THE AGE OF ELIZABETH

Literary tendencies of the Age of Elizabeth

*The New Romanticism*

The remote, the extraordinary, the wonderful - they fascinate the romantic quest. The Elizabethan age, the first and greatest romantic epoch, was abundantly fed by these desires, and dreams. Edward Albert says: "There was a daring and resolute spirit of adventure in literary as well as other regions, and most important of all these was an unmistakable buoyance and freshness in the strong wind of the spirit.

*Independence*

The spirit of independence and creativity was immense in display inspite of borrowings from abroad. Shakespeare borrowed freely, but by the vigour of his creative imagination he transformed dross into gold.
The Spensarian stanza came from Spenser, and his works are symbols of intrepidity and inventiveness.

**Poetry**

Poetry was at its prime during the Elizabethan age. Plenty were the songs, lyrics and sonnets produced. Spenser introduced melody and pictorialism in poetry.

**Drama**

Drama achieved the pinnacle of its popularity in the hands of the versatile Shakespeare and witty Ben Jonson.

**Translations**

Many Translations of this period were as popular as the original works. Sir Thomas North translated Plutarch's *Lives*, and John Florio translated Montaigne's *Essays*. Other notable translations were Ovid's *Metamorphosis* by Arthur Golding, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* by Sir John Harrington and Tasso's *Jerusalem Liberatta* by Richard Carew. Legouis remarks in this regard: "The rich soil was fertilized by a deep layer of translations. By 1579, many of the great books of ancient and modern times had been translated into English, almost all of them by 1603, the end of Elizabeth's reign".

**Interest in Greek literature**

The study of Greek literature was revived and this shed a dazzling light into many dark places of intellect. The revived classical learning did away with the earlier rudeness of English literature.

**Growth of prose**

Prose, for the first time, became first rate during this period. Latin conventions stepped aside for English prose tradition which possessed a universal application. This was the age when English novel made its first appearance.

**The characteristics of the Elizabethan age**

The richest period in the history of England, the Elizabethan age witnessed the rise and growth of the feelings of patriotism and nationalism among the English people.

**The Renaissance**

Renaissance, the gradual enlightenment of human mind after the darkness of the Middle Ages, reached its manhood in England during the Elizabethan age. The age produced geniuses like Shakespeare, Sidney, Marlowe and Spenser. The Elizabethan people, under the influence of the Renaissance, made frantic efforts to free themselves from the shackles of feudalism and churches and asserted their right to live, to think, and to express themselves in accordance with a more flexible secular code. The revival of classical learning was active during the Elizabethan age, and the study of classical authors became a passion with the people.

**The Reformation**

Elizabethan age witnessed the culmination of the Reformation. Spenser presented the best trends of Reformation in the *Faerie Queene*.

**Nationalism grew**

Nationalistic and patriotic feelings were aroused among the English people with the defeat of the Spanish Armada. This upsurge of nationalistic feelings had earlier been evident in Chaucer's time. They found their bloosoming in the Elizabethan literature.

**Discoveries**

Discoveries in the field of astronomy by Copernicus against the old theories of Ptolemy, and the discovery of America by Columbus and Cabot brought about a widening of the horizon of knowledge. New knowledge began to pour in from the East and new worlds were opening in the West. The great voyagers, whose exploits were chronicled in the immortal pages of Hakluyt brought home both material and intellectual treasures from the "still vexed Bermonthes" as Shakespeare called them. Such explorations had commendable influence on the literature of the time.

**Printing and education**

Printing, introduced by Caxton in the previous age, had now its profound effect. The new learning was popularised by the printing press. Education, which had been in the hands of the church earlier became secular.

**Humanism**

Humanists, led by Erasmus, took interest in life and mankind. Under the new creed life was no longer a penance to be undergone by ideal Christians in preparation for heaven. People began to love life and endeavoured to make it larger and happier.

**University Wits**

The University Wits, or the pre-Shakespearean dramatists, are called so because of their association with the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Thomas Kyd, John Lyly, George Peele, Robert Greene, Thomas
Nash and Thomas Lodge who revolved round the central sun, Christopher Marlowe, constituted the constellation of the University Wits. These university men were dramatists as well as actors. They often worked together in revising old plays or creating new ones. We find frequent repetition of names in their plays because they banked on a common store of material from which they culled out their stories and characters.

**Their contribution**

Immense was their contribution to the formation of the Romantic Comedy which blossomed forth in the hands of Shakespeare. John Lyly's comedies are romantic and witty, while those of George Peele are satirical and humorous. Nevertheless, these comedies lacked humour.

The University Wits, inspite of their loose plots, made some advance in plot construction and in harmonising the different threads of their stories into a perfect whole. In this respect Robert Green showed the way to Shakespeare. Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* anticipates Shakespeare's skill in constructing the plot of *The Merchant of Venice*.

The University Wits prepared the way for Shakespeare's historical plays. Marlowe's *Edward II* was a model for Shakespeare's *Richard II*. Greene's *History of Alphonsus, King of Aragon* and *Scottish History of James IV* are a prelude to the historical plays of Shakespeare.

The University Wits were fond of heroic themes such as lives of great figures like Tamburlaine. Christopher Marlowe raised the subject matter of drama to a higher level. He wrote *Tamburlaine the Great*, the story of the great conqueror.

These dramatists prepared the way for later tragedy. The vogue of Senecan tragedy revelling in bloodshed was popularised by Thomas Kyd in his *Spanish Tragedy* which Tourner and Webster followed with enthusiasm later.

Marlowe revolutionised the whole conception of medieval tragedy. For the Middle Ages, tragedy was a thing for the princes, for Marlowe it was a matter of individual heroes. Marlowe introduced the element of struggle in tragedy and took it out from the working of fate. He also refused to impart moral touch to his tragedies as was the custom in the Middle Ages. Thus in the sphere of tragedy, the University Wits made notable contribution.

John Lyly and George Peele made drama poetic. Much of the sweetness of Shakespearean plays had already been present in the plays of Peele. In the art of characterisation too the University Wits made definite improvement. John Lyly's characters were witty and intellectually sharp. Marlowe's characters were living and breathing realities. Tamburlaine, Faustus, the Jew of Malta take hold of our imagination by the intensity of their passion and exuberance of their enthusiasm. Let us now examine briefly the works of the University Wits.

**John Lyly (C:1554 - 1606)**

Lyly looked to the court for favour rather than to the spectators in the public theatres. His best plays are *Women in the Moon, Endymion, Alexander and Campaspe, Midas*, and *Love's Metamorphosis*. Wit and humour characterise Lyly's comedies. Lyly, as a dramatist, is important as the first English writer of what is essentially high comedy, and as having adopted prose as the medium for its expression.

**George Peele (1558-1597)**

Peele's prominent plays are *The Araygnement of Paris, The Famous Chronicle of King Edward I, The Old Wife's Tale* and *The Love of King David and Bathsheba*.

The exemplary poetic style and decorative phrases of Peele make his plays profusely flowery. Edward Albert remarks: "He has his moments of real poetry; he can handle his blank verse with more ease and variety than was common at the time ......... he has humour and a fair amount of pathos. In short, he represents a great advance upon the earliest drama, and is perhaps one of the most attractive of the playwrights of his time".

**Robert Greene (1558-92)**

The five plays that Greene left behind are *The Comical History of Alphonsus, King of Aragon; A Looking Glass for London and England; Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay; The History of Orlando Furioso; The Scottish History of James IV*.

**Thomas Lodge (1558-1625)**

Lodge abandoned law for literature and wrote *A Defence of Plays*, a reply to *The School of Abuse* by Stephen Goson. Lodge's best - known romance is *Rosalynde, Euphues Golden Legacie* which appeared in 1590. Shakespeare followed it in the plot of *As You Like It. Wounds of Civil War* is a chronicle play by Lodge.

**Thomas Kyd (1558-1594)**

Kyd was one of the best - known tragic poets of
his time, and his work shows an advance in the construction of plot and development of character. In his *Spanish Tragedy* (printed in 1594) Kyd employs the whole Senecan apparatus of horror — ghost, hanging, stabbing, madness, pistolling and suicide — and employs them all with a skill which prepares his hearers and suprises them. The *Spanish Tragedy* is a revenge play. Writing this tragedy Kyd supplied the romantic melodrama to the dramatic literature before Shakespeare. The characters are so forceful, and Kyd contributed a new type of hero — the heritating type — seen magnificently in the character of Hamlet.

Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593)

Christopher Marlowe was the most important dramatist among the University Wits before Shakespeare. The greatest figure in the pre-Shakespearean drama, Marlowe has left behind such powerful tragedies as *Tamburlaine*, *Doctor Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta* and *Edward II*. Each of these tragedies reflects the spirit of Renaissance and revolves round the central personality who is consumed by lust for power. In Marlovian tragedies the hero dominates over the rest of the characters and dwarfs them by his towering personality. *Tamburlaine the Great* the dramatist's attention is on the meteoric rise of Timur, the Tartar, who, starting his life as a shepherd, swept over Persia, and rushed like a tempest over the whole east with the consuming passion of establishing his authority all over the east. Seated on his chariot drawn by captive kings, with a caged emperor before him, he boasts of his power which overrides everything. Then, afflicted with disease, he raves against the gods and would overthrow them as he has overthrown earthly rulers.

Marlowe's second play, *Doctor Faustus*, presents the tragedy of Doctor Faustus, a German scholar and physician, who in his lust for worldly power and knowledge signs the fatal contract with Mephistopheles, the agent of the Devil, that he would readily allow his soul to be taken whenever Mephistopheles wanted, if for twenty four years he remains under his command and carry out his behests according to his liking. But, after the expiry of twenty four years Faustus's soul is forcefully dragged by the devils to hell where it is perpetually consigned with no hope of redemption.

*The Jew of Malta*. Marlowe's third tragedy, deals with the greed for wealth and centres round Jew Barabas, an old money-lender, who, in his greed for wealth, strongly suggests Shylock in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. The Jew makes plans to hold an entire city to ransom, but the evil reconciles upon him, and he falls a prey to sinister machinations. He falls into a boiling cauldron which he had prepared for another, and dies blaspheming, his only regret being he could not commit all the crimes he had in mind. The Jew experiences no compunction at the time of his death and is not tortured by the qualms of conscience. "Let me be envied, but not pitied" is the Jew's dying farewell to the people who he sought to destroy.

Marlowe's last play, *Edward II*, is a tragic study of a king's weakness and misery and brings out the irony of kingship. Edward II is murdered in the castle in cold blood, and his tragic end moves us to sympathy. In point of style and dramatic construction, the play is best of all Marlowe's attempts in the field of tragedy. The character of Edward II, Mortimer, Isabella and Gaveston have been nicely delineated. The tragedy forms the consummation of Marlowe's dramatic art.

Marlowe's contribution to Elizabethan drama

Marlowe raised the subject - matter of drama to a higher level. This was Marlowe's greatest contribution to Elizabethan drama. The big heroic subjects he presented appealed to the imagination of the audience. Marlowe lent life and reality to his characters, thereby making them brimming with vigour and fire.

Marlowe is credited with modifying the conception of tragedy. In the Middle Ages, tragedy was a thing of the princes, for Marlowe it was a matter of individual heroes. A typical Marlowian tragedy portrays a giant figure and his consuming passion reaches beyond ordinary aspiration until he meets his fate.

Marlowe introduced the element of struggle which was absent in the tragedy of the Middle Ages. In *Doctor Faustus* there is a constant struggle within Faustus' soul, between the good and bad angels.

Marlowe realised that tragic action must issue from, and be reflected in character. The spring of tragedy in *Tamburlaine* is Tamburlaine himself. So was with Faustus and Edward II. In each case the tragedy begins in the hero and ends with him. Marlowe's characters all
arouse sympathy in some degree, Faustus and Edward II in a high degree, and in their own nature are the seeds of their fate. This was Marlowe’s remarkable contribution to English tragedy.

Marlowe added poetic grandeur and poetic excellence to drama. He poetised the whole of the Renaissance spirit. In place of rhyming line he introduced and perfected the blank verse. His verse is noted for its burning energy, its splendour of diction, its sensuous richness, its variety of pace and its responsiveness to the demands of varying emotions.

The Marlowian hero

Marlowian heroes are representatives of the Renaissance spirit that coloured the thoughts and feelings of men of his age. They are truly heroic in their dimensions though they may not be men of virtue or morality. They are the incarnation of unbridled power and superhuman energy. They possess aspiring souls and are encouraged by magnificent possibilities of glorious achievement.

The earliest glimpse of the Marlowian hero is seen in Tamburlaine. He is a mighty conqueror and to establish his empire all over the world is his greatest ambition. In the pursuit of his design he is cruel and ruthless. He marches triumphantly through conquered land and lashes the vanished foes in a bantering manner. He burns all cities and revels in ghoulish delights. An incarnation of unbridled power driven by his lust for power, Tamburlaine is a typical Marlowian hero.

Doctor Faustus presents another aspect of the Marlowian hero. The genuine Renaissance passion of infinite passion of knowledge and supreme power is represented in him. To realise unlawful power he barter his soul to Lucifer.

