BRITISH FICTION

I SEMESTER

I B.A ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Unit – I

Joseph Andrews

- Henry Fielding

Henry Fielding, (born April 22, 1707, Sharpham Park, Somerset, Eng.—died Oct. 8, 1754, Lisbon), novelist and playwright, who, with Samuel Richardson, is considered a founder of the English novel. Among his major novels are *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749). Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* was published anonymously in 1742. Described on the title page as "Written in Imitation of the Manner of Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote*," it begins as a burlesque of *Pamela*, with Joseph, Pamela's virtuous footman brother, resisting the attempts of a highborn lady to seduce him. The parodic intention soon becomes secondary, and the novel develops into a masterpiece of sustained irony and social criticism, with, at its centre, Parson Adams, one of the great comic figures of literature and a striking confirmation of the contention of the 19th-century Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky that the positively good man can be made convincing in fiction only if rendered to some extent ridiculous. Fielding explains in his preface that he is writing "a comic Epic-Poem in Prose." He was certainly inaugurating a new genre in fiction.

Summary

Joseph Andrews, a handsome young footman in the household of Sir Thomas Booby, has attracted the erotic interest of his master's wife, Lady Booby. He has also been noticed by the parson of the parish, Mr. Abraham Adams, who wishes to cultivate Joseph's moral and intellectual potential. Before he can start Joseph on a course of Latin instruction, however, the Boobys depart the country for London, taking Joseph with them.

In London, Joseph falls in with a fast crowd of urban footmen, but despite his rakish peers and the insinuations of the libidinous Lady Booby he remains uncorrupted. After a year or so Sir Thomas dies, leaving his widow free to make attempts on the footman's virtue. Joseph fails to respond to her amorous hints, however, because he is too naïve to understand them; in a letter to his sister Pamela, he indicates his belief that no woman of Lady Booby's social stature could

possibly be attracted to a mere servant. Soon Joseph endures and rebuffs another, less subtle attempt at seduction by Lady Booby's waiting-gentlewoman, the middle-aged and hideous Mrs. Slipslop.

Lady Booby sends for Joseph and tries again to beguile him, to no avail. His virtue infuriates her, so she sends him away again, resolved to terminate his employment. She then suffers agonies of indecision over whether to retain Joseph or not, but eventually Joseph receives his wages and his walking papers from the miserly steward, Peter Pounce. The former footman is actually relieved to have been dismissed, because he now believes his mistress to be both lascivious and psychologically unhinged.

Joseph sets out for the Boobys' country parish, where he will reunite with his childhood sweetheart and now fiancée, the illiterate milkmaid Fanny Goodwill. On his first night out, he runs into Two Ruffians who beat, strip, and rob him and leave him in a ditch to die. Soon a stage-coach approaches, full of hypocritical and self-interested passengers who only admit Joseph into the coach when a lawyer among them argues that they may be liable for Joseph's death if they make no effort to help him and he dies. The coach takes Joseph and the other passengers to an inn, where the chamber-maid, Betty, cares for him and a Surgeon pronounces his injuries likely mortal.

Joseph defies the Surgeon's prognosis the next day, receiving a visit from Mr. Barnabas the clergyman and some wretched hospitality from Mrs. Tow-wouse, the wife of the innkeeper. Soon another clergyman arrives at the inn and turns out to be Mr. Adams, who is on his way to London to attempt to publish several volumes of his sermons. Joseph is thrilled to see him, and Adams treats his penniless protégé to several meals. Adams is not flush with cash himself, however, and he soon finds himself trying unsuccessfully to get a loan from Mr. Tow-wouse with a volume of his sermons as security. Soon Mr. Barnabas, hearing that Adams is a clergyman, introduces him to a Bookseller who might agree to represent him in the London publishing trade. The Bookseller is not interested in marketing sermons, however, and soon the fruitless discussion is interrupted by an uproar elsewhere in the inn, as Betty the chambermaid, having been rejected by Joseph, has just been discovered in bed with Mr. Tow-wouse.

Mr. Adams ends up getting a loan from a servant from a passing coach, and he and Joseph are about to part ways when he discovers that he has left his sermons at home and thus has no reason to go to London. Adams and Joseph decide to take turns riding Adams's horse on their journey

home, and after a rocky start they are well on their way, with Adams riding in a stage-coach and Joseph riding the horse. In the coach Mr. Adams listens avidly to a gossipy tale about a jilted woman named Leonora; at the next inn he and Joseph get into a brawl with an insulting innkeeper and his wife. When they depart the inn, with Joseph in the coach and Adams theoretically on horseback, the absent-minded Adams unfortunately forgets about the horse and ends up going on foot.

On his solitary walk, Adams encounters a Sportsman who is out shooting partridge and who boasts of the great value he places on bravery. When the sound of a woman's cries reaches them, however, the Sportsman flees with his gun, leaving Adams to rescue the woman from her assailant. The athletic Adams administers a drubbing so thorough that he fears he has killed the attacker. When a group of young men comes by, however, the assailant suddenly recovers and accuses Adams and the woman of robbing and beating him. The young men lay hold of Adams and the woman and drag them to the Justice of the Peace, hoping to get a reward for turning them in. On the way Mr. Adams and the woman discover that they know each other: she is Joseph's beloved, Fanny Goodwill, who set out to find Joseph when she heard of his unfortunate encounter with the Ruffians.

The Justice of the Peace is negligent and is about to commit Adams and Fanny to prison without giving their case much thought when suddenly a bystander recognizes Adams and vouches for him as a clergyman and a gentleman. The Justice readily reverses himself and dismisses the charges against Adams and Fanny, though the assailant has already slipped away and will not be held accountable. Soon Adams and Fanny depart for the next inn, where they expect to meet Joseph.

Joseph and Fanny have a joyous reunion at the inn, and Joseph wishes to get married then and there; both Mr. Adams and Fanny, however, prefer a more patient approach. In the morning the companions discover that they have another inn bill that they cannot pay, so Adams goes off in search of the wealthy parson of the parish. Parson Trulliber, who spends most of his time tending his hogs rather than tending souls, reacts badly to Adams's request for charity. Adams returns to the inn with nothing to show for his efforts, but fortunately a generous Pedlar hears of the travelers' predicament and loans Adams the money he needs.

After a couple more miles on the road, the travelers encounter a gregarious Squire who offers them generous hospitality and the use of his coach but then retracts these offers at the last

minute. Adams discusses this strange behavior with the innkeeper, who tells him about the Squire's long history of making false promises.

Walking on after nightfall, the companions encounter a group of spectral lights that Mr. Adams takes to be ghosts but that turn out later to be the lanterns of sheep-stealers. The companions flee the scene and find accommodations at the home of a family named Wilson. After the women have retired for the evening, Mr. Adams and Joseph sit up to hear Mr. Wilson tell his life story, which is approximately the story of a "rake's progress" redeemed by the love of a good woman. Wilson also mentions that since moving from London to the country, he and his wife have lost their eldest son to a gypsy abduction.

The travelers, who are quite won over by the Wilson family and their simple country life, depart in the morning. As they walk along, Mr. Adams and Joseph discuss Wilson's biography and debate the origins of human virtue and vice. Eventually they stop to take a meal, and while they are resting, a pack of hunting dogs comes upon them, annihilates a defenseless hare, and then attacks the sleeping Mr. Adams. Joseph and his cudgel come to the parson's defense, laying waste to the pack of hounds. The owner of the hounds, a sadistic Squire whom Fielding labels a "Hunter of Men," is at first inclined to be angry about the damage to his dogs, but as soon as he sees the lovely Fanny he changes his plans and invites the companions to his house for dinner. The Hunter of Men and his retinue of grotesques taunt Mr. Adams throughout dinner, prompting the parson to fetch Joseph and Fanny from the kitchen and leave the house. The Hunter sends his servants after them with orders to abduct Fanny, whom he has been planning all along to debauch. The servants find the companions at an inn the next morning, and after another epic battle they succeed in tying Adams and Joseph to a bedpost and making off with Fanny. Luckily for Fanny, however, a group of Lady Booby's servants come along, recognize the milkmaid, and rescue her from her captors. They then proceed to the inn where Adams and Joseph are tied up, and Joseph gets to take out his frustrations on Fanny's primary captor before they all set off again. Mr. Adams rides in a coach with the obnoxious Peter Pounce, who so insults the parson that he eventually gets out of the coach and walks beside Joseph and Fanny's horse for the last mile of the journey.

The companions finally arrive home in Lady Booby's parish, and Lady Booby herself arrives shortly thereafter. At church on Sunday she hears Mr. Adams announce the wedding banns of

Joseph and Fanny, and later in the day she summons the parson for a browbeating. She claims to oppose the marriage of the young lovers on the grounds that they will raise a family of beggars in the parish. When Adams refuses to cooperate with Lady Booby's efforts to keep the lovers apart, Lady Booby summons a lawyer named Scout, who trumps up a legal pretext for preventing the marriage. Two days later Joseph and Fanny are brought before the Justice of the Peace, who is perfectly willing to acquiesce in Lady Booby's plans.

The arrival of Lady Booby's nephew, Mr. Booby, and his new wife, who happens to be Joseph's sister Pamela, thwarts the legal proceedings. Mr. Booby, not wanting anything to upset his young wife, intervenes in the case and springs her brother and Fanny. He then takes Joseph back to Booby Hall, while Fanny proceeds to the Adams home. The next day Lady Booby convinces Mr. Booby to join in her effort to dissuade Joseph from marrying Fanny. Meanwhile, Fanny takes a walk near Booby Hall and endures an assault by a diminutive gentleman named Beau Didapper; when the Beau fails to have his way with Fanny, he delegates the office to a servant and walks off. Fortunately, Joseph intervenes before the servant can get very far.
Joseph and Fanny arrive at the Adams home, where Mr. Adams counsels Joseph to be moderate and rational in his attachment to his future wife. Just as Adams finishes his recommendation of stoical detachment, someone arrives to tell him that his youngest son, Dick, has just drowned in the river. Mr. Adams, not so detached, weeps copiously for his son, who fortunately comes running up to the house before long, having been rescued from the river by the same Pedlar who earlier redeemed the travelers from one of their inns. Adams rejoices and once again thanks the Pedlar, then resumes counseling Joseph to avoid passionate attachments. Joseph attempts to point out to Adams his own inconsistency, but to no avail.

Meanwhile, Lady Booby is plotting to use Beau Didapper to come between Joseph and Fanny. She takes him, along with Mr. Booby and Pamela, to the Adams household, where the Beau attempts to fondle Fanny and incurs the wrath of Joseph. When the assembled Boobys suggest to Joseph that he is wasting his time on the milkmaid, Joseph departs with his betrothed, vowing to have nothing more to do with any relations who will not accept Fanny.

Joseph, Fanny, the Pedlar, and the Adamses all dine together at an alehouse that night. There, the Pedlar reveals that he has discovered that Fanny is in fact the long-lost daughter of Mr. and Mrs.

Andrews, which would make her the sister of Joseph and thereby not eligible to be his wife. Back at Booby Hall, Lady Booby rejoices to learn that Joseph and Fanny have been discovered to be siblings. Everyone then gathers at the Hall, where Mr. Booby advises everyone to remain calm and withhold judgment until the next day, when Mr. and Mrs. Andrews will arrive and presumably will clear things up.

Late that night, hi-jinx ensue as Beau Didapper seeks Fanny's bed but ends up in Mrs. Slipslop's. Slipslop screams for help, bringing Mr. Adams, who mistakenly attacks Slipslop while the Beau gets away. Lady Booby then arrives to find Adams and Slipslop in bed together, but the confusion dissipates before long and Adams makes his way back toward his room. Unfortunately, a wrong turn brings him to Fanny's room, where he sleeps until morning, when Joseph discovers the parson and the milkmaid in bed together. After being briefly angry, Joseph concludes that Adams simply made a wrong turn in the night.

