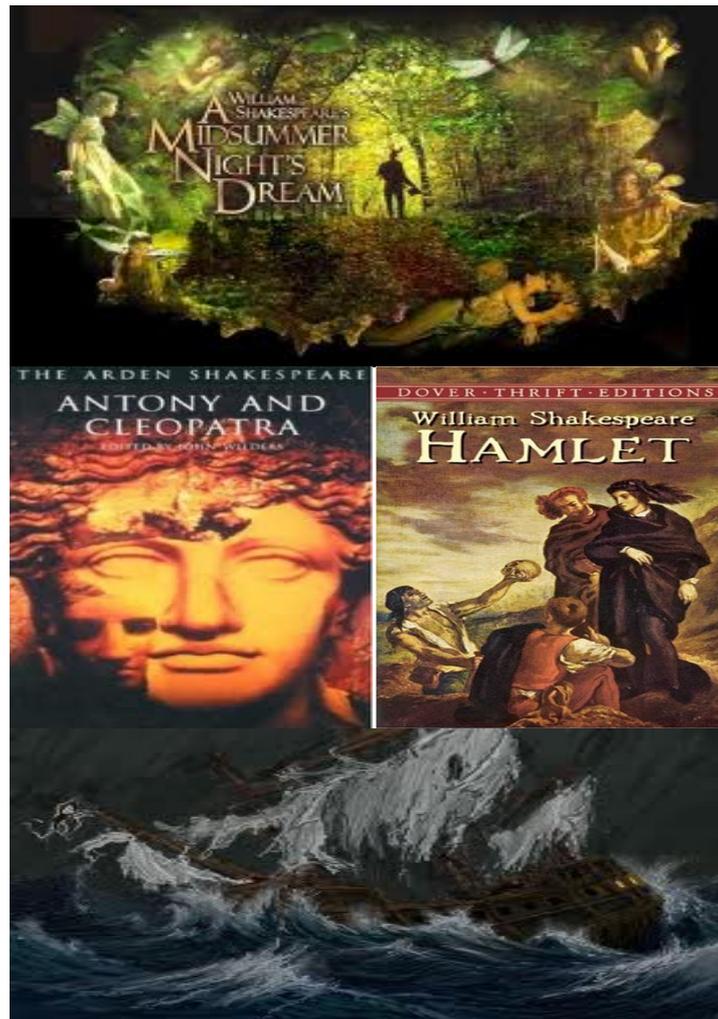




PROGRAMME CODE: MAEL 20

SEMESTER III SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMA- I (MAEL 602)

SEMESTER IV SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMA -II(MAEL 607)



SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

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SEMESTER

III

UNIT 1

HAMLET- I

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1.1. INTRODUCTION

Hamlet is the most notable and the most discussed play in the canon of literature not only from the literary point of view but also from the point of referring to some of the most complex issues and problems concerning life. Since the play came into existence in the early years of the seventeenth century, it has left critics, viewers, authors, readers with some baffling questions. Why does Hamlet procrastinate from revenge? Is the ghost of the father real? Is Hamlet insane? Does Hamlet really love Ophelia? These questions continue to haunt every one of us. Still relevant to contemporary audiences even after four hundred years, it includes everything – intrigues, romance, politics, violence, revenge, jealousy, wit and that to on a grand scale (Kenneth Branagh) – passions of universal human concerns. Almost every one of us seems to face Hamlet's dilemma of 'to be or not to be' and 'whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune or to take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them'. The 'slings and arrows' and 'a sea of troubles' serve as metaphor for all the awful things that are often faced by us.

1.2. OBJECTIVES

- To introduce Shakespeare as a playwright.
- To analyze the story and the various themes of *Hamlet*.
- To discuss the features of a revenge play.
- To analyze the renaissance features and their projection in *Hamlet*.

1.3 SHAKESPEARE – A RECONSTRUCTOR AND ADAPTOR

Hamlet was probably performed in July 1602 and was first published in printed form in 1603. As was the practice with Shakespeare, he could have taken the story of *Hamlet* from sacred possible sources including works from Denmark and France. However, it goes to the credit of Shakespeare that he appropriated the raw material in such a manner that it appears his own. He modified his source material and what could have been a simple revenge tragedy, he resonates it with the most fundamental themes and problems of the Renaissance. The Renaissance with its, propagation of political ideal of humanities generated a new interest in human experience and understanding. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is engrossed in seeking answers to the questions that cannot be answered for they concern supernatural and metaphysical matters. Further, Hamlet is in a dilemma – how to know the guilt or innocence, the motivations, the feelings, the mental states of people.

1.4. ACT-WISE ANALYSIS

Act – I

There is no exaggeration in the statement that the first scene of the first act of a Shakespearean play is always masterly in effect and strikes the key note of the play. In *Hamlet* too, Shakespeare creates the desired atmosphere in a very dramatic manner. The two characters Francisco and Bernardo refer to the unrest and disturbances brewing up in the State of Denmark, Further the scene prepares the audience to accept without raising an eyebrow about the acceptability of the appearance of the ghost of Hamlet's father. Horatio connects the appearance of the ghost with the political troubles in the country. In scene two, nearly all the important characters except Ophelia are introduced. It is from Claudius' – speech that the readers come to know that young Fortinbras with the help of Norway plans to attack Denmark; that young Hamlet is next in succession, to the throne and he must not return to Wittenberg for

his studies, and that Hamlet must throw off his studies. Further, soliloquies unravel the inner most secrets of Hamlet's heart and that he finds suicide a better option to escape from his sorrow. What an indecent and wicked haste – the mother's incestuous marriage has filled Hamlet's heart with horror and pain Told by Horatio, Hamlet decides to speak to the ghost of his father, thus increasing the suspense of the audience. Laertes warns his sister Ophelia, the love interest of Hamlet not to trust in Hamlet's professions of love that might be 'but a fashion and toy in blood.' In the scene to follow, the ghost appears; tension mounts as Hamlet is confirmed of something mysterious and terrible about the death of his father. In the next scene is unfolded the 'most foul, strange and unnatural murder' at the hands of brother; 'The serpent that did sting they father's life/Now wears his crown' and that 'with witchcraft o his wit and with treacherous gifts' had already seduced his wife. The terrible revelation gives a tremendous shock to Hamlet who now decides to put 'an antic disposition' to verify the truth of ghost's revelation.

ACT – II

A period of about two months is supposed to have elapsed between Act I and Act II. The audience is now informed of the strange behaviour of Hamlet. Hamlet welcomes actors, about to enact a play called the Murder of Gonzago and wants them to recite a speech in the course of their play that he has written especially for them. He begins to doubt whether some evil spirit might not have assumed the shape of his father's ghost. He believes that the dramatic performance representing a similar murder would reveal whether Claudius is the real murderer or not. In case, Claudius is guilty, Hamlet decides to act swiftly.

ACT – III

Almost a continuation of the previous scene, the Act begins to show how Polonius' plan of bringing together Hamlet and Ophelia works out. The queen also hopes that Ophelia's love and beauty might restore Hamlet to sanity. Hamlet delivers his most famous soliloquy, 'to be or not to be' – and is tempted to commit suicide in a bid to escape all the troubles, evils and injustices in the world. Philosophically, *Hamlet* expresses the universal fear that many people would like to end their miseries by death but who knows that even more terrible experiences lie in waiting after death. In his conversation with Ophelia, Hamlet confesses that he had once loved Ophelia but now disgusted with life, he would wish her to leave the world and join a 'nunnery'. Ophelia feels profound sorrow at the breakdown of such a noble mind. The king however is convinced that love may not be the cause of Hamlet's strange behaviour. Alarmed now, Claudius plans to send Hamlet away. Hamlet's meeting with actors is significant in that it unfolds a glimpse of theatre activities of Shakespeare's times. The play within the play 'Mouse Trap' is performed. As the play reproduces the story related by the ghost, Claudius suddenly gets up in panic and rushes away from the performance. Hamlet and Horatio are now confirmed as both observe how the King has shown clear signs of guilt and his crime is thus beyond doubt.

King kneels down to pray to God for forgiveness; Hamlet passes by and excuses himself for not acting by arguing that it is no use killing the king while he is praying: in case the king is killed, he will go straight to heaven. Polonius is killed by Hamlet while he was eavesdropping the conversation between Hamlet and his mother. Hamlet's sincerity of purpose makes Gertrude realize the gravity of her own crime and conduct and she ends up by expressing words of repentance and affection towards Hamlet.

ACT – IV

Here audience is informed of the things that follow Polonius' murder. It gives Claudius an excuse to send Hamlet away to England. The first three scenes of the fourth act, dramatically speaking show Hamlet's fortunes going down; the reintroduction of Fortinbras makes Hamlet sharply conscious of the contrast between an active and dashing warrior like Fortinbras and his own wavering and uncertain behaviour. He curses himself by asking if his father's brutal murder and debauchery of her uncle and mother are not causes and reasons enough for him to be swift in action and revenge. He now decides to proceed straightway to action to revenge. Claudius however succeeds in convincing Laertes that it is Hamlet who is at the root of the death of his father and the madness of his sister. Ophelia is accidentally drowned.

ACT – V

The Act begins with Shakespeare's usual practice of providing some kind of relief to overworked emotions. Through the famous gravedigger scene, Shakespeare introduces comic relief. Hamlet, after watching the graves being pulled up, reaches the conclusion that life is short and meaningless, ending in utter futility. In the last scene of the Act, Shakespeare skillfully gathers all the loose threads of action and brings to an almost inevitable and tragic end of the action. Hamlet reveals to Horatio the plot of Claudius to get Hamlet killed. In the fencing match, the queen out of joy drinks the poisoned cup of wine, meant to be drunk by Hamlet. The queen dies, and so do Hamlet and Laertes too. However, Hamlet takes revenge upon Claudius by stabbing him and forcing him to gulp down the poisoned wine.

1.5. THEMES

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

1.5.1. The Theme of Uncertainty

What separates *Hamlet* from other revenge plays (and maybe from every play written before it) is that the action we expect to see, particularly from Hamlet himself, is continually postponed while Hamlet tries to obtain more certain knowledge about what he is doing. This play poses many questions that other plays would simply take for granted. Can we have certain knowledge about ghosts? Is the ghost what it appears to be, or is it really a misleading fiend? Does the ghost have reliable knowledge about its own death, or is the ghost itself deluded? Moving to more earthly matters: How can we know for certain the facts about a crime that has no witnesses? Can Hamlet know the state of Claudius's soul by watching his behavior? If so, can he know the facts of what Claudius did by observing the state of his soul? Can Claudius (or the audience) know the state of Hamlet's mind by observing his behavior and listening to his speech? Can we know whether our actions will have the consequences we want them to have? Can we know anything about the afterlife?

Many people have seen *Hamlet* as a play about indecisiveness, and thus about Hamlet's failure to act appropriately. It might be more interesting to consider that the play shows us how many uncertainties our lives are built upon, how many unknown quantities are taken for granted when people act or when they evaluate one another's actions.

1.5.2. The Complexity of Action

Directly related to the theme of certainty is the theme of action. How is it possible to take reasonable, effective, purposeful action? In *Hamlet*, the question of how to act is affected not only by rational considerations, such as the need for certainty, but also by emotional, ethical,

and psychological factors. Hamlet himself appears to distrust the idea that it is even possible to act in a controlled, purposeful way. When he does act, he prefers to do it blindly, recklessly, and violently. The other characters obviously think much less about “action” in the abstract than Hamlet does, and are therefore less troubled about the possibility of acting effectively. They simply act as they feel is appropriate. But in some sense they prove that Hamlet is right, because all of their actions miscarry. Claudius possesses himself of queen and crown through bold action, but his conscience torments him, and he is beset by threats to his authority (and, of course, he dies). Laertes resolves that nothing will distract him from acting out his revenge, but he is easily influenced and manipulated into serving Claudius’s ends, and his poisoned rapier is turned back upon himself.

1.5.3. The Mystery of Death

In the aftermath of his father’s murder, Hamlet is obsessed with the idea of death, and over the course of the play, he considers death from a great many perspectives. He ponders both the spiritual aftermath of death, embodied in the ghost, and the physical remainders of the dead, such as by Yorick’s skull and the decaying corpses in the cemetery. Throughout, the idea of death is closely tied to the themes of spirituality, truth, and uncertainty in that death may bring the answers to Hamlet’s deepest questions, ending once and for all, the problem of trying to determine truth in an ambiguous world. And, since death is both the cause and the consequence of revenge, it is intimately tied to the theme of revenge and justice—Claudius’s murder of King Hamlet initiates Hamlet’s quest for revenge, and Claudius’s death is the end of that quest.

The question of his own death plagues Hamlet as well, as he repeatedly contemplates whether suicide is a morally legitimate action in an unbearably painful world. Hamlet’s grief and misery is such that he frequently longs for death to end his suffering, but he fears that if he commits suicide, he will be consigned to eternal suffering in hell because of the Christian religion’s prohibition of suicide. In his famous, “To be or not to be” soliloquy (III.i), Hamlet philosophically concludes that no one would choose to endure the pain of life if he or she were not afraid of what will come after death, and that it is this fear which causes complex moral considerations to interfere with the capacity for action.

1.5.4. The Nation as a Diseased Body

Everything is connected in *Hamlet*, including the welfare of the royal family and the health of the state as a whole. The play’s early scenes explore the sense of anxiety and dread that surrounds the transfer of power from one ruler to the next. Throughout the play, characters draw explicit connections between the moral legitimacy of a ruler and the health of the nation. Denmark is frequently described as a physical body made ill by the moral corruption of Claudius and Gertrude, and many observers interpret the presence of the ghost as a supernatural omen indicating that “[s]omething is rotten in the state of Denmark” (I.iv.67). The dead King Hamlet is portrayed as a strong, forthright ruler under whose guard the state was in good health, while Claudius, a wicked politician, has corrupted and compromised Denmark to satisfy his own appetites. At the end of the play, the rise to power of the upright Fortinbras suggests that Denmark will be strengthened once again.

source: <http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/hamlet/canalysis.html>

Self Assessment Questions I

1. Shakespeare’s opening scenes are most impressive. Discuss.
2. Why does Hamlet keep on postponing revenge?

3. Account for Hamlet's obsession with idea of suicidal death.
4. 'Something is rotten in the state of Denmark' – Do you envisage *Hamlet* as a political play?

1.6. FEATURES OF A REVENGE PLAY

M.H. Abrams in his book *Glossary of Literary Terms* defines revenge Tragedy in following words – 'A revenge tragedy's subject' is a murder and the quest for vengeance, and it includes a ghost, insanity, suicide, a play within a play, sensational incidents, and a gruesomely bloody ending (323). Extremely popular in Shakespearean age and in Jacobean era revenge tragedy during the period of Renaissance clearly bear the influence of Roman playwright Seneca. The Senecan model invariably includes:

- A secret murder, usually of an ideal ruler by an evil person.
- The ghost appears before the victim's kinsmen, generally a son.
- Plotting, scheming, play of intrigue is seen.
- Either real or feigned madness overtakes the avenger.
- General violence and a catastrophic end that decimates the dramatis personae including the avenger.

The typical structure of a revenge tragedy thus had five parts:

1. Exposition where the ghost usually provides motivation for revenge
2. Anticipation in which detailed planning of the revenge takes place
3. Confrontation between the hero and the intended victim
4. Delay as the hero hesitates to perform the killing.
5. Completion of the hero (often with the death of the hero).

1.6.1.Revenge: A Popular Theme

Revenge tragedies, it is now well established, were all the rage in England during the late 16th and early 17th century. Originated at the hands of Greek playwrights, Seneca left an indelible imprint upon his successors including Shakespeare. In writing *Hamlet*, Shakespeare follows closely the dramatic conventions of the stage of Elizabethan times. Though an advance on Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, *Hamlet* is a typical revenge play, said to be based on Kyd's another play called *Ur-Hamlet*. Most revenge tragedies share some basic elements: a vengeful ghost, a play within the play, mad scenes, horrifying scenes of bloodbath and most importantly a central figure, who, overwhelmed with grief due to the failure of the system, takes matters in his hands. *Hamlet* perhaps is the only protagonist in any Elizabethan revenge play who can be considered a hero, aware of the moral implications involved in exacting his revenge, 'foul deeds will rise'.

1.6.2. Hamlet – The Motive of Revenge

Revenge is a passion compelling a person to act recklessly through anger rather than reason. Apparently, revenge is the dominant theme in *Hamlet*. Not only the protagonist but characters such as Fortinbras and Laertes are too motivated to take revenge. Fortinbras was enraged by his father's murder and sought revenge against Denmark, 'Now sir, young Fortinbras.....as it doth well appear unto our state-but to recover of us, by strong, hand terms compulsative, those foresaid lands so by his father lost.' Laertes's father Polonius gets killed by Hamlet accidentally thinking him to be the king eaves dropping on a conversation between Hamlet and his mother.

The Revenge plot becomes obvious with the Ghost's utterance, 'So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear (I,v.7) The spirit of the king demands Hamlet to 'revenge his foul and most unnatural murder' (I,v.25) after informing that his brother poisoned him. To make sure of his uncle's guilt, he re-enacts the scene of murder with the production of the play within the play named *The Murder of Gonzago* (II ii). In the last Hamlet kills Claudius and dies of the wound received during the flight with Laertes. It may be argued that *Hamlet* is more of a tragedy than a revenge play because it focuses more on the fall of a hero than on the execution of Claudius.

It is obvious that a Shakespearean tragedy sticks around a central conflict which runs through from the beginning to the end. A reading of the play Hamlet suggests that conflict here is built upon the theme of revenge – from the exposition, suspense and the catastrophe of the play for the death of the father. Wronged by a powerful figure, deceived by his own mother and ‘cheated’ by his lady love, Hamlet finds ‘How stale, weary and unprofitable are the uses of this world’. The tension gets built up as ghost narrates the horrifying tale of murder of Hamlet’s father. As law and society fails to punish the murderer, it is now upon Hamlet to take revenge of his father’s death. Confused and suspicious, Hamlet seeks to ‘catch the conscience of the king’ through a play. Driven to put on ‘an antic disposition’ Hamlet is torn asunder between ‘to be or not to be’. He curses himself: But am I pigeon livered and lack gall/To make oppression bitter, or ere this/I should have fatted all the region kites/with this slave’s offal. Bloody, bawdy villain (II, II). Hamlet misses the opportunity to kill his uncle, and instead kills Polonius accidentally. By the end of the play, revenge’s is taken but at the ultimate price of his precious life.

1.7. THE RENAISSANCE FEATURES IN *HAMLET*

The word Renaissance literally means "rebirth." In the context of the English Renaissance, this refers to a renewal of learning, especially in terms of new beliefs and ways of doing things differently from the Middle Ages. Characteristics of the Renaissance include a renewed interest in classical antiquity; a rise in humanist philosophy (a belief in self, human worth, and individual dignity); and radical changes in ideas about religion, politics, and science.

Here are some examples of how these characteristics are illustrated in *Hamlet*:

Classic Antiquity: Hamlet has lots of references to classical Greek and Roman stories, characters, and historical events. For example, you can find a murderous king (Pyrrhus), and a queen in mourning over her murdered husband (Hecuba), which mirror the main plot points of the play.

Humanist Philosophy: In Act II, Scene 2, Line 311, Hamlet asks: "What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties..." In this speech, you can see a clear assertion of humanist ideas about the uniqueness and extraordinary abilities of the human mind.

Religion: In Hamlet's most famous soliloquy, which begins, "To be or not to be...", he alludes to an unknown afterlife, "The undiscovered country...", which is a stark departure from Medieval religious ideas rooted in a strict belief that people either go to heaven or hell when they die.

Politics: There were big political changes taking place during the time that Shakespeare wrote Hamlet. This is reflected in the play by Hamlet's questioning of Claudius's right to ascend to the throne in his father's place. It was a new idea to question anything having to do with the "natural" hierarchical structures that maintained political power.

Science: This point is illustrated by Shakespeare's use of the play-within-the play in Hamlet. Here, Prince Hamlet's play, The Mousetrap, is presented to the court supposedly as entertainment, but Hamlet's intent is to gather obvious evidence of Claudius's guilt for the murder of his father. Says Hamlet: "...the play's the thing Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

Source:<http://www.cliffsnotes.com/cliffsnotes/literature/what-are-the-renaissancefeaturescharacteristics-in-hamlet>

SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS II

1. Trace the evolution of the revenge play.
2. Discuss that Hamlet is an advance on the revenge plays of his times.
3. Discuss the characteristics of renaissance as illustrated in Hamlet.

1.8. SUMMING UP

One of the most amazing tragedies, Hamlet revolves around the theme of revenge. Envy, revenge, jealousy, injustice, passion for power are some of the issues which continue to engage and enthrall theatre going public even today. As we are all slaves to passions of various kinds, we somehow start equating ourselves with Hamlet. At some point of time, we are perplexed by the challenges life throws at us. How beautifully Shakespeare integrates the personal tragedy with the universal expression of grief? How intelligently Shakespeare moves from a single particular to generalization? Hamlet's world shows the critical inquisitiveness and part skeptical, part agnostic forms of the modern mind. At the same time, Hamlet's experiences inhibiting him from performing the act (revenge) serve as an eye opener to the youth.

1.9. ANSWERS TO SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

I

1. Refer to section 1.4.
2. Refer to section 1.5.1.
3. Refer to section 1.5.3.
4. Refer to section 1.5.4.

II

1. Refer to section 1.6.
2. Refer to section 1.3 and 1.6.
3. Refer to section 1.7.

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- Bradley, A.C. *Shakespearean Tragedy*, London, Macmillan & Co. Ltd. 1904. (1904)
- Jardine, Lisa. *Reading Shakespeare Historically*, London & New York, Routledge. (1996)
- Jones, Ernest. *Hamlet and Oedipus*. New York : Norton (1976).

1.11. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by the term Shakespearean Tragedy? Discuss Hamlet as a revenge play.
2. What features of Renaissance do you notice in *Hamlet*?
3. Discuss the theme of uncertainty in the tragedy?

2.1. Introduction

2.2. Objectives

2.3. Enigma of Delay

2.4. The Question of Madness

2.4.1. Who is Real Hamlet?

2.4.2. Hamlet's Tragic Flaw

2.5. Hamlet: A Renaissance Character in a Medieval World

2.6. Soliloquies

2.7. Summing Up

2.8. Answers to Self-Assessment Questions

2.9. Glossary

2.10. References

2.11. Terminal and Model Questions

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Hamlet is one such play that has enormously surpassed the simple end of the playwright, to entertain. Shakespeare, through sheer artistry and understanding of human nature has kept millions riveted to, for centuries now. The critics are baffled by the puzzling and unexplained character of Hamlet – the more they read the more puzzled they get. In fact, the meanings that Shakespeare's Hamlet has are infinite. Hamlet is said to be a play not about a man who is incapable of making decisions, nor it is a play about a man seeking revenge. The tragedy is said to be a play about a man who is going through a spiritual metamorphosis. The play is labeled as a play about a man who is dimwitted and slow, incapable of making up his mind.

2.2. OBJECTIVES

- To understand the factors which make Hamlet so interesting and so enigmatic.
- To familiarize the readers with the renaissance characteristics of man as distinct from medieval bent of mind.
- To familiarize the students about how effectively Shakespeare uses the dramatic device of soliloquy.

2.3. THE ENIGMA OF DELAY

“I do not know
Why yet I live to stay
This thing's to do
Sith I have cause and will and strength and means to do it.”

The above lines hold the key to understand the most puzzling character Shakespeare portrays in his tragedies. As a normal person, Hamlet is ready to take revenge of the murder of his father, however there is something that checks him to go ahead. The critics while unraveling the mystery of an inactive Hamlet, suggest a number of reasons which hold him in check. Klein while elaborating the cause of delay in Hamlet defends the hero in the name of justice, “Hamlet's aim is not the crown, nor it his first duty to kill the King but his task is justly to punish the murderer of his father, unreliable as that murder is in the eye of world, and to satisfy the Danes of the righteousness of this procedure”.

It is the difficulty of producing this evidence, this proof, the apparent impossibility of convincing the guilty person that constitutes the cardinal point in Hamlet. And therefore killing the king before the proof is adduced would be, not killing the guilty, but killing the proof; it would be not the murder of the criminal, but the murder of justice!’ Apparently, even Hamlet admits that he has the cause and will and strength and means to do it’. The textual references suggest clearly that Hamlet is the beloved of the people and he needs not answer regarding the justification of his action. Is it a metaphysical and conscientious scruple which grows at his bow! Supporting the above contention, Masefield makes a valid point, ‘What Hamlet hesitates to do, may be necessary or even just, but it is a defilement of personal ideals, difficult for a wise mind to justify. It is so great a defilement that death seems preferable to action and existence alike. It is very much apparent that there is something in Hamlet's nature that forbade him to take revenge. In contrast to the general impression that Hamlet is sentimental, given to melancholy and is an introspective dreamer, a close study of Hamlet's mind reveals a brighter side to his nature. In Goethe's words, Hamlet is “a true child of the Renaissance. He is imbued with the cheerful culture of the age. It is not for nothing that he

studied at the university of Wittenberg-the Wittenberg of Martin Luther and Giordano Bruno. Philosophy is his favourite subject. He refers to it as 'our philosophy'. To his philosophy is attributed his love for life, his appreciation of 'man':

What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! in form,
in moving, how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! in apprehension
how like a god! The beauty of the World! The paragon of animals!

However, the next moment you hear the same man say:

Unhand me gentleman.
By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that let me!

The lightning quickness with which Hamlet takes out his knife and kills the eavesdropper and later cleaves his mother's heart and then brutally makes Claudius gulp down the poison with savage mockery which leaves the reader aghast.

Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane.
Drink off this poison. Is thy union here?
Follow my mother.

What has transformed this man into a cruel beast? A.C. Bradley succinctly puts forward the reason which appears psychologically concerning, Hamlet received a violent mental shock when his father's sudden death was closely followed by his mother's incestuous marriage, and this shock was so great that he became 'utterly disgusted with life' and it was this mental condition that made him incapable of action. The above view is corroborate by Clutton Brock who evokes the use of psychological formula to study the problem; and maintains that the 'law of reversed action' implies that under the stress of a severe mental shock, there is a tendency in the mind to mechanically refuse to do what it consciously wishes to perform. Hamlet wanted to obey his father's ghost but the shock which he suffered on hearing of the murder and particularly on realizing that her mother has given favours to his uncle steals his inner peace. In fact, it is not the murder of his father which gnaws at his soul, but rather the annoyance at the deception of his mother:

But I have that within which passeth show;
These but the trappings and suits of woe,-

A review of Hamlet's soliloquies clearly evinces that it is not mourning for his father that possesses his mind but it is mother's image that governs his mental state. Disgusted at his mother's wedding and frustrated with himself of, for not taking prompt revenge, Hamlet is led to conclude, Let me not think out: Frailty, thy name is woman! Suicide appears to be an obvious choice; however, Hamlet does not succumb to the temptation. The whole earth, the sky, men, women, everything in this rotten world is comprehended in terms of frustration of disappointment.

What makes Hamlet so convincing and lovable is that many of our youngsters seem to share Hamlet's dilemma. Like him, they are confronted with a world where intrigues, violence, crime, deception, hypocrisy are normative. For a sensitive soul like Hamlet, 'the time is out of joint, O cursed spirit that I was born to set it right', 'How stale and unprofitable are the uses of this world', 'Fie on' "Ah fie!" An unwedded garden / That grows to seed; Rightly does Hamlet's tragedy appear to be 'the tragedy of the intellectual, of the importance of the over cultivated imagination and the reasoning powers to meet the call of everyday life for practical efficiency' (Chambers).

2.4. QUESTION OF MADNESS

Surprisingly, what has maddened the critics most is the madness of Hamlet himself the question of Hamlet's madness can be studied and analyzed in the light of following observations (i) Hamlet becomes mad (ii) Hamlet is not mad (iii) Hamlet feigns madness and there is method in his madness. That Hamlet is mad gets support in some of Hamlet's own words:

Who does it, then? His madness : it 'to be so,
Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd.

Further Ophelia's description of Hamlet also supports the contention:

Ophelia – My Lord, as I was sewing in my chamber.
Lord Hamlet, - with his doublet all untraced;
Not hat upon his head; his stockings fouled,
Ungartered, and down gyred to his uncle;
Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other;
And with a look so piteous in purport,
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors, - he comes before me.

And further –

He took me by the wrist, and held me hard.
And with his other hand thus over his brow,
He raised a sigh so piteous and profound,
And, with his head over his shoulder turned,
He seemed to find his way without his eyes:
For out O' doors, he went without their help.

That Hamlet is not really mad is evident when his mother asks him not to believe in ghost, 'This is very coinage of your brain / This bodiless creation ecstasy / Is very cunning in'. Hamlet refutes by saying :

..... 't is not madness
That I have uttered; bring me to the test,
And I the matter will re-word; which madness
Would gambol from.

This may draw a parallel with Hamlet in his state of utter confusion. Awed at the ugliness of the outside world, unable to compromise with the rottenness, he finds himself unable to take decisions even for himself. However the redeeming feature he exudes gets expression in the following words.

Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart.

There appears a general contradiction between Hamlet and the world of Claudius and the two worlds stand in irreconcilable opposition. There is a vast gap in their moral values, social yardsticks of behavior, conventions and attitudes. What makes the play interesting is that the tragedy unfolds the various contradictions of Renaissance society – such contradictions exist

and appear in almost all the societies in different periods of time. Look around and you perceive what Shakespeare expressed centuries ago, still holds good.

That any person in such circumstances would behave disorderly would be thrown off balance by distress of mind or the shock of calamity is true to a great extent. Analyzed minutely, Hamlet's madness appears to be feigned. It appears that Hamlet uses his madness as a defensive apparatus, 'to claim the mad man's privilege and security – till at last 'his pranks' become, 'too broad to bear with'. Intelligent as he is, he knows that it will shift all suspicion from him, 'it is to put his enemies off the scent'. However, it is Polonius who captures the method in madness, 'though this be madness, yet there is method in it.'

2.4.1. Who is the real Hamlet?

A close study of Hamlet's mind leaves the reader to consider him – an enigma, a riddle. Essentially ambiguous in terms of dramatic origins, Hamlet's character baffles in its multi-dimensionality and apparent contradictions. Psychoanalysts such as Ernest Jones explain Hamlet's delayed revenge as an expression of Hamlet's madness in terms of Freudian repression. Jones literally writes off Hamlet's contradictions in terms of unconscious Oedipal desires, where the delay in Killing Claudius is the expression of an original 'mad' repressed desire for her. His assumed madness, he maintains thus disguises the moral danger of incestuous desire where lies the 'real' madness of his passions.

2.4.2. Hamlet's Tragic Flaw

Until recently, critics tended to assume that the causes of tragic misfortune resided in some moral defect of the protagonist. Aristotle's term *hamartia* (derived from "fault," "failure," "guilt" but literally meaning to "miss the mark") was often translated as "tragic flaw," leading critics to seek the chink in the hero's armour (such as pride or ambition) which leads to his or her downfall. Although the precise meaning of *hamartia* remains a matter of debate, the notion of the hero's tragic flaw has inspired a rich tradition of criticism and remains a useful starting point for thinking about character. Some of the most important interpretations of Hamlet's tragic flaw are as follows:

Goethe: According to Goethe, Hamlet is not tough enough. He lacks mettle. In his words, "... it is clear to me what Shakespeare has set out to portray: a heavy deed placed on a soul which is not adequate to cope with it. And it is in this sense that I find the whole play constructed. An oak tree planted in a precious pot which should only have held delicate flowers. The roots spread out, the vessel is shattered.

A fine, pure, noble and highly moral person, but devoid of that emotional strength that characterizes a hero, goes to pieces beneath a burden that it can neither support nor cast off."

Source: *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1796), trans. Eric Blackall, book 4, 145-6.

http://books.google.ch/books?id=R6twf14J_igC&pg=PA146&lpg=PA146&dq=#v=onepage&q&f=false

Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Hamlet's delay, and ultimately his downfall, is caused by too much thinking :

"...his thoughts, and the images of his fancy, are far more vivid than his actual perceptions. ... The effect of this overbalance of the imaginative power is beautifully illustrated in the everlasting broodings and superfluous activities of Hamlet's mind, which, unseated from its healthy relation, is constantly occupied with the world within, and abstracted from the world

without, – giving substance to shadows, and throwing a mist over all common-place actualities.”

Source: Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and Other English

Poets <http://shakespearean.org.uk/haml-col.htm>

A.C. Bradley: Hamlet suffers from the tragic and melancholy recognition of our finite human condition – though our souls may be infinite, our bodies are mortal :

I have dwelt thus at length on Hamlet's melancholy because, from the psychological point of view, it is the centre of the tragedy, and to omit it from consideration or to underrate its intensity is to make Shakespeare's story unintelligible. But the psychological point of view is not equivalent to the tragic; and, having once given its due weight to the fact of Hamlet's melancholy, we may freely admit, or rather may be anxious to insist, that this pathological condition would excite but little, if any, tragic interest if it were not the condition of a nature distinguished by that speculative genius on which the Schlegel-Coleridge type of theory lays stress. Such theories misinterpret the connection between that genius and Hamlet's failure, but still it is this connection which gives to his story its peculiar fascination and makes it appear (if the phrase may be allowed) as the symbol of a tragic mystery inherent in human nature. Wherever this mystery touches us, wherever we are forced to feel the wonder and awe of man's godlike 'apprehension' and his 'thoughts that wander through eternity,' and at the same time are forced to see him powerless in his petty sphere of action, and powerless (it would appear) from the very divinity of his thought, we remember Hamlet. And this is the reason why, in the great ideal movement which began towards the close of the eighteenth century; this tragedy acquired a position unique among Shakespeare's dramas, and shared only by Goethe's *Faust*. It was not that *Hamlet* is Shakespeare's greatest tragedy or most perfect work of art; it was that *Hamlet* most brings home to us at once the sense of the soul's infinity, and the sense of the doom which not only circumscribes that infinity but appears to be its offspring.

Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth: 2nd ed. London: Macmillan, 1905.(127-28).

Source: <http://shakespeare-navigators.com/bradley/tr128.html>

Ernest Jones: The Freudian interpretation, or Oedipus complex. Hamlet is driven by the unconscious desire to kill his father and marry his mother. Thus, his attitude toward Claudius is ambivalent; he is grateful to Claudius for removing his "rival" for his mother's affections (King Hamlet) but also resents him as his new father-figure.

As a child Hamlet had experienced the warmest affection for his mother, and this, as is always the case, had contained elements of a more or less dimly defined erotic quality. ... Now comes the father's death and the mother's second marriage. The long 'repressed' desire to take his father's place in his mother's affection is stimulated to unconscious activity by the sight of someone usurping this place exactly as he himself had once longed to do. ... The two recent events, the father's death and the mother's second marriage. . . represented ideas which in Hamlet's unconscious fantasy had for many years been closely associated. However, the call of duty to slay his uncle cannot be obeyed because it links itself with the call of his nature to slay his mother's husband, whether this is the first or the second; the latter call is strongly 'repressed,' and therefore necessarily the former also.

2.5. HAMLET: A RENAISSANCE CHARACTER IN A MEDIEVAL WORLD

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Fortinbras and Laertes are medieval characters. As characters of this era, they are driven by chivalry and hence the duty of revenge through murder. However, in

the medieval world that comprises the setting of the play, Hamlet represents a character of an altogether different age. Shakespeare shapes Hamlet as a thinker who questions and examines the world around him in his own pursuit of revenge. Thus, because of his fundamentally different approach to the world than the medieval characters of Fortinbras and Laertes, Hamlet can be considered as a Renaissance character. More specifically, Hamlet's Renaissance view on his world develops him both as an Elizabethan-era humanist and nihilist. Thus, through Hamlet, Shakespeare illustrates humanity's struggle with the purpose and meaning of man.

Young Fortinbras is the first foil for Hamlet introduced in the play. He desires to "recover of us, by strong and terms compulsory, those foresaid lands so by his father lost" (15) in order to avenge his father's death at the hands of King Hamlet. Thus, Shakespeare presents Fortinbras as a medieval character whose belief system lies in chivalry. Furthermore, Fortinbras' gathering of an army indicates his intention to deliver the revenge for his father's death through brutality. Shakespeare therefore places revenge as the most important aspect of chivalry, as by attempting to conquer the lands that his father had lost; Fortinbras violates the gentlemanly agreement reached after the fight between his father and Hamlet. Thus, in a world where the code of chivalry reigns, the medieval character of Fortinbras establishes a murderous and action-oriented revenge at the top of his value system.

This importance of murder for revenge in the medieval world is exemplified in another foil for Hamlet: Laertes. Like Fortinbras, Laertes' father also is killed, and Laertes is faced with the burden of avenging his death. Laertes is another solidly medieval, chivalrous figure, as evident in his vengeful nature. Also like Fortinbras, Laertes' chivalrous code of ethics drives his desire for revenge when his father, Polonius, is killed. He cries out "to hell, allegiance! Vows, to the blackest devil! Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit! I dare damnation. To this point I stand, that both the world I give to negligence, let come what comes, only I'll be revenged most thoroughly for my father" (215). When his father is killed, Laertes throws out many of the other dictates of the code of chivalry such as allegiance to his king, solely focusing on one aspect of the code: revenge, to the point where he seems to be willing to do anything to succeed in his endeavor. In a similar way to Fortinbras, the medieval character of Laertes follows the code of chivalry and values revenge as its most important aspect. And like Fortinbras, Laertes' thoughts for how to deliver this revenge turn toward murder as he plots with Claudius to "anoint my sword" (233) to kill Hamlet.

Contrasting with Laertes and Fortinbras, Hamlet is not a medieval character in the play. Instead, Hamlet is a modern Renaissance Elizabethan character who is placed in the medieval world. As an Elizabethan character, he is part of the Renaissance era movement, which at its core debated the nature of man. One aspect of this era included the humanist movement, which believed in the worth of all humans and that truth can be found through introspection. As the Renaissance's nexus shifted from Italy to Northern Europe, the ideas of humanism became more widespread as thinkers and innovators such as Galileo, Montaigne, and even Shakespeare himself were introduced to its tenets. Another aspect of Renaissance thinking was what modern society would call nihilism, which proposes that human existence in fact has no meaning and thus there is no real purpose to life. These two philosophies of the Renaissance, an appreciation for the value of the human and the contrasting assertion that life is essentially meaningless cause Hamlet's inner strife and set him apart from the medieval characters, Laertes and Fortinbras, who are solely driven by chivalry.

As a humanist, education and individual thought bring Hamlet to examine the purpose of man's existence. With the exception of Horatio, a fellow student from Wittenberg, Hamlet is the only character in the play with academic and intellectual aspirations. Hamlet's wish to go

"back to school in Wittenberg" (27) demonstrates his desire for knowledge, a yearning not present in the vast majority of characters in Hamlet. Thus, with Hamlet's humanistic intellectual pursuits, Shakespeare separates him from his medieval counterparts. Hamlet's individual thought also leads him to exclaim to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern "what a piece of work is a man, how noble of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable; in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals" (102- 103). In the first part of this speech to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet asserts that he values man and states that he believes that man is a marvel, close to perfection and thus, through these lines, demonstrates Hamlet's humanism. However, Hamlet's intellect and insight leads to his self-doubt regarding the importance of man and brings about his conflicting nihilism, establishing him as a character at odds.

Hamlet's speech to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern concludes with an expression of his nihilism. He states "and yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me, no, nor women neither" (103). These nihilistic sentiments question the purpose of life, suggesting that all humanity will eventually become dust. Indeed, in a sense this statement is a contradiction of Hamlet's previous words of admiration for mankind, and Shakespeare uses this passage to clearly identify the two forces pulling on Hamlet - his humanism and his nihilism. Hamlet's nihilism once again becomes apparent in his character close to the end of the play in the scene with the gravediggers, when he states, "Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth to dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam" (251). Hamlet's nihilism has brought him to the conclusion that Yorik, Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, and all humans will eventually die and be reduced down to the same indistinguishable dust, no matter what position they held. The word "dust," repeated from page 103 emphasizes Hamlet's growing nihilism and the futility he sees in life that inevitably ends in death. Shakespeare presents Hamlet's Renaissance beliefs in the same scenario as Fortinbras and Laertes, as Hamlet desires to get "his revenge" (59) for his father's death. When Claudius murders Hamlet's father, King Hamlet, Hamlet seeks revenge. There can be no doubt that, like Fortinbras and Laertes, Hamlet is desirous of revenge; however, the important dichotomy occurs when Hamlet is faced with the task of killing for revenge. Because of Hamlet's clashing humanism and nihilism in attempting to answer questions about human existence, he struggles to murder Claudius. This inner struggle is evident throughout the play such as when he declares, "why, what an ass am I! This is most brave, that I, the son of a dear father murdered, prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell, must like a whore unpack my heart with words, and fall a-cursing like a very drab" (119). Despite the medieval dictates which indicate that Hamlet must avenge the death of his father through murdering Claudius, his inner strife does not allow him to take this action - he has become paralyzed by his thoughts. Instead, he finds solace in the spoken word and the play, the imitation of action. This inability to carry out the medieval-style revenge because of his Renaissance thought patterns represents a tension between the rhetoric of medieval society and the reasoning of the Elizabethan era. In Hamlet, Shakespeare creates and contrasts two distinct types of characters from his perspective in the late 1500s and early 1600s: those medieval characters, Fortinbras and Laertes, rooted in the past world of chivalry and Hamlet, a character of his modern day. The situation that Fortinbras and Laertes are placed in, avenging the death of a father through bold action and presumably murder, allows Shakespeare to parallel these two characters with the ancient character of Oedipus in Sophocles' Oedipus Rex. Similar to Fortinbras and Laertes, Oedipus' father (or at least the man who he thinks is his father) is killed, and Oedipus willingly accepts the challenge to gain revenge through "exile or death, blood for blood" (Oedipus Rex 7). Thus, if Shakespeare did indeed have the Greek-era Oedipus in mind when he shaped the characters of Fortinbras and Laertes, he is creating a historical trend. Specifically, he is highlighting a long-standing code which values murder as a means of revenge. More importantly, the characteristic that Oedipus

and the medieval characters of Fortinbras and Laertes share an unquestioning devotion to this code. Shakespeare contrasts these characters with Hamlet, giving him a modern intellectualism and curiosity for the world around him. Hamlet possesses and thus highlights characteristics of an important movement, humanism, during the Renaissance, the time when Shakespeare was watching the world as he knew it go through an unprecedented change emphasizing intellect and reason. He suggests that every modern human is forced to confront the two conflicting ideas that Hamlet faces. Are humans a paragon of beauty, beings filled with meaning and vibrancy or are they simply a creation of nothing, a mere speck in the universe's existence which has no real impact and no real purpose? Shakespeare's important choice to have Hamlet die an incommensurable character, with this inner dilemma unsolved, represents an important ambiguity in the play that leaves the audience questioning the purpose of their existence - or lack thereof.