Marlowe’s hero, Barabas, the Jew, in The Jew of Malta is again a typical Renaissance figure. Barabas is an evil - minded man. His lust for wealth drives him to the commission of several sinful acts which call for nothing but condemnation for his designs. An incarnation of the devil himself, he fights with monstrous instruments of death against the whole city and does not show the least scruple in poisoning his own daughter.

In Edward II, Mortimer, the younger, is reflective of Marlowe’s explosive youth of fiery ambition and unscrupulous means. He is dashing, audacious and haughty. He is the embodiment of despotic arrogance.

What knits together Marlowe’s heroes is their love for power and worldly glory. They are all audacious, strong and heroic. Feelings of repentance and remorse, even in their worst periods (except in the case of Doctor Faustus) rarely come to their lips. They remain triumphant even in their defeats.

- The famous translation of Ovid’s Metamorphosis into English was made by Arthur Golding.
- Who is known as the poet of English Renaissance? - Christopher Marlowe.
- Name the poets who are credited with the introduction of sonnet and blank verse poetry in England? - Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey.
- Among the University Wits who was known as “the true child of Renaissance”? - Christopher Marlowe.
- Which play of Marlowe expresses the desire for infinite knowledge, love for power and pleasure and the glorification of beauty? - Dr Faustus.
- The best trends of Reformation were presented by Spenser in his? - Faerie Queene.
- Who wrote Gorboduc, the first English tragedy? - Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton.
- Thomas Kyd wrote his Spanish Tragedy in the style of? - Seneca.
- Alexander and Comuspe is a play written by John Lyly.
- Thomas Kyd’s Spanish Tragedy is categorised as a Revenge Tragedy.
- Which play of Marlowe is a study of the lust for wealth and centres round the figure of Jew Barabas? - The Jew of Malta.
- Mortimer, Isabella and Gaveston are characters who appears in Marlowe’s play - Edward II.
- Who does Grierson - Smith call the ‘morning star of Elizabethan drama’? - Christopher Marlowe.
- ”Marlowe’s Mighty Line”, who described in these words the burning energy and splendour of Marlowe’s diction? - Ben Jonson.
Shakespeare lived in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the period known as the Elizabethan Age. Historians regard the Elizabethan Age as the peak of English culture. But one can question whether the period would have been so important had Shakespeare not lived and wrote in it.

The fame of Shakespeare basically rests on his understanding of human nature. He could see in a specific dramatic situation the qualities that relate to all human beings. Shakespeare wrote at least 37 plays which contain vivid characters of all types and from all walks of life.

In addition to his deep understanding of human nature, Shakespeare had knowledge in a wide variety of other subjects which include music, law, military science, politics, sports etc.

Shakespeare was born in 1564 at the small market town of Stratford-upon-Avon as the son of John Shakespeare, a glove maker. The register of Holy Trinity, the Parish church in Stratford, records his baptism on April 26. According to the custom of that time children were baptised three days after their birth. Therefore, Shakespeare is generally believed to have been born on April 23.

At the age of 7 Shakespeare probably joined the Stratford Grammar school, where he might have read such ancient authors as Cicero, Ovid, Plautus, Seneca and Virgil.

There is some indication that Shakespeare had won recognition in the English theatrical life by 1592. A pamphlet which appeared in that year contained an apparent reference to Shakespeare which suggested that he had become an actor and playwright. There are suggestions that in 1594 Shakespeare was the partner of a company called Lord Chamberlain's Men. The Lord Chamberlain's Men was one of the most popular acting companies in London.

From mid-1592 to 1594, London authorities often closed public theatres due to the outbreak of plague. This caused the decline of the need of plays. At this time Shakespeare began writing poems. In 1593 appeared Shakespeare's long poem, Venus and Adonis. The poem was dedicated to the 19-year-old Henry Wriothesly, The Earl of Southampton. The Rape of Lucrece, also dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, came out in 1594.

In 1598, the English clergyman and schoolmaster, Francis Meres, wrote Palladis Tamia: Wit's Treasury, which is an important source of information about Shakespeare's career. Meres says: "As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latins: so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage."

This indicates that Shakespeare had achieved reputation as a playwright by at least the mid-1590-s.

In 1599, Shakespeare and six associates became owners of The Globe, one of the largest theatres in the London area. It may have held as many as 3000 spectators.

**The King's Men**

Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603 and was succeeded by James VI of Scotland. As King of England he became James I. James I enjoyed and actively supported theatre. He issued a royal licence to Shakespeare and his fellow players, which allowed the company to call itself the King's Men. The members of the company were called Grooms of the Chamber. In 1608 the King's Men leased the Blackfriars Theatre in London which had artificial lighting.
In 1616 Shakespeare died and was buried inside the Stratford parish church. His monument records the day of death as April 23, the generally accepted date of his birth.

### The plays of Shakespeare and their Sources

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<td>Richard III</td>
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<td>The Taming of the Shrew</td>
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<td>Twelfth Night</td>
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<td>The Merry Wives of Windsor</td>
<td>Source unknown</td>
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<td>Hamlet</td>
<td>Histories Tragiques by the French author Francois de Belleforest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Torillus and Cressida</td>
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### The plays of Shakespeare are divided into seven groups:

#### The early comedies

The Comedy of Errors, Love's Labour's Lost and The Two Gentlemen of Verona are regarded as the early comedies. They are immature plays, and generally the plot of these comedies lack originality. The characters are less finished and marked with artistic lapses in character portrayal.

#### The English histories

Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V, Richard III, Henry VIII, King John and Henry VI are the historical plays of Shakespeare. In these plays are presented the history of Britain of three hundred years and nice portraits of English Kings. While King John, Richard II and Henry VI present the weakness of English kings, Henry IV, Henry V and Richard III are studies of kingly strength. Moreover, these historical plays served as a guide to the kings of England and acquainted them with
the pitfalls that beset the life of the high and the mighty. What we find in these plays is a rapid maturing of Shakespeare's skill in plot construction and characterisation. They are marked with a fervent note of patriotism.

The mature comedies

The flower of Shakespeare's comic genius is found in the mature comedies. The mature comedies are Much Ado About Nothing, Twelfth Night, The Merchant of Venice and As You Like It. Vitality, vivacity, enlivening wit and pleasant humour are marked characteristics of these plays. Romantic in nature, these plays are saturated with the spirit of love. The sparkling and vivacious heroes and heroines of these plays such as Rosalind and Orlando in As You Like It, Viola and Orsino in The Twelfth Night, Benedick and Beatrice in Much Ado about Nothing, Portia and Bassanio in The Merchant of Venice have been the objects of love and admiration among the readers of these pleasant comedies.

The sombre plays

The general tone of the plays, All's Well that Ends Well, Measure for Measure and Troilus and Cressida, is marked by a note of sombreness (gloominess). They reflect a cynical, disillusioned attitude to life, and a fondness for objectionable desire to expose the falsity of romance and to show the sordid reality of life.

The great tragedies

Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth and King Lear are classified as the great tragedies of Shakespeare. In intensity of emotion, depth, psychological insight and power of style these tragedies stand supreme, and achieve the high watermark of Shakespearean excellence.

The Roman plays

"These are based on North's translation of Plutarch's Lives, and though written at fairly wide intervals, are usually considered as a group: Julius Caesar, contemporary with the English histories, shows the same concern with political security, and, in its depth of character study is approach-
unrivalled in literature. From king to clown, from lunatic to demi-devil to saint and seer, from lover to misanthrope, all are revealed with the hand of the master. Surveying this multitude, one can only cry out as Hamlet does "What a piece of work is man!"

In his characters vice and virtue co-mingle. Thus the villain Iago (Othello) is a man of resolution, intelligence and fortitude; the murderer Claudius (Hamlet) shows affection and wisdom, the peerless Cleopatra is narrow, spiteful and avaricious; and Caliban, the beast, (The Tempest) has his moments of ecstatic vision.

**Treatment of love**

Shakespeare is glorified for his admirable treatment of love. What renders beauty to his plays is the element of romance. We have in his plays, the devotion and fidelity in love, as in the case of Desdemona for Othello, Miranda for Ferdinand, and Rosalind for Orlando. All these are instances of extreme devotion in love. Nevertheless we have in Shakespeare mockery of love. The love of Benedick and Beatrice in Much Ado About Nothing, and the love of Bottom and Tirania in A Midsummer Night's Dream present the hollow mockery of "Lord, what fools these mortals be."

**Style and language**

What impresses us most is Shakespeare's language and style. Shakespeare's command of language and the magic of expression still reign supreme in the realm of literature. Matthew Arnold writes, "Shakespeare is the king of poetic rhythm and style, as well as the king of the realm of thought in his dazzling prose and exuberant verse. Shakespeare has succeeded in giving us the most varied, the most harmonious verse which have ever sounded upon the human ear since the Greeks."

**Philosophy of life**

We like Shakespeare because of his rich, profound and meaningful utterance about life and its various aspects.

The following lines speak volumes of Shakespeare's depth of understanding of life and its significance. Study them.

"The web of our life is of mingled yarn, good and ill together" (All's Well that Ends Well)

"The world is a stage,
And all the men and women merely players"

(As You Like It)

"The dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn,
No traveller returns" (Hamlet)

"Life is but a walking shadow, man a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage.
And then is heard no more ; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing". (Macbeth)

Hamlet's words, "There is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so", again give the key to human happiness.

These rich and profound observations of Shakespeare give the key to the essential reality of life.

**Shakespearean tragedy**

Tragedy is essentially a tale of death and suffering. Shakespearean tragedies are also powerful and penetrating tales of death and suffering. The remarkable tragedies of Shakespeare are Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, King Lear, Romeo and Juliet, Coriolanus, Antony and Cleopatra and Timon of Athens.

Shakespearean tragedy is concerned with the fate of persons of "high degree" often with kings or princes. The dramatist, being medieval in his conception of tragedy, made conspicuous persons suffer so that the tragedy may have a powerful effect on the reader's mind.

Though there are a number of characters, concentration is on the hero and heroine who generally come to a better end at the end of the play. Again, the suffering and calamity that befall the hero are not of the ordinary type. The hero undergoes excruciating pain and suffering. The suffering is of such intensity that it staggers and shakes the man and he writhes in the coils of insufferable agony. Hamlet, in the state of his vacillation, is literally on the rack. Othello, in his disturbed state of mind, finds a house divided within himself. King Lear, in the afflicted state of his insanity, raves and Macbeth experiences the pangs of murdering the king deep down in his heart till he feels that life is meaningless, and it is all "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing".
In the medieval conception of tragedy, fate played an important part in bringing about the tragedy, but Shakespeare made man responsible for his own doom, and he believed in the principle, 'character is destiny'. Hamlet meets his tragedy because of his vacillating nature. Othello is overcredulous, and Lear is too rash.

Conflict and struggle
There is always a conflict and struggle in the tragedies of Shakespeare. The conflict takes two forms. Firstly, the hero with the external circumstances, and secondly the conflict is within the soul of the hero or the heroine. Both the internal and external conflicts have their significance in bringing about the tragedy. In Romeo and Juliet the conflict is external. It is centred round the hatred of two houses. In plays like Othello, Macbeth, Hamlet and King Lear, conflict is both external and internal. Macbeth is divided in his soul before he murders king Duncan. Hamlet's vacillation makes him inert and inactive. The hero is entoiled in the great crisis of his life and falls a victim to his own inner conflict. Thus Shakespeare creates the psychological tragedy of the hero by presenting the moral conflict within his soul resulting in his death.

Shakespearean heroes are exceptional characters in whom is perceptible an intensification of life. The hero is a man of exceptional calibre, and he is governed by particular predispositions. Thus Macbeth is the embodiment of passion and Othello believes in what he hears. It is also not necessary that heroes are the fountain heads of all virtues. Macbeth has no virtues to boast of. But even to these wicked characters Shakespeare gives something of greatness. Macbeth has courage which wins our admiration.

A Shakespearean tragedy inspite of its tragic end never depresses us. Though there may be heart-rending suffering for the hero, yet finally he lends upon us the impression of greatness. Macbeth, at the end of the play, redeems his character and make the reader think high of him. Thus the spectacle of the Shakespearean tragedy is never depressing.

Shakespeare's comedies
"Human life is a tale told in tears with smile" (Goethe)

It is said that Shakespeare wrote his comedies when he was in his most delightful and cheerful mood. As You Like It, The Twelfth Night and The Merchant of Venice are classified as Shakespeare's romantic comedies, and they are set in distant lands, far away from the "sick hurry and divided aims" of modern life. In these comedies we are taken to a world of fancy and imagination. The main feature of Shakespeare's romantic comedy is the beautiful combination of realism and fancy. The characters, though living in a world of romance, are drawn from the world of men and women. They have their existence in the world of sorrows and they have to suffer like ordinary mortals experiencing adversity, separation and disappointments.

