

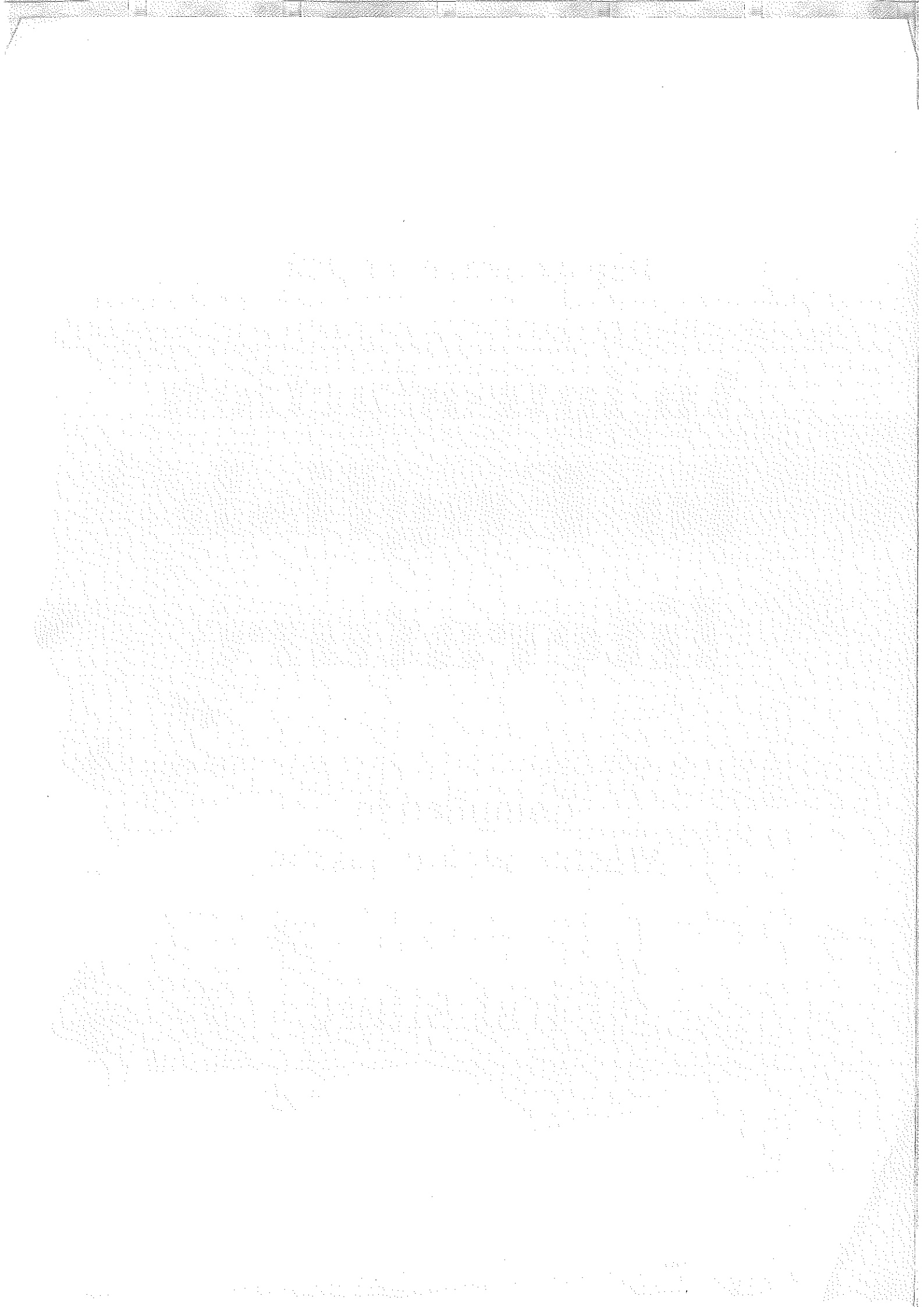
Diala university
College of basic education
Department of English

**An introduction
to English
literature**

Compiled by
Muslim mehdy jassim

First stage





Part One

I. General Notes

What is Literature

بها إلى الكلمات اللغوية
Literature is an art in which language or words have
a most significant function. Arts include, besides literature,
some other things, such as: music, painting, modelling, etc., ---

The Artists who want to create a beautiful work of art
must have their special tools. In literature, to create beautiful
works of art, such as a poem, a novel, a play or a short
story, the artists work by words.

Literature may be divided into various branches = poetry,
novel, drama, essay, biography, autobiography, etc., --- Good
literature is that literature in which words are employed effectively,
they should be well-chosen and strong in their emotional or
intellectual appeal. Good literature is very enriching. It educates
the minds and hearts and exposes the reader to lofty ideas
and ideals. It opens one's eyes to the deep meaning of life.