Source: http://www.flamingnet.com/bookreviews/resources/essays_bookreviews/hamlet.cfm

2.6. SOLILOQUIES

While writing, Shakespeare kept in mind the close connection between the stage and the audience. Shakespeare being a professional writer knew that as the stage is surrounded by the spectators, the actor had to establish rapport with the audience while rendering account of his most intimate thoughts and feelings. It is in fact through monologues Shakespearean informs his audience about the events, or about the plans and character of the personage speaking. Actors address the audience; e.g. 'And mark how well the sequel hangs together', or 'To say the truth', or 'Mark me now', That Hamlet is not a man of action but essentially as a man of reflection is evinced in soliloquies. The railings and self accusations, the insults, the doubts and suspicion about himself reveal his subjective state of mind. The statements that King Claudius is 'no more like my father than I to Hercules,' and when Hamlet speaks of 'my weakness and my melancholy' clearly refer to Hamlet's habit of self-explanation.

The statement that the play would be 'less problematic but poorer without soliloquies; is in itself enough to underscore the significance of the soliloquies inserted intelligently in the tragedy. Though Soliloquies are generally avoided in drama for they apparently seem to obstruct the course of action, however, they as dramatic devices are significant in a number of ways. Moreover, in Shakespeare's masterly hands, they are exquisitely and aesthetically used. In general, soliloquies serve two dramatic purposes – (a) inform the spectators/audience about the incidents and the course of action already taken place in the past (b) reveal the inner working of the speaker's mind. Soliloquies in Hamlet unlock and reveal Hamlet's mind. The enigma that Hamlet is even to critics, gets revealed to a great extent in soliloquies'. The seven soliloquies spoken by Hamlet at different intervals offer sites to probe deeper into the causes attributed to his delay in taking revenge. The first soliloquy offers reasons for his intense melancholy – the incestuous and hasty marriage of his mother –

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
..... 'tis an unweeded garden.

Greatly disillusioned as Hamlet is, he denounces all women –

..... Frailty thy name is woman –
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married – O, most wicked speed, to post

With such dexterity to incestuous sheets.

The second soliloquy is significant as it amply underlines the revenge motive. The Ghost of Hamlet's father narrates him the things the stock Hamlet, He vouches:

..... Remember thee!
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
The exclaims outpouring his disillusionment;
O, most pernicious woman!
O villain, villain, smiling damned villain
O villain, villain, smiling, and smile and be a villain.

The soliloquy spoken after Hamlet meets the players, further allows the reader an insight into Hamlet's troubled mind. His wavering disposition and reflective bent of mind appears to be solid reasons preventing Hamlet to take action:

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I:
Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion
Could force his soul so to his own concert
That from her working all his visage wann'd.

The consciousness of not being able to act gnaws at his heart, 'Am I a coward?' He reassures himself to act only if he catches his uncle on wrong footing. He doubts –

The spirit that I have seen
May be the devil : and the devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape
..... The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

2.7. SUMMING UP

Since the play was written, *Hamlet* still continues to be one of the most popular tragedies of Shakespeare. What apparently appears to be a tragedy of revenge, it is a play which seeks to fathom the innermost recess of human mind. Readers get compelled to equate themselves with Hamlet's struggles, obscurities and contradictions. His tragedy is the tragedy of the modern man, a man at war within himself. What interests the readers more is the Hamlet's imperfections leave more room for discussion. Facets of Hamlet are found in Romes and Richard II, in Jaques and also in philosopher character Brutus – Perhaps it is the integration of the features of all these characters in Hamlet's character that makes his character so fascinating.

Self Assessment Questions

1. Form an idea of Hamlet after reading the following comments of some of the prominent critics.
2. 'Though this be madness there is method in it' – Discuss.

3. Is Hamlet's distress understandable? Why does he fail to act until too late? Is his inaction due to a tragic flaw?

2.8. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Refer to section 2.3 and 2.4
2. Refer to section 2.4
3. Refer to section 2.3 and 2.4.2

2.9. GLOSSARY

Oedipus Complex: In psychoanalytic theory the term Oedipus complex denotes the emotions and ideas that the mind keeps in the unconscious, via dynamic repression that concentrates upon a child's desire to sexually possess the parent of the opposite sex (e.g. males attracted to their mothers, whereas females are attracted to their fathers). Sigmund Freud who coined the term "Oedipus complex" believed that the Oedipus complex is a desire for the parent in both males and females

Hamartia: The Greek word for error or failure, used by Aristotle in his *Poetics* (4th century BCE) to designate the false step that leads the protagonist in a tragedy to his or her downfall. The term has often been translated as 'tragic flaw', but this misleadingly confines the cause of the reversal of fortunes to some personal defect of character, whereas Aristotle's emphasis was rather upon the protagonist's action, which could be brought about by misjudgement, ignorance, or some other cause.

2.10. REFERENCES

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2.11. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. "Madness of Hamlet is less than madness and more than feigned"- T.S. Eliot. Discuss.
2. "Soliloquies spoken by Hamlet reveal and unlock his heart" – Discuss.
3. Is Hamlet a tragedy of character or destiny?

3.1.Introduction

3.2.Objectives

3.3.Performance History

3.4.Major Characters

3.4.1. Hamlet

3.4.1. Ophelia - Deciphering the Phenomenon

3.4.2. Gertrude

3.4.3. Polonius, Claudius, Laertes and Horatio

3.5.The Role of the Ghost

3.6.Instructions to Players

3.7.Hamlet: An Artistic Failure

3.8.Summing Up

3.9.Answers to Self-Assessment Questions

3.10.References

3.11.Terminal and Model Questions

3.1. INTRODUCTION

That *Hamlet* is one of the most popular and famous Shakespearean plays is evinced in a number of questions and different interpretations raised by critics. Every time it is read, seen or performed, it elicits appreciation and interpretations that are just extraordinary. Written primarily for Richard Burbage, the play happened to be Shakespeare's fourth most popular play during his lifetime-after Henry IV Part I, Richard III and Pericles. Put down by Puritans, the play was revised in Restoration period and continues to enthrall everyone during 18th and 19th centuries. The play has a long history of being staged in U.K. with actor-managers of the Victorian era (including Kean, Samuel Phelps, Henry Irving) staging in a grand fashion - to being played in France, Germany and in India in 19th and 20th century (From 1850s, the Parsi Theatre tradition in India transformed Hamlet into folk performances, with dozen of songs added).

3.2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the unit are to:

- Acquaint the students with the various adaptations and performances on stage, T.V. and films.
- To familiarize them with the art of acting, and instructions considered to be in fashion during Elizabethan times.
- Help the reader to form an idea about the Elizabethan society, especially about the status of women.

3.3. PERFORMANCE HISTORY – IN BRIEF

Shakespeare modeled the character of Hamlet for Richard Burbage, the Chief tragedian of the Lord Chamberlain's Men. With several reprints, it was performed at the Globe to be performed before James I in 1619 and Charles I in 1637. Even during the Puritan age, it was performed though illegally. During Restoration, the play was performed by Sir William Davenant's Duke's Company. Alexander Sumarokov wrote a Russian adaptation. In the 19th century, George Frederick Cooke, J.B. Booth, Kean, W.C. Macready and Charles Kemble performed the play in a grand manner, with elaborate scenery and costumes. Some famous performances in 20th century are: Otojiro Kawakami 1903 Shimpa Adaptation, Shoya Tsubouchi 1911 blended Shingeki (new drama) and Kabuki style, Fukuda Tsuneari 1955, In Moscow, Stanislavski, explored psychological motivation; Craig conceived the play as a symbolist monodrama. Plays with contemporary political overtones were written by Jessner, in Germany. Besides, Poland, Czech and China also witnessed staging of the play.

In notable T.V. productions of *Hamlet*, stars such as Christopher Plummer, Richard Chamberlain, Derek Jacobi (Royal Shakespeare Company BBC) played Hamlet. In 2014, Vishal Bharadwaj, the famous Bollywood director made a Bollywood film "Haider" which was based on *Hamlet*.

3.4. MAJOR CHARACTERS

That Shakespeare wanted a stamp of his own is evident from the simple proposition that he eschewed the classical model of writing drama existing during the age and remodeled the tradition regarding incident, character, the three unities, emotional texture, poetic style and language. However, the field he excelled in was character – portrayal. Today, not only his protagonists are remembered by every avid literature lover, but his other characters stand out

from amongst a galaxy of unforgettable portraits. Ophelia, Polonius, Cassius, Casca, Lady Macbeth, Desdemona, Falstaff, Jacques are characters who with their intensely etched personalities leave an indelible imprint upon our memories. Let us now examine some of the major characters of the play:

3.4.1. Hamlet

Hamlet has fascinated audiences and readers for centuries, and the first thing to point out about him is that he is enigmatic. There is always more to him than the other characters in the play can figure out; even the most careful and clever readers come away with the sense that they don't know everything there is to know about this character. Hamlet actually tells other characters that there is more to him than meets the eye—notably, his mother, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern—but his fascination involves much more than this. When he speaks, he sounds as if there's something important he's not saying, maybe something even he is not aware of. The ability to write soliloquies and dialogues that create this effect is one of Shakespeare's most impressive achievements.

A university student whose studies are interrupted by his father's death, Hamlet is extremely philosophical and contemplative. He is particularly drawn to difficult questions or questions that cannot be answered with any certainty. Faced with evidence that his uncle murdered his father, evidence that any other character in a play would believe, Hamlet becomes obsessed with proving his uncle's guilt before trying to act. The standard of "beyond a reasonable doubt" is simply unacceptable to him. He is equally plagued with questions about the afterlife, about the wisdom of suicide, about what happens to bodies after they die—the list is extensive.

But even though he is thoughtful to the point of obsession, Hamlet also behaves rashly and impulsively. When he does act, it is with surprising swiftness and little or no premeditation, as when he stabs Polonius through a curtain without even checking to see who he is. He seems to step very easily into the role of a madman, behaving erratically and upsetting the other characters with his wild speech and pointed innuendos.

It is also important to note that Hamlet is extremely melancholy and discontented with the state of affairs in Denmark and in his own family—indeed, in the world at large. He is extremely disappointed with his mother for marrying his uncle so quickly, and he repudiates Ophelia, a woman he once claimed to love, in the harshest terms. His words often indicate his disgust with and distrust of women in general. At a number of points in the play, he contemplates his own death and even the option of suicide.

But, despite all of the things with which Hamlet professes dissatisfaction, it is remarkable that the prince and heir apparent of Denmark should think about these problems only in personal and philosophical terms. He spends relatively little time thinking about the threats to Denmark's national security from without or the threats to its stability from within (some of which he helps to create through his own carelessness).

3.4.2. Ophelia: Deciphering the Phenomenon

As there were seen no professional actresses on the public stage in Shakespearean times, it can well be assumed that the female role was played a tender age boy actor. Mentally unstable due to traumatic events in past, Ophelia's melancholy and confused state of mind is often contrasted with Hamlet's madness. When first introduced, she is found listening meekly to her brother's warning that Hamlet does not have the freedom to marry whomsoever he wants. Further, she is rebuked by her father for pursuing the heir to the throne of Denmark. Hamlet's madness is known to the world only when Ophelia describes Hamlet's 'hellish' expression

who ‘only stared at her and nodded three times, without speaking to her’. The ‘Nunnery Scene’ leaves Ophelia heart-broken who exclaims, ‘O, what a noble mind is here O’erthrown’ The ‘Mousetrap Play’, leading to killing of Polonius results in Ophelia talk in riddles and rhymes, sing some ‘mad’ and bawdy songs about death and a maiden losing her virginity. In Act IV Sc VII, Queen Gertrude informs of Ophelia’s tragic death by drowning when she became ‘incapable of her own distress.’

Ophelia though earlier considered a ‘weak’ character has gained currency in present times. She is often referred to in connection to suicide, mental stability and failed love. Of late, she has come to represent all those girls, subdued, tortured and dominated by the system. She represents all those girls who are victimized, lost and are unsure of themselves.

With the publication of her book *Reviving Ophelia*, Mary Pipher, a psychologist of repute, Ophelia’s portrayal offered ‘new meanings and subversive tensions’. Ophelia’s character moved her to make a study of the lives of the troubled young women and trace the reasons of their being led astray. Ophelia, she seems to suggest, underwent extreme pressure from parents, peers and the external world to reach an unachievable ideal. The warnings of Polonius and Laertes hint at the tremendous pressure on girls of tender age like Ophelia to meet goals while still holding on to their sanity. Pipher’s analysis underscores the argument that Ophelia was entirely misunderstood, much like her patients. A study of the complex mind of an adolescent, undergoing both physical changes and emotional redressing requires a holistic perspective.

Ophelia’s character is invested with so many shades and such little nuances by Shakespeare that actresses of repute get tempted to grab it. Helen Faucit, Dora Jordan, Frances Abington, Peg Woffington, Susannah Maria Cibber, Elizabeth Satchell, Jean Simmens, Helen Bonhan Carter, Kate Winslet (1996), Julia Stiles (2000), Gugu Mbatha-Raw (2009) have played Ophelia’s role in stage and films. Not surprisingly, themes associated with Ophelia have led to movies such as “Ophelia learns to Swim” (2000) and “Dying Like Ophelia” (2002).

Ophelia’s character has inspired a number of characters sketched by great writers. Thus, Russian novelist Fyoder Dostoevsky in his masterpiece *The Brothers Karamazov* refers to a capricious young woman who committed suicide by throwing herself off a steep cliff into a river. Rebecca Reiser’s *Ophelia’s Revenge*, Lisa Fiedler’s *Dating Hamlet*, Lisa Klein’s *Ophelia* retell Hamlet from Ophelia’s point of view. That, how important Ophelia is, gets acknowledged in a number of poems. French poet Arthur Rimbaud’s Ophelia, Richard Brautigan’s poem ‘The Rape of Ophelia’ are inspired by Shakespeare’s Ophelia. In the Waste Land, T.S. Eliot alludes to Ophelia’s death in the section entitled ‘Death by Water’. Though apparently Ophelia may appear to be the most static and one-dimensional evolution. Hamlet gets convinced that all women are whores. His mother is whore when she remarried, and Ophelia is whore for she is used by her father to discover what makes Hamlet behave so strangely.

Ophelia too is a victim of a rigid society. Carol Thomas Neely rightly observes that “Ophelia’s movement from submissive daughter to mad prophet reveals the combination of powerlessness and freedom. Until her madness, Ophelia scarcely exists outside of men’s use of her. She is not simply driven to this madness but freed from it by her father’s death, Laertes’s and Hamlet’s absence. The madness incorporates and allows expression of the earlier pressures on her: the desired and forbidden loss of chastity, the virtues hypocritically enjoined, and the corruption perceived.”

3.4.3. Gertrude

Few Shakespearean characters have caused as much uncertainty as Gertrude, the beautiful Queen of Denmark. The play seems to raise more questions about Gertrude than it answers, including: Was she involved with Claudius before the death of her husband? Did she love her husband? Did she know about Claudius's plan to commit the murder? Did she love Claudius, or did she marry him simply to keep her high station in Denmark? Does she believe Hamlet when he insists that he is not mad, or does she pretend to believe him simply to protect herself? Does she intentionally betray Hamlet to Claudius, or does she believe that she is protecting her son's secret?

These questions can be answered in numerous ways, depending upon one's reading of the play. The Gertrude who does emerge clearly in Hamlet is a woman defined by her desire for station and affection, as well as by her tendency to use men to fulfill her instinct for self-preservation—which, of course, makes her extremely dependent upon the men in her life. Hamlet's most famous comment about Gertrude is his furious condemnation of women in general: "Frailty, thy name is woman!" (I.ii.146). This comment is as much indicative of Hamlet's agonized state of mind as of anything else, but to a great extent Gertrude does seem morally frail. She never exhibits the ability to think critically about her situation, but seems merely to move instinctively toward seemingly safe choices, as when she immediately runs to Claudius after her confrontation with Hamlet. She is at her best in social situations (I.ii and V.ii), when her natural grace and charm seem to indicate a rich, rounded personality. At times it seems that her grace and charm are her only characteristics, and her reliance on men appears to be her sole way of capitalizing on her abilities.<http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/hamlet/canalysis.html>

Hamlet's comment in the Queen's closet scene when he says frailty, thy name is women! is without any doubt an expression of how Hamlet sees his own mother as an example of the weakness of women. Described by ghost as a 'most seeming virtuous queen', Gertrude appears to be a very practical woman who prefers to take safe decisions. In fact, it is her sinful behaviour which causes in Hamlet an internal dilemma.

3.4.4. Polonius / Claudius / Laertes and Horatio

Polonius is a man bred in courts, exercised in business, stored with observation, confident in his knowledge, proud of his eloquence, all declining into dotage. His mode of oratory is designed to ridicule the practice of those times, of prefaces that made no introduction, and of method that embarrassed rather than explained. This part of his character is accidental, the rest natural. Such a man is positive and confident, because he knows that his mind was once strong, and knows not that it has become weak. Such a man excels in general principles, but fails in particular application. He is knowing in retrospect, and ignorant in foresight. While he depends upon his memory, and can draw from his depositaries of knowledge, he utters weighty sentences, and gives useful counsel: but, as the mind in its enfeebled state cannot be kept long busy and intent, the old man is subject to the dereliction of his faculties; he loses the order of his ideas, and entangles himself in his own thoughts, till he recover the leading principle, and fall into his former train. The idea of dotage encroaching upon wisdom will solve all the phenomena of the character of Polonius.

Shakespeare's villains are complex. Unlike the earlier antiheroes of the revenge or morality plays that were popular in Elizabethan and Jacobean culture, Shakespearean criminals lack the simple clarity of absolute evil. Claudius is a perfect example of a quintessential Shakespearean antagonist. As with all the supporting characters in Hamlet, Claudius is not developed to his full potential. His primary role in the play is to spawn Hamlet's confusion and anger, and his

subsequent search for truth and life's meaning. But Claudius is not a static character. While his qualities are not as thoroughly explored as Hamlet's, Shakespeare crafts a whole human being out of the treacherous, usurping King of Denmark. Laertes is a minor character who plays a major role in William Shakespeare's play 'Hamlet.' Laertes is a young man who feels responsible for protecting his family's name. Many young men feel responsible for protecting their family, but sometimes they might do so in irresponsible ways. It is difficult to act in a rational and responsible way if you are hot-tempered and impulsive. Laertes, a character in the play Hamlet by William Shakespeare, is a young man who wants to protect his sister from heartache and avenge the death of his father Polonius. Laertes is impulsive and irrational in his quest to avenge his father's death, which ultimately leads to his own demise.

Horatio is Hamlet's most trusted friend, to whom Hamlet reveals all his plans. Horatio swears himself to secrecy about the ghost and Hamlet's pretense of madness, and conspires with Hamlet to prove Claudius's guilt in the mousetrap play.[He is the first to know of Hamlet's return from England, and is with him when he learns of Ophelia's death.

Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man
As e'er my conversation coped withal.

At the end of the play, Horatio proposes to finish off the poisoned drink which was intended for Hamlet, saying that he is 'more an antique Roman than a Dane', but the dying prince implores Horatio not to drink from the cup and bids his friend to live and help put things right in Denmark; "If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart, / Absent thee from felicity a while, / And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain / To tell my story." Hamlet, speaking of death as "felicity", commands Horatio to wait "a while" to tell the story; perhaps Hamlet dies expecting his friend to follow as soon as the complete story has been told. Hamlet's last request creates a parallel between the name Horatio and the Latin orator, meaning "speaker".

Self Assessment Questions I

1. As compared to female figures in comedies, women in Hamlet are secondary in importance. Discuss.
2. Ophelia stands out for all the girls who are subjugated and repressed. Discuss.
3. Hamlet's tragedy is mainly linked to the remarriage of his mother—how far could this be true?

3.5. THE ROLE OF THE GHOST IN HAMLET

The ghosts, apparitions, fairies and witches play a very important dramatic function in Shakespearean tragedies. Supernatural agents as they are, they are viewed with great suspicion – are they agents of devil or of God? Hamlet exclaims on seeing the ghost of his father, 'Angels and ministers of grace defend us' (I.IV.39). He does not know whether it is an evil or good spirit:

Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents charitable or wicked (I.IV.40-43).

The ghost is a symbol of instability and refers to the rottenness, sickness and disease in the State of Denmark. It invokes Hamlets to revenge his foul and most unnatural murder. Though the ghost condemns the queen 'thy most seeming-virtuous Queenloved prey on garbage',

yet it does not encourage the son against her who decides, 'I will speak daggers to her but use none. The ghost is important in that it causes unfortunate events to follow.

3.6. INSTRUCTIONS TO PLAYERS: THE PLAY IS THE THING

In Shakespeare's tragedy, Hamlet, the players and their play emphasizes the importance of theatre and its' power. The players arrive in Act2 Scene2. They are announced by a flourish of trumpets, which is the usual occurrence upon the arrival of actors; yet, this is the second time in the scene we have heard such a grand entrance, the first being that of the King and Queen at the start of the scene, therefore a similar feeling of importance is evoked for the players Immediately. Hamlet himself welcomes them with great warmth and 'entertainment.' He has great admiration for these people and their lifestyle, which has the freedom from duties and of expression that Hamlet lacks. Through them we see him explore role-play and word-play in a way which he himself cannot, in Shakespeare's use of Hamlet as our guide to the world of theatre, and as an overly contemplative avenger. Already, in Act2 scene2, we see that Hamlet is conceiving plans and deception, as he warns of his contrived madness: "I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw." (2, 2, 374-5) and so we see that he is already taking on some of the wiles of a player in order to conceal his true ideas, posing as a madman.

Later in the scene we see Hamlet trying to gain further some affinity with the players, promoting a speech from the first players, prompting a speech from the first player, which refers to the attack on troy. Shakespeare has used Marlowe's Dido as his source and manipulated it to create greater relevance to 'Hamlet' and Hamlet who is mirrored by the character Phyruss, who is made more of a dark thinker than rash avenger, reflecting back to our first images of Hamlet in his 'inky cloak.'

Yet, Hamlet plays director to the players, and so they become his pawns to manipulate the reactions of me the audience within the play, most specifically to 'catch the conscience of the King.'

However we have already seen how Hamlet holds little belief in outward expressions and 'trappings', believing that they do not show what real and honest, 'that within which passes show" (1, 2, 1-85) in his role as a rebel idealist and great supporter of truth, so different from Claudius' oily rhetoric (1, 2, 1-39). It is interesting, therefore, that Hamlet should give the players so much praise, not that he does this he does this without criticism seeing it as 'monstrous' that they should be able to evoke such grief, thus appearing as 'dull' dreamer. He even compares actors with prostitutes, implying that they are selling their souls, their emotions to the public, 'like a whore [who can] unpack [...] heart with words.' Indeed, the imagery of 'the stage with tears' reflects back to Hamlet's disgust at Gertrude's weeping and dejected humour of the visage' in the first act.

Hamlet has realised that as an idealist, he can never be fulfilled, he too 'must like a whore' deceive and in the soliloquy of act2 scene2, he is clearly working himself up, attempting to take actor qualities in his almost pantomimesque choice of words and rhythms : "...treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain! ... ,what an ass am I? ..."

The play within the play is a striking reflection of the disorder within Elsinore. It is a play about kings and queens, and with it Hamlet intends to provoke Claudius into some confession or evidence of his guilt. Yet the play also questions Hamlet himself, and so the speech of the players king should to some extent 'catch the conscience of the' prince. A fool is clearly absent from 'Hamlet' and so this alternative questioning of our key protagonist could in some way be viewed as fulfilling, an abstract fool role. The player king delves into views on taking

action, such as : “What to ourselves in passion we do propose, the passion ending, doth the purpose lose.”

Yet Hamlet is too caught up in the purpose, he needs ‘passion,’ like that of the players in order to avenge. Instead he is waiting for the ‘ripe fruit’ to fall-fall, a sign that the time is ripe or right. The players and their play serves to underline the analysis of theatre and its power in ‘Hamlet’, and as functions to make objective comparisons to the ‘real’ characters in the play as well as provoke their actions and thoughts in their reflections of what is past and what is to come in the murders of the old King Hamlet and the inevitable murder of Claudius.

3.7. HAMLET: AN ARTISTIC FAILURE

Hamlet and His Problems is an essay written by T.S. Eliot in 1919 that offers a critical reading of Hamlet. The essay first appeared in Eliot's *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* in 1920. It was later reprinted by Faber & Faber in 1932 in *Selected Essays, 1917-1932*. Eliot's critique gained attention partly due to his claim that Hamlet is "most certainly an artistic failure." Eliot also popularized the concept of the objective correlative — a mechanism used to evoke emotion in an audience – in the essay. The essay is also an example of Eliot's use of what became known as new criticism. Eliot begins the essay by stating that the primary problem of Hamlet is actually the play itself, with its main character being only a secondary issue. Eliot goes on to note that play enjoys critical success because the character of Hamlet appeals to a particular kind of creatively minded critic. According to Eliot, a creative-minded individual who directs his energy toward criticism projects his own character onto Hamlet. As a result, the critic becomes biased in favour of and fixated on the character. Eliot accuses Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Samuel Taylor Coleridge of this, stating that Goethe's critique turns Shakespeare's tragic hero into his own Werther while Coleridge's "Lecture on Hamlet" made Hamlet into a Coleridge. Eliot wrote that due to their fixation on Hamlet rather than the play as a whole, the type of criticism that Coleridge and Goethe produced is "the most misleading kind possible."

Eliot follows this by praising J.M. Robertson and Elmer Edgar Stoll for publishing critiques that focus on the larger scope of the play. He argues that a creative work cannot be interpreted; only criticized according to a standard or in comparison to another work. The function of interpretation in this argument is to make the reader aware of relevant historical information that they are not assumed to know. Eliot credits Robertson in particular for his historical interpretation of Hamlet.

Next, Eliot names three sources on which Shakespeare is believed to have based his play: Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, *The Ur-Hamlet*, and a version of the play performed in Germany during Shakespeare's lifetime. He notes the differences between Hamlet and its source material, pointing out that in the earlier works the only motive for murder is revenge, the delay of which is the result of circumventing the king's guards. The Hamlet of the earlier play also uses his perceived madness as a guise to escape suspicion. In Shakespeare's version, however, Eliot believes Hamlet is driven by a motive greater than revenge, his delay in exacting revenge is left unexplained, and that Hamlet's madness is meant to arouse the king's suspicion rather than avoid it. Eliot finds these alterations too incomplete to be convincing, and feels that the prose of the two texts are so similar in some sections that it appears that Shakespeare simply revised Kyd's text. Eliot concludes this section by agreeing with Robertson's assertion that the hero of Hamlet is driven more by his mother's guilt than revenge for the father, and Shakespeare fell short in combining this altered motive with his source material.

The latter portion of the essay is dedicated to Eliot's criticism of Hamlet based on his concept of the objective correlative. He begins by arguing that the greatest contributor to the play's failure is Shakespeare's inability to express Hamlet's emotion in his surroundings and the audience's resultant inability to localize that emotion. The madness of Shakespeare's character, according to Eliot, is a result of the inexpressible things that Hamlet feels and the playwright cannot convey. Eliot concludes by stating that because Shakespeare cannot find a sufficient objective correlative for his hero, the audience is left without a means to understand an experience that Shakespeare himself does not seem to understand. The objective correlative concept that Eliot popularized in this essay refers to the concept that the only way to express an emotion through art is to find "a set of objects, a situation, [or] a chain of events" that will, when read or performed, evoke a specific sensory experience in the audience. This sensory experience is meant to help the reader understand the mental or emotional state of a character. Eliot writes that Hamlet's state of mind is a direct result of his confused emotions and the lack of external representation for these emotions in an objective correlative. He goes on to say that Hamlet's initial conflict is disgust in his mother, but his feelings regarding the situation are too complex to be represented by Gertrude alone. Neither Hamlet nor Shakespeare can grasp or objectify these feelings, and so it acts as an obstacle to the character's revenge and Shakespeare's plot. But Eliot points out that if Shakespeare had found an objective correlative for Hamlet's internal conflict, the play would be entirely changed because the bafflement that characterizes it is a direct result of Shakespeare's shortcomings in this respect. Eliot does, however, give credit to Shakespeare's use of the objective correlative in his other works. As an example, he references a scene in Macbeth in which Lady Macbeth is sleepwalking and the imagined sensory impressions Shakespeare provides allow the audience to understand her mental state.

One critical objection to Eliot's essay is that although Eliot begins "Hamlet and His Problems" with a complaint against critics that conflate Hamlet and its hero, he then spends a large portion of the essay focused on Hamlet the character and his effect on the play. It has been noted that if Eliot's intent was to focus his critique on the play, he could have titled his essay "Hamlet and Its Problems" instead. Some critics have also pointed out that Eliot offers no formal critique or concrete suggestions of how to improve the play. Although many critics credit Eliot's concept of the objective correlative, some take issue with his discussion of the subject in this essay. Some critics argue that no individual can say with certainty what emotion Shakespeare intended to convey in Hamlet, and thus cannot attack Shakespeare for failing to express it. Others also feel that Eliot's critique of the play is too driven by his modernist views and that he takes Hamlet too much at face value.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamlet_and_His_Problems

3.8. SUMMING UP

Shakespeare's Hamlet, though utters that 'time is out of joint/O' cursed spirit that I was born to set it right is himself timeless. The psychological depth and the nuances of human mind which Hamlet's character unravels, is indeed very surprising. With each successive age, Hamlet appears to throw surprises to psychologists. There is something of Hamlet in all of us. At times, we get excited, think of taking revenge, and are given to procrastination and depression. Amidst mishaps, sufferings, obstacles, we get perplexed not knowing the way out of vicissitudes. Based on Senecan formula of murder, madness and revenge, inclusive of old fashioned, traditional conventions of the stage (the dumb show and play within the play) full of maxims e.g. 'All that lives must die'. (1.2.72), 'To thine ownself be true' [1.3.78], and 'there's a divinity that shapes our ends' the play is just superb.

Self Assessment Questions II

1. What role does supernatural play in tragedy?
2. Analyze the acting skills of players.
3. Discuss the concept of objective co-relative with reference to Hamlet.

3.9. ANSWERS TO SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

I

1. Refer to Section 3.4.1. and 3.4.2.
2. Refer to Section 3.4.1.
3. Refer to Section 3.4.2.

II

1. Refer to section 3.5.
2. Refer to section 3.6.
3. Refer to section 3.7.

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3.11. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand about Hamlet's relationship with Ophelia? Does he love her? Did he ever love her?
2. Ophelia stands for all those female folk who are subordinated by an oppressive system'. Do you agree and if so why.
3. Do we have certain knowledge about ghosts. Is the ghost that appears in Hamlet a real one is it really a misleading fiend?

UNIT 4 *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM- I*

4.1.Introduction

4.2. Objectives

4.3.Comedy: Its origin and journey

4.3.1. Various Kinds of Comedy: Classical Comedy

4.3.2.Comedy of Manners

4.3.3.Comedy of Humours

4.3.4.Comedy of Intrigue

4.3.5.The Divine Comedy

4.3.6.Romantic Comedy: Shakespearean Comedy

4.4.Shakespeare's Life: Formative Influences

4.4.1.Shakespeare's works: Different Phases of Career

4.5.A Mental Voyage to Elizabethan Times: Renaissance and Its Impact

4.5.1.Shakespearean Theatre / Stage

4.5.2.Audience

4.6.Shakespeare: Criticism Down the Ages

4.7.Summing UP

4.8.Glossary

4.9.Answers to Self Assessment Questions

4.10.References

4.11.Terminal and Model Questions

4.1. INTRODUCTION

As is obvious, to recreate oneself is one of our necessities since time immemorial. Today, we are living in a world facilitated by hi-tech gadgetries as C.Ds, D.V.Ds, ipads, android phones, cinema, internet etc to cater our taste buds for entertainment. Did you ever think that before the invention of these gadgets how did people recreate themselves? Going back to history we find that besides listening to great orators and old wives tales, people were introduced to a very different form of art, the 'Drama'. Beginning of Drama in England is around eighth century when Saxon Kings ruled in various kingdoms into which the land was then divided, and print media was nowhere in existence. The church thought of play acting as a means of instruction to impart the important lessons for life and religion to the illiterate villagers in an interesting manner so that they could chew upon the moral or religious principles and be entertained simultaneously. These dramatized versions of episodes from the Bible were called Miracle plays and Morality plays. This effort of clergy made the teachings of Bible more accessible to the common people. As more characters were introduced and the performances became elaborate they shifted from church to churchyard and so into streets. In cause of time, developing from morality plays and Interludes, drama established itself at the royal court and in the households of nobility and the characters took a shift from merely moral types to actual persons.

Another influence was the Greek drama. The tragedies of Aeschylus and Seneca, the comedies of Aristophanes and Plautus, had been composed centuries earlier. Their works were regarded by scholars as the supreme models of drama. The learned Aristotle had framed rules of dramatic construction, and those came to be called Aristotle's Unities.

All men like to be amused, to have fun and to see wonderful things. Drama in the broader perspective provides the glimpse of life. Audience co-relate their life and its experiences with that of the actors in the drama, at times being purgated or purified, having released such emotions which could else had been heavy on them. Thus, it aims to be reformatory or corrective. In this unit, we will enjoy reading a comedy crudely defined as a play with a happy ending. The comedy that we will read is *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* by one of the greatest playwright William Shakespeare.

4.2. OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Understand comedy and its various types.
- Differentiate between the classical and romantic comedy.
- Appreciate the life of Shakespeare and its formative influences.
- Understand world of Shakespeare's comedies.
- Analyze different phases of Shakespeare's Career tracing his evolution as a dramatist.

4.3. COMEDY

The idea of comedy originated in ancient Greece of 4th century BC and persists through the present. It's primarily concerned with humans as social beings and its function is corrective. The word comedy (kōmōidia, komoidia) is derived from Greek verb meaning "to revel", intended to be humorous. Comedy arose out of the revels associated with the rites of Dionysus, a god of vegetation. The word came into modern usage through the Latin 'comoedia' and Italian 'commedia'. Greeks and Romans confined the word "comedy" to descriptions of stage plays with happy ending. In the Middle ages, the term expanded to include narrative poems

with happy endings and a lighter tone. With the progress of time, the word became synonymous with humour in general and was associated with any sort of performance intended to cause laughter.

Greek philosopher Aristotle, around 335 BC, in his work *Poetics* stated that comedy originated in phallic processions, and is the light treatment of the otherwise base and ugly. Comedies begin with low or base characters seeking insignificant aims and end with some accomplishment of the aims which either lightens the initial baseness or reveals the insignificance of the aims. It includes unrealistic in order to portray realistic. For Greeks, all comedies ended happily which is opposite of tragedy, which ends sadly. Comedy testifies to physical vitality, delight in life, and the will to go on living. Comedy is utmost enjoyable when it co-relates with the festivity of life. Comedy presents the life as it should be, not as it is, as we would expect it to be. It intends to present the amusing view of life. The hero of the comedy struggles against the odds and triumphs over difficulties and the manner in which he succeeds, wins our admiration and gives us aesthetic pleasure. Contrary to tragedy, we find that the end of comedy all the characters are happy and together. It exercises 'poetic justice' i.e. vices are punished and virtues are rewarded.

4.3.1. Various Kinds of Comedy: Classical Comedy

The classical comedy follows the rules of dramatic composition as laid down by ancient Greek and Roman writers like Aristotle around 4th century BC and persists through present. It is primarily concerned with humans as social beings, rather than as private persons. Its function is corrective i.e. to expose some human folly, to hold a mirror up to society to reflect its follies and vices, in the hope that they will be mended as a result. The rules that are of importance are: the observance of three unities of time, place and action as described by Aristotle, the strict separation of the tragic and the comic and of light and serious elements. There is realism in portrayal of life of characters. The first English comedy *Ralph Roister Doister*, was modeled on the comedies of Plautus.

4.3.2. Comedy of Manners

Also known as artificial comedy or High Comedy, it was a popular style of writing in English after restoration. Its subject is a particular section of society usually upper class society and it uses humour to satirize the behaviour, social customs and mannerisms of its members. The comedy of manners developed during restoration period. It is realistic in character and focuses our attention on the life, manners, ways, love-intrigues and foppery of the upper and the aristocratic classes of society. The scenes of comedies were generally laid in London, particularly cafes, chocolate houses, clubs and gambling centres. Comedies of Congreve and Dryden belong to this class.

4.3.3. Comedy of Homours

This type of comedy practiced by Ben Jonson, is a satire on eccentricity, which was supposed to be due to excess of one of the four 'humours' or natural fluids of the body-blood, phlegm, cholera and melancholy or black bile. It is also known as comedy of characters. It presents some special peculiarity or oddity of character, some salient trait, the habitual attitude and the conduct of the person possessing it. Ben Jonson was the progenitor of this form of comedy and his theory was that comedy ought to be judicial. It should treat real life in the spirit of satire so that it introduces reform in social life. This type of comedy is also known as satirical comedy, as the weapon of ridicule and division is used in exposing human folly. This type of comedy presents the manners of the time of low life, of low bullies, sinister cheats and ignorant dupes. *Every Man in His Humour* by Jonson is an example of comedy of manners.

4.3.4. The Comedy of Intrigue

This type of comedy focuses on the plot or action and not the presentation of character. Comedies of this kind were very popular in Spain during Restoration and Post Restoration period. It specializes in situations arising out of infidelity in love and marriage. Dryden's *The Spanish Friar* is a comedy which depends for its interest on intrigue.

4.3.5. The Divine Comedy

Dante used the term comedy for his great epic *The Divine Comedy*. He used the term 'comedy' in a sense, very different from that in which it is used by us. In his time, comedy meant a story with a happy ending. There was no notion attached to it, of its being hilarious or mirth provoking.

4.3.6. Romantic Comedy or Shakespearean Comedy

This form of comedy was practiced mainly by Shakespeare and the University Wits including Lyly, Greene and Nashe. This comedy depicts romance growing rapidly and focuses on the foibles of those falling in love in humorous terms. Comedy, in Elizabethan time had a very different meaning from modern comedy. A Shakespearean Comedy, on the other hand, is a romantic comedy. It is a product of the national taste and tradition of that time. Shakespeare considered life as a blend of joys and sorrows, and therefore mingled the serious and the gay, the comic and the tragic freely in his comedies. He wrote his comedies not with any corrective or satiric purposes; instead he aimed at good natured laughter. Follies are no doubt exposed and ridiculed but the laughter is gentle and sympathetic. It explores the possibility of a better world order, in which life would be much happier and nobler. In this world, life is lived differently and beautifully. It presents a paradisaical glimpse for the soul to come out of its shell and a happy adventurer in the quest of a higher life. Just as the modern man in present time being fed up of the monotonous life finds nature as the antidote to his boredom, similarly the desire to get some relief from prosaic day to day life would have eluded the dramatist to introduce the remote, the distant and the unfamiliar enchanted world. The characters in Shakespearean comedy are always on a quest and we are inspired to become partners in their quest. Unlike classical comedy, merely exposing and ridiculing human folly, hypocrisy and vanity, Shakespearean comedy presents an artist's vision of a better world order. That is why, the characters in his comedy are not ludicrous specimen of humanity but are beautiful, noble and have glory.

4.4. SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE: FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

William Shakespeare was born on or about the 23rd April 1564, at Stratford on Avon, Warwickshire. His father, John Shakespeare, was a prosperous tradesman in Stratford. His mother, Mary Arden, came from a higher social background, being the daughter of a gentleman and landowner, Robert Arden. He received his early education from the local Grammar School, where he was taught Latin and Arithmetic. Unfortunately due to financial misfortunes of his father he withdrew from school at the age of fourteen to help the family by earning money on his own account.

