

TRB ENGLISH (PG)

- ✦ **English Literature from 1400-1600**
- ✦ **English Literature from 1601-1798**
- ✦ **English Literature from 1798-1850**
- ✦ **Literature from 1851 to the Present Day**
- ✦ **Plays and Sonnets by Shakespeare**
- ✦ **American Literature**
- ✦ **(A) Indian Writing in English**
(B) Commonwealth Literature
- ✦ **Literary Criticism**
- ✦ **Language, Linguistics and Pedagogy**
- ✦ **Application of Language Skills**

I. ENGLISH LITERATURE FROM 1400-1600

POETRY

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

GEOFFREY CHAUCER'S LIFE AND WORKS

Geoffrey Chaucer occupies a unique position in the Middle Ages. He was born a commoner, but through his intellect and astute judgments of human character, he moved freely among the aristocracy. Although very little is definitely known about the details of his life, Chaucer was probably born shortly after 1340. Chaucer's father, John, was a prosperous wine merchant.

Both Chaucer's father and grandfather had minor standing at court, and Geoffrey Chaucer's own name appears in the household accounts of Elizabeth, Countess of Ulster and wife to Prince Lionel. As a household servant, Chaucer probably accompanied Elizabeth on her many journeys, and he may have attended her at such dazzling entertainment as the Feast of St. George given by King Edward in 1358 for the king of France, the queen of Scotland, the king of Cyprus, and a large array of other important people. Chaucer's acquaintance with John of Gaunt (fourth son of Edward III and ancestor of Henry IV, V, and VI), who greatly influenced the poet, may date from Christmas 1357, when John was a guest of Elizabeth in Yorkshire.

Chaucer had a high-born wife, Philippa, whom he probably married as early as 1366. Chaucer may also have had a daughter, Elizabeth, and two sons, "little Lewis" (for whom he composed the *Astrolabe*, a prose work on the use of that instrument of an astronomer) and Thomas.

Chaucer was one of the most learned men of his time. He made numerous translations of prose and verse, including Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, saints' legends, sermons, French poetry by Machaut and Deschamps, and Latin and Italian poetry by Ovid, Virgil, Boccaccio, and Petrarch. He also shows a wide knowledge of medicine and physiognomy, astronomy and astrology, jurisprudence, alchemy, and early physics. His knowledge of alchemy was so thorough that, even into the seventeenth century, some alchemists themselves considered him a "master" of the science — not a pseudoscience in Chaucer's time.

According to the legend on his tomb in Westminster Abbey, the poet died on October 25, 1400.

Public Positions and Service

During 1359 to 1360, Chaucer served with the English army in France and was taken prisoner near Reims. He was released for ransom — toward which Edward himself contributed sixteen pounds — and returned to England. Later that same year, Chaucer travelled back to France,

carrying royal letters, apparently entering the service of Edward as the king's servant and sometimes emissary.

Although he again served with the English army in France in 1369, by 1370 Chaucer was travelling abroad on a diplomatic mission for the king. Having been commissioned to negotiate with the Genoese on the choice of an English commercial port, Chaucer took his first known journey to Italy in December of 1372 and remained there until May 1373. He probably gained his knowledge of Italian poetry and painting during his visits to Genoa and Florence.

Chaucer's high standing continued during the reign of Richard, who became king in 1377. Throughout most of 1377 and 1378, his public services were performed chiefly in England. Chaucer received various appointments, including justice of the peace in Kent (1385), Clerk of the King's Works (1389), and, after his term as Clerk of the King's Works (sometime after 1390), deputy forester of the royal forest of North Petherton in Somerset. During this time, he was also elected Knight of the Shire (1386) and served in Parliament.

Chaucer continued to receive royal gifts, including a new annuity of twenty pounds, a scarlet robe trimmed with fur, and, after 1397, an annual butt of wine (104 gallons). When Henry IV was crowned, he renewed Richard's grants and gave Chaucer an additional annuity of forty marks. Throughout his public career, Chaucer came into contact with most of the important men of London as well as with many of the great men of the Continent. We have records of his frequent dealings with the chief merchants of the city, with the so-called Lollard knights (followers of Wyclif, to whom John of Gaunt gave protection), and with the king's most important ambassadors and officials.

Payments to the poet during the last years of his life were apparently irregular, and his various "begging poems" — "Complaint to his Purse," for instance — together with records of advances which he drew from the royal Exchequer, have sometimes been taken as evidence that Chaucer died poor; but this is by no means certain. At any event, Geoffrey Chaucer's son Thomas took over Geoffrey Chaucer's new house in the garden of Westminster Abbey and remained in high court favour after Chaucer's death.

Chaucer's Work

Chaucer has presented caricatures of himself again and again — in such early poems as *The Book of the Duchess*, *The Parliament of Fowles*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The House of Fame*, and *The Legend of Good Women*, and also in his masterpiece, *The Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer's narrators are, of course, not the "real" Chaucer — except in certain physical respects — but the various caricatures have much in common with one another and certainly reveal, either directly or indirectly, what Chaucer valued in a man.

With the exception of the Troilus narrator, a very complicated and special case, all Chaucer's narrators are bookish, fat, nearsighted, comically pretentious, slightly self-righteous, and apparently — because of a fundamental lack of sensitivity and refinement — thoroughly unsuccessful in the chief art of medieval heroes: love. We may be fairly sure that the spiritual and psychological qualities in these caricatures are not exactly Chaucer's. Chaucer's actual lack of pretentiousness, self-righteousness, and vulgarity lies at the heart of our response to the comic self-portraits in which he claims for himself these defects.

