

BRITISH LITERATURE- 17th Century

Unit I

The Puritan Movement in 17th-Century England

The Puritan movement emerged in 17th-century England as a religious and social reform movement. Its adherents, the Puritans, sought to purify the Church of England, which they believed had retained too many Catholic practices and doctrines. The movement was rooted in Calvinist theology, emphasizing predestination, the sovereignty of God, and the importance of individual faith.

The Puritans faced significant opposition from the Anglican establishment, which maintained its hierarchical structure and liturgical traditions. As a result, many Puritans were persecuted, imprisoned, or exiled. Some, such as the Pilgrims and Puritans, emigrated to the New World, where they founded colonies such as Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay.

The Puritan movement had a profound impact on English society and culture. Their emphasis on education, hard work, and self-discipline contributed to the development of a strong middle class. Puritan values also influenced the development of American democracy, with their emphasis on individual liberty and self-government.

However, the Puritans were not without their flaws. Their strict adherence to religious orthodoxy often led to intolerance and persecution of dissenters, such as Quakers and Anabaptists. Moreover, their emphasis on predestination could be seen as a pessimistic view of human nature, suggesting that individual effort was ultimately futile.

Despite its limitations, the Puritan movement remains an important chapter in English history.

The English Civil War: A Clash of Ideals

The English Civil War, a conflict that raged from 1642 to 1651, was a pivotal event in English history. It was a clash between two opposing factions: the Royalists, who supported King Charles I, and the Parliamentarians, who advocated for the supremacy of Parliament. This conflict was rooted in deep-seated political, religious, and social tensions that had been simmering for decades.

At the heart of the conflict was a struggle for power between the King and Parliament. Charles I, a devout Anglican, sought to govern as an absolute monarch, asserting his divine right to rule. Parliament, on the other hand, demanded greater control over taxation, the military, and other aspects of government. The growing tensions between the King and Parliament reached a boiling point in the 1640s, leading to the outbreak of civil war.

Religious differences also played a significant role in the conflict. The Puritans, a Protestant sect that sought to reform the Church of England, were increasingly at odds with the Anglican establishment. Many Puritans supported Parliament, while the Royalists tended to be more conservative in their religious views. The war became a battleground for competing religious ideologies, with both sides accusing the other of heresy.

The English Civil War had a profound impact on English society and politics. The victory of the Parliamentarians led to the execution of King Charles I in 1649 and the establishment of the Commonwealth, a republic ruled by Oliver Cromwell. The war also marked a turning point in English history, as it solidified the power of Parliament and laid the groundwork for the development of constitutional monarchy.

The English Civil War was a complex and multifaceted conflict with far-reaching consequences. It was a clash of ideals, a struggle for power, and a battleground for competing religious ideologies.

The Restoration of the English Monarchy

The Commonwealth period, which followed the execution of King Charles I in 1649, was a radical experiment in republican governance. Led by Oliver Cromwell, the Commonwealth sought to establish a new political order based on religious tolerance and social equality. However, the Commonwealth faced numerous challenges, including economic difficulties, religious divisions, and political instability.

The growing discontent with Cromwell's rule and the desire for a return to traditional monarchy led to the Restoration of the Stuart dynasty in 1660. Charles II, the son of the executed king, was invited to return to England and assume the throne. The Restoration marked a significant turning point in English history, ushering in a new era of political, social, and cultural change.

The Restoration was characterized by a renewed emphasis on traditional English institutions and values. The monarchy was reestablished, and the Church of England was restored as the official state religion. However, the Restoration also brought about significant changes. The monarchy was no longer as absolute as it had been under the Stuarts, and Parliament gained greater influence over government affairs.

The Restoration era witnessed a flourishing of arts and culture, with the rise of Restoration comedy and the development of a distinctive style of architecture. The period also saw significant economic growth, as England expanded its trade and colonial empire. However, the Restoration was not without its challenges. Religious tensions persisted, and the country faced threats from both domestic and foreign enemies.