Allardyce Nicoll writes: "Characters and scenes alike are viewed through magic casements which transform reality. The settings are all imaginative — an unknown island. Thebes, Arden, Illyria and Venice — each one conceived in the glow of a strong and beautiful fancy. Yet all related to real life. There are contemporary figures and contemporary fashions in Love's Labour's Lost; Bottom and his companions mingle with the fairies; Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek are companions of Viola and Olivia; Dackberty and Verges, of Hero and Beatrice. This is the cardinal characteristic of Shakespeare's romantic world, the union of realism and fancy."

Another important feature of the Shakespearean comedy is the role of women. The comedies are generally governed and dominated by heroines rather than by heroes. Ruskin says: "Shakespeare has no heroes, he has only heroines". The heroines of Shakespeare's comedies have all the gifts of inspiring and of returning affection. They are simply human and patiently natural in their response to emotional crisis, like that of falling in love. George Gordon writes: "Shakespeare was a great student of women, and his portraits of women have never been surpassed .... The best of artists have their limits, but in this bright particular region Shakespeare would appear to have had none. From Cleopatra to Miranda — which I take to be very nearly the full span — he is equally at home, and has the whole range of feminity at his command."

Humour is the next important ingredient of the comedies of Shakespeare. Satire is almost absent. The humour that is found in the comedies is tolerant, sympathetic, genial and sparkling. Shakespeare employs different kinds of humour with equal case, from the mumblings of a drunkard to the intelligent repartees of
the leading women. Dowden observes in his book *The Mind and Art of Shakespeare*: "The genial laughter of Shakespeare at human absurdity is free from even that amiable cynicism, which gives to the humour of Jane Austen a certain piquant flavour. It is like the play of summer lightning, which hurts no living creatures, but, surprises, illuminates and charms.

**Element of love**

Shakespearean romantic comedy is pre-eminently and primarily the comedy of love. The atmosphere is full of the genial spirit of friendship and love. Love forms the main motive force of the romantic comedy. J.W. Lever in his *Elizabethan Love Sonnets* writes: "In Shakespearean comedy love is the means of all human fulfilment, as it is the source of all natural fruition.... Shakespeare's heroines are quite lacking in the saintly qualities of the Petrarchan mistress. Far from raising their lovers' thoughts above base desires Rosalind teaches Orlando how to woo and Juliet reciprocates Romeo's ardour so frankly that he promptly forgets the chaste attractions of his former lady."

**Characterisation**

Characterisation is of a high order in Shakespearean comedy. There are subtle characters and complex moods in these comedies.

The comedies of Shakespeare are loved and admired because a brilliant sunshine inundates and glorifies them. The spirit that inspires them is the spirit of humanity. Shakespearean comedies are largehearted in their conception, sympathetic in their tone, and humanitarian in their idealism. All these qualities give charm to the Shakespearean comedies.

**Dramatic Romances or the Last Plays**

Four plays of Shakespeare — Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale and The Tempest — are placed in the group called Dramatic Romances. The term "dramatic romances", is applied to these plays on account of the fact that they are neither pure tragedies nor are they comedies scintillating with humour and fun. They contain incidents which are undoubtedly tragic but their end is happy.

The dramatic romances were penned in the last period of Shakespeare's dramatic craftsmanship. Here the general atmosphere is one of peace, calmness and serenity. The plays of this time are characterised by reconciliation, atonement and forgiveness. Dowden says: "The plays are all concerned with the knitting together of human bonds, the reunion of parted kindred, the forgiveness of enemies, the atonement for wrong — not by death but by repentance — the reconciliation of husband with wife, of child with father, of friend with friend."

The last plays of Shakespeare are marked with the beauty and love, mirth and grief of youth. There are sufferers, aged, experienced and tried — Queen Katherine, Prospero, Hermione. There are children absorbed in their happy and exquisite egoism — Perdita and Miranda, Florizel and Ferdinand, and the boys of old Belarius.

Shakespeare's style in this period is much more matured and sober than that of the period of tragedies. Raleigh observes: "The style of these last plays is a further development of the style of tragedies. The thought is often more packed and buried, the expression more various and fluent at the expense of full logical ordering ...... constructions are mixed, grammatical links are dropped, the meaning of many sentences is compassed into one..."

**The sonnets**

An outstanding sonnet writer, Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets. The first 126 sonnets were addressed to a handsome youth, (known as W.H.) and the last 26 were addressed to a dark mistress. The last two sonnets were conventional exercises. Though the sonnets were all written for private circulation they were published by Thomas Thorpe in 1609, at frequent intervals.

Shakespeare's sonnets are a collection of 154 poems that deal with such themes as love, beauty, and mortality. All but two first appeared in the 1609 publication entitled *Shakespeare's Sonnets*; numbers 138 ("When my love swears that she is made of truth") and 144 ("Two loves have I, of comfort and despair") had previously been published in a 1599 miscellany entitled *The Passionate Pilgrim*. The Sonnets were written over a number of years, probably beginning in the early 1590s.

The conditions under which the sonnets were published are unclear. The 1609 text is dedicated to one "Mr.W.H.", who is described as "the only begetter" of the poems in the dedication. It is unknown if the dedi-
The Italian sonnet

The Italian sonnet (or Petrarchan, named after Petrarch, the Italian poet) was probably invented by Giacomo da Lentini, head of the Sicilian School under Frederick II. Guittone d'Arezzo rediscovered it and brought it to Tuscany where he adapted it to his language when he founded the Neo-Sicilian School (1235-1294). He wrote almost 300 sonnets. Other Italian poets of the time, including Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) and Guido Cavalcanti (c. 1250-1300) wrote sonnets, but the most famous early sonneteer was Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374).

The Italian sonnet was divided into an octave, which stated a proposition or a problem, followed by a sestet, which provided a resolution, with a clear break between the two sections. Typically, the ninth line created a “turn” or volta, which signaled the move from proposition to resolution. Even in sonnets that don't strictly follow the problem/resolution structure, the ninth line still often marks a “turn” by signalling a change in the tone, mood, or stance of the poem.

In the sonnets of Giacomo da Lentini the octave rhymed a-b-a-b, a-b-a-b; later, a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a pattern became the standard for Italian Sonnets. For the sestet there were two different possibilities, c-d-c-d-e-f and c-d-c-d-e-c. In time, other variants on this rhyming scheme were introduced.

The first known sonnets in English, written by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, used this Italian scheme, as did sonnets by later English poets including John Milton, Thomas Gray, William Wordsworth and Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

This example, On His Being Arrived to the Age of Twenty-three by Milton, gives a sense of the Italian Form:

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth, (a)
Stolen on his wing my three and twentieth year! (b)

My hasting days fly on with full career, (b)
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew’th (a)
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth, (a)
That I to manhood am arrived so near, (b)
And inward ripeness doth much less appear, (b)
That some more timely-happy spirits indu’th (a)
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow, (c)
It shall be still in strictest measure even (d)
To that same lot, however mean or high, (e)
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven (d)

All is, if I have grace to use it so, (c)
As ever in my great Task- master's eye (e)

In addition to the rhyme scheme, English poets usually use iambic pentameter to structure their sonnets as Milton has done here. This is a rough equivalent to the hendecasyllable or Alexandrines usually used for Petrarchan sonnets in romance languages such as Italian, French and Spanish.

Form

Soon after the introduction of the Italian sonnet, English poets began to develop a fully native form. These poets included Sir Philip Sidney, Michael Drayton, Samuel Daniel and William Shakespeare. The form is often named after Shakespeare, not because he was the first to write in the form but because he became its most famous practitioner.

The form consists of three quatrains and a couplet. The couplet generally introduced an unexpected sharp thematic or imagistic "turn". The usual rhyme scheme was a-b-a-b, c-d-c-d-e-f-e-g-g.

This example, Shakespeare’s Sonnet 116, illustrates the form:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove
O no, it is an ever fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring barque,
Whose worth's unknown although his height be taken.
Love's not time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle’s compass come,
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom
If this be error and upon me proved
I never writ, nor no man ever loved

**Theme of sonnets**

Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets in all. The first 126 sonnets were addressed to Mr. W.H, and they describe the poet’s intimacy with the young man who is identified as the Earl of Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton, or William Herbert, the third Earl of Pembroke. The sonnets addressed to a dark mistress describe a woman of the courtesan type whose attraction for Shakespeare and whose hold on him was purely sensual. A recurring theme in Shakespeare’s sonnets is the immortality of the poetic fancy, love and friendship.

Shakespeare’s sonnets are the manifestations of the passionate feelings of the poet. The themes of love, friendship and affection are found in them. The sonnets have some autobiographical elements. Wordsworth and Schlegal brothers put forward the autobiographical theory of these sonnets. They are sincere records of real events in the life of Shakespeare.

**SYNOPSIS OF SOME PLAYS**

**Love’s Labour’s Lost**

Is one of William Shakespeare’s early comedies. It is believed to have been written around 1595-1596 and is probably contemporaneous with *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

The play opens with the King of Navarre and three noble companions, Berowne, Dumaine, and Longaville, taking an oath to devote themselves to three years of study, foreswearing bodily pleasures and the company of women. One of the companions, Berowne, refuses to take the vow seriously, and argues the merits of sensual love, but is overruled and promises to abide. Berowne then reminds the King that the Princess of France has an appointment to meet him in order to discuss the surrender of the region of Aquitaine. The King denies the Princess and her retinue (which includes three lovely young women) entry into his court, insisting that they camp at a distance. The King and his friends then interview the Princess and her companions, and each falls in love with one of the ladies.

The main plot is supplemented by several other comic subplots. A bombastic Spanish swordsman, Don Adriano de Armado, woos a low-born country wench, Jaquenetta, assisted by Moth, his witty page, and Costard, a country bumpkin. There are also two pedantic scholars, Holofernes and Sir Nathaniel, who sometimes speak to each other in schoolboy Latin. In the final act, the comic characters stage an inept pageant to entertain the noble persons, just as the mechanics perform a barbarous play for the court at the end of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

At the end of this lighthearted play, events suddenly take a darker turn. News arrives that the Princess’s father has died and she must leave to take the throne. The nobles swear to remain true to their ladies, but the ladies, unconvinced by their youthful ardour, demand that they wait a whole year to prove their seriousness. The play thus end with no weddings, a surprising conclusion for an Elizabethan comedy. There is evidence that Shakespeare may have written a sequel, *Love’s Labour’s Won* which has since been lost.

**Romeo and Juliet**

*Romeo and Juliet* is a tragedy based on Romeus and Juliet, a poem by the English author Arthur Brooke. *Romeo and Juliet* deals with two teen-aged lovers in Verona, Italy, who are caught in a bitter feud between their families, the Montagues and the Capulets. Romeo, a Montague, and his friends crash a masked ball given by the Capulets. At the ball, Romeo meets Juliet, a Capulet, and they fall in love. The next day, the couple are secretly married by Friar Laurence. Returning from the wedding, Romeo meets Juliet’s cousin Tybalt, who tries to pick a fight with him. But Romeo refuses to fight his new relative. To defend the Montague honor, Romeo’s friend Mercutio accepts Tybalt’s challenge. As Romeo attempts to part the young men, Tybalt stabs Mercutio to death. In revenge, Romeo then fights and kills Tybalt. As a result of the death of Tybalt, Romeo is exiled from Verona.

Juliet’s father tries to force her to marry her cousin Paris, unaware that she is already married. To allow Juliet to escape from her father’s demand, Friar Laurence gives Juliet a drug that puts her into a deathlike sleep for 42 hours. The friar sends a messenger to the exiled Romeo to tell him of the drug, but the messenger is
delayed. Romeo hears that Juliet is dead and hurries to the tomb where she has been placed. There, he takes poison and died by Juliet's side. Juliet awakens to find her husband dead and stabs herself. The discovery of the dead lovers convinces the two families that they must end their feud.

**Henry IV**

*Henry IV*, Part I and II, two related histories partly based on the *Chronicles* by the English historian Raphael Holinshed and on The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth, a play by an unknown English author.

The two parts of Henry IV dramatize events that follow the murder of England's King Richard II. In part I, the guilt-ridden Henry IV wants to go to the Holy Land in repentance for Richard's death. But constant political unrest in England prevents him. At the same time, Prince Hal, his son, leads an apparently irresponsible life with his brawling friends, led by the fat, jolly knight Sir John Falstaff. Falstaff's clowning provides most of the play's humor. The king quarrels with Henry Percy, who is the fiery young son of the powerful Earl of Northumberland. As a result of the quarrel, the Percy family revolts. At the Battle of Shrewsbury, Hal reveals himself to be a brave and princely warrior and kills Hotspur.

Part II of *Henry IV* also has many scenes of Falstaff's clowning. These scenes are set against the background of the continuing Percy rebellion and the approaching death of the ill Henry IV. Hal's brother, Prince John, finally defeats the rebels. The king dies, and Hal takes the throne as Henry V. He immediately reveals his royal qualities and rejects Falstaff and his friends, telling them to leave him alone until they have abandoned their wild living.

Of the two plays, Part I is more memorable. It introduces Falstaff, best characterized by his comment in Part II that "I am not only witty in myself, but the cause that wit is in other men." Falstaff is a bragging, lying, and thievish drunkard. But his faults are balanced by his clever sense of humor, his contagious love of life, and his refusal to take either himself or the world seriously. Falstaff is one of the great comic roles in the theater.