The ultimate effect of Chaucer's poetry is moral, but it is inadequate to describe Chaucer as a moralist, much less as a satirist. He is a genial observer of mankind, a storyteller, as well as a satirist, one whose satire is usually without real bite. He is also a reformer, but he is foremost a celebrator of life who comments shrewdly on human absurdities while being, at the same time, a lover of mankind.

WRITING THE CANTERBURY TALES

In Medieval England, most people were illiterate. This is why Church stain glass windows and wall paintings depict bible stories- it helped the congregation follow the biblical stories. Chaucer, due to his family's wealth and connection, was one of the fortunate people who learnt to read and write.

Chaucer was not a professional writer but wrote for pleasure, for his own amusement and that of his family and friends. His poetry was a great favourite of the King's. Chaucer wrote in Middle English, writing works such as Troilus and Criseyde and House of Fame. Though not the first to write in the vernacular, he appears to be instrumental in popularising it. Whilst working as Controller of Customs and Justice of Peace in 1386, however, he began writing his most famous works- The Canterbury Tales. The Canterbury Tales, written in a combination of verse and prose, tells the story of some 30 pilgrims walking from Southwark to Canterbury on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St Thomas Beckett. Thus, The Canterbury Tales is a collection of 24 stories, told as the pilgrims make their journey to Canterbury Cathedral.

Chaucer's work is not simply a story; the Canterbury Tales is also a comment on English society at the time. The very fact that Chaucer wrote in English demonstrates his dismissal of accepted practices. Chaucer's characters offer various social insights and raise various questions concerning social class, spirituality and religion. The work was unfinished when Chaucer died.

CHARACTER LIST

The Knight

The Knight rides at the front of the procession described in the General Prologue, and his story is the first in the sequence. The Host clearly admires the Knight, as does the narrator. The narrator seems to remember four main qualities of the Knight. The first

is the Knight's love of ideals—"chivalrie" (prowess), "trouthe" (fidelity), "honour" (reputation), "freedom" (generosity), and "curteisie" (refinement) (General Prologue, 45–46). The second is the Knight's impressive military career. The Knight has fought in the Crusades, wars in which Europeans traveled by sea to non-Christian lands and attempted to convert whole cultures by the force of their swords. By Chaucer's time, the spirit for conducting these wars was dying out, and they were no longer undertaken as frequently. The Knight has battled the Muslims in Egypt, Spain, and Turkey, and the Russian Orthodox in Lithuania and Russia. He has also fought in formal duels. The third quality the narrator remembers about the Knight is his meek, gentle, manner. And the fourth is his "array," or dress. The Knight wears a tunic made of coarse cloth, and his coat of mail is ruststained, because he has recently returned from an expedition.

The Knight's interaction with other characters tells us a few additional facts about him. In the Prologue to the Nun's Priest's Tale, he calls out to hear something more lighthearted, saying that it deeply upsets him to hear stories about tragic falls. He would rather hear about "joye and greet solas," about men who start off in poverty climbing in fortune and attaining wealth (Nun's Priest's Prologue, 2774). The Host agrees with him, which is not surprising, since the Host has mentioned that whoever tells the tale of "best sentence and moost solaas" will win the storytelling contest (General Prologue, 798). And, at the end of the Pardoner's Tale, the Knight breaks in to stop the squabbling between the Host and the Pardoner, ordering them to kiss and make up. Ironically, though a soldier, the romantic, idealistic Knight clearly has an aversion to conflict or unhappiness of any sort.

The Squire

The Squire is the Knight's son, accompanying him on this pilgrimage. We think he's a pretty good squire; after all, Chaucer tells us that he rides a horse well, can joust well, and he carves the meat for the Knight well at dinner. After the Franklin interrupts his tale, he praises the Squire for being everything a young man ought to be.

But, from his portrait we get the impression that the Squire is still pretty young – more of a man-boy than a man. Chaucer describes him as "embrouded" as if he were a "meede / al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and reede" (89 – 90) – embroidered like a meadow full of red and white flowers. That sounds more like a description of a maiden than a man! And, in his portrait, Chaucer spends a lot more time talking about how well the Squire can dance, sing, write poetry and, most importantly, indulge in serious crushes, than he does about the Squire's prowess on the battlefield. From his portrait, we end with the impression that the Squire is a teenager, a bit of a pretty boy, and prone to serious infatuations that keep him up all night.

The Squire's role in the General Prologue is probably to represent both youthfulness and femininity. Compare his portrait to that of his father, who is a grown-up version

of the Squire, or to the Monk, who is a manly man, and we can get a good picture of how Chaucer was thinking about the differences between youth and age, and femininity and masculinity, and how these different categories are all related to each other.

The Yeoman

The Knight travels with only one servant, or yeoman, and one who looks like Robin Hood. Seriously, this guy is dressed all in green and decked out with a bow and arrows, a dagger, and a sword. His hair is short, and his face is brown, suggesting that he spends a lot of time outside. Chaucer tells us he's a forester – at home he probably takes care of the forests on the Knight's land, protecting them from outlaws and making sure nobody poaches in them. As foresters go, he's probably a good one, a conclusion we can draw because he keeps his bow and arrows in very good condition – no droopy feathers for him – so it's likely he keeps his forest in similarly tip-top shape.