Once Adams has left them alone, the apparent siblings vow that if they turn out really to be siblings, they will both remain perpetually celibate. Later that morning Mr. and Mrs. Andrews arrive, and soon it emerges that Fanny is indeed their daughter, stolen from her cradle; what also emerges, however, is that Joseph is not really their son but the changeling baby they received in place of Fanny. The Pedlar suddenly thinks of the Wilson family, who long ago lost a child with a distinctive birth-mark on his chest, and it so happens that Joseph bears just such a distinctive birth-mark. Mr. Wilson himself is luckily coming through the gate of Booby Hall at that very moment, so the reunion between father and son takes place on the spot.

Everyone except Lady Booby then proceeds to Mr. Booby's country estate, and on the ride over Joseph and Fanny make their wedding arrangements. After the wedding, the newlyweds settle near the Wilsons. Mr. Booby dispenses a small fortune to Fanny, a valuable clerical living to Mr. Adams, and a job as excise-man to the Pedlar. Lady Booby returns to a life of flirtation in London.

Joseph Andrews Character List

Joseph Andrews

A handsome and virtuous young footman whom Lady Booby attempts to corrupt. He is a protégé of Mr. Adams and the devoted but chaste lover of Fanny Goodwill. His adventures in journeying

from the Booby household in London back to the countryside, where he plans to marry Fanny, provide the main plot of the novel.

Mr. Abraham Adams

A benevolent, absent-minded, impecunious, and somewhat vain curate in Lady Booby's country parish. He notices and cultivates Joseph's intelligence and moral earnestness from early on, and he supports Joseph's determination to marry Fanny. His journey back to the countryside coincides with Joseph's for much of the way, and the vibrancy of his simple good nature makes him a rival of Joseph for the title of protagonist.

Fanny Goodwill

The beautiful but reserved beloved of Joseph, a milkmaid, believed to be an orphan. She endures many unsuccessful sexual assaults.

Sir Thomas Booby

The recently deceased master of Joseph and patron of Mr. Adams. Other characters' reminiscences portray him as decent but not heroically virtuous; he once promised Mr. Adams a clerical living in return for Adams's help in electing Sir Thomas to parliament, but he then allowed his wife to talk him out of it.

Lady Booby

Sir Thomas's widow, whose grieving process involves playing cards and propositioning servants. She is powerfully attracted to Joseph, her footman, but finds this attraction degrading and is humiliated by his rejections. She exemplifies the traditional flaws of the upper class, namely snobbery, egotism, and lack of restraint, and she is prone to drastic mood swings.

Mrs. Slipslop

A hideous and sexually voracious upper servant in the Booby household. Like her mistress, she lusts after Joseph.

Peter Pounce

Lady Booby's miserly steward, who lends money to other servants at steep interest and gives himself airs as a member of the upwardly striving new capitalist class.

Mr. Booby

The nephew of Sir Thomas. Fielding has adapted this character from the "Mr. B." of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*; like Richardson's character, Mr. Booby is a rather snobbish squire who marries his servant girl, Pamela Andrews.

Pamela Andrews

Joseph's virtuous and beautiful sister, from whom he derives inspiration for his resistance to Lady Booby's sexual advances. Pamela, too, is a servant in the household of a predatory Booby, though she eventually marries her lascivious master. Fielding has adapted this character from the heroine of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*.

Mr. Andrews

The father of Pamela and, ostensibly, Joseph.

Mrs. Andrews

The mother of Pamela and, ostensibly, Joseph.

Two Ruffians

Highwaymen who beat, rob, and strip Joseph on the first night of his journey.

Postilion

Lends Joseph his greatcoat when Joseph is naked following the attack by the Ruffians.

Mr. Tow-wouse

The master of the inn where Joseph boards after being attacked by the Ruffians. He intends to lend Joseph one of his own shirts, but his stingy wife prevents him. Later he is discovered in bed with Betty the chambermaid.

Mrs. Tow-wouse

The frugal, nagging wife of Mr. Tow-wouse.

Betty

A chambermaid in the inn of Mr. and Mrs. Tow-wouse. Her initial care of Joseph bespeaks her basic good nature, but she is also lustful, and her association with him ends badly.

Mr. Barnabas

A clergyman who never passes up a drink and halfheartedly attends Joseph during his recovery from the attack by the Ruffians.

Surgeon

Belatedly addresses the injuries Joseph sustained during his attack by the Ruffians.

Bookseller

A friend of Mr. Barnabas, declines to represent Mr. Adams, author of several volumes of sermons, in the London book trade.

Tom Suckbribe

The Constable who fails to guard an imprisoned Ruffian and may have some financial incentive for failing in this office.

Leonora

The reclusive inhabitant of a grand house along the stage-coach route, a shallow woman who once jilted the hard-working Horatio for the frivolous Bellarmine and then was jilted in turn.

Horatio

An industrious lawyer who intended to marry Leonora but lost her to the wealthy and flamboyant Bellarmine.

Bellarmine

A Frenchified cavalier who values Leonora's beauty enough to steal her away from Horatio but who finally rejects her when her father refuses to supply a dowry.

Leonora's Father

A miserly old gentleman who refuses to bestow any money on his daughter during his life and thereby causes her to lose Bellarmine as a suitor.

Leonora's Aunt

Leonora's chaperone during the period of her courtship by Horatio and then Bellarmine; encourages Leonora to pursue her financial self-interest in choosing a mate.

Mrs. Grave-airs

A snobbish stage-coach passenger who objects to traveling with the footman Joseph but turns out to be the daughter of a man who was once a lower servant.

Sportsman

Encounters Mr. Adams while out shooting one night; extolls bravery when conversing with Adams but flees the scene when the cries of a distressed woman are heard.

The Justice

A local magistrate who does not take his responsibilities very seriously. He handles the case of Mr. Adams and Fanny when Fanny's attacker accuses them of having beaten and robbed him.

Mr. Wilson

A gentleman who, after a turbulent youth, has retired to the country with his wife and children and lives a life of virtue and simplicity. His eldest son, who turns out to have been Joseph, was stolen by gypsies as a child.

Mrs. Wilson

The wife of Wilson. She once redeemed him from debtor's prison, having been the object of his undeclared love for some time.

Pedlar

An apparent instrument of providence who pays one of Mr. Adams's many inn bills, rescues Mr. Adams's drowning son, and figures out the respective parentages of both Joseph and Fanny.

Mrs. Adams

The wife of Mr. Adams and mother of his six children, prone to nagging but also appreciative of her husband's loving nature.

Parson Trulliber

An entrepreneurial and greedy clergyman, more dedicated to hog farming than to the care of souls, who refuses to lend Mr. Adams money for his inn bill.

Mrs. Trulliber

The downtrodden wife of Parson Trulliber.

Hunter of Men

An eccentric and rather sadistic country gentleman who sets his hunting dogs on Mr. Adams, allows his friends to play cruel jokes on him, and attempts to abduct Fanny.

Captain

One of the Squire's friends, abducts Fanny on the Squire's orders but is himself taken prisoner by servants of Lady Booby.

Player

One of the Squire's friends, a failed actor who pursues Fanny on the Squire's orders but flees when the Captain is taken prisoner.

Poet

One of the Squire's friends, a failed playwright who pursues Fanny on the Squire's orders but flees when the Captain is taken prisoner.

Quack-Doctor

One of the Squire's friends; comes up with a Socratic practical joke that exploits Mr. Adams's pedantry.

Priest

Discourses on the vanity of riches before asking Mr. Adams for money to pay his inn bill.

Lawyer Scout

Tells Mr. Adams that Joseph has worked long enough to gain a settlement in Lady Booby's parish, but then becomes a willing accomplice in Lady Booby's attempt to expel Joseph and Fanny.

Justice Frolick

The local magistrate who cooperates with Lady Booby's attempt to expel Joseph and Fanny from her parish.

Beau Didapper

A guest of Lady Booby's, lusts after Fanny and makes several unsuccessful attempts on her.

Pimp

A servant of Beau Didapper's, attempts to persuade Fanny to accept his master's advances and then makes a few attempts on his own behalf.

Dick Adams

A son of Mr. and Mrs. Adams, nearly drowns in a river but is rescued by the Pedlar. He then reads the story of Leonard and Paul to his parents' guests.

Leonard

A married man who argues frequently with his wife while entertaining his friend Paul in their home. Like his wife, he eventually accepts Paul's advice always to yield in disputes, even and especially when he knows himself to be right.

Leonard's Wife

The wife of Leonard, with whom she argues frequently while they are entertaining his friend Paul in their home. Like her husband, she eventually accepts Paul's advice always to yield in disputes, even and especially when she knows herself to be right.

Paul

Leonard's friend, separately advises both Leonard and Leonard's wife to adhere to the "Doctrine of Submission."

Themes in Joseph Andrews

Appearances

Joseph's face could launch a thousand ships… Wait, that's not how that goes. But seriously, Joseph is a handsome guy who attracts ladies right and left. A major plot point has to do with his obliviousness to female attention, largely a result of that gorgeous mug. What's a male model-lookalike to do?

Like Fanny, Joseph isn't aware of how attractive he is—and that could be one thing that makes him even *more* attractive to the ladies. Think of it this way: since Joe doesn't know how handsome he is, he's free to dwell on the stuff that matters, like developing his inner self and, you know, memorizing Parson Adams's copy of Aeschylus. Everyone else is free to stare at his pretty face.

Lust

The ladies are the lustful ones in *Joseph Andrews.* Sure, the men (besides Joseph) have their fair share of randy moments, but the women are the ones who actually indulge their feelings. Take Lady Booby, for instance: she makes a pretty bold move by inviting Joseph into her bedroom while she's naked. Or consider Mrs. Slipslop, who makes a pretty straightforward play for Joseph at the beginning of the book.

In a society where lust often has serious social ramifications, what's the deal with these women? Lady Booby, at least, has a lot to lose. That should tell us a lot about how tempting Joseph is, first and foremost. But Fielding is also totally making fun of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, where the virtuous heroine tries to withstand a lot of unwholesome male attention. It's as if Fielding is saying, "Hey, this is the eighteenth century: everybody's got sex on the brain. Some of us just deal with it better than others."

Of course, in Lady Booby and Mrs. Slipslop, we do also see these women taking control (if you can call it that) of their sex lives in a way that isn't totally typical—or representative—of eighteenth-century life. If Lady Booby really pulled a stunt like seducing Joseph, she probably would have some major consequences to face up to—if anybody ever found out, anyway.