The Restoration of the English monarchy was a complex and multifaceted event with far-reaching consequences. It marked a return to traditional institutions and values, while also ushering in a new era of political, social, and cultural change.

Metaphysical Poetry: A Quest for the Divine

Metaphysical poetry, a literary movement that flourished in 17th-century England, was characterized by its intellectual complexity, philosophical depth, and unconventional use of imagery. This poetic style, championed by poets such as John Donne, George Herbert, and Andrew Marvell, sought to explore the mysteries of love, religion, and the human condition through intricate arguments and paradoxical imagery.

One of the defining features of metaphysical poetry was its intellectual rigor. Metaphysical poets often employed philosophical concepts and theological arguments to explore complex themes such as the nature of love, the relationship between the soul and the body, and the meaning of life. They were not afraid to delve into the depths of human experience and to question traditional beliefs and values.

Another key characteristic of metaphysical poetry was its unconventional use of imagery. Metaphysical poets often employed unexpected and surprising analogies to convey their ideas. They were particularly skilled at using metaphysical conceits, extended metaphors that compared seemingly unrelated things in a surprising and thought-provoking way. These conceits often served to illuminate the poet's philosophical or religious ideas.

Metaphysical poetry was a response to the more conventional and sentimental style of poetry that was popular in the 16th century. The metaphysical poets sought to create a more intellectually challenging and stimulating form of poetry. They were influenced by the philosophical and religious debates of their time, and their poetry often reflects the intellectual ferment of the 17th century.

Metaphysical poetry had a profound impact on the development of English literature. Its intellectual rigor, unconventional imagery, and philosophical depth have inspired generations of poets and critics.

Restoration Drama: A Stage of Change

Restoration drama, a literary movement that flourished in England during the late 17th century, marked a significant departure from the Puritanical ideals that had dominated the previous era. Characterized by its witty dialogue, bawdy humor, and focus on social and political satire, Restoration drama reflected the changing cultural and political landscape of the time.

The Restoration period, which began in 1660 with the return of King Charles II to the throne, ushered in a new era of social and cultural freedom. The Puritans, who had previously held sway over English society, were now out of power, and their strict moral codes were gradually being eroded. This newfound freedom allowed playwrights to explore a wider range of themes and subjects, including love, marriage, money, and social class.

One of the most distinctive features of Restoration drama was its focus on comedy. Playwrights such as William Wycherley, John Dryden, and William Congreve excelled at creating witty and satirical comedies that poked fun at the foibles of society. These plays often featured characters who were morally ambiguous and socially ambitious, and they frequently explored themes such as infidelity, hypocrisy, and the pursuit of wealth.

Another important aspect of Restoration drama was its emphasis on spectacle and entertainment. Playwrights often incorporated elaborate sets, costumes, and special effects into their productions, creating a visually stunning experience for the audience. This emphasis on spectacle was partly due to the influence of Italian opera, which was becoming increasingly popular in England at the time.

Restoration drama reflected the changing social and political landscape of the late 17th century. It was a time of great social and cultural upheaval, and playwrights were eager to explore the new freedoms that were available to them.

Sentimental and Anti-Sentimental Comedy: A Comparative Analysis

Sentimental and anti-sentimental comedy represent two distinct approaches to humor that have shaped the development of dramatic literature. Sentimental comedy, characterized by its emphasis on emotional appeal and moral uplift, aims to evoke sympathy and compassion in the audience. In contrast, anti-sentimental comedy employs satire, irony, and cynicism to challenge sentimental conventions and expose the hypocrisies of society.

Sentimental comedy often revolves around virtuous protagonists who face adversity but ultimately triumph through their goodness and perseverance. The plots of these plays are typically predictable, with clear-cut heroes and villains, and the endings are invariably happy. Sentimental comedies often rely on stock characters, such as the virtuous young woman, the scheming villain, and the loyal servant, to evoke predictable emotional responses from the audience.