We never see the Yeoman again after the General Prologue, but, from him, we learn two things about the Knight: 1) that he's not high-maintenance, because he travels with only one servant, and 2) that he owns some land – hence, his need for a forester.

The Prioress

The Prioress is trying to be very, well, dainty. She has all these funny habits, like singing through her nose, speaking incorrect French, and eating so carefully that she never spills a drop. She does these things, Chaucer tells us, because she "peyned hir to countrefete cheere / of court" (139 – 140), or tries very hard to seem courtly. When she sees a mouse caught in a trap, she weeps, perhaps believing that this is how a damsel of the court would behave. Of course, two lines later, we learn that she has no problem feeding her hounds flesh, so her weeping over the trapped mouse is probably, like most of her habits, an affectation – a behavior the Prioress adopts to seem a certain way (in this case, like a courtly damsel), but which doesn't really reveal her true feelings.

Though the Prioress may try to seem dainty, in point of fact she's a very large woman: Chaucer tells us her forehead is a full hand-span broad and, come to think of it, she's not underfed. In keeping with her goal of seeming courtly, the Prioress is very elegantly dressed, with a string of coral beads attached to a pendant that reads "Amor Vincit Omnia," or "Love Conquers All." The beads and the pendant are interesting because this being a prioress, or nun who is in charge of a convent, we would expect her to be carrying rosary beads with a crucifix on the end. But instead she is carrying vanity beads. The pendant, which could refer to God's love, in her case more probably refers to the courtly love between a damsel and hero in one of the romances that were popular reading material for women of this time period.

So here's the thing about the Prioress: as a religious figure, she should be all kinds of things that she very clearly is not. What are these things? Well, take a look at

the Parson's portrait, which represents an ideal religious figure in the General Prologue, to find out the answer. With the Prioress, our first example of someone from the religious life, we have not only our first supposedly pious person with her priorities out of whack (a situation we'll definitely see again), but also our first example of someone who's trying way too hard to be perceived a certain way, and how ridiculous that looks.

We should note that the Prioress has a nun with her who serves as her "chapelyne" or secretary, and three priests, who probably help her out by saying mass and administering the sacraments in the abbey she runs. Although we get no portraits of these pilgrims, two of them, the Second Nun, and the Nun's Priest, tell tales later on.

The Monk

The Monk, Chaucer tells us, is a manly man. The Monk's favorite past-time is hunting, and to this end he keeps gorgeous (and probably expensive) horses and greyhounds. Like the Prioress, the Monk is all sorts of things that, as a religious figure, he should probably not be – a hunter, overfed, expensively-dressed in fur and gold jewelry, and a cultivator of expensive habits. But the Monk is willing to admit that he doesn't live a traditional religious life of hard work, study, and fasting, claiming as his excuse that he is a modern man, disdainful of the old traditions. So, out with the old fuddy-duddies like Augustine, who would have the monk slaving away over his books in a cloister, and in with the new – the new, in this case, being a comfortable life of sport, fine food and clothing, and amusements outside the monastery's walls.

Of the Monk's physical appearance, we learn that he is fat, bald, and greasy, with eyes that roll in his head. In medieval physiognomy, the practice of drawing conclusions about someone's character from their physical appearance, rolling eyes like this might be a sign of impatience and lust for food and women. This part of the Monk's portrait foreshadows the interaction between the Monk and the Host after the Tale of Melibee. At this point, before asking him to tell a tale, the Host praises the Monk's brawn and bulk and laments that he is a religious figure because, were the Monk not pledged to celibacy, he would surely impregnate lots of women! The Host says that he thinks the Monk would be a stud if given the opportunity, but considering the Monk's lack of respect for the "old" traditions of the religious life (and that mysterious love-knot pendant tying his hood), we think it's likely that he probably already is one.

With the Monk's portrait, we see another satire of religious figures who are supposed to live a monastic life of deprivation and hard work, but instead live a life of luxury and ease. Similar to the Prioress, the Monk is doing all kinds of things which, were he really pious, he would not. The Monk, though, is more self-aware about his departure from the pious life, taking the defensive stance of being a "modern" man, an excuse that rings somewhat hollow to discerning ears.

EDMUND SPENSER

WORKS OF EDMUND SPENSER

The Shepheardes Calendar was published in 1579. This is supposed to be Spenser's first major work. The poem consists of twelve eclogues each after the name of the corresponding month.

Spenser's complaints (1591) contain his condemnation of his age. Another poem, Colin Clout's Come Home Again (1595) deals with Spenser's visit to London. Spenser published his Fowre Hymnes in 1596. This book was jointly dedicated to two ladies.

The Amoretti contains 89 personal sonnets which describe Spenser's long courtship of Elizabeth Boyle whom he married afterwards. The supreme charm of these sonnets lies in the fact that they express a sincere emotion, an intense passion for the lady whom the poet did marry.

The Faerie Queene is Spenser's masterpiece at which he worked for nearly the whole of the later part of his life and died leaving it unfinished. His ardent desire was to rival the great ancient epics and thus vindicate the unlimited possibilities to which 'our mother tongue' could be stretched for use. It is an allegory on grand scale and each book is devoted to one virtue of which the protagonist is the embodiment. It is written in Spenserian Stanza which is Spenser's special contribution to English versification.

