



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

**SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**COURSE CODE: ENG 381**

**COURSE TITLE: ENGLISH NOVEL**

**COURSE  
GUIDE**

**ENG 381  
ENGLISH NOVEL**

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## INTRODUCTION

*ENG 381: The English Novel* is a three credit unit course which focuses on the development of the English Novel from the origins to the present. The intention of the course is to provide you with adequate knowledge of the themes and styles of the novelists. We will therefore provide a background to each novelist whose novel you will study for you to be able to understand their influences on each work. We have tried to include the novels that are easily available in the market so that you can buy, read and appreciate them. You must have to read the novels for a better and fuller understanding of the course.

The course consists of five modules broken into twenty units and each unit examines a specific issue within the scope of the course. The course guide informs you of what the course is all about, what you are expected to learn in each unit and how you can work your way through the materials. Ensure that you answer the self-assessment exercises to help you test what you have been able to learn from each unit. You are also expected to attempt or answer the tutor-marked assignments in the text and also the ones contained in a separate file to be sent to you.

## WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS COURSE

*ENG 381: The English Novel* will widen your scope of the English culture and other economic, religious and socio-political issues of each age reflected in the novels. By reading the novels, you will also be expanding your vocabulary and expressions in English language.

## COURSE AIMS

The basic aim of this course is to familiarise you with the different English novelists and their works. You will also learn more about the themes and styles that make each novelist unique. We will realise this by:

- Presenting an overview of the concept of The English Novel.
- Presenting an analysis of the novels.
- Discussing the themes of the selected novels.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

The general objective of the course is to explain the major thoughts and trends that have guided the English novelists and their works. You will however discover that each unit has specific objectives at the beginning, and you are encouraged to read them before going through the main

content of the unit for you to get the best out of every unit. At the end of this course, you should be able to:

- define the concept of English Novel
- explain the themes and styles of selected novels
- discuss the background of the major English novelists
- distinguish between the earliest English novels and the modern ones
- examine the socio-political influences on the novelists and their works
- list the major English novelists.

## WORKING THROUGH THIS COURSE

You are advised to start this study by reading the course guide very well to get a quick overview of the course. You should then proceed to read the units carefully starting from unit one. Before reading a particular unit, ensure that you have read its objectives to get the overall picture of the unit. You should also read the recommended novels. That is why I have included novels that are accessible in terms of availability and language. You should also read other related materials under the reference section of each unit to enhance your understanding of the course. Each unit has a self-assessment exercise, which you are expected to use in assessing your knowledge of the course. Note the questions that you may need us to elaborate and clarify during tutorials.

## COURSE MATERIALS

1. Course Guide
2. Study Units
3. Textbooks
4. Assignment File
5. Presentation Schedule

## STUDY UNITS

*ENG 381: The English Novel* is a three credit unit course comprising five modules. Each module is made up of four study units. On the whole, the course has twenty study units of varying length, depending on the content and scope of study. Here are the modules and their units:

### Module 1 The English Novel

- |        |                                 |
|--------|---------------------------------|
| Unit 1 | Definition of the English Novel |
| Unit 2 | Origin of the English Novel     |
| Unit 3 | The Rise of the English Novel   |

Unit 4 Major English Novelists

**Module 2 The First English Novels**

Unit 1 Realism and the Novel

Unit 2 Legitimacy of the Novel

Unit 3 John Bunyan - *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678)

Unit 4 Jonathan Swift- *Gulliver's Travels* (1705)

**Module 3 The 18<sup>th</sup> Century English Novels**

Unit 1 Background and Influences

Unit 2 Daniel Defoe – *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

Unit 3 Samuel Richardson – *Pamela* (1740)

Unit 4 Henry Fielding – *Joseph Andrews* (1742)

**Module 4 Victorian Novels**

Unit 1 Background and Influences

Unit 2 Charles Dickens – *Great Expectations* (1861)

Unit 3 George Elliot- *Silas Manner* (1861)

Unit 4 Thomas Hardy- *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886)

**Module 5 20<sup>th</sup> Century Novels**

Unit 1 Background and Influences

Unit 2 William Golding - *Lord of the Flies* (1954)

Unit 3 D. H. Lawrence-*Sons and Lovers* (1913)

Unit 4 Virginia Wolf – *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925)

Each module is preceded by a miniature table of contents, including introduction, unit objectives, the main content, Self-Assessment Exercise (SAE), as well as one Tutor – Marked Assignment (TMA), which you are required to answer and submit for grading.

**TEXTBOOKS AND REFERENCES**

At the end of every unit, you will find a list of books and other such materials that will enable you to have a firm grasp of the course. The books are required to aid your understanding of this course, and are by no means exhausted here. You are, therefore, expected to consult as many materials as possible. This will enable you to deepen your understanding of the course.



## **ASSESSMENT**

The course has two types of exercises you are expected to tackle. The first is the Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs) which you are expected to do, but not submit at the end of the study. The second is the Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMAs) which you must solve and submit in an assignment file in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the successful completion of the course. The TMAs account for 30% of your total score for the course.

## **TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Every unit has a Tutor – Marked Assignment, which is a compulsory question that must be answered. You will need to submit a specified number of the Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMAs) before your examination. You will be assessed on four of them but the best three will be picked. The total marks for the best three (3) assignments will be 30% of your total work. Ensure that each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline for submission. If, for any reason, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor to discuss the possibility of an extension. Extension will not be granted after due date unless under exceptional circumstances. You will minimise your chance of doing well in the course if you fail to submit answers to all the Tutor-Marked Assignments as required.

## **FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADING**

The final examination for *ENG 381* will occur within the duration of three hours. The examination itself will attract 70% of the total course grade. It will consist of questions that reflect the self-test exercises as well as the tutor-marked assignments. You are expected to spend quality time to read the entire course units and all the SAEs and TMAs for the final examination. All areas of the course will be examined. Find time to read the units all over before your examination. All areas of the course will be assessed so you are advised to revise the entire course after studying the last unit before you sit for the examination. You will also find it useful to review your tutor-marked assignments and the comments of your tutor on them before the final examination.

## COURSE MARKING SCHEME

The following table lays out how the actual course mark allocation is broken down.

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Marks</b>
Assignments (Best three Assignments out of Four marked)	= 30%
Final Examination	=70%
Total	=100%

## PRESENTATION SCHEDULE

The dates for submission of all assignments will be communicated to you. You will also be told the date for completing the study units and dates for examinations.

## COURSE OVERVIEW

This table brings together the units, the number of weeks you should take to complete them, and the assignments that follow each unit.

Unit	Title of Work	Week's Activity	Assessment (End of Unit)
	<b>Course Guide</b>		
<b>Module 1 The English Novel</b>			
1	Definition of the English Novel	1	Assignment 1
2	Origin of the English Novel	2	Assignment 2
3	The Rise of the English Novel	3	Assignment 3
4	The Major English Novelists	4	Assignment 4
<b>Module 2 The First English Novels</b>			
1	Realism and the Novel	5	Assignment 1
2	Legitimacy of the Novel	6	Assignment 2
3	John Bunyan - <i>Pilgrim's Progress</i> (1678)	7	Assignment 3
4	Jonathan Swift- <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> (1705)	8	Assignment 4
<b>Module 3 The 18<sup>th</sup> Century English Novels</b>			
1	Background and Influences	9	Assignment 1
2	Daniel Defoe – <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> (1719)	10	Assignment 2
3	Samuel Richardson – <i>Pamela</i> (1740)	11	Assignment 3
4	Henry Fielding – <i>Joseph Andrews</i> (1742)	12	Assignment 4
<b>Module 4 Victorian Novels</b>			
1	Background and Influences	13	Assignment 1
2	Charles Dickens – <i>Great Expectations</i> (1861)	14	Assignment 2
3	George Elliot- <i>Silas Manner</i> (1861)	15	Assignment 3
4	Thomas Hardy- <i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i> (1886)	16	Assignment 4
<b>Module 5 20<sup>th</sup> Century Novels</b>			
1	Background and Influences	17	Assignment 1
2	William Golding - <i>Lord of the Flies</i> (1954)	18	Assignment 2
3	D. H. Lawrence- <i>Sons and Lovers</i> (1913)	19	Assignment 3
4	Virginia Wolf – <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i> (1925)	20	Assignment 4

## HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS COURSE

In distance learning the study units replace the lecturer. This is one of the advantages of distance learning; you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suits you best. Think of it as reading the lecturer instead of listening to a lecturer. In the same way that a lecturer might give you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read your set books or other materials. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate points. Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives. If you make a habit of doing this, you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course. The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from your course guides. The following is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you encounter any difficulty, telephone your tutor. Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need assistance, do not hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it. Follow the following advice carefully:

- read this Course Guide thoroughly, it is your first assignment.
- organise a study schedule. Refer to the "Course Overview" for more details. Note the time you are expected to spend in each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you choose to use, you should decide on and write your own dates for working on each unit
- once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason that students fail is that they get behind with their course work. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please let your tutor know before it is too late for help
- turn to Unit 1 and read the Introduction and the Objectives for the Unit
- assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the 'Overview' at the beginning of each unit. You will almost always need both the study unit you are working on and one of your set books on your desk at the same time
- work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit you will be instructed to read sections from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to guide your reading
- review the objectives for each unit to ensure that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your tutor

- when you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can then start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule
- when you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. Consult your tutor as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems
- after completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the Course Objectives (listed in the Course Guide)
- keep in touch with your study centre. Up to date course information will be continuously available there.

## **FACILITATION/TUTORS & TUTORIALS**

There are 8 hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor, as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your tutor-marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone, e-mail, or through a discussion if you need help. The following might be circumstances in which you would find help necessary.

Contact your tutor if:

- You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings
- You have difficulty with the self-test exercises
- You have a question or problem with an assignment, with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face to face contact with your tutor and ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussions actively.

The primary thing you need to do is to befriend the library because it is the nerve – centre of the university system. The library will help you to locate and consult some of the referred textbooks and plays. You must read the recommended plays as this will facilitate your understanding of their analysis and interpretation. Reading their analysis is not a substitute for reading the plays. You must be ICT compliant in order to enable you exploit the materials on the internet. You are free to visit experts on the field and interact with them to enable you to gain diverse knowledge on the course.

Fifteen tutorial hours are provided for in this course to enable the students and their tutors to meet and examine the contents of the course at intervals. You will be informed of the dates, time, and venue for these tutorials, along with the name and particulars of your tutor as soon as one is assigned to your group. Your tutor will grade and comment on your assignments, monitor your progress and provide answers to your questions during tutorials. You must submit your assignments in good time to enable your tutor to read them well and to make appropriate comments. Do not play with your tutorials or hesitate to consult your tutor when the need arises. Tutorials afford you the opportunity to meet and discuss with your tutor face to face and they help you to get immediate answers for troubling questions. Apart from tutorials, you may consult your tutor when:

- you do not understand any part of the study units
- you have difficulty understanding Self-Assessment Exercises or Tutor-Marked Assignment
- when you have problems with the tutor's comments on your assignments or their grading. To gain maximally from the tutorials, you ought to prepare list of questions before attending them and you must endeavour to participate actively in discussions during tutorials.

## **CONCLUSION**

This course is designed to enable you understand the background and development of the English Novel.

## **SUMMARY**

This course examines the English Novel from the earliest form of the novel as distinguished from romance to the modern times. It explains its characteristics and the influences on the novelists which made their works unique. The course guide is, therefore, designed to make the course easy for you to understand. But it all depends on how much time you devote to studying the various course units.

We wish you the very best as you proceed!

**MAIN  
COURSE**

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**MODULE 1            THE ENGLISH NOVEL**

Unit 1	Definition of the English Novel
Unit 2	Origin of the English Novel
Unit 3	The Rise of the English Novel
Unit 4	Major English Novelists

**UNIT 1        DEFINITION OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL****CONTENTS**

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Prose
3.2	Fiction
3.3	Narrative
3.4	The Novel
3.5	The English Novel
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Reading

**1.0    INTRODUCTION**

In this course, you will be introduced to the most popular literary genre, the novel. We read novels at various occasions for various reasons. Sometimes, we read the novel to enjoy the story, for our entertainment, for relaxation, as a hobby or as a set text for our studies. In the novel, we encounter the experiences of people engaged in various life-like situations. Many of us have never bothered to define the novel or find out what constitutes a novel. Can we refer to any story book as a novel? You will find out the answer to this question as we try to define the novel in this unit.

The novel is an imaginative art that is presented in prose form. This means that the story presented in the novel is fictitious. We will therefore commence our definition of the novel by first of all defining prose fiction. In this unit, we are going to define prose fiction. This definition will guide our understanding of, not just the words “prose” and “fiction” but, prose fiction as a genre of literature. You will also be acquainted with the earliest forms of prose fiction.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define prose
- define fiction
- define the novel
- explain the link between the novel and narrative
- differentiate between prose and narrative
- define novel as a genre of literature.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

In this unit, as stated earlier, we will start our definition of the novel by first of all defining those characteristics that make the novel unique, thereafter; we will link them to the definition of the novel as a genre of literature.

### 3.1 Prose

Prose is the most distinctive and common form of language. Its origin is traced to the Latin word *prosa* which means ‘straight-forward’ in the literal sense. This means that whenever you are talking to someone in a straight forward manner, you are speaking in prose form. Most of the things we read as articles, text books, some aspects of the Bible, are presented in prose. Prose is devoid of the rhythmic pattern that characterises poetry and the dialogue format of drama. In most text books or other prosaic presentation, the arrangement is usually in chapters or grouped under specific headlines, and sub-headings. Poetry is presented in verse and stanzas because certain aspects of it are expected to rhyme in a particular form but in prose, stanza or verse is absent. Poetry therefore has a more systematic form of presentation while prose is presented in what I could call free style. Poetry presentation adheres to a particular metric form and definite structure which is absent in prose. In writing therefore, anything that is not presented in verse or dialogue is presented in prose.

Usually, because prose is presented in a straight forward manner, it is constructed in a simple manner and loosely defined structure. There is no specific guidelines in the construction of prose and writers do not make any special effort to present it in a particular pattern like is done in drama and poetry. Because there is no specific or formal structure, prose is therefore used in everyday conversation and as the general mode of communication in many “formal and informal presentations like the spoken dialogue, speeches, factual, topical and fictional writing” (Iwuchukwu, 2010, 3). So we talk in prose form in our everyday

discussions, speeches, preaching and in other modes of communication as we interact with one another on a daily basis.

In writing, prose is presented in paragraphs that are made up of sentences and phrases (sometimes) in a narrative form reflecting the pattern of everyday speech. This means that when you are reading any prose work, it will seem as if you are talking to someone or that someone is narrating an event or incident to you. Although prose writing does not adhere to the systematic presentation found in poetry, the writer does not just jumble words on the pages of the book without caring whether they make sense or not. The writer ensures that the sentences are correct and arranged in a logical sequence for it to make sense and for the reader to understand what is being communicated. We liken this to our everyday speech where we ensure that the words we utter are presented coherently in a logical and meaningful way so that the person we are talking to will be able to understand and assimilate the message.

It is difficult to trace the origin of prose since oral communication is as old as the world itself. In written form, prose used for the dissemination of written information in text books, magazines in commerce is traced to the 15th century by Monks in monasteries who composed and sold enlightening religious materials like the lives of saints and some other articles of faith in printed form. From then on, prose became in this environment the medium of silent and private reading (Whiteman 2006, 16) and later spread to other forms of writing.

### **3.2 Fiction**

The origin of fiction is traced to the Latin word *fictum* which means “created” and refers to stories, incidents, events or accounts that are not real. Good examples of fictitious stories are folktales and other fabricated stories. It is a product of the narrator’s imagination or another person’s imagination being narrated by a different person but not factual. Some newspapers in Nigeria like *The Sun Newspapers* serialise short stories which is different from their news items. While the former is fiction, the later is factual. Fiction is therefore any form of story which deals, in part or in whole, with events that are not factual, but rather, are imaginary and invented by its author. We have seen that fiction refers to non-factual accounts but in its other meaning, it represents a major branch of literature like the novel and short story which are referred to as genres of prose fiction. This means that we will combine prose and fiction to get a branch of literature that is known as prose fiction.

## SELF- ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

List the genres of prose fiction.

### 3.3 Narrative

You have learnt so far that prose fiction is non-factual story and another important characteristic of prose fiction is that it is presented in a narrative form. You can see that we have been mentioning story in our definition of fiction. Stories are usually narrated by someone, orally or written. This means that prose fiction is presented in a narrative form. There are other forms of prose that are presented in a narrative form that are not classified as prose fiction. Can you mention some examples? Some of them include essays, biographies, some historical accounts and many others. Fiction and narrative are words that distinguish prose fiction from any other form of narrative or fictional work. For instance, biography is presented in a narrative form but it is a factual account of the life of an individual. Also the fact that prose fiction tells a story that is not true distinguishes it from history which is a factual account of events that took place in the life of a people or a nation with real names of the participants, actual dates and identifiable locations like towns, countries or villages. You may recall how the events of the civil war were recollected by various authors and published in various newspapers after Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu's death. This is history and not prose fiction.

### 3.4 The Novel

The novel is defined as a "...fictitious narrative, having a closely – knit plot of some intricacy, characters that approach human reality, of epic length and scope, but with a definite unity of effect. The plot may be subordinated to characters or characters to the plot, but there should be some kind of narrative action; and even if the limits of space and time covered are small, there should be a sweep or sense of bigness about a novel to differentiate it from a tale of a short story" (Woods et al.1936, 698). Basically, length is what distinguishes one genre of prose fiction from the other. The *novel* is the longest form of prose fiction followed by the *novella* while the *short story* is the shortest. The length of any genre of prose fiction is measured by the number of pages that make up that particular work. It is said that the short story is so short that it can be contained in as few as five to twenty five pages (5-25 pages); the novella, about sixty to one hundred and seventy pages while any work in that genre that is above that is categorised as novel. The novel is an artistic work, not just a product of the writer's imagination, but it must be presented in a style that would make it an entertaining piece. Another important factor in the novel is that though it is fiction, it is presented in

a realistic manner and presents a slice of life known as *verisimilitude*. This means that events are presented in a way that it will look like a real life story; factual account but they are not. In the novel we extend our sympathies. This helps us to understand an aspect of human life that we would have missed if we did not read the novel which is an extension of life. When we empathise with others, we also understand them. The novel presents the closest imitation of life because of empathy and sympathy in it whereby the readers identify themselves with the characters.

The novel is a fictitious artistic account that is the product of the writer's imagination and is presented in a narrative form. The novel is the longest form of prose genre because it is expected to present an "epic length performances that try to cope with the totality of life" (Lubbock 30). It is an artistic work that "has a personal narrative, a hero to identify with fictional inventions, style, and suspense – in short anything that might be handled with the rather personal ventures of creativity and artistic freedom" (Kermode 1980, 23). The personal hero is sometimes referred to as the protagonist. It treats essentially personal subject matter which is open to various interpretations by the reader as it relays human experience from the writer's imagination. The novelist represents the social, political, and personal realities of a place and period with clarity and details that make it very close to life. A novel could be based on history but the author uses vivid and graphic representations of characters and incidents to present an entertaining story. The language used by novelists is distinct and this enables the author to manipulate it to suit his or her purpose or style and at the same time make the message clear and for the reader to enjoy the story, be entertained and also be educated.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Describe two distinguishing characteristics of prose fiction.

### **3.5 The English Novel**

The English novel refers to novels written by English men and women that reflects the English society at a particular period. It is different from the novel in English which could be the novel of any continent, country or locality but written in English language. In English novel, each writer presents his or her perspective of the English society at that particular time in the history of the people.

The present form of the English novel was originally serialised to the audience and to a large extent this influenced the author, because sometimes the author conceded to the demand of the reading public in

the plotting and structure of the novel. For instance, the marriage between Pip and Esther in Charles Dickens *Great Expectations* was said to have been influenced by the reading public.

The emergence of the English novel was influenced by several factors which were historical, moral, structural, and the subject matter at every stage of its development. The application of fiction and realism to the novel started with the English novel because though the story was a product of the author's imagination the reading public expected the story to be credible and be as close as possible to real life. Consequently, the novel presents many character types, detailed and vivid description of incidents, action, setting and general environment and atmosphere that are appear life-like. The character is revealed as the story moves through suspense, climax and resolution of conflicts.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain what you understand by English novel.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In this unit we have tried to explain prose fiction and linked it to the novel. You have learnt that the novel is a long narrative and fictitious story that presents a slice of life through the representation of events that seem realistic. It tells a story that deals with cultural, social and political issues in the world but the characters are not known human beings but relate to themselves like people in the real world. The setting is also imaginary unlike the setting in history which is real. You learnt also that the English novel refers to novels written by English men and women about the English people and environment. We also tried to differentiate prose fiction from history since both of them tell stories. We also explained that prose fiction is an aspect of literature that is presented in a narrative form.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

Prose is a type of writing that is not presented in verse and fiction, and is a tale that is a product of the writer's imagination. It is an invented story which means that it is not real. In prose fiction therefore, the writer tells a fictitious story to his readers to educate or entertain or to do both. Prose fiction refers to any narrative presented in prose form and is not factual. It is a combination of two distinct words, "prose" and "fiction". The genres of prose fiction are the short story, the novella and the novel. Prose fiction is a product of the writer's imagination which means that it presents an invented story. The novel is the longest and most popular form of prose fiction which presents human experience to educate and

entertain the readers by telling stories that deal with life-like situations. The events could be contemporary or historical accounts manipulated by the writer and presented in a fictional manner.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

In your own words, explain the meaning of prose fiction and relate it to the novel.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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## UNIT 2 ORIGIN OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Origins
  - 3.2 Romance
  - 3.3 The Romantic
  - 3.4 The Gothic
  - 3.5 Allegory/Fables
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Most literary scholars define the novel as a coherent unified, fictitious prose narrative, with a beginning a middle and an end, and with the "... materials deployed in such a way as to give the image of coherence, continuity, and wholeness, and with certain tensions and anticipations regarding the central characters carried through the entire length of the work, to be resolved only at the end" (Barnet et al, 1987, 67). The English novel, just like the African novel has its roots in the oral tradition of storytelling. According to Wood et al., "...the term *novel* refers back to the production of short stories that remained part of a European oral culture of storytelling into the late 19th century". These include fairy tales, jokes, little funny stories designed to make a point in a conversation. In written form, some scholars argue that Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1386–1400) is the forerunner of the English novel in spite of its presentation in verse form. However, others disagree because of its presentation of the stories in verse instead of in prose so the origin of the novel cannot be traced to the *Canterbury Tales*.

The origin of the novel is also traced to the early allegorical works and also to the Romantic period that produced the romance and the Gothic novel. These will be discussed in details in this unit



## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- trace the origin of the English novel
- list some of the earliest fictional works that preceded the novel
- differentiate between the novel and other fictional works
- determine the generally accepted early novel.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

We are going to try to trace the origins of the English novel. We will also discuss briefly, some of the prose fiction narratives that preceded the English novel.

### 3.1 Origins

By now, you know that the novel is an imaginary or literary book presented in long narrative prose. Its origin is traced to the “medieval and early modern romance and in the tradition of the novella” (Wikipedia online Dictionary) so the term novel as we know it today derived from Novella. However, it is difficult to state the exact date of the origin of the English novel in its present form that is evaluated through the author’s presentation of the plot, theme, the use of language, characterisation and vivid description of events and environment. Most of these elements of the novel were introduced in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries as they helped to distinguish the novel from history, personal memoir and the autobiography.

However some scholars trace the origin of the novel to the oral tradition of storytelling of the English people which were presented in the form of fairy tales, jokes and little funny stories used for illustration in a conversation. This is why they link the origin of the novel to Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (1386–1400) which is a collection of life-like stories with realist characters, with the narrators, representing different people with different backgrounds, professions, tastes and social statuses. Another important point in favour of the *Canterbury Tales* is its plot presentation, character sketches, vivid description of incidents and setting which imbues it with the element of verisimilitude so one could be justified to say that it the precursor of the English novel but the snag is that it is presented in verse and not prose.

### 3.2 Romance

The word romance is a term that is traced to the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century to denote a form of story that was initially derived or adapted from Roman and Greek historians. The early form of this genre is known as Arthurian romance which focused on a single hero who is involved in “a double course of episodes” (Obstfeld, 2002, 56). The Arthurian romance generally, presents the exploits of a knight who strives to prove both his prowess as an independent knight and his readiness to function as a perfect courtier under King Arthur. The plot involves the quest or a mission the knight who fights to prove himself in a personal task and problem he accepted. The popular ones are presented in plots that involved the separation and reunification of lovers in the course of adventures that are designed to prove their love and value. A good example of romance is *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (c. 1380). The problem here again is that like the *Canterbury Tales* these romances were presented in verse and not prose so the origin of the novel may not be traced to this early genre.

### 3.3 The Romantic

The English novel is said to have appeared in the Romantic period with the Romantic novel but it presents incidents that are not realistic and human characters that are manipulated by the supernatural forces thereby directing and controlling human fate. This genre of the novel appeared when Romantic poetry flourished so it is possible that the novelists may have been influenced by the Romantic poets' passion for nature and rustic life. However, in the novel, the passion was directed towards romance and unrealistic incidents that tend towards the melodramatic and lacks the element of verisimilitude which is a vital aspect of the novel.

### 3.4 The Gothic

The Gothic novel presents a story that combines elements of horror and romance in the plot and was said to have originated with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Ann Radcliffe also wrote in the gothic style, his remarkable contribution is the introduction of the brooding figure of the Gothic villain which developed into the Byronic hero. Her most popular and influential work is *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, (1794), popularly referred to as the archetypal Gothic novel. Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* (1818) is another major contribution to the Gothic genre and in which she narrated a chilling tale that could be related to modern organ transplants and tissue regeneration. The novel is still relevant in contemporary times as it reminds the readers of the moral issues raised by modern medicine. These novels were usually

didactic and tried to provide examples of good conduct. Scholars are reluctant to trace the origin of the novel to this genre because of the excessive use of horror which departs from the element of verisimilitude though it is regarded as a genre of the novel

### 3.5 Allegory/Fables

In allegory the story is presented through the manipulation of characters, actions and setting to convey a double meaning in a way that the literal meaning as well as an underlying or deeper meaning is communicated to the reader. The writer manipulates language in a way that animals/ideas/abstract nouns as characters could speak and act as humans while one subject is discussed under the guise of another. It is used mostly in satires and a good example is George Orwell's *Animal Farm* which uses the animals' revolt against their owner to present a satirical attack on the Russian communist system. Orwell uses animals to portray the injustice and double standard which reflect the insincerity of the communist system of government. So in allegory, the writer employs and manipulates such characters/ideas to convey a double meaning of the subject matter at the literal level and a deeper level. Such a work "would normally operate at a primary level as well as the secondary level of significance. ... narration offers the writer an opportunity to describe one subject under the guise of another and thus to be ambivalent in his or her themes" (Ezeigbo, 1998, 24).