Violence

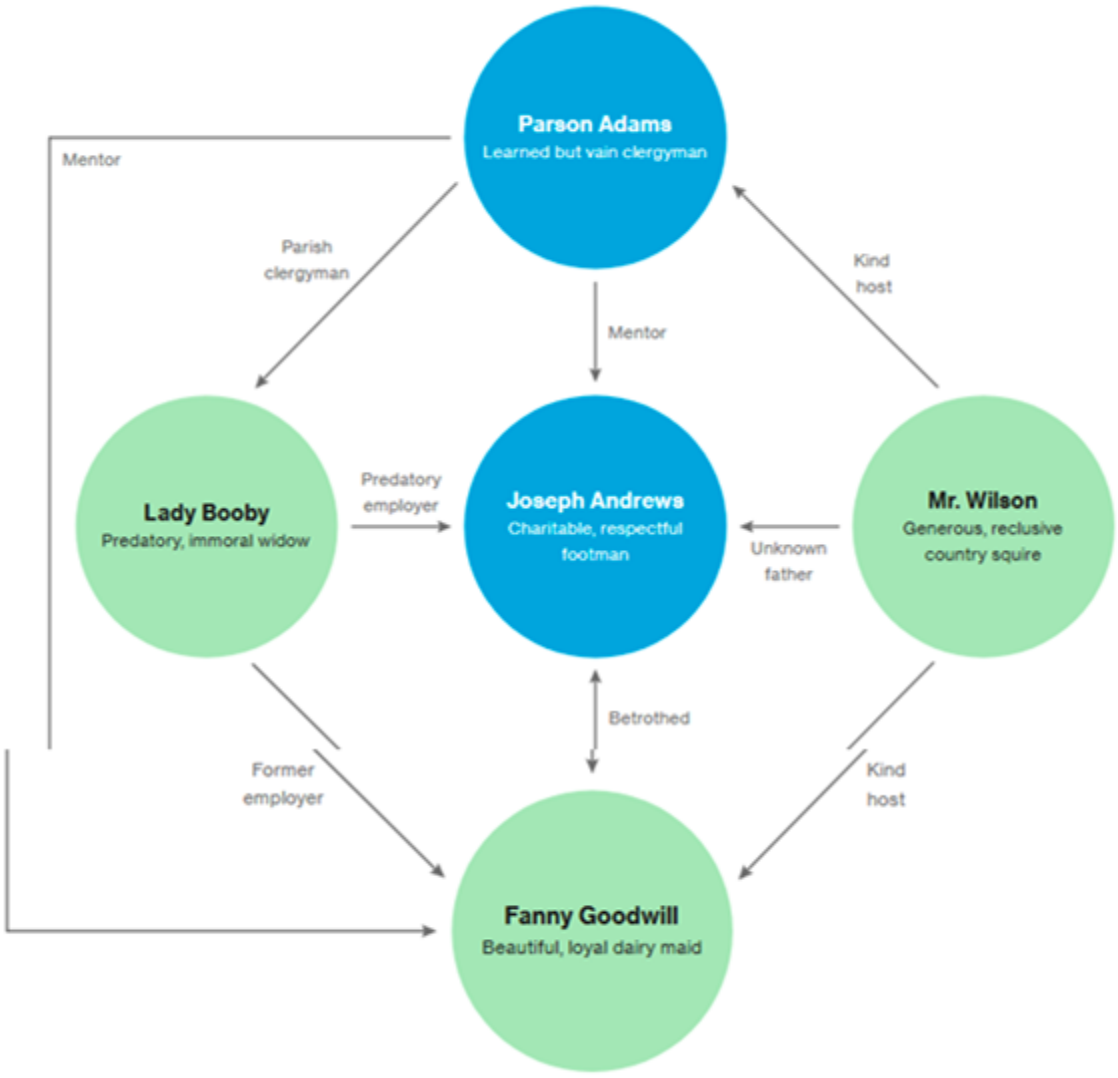
For a comedic book, there's an awful lot of violence in *Joseph Andrews.* Between Parson Adams and his crabstick and Joseph and his cudgel, we wouldn't want to mess with this crew. While we'd like to see these dudes as the defenders of justice, Adams is often the one to throw the first punch. Like, does he really need to deck the grumpy innkeeper?

We could see this two ways. Either Adams harbors a lot of inner rage that he's letting out, or he really does believe in the principles he advocates. (Good thing he doesn't advocate for violence, right?) We're going with the second option. Usually, the fights Adams gets in have to do with sticking up for his friends or being slighted by someone rude. Surely, we can forgive him that much.

Foolishness and Folly

For all the smart cookies lurking around in *Joseph Andrews,* there's also *plenty* of foolishness and folly to go around. Though Lady Booby (that name!) comes close, we're gonna say that Parson Adams wins the prize for most foolish of all. (Perhaps he's earned some fool's gold?) His appearance certainly does some of the work for him: with that cassock and ridiculous wig, certain folks find it hard to take him seriously. But then, on top of that, he has to go around quoting the most ridiculous, obscure texts, just to make himself look extra foolish.

If we learn anything from Parson Adams, it's that foolishness and wisdom aren't necessarily mutually exclusive. The good Parson has plenty of life lessons to impart to his young friends, and they'd be missing out if they dismissed him as a total fool… even if he does look pretty funny rolling down that hill.


Parson Adams
Learned but vain clergyman
Mentor
Parish clergyman
Mentor
Kind host
Lady Booby
Predatory, immoral widow
Predatory employer
Joseph Andrews
Charitable, respectful footman
Unknown father
Mr. Wilson
Generous, reclusive country squire
Betrothed
Former employer
Kind host
Fanny Goodwill
Beautiful, loyal dairy maid

Unit – II

Kenil Worth

- Sir Walter Scott

Sir Walter Scott, in full **Sir Walter Scott, 1st Baronet**, (born August 15, 1771, Edinburgh, Scotland—died September 21, 1832, Abbotsford, Roxburgh, Scotland), Scottish novelist, poet, historian, and biographer who is often considered both the inventor and the greatest practitioner of the historical novel. Scott's father was a lawyer, and his mother was the daughter of a physician. From his earliest years, Scott was fond of listening to his elderly relatives' accounts and stories of the Scottish Border, and he soon became a voracious reader of poetry, history, drama, and fairy tales and romances. He had a remarkably retentive memory and astonished visitors by his eager reciting of poetry. His explorations of the neighbouring countryside developed in him both a love of natural beauty and a deep appreciation of the historic struggles of his Scottish forebears.

Short Summary

The novel opens in Bony Black Bear Inn owned by Giles Gosling. He just welcomes his mischievous nephew Michael Lambourne on his return from Flanders. He boasts his services in the army. A party is arranged to celebrate the return of Lambourne. He invites the Cornishman, Tressilian, and other guests to drink with them. During the party Lambourne comes to know about a certain young lady under the steward Foster's charge at Cumnor Place. It was owned by the Earl of Leicester. Tressilian and Lambourne visit the place. On arriving there Tressilian finds out that this lady is his former lady-love, Amy. He offers to take her home, but she refuses. As he is leaving, he quarrels with Richard Varney, the earl's squire. Varney announces the arrival of the Earl. He hands over Amy the gift sent by the Earl. During the visit of the Earl, Amy pleads to make their marriage public but he refuses the resentment of Elizabeth.

Varney employs Lambourne to spy Tressilian. Warned by his host, Tressilian leaves Cumnor by night and reaches the residence of Sir Hugh Robsart, Amy's father. Returning to London, Tressilian befriends Wayland Smith who cures the Earl of Sussex of a dangerous illness. They plan to bring Amy's case before the queen. When the case is brought in front of the queen, she

asks both the Earl of Leicester and Earl of Sussex to forget their enmity and become friends. When Tressilian brings the case of Amy, Varney claims that Amy is his wife and saves Earl of Leicester

Wayland Smith manages to meet Amy informs her about the arrival of Elizabeth to Kenilworth and the rumour about the marriage between the queen and Leicester. The queen commands Varney to be present in Kenilworth along with his wife Amy. Realizing the danger Varney informs the queen that Amy is unwell and produces medical certificate. By the mean time, Amy escapes with the help of Wayland Smith and reaches Kenilworth.

Amy writes a letter to the Earl in which she explains the situation which led her to come to Kenilworth and presents the evil motives of Varney. Unfortunately Wayland Smith misses that letter. By that time the Earl of Leicester proposes to marry the queen which is rejected by her. Receiving no reply to her note, Amy presents herself in front of the queen and seeks protection from Varney. Also, she claims that the Earl knows everything. When the Earl is in danger, Varney rescues him by saying that she is mentally ill. The queen orders a medical examination by the royal physician.

Both Leicester and Varney realize the possible danger. Varney influences the Earl and obtains permission to take Amy away from Kenilworth. The next witnesses the duel between Tressilian and the Earl. It was interrupted and the missing letter of Amy is given to the Earl. Now, the Earl understands the schemes of Varney and cries. He confesses to the queen about his secret marriage with Amy and seeks forgiveness. The queen orders to rescue Amy from the hands of Varney immediately. Sir Walter Raleigh and Tressilian proceed to Cumnor to save Amy.

Varney reaches Cumnor place first and sets a trap to kill Amy with the help of Anthony Forster. But Forster warns her not to come out of the room until the Earl comes. In the following evening when she hears whistle like the earl's signal, she tries to come out of the room. It unhooks the trap and she is killed in the mishap. The death of Amy halts all the celebrations in Kenilworth. Varney dies in prison by consuming poison. Amy’s father Sir Hugh Robsart settles all his properties to Tressilian and dies very soon after his daughter. Leicester is recalled to the court after a short break. Walter Raleigh rises in rank and power. Tressilian looks very dejected and

looks older than his age. He goes to Virginia in America along with Walter Raleigh and dies young. Wayland Smith marries Janet and lives happily. Anthony Forster's skeleton was found in the secret room found nearby Amy's room after several years. He had gold bars in his hands.

Historical Aspects

- The novel is set against the time of Queen Elizabeth.
- Scott uses historical characters but meddles with the facts.
- But he presents the spirit of the age effectively and portrays them realistically.
- There are many inaccuracies in the facts presented in the novel.
- Amy was married by the Earl openly. It was not a secret marriage as presented in the novel.
- Critics say: "Scott always treated history with perfect disregard of inconvenient facts and dates.
- A Spanish ambassador of that time records: "Lord Robert Dudley's wife had a breast cancer and the queen only waits till she dies to marry him".
- Some other critics claim that Amy was not ill and she struggled hard to protect herself from being poisoned.
- In reality, Varney and Anthony Forster are very good friends.
- There was no person named Wayland Smith in history. It was just a legend.

Characters

Giles Gosling, host of the "Black Bear" at Cumnor
Michael Lambourne, his nephew
Edmund Tressilian, a Cornish gentleman, Amy's former lover
Wayland Smith, his servant
Thomas Radclyffe, 3rd Earl of Sussex
Sir Nicholas Blount, master of house to the Earl of Sussex
Sir Walter Raleigh, a gentleman in the household of the Earl of Sussex
Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester
Richard Varney, his squire
Anthony Foster, steward of Cumnor Place
Master Erasmus Holiday, a village pedagogue

Dickie Sludge, alias Flibbertigibbet, one of his pupils
Doctor Doboobie, alias Alasco, an astrologer
Sir Hugh Robsart, of Lidcote Hall, Devonshire
Amy Robsart, his daughter
Janet Foster, her attendant at Cumnor
Queen Elizabeth, at Kenilworth
In attendance on the Queen
Lord Hunsdon
Lord Burleigh

Themes

Kenilworth is a novel of selfishness versus selflessness and ambition versus love. Amy and the Earl both struggle internally with selfishness and love, while Varney and Tressilian each typify the extremes of the two qualities. Perhaps the finest point of this work is its characterization. The Earl is shown as an ambition-driven man who will stoop to deceit and almost anything else in order to attain his goals, but with one saving grace—he loves Amy, and in the end gives up his pride and ambition to confess their marriage. Amy Robsart is a pretty, spoiled child whose tragic circumstances teach her maturity and determination, although such lessons come too late to save her. Tressilian is the serious, steadfast lover of Amy, and continues to try to save her from herself throughout the book and finally dies of a broken heart. Varney is the chief villain of the work. His greed and ambition know no bounds. It is he that pushes the Earl beyond what he would normally do to secure power, and it is he that finally murders Amy Robsart.

Unit – III

Oliver Twist

- **Charles Dickens**

Oliver Twist, in full **Oliver Twist; or, The Parish Boy's Progress**, novel by Charles Dickens, published serially under the pseudonym "Boz" from 1837 to 1839 in *Bentley's Miscellany* and in a three-volume book in 1838. The novel was the first of the author's works to realistically depict the impoverished London underworld and to illustrate his belief that poverty leads to crime.

Charles Dickens, in full **Charles John Huffam Dickens**, (born February 7, 1812, Portsmouth, Hampshire, England—died June 9, 1870, Gad's Hill, near Chatham, Kent), English novelist, generally considered the greatest of the Victorian era. His many volumes include such works as *A Christmas Carol*, *David Copperfield*, *Bleak House*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations*, and *Our Mutual Friend*.Dickens enjoyed a wider popularity during his lifetime than had any previous author. Much in his work could appeal to the simple and the sophisticated, to the poor and to the queen, and technological developments as well as the qualities of his work enabled his fame to spread worldwide very quickly. His long career saw fluctuations in the reception and sales of individual novels, but none of them was negligible or uncharacteristic or disregarded, and, though he is now admired for aspects and phases of his work that were given less weight by his contemporaries, his popularity has never ceased. The most abundantly comic of English authors, he was much more than a great entertainer. The range, compassion, and intelligence of his apprehension of his society and its shortcomings enriched his novels and made him both one of the great forces in 19th-century literature and an influential spokesman of the conscience of his age.