The 'Epithalamion' is Spenser's gift to Elizabeth Boyle. Prothalamion, is to celebrate the marriages of the Earl's two daughters.

INTRODUCTION OF PROTHALAMION

"Prothalamion" was written by the English poet Edmund Spenser in 1596 in celebration of the engagements of Elizabeth and Katherine Somerset, the daughters of the Earl of Somerset. The poem was innovative and unusual for its time. In fact, Spenser coined the word "prothalamion" specifically for it, modeling the title on the word "epithalamion," or "wedding song." Unlike an "epithalamion," which celebrates a wedding, a "prothalamion" celebrates a betrothal or engagement. The betrothals of the poem were more than matters of the heart, and were politically important events in England at the time. The poem thus meditates on the relationship between marriage, nature, and politics; it celebrates the beauty of the brides, the perfection of their marriages, and the natural world as a respite from the political complications of life at court. At the same time, however, the poem also suggests that the beauty and perfection that it describes is fleeting.

Summary of Prothalamion

It was a calm day with a light breeze in the air, which cooled things down and lessened the heat of the brightly shining sun. I was frustrated with the time I'd wasted at court: my political ambitions had failed, and my hopes turned out to be empty illusions. To make myself feel better, I went for a walk along the banks of the river

Thames. The shore and the meadows surrounding the river were covered with flowers—flowers so beautiful that they could be hung up in young women's room, or made into crowns for their fiancés in advance of their wedding day, which is not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem.

In a meadow by the river, I saw a group of nymphs—the mythological daughters of the river. Their hair was green and hanging down loosely, and they looked like brides. Each of them was carrying a wicker basket woven from twigs and full of flowers that they'd gathered from the meadow. The nymphs quickly and skillfully plucked all kinds of flowers—including blue violets, daisies (which close at night), lilies (which are so white they seem virginal) primroses, and vermeil roses—which they would use to decorate their bridegrooms on their wedding day, which was not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem.

I saw two beautiful swans swimming down the river Lee. I had never seen such beautiful birds. The snow on top of the famous Pindus mountain range has never been whiter than those swans. Not even the god Zeus, when he transformed himself into a swan in order to seduce the princess Leda, was as white as those swans. And though people say that Leda was as pale as Zeus was, neither Leda nor Zeus came close to being as white as the swans before me in the river. In fact, the swans were so white that even the calm river upon which they swam seemed to make them dirty; as such, the river told his waves not to touch the birds' silky feathers, in order to prevent the waves from dirtying the lovely birds and diminishing their beauty, which was as bright as the sun will be on their wedding day, which was not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem.

The nymphs, who had by this point collected enough flowers, ran to see those silver swans as they floated down the river. And when they saw them, the nymphs stood in stunned amazement, filling their eyes with the wonderful sight. The nymphs thought that they had never seen such lovely birds, and they assumed that they were angelic, or that they were the mythological swans who drew the goddess Venus's chariot through the sky. The swans were so beautiful it seemed impossible that they were born from any mortal creature; instead, the nymphs thought they were angels or the children of angels. Yet, the truth is that the swans were bred from the heat of the sun in the spring, when the earth was covered in fresh flowers and plants. They seemed as new and fresh as their wedding day, which was not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem.

Then the nymphs took out of their baskets all the sweet-smelling flowers they'd picked and threw them onto the swans and onto the waves of the river, so that river seemed like the river Peneus in Greece, which flows through the Tempe Valley in Thessaly. Indeed, the river was so covered in lilies that it seemed like the floor of a bridal chamber. Two of the nymphs wove flower crowns from the freshest flowers they could find in the meadow;

they presented these to the swans, who wore them on their foreheads. Meanwhile, another nymph sang the following song, which was prepared for the swans' wedding day, which was not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem.

"You swans, who are the world's beautiful decoration and the glory of the skies: you are being led to your lovers, and I wish you joy and happiness in your marriage. I further pray that Venus, the queen of love, and her son, Cupid, will smile on you, and with their smiles, remove all fights and and conflicts from your marriages. I pray that your hearts will be full of peace, your kitchens full of food, and your bedrooms proper and fruitful, so that your children defeat your enemies, and that your joy will overflow on your wedding day, which is not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem."

That was the end of the nymph's song, and everyone repeated her, announcing that the swans' wedding day wasn't far off—and the ground echoed with this line, which then echoed throughout the meadow. Thus the joyful swans went down the river Lee. Its waters murmured as they passed, almost as though the river would speak to them if he were able to talk. But he did make his affection clear by slowing down his current. And all the birds that lived on the river began to flock around the two swans, who were far more beautiful than those other birds—just as the moon is far more beautiful than the stars around it. In this way, they arranged themselves around the swans and waited on them, and lent them their best service for their wedding day, which was not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem.

After a while, they all came to London, which was where I was born and raised, though I am named after a different place, and come from an old, well-known family. They came to a place where there were brick towers on the banks of the Thames, which serve now as housing for law students, though in the past they were the headquarters of the Knights Templar, until that order crumbled due to pride. Next to the brick towers there is a place where I often received favors from the important man who lives there— whose protection I sorely miss now, though it is inappropriate to meditate on such grievances here, and I should limit myself to talking about the joys of the wedding day, which is not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem.