Fables also use animals as characters. You will recall that we said that the novel presents human beings as characters and thrives on human relationships in a seemingly realistic manner. So allegory and fables are therefore not classified as novels hence *Pilgrims Progress* and *Aesop Fables* are not classified as novels. So we cannot trace the origin of English novel to these genres

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

We have tried to trace the origin of the English novel. There are different views on this origin. What is clear is that the English novel is a product of various experimentations that included the romance, the allegory and the Gothic. It also has its roots in the story-telling tradition of the English people. The Modern English novel is therefore a combination of these earlier genres of prose fiction.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have tried to trace the origin of the modern English novel to the earlier genres of prose fiction. We also saw the various prose

fiction genres that preceded the novel as a genre of literature but it is difficult to trace the origin of the novel to a particular genre.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

List two of the earliest fictional works that preceded the novel and differentiate between them and the novel.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

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## UNIT 3 THE RISE OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Romance
  - 3.2 Literacy
  - 3.3 Availability of Paper
  - 3.4 Serial Novel
  - 3.5 Circulating Library
  - 3.6 Leisure
  - 3.7 Shifts in Reading Taste
  - 3.8 The Printing Press
  - 3.9 Literary Journals/Criticism
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, we learnt that it is difficult to trace the origin of the novel to a particular early fiction in verse or narrative. The novel as a genre of literature therefore emerged in the eighteenth century as a combination of several sub-genres that preceded it and has evolved into many genres which include the historical, gothic, epistolary, sentimental and *bildungsroman* novels. This is because as the genre was evolving, many authors wrote in different styles, genres and preferences. The result is the emergence of the English novel as a type of literature “such as was never heard of in the world before” (Woods *et al* 1936, 255). The novel bases its story on real life experience as against tradition of classical literary Greek and Roman poets whose stories were derived mainly from mythology, history, legend or previous literature or the emphasis on individual experience rather than collective tradition (Woods *et al* 1936, 265). The English novel as a genre of literature therefore evolved during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and it “completely broke the traditions of the past and opened the door to a whole new generation of writers” (Doody 1996, 28) partly in response to an expansion of the middle -class reading public.

Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* is regarded as the first step fictional story in narrative form that is not adapted from any source but from his imagination and experience. Defoe presented in *Robinson Crusoe*, a story that is based on individuality and originality so is regarded as the

major early work in this genre and is seen as pioneering the emergence of modern novel. Defoe is followed closely by Samuel Richardson with his *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa*; (1748) as the pioneers of the English novel. Another novelist of the earliest phase of the development of the novel is Henry Fielding with his comic masterpiece, *Tom Jones*. Other novelists like Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Walter Scott and others emerged over the years to give the English novel its unique place in world literature. In this unit, we will discuss the factors that influenced the rise or development of the novel.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- trace the development of the English novel
- list the factors that contributed to the rise of the English novel
- discuss the contribution of each factor.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

The development of the novel is hinged on the media that enhanced its circulation to as many readers as possible. Although the novel is seen as the counterpart of prose narratives in the traditional society, it is much longer than the folktale and other forms of oral narratives, or various forms of early documented fiction in prose or verse. Also, the oral narratives do not have complex plot structure that is the hallmark of the novel unlike the oral narratives the story in the novel cannot be recounted with ease or be remembered with precision. The novelists needed a medium that would enable the story to be told correctly and consistently all the times and relayed beyond the immediate environment of the originator. The novels were therefore written and expected to be read beyond the immediate environment of the author and this to a large extent contributed to the rise of the novel.

### 3.1 Romance

Romance is a genre of fictional narrative that preceded the novel. It concentrates on the individual and tends towards the idealisation or glorification of the hero who usually lives in a world of dreams and illusions. It was the first form of fictional narrative that involves a complex plot characteristic of the modern novel and was popular with the aristocrats. It is presented in a heroic prose and thrived during the medieval and renaissance periods as a literary genre of high culture. Its popularity among the aristocratic class of the period is traced to its treatment of fantastic stories about marvel-filled adventures, often of a knight errant, the hero, and involves a quest by the hero. In many cases,

the stories were adapted from history, fairy tales, myths and legends. (Briggs 134) Some scholars opine that modern novel is more influenced by the romance than by any other medieval genre mainly because, unlike epics that were written in verse, early 13<sup>th</sup> century romances were written as prose (Lewis, 1954, 129).

Romance dealt with traditional, courtly and chivalrous themes from folklore and presented tales of fairy characters who were transformed, more and more often, into wizards and enchantresses (Briggs 233). By the twelfth century, the focus shifted to the of recount marvelous adventures of a chivalrous, heroic knight, often with a super-human ability, who goes on a quest, gets involved in fights in which he defeats monsters and giants, and wins favour with a lady (Lewis, 1954, 129). However the focus of medieval romance was mainly on adventure and not on love or sentiment which is found in the modern romance that presents the romantic relationship between two people with an emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending (Lewis, 1954, 132).

The novel that evolved later differs from romance as it deals realistically with human relationships and the hero in relating to other people in the story, matures, grows in experience and progresses from innocence to knowledge and in many cases comes to terms with reality. Romance played a vital role in the development of the novel.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Mention two reasons why *romance* is not regarded as a novel.

### **3.2 Literacy**

Literacy is an important factor in the development of the novel. As more people became literate in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century more people joined in the reading of prose fiction. More women of wealthier households were among the literate class of this period and gradually literacy spread among the urban populations of Europe and increasing the number of literate people and the readership of prose fiction. Another factor that influenced the increase in readership of prose fiction was the Protestant Reformation which enkindled propaganda and press wars that lasted into the 18th century. People were eager to follow the events, so, by reading the propaganda articles of the reformation they also read other treatise including prose fictional narratives. Some of the readers learnt to read and write through these publications. Thus, as reading and writing skills spread among apprentices and women of the middle classes, they joined the aristocratic in the reading of prose fiction that eventually evolved into the novel. In addition, as more people learnt to read and write, the personal letter became a favourite medium of communication among

men and women. Some epistolary novels were offshoots of such personal letters. Reading became very popular so many people bought popular titles not necessarily because of they liked the subject matter but "...because they were the books everyone had heard of, or books of an eternal value to be chosen if one was not too sure about one's ability to judge. The prefaces exploited these insecurities praising the solid value of the old and well known titles" (Woods et al, 1936, 456). As time went on, issues like fashions, love, personal views, intimate affairs/feelings, secret anxieties, and code of conduct and gallantry became subjects of the novels as the reader identifies personally the characters in a novel. More people wanted to be part of this new culture and this increased the reading public and contributed immensely to the rise of the novel.

### **SELF -ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain the contribution of literacy to the development of the novel.

### **3.3 Availability of Paper**

Before the invention of paper, the verse epics were presented in parchment and their owners recited them on festive occasions. The parchment was prestigious but was too expensive to be used for stories that one would read for leisure. Consequently, only libraries and a few wealthy individuals could afford them. The invention of paper made books cheaper and available to a wider audience and an individual could buy a book exclusively for him or herself read it as many times as possible without going to borrow from the library. Consequently, novels were produced in large quantities, different formats and sizes to enable the reader carry it with ease or kept to be read privately at home or in public without the support of a table. This made it possible and fashionable for people to read novels in coffee houses or on journeys.

### **3.4 Serial Novel**

Many novels of the Victorian period were published in serial form in journals. Many of the novels made their debut in such journals as chapters or sections appeared in each edition of the journals so like modern soap opera, readers eagerly awaited the appearance of the unfolding and conclusion stories of novels. This helped to sustain the reader's interest in such novels and increased the eagerness of readers to see each new appearance of the novel and the introduction of some new element in the plot twist or a new character. The authors who published serially were often paid on an installment basis and this may be responsible for the popularity of the three-volume novel during this period.



## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

List three contributions of the serial novel and invention of paper to the development of the novel.

### **3.5 Circulating Libraries**

The circulating libraries contributed immensely to the rise of the novel. The libraries were established in Britain in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with a cheap and affordable subscription rate. They stocked wide varieties of novels in different genres to cater for the reader's interest. It may not have been possible for a reader to buy all the published works, so many people patronised the circulating library especially the lower class like tradesmen, housewives, farmers, shopkeepers who could not afford to buy the novels but could borrow them from the library. This increased the demand for the novel which in turn influenced the development of the novel positively.

### **3.6 Leisure**

Initially, the novel developed as aristocratic entertainment but as the spread of the novel increased, its readers included almost all classes as the scope of readership widened and the reading habits differed as more people irrespective of class tried "to follow fashions" by reading more books. Novels were read for leisure mostly by women who were left on their own a greater part of the time since "most men led full and busy lives and were hardly at home for most of the day, weeks or even months depending on their profession" (Ezeigbo, 1998, 5). The women therefore spent their leisure reading voraciously since they could not be part of in their husbands' leisure activities. In addition, the ladies and their daughters in the affluent families who afforded nannies, valets and servants who did all the household chores were idle so had time to read as many novels as possible. Also after the industrial revolution, women had more time for leisure because of the provision of factory-made goods like soaps, bread, cloth and other household goods which were previously produced manually by them. They therefore had more time for leisure so novel-reading became a form of entertainment for them.

The popularity of the novel lies more in its presentation format in prose which is easier to be read and understood than verse and drama. Consequently more novels and short stories were produced to meet the demands and interest of the ever increasing reading public.

## SELF -ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Explain the relationship between the circulating library, leisure and the rise of the novel.

### 3.7 Shifts in Reading Taste

The emergence of the prose fiction heightened the reader's interest in secular subjects and in turn influenced the development of the novel. This is against the medieval practice whereby most literate people in Britain read the Bible and other books for spiritual growth at their leisure. The industrial revolution brought with it economic and social transformation which increased interest in secular issues presented as articles in journals or in books. More people devoted their leisure to reading novels as the writers invented new styles to meet the changing tastes of the reading public. The reader was exposed to a new life with every new novel as against the stories of the Bible and other devotional books which remained the same. People preferred the novelty of the story in each new novel so voraciously devoured every new title as topical issues became the subject matter of the novel.

Also the novelists shifted their foci from the isolated hero of the romantic fiction of the Medieval Ages to the early novel in which the story was driven by plot. The individual hero is still preset as portrayed in the novels *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders*, *Pamela*, and *Clarissa* but the plot is different from the old romantic fiction as the novel presented more realistic individuals and incidents.

### 3.8 The Printing Press

The invention of printing complemented the invention of the paper in the acceleration of the growth of the novel. Printing aided the creation of a medium of comparatively cheap entertainment and knowledge through the chapbooks which appeared in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. The chapbooks presented a more elegant production known as the *belles lettres*, a popular genre that transformed into an amalgamation of the poetry and fiction genres of literature which gained popularity in late 18<sup>th</sup> century but the genres were separated in later centuries. The statistics of the genres printed showed that prose fiction especially the novel was the highest and continued to increase as "...the press output and the money made with fiction have risen disproportionately since the 18<sup>th</sup> century" (Barnet *et al*, 1987,132).

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the role of printing press in the development of the English novel.

### 3.9 Literary Journals/Criticism

Literary journals provided the platform for literary reviews and criticism. This practice influenced the growth of the novel positively in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. It created an opportunity for public discussion on the subject matter of the novels which people were reading at a given period. It also aided the popularity of the novels which in turn increased sales and circulation. This is not applicable to only the well-written novels because even the low-rated novels sold too because people wanted to know why it was rated poorly. Literary criticism published in newspapers and literary journals therefore helped to popularise or bring down works and this in turn affected the circulation of such works.

Journals like *The Spectator* and *The Tartler* at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century pioneered literary criticism and other literary journals emerged in the middle of the century and by the 1780s, the reception of criticisms by the reading public became a new marketing platform for novels, and authors and publishers recognised it as such. On the part of the authors, they became self conscious and wrote to satisfy the target audience while publishers ensured high quality production of the novels. Consequently, literary criticism contributed to improved artistic quality and originality of themes in the novels.

Gradually the novel moved from a form of entertainment to text books with its introduction in the curricula of secondary school and universities. This further enhanced the development and rise of the novel. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the public perception of the place of a particular novel was no longer based on the taste of the aristocratic class or what was fashionable to read but by the attention accorded it by literary criticism in the journals and other media.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

Several factors contributed to the development and rise of the novel. They include romance; literacy; the invention of paper and printing press; serialisation of the novel; the circulating library; leisure; shifts in the reading taste of the audience; and literary journals/criticism. The novel is a vibrant literary genre of prose fiction which reflected the age, culture and other socio-political issues of a particular period. The novel in its present form evolved over the centuries through a complex

interaction between authors, their publishers on one hand and the reading public and literary criticism on the other hand. Its inclusion in the curricula of schools as text through the experts who teach and discuss literature in schools and in the media also aided the growth of the English novel. Through criticism, good authors are celebrated with awards and prizes so criticism can make or mar an author or a particular novel. Authors therefore strove for excellence through the improvement of their individual styles to ensure the acceptability and popularity of their works.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have discussed the factors that contributed to the development of prose fiction. The term *novel* as is known today is traced to the publication of *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe in 1719. Initially, reading was a form of status symbol but gradually the reading public increased and went beyond the aristocrats to include the middle and lower classes as the level of literacy increased. Literary criticism aided the public appreciation of and the popularity of a particular novel. The invention of paper and printing press and also the establishment of circulating libraries accelerated the development of the novel as they helped to widen the circulation of the novels to reach readers of almost all classes and reading habits. The novel as a genre of prose fiction developed from a combination of Daniel Defoe's lone adventure novels, Samuel Richardson's Epistolary novels, Henry Fielding's comic masterpieces, Jane Austen's highly polished novels about the life of landed gentry, Walter Scott's historical novels, collectively made the list of novelists to continue to grow in leaps and bounds from these early beginnings.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

List the factors that contributed to the development of prose fiction and discuss one of them.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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## UNIT 4 MAJOR ENGLISH NOVELISTS

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Daniel Defoe
  - 3.2 Frances Burney
  - 3.3 Henry Fielding
  - 3.4 Tobias George Smollett
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will discuss some of the earliest English novelists and their contribution to the development of the English novel. There is a controversy on the novels that comprises the earliest English novels. We are not concerned with that in this unit but we will discuss four of the novelists in that category. We are familiar with two of them; Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding but not much is known about the remaining two; Frances Burney and George Smollett. These early novelists influenced later novelists and the form of the modern novel.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify some of the earliest English novelists
- list some of the earliest English novels
- discuss their contribution to the development of the English novel
- discuss the various themes and styles of the earliest English novels.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

In the last unit, we traced the origin of the modern novel to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* which is generally accepted as the first English novel. However, there are other novels that were written at about the same time but Defoe seemed to be luckier than others and was projected more than his contemporaries. In this unit, we will discuss some of those earliest novelists. We will also see why *Robinson Crusoe* is considered the first English novel.

### 3.1 Daniel Defoe

Daniel Defoe was a literary artist and a journalist who is perceived to be one of the greatest journalists of his time. Defoe as the son of a butcher was not born or raised as a gentleman but he became a gentleman and subsequently, he changed his name from Foe to Defoe and bought a coach with his coat of arms on its door to suit his elevation to a higher class. He was a prolific writer with over three hundred and seventy (370) known publications that he had the ability to write on almost any topic” (Wikipedia Online Dictionary). However, many of his contemporaries believed that he was a writer who wrote to please a section of the society, as “a man who sold his pen to the political party in office” (Mckeon 1987). They regarded him as a man who lacked integrity, therefore was not taken seriously in the literary circles at that time though they acknowledged his skill at writing. His reputation as a writer was in decline for several years. For instance, readers were shocked by the language and content of *Moll Flanders* and his other novels that featured rogues as the main characters. However, with the publication of a succession of biographies and editions of his works from 1780 to 1830, his profile as a literary star started rising because, despite these negative reactions, by 1860 the number of criticisms on his books in the journals, and essays about him increased dramatically and this contributed to his being acknowledged as one of the great eighteenth century writers and his novel, *Robinson Crusoe*, the first English novel.

*Robinson Crusoe* has become so popular that it has been subjected to so many interpretations by critics and scholars. For instance, in 1719, within four months, *Robinson Crusoe* became a financial success as it was printed six times. Defoe decided to capitalise on that success to write, *The Further Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* and recycled some essays as *Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe* both did not record the expected success. However both later became parts of *Robinson Crusoe* which was at first printed with both the first and second parts and in about 1860 the modern practice of publishing only the first part of *Robinson Crusoe* started.

*Robinson Crusoe* was so successful that it was immediately pirated, abridged, imitated, translated and adapted for the stage as pantomime and as drama because of its universal appeal (Price, 2003, 143). The novel has continued to be published, adapted, and translated into several languages over the centuries. Critics and readers all over the world acclaim that *Robinson Crusoe* is Defoe's greatest work. The novel will be discussed in details in Module 3.

### 3.2 Frances Burney

Frances Burney (1752 -1840) also known as *Fanny Burney* was an English novelist, diarist and playwright, self educated, who started her writing career at the age of ten with what she referred to as “scribblings”. She got married to a French exile, General Alexandre D'Arblay, and became Madame d'Arblay. Her long writing career and travels took her to France but she finally settled in Bath, England, where she died on 6, January 1840.

Frances Burney wrote a total of four novels, eight plays, one biography and twenty volumes of journals and letters but the focus here is on her novels. Her first novel, *Evelina*, was published anonymously in 1778 and it brought her an immediate fame because of the unique narrative technique and comic aspects of the novel. She published her first novel anonymously but later her identity was revealed and her other novels include *Cecilia* (1782), *Camilla* (1796), *The Wanderer* (1814). All her novels explore the lives of English aristocrats, and satirise their social pretensions and personal foibles in addition to issues that bother on the politics of female identity (Delvin, 1987, 67). Although her novels were very popular during her lifetime, her reputation dwindled after her death because critics argued that she did not depict accurate lives of the English aristocrats of her time and that later novels offered a more interesting and accurate portrait of eighteenth-century life.

Luckily, the posthumous publication of her extensive diaries in 1841 rekindled public interest in her works. Consequently, modern critics are re-examining her works with a renewed interest especially on her gender perspective in the presentation of the social lives and struggles of women in a predominantly male-oriented culture. Scholars have therefore continued to “value Burney’s diaries as well, for their candid depictions of eighteenth-century English society” (Doody, 1988, 141) as well as her wit and talent for satirical caricatures. Frances Burney was encouraged to write by her father and family friend Samuel Crisp but they dissuaded her from publishing or performing her dramatic comedies because they felt it was inappropriate for a lady to publish. She persisted despite the setback caused by social pressure on the female writer at that period and was able to support both herself and her family with the proceeds of her later novels and her works are “...now widely acknowledged for its critical wit and ... deliberate exploration of the lives of women” (Delvin, 1987, 87).

Burney was a talented storyteller who was influenced by her extensive reading of book in her father’s library, as well as from her “journal-diaries” - correspondence with family and friends in which she recounted some of her life experiences and her observations on those



experiences. Her diary contains mostly experiences with her sister Susanna. Burney's sense of impropriety towards her own writing made her edit earlier parts of her diaries in later life and "destroyed much of her own diary material in revising the manuscripts". (Rousseau, 2004, 23). This sense of impropriety reflects her father's influence and the societal perception of women in that age.

### ***Evelina***

*Evelina or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, is her first novel published anonymously in 1778 without her father's knowledge or permission. She was afraid that the publisher might recognise her writing and link it to her father for whom she worked, so she copied the original manuscript in a disguised hand. The publisher rejected it because of its anonymity. Nobody suspected that the novel was written by a woman because a woman was not expected to put herself deliberately into the public eye by writing. Burney did not give up but colluded with her eldest brother who posed as its author to publish the novel in her second attempt. She received only twenty guineas as payment for the manuscript because of their inexperience in negotiating.

The novel was an instant success as critics, and respected individuals extolled its realistic portrayal of working-class citizens of London and for its presentation of the foible of wealthy English society through a comic mode. Burney's father read public reviews of the novel before he realised that the author was his own daughter. Although the act of publication was radical for a woman at that time and of her age, he was impressed by the favourable criticisms the book received so supported her exceedingly realising the social advantages of having a successful published writer in the family.

The novel was written in an epistolary form and portrays the English upper middle class from the perspective of a seventeen-year-old lady of a marriageable age. It presents the oppressive patriarchal values and other social hypocrisies that affected young women in 18<sup>th</sup> Century England. It is a comic and witty satirical novel and its popularity was reflected in the way it went through four editions before the end of its print run. In 1971 it was still considered a classic by the writers of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which stated that "addressed to the young, the novel has a quality perennially young" (Delvin, 1987, 89).

### **3.3 Henry Fielding**

Henry Fielding is one of the forerunners of the English novel with the publication of the novel *Joseph Andrews* in 1742. He was born in 1707 into an aristocratic family and educated at Eton and later in Poland. He

started his writing career as a playwright before writing novels. His novels include epic of the nation in *Tom Jones*; and comic epic in *Joseph Andrews* the popular *Moll Flanders*. His characters follow the general pattern of growth from innocence to maturity; from egoism to experience and self knowledge. He influenced the main tradition of the English novel through the eighteenth century (e.g., Smollett) and the nineteenth century (e.g., Dickens and Thackeray). According to Eustace Palmer, his works "...exposes the fallacy of the hypothesis that the eighteenth century is the most inaccessible period in English literature for a non-European student" (33). The reason normally adduced for this view is that this century, with its tremendous social stability and cohesion was concerned with elegant manners and elaborate conventions in writing. But he wrote in "...formally elegant prose, upholding the Augustan virtues of decorum and good sense using Augustan conventions as the norm with which he measures deviations from that norm" (Palmer 1996, 33). The success of his novels lie in their "gloriously comic atmosphere" and his readers identify with "his moral and spiritual health, his geniality, his humanity and his rather modern protest against evils of the system..." (Palmer 1996, 33).

Fielding's greatest contribution to the development of the English novel is a sense of structure in the novel. In his tightly structured *Tom Jones* (1749), a comic masterpiece and his best known work, every detail has a purpose so some critics refer to it as one of the best plotted novels in English. He introduced a new kind of fictional "hero who is good hearted, well intentioned, a generous young man with ordinary human weakness, one who yields to temptation with women and makes errors in judgment" in the character of Tom Jones (Battrestin 1959, 35). His last novel *Amelia* was published in 1751 and was said to be a biography of his former wife, Charlotte, in which she is portrayed as the heroine. However, the novel was poorly received by the audience because, as a biography, it was said to contained several factual errors. Fielding also tried to give dignity and status to the novel by relating it to the classical epic as espoused in his theory of the novel expressed in *Joseph Andrews* (1742).

### 3.4 Tobias George Smollett

Tobias George Smollett (1721 – 1771) was a medical doctor, a poet, a playwright and a novelist. He was born in Scotland and his father was a judge and land-owner. Tobias was educated at the University of Glasgow where he qualified as a surgeon but his medical career came secondary to his literary ambitions. The novels that popularised him were his picaresque novels like *The Adventures of Roderick* (1748) and *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751), which influenced later novelists such as Charles Dickens. *The Adventures of Roderick Random*

brought him to limelight and fame and his second novel, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* was equally successful and with that he was recognised as a leading literary figure.

He also wrote *The Life and Adventure of Sir Lancelot Greaves* (1760), *Travels through France and Italy* (1766), and *The History and Adventure of an Atom* (1769) in which he used the guise of a tale from ancient Japan to present his view on British politics during the seven-year war. He published his last novel, *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* in 1771, the year he died.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The novel is the last genre of literature to be developed but has since become the most popular genre. In this unit, we have discussed some of the early English novelists since we cannot discuss all of them. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is regarded by many scholars as the first novel. This is attributed to the fact that the novel received positive criticism from the critics. Among the novelists discussed here, Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding stand out so they will be discussed in details in Module 3.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In every aspect of life, there are always pioneers. In the history of the development of the novel as a literary genre, some writers cleared the path and led the way for others to follow. Some of those pioneer writers and their contribution to the development of the novel were discussed in this unit.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

List four early English novelists and discuss their contributions to the development of the novel.

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

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## MODULE 2 THE FIRST ENGLISH NOVELS

- Unit 1 Legitimacy of the Novel
- Unit 2 Realism and the Novel
- Unit 3 John Bunyan – *Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678)
- Unit 4 Jonathan Swift – *Gulliver’s Travels* (1705)

### UNIT 1 LEGITIMACY OF THE NOVEL

#### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The First English Novels.
  - 3.2 Thomas Malory – *Le Morte d’Arthur* (1485)
  - 3.3 William Baldwin – *Beware the Cat* (1570)
  - 3.4 Philip Sidney – *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* (1581)
  - 3.5 Aphera Behn – *Oroonoko* (1688)
  - 3.6 Legitimacy of the Novel
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
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- 7.0 References/Further Reading

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Which is the first English novel? Do we really have a particular prose fictional work that can conveniently be referred to as the first English novel? Many scholars refer to Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* published in 1719 as the first English novel. Does this mean that no prose fictional work existed in Britain before that date? Scholars therefore do not seem to be sure of which work should stand as the first English novel. Consequently, a number of works of literature are said to be the first English novel. In this unit, we will list some of such works but will not discuss them in details for want of space. However, we will review the criteria that determine what the novel should be and decide if these works fit into the category of the first English novels. This review will aid the determination of the works that could be called novels, and decide if the works discussed in this unit are novels or not and then give reasons for the decision. John Bunyan’s *Pilgrims Progress* and Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* will be used as illustrative texts in the subsequent units of this module.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify some first English fiction writers
- list some of their works
- explain why scholars do not regard these works as novels.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

In our discussion here, we will examine the claims that some works should be classified as the first English novels and confirm or refute such claims.

### 3.1 The First English Novels

As stated earlier, a number of prose fiction narratives lay claim to being the first English novels. The following works of literature have each been listed in Wikipedia as the first novel in English. I hope that you know the difference between the first English novel and the first novel in English? The former denotes a novel written by an Englishman or woman with British background reflecting on the socio-political, economic and cultural British experience at a particular age. While the latter refers to a novel written by anyone about any culture but written in the English language. We will present a brief study of some of the not too popular early novels in this unit and study John Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* in detail because the texts are available and some of us are more familiar with the stories than other early novels.

Different scholars have variously ascribed the following fictional literary works as the first English Novel.

- Thomas Malory – *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485)
- William Baldwin – *Beware the Cat* (1570, 1584)
- John Lyly- *Eupheus: The Anatomy of Wit* (1578) and *Eupheus and his England* (1580)
- Philip Sidney – *The Countess of Pembroke* (1581)
- Thomas Nashe – *The Unfortunate Traveller, or The Life of Jack Wilton* (1594)
- John Bunyan – *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678)
- George Ashwell (translator) – *Philosophus Autodidactus* (1686)
- Aphra Behn – *Oroonoko* (1688)
- Simon Ockley (translator) – *The Improvement of Human Reason: Exhibited in the Life of Hai Ebn Yokdhan* (1708)

- Daniel Defoe – *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)
- Daniel Defoe – *Moll Flanders* (1722)
- Samuel Richardson – *Pamela* (1740)
- Jonathan Swift – *A Tale of a Tub* (1704)
- Daniel Defoe – *The Consolidator* (1705)
- Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726)
- (culled from  
[http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_novel\\_in\\_English](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_novel_in_English))
- Generally, Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is regarded as the first English novel and this is because it gained wide acceptance because of the impact of its influential study by Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (1957) which popularised the novel.  
[http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_novel\\_in\\_English](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_novel_in_English))

### SELF- ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Explain briefly why Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* is regarded as the first English novel.

### 3.2 Thomas Malory, *Le Morte d’Arthur* (1485)

*Le Morte d’Arthur* (The Death of Arthur) is a prose fiction narrative in the romance genre which is made up of tales about legendary figures like King Arthur, Guinevere, Lancelot and the Knights of the Round Table and was compiled by Sir Thomas Malory. The composition includes Malory’s original composition (“The Gareth Story”) and an interpretation of existing French and English stories about these historical and legendary figures. Since this is a compilation of existing stories and contains many stories, the book cannot be called a novel. This book has been described as “the best-known work of English-language Arthurian literature today” (Doody, 1998, 32) but because it is not an entirely imaginary composition with plot line and fictitious characters in interpersonal relationships found in the novel, it is not a novel and so cannot pass for the first English novel. However, it influenced other modern Arthurian Writers like T. H. White and Tennyson.