The differences between literary works and scientific works

1. In a literary work, words are employed to create beauty; in a scientific work, they are used to create facts.
2. A literary work appeals to imagination; whereas scientific work appeals to mind (intellect).
3. The business of the artist is to create beauty in its physical and spiritual meaning; the business of the scientist is to discover truth.

What is Poetry

It is difficult to give an exact or definite meaning of poetry because poetry could mean different things to different people. So we have different definitions of poetry:

1. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines poetry as "the elevated expression of elevated thoughts or feelings in metrical form."
2. A. E. Houseman defines poetry saying that "poetry is not the thing said, but a way of saying it."
3. William Hazlitt says that "poetry is the language of the imagination and passions."

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William Wordsworth defines poetry as "the imaginative expression of strong feelings".

5- Matthew Arnold believes that "poetry is the criticism of life."

6- P. B. Shelley says that "poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the best and happiest minds."

The Poet شاعر

The poet is the person who writes poetry. The poet is distinguished by certain qualifications such as:-

- 1- He has a great ability to think and feel without external excitement,
- 2- He possesses a lively sensibility, enthusiasm and tenderness, with great knowledge of human nature,
- 3- He is to be sensible to pain and pleasure, both his own and that of others,
- 4- He should have "the faculty to create and use the language effectively",
- 5- He should have a fine sense for music and a powerful imagination,

- 6- He needs to have inspiration and great love to read poetry of other poets,
- 7- He must be natural, not artificial,
- 8- He must be honest and sincere, treating his subject matter with depth and vitality -

Why do we read Poetry

People read poetry for different reasons:-

- 1. For enjoyment of its music, or of the thoughts that poetry expresses,
- 2. To enrich their experiences of life, nature, and of human beings,
- 3. To learn how to love and value many things in life such as: beauty, love, sorrow, death, nature, etc. - - -
- 4. To think deeply and encourage to be creative in using the language.

Poetry and Prose

Poetry has much in common with other forms of writing, but several distinctive characteristics of poetry may be observed:

1. Poetry is more concrete and specific than prose; poetry is more compressed than prose and the poet may omit many details which would be necessary in prose.
2. In poetry the recurring rhythm is more essential than in prose.
3. Poetry is composed to be sung and read aloud for its musical language; prose is written to be read quietly.
4. Poetry is, more than prose, the language of passion.
5. The appeal of poetry is to emotions and imagination (more than prose), of prose to the reason. Coleridge says -
Prose = words in their best order; poetry = Best words in their best order.
6. Poetry is written in lines, prose in sentences.

Poetry and Verse

Verse is a general term for all kinds of poetry or for a single line of a poem - A "verse is the shortest division of any kind of composition into parts". The difference between verse and poetry doesn't lie in the external form but in the content - Poetry is a higher, more elevated, form than verse. Poetry is "verse plus magic". The lines of verse are usually simple, easy to remember, but have no lasting appeal; they don't touch the heart.

The Distinction between Prose and Verse

A careful examination of a piece of verse shows that it differs in several important respects from a piece of prose:

I. Verse is Metrical: Verse usually follows certain recurrent rhythm called metre, prose doesn't follow this kind of rhythm. Prose, of course, has rhythm, but it doesn't possess that definite and regulated pattern of rhythm (metre).

1. The Use of Archaic Words: In verse, many old-fashioned and archaic words are used, such as maid for girl, ire for anger, steed for horse, and trow for believe; etc. —
In prose these words may be considered out of place.
2. Departure from the Normal Order of Words: In verse, words are often put out of their usual order for the sake of metre or to achieve musical effect. Thus, we sometimes notice the subject follows its verb, an adjective follows the noun it modifies, etc. — — —
3. Grammatical Licence: Various grammatical constructions which are not admissible in prose are frequently found in verse: the use of singular for plural, an adjective for an adverb, and the omission of words which are regarded in prose as indispensable.
4. The Use of Figures of Speech: In verse, picturesque language and figures of speech are much more freely used than in prose, especially those figures of speech rarely employed in prose, such as apostrophe, exclamation, transferred epithet.

6. The Use of short Words: Generally speaking, words used in Verse are shorter than those used in prose to obtain a more forcible and vivid effect.

7. Euphony: The language of verse is more musical and harmonious than the language of prose - This is clear in using ^{مخارج} onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance in Verse more than in prose.

2. English Poetry: A Historical Background

I. Anglo-Saxon Poetry: VII to XI Centuries

The Anglo-Saxon poetry is regarded the roots of the English poetry. The Anglo-Saxon were Germanic tribes who settled in England. They brought with them their literature and language. They loved to sing of great battles, heroes and Gods.

One of the most important poems of this period is Beowulf, in which the ideals of the Germanic tribes are reflected. Beowulf is the first English epic written in Anglo-Saxon or Old English. It is a long poem consisting of more than three thousand lines full of vivid adventures. It was composed by an anonymous poet. It tells the story of a heroic leader, Beowulf, and his courage in fighting Grendel, the monster, and a dragon. Besides Beowulf, there were other shorter poems such as Widsith, The Wanderer, and The Seafarer.