But in that place there now lives an aristocrat who brings honor to England—and whom the rest of the world admires. On a recent mission, he terrorized the Spanish and made the cliffs on either side of the straits of Gibraltar shake with fear. Man of honor, exceptional knight, the news of your triumphs travels across England. I hope you take joy in your victory and that you remain happy forever—since even your name promises that you will be happy. And I hope that through your skill and your victories in war, other countries won't be able to harm England. And I hope that Queen Elizabeth's name will be celebrated throughout the world, accompanied by your calls to arm, which some poet will preserve in song

for the rest of human history on the day of the wedding, which is not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem.

From the tall battlements of the house, the same aristocrat whom I described above came out like the evening star, Hesperus, who bathes his blond hair in the ocean all day and then rises above the horizon at night. The aristocrat came down to the river with many people following him. Among the crowd, two handsome knights stood out, who would've been a fitting match for any queen. Indeed, they were so intelligent and well-made that they seemed like Zeus's sons, Castor and Pollock, who, in Greek mythology became stars, part of the constellation Gemini. The two knights went down to the river to meet the two swans, whom they loved dearly. At the scheduled time they will get married, and that wedding day is not far away: please be quiet, river Thames, until I finish my poem.

Summary

Prothalamion is Spenser's second wedding song; the poem is modelled on his own marriage song called Epithalamion. In this poem he celebrates the occasion of the marriage of the daughters of Earl of Worcester. In this poem the poet attempts to win a patronage and the favour of the Queen.

Prothalamion (1596) was written at a time in his life of disappointment and trouble when Spenser was only a rare visitor to London. Here he is a passive observer than the bridegroom turned poet and hence though as beautiful metrically as his own marriage ode Epithalamion, it naturally does not voice the same ecstasy of passion. We find reference in the poem to the poet's own discontent to the history of Temple as to the achievements of Essex.

According to C. S. Lewis, "interesting as they are in themselves, they do not seem to contribute much to total effect." The poem has two themes—the obvious one of celebrating the ladies going to their betrothal and the personal theme which serves for introduction and passing reference once again towards the end. The tone of the two is in great contrast. The first one is gay, full of colour, beauty and hope of fulfillment; the second sad and tragic. The poet is conscious of the contrast and makes an attempt to suppress the sad not in a gay poem. At one point the poem verges on the elegiac but the poet deliberately steers himself to the opposite shore on consideration of decorum.

It is a cleverly contrived poem. So far as the poet is concerned the more important theme is the personal one, the statement of neglected merit, the loss of the great patron and the acquiring of a new one in Essex. But this is hidden and artfully introduced. The most powerful lines are those devoted to Essex to whom Spenser devotes about 23 lines. These lines are direct address. The poem is skillfully directed to take in this matter. The train of thought and the plan of poem are so conducted that the passage on Essex is integral and not superimposed. The bridegroom's play a minor role and are colorless and have only a reflected glory which they take from Essex.

The verse is an adaptation of the Italian canzone of 18 lines with varying rhyme scheme. The last two lines serve as a burden/refrain to the whole poem. The last line is repeated with variation. And the penultimate line slightly varied to suit the meaning. Poem is lyrical throughout and the repetition adds to the lyrical effect. The organization of stanza makes for great variety in the cadence with the mixing of 10 syllabic and 6 syllabic lines. There are fourteen of the former and four of the latter in each stanza. The successful handling of the very complicated arrangement shows the poet's mastery over a new metre.

In Spenser's poetry we get a characteristic blending of mythology and realism. Spenser added a new dignity to English verse by handling it in an exalted manner with a unique style, thought and art.

INTRODUCTION OF EPITHALAMION

Epithalamion which is considered to be Spenser's "highest poetic achievement" was published in 1595 alongwith his Amoretti, a sonnet sequence.

The poem describes the wedding-day, from the dawn to the calm, moon – illuminated night which enwraps the lovers in its cover to allow them to share the ecstatic felicity of nuptial love. It has twenty-four stanzas corresponding to the twenty four hours of the day. Every hour is celebrated and is given full honour by the poet as it brings him nearer his beloved. Consequently the poem becomes one of the greatest tributes ever paid in honour of love.

The poem follows the long tradition of rituals. It is accompanied by all the paraphernalia of marriage rituals. But here Spenser brings the ritualistic modes not only from Christianity, but also from Greek and Roman mythologies.

The poem begins in a traditional style with an invocation to the Muses whose aid he seeks in order to celebrate the happiest occasion of his life. It is their blessing which has enabled the union of the poet and his beloved.

The remarkable feature of the poem is its sincerity. The feeling and the emotion behind the poem have a purity, a chastity, which is exemplified by his beloved. Hence a symbolic, spiritual identity of the 'chastity' of the lovers. This idea enhances the ritualistic mood of the poem and adds to its nobility and sublimity. Except for a few minor technical lapses, the poem possesses all the qualities to make it great.

Summary of Epithalamion

i) A brief analysis of the poem

Epithalamion holds a unique place among the rest of Spenser's poems by the sheer eloquence of its passion, its concentrated effect and the mastery of rhythmical and musical effect. Spenser wrote it as a wedding gift, a 'song made in lieu of many ornaments' for the bride he had wooed in Amoretti, and he freely drew upon all the decorative resources of the Elizabethan lyric for its composing. This Ode is cast in an elaborate canzone form

which with its interlacing of long and short lines, gently pointed rhyme and bound by a refrain at the end of each long stanza, produces an effect of marvelous rhythmical harmony and resonance.