### 3.3 William Baldwin - *Beware the Cat* (1570)

*Beware the Cat* (1561) is a prose narrative that is slightly longer than a short story but not as long as the novel written by William Baldwin who was also a poet. The work which predates Shakespeare by some decades though “... has similarly archaic language and ideas that are typical of the 1500s in England,” was not published immediately due to some political and religious issues and when it appeared eventually in print, it

received almost no attention from literary scholars (Woods et. al 1936, 124). It is set in London on a cold Christmas night during the reign of Edward VI. The plot which unfolds through the narrator, Master Streamer, recounts a complex cycle of inter related stories to two of his friends as they share his bed. The first two sections of the plot are essentially horror stories, and the book is then lightened with a third and more comic section (Wood et. al 1936, 127). Characters in the story include an Irish werewolf, the grimalkin, and an underworld society of talking cats, among several other horrors in form of characters, magical and supernatural elements like an ancient book of forbidden lore and magic potions. It is presented in the first person narrative technique and the language though in archaic English, the use of dialogue is remarkable, highly advanced for the time and the characters are delineated clearly and the incidents, actions, characters and environment are presented with vivid description. The subject matter contains an anti-Catholic undercurrent and because of this anti-Catholic sentiment critics placed the work in the realm of propaganda (Mckeon, 2000, 65). It is a remarkable work which is regarded as the first horror prose fiction that is longer than a short story. However it could not pass for the first English novel because it is shorter than the novel and contains unrealistic characters and incidents thus deviating from the concept of verisimilitude which is the hallmark of the novel.

### **SELF -ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain why William Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* does not qualify to be called a novel.

### **3.4 Philip Sidney- *Old Arcadia* (1581)**

The book, generally known as the *Arcadia* which evolved from the *Old Arcadia* which according to Sidney is a short entertainment piece he set out to write for his sister, Mary Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke. In the 1580s, Sidney reorganised the original story and added episodes which helped to increase its volume. The work is presented as books that are separated from each other with a set of poems though the narration runs in a chronological order. There are different versions of Sidney's original version but all of them were almost forgotten until 1908, when antiquarian Bertram Dobell discovered that a manuscript of the *Arcadia* he had purchased differed from published editions so he bought two other versions of the manuscripts (Lewis, 1954, 129) and redirected attention to the work. It was also discovered that the version of the *Arcadia* known to the Renaissance and later periods is substantially longer than the *Old Arcadia*. Sidney's revised *Arcadia* was published in two differing editions after his death.



*Old Arcadia* (1581) is a romance based on the household of Duke Basilius and the steward of Dametas's family which is narrated in "Sprawling Renaissance Prose". The plot is structured in five books or acts in the style of classical dramaturgy of exposition, action, complication, reversal and catastrophe and combines serious and comic elements so it is often called a *tragicomedy*.

The combination of verse and prose forms in the book coupled with the presentation of the plot in the structure of classical dramatic style denies this book a place as the first English novel.

### 3.5 Aphera Behn, *Oroonoko* (1688)

Aphera Behn is regarded as the foremother of British women writers, and her work, *Oroonoko* is a crucial text in the history of the novel. She worked as a spy for Charles II at the onset of the Second Dutch War but was poorly remunerated so she returned to England as a destitute and even spent some time in a debtor's prison (Lewis, 1954, 68). She turned to writing to make a living and luckily she made remarkable success as a poet and a playwright, her poems sold well, and a number of her plays were staged successfully. Her fame as a writer was established in her own lifetime but she started writing extended narrative prose towards the end of her career. Consequently her prose fiction *Oroonoko* which some scholars regard as one of the earliest English novels was published less than a year before she died.

*Oroonoko* or *The Royal Slave* is a short work of prose fiction that presents a love story of its hero, an enslaved African, Prince Oroonoko in Surinam in the 1660s. He falls in love with Imoinda, the daughter of the king's top general but the king also falls in love with Imoinda and marries her. Unwillingly, she spends some time in the king's harem but sees Oroonoko secretly. They are discovered and sold to slavery separately but are reunited as Caesar and Clemene.

Imoinda becomes pregnant and Oroonoko petitions for their return to their homeland but his request is turned down. Frustrated he organises a slave revolt but the slaves are overpowered and punished. Oroonoko decides to kill Byam to "avenge his honour, and to express his natural worth" (Lewis 1954, 68). He knows that he would be killed too so he kills Imoinda to protect her from violation and subjugation after his death. Imoinda, smiling, willingly dies by his hand. Later Oroonoko is found mourning by her decapitated body and is prevented from killing himself, but is later executed publicly. He dies "by dismemberment ... calmly smokes a pipe and stoically withstands all the pain without crying out" (Woods et al 1936, 342)

The work is presented in the first and third person narrative technique. The love story of the ill-fated lovers is mixed with the narrator's experience in which she presents herself as a witness of the actions that took place in Surinam, West Indies. The story is concluded as the narrator leaves Surinam for London. This work is not regarded as the first English novel because of its length; it is very short and tilts towards a historical account.

### **SELF -ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Philip Sidney's *Old Arcadia* and Aphera Behn's *Oronooko* do not qualify as the first English novels. Explain.

### **3.6 Legitimacy of the Novel**

What gives the novel its authority and makes it a unique genre of Literature is what we refer to as the legitimacy of the novel. Novel like every other literary genre is made up of form and content.

Content is the theme, the central idea which the writer explores in the novel generally known as the theme. Theme is explicated through the interpersonal relationships of the characters. To a large extent the success of a novel depends on the liveliness and interaction of the characters that are used to explore the theme in order to entertain and educate the readers.

Form is the totality of the author's technique by which the novel achieves its meaning, unity and integrity. It includes the language, structure, setting and characterisation which are organised to achieve a single purpose of relaying a message in an entertaining manner. This technique is further divided into three as follows:

- basic elements - plot, setting and characterisation
- literary devices - imagery, symbolism, irony, etc
- structure and style.

We will discuss the basic elements in the next unit.

The structure of every work accords with its style, and the style of an author is unique to him or her and adapted to suit a particular purpose that fits the experience presented in the novel. The style of a particular novel is therefore not a general style for all novels. The structure of the novel is the organisation of incidents in such a way that the character is revealed and the conflict, suspense, climax, and resolution of conflict are achieved. It is also the arrangement that provides unity, builds

relationship between characters and situations in the novel building effect gradually and cumulatively to heighten the intended impact.

The novel is seen as the closest imitation of life because of the empathy and sympathy whereby a reader can identify with the characters presented. Characters must therefore be true to life and engage in realistic actions. This is why the terms fiction and realism are applied exclusively to the novel. It is the imagination of the author (fiction) yet it must be credible and be as close as possible to life (realism). In the novel the reader encounters many character-types confined in one. These details are taken from different aspects of life and are made whole through the art form. The novel is therefore a synthesis of many incidents in life that are artistically fused to give it its unified form.

Novels are not read only because they are recommended texts but they are like life companions for those who value the genre. Novels offer hours of pleasure and good novel offer insights into lives and issues that are not quantifiable. A good novel, like other forms of great literature, "...has the capacity to enrich our understanding of life, extend the range of our sympathies, develop our minds, satisfy our curiosities and even deepen our knowledge of the social, political and historical issues..." (Lewis 1954. 23). Through the novel the reader learns more about virtues and vices, about other countries and culture and in fact about every facet of human existence. There is hardly a subject that has not been explored in the novel and if you are a voracious reader, you must have read a lot about corruption, neo-imperialism, political instability, polygamy, slavery, greed, oppression and many others issues that are part of the problems facing the countries from which the novels emanated. In addition, some novels try to uphold universally accepted morals, values and standards and sometimes, the simple joy of reading novels obscures our awareness of the deeper roles they play in our lives. Novels help to sharpen our intellect, fulfill some of our emotional needs, increase our awareness on certain issues that concern us and shape our perception of ourselves and of the world around us.

The impact and significance of the novel is especially obvious in the case of the English novel because it emerged at a period when England experienced a spastic social transformation which produced the world's first modern, capitalist economy (Woods et al 1936, 243) which provided the themes explored by the early novelists. It was also a period when traditional social values and narrative forms were getting outdated so the great English novelists emerged with an eagerness to create something new and different. They broke from the tradition of featuring aristocrats and noblemen in stories and focused on the ordinary people capturing the rhythms of everyday life. They also reacted to a number of larger historical developments like industrialisation and urbanisation,

democratisation and globalisation which were copiously depicted in the novels.

The distinguishing factor of the early English novel was its preoccupation with issues of class and status based on stories of courtship, love, and marriage and in most cases virtue is rewarded and justice meted out. However the plots and characters of particular novels could be related to larger movements in English history. For instance, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* responds to deepening worries about the moral authority of the ruling classes, while Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* reflects the influence of new discoveries in science, including Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution.

A novel is expected to be an original imaginative creation of the author so it excludes the retelling of stories as presented in *Le Morte d'Arthur*. A novel is expected to present realistic characters, environment, incidents and actions; it is different from romance so *Arcada* and *Le Morte d'Arthur* are excluded. A novel is expected to be of a certain length so excludes *Oroonoko*, and *Beware of Cat* which may be categorised as novella. Unity of structure is a vital aspect of the novel so works that are presented in a disjointed episodic pattern are excluded.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Write a short note on the structure of the novel.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The novel is an imaginative work of art created by the author with an adherence to the concept of verisimilitude. Many prose narratives lay claim to be the first novel but most of the narratives lacked some of the elements of the modern novel so are not regarded as novels. The novel is different from romance, allegory, fable and other forms of tales. It is presented in a long narrative form and not in verse. It means therefore that none of the works discussed in this unit qualifies as the first English novel. The English novel appeared in England with Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Moll Flanders* (1772). These were followed by Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*; Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747-48); Henry Fielding's *Shamela* (1741) and *Joseph Andrews* (1742). It can therefore be said that the credit for writing the first English novel goes to these novelists who are often referred to as "the founding fathers of the English Novel" (Ezeigbo, 1998, 3).

## 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we have seen some early prose narratives that lay claim to being the first English novels and why they are not qualified to be categorised as such. We have also studied some of the criteria used in the determination of what a novel is. Some of these earlier works were largely unknown but were rediscovered by scholars later. However, many of them do not qualify to be categorised as novels because of their narrative techniques and the treatment of the subject matter. Some of them are written in verse though they present stories in a logical sequence while in some; the stories are episodic and disjointed. In some others, the stories presented are too fantastic to be real. Consequently, we do not regard any fictional work in this category as the first English novel.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

List three English prose narratives and explain why they are not categorised as novels.

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[http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_novel\\_in\\_English](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_novel_in_English)

## UNIT 2 REALISM AND THE NOVEL

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The novel has continued to be the most popular genre of literature and part of its popularity lies in the realistic presentation of events and characters in it. This is referred to as *realism*. Realism distinguishes the novel from the previous literary writings. The plot is not borrowed from myth or legend. It entails realistic characterisation whereby, the characters are given proper names which we encounter in everyday life instead of allegorical names or abstract names found in earlier fictions like Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress*. This gives the impression that these characters are like real persons in real societies. The setting is equally realistic and there is usually a time process which is very important because it enables the characters to mature and gain more experience at the end of the novel.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define the novel Realism
- explain Realism
- discuss Realism in a novel
- identify elements of realism in a novel

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

We will examine the concept of realism and try to relate it to the novel as literary genre and more specifically to the English novel. We will also examine some major characteristics that make the novel unique.

#### 3.1 Realism

Realism as a literary theory or movement is associated with a realistic portrayal of life in a work of art. The novel has continued to arouse attention as a popular genre of literature. The author adopts a style of presenting an interesting story through the portrayal of life-like events and incidents in the story which is achieved through a proper manipulation of language to create a credible story. The success of a novel therefore depends on the ability of the author to induce the element of realism in the work.

Realism as a “literary concept has proved incapable of being reduced to some specific meanings, especially given the modern conceptualization of indeterminate truths and other interpretations in literature...” (Ezeigbo 1998, 118). However it is a defining characteristic which differentiates the work of early 18<sup>th</sup> Century novelists from the previous prose fictional works. The novel is realistic because it attempts to portray all varieties of human experience, not merely those suited to one literary perspective. Modern realism begins from the position whereby truth can be discovered by the individual through the senses. For instance, Defoe in writing fiction, disregarded the traditional plot structure (of myths, legends etc.) and merely allowed his narrative to flow spontaneously from his sense of what his protagonists might do next. He thereby initiated an important tendency in fiction which is the total subordination of the plot to the pattern of the autobiographical memoir (Ghent 1953, 67).

Arnold Kettle opines that all novels which are successful works of art contain two elements - life and pattern. Every good novel therefore is a reflection of life and of human experience as the novelist manipulates words to present a representation of a realistic world peopled by realistic men and women engaged in realistic activity. In addition the novelist imposes some pattern on the life that he presents. Pattern here means “...meaning, significance and moral design and not just the formal elements of plot, structure and coherence, although these might be part of it” (Abrams 1981, 157). The novelist is not expected to present a photographic copy of life, a reportorial account of it without implying what he/she thinks about it. Realism in the novel therefore does not mean a replication of life but the author’s perspective of life. In other words, he/she clarifies and evaluates the issues, situations and characters

presented in the work and in the end tries to impose an order in the chaos of experience in what may be called *denouement*. Realism in the novel enables the novelist to present an illuminative view of life. This is why certain prose fictional works on pornography and thriller are not regarded as novels because the authors of such works present great slices of life without any attempt to extract some significance.

Realism is therefore a very important component of the successful novel. Detailed and vivid descriptions are vital in the novel but there is no yardstick for measuring the extent of detailed description since it could be more in one good novel and less in another. For instance, James Joyce's *Portrait of a Lady* does not contain as much minute description of places, objects and even individuals as in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders* yet all of them are classified as successful novels. Different novelists present life in varying proportions but the important issue is that the world presented in the novel should be "...seen as a reflection of normal human activity, that the people should look like realistic men and women and the issues and modes of conduct presented should be applicable to the human race..." (Enright and De Chickera, 1953, 34). Although in some novels, the characters behave abnormally, it is for a purpose as long as the author convinces the reader of the authenticity of the world he/she has created because according to Ian Watt, "... a novel's realism resides not just in the kind of life it presents, but also in the way it presents it" (Quoted in Barnett et al, 1936, 65). The novelist's obligation is to convince the reader that the world he/she has created is a world of ordinary human beings and ordinary human activity.

Setting is a very important aspect of a successful novel that adds to its realism. The detailed presentation of all aspects of the characters' environment is one of the things that give solidity to a novel. Setting helps to reflect the characters' changing moods, fortunes or states of mind, and also to objectify the themes. Setting could also have a symbolic significance as in *Great Expectations* where the marshes and the rotting hulks symbolise the corruption prevalent in Victorian England. Plot and structure also aid realism in the novel. The arrangement and organisation of actions and incidents in the novel help to enhance the credibility of the actions because they are aspects of the shape of the novel.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

In your own words, explain what you understand as realism in a novel.



## 3.2 What Makes a Novel?

Certainly, the novel is a very popular genre of written literature. We know that it is a type of book which we read for pleasure, as a form of diversion or as a literary text. There are many elements that distinguish the novel from other types of books. We will look at these elements.

### 3.2.1 Fiction

The novel presents a fictitious story. It is a product of the writer's imagination so it is an imaginative work of art which recreates the truth of human experience. This means that it recreates everyday life as it is lived in what is known as verisimilitude. This does not mean that novelists report life incidents in a verbatim form. What they do is to choose some incidents, experiences or personalities and compose their stories around such experiences or personalities. They may choose realistic towns or communities but the characters and greater part of the incidents are fictitious. However, some scholars consider biographies as forms of novel but in this study we will concern ourselves with the general definition of the novel as an imaginary art.

### 3.2.2 Narration

The novel is a genre of the prose narrative genre of literature. It presents its story in a narrative form. This means that when you are reading a novel, it is as if someone is narrating the story to you. Sometimes, minimal dialogues are interjected in the story but not like in drama where the entire story is told in dialogue. Narration therefore distinguishes the novel from other genres of literature. However, some types of poems are presented in narrative forms but other elements of the novel distinguish it from such poems.

### 3.2.3 Plot

The story in the novel is not usually presented in a chronological order of their occurrence. This artistic reorganisation of this story by the author to suit his purpose is what we call *plot*. This means that you may find a novel which does not begin at the chronological beginning of events but in the end or in the middle. The story then moves forwards or backwards in time and space depending on the writer's purpose or style. The writer uses foreshadowing or flashbacks to plot the story to make it interesting and to create suspense. Plot therefore is the plan of action, the arrangement or order of events in a novel.

### 3.2.4 Craft

A good novel is made up of credibility and craft of the work. Credibility in the novel dictates that it should recreate incidents and events that are plausible and possible. The events created in the novel should be as close to reality as possible so the reader can identify with the characters and also empathise with them. *Craft* in the novel is the ability of the writer to balance the various elements that make up the story together in a coherent whole that makes it an interesting work.

### 3.2.5 Theme

*Theme* is the controlling idea behind the story which the reader gets consciously or unconsciously as he or she reads the novel. Usually, the story is built around the theme. The theme could be literal or symbolic.

### 3.2.6 Setting

*Setting* refers to the place and time the events of the story took place. The place could be fictitious or real. Setting could be symbolic or literal which means that there could be specific mention of known or unknown places or the setting may not be mentioned specifically. Setting is the general environment of the work. Time setting refers to the period, year or time the events took place. Setting helps to give an element of authenticity to the story.

### 3.2.7 Characterisation

*Characterisation* refers to the ability of the novelist to create human beings in plausible human relationships in the novel. These human beings are called characters. The characters include the protagonist, antagonist, dynamic, static, and archetypal. Usually, the story revolves around the protagonist who is the major character. The antagonist is the character or thing that works against the protagonist. It may come in the form of one of the characters, conflict, flaws in his character or other qualities. These forces act against him and may eventually destroy him. A dynamic character is influenced by personal experience and grows from innocence to maturity by coming to terms with issues as realisation dawns on him/her. The static character does not grow in the course of the story but remains the same from the beginning to the end. The archetypal character conventionally overcomes all obstacles and still survives. It is however important to recall that in characterisation, the author takes a bit from different people in an art and technique that synthesises the various traits of living people, combines them in a single character whose existence is fictitious but whose traits are an agglomeration of various people. Generally, the growth of a character in

a novel is usually from innocence to maturity, from egoism to experience, from ignorance to self knowledge.

### 3.2.8 Volume

In literature, volume refers to the size of the work and this is a very important element in the determination of a novel. This size is determined by the length of the work, the number of pages a particular literary work has. Generally, the novel is the longest genre of literature though some epic narratives, especially the Homeric epics, are equally very long but the hallmark of the novel is that it is voluminous. The difference between the ancient Homeric epic and the modern novel, according to Lukács, is that the novel in the perfect form reflects the modern individual's experience of the world: "Equilibrium, coherence and unity" had been features of the ancient epic. A "fragmentary nature of the world's structure" according to Lubbock is by contrast the typical experience modern novels provide" (quoted in Iwuchukwu 2010, 76). The volume therefore is a major distinguishing factor between the novel and other genres of prose fiction like the novella and the short story. The volume of the novel is justified by the belief that the novel presents "epic length performances that try to cope with the totality of life" (Lubbock quoted in Iwuchukwu 2010, 30). For a work of prose fiction to be qualified as a novel, the length must be of at least 50,000 words and above, or 170 pages and above.

### 3.3 Verisimilitude

The subject matter in a novel is drawn from man and his environment, from life as it is lived by human beings. The novel does not present an aspect of man like in poetry but man in his entirety, his hopes, aspirations, ambitions, disappointments, successes and failures. The novelist treats man as "...a complete whole and talk of an aspect as the parson emphasises the soul and the philosopher the intellect" (Enright and De Chickera, 1962, 65). It is true that the novel presents life but it is still a fictional work, a product of the writer's imagination but not concrete reality so the reality presented in the novel is seen as a slice of life which is called verisimilitude. Slice of life means that the story in the novel is presented in such a way that the characters are true to life and the events realistic but not reality, that is, the incidents and events did not take place in real life the way they are presented in the novel. However, the reader gets the feeling that what is being read is real, credible or at least believable. That is why fantasy and romance which present fantastic and improbable and unrealistic incidents and actions are not classified as novels.

The element of verisimilitude enables the reader to appreciate the novel as a form of entertainment that is enjoyed in intimate reading situations and the fictional world created by the author. The novelist invites the reader to personally identify with the novel's characters and this can only be achieved if the work presents a slice of life. This justifies the claim that the novel is an imaginative work of art in prose that captures the full essence and wholeness of man alive. Thus, D. H. Lawrence calls it the bright book of life (quoted in Enright and De Chickera, 1962, 52)

### **3.4 Function of the Novel**

Generally, the novel is seen as a form of entertainment but it is pragmatic. It serves as a guide for man to see how to live wholly as a man. The novel teaches more than theories and sermons on the notion of right and wrong. The novel presents the truth of life which is not absolute. In life there is right and wrong, good and bad every time and everywhere. However, what is wrong or bad in a particular situation may be right or good in another situation. The novel therefore presents people who live normally, acting and reacting to issues as circumstances demand. All aspects of human beings are explored in the novel and from that the reader gains an insight into various aspects of life and learns from the experiences of the characters.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The novel is an original imaginative artistic creation of the author in prose form that presents realistic characters and incidents. The novelist is able to do this through the choice of theme; characters and characterisation; the plot, the presentation of possible and plausible actions in such a way that the work will be entertaining and the reader not only is able to identify with the characters but also learns from their experience. The novel is the most popular genre of literature as it can be assessed conveniently anytime, anywhere. You can conveniently pick a novel and read in the comfort of your room or in a bus for relaxation. It is not like drama which you need to go to the theatre to enjoy or poetry which is presented in verse with its meaning shrouded in imageries and symbolism. The novelist tells his/her story in an interesting manner that captures and holds the attention of the reader.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

We have seen in this unit that there are some basic characteristics that distinguish the novel from other forms of prose narratives. Realism in the novel "...involves not only a selection of subject matter but, a special literary mode whereby the subject is presented in such a way to give the reader the illusion of actual experience" (Abrams, 1981, p.

153). It presents realistic characters, environment, incidents and actions and must have a certain length. We have seen also that realism is a very important element of the novel.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

List and explain four characteristics of the novel.

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## UNIT 3 JOHN BUNYAN – *PILGRIM'S PROGRESS* (1678)

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Background
  - 3.2 Theme
  - 3.3 Plot
  - 3.4 Characterisation
  - 3.5 Setting
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will study a prose narrative work in detail and decide if we can classify it as a novel. The work is John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* published in 1678. The full title of the work is *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come* and it is a Christian allegory. This book is seen as one of the most significant works of religious English Literature and "has been translated more often than any book other than the Bible. People of all ages have found delight in the simple, earnest story of Christian, the Pilgrim. The events seem lifelike; they follow each other rapidly and consistently" (quoted from the Book's blurb)

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- narrate the story of the Pilgrim's Progress
- list and analyse the major characters
- discuss the thematic preoccupation of the author
- explain why it is not classified as a novel.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

In this unit we will analyse one of the early major prose narrative works that preceded the English novel. The work, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is not considered as a novel but an allegory.

### 3.1 Background

John Bunyan was born in Elstow Bedfordshire England in 1628. His father was a tinker, a lowly occupation but nevertheless sent him to school to learn to read and write. At sixteen, he was drafted into the parliamentary army and at the end of his service, he returned to his native village. He read the bible a lot and though he did not acquire much education, "...the bible became his textbook, and to it he owes the force, simplicity rhythm, charm and the qualities of his own prose" (Woods et al 1936, 574). In 1653, Bunyan joined a non-conformist church in Bedford; and shortly afterwards started preaching lay sermons in his own and other churches in the neighbourhood. He was arrested and jailed for preaching without permission. He remained in jail for twelve years where he wrote with the dim light of the prison. Though he was not educated, his "stories are native, racy, realistic, simple and rugged" (Woods et al 1936, 575)

The *Pilgrims Progress* is divided into two parts, each reading as a continuous narrative with no chapter divisions. The first part was published in 1678 while its expanded version was published in 1679 written after Bunyan was freed. The Second Part appeared in 1684. Since then there have been many editions.

### 3.2 Theme

The novel explores the themes of faith and steadfastness which are necessary for Christians who want to attain everlasting life in heaven. The idea of good deeds is also explored in the work. We cannot classify it as a novel because of its presentation of unrealistic, improbable incidents and characters. It is an allegory.

### 3.3 Plot

Christian, the protagonist of the allegory embarks on a journey from his hometown, the "City of Destruction" which represents this world. He is weighed down by a great burden which is the knowledge of his sins and realises that his burden would make him to sink into *Tophet* – hell, so decides to seek deliverance to avoid such fate. *Tation* comes from his reading the Bible referred to as the book in his hand. He meets Evangelist who directs him to the "Wicket Gate" for deliverance. Christian agrees but no member of his family agrees to go with him, so he abandons them and seeks his salvation. Obstinate and Pliable try in vain to bring him back. Obstinate returns disgusted, but Pliable goes with Christian, hoping to go to paradise with Christian at the end of his journey. Their journey is truncated as the two of them fall into the Slough of Despond where Pliable manages to extricate himself and



abandons Christian. However, Christian is later pulled out by Help, who heard his cries.

He continues his journey and on his way to the Wicket Gate, he is diverted by Mr. Worldly Wiseman into seeking deliverance from his burden through the Law, with the help of Mr. Legality and his son Civility in the village of Morality. He meets the Evangelist again on his way to Mr. Legality's home as he stops before Mount Sinai. Evangelist convinces Christian to return to the path to the Wicket Gate and that he will still be welcomed despite his sin of turning away Christian obliges. He reaches the Wicket Gate and is directed into it by the gatekeeper Good Will.

Good-will (Jesus) directs Christian to the place of deliverance to be relieved of his burden. Christian reaches the House of the Interpreter, where he is exposed to images that reflect Christian faith and life. In the end, Christian reaches his destination and is relieved of his burden and greeted by three shining ones. They give him the greeting of peace, new garments, and a scroll as a passport into the Celestial City.

On this journey he encounters the Hill of Difficulty, House Beautiful, which is an allegory of the local Christian congregation where he spends three days before and leaving, he is clothed with armour (Eph. 6:11-18). He also enters the Valley of the Shadow of Death at a point and in the middle of the gloom and terror he hears the words of the Psalm 23 spoken possibly by his friend Faithful.

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*  
(Psalm 23:4.)

He also meets Faithful, who accompanies him to Vanity Fair, where both are arrested and detained because of their disdain for the wares and business of the fair. Faithful is put on trial, and executed as a martyr. Hopeful, a resident of Vanity, accompanies Christian for the rest of the journey but along the way they are captured by Giant Despair, who takes them to his Doubting Castle, where they are imprisoned, beaten and starved. The giant wants them to commit suicide, but they endure the ordeal until they escaped later.

In the next stage of their journey, the shepherds show them some of the wonders of the place also known as Immanuel's Land where they encounter sights that strengthen their faith and warn them against sinning as in the Interpreter's house. They get to Mount Clear from where they see the Celestial City through the shepherd's perspective glass. They also encounter a lad named Ignorance, who believes that his

own good deeds qualify him to enter the Celestial City and not the grace of God. Christian and Hopeful try in vain to persuade him aright but he persists in his own way that leads him into hell.

The Second Part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* presents the pilgrimage of Christian's wife, Christiana; their sons; and the maiden, Mercy. They take the same route which Christian took and encountered the same groups, people, visited and stopped at the same stopping places with the addition of Gaius' Inn between the Valley of the Shadow of Death and Vanity Fair. However, their journey was longer because they were involved in the marriages and childbirth for their four sons and their wives. The hero of the story is Greatheart, the servant of the Interpreter, and a pilgrim's guide to the Celestial City who kills four giants and participates in the slaying of a monster that terrorise the city of Vanity. The passage of years in this second pilgrimage better allegorises the journey of the Christian life. By using heroines, Bunyan, in the Second Part, illustrates the idea that women as well as men can be brave pilgrims.