Summary

The novel follows the journey of the titular character, Oliver Twist. Oliver, an orphan since birth, spends much of his childhood at a "child farm" (orphanage) with too many children and too little food. The farm is located roughly 70 miles outside London. One night, after being served his portion of gruel, Oliver asks for a second helping. This is unacceptable, and Oliver is sent to work as an apprentice to an undertaker. Eventually, after suffering repeated mistreatment, Oliver

runs away and heads for London. He soon finds himself in the presence of the Artful Dodger, who tells him to stay at the house of an "old gentleman" (named Fagin) with a number of other boys. Oliver learns that these boys are trained pickpockets. On an outing, Oliver witnesses the boys take a handkerchief from Mr. Brownlow, an elderly man, which prompts Oliver to run away in fear and confusion. The elderly man mistakes Oliver's behaviour for guilt and has him arrested. However, after learning more about Oliver, Mr. Brownlow realizes his mistake and offers to take care of him at his home.

Oliver assumes that he is now rid of Fagin and the pickpockets, but his knowledge of their crimes causes them to seek Oliver out. Nancy, a prostitute and mistress of one of Fagin's men, Bill Sikes, is sent to take Oliver from Mr. Brownlow back to Fagin. She does so successfully, and Oliver is sent on a burglary mission with another member of the group to the countryside around London. On this errand, Oliver is shot in the arm and then is taken in by the family (the Maylies) that he attempted to rob. While he is there, Fagin and a man named Monks plot to get him back. Rose Maylie, while on a trip to London with her family, meets with Mr. Brownlow to talk with Nancy, who has slipped away from Sikes to explain the plans made by Monks and Fagin to get Oliver back. She describes Monks and tells them when he might most easily be apprehended. Unfortunately for Nancy, news of her betrayal reaches Sikes, and he beats her to death. Sikes accidentally hangs himself soon after. The Maylies reunite Oliver with Mr. Brownlow, who forces Monks to explain himself. The reader and Oliver are then informed that Monks is Oliver's half-brother and that Oliver is entitled to a large fortune. He receives his share of the money, Fagin is hung, and the Maylies, Oliver, and Mr. Brownlow move to the countryside where they spend the rest of their days together.

Analysis

Oliver Twist was very popular when it was first published, partially because of its scandalous subject matter. It depicted crime and murder without holding back—causing it, in Victorian London, to be classed as a "Newgate novel" (named after Newgate Prison in London). While critics often condemned such novels as immoral, the public usually enjoyed them. Because the novel was also published serially, the anticipation of waiting for the next installment (and its

many cliffhangers) also likely contributed to its popularity. To this day, *Oliver Twist* is enjoyed by many for its historical social 8commentary and exciting plotline. It has been adapted for film several times, including in 1948 (directed by David Lean) and 2005 (directed by Roman Polanski).

Characters

Mr. Bumble, fictional character in the novel *Oliver Twist* (1837–39) by Charles Dickens. Mr. Bumble is the cruel, pompous beadle of the poorhouse where the orphaned Oliver is raised. *Bumbledom,* named after him, characterizes the meddlesome self-importance of the petty bureaucrat.Mr. Bumble marries the poorhouse matron, Mrs. Corney, a tyrannical woman who completely dominates him. In response to learning that a husband bears legal responsibility for his wife's actions, Mr. Bumble utters the celebrated line "If the law supposes that—the law is a ass." The Bumbles become paupers in the same poorhouse where they once inflicted such damage and unhappiness.

The Artful Dodger, byname of **Jack Dawkins**, fictional character in Charles Dickens's novel *Oliver Twist* (1837–39). The Artful Dodger is a precocious streetwise boy who introduces the protagonist Oliver to the thief Fagin and his gang of children, who work as thieves and pickpockets.

Fagin, fictional character, one of the villains in Charles Dickens's novel *Oliver Twist* (1837–39) and one of the most notorious anti-Semitic portraits in English literature.Fagin is an old man in London who teaches young homeless boys how to be pickpockets and then fences their stolen goods. Although a miser and exploiter, he shows a certain loyalty and solicitude toward the boys. The Artful Dodger is one of Fagin's thieves and, for a time, so is the young Oliver Twist. At the novel's end, Fagin is executed for complicity in a murder.

Oliver Twist

As the child hero of a melodramatic novel of social protest, Oliver Twist is meant to appeal more to our sentiments than to our literary sensibilities. On many levels, Oliver is not a believable character, because although he is raised in corrupt surroundings, his purity and virtue are

absolute. Throughout the novel, Dickens uses Oliver's character to challenge the Victorian idea that paupers and criminals are already evil at birth, arguing instead that a corrupt environment is the source of vice. At the same time, Oliver's incorruptibility undermines some of Dickens's assertions. Oliver is shocked and horrified when he sees the Artful Dodger and Charley Bates pick a stranger's pocket and again when he is forced to participate in a burglary. Oliver's moral scruples about the sanctity of property seem inborn in him, just as Dickens's opponents thought that corruption is inborn in poor people. Furthermore, other pauper children use rough Cockney slang, but Oliver, oddly enough, speaks in proper King's English. His grammatical fastidiousness is also inexplicable, as Oliver presumably is not well-educated. Even when he is abused and manipulated, Oliver does not become angry or indignant. When Sikes and Crackit force him to assist in a robbery, Oliver merely begs to be allowed to "run away and die in the fields." Oliver does not present a complex picture of a person torn between good and evil—instead, he is goodness incarnate.

Even if we might feel that Dickens's social criticism would have been more effective if he had focused on a more complex poor character, like the Artful Dodger or Nancy, the audience for whom Dickens was writing might not have been receptive to such a portrayal. Dickens's Victorian middle-class readers were likely to hold opinions on the poor that were only a little less extreme than those expressed by Mr. Bumble, the beadle who treats paupers with great cruelty. In fact, *Oliver Twist* was criticized for portraying thieves and prostitutes at all. Given the strict morals of Dickens's audience, it may have seemed necessary for him to make Oliver a saintlike figure. Because Oliver appealed to Victorian readers' sentiments, his story may have stood a better chance of effectively challenging their prejudices.

Nancy

A major concern of *Oliver Twist* is the question of whether a bad environment can irrevocably poison someone's character and soul. As the novel progresses, the character who best illustrates the contradictory issues brought up by that question is Nancy. As a child of the streets, Nancy has been a thief and drinks to excess. The narrator's reference to her "free and agreeable . . . manners" indicates that she is a prostitute. She is immersed in the vices condemned by her society, but she also commits perhaps the most noble act in the novel when she sacrifices her

own life in order to protect Oliver. Nancy's moral complexity is unique among the major characters in *Oliver Twist.* The novel is full of characters who are all good and can barely comprehend evil, such as Oliver, Rose, and Brownlow; and characters who are all evil and can barely comprehend good, such as Fagin, Sikes, and Monks. Only Nancy comprehends and is capable of both good and evil. Her ultimate choice to do good at a great personal cost is a strong argument in favor of the incorruptibility of basic goodness, no matter how many environmental obstacles it may face.

Nancy's love for Sikes exemplifies the moral ambiguity of her character. As she herself points out to Rose, devotion to a man can be "a comfort and a pride" under the right circumstances. But for Nancy, such devotion is "a new means of violence and suffering"—indeed, her relationship with Sikes leads her to criminal acts for his sake and eventually to her own demise. The same behavior, in different circumstances, can have very different consequences and moral significance. In much of *Oliver Twist,* morality and nobility are black-and-white issues, but Nancy's character suggests that the boundary between virtue and vice is not always clearly drawn.

Rose Maylie

Agnes Fleming's sister, raised by Mrs. Maylie after the death of Rose's father. A beautiful, compassionate, and forgiving young woman, Rose is the novel's model of female virtue. She establishes a loving relationship with Oliver even before it is revealed that the two are related.

Mr. Brownlow

A well-off, erudite gentleman who serves as Oliver's first benefactor. Mr. Brownlow owns a portrait of Agnes Fleming and was engaged to Mr. Leeford's sister when she died. Throughout the novel, he behaves with compassion and common sense and emerges as a natural leader.

Monks

A sickly, vicious young man, prone to violent fits and teeming with inexplicable hatred. With Fagin, he schemes to give Oliver a bad reputation.

Bill Sikes

A brutal professional burglar brought up in Fagin's gang. Sikes is Nancy's pimp and lover, and he treats both her and his dog Bull's-eye with an odd combination of cruelty and grudging affection. His murder of Nancy is the most heinous of the many crimes that occur in the novel.

Themes

The Failure of Charity

Much of the first part of *Oliver Twist* challenges the organizations of charity run by the church and the government in Dickens's time. The system Dickens describes was put into place by the Poor Law of 1834, which stipulated that the poor could only receive government assistance if they moved into government workhouses. Residents of those workhouses were essentially inmates whose rights were severely curtailed by a host of onerous regulations. Labor was required, families were almost always separated, and rations of food and clothing were meager. The workhouses operated on the principle that poverty was the consequence of laziness and that the dreadful conditions in the workhouse would inspire the poor to better their own circumstances. Yet the economic dislocation of the Industrial Revolution made it impossible for many to do so, and the workhouses did not provide any means for social or economic betterment. Furthermore, as Dickens points out, the officials who ran the workhouses blatantly violated the values they preached to the poor. Dickens describes with great sarcasm the greed, laziness, and arrogance of charitable workers like Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Mann. In general, charitable institutions only reproduced the awful conditions in which the poor would live anyway. As Dickens puts it, the poor choose between "being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick one out of it."

The Folly of Individualism

With the rise of capitalism during the Industrial Revolution, individualism was very much in vogue as a philosophy. Victorian capitalists believed that society would run most smoothly if individuals looked out for their own interests. Ironically, the clearest pronunciation of this philosophy comes not from a legitimate businessman but from Fagin, who operates in the illicit businesses of theft and prostitution. He tells Noah Claypole that "a regard for number one holds us all together, and must do so, unless we would all go to pieces in company." In other words, the group's interests are best maintained if every individual looks out for "number one," or

himself. The folly of this philosophy is demonstrated at the end of the novel, when Nancy turns against Monks, Charley Bates turns against Sikes, and Monks turns against Mrs. Corney. Fagin's unstable family, held together only by the self-interest of its members, is juxtaposed to the little society formed by Oliver, Brownlow, Rose Maylie, and their many friends. This second group is bound together not by concerns of self-interest but by "strong affection and humanity of heart," the selfless devotion to each other that Dickens sees as the prerequisite for "perfect happiness."

Purity in a Corrupt City

Throughout the novel, Dickens confronts the question of whether the terrible environments he depicts have the power to "blacken [the soul] and change its hue for ever." By examining the fates of most of the characters, we can assume that his answer is that they do not. Certainly, characters like Sikes and Fagin seem to have sustained permanent damage to their moral sensibilities. Yet even Sikes has a conscience, which manifests itself in the apparition of Nancy's eyes that haunts him after he murders her. Charley Bates maintains enough of a sense of decency to try to capture Sikes. Of course, Oliver is above any corruption, though the novel removes him from unhealthy environments relatively early in his life. Most telling of all is Nancy, who, though she considers herself "lost almost beyond redemption," ends up making the ultimate sacrifice for a child she hardly knows. In contrast, Monks, perhaps the novel's most inhuman villain, was brought up amid wealth and comfort.

The Countryside Idealized

All the injustices and privations suffered by the poor in *Oliver Twist* occur in cities—either the great city of London or the provincial city where Oliver is born. When the Maylies take Oliver to the countryside, he discovers a "new existence." Dickens asserts that even people who have spent their entire lives in "close and noisy places" are likely, in the last moments of their lives, to find comfort in half--imagined memories "of sky, and hill and plain." Moreover, country scenes have the potential to "purify our thoughts" and erase some of the vices that develop in the city. Hence, in the country, "the poor people [are] so neat and clean," living a life that is free of the squalor that torments their urban counterparts. Oliver and his new family settle in a small village at the novel's end, as if a happy ending would not be possible in the city. Dickens's portrait of rural life in *Oliver Twist* is more approving yet far less realistic than his portrait of urban life.