**Twelfth Night**

In Illyria, the Duke of Illyria, Orsino states he is sick in love with Olivia. Valentine reports to him, however, that she will not see him or any other man for seven years while she mourns the death of her father and brother (both died with the last six months). On the seacoast, Viola and her ship's captain come ashore after their ship sinks. Viola fears her twin brother Sebastian is drowned, but the captain thinks he saved himself by holding onto the floating mast. Upon learning that she is in Illyria, governed by Orsino, she convinces the captain to help disguise her as a male so that she may become a servant to Orsino, she convinces the captain to help disguise her as a male so that she may become a servant to Orsino, and it seems, perhaps try to win his love. At Olivia's house, her uncle, Sir Toby Belch, comes home late, drunk as usual, while Olivia's lady-in-waiting Maria lets him in. Soon, Toby's drinking buddy Sir Andrew Aguecheek shows up. Andrew tells Toby he'll head for home the next day, since Olivia won't let him woo her, but Toby convinces him to stay with them another month and promises to try harder to get Olivia to like him (Andrew). Back at the Duke's palace, he asks Viola ( Pretending to be a male servant named Cesario) to approach Olivia and woo her on his behalf. Viola ( as Cesario) promises to do so, but privately reveals she will not try hard, since she desires Orsino. At Olivia's house, Olivia and her servant Feste (aka Clown) trade witticisms when Maria and Toby (drunk as usual) tell her Viola ( as Cesario) is at the door. Learning Viola is come from Orsino, Olivia tells her steward Malvolio to send him away. Finally, though, she agrees to see Viola. Viola speaks to Olivia about Orsino and actually tries to tell her how to distance herself from him. While Viola speaks, Olivia actually starts to fall in love with her (as Cesario) When Olivia makes a pass at Viola, she quickly shuns Olivia off. After Viola leaves, Olivia even has Malvolio send her ring after her (as Cesario).

When Viola receives the ring from Malvolio, she realizes Olivia's new love for her and wonders how things will work out now that Orsino loves Olivia, Olivia loves Viola (as Cesario), and Viola loves Orsino. At the seacoast, Sebastian tells Antonio (the captain that rescued Sebastian, but not Viola) of his fears that Viola is drowned. Sebastian heads to Orsino's court, and though Antonio knows he has enemies there, he follows Sebastian out of pity for his plight. At Olivia's house, Toby and Andrew drink into the night, while the clown
entertains them. Maria appears and Toby starts flirting with her. Malvolio, though, shows up and tries to spoil the fun. After he leaves, Maria tells Toby, Andrew, and the Clown how she plans to trick Malvolio into thinking Olivia is in love with him by penning love letters to him in Olivia's hand. Separately, Andrew tells Toby he is running out of money while he tries to win Olivia, and if he fails, he'll blame Toby. At the Duke's palace, the clown sings songs of love, while Viola and Orsino discuss the qualities of love. Orsino bids Viola approach Olivia again with his greeting, even though Viola insists Olivia will not be moved. In Olivia's garden, Toby, Andrew, Olivia's servant Fabian, and Maria hide and listen to Malvolio pompously dream of his "impending" marriage to Olivia, the idea placed in his mind by Maria's deceptive letters.

Viola comes back to Olivia's house to talk to her for Orsino, but Olivia declares to Viola that she loves her (as Cesario). Andrew again announces he's leaving, but Toby and Fabian again convince him to stay, convincing him she should duel Viola (as Cesario) to impress Olivia to love him. Separately, Toby admits to Fabian he only keeps Andrew around to use his money for alcohol. Sebastian and Antonio arrive in Illyria and Sebastian decides to tour the town, then meet Antonio at the Elephant Inn. At Olivia's house, Malvolio approaches Olivia and makes advances to her, but she thinks him mad. When Toby, Maria and Fabian appear, Malvolio treats them like they are base and he is royal, causing them to laugh uproariously behind his back. Andrew appears with his outrageously stupidly worded challenge to Viola and Toby promises to deliver it. Toby comes to Viola (who had been speaking with Olivia) and tells her (as Cesario) that Andrew, a most fierce and dreaded knight, has a quarrel with Viola and tells her (as Cesario) that Andrew, a most fierce and dreaded knight, has a quarrel with her and will duel her. This greatly fears Viola, but Fabian promises to try to calm Andrew. Separately, Toby tells Andrew that Viola is fierce and unstoppable. Toby gets the two to duel, both fearing the other, when Antonio appears and breaks it up, thinking Viola to be Sebastian. Officers of the Duke then appear and arrest Antonio by order of Orsino. Antonio, thinking Viola to be Sebastian, asks for the money back that he lent Sebastian earlier. Viola, not knowing what he means, denies she knows him (though offers him money on loan), angering him and calling her disloyal.

The officers lead him away while Viola realizes the confusion and finds new hope that Sebastian is alive. After Viola leaves, Toby and Fabian egg Andrew on further to once again duel Viola (as Cesario)

Outside Olivia's house, the clown follows Sebastian around (thinking him Viola) insisting his name is Cesario and that Olivia desires to see him. This annoys Sebastian and he bids the clown to leave. Andrew then appears and strikes back at Andrew, scaring him. Toby, trying to keep Sebastian from Andrew himself duels Sebastian, until Olivia breaks it up. Sebastian immediately falls in love with her and they depart into her house together. In another part of the house, Malvolio is kept prisoner in a cell in the basement by Toby and Maria. The clown pretends to be a priest and visits him, but will not help him, and, rather, makes fun of him and calls him mad. In Olivia's garden, Sebastian ponders the amazement of the finding of his new love Olivia, then she and he go with a priest to the church to be

At Olivia's house, the Duke arrives and entreats the clown to let him see Olivia. While waiting, Antonio shows up with the officers and explains how he rescued Sebastian from the sea then helped him (actually Viola) in the duel. Orsino tells Antonio he is a pirate and not to be trusted since he helped steal one of Illyria's greatest battleships in the past. Olivia arrives and immediately starts doting on Viola (as Cesario), eventually calling her husband, shocking Viola and enraging the Duke. The Priest arrives and confirms the marriage between Olivia and Cesario (actually Sebastian). Andrew then appears and swears Cesario struck Toby alongside the head, wounding him, but Viola denies it. Toby appears, mad at Viola (thinking her Sebastian), but leaves to be bandaged. Finally, Sebastian appears and greets all, while both twins (he and Viola) are amazed and delighted that the other is living. Sebastian promises to keep his marriage to Olivia, and the Duke vows to marry Viola. Malvolio is brought forth from the cell and all learn of the trick played on him. Fabian and the Clown admit they, Toby, and Maria did it all in jest, and in return for Maria's help, Toby married her. However, Malvolio vows to be revenged on them all. The Duke calls his servants to calm Malvolio, and all depart happily.

Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar is a tragedy partly based on Lives by
the ancient Greek biographer Plutarch, as translated by the English writer Sir Thomas North.

The play takes place in ancient Rome and concerns events before and after the assassination of the Roman ruler Julius Caesar. In spite of its title, the play's central character is Brutus, a Roman general and Caesar's best friend. Brutus reluctantly joins a plot to murder Caesar, because he believes Rome's safety requires his death. The plotters attack Caesar in the Roman Senate. He resists until he sees Brutus. Caesar's last words are "Et tu, Brute? [You too, Brutus?] Then fall, Caesar!"

Brutus defends the assassination to a crowd of Romans. But he unwisely allows the clever and eloquent Mark Antony to deliver a funeral speech over Caesar's body. Antony tells the people, "I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him." He then describes the plotters with heavy sarcasm as "honourable men." At the same time, Antony points out Caesar's virtues and thus gradually turns the crowd into a mob ready to burn and kill in order to avenge Caesar's death. The plotters are forced to flee Rome.

Mark Antony leads an army that defeats the forces of the plotters at the Battle of Philippi. At the end of the battle, Brutus commits suicide. Over his corpse, Antony states, "This was the noblest Roman of them all." Antony says that the other plotters killed Caesar out of envy but only Brutus acted with "honest thought / And common good to all."

Julius Caesar became a popular play because of its magnificent language and sharp character portraits. For example, Caesar describes the plotter Cassius as having a "lean and hungry look." But the real interest in Julius Caesar centers on the character of Brutus. A thoughtful, withdrawn man, he is torn between his affection for Caesar and his strong sense of duty to the state.

Hamlet

Hamlet is a tragedy partly based on Hamlet, a lost play by an unknown English author, and on a story in Histories Tragiques, a collection of tales by the French author Francois de Belleforest.

Prince Hamlet of Denmark deeply mourns the recent death of his father. He also resents his mother's remarriage to his uncle, Claudius, who has become king. The ghost of Hamlet's father appears to the prince and tells him he was murdered by Claudius. The ghost demands that Hamlet take revenge on the king.

Hamlet broods about whether he should believe the ghost. In his soliloquies, he criticizes himself for not acting against his uncle. He also considers the dangers and rewards of suicide. Hamlet decides to have a band of travelling actors perform "something like the murder of my father" before the king to see if Claudius will show any guilt. The king's violent reaction to the play betrays his guilt. But Hamlet rejects a chance to kill Claudius while he is on his knees in prayer.

Polonius, the king's advisor, decides to eavesdrop on Hamlet while the prince is visiting his mother in her sitting room. He hides behind a curtain, but Hamlet becomes aware that someone is there. Hamlet stabs Polonius through the curtain and kills him.

Claudius exiles Hamlet to England for killing Polonius. He also sends secret orders that the prince be executed after he arrives in England. But Hamlet intercepts the orders and returns to Denmark. He arrives in time to see the burial of Ophelia, the daughter of Polonius. The girl, whom Hamlet had loved, had gone insane following her father's death and drowned herself.

Laertes, Ophelia's brother, blames Hamlet for the deaths of his sister and father. He agrees to a plot suggested by Claudius to kill Hamlet with a poisoned sword in a fencing match. Laertes wounds Hamlet during the duel and, in turn, is wounded himself by the poisoned weapon. While watching the match, Hamlet's mother accidentally drinks from a cup of poisoned wine Claudius had prepared for Hamlet. Although dying from his wound, Hamlet kills Claudius. At the conclusion of the play, Hamlet, his mother, Claudius, and Laertes all lie dead.

Shakespeare handled the complicated plot of Hamlet brilliantly. In this play, he also created perhaps his greatest gallery of characters. The role of Hamlet in particular is considered one of theater's greatest acting
challenges. Shakespeare focused the play on the deep conflict within the thoughtful and idealistic Hamlet as he is torn between the demands of his emotions and hesitant skepticism of his mind. Hamlet reveals this conflict in several famous and eloquent soliloquies. The best known is his soliloquy on suicide, which begins, “To be or not to be”.

Othello

Othello is a tragedy partly based on a story in Hecatommithi, a collection of tales by the Italian author Cinthio.

Othello, a noble black Moor (North African), has spent his life as a soldier and become a general in the army of Venice, Italy. He marries Desdemona, a beautiful Venetian girl much younger than himself. Almost immediately after the marriage, Othello is ordered to Cyprus, where Desdemona joins him. Othello's villainous aide, Iago, hates the Moor. Iago decides to destroy Othello by persuading him that Desdemona has made love with Cassio, Othello's lieutenant.

Iago quickly convinces Othello that Desdemona has been unfaithful. He achieves his goal by taking advantage of Othello's insecurity over his color, age, and lack of sophistication. Constantly tormented by Iago, Othello murders Desdemona. After the Moor learns he has been tricked, he stabs himself and dies, describing himself as “one that loved not wisely, but too well.”

Othello is Shakespeare's most straightforward tragedy. The action moves rapidly, and the language is simple and direct, like the main character. Othello and Romeo and Juliet differ from Shakespeare's other tragedies in that neither deals with public affairs and royalty. Instead, Othello is a tragedy of personal tensions, of love and hatred, and of jealousy and impatience.

King Lear

King Lear is a tragedy partly based on the Chronicles by the English historian Raphael Holinshed; The True Chronicle History of King Lear, a play by an unknown English author; and Arcadia, a romance in prose and verse by the English author Sir Philip Sidney.

The main plot concerns Lear, an aged king of ancient Britain. He prepares to divide his kingdom among his three daughters - Regan, Goneril, and Cordelia. Lear becomes angry when Cordelia, his youngest daughter, refuses to flatter him to gain her portion of the kingdom. Lear rashly disinherits her. He also exiles his trusted adviser, Kent, for supporting Cordelia.

Regan and Goneril soon show their ingratitude. They deprive Lear of his servants and finally force his to spend a night outdoors during a storm accompanied only by his jester, called the Fool. Lear's mind begins to snap under the strain. But as he approaches madness, he finally sees his errors and selfishness. Cordelia, who had been living in France, returns to Britain and finds the king insane. Lear recovers his sanity and recognizes her. Armies raised by the wicked sisters capture Lear and Cordelia, who is put to death. Meanwhile, Goneril has poisoned Regan in a bitter quarrel over a man they both love and then killed herself. Order is finally restored in the kingdom. But Lear dies of a broken heart as he kneels over the body of Cordelia.