Anglo-Saxon poetry is characterized by certain features:-

1. Its language is quite different from modern English. It reflects the traditions of an older world.
2. It doesn't have rhyme.
3. It is based on alliteration and on the use of "Kennings".
Kenning is an old poetic device which is no longer used. It is a kind of metaphor in which the simple name of a thing is replaced by a phrase describing one of its functions or qualities. This, ring-giver is used for king, sea-wood for a ship, etc.---

2. The Medieval Period: XI-XIV Centuries.

It was the period during which England fell under a Norman-French influence which was caused by the invasion of William the Conqueror 1066. The French influence resulted in the appearance of a new type of poetry, such as the Romances. The Romances were long poems about the adventures of brave knights rescuing beautiful ladies. The most important example of the English Romances was Sir Gawain and the Green Knight; it was a long poem of more than (2500) lines; its poet was unknown.

Other kinds of Romances were the stories of King Arthur and his knights of Round Table. The second type of poetry of this period was the sermons called homilies written in metrical form. The third type was the Fabliaux; they were poems about animals and birds ^{عن} endowed with human vices and virtues. A good example of this type of poetry was The Owl and the Nightingale in which the owl represents duty and the Nightingale represents beauty.

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400)

Geoffrey Chaucer was the greatest poet of the Middle Ages. He is often described as "the father of English poetry". In fact Chaucer was the real founder of English poetry. The language Chaucer used is that from which modern English descended. His poetry differs from old English in several

Cases:-

- 1- He introduced rhyme for the first time and his verse is more regular, with a definite rhythm, than the Anglo-Saxon poetry.
- 2- He used a line of five Iambic feet.

3- His poetry is more literary than Old English poetry since Chaucer was a man of wide experience.

Chaucer's poetic works fall into three periods:-

- 1- The French Period: It is his early period in which he imitates French models. He translated the allegorical Romance Le Roman de La Rose. Chaucer wrote his poem The Book of the Duchess during this period.
- 2- The Italian Period: It is the period in which the influence of Italian literature was clear. In this period he wrote The Parliament of Fowls, a fable in verse in which the characters are birds. He also wrote Troilus and Criseyde, a poem of tragic love.
- 3- The English period. In this period, Chaucer's originality is established. He wrote his masterpiece The Canterbury Tales during this period. They are stories told by a group of pilgrims, from different ranks of society, on their way to visit the shrine of St. Thomas Beckett at Canterbury.

3. The Sixteenth Century: The Renaissance Period

This period is also called the Elizabethan period. The Renaissance was a great literary movement started in Italy during the 14th century; it reached England during the rule of Queen Elizabeth (1550-1603). Renaissance means rebirth or revival of learning, art, music, and literature. The most important poets of this period are:

1. Sir Thomas Wyatt (1505-1542) and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517-1547). They wrote a number of songs and sonnets. Wyatt was the first to employ the Italian sonnets; and Henry Howard was the first to use blank verse.
2. Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1588) He wrote a series of (120) sonnets Astrophel and Stella. He also wrote two prose works: Arcadia and Apology for poetry.
3. Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) He is described "the poets poet," and "the prince of poets in his time". His literary talent lies in his power of description, his rich imagination, and his love of music. This is clearly shown in his masterpiece The Fairie Queen.

It is an unfinished allegorical romance meant to delight and teach. Spenser also wrote The Shepherd's Calender which is a pastoral poem, and a series of sonnets known as Amoretti which consists of eighty eight sonnets in which he describes his love to Elizabeth Boyle whom he married in 1594).

Spenser's greatest contribution to English poetry was the Spenserian stanza, a type of stanza consists of nine lines, rhyming ababcbcc and the last line has six feet instead of five which is called "Alexandrine".

4. William Shakespeare (1564-1616) the greatest writer of English. As a poet he is famous for his sonnets. They are (154) sonnets - number (1-126) are addressed to a friend, and the others are addressed to a woman known as "the dark lady". He also wrote two long poems and many songs and lyrics.

4. The Seventeenth Century

This century was considered one of the richest period in the history of English literature, both in achievement and variety. It was also an age of conflict which caused the Civil War between King Charles I (1625-1649) and the Parliament headed by Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658). The causes of the war were religious and economic. However, we have a new spirit; it was a scientific spirit. The poets of this period were greatly influenced by this new spirit. Generally, they could be divided into three groups: the Cavaliers poets, the metaphysical poets, and the puritans.

I. The Cavaliers poets

The Cavaliers poets supported King Charles I. They were gay in spirit, light hearted, with refinement of taste. They wrote joyful lively lyrics. They were called Ben Jonson's sons. The most important Cavaliers poets are:

I. Robert Herrick, he wrote a volume of love lyrics and pastoral poems, Hesperides which contained his famous poem "Gather Ye Rosebuds while Ye May" and "To Daffodils".