Before his nineteenth birthday, Shakespeare married Ann Hathaway, who was eight years older than himself and became a well-known actor and playwright by 1592. Few years after his marriage-roughly about 1587, he left his native place to seek his fortunes in London, where he stayed for another twenty years and grew steadily in fame and wealth. He became a share holder in two of the leading theatres of the time, the Globe and the Black friars. The years between 1596 to 1610 brought many domestic sorrows to him. He lost his dear ones and

between 1610 and 1612, he retired to Stratford. Between the years 1589 and 1611, he wrote at least 36 plays, 2 narrative poems and many sonnets. He retired as a wealthy man and on 23rd April 1616, took his last breath. Though four hundred years have passed since his dramas were written, yet their freshness and their appeal is permanent in literature. His dramas have an neither eternal freshness which neither age can wither nor custom stale. The most significant quality that we notice in Shakespeare's work is his universality and his profound understanding of human nature. A man is not born as a personality but there are many factors that mingle up to form a persona. Shakespeare too was influenced by many such factors. Warwickshire is situated in the heart of England. The river Avon runs through the middle of it dividing it into two-to the north the Forest of Arden, and to the south beautiful landscape of countryside. This abundance of natural beauty permeated his creative genius and is generously exhibited in his works. Shakespeare was of an observant mind as he not only observed with interest various tradesmen as carpenters, cobblers, drapers etc. but also portrayed with remarkable accuracy and authenticity these characters in his plays. One can readily notice references to various country sports as archery, beer baiting, hunting etc. in his plays proving his love of outdoor life and his knowledge of even the minutest details of it. As an Elizabethan boy, he had to attend the church services regularly, and the verses of Bible, of the pray-book, of the sermons and of the Psalms became a part of his being and are reflected throughout the plays in various forms. Critics have expressed surprise at the vastness of Shakespeare's knowledge of classical mythology and literature of birds, beasts etc. that too when he had no university education at all. Shakespeare was a hungry and rapid reader. He lifted tales from the books and re-handled them. Shakespeare used to vividly watch Greek dramas: his acquaintance with drama later on inspired him to create masterpieces. Shakespeare was an artist divinely inspired and a great humanist.

Self Assessment Questions I

1. Write a note on the biographical information which you think is important to understand Shakespeare's works.
2. Prepare a list of various types of comedies penned by English, Greek and Roman writers.
3. Shakespeare wrote both for the classes and the masses. Discuss.
4. A Mid Summer Night's Dream was written during Shakespeare's which phase of dramatic career?

4.4.1. Shakespeare's Works : Different Phases of Career

Rightly regarded as one of the most precious treasures of the world, Shakespeare's literary career, if chronologically considered evinces four distinct periods. Quite surprisingly, Shakespeare appears to be least concerned about the publication of his plays, for it is his friends and fellow actors John Heminge and Henry Condall who painstakingly issued all his plays in 1623 in the first Folio dedicated to the Earls of Pembroke and of Montgomery. Other Folios, The Second, The Third and The Fourth appeared in 1632, 1663-64 and 1685.

Spread over a period of Twenty four years (1588-1612) Shakespeare's dramatic career divided into four distinct periods, illustrates the development of his mind and art. In the first period of apprenticeship, termed by Dowden as period 'In the workshop', Shakespeare rewrote other's plays. *Titus Andronicus*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Richard III* and *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* were written in this period eliciting the following commentary from Hudson, 'The work of this period, as a whole, is extremely slight in texture; the treatment of life in it, is superficial; there is little depth in thought or

characterization; and the art is markedly immature. Though lacking in finesse, in some technical features, the plays are marked by vivacity, cleverness, delight in beauty and a quick enjoyment of existence.' The drama *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* that we are going to read in this unit, assumed to be written around 1598 is a romantic comedy. It is the first mature comedy of Shakespeare, and has a number of distinctive features of its own.

Termed as 'In the World' (Dowden), the second period (1594-1600) reveals Shakespeare's bid to grow independent in power and technique. The youthful crudeness, strain and extravagance disappears; and in its place, a penetrative insight into the human mind, a deep understanding of the complexities of the world, a matured wisdom enrolls the splendid panorama of national history and the moral issues perturbing life. During this period were written *Richard II*, *King John*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Henry IV*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *As You Like It*, *Henry V*, *Taming of the Shrew* and *Twelfth Night*.

Known as 'Out of Depths', the third period (1600-1608) saw the production of plays – *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Timon of Athens*. The dark world of crime and punishment in war with the innocent, noble minded, good people – constitutes the themes of many of these plays. Problems of life and death, issues of ambition, ingratitude, treachery, passions of love, envy, hatred, sins and weaknesses of men form the crux of the plot. The clash of characters – the play of fierce judgment, hot passion, misanthropy, violent acts, the darker sides of human experiences make the plays superb.

Described as 'On the Heights' (Dowden), in the fourth period (1608-1612), the torrent of the violent passions and hurricane of emotions get calmed and 'the air is filled with sweet and tender melodies' whose themes such as repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation, rule the plots of the plays of this period – *Cymbeline*, *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*. *Pericles* and *Henry VIII* are also attributed to this period. In these last plays, the groundwork is still furnished by tragic passion but the evil is no longer permitted to have its way, but is controlled and conquered by the good.

Now you might have got an idea of the immense dramatic talent of Shakespeare. The range of themes, the depth of passions, the variety of characters, a mixing of conventional, folk and royal theatre, the complexity of the ways of the world found in his plays, remain unchallenged even today.

4.5. A MENTAL VOYAGE TO ELIZABETHAN TIME

The period of time from 1562-1602 in the history of English literature is said to be Elizabethan period. It is named after its ruler - Queen Elizabeth who ruled England during this time. She was succeeded by the Stuart King, James I (1603-1625). Thus Shakespeare lived and created both in the Elizabethan Age and Jacobean Age (Adjective for James). These were the period of English Renaissance in England. The Age of Shakespeare or the Elizabethan Age was the richest period in the history of England. Renaissance had its birth in Italy, and spread in Germany, France and England. Under its influence, the people made efforts to free themselves from the rigid institutions of the Middle Ages, feudalism and the churches and to assert their right to live, to think, and to express themselves in accordance with a more flexible secular code. Under the new creed, Humanism flourished, life no longer seemed mere penance to be endured by good Christians in preparation for heaven. People began to take interest in this life and strove hard to make it larger and happier. Both in politics and religion, the English nation was attaining to a state of stability. Edmund Spenser presented the best trends of Reformation

in *The Faerie Queen*. He even expressed the possibility of the existence of a fairy world over and above the world of mortals. Men's geographical horizons were widened by the discovery of the New World which opened the new vistas of wealth and prosperity. New discoveries in the field of astronomy by Columbus and Cabot not only widened the horizons but also opened the new doors of knowledge from the new worlds. It was an age of adventure. The new learning was popularized by the advancement of printing. Elizabethan age was the manhood of Renaissance, meaning both reawakening and revival. It was the efflorescence of this spirit in this age and the world of literature also could not remain unaffected. Many ancient masterpieces were translated into English, and made available to the people. The dramas of the age, including those of Shakespeare are full of classical references of Gods, Goddesses and mythology. Pamphlets and treatise were freely written. Art and literature are peace time activities and the accession of glorious Queen Elizabeth brought both external and internal peace resulting in an abundance of excellent literature. She was popular and powerful and was looked upon as an exalted individual therefore countless tributes were made to her in contemporary literature.

It was the age when literature made an all round development whether it be poetry, translations, prose, or drama. Shakespeare was fortunate in the moment of his birth, as it was the most suitable time when men of genius like Shakespeare could make their mark and reached heights of glory.

4.5.1. Shakespearean Theatre/Stage

During the earlier times, since drama came out of churchyards to streets, it was hampered for want of a suitable place. It used to be staged in the courtyards of inns, in some open space at the outskirts of the city or, in the mansions of the rich. The first English theatre called "The Theatre" was built in 1576, which later in 1599 was reconstructed as the "Globe" where most of the Shakespeare's plays were staged. This was the time when Puritans were in power. They were opposed to such constructions and regarded all the plays as immoral and the actors as vagabonds, thieves and good for nothings. Later when the nobles and Lords gave their names to these acting troupes, they came to be seen with some measure of respect. Hence, it was essential for the actors to be associated under such noble patronage. Shakespeare also joined Lord Chamberlain's Company in 1594, and the patronage of the Queen. Elizabethan theatres were generally built after the design of the original Theatre, which was built of wood, a circular enclosure, open to sky and containing a ground floor and two upper galleries. The stage was not a thing apart from the audience, with a curtain to hide it. The main stage for action was a wooden platform. There was little attempt to decorate it. There were no curtains with painted scenery and this lack was supplied through appropriate dialogue. Similarly, the time of day, night and location were indicated through dialogue. Trap-doors were let into the floor of the stage, through which devils, fairies and other supernatural beings could make their exits and entrances. About 1500 audience members could pay extra money to sit in the covered seating areas, while about 800 "groundlings" paid less money to stand in the open area before the stage. The stage was divided into three levels (1) a main stage area, doors at the rear and a curtained area in the back for "discovery scenes" (2) an upper, canopied area called "heaven" for balcony scenes, and (3) an area under the stage called "hell", accessed by a trap door in the stage. Since there could be no dramatic lighting, there was very little scenery and props; audience relied on the actors' lives and stage directions for the mood of the scenes. One important difference between plays written in Shakespeare's time and those written today is that they were published after their performances, sometimes even after their author's death. The audience came from all classes, and his plays appealed to all kinds of sensibilities, from kings and queens to clowns and servants. No such thing as a female actor assisted, or would have been tolerated. All female parts were played by boys or young men, who frequently wore

masks. At the conclusion of each performance, the actors knelt on the stage and offered a prayer for the queen. The Elizabethan stage brought the audience into, direct, almost personal touch with actors. They surrounded the actors on three sides. The royal court supported the theatre, and most of the respectable citizens of London visited the performances.

4.5.2. Shakespeare's Audience

The Elizabethan Theatre audience attracted people from all classes- The upper class nobility as well as the Lower class commoners. Queen Elizabeth loved watching plays but these were generally performed in indoor playhouses for her pleasure. Nobility formed a sizeable portion of the audience however, it was the poorer audience referred to as 'groundlings' which occupied stage more often. While richer patrons would sit in the covered galleries, paying as much as half a crown each for their seats in 1599, anyone who remains on the level standing pays only one English penny. It appears that Shakespeare's audience was composed of tannery butchers, iron workers, millers, seamen, servants, shopkeepers, wig makers, bakers and countless other tradesmen and their families. Loud, hot tempered, the audience was far more boisterous than are patrons of the theatre today. In Hamlet, reference is made to such groundlings thus:

O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious
Periwig - patted fellow tear a passion to tatters, to –
Very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who
for the most part are capable of nothing but
In explicable dumb shows and noise(III, II).

Shakespeare again makes reference to such a crowd in his comedy A Mid Summer Night is Dream.

4.6. Shakespeare: Criticism down the Ages

Criticism does not simply mean to find faults in world of art. Bringing to light the minutest beauties and nuances of aesthetics is what it stands for. Shakespeare perhaps is the only author who has invented, attracted and compelled the lovers of literature to read, appreciate and comment in such large numbers. He has been viewed, reviewed, interpreted and re-interpreted at different periods of time in the light of critical standards of that age to such extent that in itself Shakespearean criticism has become a class apart. In his times, Shakespeare was a well established writer. He 'surpassed the Greek and Latin dramatists by reason of his art and was not of an age but for all time' so wrote Jonson.. Called 'an' upstart crow beautified with our feathers' (Greene), Shakespeare's play *Twelfth Night* was criticized as 'a silly play'. *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* was surprisingly called as "the most insipid ridiculous play that ever he saw in his life' (Samuel Pepys). Though Dryden admired Shakespeare, he could not accept Shakespeare as a model to be followed. Though Alexander Pope in eighteenth century found fault with Shakespeare's puns, conceits and extravagance of language, yet he admired Shakespeare's infinitely diversified characters. Dr. Johnson appreciated Shakespeare's comprehensive vision and for holding a faithful mirror of manners and of life. Charles Lamb added another dimension to criticism when he found Shakespeare's plays 'less calculated for performance on the stage than those of any other dramatist.' Dowden perceived a reflection of Shakespeare's attitude to life in his plays. It was criticism of Granville-Barker that once again recognized Shakespeare, the craftsman. Post colonialists and cultural materialists review Shakespeare's plays and find it promoting the cause of aristocracy and feudalism. Recently, Critics add to criticism by studying Shakespearean literature against the backdrop of theory of Exclusion, subaltern and marginality.

4.7. SUMMING UP

Apparently intended to be written and staged for wedding festivities and generally considered a dream, *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* is no more labeled as a comedy without significance. An analysis of the comedy suggests that it is splendidly wrought and through the skilful weaving of opposing strands of plot and subplots, the interest of the reader is sustained throughout. Called Shakespeare's 'farewell to mirth', the play along with the pervading spirit of gaiety and happiness, also underlines some grey areas, paving the way for the somber and mature plays. However, in the ultimate analysis, the comedy mixing mirth with beauty, stands out as one of the loveliest of all the Shakespeare's plays.

4.8. GLOSSARY

Renaissance Spanning from 14th to the 17th century, Renaissance was a cultural movement which began in Italy and later on spread to the rest of Europe. Meaning 'rebirth', it was first used and defined by Jules Michelet. It is important, in that, it profoundly affected European intellectual life in the early modern period. In recognized 'the genius of man, the unique and extraordinary ability of the human mind.' A new interest in science and in ancient art resulted in a period of vigorous artistic and intellectual activity. Instead of the religious life, it vouched for a secular and rational understanding of life. Major figures of Renaissance include Galileo, William Shakespeare, Leonardo da Vinci' and Michael Angelo.

Forms of Comedy and Practitioners

Ancient Greek Comedy: Aristophanes, Menander

Ancient Roman Comedy: Plautus, Terence

Comedy of Humours: Ben Jonson, George Chapman

Comedy of Manners: Moliere, Wychereley, William Congreve

Comedy of Menace: David Campton, Harold Pinter

Restoration Comedy: George Etherege, Aphra Behn

Sentimental Comedy: Colley Cibber, Richard Steele

Shakespearean Comedy: as practiced by William Shakespeare

Folio – The term folio is applied to a book, the pages of which are formed by a sheet of paper folded once.

Quarto – The term Quarto is applied to a book, the pages of which are formed by a sheet of paper folded twice.

The Blackfriars And The Globe – Shakespeare's name is associated with these two playhouses of his times. Earlier, James Burbage constructed 'Theatre' in 1576 – the first permanent building designed for theatrical purposes in England.

Self Assessment Questions II

1. 'A writer is the product of his age' to what an extent is this true in case of Shakespeare?
2. Prepare a write up on the contemporary writers of Shakespeare. In what ways are Shakespeare's' plays different from theirs?
3. Does the modern stage bear any similarity to the stage in Elizabethan times? Discuss.

4.9. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

I

1. Consult Wikipedia for biographical information.
2. Once again consult websites. Prepare a list of comedies penned by English, Greek and Roman writers.
3. Refer to Section 4. 5.
4. Ist Phase

II

1. Consult Wikipedia and websites on Renaissance.
2. Consult web and also section 4.3.6.
3. Read theatre's history as well as section 4.5.

4.10. REFERENCES

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4.11. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. What is Shakespearean Comedy? Indicate its special features from a study of comedies.
2. The Elizabethan stage has definitely left a mark on Shakespeare's dramas. Discuss the features of the stage and establish what Shakespeare practices to appropriate his themes to stage conditions.
3. Trace Shakespearean Criticism through the ages.

5.1. Introduction

5.2. Objectives

5.3. Act wise Analysis of The Play

5.4. A Historical Perspective

5.5. Plot: A Triumph of Construction

5.6. What is the Play About?

5.6.1. The Theme of Love

5.6.2. Marriage as a Comic Closure

5.6.3. The Theme of Conflict

5.7. Analyzing the Characters

5.7.1. Theseus and Hippolyta

5.7.2. The Lovers : Helena and Hermia and Demetrius and Lysander

5.8. Summing up

5.9. Answers to Self-Assessment Questions

5.10. Glossary

5.11. References

5.12. Terminal and Model Questions

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Though Shakespeare's *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* is grouped among his comedies, yet it falls in a class by itself. From time to time, the play has been described as a comedy, a romance, a fairy tale, a masque, a burlesque, however no name adequately describes the true nature of the play. Too ethereally delicate, romantic imagination let loose here is guided by Shakespeare's masterly skill into the most exquisite form with incomparable beauty and suavity. With its intricate yet ingenuous plot – wholly Shakespeare's invention, it is, as its name acknowledges, a dream. While its musical quality links it with opera, its sparkling fun almost faultless puts it in the group of most hilarious comedies. The play is unique for there is no pathos (unlike other comedies such as *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It* etc) and no hurricane of passions. Printed in 1600 and publicly acted innumerable times, *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* is a lyrical fantasy dealing with love as a dream, a fever, an illusion, an infatuation etc.

5.2. OBJECTIVES

This unit will help you to:

- Understand the true nature of Shakespearean comedy
- Understand Shakespeare's skill in plot-construction
- Comprehend how universal is the theme of love, romance and marriage

5.3. ACT WISE ANALYSIS OF THE PLAY

The play is called *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* not because the action takes place on Midnight (June 24) or because the play was produced then, but because it was the time according to superstition or folk belief when strange things happened, when spirits were abroad, and supernatural was closest to the lives of men. The title reminds us that the fantastic happenings the play contains have the unreal quality of a dream.

ACT I: There are three strands of the strands which are all attached to another story that of Theseus and Hippolyta. While reading the play, you will be surprised to know how much ingenuity and tact is required to piece together the three strands which are so different in texture. As in the practice with Shakespeare, almost all the characters of the main plot are introduced. The opening line sets the stage for the approaching marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta and Theseus is the connecting link between the four stories *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* comprises of – Oberon and Titania, Helena and Demetrius, Hermia and Lysander and that of Theseus and Hippolyta besides the histrionics of Bottom and friends.

ACT II: The plot becomes complex as Oberon decides to be benevolent and quite whimsically announces his decision to help Helena win Demetrius who has turned his affection now to Hermia under the influence of love-juice. The intervention of the fairies in settling the affairs of the estranged lovers lends a magical and fairy character to the play. Puck mistakes Lysander for Demetrius and anoints his eyes so that he turns from Hermia to Helena.

ACT III: In this act, Shakespeare skillfully mixes together both the comic and the fairy stories through Bottom's transformation into the monster that Titania wakes to love. Shakespeare, however, does not forget to bring into focus, the central idea of the play, that of love's illusions. What adds amusement to the comedy is the contrast between Bottom's rustic matter of factness and complacent opinion of himself and Titania's poetical fancies and magic powers. The confusion in the play reaches into high point in this scene as the earlier position

of the lovers now gets reversed. Hermia is deserted and Helena is loved by both Demetrius and Lysander and a quarrel ensues between Hermia and Helena.

ACT IV: Herein, efforts are made to straighten out the three intermingled stories, ‘the complication, like a musical discord, having existed only for the sake of being resolved.’

5.4. A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Said to be written between 1594 or 1596 (mainly because of topical references and an allusion to Spenser’s Epithalamion), the play was performed at the theatre and later the Globe. The play was staged during Puritan and Victorian times as well in 19th centuries either in the form of drolls or in the Opera style. In 20th century, Reinhardt directed a film while H.G. Barker (1914), Peter Brook (1970) Joseph Pepp, Riverside Shakespeare Company also staged the play. It is expected from students to gather more information on stage, film, opera adaptations of not only this play but of Shakespeare’s other plays as well. It is interesting to note that Shakespeare’s *A Mid Summer Night’s Dream* continues to inspire later works-the main being *St. John’s Eve* (1853 Henrik Ibsen), comic series *Sandman* (Neil Gaiman), *A Mid Summer Night’s Gene* (1997 a sci-fi Parody by Andrew Herman), *Magic Street* (2005 by Orson Scott Card) etc. Here is given the list of some of the film adaptations of *A Mid Summer Night’s Dream*:

1935 - by the Director Max Reinhardt

1968 - by the Director Peter Hall

1982 - by the Director Woody Allen

1999 - by the Director Michael Hoffman

2002 - by the Director Gil Cates Jr

Best known T.V. productions are listed below:

1981 - B.B.C. Television Shakespeare Prod. (Jonathan Miller)

1999 - Walt Disney Productions.

2005 - Shakespeare- told B.B.C. T.V. Series

5.5. PLOT: A TRIUMPH OF CONSTRUCTION

What does plot mean? Do not you think it is simply design? ‘The means by which the artist, out of a chaos of characters, actions, passions, evolves order (W.H. Fleming: Shakespeare’s Plots, 15) within the limited spaces of five acts. The plot in its simplest form is a story with a beginning and an end; the beginning and end are conjoined with related incidents, sequences, episodes and climax with a central purpose. The dramatist writes and invents incidents to communicate to the audience/reader with a central purpose. The central purpose may be to illustrate a many sided character - hero in this case or it may be to convey a central idea.

The plot of *A Mid Summer Night’s Dream* is in fact a triumph of construction. When you go through the plot, you would be surprised to find how many heterogeneous elements are conjoined together in the play. There is a classical hero along with an Amazonian queen. Two pairs of Athenian lovers are contrasted with fairy lovers. The tedious quarrels of the lovers exist along with the dispute between Oberon and Titania about the changeling boy. Jumbled together are such astonishing things as fairies ‘creep into acorn cups and hide them there’. Daintiest woodland fairies are contrasted with ‘hempen homespuns’ English artisans on one hand and with aristocrats on the other. When and how does the four nights and four days pass away is still a mystery, waning moon is full before she is new, how does ass-head enables Bottom to speak the English tongue. These varied and diversified situations and characters are caught together in moonshine not of poetry interspersed with allusions to mythical demigods, London actors, Indian King, centaurs, six pence, magic herbs etc. Do not you think that it

requires exquisite innovative mind to unify such disparate elements in a plot having an artistic harmony?

That the intricate plot of the play is Shakespeare's own invention, there is no doubt about it. After going through *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*, it is evident that the real centre of the plot is the love story of the four Athenian lovers and a special occasion – a wedding, festivities determine the selection and the adjustment of the material. The love chase of Helena, Hermia, Demetrius and Lysander, the quarrel between Oberon and Titania, the infatuation of the Queen for the ass head Bottom, the rehearsal of the tragi-comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe all are conjoined together to be in line with the dramatic purpose of the author.

Self Assessment Questions I

1. What do you mean by plot? How is it different from a story?
2. How do you know that the play was written to be staged during wedding festivities? Find out the textual references.
3. Gather information about the three distinctly projected classes Shakespeare refers to namely the aristocracy, the commoners and fairies.
4. Which of the following does Oberon want that Titania should refuse to give him?
 - (a) Her attendant, an Indian Prince.
 - (b) Her magic Wand
 - (c) Her maid in waiting
 - (d) Her Love

5.6. THEME: WHAT IS THE PLAY ABOUT

As said about the plot, Shakespeare's masterly skill is revealed in the way, he handles various themes. He weaves together the court background of the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta, the double lovers' entanglement of Lysander and Hermia, the underplot/secondary drama of the Athenian artificers and Pyramus and Thisbe interlude along with the fairy world of Oberon and Titania linked up with and playing over all these. When you read *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* you find three distinct worlds existing together – (a) The court of Pre-Homeric Athens, (b) the realistic population of a contemporary English countryside along with all its trifles, beliefs and issues and (c) the realms of a fairy land. The three distinct and apparently unrelated worlds – ancient, medieval and modern exist together in one and the same timeless moment. The wonderful dexterity with which the three evidently alien kinds of matter are woven into a single composite picture is not found elsewhere. Needless to say, the three different worlds of aristocracy, the commoners and fairies, welded into the form of a credible society – reveal the imaginative insight of Shakespeare. However, they also reveal the professional side of a writer who appeals to all sections of the society.

The central idea of the play is that reason and love do not go together. Sanity, commonsense, cool reason is pitted against the insanity, absurdities and impulsiveness of love. Through the four pair of lovers, Shakespeare embodies almost every conceivable manifestation of love. The theme of love is illustrated in the gravely expressed perception of the capriciousness and transforming power of love.

Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
Love can transpose to form and dignity (1.1.282-3).

Besides, the main theme, the play brings to the fore, the theme of patriarchal and parental authority trampling the freedom of lovers. At the macro level, the play refers to the disruption of the established order i.e. the social conventions and the laws of Athens are challenged by

the young especially women. At first glance, the play appears but a light excursion into the realms of pure romance, where fairies dance and lovers woo, and magically all the complications get removed, yet the intellectual foundations of it all, are embodied in the unromantic worldly realism of Theseus. The main theme is contrasted and parodied in the comic under plot of the rude mechanicals who present quite a queer interlude, 'A tedious brief scene of young Pyramas and his love Thisby: very tragical mirth.'

The main theme of love and tertiary themes will be discussed in the following pages. An attempt will also be made to analyze the underlying issues such as exclusion, marginality, aesthetics of class and poor as well as stageability of the text in the next unit.

5.6.1. The Theme of Love

The play opens with the preparations for the festivities for the impending marriage of the middle aged Theseus, King of Athens and Hippolyta, the Amazonian queen. The ducal pairs have tastes in common, and are friendly rather than ardent lovers. To Theseus' anxiety, 'How slow/ this old moon wanes! She lingers my desires'/Hippolyta's reply is quite restrained and sober:

Four days will quickly steep themselves in night.
Four nights will quickly dream away the time,
And then the moon, like to a silver bow,
Now bent in heaven, shall behold the night of our solemnities.

And then we are introduced to the two pairs of lovers whose pursuit of love constitutes the main theme of *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*. When Lysander utters, 'the course of true love never did run smooth' (1.1.134), he is simply articulating Shakespeare's most favourite and people's most sought after theme – the theme of obstacles in the path of love. Egeus, the father invokes parental authority and oral conventions, pleads in the court of Theseus to restrain his daughter Helena from marrying Demetrius. As 'Love looks not with eyes, but with the mind/ And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind/ nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste', Shakespeare portrays the love madness of his youthful characters. You would have read and seen a number of stories and films wherein is depicted how lawless and capricious love invites troubles, impediments and even tragedy. Look around yourself and you will find how youth betray friends, plan murders, disobey parents and switch over loyalties. In the play, Helena betrays Hermia and Lysander to Demetrius. The friendship of Helena and Hermia ends; Lysander and Demetrius seek each other's death. Under the spell of love juice – a symbol of man's inconstancy and blindness – even the majestic Titania falls in love with ass-headed Bottom. Love takes its own fanciful and whimsical path and in the dream ridden fancy, there are vagaries, passionate loyalties, fantastic humours, quixotic adventures and midsummer madness of subjectivity. The love has no basis in reality; it merely creates a phantom; a mere shadow of the beloved person; it is a dream. However, the lover remains under the delusion that he is following the dictates of reason. Thus Lysander, pranked upon by Puck, has been made to transfer his love from Hermia to Helena. He exclaims:

The will of man is by his reason swayed
And reason says you are the worthier maid
Reason becomes the marshal to my will,
And leads me to your eyes, where I o'er look
Love's stories; written in love's richest book.
Titania too makes her impassioned declaration of love to Bottom :
I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again
Mine ear is enamoured of thy note

So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape,
And thy fairy virtue's force perforce doth move me,
On the view, to say, to swear, I love thee.

Now, you can draw upon the conclusion that the infatuation of Titania, the fairy queen for a weaver transformed into an ass parodies the main story. Further what Shakespeare wrote several centuries back also holds good even today. Love for aristocracy is partly a frivolous amusement in idleness, partly a sensual caprice, while love for lower class is 'bitter earnest, they know its pathos only'. As is apparent, the comic under plot of the rude mechanicals serves as the parody of the main theme of love. Further, the love of Oberon for Indian boy and beautiful Titania's passion for clumsy and grotesque represents how disparity and inequality hamper the path of love.

You would agree now that Shakespeare in sketching his characters is sketching your own picture of youthful days – passionate, impulsive, dreamy, romantic, adventurous – a little bit of mad, unruly, lawless, capricious, inconstant etc. etc. Youth even today express their love by interchanging rhymes and love tokens, serenading by moon light and using bracelets of hair, rings, conceits, knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats. Their passions and preferences are not amenable to reason, 'Things base and vile to common views, their love has transposed them to form and dignity'. However, the lighthearted tone of the play suggests from the beginning itself that everything is going to be settled happily – all the hazards, confusions, obstacles, misunderstandings, uncertainties will end up soon.

5.6.2. Marriage as a Comic Closure

One of the most outstanding features of Shakespearean comedy is its 'pervading obsession with marriage' (Lisa Hopkins). In *Love's Labour Lost* and *As You Like It* four couples marry or are expected to marry. In *Twelfth Night*, three couples marry and in *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, two couples marry. In *The Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night*, *Taming of the Shrew*, marital relations dominate the plays; Viola is seen enquiring about Orsino's marital status. Olivia proposes marriage to the supposed Cesario, Rosalind engineers her own marriage. As written earlier, there appears to be no doubt that *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* is marriage play, written to be performed at a grand wedding in some noblemen's house. Elizabethans, as the play seems to suggest, missed no opportunity for feasting and merry making and for revelry no time was more auspicious than a wedding day:

A fortnight hold we this solemnity
In nightly revels and new jollity.
What masques, what dance shall we have,
to wear away this long age of three hours
Between our after supper and bed time?

However, after going through *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*, you would realize the contention that all of Shakespeare's comedies end up with happy marriage' is not true. The play warns about the possible dangers of marriage – quarrels, curbing of will, infidelity, death in childbirth etc. The conversation between Egeus and Theseus articulates that lovers stand up in rebellion against the patriarchal order. Hippolyta, though eager, is a sullen bride despairing entrapment. That 'man' is dominant is obvious in how Theseus overrules Hippolyta's distaste for mechanicals' play (v.i. 89-105) and when he says, "Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword/won thy love doing thee injuries" (1.1.16-17). Helena is ridiculous and fails to preserve her dignity and self respect:

I am your spaniel, Demetrius
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you

Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me.

Titania too is a butt of jokes accusing Oberon of infidelity and falling herself in love with ass head Bottom. However, by the end of the play, Titania and Oberon are reconciled; the lovers are reconciled with Theseus and Egeus.

5.6.3. The Theme of Conflict

As you examine the text of *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*, you notice that despite its dreamy nature, lyrical fantasy and romantic atmosphere, Shakespeare refers to a number of issues which impacted the society of Elizabethan times and which still holds good in our times as well. As Shakespearean society was patriarchal, revolt against parental authority is manifested in Hermia's defiance of her father Egeus's authority. Hermia would rather become a nun, or even die, than give to herself to him, 'whose unwished yoke/my soul consents not to give sovereignty'. Both she and Lysander lamenting that the 'path of true love never did run smooth' are able to invoke the sympathy of audience. 'Theirs is the romantic, but also profoundly human appeal of youth and freedom in conflict with the restrictions and compulsions associated with age (Draper). Does not Egeus's pleading in the court of King Theseus against Lysander remind you of court cases pending in courts now-a-days against love birds. Analyzed from the perspective of Elizabethan society when arranged marriages were the norms, the assertion of parental authority invoking law against her own daughter by Egeus may appear to be cruel, tyrannical and unreasonable. Shakespeare while doing so was merely giving us a glimpse of Elizabethan society struggling to emerge from the shadow of tyrannical conventions of the medieval times. The theme may be analyzed from another angle also. Evidently, renaissance with its emphasis on liberty and dignity of human beings had inserted new hopes and the young people's rebellion may be studied in this light also.

5.7. ANALYSING THE CHARACTERS

Each dramatist's forte is distinct – with some it is plot while with other, it is either language, or story, or music, or spectacle etc. etc. In case of Shakespeare, his greatest strength is his characterization. In fact, it is his deep insight and close study of human nature which keeps alive the interest in his dramas. Neither his predecessors nor contemporaries like Chaucer, Marlowe, Kyd, Nash, Lyly, Beaumont and Fletcher, nor his successors like Webster, Ben Jonson etc. can equal Shakespeare in the art of characterization. The variety, vitality, originality, completeness and disinterestedness of Shakespeare render his character sketches unrivalled in the whole range of literature. Who can match the inimitable Othello, given to suspension, the unparalleled Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark, given to noble inaction, the intemperate King Lear, the brave Macbeth's vaulting ambition, Sir Andrew's stupidity etc.? Where else is equalled Rosalind's wit, humour and vivacity, Cleopatra's majesty and grace? Significantly, the denizens of different worlds also feature in his plays. He opens the gates of the magical world of spirits, calls up the midnight ghosts, exhibits before us his witches amidst their unhallowed mysteries, peoples the air with sportive fairies and sylphs. Most importantly, Shakespeare wrote for the Elizabethan stage and always had his audience in mind but his characters are not of an age, but of all ages, not of one country, but of all countries. Drawn from all walks of life, of all times, of all genders, of all worlds, of all professions and classes, his characters are truly universal as each of us empathizes with them.

However, a reading of *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* clearly gives the idea that Shakespeare was experimenting with his art of characterization. No single towering figure gets space in *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*. Characters of all ages-aged or young, of all classes – of aristocracy, middle class, or poor class – do cross the stage of this Shakespearean play. That Shakespeare was still in 'the workshop' while writing this play is evident in the weak

characterization of the play. At this time, you must know, Shakespeare was slowly mastering the temptation of the domination of the poetic and lyric faculty by the dramatic. As the play is more of a dream than a drama, a lyric, a dramatic fantasy, it will be proper to conclude that the centre of interest is incidents and situations which get further complicated by mistakes, disguises, crudities, absurdities, cross-purposes and the improbabilities. However, it has to be conceded that the play is a notable advance on his early comedies such as *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Two Gentleman of Verona* etc.

5.7.1. The Characters: Theseus and Hippolyta

Theseus and Hippolyta are the central figures in the sense that it is their wedding that provides the occasion for the play to be written and staged. Besides, they provide true proportions to the fairy tribe upon one hand and upon the other to the human mortals. Theseus represents ideals of reason, heroism, serenity and graciousness. He is in love, but his love has no fantasy. He believes:

Lovers and Madmen have such seething brains
Such shaping fantasies that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends
The lunatic, the lover and the poet
Are of imagination all compact.

That Theseus is a man of the world and statesman is evident in his deep respect for the Athenian law and precedent, his moderation and firmness in judgment. Though he appears to pity Hermia, yet his patriarchal mindset dominates his decisions – in wooing Hippolyta with sword as well as in threatening Helena of dire consequences, in case, she does not obey her father Egeus. Hippolyta is the sensible woman of high rank-an Amazon as well as a great lady. She has little patience with folly and ignorance and is greatly bored with Pyramus and Thisbe, 'This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard'. On the contrary, Theseus is a benevolent monarch and sympathizes with rustics, 'The Kinder we', says Theseus, 'to give them thanks for nothing'.

5.7.2. The Lovers: Helen and Hermia, Demetrius and Lysander: Of Lysander and Demetrius, Lysander is rather more likeable. Even Theseus admits:

In himself he is worthy gentleman
But in this kind, wanting your father's (Egeus') voice.

Though well intentioned, chivalrous and resourceful, his ill treatment of Hermia and his valentine like surrender of her to Demetrius can be explained in the light of the spell caused by Puck. Demetrius serves as a foil to Lysander. Helena 'devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry /upon this spotted and inconstant man.' It is, in fact, the passionate entreaties of Helena to Demetrius which compel Oberon to help Helena. Puck is asked to apply juice resulting in the ensuing utter confusion. Only such a dramatic genius as Shakespeare could have relied upon a not so important character as Demetrius for bringing about complications, twists and turns in the plot.

As compared to the male counterparts, Hermia and Helena are exquisitely drawn. Sharply differentiated in appearance as well as in temper, they outmost their lovers. Of the two, Hermia is more pert in temper and shrewish in speech, while Helena has a milder and softer disposition. Hermia anticipates Shakespeare's powerful women characters such as Rosalind, Celia, Beatrice, Viola, Olivia etc. While Viola is practical, Helena lacks in judging human mind. Helena represents the traditional forlorn maiden love, a sweet lady doting upon an inconstant man. Whimsical, impulsive and emotional as she is, she believes –

Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
And therefore is winged cupid painted blind.

The sketches of the female characters of Shakespeare though not fully flesh and blood, are significant in that they give us glimpse of girls who challenge the parental authority and conventions of the constricted society of the times. The confident, defiant girls perhaps represent the stirrings and transformations, Elizabethan society was experiencing as a result of expanding renaissance spirit.

Self Assessment Questions II

1. How does Shakespeare weave together the three distinct worlds - that of court, streets and dreams.
2. Write a note on how the theme of love is treated in A Mid Summer Night's Dream.
3. Compare and contrast Helena and Hermia.
4. Demetrius and Lysander are two typical lovers. Discuss.
5. What role do Theseus and Hippolyta play in A Mid Summer Night's Dream.

5.8. SUMMING UP

In this unit you got familiarized with:

- The narrative of the play.
- Shakespeare's art of plot construction and characterization.
- Shakespeare's handling of theme of love.

You now know how skillfully Shakespeare weaves together the elements that serve the palate of his audience comprised of almost all the sections of society. The story of Theseus and Hippolyta, of Helena and Hermia, of Demetrius and Lysander and the reference to Athenian workmen cater to the aristocracy, the middle class and the poor men respectively. To this is added the invisible world of fairies and dreams. It goes to the credit of Shakespeare that he brings together the ancient, medieval and the modern world. The conflict ensues between the upholders of the traditional conventions and those resisting them. The romantic world of lovers and the realistic world of the rude mechanicals are seen together bringing out their sharp contrast.

5.9. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

I

1. Refer to section 5.5 of the unit.
2. Refer to section 5.3 and 5.6.2.
3. Refer to sections 5.5 and 5.6.3.
4. Her attendant, an Indian Prince.

II

1. Refer to section 5.5.
2. Refer to section 5.6.1.
3. Refer to section 5.7.2.
4. Refer to Sections 5.7.2 and 5.6.1.
5. Refer to section 5.7.1.

5.10. GLOSSARY

Masque: A form of festive courtly entertainment, masque flourished in 16th and early, 17th century Europe. It involves music and dancing, singing and acting within a stage design.

Patriarchal Authority: A type of social system in which males are the primary authority. Father is the absolute authority – has control of property, moral authority and privileges male descents and entails female subordination.

Puck: A mischievous natural fairy, Puck is a popular character in *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*. A shrewd and Knavish spirit, Puck's mistaken doings provide the convolutions of the plot and set the funny tone of the comedy.

5.11. REFERNCES

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5.12. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. How is *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* structured? How does Shakespeare use contrasting tones and characters in the play?
2. What is your understanding of Shakespearean Comedy?
3. Love in all of its manifestations is present in *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*. Discuss.

6.1.Introduction

6.2.Objectives

6.3.The World of Fairies : Oberon and Titania

6.4.The Athenian Workmen and Bottom

6.5. The Play: Is It Not a Dream?

6.6.The Issue of Exclusion

6.6.1. Marginals/Subalterns

6.6.2. Patriarchy, Shakespeare and Global Girlhood

6.7. Summing up

6.8. Answers to Self-Assessment Questions

6.9. References

6.10.Terminal and Model Questions

6.1. INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare is one of those writers in the world who impacted the world in various areas of literature, culture, art, theatre and film. Over the centuries, there have been speculations surrounding various aspects of his life, his professional career, religious affiliation, gender orientation, political obligations. Considered a playwright, controversies round up the sources for collaborations, authorship and chronology of plays. There exists no other writer whose plays have been perfumed, adapted, revised and translated as many times as Shakespeare. His knowledge of the human heart and mind is unparalleled and the colourful gallery of superbly etched characters still continues to entertain and intrigue audience and spectators. *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* is one of most popular works on the stage and is widely performed across the stage. It is not merely a dream but a play being interpreted and reinterpreted in the light of new theories of literature, offering new insights.

6.2. OBJECTIVES

- To study with a view to demystify Shakespeare - the man and his comedies.
- To understand constraints under which Shakespeare, the playwright wrote.
- To analysis the play in the light of theories of Exclusion, Marginality and feminism.

6.3. THE WORLD OF FAIRIES: OBERON AND TITANIA

It is significant to note that Shakespeare brings into conjunction two extremely different worlds – the exquisite delicacy of fairy world of Titania and Oberon and Puck and the thick witted grossness and clumsiness of the world of Bottom and others. The elaborate account of fairies given by Shakespeare stands proof to the special interest taken by him in the superstitious fancies which had clustered round the fairies during his times. Compared to the present times, in Shakespeare's times, fairies held a more prominent position in popular literature. Not only in this play, the fairy lore lies scattered through Shakespeare's writings. In the world of *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*, it appears that you meet fairies –

Over hill, over dale
Through bush, through brier
Over park over pale
Through flood, through fire
... wander everywhere
Swifter than moon's sphere.

The graphic pictures of fairies are a step ahead of the divergent traditions Shakespeare inherited from his predecessors like Chaucer and Spenser. In fact, it was only due to Shakespeare's innovative skills that what existed as fragmentary popular world evolved into a beautiful and regulated world. What was invisible got a form – fairies are lords of imagination and ideas conveyed by the senses. Shakespeare gives a convincing world of fairies and creates an atmosphere proper to such a world. Bestowed with perpetual youth and beauty, immortality, the delightful sketches of the fairy tribe which includes Peas-blossom, Cobweb, Moth, Mustard Seed, Puck, Oberon and Titania add to the charm of the play. It is the fairy element that makes Apparently, it appears that a sort of ideal dream and it is from the fairy personages that its character as such mainly proceeds (Hudson). However, quite significantly, Shakespeare invests them with a personality. Besides performing several duties they draw comparison with mortals in being jealous, mischievous, revengeful, capricious and manipulative.