Anti-sentimental comedy, on the other hand, is more critical and cynical in its approach. It often satirizes social conventions, political institutions, and human behavior. Anti-sentimental comedies may feature morally ambiguous characters and

unpredictable plot twists. The endings of these plays are often bittersweet or even tragic, as they challenge the audience's expectations and force them to confront the darker side of human nature.

While sentimental and anti-sentimental comedy represent two distinct approaches to humor, they are not mutually exclusive. Many plays incorporate elements of both sentimental and anti-sentimental comedy, creating a more complex and nuanced experience for the audience. For example, a sentimental comedy may include satirical elements that poke fun at the foibles of its characters. Conversely, an anti-sentimental comedy may also contain moments of emotional appeal and moral uplift.

In conclusion, sentimental and anti-sentimental comedy offer two distinct approaches to humor that have shaped the development of dramatic literature. Sentimental comedy emphasizes emotional appeal and moral uplift, while anti-sentimental comedy employs satire, irony, and cynicism to challenge sentimental conventions. While these two approaches may seem contradictory, they can also complement each other, creating a more complex and nuanced experience for the audience.

The Growth of Criticism in 17th-Century British Literature

The 17th century witnessed a significant growth in critical discourse surrounding British literature. This development was fueled by several factors, including the rise of a literate middle class, the establishment of literary academies, and the increasing sophistication of literary taste.

One of the most important factors contributing to the growth of criticism in the 17th century was the rise of a literate middle class. As more people learned to read and write, there was a growing demand for literary criticism. This led to the publication of a wide range of critical works, from scholarly treatises to popular reviews.

Another significant factor was the establishment of literary academies, such as the Royal Society in London. These academies provided a forum for scholars and writers to discuss literary matters and exchange ideas. They also published journals and other works that contributed to the development of critical discourse.

The increasing sophistication of literary taste was another factor that led to the growth of criticism in the 17th century. As readers became more discerning, they demanded more sophisticated and insightful criticism. This led to the development of new critical approaches, such as neoclassical criticism, which emphasized the importance of reason, order, and clarity in literature.

The growth of criticism in the 17th century had a profound impact on the development of British literature. It helped to establish literary standards, to promote the appreciation

of literary excellence, and to foster a more sophisticated and intellectually engaged literary culture.

Unit II

John Bunyan Pilgrims Progress

A Critical Appreciation of John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress

John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress is a timeless masterpiece of religious allegory that continues to captivate readers centuries after its initial publication. The work, written in a simple and accessible style, tells the story of Christian's journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City, serving as a metaphor for the spiritual quest for salvation.

Bunyan's masterful use of allegory is one of the key strengths of Pilgrim's Progress. The characters, settings, and events in the story are all symbolic representations of spiritual concepts. Christian, for instance, represents the human soul struggling to overcome sin and attain salvation. The journey he undertakes symbolizes the Christian life, filled with trials, temptations, and ultimate triumph.

The book is also notable for its vivid and memorable characters. The protagonist, Christian, is a relatable figure who grapples with doubt, fear, and temptation. The supporting characters, such as Evangelist, Worldly Wiseman, Faithful, and Hopeful, provide a diverse cast of individuals who influence Christian's journey in significant ways.

Bunyan's prose is remarkably clear and engaging, making Pilgrim's Progress accessible to readers of all ages and backgrounds. The author's ability to convey complex theological ideas in simple language is a testament to his literary skill.

Despite its religious themes, Pilgrim's Progress has universal appeal. The story's exploration of the human journey towards spiritual enlightenment resonates with readers of all faiths and backgrounds. The book's enduring popularity is a testament to its timeless message and its enduring literary value.

In conclusion, John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress is a masterpiece of religious allegory that continues to captivate readers centuries after its initial publication. The book's masterful use of symbolism, vivid characters, and accessible prose make it a timeless classic .

Unit III Poetry

A Critical Appreciation of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book 1, Lines 1-83

John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, a grand epic poem, begins with a powerful invocation to the Holy Spirit, seeking divine inspiration for the daunting task of narrating the fall of man. The opening lines establish the poem's epic scope and its exploration of the profound themes of good and evil, free will, and the nature of God.