When the pilgrims end up in the Land of Beulah, they cross over the River of Death by appointment. As a matter of importance to Christians of Bunyan's persuasion reflected in the narrative of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the last words of the pilgrims as they cross over the river are recorded. The four sons of Christian and their families do not cross, but remain for the support of the church in that place.

### 3.4 Characterisation

As stated earlier, the work is in the allegorical mode so there is no effort to fully develop the characters. The characters are mere representatives of ideas, ideals and concepts. We will list just the major characters and what they represent.

#### **Christian**

Christian is the protagonist and at some time he is called Graceless. His journey to the Celestial City forms the plot of the story. He represents every Christian in his or her journey to heaven, the struggles against sin and worldly pleasures and final triumph over those temptations and distractions.

#### **Evangelist**

Evangelist represents the religious men, pastors who introduce the bible to Christians and help them on the path to the Heaven.

**Mr. Worldly Wiseman**

Mr. Wordly Wiseman is a resident, and the Carnal Policy is the person who persuades Christian to go out of his way to be helped by Mr. Legality.

**Goodwill**

Goodwill is the keeper of the Wicket Gate which represents the gate of Heaven. He represents Christ.

**The Interpreter**

The Interpreter is identified as the Holy Spirit. He is the one who has his house along the way as a rest stop for travelers to examine themselves. He teaches them the right way to live the Christian life.

**Apollyon**

Apollyon is the Destroyer. He is the lord of the City of Destruction and one of the devil's companions who tries to force Christian to return to his domain and service. He appears as a dragon-like creature with scales and bats' wings. He takes darts from his body to throw at his opponents.

**Faithful**

Faithful is Christian's friend from the City of Destruction who is also going on pilgrimage. Christian meets him just after getting through the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

**Hopeful**

Hopeful is the resident of Vanity Fair, who takes Faithful's place as Christian's fellow traveller. Faith represents trust in God in the present while hope represents trust in God for the future.  
There are many other characters.

**3.5 Setting**

The setting as presented in the text includes the following places:

- City of Destruction is Christian's home and a representative of the world; Slough of Despond, the miry swamp on the way to the Wicket Gate; one of the hazards of the journey to the Celestial City. In the First Part, Christian falling into it, sinks further under the weight of his sins (his burden) and his sense of their guilt; Mount Sinai, a frightening mountain near the Village of Morality that threatens all who would go there; Wicket Gate, the entry point of the straight and narrow way to the Celestial City. Pilgrims are required to enter the way by way of the Wicket Gate. Others include: House of the Interpreter, Cross and Sepulchre, Hill Difficulty, House Beautiful, Valley of Humiliation, Valley of

the Shadow of Death, Gaius's inn, Vanity and Vanity Fair, River of God or River of the Water of Life, Doubting Castle, River of Death and so many other places mentioned in the text. The setting departs from the realm of realism which is the hallmark of the novel.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

From the story, we understand that this is an allegorical work which is designed primarily to teach moral lessons. The characters are mainly abstract qualities and some of the actions take place in locations that cannot be identified in real life. It does not conform to the principles of verisimilitude which is the hallmark of the novel as a literary genre. The actions are also not possible or plausible in human realm. However, it is presented in prose narrative which is the structure of the novel. So it must have contributed to the development of the novel.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The story presented in this unit is more of a treatise for moral lessons. Bunyan used a plain style to concretise the actions of abstract qualities which are imbued with human characteristics. It presents the struggles of Christians against temptation and sin in the journey to a blissful eternal life in heaven.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Discuss the theme and characterisation in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

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*Wikipedia Online Dictionary*

## UNIT 4 JONATHAN SWIFT – *GULLIVER’S TRAVELS* (1705)

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Background
  - 3.2 Plot
  - 3.3 Theme
  - 3.4 Characterisation
  - 3.5 Setting
  - 3.6 The Age of Reason
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to study another text, *Gulliver’s Travel* by Jonathan Swift. In the course of our discussion, we will discover why scholars are reluctant to consider it as a novel. Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* is very popular with children because children experience the world from a point of view that is similar to that of Gulliver since they can make themselves Gulliver in the land of the *Lilliputians* by playing with dolls or toy soldiers that are totally under their control. Jonathan Swift lived during the Age of Reason in England so we will discuss that Age briefly because of its influence on the author and his work.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- present the plot of the work
- list some of the characters
- discuss the theme and setting of the novel
- relate the story to contemporary experience
- explain why the text is not considered as a novel.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

We will discuss yet another fictional work, *Gulliver's Travels* and decide if it could be categorised as a novel or not.

#### 3.1 Background

Jonathan Swift (1677 - 1745) was a satirist, essayist, political pamphleteer, an author, a poet and cleric. He was born in Dublin to a very poor English father but was supported grudgingly by his uncle. He received his Doctor of Divinity degree from Trinity College Dublin and later travelled to England where he published his first major prose works: *A Tale of the Tub* and *The Battle of the Books* (1704). His master piece, *Gulliver's Travels* was published in 1726. He lived during the Age of Reason and his life and character were full of surprising and ironic contradictions. For instance, his masterpiece became a popular children's classic yet at 32, he vowed "Not to be fond of children, nor let them come near me hardly" (Murry, 1954, p. 5). He did not have a happy and pleasant childhood as he did not grow up with his parents so this may have influenced his negative attitude towards children. Again, he was an ardent crusader against the abuse of reason but lost his mental powers three years before he died. He was a self-proclaimed misanthrope who gave away one third of his income to charity. Though he is a world famous author, he considered his life a series of bitter disappointments. In his own life Jonathan Swift seems to have swung between the swollen pride of great expectations and the deflation of last minute disappointments (Murry, 1954, p. 27). Even with his enormous literary success and undisputed political influence, Swift still felt cheated. He remained a model of productivity and became one of the great writers his age despite a debilitating disease. His most memorable works include: *Proposal for Universal Use of Irish Manufacture* (1720), *Drapier's Letters* (1724), and *A Modest Proposal* (1729). He died in 1745 and willed greater part of his fortune to establish a hospital for the mentally ill which still exists as a psychiatric hospital ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan\\_Swift](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_Swift)).

#### 3.2 Plot

In *Gulliver's Travels* Jonathan Swift presents the story of Captain Lemuel Gulliver, a surgeon whose business fails and he decides to go on a sea voyage. The novel presented in first person narrative as Gulliver narrates his experiences during the four voyages he undertakes in the book to imaginary lands. Swift uses the travel book form which hovers between fact and fiction. The first trip takes him to *Lilliput* where Gulliver wakes up after his shipwreck to find himself bound by innumerable tiny threads and addressed by tiny captors who were six

inches tall. There he observes their customs and traditions. They are ready for violence against Gulliver, though their arrows so tiny that they are little more than pinpricks. However, they are hospitable and feed Gulliver in spite of the famine in their land. Gulliver later becomes a national resource, used by the army in its war against the people of *Blefuscu*, whom the Lilliputians hate for doctrinal differences concerning the proper way to crack eggs. Gulliver is later convicted of treason for putting out a fire in the royal palace with his urine and is condemned to death. Gulliver escapes.

In the second voyage, he ends up in the lands of giants called *Brobdingnag* where a farmer discovers him and keeps him for amusement and initially treats him as little more than an animal. He sells Gulliver to the queen, who also uses him for courtly entertainment because of his musical talents. He is generally startled by the ignorance of the people as he observes that even their king knows nothing about politics. He is not happy in Brobdingnag and gains his freedom during a trip with the royal couple to the frontier his cage is plucked up by an eagle and dropped into the sea.

Gulliver sets sail again in the third voyage, encounters the ghosts of great historical men from the past but he is not impressed by them. He gets to a floating island inhabited by theoreticians and academics who oppress the land below, called *Balnibarbi*. The scientific research undertaken in *Laputa* and in Balnibarbi seems totally inane and impractical, and its residents too appear wholly out of touch with reality. He also visits the *Luggnaggians* and the *Struldbrugs*. The Struldbrugs grow old but live forever in horrible senility and prove that age does not bring wisdom.

Finally, Gulliver sets out as the captain of a ship, but after the mutiny of his crew and a long confinement in his cabin, he arrives in an unknown land populated by *Houyhnhnms*, rational-thinking horses who rule, and by *Yahoos*, brutish humanlike creatures who serve the Houyhnhnms. Gulliver learns their language, and when he can speak he narrates his voyages to them and explains the constitution of England. He is exposed to their noble culture as they treat him with great courtesy and kindness. He wants to stay with the Houyhnhnms, but his bared body reveals that he is very much like a Yahoo, and he is banished. Gulliver departs in grief to a nearby island in a canoe where he is picked up by a kind Portuguese ship captain. Gulliver realises that the captain and indeed all humans are shamefully like the Yahoos. Gulliver therefore concludes his narrative with a claim that by right, England owns all the lands he has visited as her colonies in spite of the fact that he questions the idea of colonialism. In the novel, Swift presents graphic details of places, events and actions.

### 3.3 Theme

*Gulliver's Travels* presents a criticism of humanity and insists that for a healthy relationship to exist in life, people should realise that everything is a matter of proportion and balance of keeping proper perspective. Human beings claim to value reason which but Gulliver sees it as an ideal which we pay lip service to. He therefore points out the discrepancy between the ideal and actual experience which has made it impossible for him to function in his own society. He shows how morally intolerable social arrangements in fact are. Each of the four books representing the four voyages has a different theme. However one idea that is constant and stands out is pride and the attempt to deflate human pride. Critics hail the work as a satiric reflection on the shortcomings of the Age of Reason.

Men in the Age of Reason pride themselves on their high intellectual ability. He presents how situations affect the perception of human beings. He contends that the situation a people find themselves in help to determine their status, position and personality which in turn is dependent on how other people see them.

Jonathan Swift in *Gulliver's Travels* questions the possession of physical power and the moral justification of the use of that power. In the land of the Lilliput, his giant size is an advantage as he defeats the *Blefusculian* navy with ease. On the other hand, he finds himself in a disadvantaged position in Brobdingnag where his size becomes embarrassingly so tiny that even insects were very huge. Swift insists that generally in the society, those who claim to be morally superior in most cases use force to dominate others.

This takes us to the theme of the limitation of human understanding. Each society believes that it is more than others yet in an encounter with others, the limitations of their understanding is made manifest. The author also satirises practical knowledge which he argues does not yield fruitful result. A good example is the futility of the experiment by the academy of Balnibarbi in which the extracting of sunbeams from cucumbers is highlighted.

### 3.4 Characterisation

#### **Gulliver**

Jonathan Swift presents Gulliver as a member of the Middle class English society of the Age of Reason or Enlightenment Age who is a scientist and actually trained as a doctor, so is a very good representative of his age. He is the narrator and protagonist of the story. Unlike in the allegorical work we discussed in the last unit, most of the characters



here are more developed as human beings. Through him, the author gives vivid and detailed description of events, incidents, characters and places in the work. For instance, the reader is informed that the Lilliputian king is strong, handsome, has good posture and graceful movements, along with “majestic manners”.

### **Mary Burton Gulliver**

Mary is Gulliver’s wife but mentioned briefly at the beginning of the story and all we know about her is that about her social status.

### **James Bates**

James Bates is surgeon in London under whom Gulliver did his medical internship and later set up a practice with him, but it failed after Bates died.

### **The Emperor**

Another major character is the Emperor, the ruler of Lilliput who like his subjects is very tiny. His height is just a little above six inches and he believes that in spite of his size, he can control Gulliver. He does not hesitate to execute his subjects over flimsy political reasons which made him an autocratic ruler.

### **The Farmer**

The Farmer is Gulliver’s first master in Brobdingnag. He exploits Gulliver as a labourer and almost starves him to death. He uses Gulliver in his show business and profits despite the fact that he has discovered that he could actually relate to Gulliver like a fellow human being. His nine year old daughter, *Glumdalclitch*, is friendlier towards Gulliver and takes care of him. She is forty feet tall. She sews very well, makes dresses for Gulliver and hangs him in her closet to sleep safely at night. Later she is invited to the court by the Queen who bought Gulliver from the farmer, to take care of Gulliver and she treats him like her doll.

### **The Queen**

The queen of Brobdingnag is the one who bought Gulliver from the farmer with the intention of keeping him as a pet but is more considerate than the farmer. She is delighted by Gulliver’s beauty and charms, after the purchase, she invites him to live in the court instead of keeping him as a pet and invites the farmer’s daughter as a nursemaid to take care of him.

### **The King**

The king of Brobdingnag, is presented as an intellectual who is well versed in political science and other disciplines. He discusses history and other socio-political issues with Gulliver.

### **Lord Munodi**

Lord Munodi is a lord of *Lagado*, capital of the underdeveloped land beneath Laputa. He is another intelligent character and made Gulliver's visit memorable by taking him on a tour of his country on Gulliver's third voyage. His advice on agriculture and land management was rejected by his rulers but he applied it successfully in his own estate.

### **Houyhnhnms**

*Houyhnhnms* are a set of intelligent and wise horses who exemplify pure rationality. They lead monotonous, orderly lives, with no need for disagreement or excitement. They however fail to provide solutions to human problems through their narrow commitment to reason which prove inhuman (Mack et al 241). They are the masters of the Yahoos. Gulliver discovers that he is closer to these horses than to his human family and his stay there makes it almost impossible to function in his own society.

### **The Yahoos**

The yahoos comprise men of hairy bodies and women with long hanging breasts who are kept as servants in Houyhnhnms to perform manual labour. They are unkempt, naked grubby with very primitive eating habits and lascivious sexual appetites.

### **Don Pedro de Mendez**

He is a generous man, the Portuguese captain who takes Gulliver back to Europe when he is forced to leave the land of the Houyhnhnms. He offers Gulliver his own suit to replace Gulliver's tattered clothes.

Other characters in the work include the *Brobdingnagians*, giants, who are basically a reasonable and kindly people governed by a sense of justice; The *Lilliputians* and *Blefuscutians* who are two races of miniature people whom Gulliver meets on his first voyage. Basically, they are not straightforward people but are involved in intrigues, conspiracies and jealousies so are quick to take advantage of people and situation; the *Laputans* who are absentminded intellectuals who are parodies of theoreticians. They are so inwardly absorbed in their own thoughts that they must be shaken out of their meditations by special servants called *flappers*, who shake rattles in their ears.

## **3.5 Setting**

It is clear that the journey undertaken by Gulliver is an imaginary one. However, since it is written in the Age of Reason, Swift tries to relate it in a realistic style in conformity with the convention of that Age. The physical setting of the story is at The Court of Lilliput, *Mildendo*, the Capital of Lilliput, and the Emperor's Palace where greater part of the

action takes place. He gives a vivid description of the environment in each of the settings.

### 3.6 The Age of Reason

The Age of Reason, 18<sup>th</sup> Century, is basically an Age that presumed that human beings could know everything and in fact, control everything ultimately. It was an age of famous scientific discoveries. The general belief was that human beings would use their scientific knowledge to improve the world. It was the age in which Isaac Newton discovered the law of universal gravitation and other major laws. The Age of Reason also believed that there were discoverable rules like politics that control human behaviour.

The essence of the Age of Reason is that man's greatness lies in the fact that he is a rational being, so whatever is said must be analysed. This influenced prose fiction and other forms of writing. People were not reading prose as a form of entertainment but subjected the works to critical analysis in an attempt to evaluate what was said; the mode of presentation; style; and language. The Age produced journalists, diarists, and talented letter writers who helped to develop the novel. For instance, *Pamela* is a novel that evolved from a collection of letters. (Greenberg et al 1973, 34) It was an age that emphasised reasoning and analysis.

Jonathan Swift in this work satirises the idealistic beliefs of that age by presenting human inadequacies from various perspectives to show how far they have "...fallen from the ideal, and then they would want to do better" (Doren 1930, 24). He portrays the animalistic tendencies of human beings to show that people's obsession with self importance, and the need to protect their ego pushes them to evil tendencies. He also shows the limitations of human reasoning and how human beings could be controlled by passion and pride in that state could act in a bastardly manner. He illustrates this in his essay, "A Modest Proposal" where he suggest that one hundred thousand Irish babies be fattened up for a year (to be fricasseed or roasted whole), then sold for food and their skins used to produce soft gloves. This is a very practical, reasonable plan especially from the economic point of view but vied from the humane angle it is unthinkable inhumane. He used this "Modest Proposal" to call attention to the oppression of the poor represented by the babies. He contends the poor who are starving while the rich feed fat on their toils and labour.

Jonathan Swift though an Anglican, decried the injustice against and oppression of the Catholics and uses his works to sue for peace. However, in *Gulliver's Travels* he satirises extremities of both the

Catholics and Protestants as illustrated in the action of *The Lilliputian Big Enders* and *Little Enders* in which each want to exterminate the other because of the way they break their eggs, though their mutually sacred book says, “All true believers shall break their eggs at the convenient end”. In the same way, the Catholics and Protestants are perpetual enemies and are ready to kill each other yet they profess the same faith in Christ’s brotherly love and claim to live by the tenets of the same sacred text, the Bible.

Swift also satirises the claim of civilisation by the Age of Reason and maintains that despite the seemingly beautiful inventions of the age, people are yet to rise above their animalistic nature. He therefore criticises their pretensions “from a double perspective: because of reason, people can hope to rule the universe, but because of their vices, even their godlike reason can be seen as puny, conniving, and self-serving” (Greenberg et al, 1973, 32). He concludes that what the people of his age do is not reasoning but rationalisation in which they give reasons to justify their actions.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In this unit, we discussed *Gulliver’s Travels* by Jonathan Swift who was a champion of freedom, a critic of Ireland who became its national hero, a misanthrope who gave his money to charity, and a child - hater who wrote a great children's classic. (Murry 1954, 40). Many Scholars do not regard it as novel because of its use of extra ordinary characters who are not realistic. They are used instead as parodies of real human beings. His work is a satire which reflects some of the ideals of a civilised society that claims to operate based on truth, justice, and morality but does not actually practice what it preaches.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

We learnt in this unit that Gulliver is trained as a doctor, a scientist, and therefore a good representative of the practical man of the Age of reason. He is devoid of emotion as he narrates his story in a scientific manner, specifically and objectively. He takes the reader through four voyages and presents people from different societies and their perspectives on the issues that were predominant during the Age of Reason. The author uses the voyages and Gulliver’s interactions with the people to satirise human foibles and pretensions.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

List two major principles of the Age of reason and relate them to *Gulliver’s Travels*.

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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan\\_Swift](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_Swift)

## MODULE 3 THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ENGLISH NOVELS

Unit 1	Background and Influences
Unit 2	Daniel Defoe – <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> (1719)
Unit 3	Samuel Richardson – <i>Pamela</i> (1740)
Unit 4	Henry Fielding – <i>Tom Jones</i> (1749)

### UNIT 1 BACKGROUND AND INFLUENCES

#### CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Historical Background
3.2	Influences
3.2.1	Religious
3.2.2	Socio - Political
3.2.3	The Literary Perspective
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
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#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The English novel emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century with early English writers who made notable contributions towards the establishment of the present form of the novel in that Century. One of the important contributions of the Neo Classical Age (18<sup>th</sup> century) was the modern novel (Woods et al. 1936, 698). Before this, literature was mainly in verse and drama. Defoe set the pattern towards realism in the novel with his painstakingly detailed description of events and incidents in *Robinson Crusoe* and *Pamela*. Samuel Richardson also made notable contributions. The circulating libraries also exerted great influence on the development of the novel. The readers of fiction relied heavily on these libraries, which might be likened to modern video stores where we rent video films. These libraries were not only outlets for the rental of books, but also exerted a profound influence on both form and content of the novel. Other factors that influenced the development of the novel in this century were religious, social, political and economical.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the background of 18<sup>th</sup> Century England
- contextualise the influence of the Age on the development of the English Novel.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

In this unit, we are going to discuss the history of England in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and relate those historical events to the development of the English novel.

### 3.1 Historical Background

The close of 17<sup>th</sup> Century in England was a very turbulent period and this turbulence influenced the 18<sup>th</sup> Century a bit before the return of stability. The death of King Charles II brought King James II, a catholic to the throne. He was driven away and was succeeded by his protestant daughter in what was known as the glorious revolution. The emergence of the *Puritans* and the Parliament changed the history of England. In 1702, Queen Ann ascended the throne and 1707 saw the unification of England and Scotland. The 18<sup>th</sup> Century England was that of apparent stability. According to Lukas (1962), quoted in Ezeigbo, “the great English novelists of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century lived in post-revolutionary period. This gave their works an atmosphere of stability and security, and a certain complacent short-sightedness” (3). The society was “relatively secure; it was ruled by self conscious and enlightened alliance of landed gentry and the commercial gentleman” (Ezeigbo 1998, 4). The society witnessed the industrial revolution and it was a materialist society where money matters a lot.

### 3.2 Influences

A number of factors influenced the development of the novel during this period.

#### 3.2.1 Religious

The long drawn battle between the Catholics and the Protestants in England led to the emergence of the Puritans, the extreme protestant group. The Puritans asserted themselves and although, their activities were stopped by King Charles II during the Restoration Period, the puritan ideals persisted and influenced literature in general and the novel in particular. For instance, Daniel Defoe was a puritan. Puritanism was

middle class oriented. Although the 18<sup>th</sup> Century puritans were not as strict as their predecessors, they gave devotion to God but were more practical. Inasmuch as they believed that their religion should come first in everything they do, they worked hard and offered value for what they got. This is seen in *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*. Robinson Crusoe worked hard and accumulated wealth while Moll Flanders, after her repentance worked hard and is rewarded at last (McKeon 1987, 24). There is therefore a moral undertone in the novels of this period. Writers of this tried to extol virtues as seen in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* (1740) which was composed "to cultivate the principles of virtue and religion in the minds of the youth of both sexes" (McKeon 2000, 25). The novel focused on a heroine who would have been vulnerable because of her social status and her occupation as servant but exhibits such strength of character that reformed her antagonist and happiness for both of them in the end.

### 3.2.2 Socio-Political

The establishment of parliament after the commonwealth and the two political parties, the Whigs and the Tories also affected the novel in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century England. There was always a clash of interests between the Whigs and the Tories and the rising middle class, the aristocracy and the clergy were not left out. This affected who patronised who or what. In the social life, there emerged many coffee houses each patronized by one particular group. The writers and critics went to the Wills, the clergy to the Trubys, the scholars to the Grecian, the Tories to the Cocoa Tree, and the Whigs to the St James. News and gossips were rife in these coffee houses which in turn fostered journalism and literary output including the novel.

Socially also, the age directed its focus on the common man and the writers also started featuring the common people as characters in their works. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* concerned itself with an ordinary man with the most ordinary pursuit, while *Moll Flanders* focuses on practical and realistic means of survival.

### 3.2.3 The Literary Perspective

Based on the factors above, issues were analysed critically and reason was applied into whatever is said. Consequently, prose ceased to be pastime or entertainment objects. The novels were not read just for interest, the language and the style of the author became objects of interest and not just the story told in the novel. Creative journalists, diarists and talented letter writers emerged. Some of these diaries and letters were transformed into novels. For instance, Richardson's *Pamela* was written originally as a collection of letters. Emphasis on the novel



became reasoning and analysis and this gave rise to realism (Hunter 1990, 54) in the novel. The 18th-century also saw the raising of status of the novel to an object of debate which remains till date in form of literary criticism

Novels tended to be published in three volumes because such a format enabled three people to be reading and renting the library's novel at the same time. (Doody 1996, 25) And because writers were dependent for their livelihoods on having their books available through circulating libraries, these institutions were able to exert tremendous market pressure on authors, discouraging them from writing about subjects that might embarrass or confuse young readers, especially women.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Century saw the emergence of realistic fiction, the novel and this led to the definition of the novel as a form of fiction that is different from history. It was said that “valuable fictions defended a higher truth, a truth beyond the flat, factual and historical truth of every-day experience” (Woods et al 1936, 235). Critics saw in it, the imitation of nature while acknowledging the almost divine power of the writer to create worlds of a deeper significance in the second half of the 18th century.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The earliest English novels represented two major historical forces which were great influences each in its own way. The first one was the rising middle class while the second was the existing aristocratic, confident class that was secure in its own social position. The major preoccupation of these early novels was the exploration of the relationships between individuals, the classes and their larger social world.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The novel gives a glimpse of human lives as lived then but somehow there is an intersection between the lives of the novelists with the creation of their art. This is known as realism and this was a product of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century when novelists started portraying ordinary people with everyday experiences and realistic inter-personal relationships. The English novel right from this century has been fascinating and popular and has tremendous influence on the readers everywhere novels are read.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the major contribution of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to the development of the English Novel.

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## UNIT 2 DANIEL DEFOE – *ROBINSON CRUSOE* (1719)

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The earliest English novels in a wider historical context began to emerge in the middle of the 18th century, a period that was characterised by a lot of socio-political changes in England. The English novel developed during the 18th century, partly in response to the growing middle class which caused an expansion in the reading public. One of the major early works in this genre was *Robinson Crusoe*, by Daniel Defoe. The 18th century novel emerged with different styles which have endured to the contemporary times. The styles include loosely structured and semi-comic like Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* which is considered a [comic masterpiece](#); the epistolary novels like [Samuel Richardson's Pamela](#) and *Clarissa* and the autobiographical form like Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* which we will discuss in this unit.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss Daniel Defoe as an 18<sup>th</sup> Century novelist
- analyse *Robinson Crusoe* as the first English Novel
- examine the plot, theme and characterisation in *Robinson Crusoe*.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is acclaimed to be the first English novel and that is why it will be the first novel we will study in this unit.

#### 3.1 Background of the Author

Daniel Defoe was a prolific writer with over 370 known publications who could and in fact actually wrote on almost any topic. However, many of his contemporaries saw him as a man without integrity because they claim that "he was a man who sold his pen to the political party in office..." (Mckeeon 1987, 87). He was a puritan but a great realist and is said to have initiated the convention of realism to the English novel. He also bequeathed the art of vivid and detailed description of incidents, events and the environment and also the realistic portrayal of characters to the English novel. His characters were mainly average people from the middle and lower classes. He adopted different styles in his writings.

For instance, in *Robinson Crusoe* he used the autobiographical technique which enhances realism. At a point in his career as a writer, his reputation began to decline, perhaps because of his involvement with politics. However, critics redirected attention to his works after a succession of biographies and editions of his works was published from 1780-1830 and his popularity grew. Also his works received widespread and consistent serious critical attention in the twentieth century, and his works have been subjected to several interpretations from modern theoretical perspectives like, Marxist, psychoanalytic, feminist, and poststructuralist. His first and famous novel *Robinson Crusoe* was popular and a financial success when it was published in 1719. That same year, he also wrote *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, which was not as successful as the first one. The following year, he recycled some of his essays as *Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe*. He also wrote *Moll Flanders*. It is believed that his greatest work is *Robinson Crusoe* which we will discuss in details here.

#### 3.2 Plot

The story begins with the narrator who is also the protagonist, Robinson Crusoe giving us an insight into his family background. As the story progresses, we discover that his ambition for adventure is so strong that he sets sail in spite of his parents objection. For instance, his father called him into his chambers and enumerated the reasons why he should not travel and promised to ensure that Crusoe is provided with everything that would help to make his life very comfortable but the offer is turned down by Crusoe. His father explained to him that the life of the middle class to which they belong is far better than the life he

proposes to live. Crusoe is adamant and runs away from home when he could not persuade his mother to prevail on his father to give him his blessing before the proposed trip. The story takes us through Crusoe's experiences in and outside the ship, his regrets, repentance, desire to return home, his escape, solitary life, that spanned over twenty years taking him to Islands, Brazil and other countries. He also had to contend with dangerous wild animals and other life threatening encounters with humans.