In folklore, you might have heard of both wicked and good fairies. The fairies of folklore are rough and repulsive taking their style from the hempen homespun who invented them. They are wicked and dreaded spirits who abducted mortals, dealt in changelings, smote humans with diseases, blessed crops, stole cattle and punished with punching and nipping unchastity and any interference with their own privacy. But the fairies of Shakespeare, though indulging in innocent mirth and mischief, yet bless mortals, help them in keeping their dwellings clean and generally are benecolent in their altitude towards humanity (Furness). The fairies in *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* differ from the fairies in *Tempest* mainly in two ways – fairies in *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* are projected as superior to mortals while Prospero uses supernatural for his own purpose. Secondly, while in *Tempest*, Oberon, Titania and Puck are drawn from folklore and tradition, Ariel is Shakespeare's original creation. In a nutshell, Shakespeare did not intend to project the fairies merely as a spectacular device. He introduced them to cater to the taste of the audience of his times who believed in witches, ghosts and fairies. The fairies are important as agents in the main plot. They are not merely to assist other effects; their story has its own plot interest. Besides, adding to the dreamy character of the play, the lovely poetry they speak adds to the unique appeal of the comedy.

Puck is the prominent actor, 'mischief loving sprite', the jester of the court along with being a little bit of a rogue and sportive. Called Robin Good fellow, 'lob of spirits', Puck seems to be the domestic spirit who frightens the maidens of the village, skims milk, labours, tricks upon the 'breathless housewife', misleads night wanderers and laughs at their harm. Puck had been mentioned by writers such as Drayton, Burten, Ben Jonson, Beautmont and Fletcher etc though with other names. Puck's role is important in that it is his mischief that gives twist to the plot.

Oberon and Titania are represented as keeping rival courts in consequence of a quarrel. Like mortals, they love and quarrel which causes abnormality in the seasons –i.e. – 'the chiding autumn, angry winter' etc. They draw an analogy with Theseus and Hippolyta. Oberon is not Shakespeare's invention but also appears in the old French romances, German stories, Spenser's *Fairy Queen* as well as in Greene's *James the Fourth*. However, the name of Titania as the Queen of fairies seems to be Shakespeare's invention. At times, the human characters are the sport of their whims and fancies, though they have their human side too. Disturbed by the trouble of Helena, Oberon orders Puck to anoint Demetrius' eyes so 'that he may prove. More fond on her than she upon her love'. However, when he finds that Puck has committed a blunder, he arranges to set the things at right, 'What has thou done? Though has mistaken quite, And laid the love juice on some true love's sight'. Conclusively, the fairy world does not exist for the sake of delight only, it intervenes and twists the plot to the delight of the reader.

6.4. THE ATHENIAN WORKMEN AND BOTTOM

Though called Athenian Workmen, the group is characteristically English belonging to various professions which were common in England. Their presence in the play is significant as it makes Shakespeare's vision of humanity complete and round. They offer well marked contrasts – their rudeness, roughness, coarseness and poverty is contrasted with the majesty, culture and opulence of Theseus and Hippolyta on the one hand and on the other with airy, ethereal, romantic and refined Oberon, Titania and their attendant fairies.

The mechanicals, forming a group of amateur actors in Peter Quince's Company act unabashedly the 'comical tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe' and thus add to the play's entertainment value. The tragedy, they enact, parodies the love theme of the play besides giving a glimpse of the aesthetics of the folk people vis-à-vis aesthetics of the cultured.

BOTTOM

Being simply the best wit of any handicraftsman in Athens, Bottom is the most distinctly drawn character of the play. Though called Athenian, he is thoroughly Elizabethan and completely English. Deriving his name from bottom in weaving which is either a ball of thread or the block on which it is wound, Bottom is a self-assured and conceited actor, 'there is not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he'. Of all the Athenians i.e. Quince, Snug, Flute and Starveling, he is 'the shallowest thick skin of that barren sort', "nothing less than hateful fool". He relieves Peter Quince, the stage manager and takes upon himself the whole management of the play. He shows himself up as the romantic, the poetical, the imaginative man, who naturally takes command. He is an artist who directs the whole proceedings, the calling of the roll of players, the description of the piece, the casting of the parts etc. He alone shows the enthusiasm for the drama itself; others are only concerned with pleasing the Duke-if they frighten – the ladies they may be hanged; if they please they may receive a little pension, 'a six pence a day'. Bottom may be charged with being conceited, however, it is he only who shows passion for the drama. The creative artist is stirring in the soul of Bottom. He is set to play the principal part, however, he expresses his wish to play Thisbe as well as Lion too. Even when, Bottom is finally restricted to one part, that of Pyramus, he shows his eagerness to come to grips with the details, particularly the matter of beards, 'to discharge it in either your straw coloured beard, your orange tawny beard, your purple in grain beard, or your French crown colour beard, your perfect yellow'. At places, this eagerness, this overconfidence becomes gigantic – but do not you think it is better to be vain like Bottom than to be dead in the spirit like Snug or Starveling. His understanding of the theatre is revealed when he corrects even the Duke, 'No, in truth, Sir, he should not. 'Deceiving me' is Thisbe's cue; she is to enter now and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see, it will fall pat as I told you. Yonder she comes.' As discussed in other units in *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*, Bottom appears to represent the folk theatre as against the urban theatre represented by Duke and aristocrats. Critics go on to point out that Shakespeare's representation of Bottom draws similarities with the great Ned Alleyn whom Shakespeare had observed at the Rose Theatre listening to the synopsis of a new play. In fact, it is reasonable to believe that Shakespeare caused his mechanics to ape the methods of the professional actors. Bottom follows the creative artist's ambition to play the different types of character roles. Further, the ambition of the theatrical personalities for applause is also ridiculed in Bottom.

Puck out of sheer mischief puts an ass head over him. Though glimpsed as something monstrous, gross and earthy, Titania falls for Bottom. Deserted by his companions, conjured into fairyland, metamorphosed Bottom is promoted into the paramour of the fairy queen who embraces, fondles and asks her fairies to look after him. He carries off this role bravely with a mingled touch of wit, philosophy and masculine complacency :

Methinks mistress, you should have little reason for that;
and yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little
company together now a days; the more the pity that
some honest neighbours will not make them friends.
Nay, I can gleek upon occasion.

He enjoys his present role of queen's beloved, 'I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good master Cobweb: "If I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you, and that 'get your weapons in your hand and kill me a red-hipped humble bee on the top of a thistle and bring me the honey bag."

A glance at the play suggests that Bottom is the only fully developed character in the play. Apparently, it appears that *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* has all the characters of a dream. Its

action is ruled by caprice and moonlit madness; Its personages appear to be under the spell of visions or to walk and talk in sleep. But lastly, there is Bottom who is neither a flickering self, nor a bewildered passionate lover, but a man of this world, comfortably housed in flesh, personage of some note among the artisans of Athens' (Priestley).

6.5. THE PLAY: IS IT NOT A DREAM?

That the title of the play mentions dream is, enough to underscore the dreamy nature of the play. Hippolyta's speech in the very First Act of the play, 'Four days will quickly steep themselves in night / Four nights will quickly dream away the time' refers to the world of dreams wherein exists only fun, laughter, gaiety and romance. Further, the bizarre, the magical events and happenings cannot be explained but for dream and magic. Bottom articulates the dream like nature of the day when he says:

I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was
Man is but an ass if he go about it expand this dream.

Not only in this play but even in other plays of Shakespeare, dreams are significant. They seem to cover up how events occur without explanation. Time seems to stop; impossible becomes possible. With the introduction of dream, Shakespeare recreates an environment wherein anything is possible- Titania and Oberon resemble the stately, graceful creations of our imagination when we are asleep. The fairies are like those unfinished childish fancies, begun and broken off which we see in dreams. Puck is the representative of the grotesque, immoral inhuman creations which so strongly go and come in dreams. The changes of scenes, the appearance and disappearance of the personages cross and re-cross one another with the bewildering capacity of a dream. Carried away to great distances, fairies move as swiftly as thought in the spiced Indian air. It appears that Shakespeare learnt all about any fairies and elves in Warwickshire as a little boy sitting on his mother's knees. The presence of Pease blossom, Cobweb, Mustard Seed and Moth – attendants of Fairy Queen Titania builds up an appearance of the fairy land, 'of the stuff of which dreams are made of' with their alluring unreality and fantasy. The fairies 'hunt the worms in a rose bud, tease bats, chase spiders and 'lord it over nightingale'. Their elements are twilight, moonlight, dew and spring perfumes. They take care of the flowers, adorn them with pearls of the dew, are the enemies of all gloomy and ugly things, drive them from Titania's bed, and sing to her as she sleeps. In beautiful things, such spirits dwell. Oberon is the spirit of a graver sort, who takes no delight in mischief for its own sake, though he can play a magic trick to serve his own ends, and he is willing to assist the lovers. Puck is the domestic spirit who hunts farm and dairy, and plays childish practical jokes. Titania is involved in the misadventures of the night by falling a victim to the magic flower. The fairies do not exist for their own sake in the play, it is they who twist and transform the narrative. Puck is the chief of the troubles, mistaking Lysander for Demetrius; he anoints the love juice on Lysander's eyes. Lysander awakens and through the virtue of the charm, falls instantly and violently in love with her. Again, it is Puck who transforms Bottom into an ass whose song wakens Titania who at once falls in love with him under the influence of the magic flower. It goes to the credit of Shakespeare's plot construction skill that he weaves superbly the fairy world with several other worlds in the comedy. The fairies are linked with Theseus and Hippolyta, with the lovers, and with the clowns and in fact, it is they who mix with every group in the play. Besides their contribution to the action of the play, they render the play a grace, loveliness and magic, so unmatched. Fairies speak poetry of the most exquisite type, 'more tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear/when wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear'. It is not surprising therefore to find E.A.Poe exclaim, "When I am asked for a definition of poetry, I think of Titania and Oberon of

A Mid Summer Night's Dream". Written as the play is in the first phase of Shakespeare's professional career as a playwright, here one finds Shakespeare's young heart outpouring his poetic fancies in full vein. It is the fairies that make the play 'an elf play, a fairy carnival of inimitable mirth and melody, steeped in a mid-summer atmosphere.

Self Assessment Questions I

1. What popular beliefs are connected with fairies in *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*? Make a list of them.
2. What absurdities of stage-management occur in the mechanics' play?
3. Is the play only a Dream or nothing else? Discuss and substantiate your answer with examples.

6.6. THE ISSUE OF EXCLUSION

There is a common understanding that Elizabethan literature focuses upon the aristocracy and forwards the ideology of the upper classes. Shakespeare's days too have been criticized by Post colonial critics for endorsing the discourse of colonialism. Crosby in his analysis concludes that Shakespeare failed to catch the restlessness, uneasiness and anxiety of the subaltern which figure prominently in his contemporary writers. Shakespeare has often been denigrated as anti-democratic and contemptuous of the crowd. That he was an unfailing supporter of the Elizabethan social hierarchy, however, reveals only the half truth. In fact, while writing plays, Shakespeare was governed only by certain factors – marketability, taste and choice of the audience, stage ability, patronage, and political as well as economic constraints.

Even a cursory glance at Shakespeare's plays would suggest that he was writing for a most heterogeneous kind of audience comprising both the vulgar 'and the refined'. In *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*, besides the fairy world, the three layered social hierarchy he introduces is as follows:

- Theseus, the Duke of Athens and Hippolyta form the first social stratum.
- Lysander, Demetrius, Egeus, Helena, Hermia, the noblemen and women of the Duke's Court.
- Plebians like Bottom, Quince, Flute, Starveling, Tom Snout, Smug etc.

Evidently, characters in the third category form the lower class or the excluded class. Their subordination is implicit in the class they belong to; thus Bottom is a weaver; Flute is a bellow mender with the falsetto voice; Quince is a carpenter and Starveling is a tailor. Puck refers to their inferior rank by calling them 'a crew of patches, rude mechanicals/ that work for bread'. They are 'hempen home spuns' and are outside the established structures of political representation. Economically deprived, they form the class of marginals. Bottom's following speech brings to surface the deep cleavage between the high and the low classes:

In any case, let Thisbe have clean linen, and let not
him that plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang
out for the lion's claws. And most dear actors, eat no onion or garlic
(11.ii.35-9)

The dialogues of the rustics reflect the constrictions of the class. Frightening the ladies, forcing them shriek, presenting a lion among ladies are practices which invoke punishment. Incorporated in the text are the measures through which aristocracy maintains its stronghold. The dominant section as is revealed in *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* uses not only religion,

tradition and culture but also the political and bureaucratic powers and if nothing works also indulges in violence to perpetuate its dominant position. Bottom's rebellious gestures appear subversive in intent and are seen as challenging the power of the aristocracy.

Barbar, however adds another dimension to Bottom's challenges. In *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*, he notices the conflict between the two aesthetics – the archaic, amateur, folk theatre and the mature Elizabethan theatre. Referring to the theatre of Elizabethan times, he evinces in his study how the festive or folk elements in Shakespeare's plays were appropriated and absorbed by the mature theatre, 'Shakespeare's theatre was taking over on professional and everyday basis functions which until his time had largely been performed by amateurs on holidays his comedy presents holiday magic as imagination, games as expressive gestures' (15).

J.D. Palmer finds in Bottom's famous protest to the Duke, 'an artist's anxiety to be well understood'. However, studied from the point of view of Exclusion, the protest offers a problematization of the question of representation of subalterns. Subalterns are pushed to the margins and are denied recognition. Recognition is a question of social status. Theseus' interruption opens a conflictual space and reveals Court's hegemonic ends:

Pyramus: O, wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss. Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

Theseus: The Wall, Me thinks, being sensible, should curse again.

Pyramus: No in truth, sir he should not 'Deceiving me' is Thisbe's cue You shall see it will fall pat I as told you. (V.I.174-81)

6.6.1. Marginals/Subalterns

Studied from the point of view of the theory of subalternity, Bottom's challenge appears as his bid to wrest initiative and settle scores with the Duke. Again, studied from the point of view of Exclusion theory, various conventions and techniques of traditional drama such as use of dreams, mixing of human and non-human world, use of masks etc open up channels of inclusion in the larger society. Queen's infatuation in dream for a lower category person i.e. Bottom suggests a breakdown of categories. Victor Turner's *Theory of Communitas (The Ritual Process : 1969)* too seems to suggest that ass's head that Bottom wears is not merely a comic attribute. It suggests lower class's rising aspirations to break the hierarchy of the class.

Shakespeare's picture of Elizabethan society evidently represents social, economic and cultural chasm between the two groups-elites and non-elites. By depicting the protest and resistance of the subaltern class, Shakespeare hints at the fissures, fractures and 'rupture' of social bonds. It is quite interesting to note that the implicit suggestion of resistance in mechanical's amateur theatrical in *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*, said to have been written between 1590-96 can be traced to the popular uprisings taking place in Elizabethan times. Underscoring an automatic assumption of an equation between crises and rebellion, such uprisings offer invaluable insights into the subtle dynamics of power. Uprisings, in fact, are seen as attempts to generate opportunities for the socially excluded. In his famous study, Theodore B. Leinwand links Titania's lament and the artisans' presence with the 'anti-enclosure riot of distinctly violent proportions generally referred to as the Oxford shire rising of 1596'. Incidentally, the leaders of this uprising were all artisans, the main being Bartholomew Stere, a carpenter and Richard Bradshaw, a miller. Sharp Buchanan (1980) too refers to forty food riots in west of England during 1586-1631. Brian Manner, another Shakespearean scholar refers to several such disturbances in 1595 alone, one being initiated by a silk weaver. With such a scenario, it is but natural for a dramatist to insert such social and cultural signs of unusual economic distress. Seen in this context, it is also not without reason

why Shakespeare picked up Bottom, the weaver as the leader to play such an important role in *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*. In short, deconstructing Shakespeare's play in the context of narratives of exclusion subalternity helps in understanding the hegemonic grammar of social and political order.

6.6.2. Patriarchy, Shakespeare and the Global Girlhood:

Women, especially in Shakespeare's comedies do take a central stage- there is no doubt about it. Though Hippolyta, Hermia, Helena and Queen cannot be equated with Shakespeare's heroines in other plays in terms of fully grown characters, yet they play – significant roles in *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*. Hermia and Helena openly defy the existing patriarchal rulings and dare to disregard the father's advice in matrimonial matters. As a typical Elizabethan father, Egeus is privileged with double fold rights - he can restrain Hermia, his daughter from marrying a man 'he' disapproves and again forcing her into an alliance which 'he' favours:

As she is mine, I may dispose of her;
Which shall be either to this gentleman,
Or to her death, according to our law
Immediately provided in that case. (I. i. 42-45)

Theseus' advice to Hermia "To you, your father should be as a God" (I.i. 47) throws to the wind, "renaissance precepts of companionate marriage." Again Theseus' reprimand exposes the general attitude of the age. The father is one:

that composed your beauties, yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax (I.i 48-49)

It is his prerogative, "To leave the figure, or disfigure it" (I. 151). Evidently, here is strong suggestion that patriarchal postulations will not spare Hermia's individual resolution – she will have to die or she will remain cloistered rest of her life "chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon" (I.i.73).

Elizabethan society bears similarity to our society in that here girls are assigned that much liberty as the patriarchy feels justified to, not more. However, signs of rebellion do exist and when Lysander proposed elopement, "If thou lov'st me then/Steal forth thy father's house tomorrow night" (I.i.163-64). Hermia readily agrees to go to a place where "Athenian law/cannot pursue (i.i.462-63)". However, she sticks to preserve her chastity and virginity, ideals so important in Elizabethan age. Helena's dilemma illustrates another form of patriarchal repression. She casts off her feminine conventions without upholding her dignity, "I am your spaniel; and Demetrius,/The more you beat me, I will fawn on you" (II.ii 202-03). It is she who is victimized even by Puck – actually she seems to suffer from persecution mania.

In the relationship between Oberon and Titania, you can read signs of struggles regarding political supremacy as well as sexual subordination. Oberon's displeasure at Titania's excessive fondness for a 'changeling boy' (II.i. 120) appears to be an expression of 'masculine anxiety about the uses of patriarchal power over women' specially, 'over women's sexuality.' Elizabethan society as depicted by Shakespeare bears an analogy to the Indian society in the sense that men's infidelity is deliberately undermined by the patriarchy where as women's infidelity is not tolerated upon.

Self Assessment Questions II

1. Was Shakespeare endorsing the ideology of the upper classes? Discuss.

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2. The rebellious gestures of Bottom question the challenge the power of aristocracy. Do not you think that the protest offers a problematization of the question of representation of subalterns?
3. Trace the signs of rebellion among the youth especially women in Shakespeare's play *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*.

6.7. SUMMING UP

In this unit you have got familiarized with the following:

- The play is not merely a dream. It discusses some of the issues which stirred the people of Elizabeth's times.
- The mechanicals no doubt add to the entertainment value of the play, however interpreted in the light of theories of Exclusion and marginality, they represent a class which has been kept out of the mainstream through a design.
- Bottom and mechanicals' bid to perform the play of Pyramus and Thisbe can be interpreted in terms of creative people's aspiration to ape the methods of the professional actors.

6.8. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

I

1. Refer to section 6.3.
2. Refer to section 6.4.
3. Refer to sections 6.5.

II

1. Refer to section 6.6.1.
2. Refer to section 6.4 and 6.6.2.
3. Refer to section 6.6.3.

6.9. REFERENCES

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6.10. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on the significance of the title with special reference to the world Dream in *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*.
2. Does the Pyramus and Thisbe story have any relevance to the main story, or is it simply a comical interlude?
3. Is the play merely a Dream? What other issues are raised by Shakespeare?
4. The mechanicals are a source of mockery through the entire play? Is Shakespeare making a class commentary here?
5. Discuss how Shakespeare deals with gender issues in the play.

SEMESTER

IV

- 1.1. Introduction
- 1.2. Objectives
- 1.3. Shakespeare's Roman Play
- 1.4. Shakespeare's Concept of Tragedy
- 1.5. *Antony and Cleopatra* as a Historical Play
- 1.6. Various Themes in the Play
 - 1.6.1. Fate, Destiny, Inevitability or Historical Necessity
 - 1.6.2. Struggle between Reason and Emotion
 - 1.6.3. Rome versus Egypt
 - 1.6.4. Duty and Honour
 - 1.6.5. Dynamic Change (Rome) Verses State Order (Egypt)
 - 1.6.6. Masculine Order Versus Feminine Order
 - 1.6.7. Virtues of a Republic Versus Despotism
- 1.7. Summary
- 1.8. Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 1.9. References
- 1.10. Terminal and Model Questions

1.1. INTRODUCTION

After having read *Hamlet*, which is considered to be one of the four major Shakespearean tragedies by A.C. Bradley, the renowned Shakespearean critic, and then *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, which is a fantastic Shakespearean comedy, let us now move to one of the finest Roman plays by Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra* which is enjoyed as both literature and theatre even today .

1.2. OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit

- You will be able to develop an understanding of Shakespeare as a dramatist.
- You will also be acquainted with some of Shakespeare's famous Roman Plays including *Antony and Cleopatra* which will be dealt in detail in the coming three units.

1.3. SHAKESPEARE'S ROMAN PLAYS

The term Shakespeare's 'Roman Plays' is simply a convenient description that critics have given to the three plays that Shakespeare set in ancient Rome.

The plays are *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*. What they have in common is that they are all set in ancient Rome and that their source is the Roman historian, Plutarch, translated by the Renaissance English writer, Thomas North. Shakespeare actually copied passages from North, for example Enobarbus' description of Cleopatra (The barge she sat in in *Antony and Cleopatra*). He alters that piece of text, adapting it to his purposes with additional imagery and by casting it into his own metrical pattern.

Another feature of the Roman plays is that it was customary in Shakespeare's time to use Roman costume on the stage to re-enforce the impression that we are in Rome. Usually, costume wasn't an important issue: the characters came on dressed in contemporary clothes, for the most part, although social class was depicted by purple and gold for kings, the right kind of material for the nobility, and merchant and peasant dress accordingly. It's an interesting fact that when actors wore the clothing of a nobleman or a king they were technically breaking the law, as there were strict laws forbidding the use of such clothing if you weren't a member of that class.

The three plays are always referred to as the Roman Plays, which conceals a number of issues: for example, what kind of plays were they? For example, *Antony and Cleopatra* is often regarded as a tragedy, or because, like *Romeo and Juliet*, the tragedy concerns two lovers who suffer equally, a 'double tragedy'. But even here, the term 'tragedy' refers to a form of Greek tragedy which some of Shakespeare's plays, like *Macbeth*, strongly resemble, but none of them fits neatly into any category. *Antony and Cleopatra*, for example, produces strong tragic feelings in the audience but it's actually written with a comic structure. It's one of Shakespeare's most 'postmodern' plays. *Julius Caesar* has a central character, Brutus, who looks very much like a tragic figure but there are too many issues explored in the play for it to be termed a tragedy. It's therefore convenient to take hold of the ancient Roman setting and call these plays 'Roman Plays.'

The plays all explore power. They also examine things like loyalty, war, love, friendship and honor.

Although Shakespeare experts don't always agree, the plays generally called Roman Plays are: *Antony and Cleopatra* (1623): The plot is based on Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives* and follows the relationship between Cleopatra and Mark Antony from the time of the Sicilian revolt to Cleopatra's suicide during the Final War of the Roman Republic.

Coriolanus (1605 and 1608): The play is based on the life of the legendary Roman leader Caius Marcius Coriolanus.

Julius Caesar (1599): It portrays the 44 BC conspiracy against the Roman dictator Julius Caesar, his assassination and the defeat of the conspirators at the Battle of Philippi.

1.4. SHAKESPEARE'S CONCEPT OF TRAGEDY

"A Shakespearean tragedy is a five act play ending in the death of most of the major characters." This statement with others of its kind may accurately describe many of Shakespeare's tragedies.

Shakespeare was one of the greatest dramatists of his age. He has written a number of plays and drama, among them the four tragedies *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth* are of great importance. He was a dramatist in whose works we can find and connect to the tragic experience which was the main element in Aristotle tragic theory.

Shakespeare borrowed the concept of tragedy from ancient Greece and Rome, as well as from contemporary writers who wrote just before him or simultaneously. Shakespeare borrowed, both from history and other sources. That is the reason some critics have called him a plagiarist. He wrote to cater the demands of his audience. Their likes and dislikes was his priority. Even in weak plots he added some spice to match their taste. It was this greatness that he was able to sublimate even the absurd plots. The themes of Shakespearean tragedy are sorrows, sufferings, disturbances and death brought out by struggle. This can be between man's inner souls, or between good and bad. He presents before us in a great way, the main character's heroic struggle for goodness though in that he may lose his life. But in all his tragedy the utmost winner is the goodness in man soul. Shakespeare glorifies the soul of man. Charlton calls his tragedy as, "*the apotheosis of the soul of man*". The essence of Shakespeare's tragedies is the expression of one of the great paradoxes of life. We might call it the paradox of disappointment. Defeat, shattered hopes, and ultimately death are faced by all human being. They are very real, but somehow we have the intuitive feeling that they are out of place. They seem to be intruders into life. Tragic literature confronts us afresh with this paradox and we become fascinated by it.

Shakespeare's tragic hero suffers from some tragic flaw which brings about perpetual damnation of the hero. It is usually seen that Shakespeare's heroes are high ranked people, well established and possess noble qualities of head and heart. As Shakespeare's concept of tragedy is medieval where chivalry was of utmost importance, his heroes were valiant. Shakespeare's heroes were larger than life characters and largely influenced the society. In all the tragedies a single character or main character is in the spotlight and around him the plot revolves. In *Antony and Cleopatra* we see Cleopatra, the heroine of the play, who bewitches Antony and is responsible for his tragic end whereas in *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* the protagonists are themselves responsible for their fate. As we identify ourselves with the protagonist the sense of tragedy is also aroused. The protagonist is portrayed vividly as a believable human being. Traits may include strength of character as in *Othello*, intelligence and cleverness in *Hamlet*, foolish and vanity in *King Lear*. We are led to identify ourselves with the protagonist. Through *Hamlet's* soliloquies we share his thoughts. Similarly in *Macbeth*, we find ourselves involved in the plot of the murder of King Duncan and we hear the prophecies that motivate *Macbeth*. Such characterization of the central figures is well suited in tragedy.

With regard to Shakespeare, we can say that his tragedies are "Tragedies of character and destiny". Destiny and character are inter-connected in his play. We can see it through his various tragedies, in which the hero of the play comes under such fatal conditions that he

doesn't know what to do. He is incapable of dealing with the misfortunes that befall him. These fatal forces hover over his head. And then falling prey to his destiny, he keeps committing blunders which not only affect him but also affect the society he lives in.

In Shakespearean tragedy we can see that there are two types of conflicts working upon hero, External and Internal. When the conflict is between two persons or among groups of person representing the opposite party's interest, then the conflicts is external. In his early plays, there were a lot of external conflicts but as his understanding of human nature matured, this conflict became largely internal. The internal conflict takes place in the mind of the protagonist. It happens between two opposite ideas or interests that haunt the mind of the hero. These ideas and thoughts pull him in different direction and the result is that he is distressed and torn from inside. The tragic hero's mind is plagued by traumas and there is no escape from the situation.

In each play we can see an element of hope that is disappointed or ambition that is frustrated. Here, through this example, we can understand this paradox present in the play. Macbeth is the most straightforward example. Macbeth murders Duncan with the assurance of good reward. He then enters battle with what again seems to be positive assurance. Only when it is too late he realize that he is being led to his destruction. Hamlet also has a central, well considered ambition, but its result is not so straightforward. Hamlet wants to avenge his father's murder, but the whole matter is so entangled with everything, from petty court rivalries to national politics, that his success is accompanied by disaster.

And let me speak to the yet unknowing world
How these things came about. So shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on the inventors' heads.

Hamlet V, ii

Finally, we should consider a very prominent part of all four tragedies: death to the protagonist. Death is important in expressing tragedy because it is at the very heart, the paradox of disappointment. For secular as well as religious men, death brings about a final conclusive disillusionment to every meaningful hope. It is the embodiment of defeat. In the tragedies under consideration, death is not used as an extreme expression of human suffering. Rather it is used symbolically to emphasize the disappointment and defeat that accompany it. The symbolic character of death is especially notable in Othello's suicide. Iago's treachery caused several other deaths but not Othello's. Othello's suicide is a response to his despair. The tragedy in *Hamlet* is not specifically Hamlet's death, but the overall miscalculation and unnecessary bloodshed. Hamlet's death merely confirms the disaster.

We have said that tragedy deals with one of the great paradoxes of life. Still we can say that Shakespeare's tragedies always portray such characters that are brave to face the odd circumstances of life bravely. It does not tell us that life is meaningless in spite of defeat and disappointment, nor does it point to despair and proclaim the worthlessness of our hopes. Rather it affirms the paradox and challenges us with it.

1.5. ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA AS A HISTORICAL PLAY

Antony and Cleopatra is a historical play by William Shakespeare, first performed in 1607 or 1608 and first printed in 1623. The source for the story is Plutarch's "Life of Marcus

Antony". Shakespeare worked closely to this work and astonishing numbers of phrases within Shakespeare's play are taken directly from Thomas North's translation.

It is believed that Shakespeare wrote *Antony and Cleopatra* in 1606 after *Macbeth* and it is obviously one of his greatest plays. Although it is not in the first class of Shakespeare's production yet it stands next to them. *Antony and Cleopatra* is probably the best known of Shakespeare's Roman plays. It presents before us, what happens when power of state and the power of love clashes with each other. In this play, Shakespeare introduced two great historical characters--Marcus Antony and the legendary Egyptian princess, Cleopatra to the Elizabethan stage.

Shakespeare has made poetry his medium of his play to present the history of those early days. But he based his plot on facts and not merely on his imagination. But wherever necessary, he made changes to suit the taste of his Elizabethan audience. Shakespeare chose historical figures because he wanted to present the life of great men from history in front of his audience.

One such play was *Antony and Cleopatra*. Shakespeare wanted the Elizabethan audience to be familiar with the history of Marc Antony, a great Roman warrior. Had Antony succeeded in winning the sole control of Rome and Cleopatra as his queen, he could have changed the course of the Roman Empire. However, their relationship ended in mutual suicide in 30 BC, eleven years after it started, when Caesar's Roman troops captured the Egyptian city of Alexandria.

The seed of their relationship was sown with the murder of Julius Caesar in March 44 BC. Rome descended into anarchy and civil war. By 41 BC Antony and Caesar shared the leadership of Rome and had divided the state into two regions - the western portion including Spain and Gaul ruled by Caesar, the eastern region including Greece and the Middle East ruled by Antony. As the Parthian Empire (modern-day Iraq) was a threat to Antony's eastern territory, so he planned a military campaign to subdue it. But Antony needed money to put his plan into action and he looked to Cleopatra - ruler of Egypt and the richest woman in the world - to supply it. That was how he met her and fell in love with her. Antony, portrayed in his middle years, is shown to be a great warrior, seduced by sensual love. Cleopatra, on the other hand, is shown to be a figure larger than life, fatally flawed, and willing to sacrifice kingdoms for her love.

But Shakespeare has condensed this complete period into short time so that it could be presented on stage. The two themes LOVE TRAGEDY and HISTORY are interlinked with each other. Antony and Cleopatra weigh both love and duty and find no easy compromise between the two.

1.6. VARIOUS THEMES IN THE PLAY

1.6.1. Fate, Destiny, Inevitability, or Historical Necessity

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, we can see that all the events of future are presented in such a way that we can tell what is going to happen next. The chain of events in this play seems more predetermined than in most of Shakespeare's plays and many of the plays use expectation, prophecy and fulfillment. Each and every event in this play is foreshadowed either by soothsayers or savvy observers like Enobarbus. From the beginning, even someone with no prior knowledge of the story sees clearly that Caesar will win. Personal agency seems limited, and the suicides of the lovers near the end seem to be a final act of self-assertion, the only possible act left to them, in the face of historical necessity.

Shakespeare is dealing with history, so he can make events seem fated, but the Soothsayer and his dire predictions are taken from Plutarch. The use of the soothsayer underscores the theme of destiny, which in a play based on historical events can be viewed in different ways. To us, the defeat of Antony is inevitable, fated, because it has already happened. The soothsayer's presence adds a sinister inevitability to a historical event playing out before us. Historical forces become conflated with less rational conceptions of destiny and fate. Because of the soothsayer's presence, history itself takes on a supernatural element, being beyond the control or explanation of men.

1.6.2. The Struggle between Reason and Emotion

In his opening lines to Demetrius, Philo complains that Antony has abandoned the military endeavors on which his reputation is based for Cleopatra's sake. His criticism of Antony's "dotage," or stupidity, introduces a tension between reason and emotion that runs throughout the play (I.i.1). Antony and Cleopatra's first exchange heightens this tension, as they argue whether their love can be put into words and understood or whether it exceeds such faculties and boundaries of reason. If, according to Roman consensus, Antony is the military hero and disciplined statesman that Caesar and others believe him to be, then he seems to have happily abandoned his reason in order to pursue his passion. He declares: "Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch / Of the ranged empire fall" (I.i.35–36). The play, however, is more concerned with the battle between reason and emotion than the triumph of one over the other, and this battle is waged most forcefully in the character of Antony. More than any other character in the play, Antony vacillates between Western and Eastern sensibilities, feeling pulled by both his duty to the empire and his desire for pleasure, his want of military glory and his passion for Cleopatra. Soon after his nonchalant dismissal of Caesar's messenger, the empire, and his duty to it, he chastises himself for his neglect and commits to return to Rome, lest he "lose [him]self in dotage" As the play progresses, Antony continues to inhabit conflicting identities that play out the struggle between reason and emotion. At one moment, he is the vengeful war hero whom Caesar praises and fears. Soon thereafter, he sacrifices his military position by unwisely allowing Cleopatra to determine his course of action. As his Roman allies—even the ever-faithful Enobarbus—abandon him, Antony feels that he has, indeed, lost himself in dotage, and he determines to rescue his noble identity by taking his own life. At first, this course of action may appear to be a triumph of reason over passion, of Western sensibilities over Eastern ones, but the play is not that simple. Although Antony dies believing himself a man of honor, discipline, and reason, our understanding of him is not nearly as straight-forward. In order to come to terms with Antony's character, we must analyze the aspects of his identity that he ignores. He is, in the end, a man ruled by passion as much as by reason. Likewise, the play offers us a worldview in which one sensibility cannot easily dominate another. Reason cannot ever fully conquer the passions, nor can passion wholly undo reason.

1.6.3. Rome versus Egypt

Shakespeare constantly juxtaposes the world of Egypt with the world of Rome. We move from Egypt to Rome and Athens in a matter of moments. Shakespeare uses Rome and Egypt to deal with a number of themes, organized in terms of oppositions: change versus the status quo, martial values versus self-indulgence, masculine authority versus feminine authority, and the values of an erstwhile Republic versus the values of despotism.

These binaries reflect not just qualities inherent in the two places, but the changes that come upon Antony depending on which place he is in. Antony, in some ways, is one man in Egypt and a different one in Rome. Egypt is an exotic frontier, a welcome escape from a life of soldiership and civic duty. In Egypt, Antony rules basically as a king, the kind of king known better for his self-indulgence than his administrative abilities. Parallels can be drawn to other

places throughout history: many men, away from home serving the interests of empire, have created lives of decadent pleasure. From Romans in Egypt to debauched Frenchmen in Indochina, imperial frontiers have provided men with escape and luxury, and a freedom that could never be possible for them in their homelands. Antony is torn between duty and passion, soldiership and self-indulgence, political ambition and love of life for its sensual pleasures. Antony seems to delight in Egypt as an escape from his Roman self. In the East, Antony is able to indulge impulses that Romans disdain, even if these impulses fascinate them.

1.6.4. Duty and Honor

For Romans, honor and duty are closely linked. The Roman definition of honor is a highly masculine one, with very different standards for men and women. Much less is expected of Cleopatra than of Antony.

Antony is never able to reconcile his Roman duty with his human passions. Rome is a land that prizes duty very highly. His love for Cleopatra completely undoes his character as a soldier. When he fails at Actium to live up to his duty, part of him dies and he feels guilty for it. Different characters are motivated or restrained by their definition of honor at different points in the play. Enobarbus, Antony, Pompey, Cleopatra, and Octavius are characters to watch for different takes on the meaning of honor. Enobarbus sees honour as loyalty between friends, and his failure to live up to that precept leads to his death from grief. Antony sees too late that his honor as a Roman is tied to duty, and tries to salvage his honor through his valor as a warrior. Pompey prizes his honor highly enough to sacrifice ultimate power for principle. His duty is to destiny itself. Cleopatra has no understanding of Roman conceptions of honor, and is often baffled by Antony as he becomes unhinged, being unable to understand the principles he has failed to uphold. But she has her own idea of honor, one centered on the glamour and individuality of her own persona. This kind of honor, centered on herself, means she will not allow Caesar to parade her through Rome as a trophy.

Caesar is a man of practical mind. He is not good as Antony but through his sensibility he wins the battle against Antony.

1.6.5. Dynamic Change (Rome) Versus Static Order (Egypt):

This binary is closely tied to the theme of fate and historical necessity, which has its destructive and transformational side. Egypt is a static world, ruled by the same family for centuries. This relative stability stands in sharp contrast to Rome, where the structures of power are constantly changing, and different generals hold sway at different times. Rome is in a period of great flux, as the Republic has ended and the new period of Empire is about to begin. The dynamic character of Rome turns Rome itself into a metaphor for change. The scenes in Egypt show a relatively peaceful status quo, while from the beginning the scenes in Rome are full of great changes with consequences for the whole Mediterranean world. Towards the end of the play, when Egypt is invaded, Rome's presence means that Egypt is infected by the destructive and creative powers of change. Old orders will fall, a new one will be built, and Egypt will be left forever altered. The reign of pharaohs, which has continued in Egypt under different dynasties for over three thousand years?

1.6.6. Masculine Order versus Feminine Order

The court of Cleopatra is woman-centered whereas Rome is a very masculine world. Rome is obsessed with duty and militaristic virtues, and anxiety about being dominated by women is rampant. Alexandria is a world of pleasure, where the female sovereign's rule is uncontested. While the Romans express disgust with Cleopatra's hold on Antony, and eagerly dismiss her as a manipulative whore, their fascination with her is obvious. When Antony and his men return

to Rome, many of the Roman soldiers are hungry for tales of Egypt's wonders, the greatest wonder of all being Cleopatra.

1.6.7. Virtues of a Republic versus Despotism

Rome is a former Republic with a tradition of citizenship. Egypt is a land of sovereign and subject. Enobarbus is subordinate to Antony, but both are Romans, and Enobarbus is allowed to speak his mind. Antony encourages messengers to speak freely to him. In the same situation, Cleopatra has no qualms about beating the bearer of bad news. A Roman leader must cater to the mob; Cleopatra appears to her people dressed as a goddess, and has no need to curry their favor.

Blind passion mutes the voice of reason and leads to the death of two mighty leaders.

Antony and Cleopatra both pay with their lives for their scandalous, all-consuming love affair. Antony, once a wise leader, allows his emotions to gain sway over his reason. Consequently, he makes bad decisions, including his foolhardy decision to fight the forces of Octavius at sea. Cleopatra likewise allows her emotions—including jealousy and anger—to rule her.

1.7. SUMMARY

In this unit you were acquainted with Shakespeare's Roman plays. The concept of Shakespearean tragedy was also explained in detail to you. Furthermore, the unit also shed light on the major themes explored by Shakespeare in the play like fate, destiny, inevitability, the struggle between reason and emotion and duty and honour.

Self Assessment Questions

1. Write a note on Shakespeare's concept of Tragedy.
 2. Discuss the theme of Duty and Honour as discussed by Shakespeare in *Antony and Cleopatra*.
 3. Discuss Shakespeare as a writer of Roman plays.
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1.8. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Refer to our discussion at section 1.4
 2. Refer to our discussion at section 1.6.4.
 3. Refer to our discussion at section 1.3.
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1.9. REFERENCES

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1.10. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. How did Elizabethan drama come into existence and what was the contribution of earlier drama in its development?
 2. Describe the various themes presented in the play Antony and Cleopatra.
 3. Discuss Shakespeare as a dramatist and discuss the impact of his age in his plays.
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2.1. Introduction

2.2. Objectives

2.3. Summary and Analysis of the Plot

2.3.1. ACT I

2.3.2. ACT II

2.3.3. ACT III

2.3.4. ACT IV

2.3.5. ACT V

2.4. Let us Sum Up

2.5. Answers to Self Assessment Questions

2.6. References

2.7. Terminal and Model Question

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit you took a glimpse of Shakespeare's Roman plays. Further you were introduced to *Antony and Cleopatra* which is a Roman tragedy, based on real events whose main source was Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, translated in English by Sir Thomas North. The action of the play takes place in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East between 40 and 30 BC. The settings of the play serve to demonstrate the differences between sober, moralistic Rome and the hedonistic, decadent Egypt. In total there are 42 scenes in the play. This unit will primarily focus on the analysis of the major events that take place in course of the play.