First, we have an invocation to the Muses, whom Spenser loved to honour, and usually invoked when celebrating any noble or illustrious name. But now he seeks their aid on a more intimate occasion-to help him to sing the praise of her who is to be his wife. He asks them to come at dawn and bring forth with them the nymphs of rivers and forests, and also those of the sea-let all carry garlands of roses and lilies for the bride and strew the ground everywhere, with flowers for fear her tender feet should be hurt by its hardness. But we must understand the word "nymphs" is only a poetic veil to transfigure the young peasant maids and fishermen's daughters on Spenser's domain. He also makes a passing remark to the excellent quality of the trout and pikes in his own river. While describing the beauty of his bride he makes a passing remark to his virgin empress.

He enriches his wedding song with a wealth of imagery and a galaxy of classical deities to come to grace his wedding or to add to the merry-making of the wedding feast. Solemnity is combined with levity and serene Christian morality is supplemented by the bacchanalian revelry of the wedding feast. Not a description here in this poem is out of place, not a simile is introduced without any bearing to the occasion nor a god or goddess is invoked in vain. There is a radiance of feeling glowing through the universal truth of its thought and the supreme intricacies of its art.

ii) Its form and Structure

It was not without reason that Charles Lamb hailed Spenser as the "Poets Poet". Edmund Spenser was the "Prince of Poets in His Time" and was a bright luminary on the literary firmament whom his contemporaries looked upon for their guidance and literary output and for the succeeding generations he was a lodestar of literary substance. Spenser did yeoman's service to English poetry in a variety of ways and left behind works of immortal value which served as mirror to shape their works for a host of poets who came in his wake. Spenser was a poet in the true sense of the word and no wonder he was the favourite of the Muses.

Spenser added a new dignity to English verse by handling it in an exalted manner with a unique style, thought and art. No doubt, English poetry was indebted to Chaucer who was proclaimed as the father of English poetry. But of the two, Spenser is undoubtedly a better soldier and the poetry of Chaucer pales into significance before that of Spenser. Though Chaucer's works are universal, he could not land at all ports like Spenser in his Faere Queene. While Chaucer is a photographer, Spenser is a portrait painter and an artist. Spenser has handled his Epithalamion in a way that at once it earned a compendium of praises from the critics. He has drawn upon all the decorative resources of the Elizabethan lyric for its composing. It is cast in a canzone form which with

its interlacing of long and short lines, gently pointed by rhyme and bound by a refrain at the end of each stanza produces an effect of marvelous rhythmical harmony and resonance. "No poem shows better the richness of his imagination and language, drawn from all the sources, ancient, modern, mythological and Christian. And what insight the poem gives into the literary tastes of an age when the most pious thoughts could lightly wear a pagan garb!" says Emile Legouis. Thus we find the form, diction and art of his Epithalamion unique as a wedding Ode, serving as a fitting model for any poet with resourcefulness to model upon. It is "the most magnificent lyric ever penned of love-triumphant" says Selincourt.

Spenser has happily combined the two conflicting ideas of art and morality harmoniously. He did not allow his poetic vision to be clouded by the fanaticism of either school. He never subordinated the one to the other and in all his poems he always presented art and morals as the obverse and reverse of the coin and left the readers to choose for themselves. His Epithalamion, no doubt, is not an exception to this. It bears the impress of an artist, a painter, a musician and epicure, a moralist, and a Platonist.

iii) The Diction and Versification

The diction and versification of Spenser correspond felicitously with the ideal character of his thought. Though it may be true that, in affecting the obsolete, Spenser 'writ no language'; though, that it is to say, he did not attempt to amplify and polish the living language of court, yet his mixture of old English words with classical syntax in metres adapted from those used by Chaucer, produces a remarkably beautiful effect. The language in Epithalamion is almost fully modern and free from archaism.

SIR THOMAS WYATT

REMEMBRANCE

Thomas Wyatt was born in 1503, at Allington Castle in Kent, and educated at St John's College, Cambridge. While travelling as a diplomat for Henry VIII he developed his interest in Continental poetry; he was the first English poet to use the Italian forms of the sonnet and terza rima, and the French rondeau. His translation of the Penitential Psalms is based on a version by the Italian poet Pietro Aretino. In the course of his career Wyatt served his King Henry in a variety of offices, including those of Marshal of Calais, Sheriff of Kent and Ambassador to Spain, and he was also jailed several times. His first imprisonment, in 1534, was for brawling; two years later his relationship with the disgraced Anne Boleyn resulted in a short spell in the Tower of London. Thomas and Anne had been lovers before her marriage to Henry, and his sense of loss at their separation forms the subject of the famous sonnet 'Whoso List To Hunt'. Wyatt was restored to favour and knighted in 1537, and spent the next two years on his embassy to the court of Charles V of Spain. In 1540 however, his trusted patron Thomas Cromwell was executed, leaving him without an ally at court. The following year Wyatt

was accused of treason by his enemies and imprisoned in the Tower once more. He managed to secure his own release but died of a fever soon afterwards.