### 3.3 Theme

The main theme of the novel is dignity of labour which is exemplified in Crusoe who, in the novel, strives very hard to achieve mere subsistence. His sense of industry is also highlighted in Brazil. The novelist therefore does not only show that there is dignity in labour but also demonstrates that man can achieve success through hard work thereby triumphing over his handicaps. Most of the characters in the novel are engaged in the single-minded pursuit of economic gains.

Another issue raised in the novel is the rise of the growing self-consciousness of a mercantile middle class. *Robinson Crusoe*, like most of Defoe's works, was conceived in rebellion against the organisation of society in general and the middle class in particular (Palmer 1986, 33). Robinson Crusoe may have left home because of his disenchantment with middle class life. This is seen in the argument between him and his father before he set sail.

In his father's speech, we see an obvious glorification of middle class life. Crusoe does not seem to like that kind of life so in order to resist the temptation of conforming to the middle class values of easy life in a conventional mode of existence, he decides to set sail and tries to exhibit his repulsion for that middle class life. He may be able to make his fortune more easily yet he leaves. Defoe therefore uses Crusoe as a representation of some young middle class English men and women of his age who leave home for overseas because the conventional but constricting ease of middle class life offered them few opportunities for developing their talents to the full and achieving complete self-fulfillment. (Arnold 1960, 23). Crusoe therefore "rejects the soft options offered by his class and proceeds to an Island to create an existence which is almost as comfortable and serene, but he does it on his own terms, making use of his ingenuity, industry and courage" (Palmer 1986, 65).

Other issues raised in the novel include honesty and reward. Crusoe's friend was compensated when he discovers that he dealt honestly with him. This shows that honesty is a virtue that should be emulated.

### 3.4 Characterisation

#### 3.4.1 Robinson Crusoe

Robinson Crusoe is the main character in the novel and the whole story revolves around him. He is strong-willed, ambitious, tenacious, and kind hearted. His generosity is handsomely rewarded one way or the other. He is creative, resourceful, and hardworking hence he was able to build an Island out of nothing and made it fit for human habitation. He is magnanimous and shared his wealth with the poor and all those who were helpful to him. He is resilient so is able to adapt to situations, places, and relationships.

It appears that the desire for leadership as the Governor, King or Prince is intrinsic to Crusoe's nature, an ambition which he could not realise in the competitive and rigidly stratified structure of English society but which he however achieves with ease on the Island he founded. He has delusions of grandeur and perceives himself as some kind of god. This is highlighted in the dream in which he rescues a 'savage' from his enemies. He recounts: ". . .1 seeing him alone, and not perceiving that the other sought him that way, showed myself to him. . . and he kneeled down to me, seeming to pray me to assist him;. . ." (p.145). His real feeling is highlighted in his use of such Biblical terms as: he *shows himself to* the native (Jesus shows himself to his disciples) and *smiles upon him*, and the latter *kneels down to him* and *prays him to assist him*.

Crusoe exhibits traces of imperialist mentality and superiority complex especially in his relationship with *Friday* who he sees as an inferior, a servant. He extends this attitude to other natives he meets who he regards as servants or slaves. He did not bother to ask him his name but immediately calls him Friday and teaches him to call him Master to assert his superiority and to heighten the master-servant relationship. When he conceives of the idea of building a boat which he would use in leaving the Island, He assigns dirtier and heavier tasks to Friday and his father. He approves of slavery and believes that all natives as savages so is surprised to discover that Friday is capable of demonstrating filial affection just like Europeans.

Crusoe's character presents an ambiguity in that he is generous but very selfish. He shows little interest in anyone except himself yet seems to have a tremendous capacity for eliciting affection and compassion from almost everyone. For instance, he treats the members of his family, including his father, with studied indifference and when he marries, he shows no signs of any feelings for his wife or children. In his relationship with the people he meets on his travels, Crusoe behaves with the same cold detachment. He has no hesitation in selling the

devoted and self-sacrificing *Xury* to a Portuguese Captain and justifies himself with the fact that the Captain would set the boy free in ten years if he is converted to Christianity. Again, Crusoe separates Friday, his excellent servant, from his Father, takes him to England without any consideration for Friday who might prefer to be reunited with his father and when Friday dies, he is dismissed with a few words of compassion. Robinson Crusoe is a hero whose actions are despicable yet loveable.

### **3.4.2 Friday**

Friday is the character Crusoe met on the Island and describes as a savage and changed his name to Man-Friday because they met on a Friday. Friday is an epitome of honesty, sincerity, zealousness and courageousness. He is very trustworthy, always cheerful, appreciative and rational. He assisted Crusoe in his survival drive after the shipwreck. Daniel Defoe presents him as a very resourceful and useful person but who needs guidance and direction from another person. His courage and bravery was manifested in several ways but was very obvious during their encounter with the wolves whereby if not for his wisdom and strength, the wolves would have slaughtered them. He is loyal and steadfast, and remained a true and faithful friend till the end.

### **3.4.3 Crusoe's Father**

He is a middle class Englishman who Crusoe describes as “wise and grave”. He wished that his son would follow his footsteps and be content with their position in the society. He therefore tried all he could to dissuade Crusoe from embarking on his proposed adventure but the latter was adamant. He is an average man who is content with his life as neither poor nor too rich.

### **3.4.4 The Old Man**

The Old Man is another honest and sincere character in the novel. He took charge of Crusoe's wealth during his absence and when Crusoe returns after about thirty years, the Old Man gave him a correct account in all fairness.

### **3.4.5 Xury**

Xury is a young African slave. He helped Crusoe in the course of their sea voyage to escape from dangers several times. In fact, if not for Xury, Crusoe would have perished and would not have escaped successfully from the Captain of the *Rover*. In the end, Xury was sold to the Captain of the Brazil-bound ship who promised that he would be freed after ten years.

### **3.5 Setting**

There is graphic, detailed and vivid description of the environment in the novel. The author mentions locations, Islands, cities, and countries existing in real life. This helps to render the adventure not only realistic but also authentic. Known places mentioned in the novel include London, Tarmouth, Madrid and West Indies. The Island where most of the actions take place is in the vicinity of Trinidad.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

*Robinson Crusoe* is widely acclaimed as the first English novel. It presents the story of Robinson Crusoe's adventures. It is presented in first person narrative technique and this makes it look like an autobiography and also gives a note of authenticity to the narrative. The story presented in the novel takes the reader through the account of Crusoe's background, his life history, his strange adventure and incursions into precarious situations and survival through his tenacity, determination and hard work.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we discussed the first full length novel. You need to read the novel to be able to understand the discussion in this unit. We presented the plot, the themes, setting and discussed some major and minor characters in the novel. The novel as a work of art is open to many interpretations. From our perspective here, we see Crusoe as a generous hardworking man but also a selfish racist. We see that initially, he saw himself as a king and the animals as his subjects but we discover that when human beings replaced the animals, Crusoe's attitude to them does not change as he treats the human beings-Friday and others as less human.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

In your own words, discuss Robinson Crusoe's character.

### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

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## UNIT 3 SAMUEL RICHARDSON – *PAMELA* (1740)

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
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  - 3.2 The Epistolary Novel
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  - 3.4 Theme
  - 3.5 Setting
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to study one of the first English novels by one of the earliest novelists, Samuel Richardson. He stands out as one of the early English novelists because he invented and popularised the *epistolary* genre of the novel. We shall therefore start with an explanation of the epistolary novel. We will also present his background, works and a brief analysis of his first novel, *Pamela*. Richardson's *Pamela* is often credited with being the first English novel. However like we discussed earlier, it is difficult to ascribe the first English novel to a particular novel. Some ascribe it to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* while others claim it is Richardson's *Pamela*. However, no one contests the fact that Richardson was innovative in his concentration on a single action, and telling the story in the form of letters. He therefore pioneered the epistolary novel. He also "...pioneered in showing how his characters' sense of class differences and their awareness of the conflict between sexual instincts and the moral code created dilemmas that could not always be resolved" (Doody 1996,32). These characteristics reappear regularly in the subsequent history of the novel. Above all, Richardson is said to be the writer who made the novel a respectable genre.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the epistolary novels
- mention Samuel Richardson's contribution to the development of the English Novel

- discuss the plot of *Pamela*
- examine the theme of the novel *Pamela*.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

We will discuss another English novel, *Pamela* by Samuel Richardson. This novel is written in an *epistolary* form which has become a genre of the novel.

#### 3.1 Background of the Author

Samuel Richardson was an 18th-century English writer and printer who was born on August 19, 1689 and died on July 4, 1761. He wrote mainly in the epistolary form and the best of his epistolary novels are *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747-48). His contribution to the development of the English novel is the invention of the use of the letter format in writing novels and this format is known as the epistolary form. He started his writing career late as *Pamela* was published when he was fifty years old. He received moderate education and was apprenticed to a London printer but later set up his own business on completion of his apprenticeship. His personal life was not so pleasant as all the six children he had from his first marriage died in infancy or childhood and his wife died also. He remarried and two of his children in the second marriage also died in infancy but fortunately, his four daughters survived him. It is suggested that his bereavements contributed to the nervous ailments he had in his later life.

However, he was a successful and prosperous printer as his press was adjudged one of the best three in London in the 1730's. He was later commissioned to write a collection of letters that might serve as models for "country readers," a volume that was known as *Familiar Letters on Important Occasions*. The subject matter of some of these letters continued in subsequent letters sometimes in reply to earlier ones. For instance after a letter from "a father to a daughter in service, on hearing of her master's attempting her virtue," he supplied the daughter's answer. In this way he built up the stories into a novel (Armstrong 1987, 32). His novel *Pamela is said to have evolved from such letters*. He used the technique of the letter, and developed a plot based on the story being discussed in the letter and combined it with a real life experience of a serving maid who preserved her virtue and was rewarded by marriage. With these, he started writing the novel in November 1739 and published it as *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded*, a year later (1794). Luckily, *Pamela* was well received by the reading public and Richardson decided to cash in on the popularity of *Pamela* to write a continuation of her story, *Pamela in her Exalted Condition* (1742) but the work "...did little to enhance his reputation" (Keymer and Peter 2005, 42).

Richardson revised his works indefatigably; consequently, the various editions of his novels differ greatly. Much of his revision was said to have been “undertaken in anxious, self-censoring response to criticism but the earliest versions of his novels are generally the freshest and most daring” (Keymer and Peter 2005, 50). You will recall that we said that critics to a large extent influenced the early English novelists. By the end of the 18th century, Richardson’s reputation was on the wane both in England and abroad. It was reborn in the late 20th century, however, and *Clarissa* is now widely admired as one of the great psychological novels of European literature (Keymer and Peter 2005, 50).

### 3.2 The Epistolary Novel

By now you know what the epistolary novel is. It is a novel that is written in form of a letter. It could be one full length letter as we see in Mariama Ba’s *So Long a Letter* or written as series of letters. It could also be in form of a diary. This form of the novel was made popular especially during the 18th century, mainly because of Richardson’s *Pamela*. Richardson and his contemporaries argued that the letter allowed the reader greater access to a character’s thoughts. Richardson claimed that in the novel, he recorded Pamela’s thoughts nearly simultaneously with her actions (Armstrong 1987, 38).

Richardson started writing *Pamela* as a conduct book, but as he progressed, he was able to turn the series of letters into a story. He then decided to experiment with it and the result was the birth of a new form in novel writing. Many novelists from the mid-18th century and well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century wrote in this new form and claimed legitimacy through the ability to teach as well as entertain.

In this novel the novelist uses Pamela’s letters that are classified into two groups. The first group of letters at the beginning of the novel comprises the letters she wrote to her parents on her uncertainty on how long she could stay on with Mr. B after his mother’s death. In these letters, she seeks her parents’ advice on how to wriggle out of her various moral dilemmas. The second group is a compilation of her writings while she is held in bondage by Mr. B. It is therefore considered a diary because she wrote them not being sure if her parents would receive them or not.

In *Pamela* therefore, the letters are almost written exclusively by the heroine so the story is told from her perspective. This style like the first person point of view narrative technique restricts the reader’s access to the other characters and actions outside Pamela. The reader sees only Pamela’s perception of them. However, the style adds to the authenticity of the novel and realism in the novel. In other novels by Richardson

(*Clarissa* (1748) and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753)), the reader sees the letters of other characters and so is in a position to evaluate the characters' motivations and moral values objectively and effectively.

### 3.3 Plot

*Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* tells the story of a beautiful fifteen-year-old maidservant named Pamela Andrews who was a maid to a noble woman. After the death of the woman, his son Mr. B became her nobleman master and was infatuated with Pamela and made amorous advances towards her. Initially, he was attracted to her by her beauty and later by her innocence and intelligence. Unfortunately, he could not propose marriage to her because she belongs to the lower class in terms of social status. It appears therefore that he just wanted to violate her. He abducts her, locks her up in one of his estates, and attempts in vain to seduce and rape her. She persists in her rejection of him but realised that she was gradually falling in love with him.

He intercepts her letters to her parents and by reading them becomes attracted to her the more because of her innocence, intelligence, and continuous attempts to escape. Her virtue is eventually rewarded when he sincerely proposes an equitable marriage to her. In the second part of the novel, Pamela attempts to build a successful relationship with him and to adapt to upper class society. The story, a bestseller of its time, "...was very widely read but criticised for its perceived licentiousness" (Mckeon 1987. 45).

The plot is presented in a chronological causal arrangement. The novel opens after the death of Lady B and her maid Pamela Andrews is presented as a pious, innocent young lady in Bedfordshire. The squire Mr. B begins to pay Pamela more attention by being generous towards her, later made several attempts to seduce her but she rejects him. He also tries in vain to bribe her to keep the amorous attempts secret. Pamela is not happy with this situation and considers returning to her poor family so as to preserve her purity and innocence.

Mr. B intercepts her letters to her parents and tells them that she is having a love affair with a poor clergyman and that he will send her to a safe place to preserve her honour and abducts her to Lincolnshire Estate. Pamela is maltreated by the House Keeper but no one is willing to liberate her because of Mr. B's social position. She makes futile attempts to escape. Mr. B resolves to leave her alone and actually stays away for some time and asks her to be his mistress but Pamela refuses. Eventually, after reading a parcel of letters which Mrs. Jewkes seized from where they were hidden by Pamela, Mr. B regrets his actions, feels

pity for what he has put her through and decides to marry her. Initially, she doubts his sincerity and insists on going home. He allows her to go with a letter wishing her a good life; she then realises that she is in love with him. When she receives a second note asking her to come back because he is ill, she accepts. In the resolution, they get married and everybody including Pamela's father is happy. Even his sister Lady Davers is won over.

### 3.4 Theme

The main theme of the novel is *virtue*. Richardson explores this theme from the perspective of perseverance. Pamela perseveres in the preservation of her virtue and upholding her honour and is rewarded in the end. The novelist presents Pamela's dedication to the preservation of her honour irrespective of the pressures and hardships as an act that is worthy of emulation. The novel was so popular that it was read by countless readers and was also read aloud in groups. Usually, the audience is happy in the end of the novel at the happy turn of fortune which brings the hero and heroine together in marriage.

Another theme explored in the novel is that of class distinction or social stratification. Richardson, through the portrayal of Pamela shows that those in the lower strata of the social class ladder are not ignorant, stupid, unintelligent and debased. In spite of her poor background, Pamela shows strength of character and sound intelligence and morality.

### 3.5 Setting

The novel is set in 18<sup>th</sup> century England. However towns like Bedfordshire and Lincolnshire are mentioned and the mention of real places adds to realism in the novel.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have discussed another early English novel, *Pamela*. This novel is written in the epistolary mode which incidentally, is an invention of Samuel Richardson. Epistolary novel is a novel that is written in form of letters. The letters in this novel were written mainly by the heroine and the main idea explored in the novel is the reward for a virtuous life.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

The novel studied in this unit chronicles the experiences of a maid servant, Pamela, whose mistress dies and her son who becomes Pamela's master tries to seduce her. Pamela perseveres in her earnest

determination to preserve her virtue and prefers to go back home to her poor parents instead of living a life of immorality in affluence. Her honesty, innocence and intelligence are made manifest through the letters she writes to her parents. Her tormentor, Mr. B. who just lusted for her, falls in genuine love with her and marries her. In the second part of the novel, Pamela tries and eventually wins over those who disapproved of the marriage on the basis of the difference between their social classes. The story is presented from the heroine's point of view.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the themes explored in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*.

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## UNIT 4 HENRY FIELDING – *TOM JONES* (1749)

### CONTENTS

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  - 3.5 Technique
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to study another English novel, *Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding who is another great novelist of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century who contributed immensely to the development of the novel. The novel is presented in a tightly structured plot in which every “every detail has a purpose” thus the sense of *structure* becomes Fielding’s contribution to the development of the English novel and he influenced other novelists. Some critics refer to *Tom Jones* as one of the best plotted novels in English despite a lengthy story it presents with interpolating incidents. Fielding relates the novel to the classical epic in an attempt to give dignity and status to the new genre of the novel. Fielding believed that the purpose of art is to entertain and educate.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- emphasise the contribution of Henry Fielding to the development of the English novel
- list the major characters in the novel
- discuss the theme of the novel
- present the plot of the novel
- mention at least two latter novelists influenced by Fielding.



### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

Henry Fielding is one of the pioneer English novelists who contributed to the development of the English novel. In this unit, we will study one of his novels.

#### 3.1 Background of the Author

Henry Fielding was an aristocrat, born in 1707 and educated at Eton and later in Poland with Classical education in Latin and Greek. He started his writing career as a playwright, his plays were mainly comedies and political satire; the government was ridiculed in some of his plays. In reaction, the government decided to protect itself from further embarrassment and enacted The *Walpole's Theatrical License Act of 1737* which placed theatre under the Lord Chamberlain and effectively prevented Fielding from writing for the stage and producing his plays again. He then turned to journalism and novel writing. His experience as a playwright influenced his novels tremendously because most of his novels present individual scenes which rise to a climax or surprising reversals before resolution as we find in the plays. Also, he developed his dialogue effectively, presenting comic characters and works through the medium of parody. Fielding's interest in the novel was aroused by Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and he wrote a brilliant parody of *Pamela* with the title, *Shamela* in 1740. He started writing serious novels after that and became so engrossed with the novel as a genre of literature that he propounded a theory of form and structure of the novel which influenced the main tradition of the English novel and some novelists through the eighteenth and the nineteenth century. His other novels are *Joseph Andrews* (1742) *Jonathan Wilde* (1743), *Tom Jones* (1749) and *Amelia* (1751)

#### 3.2 Plot

In *Tom Jones*, the story revolves around the adventures of Tom Jones who is the hero of the novel. The author is able to manage the array of characters in a story that is filled with intrigue, suspense and a lot of surprises. As the story begins, it appears as if Tom Jones is an outsider in the Allworthy family because Allworthy discovers him as a baby and is made to believe that his parents are a local woman, Jenny and her tutor, Mr. Partridge. He sends the 'parents' away and decides to bring up the boy as Tom Jones despite criticisms from the parish.

His sister, Bridget Allworthy, gets married later and gives birth to another boy Blifil but her husband dies shortly afterwards. So Blifil and Tom are raised together in the family but Tom is despised while Blifil is adored by almost all the members of the household except Allworthy

who treats both consistently with kindness. Tom is seen as wild and Blifil, pious. Tom confides in Blifil who relates his secrets to their uncle and also their tutor, Thwackum, and Tom gets in trouble all the time. Meanwhile, Tom's generosity highlights his noble and generous nature and he starts winning the admiration of the people of the parish who have also taken note of Blifil's sneaky nature.

The daughter of poor Black George, Molly, becomes pregnant and Tom accepts responsibility for it to save Molly from going to prison. Meanwhile, another lady Sophia and Tom fall in love with each other and Tom begins to resent his relationship with Molly but remains with her out of honour. However, he discovers later that Molly has been having affairs with other men. He concludes that he is not the father of her child, leaves her and decides to love Sophia but later he encounters Molly by chance and makes love to her. Tom's noble nature manifests itself again when Allworthy falls gravely ill. Tom becomes so upset that he hardly leaves his bedside until he recovers but his sister, Bridget dies suddenly.

Mrs. Western, Sophia's aunt decides with the Squire Western to marry Sophia to Blifil and prevails on Sophia to accept Blifil as a suitor. Blifil manages to convince Allworthy that Sophia is in love with him though Sophia rejects the proposal. Squire Western becomes violent towards her while Blifil tells Allworthy that Tom is a rascal who cavorted drunkenly about the house, and Allworthy banishes Tom from the county. Tom leaves reluctantly because he does not want to leave Sophia. In Bristol, he meets Partridge who becomes his loyal servant and also saves Mrs. Waters from a robbery attack. He begins an affair with her in an inn. Meanwhile, Sophia runs away to escape from a forceful marriage to Blifil and stops at the inn only to discover Tom and his lover. She avoids him but leaves her muff in Tom's bed so that he knows she has been there. Tom finds the muff and sets out to search for her. Fitzpatrick arrives at the inn searching for his wife, and Western arrives searching for Sophia.

Sophia goes to London where she stays with her lady relative Lady Bellaston. Later, Tom and Partridge arrive in London and stay in the house of Mrs. Miller and her daughters, one of whom is named Nancy. Tom and Nancy fall in love. Nancy becomes pregnant and Tom convinces Nightingale to marry her. Lady Bellaston and Tom begin an affair, but Tom continues to pursue Sophia secretly. He succeeds and they reconcile, and Tom breaks off the relationship with Lady Bellaston but the Lady is bent on destroying the love between Tom and Sophia which made her to encourage another young man, Lord Fellamar, to rape Sophia.

The major actors in the story are brought together at the climactic moment of the story as Squire Western, Mrs. Western, Blifil, and Allworthy arrive in London, and Squire Western locks Sophia in her bedroom. Mr. Fitzpatrick challenges Tom to a duel thinking the he is his wife's lover. In the duel, Fitzpatrick is wounded and Tom is thrown into the jail where later he is informed by Partridge that Mrs. Waters is the same person as Jenny Jones, the presumed mother of Tom Jones.

In the resolution of the story, Mrs. Waters inform Allworthy that Fitzpatrick is still alive and has admitted that he initiated the duel. She reveals also that she was persuaded to conspire against Tom by Blifil. The greatest surprise is the revelation that Bridget Allworthy is Tom Jones' mother. Allworthy also learns Tom's concerns for his well-being when he was sick. Tom is released from the jail and is reunited with his uncle, Allworthy who decides never to speak to Blifil again. However, Tom takes pity on Blifil and provides him with an annuity. Squire Western consents to the marriage between Tom and Sophia since he has become Allworthy's heir. Sophia and Tom are married and live happily on Western's estate with their two children and are benevolent towards their neighbours.

### 3.3 Themes

The major theme explored in the novel is that of hypocrisy. The author satirised the hypocritical attitude of the age. The 18<sup>th</sup> Century' claim of convention, elegant manners and social stability is questioned. Bridget Allworthy hides the birth of her illegitimate child from his brother. Squire Western does not want Tom to marry Sophia but changes his mind when he realises that Tom is Allworthy's heir. Blifil's pretensions are exposed in the end. The author contends that the age has its problems and failings.

Another theme is the theme of virtue. People of that age pretend to be living virtuous lives. The author satirises them and opines that people should live their normal lives making their mistakes and learning from them. He therefore prefers Tom Jones who exhibits human weakness in his affairs with numerous women but in a more practical sense, he is a better person.

### 3.4 Characterisation

Critics are divided on the appropriateness of Fielding's method of characterisation in which he gives a lengthy sketch of each character before presenting his activities, and the "...characters do not develop beyond the limits of the sketches" (Palmer 1986, 69). Fielding rarely goes into the minds of his characters to analyse their thoughts and shows

the motives of their actions like the omniscient narrator. When compared with Richardson a critic says that Fielding has the habit of staying on the outside of his characters while Richardson has the ability to penetrate into their minds. Fielding obviously accepts this particular critical principle, for in the preface to book three of *Joseph Andrews* he writes, "I declare here once for all, I describe not men, but manners, not an individual but species". This shows that he is interested in portraying character types. This is obvious in this novel which is epic and comic, dealing with the manners, not the passions of men. He therefore establishes the main traits of the character and then exposes him to society in order to see how he misinterprets society or how society misunderstands him. He creates these characters in order to make specific points.

### **Tom Jones**

Tom Jones is seen in the beginning of the story as a bastard raised by the philanthropic Allworthy but as the novel ends, we discover that he is actually Allworthy's nephew. He is impudent and in terms of chastity and fidelity, he could be said to be morally bankrupt. However, he is very generous, has a noble heart and takes care of the poor. He is very handsome and this with his gallantry wins him the love and affection of women throughout the countryside. He carries himself with dignity even when he was regarded as a bastard.

### **Sophia Western**

Sophia Western is the heroine and like the hero is very generous and kindhearted. She is beautiful and treats people with respect irrespective of their social class. She is courageous and steadfast. She is patient with Tom and in the end is able to reconcile her love for Tom and her filial duty to her father. Sophia's natural modesty is contrasted with her Aunt Western's false and pretentious manners.

### **Mr. Allworthy**

Mr. Allworthy is a benevolent gentleman and he is indeed worthy of emulation. He is generous, selfless and so good natured that he fails to see the evil in others but this helps to propel the plot. The novelist uses him as the moral yardstick of the novel.

### **Master Blifil**

Blifil is the antagonist and a foil to Tom Jones. He is the acclaimed legitimate heir of Mr. Allworthy, his uncle. He represents the 18<sup>th</sup> Century man who appears to be pious, virtuous and principled but underneath is ruled by greed and avarice but his hypocrisy is exposed in the end.

**Jenny Jones**

Initially, Jenny Jones who later appears as Mrs. Waters is presumed to be Tom's mother and is banished by Allworthy. She seduces Tom and in the end aided the resolution of the novel through important revelations about Tom's true mother, Blifil's true character, and the information about the duel that facilitates Tom's release from prison. She later marries Parson Supple.

**Bridget Allworthy**

Bridget Allworthy is the real mother of Blifil and Tom. She is unattractive so resents beautiful women. After the birth of Blifil, she is undecided on the level of her affection to each child but before she dies, she becomes devoted to Tom mainly because of his good looks and gallantry and perhaps, she has seen through Blifil's hypocrisy.

Other characters in the novel include Lady Bellaston Harriet Fitzpatrick, Mr. Fitzpatrick, Mr. Dowling, Square, Mrs. Miller and many others.

**3.5 Technique**

Fielding tries to adhere to 18<sup>th</sup> Century conventions of decorum and good sense in literature. He presents his story in the comic mode and using a satirical style he explores issues of social concern like the society's hypocrisy, follies, foibles and vices of his age. Another technique he adopts in the novel is the commentary on his characters and the presentation of introductory prefaces to explain certain issues. This technique is criticised by some scholars who feel that such description destroys the illusion of reality in the novel. He also uses the narrator.

**4.0 CONCLUSION**

Henry Fielding was a great 18<sup>th</sup> Century novelist who contributed immensely to the development of the English novel. His technique allows for a panorama of his society and also for him to make comments on his characters. This authorial comment reminds the reader that he/she is reading a novel but is seen as a flaw by some critics because it destroys the element of verisimilitude in the novel.

**5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit we have studied another 18<sup>th</sup> Century novel *Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding. In the novel, he exposes the widespread snobbery that was prevalent in a society which is rigidly stratified, where deference is paid to people with titles and the poor snubbed. Unfortunately, even those who are much lower down the social ladder try to be patronising to

those they see as their social inferiors. With the character Tom Jones, he introduced a new kind of fictional hero in the form of a good hearted, well intentioned, generous young man with ordinary human weakness who yields to temptation and commits errors in judgment like any human.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Discuss Tom Jones's character.