2.2. OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit

- You will have a complete understanding of *Antony and Cleopatra*.
 - You will be able to draw clearly picture of the entire drama in your mind, without any difficulty.
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2.3. SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF THE PLOT

2.3.1. Act I

Scene i

The play opens in Alexandria, in one of the rooms of Cleopatra's palace. Two of Antony's friends, Demetrius and Philo, discuss how their general, Mark Antony, has fallen in love with the Egyptian queen, Cleopatra, and has lost interest in his proper role as one of the three leaders (or triumvirs) of the Roman Empire. Cleopatra and Antony enter, the queen imploring Antony to describe just how much he loves her, when a messenger from Rome greets them. Antony says that he has little interest in hearing Roman news, but Cleopatra tells him that he must listen. She teases Antony for possibly turning away a command from young Octavius Caesar or a rebuke from Antony's wife, Fulvia. When she urges him to return to Rome, Antony claims that Rome means nothing to him. He says that his duty requires him to stay in Alexandria and love Cleopatra. Although the queen doubts the sincerity of his sentiment, her suggestions that Antony hear the news from Rome go unheeded, and the couple exits together. After the lovers have gone, Philo and Demetrius express shock and despair at their general's disrespect for Caesar and the concerns of the empire.

Scene ii

This scene also takes place in Cleopatra's palace in Alexandria. Cleopatra's attendants ask a soothsayer, or fortune-teller, to reveal their futures. The Soothsayer tells Charmian and Iras, the queen's maids, that their fortunes are the same: their pasts will prove better than their futures, and they shall outlive the queen whom they serve. Cleopatra joins them, complaining that Antony has suddenly turned his mind toward Rome again. She sends Antony's follower Enobarbus to fetch his master, but changes her mind, and as Antony approaches, she leaves to avoid seeing him. A messenger reports to Antony that Fulvia and Lucius, Antony's brother, have mounted an army against Caesar but have lost their battle. When the messenger hesitantly suggests that this event would not have happened had Antony been in Rome, Antony invites the man to speak openly, to "taunt [his] faults / With such full license as both truth and malice / Have power to utter". Another messenger arrives to report that Fulvia is dead. Antony comments that he long desired his wife's death but now wishes her alive again.

Enobarbus arrives and tries to comfort Antony with the thought that Fulvia's death was an event that should be welcomed rather than mourned. Worried that his idleness and devotion to Cleopatra are responsible for these events, as well as a battle being waged by Sextus Pompeius, who is currently attempting to take control of the seas from the triumvirs, Antony decides to break away from Cleopatra and return to Rome.

Scene iii

The scene opens with Cleopatra orders her servant Alexas to fetch Antony. When Antony enters, Cleopatra feigns a fainting spell, lamenting that Fulvia ever gave Antony leave to come to Egypt. She asks how she can have believed the vows of a man so willing to break his vows to his wife. Antony tells her of the volatile political situation in Rome and of Fulvia's death. Cleopatra notes how little he mourns and predicts that he will grieve as little after her own death. They argue about the depth and truth of his feelings, until Antony finally departs, promising that distance will not threaten their love.

Scene iv

The scene now shifts to Rome and focuses on a discussion between Antony's co-triumvirs as they discuss the problems facing the empire. Here we have our first glimpse of Caesar Octavius and Lepidus. Young Octavius Caesar complains to Lepidus, the third triumvir, that Antony has abandoned his responsibilities as a statesman and, in doing so, has also abandoned the better part of his manhood. Lepidus attempts to defend Antony, suggesting that Antony's weaknesses for fishing, drinking, and reveling are traits he inherited rather than ones he has chosen. Caesar remains unconvinced, declaring that Antony has no business enjoying himself in Egypt during a time of crisis. A messenger arrives with news that Pompey's forces are both gathering strength and finding support among those whose prior allegiance to Caesar arose from fear, not duty. Remembering Antony's valiant and unparalleled performance as a soldier, Caesar laments that Antony is not with them. He and Lepidus agree to raise an army against Pompey.

Scene v

Again we return to Alexandria; Cleopatra is in her palace with her attendants, Charmian and Iras, and Mardian, a eunuch. "Cleopatra complains to Charmian that she misses Antony. She wonders what he is doing and whether he, in turn, is thinking of her. Alexas enters and presents her with a gift from Antony: a pearl. He tells the queen that Antony kissed the gemstone upon leaving Egypt and ordered it be delivered to Cleopatra as a token of his love. Cleopatra asks if he appeared sad or happy, and she rejoices when Alexas responds that Antony seemed neither: to appear sad, Cleopatra says, might have contaminated the moods of his followers, while a happy countenance could have jeopardized his followers' belief in his resolve. Cleopatra orders Alexas to prepare twenty messengers, so that she can write to Antony on each day of his absence. She promises, if need be, to "un people Egypt" by turning all of its citizens into messengers.

2.3.2. Act II

Scene i

In this scene, set in the insurrectionists' camp, Pompey (Sextus Pompeius), a rival general of the Triumvirate, plans his strategy with two of his officers, the sea pirates Menas and Menecrates. He feels confident of victory against the triumvirs not only because he controls the sea and is popular with the Roman people, but also because he believes that Antony, the greatest threat to his power, is still in Egypt. Menas reports that Caesar and Lepidus have

raised an army, and another soldier, Varrus, arrives to tell them that Antony has come to Rome. Menas expresses his hope that Caesar and Antony's mutual enmity will give rise to a battle between the two triumvirs, but Pompey predicts that the two will come together in order to fend off a common enemy.

Scene ii

At the beginning of the scene, in Rome, Lepidus meets briefly with Antony's friend Enobarbus. He asks Enobarbus to suggest to Antony that he exercise some tact and gentleness when he meets with Caesar. Lepidus tells Enobarbus that Antony should use "soft and gentle speech" when speaking to Caesar (II.ii.3). Enobarbus answers that Antony will speak as plainly and honestly as any great man should. Antony and Caesar enter with their attendants and sit down to talk. Caesar complains of the rebellion that Fulvia and Antony's brother raised against him. He asks why Antony dismissed his messengers in Alexandria and accuses Antony of failing in his obligation to provide military aid to the other triumvirs. Antony defends himself, and Maecenas, one of Caesar's companions, suggests that they put aside their bickering in order to face Pompey. Agrippa, another of Caesar's men, suggests that Antony marry Caesar's sister, Octavia. This bond, he claims, would cement the men's affection for and alliance with one another. Antony consents. Caesar and Antony shake hands, promising brotherly love, and they agree to march together toward Pompey's stronghold on Mount Misenum.

When the triumvirs disperse, Enobarbus tells Agrippa of the good life they lived in Egypt. He describes how Cleopatra first came to meet Antony, comparing the queen to Venus, the goddess of love. Antony, he maintains, will never be able to leave her, despite his marriage to Octavia.

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.

Scene iii

Antony, Octavia, and Caesar are back at Caesar's palace in Rome. Antony promises Octavia that though his work will take him away from her often, he won't indulge in any monkey business, no matter how naughty he's been in the past. Caesar leads his sister away, and Antony meets with a soothsayer who tells him he should have never left Egypt, and should get back there as soon as possible. Antony asks whether he or Caesar will have better fortune, and the man replies that Caesar will. Further, Antony should stay as far away from Caesar as possible, as Antony's fortune is muted, and his greatness lessened, whenever Caesar is around. Antony agrees, and announces that though he married Octavia to make peace, he needs to return to his girl in Egypt as "I' th' East my pleasure lies." In a totally unrelated side note, he sends his soldier Ventidius to Parthia (modern day Iraq) to fight on his behalf. (Parthia was one of Rome's last surviving major enemies in the East.)

Scene iv

Lepidus meets with Maecenas and Agrippa. They are to gather their troops and meet together at Mount Misenum, where they'll face off with Pompey's army. Lepidus has some other stuff to do, so he'll be there two days later than the other men.

Scene v

Cleopatra is bored and pensive as this scene opens in Alexandria. Cleopatra misses Antony, and jokes with her servants about the times they had. She likens Antony to a fish she caught in the river, and notes that last time she caught him she kept him for quite some time, "Ere the ninth hour, I drunk him to his bed," (i.e., they were rather voracious in their appetites for each other.) Interestingly, Cleopatra dressed him up in her headdresses and clothes, and she wore the sword he used in the battle against Brutus and Cassius at Philippi. This moment of sharing is interrupted by a messenger who brings news from Rome. Cleopatra can tell by his face that it's not great news. She worries that Antony is dead, or that he's Caesar's captive or something terrible. She keeps interrupting the messenger, threatening him if he brings bad news and promising gold if he brings good. Finally, the messenger points out Antony is alive and well, but bound to Octavia "for a turn i' th' bed." Cleopatra, Antony's former partner for such bed turns, flies into a rage, beats the messenger herself, and eventually draws a knife. He runs away, thinking his job was to tell the truth, not to bear its consequences. She eventually calms out of crazed mood, and calls the messenger back, admitting she has acted like she's on Jerry Springer. She says it's not the poor messenger's fault that Antony sleeps around. She has the messenger repeat that Antony's married a few more times, adding to the drama. As she dismisses the servant, she's still in a sad rage, and points out that praising Antony has made her dispraise Julius Caesar (her original lover). She's sure this is punishment for her short memory. Cleopatra sends her servant, Alexas, to follow the messenger and ask that he bring back word of what Octavia is like – her age, manner, height, hair color. She'd like to size up the competition.

Scene vi

The focus of this scene, set near Misenum. Before waging a war, Pompey and the triumvirs hold a meeting. Pompey tells Caesar, Lepidus, and Antony that he is fighting to avenge his father, whose defeat by Julius Caesar led him into Egypt, where he was killed. Antony informs Pompey that despite the latter's strength at sea, the triumvirs' army will prevail. The three offer Pompey rule over Sicily and Sardinia should he agree to rid the sea of pirates and to send payments of wheat to Rome as a tax. Pompey admits that he was ready to accept this offer until Antony offended him by refusing to acknowledge the hospitality he showed Antony's mother on her recent visit to Sicily. Antony assures Pompey that he intended to offer gracious thanks, at which the men shake hands and make peace.

Pompey invites the Romans aboard his ship for dinner, and the triumvirs join him. Enobarbus and Menas stay behind discussing their military careers, the current political situation, and Antony's marriage to Octavia. Enobarbus repeats that he is sure Antony will inevitably return to Egypt. After the talk, the two go to dinner.

Scene vii

A group of servants discusses Pompey's dinner party, commenting on Lepidus's drunkenness in particular. Pompey enters with his guests as Antony discusses the Nile River. Lepidus babbles on about crocodiles, which, according to popular belief, formed spontaneously out of the river mud. Lepidus asks Antony to describe the crocodile, and Antony responds with a humorously circular and meaningless definition: "It is shaped, sir, like itself, and is as broad as it hath breadth". Menas pulls Pompey aside to suggest that they set sail and kill the three triumvirs while they are still drunk and onboard the boat, thus delivering control of the Western world into Pompey's hands. Pompey rails against Menas for sharing this plan with him. Were the deed done without his knowledge, Pompey says, he would have praised it, but now that he knows, it would violate his honor. In an angry aside, Menas expresses his

disappointment with Pompey and swears that he will leave his master's service. Meanwhile, the triumvirs and their host continue their drunken revelry, eventually joining hands, dancing, and singing before they leave the ship and stumble off to bed.

2.3.3. Act III

Scene i

The act opens on a plain in Syria. Ventidius, fighting for Antony, defeats the Parthians, killing their king's son. One of Ventidius's soldiers urges him to push on into Parthia and win more glory, but Ventidius says he should not. If he were too successful in war, he explains, he would fall out of Antony's favor and not be able to advance as a member of Antony's forces. Instead, Ventidius halts his army and writes to Antony, informing him of his victory.

Scene ii

As this scene opens, in Rome, Agrippa and Enobarbus enter and discuss recent events. Agrippa and Enobarbus discuss the current state of affairs: Pompey has gone, Octavia and Caesar are saddened by their nearing separation, and Lepidus is still sick from his night of heavy drinking. Agrippa and Enobarbus mock Lepidus, the weakest of the three triumvirs, who trips over himself in order to stay on good terms with both Antony and Caesar. A trumpet blares, and Lepidus, Antony, and Caesar enter. Caesar bids farewell to Antony and his sister, urging his new brother-in-law never to mistreat Octavia and thereby drive a wedge between himself and Antony. Antony implores Caesar not to offend him, making assurances that he will not justify Caesar's fears. Antony and Octavia depart, leaving Lepidus and Caesar in Rome.

Scene iii

Cleopatra's messenger returns to report on Antony's bride. He tells Cleopatra that Octavia is shorter than she and that Octavia has a low voice and is rather lifeless. This news pleases Cleopatra, who delights in thinking that Antony's bride is stupid and short. She decides that, given Octavia's lack of positive attributes, Antony cannot possibly enjoy being with her for long. She promises to reward the messenger for his good service, showers him with gold, and asks him not to think of her too harshly for her past treatment of him. She then tells Charmian that Antony will almost certainly return to her.

Scene iv

Antony complains to Octavia that since departing Rome, Caesar has not only waged war against Pompey but has also belittled Antony in public. Octavia urges Antony not to believe everything he hears, and she pleads with him to keep the peace with her brother. Were Antony and Caesar to fight, Octavia laments, she would not know whether to support her brother or her husband. Antony tells her that he must do what needs to be done to preserve his honor, without which he would be nothing. Nevertheless, he sends her to Rome to make peace again between Caesar and himself. Meanwhile, he prepares for war against Pompey.

Scene v

Enobarbus converses with Eros, another friend of Antony. The two discuss Caesar's defeat of Pompey's army and the murder of Pompey. Eros reports that Caesar made use of Lepidus's forces, but then, after their victory, denied Lepidus his share of the spoils. In fact, Caesar has accused the triumvir of plotting against him and has thrown him into prison. Enobarbus reports that Antony's navy is ready to sail for Italy and Caesar.

Scene vi

Back in Rome, Caesar rails against Antony. He tells Agrippa and Maecenas that Antony has gone to Egypt to sit alongside Cleopatra as her king. He has given her rule over much of the Middle East, making her absolute queen of lower Syria, Cyprus, and Lydia. Caesar reports that Antony is displeased that he has not yet been allotted a fair portion of the lands that Caesar wrested from Pompey and Lepidus. He will divide his lot, he says, if Antony responds in kind and grants him part of Armenia and other kingdoms that Antony conquered. No sooner does Maecenas predict that Antony will never concede to those terms than Octavia enters. Caesar laments that the woman travels so plainly, without the fanfare that should attend the wife of Antony. Caesar reveals to her that Antony has joined Cleopatra in Egypt, where he has assembled a large alliance to fight Rome. Octavia is heartbroken, and Maecenas assures her that she has the sympathy of every Roman citizen.

Scene vii

Cleopatra plans to go into battle alongside Antony and responds angrily to Enobarbus's suggestion that her presence will be a distraction. Enobarbus tries to dissuade her, but she dismisses his objections. Antony tells his general, Camidius, that he will meet Caesar at sea. Camidius and Enobarbus object, pointing out that while they have superiority on land, Caesar's naval fleet is much stronger. -Antony, however, refuses to listen. Cleopatra maintains that her fleet of sixty ships will win the battle. Antony leaves to prepare the navy, despite the protests of a soldier who begs him to forgo a doomed sea battle and advocates fighting on foot. After the general and the queen exit, Camidius complains that they are all "women's men," ruled by Cleopatra. He comments on the speed of Caesar's approach, then goes to prepare the land defenses.

Scene viii

Caesar orders his army to hold off its attack until the sea battle ends.

Scene ix

Antony instructs Enobarbus to set their squadrons on a hillside, which will allow them to view the battle at sea.

Scene x

Enobarbus describes the sea fight he has just witnessed: Antony's forces were winning the battle until Cleopatra's ship fled without warning and Antony followed her. The fleet was thrown into confusion, and the victory went to Caesar. Antony's soldiers are sickened by the sight, one of them declaring that he has never seen anything so shameful. Camidius defects to Caesar's side, bringing his army and following the lead of six of Antony's royal allies, but Enobarbus, against his better judgment, remains loyal to his general.

Scene xi

Deeply ashamed of his performance in battle, Antony berates himself, ordering his servants to leave the service of such an unworthy master. He urges them to abandon Antony as Antony has abandoned his nobler self. When Cleopatra enters, she finds her lover distraught and alone. She tries to comfort him, but Antony can remind her only of his valiant past: it was he who won fierce battles, who dealt with the treacheries of Cassius and Brutus. But now, he determines, such events do not matter. He asks Cleopatra why she has led him into infamy, and she begs his forgiveness, saying that she never dreamed that he would follow her retreat.

He asks her how she could doubt that he would follow her, when his heart was tied to her rudder. Antony complains that he must now seek young Caesar's pardon, but unable to bear the sight of the queen's sorrow, he forgives her. As Antony kisses Cleopatra, he remarks that even her mere kiss repays him for his shame.

Scene xii

In his camp in Egypt, Caesar is meeting with some of his officers and also with Antony's ambassador, Euphronius. Caesar is with Dolabella and Thidias, two of his supporters, when Antony's ambassador arrives with his master's request: Antony asks to be allowed to live in Egypt or, barring that, to "breathe between the heavens and earth, / A private man in Athens". The ambassador further delivers Cleopatra's request that Egypt be passed on to her heirs. Caesar dismisses Antony's requests but declares that Cleopatra will have a fair hearing so long as she expels Antony from Egypt or executes him. He sends Thidias to lure Cleopatra to accept these terms, hoping that she will betray her lover.

Scene xiii

Enobarbus tells Cleopatra that the defeat was not her fault since Antony could have chosen to follow reason rather than lust. The ambassador returns with Caesar's message: Antony declares that he will challenge his rival to one-on-one combat. Enobarbus meditates on such a course of action, but decides that if he remains loyal to Antony he might be able to attack Caesar, if Caesar kills Antony. Meanwhile, Thidias arrives to tell Cleopatra that Caesar will show her mercy if she will relinquish Antony. The queen concedes that she embraced Antony more out of fear than love and declares Caesar a god to whom she will bow down. Just then, Antony enters in a fury and demands that Thidias be whipped. He then turns to Cleopatra and rails at her for betraying him. The queen protests that she would never betray him, which satisfies Antony. Antony's fleet has reassembled, and much of his land forces remain intact, ready to attack Caesar again. Enobarbus, who has observed this scene, decides that he has been faithful to Antony long enough. He feels that Antony's mind is slipping and that he must abandon his master.

2.3.4. Act IV

Scene i

At Caesar's camp outside Alexandria, Agrippa and Maecenas attend their general. He receives Antony's challenge and laughs at it. Maecenas counsels him to take advantage of Antony's rage, for "[n]ever anger / Made good guard for itself". Caesar prepares his army—swelled by deserters from his enemy's troops—and plans to crush Antony for good.

Scene ii

Enobarbus brings word to Antony that Caesar has refused to fight him. Antony asks why, and Enobarbus suggests that Caesar is so sure of success that one-on-one combat seems unfair. Antony declares that he will fight the next day, whether it brings him victory or death. He thanks his servants for their faithful service and warns them that this night might be his last night with them. They begin to weep, and Enobarbus, with tears in his eyes, rebukes Antony for such a morbid speech. Antony says that he did not mean to cause sorrow, and, as he leads them off toward a bountiful feast, urges them to enjoy their evening together.

Scene iii

That night, Antony's soldiers hear strange music resounding from somewhere underground. They whisper that it is the music of Hercules, the god after whom Antony modeled himself and who they believe now abandons him.

Sceneiv

The following day, Eros arms Antony for battle, and Cleopatra insists on helping. Antony feels confident about the coming fight, promising Cleopatra that anyone who attempts to undo his armor before he is ready to remove it and rest will confront his rage. An armed soldier enters and reports that a thousand others stand ready for Antony's command. Antony bids Cleopatra adieu, kisses her, and leads his men into battle.

Scene v

Preparing for battle, Antony admits he wishes he had taken the earlier opportunity to oppose Caesar on land. A soldier comments that had he done so, he would still count Enobarbus as an ally. This report is the first Antony has heard of his most trusted friend's desertion, and the news shocks him. At first he does not believe it, but Eros then points to the "chests and treasure" Enobarbus left behind. Antony orders soldiers to deliver Enobarbus's possessions to him, along with "gentle adieus and greetings," and laments that his "fortunes have / Corrupted honest men".

Scenevi

Caesar, feeling certain of his victory, orders Agrippa to begin the battle. Caesar orders that the front lines be fitted with soldiers who have deserted Antony, so that Antony will feel like that he is wasting his efforts fighting himself. Enobarbus receives the treasure and is overcome by guilt, realizing that he has become a common traitor. Deciding that he would rather die than fight against Antony, he declares himself a villain and goes to seek out a ditch in which to die.

Scene vii

This is a short war scene. Antony's men win the battle and retake Alexandria with a fierce display of force. Scarus receives a fantastic wound but will not relent, begging Antony for the chance to chase after the retreating army. Antony is elated at his hero's bravery and promises to reward him for his optimism and valour.

Scene viii

Antony returns from war, vowing to destroy Caesar's army completely on the following day. He praises his soldiers for their valor and commands them to regale their families with tales of the day's battle. When Cleopatra enters, Antony declares his love for her. He announces that she is the only thing that can pierce his armor and reach his heart. Antony asks Cleopatra to commend Scarus, one of his bravest soldiers. The queen promises the man a suit of golden armor that once belonged to a king. Antony leads his troops and his lover in a triumphant march through the streets of Alexandria to mark the joyous occasion.

Scene ix

Caesar's sentries discuss the coming battle as Enobarbus berates himself nearby. Unaware that he is being watched, Enobarbus rails against his life, wishing for its end and hoping that history will mark him as a traitor and a fugitive. After he collapses, the sentries decide to rouse him but discover that he has died. Because he is an important man, they bear his body to their camp.

Scene x

Antony determines that Caesar means to attack him by sea and declares himself ready. He wishes his enemy were equipped to fight in fire or air, swearing he would meet him in those places if he could.

Scene xi

Caesar holds his armies back, preparing to attack Antony at sea.

Scene xii

Anthony has gone with Scarus to watch the naval battle. Scarus, in an aside, condemns Cleopatra's fleet as weak, and laments that the soothsayers refuse to share their knowledge regarding the battle's outcome. Antony watches as the Egyptian fleet betrays him and defects to Caesar. Realizing his predicament, Antony commands Scarus to order his army to flee. Alone, the general blames Cleopatra as a deadly enchantress who has beguiled him to a state of absolute loss. When the queen enters, Antony drives her away, threatening to kill her for her betrayal.

Scene xiii

Cleopatra returns to her maids with tales of Antony's murderous rage. Charmian suggests that her mistress lock herself in a monument and send Antony word that she has killed herself, to quell his anger. Abiding by the plan, she bids Mardian deliver the news to Antony and asks him to return with word of her lover's reaction.

Scene xiv

Antony arms himself to kill his lover, telling Eros that he no longer knows who he is now that Cleopatra's love has proven false. Mardian arrives with his false report of the queen's death, adding that her last words were "Antony! most noble Antony!". Antony tells Eros to unarm. Overcome with remorse, he declares that he will join Cleopatra in death and beg her forgiveness for thinking him false. He asks Eros to kill him. Horrified, Eros refuses, but Antony reminds him of the pledge he made long ago to follow even Antony's most extreme wishes. Eros relents. He prepares to stab Antony but stabs himself instead. Antony praises his soldier's honor and says he must learn from this example. He falls on his own sword but fails to kill himself. A group of guardsmen refuses to finish the task, and Diomedes, a servant of Cleopatra, reports that the queen is alive and well. It is too late, however, to save Antony's life. Dying, Antony commands his guards to bear his body to Cleopatra.

Scene xv

From atop the monument with her maids, Charmian and Iras, Cleopatra declares that she will never leave her hiding place. Diomedes appears below and calls up to her that Antony's guard has brought the wounded Antony. The lovers call to one another. Antony says that he is dying and wishes to embrace her one last time. She replies that she dares not come down from her monument, lest she be captured by Caesar and paraded through the streets as a prisoner of war. Instead, Cleopatra asks the soldiers to heave Antony up to her. As they do so, Cleopatra notes that the strength of Antony's body has turned to heaviness. She pulls him to her and kisses him, the onlookers declaring this intimacy "a heavy sight". Antony advises the queen to cast herself upon Caesar's mercy, trusting in the honesty of Caesar's friend Proculeius. He then recalls his own greatness and says that he will die gloriously, "a Roman by a Roman / valiantly vanquished". He dies, and Cleopatra curses the world as a suddenly very dull place. Without

Antony, she feels that neither life nor she herself is the least bit remarkable: she might as well be a “maid that milks / And does the meanest chores”. After her maids revive her from a fainting spell, Cleopatra decides that they must bury Antony in Roman fashion and then help her seek her own death.

2.3.5. Act V

Scene i

The final act opens at Caesar's camp in Alexandria. Caesar orders Dolabella to deliver to Antony a command for his surrender. After Dolabella leaves, Decretas, one of Antony's men, enters carrying Antony's sword. When Caesar asks why the man would dare appear before him in such a way, Decretas explains that he was a loyal follower of Antony's and now wishes to serve Caesar as faithfully. Caesar questions the meaning of this reversal, and Decretas explains that his master is dead, taken from this world by the same noble hands that committed the brave deeds for which Antony is so renowned. Caesar remarks that the passing of such a great man ought to be marked by great tumult and mourning—after all, the death of Antony, as one of the two triumvirs, “is not a single doom” but the end of one-half of the world. Agrippa notes the irony of their mourning Antony's death after having fought him so fiercely. Caesar and his men agree that Antony was a great man, and Caesar declares it proper to mourn him.

A messenger arrives from Cleopatra to ask what Caesar intends for the queen. Caesar promises to be honorable and kind to her, and dispatches Cleopatra's messenger with assurances, bidding her to be of good heart. Although Caesar tells Cleopatra that he intends to cause her no shame, he plans to force her to live in Rome, where she will be his eternal triumph. Toward this end, he orders some of his men, led by Proculeius, to prevent Cleopatra from committing suicide and thus robbing him of renown.

Scene ii

Back at her monument in Alexandria, Cleopatra and her attendants plan their immediate future. Proculeius arrives at the queen's monument and asks Cleopatra's terms for giving herself up to Caesar. Cleopatra remembers that Antony told her to trust Proculeius and tells the Roman she hopes the emperor will allow her son to rule Egypt. Proculeius assures her that Caesar will be generous and says that Caesar will soon repay her supplication with kindness. Meanwhile, his soldiers, having slipped into the monument, move to seize Cleopatra. The queen draws a dagger, hoping to kill herself before being taken captive, but Proculeius disarms her. He orders the soldiers to guard the queen until Caesar arrives, and Cleopatra cries that she will never allow herself to be carried through Rome as a trophy of the empire's triumph.

Dolabella arrives and takes over for Proculeius. The queen converses with him, discussing her dreams (in which she sees a heroic vision of Antony), and then persuades Dolabella to admit that Caesar plans to display her as a prisoner of war. Caesar arrives and promises to spare Cleopatra's children and treat her well if she does not kill herself. She gives him a scroll that hands over all her treasure to him—or so she says. When Cleopatra asks her treasurer, Seleucus, to confirm that she has given Caesar everything, Seleucus contradicts her. Cleopatra rails against the treachery of her servant, but Caesar comforts her. He assures her that he does not desire her wealth, since he is far greater than a mere merchant. When Caesar leaves, Cleopatra admits to her maids that she doubts his intentions, remarking to her companions that he is charming her with words, and Iras and Charmian encourage her to follow her plan toward death. Confirming Cleopatra's doubts, Dolabella admits that Caesar means to convey the queen to Rome and encourages the queen to respond to this news as she sees fit.

Rather than succumb to the infamy of being a spectacle for the entertainment of filthy Roman crowds, Cleopatra resolves to kill herself. She would rather die than see herself imitated by a boy actor, who would portray her as a common whore. She orders Charmian and Iras to dress her in her most queenly robes. When they have done so, she admits into her presence a clown, who brings her a basket of figs that contains asps—poisonous snakes.

Dressed in her finest royal garments, Cleopatra kisses her maids goodbye. Iras falls dead, and Cleopatra takes a snake from the basket and presses it to her breast. She applies another asp to her arm, and dies. As the guards rush in to discover the dead queen, Charmian presses the snake to herself and joins her mistress in death. Dolabella enters, followed by Caesar. They realize the manner of the suicide, and Caesar orders Cleopatra to be buried next to Antony in a public funeral.

2.4. LET US SUM UP

In this unit you were given the summary of the various important scenes of the play. You saw how after defeating Brutus and Cassius, following the assassination of Julius Caesar, Mark Antony becomes one of the three rulers of the Roman Empire, together with Octavius Caesar and Lepidus, and is responsible for the eastern part of the empire. He falls in love with Cleopatra, the Queen of Egypt, and settles in Alexandria. However, he is compelled to return to Rome when the empire is threatened by the rebellion of Sextus Pompey, the son of Pompey, who had been defeated by Julius Caesar.

As his wife has just died Antony marries Octavius' sister, Octavia, in an attempt to heal the rift between the two emperors. They make peace with Pompey. When Cleopatra hears about Antony's marriage she flies into a jealous rage but knows that Antony does not love Octavia. Antony goes to Athens but when war breaks out between Caesar and Pompey, Antony sends Octavia back to Rome and returns to Egypt.

Caesar is incensed with Antony's behaviour and he declares war on both Antony and Cleopatra. When the Romans arrive Antony is offered a choice of how to fight and, despite being renowned as the world's greatest soldier, he chooses to fight on sea. The Egyptian navy is inadequate and when Cleopatra's navy turns and flees, Antony follows them and Caesar defeats him.

Cleopatra goes to her tomb and sends a message to Antony that she is dead. Antony is devastated and decides to kill himself. He botches the suicide and wounds himself without dying. His followers take him to Cleopatra's tomb, where he dies in her arms.

Cleopatra's life is in tatters. Having lost Antony and being at the mercy of Caesar, she resolves to commit suicide. She has someone bring her some poisonous snakes and incites them to bite her. Caesar arrives just after her death and orders that the twolovers be buried together.

Self Assessment Questions

1. Where does the play *Antony and Cleopatra* open?
2. Who is Fulvia?
3. Draw a character sketch of Enobarbus.
4. Give the significance of Act IV in your own words.
5. How does Antony meet his end?

2.5. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. In Alexandria
2. Antony's wife
3. Refer to at section 2.3.
4. Refer to section 2.3.4.
5. Refer to section 2.3.5.

2.6. REFERENCES

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2.7. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss how far *Antony and Cleopatra* is tragedy of love and infatuation?
2. Critically examine Antony's passion for Cleopatra?
3. Discuss Enobarbus's relationship with Antony. Is his defection justified?
4. Analyze Antony's decline. Do his mistakes make him cease to be heroic?

3.1. Introduction

3.2. Objectives

3.3. Shakespeare's Art of Characterization

3.4. Character Analysis

3.4.1. Antony

3.4.2. Cleopatra

3.4.3. Enobarbus

3.4.4. Caesar

3.4.5. Other Minor Character

3.5. Summing Up

3.6. References

3.7. Terminal and Model questions

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare was a man of great genius who portrayed human qualities in such a masterful manner that no other writer, before or since, has been able to portray. All of Shakespeare's characters are remembered for their unique qualities till date. This proves his great status in the literary world. His ability to capture the range of human emotions in simple yet profoundly eloquent verse is perhaps the greatest reason for his enduring popularity. This unit will focus on Shakespeare's art of characterization. Besides this, some of the major characters of the play like Antony, Cleopatra, Enobarbus and Ceaser will also be discussed.

3.2. OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit

- You will be able to understand Shakespeare's art of characterization.
- You will further examine for yourself how Shakespeare created his characters in order to embody his own ideas.

3.3. SHAKESPEARE'S ART OF CHARACTERIZATION

Shakespeare devoted much of his attention in the art of characterization. He took plot as it came to his hand and then left it to develop by itself. His main interest was in character development, and this quality smoothes all the absurdities and improbability of his plot and makes it more refined and acceptable by the common mass of his age.

Another quality in Shakespeare characters is their universality. His characters are not exaggerated. He does not give us utterly depraved or purely virtuous characters. We may say he depicts common humanity in his play. Even when the plot calls for supernatural agent, the tone of the dialogue of various characters remains life-like and realistic. Johnson has said for Shakespeare, "He approximates the remote and familiarizes the wonderful". He presents human nature not merely as it reacts to the common situation of life but also as it may act in extraordinary situation.

Critics say that no author before Shakespeare, except Chaucer, has presented characters in such a life like and realistic manner. Even no knowledge of psychology had been there to give him theoretical hints for his character portrayal and so he acquired his knowledge of human nature from his personnel observation.

Central characters in this play can be divided by their devotion to either passion or reason. It is Personal characteristics that inform their actions. Caesar is a man who applies his rationality and reason in every work. He's constantly planning and scheming and doesn't like to lose control through drinking too much He decries Antony's decadent lifestyle. Cleopatra, by contrast, likes to wear nice things, drink nice wine, and lounge around in bed a lot. She is completely tempestuous in her feelings too, sometimes fawning over Antony, and sometimes scorning him. Caesar, however, is pretty consistent in his hatred and resentment of Antony. Antony represents a bridge between these two paths of reason and passion, or more accurately, he's an emblem of the struggle between them. His passion keeps him in Egypt, while his reason calls him to the politics of Rome. Sometimes he is valiant like a Roman, and sometimes decadent like an Egyptian. When one falls on this continental divide, it is a big deal for figuring out what type of character one has. Antony doesn't belong to either side because of it he suffers a lot of self-doubt and can't judge, if he's living his life well? It seems that it's this uncertainty or inability to honor both passion and reason that ultimately defeats him.

In this way we can say that Shakespeare has given these historical characters a new dimension and brought them nearer to general audience of his time who were earlier oblivious of these historical characters.

3.4. CHARACTER ANALYSIS

In this section we will analyze the major characters of the play *Antony and Cleopatra*. It will focus on their personalities, relationships and roles in the play. Let us begin with the protagonist Mark Antony.

3.4.1. Mark Antony

Antony is a great Roman general who is adored by his countrymen. He is a middle-aged man. He is far less single-minded than Octavius Caesar. In Plutarch work *Parallel Lives* Antony's love for Cleopatra is the cause of his doom, and Shakespeare shares this view, but the play also shows their love as a kind of triumph, so beautiful and wonderful on its own terms.

In all the tragedies of Shakespeare we can see that the main character or the hero of the play has certain moral values. Because of these values the hero rules the hearts of all people. However, these heroes also have some drawback, some weakness in their character, the tragic flaw, due to which they are ruined. We can see that Antony's love towards Cleopatra proved a great mistake for him. This love towards Cleopatra is unlawful, lustful, adulterous and not sanctioned by society. Antony's understanding of himself, however, cannot bear the stress of such tension. In his mind, he is first and foremost a Roman hero. He won his position, as one of the three leaders of Rome by vanquishing the treacherous Brutus and Cassius, who conspired to assassinate his predecessor, Julius Caesar. He often recalls the golden days of his own heroism, but now that he is entangled in an affair with the Egyptian queen, his memories do little more than demonstrate how far he has strayed from his ideal self.

Antony himself points out to Octavia in Act III, Scene iv, that his actions in recent past had been destroying his honor, and without honor, which is the most defining characteristic of a Roman hero, he could no longer be Antony, the great Roman general.

If I lose my honor,
I lose myself: Better I were not yours
Than yours so branchless

Throughout the play, Antony grapples with the conflict between his love for Cleopatra and his duties to the Roman Empire. In Act I, scene i, he is engaged with Cleopatra in a conversation about the nature and depth of his love towards her. His love is so intense and true that he has even dismissed all his duties towards Rome in her love.

Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the ranged empire fall

But sometimes Antony finds himself torn between the Rome of his duty and the Alexandria of his pleasure. The geographical poles that draw him in opposite directions represent deep-seated conflicts between his reason and emotion, his sense of duty and his desire, his obligations to the state and his private needs.

In the very next scene, however, Antony is so much worried, that he is not able to overcome from the infatuation towards Cleopatra and says;

These strong Egyptian fetters must break

Or lose himself in dotage.

He was aware that the death of his wife had also made his situation critical. Had she been alive, then he would have been able to break off this spell of Cleopatra. Her absence had made his condition worst. Of his wife's death he exclaims:

There's a great spirit gone! Thus did I desire it:
What our contempt doth often hurl from us,
We wish it ours again; the present pleasure,
By revolution lowering, does become
The opposite of itself: she's good, being gone;
The hand could pluck her back that shoved her on.
I must from this enchanting queen break off. (1. ii. 126.)

Although there were a lot of errors in his judgments but still he had a noble mind and a noble heart. He was in reality a true man and this quality is noticeable in the entire play. He listened to Enobarbus' comments very seriously without showing any contempt and never scolded him for taunts. For instance, when Enobarbus satirizes Cleopatra in the following words,

I have seen her die twenty times,
Upon far poorer moments:
I do think there is mettle in death,
Which commits some loving act upon her
She hath such clarity in dying.

We can also see his greatness when he was defeated in the battle by Caesar. At that time also he wanted to do something for his men though he himself was in desperate need. He asked his men to take away the gold left in his ship and shift to the secure and safe place.

I have ship
Laden with gold, take that divide it; fly
And make your peace with Caesar.

They can also make peace with Caesar and go towards his side. When he came to know that Enobarbus has also left, he did not blame anyone, instead asked his soldiers to go and give his blessings and gifts to him. This gesture of Antony shows his large heartedness.

Later, having suffered defeat at the hands of both Caesar and Cleopatra, Antony returns to the imagery of the stripped tree as he laments,

[T]his pine is barked
That overtopped them all.

Rather than amending his identity to accommodate these defeats, Antony chooses to take his own life, an act that restores him to his brave and indomitable former self. The wound he was inflicted with, were not at once fatal. He lives long enough to comfort his followers in the heroic words:

Nay, good my fellows, do not please sharp fate
To grace it with your sorrows: bid that welcome
Which comes to punish us, and we punish it
Seeming to bear it lightly. Take me up:
I have led you oft: carry me now, good friends,
And have my thanks for all.

In suicide, Antony manages to convince himself and the world that he is “a Roman by a Roman/ Valiantly vanquished. Now my spirit is going; I can no more”

Shakespeare has succeeded in arousing pity for Antony through his art of characterization and in doing so he did not hide his faults but rather presented it in front of the audience so that the audiences too have their view.

He has heard the truth about Cleopatra, and only importunes death that he may snatch that one last interview sacred to his love of her, his care for her, and to that serene, lefty dignity which now he has attained. The world seems a blank when this full life is out; and looking at the race that is left, we feel inclined to echo Cleopatra's words above the corpse:

O, wither'd is the garland of the war,
The soldier's pole is fall'n: young boys and girls
Are level now with men; the odds is gone,
And there is nothing left remarkable
Beneath the visiting moon.

3.4.2. Cleopatra

Cleopatra was the middle-aged Queen of Egypt. She was the last of the Greek dynasty that began its rule over Egypt, centuries before, with Ptolemy. (Ptolemy was a general under Alexander the Great. He inherited the Egyptian part of Alexander's empire after Alexander's death.) Cleopatra is one of Shakespeare's most accomplished creations, an intriguing woman who wraps great men around her finger. She is possessive, commanding, and dramatic. She is complicated and fickle.

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Cleopatra features as Antony's lover. She has had many suitors in the past, including the great Julius Caesar. Her own emotions are of supreme importance to her, and she has a violent temper. Her personal charisma far exceeds her talents as a strategist, and her interference partly causes Antony's defeat. In the end of the play, she commits her “final” suicide because after defeat she does not want to be paraded through the streets as Caesar's trophy. The assortment of perspectives from which we see Cleopatra illustrates the varying understandings of her as a decadent foreign woman and a noble ruler. As Philo and Demetrius take the stage in Act I, scene i, their complaints about Antony's neglected duties frame the audience understanding of Cleopatra, the queen for whom Antony risks his reputation. Within the first ten lines of the play, the men declare Cleopatra a lustful “gipsy,” a description that is repeated throughout the play as though by a chorus. Cleopatra is labeled a “wrangling queen”, a “slave”, an “Egyptian dish”, and a “whore”; she is called “Salt Cleopatra” and an enchantress who has made Antony “the noble ruin of her magic”.

But to view Cleopatra as such is to reduce her character to the rather narrow perspective of the Romans, who, standing to lose their honor or kingdoms through her agency, are most threatened by her. Certainly this threat has much to do with Cleopatra's beauty and open sexuality, which, as Enobarbus points out in his famous description of her in Act II, scene ii, is awe-inspiring.

The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Burned on the water; the poop was beaten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
The winds were love sick with them; ...

Indeed, when Cleopatra takes the stage, she does so as an actress, elevating her passion, grief, and outrage to the most dramatic and captivating level. As Enobarbus says, the queen did not walk through the street, but rather

Hop forty paces through the public street
And having lost her breath, she spoke and panted,
That she did make defect perfection,
And breathless, pour breath forth.