Milton's choice to begin the poem in *medias res*, "Of Man's first disobedience, and the Fruit / Of that forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste / Brought Death into the World, and all our woe," immediately plunges the reader into the heart of the narrative. This technique creates a sense of urgency and mystery, inviting the reader to delve deeper into the epic's unfolding story.

The invocation to the Holy Spirit is a significant element of the poem, as it establishes Milton's religious and philosophical beliefs. By seeking divine inspiration, Milton positions himself as a humble instrument of God, conveying a sense of reverence and humility. The invocation also foreshadows the epic's exploration of theological themes, such as the nature of sin, the concept of free will, and the ultimate triumph of good over evil.

The opening lines of *Paradise Lost* set the stage for a monumental epic, establishing its themes, scope, and tone. Milton's masterful use of language, imagery, and theological concepts creates a powerful and engaging introduction to one of the greatest works of literature.

A Critical Appreciation of Richard Crashaw's "The Shepherd's Hymn"

Richard Crashaw's "The Shepherd's Hymn" is a stunning example of metaphysical poetry, characterized by its intellectual complexity, intricate imagery, and exploration of theological themes. The poem's opening lines, "See, how the Sun doth gild the Dew," immediately establish a sense of wonder and awe as the poet describes the beauty of the natural world.

Crashaw employs a rich tapestry of imagery to convey his spiritual message. He compares the sun's rays to "golden wires," and the dew to "pearls," creating a visually striking picture of the natural world. This imagery is not merely decorative; it serves to illuminate the poet's theological themes, such as the divine presence in creation and the beauty of the spiritual life.

The poem also explores the relationship between the shepherd and his flock, a metaphor for the relationship between God and his people. The shepherd's care for his

sheep symbolizes God's loving guidance and protection. Crashaw's use of this metaphor adds depth and meaning to the poem, elevating it beyond a mere description of a pastoral scene.

One of the most striking features of "The Shepherd's Hymn" is its use of paradox. The poet juxtaposes the beauty and harmony of the natural world with the darker realities of human existence. This paradoxical approach creates a sense of tension and ambiguity, inviting the reader to contemplate the complexities of faith and human experience.

In conclusion, Richard Crashaw's "The Shepherd's Hymn" is a masterful example of metaphysical poetry. Its intricate imagery, theological themes, and paradoxical structure make it a work of enduring value.

A Critical Appreciation of Absalom and Achitophel, Lines 150-250

John Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* is a masterfully crafted political satire that uses biblical characters and events to comment on contemporary English politics. In lines 150-250, Dryden paints a vivid portrait of Achitophel, a cunning and manipulative advisor who seeks to undermine King David's authority.

Dryden's characterization of Achitophel is both scathing and insightful. He portrays Achitophel as a man of great intelligence and cunning, but also as a deeply flawed individual who is driven by ambition and a thirst for power. Achitophel is described as a "talented plotter," a "master of intrigue," and a "viperous foe." His language is sharp and sarcastic, and he is adept at manipulating others to serve his own ends.

Despite his negative qualities, Dryden's portrayal of Achitophel is not without a certain admiration. The poet acknowledges Achitophel's intelligence and his ability to see through the pretensions of others. However, he also condemns Achitophel's ambition and his willingness to betray his friends and allies.

Dryden's use of biblical imagery adds depth and complexity to his characterization of Achitophel. By comparing Achitophel to the biblical figure of Ahithophel, a counselor to King David who betrayed him, Dryden suggests that Achitophel's actions are not merely a product of his own personal ambition, but rather a reflection of a timeless pattern of human behavior.

In conclusion, Dryden's portrait of Achitophel in lines 150-250 is a powerful and insightful piece of political satire. Through his vivid characterization and use of biblical imagery, Dryden creates a memorable and complex figure who serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of ambition and the corrupting influence of power.