2. Thomas Carew

3. John Suckling,

4. Richard Lovelace who wrote famous poems as "To Lucasta," and "To Althea, from Prison."

2. The Metaphysical Poets

They include John Donne, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, Andrew Marvell, and Abraham Cowley. The poet John Donne is the leader of these poets. Donne's poetry is divided into two types:

1. The love lyrics which are intellectual and dramatic; their chief quality is the use of conceit. In these lyrics Donne treats love in a realistic manner.

2. The religious poems such as the two Anniversaries and the Holy Sonnets.

Donne's poetry is characterized by his wit, the use of conceit, the intellectual quality, the dramatic force, and the fusion of feelings and thoughts.

3. The Puritans

The most important example of the Puritan poets is John Milton. During the civil war Milton sided with the Parliament against King Charles I. The Puritans, unlike the Cavaliers, were more serious, restrained, highly religious and somber. Milton's early poetry is lyrical, such as L'Allegro and Il Penseroso and his pastoral elegy Lycidas. The last period of Milton's poetry is devoted to the writing of epic poetry: Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained.

John Dryden (1631-1700)

This period is called the Restoration period because the monarchy is restored in England with the return of King Charles II from France in 1660. The age is also called the age of Dryden because Dryden was the most important literary figure of this period.

When King Charles II returned to England he brought with him the French manners and French literary tastes.

He reopened the theatres which were closed by the Puritans. The romantic spirit of the Elizabethans and the moral discipline of the Puritans were dead.

The most important quality of the Restoration period was the writing of Satire. The chief writer of Satire was Dryden. The aim of satire, as Dryden said, was "the emendment of vices by correction". Besides the writing of Satire, the writers emphasized realism and precision in writing. The style of writing in this period was called the classical style which was clear, precise, concise, formal and elegant. It was Dryden who had founded the classical school of Poetry in England.

Dryden's achievement was his satire of which Absalom and Achitophel and MacFlecknow were the best. They were written in heroic couplets. Dryden also wrote two long didactic poems: Religio Laici and The Hind and the Panther. His beautiful ode "Song for St. Cecilia's Day" is memorable.

5. The Eighteenth Century: The Augustan Age

This period is called the Augustan Age because the poets and writers of this period tried to imitate the works of Classical writers who were writing during the rule of Emperor Augustus Caesar, ruler of Rome. It is also called The Neo-classical, and the Age of Reason since the writers' aim was to reflect life through reason, not through imagination. It is also called the Age of Satire since the writings of this period are satiric.

The poetry of this period is characterized by certain features: (1) It concentrates on the mind rather than the emotion, (2) It pays more attention to the problems and follies of society rather than of the individuals, (3) It concentrates on the city rather than the countryside, (4) The poets want to create order and harmony in the society; they believed that Nature is the best symbol of order, correctness and permanence. They want to follow nature as the ancient writers did. Generally speaking, the poetry of this period was highly refined and imposing, its style kept the same qualities of clarity, balance and

elegance of Dryden's style (The Restoration period).

The most important poet of this period was Alexander Pope (1688-1744). Pope was Dryden's disciple; he perfected many of the artistic ideals set up by Dryden, especially the use of heroic couplet.

Pope is basically the poet of order and harmony. His great knowledge of his society was best known in his masterpiece The Rape of the Lock (1714) in which he used the mock-heroic. In this poem Pope combined Satire and epic. His satire was not directed against a particular person but against a flaw in human nature, that is Pride. In his other masterpiece, The Dunciad in which he directed his satire against his personal enemies, the dunces. Pope wrote other poems, in the form of mock-epic: Essay on Criticism, Essay on Man and the Moral Essays.

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During the second half of the eighteenth century, a new tendency of literature had developed. The writers of this period moved away from Pope and his disciples, both in theme and expression. They wrote about nature, not as a rule or law, but for its own sake. They wrote about love and feelings; and they described the countryside and its people in their poems. These poets are called the Pre-Romantics. They prepared for the flowering of the Romantic Movement in the 19th century. The most important poet of this period is James Thomson (1700-1748) whose poem, The Seasons, written in blank verse, is rich with natural descriptions and feelings. Another important poet is Thomas Gray (1716-1751) whose poem Elegy Written in the Country Churchyard is famous. William Collins (1721-1759) was famous for his extremely musical poems about the country. Robert Burns, a scot poet, was also famous during this period.

The eighteenth century ended with a great poet, William Blake (1757-1827). He was a mystic poet. His poetry was visionary and symbolic. The famous poems Blake wrote

were: Songs of Innocence, and Songs of Experience. They form short lyrics, simple in their diction but deep in their meaning.