Whether whispering sweet words of love to Antony or railing at a supposedly disloyal servant, Cleopatra leaves her onlookers breathless. As Antony notes, she is a woman whom everything becomes—to chide, to laugh / To weep.

It is this ability to be the perfect embodiment of all things—beauty and ugliness, virtue and vice—that Cleopatra stands to lose after her defeat by Caesar. By parading her through the streets of Rome as his trophy, he intends to reduce her character to a single, base element—to immortalize her as a whore. If Antony cannot allow his conception of self to expand to incorporate his defeats, then Cleopatra cannot allow hers to be stripped to the image of a boy actor; “squeaking Cleopatra . . . / I’t’h’ posture of a whore”.

We can say that Shakespeare has shown profound judgment and feeling in following closely to the classical masters. The magical play of fancy and the overpowering fascination of the character are kept up to the last: and when Cleopatra, on applying the asp, asks her maids to keep silence she says,

Peace! Peace I
Dost thou not see my baby at my breast.
That sucks the nurse to sleep?

These few words—the contrast between the tender beauty image and the horror of the situation—produce an effect more intensely mournful than the entire thing in the world. The generous devotion of her adds the moral charm which alone was wanting: and when Caesar hears this news he hurries in to save his victim, and exclaims, when gazing on her,

She looks like sleep-
As she would catch another Antony
in her strong toil of grace,

The image of her beauty and her irresistible arts, triumphant even in death, is at once brought before us, and one masterly and comprehensive stroke consummates this most wonderful, most dazzling delineation. Cleopatra often behaves childishly and with relentless self-absorption; nevertheless, her charisma, strength, and indomitable will make her one of Shakespeare’s strongest, most awe-inspiring female characters.

3.4.3. Domitius Enobarbus

Domitius Enobarbus was the most trusted friend and supporter of Antony. Enobarbus was a cynical observer of the events of the play, disapproving of Antony often but always speaking from a complex and sophisticated perspective. His sense of irony runs deep, and he is completely outspoken until his master begins to lose self-control. His penetrating insights make him one of the play’s most memorable characters. After he has betrayed Antony, Enobarbus’ keen insight is turned on himself, and he dies of grief.

We can say that Enobarbus played the role of the chorus in Antony and Cleopatra. Generally there is no chorus in Shakespeare's plays but it helps dramatist in a variety of ways. So Shakespeare solves this problem by introducing him in the play.

But we can't call him entirely a chorus as he has some other functions to perform as well. He comments on the action of the play. Comments that he makes are objective, ironic, blunt and cynical. Enobarbus has immense presence of mind and he acts always according to situation. But whenever he comments he always keeps in mind his master's honor. For example, when Lepidus entreats him to ask Antony to be soft and gentle in speech while dealing with Caesar he says:

I shall entreat him
To answer like himself; if Caesar move him,
Let Antony look over Caesar's head
And speak as loud as Mars by Jupiter
Were I the wearer of Antonio's beard
I would not save it today

3.4.4. Octavius Caesar

Octavius was the grandson and the adoptive son of Julius Caesar. He was one of the triumvirs, the other two being Lepidus and Mark Antony. Octavius began his career with little — except the name of his grand-uncle Julius Caesar, his father by adoption, and he naturally wanted more — all that was possible. Having been named heir in Caesar's will, Octavius comes to Rome to claim his fortune.

Nothing exists for young Caesar except the single goal of acquiring and maintaining power. As such, he is the antithesis of Antony, who becomes involved in a love affair that ultimately outweighs his own quest for mastery of the world. Because of the limited range of Octavius's vision and interests, he often appears cold and calculating, and many of his actions are indeed calculated ones. In betrothing his beloved sister to Antony, his long-time rival, he shows that he is capable of placing political expediency above family loyalty. Conversely, when Antony abandons Octavia, Octavius acts like the outraged brother who wishes to avenge his sister's honor. While his pride is understandably piqued, his anger also hints of opportunism, for here is the perfect pretext for attacking his rival.

Octavius struggles for supremacy within the Triumvirate, but interestingly, his contest is only with Antony, for neither he nor Antony considers Lepidus an equal. Throughout the drama, neither Antony nor Octavius trusts the other. Nor does Octavius's sister, Octavia, wholly trust Antony. She is well aware of his greater experience in battle and statesmanship, as well as his popularity with his soldiers and with the public, compared to her brother's inexperience. Quite naturally, Octavius is insecure about his ability to succeed in an arena where Antony has been active for close to twenty years. But he gains confidence as he observes Antony's dissipated life in Egypt, and he takes advantage of every situation he can.

Octavius has few devoted friends, and Shakespeare seemingly uses him to illustrate the lot of the ruler who must sacrifice everything to stay in power. He trusts no one, and he fears to let himself be close to few, if any, of his men. His treatment of Lepidus is one example of how he can cast aside presumed friends in order to achieve even more power. It is possible, of course, that Antony might have treated Lepidus unfairly, but in fact, it was Octavius who imprisoned the third member of the Triumvirate and confiscated his lands. Octavius, at times, seems almost without principle. For example, one of Octavius's closest friends, his officer Dolabella, surreptitiously helps Cleopatra by warning her that Octavius plans to take her to Rome in disgrace if she is captured. Cleopatra is thus able to thwart Octavius's devious schemes. She takes

her own life and thus deprives him of parading her through the streets of Rome in disgrace — all for the glory of Octavius, the conqueror. Basically, then, we can say that Octavius symbolizes the world of power, politics, and war. The Rome of this play is the Rome of the waning Republic. It is a masculine, taciturn, and seemingly pleasure less place: fittingly, it is the seat of Octavius's realm.

While Octavius's character often seems pale in comparison with Shakespeare's portraits of Antony and Cleopatra, he is vital to the play, for he functions both as Antony's antagonist and as his foil. Without the dour young Octavius as a rival and as a contrast, Antony's virtues, as well as his faults, would not be so vividly apparent for the audience— or for Cleopatra, for that matter.

3.4.5. Other Minor Characters

Lepidus

Lepidus is a member of the second Roman triumvirate, along with Octavius Caesar and Antony. He is arguably the weakest of the trio, mostly because he has a conciliatory nature and always tries to make everyone friends. In actuality, he is blind to everyone's passion and treachery. Lepidus has an earnest innocence, and does not play much of a role in the affairs of the other triumvirs, who have bigger stakes in winning battles than avoiding them.

Lepidus is most notable for his absences – he has a mere two lines in the negotiations with Pompey, and on Pompey's barge he inquires with childlike wonder about the animals of Egypt, rather than getting caught up in the political discourse of the other men. Lepidus disappears during the more serious conversations, and actually gets so drunk that he has to be carried off to bed. Lepidus is something of a laughingstock – even his inferiors Enobarbus and Agrippa make a mockery of him. The men criticize Lepidus's fawning over Antony and Caesar, and agree that he's like the beetle caught between two wings. This jibe fittingly describes Lepidus's fate. Though we do not see him again, we know he is torn between the two men he thinks are his friends and ends up losing his position, and freedom, because of his naïveté.

Lepidus, like Pompey, seems to be a generally good guy who suffers at the hands of the passionate and treacherous men that surround him. However, unlike Pompey (who is restrained by his honor), Lepidus suffers from being naïve and innocent – a little lamb in a pack of political wolves. He earnestly believes the others have the common good in mind, whereas they're really thinking of their own personal good. Thus, Lepidus's own personal goodness becomes lethal, when combined with his inability to see the true natures of those around him.

Sextus Pompeius

Sextus Pompeius (Pompey): Son of Pompey the Great, he is at the beginning the greatest enemy of Caesar and Antony; however, he becomes their ally, and then is defeated by Caesar and Lepidus, and murdered by an officer. Antony had hoped to use him as an ally in the fight against Caesar, so he is therefore very upset with the officer that killed him.

Ventidius

A gifted officer of Antony, blessed also with political savvy. When victorious against Rome's formidable enemy, the Parthian Empire, Ventidius is careful not to capitalize too well on his victories, as too much success for an officer can lead to a superior's fear, envy, and suspicion. Although not at all integral to the central story of the play, Ventidius' scene (3.1) speaks volumes about the volatile politics of the Roman military.

Eros

A follower of Antony; stays with him until the very end, when Antony asks him to kill him; Eros cannot bear the thought, so he instead kills himself.

Scarus

He was a brave soldier and a faithful companion of Antony.

Decretas

He was a friend of Antony. After Antony's suicide, Decretas brings Antony's bloody sword to Caesar.

Demetrius& Philo

They are friends of Antony. At the beginning of the play, they speak disapprovingly of Antony's affair with Cleopatra.

Canidius

He was the Lieutenant general in Antony's army. After Antony's shocking desertion of his own men at Actium, Canidius defects to Caesar's camp.

Maecenas

He was a follower of Caesar and wants Caesar to reconcile with Antony.

Agrippa

He was a friend to Caesar. He encourages the marriage between Antony and Octavia.

Dolabella

He was a friend to Caesar. He guards the captured Cleopatra, and helps her to preserve her honor.

Proculeius

He was a friend to Caesar. Antony warns Cleopatra to trust none in Caesar's camp but Proculeius, but in the end Dolabella proves her greatest friend.

Thidias

Thisias was sent as a messenger from Caesar to Cleopatra, to promise her anything so that she will give herself up. Antony catches word that Cleopatra has responded well to his offer, and comes in to see Thidias kissing Cleopatra's hand. Antony flies into a rage and has Thidias whipped.

Menas

He was one of Pompey's men. When Pompey entertains the triumvirate as guests aboard his barge, Menas asks if he should murder the three men and make Pompey the world's master.

Mardian

Mardian was an Attendant on Cleopatra and a eunuch. He brings Antony the false news that Cleopatra is dead.

Seleucus

Cleopatra's treasurer; he betrays her when she bids him tell Caesar that she has kept no treasure for herself.

Diomedes

He was an attendant on Cleopatra. He brings news to Antony that Cleopatra is still living.

A Soothsayer

He predicts many things, although some of his predictions are masked. He tells Charmian that she will outlive her mistress, which she does, but only by a few moments. He warns Antony that whenever Antony contests with Octavius, he will lose.

A Clown

He delivers the asp that kills Cleopatra.

Charmian

Attendant on Cleopatra. This devoted lady in waiting follows her mistress even unto death. Her memorable last words are taken directly from Plutarch

Iras

She was an Attendant on Cleopatra. Saucy and high-spirited, she also proves loyal enough to join her mistress in suicide.

3.5. SUMMARY

In this unit you read about Shakespeare's art of characterization. You saw how Shakespeare's main interest lay in character development. His treatment of characters was such that he gave life to even the flattest character that he took from history. Furthermore, you analyzed for yourself some of the important characters of the play. Through a character analysis of these characters, you learned about their personalities, relationships and roles in the play.

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3.7. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Antony as a tragic hero?
2. Write a note on the role played by Enobarbus in the play.
3. Discuss Cleopatra as a tragic queen?

- 4.1. Introduction
- 4.2. Objectives
- 4.3. Shakespeare at a Glance
 - 4.3.1. Early Years
 - 4.3.2. Arrival at London and Shakespeare's Theatrical Career
 - 4.3.3. As an Actor and Playwright
 - 4.3.4. His Last Years
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4.1. INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare English playwright, poet and a professional man of theater, is regarded as the greatest dramatist in the history of English literature. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon." Shakespeare had a profound understanding of human nature and human behavior, and was able to communicate this knowledge through the wide variety of characters he created in his plays. Elizabethan tragedy and comedy alike reached their true flowering in Shakespeare's works. Beyond his art, his rich style, and his complex plots, all of which surpass by far the work of other Elizabethan dramatists in the same field, and beyond his unrivaled projection of character, Shakespeare's compassionate understanding of the human lot has perpetuated his greatness and made him the most representative figure of English literature.

4.2. OBJECTIVES

After going through the unit you will be able to:

- Get familiar with the Shakespeare life and his work.
- Examine Shakespeare's use of language, stage craft and character.
- Evaluate Shakespeare as a great dramatist of the Elizabethan age.
- Develop an understanding of *The Tempest* which is considered to be one of the finest plays by Shakespeare.

4.3. SHAKESPEARE AT A GLANCE

Shakespeare composed his plays during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, who ruled England from 1558 to 1603, and during the early part of the reign of her closest relative, James VI of Scotland, who took England's throne as James I after Elizabeth's death in 1603. During this period England saw an outpouring of poetry and drama, led by Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, and Christopher Marlowe, that remains unsurpassed in English literary history.

4.3.1. Early Years

William Shakespeare was the son of John Shakespeare, a successful glover and alderman originally from Snitterfield, and Mary Arden, the daughter of an affluent landowning farmer. He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon and baptized on 26 April 1564. His actual birthdate is unknown, but is traditionally observed on 23 April, St George's Day. This date, which can be traced back to an eighteenth-century scholar's mistake, has proved appealing because Shakespeare died on 23 April 1616. He was the third child of eight and the eldest surviving son.

Although no attendance records for the period survive, most biographers agree that Shakespeare was educated at the King's New School in Stratford, a free school chartered in 1553, about a quarter of a mile from his home. Grammar schools varied in quality during the Elizabethan era, but the curriculum was dictated by law throughout England, and the school would have provided an intensive education in Latin grammar and the classics.

At the age of 18, Shakespeare married the 26-year-old Anne Hathaway. Six months after the marriage, she gave birth to a daughter, Susanna, who was baptized on 26 May 1583. Twins, son Hamnet and daughter Judith, followed almost two years later and were baptized on 2 February 1585. Hamnet died of unknown causes at the age of 11 and was buried on 11 August 1596.

After the birth of the twins, there are few historical traces of Shakespeare until he is mentioned as part of the London theatre scene in 1592. Because of this gap, scholars refer to the years between 1585 and 1592 as Shakespeare's "lost years". Biographers attempting to account for this period have reported many apocryphal stories. Nicholas Rowe, Shakespeare's first biographer, recounted a Stratford legend that Shakespeare fled the town for London to escape prosecution for deer poaching. Another eighteenth-century story has Shakespeare starting his theatrical career minding the horses of theatre patrons in London. John Aubrey reported that Shakespeare had been a country schoolmaster.

4.3.2. Arrival at London and Shakespeare's Theatrical Career

It is not known exactly when Shakespeare began writing, but contemporary allusions and records of performances show that several of his plays were on the London stage by 1592. He was well enough known in London by then to be attacked in print by the playwright Robert Greene:

"...there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tiger's heart wrapped in a Player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and being an absolute Johannes factotum, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country."

Scholars differ on the exact meaning of these words, but most agree that Greene is accusing Shakespeare of reaching above his rank in trying to match the university-educated writers, such as Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Nashe and Greene himself. The phrase parodying the line "Oh, tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide" from Shakespeare's *Henry VI*, part 3, along with the pun "Shake-scene", identifies Shakespeare as Greene's target.

Greene's attack is the first recorded mention of Shakespeare's career in the theatre. Biographers suggest that his career may have begun any time from the mid-1580s to just before Greene's remarks. From 1594, Shakespeare's plays were performed only by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, a company owned by a group of players, including Shakespeare that soon became the leading playing company in London. After the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603, the company was awarded a royal patent by the new king, James I, and changed its name to the King's Men.

In 1599, a partnership of company members built their own theatre on the south bank of the Thames, which they called the Globe. In 1608, the partnership also took over the Blackfriars indoor theatre. Records of Shakespeare's property purchases and investments indicate that the company made him a wealthy man. In 1597, he bought the second-largest house in Stratford, New Place, and in 1605, he invested in a share of the parish tithes in Stratford.

Some of Shakespeare's plays were published in quarto editions from 1594. By 1598, his name had become a selling point and began to appear on the title pages. Shakespeare continued to act in his own and other plays after his success as a playwright. The 1616 edition of Ben Jonson's *Works* names him on the cast lists for *Every Man in His Humour* (1598) and *Sejanus, His Fall* (1603). The absence of his name from the 1605 cast list for Jonson's *Volpone* is taken by some scholars as a sign that his acting career was nearing its end. The First Folio of 1623, however, lists Shakespeare as one of "the Principal Actors in all these Plays", some of which were first staged after *Volpone*, although we cannot know for certain what roles he played. In 1610, John Davies of Hereford wrote that "good Will" played "kingly" roles. In 1709, Rowe passed down a tradition that Shakespeare played the ghost of Hamlet's father. Later traditions maintain that he also played Adam in *As You Like It* and the Chorus in *Henry V*, though scholars doubt the sources of the information.

Shakespeare's poetry rather than his plays reached print first: *Venus and Adonis* in 1593 and *The Rape of Lucrece* in 1594. These two fashionably erotic narrative poems were probably written to earn money as the theaters were closed from the summer of 1592 to the spring of 1594 because of plague, and Shakespeare's normal source of income was thus denied him. Even so, the two poems, along with the Sonnets, established Shakespeare's reputation as a gifted and popular poet. Shakespeare dedicated the two poems to Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton. Scholars disagree on whether the dedications are evidence of a close relationship between Shakespeare and Southampton. Literary dedications were designed to gain financial support from wealthy men interested in fostering the arts, and it is probable that Southampton rewarded Shakespeare for his two poems. Both poems became best-sellers—*The Rape of Lucrece* appearing in eight editions by 1632, *Venus and Adonis* in a remarkable 16 editions by 1636—and both were widely quoted and often imitated.

The Sonnets were not published until 1609, but as early as 1598, a contemporary, Francis Meres, praised Shakespeare as a "mellifluous and honey-tongued" poet equal to the Roman Ovid, praising in particular his "sugared sonnets" that were circulating "among his private friends." The 154 sonnets describe the devotion of a character, often identified as the poet himself, to a young man whose beauty and virtue he praises and to a mysterious and faithless dark lady with whom the poet is infatuated. The sonnets are prized for their exploration of love in all its aspects. Sonnet 18, which begins "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day," ranks among the most famous love poems of all time.

4.3.3. Actor and Playwright

Shakespeare's reputation today is, however, based primarily on the 38 plays that he wrote, modified, or collaborated on. Records of Shakespeare's plays begin to appear in 1594, when the theaters reopened with the passing of the plague that had closed them for 21 months. In December of 1594 his play *The Comedy of Errors* was performed in London during the Christmas revels at Gray's Inn, one of the London law schools. In March of the following year he received payment for two plays that had been performed during the Christmas holidays at the court of Queen Elizabeth I by his theatrical company, known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men. The receipt for payment, which he signed along with two fellow actors, reveals that he had by this time achieved a prominent place in the company. He was already probably a so-called sharer, a position entitling him to a percentage of the company's profits rather than merely a salary as an actor and a playwright. In time the profits of this company and its two theaters, the Globe Theatre, which opened in 1599, and the Blackfriars, which the company took over in 1608, enabled Shakespeare to become a wealthy man.

Shakespeare wrote nearly all of his plays from 1590 to 1611, when he retired to New Place. A series of history plays and joyful comedies appeared throughout the 1590s, ending with *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. At the same time as he was writing comedy, he also wrote nine history plays, treating the reigns of England's medieval kings and exploring realities of power still relevant today. The great tragedies—including *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*—were written during the first decade of the 1600s. All focus on a basically decent individual who brings about his own downfall through a tragic flaw. Scholars have theorized about the reasons behind this change in Shakespeare's vision, and the switch from a focus on social aspects of human activity to the rending experience of the individual. But no one knows whether events in his own life or changes in England's circumstances triggered the shift, or whether it was just an aesthetic decision. Shakespeare's only son, Hamnet, had died in 1596 at the age of 11, his father died in 1601, and England's popular monarch, Elizabeth I, died in 1603, so it is not unreasonable to think that the change in Shakespeare's genre and tone reflects some change in his own view of life prompted by these events. In his last years working as a playwright, however, Shakespeare wrote a number of plays that are often called

romances or tragicomedies, plays in which the tragic facts of human existence are fully acknowledged but where reassuring patterns of reconciliation and harmony can be seen finally to shape the action.

Shakespeare's plays were performed at the courts of Queen Elizabeth I and King James I more frequently than those of any other dramatist of that time. Shakespeare risked losing royal favor only once, in 1599, when his company performed "the play of the deposing and killing of King Richard II" at the request of a group of conspirators against Elizabeth. In the subsequent inquiry, Shakespeare's company was absolved of any knowing participation in the conspiracy. Although Shakespeare's plays enjoyed great popularity with the public, most people did not consider them literature. Plays were merely popular entertainments, not unlike the movies today.

4.3.4. Last Years

After about 1608, Shakespeare began to write fewer plays. For most of his working life he wrote at least two plays a year; by 1608 he had slowed usually to one a year, even though the acting company continued to enjoy great success. In 1608, the King's Men, as his company was called after King James took the throne, began to perform at Blackfriars, an indoor theater that charged higher prices and drew a more sophisticated audience than the outdoor Globe. An indoor theater presented possibilities in staging and scenery that the Globe did not permit, and these can be recognized in the late plays.

In 1613, a great fire destroyed the Globe Theatre during a performance of Henry VIII. Although the Globe was quickly rebuilt, Shakespeare's association with it—and probably with the company—had ended. Around the time of the fire, Shakespeare retired to Stratford, where he had established his family and become a prominent citizen. Shakespeare's daughter Susanna had married John Hall, a doctor with a thriving practice in Stratford, in 1607. His younger daughter, Judith, married a Stratford winemaker, Thomas Quiney, in 1616.

Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616—the month and day traditionally assigned to his birth—and was buried in Stratford's Holy Trinity Church. He had made his will the previous month, "in perfect health and memory." The cause of his death is not known, though a report from the Holy Trinity's vicar in the 1660s claims that he "died of a fever ... contracted after a night of drinking with Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton, friends and fellow writers."

Shakespeare left the bulk of his estate to his daughter Susanna and the sum of 300 pounds to his daughter Judith. The only specific provision for his wife was their "second-best bed with the furniture" although customary practice allowed a widow one-third of the estate. Shakespeare also left money for "the poor of Stratford," and remembered the three surviving original members of his acting company, Richard Burbage, John Heminges, and Henry Condell, with small grants to buy memorial rings.

Shakespeare's wife, Anne, died on August 6, 1623. She lived long enough to see a monument to her husband erected in Holy Trinity Church, but she died just before the publication of the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays, the more lasting monument to his memory. Soon after her death, Susanna and John Hall moved into New Place, where they lived until their deaths, his in 1635 and hers in 1649. Their daughter, Elizabeth Hall, died childless in 1670. Judith Quiney had three sons, but none lived long enough to produce heirs, and she died in 1662. Thus, by 1670, the line of Shakespeare's descendants had reached its end.

4.4. SHAKESPEARE'S PUBLICATION

Many of his plays were published in editions of varying quality and accuracy during his lifetime. In 1623, two friends and fellow actors of Shakespeare, Heminges and Condell—collected 36 of his plays, 18 of them never before printed, and published them in a handsome folio edition, a large book with individual pages formed by folding sheets of paper once. This edition, known as the First Folio, appeared in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death. It was prefaced with a poem by Ben Jonson, in which Shakespeare is hailed, presciently, as "not of an age, but for all time."

The First Folio divided Shakespeare's plays into three categories: comedies, histories, and tragedies. In this section we will discuss Shakespeare's drama according to the first folio.

4.4.1. Comedies

Shakespeare's comedies celebrate human social life even as they expose human folly. By means that are sometimes humiliating, even painful, characters learn greater wisdom and emerge with a clearer view of reality. Some of his early comedies can be regarded as light farces in that their humor depends mainly upon complications of plot, minor foibles of the characters, and elements of physical comedy such as slapstick. The so-called joyous comedies follow the early comedies and culminate in *As You Like It*. Written about 1600, this comedy strikes a perfect balance between the worlds of the city and the country, verbal wit and physical comedy, and realism and fantasy.

After 1600, Shakespeare's comedies take on a darker tone, as Shakespeare uses the comic form to explore less changeable aspects of human behavior. *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure* test the ability of comedy to deal with the unsettling realities of human desire, and these plays, therefore, have usually been thought of as "problem comedies," or, at very least, as evidence that comedy in its tendency toward wish fulfillment is a problem.

4.4.2. The History Plays

History plays, sometimes known as chronicle plays (after the "chronicles" from which the plots were taken), were a highly popular form of drama in Shakespeare's time. By 1623, every English monarch from William the Conqueror to Elizabeth I had been represented in a play, as the English past served as an important repository of plots for the dramatists of the burgeoning theater industry of Elizabethan England. The plays not only offered entertainment but also served many people as an important source of information about the nation's past. In 1612 English dramatist Thomas Heywood claimed that such plays "instructed such as cannot read in the discovery of all our English Chronicles."

Shakespeare wrote ten plays listed in the 1623 Folio as histories and differentiated from the other categories, comedies and tragedies, by their common origin in English history. Eight of Shakespeare's history plays re-create the period in English history from 1399, when King Henry IV took the throne after deposing King Richard II, to the defeat of Richard III in battle in 1485. Henry IV was the first English king from the house of Lancaster. The history plays cover the conflict between the houses of Lancaster and York, known as the Wars of the Roses, from 1455 to 1485. The final event is the victory of Henry VII over Richard III in 1485, ending the rule of the York dynasty and beginning the Tudor dynasty. The eight plays devoted to this period, listed in the chronological order of the kings with the dates of their composition in parentheses, are Richard II (1597?); Henry IV, Parts I and II (1597?); Henry V (1598?); Henry VI, Parts I, II, and III (1590-1592?); and Richard III (1592-1593?). As their dates

indicate, Shakespeare did not write the plays in chronological order. He wrote the second half of the story first and only later returned to the events that initiated the political problems.

The two remaining Shakespeare history plays are *King John* (1596?) and *Henry VIII* (1613?). *King John*, beginning soon after John's coronation in 1199, was seemingly reworked from an anonymous, older play on the same subject. It treats the English king's failed effort to resist the power of the Pope, a theme of obvious relevance in England after the Protestant Reformation. *Henry VIII*, probably co-written with English dramatist John Fletcher, is a loosely connected pageant of events in Henry's reign, ending with the prophecy of the birth of Elizabeth and her succession by King James.

Shakespeare's main sources for the events of the history plays were the *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1577; 2nd ed. 1586, which Shakespeare used) by Raphael Holinshed and Edward Hall's *Chronicle* (1542). Although Shakespeare took situations from these and a few other historical sources, he selected only such facts as suited his dramatic purposes. Sometimes he ignored chronology and telescoped the events of years to fit his own dramatic time scheme. Above all, he used the power of his imagination and language to mold vivid and memorable characters out of the historical figures he found in his sources.

The overall theme of the history plays is the importance of a stable political order, but also the heavy moral and emotional price that often must be paid for it. Shakespeare dramatized the great social upheaval that followed Henry IV's usurpation of the throne until the first Tudor king, Queen Elizabeth's grandfather, restored peace and stability. In addition to chronicling the often violent careers of England's great kings, Shakespeare's history plays explore the extreme pressures of public life, the moral conflicts that kings and queens uniquely face, and the potential tragedy of monarchy.

4.4.3. Tragedies

Shakespeare's tragedies are among the most powerful studies of human nature in all literature and appropriately stand as the greatest achievements of his dramatic artistry. Attention understandably has focused on his unforgettable tragic characters, such as Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth. Yet the plays also explore and extend the very nature of tragedy itself by discovering within it a structure that derives meaning precisely from its refusal to offer consolation or compensation for the suffering it traces.

4.4.4. Late Collaborations

Although *The Tempest* probably was Shakespeare's final solo creation, he is thought to have continued to work as a collaborator on several plays, including *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. The historical drama *Henry VIII*, also known as *All Is True*, was probably written about 1613 with English dramatist John Fletcher, and first published in the 1623 Folio. It dramatizes events from Henry's reign leading to the birth of the future Queen Elizabeth I, presenting an implied history of the Reformation in a series of scenes on the fall from greatness of some characters (the Duke of Buckingham, Catherine of Aragón, and Thomas Cardinal Wolsey) and the rise of others (Anne Boleyn and Thomas Cranmer). At the end of a performance at the Globe on June 29, 1613, the theater's thatched roof caught fire and the building burned to the ground.

The Two Noble Kinsmen, probably the last play Shakespeare wrote, was written jointly with John Fletcher about 1613. Both men's names appear on the first published edition in 1634. Scholars generally attribute to Shakespeare most of acts one and five and to Fletcher the bulk of the play's middle. The play tells of the competition of two friends, Palamon and Arcite, for

the love of one woman, Emilia. She is the sister of Hippolyta, who was queen of the Amazons and wife of the Greek hero Theseus. The story is taken from The Knight's Tale, part of Chaucer's influential 14th-century masterpiece *The Canterbury Tales*.

4.5. LITERARY QUALITIES OF THE PLAYS

Everyone loves a good story, and Shakespeare was one of the very best storytellers. Most of Shakespeare's stories have an almost universal appeal, an appeal often lacking in the plays of his contemporaries, who clung more closely to the tastes and interests of their own day. An even greater achievement is Shakespeare's creation of believable characters. His people are not the exaggerated types or allegorical abstractions found in many other Elizabethan plays. They are instead men and women with the mingled qualities and many of the inconsistencies of life itself. The very richness of Shakespeare's language continues to delight, and it is always amazing to be reminded how many common words and phrases have their origin in Shakespeare's art. His poetic and theatrical artistry has created plays that continue to attract readers and theatergoers, and he properly remains one of our own age's most popular playwrights.

4.5.1. Shakespeare's Characters

Shakespeare's characters emerge in his plays as distinctive human beings. Although some of the characters display elements of conventional dramatic types such as the melancholy man, the braggart soldier, the pedant, and the young lover, they are nevertheless usually individualized rather than caricatures or exaggerated types. Falstaff, for example, bears some resemblance to the braggart soldiers of 16th-century Italian comedy and to representations of the character Vice in medieval morality plays, but his vitality and inexhaustible wit make him unique. Hamlet, one of the most complex characters in all literature, is partly a picture of the ideal Renaissance man, and he also exhibits traits of the conventional melancholic character. However, his personality as a whole transcends these types, and he is so real that commentators have continued for centuries to explore his fascinating mind.

The women in Shakespeare's plays are vivid creations, each differing from the others. It is important to remember that in Shakespeare's time boy actors played the female parts. Actresses did not appear in a Shakespeare play until after the restoration of Charles II to the English throne in 1660 and the introduction of French practices such as women actors. It says much about the talent of the boy actors of his own day that Shakespeare could create such a rich array of fascinating women characters. Shakespeare was fond of portraying aggressive, witty heroines, such as Kate of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Rosaline of *Love's Labour's Lost*, and Beatrice of *Much Ado About Nothing*. However, he was equally adept at creating gentle and innocent women, such as Ophelia in *Hamlet*, Desdemona in *Othello*, and Cordelia in *King Lear*. His female characters also include the treacherous Goneril and Regan in *King Lear*, the iron-willed Lady Macbeth, and the witty and resourceful Portia in *Merchant of Venice*, the tender and loyal Juliet, and the alluring Cleopatra.

Shakespeare's comic figures are also highly varied. They include bumbling rustics such as Dogberry and Verges in *Much Ado About Nothing*, tireless punsters like the Dromios in *The Comedy of Errors*, pompous grotesques like Don Armado in *Love's Labour's Lost*, elegant wits like Feste in *Twelfth Night*, cynical realists like Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida*, and fools who utter nonsense that often conceals wisdom, such as Touchstone in *As You Like It* and the Fool in *King Lear*.

Shakespeare drew his characters with remarkable insight into human character. Even the wicked characters, such as Iago in *Othello*, have human traits that can elicit understanding if

not compassion. Thus, Macbeth's violent end arouses pity and awe rather than scornful triumph at a criminal's just punishment for his deeds. The characters achieve uniqueness through their brilliantly individualized styles of speech. Shakespeare understands of the human soul and his mastery of language enabled him to write dialogue that makes the characters in his plays always intelligible, vital, and memorable.

4.5.2. Shakespeare's Attitudes

Shakespeare's philosophy of life can only be deduced from the ideas and attitudes that appear frequently in his writings, and he remained always a dramatist, not a writer of philosophical or ethical tracts. Nonetheless, the tolerance of human weakness evident in the plays tends to indicate that Shakespeare was a broad-minded person with generous and balanced views. Although he never lectured his audience, sound morality is implicit in his themes and in the way he handled his material. He attached less importance to noble birth than to an individual's noble relations with other people. Despite the bawdiness of Shakespeare's language, which is characteristic of his period, he did not condone sexual license. He accepted people as they are, without condemning them, but he did not allow wickedness to triumph. The comments of Shakespeare's contemporaries suggest that he himself possessed both integrity and gentle manners.

It should be remembered that even though Shakespeare was a poet "for all time," as his friend Ben Jonson said, he nevertheless was necessarily a product of his own era and shared many beliefs of the time. These beliefs are different from our own, and some of them may now seem strange and even unenlightened. Although Shakespeare anticipated many modern ideas and values, in other ways he does not rise above the ideas and values of his own time. As the history plays indicate, he accepted the idea of monarchy and had little interest in, or even concept of, participatory democracy. Although many of his women characters are assertive and independent, the plays still have them subordinate their energy to the logic of the male-dominated household. It is also likely that Shakespeare believed in ghosts and witches, as did many people of his time, including King James I.

4.5.3. Shakespeare's Stagecraft

Shakespeare brilliantly exploited the resources of the theaters he worked in. The Globe Theatre held an audience of 2,000 to 3,000 people. Like other outdoor theaters, it had a covered, raised stage thrusting out into the audience. The audience stood around the three sides of the stage in an unroofed area called the pit. Covered galleries, where people paid more money to sit, rose beyond the pit. Performances took place only during daylight hours, and there was little use of lighting. Few props were used, and little scenery. Costumes, however, were elaborate. Language created the scene, as in this passage from *The Merchant of Venice*:

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here we will sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears: stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patens of bright gold.
Act V, Scene 1

4.5.4. Shakespeare's Language and Writing Style

William Shakespeare's early plays were written in the conventional style of the day, with elaborate metaphors and rhetorical phrases that didn't always align naturally with the story's plot or characters. However, Shakespeare was very innovative, adapting the traditional style to

his own purposes and creating a freer flow of words. With only small degrees of variation, Shakespeare primarily used a metrical pattern consisting of lines of unrhymed iambic pentameter, or blank verse, to compose his plays. At the same time, there are passages in all the plays that deviate from this and use forms of poetry or simple prose

In Shakespeare's time English was a more flexible language than it is today. Grammar and spelling were not yet completely formalized, although scholars were beginning to urge rules to regulate them. English had begun to emerge as a significant literary language, having recently replaced Latin as the language of serious intellectual and artistic activity in England. Freed of many of the conventions and rules of modern English, Shakespeare could shape vocabulary and syntax to the demands of style. For example, he could interchange the various parts of speech, using nouns as adjectives or verbs, adjectives as adverbs, and pronouns as nouns. Such freedom gave his language an extraordinary plasticity, which enabled him to create the large number of unique and memorable characters he has left us. Shakespeare made each character singular by a distinctive and characteristic set of speech habits.

Just as important to Shakespeare's success as the suppleness of the English language was the rapid expansion of the language. New words were being coined and borrowed at an unprecedented rate in Shakespeare's time. Shakespeare himself had an unusually large vocabulary: about 23,000 different words appear in his plays and poetry, many of these words first appearing in print through his usage. During the Renaissance many new words enriched the English language, borrowed from Latin and from other European languages, and Shakespeare made full use of the new resources available to English. He also took advantage of the possibilities of his native tongue, especially the crispness and energy of the sounds of English that derives in large measure from the language's rich store of monosyllabic (one-syllable) words.

The main influences on Shakespeare's style were the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, the homilies (sermons) that were prescribed for reading in church, the rhetorical treatises that were studied in grammar school, and the proverbial lore of common speech. The result was that Shakespeare could draw on a stock of images and ideas that were familiar to most members of his audience. His knowledge of figures of speech and other devices enabled him to phrase his original thoughts concisely and forcefully. Clarity of expression and the use of ordinary diction partly account for the fact that many of Shakespeare's phrases have become proverbial in everyday speech, even among people who have never read the plays. It is also significant that the passages most often quoted are usually from plays written around 1600 and after, when his language became more subtle and complex. The phrases "my mind's eye," "the primrose path," and "sweets to the sweet" derive from *Hamlet*. Macbeth is the source of "the milk of human kindness" and "at one fell swoop." From *Julius Caesar* come the expressions "it was Greek to me," "ambition should be made of sterner stuff," and "the unkindest cut of all."

Shakespeare wrote many of his plays in blank verse—unrhymed poetry in iambic pentameter, a verse form in which unaccented and accented syllables alternate in lines of ten syllables. In Shakespeare's hand the verse form never becomes mechanical but is always subject to shifts of emphasis to clarify the meaning of a line and avoid the monotony of unbroken metrical regularity. Yet the five-beat pentameter line provides the norm against which the modifications are heard. Shakespeare sometimes used rhymed verse, particularly in his early plays. Rhymed couplets occur frequently at the end of a scene, punctuating the dramatic rhythm and perhaps serving as a cue to the offstage actors to enter for the next scene.

4.6. LITERARY REPUTATION

Shakespeare achieved his reputation as perhaps the greatest of all dramatists after his death. Although his contemporary Ben Jonson declared him “not of an age, but for all time,” early 17th-century taste found the plays of Jonson himself, or Thomas Middleton or Beaumont and Fletcher, equally worthy of praise. Shakespeare’s reputation began to eclipse that of his contemporaries some 150 years after his death. He was always popular but until the mid-18th century his reputation was not, as it would become, unrivaled. Although his works were regularly staged in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, theater companies hardly treated his plays with reverence. When they performed the plays, they most often used versions rewritten for the fashions of the age, “purged”—as their adaptors maintained—of their coarseness and absurdities. These alterations could be significant. In the version of *King Lear* that dominated the stage from 1681 until 1823, Lear and his daughter Cordelia are left alive at the end, transforming a tragedy into a tragicomedy (and reproducing what the historical source material suggests about their fates). While these adaptations seem odd to us today, it was this practice of adapting Shakespeare that kept his plays in the repertory while those of Jonson, Middleton, and others remained on the shelf.

Shakespeare began to assume the role of England’s national poet during the first half of the 18th century. This process reached its culmination with the installation of a memorial statue in Westminster Abbey in 1741 and the celebration of a festival in 1764 to commemorate the bicentenary of his birth. During the 19th century the Romantic Movement did much to shape both Shakespeare’s international reputation and the view of his achievement that has persisted ever since. Particularly important were the lectures on Shakespeare by English romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the writings of German romantic poet and dramatist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Romantic authors claimed Shakespeare as a great precursor of their own literary values. They celebrated his work as an embodiment of universal human truths and an unequalled articulation of the human condition in all its nobility and variety.

4.7. THE TEMPEST: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

The Tempest (1611), is a tragicomedy by William Shakespeare, and probably the last play attributable to his sole authorship. The story of *The Tempest*—a storm, a shipwreck, and the adventures of the shipwrecked party on an enchanted island—was suggested to Shakespeare by reports received in London late in 1610 of the wreck of an English ship off the Bermuda Islands. The survival of the crew during a winter’s sojourn in the islands provided a timely topic for a play, but little plot. Somewhere, however, in old stories and in Italian comedies Shakespeare picked up accounts of a banished prince who was also a wise magician. This prince had a fair daughter whom he contrived to marry to the son of a hostile king in order to end an old feud. Shakespeare set these characters and their story in an enchanted island after a shipwreck and the result was *The Tempest*.

The plot of *The Tempest* is alone among Shakespeare’s plays in observing the unity of time. The play contains something for exciting action; lovely songs; a stately masque with music and dancing; the farcical comedy of the monster Caliban, the drunken butler Stephano, and the clown Trinculo; the love story between Ferdinand and Miranda; and, controlling and directing all, the figure of the wise and benevolent magician Prospero. Such theatrical spectacles must have taxed the resources of the Blackfriars stage, the London theater where *The Tempest* was performed. Yet *The Tempest* is also a multilayered, lyrical play, containing beautiful verse, wisdom of thought, and themes of repentance and reconciliation. Above all, there is the sense of finality. The famous lines given to Prospero, beginning with the words, “Our revels now are ended,” are interpreted by many to announce Shakespeare’s retirement from the theater.

4.8. MAJOR CHARACTERS

After an understanding of the plot of the drama, let us now get introduced to the major characters of the play. These characters will also be discussed in detail later on as well.

Prospero-The play's protagonist and father of Miranda. Twelve years before the events of the play, Prospero was the duke of Milan. His brother, Antonio, in concert with Alonso, king of Naples, usurped him, forcing him to flee in a boat with his daughter. The honest lord Gonzalo aided Prospero in his escape. Prospero has spent his twelve years on the island refining the magic that gives him the power he needs to punish and forgive his enemies.

Miranda-The daughter of Prospero, Miranda was brought to the island at an early age and has never seen any men other than her father and Caliban, though she dimly remembers being cared for by female servants as an infant. Because she has been sealed off from the world for so long, Miranda's perceptions of other people tend to be naïve and non-judgmental. She is compassionate, generous, and loyal to her father.

Ariel-Prospero's spirit helper. Ariel is referred to throughout this and in most criticism as "he," but his gender and physical form is ambiguous. Rescued by Prospero from a long imprisonment at the hands of the witch Sycorax, Ariel is Prospero's servant until Prospero decides to release him. He is mischievous and ubiquitous, able to traverse the length of the island in an instant and to change shapes at will. He carries out virtually every task that Prospero needs accomplished in the play.