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## MODULE 4 VICTORIAN NOVELS

Unit 1	Background and Influences
Unit 2	Charles Dickens – <i>Great Expectations</i>
Unit 3	George Elliot- <i>Silas Manner</i>
Unit 4	Thomas Hardy- <i>The Mayor of Caster Bridge</i>

## UNIT 1 BACKGROUND AND INFLUENCES

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will be introduced to the Victorian Age which is considered the golden age of the English novel. We discuss the historical background of the age and its influence to the development of the English novel.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the Victorian Age
- relate the historical events to the development of the English novel
- highlight the influence of the Age on some novelists
- mention some novelists of the period.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

As stated above, the Victorian Age is acclaimed to be the golden age of the English novel. We will now discuss the novelists, the influences and the developments that gave rise to this claim.

#### 3.1 The Victorian Age

Queen Victoria ascended the throne of England in 1837 and died in 1901. Though the Victorian age was named after her, the age is said to have actually started in 1832, the year of the first reform bill which gave limited franchise to lords and led to the gradual decline of the feudal system and the beginning of democracy in England. The Victorian age was an important age in the history of England because of the major changes in political, social and economic systems of the society. It was regarded as the beginning of the modern world because it witnessed the introduction of the major political systems of government - democracy, socialism and capitalism. The age could be compared to the Renaissance but it was more purposeful in terms of reforms and changes especially in politics and economy. It is seen as the most exciting period in history with its combination of turbulence, problems, inventions and socio-political reforms which were the offshoots of the industrial revolution that changed the lives of the people tremendously. Industry changed the economy of England from domestic - based to factory-based. Consequently, people rushed to the cities to work in the industries where they were compelled to work long hours. It also brought new ideas, the rise of the middle class, and the conflicts between the agriculturalists; and the industrialists and between Catholicism and Protestantism.

The early capitalist manufacturers of the Victorian Age comprised the enterprising and thrifty individuals most of who were uneducated and so complicated the problems with their crudity. It also saw the emergence of the utilitarian philosophy of greatest happiness for the greatest number which was responsible for the institution of democracy through a gradual process. The elite did not believe that the common man could govern himself; some advocated the education of the common man to make him understand the society it proposes to govern. There was a general campaign for people to realise the need for the use of wealth to build a better society which will afford the individual an opportunity to share in the wealth of the nation. All these changes and conflicts formed the subject matter of the Victorian novelists.

Industrialisation was another great influence on the English novel as we see in the opening passage of Dickens's *Bleak House* which is adjudged one of the most famous openings in English novel. The passage is filled with extraordinary bits of description of industrial atmosphere. The



industrial revolution therefore intensified serious social problem that persisted for many years in spite of legislation aimed at addressing it. Air pollution became unbearable and indeed provided more than enough material for the novelists who portrayed it from different perspectives. The Victorian novelists depicted these in their novels though from different perspectives.

### **3.2 Science and Society**

Another major influence on literature of the Victorian Age was science and its impact on the society. Two major aspects of science which affected the development of Victorian England were the attempt to control natural powers and new conceptions in Biology and Geology.

It was through science that the application of mechanical means in production evolved and it affected the hiring of workers and working conditions. With industrial revolution, machines were introduced, fewer people were hired and there was a change from domestic economic system to factory economic system with its attendant changes like population re distribution.

New conceptions in Biology and Geology affected man's attitudes to religion and thought process. Science, especially Biology, offered explanations for certain concepts that were hitherto regarded as mysterious. Consequently, religious and domestic aspects of life were upset but it was difficult for them to embrace the change. Many people were therefore angry and frustrated.

The Victorian era was an important time for the development of science and the Victorians had a mission to describe and classify the entire natural world. One of this writing was Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, in which he espoused the theory of evolution that almost destabilised many of the ideas the Victorians had about themselves and their place in the world. This also influenced the novelists of the period.

### **3.3 Romantic Element in Victorian Period**

In Victorian England, there was a group known as the Oxford Group and who were mainly romanticists. They therefore advocated a return to a more picturesque form of religious observances that were ritualistic before the reformation. They believed that the only way to curb evil, and bring about genuine social reform and sanity in the society was a return to the earlier forms of religious worship and philosophy. They sought an escape from the doubt that plagued the Church of England and security in God that cannot be found in the secular world. This escape is viewed as romanticism.

### 3.4 Social Influence on the Novel

Literature especially during the Victorian age was a product of the writer and the reader. There was a relationship between the writer and the readers in which the latter, to some extent, participated in the creative process and contributed to the outcome of the work. The readers identified themselves with the characters and also read to learn more about the society so they read and made comments which influenced the writer. For instance, Charles Dickens is said to have reversed the ending of his novel *Great Expectations* due to pressure from the readers.

Most of the major writers of the Victorian Age were platform or pulpit men (politicians or clergymen) who preached sermons or delivered lectures. Some novelists gave readings to numerous audiences because it was an age that developed a rapport between the reader and the writer. Respectability therefore permeates the Victorian novel as novelists wrote with strong moral tones so as not to offend the audience. The novelist wrote to satisfy the Puritan respectable middle class since the Aristocrats and Proletariat were regarded as people with loose morals. (Dawson 1979, 27)

The magazines/journals also played a very important role in the development of the novel in the Victorian Age. The journals and magazines catered for different audiences with some having definite affiliations to particular set of ideas or motives. They also provided a medium for reviews, comments and criticisms on serialised novels. Some writers of this period attached themselves to specific magazines and journals.

Before the Victorian Age, most authors published anonymously and were paid for their manuscripts. Later with the establishment of the new copyright law in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of royalty was instituted and it included the sharing of profit for all future editions. Novelists assumed entirely new roles as public voices in the Victorian Age as they wrote on national issues of social concern which were circulated to a wider audience through the serialisation of the novel. The novelists also assumed higher public status as they spoke through their works, newspapers, public debates and lectures. They were seen as the “conscience of their nation; as national sages and as far sighted judges” (Dawson 1979, 36).

The literary market became enlarged with time and writers started writing difficult texts that needed critical interpretations for it to be understood. New styles of writing emerged and novels addressed contemporary socio-political issues openly. Writers realised that they have a responsibility to their audience; a responsibility to be the

spokesperson of the citizen whose voice is heard; and a responsibility to the future generations who will have to evaluate the artistic work. Each writer employed a unique way of exploring the individual's perception of reality. This revolutionised the style of the novel as the search for one's personal style generated a kind of competition among authors especially with the new status of authors as celebrities.

History also influenced the Victorian novelists. Some writers of this Age recounted history but in a fictionalised way, that is, they got their materials from history and imaginatively built a story around that fictional account and through it, presented a realistic view of life.

### **3.5 The Victorian Novel**

The Victorian Age (1837–1901) was the period when the novel became the leading form of literature in English. Most writers were then more concerned with the satisfaction of the reading public, mainly the middle class, than with the satisfaction of the patrons, predominantly, the aristocratic class. The social novel became popular as it portrayed the experiences of the working class, the poorest members of the society and the oppressed. The novelists, through their works therefore tried to elicit the sympathy of middle class audiences; to arouse the consciousness of the lower groups; and to incite action towards the entrenchment of social justice. The depiction of the deplorable working/living conditions of the poor in contrast to affluence lifestyle of the wealthy class became popular subjects for the novels.

The dominant feature of Victorian novels was the concept of verisimilitude as the novelists painted detailed and graphic picture of the incidents to make them very realistic. These novels therefore presented very close representation of the real social life of England at that age reflecting the emerging middle class; their hopes, aspirations, manners, and expectations as opposed to the aristocrat way of life that dominated the preceding ages. Another important feature of the Victorian novel is that most of them are long and presented in closely knit plots.

#### **3.5.1 Serial Novels**

Most of the Victorian novels were serialised as individual chapters or sections were published in chronological sequence in journal issues. Consequently, it affected the sale of the journals positively as demand was high for each new appearance of the novel to introduce some new elements in form of twists in the plot or a new character which enhanced the suspense and so maintained the interest of the readers. Authors who published serially were often paid on installment basis and this aided the popularity of the three-volume novel during this period. Novels are

made up of a variety of plots and a large number of characters, appearing and reappearing according to the dictates of the incidents and action in the novels.

### 3.5.2 Style

Victorian novels tend to be idealised portraits of difficult lives in which hard work, perseverance, love and luck win in the end; virtue is rewarded and wrongdoers are suitably punished. It appears that the novelists wrote with the intention of imparting moral lessons. However the didactic aspect of the novels of this period did not mar the style as novelists wrote classical novels that are still relevant in contemporary times. Their language was filled with picturesque imageries and the diction in most cases, simple.

Children literature emerged also in the Victorian Age. The novelists of this period are credited with 'inventing childhood' due to their efforts to stop child labour and the introduction of compulsory education. As children began to be able to read, literature for young people emerged and became a booming business with renowned writers like Charles Dickens. Other writers like Lewis Carroll, R. M. Ballantyne and Anna Sewell dedicated themselves to writing mainly for children while Anthony Hope and Robert Louis mainly for adults, but their adventure novels are now generally classified for children.

### 3.6 Women as Writers

The Victorian Age saw the emergence of daring, prolific and vivacious women writers. Some of them include George Elliot, the Bronte sisters and others. It is true that women authors dominated the writing and publication of prose fiction from the 1640s into the early 18th century, few of them addressed the *woman question* through an inquiry into the precepts of their education and their position in the society overtly the way George Eliot did in her works (Vann 1994, 32).

### 3.7 Some Victorian Novelists

This age saw the emergence of Charles Dickens on the literary scene in the 1830s and he wrote vividly about London life and struggles of the poor in his novels. William Thackeray was another great novelist of the Victorian period. He was seen as Dickens's great rival at the time. He wrote in similar style with Dickens but with "a slightly more detached, acerbic and barbed satirical view of his characters. He tended to depict situations in a more middle class flavour than Dickens" (Maynard et al 1992, 239). His popular novel *Vanity Fair* is an example of the historical novel. Other novelists include Anthony Trollope who in his works tilted

towards the depiction of landowning and professional classes; The Bronte Sisters –Ann, Charlotte and Emily who in their short lives produced novels though they were masterpieces which were not appreciated immediately by Victorian critics. Emily’s only work, *Wuthering Heights*, presented “...violence, passion, the supernatural, heightened emotion and emotional distance, an unusual mix for any novel but particularly at this time” (Maynard et al 1992, 243) it explored the issue of class, myth, and gender; George Eliot whose real name was Mary Ann Evans, used the pseudonym to conceal the fact that she was a woman because she wanted to write novels which would be taken seriously instead of the romances which women of her age were supposed to write; Wilkie Collins’ *The Moonstone* (1868) was an epistolary novel which is generally regarded as the first detective novel in English language and his *Woman in White* as one of the most sensational novels; and Thomas Hardy and others depicted the rural folks and the changing social and economic situation of the countryside. (Stedman 1996, 45)

George Eliot’s novels were rated highly because of their combination of high Victorian details with intellectual narrative and her novel *Middlemarch* was considered the milestone of literary realism.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The Victorian Age believed in a healthy society. The novel in this age was inspired mainly by the industrial revolution in England. It was also influenced by the readers and who to some extent, participated in the creative process and contributed to the outcome of the work as the novels were serialised. The readers identified themselves with the characters and also read to learn more about the society so they read and made comments which influenced the writer. The society therefore exerted a great influence on the Victorian novelists.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we have presented not just the historical background of the Victorian Age but also the novels, some of the novelists, their style and their influences. The novel in the Victorian age was written from an individual’s point of view and writers assumed the status of celebrities as they are seen as the voice for the voiceless and the conscience of the society. The writers used their works to draw attention to unholy socio-political issues that needed to be addressed for a social justice to reign. Social novels therefore became very popular. The audience also influenced the novels of this age which were serialised. The novelist was seen as an exceptional individual whose perceptions naturally enabled him to produce different views.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

List and explain two factors that influenced the novelists of the Victorian period.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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## UNIT 2 CHARLES DICKENS – *GREAT EXPECTATIONS*

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
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    - 3.4.2 Symbols
  - 3.5 Characterisation
  - 3.6 Setting
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we are going to discuss a very important novelist of the Victorian period. Most of you must have read novels like *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations*, and *David Copperfield* as students in the secondary schools or on your own. These novels were written by Charles Dickens. He is among the most popular novelists of the period and even in modern Nigeria, his novels are still widely read. We will discuss one of his novels, *Great Expectations* in this unit.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- present the plot
- discuss the theme of the novel
- list the characters in the novel
- relate the novel to the Victorian sensibilities
- analyse the setting of the novel.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* is an interesting novel. There is no way you can enjoy the story or even understand greater part of the analysis without reading the novel. Really, you are advised to read the novel before reading the analysis below. This advice is for all the units.

### 3.1 Charles Dickens (1812 – 1870)

Charles Dickens spent his early life in Kent, a county in southeast England. His father was so poor that he was a debtor all his life; he was arrested later and taken to debtors' prison. All his children except Charles later joined him in prison. Charles who was twelve years old then, lived outside the prison and worked with other children in a warehouse but he despised the job. Luckily when his father was released from prison he went back to school and later was employed as a law clerk from where he became a court reporter, and finally a novelist. He published his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, at the age of twenty five and it was an instant success and very popular. His other novels were equally successful and popular. They include *Hard Times*, *Oliver Twist*, *A Christmas Carol*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations* and others. He was a very prolific writer who remained a literary celebrity until his death in 1870.

Charles Dickens is seen as a very good example of the Victorian novelist because he painted a vivid picture and gave graphic details of the experiences of the working class during the Victorian period. Generally, his novels deal with the plight of the poor and oppressed. He is still popular in contemporary times as he remains one of the most popular and read authors of his age. He commented on the social challenges of the age as reflected in his novels which were entertaining and satisfied the taste of the reading public.

### 3.2 Plot

The story of the novel revolves around a young orphan, Pip who lives with his sister and her husband in the marshes of Kent. One day, as he was in a cemetery looking at his parents' tombstones, an escaped convict springs up suddenly from behind a tombstone, grabs Pip and orders him to get food and file for him. Pip obeys but unfortunately, the convict is rearrested but Pip tries to protect him by claiming that he (Pip) stole the items. We learn later that the convict's name is Magwitch.

Pip visits Miss Havisham, a wealthy and eccentric woman who was disappointed on her wedding day, refused to remove that wedding gown and has kept all the clocks in her house stopped at the same time of the incident several years back. He meets and falls in love with Estella during that visit but is treated with disdain by her. He started dreaming of becoming a wealthy gentleman so that he can win her love. He thought that Miss Havisham wanted to make him a gentleman so that he would marry Estella without realising that Miss Havisham uses Estella to hurt men as revenge for the pain she suffered in the hands of a man. So, Pip is brought by Uncle Pumblechook as a toy with which young



Estella would practise her insensitivity to men to Miss Havisham's delight.

Pip works as an apprentice to Joe, his brother-in-law, in his blacksmith shop but is not happy with the work and improves himself through education with the help of Biddy. Pip's dream translates into reality as Jaggers, a lawyer, informs them that a secret benefactor endowed a fund for Pip's education so he must go to London to start immediately. Pip is overjoyed and erroneously believes that Miss Havisham is his secret benefactor.

In London, as Pip decides to become a gentleman, he becomes contemptuous of his old friends and relations and wishes to be close to Estella. At twenty-one, Pip starts receiving an income from his fortune and started living a wild life with his friend, Herbert Pocket. Mrs. Joe dies, and Pip goes home for the funeral, feeling tremendous grief and remorse. Some years later, Magwitch barges into Pip's room and reveals that he is Pip's benefactor and that his action was motivated by the kindness Pip bestowed on him. He therefore worked hard, and made a fortune in Australia which he dedicated to making Pip a gentleman. Pip is disappointed but helps Magwitch to escape, as the convict is pursued both by the police and by Compeyson, his former partner in crime. Pip discovers that Compeyson was the man who disappointed Miss Havisham on their proposed wedding day and that Estella is Magwitch's daughter.

Miss Havisham repents for her misdeeds, asks Pip's forgiveness and later dies. Pip narrowly escapes death at the hands of Orlick. Pip and Herbert try to help Magwitch to escape. Magwitch and Compeyson fight, the latter is drowned while the former is sentenced to death. Pip loses his fortune and falls ill. Biddy has taught Joe who has been taught how to read and write and marries her later. Estella marries an upper-class lout named Bentley Drummle and is ill-treated by him though he dies later. Pip discovers that Estella's coldness and cruelty have been replaced by a sad kindness, and the ending of the novel implies that they may get married.

### **3.3 Theme**

The major theme explored in this novel is wealth which is seen as being responsible for the high level of inhumanity, corruption and decay in Victorian England. Almost every character worships wealth though their attitude to wealth differs from one character to the other. Pip despises his lowly background and longs to be a gentleman so that he could be worthy of Estella. The wealthy class, represented by Miss Havisham, uses wealth for the acquisition of power and the exertion of authority over other characters to the extent that she ruined the lives of some of

them. In her unrelenting pursuit of material wealth, she is completely dehumanised while Mr. Jaggers "...creates a dehumanised automatic machine out of his clerk, Wemmick" (Fielding 1959, 7). These characters reflect the "Victorian society in which people wish to be professional successes while retaining some humanity, are forced to live schizophrenic lives" (Fielding 1959, 7). The members of the Victorian upper classes have to work for a living but regard money as dirty and a necessary evil. We see that after the departure of every client, Mr. Jaggers ritualistically washes his hands.

Closely related to the theme of wealth is the theme of ambition and self improvement. The idea of respectability was in vogue in Victorian England such that each individual strives for self improvement. However the age respected moral excellence and that is why Joe triumphed in the end. The title of the novel reflects Pip's desire for ambition and self improvement that would propel him to great expectations. Consequently, those in the lower class aspire to the higher class so the theme of social class is explored in the novel. This theme is central to the novel's plot and to the ultimate moral theme of the book as Pip realises that wealth and class are less important than love, loyalty, and inner worth (Kettle 1951, 34). We see a number of characters from the higher social class which were despicable while some from the lower class are noble hearted. The novelist seems to say that one's social status is not the basis for the determination of one's real character. For instance, Drummle is an upper-class hooligan, while Magwitch, a persecuted convict, has a deep inner worth (SparkNotes Editors, 2007). In this novel, Dickens extols characters who earn their fortunes through hard work and exposes the inadequacies of nobility and inherited aristocracy.

Another theme explored in the novel is dignity of labour which is reflected in the lives of Biddy and Joe. Joe represents the ordinary man who believes in hard work and is content with what he has, with his profession and what he earns from it. He is content and has peace of mind. He works as a blacksmith and is a symbol of the dignity of labour.

### 3.4 Style/Narrative Technique

Charles Dickens presents the story from the perspective of the protagonist, Pip in the first person point of view narrative technique which aids the realism in the novel as this makes the story more authentic. He presents series of complicated incidents and coincidences which are resolved in the end. The elements of *suspense* and *surprise* are deployed effectively in the novel with graphic and vivid description of incidents, actions, characters, and atmosphere. He also makes use of motif and symbols in the novel.

### 3.4.1 Motif

The motif of doubles runs throughout the novel as almost every element in the novel has a double. For instance there are two convicts on the marsh (Magwitch and Compeyson), two invalids (Mrs. Joe and Miss Havisham), two young women who interest Pip (Biddy and Estella), and two adults who seek to mold the younger ones according to their own designs (Magwitch and Miss Havisham).

### 3.4.2 Symbols

Another device used in the novel is the use of symbol. For instance, Satis House symbolises Pip's romantic perception of the upper class and wealth, while Miss Havisham's wedding dress on her decaying body is a symbol of death and degeneration. Also, the misty marshes symbolise danger and uncertainty. As a child, Pip brings Magwitch a file and food in the marshes, later; he is kidnapped by Orlick and would have been murdered in the marshes.

There are other motifs and symbols, try to identify them as you read the novels.

## 3.5 Characterisation

In this novel, Charles Dickens presents an array of rounded characters who grow from ignorance to knowledge. Most of the characters realised the need for moral balance in life. Through the characters, the novelist is able to relay an important message which is that true and ultimate happiness in life does not reside in wealth or social class.

### Pip

Pip is the protagonist and narrator in the novel. His real name is Philip Pirrip but is called Pip. He begins the story as a young orphan boy being raised by his sister and brother-in-law in the marsh county of Kent but by the end of the novel he matures both in age, reasoning and understanding of life. Initially, he is presented as an innocent, passionate and romantic young boy who is too idealistic and unrealistic in his expectations. He therefore perceived the world from a very narrow perspective and tends to oversimplify situations based on superficial values; hence he behaves badly toward the people who care about him especially Joe and Biddy. For instance, as soon he aspires to become a gentleman, he becomes cold and snobbish believing that these are the traits of a gentleman. However, he is very generous, sympathetic, has a powerful conscience and strives to improve himself, both morally and socially. The reader's perception of the story is shaped by Pip's thoughts and attitudes.

### **Estella**

Dickens uses Estella's character as a bitter criticism against the class system in England. Miss Havisham raised her from the age of three to torment men and break their hearts, the way her own heart was broken. Consequently, she is snobbish, cold, cynical, and manipulative which are the characteristics of the upper class who look down on those below them in rank. Ironically, her lowly birth (being Magwitch's daughter) should have placed her at the lowest rung of the class ladder but being raised by Havisham, she assumes the conceited poise of the upper class. Estella remains Pip's unattainable dream throughout the novel. He loves her passionately, but, though she sometimes seems to consider him a friend, she is usually cold, cruel, and uninterested in him. As they grow up together, she repeatedly warns him that she has no heart but she relents in the end.

### **Miss Havisham**

Miss Havisham is a vengeful wealthy woman who lives in a decaying mansion and wears an old wedding dress every day of her life because she was jilted on her wedding day. She also wears only one shoe, because when she learned of his betrayal, she had not yet put on the other shoe so she stops at that and also stops all the clocks in Satis House at twenty minutes to nine. The portrayal of her character deviates from realism as it is difficult to believe that one could wear only one dress for the rest of her life. However, she remains one of the most memorable characters in English novel. She adopts and raises Estella as a weapon to take a revenge on men but suffers greatly because of her maniacal quest for revenge. She is redeemed at the end of the novel as she begs Pip for forgiveness. Her repentance reinforces the novel's moral perspective.

## **3.6 Setting**

The novel is set in early Victorian England during the period of the Industrial Revolution which transformed both the land and the people of England. Although social class no longer depended entirely on heredity, the gap between rich and poor remained very wide. The actions of the novel take place mainly in Kent, Satis House and London.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In this unit, we studied a very interesting novel, *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens. It is one of the novels of the Victorian Age so it reflects the Victorian sensibilities of affectation and class consciousness. It was published when serial publication of the Victorian Age established a kind of intimate relationship between the author and readers and his readers reactions, to a large extent, influenced the next serial to appear. It is said that Dickens was sensitive to criticism and

occasionally restructures the plot to satisfy his readers (Cockshut 1961, 28). Consequently, the conclusion looks contrived, sentimental and unrealistic. Another flaw is the tendency of the novel towards melodrama. For instance, Miss Havisham in the flames is melodramatic. These may be the consequence of serial writing in which Dickens was obliged to introduce incidents designed to arouse interest and create suspense.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

*Great Expectations* is a well-structured novel built around a central theme and other sub-themes. It presents the highly class-stratified Victorian society but upholds the sense of hard work and dignity of labour. In terms of genres of the novel, it is categorised as a *bildungsroman*. It therefore presents the growth of the protagonist from innocence to maturity and self realisation. Dickens' depiction of the hard realities of London life is a consequence of his personal experience and familiarity with the environment. For instance, his father was sent to debtor's prison and he was forced to work in a factory thus acquiring a firsthand experience of child labour which he portrays in many of his novels.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Describe the character of Miss Havisham.

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## UNIT 3      GEORGE ELLIOT- *SILAS MANNER*

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study another Victorian novel, *Silas Marner* by George Elliot. The novel reflects the Victorian age sensibilities of class distinction. We will see that different characters belong to different classes with different moral, economic and social experiences. Each character knows his or her position in the social class ladder and acts accordingly. For instance, the “villagers dare not mingle with their superiors at the Red House Party ...Eppie is contended with her low social life (Iwuchukwu 2010, 87). Silas has a lot of money yet does not belong to the high social class of Reveloe. The implication is that money alone does not determine one class and that the upper class is not always the best in terms of moral uprightness.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- narrate the story of *Silas Marner*
- discuss the themes of the novel
- describe the setting
- analyse some of the characters.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

We are going to discuss yet another interesting novel. You will not help empathising with Silas Marner as he settles in Reveloe but in the end you rejoice with him and with the theme of retributive justice explored

in the novel especially as it affects the Lantern Yard Assembly and Dunstan Cass.

### 3.1 Background of the Author

George Elliot is the pseudonym of Mary Ann Evans who was born in 1819 in Warwickshire, England. She was sent to the boarding school, where she developed a strong religious faith, and was influenced by the evangelical preacher Rev. John Edmund Jones. After her mother's death, Evans moved with her father to the city of Coventry where she met Charles and Caroline Bray, progressive intellectuals who led her to question her faith. In 1842 she stopped going to church, and this renunciation of her faith put a strain on Evans's relationship with her father which lasted for several years.

She was forced to adopt a pen name because women writers were not taken seriously at that time so she had to publish under a man's name. Her meeting with George Lewes in London marked a turning point in her life as he later became her husband in all but the legal sense as a true legal marriage was impossible, as Lewes already had an estranged wife. Evans was interested in philosophy, but Lewes persuaded her to try fiction writing. She published her first collection of stories, *Scenes from Clerical Life* in 1857 as George Elliot and it was a huge success and it was followed by the publication of her first novel *Adam Bede* (1859). After that, she revealed her identity and naturally, it caused a stir in a society that felt that women were incapable of serious writing. Her other novels include *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), and *Middlemarch* (1871–1872).

### 3.2 Plot

George Elliot's *Silas Marner the Weaver of Reveloe* presents a simple story of a withdrawn weaver called Silas Marner. He was an ardent member of the Lantern Yard Assembly until he is falsely accused of stealing the congregation's funds while watching over one of their deacons who was sick. Unknown to him, his 'best friend', William Dane, masterminded the accusation and connives with the hierarchy of the church to proclaim that he is guilty. Consequently, his fiancée, Sarah rejects him and marries William. This incident shatters his faith in God and man so he leaves the church and his old hometown heartbroken and settles in the village of Reveloe where he lives as a recluse.

Members of Reveloe are suspicious of him because of the belief that he possesses mystical powers especially after curing the cobbler's wife with herbs. Marner is not bothered by this and focuses on his business and before long has stored huge amount of gold which he hoards and

counts daily with passion. Unfortunately, his stack of gold is stolen by Dunstan Cass, the dissolute younger son of Squire Cass. This shatters his life again, he becomes very gloomy and disconsolate despite the villagers attempts to help him.

Godfrey Cass's marriage to Molly, an opium-addicted woman of low birth is kept secret and the secret threatens to destroy Godfrey's blooming relationship with Nancy, a young woman of higher social and moral standing. On one winter's night, Molly decides to take her two-year old daughter to town to reveal Godfrey's secret and ruin him but unfortunately she could not reach her destination, she sits down to rest in the snow because of her disorientated state of mind and dies there. Her child wanders from her mother's still body into Silas' house. Silas takes the child, follows her tracks in the snow and discovers the woman dead. Godfrey also arrives at the scene, but resolves to tell no one that she was his wife.

Silas keeps the child and names her Eppie and the child changes his life completely. He feels that his material gold that was robbed has been returned to him symbolically in the form of golden-haired Eppie. Godfrey Cass is now free to marry Nancy, but continues to conceal the existence of his first marriage and child from her. However he helps Marner with occasional gifts to take care of Eppie.