This fact does not contradict, but rather supports, the general estimation of Dickens as a great urban writer. It is precisely Dickens's distance from the countryside that allows him to idealize it.

Unit – IV

Far from the Madding Crowd

- Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy was born June 2, 1840, in Higher Bockhampton in Dorset, a rural region of southwestern England that was to become the focus of his fiction. The child of a builder, Hardy was apprenticed at the age of sixteen to John Hicks, an architect who lived in the city of Dorchester. The location would later serve as the model for Hardy's fictional Casterbridge. Although he gave serious thought to attending university and entering the church, a struggle he would dramatize in his novel *Jude the Obscure*, declining religious faith and lack of money led Hardy to pursue a career in writing instead. He spent nearly a dozen years toiling in obscurity and producing unsuccessful novels and poetry. *Far from the Madding Crowd*, published in 1874, was the author's first critical and financial success. Finally able to support himself as a writer, Hardy married Emma Lavinia Gifford later that year.

Although he built a reputation as a successful novelist, Hardy considered himself first and foremost a poet. To him, novels were primarily a means of earning a living. Like many of his contemporaries, he first published his novels in periodic installments in magazines or serial journals, and his work reflects the conventions of serialization. To ensure that readers would buy a serialized novel, writers often structured each installment to be something of a cliffhanger, which explained the convoluted, often incredible plots of many such Victorian novels. But Hardy cannot solely be labeled a Victorian novelist. Nor can he be categorized simply as a Modernist, in the tradition of writers like Virginia Woolf or D. H. Lawrence, who were determined to explode the conventions of nineteenth-century literature and build a new kind of novel. In many respects, Hardy was trapped in the middle ground between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, between Victorian sensibilities and more modern ones, and between tradition and innovation.

Hardy lived and wrote in a time of difficult social change, when England was making its slow and painful transition from an old-fashioned, agricultural nation to a modern, industrial one. Businessmen and entrepreneurs, or "new money," joined the ranks of the social elite, as some families of the ancient aristocracy, or "old money," faded into obscurity.

Hardy was frustrated by the controversy caused by his work, and he finally abandoned novel-writing altogether following *Jude the Obscure.* He spent the rest of his career writing poetry. Though today he is remembered somewhat more for his novels, he was an acclaimed poet in his time and was buried in the prestigious Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey following his death in 1928.

Far from the Madding Crowd

Summary

Far From the Madding Crowd opens with a description of farmer Gabriel Oak, a man just out of youth who has established himself as a sheep-farmer in the past year, putting all of his savings into the livestock. One day he catches sight of a woman in a carriage and, while she thinks she's alone, he watches her admire herself in her mirror. Later he sees her ride sidesaddle, not exactly ladylike, and when he finally meets the lady—Bathsheba Everdene—in person, he lets slip that he saw her. She's embarrassed and would rather have nothing to do with him, but soon after that he falls asleep in his cottage without leaving a window open to let out smoke from his fire, and Bathsheba saves him just in time. Gabriel begins to fall in love with her, and finally musters up the courage to go to her aunt's house and ask for her hand in marriage. Bathsheba isn't home, and the aunt, Mrs. Hurst, tells Gabriel that her niece has already had a host of suitors. Dejected, Gabriel leaves. But Bathsheba soon arrives and races after Gabriel, who is immediately cheered—but Bathsheba only wanted to say that she can't bear him imagining she has many suitors when she's independent and doesn't want to marry anyone.

Not long after, Gabriel hears that Bathsheba has left for Weatherbury: her uncle has died and she is going to take over as mistress of his farm. Soon after that, Gabriel wakes in the middle of the night to find that one of his over-eager dogs has chased his entire flock of sheep across the fields, and they've fallen over a cliff to their deaths, destroying his entire life's savings. Gabriel settles his debts and is left penniless. He goes off in search of employment as a bailiff or even shepherd, and hears that there's work to be had near Weatherbury. On his way to the job fair, he comes across a fire, and takes charge of the disorganized farmhands trying to put it out: he manages to save it. Impressed, the mistress of the farm rides over and unveils herself: it's Bathsheba. Cool and unflustered, she says she needs a shepherd, and hires Gabriel. He goes to Warren's Malt-house, where a number of the farm hands, including Jan Coggan, Matthew Moon, Henery Fray,

Joseph Poorgrass, and Laban Tall often gather to gossip and discuss town affairs. Tonight there's two pieces of news: first, the Bailiff Pennyways has been caught stealing, and second, Fanny Robbin, Bathsheba's youngest servant, is missing.

It's soon discovered that Fanny Robbin ran off with her lover, a soldier in another town. Gabriel had run into the girl on his way into town, and she had looked scared and desperate. He gave her a little money then, and she now sends him the money back with a letter telling him that she's going to be married to Sergeant Francis Troy, but asks him to keep this news quiet. Meanwhile, Fanny goes to see Troy, calling up to his barracks window from the outside and reminding him that he's promised to marry her. He waffles for a little while, but then admits that if he did promise, then they will indeed get married.

Meanwhile, Bathsheba is growing accustomed to her role as female farmer, even though not everyone accepts that, as a woman, she can do it. Nonetheless, she impresses everyone as she participates adeptly at the corn market. Almost all the men's eyes are on her—only one man, the serious middle-aged farmer Mr. Boldwood, fails to pay any attention to her. Bathsheba's pride is slightly bruised at this, even though she doesn't want to be the utter center of attention. Not long afterwards, she's sitting with her servant and companion, Liddy Smallbury, and preparing to send a valentine to one of the little boys in the village, Teddy Coggan. Liddy suggests that it would be hilarious to send the valentine to Boldwood instead. On a whim, Bathsheba decides to do so, and seals the anonymous letter with a joke seal that says, "Marry me."

Boldwood is thunderstruck upon receiving the letter. After spending some time in a daze, he decides to go to Warren's Malt-house, where a number of the other workers are drinking and chatting. He leaves with Gabriel, and asks him if he can identify the handwriting. Both upset and shocked at the cavalier thoughtlessness of it, Gabriel says that it's Bathsheba's hand.

At the next market, Boldwood does really study Bathsheba for the first time, and is amazed at her beauty. Bathsheba is satisfied that she's finally gotten his attention, though she has a pang of regret at how she's done so. He resolves to speak with her and asks her to marry him. Now deeply uncomfortable, Bathsheba refuses, but Boldwood insists, saying that he wouldn't dare to ask if he hadn't been led to believe that she had feelings for him. Bathsheba is unable to convince him that it was all a game—finally, she agrees to think about his proposal for a time.

Still, she doesn't love him, but she admits to herself that she should accept the moral consequences for her actions. She goes to Gabriel to talk about it, but instead of sympathy she finds that he is disappointed in her actions. Bathsheba grows angry and dismisses him. Soon enough, though, Gabriel's services are needed when the sheep get into clover and risk being poisoned. He manages to save almost all of them, and Bathsheba turns on her charm once again in order to convince him to stay.

During the sheep-shearing time, Boldwood asks for Bathsheba's hand once again. Knowing she should make amends for her actions, Bathsheba says she will try to love him, but would like him to wait a few more weeks before she promises. Thrilled, he agrees. That night, though, Bathsheba is pacing the grounds when she literally runs into a man on a path—a piece of fabric on her dress gets stuck to one of his soldier's buttons. The man begins to tease her about her beauty and charm, and Bathsheba isn't sure whether she should be pleased or angry. Upon arriving home, she asks Liddy who the soldier might be. She thinks it's Sergeant Troy, who's known to be a trickster with women, but whom she also finds charming and handsome. A week later he introduces himself to her formally, continuing to tease and jest with her. He eventually convinces Bathsheba to meet him in a clearing later that night; she does so, and he kisses her.

Bathsheba falls in love with Troy, something that Gabriel notices, though it pains him. He decides to speak with Bathsheba about it, reminding her that she owes something to Boldwood (who has been traveling). Bathsheba grows angry with Gabriel and orders him to leave again, which he refuses. With Liddy, meanwhile, Bathsheba moves wildly from one temper to the next, worrying about Troy's character but unable to stamp out her feelings for him. She sends a letter to Boldwood telling him she can't marry him, but she happens to meet him in person the day after and he goes into a rage against Troy, who has just left town for a few days. Worried that they'll quarrel or hurt each other, Bathsheba decides she can either try to prevent Troy from coming back for a while or else break things off with him. Late at night, she takes her horse, Dainty, and rides off. But Gabriel and Jan Coggan think that the horse has been stolen, so they follow its tracks until they meet Bathsheba at the tollbooth. They resolve not to say anything of it.

Bathsheba is gone for a few weeks, and Gabriel's helper, Cainy Ball, brings news to the farm hands that he saw her arm in arm with Sergeant Troy in Bath. Gabriel is upset and troubled, but

that night he hears Bathsheba's voice, and thinks that since she's come home all must be well. Boldwood, though, catches sight of Troy outside an inn in town, and decides to follow him. At first, he says he'll pay Troy to marry Fanny, as is his duty, and Troy agrees; but Bathsheba soon comes to see him, and Boldwood, hiding in the bushes, recognizes just how much she loves him. Deeply upset, he tells Troy to marry Bathsheba so as to save her honor—he'll pay him for that instead. They go to Bathsheba's farm together, and Troy slips him a newspaper announcing that he and Bathsheba already got married. Troy laughs in Boldwood's face.

Bathsheba soon grows upset with Troy's laziness, penchant for drinking, and love of gambling and horse racing. On the night of the harvest dinner, he ignores Gabriel's warnings that a storm is coming and the ricks should be battened down to protect the produce. Instead, he plies the workers with brandy until they're in a drunken stupor: only Gabriel, and later Bathsheba, work all night to protect the farm.

Soon afterward, Troy and Bathsheba are leaving the Casterbridge market when they see a poor, ragged woman walking along the road. Troy tells Bathsheba to go ahead: he's recognized Fanny, and they agree to meet a few days afterward so that Troy can help her and find her a place to stay. At home, Bathsheba discovers a lock of blond hair in Troy's watch-case: he admits it belonged to the girl he loved before her.

Only a few days later, the news reaches town that Fanny is dead—she had walked all the way to the Casterbridge Union-house and had died soon after arriving. Bathsheba is troubled by this news, wondering if there's any connection to Troy. She has Fanny's casket brought to her own house, since Fanny was her uncle's servant. Mary-ann tells Bathsheba of a rumor that there are two people in the casket, not one—indeed, Gabriel had seen "Fanny and child" written on the coffin and had rubbed out "and child." That night, Bathsheba dares to open the coffin and she sees the two, as well as Fanny's golden hair. Later Troy arrives and sees Fanny's body: he kisses it, and tells Bathsheba that he only ever loved Fanny, and that Bathsheba is nothing to him. He storms off. First he spends all his money getting a gravestone engraved and plants flowers around it, though the rain wipes them away. He then decides he cannot return home. He leaves and, near Budmouth, decides to go for a swim. Troy is drawn out by the current and finally is picked up by a boat. His clothes are not where he left them, so he accepts the sailors' proposal to join them on a voyage to America for six months.

Back at Weatherbury, Bathsheba has reached a dull apathy: at first she refuses to believe that Troy is dead, as is reported, but as time passes her doubts cease. Boldwood proposes that she agree to marry him seven years from Troy's disappearance, since she will not legally be a widow until then. Bathsheba again puts him off, torn about what to do since she knows she owes him a great deal. At the late-summer fair, Troy returns as an employee of the circus. He catches sight of Bathsheba in the audience, but manages to avoid her. He gets Bailiff Pennyways to join his side, and together they scheme on how best for Troy to reclaim his "property," in his wife and her farm.

That Christmas, Boldwood prepares a grand party—quite out of keeping with his personality. As it approaches, Bathsheba grows increasingly anxious. Finally, at the party, Boldwood once again proposes to her, and finally she agrees to marry him at the aforementioned date. Even though she's clearly distraught, Boldwood seems satisfied that he's gotten an answer from her, and forces her to wear a ring he's bought for her. As they emerge, though, the doorman calls that a stranger is outside, and Troy walks in. He orders Bathsheba to leave with him. Bathsheba freezes, but then Boldwood tells her to go with her husband. As Troy seizes her arm, though, she screams, and suddenly Boldwood shoots Troy dead. He calmly walks outside and turns himself in to the Casterbridge jail.