6- The Nineteenth Century Period

This century includes both the Romantics and the Victorians. The Romantics were writing between 1790 and 1830. From 1830 to the end of the century the scene was dominated by the Victorians.

I- The Romantics

In the second half of the eighteenth century, Neo-Classicism in England was dying slowly and Romanticism was growing stronger and stronger under certain influences which change many of the ideals of society. These influences are brought about by the French Revolution (1789) and the Industrial Revolution. The French Revolution inspired many poets of this period to write about such concepts as democracy, freedom, equality, and brotherhood.

The most important poets are seven: William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel Tylor Coleridge, George Gordon, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats. These poets are individualists; so they didn't form a coherent school; but they had many things in common:

1. They wrote about liberty, beauty and imagination,
2. They discarded reason and all of them except Blake, responded to nature, not as a law or rule, but as a symbol of beauty, purity and cleanliness,
3. They were interested in expressing the feelings of man in solitude, not of man in society,
4. They used the language with more freedom than the 18th century poets did.
5. They rejected the use of poetic diction,
6. They used blank verse instead of heroic couplet.

Wordsworth and Coleridge are known as Lake Poets because they lived in the Lake District in the North West of England, one of the most beautiful places in England. They worked together to publish in 1798 their famous book Lyrical Ballads and other Poems which offers new principles for writing poetry: poetry should be simple; the language of ordinary people should be used in poetry, i.e., the language which is

really used by people of "humble and rustic life".

Wordsworth's contribution to English poetry is his original treatment of nature. He sees new meanings in nature - Nature is a moral teacher and a guide because God resides in Nature. Many of his poems show the influence of Nature on the formation of human mind, poems such as: Tintern Abbey, Intimation of Imortality, Michael, the prelude, etc., --- He also wrote many sonnets and short lyrics.

Coleridge was different from Wordsworth. He wrote smaller amount of poetry which is more intense than Wordsworth's poetry in its psychological treatment, visuality of details and complex symbolism. Of his poem, the most famous are: The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and Kubla Khan. Of the conversation poems the best are: Frost at Midnight and Dejection: an ode.

The younger romantic poets include Shelley, Byron and Keats. Shelley and Byron were lovers of freedom and champions of love and brotherhood; Keats was a lover of beauty. The three poets died when they were very young.

Shelley was an idealist who believed that man was naturally good but social institutions make him bad. He believed that love is a great power that could put an end to all kinds of evil of the world. This is shown in his poems Ode to the West Wind, Prometheus Unbound, his masterpiece in which he expresses his views and philosophy of revolution, Epipsychidion in which he describes his doctrine of love, and Adonais in which he laments the death of his friend, the poet John Keats.

Byron was more popular in Europe than in England. He made popular the legend of the Byronic hero. Byron's works were very influential in Europe, such as Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. He also wrote Oriental Tales and satirical poems Don Juan.

Keats was not radical in his political views. He involved himself in art and beauty. His poetry was rich with music. His reputation is based on poems: The Eve of St. Agnes,

La Belle Dame sans Merci, Isabella, Hyperion and the wonderful odes: To A Nightingale, On a Grecian Urn, On Melancholy, To Autumn and To Psyche. In his poetry, Keats shows great interest in the physical aspects of nature, its charm and beauty.

2. The Victorians

With the death of most of the romantic poets, the spirit of romanticism lost its vitality and vigour. The Reform Bill opened a new chapter in the life of the Victorian society and gradually led to the appearance of a new style in literature, especially in poetry. The poetry of this period moved towards realism.

The Victorian period is often divided into three periods: the early Victorian, the middle Victorian and the late Victorian. The early Victorian witnessed progress in many fields: education, science, industry, --- This progress caused conflict between the old and the new. New scientific ideas contradicted well-established religious beliefs. The invented machinery made some people very rich and others very poor. Spiritual values were influenced by the growing material values.

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The poets of this period were greatly influenced by what was happening in their society. Some of them were optimistic, others were pessimistic, still others tried to find an escape from the problems of their age.

The most important poet of this period is Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892). His poetry is a record of the social, intellectual and spiritual life of the time. In Locksley Hall, he points to the danger of living by false ideals in a materialistic society. In "The Princess" he tries to establish the proper relationship between men and women which should not be based on the master/slave ideal but on love and understanding. In In Memoriam he laments the death of his close friend, Arthur Hallam; he also treats the conflict between science and religion. Tennyson was the poet of law and order, both in the social and moral sense.

Robert Browning (1812-1889) is another important poet of the early Victorian period. His genius is mainly dramatic. He was interested in studying the psychology of human soul. So he treated the problems of life in the form of the dramatic monologue of which he became a master. He wrote many poems in this form,

such as My Last Duchess. Browning was also known as a great poet of love. In his love poetry he didn't talk about idealized emotions but about more real experiences. He sees in love a principle that harmonizes and unifies all beings.