Caliban -Another of Prospero's servants. Caliban, the son of the now-deceased witch Sycorax, acquainted Prospero with the island when Prospero arrived. Caliban believes that the island rightfully belongs to him and has been stolen by Prospero. His speech and behavior is sometimes coarse and brutal, as in his drunken scenes with Stephano and Trinculo, and sometimes eloquent and sensitive, as in his rebukes of Prospero in Act I, scene ii, and in his description of the eerie beauty of the island in).

Ferdinand -Son and heir of Alonso. Ferdinand seems in some ways to be as pure and naïve as Miranda. He falls in love with her upon first sight and happily submits to servitude in order to win her father's approval.

Alonso-King of Naples and father of Ferdinand. Alonso aided Antonio in unseating Prospero as Duke of Milan twelve years before. As he appears in the play, however, he is acutely aware of the consequences of all his actions. He blames his decision to marry his daughter to the Prince of Tunis on the apparent death of his son. In addition, after the magical banquet, he regrets his role in the usurping of Prospero.

Antonio -Prospero's brother. Antonio quickly demonstrates that he is power-hungry and foolish. In Act II, scene i, he persuades Sebastian to kill the sleeping Alonso. He then goes along with Sebastian's absurd story about fending off lions when Gonzalo wakes up and catches Antonio and Sebastian with their swords drawn.

Sebastian -Alonso's brother. Like Antonio, he is both aggressive and cowardly. He is easily persuaded to kill his brother in Act II, Scene I, and he initiates the ridiculous story about lions when Gonzalo catches him with his sword drawn.

Gonzalo -An old, honest lord, Gonzalo helped Prospero and Miranda to escape after Antonio usurped Prospero's title. Gonzalo's speeches provide an important commentary on the events of the play, as he remarks on the beauty of the island when the stranded party first lands, then

on the desperation of Alonso after the magic banquet, and on the miracle of the reconciliation in Act V, scene i.

Trinculo & Stephano -Trinculo, a jester, and Stephano, a drunken butler, are two minor members of the shipwrecked party. They provide a comic foil to the other, more powerful pairs of Prospero and Alonso and Antonio and Sebastian. Their drunken boasting and petty greed reflect and deflate the quarrels and power struggles of Prospero and the other noblemen.

Boatswain -Appearing only in the first and last scenes, the Boatswain is vigorously good-natured. He seems competent and almost cheerful in the shipwreck scene, demanding practical help rather than weeping and praying. And he seems surprised but not stunned when he awakens from a long sleep at the end of the play.

4.9. SUMMING UP

In this unit you were given an introduction to William Shakespeare, ace dramatist and sonneteer. You further traced Shakespeare's career as an actor and a dramatist and examined his evolution as a dramatist during the major phases of his life. The unit further examined the literary qualities of Shakespeare's plays. Besides this his stage craft, language and writing style were also examined. Finally, the major characters of *The Tempest* like Prospero, Miranda, Ariel, Ferdinand were also discussed.

Self Assessment Questions

1. Give a biographical account of Shakespeare's life in your own words.
2. Shed light on the literary qualities of Shakespeare's plays.
3. Write a short note on Shakespeare's publications.

4.10. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Refer to our discussion at 4.3.
2. Refer to our discussion at 4.5.
3. Refer to our discussion at 4.4.

4.11. REFERENCES

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Shakespeare

4.12. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Shakespeare's achievements as dramatist in your own words.
2. Summarize the plot of *The Tempest*.
3. Write a short note on the following:
(a) Shakespeare's Stagecraft, (b) Shakespeare's Characters

- 5.1. Introduction
- 5.2. Objectives
- 5.3. *The Tempest*: Analysis of some of the Important Scenes
 - 5.3.1. *The Tempest* Act I, Scene i
 - 5.3.2. *The Tempest* Act I, Scene ii
 - 5.3.3. *The Tempest* Act II, Scene iii
 - 5.3.4. *The Tempest* Act II, Scene iv
 - 5.3.5. *The Tempest* Act III, Scene v
 - 5.3.6. *The Tempest* Act III, Scene vi
 - 5.3.7. *The Tempest* Act III, Scene vii
- 5.4. Theme of the Play
 - 5.4.1. The Illusion of Justice
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 - 5.4.3. The Allure of Ruling a Colony
- 5.5. Motifs of the Play
 - 5.5.1. Masters and Servants
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 - 5.5.3. Mysterious Noises
- 5.6. Symbols in the Play
 - 5.6.1. The Tempest
 - 5.6.2. The Game of Chess
 - 5.6.3. Prospero’s Books
- 5.7. Summing Up
- 5.8. Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 5.9. References
- 5.10. Terminal and Model Questions

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In the last unit you read about Shakespeare and his dramatic achievements. You were also introduced to *The Tempest*, Shakespeare's finest tragic-comedy, which will be discussed in detail in the coming two units. *The Tempest* probably was written in 1610–1611, and was first performed at Court by the King's Men in the fall of 1611. It was performed again in the winter of 1612–1613 during the festivities in celebration of the marriage of King James's daughter Elizabeth. *The Tempest* is most likely the last play written entirely by Shakespeare and it is remarkable for being one of only two plays by Shakespeare (the other being *Love's Labor's Lost*) whose plot is entirely original. The play does, however, draw on travel literature of its time—most notably the accounts of a tempest off the Bermudas that separated and nearly wrecked a fleet of colonial ships sailing from Plymouth to Virginia. The English colonial project seems to be on Shakespeare's mind throughout *The Tempest*, as almost every character, from the lord Gonzalo to the drunk Stephano, ponders how he would rule the island on which the play is set if he were its king. Shakespeare seems also to have drawn on Montaigne's essay "Of the Cannibals," which was translated into English in 1603. Further, the name of Prospero's servant-monster, Caliban, seems to be an anagram or derivative of "Cannibal." Let us now discuss the play in detail.

5.2. OBJECTIVES

- This unit will provide a detailed summary of some of the important scenes of the play.
- Through a reading Shakespeare's *The Tempest* students will value ideas of good coming from bad, atonement and reconciliation, purification through suffering, illusion versus reality, and nature versus society.
- The unit will discuss the major themes, symbols and motifs discussed in *The Tempest*.

5.3. THE TEMPEST SUMMARY OF SOME OF THE IMPORTANT SCENES

5.3.1. *The Tempest* Act I, Scene i

The play opens on the deck of a ship that is sailing from the North African city of Carthage to the Italian city of Naples. The stage can be set or divided in many ways. The actors are usually center stage in this section. Others enter from the same wing. A clap of thunder sounds, light flashes, the dialogue begins between the Master of the boat and the Boatswain. The two characters run around trying to secure the rigging of the ship in the storm. Alonso, the King of Naples, steps from the wing to ask what is going on. He is accompanied by his counselor, Gonzalo and Antonio, the reigning Duke of Milan. The royal passengers ask the Boatswain about the status of the storm, and he orders them to get below the deck. Gonzalo warns him to be wary of the stature of the men on board, but the Boatswain is indignant:

None that I love more than myself. You are a councilor; if you can command these elements to silence and work the peace of the presencet, we will not hand a rope more - use your authority. If you cannot, give thanks you have lived so long, and make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hours, if it so hap.

Gonzalo exits, remarking that the Boatswain is fit for dying by hanging than drowning, as he continues to order the sailors. He returns with Antonio and Sebastian, Alonso's brother. The Boatswain demands to know why the three men have come back on deck and Sebastian insults him: "A pox o' your throat, you bawling, blasphemous, and uncharitable dog!" Chaos continues as the storm ravages the deck of the ship. The mariners enter the stage and lament. Antonio asks if they are "merely cheated of our lives by drunkards" and the Boatswain exits. A clamor

of shouts and cries is heard from within the boat and the royal passengers exit to die with the king. Gonzalo ends the act, wishing that he would not have to die at sea:

“Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground, -long heath, broom, furze, anything? The wills above be done, but I would fain die a dry death”

The curtains close fall and the stage is reset for the island scene.

Summary

A violent storm rages around a small ship at sea. The master of the ship calls for his boatswain to rouse the mariners to action and prevent the ship from being run aground by the tempest. Chaos ensues. Some mariners enter, followed by a group of nobles comprised of Alonso, King of Naples, Sebastian, his brother, Antonio, Gonzalo, and others. We do not learn these men’s names in this scene, nor do we learn (as we finally do in Act II, Scene I) that they have just come from Tunis, in Africa, where Alonso’s daughter, Claribel, has been married to the prince. As the Boatswain and his crew take in the topsail and the topmast, Alonso and his party are merely underfoot, and the Boatswain tells them to get below-decks. Gonzalo reminds the Boatswain that one of the passengers is of some importance, but the Boatswain is unmoved. He will do what he has to in order to save the ship, regardless of who is aboard.

The lords go below decks, and then, adding to the chaos of the scene, three of them—Sebastian, Antonio, and Gonzalo—enter again only four lines later. Sebastian and Antonio curse the Boatswain in his labors, masking their fear with profanity. Some mariners enter wet and crying, and only at this point does the audience learn the identity of the passengers on-board. Gonzalo orders the mariners to pray for the king and the prince. There is a strange noise—perhaps the sound of thunder, splitting wood, or roaring water—and the cry of mariners. Antonio, Sebastian, and Gonzalo, preparing to sink to a watery grave, go in search of the king.

5.3.2. *The Tempest* Act I, Scene ii

In an island hut, Prospero, brother of Antonio and the rightful duke of Milan, is speaking with his daughter, Miranda. She asks Prospero to calm the sea, if he has, by any means, stirred up the storm in which she watched the ship perish. Prospero tells his daughter to be calm, because no harm has come to its passengers. He reminds her that everything has been done for her. Prospero decides that now is the time to inform his daughter of what he has been hiding since they came to the island. He asks “Canst thou remember/ A time before we came unto this cell.” Miranda says that she remembers her life before the island as if it were a dream. He tells her that they have been on the island for twelve years and that he was once the Duke of Milan. She asks what events transpired to bring them to the island, and he relays the tale. He had become entrenched in studies of the secret arts and put his brother in control of the affairs of state. Once his brother learned how to manage the state and Prospero himself had been detached from worldly affairs, a change took place:

...in my false brother
awakened an evil nature, and my trust,
like a good parent, did beget of him
A falsehood in its contrary as great
As my trust was, which had, indeed, no limit,
A confidence sans bound...

For Prospero, his “Library/ /Was dukedom large enough” but his brother thought him to be incapable of ruling. His brother made an alliance with the King of Naples. Miranda remarks

that "good wombs have borne bad sons." With the support of the King of Naples, his brother raised an army and expelled him from the dukedom with his daughter. A few sympathetic ministers helped the fallen duke and his child to a boat, which carried them to the island. The pair was furnished with food, clothing and Prospero's books by the good councilor, Gonzalo. Miranda exclaims "Would I might/ But ever see that man!" She then asks her father why he has raised the storm and he tells her that by chance his enemies have come near the island and he has shipwrecked them to get his revenge. He uses his magic to make Miranda go to sleep and he calls his spirit servant Ariel to him. Ariel enters from the wings. He reports that he has accomplished everything which his master bid him. He caused the storm and then the shipwreck. He relays that the King's son, Ferdinand leapt up and shouted: "Hell is empty/ And all the devils are here" Ariel also tells Prospero that no one was wounded and that the ship itself is safe, its mariners sleeping. Prospero prepares to order more, but Ariel reminds him that he has been promised his freedom:

...I prithee,
Remember I have done thee worthy service,
Told thee no lies, made no mistakes, served
Without or grudge or grumblings. Thou did promise
To bate me a full year.

Prospero reminds him that he freed him from his cell, in which he had been placed by Sycorax, the former ruler of the island. Prospero asks him about her, finding out that she was born in Algiers and was a terrible sorceress who came to the island with a child, Caliban. Ariel expresses his gratitude to Prospero for freeing him from his imprisonment and Prospero threatens him with twelve more years of imprisonment if he complains any more. Ariel is promised freedom in two days if he completes his commands. Prospero awakens Miranda and they go to visit Caliban. Caliban's hut is off to one of the sides of the stage. They rouse him from his dwelling and he curses them:

As wicked dew as e'er my mother brushed
With raven's feather from unwholesome fen
Drop on you both! A southwest blow on ye
And blister you all o'er!

Prospero tells him that he will receive stomach pains for such a curse. Caliban says that the island is rightfully his, but they took it from him and taught him "To name the bigger light and how the less" (the bigger light is the sun and the lesser the moon). Because of this, he taught them the secrets of the island: where to find food and shelter. Prospero assails him because he sought to "violate/ The honour of my child." Caliban admits to the attempted rape charge, that he would have populated the island with his offspring. Miranda berates him, asserting that they gave him the gift of language. Caliban responds:

You taught me language, and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!

Prospero threatens him anew and Caliban capitulates, admitting his inferior strength. Ariel reenters the stage, in the guise of a sea-nymph, leading Ferdinand. Ferdinand follows the sound of Ariel's song, believing his father and compatriots to be dead. Miranda thinks that Ferdinand is a spirit, but her father corrects her. Ferdinand comes to Miranda and marvels that she is a human. Miranda and Ferdinand stare at each other. Miranda remarks that Ferdinand is the third man she has ever seen and the young prince swears he will make her the Queen of

Naples, if she is a virgin. When Prospero alleges that Ferdinand has come to the island as a spy, Miranda exclaims at her father's accusation:

There's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple.
If the ill spirit have so fair a house,
Good things will strive to dwell with't.

Prospero calls him a traitor and threatens torture while Miranda pleads on his behalf. Prospero is pleased with this, because he plans to use the youths' affection towards his own ends.. Ferdinand submits to Prospero, continuing to praise his daughter:

Might I but through my prison once a day
behold this maid. All corners else o' the' earth
Let liberty make use of; -space enough
Have I in such a prison.

Miranda tries to comfort Ferdinand as Prospero once again promises Ariel his freedom. Everyone exits. The curtain falls, and the stage is reset.

Summary

Scene ii opens on the island, with Prospero and Miranda watching the ship as it is tossed by the storm. Miranda knows that her father is creating the storm, and she begs him to end the ship's torment and her own, since she suffers as she watches the ship's inhabitants suffer. Prospero reassures his daughter that his actions have been to protect her. He also tells Miranda that she is ignorant of her heritage; he then explains the story of her birthright and of their lives before they came to be on the island.

Prospero begins his story with the news that he is the duke of Milan and Miranda is a princess. He also relates that he had abdicated day-to-day rule of his kingdom to his brother, Antonio. Prospero admits that books held more attraction than duties, and he willingly allowed his brother the opportunity to grasp control. But Antonio used his position to undermine Prospero and to plot against him. Prospero's trust in his brother proved unwise, when Antonio formed an alliance with the king of Naples to oust Prospero and seize his heritage. Prospero and his daughter were placed in a small, rickety boat and put out to sea. A sympathetic Neapolitan, Gonzalo, provided them with rich garments, linens, and other necessities. Gonzalo also provided Prospero with books from his library. Eventually, Prospero and Miranda arrived on the island, where they have remained since that time.

When he finishes the tale, Prospero uses his magic to put Miranda to sleep. The sprite, Ariel, appears as soon as Miranda is sleeping and reports on the storm, the ship, and the passengers. Ariel relates everyone, except the crew, was forced to abandon ship. Ariel tells Prospero that the passengers have been separated into smaller groups and are on different parts of the island; that the ship, with its sleeping crew, is safely hidden in the harbor; and that the remainder of the fleet, thinking that the king is drowned, has sailed home. Ariel then asks that Prospero free him, as had been promised. But Prospero has more need of his sprite and declares that Ariel's freedom must be delayed a few more days.

When Ariel leaves, Prospero awakens Miranda and beckons Caliban, the son of the witch, Sycorax. Caliban has been Prospero's slave, but he is insolent and rebellious and is only controlled through the use of magic. Caliban claims the island as his own and says that Prospero has tricked him in the past. Prospero is unmoved, claiming that Caliban is corrupt, having tried to rape Miranda. Prospero threatens and cajoles Caliban's obedience, but Caliban's presence makes Miranda uneasy.

After Caliban leaves, Ariel enters with Ferdinand, who sees Miranda, and the two fall instantly in love. Although this is what Prospero intended to have happen, he does not want it to appear too easy for Ferdinand, and so he accuses Ferdinand of being a spy. When Prospero uses magic to control Ferdinand, Miranda begs him to stop.

5.3.3. *The Tempest* Act II, Scene i

On another part of the island, Alonso, his brother Sebastian, the Duke Antonio, Gonzalo the councilor and Lords Adrian and Francisco enter the stage. Gonzalo is in the process of comforting the king by pointing out to him how lucky he is to have survived. Antonio and Sebastian are making fun of the exchange between the King and his councilor. The group begins to discuss the nature of the island, remarking that it is very green and wild. Gonzalo continues to sing the praises of the isle while the rest of the group pokes fun at him, with the exception of the grieving King. They discuss the event in Carthage from which they are traveling home: the marriage of the King's daughter to the King of Tunis:

ADRIAN: Tunis was never graced before with such a paragon
to their queen.

GONZALO: Not since widow Dido's time.

ANTONIO: Widow? A pox o' that. How came that widow in?
Widow Dido!

They continue to make a game of the mythical Dido (who is also from Virgil's *Aeneid*) and debate humorously over whether or not Tunis and Carthage are one and the same. Gonzalo speaks to the King, trying to cheer him up, asking if his "doublet is as fresh as the first day I wore it?" Alonso laments, wishing that he had never gone to Carthage because he has lost his son and heir, Ferdinand. Francisco tells the king that his son might still be alive, because he saw him swimming in the wake of the wreck. Sebastian reminds the King that everyone had advised him against the marriage. Gonzalo attacks Sebastian's forwardness:

My lord Sebastian,
The truth you speak doth lack some gentleness,
And time to speak it in - you rub the sore
When you should bring the plaster.

Gonzalo tells Sebastian that he is making the situation worse. He then tells the King what he would do if the island were his as a colony. During this speech Antonio and Sebastian continue to make fun of him on the side of the stage as he speaks in the center, saying that he would plant weeds in place of other crops. Gonzalo describes the island as a paradise without laws and without a social hierarchy, where everything would be innocent and pure. The other two continue to ridicule him:

SEBASTIAN: Yet he would be king on't.

ANTONIO: The latter end of the commonwealth forgets the
beginning.

GONZALO: All things in common nature should produce
Without sweat or endeavour.

Gonzalo describes a utopia free of marriage and crimes, where he would rule with perfection. Alonso asks him to be quiet. The others continue to laugh at him. Ariel enters from the wings playing music. He is invisible to the characters but not to the audience. Everyone falls asleep except for Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio. Alonso wishes to sleep and the other two promise to guard him while he sleeps. Ariel exits and the pair discuss the odd sleep that has come over their comrades. Antonio alludes to a plan and Sebastian begs him to speak it. Antonio says of

the King's son that " 'Tis as impossible that he's undrowned/ as he that sleeps here swims.". The two agree that the prince must be dead and realize that the next heir to Naples is Alonso's daughter, the new Queen of Tunis. Antonio points out that there is a long distance between Tunis and Naples, proposing that she would not be able to rule the kingdom if the King were seized by death instead of sleep:

As this Gonzalo; I myself could make
A chough of as deep chat.O, that you bore
The mind that I do, what a sleep were this
For your advancement! Do you understand me?

Antonio implies that Sebastian should kill his brother and become king himself. Sebastian points out that that is the same thing he did to his brother (Prospero) asking if he has a guilty conscience. Sebastian says that he is not at all guilt-ridden. Sebastian says that his example will be his own precedent. They draw swords. Ariel returns from the wings and awakens Gonzalo to tell him of the plot. Gonzalo yells to the others and they all awaken. Antonio claims they were drawing swords against the sound of some animals. Gonzalo says that he also hears a sound and they all exit the stage with swords drawn, searching for Ferdinand. The curtain falls and the stage is reset.

Summary

On another part of the island, Gonzalo tries to comfort King Alonso, who believes that he has lost his only son, Ferdinand. The King's brother, Sebastian, is not as comforting and he mocks Gonzalo's attempts to cheer up the King. Sebastian reminds the King that he had been advised not to take the journey to Tunis in the first place, and thus he is directly responsible for all of their problems. Ariel arrives and magically puts everyone to sleep except Antonio and Sebastian. Antonio suggests that they should kill the King as he sleeps and make Sebastian the new King of Naples. Sebastian agrees, but just as they are about to draw their swords, Ariel awakens King Alonso and Gonzalo. Gonzalo sees the men with their swords drawn and asks what they are doing. Sebastian makes up a lie that they heard "a hollow burst of bellowing" (316), that sounded like a wild animal, and they were merely trying to protect their sleeping king. Believing their intentions were good, King Alonso thinks no more about it and asks them to help in the search of Ferdinand. They agree and the scene comes to a close.

5.3.4. *The Tempest* Act II, Scene ii

The curtain rises on another part of the island. Caliban enters the stage carrying wood and cursing Prospero. Thunder claps, and he assumes that it is Prospero listening. He describes the many ways that Prospero tortures him. Trinculo, a servant of King Alonso, enters the stage. Caliban thinks that he is a spirit sent by Prospero so he hides on the ground underneath his cloak. Trinculo has heard sounds come from this direction and looks around. When he sees the cloak on the ground he is not quite sure what he has found. He says that Caliban smells like a fish:

"Were I in England now, as I once was, and had but this fish painted, not a holiday fool there but would give a piece of silver. There would this monster make a man - any strange beast there makes a man. When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian."

Trinculo hears more thunder and hides underneath the cloak with Caliban. Stephano, another servant to the King, enters the stage from the wings carrying a bottle. Drunk, he sings a sea shanty. Caliban cries from under the cloak. Stephano looks at the cloaked spectacle on the ground and does not fear it. He is surprised that the four-legged beast on the ground speaks

English and he plans to make a trophy of the creature. Caliban still thinks that he is being tormented by Prospero's spirits. Stephano leans forward with his bottle and tells Caliban to drink, for he still does not know that Trinculo is also under the cloak. Trinculo speaks out and Stephano exclaims "Four legs and two voices; a most delicate monster!" Caliban drinks again and Trinculo calls out to his compatriot. Stephano fears that he has come upon a devil and threatens to leave but Trinculo beseeches him. Stephano pulls his friend from under the cloak and the two celebrate their survival. Caliban speaks aside to the audience:

"These be fine things, an if they be not sprites. That's a brave god, and bears celestial liquor. I will kneel to him."

Stephano asks Trinculo to tell him how he survived the wreck and Trinculo swears by the bottle that he swam ashore. Caliban asks the pair if they have "dropped from heaven?" Caliban continues to drink and promises to show the pair every secret of the island. Trinculo does not trust him. Stephano asks him to swear on the bottle and Caliban pledges:

I'll show thee the best springs; I'll pluck thee berries;
I'll fish for thee, and get thee wood enough.
A plague upon the tyrant I serve!
I'll bear him no more sticks, but follow thee,
thou wondrous man.

Caliban proceeds to make more promises and Stephano accepts the offer. They all exit drinking, with Caliban singing. The curtain falls and the stage is reset.

Summary

As we had read in above act Caliban has just finished chopping wood when he hears loud claps of thunder. This prompts him to soliloquize on his hatred of Prospero: "All the infections that the sun sucks up/From bogs, fens, flats on Prospero fall, and make him by inchmeal a disease!" (1-3). He feels that Prospero has filled the island with spirits to torment him for being late with the firewood. Trinculo, the court jester who has been travelling with the King, approaches, and Caliban naturally assumes he is one of Prospero's spying spirits. Caliban falls to the ground, hoping that it will somehow help him go unnoticed. Trinculo is looking for shelter, worried about the coming storm. He sees Caliban, lying flat on his face, and finds him very interesting. He wishes he were in England so that he could put the monster he has discovered on display as a freak of nature. The thunder grows closer and Trinculo finds it necessary, albeit unappealing, to crawl under Caliban's cloak for protection. In his now famous words, "Misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows!" (42). Another survivor of the shipwreck, a butler to the King named Stephano, appears. He washed ashore on a barrel of wine and has since ingested its contents and is very drunk indeed. Seeing Trinculo and Caliban lying on the ground, he thinks that they are a two-headed monster with four legs, indigenous to the island. Stephano gives Caliban the bit of wine he has left, hoping to appease the horrid creature. Caliban cries out, "Do not torment me, prithee" (73) because he still believes the men are spirits sent by his master. Trinculo gets up and is relieved to see his friend. The two dance to celebrate their reunion while Caliban, now drunk from his first taste of wine, decides that Stephano will be his new master: "I'll kiss thy foot. I'll swear myself thy subject." (154). Stephano gladly accepts Caliban's offer and they head off to see all the wonders of the island.

5.3.5. Tempest Act III, Scene i

The curtain reopens on Prospero's part of the island. Ferdinand enters the stage carrying wood, a task given to him by Prospero. He complains at first that his task is difficult, but later clarifies what drives him:

The mistress which I serve quickens what's dead,
and makes my labours pleasures. O, she is
Ten times more gentle than her father's crabbed,
And he's composed of harshness.

Prospero and Miranda enter on the other side and observe him. Miranda laments that he is working so hard. Ferdinand tells her that he will be working until dusk and she tells him to sit down while she does some of his work. Ferdinand refuses to let her do his work and Prospero observes from a distance "Poor worm, thou art infected! This visitation shows it." . Miranda tells Ferdinand her name, against her father's order. Ferdinand exclaims that her beauty is perfect. Miranda tells him that she has never seen another woman and does not know what one should look like. She pauses her speech, remembering her father's commands. Ferdinand tells her that it is for her sake that he so patiently accepts his servitude. She asks if he loves her and he replies:

O heaven, O earth, bear witness to this sound,
and crown what I profess with kind event
If I speak true; if hollowly, invert
what best is boded me to mischief: I,
Beyond all limit of what else i' th' world,
Do love, prize, honour you.

Miranda weeps in joy. Ferdinand asks why she weeps and she says that she is unworthy but his to marry if he wishes. He bends on his knee in front of her and accepts her offer. They part and exit to the wings. Prospero remains and moves downstage. He expresses pleasure at the circumstances and retires to his plotting. Prospero exits, the curtain descends, and the stage is reset.

Summary

Act Three opens with Ferdinand performing tasks against his will by his captor, Prospero. He tells himself that, although he is not use to such hard labour, he actually likes the work because he knows that Miranda "weeps" when she sees him suffer. Miranda appears, followed by Prospero who hides from their site. She offers to carry the logs for him but he refuses her help, insisting that he would rather break his back than see her undergo "such dishonor". They declare their love for one another and agree to be wed as soon as possible. Prospero is delighted by what he is hearing and, now sure that Ferdinand is worthy of his daughter, he returns to his books and to his other pressing business with Antonio and the King.

5.3.6. *The Tempest* Act III, Scene ii

The curtain reopens on the part of the island where Caliban met Trinculo and Stephano. Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo reenter the stage, still drinking. Stephano and Trinculo play off each other's drunkenness and discuss their fortunes. They know that there are at least two other people on the island (Prospero and Miranda). Trinculo mocks Caliban, who calls Stephano 'lord'. Caliban beseeches Stephano who threatens Trinculo. Ariel enters, invisible to the characters, as Caliban recounts the state of the island:

CALIBAN: As I told thee before, I am subject to a tyrant, a sorcerer that by his cunning hath cheated me of the island.
ARIEL: Thou liest.
CALIBAN (to Trinculo): Thou liest, thou jesting monkey, thou! I would my valiant master would destroy thee. I do not lie

Ariel impersonates Trinculo as he flits around the trio. Caliban tells the pair that Prospero took the island by sorcery. Stephano asks how they would be able to defeat him, and Caliban says that he could be killed in his sleep. Ariel says that he is lying, again impersonating Trinculo. The audience can watch Ariel as he mocks the three men. Caliban erupts in anger and asks Stephano to avenge him. Stephano threatens Trinculo who asks "What, what did I? I did nothing! I'll go farther off." Trinculo moves upstage and Ariel remains. Stephano asks him if he said that Caliban lied and Ariel interjects again, saying that Stephano lies. He beats Trinculo who claims that the trouble has come from drinking. Stephano tells him to stand farther off. Caliban tells him that Prospero usually naps in the afternoon and that they should sneak in and burn all his books. He also tells them about Prospero's daughter:

And that most deeply to consider is
The beauty of his daughter. He himself
Calls her nonpareil. I never saw a woman
But only Sycorax, my dam, and she;
But she as far surpasseth Sycorax
As great'st does least.

Stephano pledges to kill Prospero and says that he will be king alongside Miranda as queen. Trinculo agrees to the plot and accepts Stephano's apology. They drink to the plot and Ariel plans to tell Prospero. He plays music and the men become alarmed. Caliban assures them that they shouldn't be afraid of the noises, because he hears them all the time:

Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will him about mine ears; and sometime voices,
That if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again, and then in dreaming
The clouds methought would open and show riches
Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked
I cried to dream again.

The three men exit and Ariel continues to play music. He follows the men into the wings as the curtain falls.

Summary

The attention turns once again to Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo. Stephano is having trouble controlling Caliban, who hates Trinculo because he continues to refer to Caliban as 'the monster'. Caliban proposes that together they overpower and kill Prospero, and steal his books and his daughter. Stephano agrees to the plan, imagining himself as ruler over the island and the husband of Miranda. But Ariel has been listening to their conversation and he rushes to tell Prospero.

5.3.7. *The Tempest* Act III, Scene iii

The stage is reset for another part of the island. Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo, Adrian and Francisco enter the stage. Gonzalo states that he needs a rest from their long walk. Alonso tells him that he cannot blame them and that he has almost given up hope of finding his son. Antonio tells Sebastian that this forlorn hope is in their favor. They plan to attack again that night. Music springs up from the orchestra and amorphous shapes carry in the makings of a banquet. These performers are dressed loosely in sheets and cloaks. Alonso cries out in surprise and so does Sebastian:

A living drollery! Now I will believe
that there are unicorns; that in Arabia

There is one tree, the phoenix' throne, one phoenix
At this hour reigning there.

Antonio also expresses his surprise and Gonzalo wonders whether or not any one in Naples would believe his account of such events. Prospero, in the shadows, says that some of those men present "are worse than devils." Alonso doesn't trust such apparitions but soon they disappear. The men react at the disappearance of the shapes with curiosity about the food. No one dares to taste it, for fear of enchantment. Gonzalo tries to comfort them and so does the King. Suddenly, Ariel enters, dressed as a harpy, and the performers carry off the banquet. Ariel speaks from the side as the men all cower together:

You are three men of sin, whom destiny,
That hath to instrument this lower world
And what is in't, the never-surfeited sea
Hath caused to belch up you, and on this island
Where man doth not inhabit-you 'mongst men
Being most unfit to live. I have made you mad;

Two of them draw their swords, but Ariel calls them fools and proceeds to recount the tale of Prospero's expulsion from Milan. He tells Antonio and Alonso that they remain guilty. He tells the group that their worse fate will befall them on the island. Ariel exits the stage and the shapes depart with the table. Prospero speaks from the shadows and observes that through their fear they are now under his control. Alonso tells Gonzalo what he has heard and exits. Sebastian and Antonio soon follow him. Gonzalo speaks to Adrian:

All three of them are desperate: their great guilt,
like poison given to work a great time after,
Now 'gins to bite their spirits. I do beseech you
That are of suppler joints, follow them swiftly,
And hinder them from what this ecstasy
May now provoke them to.
The rest of the players exit, the curtain falls, and the stage is reset.

Summary

Meanwhile, King Alonso and his courtiers have been searching the island for Prince Ferdinand. Suddenly, magical creatures bring forth a banquet and place the food in front of the hungry men. Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio run toward the feast, but just as they are about to eat, Ariel appears, disguised as a harpy, and the table vanishes in a burst of thunder and lightning. Ariel accuses them of being sinful men and tells them that just Fate has caused their shipwreck and taken Alonso's son away from him. He also tells them that they will be tormented until they change their evil ways and lead "a clear life" (82). Ariel disappears and the mystical creatures again appear, dancing to the soft music that now fills the air, and again carrying the table. The King decides to keep looking for his son and die along side of him, and Antonio and Sebastian follow him, foolishly convinced that they can destroy the spirits on the island. Gonzalo, worried that they have gone mad, follows them, hoping to "hinder them from what this ecstasy/May now provoke them to".

5.3.8. *The Tempest* Act IV, Scene i

The stage is set with Prospero's hut as the curtain opens. Prospero, Miranda and Ferdinand enter. Prospero is in the process of apologizing to Ferdinand for having put him through such tasks. He tells him that as compensation he will allow the marriage between the youths:

...All thy vexations

Were but my trials of thy love, and thou
Hast strangely stood the test. Here, afore heaven
I ratify this my rich gift. O Ferdinand,
Do not smile at me that I boast of her,
For thou shalt find that she will outstrip all praise
And make it halt behind her.

Ferdinand agrees with his father-in-law to be who threatens that he must not sleep with her before they are married. He swears an oath to Prospero and then Ariel appears from off stage. Prospero commands Ariel to "Bestow upon the eyes of this young couple/ Some vanity of mine art." Ariel exits the stage to gather some of his fellow spirits. Prospero turns to Ferdinand and asks for a stronger vow. Ferdinand swears again and Prospero recalls Ariel. What follows is a scene played out by the spirits where they take on the roles of classical deities to bless the marriage. A spirit called Iris enters the stage. In her speech she announces the arrivals and the attributes of Ceres and Juno. Ceres asks Iris why she has been summoned and Iris says there is "a contract of true love to celebrate." Ceres asks if Venus or Cupid are now with Juno, and Iris says that they are not. Juno is the goddess representing marriage itself and subsequent childbirth, while Venus and her son Cupid represent lust. Juno arrives and speaks:

How does my bounteous sister? Go with me
To bless this twain, that they may prosperous be,
And honoured in their issue.

Juno sings for the blessing of their children and Ceres sings for the fruitfulness of their lands and the abundance of food. Ferdinand observes and is awe-struck, saying "Let me live here forever/ So rare a wondered father and wife/ Makes this place a paradise.". Iris calls out river nymphs to bless the marriage and a myriad of shapes and forms enter the stage. Suddenly, Prospero remembers that Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo are planning to kill him, so he stops the revelry. Ferdinand remarks:

This is strange. Your father's in some passion
That works him strangely.
MIRANDA: Never till this day
Saw I him so touched with anger, so distempered.

Prospero speaks to Ferdinand, noticing his concern, and tells him not to be dismayed:

...These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air,
And, like the baseless fabric of vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with sleep.

After this famous monologue, the two youths leave the stage and Prospero calls Ariel. Ariel asks him what he wants and he says that they need to go to Caliban. Ariel recounts that the three companions were drunk and he led them into a briar patch. Prospero sends Ariel to fetch Caliban:

A devil, a born devil, on whose nature

Nurture can never stick; on whom my pains,
Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost
And as with age his body uglier grows,
So his mind cankers. I will plague them all,
Even to roaring.

Ariel exits and then reenters guiding Stephano, Caliban and Trinculo. Prospero and Ariel remain invisible to the trio, but not to the audience. They stand on the side of the stage. The two men verbally assault Caliban for having led them astray. They have lost their bottles of alcohol Stephano says that "There is not only disgrace and dishonor in that,/ monster, but an infinite loss.". Caliban assuages their anger and asks them to be quiet. Ariel has draped some clothing on the tree and Trinculo takes a robe and puts it on. Caliban tells him to leave it alone because they should kill Prospero before they do anything else. Stephano tells him to quiet down and he takes an article of clothing from the tree that is in the center of the stage. The two continue to dress themselves in the royal clothing, offering some to Caliban:

I will have none on't. We shall lose our time
And all be turned to barnacles, or to apes
With foreheads villainous low.

Caliban eventually submits to their pleas with the promise of more wine. Prospero calls out to the spirits of Mountain and Fury and racks the conspirators with pains. They run off stage. Prospero exits with Ariel and the curtain falls.

Summary

Prospero has consented to the union of Miranda and Ferdinand and now prepares a wedding masque for the two lovers. He cautions Ferdinand not to "break her virgin knot" (15) until they are legitimately married. Soft music fills the air and three sprites pretending to be the goddesses, Iris, Ceres, and Juno, descend to participate in the celebration. Other nymphs appear and they all dance and make merry. But the festivities are cut short when they hear a "hollow and confused" noise coming from outside Prospero's dwelling. It is the sound of Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo, still drunk and ready to kill Prospero. Prospero dismisses the sprites and tells Ferdinand and Miranda: "Our revels are now ended." Prospero orders Ariel to bring out all his goods because he knows that Stephano and Trinculo will be enticed by the finery. Ariel enters once again, his arms loaded with beautiful apparel. Prospero and Ariel watch in the shadows as Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo enter Prospero's cell, and sure enough, they are distracted by the fine clothes. Stephano and Trinculo try them on, despite the pleading of Caliban who knows that Prospero will catch them. From outside a noise of wild dogs are heard. Prospero has summoned the spirits of the island to take the shape of fierce hunting hounds to chase the villains out of Prospero's cell. Comically the three men run screaming from the cell, and Prospero and Ariel remain. Prospero tells Ariel that his enemies are now all at his mercy and that he will soon have freedom from the island.

5.3.9. *The Tempest* Act V, Scene i

The stage is reset. The curtain opens. Prospero and Ariel reenter the stage. Prospero says that his plans are coming to a climax. He asks Ariel how well the King and his followers are doing. Ariel recounts that they are distracted still by the earlier spectacle and that "If you now beheld them, your affections/ Would become tender." Prospero agrees with Ariel and continues to say that if he were a different kind of man, he would not be so forgiving of his transgressors:

Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th' quick,

Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part. The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance.

Prospero orders Ariel to retrieve the crew. Ariel exits the stage. Meanwhile, he calls out the spirits of the island to help him, pledging that with success he will give up magic. Solemn music starts playing and Ariel enters with Alonso, Gonzalo, Sebastian, Antonio, Adrian and Francisco. Prospero speaks, though he is not seen by them. He addresses each character, the noble Gonzalo, contriving Alonso and Alonso's brother Sebastian. Prospero commands Ariel to retrieve his hat and rapier. He returns singing and Prospero dresses. He promises Ariel his freedom again. The ship is still invisible with all its crew sleeping below the deck. Ariel exits and Prospero addresses the group, "Behold, sir King,/ The wronged Duke of Milan, Prospero". He embraces Alonso and welcomes him. Alonso is amazed, but he does not quite believe that this is real. Nevertheless, he asks for forgiveness:

I fear a madness held me. This must crave,
An if this be at all, a most strange story.
Thy dukedom I resign, and do entreat
Thou pardon me my wrongs. But how should Prospero
Be living, and be here?

Prospero embraces Gonzalo. Then he addresses Sebastian and Antonio as traitors. He calls his brother wicked and pledges to restore his own dukedom. Alonso asks him to tell the story of his survival on the island where he lost his own son. Prospero tells him that the loss of his son is not so grave because he, too, has lost his daughter. Alonso exclaims:

A daughter?
O heavens, that they were living both in Naples,
The King and Queen there! That they were, I wish
Myself were mudded in that oozy bed
Where my son lies. When did you lose your daughter?

Prospero tells him that he lost his daughter in the last tempest. He tells the group that their senses must have been altered by the storm and he reveals Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess in a curtained-off part of the stage. The two have not been aware of what has been happening on the rest of the island. Ferdinand comes forward and kneels to his father, whom he assumed was dead. Alonso exclaims in joy and Miranda is also surprised by the spectacle:

O wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world
That has such people in't!

Alonso asks his son who the girl is with whom he plays. Ferdinand tells his father that she is Prospero's daughter and that he has chosen her as his wife. Alonso says that this is all right. Gonzalo asks heaven for a blessing on the couple and asks "Was Milan thrust from Milan that his issue/ Should become kings of Naples?" Alonso joins hands with the children and prays for their happiness. Ariel enters with the Master of the ship and the Boatswain. Gonzalo cries out:

O look, sir, look, here is more of us!
I prophesied if a gallows were on land
This fellow could not drown. (To Boatswain) Now,
blasphemy,
That swear'st grace o'erboard, not an oath on the shore?

Hast thou no mouth by land? What is the news?

The boatswain tells them that the ship is in fine condition. Ariel secretly tells Prospero that this is his doing. Alonso asks the Boatswain how this came to be. The boatswain recounts the events of the storm: they were all below deck thrashing about and suddenly they awoke to a clear sky and an ordered ship. Alonso is in disbelief. He questions Prospero, but Prospero admonishes him to not worry about it:

Sir, my liege,
Do not infest your mind with beating on
The strangeness of this business. At picked leisure,
Which shall be shortly single, I'll resolve you,
Which to you shall seem probable, of every
These happened accidents; till then, be cheerful
And think of each thing well.

Prospero tells Ariel to set Caliban and the conspirators free. Ariel exits. The three enter the stage in their new found raiment. Sebastian and Antonio laugh at the scene and ask who these men are. Prospero explained that two of the men are from their ship. Alonso recognizes Stephano as his drunken butler. They poke fun at the trio and Prospero sends them away granting Caliban a pardon. Caliban accepts graciously:

Ay, that I will; and I'll be wise hereafter,
And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass
Was I to take this drunkard for a god,
And worship this dull fool!