Gabriel goes to fetch the doctor, and when they return Bathsheba is sitting regally, her full composure regained, with Troy's head in her lap. But when they return to her home, she begins to wail about her guilt for everything that has happened. Boldwood is initially sentenced to death, but thanks to a petition, is given a life sentence.

Gabriel tells Bathsheba that he's planning to leave the farm and perhaps even the country. She grows increasingly upset at what seems to be a greater coolness from him and disregard for her. Finally she goes to see him at his cottage, where he tells her that he's agreed to take on Boldwood's farm. Bathsheba admits that she's been waiting for him to ask her to marry him once more: Gabriel is surprised but thrilled. Although he'd like a larger affair, Bathsheba insists on a small, simple wedding. They get married with only a few witnesses, but that evening many of the farmhands come to wish them well, bringing instruments and singing songs at their porch.

Character Analysis

Bathsheba Everdene

Bathsheba, the orphaned daughter of townspeople, is raised by her aunt in the countryside. From a young age, she is used to managing things on her own: for example, her aunt has her take charge of milking cows and fetching supplies for the house. She is handsome and can be vain about her appearance. In many ways, even though Bathsheba is already independent and determined at the beginning of the novel, she matures over the course of the book. At first, she insists on her independence to the detriment of others' feelings, as when she pursues **Gabriel Oak** without the intention of marrying him. Through the careless game that she later plays with **Mr. Boldwood**, she comes to recognize that independence is not necessarily the greatest good, and that it can be important to rely on others, just as it is crucial to understand the implications of one's own actions on others. In some ways Bathsheba conforms to Victorian stereotypes about women; for example, she can be thoughtless and emotional. But she also defies such stereotypes by running the farm herself and learning to manage her emotions and face an often hostile, gossipy world outside.

Gabriel Oak

Gabriel, like Bathsheba, changes over the course of the novel as a result of tragedy. For him the tragedy happens rather early on when his dog runs his **sheep**—which represent his life's savings and investment—over a cliff, and he is left penniless. At the beginning of the book, he is a more or less average person. He is no longer a young man but not yet fully adult, and he has a generally good reputation. He can be quick to judge, as when he labels Bathsheba vain, and he can be thoughtless, as when he says out loud to her that he really should marry someone wealthier than she is. But as a result of Bathsheba's refusal to marry him, as well as his misfortune, he becomes stoic, brave, and loyal. Over and over again, he proves what a decent human being he is: he puts out the fire, saves the lambs, and protects the ricks while **Troy** plies the other workers with brandy. He sees his love for Bathsheba as a burden he must bear, and he simultaneously tries to do all he can for her while feeling the need to rebuke her when he thinks she's not living up to his high standards. Gabriel also recognizes the carefully delineated social distinctions of the Weatherbury community, and knows enough not to try to claim a higher place in it than is his due—a strategy that ultimately proves successful.

Mr. Boldwood

The second of **Bathsheba**'s suitors, Mr. Boldwood is a respectable, handsome, but serious forty-ish farmer, who is in charge of Lower Farm, not far from Bathsheba's farm in Waterbury. He has never married and, despite the gossip of the villagers, has never really been in love. He was, though, responsible for **Fanny Robbin** for a time, undertaking responsibility for her schooling and then her place at Bathsheba's uncle's farm. Boldwood's crucial turning point in the novel is the **valentine** that Bathsheba sends off to him, provoking a years-long adoration and obsession—one that slowly disintegrates into madness. The valentine opens Boldwood's eyes to the world of women, and disrupts his decades-long habit of stability and solemnity. As the book goes on, Boldwood's love for Bathsheba takes on disturbing features, as he tries to extract promises from Bathsheba even when it causes her distress. Boldwood's increasingly serious mental disturbance, though, is paired with a sincere love for Bathsheba, one that finally gives her freedom even at the expense of his own.

Sergeant Francis Troy

Bathsheba's third suitor is the son of a doctor who was ruined by debt after moving from town to country. Troy is impulsive—he leaves his clerk job to enlist in the army—and is often described as a child who follows his instincts and can't think of other people's thoughts or desires over his own. He is handsome and charming, able to use his looks and language to his advantage in order to get what he wants (especially with women, though also when money is involved, as when he tricks **Boldwood** into paying him off for the marriage to Bathsheba that has already happened). But Troy is portrayed as truly capable of love. He may have seduced and then abandoned **Fanny**, but it becomes clear over the course of the novel (both to readers and, perhaps, to Troy himself) that he did love her—though such love is inextricable from his cruelty to Bathsheba. Ultimately, however, Troy's desire for material comfort conquers his aversion to Bathsheba and prompts him to return to her, though he can't imagine just how much of an effect his actions will have on others. In this way, he is not dissimilar from the Bathsheba of the beginning of the novel.

Fanny Robbin

The youngest servant at **Bathsheba**'s farm, Fanny has no friends or family to her name, though she was taken under **Boldwood**'s wing in order to be established at the farm. Fanny is in love with **Troy**, who has courted her and promised to marry her, though he waffles on that promise. Fanny runs away to marry Troy – a marriage that never happens – and slowly sinks into greater and greater desperation, especially once she becomes pregnant with Troy's child. Fanny is in many ways a foil to Bathsheba, who can't manage to decide whether to pity or hate her rival. Her death condemns Bathsheba's marriage with Troy to failure, since it underlines to Troy how much he actually did love Fanny.

Jan Coggan

A farm hand who is friendly and cheerful, often serving as best man or godfather in marriages and baptisms around Weatherbury. Coggan is one of the regulars at Warren's Malt-house and often is wont to veer off into tangents during a conversation. He represents general public opinion around the town.

Joseph Poorgrass

Another of **Bathsheba**'s farm-hands, Poorgrass is shy and timid, though he feels at home among the other workers, especially at Warren's Malt-house. Poorgrass is wont to make humorous, often irrelevant biblical and historical allusions, but he's also superstitious—he mixes these influences without any rhyme or reason. He is earnest and a good worker, although also sometimes drinks too much when he's tempted.

Henry (Henery) Fray

Another farm-hand, slightly over middle age, who insists on spelling his name "Henery." He is another one of the regulars at Warren's Malt-house, and is more critical than the others: he rages about Bailiff Pennyways, for instance, and is among the more skeptical about **Bathsheba**'s capacity as a woman farmer.

Themes

Epic Allusion, Tragedy, and Illusions of Grandeur

In *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Hardy began to construct a fictional region of England, "Wessex," which he calls in the preface a "partly real, partly dream-country" and which he went on to further develop in a number of other novels. In some ways, Hardy describes this world and its inhabitants with all the world-historical importance of places found in famous epics, such as Homer's Ithaca or Troy. And yet, at the same time, Hardy deploys an ironic touch that works to deflate his mythical or Biblical allusions. Thus, even as he treats his fictional English locale as a place of eminent significance, Hardy also reminds his readers of the much more pedestrian concerns of modern rural life.

The book is full of allusions to the Bible, as well as to ancient Greek and Roman stories. For instance, Hardy describes his character **Bathsheba**, after she kisses **Troy**, as experiencing a kind of shock similar to Moses' amazement after God gives him a command. Hardy describes **Gabriel Oak**, meanwhile, as comparable to Minerva, referring to the Roman goddess of wisdom. These allusions rely on the Victorian reader's familiarity with the Bible and epic literature, and they work to insist on the significance of the actions within the book by making the actions of rural England seem comparable to the consequential actions of myths. Even if *Far From the Madding Crowd* takes place in a "partly dream-country," one that's far from the metropolitan center of society, we are asked to take its concerns and those of its characters seriously.

Nonetheless, even as Hardy insists that the tragic events in the book should be taken seriously, his ironic touches constantly threaten to undercut the grandiosity of his Biblical and classical allusions. One example is the mother of **Cainy Ball**, who mixed up the Genesis story about Cain and Abel and named her son for the murderer rather than the victim. Again, readers would have been expected to laugh knowingly while the characters of Weatherbury are subject to ironic teasing. Similarly, in some ways the group of villagers, like **Joseph Poorgrass** and **Jan Coggan**, who gather periodically for a pint at Warren's Malt-house, function like an ancient Greek chorus by reflecting on the affairs of others and providing a running commentary on the events of the village. Their country patois and joking demeanor, however, make such a characterization

humorously inapt. Irony, then, serves as an extra layer of complexity in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, prodding the reader to both recognize the grand allusions to canonical texts and to smile at their deflation in a modern rural world where illusions of grandeur can be woefully misplaced.

Conflict and the Laws of Nature

The title of *Far From the Madding Crowd* is taken from an 18th-century poem by Thomas Gray, "Elegy on a Country Churchyard," but it cuts off the rest of the line, which in its entirety reads, "Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife." While the idea of the bucolic countryside as being free of the "strife" of the crowd is one way to characterize country life, Hardy's title is ironic: rather than depicting stereotypes of pastoral calm, his novel uses those images as a jumping-off point to portray a landscape that's actually riddled with conflict. Its characters must battle against the dangerous and often overpowering laws of nature and its creatures, even while the characters themselves become subject to conflicts among each other that mirror the difficulties of the natural world.

Indeed, nature seems often to fly in the face of people's desires and plans. The disaster of **Gabriel Oak**'s **sheep** is the novel's first dramatic instance of this. While Gabriel has spent years and all his resources developing the flock, one unlucky event kills them all and immediately transforms his circumstances. Later, though, Gabriel seems better equipped to handle the vicissitudes of natural disaster. He meets **Bathsheba** again after putting out a fire in Weatherbury, and he saves a group of lambs from being poisoned by clover—two instances of Gabriel's newfound ability to navigate the danger of the natural world. Troy is the opposite case: he is used to managing his own affairs adeptly, but after **Fanny**'s death—and after a storm washes away the flowers he's planted at her grave—he rages against cold natural laws and uncontrollable circumstances rather than learning to work within them.

Bathsheba, meanwhile, also learns to navigate as best she can in a hostile natural environment: for her, Troy eventually becomes yet another conflict-ridden aspect of this environment. After their wedding, for instance, he plies Bathsheba's workers with alcohol. As a result, no one except Gabriel is around to keep the hay safe from an incoming storm, and Gabriel and Bathsheba have to race against time and nature to ensure that all is not lost. Humans, then, can work to mitigate conflicts within nature, can rebel—unsuccessfully—against it, or can become hostile forces of

their own. Whichever the case, the novel makes clear that country life is not exempt from such conflicts. And while humans manage natural forces as best they can, there is little they can do to halt forces outside their control. Fate, chance, and circumstance, then, rule Hardy's rural world.

Women in a Man's World

Just as Bathsheba has to struggle against unfriendly natural forces, she also has to navigate a world that is made largely by and for men. This is particularly true once she takes over her uncle's farm as its mistress and owner. The attitudes of the novel's characters towards their new female supervisor range from admiring to condescending, and even the novel itself can indulge in stereotyped analysis of specifically "womanly" attributes. What is unmistakable, however, is that it is quite rare in the novel's world for a woman to be a farmer—or to be in a position of authority at all. From the beginning of *Far From The Madding Crowd*, nonetheless, we are given to expect that Bathsheba is not like other women. She is headstrong and confident; while many women would happily accept a marriage proposal from someone like **Gabriel Oak**, she refuses almost unthinkingly.

Oak and **Boldwood**, perhaps because they fall in love with Bathsheba, don't seem to mind her position of female authority (although Oak does think that Bathsheba wouldn't be able to run the farm without him). Others, though, feel differently. At the markets, for instance, people look askance at Bathsheba weighing seed and chatting with clients just "like a man" with mingled respect, suspicion, and scorn. Meanwhile, the "Greek chorus" of farm hands continually discusses her every move. As a woman Bathsheba is subject to increased scrutiny and judgment and is held to a far higher standard than men—a scrutiny that holds for the other women in the novel, like **Fanny Robbin**, while the actions of someone like **Troy** are simply laughed off. Bathsheba recognizes and fears this level of judgment: it's one of the reasons that she relies so much on her servant **Liddy**, whom she thinks of as a fellow woman she can trust.