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) was another great poet of the early Victorian period. He was a poet and critic. In his poetry he longed for simple faith, true love and simplicity as remedies for the diseases of the age. Arnold's poetry is characterized by deep melancholy and elegiac tone. The idea of alienation is one of his basic themes. His famous poems are: Dover Beach, Rauby Chapel and The Buried Life.

Among the Victorian poets there were two famous women: Elizabeth Browning, wife of Robert Browning, and Christina Rossetti. Mrs. Browning is most famous for her Sonnets From the Portuguese in which she expresses her deep love for Robert Browning. She also writes poems on social and political themes, such as, The Cry of the Children in which she protests against the social evils of the factory system, especially the employment of children in factories. In A Curse for a Nation she attacks the system of slavery in America.

Christina Rossetti was a member of a cultural family which included her two brothers, William Rossetti and Dante G. Rossetti. Her poems are characterized by colour, music and meditation. She is famous for her sonnet sequence Monna Innominata (the title means "My Nameless Lady"). They are fourteen love sonnets in which she gives expression to her love for Charles Caylay whom she loved but refused to marry because of his religious views. She also wrote religious poetry in which she revealed her simple but deep faith.

Dante G. Rossetti was a poet and a painter and leader of the Pre-Raphaelite Movement. This was a mid-Victorian movement which tried to revive the romantic traditions by following the principles of the Romantics and the style of primitive Italian painters.

In his poetry he wished to create an ideal world of beauty in contrast to the ugliness of the industrial society. His poetry is vivid, colourful, musical and passionate. He is famous for his sonnets The House of Life which he addressed to his wife Elizabeth Siddal.

Another important poet is William Morris whose poetry is rich with a harmonious and musical flow. His famous poem is The Earthly Paradise.

Swinburne is another important poet of this period. He wrote about love, freedom, hatred of tyranny and conventional morality. These things are revealed in his poems, especially his Poems and Ballads and Songs Before Sunrise in which he expresses his views on freedom.

Around the end of the 19th century two poets are of great importance because of the influence they exerted on modern poetry. They are G. M. Hopkins and Thomas Hardy.

Hopkins wrote a deeply religious poetry which explains why almost all his poetry is religious. He is famous for his unusual style, his use of condensed images, alliteration, compound words and "sprung rhythm". This kind of rhythm combines the usual regular patterns with free and varied numbers of syllables in each line. Hopkins used his rhythm in most of his poetry especially in The Wreck of the Deutschland.

Thomas Hardy was a novelist and a poet. His themes were traditional. His poems are sharp, dramatic, ironic and compressed. His famous poem was Satire of Circumstances which he addressed to his dead wife. Hardy was a poet of disillusionment - a recurrent theme in modern poetry.

7. The Twentieth Century: Modern Poetry

Modern poetry is very different from the Romantic and Victorian poetry. Modern life was not only different but complex. Radical changes had taken place and various influences were at work. These changes and influences resulted in new attitudes and tendencies in life and literature as well. The 20th century needed a special kind of poets to express the ideas of the age.

The most important qualities of modern poetry are:

1. The use of "irregular verse" and "free verse". Free verse is a kind of verse which disregards the traditional rules of rhyme and metre and follows the cadences of spoken language.
2. The language of modern poetry is highly compressed, symbolic, suggestive and intellectual. The poets used language in a realistic manner for realistic purposes.

The Influences on Modern Poetry

Modern poetry was written under various influences: social, intellectual and political.

1. The First World War of 1914-1918 which resulted in war poetry and a group of poets called war poets.
2. The Second World War, 1939-1945 which resulted in long years of economic depression.
3. The Impact of Advanced Technology and of new theories in Psychology and literature.
4. The Influence of two movements: The Symbolist Movement and Imagism. The symbolist movement emphasized the use of symbols (suggestive language) as allusion to earlier literature and myth. Imagism used common speech to create new rhythms and freedom in the choice of subject. Symbolism came from France and Imagism from America.

Modern poets are numerous; they share a feeling of disillusionment in the modern world. They warn, explore, discover and illuminate, but they do not find solutions to the problems of the age.

The most important modern poets are: W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, Philip Larkin, Ted Hughes and many others -

T.S. Eliot is the most important modern poet. He used a very complex style: indirect, symbolic, compressed, which was greatly based on allusions and myths. He also used symbols and startling images. In his poetry he brings the past, present and future to reflect on the problems of humanity. His poem The Waste Land is considered to his important poem. The importance of this poem lies both in its themes of which decay and fragmentation of Western civilization, and its technique. It is often considered to mark the beginning of a distinctively 20th Century kind of verse -

Part Two

Prose

Prose refers to the ordinary language of people in speaking or writing. It is a literary medium distinguished from poetry by its irregularity and variety of rhythm and its closer correspondence with the patterns of everyday speech.