In King Lear, Shakespeare created the brilliant characterizations that mark his dramas at their best. The characters realize their mistakes, which reflects Shakespeare's basic optimism. But they do so too late to prevent their destruction and that of the people around them. This fact is at the heart of Shakespeare's tragic view of humanity.

Macbeth

Macbeth is a tragedy partly based on the Chronicles by Raphael Holinshed. This play is set in Scotland. Returning from battle with his companion Banquo, the nobleman Macbeth meets some witches. They predict that Macbeth will first become thane (baron) of Cawdor and then king of Scotland. Macbeth privately has had ambitions of being king. After the first part of the witches' prophecy comes true, he begins to think the second part may also come true. Encouraged by Lady Macbeth, his wife, Macbeth murders King Duncan, a guest in his castle. Macbeth then seizes the throne of Scotland.
But Macbeth has no peace. Duncan's sons have escaped to England, where they seek support against Macbeth. In addition, the witches had also predicted that Banquo's descendants would be kings of Scotland. Macbeth therefore orders the murder of Banquo and his son, Fleance. Macbeth's men kill Banquo, but Fleance escapes. Macbeth is now hardened to killing. He orders the murder of the wife and children of his enemy Macduff, who had fled to England after Duncan's murder. Macduff then gathers an army to overthrow Macbeth. By this time, Lady Macbeth, burdened with guilt over the murders, has become a sleepwalker. She finally dies. At the end of the play, Macduff kills Macbeth in battle. Duncan's son Malcolm is then proclaimed king of Scotland.

In Macbeth, Shakespeare wrote a tragedy of a man's conscience. During the course of the play, Macbeth changes from a person of strong but imperfect moral sense to a man who will stop at nothing to get and keep what he wants. By the play's end, Macbeth has lost all emotion. He cannot even react to his wife's death, except to conclude that life is only "a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing". On the other hand, Lady Macbeth encourages murder in the beginning. But her conscience grows as her husband's lessens. In addition to its psychological insights, Macbeth has many passages of great poetry. The play is also noted for its bitter humor, which reinforces the tragic action.

**Antony and Cleopatra**

Antony and Cleopatra is a tragedy partly based on Lives by the ancient Greek biographer Plutarch, as translated by the English writer Sir Thomas North. Probably first performed in 1607. First published in 1623.

Mark Antony, together with Octavius and Lepidus, rules the Roman Empire. Antony lives in Roman-conquered Egypt, where he has taken the Egyptian queen, Cleopatra, as his mistress. Political problems in Rome and the death of his wife force Antony to leave his life of pleasure and return home. Back in Rome, he marries Octavius' sister Octavia for political reasons. But Antony soon returns to "his Egyptian dish." Octavius then prepares for war against him.

Antony decides unwisely to fight Octavius at sea. During the battle, Cleopatra's fleet deserts him, and Antony flees with the queen. After Cleopatra's ships desert him in a second battle, Antony finally realizes that he has lost everything. Cleopatra deceives him into thinking that she is dead, and Antony slaps himself. But before he dies, he learns that Cleopatra is still alive. Antony then returns to her and dies in her arms. Cleopatra dresses herself in her royal robes, presses a poisonous snake to her breast, and dies of its bite.

The dazzling poetry of Antony and Cleopatra is one of the tragedy's most notable features. Early in the play, Enobarbus, one of Antony's officers, gives a famous description of Cleopatra that begins, "The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne, / Burned on the water". Cleopatra is Shakespeare's finest female portrayal. At one moment she is playful, then sulking, and then filled with deadly anger. As Enobarbus says:

> Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety. Other women cloy
> The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry
> Where most she satisfies ......

Shakespeare's dramatic use of poetry reveals Antony and Cleopatra from various points of view. On one level, they are merely two people exhausted by a life of excessive pleasure and luxury. On another level, they are tragic characters willing to risk kingdoms for their love. Shakespeare laughs at them for their foolishness, sympathizes with them for their suffering, and admires them for their moments of personal nobility.

**The Tempest**

The Tempest was first published in 1623.

Prospero, the wrongfully exiled Duke of Milan, Italy, lives on an enchanted island with his beautiful daughter, Miranda. The mischievous spirit Ariel and the monster Caliban serve Prospero, who is a skilled magician. Using magic, Prospero creates a tempest (storm) that causes a ship carrying his enemies to be wrecked on the island. The ship also carries the young prince Ferdinand. Miranda loves him at first sight and cries out, "O brave new world that hath such creatures in it." With his magic, Prospero brings Miranda and Ferdinand together and upsets plots laid against him by his shipwrecked enemies. Prospero appears before his enemies and forgives them. He decides to give up his magic and return to Italy, where Ferdinand and Miranda can be married.
Like Cymbeline and The Winter's Tale, The Tempest tells a story in which old injuries are forgiven and the characters begin a new and happier life. In The Tempest, Shakespeare blended spectacle, song, and dance with a romantic love story, beautiful poetry, and broad comedy. The result of this blending is a brilliant dramatic fantasy.

**Ben Jonson (1573-1637)**

Ben Jonson was an outstanding critic and scholar of the Elizabethan Age. He was well-versed in the theory and practice of classical drama. Jonson's greatest merit lies in introducing realism in drama. He made drama the mirror of life and brought it closer to the realities of life.

Ben Jonson's merit lay in his satire and the satirical exposure of the follies and foibles of his time. As a dramatist, he sought to introduce reforms, and he effected several reforms through the medium of his plays.

Ben Jonson's comedies lack the sentimental appeal because his outlook on life was always keenly intellectual. In spite of the fact that Jonson's comedies are called the Comedy of Humours, they lack humour and fun. They revel in wit and satire rather than the true mirth of comedy.

The comedies of Jonson are Every Man in His Humour; Volpone; Barthalomew Fair etc.

- Ben Jonson is a dramatist of the —— age
- Elizabethan

- According to Jonson what gives rise to comedies?
  - Perception of incongruities in human life

- Jonson's comedy of humours is also known as
  - satirical comedy

**Post - Shakespearean Dramatists**

**George Chapman (1559-1634)**

Chapman is best known to the reader by the striking tribute of Keats in his Chapman's Homer. Chapman attempted both tragedies and comedies. His best known tragedies are Busy D'Ambois (1598), Caesar and Pompey and The Tragedy of Chabot. The comedies are All Fools and Gentleman Usher. His best work in comedy, Eastward Ho, was written in collaboration with John Marston.

**Thomas Dekker (1572-1632)**

Dekker loved London and presented London life sympathetically. Dekker was the only dramatist who sympathetically treated the life of craftsmen and the ragtag and bobtail of the streets in his Shoe Maker's Holiday.

**Thomas Heywood (1575-1650)**

The strength of Heywood lay in his portrayal of people belonging to the middle class section in society. Heywood was a prolific dramatist, and his fame rests in his play A Woman Killed with Kindness.

**Thomas Middleton (1570-1627)**

Middleton depicted the follies and foibles of London citizens. The farcical comedies such as A Trick to Catch the Old One and A Chaste Maid in Cheap Side he showed himself as a close observer and critic of the life of his time. The tragedies of Middleton are Women Beware Women and The Changeling, The Game of Chess and The Witch are his last plays.

**Beaumont and Fletcher**

Francis Beaumont (1584-1616) and John Fletcher (1579-1625) collaborated and produced a number of comedies of which The Knight of the Burning Pestle is the most important. They also produced two tragedies The Maid's Tragedy and A king and No king, and a tragi-comedy Philaster. All these plays show a surprising knowledge of the stage.

**Cyril Tourneur (C: 1575-1626)**

The revival of revenge tragedy is seen in the work of Cyril Tourneur. His two famous tragedies are The Revenger's Tragedy and The Atheist's Tragedy.

In Tourneur's plays we have all the symbols traditionally associated with medieval asceticism : the human skull, the charnel house, the seven deadly sins paraded across the stage, the bitter excoriations of lust and gluttony, and a world whose evils are drawn with such brutal exaggeration that they would be merely ludicrous could we not see them in terms of medieval contemptus mundi as the author's way of arguing that man must place his hopes in the world to come.

**John Webster (C: 1580-C: 1625)**

Webster was the most significant writer of tragedies in the Jacobean period. His two tragedies, The
White Devil and The Duchess of Malfi, are prominent landmarks in the history of Jacobean literature. Both the plays were considerably influenced by the revenge tradition which had been popularised in England by Thomas Kyd and later on by John Marston.

**Development of novel during the age of Elizabeth**

The Elizabethan fiction took varied forms and shapes. The following types of fiction were in vogue during the time.

1. The Romances of Lyly, Green and Lodge
2. The Pastoral Novel of Sydney
3. The Picaresque Novel of Nash
4. The Realistic Novel of Nicholas Breton

**John Lyly**

John Lyly's *Eupheus* is a popular Elizabethan fiction. *Eupheus* presents the story of a youth who left the university to see the world. This book was followed by the second part called *Eupheus and His England*. What is significant about Lyly's *Eupheus* is its style. Lyly gave a new kind of English prose which came to be known by the name Eupheuism.

Eupheuism is a style based on alliteration, antithesis and a revival of the pseudo - natural history of medieval fable books. In Lyly's *Eupheus* the chief motto is "A golden sentence is worth a world of treasure."

**Robert Greene**

Greene's novels are moral in tone and their style is imitative of Lyly. His novel, *Pondosto*, resembles Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* that it is generally regarded as the source of Shakespeare's play. Greene's other novels are *Mamilia* and *Menaphone*.

**Thomas Lodge**

Lodge was the follower of Lyly and his *Rosalynde* (1590) is a pastoral novel Composed in the ornate language of *Eupheus*.

**Sir Philip Sidney** (1554-86)

Sidney's *Arcadia* is a pastoral romance representing the restless spirit of adventure and restoration of the age of chivalry. *Arcadia* is an ideal creation. The country it describes is the land of dream and enchantment, of brave exploits, unblemished chastity, constant love and undying friendship. Villainy and profane passion darken these imaginary realms, but they too, like the virtues are all ideal. As the first example in English of pastoral romance, it commanded an influence on later writers, both in England and France.

In the words of Sir Walter Raleigh, "Arcadia is some sort of half way house between the old romances of chivalry and the long winded heroic romances of the 17th century. Action and adventure are already giving way to the description of sentiment, or are remaining nearly as a frame on which the diverse coloured flowers of sentiment may be embroidered."

The style of Sidney is as affected and artificial as that of *Eupheus*. Sidney had the habit of playing with a word, or pair words, and tossing it to and fro until its meaning was more than exhausted. At several places the style becomes poetical and, therefore the work has been called a prose poem.

Sydney was a politician and a diplomat. He had a passion for letters and art. His *Apologie for Poetic* reveals his ideal of noble and classical beauty in writing. His *Arcadia* is a romance in which he gives rein to his fantastic invention. In this work he mingle the pastoral and the chivalrous. Another beautiful work was 'Astrophel and Stella'.

**Thomas Nash**

Another species, Picaresque Novel, was developed by Thomas Nash. *The Unfortunate Traveller* is an important novel of Nash.

**Prose writings of early 16th century**

The important prose writers of the early 16th century were Thomas Elyot, George Cavendish, John Cheke, Thomas Wilson and Roger Ascham.

**Sir Thomas Elyot** (1499-1546)

Elyot was the author of *The Governor* which appeared in 1531. His style is classical. The work is a treatise which is specially meant for those who would be called upon to govern England.

**George Cavendish** (1500-1561)

Cavendish wrote the biography of Wolsey titled *Life of Cardinal Wolsey*.

**Sir John Cheke** (1514 - 1557)

Cheke wrote *The Heart of Sedition* in which he
shows himself vigorous in argument and eloquent in expression.

Sir Thomas Wilson (1525-1581)

In his main work, The Art of Rhetoric, which appeared in 1553, Wilson recommends purity and simplicity of language. He was against the use of outlandish English.

Roger Ascham (1515-1568)

Roger Ascham is the earliest representative of Elizabethan prose. His two important works are Taxophilus (1545) and The School Master (1547). The first is a treatise on archery, and the second is an educational work with enlightening ideas. Ascham is one of the earliest writers of classical prose. The greatest contribution of Ascham lies in the direction of advancing and improving the English prose style. In the words of Compton Rickett, "In an age so saturated with rhetoric and ornate conceits, it is a great tribute to Ascham that he should have achieved a prose at once simple and straightforward, yet never bold nor unmusical."

English prose during the age of Shakespeare

The prose romances

The prose romances produced during the later half of the 16th century were written in a new style called Eupheuistic style, cultivated and developed by John Lyly (1554-1606). Lyly wrote Euphues, a prose romance, in which he laid the foundation of a new style of prose writing which came to be associated with his name.

Sidney's Arcadia, a prose romance, is rich and ornate. Sidney's style, called Arcadian, rises to heights of poetic prose but at other times it is overloaded with fanciful images and antithesis.