Despite Hardy's radical attempt to portray Bathsheba as a confident and capable woman, the novel often slips into characterizations of her stereotypically female weaknesses. Such judgments might strike a contemporary reader as frustratingly old-fashioned. Ultimately, though, Bathsheba does prove herself able to manage a farm on her own. This portrayal of a successful female business owner is a challenge to Victorian assumptions about the role of women in public life.

Unit – V

The Grass is Singing

Doris Lessing

Doris Lessing was born in Iran to British parents; her father, Captain Alfred Tayler, was a clerk at the Imperial Bank of Persia. Shortly after her birth the family moved to Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), where Lessing's father hoped to become wealthy through farming. However, he failed to succeed in this endeavor and the family remained poor. Lessing left school at 13 and home at 15, moving to the capital of Southern Rhodesia, Salisbury (now Harare), where she worked as a telephone operator, got married, and had two children. Lessing divorced her first husband and married again, having another child and then a second divorce. In 1949 moved to London with her youngest son, armed with only £20 and the manuscript of her first novel, *The Grass is Singing*. Here, Lessing became active in communist, anti-racist, and anti-nuclear activism. As a result, she was placed under surveillance by the British Intelligence Services for 20 years. *The Grass is Singing* was published in 1950. She went on to publish over 50 more novels, some under the pseudonym Jane Somers. Lessing declined an OBE and a Damehood due to their association with the British Empire. In 2007, she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. She died at home in 2013, at the age of 94.

Summary

The Grass is Singing is set in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) during the 1940s. Mary Turner, the wife of Dick Turner, has been murdered, and a "houseboy" has confessed to the crime. Dick and Mary are poor and do not socialize with the other white settlers in their farming district. When Mary's body is discovered, the Turners' neighbor, Charlie Slatter, sends a note to the local police sergeant, Sergeant Denham. Denham then sends six native policemen to the Turners' farm, and shortly after they arrive the houseboy, Moses, turns himself in. Charlie drives to the Turners' farm to find Moses in handcuffs, and puts Dick in the back of his car.

Inside the house, Charlie's assistant Tony Marston explains that he found Mary's body on the **veranda**. Sergeant Denham arrives, and he and Charlie question Tony. However, Tony

begins to feel that they are not actually interested in his testimony, and the interview ends abruptly. The policemen take Mary's body to the car, and Tony is left wondering whether he should insist on telling Charlie and Sergeant Denham his theory about why Mary was killed. Moses will be hanged no matter what happens, but Tony wonders if by staying silent he is complicit in a "monstrous injustice." The next day, Tony packs his things and leaves the farming district. The trial takes place and it is decided that Moses murdered Mary while drunk and hoped to steal valuables from her. Tony, meanwhile, briefly takes a job in copper mining, before reluctantly ending up in an office job.

Chapter 2 begins with a description of the stores that are distributed throughout southern Africa. They are simple establishments that sell food, clothes, and other necessities, operate as local post offices, and usually house a bar. Mary's father, an alcoholic, would spend their family's little money on liquor at the store, a fact that always caused arguments between Mary's parents. Mary's older brother and sister died of dysentery when she was a child, and the period of grief that followed was "the happiest time of her childhood," when her parents briefly stopped squabbling. Mary was eventually sent to boarding school and decided to leave home at 16. Between the ages of 20 and 25, both Mary's parents died, and she was thrilled to be left completely alone. She lived in a club for young women and worked as a personal secretary at an office.

As the years passed, Mary's friends got married and had children, but Mary herself remained single, happy, and carefree. She was in denial about aging, and still dressed in "little-girl fashion." She felt no desire to get married, but one day overheard some married friends of hers gossiping cruelly about the fact that she was not married, and was horrified to realize that this was what people thought of her. After this point, she briefly became engaged to a 55-year-old widower, but called it off when he tried to have sex with her.

Soon after this, Mary meets Dick briefly at the cinema, during one of Dick's brief visits to town. Dick is a poor farmer whose bad luck has led his neighbors to nickname him "Jonah." He is resistant to the idea of getting married due to his poverty, but cannot stop thinking of Mary. He works to the point of exhaustion over the next few months, and eventually appears at Mary's door asking to marry her. She agrees, and they marry two weeks later.

When Mary first arrives at Dick's farm, she finds the house "shut and dark and stuffy," and is struck by the evidence of Dick's intense loneliness. They have tea and engage in a polite but awkward conversation. They have sex, which is not as terrible as Mary feared it would be, although she also feels "nothing" during it. In the morning, Dick introduces Mary to his longtime black house servant, Samson. While Dick clearly feels affection for Samson, Mary is immediately affronted by Samson's casual manner. Mary resolves to teach herself "kitchen kaffir," the simplified version of the native Shona language that white settlers use to communicate with their black workers.

Mary uses her savings to purchase fabrics and other items for the house, and spends her days sewing and painting the house. One day, she comes to believe that Samson stole raisins she was saving to make pudding and becomes hysterical; despite Dick's protests, she insists on taking the money out of Samson's wages. Samson quits, which upsets Dick. They hire another servant, but before long he quits as well. Then they find yet another servant, this time one who is accustomed to working for white women and obeys Mary's demands in a "blank, robotic" manner. However, in a fit of emotion Mary forces the servant to spend hours scrubbing the (already clean) zinc bathtub, making him work through his lunch break. Charlie and Mrs. Slatter come over to visit; Mrs. Slatter is friendly to Mary, but Mary rebuffs her coldly. The servant quits. A few days later, Charlie advises Dick to plant **tobacco**, but Dick is resistant to this idea.

One day, on a rare visit to the local train station to pick up groceries, Dick and Mary encounter a man who addresses Dick as "Jonah"; afterward, Dick bitterly admits that he borrowed money from the man and still owes him £50. During this period, Dick goes through a series of obsessions with keeping different animals on the farm; first bees, then pigs, and then turkeys. All these experiments fail, and cause heated arguments between Dick and Mary. Dick begins jokingly calling Mary "boss," which infuriates her.

Dick eventually resolves to open a "kaffir store" on the farm, even though there is a kaffir store nearby and thus it is unlikely that Dick's store will make much money. He asks Mary to run the store; at first Mary says she "would rather die," but she eventually agrees. Mary finds the native women who sit outside the store with their children disgusting and hates her time working there. She begins to fantasize about running away and returning to her old life in the town. One day,

she notices that her old office has placed an ad for a shorthand typist. She packs a suitcase and leaves the next day, asking Charlie to drive her to the train station.

Back in town, Mary visits the girls' club where she used to live, but is told that they do not take married women. At her old office, she is told that the typist position has been filled. Mary returns to her hotel room and realizes she doesn't have enough money to pay the bill. At this moment, Dick arrives, and begs her to come home. Mary agrees.

At first Dick and Mary slip back into their previous routine; however, Dick soon becomes severely ill with a fever. Charlie brings over a doctor, who rudely instructs Mary that she and Dick must wire the house for mosquitoes and go on a three-month holiday to be restored back to health. During this time, Mary begins supervising the farm workers while Dick is bedridden. She takes a sambok with her, and when Moses (one of the farm workers) insists on getting a drink of water, she strikes him across the face with it. She also withholds wages from the workers who arrive late, causing some of them to quit on the spot. Back at the house, Mary urges Dick to focus on growing tobacco so they will be able to make enough money to leave the farm. Dick thinks about it for three days, before agreeing to start building tobacco barns.

Dick builds the tobacco barns, but in January there is a drought and the tobacco dies. Dick cannot cover the expenses, and is forced to take out a loan in order to avoid declaring bankruptcy. Mary's health deteriorates. She begins to beg Dick for a child, but Dick refuses, saying that they are too poor. Mary sinks further and further into misery, as does Dick, who takes up chain-smoking. After another house servant leaves, Dick is forced to move Moses from the field to the house, as no one else will agree to work for Mary. Mary develops a fascination with Moses, watching him as he completes his work and even one day staring at him while he washes himself outside. He stops what he is doing and stares back at her until she goes away. This infuriates Mary, who forces Moses to do a series of unnecessary tasks. She asks Dick if they can fire Moses, but Dick angrily refuses.

Months pass, and Mary becomes increasingly depressed. One day, Moses tells her he is quitting, and she bursts into tears, begging him to stay. Moses gives her a glass of water, tells her to lie down on the bed, and covers her with her coat. He does not mention leaving again. A new dynamic then emerges between them; Moses is much more informal and authoritative with

Mary, and Mary now feels completely under his power. During this period, Mary starts having vivid nightmares, while Dick becomes ill with malaria. She dreams that Dick has died, that Moses is touching her, and that her father is making sexual advances on her. In one dream, Moses and her father morph into the same figure, and she wakes up screaming. Moses asks her why she is afraid of him, and Mary replies in a hysterical voice that she is not afraid.

Meanwhile Dick and Mary's neighbors have started spreading cruel gossip about them. One day, Charlie comes over, and urges Dick to sell his farm. Charlie stays for dinner, where he witnesses Moses and Mary's familiar, flirtatious relationship. Charlie then takes Dick to one side and sternly demands that he and Mary leave. Dick reluctantly agrees, and Charlie asks Tony to start working on Dick's farm in preparation to take over. While living on the Turners' farm, Tony comes to believe that Mary has gone mad and needs to be treated by a psychologist. One day, he catches Moses helping Mary to get dressed, and is stunned by the possibility that they are having an affair. He decides to tell Dick to fire Moses, but Moses leaves that evening and does not return.

Two nights before Dick and Mary are due to leave the farm, Mary wakes up suddenly. She walks around the house in a state of paranoid delusion, swinging wildly between different emotional states. She looks for Moses, convinced that he will "finish her" that night. Mary is supposed to spend the next day packing, but accidentally falls asleep and wakes up in the late afternoon. She suddenly feels compelled to go to the store, and finds Moses in there. She runs away screaming and bumps into Tony, who gently tells her that he has suggested that Dick take her to a doctor.

That night, Mary doesn't eat supper with Tony and Dick. In bed, Dick tells her that she is ill, and Mary responds that she has always been ill in her heart. After Dick is asleep, Mary gets up and creeps around the house, convinced that Moses is there. She goes out to the veranda, where she sees Moses in the distance. He comes toward her, puts a hand over her mouth, and stabs her to death. Moses briefly considers claiming innocence, before resolving to turn himself in. He waits outside the house until morning.

Character Analysis

Mary Turner

The novel begins with Mary Turner's death, and the plot largely revolves around her character. The daughter of white South African-born parents, Mary's childhood is blighted by her father's alcoholism and her mother's endless misery. (There is also a strong suggestion that Mary's father sexually abused her, although this is never stated explicitly; however, it *is* made clear that events from her childhood leave her repulsed by sex.) Once Mary's parents die, she embarks on a joyful and fulfilling life in an unnamed town, working as a secretary, living in a club for single women, and attending social events every night. Mary marries Dick Turner as a result of social pressure, and it is clear almost immediately that she is ill-suited to Dick's rural life. She is a strong-willed, independent, and remarkably feminist woman who resents having to live on someone else's terms. However, the biggest source of conflict in Mary's life comes from her treatment of native people. For reasons that are never made entirely clear, Mary's racism is unusually intense and sadistic, even for a white South African. At the same time, she harbors a perverse fascination with native people, and particularly Moses, a farm worker she strikes with a sambok and with whom, two years later, she develops an intimate, possibly sexual relationship. Mary suffers several nervous breakdowns over the course of the novel and by the final chapter is severely mentally incapacitated. Despite (or perhaps because of) this, she accurately predicts the fact that Moses will murder her.