Kinds of Prose

Prose falls into many types, such as: Fiction, Novel, Short Story, Drama, Composition or Essay, Biography, autobiography, History, Criticism, Journal, Letters, philosophy, sermon, etc., --- of which the most important types are novel, short story, and drama.

Novel

Definition: The word novel is derived from the Italian word novella which means ⁶⁶ tale, ⁹⁹ piece of news; and now it is applied to a wide variety of writings of which only common attribute is that they are ⁶⁶ "extended pieces of prose fiction"

According to the Oxford English Dictionary a novel is defined as "fictitious prose narrative or tale of considerable length in which characters and actions, representative of the real life, are portrayed in a certain plot". The novel may also be defined as "a form of story or prose narrative containing characters, actions, incidents, and a plot".

Characteristics

The most important characteristics of the novel are:

- 1- The novel is fictitious. It depicts imaginary characters and situations. But these imaginary characters and situations are in some sense "representative of real life".
- 2- The novel is written in prose rather than in verse. But as far as the language of the novel is concerned it includes many poetic elements.

3 - The novel is narrative. It is a "telling" rather than "enacting". And this makes the novel different from drama.

The Types of Novel

Generally speaking novels can be classified, both historically and technically. These two elements tends to overlap as particular types of novels often flourish within defined historical periods.

The following may be regarded as the most important types of the novel.

I. The Picaresque Novel

The word "pícaro" is derived from Spanish; it means rogue. The picaresque novel is built on the traditions of the sixteenth-century Spanish Picaresque narrative, which portrayed a sharp-witted rogue living off his wits while travelling through a variety of usually low-life settings. The pícaro (hero) is a minor delinquent who offends against moral and civil laws and whose behaviour is anti-social without being utterly vicious. The pícaro lives by begging or by minor theft.

Daniel Defoe's novel Moll Flanders is by no means a pure picaresque novel, but its main character is a woman of a low birth lived through bad ways. This character has little real development throughout the novel.

2. The Epistolary Novel

An epistolary novel is told through letters exchanged between different characters. This type of novel was common in the eighteenth century. The best examples of this type is Samuel Richardson's Pamela and Clarissa, and Tobias Smollett's Humphry Clinker.

3. The Historical Novel

The historical novel sets its events and characters in a well-defined historical context; and it may include both fictional and real characters. It is often distinguished by detailed description of the manners, buildings, institutions and scenery of its chosen setting. The most important novelist of historical novel is Sir Walter Scott, like his fiction Ivanhoe.

4. The Regional Novel

The regional novel involves the novels written about the life of a particular, well-defined geographical region. This region is usually rural rather than urban. Thomas Hardy's "Wessex" is his region in The Return of the Native.

5. The Satirical Novel

The satirical novels are the novels which attack vices and follies of individuals and societies. The tools of satire are: ridicule, exaggeration, and contempt. Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels is a well-known example of satiric novel.

2. Short Stories

A short story tells a narrative neatly and quickly. Its action concentrates on a small space. The short story is usually limited to a single series of events; it introduces only one main character, or at most two; it establishes a dominant mood immediately which it holds throughout. This may be called the "classic" style of the short story. The famous short story writer is Somerset Maugham. He hangs his story on a strong thread of plot, but at the same time he concentrates on character portrayal. He is a storyteller of the highest rank, and his narratives are told skillfully.

In the short story the writer attempts to picture life realistically and honestly by introducing social, economic and moral problems that confront individuals in our complex civilization.

The Elements of the Short Story

- 1. Plot: It is an important element of the short story. The plot consists of a sequence of related events.
- 2. Conflict: It may be a physical contest or a clash between two opposed characters or groups of characters. It may be a moral struggle between the central character and a universal force or power, such as: fate, nature or institutions of a society such as: law, educational system, etc.
- 3. Development of Action
The plot of a story is developed throughout the narration by a diagrammatic movement, i.e., beginning, rising action, climax, falling action, and the ending of the action.
- 4. Theme
The theme of the story is the idea the author wants to offer.

5. Characters

A story should have some characters (persons) to communicate throughout the story. The conversation and the dialogue of the characters are of great importance in understanding the story.

6. Narration

The story is told from the point of view of one of the characters, who is either a major character (central character) or a minor character. The pronouns "I" or "He", "she" are used to tell the events of the story.

Note

A short story is to be discussed in Classroom 2.

A suggested short story:

The Open Window "Saki" (H.H. Munro)

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3. Drama

I. The Meaning of Drama

The word "drama" is of Greek origin. It means "action, something performed or done". Later it came to denote literary works written to be acted or performed on a stage by actors who represent the characters who live the action. The action of a play indicates the events and changes that develop through the play.

2. The Elements of Drama

I. Plot: The plot of a play refers to a series of related events of which the play is composed and by developing these events the playwright arouses the audience's suspense and interest.

A play may have more than one plot: The main plot is that part of action which deals with the hero and other major characters, and the subplot (secondary plot) which is usually concerned with another group of characters, and it has the dramatic value of understanding the main plot.