Prospero invites everyone back to his lodge for the night. He plans to leave in the morning and hold the wedding in Naples. He promises safe winds on the voyage home and tells Ariel that this is his last command. Prospero ends the play with his monologue. He says that his magic is over since he has his dukedom back. He asks for a soft wind to take him home and end his years of exile. The curtain falls on the final scene of the play.

Summary

The final act opens three days after the great tempest that destroyed the boat. Prospero, clothed in his magic robes, hears a plea from Ariel on behalf of the stranded men. Ariel reports that King Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio have gone mad, while Gonzalo suffers mental anguish as he mourns for the victims. Prospero is moved by Ariel's words and decides that he will show them the mercy that they did not show him twelve years ago. He sends Ariel to fetch the men, and in a soliloquy he reveals that, once he restores the sanity of his enemies, he will forever renounce magic: "But this rough magic/I here abjure" (50-1). He breaks his magical staff, declares that he will drown his books, and exchanges his magician's robes for the clothing he wore when he was the Duke of Milan. Amidst solemn music Ariel leads Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo, Adrian, and Francisco into Prospero's cell. They are in a trance and stand around a circle that Prospero has made. Prospero tells Ariel that he is free from all further obligations, and that he will miss him when he returns to Milan. Prospero breaks the spell that holds the men and Gonzalo is the first to speak: "Some heavenly power guide us/Out of this fearful country." (105-6) Prospero identifies himself and Alonso, who has seen the error of his ways, repents and resigns the dukedom to Prospero. Alonso is reunited with Ferdinand and he two fathers seal their peace with the marriage of their children. Alonso and Sebastian are not repentant, but they must comply with the orders of the King to restore Prospero as Duke of

Milan. Prospero forgives Antonio but does not reconcile with him, saying: "For you, most wicked sir, whom to call brother/Would even infect my mouth, I do forgive thy rankest fault" (131-2). Ariel enters with the Boatswain and the Master of the ship, and they report that, to their amazement, the boat has been fully restored and is ready to set sail. Ariel quickly fetches Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo, who are still drunk, and Prospero confronts them. He tells Caliban that he can now be king of the island and Caliban regrets ever thinking that Stephano was his master. He calls himself a "thrice-double ass" (296) for worshipping the dull fool. Prospero invites the King and his courtiers to hear the story of his life on the island, as Ariel (as his final task for Prospero) prepares the proper sailing weather to guide Prospero back to Italy.

5.4. MAJOR THEMES OF THE PLAY

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

5.4.1. The Illusion of Justice

The *Tempest* tells a fairly straightforward story involving an unjust act, the usurpation of Prospero's throne by his brother, and Prospero's quest to re-establish justice by restoring himself to power. However, the idea of justice that the play works toward seems highly subjective, since this idea represents the view of one character who controls the fate of all the other characters. Though Prospero presents himself as a victim of injustice working to right the wrongs that have been done to him, Prospero's idea of justice and injustice is somewhat hypocritical—though he is furious with his brother for taking his power, he has no qualms about enslaving Ariel and Caliban in order to achieve his ends. At many moments throughout the play, Prospero's sense of justice seems extremely one-sided and mainly involves what is good for Prospero. Moreover, because the play offers no notion of higher order or justice to supersede Prospero's interpretation of events, the play is morally ambiguous.

As the play progresses, however, it becomes more and more involved with the idea of creativity and art, and Prospero's role begins to mirror more explicitly the role of an author creating a story around him. With this metaphor in mind, and especially if we accept Prospero as a surrogate for Shakespeare himself, Prospero's sense of justice begins to seem, if not perfect, at least sympathetic. Moreover, the means he uses to achieve his idea of justice mirror the machinations of the artist, who also seeks to enable others to see his view of the world. Playwrights arrange their stories in such a way that their own idea of justice is imposed upon events. In *The Tempest*, the author is in the play, and the fact that he establishes his idea of justice and creates a happy ending for all the characters becomes a cause for celebration, not criticism.

By using magic and tricks that echo the special effects and spectacles of the theater, Prospero gradually persuades the other characters and the audience of the rightness of his case. As he does so, the ambiguities surrounding his methods slowly resolve themselves. Prospero forgives his enemies, releases his slaves, and relinquishes his magic power, so that, at the end of the play, he is only an old man whose work has been responsible for all the audience's pleasure. The establishment of Prospero's idea of justice becomes less a commentary on justice in life than on the nature of morality in art. Happy endings are possible, Shakespeare seems to say, because the creativity of artists can create them, even if the moral values that establish the happy ending originate from nowhere but the imagination of the artist.

5.4.2. The Difficulty of Distinguishing “Men” from “Monsters”

Upon seeing Ferdinand for the first time, Miranda says that he is “the third man that e’er I saw” (I.ii.449). The other two are, presumably, Prospero and Caliban. In their first conversation with Caliban, however, Miranda and Prospero say very little that shows they consider him to be human. Miranda reminds Caliban that before she taught him language, he gabbled “like / A thing most brutish” (I.ii.359–360) and Prospero says that he gave Caliban “human care” (I.ii.349), implying that this was something Caliban ultimately did not deserve. Caliban’s exact nature continues to be slightly ambiguous later. In Act IV, scene i, reminded of Caliban’s plot, Prospero refers to him as a “devil, a born devil, on whose nature / Nurture can never stick” (IV.i.188–189). Miranda and Prospero both have contradictory views of Caliban’s humanity. On the one hand, they think that their education of him has lifted him from his formerly brutish status. On the other hand, they seem to see him as inherently brutish. His devilish nature can never be overcome by nurture, according to Prospero. Miranda expresses a similar sentiment in Act I, scene ii: “thy vile race, / Though thou didst learn, had that in’t which good natures / Could not abide to be with” (I.ii.361–363). The inhuman part of Caliban drives out the human part, the “good nature,” that is imposed on him.

Caliban claims that he was kind to Prospero, and that Prospero repaid that kindness by imprisoning him (see I.ii.347). In contrast, Prospero claims that he stopped being kind to Caliban once Caliban had tried to rape Miranda (I.ii.347–351). Which character the audience decides to believe depends on whether it views Caliban as inherently brutish, or as made brutish by oppression. The play leaves the matter ambiguous. Caliban balances all of his eloquent speeches, such as his curses in Act I, scene ii and his speech about the isle’s “noises” in Act III, scene ii, with the most degrading kind of drunken, servile behavior. But Trinculo’s speech upon first seeing Caliban (II.ii.18–38), the longest speech in the play, reproaches too harsh a view of Caliban and blurs the distinction between men and monsters. In England, which he visited once, Trinculo says, Caliban could be shown off for money: “There would this monster make a man. Any strange beast there makes a man. When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian” (II.ii.28–31). What seems most monstrous in these sentences is not the “dead Indian,” or “any strange beast,” but the cruel voyeurism of those who capture and gape at them.

5.4.3. The Allure of Ruling a Colony

The nearly uninhabited island presents the sense of infinite possibility to almost everyone who lands there. Prospero has found it, in its isolation, an ideal place to school his daughter. Sycorax, Caliban’s mother, worked her magic there after she was exiled from Algeria. Caliban, once alone on the island, now Prospero’s slave, laments that he had been his own king (I.ii.344–345). As he attempts to comfort Alonso, Gonzalo imagines a utopian society on the island, over which he would rule (II.i.148–156). In Act III, scene ii, Caliban suggests that Stephano kill Prospero, and Stephano immediately envisions his own reign: “Monster, I will kill this man. His daughter and I will be King and Queen—save our graces!—and Trinculo and thyself shall be my viceroys” (III.ii.101–103). Stephano particularly looks forward to taking advantage of the spirits that make “noises” on the isle; they will provide music for his kingdom for free. All these characters envision the island as a space of freedom and unrealized potential.

The tone of the play, however, toward the hopes of the would-be colonizers is vexed at best. Gonzalo’s utopian vision in Act II, scene i is undercut by a sharp retort from the usually foolish Sebastian and Antonio. When Gonzalo says that there would be no commerce or work or “sovereignty” in his society, Sebastian replies, “yet he would be king on’t,” and Antonio adds, “The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning” (II.i.156–157). Gonzalo’s

fantasy thus involves him ruling the island while seeming not to rule it, and in this he becomes a kind of parody of Prospero.

While there are many representatives of the colonial impulse in the play, the colonized have only one representative: Caliban. We might develop sympathy for him at first, when Prospero seeks him out merely to abuse him, and when we see him tormented by spirits. However, this sympathy is made more difficult by his willingness to abase himself before Stephano in Act II, scene ii. Even as Caliban plots to kill one colonial master (Prospero) in Act III, scene ii, he sets up another (Stephano). The urge to rule and the urge to be ruled seem inextricably intertwined.

5.5. MOTIFS OF THE PLAY

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, and literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

5.5.1. Masters and Servants

Nearly every scene in the play either explicitly or implicitly portrays a relationship between a figure that possesses power and a figure that is subject to that power. The play explores the master-servant dynamic most harshly in cases in which the harmony of the relationship is threatened or disrupted, as by the rebellion of a servant or the ineptitude of a master. For instance, in the opening scene, the "servant" (the Boatswain) is dismissive and angry toward his "masters" (the noblemen), whose ineptitude threatens to lead to a shipwreck in the storm. From then on, master-servant relationships like these dominate the play: Prospero and Caliban; Prospero and Ariel; Alonso and his nobles; the nobles and Gonzalo; Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban; and so forth. The play explores the psychological and social dynamics of power relationships from a number of contrasting angles, such as the generally positive relationship between Prospero and Ariel, the generally negative relationship between Prospero and Caliban, and the treachery in Alonso's relationship to his nobles.

5.5.2. Water and Drowning

The play is awash with references to water. The Mariners enter "wet" in Act I, scene i, and Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo enter "all wet," after being led by Ariel into a swampy lake (IV.i.193). Miranda's fear for the lives of the sailors in the "wild waters" (I.ii.2) causes her to weep. Alonso, believing his son dead because of his own actions against Prospero, decides in Act III, scene iii to drown himself. His language is echoed by Prospero in Act V, scene i when the magician promises that, once he has reconciled with his enemies, "deeper than did ever plummet sound / I'll drown my book" (V.i.56–57).

These are only a few of the references to water in the play. Occasionally, the references to water are used to compare characters. For example, the echo of Alonso's desire to drown himself in Prospero's promise to drown his book calls attention to the similarity of the sacrifices each man must make. Alonso must be willing to give up his life in order to become truly penitent and to be forgiven for his treachery against Prospero. Similarly, in order to rejoin the world he has been driven from, Prospero must be willing to give up his magic and his power.

Perhaps the most important overall effect of this water motif is to heighten the symbolic importance of the tempest itself. It is as though the water from that storm runs through the language and action of the entire play—just as the tempest itself literally and crucially affects the lives and actions of all the characters.

5.5.3. Mysterious Noises

The isle is indeed, as Caliban says, “full of noises” (III.ii.130). The play begins with a “tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning” (I.i.1, stage direction), and the splitting of the ship is signaled in part by “a confused noise within” (I.i.54, stage direction). Much of the noise of the play is musical, and much of the music is Ariel’s. Ferdinand is led to Miranda by Ariel’s music. Ariel’s music also wakes Gonzalo just as Antonio and Sebastian are about to kill Alonso in Act II, scene i. Moreover, the magical banquet of Act III, scene iii is laid out to the tune of “Solemn and strange music” (III.iii.18, stage direction), and Juno and Ceres sing in the wedding masque (IV.i.106–117).

The noises, sounds, and music of the play are made most significant by Caliban’s speech about the noises of the island at III.ii.130–138. Shakespeare shows Caliban in the thrall of magic, which the theater audience also experiences as the illusion of thunder, rain, invisibility. The action of *The Tempest* is very simple. What gives the play most of its hypnotic, magical atmosphere is the series of dreamlike events it stages, such as the tempest, the magical banquet, and the wedding masque. Accompanied by music, these present a feast for the eye and the ear and convince us of the magical glory of Prospero’s enchanted isle.

5.6. SYMBOLS IN THE PLAY

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, and colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

5.6.1 The Tempest

The tempest that begins the play, and which puts all of Prospero’s enemies at his disposal, symbolizes the suffering Prospero endured, and which he wants to inflict on others. All of those shipwrecked are put at the mercy of the sea, just as Prospero and his infant daughter were twelve years ago, when some loyal friends helped them out to sea in a ragged little boat (see I.ii.144–151). Prospero must make his enemies suffer as he has suffered so that they will learn from their suffering, as he has from his. The tempest is also a symbol of Prospero’s magic, and of the frightening, potentially malevolent side of his power.

5.6.2. The Game of Chess

The object of chess is to capture the king. That, at the simplest level, is the symbolic significance of Prospero revealing Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess in the final scene. Prospero has caught the king—Alonso—and reprimanded him for his treachery. In doing so, Prospero has married Alonso’s son to his own daughter without the king’s knowledge, a deft political maneuver that assures Alonso’s support because Alonso will have no interest in upsetting a dukedom to which his own son is heir. This is the final move in Prospero’s plot, which began with the tempest. He has maneuvered the different passengers of Alonso’s ship around the island with the skill of a great chess player.

Caught up in their game, Miranda and Ferdinand also symbolize something ominous about Prospero’s power. They do not even notice the others staring at them for a few lines. “Sweet lord, you play me false,” Miranda says, and Ferdinand assures her that he “would not for the world” do so (V.i.174–176). The theatrical tableau is almost too perfect: Ferdinand and Miranda, suddenly and unexpectedly revealed behind a curtain, playing chess and talking gently of love and faith, seem entirely removed from the world around them. Though he has promised to relinquish his magic, Prospero still seems to see his daughter as a mere pawn in his game.

5.6.3. Prospero's Books

Like the tempest, Prospero's books are a symbol of his power. "Remember / First to possess his books," Caliban says to Stephano and Trinculo, "for without them / He's but a sot" (III.ii.86–88). The books are also, however, a symbol of Prospero's dangerous desire to withdraw entirely from the world. It was his devotion to study that put him at the mercy of his ambitious brother, and it is this same devotion to study that has made him content to raise Miranda in isolation. Yet, Miranda's isolation has made her ignorant of where she came from (see I.ii.33–36), and Prospero's own isolation provides him with little company. In order to return to the world where his knowledge means something more than power, Prospero must let go of his magic.

5.7. SUMMING UP

In this unit we discussed some important scenes of the play. It also shed light on the various themes that occur in the play time and again. Various motifs used in the play, namely, the master and servant motif, the water and the drowning motif and the mysterious noises were also discussed at length. The unit also traced the significance of the various symbols that were used in the play like the Tempest, the game of chess Prospero's book.

Self Assessment Questions

1. Discuss the important motifs that occur in the play.
2. Shed light on the theme of 'The Illusion of Justice'
3. Give an analysis of the following scenes:
 - (a) Act II, Scene ii
 - (b) Act V, Scene i

5.8. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Refer to our discussion at section 5.5
2. Refer to our discussion at section 5.4.1.
3. Refer to our discussion at section 5.3.4. & 5.3.9.

5.8. REFERENCES

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5.9. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTION

1. Write a note on the setting of *The Tempest*.
2. What are the main conflicts in the play, and how are they resolved?
3. Discuss the various symbols used in *The Tempest*.
4. Shed light on the various themes of *The Tempest*.

6.1. Introduction

6.2. Objectives

6.3. Character Analysis of Major Characters:

6.3.1. Prospero

6.3.2. Caliban

6.3.3. Miranda

6.3.4. Gonzalo

6.3.5. Ariel

6.3.6. King Alonso of Naples

6.3.7. Ferdinand

6.3.8. Sebastian and Antonio

6.4. Dramatic Structure

6.4.1. Post Colonial Interpretation

6.4.2. Feminist Interpretation

6.5. Summing Up

6.6. Answers to Self Assessment Questions

6.7. References

6.8. Terminal and Model Questions

6.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous two units you were given an introduction to Shakespeare. You examined his career as a playwright, learned about the literary qualities of Shakespeare's plays like his stagecraft and writing style. You were also given a critical analysis of the various acts to *The Tempest*. In this unit we will discuss some of the major characters of the play. Furthermore, the play will also be examined through Post Colonial and Feminist lenses.

6.2. OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- Understanding William Shakespeare's craft and technique of writing
- Analyze the main characters of *The Tempest*.
- Interpret *The Tempest* through some modern literary theories like Post Colonialism and Feminism

6.3. CHARACTER ANALYSIS OF MAJOR CHARACTERS

6.3.1. Prospero

Prospero is the ousted Duke of Milan who has been living in exile on a remote island for the past twelve years. He is also a powerful magician, father of Miranda, master of Ariel and Caliban. Let us examine some of the major traits of Prospero's characters:

Prospero's Magic

Throughout the play Prospero uses his magic to whip up a dramatic storm, to put on a dazzling wedding entertainment, to bully his servants, to manipulate his enemies, and to orchestrate his daughter's marriage to the Prince of Naples.

In other words, our favorite magician is a pretty powerful guy and quite a freak.

Still, before Prospero landed on the island, his devotion to the study of magic got him into big trouble. While Prospero's nose was buried in his extensive library, his snaky brother managed to steal his title ("Duke of Milan") and get him thrown out of Italy. So, before Prospero was physically isolated on the isle, he did a pretty good job of isolating himself socially by making his "art" (magic) his number one priority. Is Shakespeare trying to tell us something about the dangers of letting one's devotion to mastering his craft consume him?

Does Prospero's Art symbolize Shakespeare's Art?

If you think Shakespeare is suggesting that being an artist makes for a lonely life, then you'll probably want to think about whether or not Prospero is a stand-in for Shakespeare himself. Well, Prospero uses magic to manipulate and dazzle, just like Shakespeare. A lot of literary critics think Prospero manipulates the action of *The Tempest* like a skillful director.

Plus, when Prospero renounces his magic, Shakespeare knows *The Tempest* is the last play he will write alone. As the sorcerer Prospero breaks his staff, Shakespeare puts down his pen and it's as though he's speaking about his own retirement from the theater when Prospero says, "Now my charms are all o'erthrown, / And what strength I have's mine own" (Epilogue). He asks only that we appreciate what he's done, and humbly takes his leave of us to disappear quietly, letting his words work magic long after he has gone.

From Bitter Old Man to Merciful Human Being

But not everyone thinks of Prospero as a stand-in for William Shakespeare. In fact, some audiences see Prospero as nothing but a bitter tyrant. He's taken Caliban's island in return for his own lost title, he manipulates his daughter, is cruel to Ferdinand and Caliban, and kind to Ariel only when the spirit is totally subservient. He also puts his enemies through all kinds of hell to gather them up so he can judge them.

Although Prospero does everything in his power to confront his enemies, he's no More importantly, instead of seeking the kind of blood-and-guts vengeance that could have turned The Tempest into a "tragedy," Prospero ultimately discovers that the capacity for mercy and forgiveness is what makes us human.

After learning about the shipwreck survivors' pitiful state, Prospero declares "the rarer action is / In virtue than in vengeance" (5.1.2). This is a pretty big deal, Shmoopsters. By this point in his career, Shakespeare made a name for himself writing bummer plays like Hamlet, King Lear, and Macbeth, where violence and suffering are the names of the game. Yet, in Prospero, Shakespeare creates a figure who decides to forgive his enemies even though they have betrayed in the worst possible way. Does this mean Shakespeare has gone soft on us by the time he pens what is most likely the last play he wrote entirely by himself? We'll leave that for you to decide.

Prospero's Power

Prospero possesses magical powers and is able to conjure spirits and nymphs to perform tasks. With Ariel's help, he conjures the tempest at the start of the play.

Prospero is quite a foreboding character dealing out punishments and treating his servants with contempt, raising questions about his morality and fairness. Both Ariel and Caliban want to be free of their master which suggests he is not easy to work for.

Ariel and Caliban represent the two sides of Prospero's personality – he can be kind and generous but there is also a darker side to him. Prospero is accused by Caliban of stealing his island and thus usurping power like his brother.

Prospero's power in The Tempest is knowledge and his beloved books demonstrate this – these inform his magic.

Prospero's Forgiveness

Having been wronged by many of the characters, he graciously forgives them. Prospero's desire to rule the island reflects his brother Antonio's desire to rule Milan – they go about realizing their desire in similar ways but Prospero absolves himself at the end of the play by setting Ariel free and forgiving his persecutors.

6.3.2. Caliban

"Hag-born" "whelp," not "honoured with human shape."

"Demi-devil."

"Poor credulous monster."

"Hag-seed."

"Strange fish."

These are just a few descriptions of Caliban, one of the most debated figures in all of Shakespeare. Is this cursing, would-be rapist and wannabe killer nothing but a monster? Or, is

this belligerent, iambic pentameter speaking slave worthy of our sympathy? Is Caliban a response to Montaigne's vision of the "noble savage"? Is he symbolic of the victims of colonial expansion? Critical interpretations of Caliban are wildly different and have changed dramatically over the years. In fact, scholars get pretty fired up about how this character should be interpreted. Before we get carried away, let's start with what we do know.

Who or What is Caliban?

Caliban is the island's only native. As Prospero tells us, he is the product of the witch Sycorax's with the devil and Caliban was "littered" (a word usually used to describe animals being born, like kittens) on the island after Sycorax was booted out of her home in Algiers. So, Caliban's life didn't exactly get off to a good start. So, was he born bad, or did something happen in his life to turn him into a "thing most brutish"? We know that after Prospero and Miranda washed up on shore, Caliban seems to have had a pretty decent relationship with the old magician. To Prospero Caliban says:

When thou camest first,
Thou strokedst me and madest much of me, wouldst give me
Water with berries in't, and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less,
That burn by day and night: and then I loved thee
And show'd thee all the qualities o' the isle,
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile-- (1.2.3)

In other words, Caliban showed Prospero how to survive on the island and Prospero took Caliban under his wing and taught him to speak. (Apparently, Caliban had no language before this.) We even learn that Prospero treated Caliban "with human care" and let him stay at his pad. Caliban, we learn, tried to rape Miranda in an attempt to "people" the isle with a bunch of little Calibans. That's pretty inexcusable, so it's clear we're supposed to be repulsed by Caliban's monstrous behavior and it's easy to see why Prospero treats him like dirt.

Yet, at the same time, Caliban is also a figure who can be read as a victim of Prospero's tyranny. When Caliban declares, "This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother" (1.2.3), we're reminded that Prospero basically took over the island and made Caliban his slave. Caliban's also feisty and challenges Prospero's authority, which we can't help but admire, especially when Caliban points out that learning Prospero's language gave him the ability to "curse" his tormenter.

Regardless of how repulsive Caliban may be, he's also the character who delivers some of the most beautiful and stunning speeches in the play. Let us check out the scene where Caliban describes the beauty and wonders of the island:

Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that gives delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again
What's in a Name?

A lot of literary critics say that Caliban's name is an anagram or at least a play on the word can[n]ibal, a term derived from "carib" (as in the Caribbean), which became a European term used to describe flesh-eaters. If this is the case, then Caliban's name associates him with the

kinds of "savage" man-eaters that Europeans were reading about in travel literature when Shakespeare wrote the play.

It's also possible that Caliban's name may be a play on the Romany word "Cauliban," which means "black" or something associated with blackness. This makes some sense, especially given that Caliban is associated with darkness throughout the play. Prospero calls his slave "thou earth" (1.2.42) and says of him, "This thing of darkness / I acknowledge mine" (5.1.20). By the way, literary critic Kim F. Hall points out that Caliban's association with "darkness and dirt" is the opposite of Miranda's association with purity and light.

Is Caliban a Symbol of Colonial Injustice

For a lot of critics, Caliban is symbolic of what happened to victims of European colonization in the centuries after Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest*. We think Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan do the best job of summing up this argument:

Caliban stands for countless victims of European imperialism and colonization. Like Caliban (so the argument goes), colonized peoples were disinherited, exploited, and subjugated. Like him, they learned a conqueror's language and perhaps that conqueror's values. Like him, they endured enslavement and contempt by European usurpers and eventually rebelled. Like him, they were torn between their indigenous culture and the culture superimposed on it by their conquerors.

This interpretation of Caliban can be pretty powerful and socially relevant, especially in film and stage productions where Caliban is portrayed as a colonized, New World subject. Yet, it's also important to remember, as Vaughan and Vaughan point out, that this "interpretation of Caliban is symbolic for what he represents to the observer, not for what Shakespeare may have had in mind."

Born to Serve

Regardless of whether or not we read Caliban as a victim of colonial injustice, he's most definitely a slave and, in some ways, the play suggests he was born to be one. Miranda says as much when she points out that she helped teach Caliban language:

[...] I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other: when thou didst not, savage,
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes
With words that made them known. But thy vile race,
Though thou didst learn, had that in't which good natures
Could not abide to be with; therefore wast thou
Deservedly confined into this rock,
Who hadst deserved more than a prison. (1.2.24)

In other words, Miranda suggests that Caliban's "vile race" and lack of language makes him deserving of his status as a slave. (This, of course, is exactly what European imperialists said about the people they colonized.) What's interesting is that even Caliban seems like he lives to serve. When he conspires with Stefano and Trinculo to kill Prospero, he promises to serve Stefano:

I'll show thee every fertile inch o' th' island;
And I will kiss thy foot: I prithee, be my god.

6.3.3 Miranda

Miranda is the fourteen-year-old daughter of Prospero. (We know her age because her dad says she wasn't yet three years old when they landed on the island and twelve years have passed since then. After spending a dozen years on a remote island with her old man and the hideous slave Caliban, Miranda falls in love at first sight the moment she lays her eyes on the oh-so-dreamy Prince of Naples.

Shakespeare also gives Miranda one of the most hopeful (and famous) lines in the play. Check out what Miranda says when she spots the shipwreck victims at the end of the play:

O, wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
That has such people in't!

Here, Miranda is the mouthpiece through which Shakespeare expresses the idea that human beings (and life in general) are pretty marvelous, despite the fact that we are all flawed creatures. Aldous Huxley liked this passage so much that he made the phrase "brave new world" the title of his famous book. We admit that Miranda is pretty naïve, but that's part of what makes such an endearing figure. In the play, she represents the guileless innocence of youth and, when she falls in love Ferdinand, her romantic union is the thing that will bring together Prospero and his former enemy, the King of Naples.

When she has the chance, Miranda takes her fate into her own hands. She declares her love to Ferdinand, thinking her father still hates him. She doesn't know that Prospero secretly helped the situation along, but she's willing to do what she wants, even though it could get her into trouble with Daddy. When Prospero pretends to be mad that Miranda has fallen for Ferdinand, she totally stands up for herself: "My affections/ Are then most humble. I have no ambition to / To see a see a goodlier man". The girl isn't wise in the ways of the world, but she has a brave heart and a spirit to follow it.

Miranda's most important personal qualities might be her ability to feel empathy and amazement. When we first meet her, she's frantically begging her father to have pity on the passengers of the storm-tossed ship, which is more than we can say for Prospero. In fact, she's so worked up that Prospero assures her "Be collected. / No more amazement. Tell your piteous heart / There's no harm done" (1.1.1).

To be amazed in Shakespeare's day literally meant to be taken with terror – the word comes from how one would feel when facing a labyrinth, a literal maze. You'd be a bit scared, but maybe you'd be taken over by the wonder of this unknown thing, and brave enough to go into it anyway. Amazement might be the most fitting word for this girl – as she faces the unknown bravely, armed with her good courage and big heart, she finds innocent wonder and delight.

Miranda's name literally means "that which must be admired" (from mirari – to admire). She looks on the world with a childlike wonder, which is more than naïveté and might actually just be the eyes of an artist, able to see the beauty in everything. Admiration is an important word for Miranda from the other side too, as she isn't the only one doing all the looking: she is much admired by those who look upon her.

6.3.4. GONZALO

In the play's *dramatis personae* (literally, a list of the "persons of the play"), we're told that Gonzalo is "an honest old counselor of Naples." He's travelling with the King's party when he's shipwrecked with the other passengers on Prospero's island.

The thing to know about Gonzalo is that he's a really good guy with an optimistic outlook on life. The first time we meet Gonzalo, he's trying to break up a nasty argument between the royals and the mariners on deck during the tempest. While everyone around him is bickering and worrying about drowning, Gonzalo keeps his cool and says he's sure "good Fate" has something other than drowning in store for everyone on board the ship.

We also know that, when Prospero was booted out of Italy and set adrift with his infant daughter, Gonzalo was the one who made sure Prospero had enough food and water to survive. Gonzalo didn't just make sure Prospero would have supplies to physically sustain him, he also made sure Prospero had fancy linens and books – the kinds of things that would keep a guy like Prospero comfortable:

By Providence divine.
Some food we had and some fresh water that
A noble Neapolitan, Gonzalo,
Out of his charity, being then appointed
Master of this design, did give us, with
Rich garments, linens, stuffs and necessaries,
Which since have steaded much; so, of his gentleness,
Knowing I loved my books, he furnish'd me
From mine own library with volumes that
I prize above my dukedom.

After washing up on shore, Gonzalo is the one who reminds everybody else that they should be celebrating because they're alive: "Beseech you, sir, be merry. You have cause / So have we all, of joy; for our escape is much beyond our loss" (2.1.1). Gonzalo gives voice to the idea that, despite the (seeming) loss of the ship, the survivors can uncover something even greater. In fact, this seems to be one of the play's biggest messages. Check out what Gonzalo has to say at the play's end:

In one voyage
Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis,
And Ferdinand, her brother, found a wife
Where he himself was lost, Prospero his dukedom
In a poor isle and all of us ourselves
When no man was his own. (5.1.249-254)

Literary critic Robert Langbaum writes that Gonzalo's speech sums up the philosophy of the genre of tragicomedy – "that we lose in order to recover something greater, that we die in order to be reborn to a better life." In other words, violence and tragedy are "all part of a providential design."

Notice the way Prospero associates Gonzalo with "fate"? Earlier, we saw how Gonzalo believes that "fate" determined whether or not he and the rest of the party would drown during the storm. Here, Prospero directly associates Gonzalo with the workings of "Providence divine," as if Gonzalo is an agent of fate. This is a pretty big deal because, in the play, we get the sense that some force greater than even Prospero's magic is at work guiding the lives of each of the characters.

Gonzalo also makes a big utopian speech that literary critics like to compare to a passage from Montaigne's "Of Cannibals," a famous essay that Shakespeare totally cribbed when he wrote Gonzalo's lines. We talk about this more in "Symbols" so check it out if you want to know more.

6.3.5 Ariel

Ariel is Prospero's "tricksy" spirit servant and attends to Prospero's every need. Unlike Caliban, Ariel has a (mostly) warm and loving relationship with Prospero, who saved Ariel when he arrived on the island. (The evil witch Sycorax imprisoned Ariel in a tree because the "delicate" spirit didn't have the heart to do her bidding.)

Even though Ariel is affectionate toward Prospero, we learn early on that Ariel isn't a servant by nature; he primarily wants his liberty, but, knowing that it will come, serves Prospero wholeheartedly and happily.

Ariel is notable for his use of white magic in the play, but also for his empathy and goodness. These traits are lacking in some of the play's human characters, and Ariel's feelings only make that fact more conspicuous. Most telling is his report on the three traitors: Antonio, Sebastian, and Alonso. He claims that their state is so pathetic, if Prospero saw them he would be moved to mercy and sympathy. Ariel thinks he himself would have that same tenderness, were he human. While we are reminded that this is a spirit of a not-human nature, he seems filled with angelic grace – even about human matters.

Check out Ariel's response when Prospero asks how the King and his party are doing:

ARIEL

Your charm so strongly works 'em
That if you now beheld them, your affections
Would become tender.

PROSPERO

Dost thou think so, spirit?

ARIEL

Mine would, sir, were I human.

PROSPERO

And mine shall. (5.1.2)

Prospero's just transformed from a revenge thirsty magician to a human being with the capacity to forgive his enemies and feel "tender[ness]" toward those who betrayed him and exiled him to the island. In other words, Ariel's compassionate spirit is the catalyst for Prospero's change. Without Ariel, Prospero may never have learned that "the rarer action is / In virtue than in vengeance" (5.1.2).

Ariel performs all of his services with great skill and presentation. From showing up as fire on the ship to his appearance as a great harpy to the three traitors, Ariel treasures the aesthetic. He tends to speak in beautifully poetic verse, even about the silliest things, without ever seeming foolish. Even as he pulls on Prospero's robes, he sings a beautiful little song. Ariel stands in for all that is delightful and good in the world.

6.3.6. King Alonso of Naples

Alonso, the King of Naples, is not a particularly good guy, but not a particularly bad one, either. As we know he was an enemy of Prospero, but the first we hear of the King is that he was easily swayed by Antonio's self-interested flattery. When we properly meet Alonso, we see he's completely self-involved, easily moved to passion, sorrow, or tears, and even though he doesn't mean to be, sometimes he is a total jerk.

Alonso is easily moved one way or another, sometimes giving up his son for dead and other times searching for him doggedly. Gonzalo can sway him in one direction (towards good) when he speaks, but we know Antonio's wicked flattery also worked on the King before. That

Alonso keeps Antonio and Sebastian, willing traitors, so close to him is evidence that he is at once trusting and naïve, in addition to being a horrible judge of character.

Unlike many of the other characters here, Alonso is quick to admit when he has done wrong – so long as he is called out on it first. When Ariel as a harpy reminds King Alonso what he's done to Prospero and Miranda, the King is genuinely sorrowful. Further, when Alonso sees Prospero, he's quick to return the man's dukedom. Yet we get the sense that Alonso doesn't think too much about his actions until he's called to account for them.

Because of his remorse and his willingness to embrace Miranda, his son, and Prospero, Alonso seems to be a not-all-that-bad kind of guy, just easily influenced by the wrong crowd. Most importantly, Alonso doesn't really trust his own senses. At the end of the play, he wonders at his son and can't really wrap his mind around the strange story they've all been part of. Ultimately, he's just another one of Shakespeare's misguided royals, not the brightest crayon in the box, easily persuaded, but not altogether bad.

6.3.7. Ferdinand

Prince Ferdinand is Alonso's son and the heir to the throne of Naples. He is quick to love, and seemingly quick to forget his father's "death," but it does seem that his heart is true and his affections, though quick, are genuine. He does have a sort of princely arrogance about him. (He may be a prince, but a little humility never killed anybody.)

We learn about Ferdinand mostly through his efforts to gain Miranda from Prospero. Ferdinand is happy in his labors, blinded by love, and quick to promise the title of queen and wife to a girl before he even knows her name. He also vows to stay true to her father, Prospero, and not violate Miranda's chastity before their wedding night – maybe because he's a good guy, maybe because Prospero threatens that the heavens will rain down fire and brimstone on him. You can't say much about Ferdinand because he doesn't say or do much, besides mooning in love. Still, he does seem easy to love, earnest, and good above all else.

6.3.8 Sebastian and Antonio

This pair can mainly be dealt with together, since nearly all of their lines are together, and their action is matched. They're also in similar positions, as both are traitorous younger brothers. Antonio is Prospero's brother, who betrayed him to have the dukedom; Sebastian is younger brother to King Alonso of Naples, and is interested in stealing Alonso's throne. They work well together because Sebastian is prone to fooling around in a mean-spirited way and Antonio earns Sebastian's trust and respect by also being a horrible human being. When Sebastian is moved to murder his own brother, it is at the suggestion of the traitorous Antonio.

In their last lines in the play, Sebastian and Antonio mock Trinculo and Stefano (who are basically their reflections). They show they have learned absolutely nothing, have no remorse, and do not wish to be forgiven, because they see nothing wrong with themselves. Their plot against the King, their lack of remorse, and their wickedness in general characterize them as bad seeds.

The entertaining part of this pair is their jesting with words and ideas. They have no boundaries on the horrible things they'll say, and they make fun of everything, usually cleverly and with great effect. Basically, we find them disgusting, but fascinating to watch.

6.4. DRAMATIC STRUCTURE

The Tempest differs from Shakespeare's other plays in its observation of a stricter, more organized neoclassical style. The clearest indication of this is Shakespeare's respect for the three unities in the play: the Unities of Time, Place, and Action. Shakespeare's other plays rarely respected the three unities, taking place in separate locations miles apart and over several days or even years.[28] The play's events unfold in real time before the audience, Prospero even declaring in the last act that everything has happened in, more or less, three hours.[29][30] All action is unified into one basic plot: Prospero's struggle to regain his dukedom; it is also confined to one place, a fictional island, which many scholars agree is meant to be located in the Mediterranean Sea.[31] Another reading suggests that it takes place in the New World, as some parts read like records of English and Spanish conquest in the Americas.[32] Still others argue that the Island can represent any land that has been colonized.

6.4.1. Postcolonial Interpretation

In Shakespeare's day, much of the world was still being discovered by European seafarers, and stories were coming back from distant islands, with myths about the Cannibals of the Caribbean, faraway Edens, and distant tropical Utopias. With the character Caliban (whose name is almost an anagram of Cannibal and also resembles "Cariban", the term then used for natives in the West Indies), Shakespeare may be offering an in-depth discussion into the morality of colonialism. Different views of this are found in the play, with examples including Gonzalo's Utopia, Prospero's enslavement of Caliban, and Caliban's subsequent resentment. Caliban is also shown as one of the most natural characters in the play, being very much in touch with the natural world (and modern audiences have come to view him as far nobler than his two Old World friends, Stephano and Trinculo, although the original intent of the author may have been different). There is evidence that Shakespeare drew on Montaigne's essay *Of Cannibals*—which discusses the values of societies insulated from European influences—while writing *The Tempest*. [34]

Beginning in about 1950, with the publication of *Psychology of Colonization* by Octave Mannoni, *The Tempest* was viewed more and more through the lens of postcolonial theory. This new way of looking at the text explored the effect of the coloniser (Prospero) on the colonized (Ariel and Caliban). Though Ariel is often overlooked in these debates in favour of the more intriguing Caliban, he is nonetheless an essential component of them.[35] The French writer Aimé Césaire, in his play *Une Tempête* sets *The Tempest* in Haiti, portraying Ariel as a mulatto who, unlike the more rebellious Caliban, feels that negotiation and partnership is the way to freedom from the colonizers. Fernandez Retamar sets his version of the play in Cuba, and portrays Ariel as a wealthy Cuban (in comparison to the lower-class Caliban) who also must choose between rebellion or negotiation.[36] Although scholars have suggested that his dialogue with Caliban in Act two, Scene one, contains hints of a future alliance between the two when Prospero leaves, Ariel is generally viewed by scholars as the good servant, in comparison with the conniving Caliban—a view which Shakespeare's audience may well have shared.[37] Ariel is used by some postcolonial writers as a symbol of their efforts to overcome the effects of colonization on their culture. For example, Michelle, a Jamaican author, has said that she tries to combine Caliban and Ariel within herself to create a way of writing that represents her culture better. Such use of Ariel in postcolonial thought is far from uncommon; the spirit is even the namesake of a scholarly journal covering post-colonial criticism.[35]

6.4.2. Feminist Interpretation

The Tempest has only one female character, Miranda. Other women, such as Caliban's mother Sycorax, Miranda's mother and Alonso's daughter Claribel, are only mentioned. Because of the

small role women play in the story in comparison to other Shakespeare plays, *The Tempest* has attracted much feminist criticism. Miranda is typically viewed as being completely

deprived of freedom by her father. Her only duty in his eyes is to remain chaste. Ann Thompson argues that Miranda, in a manner typical of women in a colonial atmosphere, has completely internalized the patriarchal order of things, thinking of herself as subordinate to her father.[38]

The less-prominent women mentioned in the play are subordinated as well, as they are only described through the men of the play. Most of what is said about Sycorax, for example, is said by Prospero. Further, Stephen Orgel notes that Prospero has never met Sycorax – all he learned about her he learned from Ariel. According to Orgel, Prospero's suspicion of women makes him an unreliable source of information. Orgel suggests that he is skeptical of female virtue in general, citing his ambiguous remark about his wife's fidelity. However, certain goddesses such as Juno, Ceres, Iris, and sea nymphs are in one scene of the play.

6.5. SUMMING UP

The Tempest first appeared in print as the first play in the 1623 Folio of Shakespeare. Throughout the play's history, the play has been variously regarded as a highlight of Shakespeare's dramatic output, as a representation of the essence of human life, and as containing Shakespeare's most autobiographical character, in the form of Prospero the magician-ruler. The 1623 text appears to have few omissions or corruptions in the text, though the play does include stage directions that are unusually detailed when compared to Shakespeare's other plays.

Self Assessment Questions

1. Analyze the following characters from the play *The Tempest*:
 - a) Miranda
 - b) Prospero
 - c) Ferdinand
2. Analyze *The Tempest* in PostColonial context.
3. Give a Feminist interpretation of *The Tempest*.

6.6. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Refer to the following sections:
 - a) Refer to Section 6.3.3.
 - b) Refer to Section 6.3.1.
 - c) Refer to Section 6.3.7.
2. Refer to Section 6.4.1.
3. Refer to Section 6.4.2.

6.7. REFERENCE

Hume,W. & Hume, P. Ed. *William Shakespeare:The Tempest*. New York:W.W. Norton and Company.2003.

Vaughan,V. & Vaughan, A. Ed. *Critical Essays on Shakespeare's The Tempest*. Connecticut: Twayne Publishers.1978.

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6.8. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Explain how Shakespeare uses Ariel in the play and the effect of Ariel on the play.
2. Compare and contrast Caliban and Ariel.
3. Discuss the character of King Alonso of Naples in your own words.