John Donne's "The Good Morrow": A Celebration of Love

John Donne's "The Good Morrow" is a captivating sonnet that explores the profound nature of love and its ability to transcend time and space. The poem presents a vision of love as a state of blissful union, where two lovers are so deeply connected that they become one.

The opening lines of the poem establish a sense of wonder and awe as the speaker addresses his beloved, asking her to imagine a world without them. He suggests that their love is so powerful that it can eclipse the sun and moon, rendering the world meaningless without their presence. This hyperbolic language emphasizes the intensity and exclusivity of their love.

The speaker then turns to the theme of time and its limitations. He argues that time, which is often associated with aging and decay, is irrelevant in the face of their love. Their love is eternal, transcending the boundaries of time and space. The image of "one bed" suggests a state of perfect union, where two become one.

The poem concludes with a powerful affirmation of love. The speaker declares that their love is so intense that it can "make heaven a new world," implying that their love is a divine force that can transform reality. This final line is a bold and moving statement of the power of love to transcend the limitations of human existence.

"The Good Morrow" is a beautiful and moving celebration of love. Donne's use of vivid imagery, powerful metaphors, and philosophical exploration make this sonnet a timeless masterpiece.

Unit IV

A Critical Appreciation of John Dryden's The Indian Emperor

John Dryden's *The Indian Emperor* is a heroic tragedy that was first performed in 1667. The play is set in the Mughal Empire and explores themes of love, loyalty, and political intrigue. Despite its historical setting, *The Indian Emperor* is a quintessentially English play, reflecting the concerns and values of its time.

One of the most striking features of *The Indian Emperor* is its use of exotic imagery and language. Dryden draws on his knowledge of Indian culture and history to create a vibrant and colorful world. The play is filled with references to Indian customs, traditions, and religions, making it a fascinating window into 17th-century perceptions of the East.

However, despite its exotic setting, *The Indian Emperor* is ultimately a very English play. The characters are all stereotypes, and the plot is driven by romantic love and political intrigue. The play's themes of loyalty, honor, and revenge are familiar to English audiences, and the characters' motivations are easily understood.

Dryden's skill as a playwright is evident in his ability to create memorable characters and engaging dialogue. The characters in *The Indian Emperor* are complex and multifaceted, and their interactions are often witty and entertaining. The play's language is rich and varied, and Dryden's use of imagery and metaphor is masterful.

Despite its limitations, *The Indian Emperor* remains a significant work of English drama. It is a fascinating exploration of 17th-century perceptions of the East, and it offers a glimpse into the world of heroic tragedy.

Unit V

A Critical Appreciation of William Congreve's *Love for Love*

William Congreve's *Love for Love* is a masterpiece of Restoration comedy, renowned for its witty dialogue, intricate plot, and insightful exploration of human nature. The play, first performed in 1695, is a satire of love, marriage, and social class, offering a sharp critique of the Restoration era's obsession with appearances and material wealth.

One of the most striking features of *Love for Love* is its intricate plot, which involves a web of misunderstandings, deceptions, and mistaken identities. The play's characters are all driven by their own desires and ambitions, and their interactions create a complex and entertaining tapestry of human behavior.

Congreve's dialogue is witty and sparkling, filled with clever repartee and double entendres. The characters' conversations are often hilarious and thought-provoking, revealing their innermost thoughts and motivations. Congreve's ability to create memorable characters and engaging dialogue is a testament to his skill as a playwright.

Love for Love also offers a sharp critique of the Restoration era's obsession with appearances and material wealth. The characters in the play are often more concerned with social status and financial security than with genuine love and affection.

Congreve's satire exposes the hypocrisy and superficiality of the Restoration world, while also offering a more nuanced view of human nature.

In conclusion, William Congreve's *Love for Love* is a masterpiece of Restoration comedy that continues to captivate audiences today. Its intricate plot, witty dialogue, and insightful exploration of human nature make it a timeless classic. The play's critique of the Restoration era's obsession with appearances and material wealth remains relevant and thought-provoking.