2. Theme: It is the central idea or concept that the play tries to dramatize in order to provide a characteristic view of life. The central ideas might be suggested by one of the characters or implied in the actions, relations and dialogue, and hence must be deduced by the audience.

3. Setting: The term setting indicates time and place of the action. It establishes a suitable and suggestive atmosphere for the dramatic presentation. Setting might be realistic or symbolic suggestion.

4. Characters: The characters of a play are the imaginary persons that the dramatist creates. Our knowledge of the characters is received from what they say and do and what others say about them.

There are various forms of characters. Characters may be divided into major and minor characters. We may have other terms to describe the types of characters:

A. The Protagonist and Antagonist: The major character is usually called the hero or protagonist. Protagonist refers to the leading figure in the conflict against the antagonist who is the hero's opponent.

B. The Individual and Type Characters: The major characters are usually described as individuals who represent themselves and see great development throughout the play. Whereas the type characters represent a class (usually minor) and they don't see any development like a faithful servant, or the detective policeman, etc. — This type of characters has a limited dramatic function.

C. The Round and Flat Characters: A round character is a complex fully portrayed one who undergoes considerable development through the action of the play. A flat character is based on limited qualities that don't allow any chance for growth or development.

5. Structure

The structure of a play is based on dividing the action into acts and scenes. The act indicates a development of the plot, whereas the scene refers to the change in the time and place of the action.

Most plays consist of five acts, but the 19th and 20th centuries dramatists prefer a three act structure. In the five act structure the action is divided into the following stages:

1. The Exposition: It introduces the basic information about the action to the audience. It gives an idea about the atmosphere of the play, the motives of the action, the characters and their relations.
2. The Rising Action: It refers to the complication of events and relations that results from the motives introduced in the exposition. In the rising action there is a great sense of disorder and confusion.
3. The Climax: It is the highest point of tension and suspense in a play and in the hero's fortunes.
4. The Falling Action: In this part of the play the characters start to come to terms with their dilemmas and problems, when the plot unfolds to pave the way for the conclusion.
5. The Conclusion: It is the final, positive or negative, resolution of the complications that the characters are subjected to. The conclusion may give a suggestive clue to the understanding of the message of the play or the writer's view of his subject.

In three-act plays, the division includes: exposition, development (the rising action, climax, falling action) and conclusion.

6. Dialogue - It refers to the speeches said by the characters of the play and it is the dramatists' basic means to convey his ideas to the audience. The functions of the dialogue are to: transmit the plot, expose the characters' nature and the changes they pass through. The dramatic dialogue covers various forms of speech as: soliloquy and Aside.

The soliloquy: It occurs when the character is allowed to speak directly with the audience to show sincere expression of his real feelings, thoughts, motives and inner conflicts.

The Aside - It enables a character to address another one privately while others who are present on the stage are not supposed to hear the speech.

The message of the play or the writer's view of the subject

Kinds of Drama: The important kinds of drama are:

I. Tragedy: A tragedy is a play that presents a great man falling towards a sorrowful ending which is usually death. Tragedy may be divided into different types: the classical and Elizabethan tragedies and modern tragedies. In the classical and Elizabethan tragedies the dramatist aims to dramatize the sense of social and universal disorder as suggested through the affairs of the tragic hero. These plays are usually concerned on an important character who brings destruction to himself and to others because of a personal flaw he suffers from, and mistakes he commits.

A modern tragedy of the 19th and 20th centuries handle an narrower sense of disorder in a family or an individual which is taken as an example for the universal disorder.

2- Comedy: If the basic function of tragedy is to make the audience think, the basic function of Comedy is to amuse the audience and hence make them think. A Comedy is a play which consists of laughing at people's follies and vices, and has a happy ending. According to their themes, Comedies may be classified into the following types.

I. Romantic Comedies: They usually deal with the theme of love and how foolishly the young characters behave under the influence of love. The best example of this type of comedy is Shakespeare's A Mid-Summer Night Dream.

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Satiric Comedies: They are usually associated with town life. They attempt to provide a moral judgement on human follies. The best example of this type of Comedies is Ben Jonson's Volpone. Another type of the satiric comedies is the Comedy of Humours which deals with the characters according to the classical theory of humours. Ben Jonson's Comedy of Humours is considered to be a good example of this type of Comedy.

3. Farce: It is considered to be a sub-division of comedy. It means a meaningless form of fun. The laughter arises from complex plots, funny situations, exaggeration and physical humour. Yet it doesn't intend to introduce any message.

4. Melodrama: It is a sentimental and sensational play full of complications that seem sometimes impossible, with the greatest interest in the plot rather than the characterization. The characters are either good or evil. The good are rewarded and the evil are punished.

Note: An act or scene of a play is to be discussed in Classroom

A suggested Play

The Never-Never Nest

By: Cedric Mount