Estimating the importance of style which Lyly gave to English prose in Eupheus, Edward Albert writes, "It is the first consciously fabricated prose style in the language. It is mannered and affected almost to the point of being ridiculous, its tricks are obvious and easily imitated, and they were freely applied by the next generation: balanced phrases, intricate alliteration, laboured comparisons drawn from classical and other sources and ornate epithets. The effect is quaint and not displeasing, but the narrative labours under the weight of it."

The pamphleteers

The pamphlets of the time were on religion, politics and literature. The most significant of the pamphleteers were Thomas Nash, Robert Green and Thomas Lodge. These writers cultivated a journalistic style characterised by vigour, force and raciness.

Translations

The classical works that were translated into English during this time were Ovid's Metamorphoses, Plutarch's Lives, Virgil's Aeneid and Homer's Odyssey. The essays of Montaigne were translated, and it paved the way for the cultivation of the essay in the 16th century. The translations enriched the prose literature of the time and opened new ways for introducing into English prose the beauty of classical writings.

Critical prose

Sir Philip Sidney attempted critical prose in his Apology for Poetry. The work was an answer to Stephen Gosson's School of Abuse. Sidney in his work defends poetry strongly against the charges of Gosson and places poetry on a higher level than history and philosophy. The Apology for Poetry is thus a landmark both in the subject matter of prose writing as well as in the development of style.

Dramatic prose

The genre was used by Thomas Kyd in his Spanish Tragedy. Marlowe used it daringly towards the end of Doctor Faustus. Shakespeare resorted to prose in his mad scenes and scenes for comic relief. We have an instance of prose in the last scene in Webster's The Duchess of Malfi. Ben Jonson also employed prose in his comedies. These writers made English prose suitable for the expression of witty, realistic and reflective thoughts.

Character writers

The character writers of the Elizabethan age enriched English prose by their characters. An outstanding character writer was Samuel Butler, the author of Hudibras. His character sketches are about a modern statesman, a mathematician and a romance writer.

Essay

Essay, during the Elizabethan age, was cultivated by Francis Bacon, who is rightly regarded as the father
of English essay. The essays of Bacon are the rich her-itage of the Elizabethan age in the field of prose writing.

- Name the Elizabethan dramatist who is remembered by Keats in one of his sonnets
  - George Chapman

- Who was described by Charles Lamb as "a sort of prose Shakespeare"?
  - Thomas Heywood

- The Knight of the Burning Pestle is a comedy by
  - Beaumont and Fletcher

- Eupheuism, a kind of prose style, is the contribution of
  - John Lyly

- Name the novel of Robert Green which is generally regarded as the source of Shakespeare’s play, The Winter’s Tale.
  - Pondosto

- —— is Sir Philip Sidney's pastoral romance which represents the restless spirit of adventure and the restoration of the age of chivalry
  - Arcadia

- —— is the first example of pastoral romance in English
  - Sidney’s Arcadia

- What is the chief motto of Lyly’s Eupheuism?
  - “A golden sentence is worth a world of treasure”

- The type of novel writing that was developed by Thomas Nash
  - Picaresque novel

- Who is the author of the treatise, The Governour?
  - Sir Thomas Elyot

- Sidney's style is popularly known as
  - Arcadian

- Sidney wrote his Apology for Poetry in response to Stephen Gosson’s
  - The School of Abuse

Poetry dominated the whole of the Renaissance and true prose, is used to instruct, and to satisfy the reason. Many of the prose works of the period derived from the models provided by Lyly's Euphuism and Sidney's Arcadianism. Popular prose writers were Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, Thomas Nashe, Thomas Deklony, Thomas Dekker etc. Some of them were playwrights too.

There were Religious prose writers like Richard Hooker, the preachers, John Donne and Philosophical prose of Francis Bacon (1561-1626).

**Francis Bacon**

Francis Bacon was born on 22nd January, 1561 as the son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, the Lord Keeper of the Great seal, under Queen Elizabeth I. He was educated at the Trinity College, Cambridge, and in preparation for a career of statesmanship, was sent to Paris in the suite of the English ambassador. He then studied law and became Queen's counsel. After the accession of James I he rose rapidly in favour and fortune. He was knighted in 1603 ; became Attorney General in 1613, Privy Councillor in 1616; Lord Keeper in 1617; Lord Chancellor and Baron Verulam in 1618; Viscount St. Albans in 1621. Then came a sudden crash. He was impeached before the House of Lords on various charges of official malpractice, and was fined £ 40,000 and imprisoned. This sentence, however, was never carried out, and ultimately he received royal pardon. Bacon died in 1626.

He is the first in date of the English Philosophers, he is one of the pioneers of modern philosophy in all countries. He formulated 'Novum Organum' in 1620. The Royal Society for Improving Natural Knowledge eminated from Bacon. His capital work 'Instauratio Magna' is written in Latin. He also wrote Essays Advancement of Learning, History of Henry the Seventh, New Atlantis:

It was by his Essays that Bacon proved himself a great writer. The construction is stiff and formal. Their essential merit lies in the density of the thought and expression, brilliant poetic images, and ideas. They have singular force and weight. No one has ever produced a greater number of closely packed and, striking formulas, loaded with practical wisdom. The essays are the first in the classics of English prose, in the proper sense. They are a compendium of precepts, which are true of all men, for all time and in all places.

**Bacon's contribution to English essay**

As far as we know the word 'essay' was first used by Montaigne, from whom it was borrowed by Bacon.
The essays of Bacon were published in three successive editions. The first volume came out in 1597. It contained ten essays titled (1) Of studies (2) Of Discourse (3) Of Ceremonies and Respects (4) Of Followers and Friends (5) Of Suitors, (6) Of Expense (7) Of Regiment of Health (8) Of Honour and Reputation (9) Of Faction and (10) Of Negotiation. The number was increased to thirty eight in 1612, while in 1625, a year before his death, a much augmented edition appeared, in which the number was brought up to fifty eight.

The essays of Bacon are thus divisible into two parts - Earlier Essays and Later Essays. The first written essays are collections of brilliant aphorisms. Bacon speaks of them as "dispersed meditations". The earlier essays are nothing but an "attempt" at a subject. They are remarkable for the extraordinary condensation of thought.

In the later essays we notice a distinct contrast with the earlier essays. He imparts warmth and colour to the style. Metaphors and similes are more frequent, and they have a poetic quality. Bacon presents himself, in these essays, as a moralist, a statesman and a man of the world.

In Bacon’s essays we miss the lightness and friendly chat of the great essayists like Charles Lamb and Montaigne. Bacon is too stately and too majestic to have a confidential interaction with his readers.

Another significant fact about the essays of Bacon is their matter. In Bacon the subject is always important, and however elegant he may be in the treatment of it, he never wanders beyond certain bounds.

Bacon’s essays, according to the nature of the subject dealt in them, can be divided into three broad classes - (1) Moral and Religious (2) Domestic, and (3) Political.

**Moral and religious essays**

These essays seem to be the work of an opportunist. They do not, in fact, embody high principles of morality. The essay, *Of Simulation and Dissimulation*, shows Bacon’s moral standard. Bacon states that to preserve secrecy dissimulation is often necessary, and in some cases even simulation or the pretence to be what one is not. His maxims are prudential. He condemns cunning, not as a thing loathsome and vile, but as a thing unwise. Occasionally he even lays down the rule for immoral conduct without a word of disapproval.

**Domestic essays**

In Bacon’s domestic essays, we find the same coldness and lack of warmth we notice in his moral and religious essays. The domestic essays are *Of Presents* and *Children*, *Of Marriage and Single Life*, *Of Love*, and *Of Friends*.

**Political essays**

Bacon felt himself more at home in the garb of a statesman than in that of a moralist, and among his finest essays are those which deal with political questions. The essay *Of Plantations* is a compendium of principles whose soundness has been gradually established by the experience of generations and centuries. The essay *Of Great Place* describes the manner of the great and high in public life.

The essays of Bacon have been highly admired for their practical wisdom and universality of appeal. They remind the readers of the chapters in Aristotle’s *Ethics* and *Rhetoric* on virtues and characters. Part of Bacon’s influence and charm of appeal of his essays, is due to their style. His sentences are often loosely constructed, but they are generally clear and intelligible. The sentences are short, but what the reader experiences is a treasure of condensed thoughts. Bacon’s essays are a landmark in the history of English literature, and Bacon remains, in the words of Hugh Walker, “the first of English essayists, and for sheer mass and weight of genius, the greatest”.

**Bacon’s contribution to English prose style**

Bacon imparted flexibility to English prose, and his style became suitable for all kinds of subject below the sun.

Bacon had an unrestrained fascination for Latin, and he was quite doubtful whether books written in English would be able to face the ravages of time. He held that “these modern languages will at one time play the bankrupt with books”. It was Bacon’s practice to interlard English with scraps of Latin.

It is found in Bacon’s style that there is an over luxuriance of figures of speech. Bacon was a past master of simile and metaphor. His similes, and metaphors are telling. They strike, charm and thrill. 

Study the following examples.

1. The way of fortune is like milky way in the sky.
2. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested.

3. A mixture of falsehood is like alloy in a coin of gold and silver; which may make the metal work better, but it debaseth it.

Bacon's style was suited for all occasions. Bacon was at certain places extremely simple, easy and graceful. His style in *New Atlantis* and *Henry VII* is easy and clear. Simplicity is their characteristic quality. Bacon was one of the greatest rhetoricians ever lived. Saintsbury says, “In prose rhetoric in the use, that is to say, of language to dazzle and persuade he has few rivals and no superiors in English”.

Bacon's greatness lies in giving a universal appeal to his writings. Of all the essayists of his times, his essays alone have a grip on the readers and their success is partly due to their style.

- The word "essay" is believed to have been first used by
  - Montaigne

- "It is in the Essays alone that the mind of Bacon is brought into immediate contact with the minds of ordinary readers. There he opens an esoteric school, and talks to plain men, in a language which everybody understands about things which everybody is interested". Who made this remark?
  - Thomas Babington Macaulay

- Name a work of Bacon in Latin
  - *Instauratio*

- Which essay of Bacon shows the manner of the great and the high in public life?
  - *Of Great Place*

- Who is the author of the article, *Bacon and the Dissociation of Sensibility*?
  - L.C. Knights

- Bacon's essays, *Of Marriage and Single Life*, *Of Friends*, and *Of Love* are classified as
  - Domestic essays

- “Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested.” This statement is taken from Bacon's essay titled
  - *Of Studies*

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**E Volution of English Poetry**

**Wyatt to Spenser**

Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542) and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517-1547) introduced the sonnet and lyric in English poetry.

**Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542)**

As a diplomat who travelled to Italy, Spain and France, he was induced to reform English verse on the model of the Italians or ancient Greeks seen through Italian eyes.

Wyatt introduced the sonnet in English poetry based on the model of Petrarch. Wyatt's poems were short but fairly numerous. They were for the most part translations, and imitations, both of Italian poetry especially the love-sonnet, and of more serious dictatic Latin poems, such as satires and epistles. Wyatt's love poems, ninety six in all, were published posthumously in 1557 in *Tottle's Miscellany*. These love sonnets of Wyatt paved the way for the love sonnets of Sidney and Spenser. Wyatt imparted emotion and passion, fervour and enthusiasm to English poetry. The fervent voice of the poet's heart can be heard in the sonnets. Personal note in poetry was introduced by Wyatt.

Wyatt wrote satires which were composed in the Italian *terza rima*, once again showing the direction of the innovating tendencies.

Wyatt and Surrey were the pioneers who renewed poetry in England. Wyatt travelled in France and Italy and fashioned English verse on the model of the Italians. He borrowed from the Italians poetic forms which were unknown to the English like Dante's *terzarima*, Serafino's *Strambotti*.

It was by the sonnet that lyricism again entered English poetry. Wyatt's imitations of Petrarch brought
bold and new images into English. His satires, imitated from Horace and Alamanni, are among his happiest innovations, reflecting his energetic and bold character.

**Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517-47)**

Surrey's work consists of sonnets and miscellaneous poems in various metres, notable for their grace and finish. He shared with Wyatt the merit of bringing the sonnet from Italy to England. He gave up the Petrarchan model popularised by Wyatt and prepared the ground of Shakespearean sonnet of three quatrains followed by a couplet.

Surrey's sonnets were grounded in love and were addressed to Geraldine or Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald. They are characterised by emotional flights of imagination marked by an elegiac note. Side by side we notice in them a genuine love for nature. Surrey also composed impersonal sonnets characterised by satirical touches to contemporary personages. The sonnet *To Sardanapalus* is impersonal in character and satirical in tone.

Surrey was the first English poet to use blank verse in his translation of the two books of *Aeneid*. Surrey was a better artist than Wyatt. He sang in sonnets his entirely imaginative love for Geraldine, or Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald. In some impersonal sonnets that this merit as an artist shows itself best. For the sonnet on the Italian model cultivated by Wyatt - two quatrains followed by two tercets - he substituted the less elaborate and easier English form which Shakespeare afterwards adopted, three quatrains with different rhymes followed by a couplet. He introduced blank verse into English, and translated the second and fourth books of the *Aeneid*. Surrey's blank verse is simply the decasyllabic.