Eppie grows up to be a very beautiful lady and reinvigorates Silas Marner's life while Godfrey and Nancy are childless. Eventually, Godfrey confesses to Nancy that Molly was his first wife and that Eppie is his child. They decide to take her and raise her as a gentleman's daughter but Eppie rejects the offer as that would mean a separation from Silas. According to her there is no happiness for her without Silas. In the resolution of the story, Dunstan Cass's skeleton is found at the bottom of the stone quarry near Silas' home still clutching Silas's gold. The gold is recovered and returned to Silas and he lives happily among his family and friends. Eppie marries a local boy, Aaron, and they move into Silas' new house, courtesy of Godfrey.

### 3.3 Theme

In *Silas Marner*, George Elliot presents a tale of love and hope. The major theme therefore is love. The characters who show love are rewarded abundantly while the selfish ones pay for their unholy acts in the end. Silas Marner sowed love both at his natal home in the north and at the rural community of Reveloe and is richly blessed with a daughter and his lost gold restored. In the same way, Eppie is blessed with a good husband and a kind-hearted mother-in-law.



The novel therefore has a strong moral tone. That is why the callous Godfrey is disappointed while his brother Dunstan meets his Waterloo at the stone pit. Finally, barely sixteen years after they ill-treated Silas Marner, the unloving brethren of Lantern Yard Church goes into extinction. Although it seems like a simple moral story with a happy ending, George Eliot also explored themes that relate to the criticism of organised church, the role of the gentry, and the negative impacts of industrialisation in the novel.

### 3.4 Characterisation

#### **Silas Marner**

*Silas Marner* is the protagonist in the novel. He is a weaver who lives in Raveloe as a stranger. The villagers see him as an odd fellow because he is a recluse who suffers occasionally from cataleptic fits and has knowledge of the herbs. He is forced to relocate to Raveloe because he was betrayed by his friend, accused falsely and based on the accusation, he lost his fiancée and his faith.

He becomes obsessed with the money he makes from his work which he hoards and counts every night. Physically, he is bent from his work at the loom, has strange and frightening eyes, and generally looks much older than his years. However he is very kind hearted, honest and loving. This is reflected in his adoption of a little girl who walked into his house and brings her up as Eppie. The novelist, through Marner's relationship with Eppie presents a portrait of an ideal family and home where love and sacrifice reign supreme. Thus, Marner who is seen initially as an outcast becomes the most exemplary citizen in the community.

#### **Eppie**

Eppie is another important character in the novel. She is the product of the secret marriage between Molly and Godfrey Cass and walked into Silas Marner's cottage on a cold winter's night when her mother died in the snow. She is a humble, beautiful and loving young lady who is content with her class. She therefore rejects the life of affluence and higher social class offered by her legitimate father. She loves flowers and animals and is presented as a near-perfect being and her sense of wisdom is worthy of emulation. In the end she marries Aaron and is happy because she is still close to Silas.

#### **Godfrey Cass**

Godfrey is the eldest son of Squire Cass and the heir to the Cass estate. He is a good-natured young man, but not strong-willed and so is usually swayed in his decisions and sometimes he acts out selfish interests. For instance, he keeps his marriage to the opium addict, Molly Farren, secret because he is afraid that his father will disown him if the truth is known

yet later, he wants to claim the product of that marriage Eppie, when he could not have another child in his new marriage. He is presented as a passive character whose “endless waffling and indecisiveness stem entirely from selfishness” (Stedman 1996, 32) His younger brother, Dunstan, knows about his secret marriage and uses it to blackmail him constantly. However when Dunstan and Molly die he becomes apprehensive, confesses and decides to take care of his daughter but Eppie is content with Silas so turns down the offer.

### **Squire Cass**

Squire Cass is the wealthiest man in Reveloe, and his two eldest sons are Godfrey and Dunstan, or Dunsey. He is a tall stout man of sixty with a hard face and a weak mouth. He is a widower who could not train his children well. He enjoys the company of his gentry class especially at the Rainbow. He does not take proper care of himself especially in terms of dressing but has an air of authority and his statements are considered irrevocable. He enjoys playing host to visitors especially on the eve of a new year. The novelist seems to infer that the absence of a mother in his household contributes to the recklessness and indiscipline of his children.

### **Nancy**

Nancy is a society lady who later marries Godfrey Cass. Like Godfrey, Nancy comes from a wealthy family but her father values moral rectitude, thrift, and hard work. Nancy inherited these strict values from him and disapproves the lack of discipline and weakness in Godfrey’s character. She is a pleasant, loving, charming and attractive lady whose main regret in life is the loss of her only child. She refuses to adopt another child because of her conviction that it is against God’s will. Nancy is neither well educated nor particularly curious but reads her bible often and does not compromise her Christian faith. When the news of Eppie’s paternity is broken to her, she regrets the entire story but maintains her calmness.

### **Dunstan Cass**

Dunstan Cass is the second son of the Squire who is hated by the people because of his reckless life. He revels in excessive drinking, betting, borrowing money and threatens his brother constantly with blackmail. He is very selfish and callous. For instance, he causes the death of his brother’s priceless horse, wildfire and shows no remorse. He steals Silas Marner’s money (bag of gold) to make up for the money he would have made from the sale of Wildfire but unfortunately dies clutching the bag of gold which was later recovered and returned to Silas Marner.

There are also characters like Dolly and Aaron Winthrop, Priscilla Lammeter and many others.

### 3.5 Setting

The time or historical setting of the novel is the “early years” of the nineteenth century while the physical or geographical setting is Reveloe, a fictional village, a rural but growing industrial community in the English countryside. The action of the novel takes place in Reveloe in locations like the cottage, the Red House, Rainbow Inn and the Street. The action in the early part of the novel, that is, Silas Marner’s life before his arrival at Reveloe, takes place up North.

### 3.6 Style/ Narrative Technique

The narrative technique adopted in the novel is that of an anonymous omniscient narrator with no part in the plot. As is characteristic with this point of view, the narrator speaks in the third person, describing what the characters are seeing, their innermost feelings, thoughts, hopes and aspirations. Close to the beginning, a personal story unrelated to the action of the novel is relayed to provide corroborating evidence for a generalisation, hinting that the narrator is a real person.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

*Silas Marner* was Elliot’s third novel and is among the best known of her works. She explores the theme of love, selflessness and the loss of religious faith in the novel. The novel’s setting recalls the beauty of the disappearing English countryside and a concern that England was fast becoming highly industrialised and impersonal. There is also the issue of class and family.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

In the novel, *Silas Marner* Elliot treats the themes of faith, family, and class in a way that gives them universal appeal, especially at the time of publication, when English society and institutions were undergoing rapid changes as moral values were also changing. It is also relevant in contemporary societies of the world especially in Nigeria where the rapid changes in moral values has taken an outrageous dimension. She explores the innermost feelings of her characters and their relationship to their society giving detailed and insightful psychological aspects of her characters showing the complex ways these characters confront their moral dilemmas.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the background of George Elliot as a novelist.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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## **UNIT 4 THOMAS HARDY- *THE MAYOR OF CASTER BRIDGE***

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
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  - 3.1 Thomas Hardy
  - 3.2 Plot of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*
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- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

We will study yet another novel in this unit. It is *The Mayor of Casterbridge* by Thomas Hardy in which he presents the story of Henchard who auctions his wife in a fair. Thomas Hardy built a reputation as a successful novelist who saw novel writing primarily as a means of earning a living. Like his contemporaries, he tried to satisfy his audience so wrote according to the conventions of serialisation, and the readers to some extent influenced the plot of his novels. Hardy wrote between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Consequently, some scholars feel that he should not be listed as a Victorian novelist yet we cannot categorise him as a modern novelist.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- present the plot of the novel
- list the major characters
- describe the setting
- discuss the narrative technique.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

We will discuss a novel that is by all standards, a classical tragedy in which the tragic hero contributes to the catastrophe that befalls him and only realises his error in judgment usually very late. This is the case

with Michael Henchard in this story that chronicles his life. His pride, his rigidity, his firmness and his inability to compromise culminate in his fall and eventual death. The novel presents his series of sufferings and reversal of fortune which leads to a climax when he recognises his own character and ends in his death.

### 3.1 Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) was born in Higher Bockhampton in Dorset, a rural region of southwestern England where he set most of his novels. He portrays traditional rural and agricultural life which he was familiar with in this novel. Hardy had wanted to go to the university and become a clergyman but because he did not have enough money, he decided to take up a career in writing instead. He did not get an instant fame through his novels but spent many years as an obscure writer before his *Far from the Madding Crowd*, (1874) brought him to limelight and he was able to support himself as a writer. In addition to novel writing, he read widely, attended lectures and concerts. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* was written in 1884-5, appeared in serial form in 1886 and was published in the same year in two volumes. His novels include: *Desperate Remedies* (1871); *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873); *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876); *The Return of The Native* (1878); *The Trumpet Major* (1880); *A Laodicean* (1881); *Two on a Tower* (1882); *The Woodlanders* (1887); *Tess of The d'Urbervilles* (1891); *Jude the Obscure* (1896); and *The Well-Beloved* (1897).

### 3.2 Plot of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*

Michael Henchard is looking for employment as a hay-trusser and as he is travelling with his wife, Susan, they decide to stop somewhere and eat. Unfortunately, Henchard gets drunk, and sells his wife and their baby daughter, Elizabeth-Jane, to Newson, a sailor, for five guineas in an auction that starts as a joke. He wakes up the following morning to realise what he has done, he sets out to search the entire town for them but it was in vain. He therefore swears an oath in a church that he will not drink alcohol for twenty-one years to represent the same number of years he has lived.

Newson is believed to have died so Susan with Elizabeth-Jane go back to Casterbridge to search for Henchard though Elizabeth-Jane believes that he is just a long-lost relative. They learn that Henchard is the Mayor of Casterbridge. The parents meet and decide that in order to prevent Elizabeth-Jane from learning of their disgrace; Henchard will court and remarry Susan as though they had met only recently. They remarry but Susan dies shortly after the marriage.

Meanwhile, Donald Farfrae, the new manager of Henchard's corn business develops interest in Elizabeth-Jane but Henchard becomes jealous. He asks Farfrae to leave his business and to stop courting Elizabeth-Jane. However as Henchard discovers that Elizabeth-Jane is not his own daughter, but Newson's, his attitude towards her changes so Elizabeth-Jane is forced to leave Henchard's house and live with a lady who turns out to be Lucetta Templeman, Henchard's lover when Susan was away. Lucetta has come to Casterbridge to marry Henchard after Susan's death.

In a twist of fate, Lucetta meets Farfrae, who has come to see Elizabeth-Jane and marries him. She demands that Henchard return all her love letters to him. Henchard obliges but the messenger, Jopp, stops at an inn where the peasants intercept the letters through which the romance between Lucetta and Henchard is discovered. They hold a "skimmity-ride," which is a humiliating parade, one afternoon when Farfrae is away. In it they portray Lucetta and Henchard together and Lucetta faints when she sees the caricature and dies shortly afterwards.

In another twist of fate, Newson resurfaces to ask for Elizabeth Jane and Henchard tells him that she is dead, Newson leaves in sorrow. Elizabeth-Jane stays with Henchard and also begins to spend more time with Farfrae. Unfortunately for Henchard, Elizabeth Jane is reunited with Newson, her real father and Henchard's deceit becomes obvious. Henchard leaves to avoid confrontation with Newson only to return on the night of Elizabeth-Jane's wedding with Farfrae but she snubs him. He leaves again, telling her that he will not return but she regrets her action later, and she goes with Farfrae to look for Henchard to make amends but it is too late as they discover that he died alone in the countryside and left a will in which he states that he should be forgotten.

### **3.3 Theme**

The major theme of the novel is the need for hard work and a good name. The novelist depicts the importance of hard work and good character. Henchard arrived Casterbridge as a jobless hay-trusser but through hard work he is able to build a big business and good reputation that earns him the position of a mayor. The importance of good reputation is further heightened by the consequences of dishonourable acts in the novel. For instance, when Henchard gets involved in petty jealousy of Farfrae, which leads to a drawn-out competition with him, he loses all he achieved in business and the women he loves. In addition, his reputation as a worthy and honourable citizen suffers and in the end he dies, a lonely man. Lucetta dies also as a result of the loss of her good name precipitated by the "skimmity-ride." Another major issue raised in the novel is the theme of agricultural and the impending

erosion of the old country life with its value system. The theme of agriculture is explored through the presentation of agriculture-based business ventures which is the mainstay of the economy in Casterbridge.

### 3.4 Setting

The novel is set in Casterbridge, a rural town that adheres to certain traditions and customs. In Casterbridge, business is conducted by word of mouth and weather-prophets are consulted regarding crop yields. However, with the arrival of Farfrae, new and more efficient systems of transacting the business in the town's grain markets were introduced. This results in an increase in agricultural production. This reflects the author's portrayal of the introduction of technology, the mechanisation of farming, the extension of capitalism to the agricultural sphere in the 19<sup>th</sup> century England and the belief that with the growth of urbanisation, traditional agricultural will dwindle.

### 3.5 Characterisation

#### **Michael Henchard**

Michael Henchard is the protagonist in the novel; his personality enables him to bear his problems without blaming anybody. He is seen as a hero because of his determination to suffer, endure great pain and bear the burden of his own mistakes as he sells his family and mismanages his business. As a character, he has a volatile temper which forces him into ruthless competition with Farfrae that strips him of his pride and property. He has a sense of insecurity which leads him to deceive Elizabeth-Jane, and lie to Newson and pays dearly for it through a lonely death. Yet his strength of character manifests itself in his will that no one should mourn or remember him.

He is a powerful, broad chested man who governed the values of the heart with with expansive good humour and tremendous warmth. He loves intensely and hates ruthlessly. He admires greatness and strength, but he is soft-hearted enough to keep Abel Whittle's mother in coals and snuff throughout a hard winter. He is open, trusting and sincere but flinches from contemplating petty details (Brown 1954, 35). His moral uprightness, concern for the feelings of others, refusal to extenuate anything at the end, and his readiness to live on despite one of his worst accusers endears him to readers.

#### **Donald Farfrae**

Donald Farfrae could be said to be the antagonist in the novel. He is young, intelligent and the one who brings scientific revolution that helps the mayor to salvage damaged grain in Casterbridge. (Brown 1954, 34). He is ambitious and quickly takes over the agriculture business. He is



light, slim, selfish, extremely secretive and settles everything in the light of cold logic after calm deliberation to ensure that he is not discredited or disadvantaged. Even his dancing and generosity seem practised, consciously done with an eye for effect so lacks imagination or a sense of humour. His primary motive in taking over Casterbridge's grain trade is to make it more prosperous and prepare the village for the advancing agricultural economy of the later nineteenth century.

### **Elizabeth-Jane Newson**

Initially, Elizabeth-Jane is mistaken to be Henchard's daughter but it she turns out to be Newson's. She is a kind, simple and uneducated girl but she improves intellectually and socially when she arrives in Casterbridge by dressing like a lady, reading voraciously, and doing her best to expunge rustic country dialect from her speech. This self-education comes at a painful time, for not long after she arrives in Casterbridge, her mother dies, leaving her in the custody of a man who has learned that she is not his biological daughter and therefore wants little to do with her. She marries Frafare in the end, despises Henchard but is determined to make amends but it is too late as she discovers that he is dead.

### **Lucetta Templeman**

Like Michael Henchard, Lucetta Templeman lives recklessly according to her passions and suffers for it. Lucetta was involved in a scandalously indiscreet affair with Henchard and later marries Donald Farfare and as their relationship continues she is made the subject of a shameful "skimmity-ride." She dies as a result of that.

## **3.6 Narrative Technique**

Hardy adopts the omniscient narrative technique in this novel and makes intrusive comments on the action and the characters. However, some of the scenes are not realized adequately, especially the mysterious and seemingly unreal incidents which tends to destroy the concept of realism in the novel. The structural pattern relies heavily on coincidence and the chance occurrences that push Henchard closer and closer to failure (Gregor 1974, 45). Hardy relays the passing from one era to the next with a quiet kind of nostalgia. The extensive use of the oral tradition, folk-lore and folk superstition in the novel evokes a rural setting that is not influenced by the technology of modern society. Thomas Hardy presents a vivid and graphic description of the rural, old - fashioned, unscientific and superstitious town in a state of innocence and naturalness where honesty, integrity, and bonding exist. He presents a town that enjoys relative peace and stability before the advent of the foreigners with their new methods and manners that are bound to disintegrate the society.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

In the *Mayor of Casterbridge*, Charles Dickens presents the story of Michael Henchard, a young ambitious hay-trusser who, who is not happy that his career is not progressing. He auctions his wife and daughter after drinking heavily at a fair but regrets his action later. Fortunately, they are reunited, unfortunately his wife dies shortly after that but unknown to him the daughter his wife brought back is not his and the realisation of this fact, his rivalry with Farfrae and “skimmity-ride.” helps to precipitate his tragic end. In the novel, Thomas Hardy is able to convey a picturesque picture of communal life in Casterbridge in which he captures all aspects of life of the people. He presents their beliefs, superstitions, occupations and their interpersonal relationships in such a way that the reader is able to relate with the all characters irrespective of class. He also depicts the gradual disintegration of the old order and its replacement with a new order that is not likely to be humane as exemplified in Farfrae who represents the new order.

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have studied a novel, *Mayor of Casterbridge*, by Thomas Hardy in which he presents the nineteenth-century English agricultural society. The novelist portrays the disintegration of rural traditional society and the introduction of technological mechanised agriculture. This novel confirms that Thomas Hardy belongs to both the Victorian and the modernist tradition as he records the change of a rural agricultural community into a modern city. He shows its effects on cultural and economic development which results in the rise of industrialisation and urbanisation; the decline of Christianity, folk traditions, and moral values.

#### 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Mention any three characters in the novel showing their contributions to the downfall of Michael Henchard.

#### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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## MODULE 5      20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY NOVELS

Unit 1	Background and Influences
Unit 2	William Golding – <i>Lord of the Flies</i>
Unit 3	D. H. Lawrence – <i>Sons and Lovers</i>
Unit 4	Virginia Woolf – <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i>

### UNIT 1      BACKGROUND AND INFLUENCES

#### CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
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3.2	Some 20 <sup>th</sup> Century Novelists
4.0	Conclusion
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6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Reading

#### 1.0      INTRODUCTION

In this unit we are going to discuss the modern novel. We have traced the origin and development of the English novel in the preceding modules. We also studied selected novels from different periods in its development. We are now in the final module and we are going to study the novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century which is popularly referred to as the Modern Period.

#### 2.0      OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the English novel in the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- list some of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century English novelists and their works.

#### 3.0      MAIN CONTENT

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century marks the beginning of the Modern Period in English Literature. In this unit, we are not concerned with the historical background of England as we did in some of the units but we will concern ourselves with what makes the Modern English novel unique.

### 3.1 The English Novel in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Many of the techniques that are adopted in novel writing developed over the past centuries. The techniques evolved as the result of experimentations and innovations occasioned by competition among the writers as each writer tries to excel. The desire of excellence was propelled by the need to satisfy the reading public. However the style and techniques are still evolving in the modern period especially with the new 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century mass media like the Internet, films, cartoon comics and other forms of animated stories. The new mass media has exerted tremendous influence on the novelist. Another influence on the 20<sup>th</sup> Century novel is the literary theories.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century novelist like his or her counterparts in the past ages was influenced by the period, the socio-political, economic and the intellectual climate that pervades in the nation in addition to his/her personality and background. The novelists of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century brought various experimentations in novel writing. Consequently, it is difficult to locate the modern English novel in a particular style. Writers were free to explore new narrative techniques. For instance, Virginia Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) tries to create a new form of realism while some authors of the 1960's "...fragmented their stories and challenged time and sequentiality as fundamental structuring concepts while Postmodern authors subverted the serious debate with playfulness" (Roe and Susan 2000, 79). Novelists adapted existing materials but reconstructed them to suit particular intentions and critics played important roles in the evolved forms of the novel. For instance, a postmodernist could reread trivial literature as the essential cultural production. In the same way, The "creative avant-garde of the 1960s and 1970s closed the gap and recycled popular knowledge, conspiracy theories, comics and films to recombine these materials in what was to become art of entirely new qualities" (DeMaria 2001,84).

The difference between these authors and their 18<sup>th</sup> and their 19<sup>th</sup> century predecessors was the influence of literary criticism on the new authors who tried to interact with the critics. Consequently, the 20<sup>th</sup> century novelists were eager to get their works into the hands of the critics and to a large extent, the success or failure of a novel is influenced by the criticism. Literary critics and theorists therefore become the privileged first readers of each new text and their judgments count. This is why James Joyce in reaction to his anticipation of how his novel *Ulysses* (1922) would be received, said: "I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that's the only way of insuring one's immortality (DeMaria 2001, 86)". 20<sup>th</sup> century novels can therefore be read as "...new textual constructs designed to prove that we are

surrounded by virtual realities, by realities we construct out of circulating fragments, of images, and of concepts” that are part of everyday life (Encyclopedia Online).

Personal realities, personal anxieties, daydreams, magic and hallucinatory experiences have also influenced the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century novelists. They also reflect their own personal realities and reactions to these realities in relation to the new science of psychology that “almost automatically destabilises and marginalises the realities of “common sense” and collective history” (DeMaria 2001, 38).

The novels portray unique aspects of each generation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The century also witnessed the emergence of more strong female voices like Virginia Woolf. Consequently, questions of gender, race, morality, sexual revolution, the assertion of the female heroine in a predominantly patriarchal system have been subjects for the 20<sup>th</sup> century novelists.

Other important subjects of modern novelists are crime, political and military confrontations. The novelists present the fact that modern industrialised, organised societies have failed as crime has been on the increase. They portray the intriguing motivations for personal and public involvement in crime. They also explore the actions of the criminals and also challenge the moral codes of detectives in these novels. Fantasy also reappear in fiction but has branched off into the “worlds of computer-animated role play and esoteric myth” which has since become a huge commercial venture.

### 3.2 Some 20<sup>th</sup> Century Novelists

Several novelists emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Prominent among them are James Joyce, Joseph Conrad, George Orwell, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, and many others. We will just discuss a few of them. You can find out more on your own.

#### **George Orwell (1903-1950).**

His real name is Eric Arthur Blair but writes with the pen name George Orwell. He was an English novelist and journalist whose allegorical novella *Animal Farm* (1945) has become a household name. Generally, he depicts the need for social justice, an opposition to totalitarianism, and belief in democratic socialism in his works. His work is marked by “...clarity, intelligence, wit ... is considered perhaps the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s best chronicler of English culture” (DeMaria 1954, 68). He is best known for his dystopian novel, *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949) and his other work is *Homage to Catalonia* (1938). He is said to have sold more copies of *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty Four* than any two books by any other 20th-century author (DeMaria 1954, 68). In 2008,

*The Times* ranked him second on a list of “The 50 greatest British writers since 1945” (Stephen 200,315). Orwell’s work has continued to influence literary, popular, and socio-political culture so much that the term Orwellian has entered the world vocabulary.

**E.M. Forster** was educated in Cambridge and is renowned for his critical work on the novel, *Aspects of the Novel* (1927). He is therefore a novelist and a critic. His notable works include *Where Angels Feared to Tread* (1905), *A Room with a View* (1908), *Howard’s End* (1911), and *A Passage to India* (1924). His novel on homosexuality was completed but was not published until after his death.

**D. H. Lawrence** in his works, focused on social life of the lower and middle classes, and the personal lives of those who could not adapt to the social norms of his time. *Sons and Lovers* (1913), is widely regarded as his earliest masterpiece. It was followed by *The Rainbow* (1915), and its sequel *Women in Love* (1920). Lawrence tried to explore human emotions more deeply than his contemporaries and challenged the boundaries of the acceptable treatment of sexual issues in the novel as exemplified notably in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928). The explicit treatment sexual relationships in the novel was championed by D. H. Lawrence in his novel *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* which was censored in Britain and he was forced to publish it in Italy in 1928 although the ban by the British was lifted in 1960.

**Virginia Woolf** was an influential feminist, and is acclaimed to be innovator of the stream-of-consciousness technique. Her novels include *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando* (1928), and *The Waves* (1931). She is also known for the famous dictum, “A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” taken from her 1929 essay, “A Room of One’s Own”.

**William Golding** is another English novelist and a Nobel laureate whose allegorical novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954) presents man as being responsible for the evil that plagues humanity. He uses as an example a group of British schoolboys, stuck on a deserted island, who try to govern themselves but degenerated into savage acts with disastrous results.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

We have seen in this unit that the English novel in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is a product of the socio- cultural, political and religious climate that pervaded the century in England in particular and the world in general. It was a period of experimentation with the content and form of the novel. The century also produced many renowned writers.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

One could conveniently say that the English novel reached its peak in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the emergence of many novelists who treated different subjects including those that were hitherto considered taboos and in different styles. Issues bordering on crime, racism, the female question and sexuality are some of the subjects explored in the novel. The realism in the novel was also taken to different levels and interpretations as authors experiment with forms and techniques.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

List and discuss three 20<sup>th</sup> Century English novelists.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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**UNIT 2 WILLIAM GOLDING – *LORD OF THE FLIES*****CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
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  - 3.4 Setting
  - 3.5 Style
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- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

*Lord of the Flies* is a very complex allegorical novel that operates on several levels. This is probably one of the reasons for its great popularity and appeal to all tastes and age-groups. The novel presents a very gripping adventure story for boys which could be enjoyed by every reader while the critic and university student should study it with the higher allegorical significances in mind.

**2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the plot of the novel
- analyse the theme and setting in the novel
- mention some of the characters in the novel
- explain the style in the novel.

**3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

The novel we will study in this unit presents a stranger than life story but because of the technique adopted by the author, it does not depart from the realm of realism.



### 3.1 Author's Background

William Golding was born in Cornwall England in 1911 and was educated in Oxford where he took a degree in English Literature. He joined the Navy and fought in World War II. His experience in the war must have inspired his novel *The Lord of the Flies*. After the war, he returned to the classroom as a teacher and also devoted his time to writing. His first novel *The Lord of the Flies* was published in 1954 and it was overwhelmingly successful. His other novels include *The Inheritors* (1955), *Pincher Martin* (1956) *Free Fall* (1959), *The Spire* (1964), and *The Paper Men* (1984). Golding retired from teaching after he made money from his novels and devoted his entire time to writing. In addition to novels, he wrote and published short stories, plays and poems. His novel, *The Lord of the Flies* has been translated into many languages all over the world and has been adapted for a motion picture.

### 3.2 Plot

The novel, *Lord of the Flies* presents the story of a group of English School boys who were stranded on Coral Island when their aircraft crashed on the Island as they were being evacuated from their country which was at war with another country. The pilot and other members of the crew perished in the crash leaving the children to themselves. They decide to organise themselves and manage their affairs as adults and elected Ralph to be their leader so that coordination would be easier. As soon as they settle down, quarrels and disagreements begin to tear them apart and they split into two groups headed by Jack and Ralph respectively. It becomes a case of survival of the fittest. Jack's group begins to hunt while Ralph's group loves to build huts and maintain a bonfire to keep dangerous wild animals at bay. The rivalry between the two groups grows and deepens but each group tries to keep to itself but Jack is bent on causing havoc because he wants to be the sole leader. Jack is largely responsible for the reign of terror on the Island. Most of the boys degenerate to the level of primitive savages bent on shedding human blood. At a point, Jack sends some hunters to capture Ralph they capture him and are about to kill him, when some naval officers rescued them.

*Lord of the Flies* is therefore a story of the gradual brutalisation of a group of English school-boys marooned on an uninhabited island. It would have been easier for the author to present the children playing and enjoying themselves instead of the present situation where they degenerate into savages demonstrating the vices expected of adults. Golding achieves his aim through a most skilful manipulation of the plot and structure, showing each stage of the brutalisation process proceeding quite logically and inevitably from the preceding leading to

the climax, in culmination of a cumulative process as the boys actually commit murder thus sustaining the element of realism in the novel.