The Poem

*They flee from me, that sometime did me seek
With naked foot, stalking in my chamber.
I have seen them gentle, tame, and meek,
That now are wild, and do not remember
That sometime they put themselves in danger
To take bread at my hand; and now they range
Busily seeking with a continual change.*

*Thanked be fortune it hath been otherwise
Twenty times better; but once, in special,
In thin array, after a pleasant guise,
When her loose gown from her shoulders did fall,
And she me caught in her arms long and small;
Therewith all sweetly did me kiss,
And softly said, 'Dear heart, how like you this?'*

*It was no dream: I lay broad waking;
But all is turned, thorough my gentleness,
Into a strange fashion of forsaking;
And I have leave to go of her goodness,
And she also to use newfangledness.
But since that I so kindly am served,
I would fain know what she hath deserved.*

The poem is written in rhyme royal. This form of poetry was introduced by Geoffrey Chaucer, and it consists of a seven-line structure with iambic pentameter and an ABABBCC rhyme scheme. This structure emphasizes the content of the stanzas and deepens the words of the lyrical voice.

First Stanza

*They flee from me that sometime did me seek,
With naked foot stalking in my chamber.
I have seen them gentle tame and meek
That now are wild and do not remember
That sometime they put themselves in danger
To take bread at my hand; and now they range
Busily seeking with a continual change.*

The first stanza describes how the lyrical voice's beloved one no longer pays attention to him. The lyrical voice starts by talking about the constant visits that have ended: 'They flee from me' that sometime did me seek, 'With naked foot stalking in my chamber'. This beloved one is familiar with the lyrical voice because of the frequency of the past visits and the "gentle tame and meek" character. Nevertheless, "now are wild and do not remember". Not only have the visits stopped, also, the character of the lyrical voice's loved one has also changed drastically. There is a significant contrast between the past and the present in the relationship between the

lyrical voice and the beloved one. This beloved one appears to be depicted as a deer. The image of the dear, an extended metaphor, is frequently used by Petrarch, an Italian poet who is known for his sonnets. Thus, the beloved one is compared to a deer that risked itself by eating out of the hand of the lyrical voice and grew closer to him. Yet, the dear, the beloved one, forgot all of this and now seeks food elsewhere

Second Stanza

*Thanked be fortune, it hath been otherwise
Twenty times better; but once in special,
In thin array after a pleasant guise,
When her loose gown from her shoulders did fall,
And she me caught in her arms long and small;
And therewith all sweetly did me kiss,
And softly said, "Dear heart, how like you this?"*

The second stanza of 'They Flee from Me' depicts the relationship between the lyrical voice and the beloved one in the past. The lyrical voice expresses his thankfulness in the first lines and accentuates this by making a particular use of syntax. In the past, the relationship between these two was "Twenty times better". Then, the lyrical voice talks about a particular episode ("but once in special") where "her loose gown from her shoulders did fall". This scene shows how the beloved one openly seduced him ("sweetly did me kiss,/ And softly said") rather than the lyrical voice, which appears to be the present situation. These actions made by the beloved one are described vividly and intensely, in order to express the lyrical voice's pleasurable memories of the past. The end of the stanza quotes the words of the beloved one and how she playfully seduced him in the past. In these lines, the beloved one is not described as a wild animal, but rather as an alluring woman. Hence, the tone of the stanza changes drastically, as the lyrical voice remembers this past situation.

Third Stanza

*It was no dream, I lay broad waking;
But all is turned thorough my gentleness
Into a strange fashion of forsaking;
And I have leave to go of her goodness
And she also to use newfangledness.
But since that I so kindly am served,
I would fain know what she hath deserved.*

The final stanza of 'They Flee from Me' accentuates the change between the past and the present situation with the beloved one. The lyrical voice says that these happy memories of the past were "no dream", as he was fully awake. He, again, emphasizes on the change in the relationship from the past to the present. The tone of the poem becomes more miserable, as the lyrical voice compares the past to the beloved one's present behavior ("And I have leave to go of her goodness"). In the final lines, the lyrical voice becomes more sarcastic and suggests that this beloved one left him because he was being too kind, blaming himself for this outcome ("But since that I so kindly am served, / I would fain know what

she hath deserved"). These words express resentment and anger from the lyrical voice, and he appeals directly to the reader so as to gain empathy from him/her.

PROSE

BACON-ESSAYS

Francis Bacon was born on January 22, 1561. He was of poor health throughout his life, yet it does not appear to have had an impact on his intellect. Francis Bacon was born near the Strand in London. Due to his health issues, young Francis Bacon was educated at home during his early childhood by his parents, Sir Nicholas Bacon and Anne Cooke Bacon. His parents hired John Walsall, a graduate of Oxford University to tutor him. Francis Bacon is said to have studied Latin as well as English, according to the medieval curriculum of the times.

Besides being an author, Bacon was also a jurist, politician, orator, scientist and philosopher. After being educated at home during his early childhood, Francis Bacon enrolled at Trinity College in the year 1573 at the age of 12 years along with his older brother Anthony Bacon. At Trinity College in Cambridge, Francis Bacon studied under the personal care of Dr. John Whitgit. Dr. Whitgit was later to become the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Francis Bacon met Queen Elizabeth for the first time at Cambridge. Queen Elizabeth was greatly impressed by his intellect, and used to, throughout her life, refer him as "the young lord keeper".

Among his essays, we are focusing on four of the most well known of them, and it is important to note that they are all inter-linked. These are Of Truth, Of Ambition, Of Revenge and Of Superstition.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It is important to know the historical background of the time the essay was written.

Francis Bacon: Essay titled Of Truth

Francis Bacon was a philosopher, jurist, scientist, orator and writer. Throughout his life, he appears to have been searching for the meaning of the term 'truth'. Francis Bacon appears to have devoted a considerable amount of time from his early years to study truth, life and love.