Wyatt and Surrey published nothing in their lifetimes. Years later Richard Tottel, a printer, in his famous collection of songs and sonnets known as *Tottel's Miscellany*, included their works.

**Tottel's Miscellany**

*Tottel's Miscellany* was published in 1557. It contained the poems of Wyatt, Surrey and several of their followers. The early poetry of the Elizabethan age is to be seen in this collection.

**Thomas Sackville (1536-1608)**

Sackville is the author of two significant works, *The Mirror of Magistrates* and *Induction*.
merits of the poem are properly those of style and are astonishing. He had an unfailling and truly admirable ease. The love which Colin clout, spenser's pastoral name for himself, bears to the scornful Rosalind, the poet's indignation when the muse is neglected leads him to condemn the idle and proud prelates. From the moment its publication Spenser was the acknowledged national poet.

**The Faerie Queene**

The Faerie Queene was his masterpiece. It is essentially a picture gallery, his characters are both moral and historical personages. His King Arthur, in love with the fairy queen, is magnificence. The allegorical story is *Epithalamion* / *Amoretti* both moral and political. His 'Amoretti' sonnets are addressed to his fiance Elizabeth Boyle and 'Epithalamion' was a fitting conclusion. In them he voices his feelings without recourse to allegory. His sonnets are unique by their purity. In default of ardent passion, the Amoretti have the charm of a harmonious and pure atmosphere. They show his love of the virginal in woman which Coleridge excellently named 'maidenliness'.

*Epithalamion* its 23 stanzas, describe enthusiastically the whole of the poet's wedding day, from the dawn of the sun which lit its glorious hours to the night which left the bride in her husband's arms.

*Prothalamion (1596)* was also the celebration of a marriage, which is filled with smooth images and harmonious lines.

**Spenser as "the Poet's Poet"**

It was Charles Lamb who called Spenser "the Poet's Poet". Spenser is also regarded as the second father of English poetry, Chaucer being the father. Spenser rendered incalculable service to English poetry in a variety of ways and left behind him models of poetic excellence to be emulated and followed by a host of poets who came in his wake. In Spenser's poetry, we have the best and the finest qualities that are generally associated with good and great poetry, and, in a way, he is the fountainhead of all those poetic excellences which are spread over in the works of subsequent poets.

**Samuel Daniel (1562-1619)**

The poems of Samuel Daniel include a sonnet-se-ries called *Delia* (1592) romance called *The Company of Rosamond* (1592), historical poems such as *The Civil Wars* (1595) and the masques, *The Queene's Wake* (1613) and *Hymen's Triumph* (1615).

**Michael Drayton (1563-1631)**

Drayton was the best historical poet of his day. His longest poem is *Polyolbion*, an enormous poem describing the towns, mountains and rivers of Britain with the interesting legends connected with each.

- Name the poet who introduced the sonnet in English on the model of Petrarch?
  - Sir Thomas Wyatt

- was the first English poet to use blank verse
  - Surrey

- is the finest achievement of Sir Philip Sidney in poetry
  - *Astrophel and Stella*

- Who is credited with the creation of the Spensarian stanza?
  - Edmund Spenser

- Spenser's first work, The Shepher's Calendar was dedicated to
  - Sir Philip Sidney

- Spenser was called "the poet's poet" by
  - Charles Lamb

- *Tottle's Miscellany* was published in
  - 1557

- *The Mirror of Magistrates* was written by
  - Thomas Sackville

- is the first English comedy
  - George Gascoigne's *Supposes*

- *Polyolbion*, an enormous poem describing the towns, mountains and rivers of Britain was written by
  - Michael Drayton
JOHN DONNE AND THE METAPHYSICAL SCHOOL OF POETRY

John Donne (1572-1631)

John Donne was one of the most remarkable literary figures of the Elizabethan age. He stood different in the sense that he broke away from Elizabethan traditions and revolted against the easy, fluent style, stock imagery and pastoral conventions of the followers of Spenser. What distinguishes him from the great Elizabthans is the prevailing character of his conceits, his metaphysical wit. To the imaginative temper of Marlowe, Donne superadded the subtlety and erudition of a schoolman. Mere romantic foppery and sensuous emotions were discarded by him as unsuitable for high-class poetry.

Donne wrote various types of poems—lyrics, elegies, satires and religious poems. He introduced subtlety, witticism and reflective imagination in poetry and made it an amalgam of curiosity, vagueness, obscurity and wit. He incongruously brought together ideas as remote from each other as the antipodes mingling the lofty and the mean, the sublime and the trivial. He subjected everything - passion, feeling, sensuousness - to the play of wit.

Donne is perhaps the most singular of English poets, who after a libertine youth took orders at the age of 43 and ended as dean of St. Paul's. He despised convention and the morals of chivalry. His friend and admirer Ben Jonson, said of him that he is "the first poet in the world for some things" and criticised him that 'Donne, for not keeping of accent, deserved hanging'.

His style is analogous. This most beautiful poem is perhaps his Ecstasy. His early poems are profoundly sensuous. They are in revolt against the poetic canons of the age, eg : Songs and sonnets, elegies, stories, and poems like The Dream, Good Morrow, The Canonization, etc.

His religious poems are equally best. His sudden flights from material to the spiritual sphere earned him the name 'metaphysical' a name given by Dryden and confirmed by Samuel Johnson.

As a poet of love

Donne wrote many songs and sonnets on the subject of love. He had a passion for passionate experience, and at the bottom he is more intellectual than emotional. His lyrics are poems of transcendental sensuality highly intellectualised.

Donne set aside the cult of woman worship and instead of regarding women as goddesses worthy of adoration, he presented their fickleness and faithlessness. In the early poems of Donne what is perceptible is a kind of cynical strain. Later on, he introduced the Platonic strain in love poetry. Poems like Twickenham Garden, The Funeral, The Blossom and The Primrose are indicative of the Platonic strain in love poetry.

As a religious poet

Donne wrote his religious poems after 1610, and the greatest, the nineteen Holy Sonnets, and lyrics such as A Hymn to God the Father reveal his religious fervour. They are intense and personal and have a force unique in this class of literature. They reveal the struggle in his mind before taking orders in the Anglican Church, his horror of death, his dread of the wrath of God, and his longing for God's love. They are expressions of a deep and troubled soul. In them are found the intellectual subtlety, scholastic learning, and the 'wit' and 'conceits' of the love poems.

As a metaphysical poet

The term "metaphysical" was applied to Donne by Dryden. Commenting on Donne's poetry Dryden remarked, "He affects the metaphysics". What Dryden meant was that Donne was fond of remote, philosophical learning and expressed his thoughts in a language marked with conceits. It is in this sense of using remote, out-of-the-way thoughts and expressions in poetry that Donne is regarded as a metaphysical poet. Donne's metaphysical poetry reveals a depth of philosophy, a subtlety of reasoning, a mingling of the homely and the sublime, the light and the serious, which make it full of variety and surprise. Imagery, a distinctive feature of the metaphysicals, is extremely breath-taking, far-fetched and fantastic in Donne.
Donne's wit

Wit was the main feature of Donne's poetry. A modern critic, Leisman, regarded Donne as the monarch of wit. In his book, The Monarch of Wit, Leisman observes: "He had, above all, wit; often deliberately outrageous and impudent and coat-trailing, often breath-taking, ingenious in the discovery of comparisons and analogies, but nearly always, in one way or another, argumentative whether in defence of preposterous paradoxes or in the mock-serious devising of hyperbolic compliments."

Donne used conceits in all his poems. In the poem Autrumake Donne compares Mrs Herbert's wrinkles to Love's graves, for Love sits like an anchorite in trench. He is of the opinion that love is not there digging a grave but building a tomb, because when she dies love will die consequently. The poem The Sun Rising is replete with such conceits. The poet exhibits all his learning and metaphysical wit in expressing contempt for the sun. In the poem Twickenham Garden the lover's tears are the wine of love.

Versification

Donne threw style and literary standards to the winds. Donne violated rhythm and subordinated melody to meaning. He introduced into rhymed verse such bold innovations as were customary in the blank verse of the dramatists. Instead of preferring the smooth flowing lines he often preferred those in which the accents have effect of shock, pull up the reader and awaken his attention.

The Canonization - An Appreciation

The Canonization, written after the accession of King James I (1603), is well-known love poem of Donne. According to Prof. Grierson, the poem reveals Donne's Platonic strain of love. Another critic, Theodore Redpath, says that The Canonization expresses Donne's positive attitudes towards love and woman, showing satisfaction in a love relationship. It is said that the poem was born out of the poet's love for Anne More, whom he loved passionately and devotedly, and elopement and subsequent marriage which ruined his fortunes.

The poem is based on a paradox. The paradox is in the sense that the poet daringly treats profane love as if it were divine love. The lovers have not renounced the world and the pleasures of the flesh. They indulge in the joys of love-making, still they are called 'saints'. Donne succeeds in establishing that devoted lovers, like the poet and his beloved, are saints, for they have renounced the world for each other, and the body of each is a hermitage for the other. They are as devoted to each other as a saint is to God, and they may rightly be called saints of love.

The poet subtly argues that love-making is an innocent activity. It does not harm any one. His sighs do not cause storms and sink ships, his tears do not cause any floods, his chills do not effect the weather, and the warmth of his passion does not cause plague.

The imagery of the poem is truly metaphysical. Wit springs out from each cluster of phrases. The affection of the lovers is true and all-absorbing. They are two bodies, but one soul. The analogies in which the lovers are likened to flies, and then to eagle and dove, and then finally to the phoenix, are among the finest instances of Donne's wit and his use of sonnets.

The idea of the resurrection of lovers is reinforced by the suggestion that they mysteriously influence the lives of the succeeding generations of men who will come to the master-priests of love to invoke their blessings.

The poem has a dramatic character too. The "You" whom the speaker addresses is not identified. Let us imagine that it is a person, perhaps a friend, who objects to the speaker's love affair. At any rate, the person represents the practical world which regards love as a trivial feeling. To use the metaphor on which the poem is built, the friend represents the secular world which the lovers have renounced. The opening of the poem anticipates Browning's method of dramatic monologue.

Characteristics of metaphysical poetry

A revolt against the contemporary fashions of poetry, metaphysical poetry intellectualised the prevailing religious spirit, and revolted against the Renaissance softness, smoothness, and sweet expression. It wanted to express new thoughts in a new way. It reveals a union of mind and soul, of thought and emotion.

Metaphysical poetry is largely lyrical. In subject
Matter it is religious and amatory. It explores the remote aspects of human consciousness. According to Mrs Bennet, "in metaphysical poetry emotions are shaped and expressed by logical reasoning and both sound and picture are subservient to this end."

Metaphysical poetry is analytical. They copied neither life nor nature. They were great wits, for wit is a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. They wrote rather as beholders than partakers of human nature; as being looking upon good and evil, impassive and at leisure, making remarks on the actions of men, and the vicissitudes of life without interest and emotion. Their courtship was void of fondness, and their lamentation of sorrow. Their wish was only to say what they hoped had never been said before.

The style of metaphysical poetry is passionately urbane, harsh, hard-surfaced, and granite. It is packed with affectations and conceits.

The language of the metaphysical poets is contemporary. Their rhythm, which is as intricate as their thought, is a stimulant to the intellect. The rhythms of Donne and his followers emerge from meaning.

Herbert is generally regarded as the saint of the metaphysical school. He wrote a number of poems on sacred subjects. Herbert was a priest and during his short career as a priest, he wrote lyrics collected in his volume The Temple of which The Pilgrimage is a remarkable poem. The poems in The Temple show Herbert’s zeal for the Church of England and are concerned with practical theology. They are the most popular of Anglican poems. It appeared after his death. All his verses are the expression of his piety as a man and as a priest. He expresses everything in by imagery. He is subtle to the point of the enigmatic. His other poems are Virtue, Elixir, The Quip, The Pulley, The Collar etc. The last two are moving in their strangeness.

Richard Crashaw (C:1613 - 1649)

Crashaw began by writing the verses of an amorous and humanist. His lyric flights have been equalled only by Shelley. His poems are approximations to thought, full of music and imagery.

Like Herbert, Crashaw too was closely associated with the Roman Church. He was an Anglican originally, but later on became a Catholic. The principal poetical work of Crashaw is The Step to the Temple, a collection of religious poems. Like Donne and Herbert, Crashaw freely indulged in metaphysical conceits, and like them he wrote great religious poetry. Delight of the Muses and Wishes to His Supposed Mistress are his notable secular poems. The most characteristic poems of Crashaw are perhaps The Flaming Heart and the Hymn to Saint Teresa.

Henry Vaughan (C : 1623-1695)

He began by writing secular poetry. But an illness detached him from the world and turned his thoughts to spiritual things.

Henry Vaughan was at heart a mystic, more at home in sacred than in secular verse. His important works are Poems, Olor Iscanus, Silex Scintillans and Thalia Rediviva. His poem The Retreat is a poem of Childhood which influenced Wordsworth in the composition of Ode on Intimations of Immortality. Like Wordsworth he too feels nature’s infinite beauty, as Vaughan sees nature as symbolic of God. The best of Vaughan’s other poems are The World, Departed Friends and The Hidden Flower. These poems show an extraordinary insight into the mystical life of nature and the heart of childhood and a strange nearness to the unseen world.