Dick Turner

Dick Turner is Mary's husband. Born in the suburbs of Johannesburg, Dick trains as a vet in his youth before using a government grant to buy a small farm. Dick is kind and principled, and described by Mary as "a good man." However, he is an extraordinarily unsuccessful farmer. Many people—including Dick himself—interpret his failures as the result of bad luck, and several of Dick's neighbors nickname him "Jonah," the name sailors give for someone who brings bad luck to a ship (after the Biblical character Jonah, who was swallowed by a whale). Over the course of the novel, however, it becomes clear that much of Dick's "bad luck" is in fact the result of irrational fantasies and poor decisions he makes about his farm. Toward the end of

the novel, Dick becomes weak and is often sick, a physical manifestation of his weak will. After Mary is murdered, Dick goes mad.

Moses

Moses is a native man educated in a missionary school. He has a large, muscular physique and is employed by Dick as a farm worker. During Dick's first illness, when Mary takes over as overseer of the farm workers, she strikes Moses across the face with a sambok for what she perceives as rudeness. Although Moses is not actually rude in reality, he is not afraid of Mary and refuses to abide by the social conventions governing relationships between native people and white settlers. We learn fairly little about Moses's inner life, but it seems that, perhaps due to his education, he is especially aware of the injustices of colonialism and willing to stand up to white people. The relationship he develops with Mary toward the end of the novel appears somewhat affectionate, however it is never made clear why Moses behaves so kindly to someone who has treated him so badly. At the end of the novel, he approaches Mary on the **veranda** and stabs her to death. He waits under a nearby tree until morning, when he turns himself in; although we never learn his final fate, the other characters suggest that it is almost certain he will be hanged.

Charlie Slatter

Charlie Slatter is a neighbor of the Turners, and thinks of himself as Dick's "mentor." A working-class Englishman who previously worked as a grocer in London, he made a fortune through tobacco farming in Southern Rhodesia. He is at times a good friend to Dick, and seems to genuinely have Dick's interests at heart. However, he is also self-interested and strategic, and much of his support for Dick is secretly rooted in the fact that he wants to take over Dick's farm to increase his own profits. Furthermore, Charlie is exceptionally invested in maintaining the racial hierarchy of Southern Rhodesia, which leads him to force Dick and Mary to leave the farm after he comes to believe Mary is having an affair with Moses. After Mary is murdered, Charlie conspires with Sergeant Denham to cover up Mary's relationship with Moses in order to protect the reputation of the white race.

Tony Marston

Tony Marston is a young, well-educated Englishman who has recently moved to Southern Rhodesia after being inspired by his cousin's success in **tobacco** farming. Tony holds the racially "progressive" ideas that are popular in England, and is more sensitive than the other characters in the novel. At the same time, he is also keen to conform to the norms of the society around him, and his progressive ideas are shown to be rather flimsy, particularly after he comes to believe that Mary and Moses are having an affair. After Mary's murder, Tony abruptly leaves the farm and ends up working in an office, precisely the kind of work he moved to Southern Rhodesia to avoid.

Sergeant Denham

Sergeant Denham is the local police sergeant in the Turners' farming district. He is in charge of investigating Mary's death, although this task is made simple by the fact that Moses immediately confesses to the murder. Along with Charlie Slatter, Sergeant Denham helps to cover up the intimacy that existed between Mary and Moses in order to preserve the racial hierarchy.

Mrs. Slatter

Mrs. Slatter is Charlie's wife (we never learn her first name). At first she appears to be a kind and compassionate person, inviting Mary to social gatherings and commiserating with her over her experience of financial hardship. However, when Mary snubs her, Mrs. Slatter grows spiteful and accuses the Turners of living "like pigs."

Themes

Intimacy vs. Hatred

All the characters in *The Grass is Singing* maintain complex and ambivalent relationships to one another. These relationships are invariably defined by feelings of both intimacy and hatred, which—rather than cancelling each other out—are shown to exist side by side, creating intense conflict and turmoil. The most significant example of this can be found in the relationship between Mary and Moses. Mary has a severely racist, cruel attitude toward all black people, and treats the black farm employees in a sadistic manner. She is especially antagonistic toward Moses, constantly insulting him and forcing him to perform an endless series of pointless tasks. At the same time, Mary is also fascinated by Moses, a fascination that she will not allow herself

to openly acknowledge. Toward the end of the novel, it is revealed that she has been forcing Moses to help her with intimate tasks such as getting dressed, leading Tony and Charlie to believe that Mary and Moses are sleeping together. While Moses's feelings toward Mary are not stated explicitly, his hatred is made obvious by his resentful and defiant attitude toward her. At the same time, he cannot escape the intimacy of the master/servant relationship that inevitably binds him to her. Eventually, the coexistence of both this intense intimacy and hatred reaches an explosive climax in which Moses kills Mary. This suggests that while the dynamic of intimacy and hatred is inevitable in a colonial society, such a dynamic is unsustainable and will eventually erupt into violence.

The relationship between Mary and Moses is far from the only one defined by intimacy and hatred. Mary's relationship to her husband, Dick, is similarly ambivalent, and both mirrors and contrasts with her relationship with Moses. Like Moses, Dick is deferential to Mary, obeying her wishes even when they conflict with his own desires. Mary feels more affection and respect for Dick than she does for Moses, but is repulsed by him sexually and comes to regret marrying him. The early intimacy in Mary and Dick's relationship turns to hatred as Mary becomes increasingly harsh and stubborn, while Dick is weakened due to poverty and illness. Although Dick survives his illness, Mary has a dream in which he is dead, suggesting that part of her may wish this were true, and that in some sense their relationship—like Mary's relationship with Moses—is too emotionally turbulent to survive. The combination of intimacy and hatred is again shown to lead to death—first on a symbolic level, and then on a literal one.

It is not only intimacy with Dick that fills Mary with disgust. She seems to hate the idea of any physical intimacy, and the narrator points out that, up until the point at which Moses pushes her, Mary has never touched a native African. (Of course, after this point Mary does allow Moses to touch her, such as when he helps her to get dressed. Mary's willingness to consent to touching Moses in these moments is part of the mystery of their relationship.) Mary's extreme resistance to physical intimacy is partially explained by moments at which she dreams of being sexually abused by her father. When Mary dreams that Dick has died, the figure of Moses comforting her transforms into Mary's father, "menacing and horrible, who touched her with desire." This moment suggests that, due to being abused as a child, Mary cannot differentiate between affection and violation. She thus comes to hate anyone who comes into intimate contact with her,

and even hates witnessing moments of intimacy between other people, such as the black mothers and babies.

In a broader sense, the colonial landscape of Southern Rhodesia is also defined by currents of intimacy and hatred that exist between the white colonizer and black indigenous populations. Although built on a strict racial hierarchy, colonial societies nonetheless depend on intimate interactions between the colonizers and the colonized. Examples of these moments of intimacy include indigenous people serving as white people's house servants, nannies, and prostitutes, as well as the high levels of sexual violence perpetrated by the settler population (a phenomenon that is briefly alluded to in the novel). All of the white characters express racist hatred to some degree; even Tony, who is the least prejudiced of the white characters, is forced to assimilate into the racist mindset that governs the lives of white Rhodesians. After coming to suspect that Mary is having an affair with Moses, Charlie insists that Dick take Mary away in order to separate her from Moses. Although Mary is not Charlie's wife, he feels it is his personal responsibility to prevent intimacy between the races, and in doing so protect the colonial racial order.

Hierarchy and Authority

The Grass is Singing takes place in Zimbabwe (formerly known as Southern Rhodesia) during the time of British colonial rule, and one of the most important themes of the novel is the way in which society is organized according to hierarchies. During the time the novel is set, the British socioeconomic class system remains extremely rigid, making it impossible for most people living in the United Kingdom to move up the social ladder. However, in Rhodesia and other colonies, even the poorest whites are still further up this ladder than the entire black population. (The narrator also notes that English-speaking white Rhodesians are placed above poor Dutch-descended Afrikaners: "'Poor whites' were Afrikaners, never British.")

Living in the colonies also gave white Brits the chance to make money through exploiting natural resources and the labor of the oppressed indigenous population. Every white person in the novel is to some extent fixated on the desire to increase their standing in the socioeconomic hierarchy. When this plan fails for Dick and he and Mary end up living in poverty, he is left miserable, ashamed, and crippled by illness.

The overarching racial and socioeconomic hierarchy is not a simple system, but rather one made up of an intricate web of smaller hierarchies that determine how much authority each person is accorded and how they are supposed to behave in relation to one another. As a woman, Mary is subservient to her husband, yet as a white person, she has authority over the black workers employed on her land (and indeed over all black people). While Mary enthusiastically wields and abuses the power she has over the black population, she often fails to honor her inferior position to Dick.

Indeed, while every character in the novel is inescapably aware of the hierarchies that organize society and of their place within these hierarchies, the characters also violate these hierarchies. This happens when Mary attempts to run away from Dick in order to regain her independence, and also when Moses continues to drink water after Mary orders him to go back to work. However, arguably the most important violation of any hierarchy of power comes when Moses kills Mary. In taking the life of a white woman, Moses commits the worst possible act in the eyes of white colonizers. At the same time, when Mary's murder is discussed at the beginning of the book, the narrator notes that white people are not surprised by Moses's act. Within the white colonial mindset, black people are placed at the bottom of the social hierarchy and are expected to behave in a "savage," immoral manner. Regardless of how black people actually behave, white people will treat them as if they are brutal and violent. This fact in itself invites violence against white oppressors, and is thus one of the central (and tragic) paradoxes of colonial society.

Brutality vs. Civilization

The most common justification for colonialism is the argument that the colonizers are bringing "civilization" to a primitive, brutal, and savage population. In today's world, most people acknowledge that at best this kind of thinking is naïve and patronizing, and at worst it is a thinly-veiled disguise for the colonizers' desire to abuse native people while gaining wealth and power for themselves. It is certainly difficult to see how the white characters in the novel are bringing "civilization" to the black population. While some white characters claim that they are bettering native people by forcing them to work, this is not a particularly convincing excuse for the harsh labor conditions to which they subject black workers.

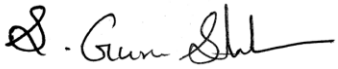
There is also evidence that the white characters are actually disturbed by black people who assimilate into white culture and behave in a "civilized" manner. When Charlie is saluted by two black policemen, he feels uncomfortable, and the narrator notes that he "could not bear the half-civilized native." Similarly, the narrator describes the self-assured satisfaction with which white people greet the news that Moses killed Mary. These examples suggest that even though colonizers claim that they seek to "civilize" the native population, in reality they do not truly wish to welcome native people into their vision of civilization. Instead, they would rather that natives continued to live up to the stereotype of brutality projected onto them by white people.

The white characters have different reasons for treating black people badly; for example, while Dick is motivated by paternalistic feelings, Mary is more power-hungry and sadistic. However, none of them seems to really be bringing "civilization" to the black population, even while some of them—such as Dick—are convinced that they are doing so. In fact, the white characters in the novel behave in a far more brutal manner than any of the black characters. Even Moses's murder of Mary is arguably not an act of brutality, but rather a reasonable response to the experience of colonial oppression. The question of whether all violence is immoral or whether some forms of violence can in fact be justified is not given a clear answer within the novel. The reader is encouraged to feel at least some sympathy for Moses, particularly after Mary ferociously injures him by whipping him across the face. Even if his murder of Mary is judged to be immoral, there can be no denying that Moses's act of brutality is a response to the brutality to which he is subjected as a native person living under colonial rule.

At the same time, the murder of Mary plays into the pre-established narrative that "white civilization" is under threat in Southern Rhodesia (and the rest of the world). Many of the white characters—and in particular Charlie—justify their actions as a way of defending white civilization from the "brutality" of the natural landscape and indigenous population. Note that at the time the novel was written, the British Empire was in the latter stage of disintegration, a fact that caused great distress among white Brits living in colonized countries whose fates were thrown into question. When Tony first arrives in Southern Rhodesia—before he has become accustomed to the severe racism of the white Rhodesians—he notices that figures like Charlie insistently deny that a white person can have a "human relationship" with a black person, and that this denial is vital to ensuring the racial order keeping the colonizers in power. In this sense,

“white civilization” is not under threat from any external brutality, but rather from the lie at the center of its colonial “civilizing” project.

Signature of the HOD



Signature of the Staff Assistant