### **3.3 Theme**

In this novel, Golding captures the picture of human decadence, the degeneration of the human mind and argues that human beings are basically evil in nature. He claims that this can manifest anytime, so human beings are responsible for the perpetration of crime and negative tendencies in the society. The major theme of the novel therefore, is evil which is pervasive in the novel. The author contends that evil is responsible for all the savage and destructive acts committed by the boys. However the degree of the manifestation of evil varies among the boys just like in real life situations. It is evil that pushes Jack in his senseless desire to eliminate Ralph. It is evil that causes the brutal murder of Simon and Piggy.

There is also the theme of fear. It is natural that the boys should be afraid when left alone in the uninhabited Island but it became an obsession as fear ruled their lives. The seed of fear sown in their minds cause them to behave irrationally, as they start to imagine things that do not really exist. Simon's death is caused by fear as he is mistakenly attacked and killed because they took him to be a monster which they refer to as the beast. Jack also instills this fear in them and takes undue advantage of them.

Another theme is the theme of political struggle. The Island represents the society where political power is used either positively or negatively. In the end, the Island is set ablaze and destroyed reflecting the author's views that evil should be destroyed.

### **3.4 Setting**

This is set in Britain after the Second World War. Specifically, the actions take place on Coral Island which is very remote and uninhabited. The Island, a natural environment is expected to embody beauty but Golding suggests that even at this stage of boyish innocence and enjoyment of natural beauty there are sinister omens for the future. The expected beautiful glamour on the Island is stressed as the heat becomes oppressive; the days are hot and mysterious and the nights are dark and menacing and at a point, coral island glamour disappears altogether. We see Jack's gradual degeneration into savagery and the intensification of the antagonisms among the boys. Jack begins to behave exactly like a primitive hunter. The sea which used to be so beautiful and inviting becomes the source of mirages and illusions, turning one's concept of reality into disarray. Golding seems to suggest that the element of

sadism is present in the human being irrespective of the environment but is only kept in check by the precepts of civilisation.

### 3.5 Style

Golding traces this breakdown of democratic forms ultimately to man's capacity for evil and destruction bringing out the innate evil in man's heart (Palmer 1996, 284). At the end of the novel Ralph weeps, not only for the death of the wise friend Piggy, but also for the end of innocence and the darkness of man's heart. Golding seems to endorse the traditional Christian view of man as a fallen creature involved in the consequences of original sin. Hence most of the world's evils are traceable to this quality of baseness in man (Palmer 1996, 286).

This message in the novel is conveyed by the author in a seemingly simple language. The novel is a very interesting novel which is "...simple as well as complex...well structured, and artistically designed and executed" (Ezeigbo 1998, 48). He also uses language to delineate the characters showing their motives and attitudes as well as their social classes. The events in the novel is presented in such a way that it holds the reader's attention from the beginning to the end as the author exploits the elements of suspense and surprise to present the story in a chronological causal sequence.

The story is presented through the third person narrative technique. This helps the author to explore the inner workings of his characters' minds. The author also makes some authorial comments from time to time in the novel. He also makes use of a great deal of imageries and symbols which not only enhance the aesthetics of the novel but also, helps to give a deeper insight into the novel and give a wider meaning to its message.

### 3.6 Characters

#### Ralph

Ralph is the oldest among the boys marooned on the Island. He is described as being handsome, attractive, kind and responsible. He is a natural leader as evidenced in the way he organises and helps to build shelter and fire as they wait and hope to be rescued. He is very popular before his overthrow by Jack. He is humane and sensitive but is easily discouraged. He takes sound advice from his close friends, Simon and Piggy and when these two were destroyed he became almost helpless. He however shares in the evil propensity of the boys by participating in the killing of Simon. This notwithstanding, he remains steadfast and responsible throughout the novel and at the end of the story, he matures morally.

**Jack**

Jack Merridew is a thin, lanky and an ugly boy who lacks leadership quality but uses brutal force, threat and violence to take over leadership from Ralph. Initially, he was the leader of the choir and later the leader of the hunters. He uses the latter position to unleash terror, violence and destruction on the Island. He is “a symbol of military dictatorship, despotism and anarchy” (Ezeigbo 1998, 43). He carries a knife always and this depicts him as bloodthirsty and a symbol of destruction. He is however, brave, courageous and resourceful.

**Piggy**

He is Ralph’s friend. He is an orphan, baldheaded, fat, asthmatic, and can only see with the aid of his eye-glasses but is the most brilliant of all the boys. He offers sound advice and useful suggestions to the boys. His health challenges inhibit him in many ways but he is mature, wise, intelligent, considerate and humane. He is also constructive and thoughtful so reminds the boys consistently and persistently of the need for their rescue. He is hated by Jack who masterminded his brutal murder. Piggy’s death indicates the end of commonsense and intellect. With his death the boys plunge further down into violence, destruction, and degenerate to a situation where savagery and terror reign supreme.

**Simon**

Simon is thin, small with bright eyes and coarse hair. He is specially endowed spiritually and detaches himself for some meditation sessions in a quiet place. He is kind caring and encourages Ralph in critical moments. He helps in building shelter and fire. Although he is physically weak, he is courageous and a morale booster to the rest and dies that others may live, so symbolises a messiah and a martyr.

**Roger**

Roger is Jack’s close ally and a symbol of evil. The evil in him manifests gradually in stages. He started from throwing stones at others and missing the next stage, he throws rocks, boulders and spears accurately at his targets. He is vicious, merciless and cruel though appears quiet and calm. He sharpens an object at both ends to kill Ralph. He tortures Sam and Eric and crushed Piggy with the boiler he rolled down.

**Sam and Eric**

Sam and Eric are identical twins, fondly called Samneric and are often seen together. They are well-behaved boys, loyal, thoughtful, kind, industrious and humane. They participate in building the shelter and fire thereby contributing to the well-being of the group. They advised Ralph to run for his life when Jack and his cohorts were after him. They were abducted by the savages and tortured to reveal Ralph’s hideout. They are

presented in the novel as individuals who though are just, are not able to withstand pressure against their better judgment.

### **Naval Officer**

He comes to rescue the boys and save them especially Ralph who is about to be killed by Jack and his group. Ironically, he is trained to kill and even armed to the teeth with revolver and sub-machine-gun, yet reprimands the boys against brutal force which he represents.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* has been one of the most successful novels of modern times. A best seller in its day, it has been made into an equally successful award-winning film and is now prescribed by Universities and school examination boards wherever English Literature is studied. It has been generally recognised that the reasons for this success are its powerful and exciting narrative style, its apparent clarity of meaning and its presentation of events in superbly surreal scenes. In the novel, Golding suggests, however, that even at this early stage of boyish innocence and enjoyment of natural beauty there are sinister omens for the future.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

*Lord of the Flies* has been described as a very conventional novel which tells a good story very well with a clear outline. Its plot and structure are not very simple but its presentation of an island actually peopled by boys comes much nearer realism than the 'other-worldly' atmospheres of the other novels. *Lord of the Flies* reveals the two paradoxical aspects of Golding the novelist: on the one hand, there is the conservative concern to tell a story and present experience in such a way that it reveals meanings and truths. This puts Golding in the mainstream of the tradition of the English novel as a serious moral artist.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Discuss the rivalry between Ralph and Jack and its effect on other characters.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

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## UNIT 3 D. H. LAWRENCE – *SONS AND LOVERS*

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- 5.0 Summary
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- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

*Sons and Lovers* is seen as an autobiographical work in which Paul the hero represents D. H. Lawrence himself. In writing the novel, Lawrence was probably trying to reflect his experiences as a young man from a particular perspective. However, let us bear in mind that although this novel is regarded as largely autobiographical, we are treating it here as a fictional work of art because there are some distortions which makes fidelity to strict autobiographical facts impossible.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- present the plot of the novel
- mention some of the characters
- discuss the style of the novel.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

*Sons and Lovers* is a novel that presents the consequences of unnatural love on both the lover and the loved as exemplified in the relationship between Mrs. Gertrude Morel and Paul and on one hand and between Paul and Miriam on the other. You will discover and appreciate the story and the technique adopted when you read the novel.

### 3.1 Background of the Author

David Herbert Lawrence (1885-1930) was the son of a coal miner. He studied with the help of a scholarship and became a school teacher but later resigned to become a full-time writer. His mother who was also a school teacher had strong influence on his works. Lawrence eloped with and married the wife of a professor in 1912. He was forced to leave England in 1916 during the First World War because of his anti-war views and also because his wife was a German. He spent most of his later years in Italy. The preoccupations of his writings are mainly sexuality, industrialisation and the working class. His novels include *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *The Rainbow* (1915), *Women in Love* (1921), and *The Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). His novel, *The Lady Chatterley's Lover* contained "explicit description of sexual acts in explicit language" and was "at the centre of a famous law case in the 1950s" the winning of the case by the publishers marked "an effective end to censorship of arts in Great Britain" (Stephen 2000, 307). D. H. Lawrence dedicated himself to the liberation of the society from its social and moral bondage especially as it concerns sexual liberation.

### 3.2 Plot

The novel presents the story of Walter Morel and his family who was frustrated by the system and is ultimately destroyed. Mr. and Mrs. Morel at the onset were attracted to each other but gradually, by the time William their first son is born, Mrs. Morel's bitterness and disillusionment becomes so much that she begins to despise her husband. Consequently she becomes very lonely, devotes her attention to her sons and shuns her husband. This generates serious conflict between husband and wife which is carried through the novel as it later degenerates into violence and the near-anarchy in the family. Mrs. Morel deliberately shuts Mr. Morel out of all family affairs and encourages the children to be hostile to him and they oblige by despising their father. Consequently, as he is alienated, his character deteriorates until he becomes brutalised, hot tempered and violent. All these affect the children negatively especially Paul who is very sensitive. Mr. Morel is presented as a man who could have been loving and caring, given a different circumstance. For he takes a cup of tea to his sick wife in bed and sometimes tells his children stories about the mine, or gets them to help him repair kettles or make fuses.

Mrs. Morel chooses her sons as lovers and expects the fulfillment her marriage lacks from them. She is emotionally attached to her sons in a relationship that could be called the Oedipus complex as is seen in the kind of possessiveness with which Mrs. Morel tries to cling to her sons once they grow up, and the hostility she directs towards their girl-



friends. This suggests that her feelings for her boys are much stronger than mere motherly love (Palmer 1996,206-7). As he grows older, William turns his attention from home, resists his mother and has affairs with numerous girls, in spite of his mother's passionate love and her ill-concealed jealousy of his girl-friends. He becomes successful but vain, snobbish and desirous of social success. Gradually he becomes lost to the family and in the end the fast pace of the new life kills him. Mrs. Morel now turns fully to her the younger son, Paul, who was conceived at the height of the estrangement between his parents. She is passionately attached to Paul and becomes the dominant force and influence in his life.

The second section of the novel presents the conflict between Miriam and Mrs. Morel on one hand and the passionate feeling between Paul and his mother on the other hand. Paul loves his mother above every other person but loves Miriam too so is torn between the two women in his life. Unfortunately, Mrs. Morel's influence is destructive in Paul's life. At a point Paul becomes estranged from both Miriam and Clara and his life shatters and with his mother's death he becomes empty and helpless. He therefore needs someone to fill the void left by his mother's death so turns completely to Miriam but Miriam could not fit into the shoe left by his mother. He becomes unstable. However, the author presents an optimistic future for Paul as the novel ends with the presentation of strong determination to live by Paul as clenches his fist and sets his mouth fast and walks towards the light of the city. He is "determined to take the path of life, not of death. He will not follow his mother. So he walks, not towards the darkness, but towards the lights of the city" (Palmer 1996, 219).

### **3.3 Theme**

The major theme of the novel is love which runs through the novel in various forms. The novelist presents different perspectives of love and its effect on the characters. He believes in love but insists that it should be moderated and directed appropriately. Mrs. Morel's inappropriate love towards her husband and children contributed to the disaster that enveloped all the members of the family. Miriam's love is at the extreme as she longs to strangle and smother those she loves. The author also distinguishes between infatuation and true love. Mrs. Morel's initial attraction to Walter Morel is based on her fascination that he is a highly sensuous man who contrasts with her own intellectuality and puritan upbringing. Unfortunately, this difference in their backgrounds precipitates the catastrophe in the novel because after the marriage, she discovers Walter's obtuseness so finds it difficult to communicate with him.

In the novel, the theme of industrialisation is also explored. In early part of the novel, the author presents the contrast between the old system of mining and modern methods of mining. The old system did not pollute the environment and in which the welfare of the miners was taken care of. In that system, the countryside remained comparatively beautiful. In contrast the modern mechanised system is shown to be more efficient but leaves the miners and the countryside degraded.

### 3.4 Setting

*Sons and Lovers* is set in the coal-mining village of Bestwood and evokes a very powerful picture and analysis of life of the miners in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century industrial England. Lawrence, as the son of a miner is able to capture a firsthand experience of the working-class life in a mining community and the result is a moving, realistic and powerful story. He presents the strengths and weaknesses of this society without idealisation and sentimentality. We see the fellowship, solidarity, and the general concern for the old, the poor and the sick among these people and the way they empathise with bereaved members of the community. The novelist also presents the poverty of people who have been exploited and degraded by an inhuman and unsympathetic industrial system that has forced them to live in squalor.

### 3.5 Style

Unlike other major novelists, Lawrence does not contribute much towards the development of form in the novel because he is more interested in direct rendering of experience as it is actually lived than in a conscious aesthetic planning of the work. Consequently in *Sons and Lovers* there are no intricate plot and structure, no conscious effort to create suspense but he divides the novel into two halves, the first is a straightforward naturalistic presentation of working-class life in industrial England culminating in the death of the Morels' first son, William. The second part is also another straightforward presentation of Paul Morel's life, fortunes and pitfalls. However, the novelist is able to probe the psychological motivations of people's actions.

### 3.6 Characters

#### Walter Morel

Initially, at the beginning of the novel, Lawrence presents Walter Morel as an important, instinctive and loving young man who as the story progresses, degenerates into a hot tempered, violent drunkard. He is exploited by his employers and dehumanised by his job, in addition, peace of mind eludes him at home so he suffers terribly. His marriage collapses partly because of the industrial life in Bestwood. It offers no

prospect of improvement for him and his family. His wife despises him and makes the children to turn against him. His efforts to remain an integral part of the family are rebuffed so his character degenerates and he gets entangled in reckless spending that lands him in debt. Despite his wife's attitude he shares in the blame for the tribulations of the family.

### **Mrs. Gertrude Morel**

Mrs. Morel is a lively, intelligent, dynamic, and vivacious young woman who longs for sophistication and elegance. Unfortunately, she could not fully realise her personality because of poverty and the frustrating life at Bestwood. She is proud, strong willed, and has a domineering character that makes her an overbearing member of her household. She is also a great snob, a stern puritan who likes making reference to her middle class upbringing and her ancestors. However, her puritan background enables her to "continue her duties stoically as a wife" (Stephen 2000, 97). She inadvertently chooses her sons as lovers to make up for the inadequacies in her marriage.

### **William Morel**

William is a well-built, ruthlessly ambitious young man with great energy who becomes successful early in life. He is born at a time when Mrs. Morel's bitterness and disillusionment are hardest to bear so she turns her love to William. William reciprocates but also pays attention to girls irrespective of his mother's influence and jealousy. His exploits take him outside the family and he takes advantage of the opportunities open to him. He becomes so overwhelmed by success that he grows into a vain, snobbish, superfluous young man. Consequently, he gets entangled in unholy relationships and unruly behaviour that destroys him eventually.

### **Paul Morel**

Paul is the second son of the Morels. He is a delicate, extremely sensitive young man and an artist. He is easy-going, neither too ambitious nor materialistic young man whose life is ruled by his mother. He is in love with Miriam but with the overbearing influence of his mother he is unable to lead a normal life and a relationship with a lady. He is still a virgin at the age of twenty and this is attributed to his devotion to his mother. He is however repelled by Miriam's fear of sexuality. He realises that in order to approach her sexually he would have to behave like a beast which he detests. He breaks off the first phase of the affair with her because he realises that this love, as far as Miriam is concerned, is a pure spiritual thing. When he goes back to Miriam in desperation he still discovers that Miriam has not overcome her fear of sexuality but submits to his craving only as a sacrificial victim. He breaks up with her and returns to Clara with whom he

experiences pure and frank sexual relationship. However, in spite of the unashamed sexual relationship, he is still unable to truly love her and she realises this too.

### **Miriam**

Miriam is an extremely shy and self-conscious girl who relishes in a world of day dreaming, romanticism, abstraction and spirituality. She is deeply religious and mystical. She seems to be in a trance whenever she speaks and she moves about in a strange rhapsodic way. She loves in a very ravenous and possessive way. She desires a very close and intimate relationship with another person, but because of “her sheer soulful intensity she is always in danger of strangling people with her love” (Palmer 1996, 214). She is afraid of sex and sex-related issues and this mars her relationship with Paul. She recoils in anguish at the slightest reference to sex because she grew up to believe that sex is a dreadful act that has to be endured in marriage.

### **Clara**

Clara is a worldly woman, married to Baxter Davies but gets entangled in a relationship with Paul. She goes back to her husband when she realises that Paul does not truly love her. She reasons that despite her husband’s faults, he is a surer anchor for her than Paul with his mood swings.

## **3.7 Contribution to the Development of the English Novel**

D. H Lawrence goes beyond the immediate actions to probe into unconscious motives and feelings of his characters in a unique manner. Lawrence’s’ exploration into ‘the hinterland of consciousness’ makes him a specialised writer and is perhaps his most important contribution to the development of the English novel (Palmer 1996, 212). Through this method, he enlarges the boundaries of his readers’ consciousness and opens their eyes to a panorama of experience that otherwise would have been lost and at the same time highlights the subconscious motives of which the characters may not be aware of. He seems to feel that there is a quality in people which is not immediately visible and which even actions may not bring out so he brings out such qualities through that technique.

He believes that people’s actions are quite often motivated by unconscious and occasionally irrational feelings, he conceives of character in a way that is different from the conventional way that studies a character through words and actions. He probes right through to the basic element of a character, that quality which is not recognisable by sight, words, action or other external factors.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

The novel presents the contrast between the old paternalistic system of mining which cared for the welfare of the miners and left the countryside comparatively beautiful, and the modern, efficient, mechanised system which leaves the miners and the countryside exploited and degraded. The beautiful company offices are contrasted with the squalour of the miners' lives. This affects the relationship of the people in the area. For instance, this state of poverty, squalour and suffering contribute to the deterioration and eventual collapse of the Morels marriage.

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we studied D. H. Lawrence's novel *Sons and Lovers* which presents a pitiable story of a miner Mr. Morel whose family life is destroyed by the industrial life in Bestwood which offers no prospect of improvement. His wife rejects him and turns her love to her sons, William and Paul. William dies and Paul becomes incapable of forming a lasting relationship with another woman, even after the mother's death.

#### 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the gradual disintegration of the Morel family.

#### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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## UNIT 4 VIRGINIA WOLF – *MRS. DALLOWAY*

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  - 3.6 Characterisation
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- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study Virginia Wolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, a novel in which she presents characters in a "flux, rather than static and who react to their surroundings in ways that mirrored actual human experience" (Spark Note Editors). The novelist also presents some rapid political and social changes that marked the period between the two world wars and how the changes affected the English people who seem to have lost faith in their country.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the theme of the novel
- analyse some of the characters
- present the plot of the novel
- explain the narrative technique adopted by the novelist.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

The modern period is an age that is known for experimentation in both content and form in English literature. The English novel is no exception and novelists experimented with different techniques to convey their messages. In current action, the novel like in classical tragedy takes place in one day with flashbacks to supply information from past events.

### 3.1 Background of the Author

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) is an outstanding English Novelist, critic, and essayist. She grew up in an upper-middle-class, socially active, literary family in Victorian London. Patriarchal, repressive Victorian society did not encourage women to attend universities consequently; she was educated at home and read voraciously, the books in her father's rich library. She started publishing her first essays and reviews after her father's death. She joined a group of young artists in the Bloomsbury group who met Thursday evenings to discuss intellectually and share their views about the world which influenced their creative output. This group disregarded the constricting taboos of the Victorian era and went to the extent of discussing homosexuality which was a subject that shocked many of the group's contemporaries. Woolf saw the group as having made up for the undergraduate education experience which her society had denied her. Virginia later married Leonard Woolf, a member of the Bloomsbury group and together they strengthened the group and later founded the Hogarth Press which published notable authors like T.S. Elliot. Her mother's death in 1895 affected Woolf's life adversely as she suffered several bouts of mania and severe depression which lasted for the rest of her life before she drowned herself. She is best remembered by her contribution to the feminism in her book *A Room of One's Own* (1929). She was a great woman who, "in spite of mental illness still found her true voice as a writer" (Stephen 2000, 310). Her other novels include *The Voyage Out* (1915), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and *The Waves*.

### 3.2 Plot

*Mrs. Dalloway* presents a day in the life of Mrs. Dalloway. The events of the novel cover one day but the writer utilises the flashback technique to supply the activities from the past. Clarissa Dalloway, an upper-class housewife prepares to host a party. The author takes the reader through her London neighbourhood. She returns from shopping and an old suitor and friend, Peter Walsh, arrives unexpectedly. Their meeting in the present is juxtaposed with their thoughts of the past. Peter wants to know if she is happy with her present husband but before she could answer, her daughter arrives. Peter leaves but it is clear that he is yet to come to terms with Clarissa's refusal.

The novelist criticises the insensitivity and tactlessness of medical professionals. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, one of Woolf's doctors suggested that plenty of rest and rich food would lead to a full recovery, a cure prescribed in the novel, and another removed several of her teeth.

### 3.3 Theme

The theme of disillusionment is overtly treated in the novel. Throughout the nineteenth century, the British Empire seemed impregnable but after World War I, the English people became vulnerable on their own land and there was loss of faith in their country. Citizens became less inclined to willingly adhere to the rigid constraints imposed by England's class system which benefited a small percentage of the society. The characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* like Clarissa, Peter, and Septimus, feel the failure of the empire as strongly as they feel their own personal failures. In the novel, the characters who champion the perpetuation of English tradition, like Aunt Helena and Lady Bruton, very old, and represent the old empire that faces an imminent demise since the people are disillusioned by it.

Another important theme is oppression which is related to the theme of disillusionment. The novelist seems to say that the British class system encourages oppression. She uses the characters to reflect this as some of the characters face oppression in one way or the other in the social system. Septimus dies in order to escape what he perceives to be an oppressive social pressure which he was unable to conform with.

Communication as a theme is also treated in the novel as characters like Mrs. Dalloway, Clarissa, Septimus, Peter, find it difficult to communicate. Clarissa's party is part of an attempt to bring people together to enhance communication.

### 3.4 Narrative Technique

The novel is presented in the third person narrative technique which is also known as the *omniscient narrator* or the eye of God. This technique enables the author to tell the reader everything about the characters. In addition, she adopts the stream of consciousness technique in the novel which enables her lead the reader into the protagonist's interior thoughts. With the stream of consciousness technique, the narrative structure is somehow fluid as "one character's thoughts appear, intensify, then fade into another's, much like waves that collect then fall"(Stephen 2000, 310). Another feature of the narration is that narrator's voice appears occasionally among the subjective thoughts of characters and the point of view changes constantly, often shifting from one character's stream of consciousness (subjective interior thoughts) to another's within a single paragraph. The effectiveness of this style is also enhanced by the novelist's use of "free indirect discourse technique to describe the interior thoughts of characters using third-person singular pronouns (he and she)... this ensures that transitions between the thoughts of [many] characters are subtle and smooth". The novel is



divided into parts instead of the conventional chapters but the novel's "structure highlights the finely interwoven texture of the characters' thoughts" (Stephen 2000, 311).

The novelist captures vivid details of commonplace tasks like shopping, throwing a party, and eating dinner and through that "transformed the novel as an art form" (Stephen 2000, 311) in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

### 3.5 Setting

The physical setting of novel is London, England with greater part of the event taking place in the affluent neighborhood of Westminster, where the Dalloways live. The time setting is a day in mid-June, 1923 with many flashbacks to Bourton in the early 1890s, when Clarissa was eighteen.

### 3.6 Characters

#### Clarissa Dalloway

Clarissa Dalloway, the protagonist of the novel is class conscious and ephemeral. She is preoccupied with fashion, parties, and intermingling in high social circles. She oscillates between being an extrovert and an introvert. Though she is concerned with appearances, she still manages to keep to herself not sharing her feelings with anyone but tries to chat with people or other issues but keeps personal affairs to herself and as she moves through the glittering world she probes beneath those surfaces in search of deeper meaning. She yearns for privacy and in the process develops a tendency towards introspection that gives her a profound capacity for emotion, which many other characters lack.

She battles constantly with thoughts of aging and death and also about the decisions she made in the past that has shaped her life. One of them is her decision to marry Richard instead of Peter Walsh. She knows that life with Peter would have been difficult, is also easily aware that she sacrificed passion for the security and tranquility which the upper-class life offers. She wishes that she could have an opportunity to live life all over again. However, by the end of the day she comes to terms with the possibility of death and feels the oppressive forces in life but moves along with her will to endure.

#### Septimus Warren Smith

Septimus was a budding poet who enlisted to fight in World War I for romantic patriotic reasons. He was shocked by the horrors of war and its aftermath. He suffers from shell shock in the war, despises himself for being made numb by the war. He obliterates the physical world and lives in an ephemeral world in which he sees and hears things that are not

really there including talking to his dead friend Evans. The novelist uses Septimus to highlight a contrast between the conscious struggle of a working-class veteran and the blind opulence of the upper class and also to the futility of war. He therefore loses the desire to preserve either his society or himself. He has serious mental problems and decides to commit suicide in order to avert the fate of his soul being destroyed by the doctors.

### **Peter Walsh**

Peter Walsh is an ambivalent character who is afraid that he has wasted his life. He finds it difficult to stand by his decisions. For instance, he assures himself that he is no longer in love with Clarissa, yet grieves over the loss whenever they meet showing that he still loves her. He loves life and is usually frantic at the thought of death. For instance, he follows a young woman through the London streets to smother his thoughts of death with a fantasy of life and adventure.

### **Sally Seton**

In the greater part of the novel, Sally Seton exists only as a figure in Clarissa's memory but appears at the party. She is married with five sons and sees Clarissa as a blessing to her. She is effusive, an extrovert and without inhibitions. Sally, like other characters in the novel bear the burden of the oppressive forces of the English society but she takes refuge in her garden whenever she is tired of talking to people. She still believes that despite the problems one can still make meaningful contribution to the society instead of resorting to despair.

### **Richard Dalloway**

Richard is Clarissa's husband and loves her and their daughter Elizabeth dearly. He is simple, shy, hardworking and sensible, and finds it difficult to share in his wife's passion for the beauty of life or desire to communicate truthfully. He is so shy that he plans to tell his wife that he loves her, but could not, partly because it has been so long since he last said it. He champions the traditions which England went to war to preserve and does not recognise the destructive power of war. He likes to associate with members of English high society and the assumption that women need him makes him happy though the assumption is wrong at times.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The novel presents the subjective experiences and memories of Clarissa the protagonist over a single day. The novel is set in the post World War I London. The novelist, through different characters presents the changing socio-political situation in England after the war. She uses the third person narrative, the stream of consciousness technique to present

not just the external actions but also the inner workings of the characters.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

In *Mrs. Dalloway* Virginia Woolf presents traditional English societal values that are being questioned. The action of the novel takes place after World War I, a time when the English looked desperately for meaning in the old order, but found out that it is no longer relevant. The social system that benefited the rich before the war comes into serious scrutiny and criticism as characters struggle against it.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the narrative technique adopted by Virginia Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Palmer, E. (1996). *Studies on the Novel*. Ibadan: African Universities Press.

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