Abraham Cowley (1618-1667)

John Milton considered Cowley as one of the three great English poets, the other two being Shakespeare and Spenser.

Cowley wrote love verses in the fashion of the day, but his love poems, published in 1647 in the collect-
tion called *The Mistress*, lack passion. His poetry is saturated with learned reminiscences and scintillates with witticism. Wit is the hallmark of Cowley. Cowley lay his hands on epics too by writing *Davidies*. Other remarkable poems of Cowley are the *Ode of Wit* and *Against Hope*.

When Dr. Johnson wrote his *Lives of the English Poets* (1779-81), he began with Cowley, Cowley headed the moderns. He was the last of the metaphysical poets and in many respects fresh-awed, the English classicists. *Davideis* is an epic by him. His best work is contained in his *Miscellanies*. One of his smallest masterpieces is the ode, *of wit*, in it he defines wit in the classical manner. His remarkable poem *Against Hope*, is a subtle definition of hope. His *Essays* is more read than his verses.

**Andrew Marvell (1621-1678)**

Andrew Marvell was the only Puritan among the metaphysical poets, but he was not the enemy of worldly and artistic amusement. He was a humanist and wit. Marvell's poetry is based on the adoration of nature. His feeling for nature, though not mystical, rises in *The Garden* to a kind of ecstasy. *The Garden* foreshadows Keats by its sensuousness, and Wordsworth by its optimistic and severe meditative mood. Marvell loved birds and his love had a natural grace about it. Marvell's feeling for animals, his suffering when they suffer, is voiced with infinite gracefulness in his semi-mythological poem *The Nymph Complaining of the Death of the Fawn*. *The Gallery* and *To His Coy Mistress* are Marvell's outstanding love poems. His lines in *To His Coy Mistress* share Donne's strength and passion without his obscurity and had run easily and harmoniously. In his love poetry Marvell takes an opportunity to denounce woman's tricks, artifices and coquetry. It issues from a heart truly deep and passionate, and the love which is demanded is forceful and violent.

Marvell was an ardent patriot. Patriotism dictated his fine ode *Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland*.

He is inspired by the country. He indulged far more fully in the happy contemplation of natural scenery. Marvell relates his own feelings in the longest of his poems "Upon Appleton House". He is very Wordsworthian in this poem. His *Garden* foreshadows Keats by its sensuousness. *To His Coy Mistress* was his popular poem. They are the masterpiece of metaphysical poetry.

**The Cavalier Poets**

Robert Herrick, Thomas Carew, Sir John Suckling, and Richard Lovelace are known as Cavalier poets. With the notable exception of Robert Herrick, the other poets of this group lived in the court of Charles I. They had their leanings towards the king as against the Puritans, but they did not use their poetry as a means of propaganda against the enemies of the king. They were lyrical poets and dealt chiefly with love, beauty and war. With the exception of Robert Herrick, who wrote both religious and secular poems, other Cavalier poets only dealt with secular themes.

**Major Cavalier Poets**

**Robert Herrick (1591-1674)**

Herrick was the chief of those who took inspiration from Ben Jonson and called themselves "Sons of Ben". His two volumes of poems are *Noble Numbers* and *Hesperides*, collections of short poems, sacred and profane. In them he reveals lyrical power of a high order, fresh, passionate, and felicitously exact but, at the same time, meditative and observant.

**Sir John Suckling (1609-1642)**

Suckling typifies the Cavaliers, their loyalty, dash, petulancy and wit. His lyrics are all of love, and they have in them an irresistible swing. They are characterised by an impertinent tone, particularly in his attack on women. Suckling's two fine lyrics are *Ballad upon a Wedding* and *Why so Pale and Wan, Fond Lover*.

**Richard Lovelace (1618-1658)**

Lovelace is remembered chiefly for two poems, *To Lucasta, Going to the wars* and *To Althea, from prison*. Mostly the lyrics of Lovelace are wanting in craftsmanship and are marked with affected wit and gallantry.
John Cleveland (1613-1658)

Cleveland excelled in wit and satire. He was Donne's most determined imitator and conceits abound in his works which spoil the natural flow of his verse. The best known of Cleveland's works is the satire *The Rebel Scot*, a fiery attack on the nation which had just delivered Charles I to the Parliament.

☐ The term 'metaphysical' was applied to Donne by
  - Dryden

☐ Name the critic who regarded Donne as the 'monarch of wit'
  - Leisiman

☐ The love poem of Donne which treats lover's tears as the wine of love
  - Twickenham Garden

☐ Which poem of Donne is said to have born out of the poet's love for Anne More?
  - The Canonization

☐ The poet who is regarded as the "saint of the metaphysical school".
  - George Herbert

☐ To His Coy Mistress is a famous love poem of
  - Andrew Marvell

☐ The Cavalier poets dealt mainly with — themes
  - Secular

John Milton (1608-1674)

Milton was one of the greatest poets of England and is placed next to Shakespeare in the hierarchy of English poets. Milton was born in London, on 9th December, 1608. He was educated at St. Paul’s School, and at Christ's College, Cambridge, where he took his B.A in 1629, and M.A. in 1632. In his thirtieth year, he resolved to complete his studies by travel, and, therefore, left London for Italy. But, the critical state of things at home brought him back to London, and from 1640 onwards, he was an active supporter of the Puritan cause against the Royalists. On the establishment of the Commonwealth, Milton was appointed Latin Secretary. In 1653, a terrible calamity took over him — he got blind. On the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Milton was arrested but was soon released and forced to drop into political obscurity. It was in darkness and sorrow that he now turned back upon the ambitious poetical designs which he had long cherished. *Paradise Lost* was published in 1667; *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* together in 1671. Milton died on 8th November, 1674.

The works of Milton

Milton's *L. Allegro* presents the life of the joyful man from the early morning to the time of his retiring. It is an invocation to the goddess Mirth to allow the poet to live with her amid the delights of rustic scenes. *Il Penseroso* is an invocation to goddess Melancholy bidding her to bring peace and quiet, leisure and contemplation. The poem, which represents the Puritan outlook on life, describes the pleasure of the studious meditative life, of tragedy, epic poetry and music.

Milton's *Comus* is a masque written at the request of Henry Lawes, a musician, who supplied the music and played the part of the Attendant Spirit when the masque was presented in 1634. *Comus* is a remarkable poem of Milton where Puritanism shows clear signs of its influence. It displays Milton's high poetical qualities. It shows him on transition from the pastoral, idyllic manner of his early poems towards the greater purpose which informed his mature work.

*Lycidas* is a pastoral elegy on the death of Edward King, Milton's friend who got drowned in the Irish sea. It is written on the classical model of Theocritus and Bion. The actual subject of the poem is the uncertainty and torment occasioned in Milton's mind by his realization that death might forestall the achievement of fame which was his ambition. In its varying moods we see the interplay of doubt, fear, anger, and finally a peaceful reliance on the belief that true fame rests on God and is to be found in heaven. It is this underlying subject which gives the poem its passionate sincerity.

In *Lycidas* Milton writes about fame and the corruption prevailing in the Roman Catholic church. The poem of mourning becomes a poem of vigorous satire and strong personal note. The passage in the poem on fame reflects
Milton's own ambition and the lines in which St. Peter thunders against the corrupt clergymen of the times represent the force and fire of Milton's religious enthusiasm and his disregard for Roman Catholicism. In this way the poem rises to a pitch of intensity which makes the lament for his friend almost pale in contrast. The presence of classical legends and pastoral conventions makes it something more than a pastoral elegy.

**Paradise Lost**

Milton began the work as early as 1685. It was first divided into ten books, but in the second edition it was redivided into twelve. The theme of *Paradise Lost* is the fall of man, and, in form, it follows the strict unity of the classical epic. Milton's aim in writing, the epic was to justify the ways of God to man, but he leaves the problem insoluble as ever. The vast and vague dimensions of the poet's universe, in which supernatural beings pass between Heaven and Earth, between Hell and Chaos baffle one's imagination.

The most important character in the epic is Satan, the rebel of Heaven and enemy of God. It is in Satan's personality that Milton has put most of himself. It has been suggested by many that Satan is the hero of *Paradise Lost*. The poet, William Blake, held that, Milton was of the devil's party. However, the judgment is not fully justifiable, because at the end of the poem, Satan's degradation is complete.

The work is an example of what Arnold called "the grand style". It is perhaps the greatest example in any language of that style, and it sustains that style almost in its entirety with miraculous power. His imagination is lofty and grand, his style majestic and sonorous.

**Paradise Regained**

*Paradise Regained* completes and answers *Paradise Lost*. Its theme is taken from the first verses of the fourth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel. *Paradise Regained* describes the temptation of Christ by Satan, and answers the victory of the former. The chief interlocutors are Christ and Satan.

**Samson Agonistes**

The theme of *Samson Agonistes*, like *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, is Biblical. The incidents mentioned in the drama are based on the *Book of Judg-
trasted with Shakespeare whose objectivity is well marked in his plays. Milton can be seen and felt in almost all his works. His early poems are reflections of his own personality. Milton presents himself as a lover of pleasures and joys of countryside in L'Allegro. In Il Penseroso he is a thoughtful student devoted to the study of Greek tragedy and philosophy. In Comus Milton is present in the form of the heroine. In Lycidas, Milton thinks more of himself than his friend, Edward King. Milton's Puritanical attitude towards women finds expression in Paradise Lost. In Samson Agonistes Milton puts himself in the figure of Samson. It is an autobiographical fragment and gives an insight into the life and mind of Milton. It is the most personal of Milton's works and the most passionate.

**Milton's classicism**

Milton was a keen student of the ancient classics, and was steeped in classical learning. His classical bent is evident in his choice of classical and semi-classical forms — the epic, the Greek tragedy, the pastoral and the sonnet; the elaborate description and enormous similes in Paradise Lost; and the fondness for classical allusion, which runs through all his poetry.

**Versification**

Milton employed rhymed verse in his early poems, Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity, Il Penseroso and L'Allegro. But soon he discarded it in favour of blank verse. Milton was the first poet to use blank verse in non dramatic poetry, and he gave it a stamp of perfection. Matthew Arnold said that Milton's blank verse is the "Sure and flawless perfection of rhythm and diction." Milton is a consummate master of English blank verse gifted in its varied movements and the placing of pauses, majestic in its flowing cadence, stern in its beauty, lofty in tone, incomparable in its dignity.

| Blank Verse | Blank verse consists of iambic pentameter (five-stress iambic verse) which are unrhymed - hence the term "blank". Of all English verse forms it is closest to the natural rhythms of English speech, yet flexible and adaptive to diverse levels of discourse, as a result it has been more frequently and variously used than any other type of versification. It became the standard meter for Elizabethan and later poetic drama. |
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ogy, alchemy, witchcraft and magic. His works have echoes of all these beliefs. The habitual themes of Thomas Browne are those of a preacher — the vanity of glory and the nearness of death. The five well-known books of Browne are Religio Medici, Pseudodoxia Epidemica or Vulgar Errors; Hydriotaphia or Urn Burial; The Garden of Cyprus and Christian Morals.

**John Milton**

Between the age of thirty and forty Milton gave up verse almost entirely and took to prose writing. Milton's prose style is marked with scholarship and classical dignity. There is eloquence, rhetoric and persuasiveness in his writing.

*True Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* is a political pamphlet of Milton which takes up the matter of political liberty.

In his ecclesiastical pamphlets Milton dealt with the question of religious liberty against the episcopal form of church government.

*Areopagitica* was published in 1644. The work, addressed to the Parliament, is Milton's vindication of his plea for liberty of the press.

**Thomas Hobbes**

Hobbes was a great philosophic and political writer of the seventeenth century who believed that the universe is composed of matter. Hobbes' political and ethical theories are expressed in his outstanding work, *Leviathan*. Hobbes states in this work that man is a purely selfish animal invariably pursuing his own personal good, irrespective of the interest of others.

- The Anatomy of Melancholy was written by Robert Burton
- Name the political pamphlet of Milton which takes up the matter of political liberty.
  - *True Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*
- ___ is Milton's vindication of his plea for liberty of the press.
  - *Areopagitica*
- Thomas Hobbes's outstanding work in which his political and ethical theories are expressed.
  - *Leviathan*
- The note of Puritanism and morality is first expressed in Milton's mask titled
  - *Comus*
- Who made this remark?
  "Almost all men are less humorous than Shakespeare, but most men are more humorous than Milton".
  - Sir Walter Raleigh

- Name the elegy of Milton that mourns the death of Edward King, the poet's friend.
  - *Lycidas*
- ___ is the poem, the subject of which is the uncertainty and torment occasioned in Milton's mind by his realisation that death might forestall the achievement of fame.
  - *Lycidas*
- The theme of Milton's *Paradise Lost* is
  - the fall of Man
- Who said that Milton's blank verse is the "sure and flawless perfection of rhythm and diction"?
  - Matthew Arnold