Until the year 1621, Francis Bacon had focused more on his career in public life as a statesman and jurist. Throughout his entire life, he was plagued by both poor health and the curse of debt. In the year 1621, in spite of the royal patronage of the then monarch of England King James I, Francis Bacon's public life and career came to an abrupt end on being charged with 23 separate counts of bribery and corruption.

It was only after this that Francis Bacon began devoting his entire life and time on study, or research, and writing. In the year 1625, Bacon wrote the final edition or compilation of his essays, titled Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral. The essay titled Of Truth was the first one in this final edition.

In this essay titled *Of Truth*, Francis Bacon has explored the fundamental question of whether it would be worse for man to lie to himself, or to others. This obviously led him to the next question, of whether even when man had possession of the truth, he could lie to those around him.

His life and personal experiences led the writer Francis Bacon to argue, and perhaps conclude, that human beings had the natural tendency or inclination to lie to others, and that this urge arose from the fact that all human beings actually loved the lie itself, more than speaking the lie to others or to themselves.

Francis Bacon: Essay titled Of Ambition

While the essay titled *Of Truth* was the first essay in the final edition of essays written by the author Francis Bacon in the year 1625, this essay titled *Of Ambition* came much later in the same edition.

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, Francis Bacon had used powerful people to gain various public official positions. All those efforts had been in vain, because although he had been appointed to various positions in the legal and political spheres, Francis Bacon had never really seemed to have achieved the heights of fame and fortune that he had actually desired.

On one occasion, Queen Elizabeth had called a parliamentary enquiry into a plot by the Roman Catholic Church which she believed had been plotting against her. Around this time, Francis Bacon had ruled against a triple tax that had been levied on the Roman Catholic Church. Due to this open show of rebellion, perhaps, Queen Elizabeth had subsequently snubbed Francis Bacon when he had applied for various positions of power in both politics as well as in the legal field.

However, Francis Bacon's ambitions never left him, and he continued to be driven by a fierce urge to excel. Towards this end, he had married Anne Barnham, the daughter of a wealthy nobleman. At the time of their marriage, Francis Bacon had been 45 years of age, while Anne Barnham had been 15 years old. However, this marriage too did not appear to have done much for either his quest for power or his quest for fortune. Francis Bacon had been plagued by debt throughout his life.

It was King James I, who rose to the throne of England after Queen Elizabeth, who recognized Francis Bacon's fierce ambition, and appointed him to various public offices. Yet, it would appear that even the king's patronage or support did not save Francis Bacon from public dishonor and disgrace after being appointed Lord Chancellor in the year 1621. This brought his public career to an abrupt end, following which Francis Bacon turned his attention to research, study and writing. For the most part, he appears to have focused on writing down his theories on his philosophical analyses of various aspects of man and his inherent nature.

The final edition of those essays was published in the year 1625, and the essay titled *Of Ambition* had been part of that edition.

Francis Bacon: Essay titled Of Revenge

Francis Bacon had written three versions of his essays, and the essays that have been included in this unit are all taken from the third and final edition of his collection of essays titled *The Essays*. The first essay in this edition is the essay titled *Of Truth*, perhaps the journey of a man's life begins with his understanding of and question for truth. This essay titled *Of Revenge* comes later in the same collection, which was published in the year 162.

In fact his essays were all written between the years 1612 and 1625, and were compiled into a collection called *Essays or Counsels*. According to Francis Bacon, these essays were not just intended to be a form of self expression, but as a form of self-interest.

Francis Bacon believed that a man of ambition should be given full freedom to fulfill that ambition, because when he is thwarted or prevented from fulfilling his ambition, he can become dangerous, with mean and vengeful thoughts, eager to take revenge on the people who had thwarted or prevented him from proceeding and progressing on his way to fulfilling his ambition. This notion or concept of the writer appears to have governed and become the base of all his essays and in fact could be said to become the central theme of all his essays as well.

Francis Bacon appeared to have been influenced by his own personal experiences as an Attorney General and Lord Chancellor of England prior to the year 1621. His studies of human nature were also to a great extent influenced by his personal experiences as a man in public positions of power and authority. Francis Bacon had claimed that a man seeking the wild justice of personal revenge would always remain the fundamental and constant challenge to the rule of law, or to the legal system of the country.

Francis Bacon: Essay titled Of Superstition

Francis Bacon had written all of his essays between the years 1612 and 1625. In the year 1625, Francis Bacon had published his third, and final version of his essays. The first essay in this edition had been titled *Of Truth*, and the present essay, titled *Of Superstition*, had also been included in this edition.

Although on the face of it, this essay may not appear to be directly linked to the others in this unit, it is important to understand its relevance. Like all the other essays he wrote, Francis Bacon had spent his entire life, studying human beings and their behavioral patterns and tendencies. All his literary work, in fact was based on his studies and observations. In that context, this essay too is based on his personal observations and studies of human beings, whose basic tendency is usually to idolize other human beings, and to be able to worship only something they can see and touch.

SUMMARY OF THE ESSAYS

Francis Bacon: Essay titled Of Truth

We will begin this section with a brief summary of the essay titled *Of Truth* written by Francis Bacon.

This essay is based on Francis Bacon's study and critical analysis of the term 'truth', and its connotation