SHIVAJI UNIVERSITY KOLHAPUR

B A III Semester V (NEP 2.0)

Major English - Paper VIII

Introduction to Literary Criticism

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Introduction

Literature is a mirror of human life. It reflects our thoughts, emotions, dreams, beliefs, and experiences. Through poems, plays, novels, and short stories, writers express their ideas about individuals and society. However, reading literature is not only about enjoying a story or a poem. It also involves understanding the writer's purpose, appreciating artistic beauty, and interpreting deeper meanings. This process is known as literary criticism. Literary criticism is the study, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of literary works. It helps readers understand how a literary work is created, what it means, and why it is important. It also develops the ability to think critically, express opinions, and appreciate different styles of writing. Literary criticism is not about finding faults in a work of literature; instead, it is about understanding and appreciating its qualities in a thoughtful and systematic way. This Subject, Introduction to Literary Criticism, has been designed especially for undergraduate students. It presents the basic principles of literary criticism in a simple, clear, and easy-to-understand language. The main objective of this book is to help beginners develop an interest in literary studies and gain confidence in reading, analyzing, and appreciating literary texts. Every topic is explained with simple examples so that students can understand the concepts without difficulty.

The first unit introduces the Nature and Functions of Literary Criticism. Students will learn what literary criticism is, why it is important, and how it helps both readers and writers. This unit also explains the role of a critic in interpreting and evaluating literature and highlights the importance of criticism in the study of literary works. The second unit focuses on Classical Criticism, which forms the foundation of Western literary theory. It explains the Theory of Imitation, one of the earliest ideas about literature, which considers literature as an artistic representation of life and nature. This unit also discusses the qualities of the Ideal Tragic Hero, helping students understand the characteristics of great tragic characters and the significance of tragedy in literature.

The third unit explains four important Literary Terms—Irony, Satire, Humour, and Paradox. These terms are widely used in literary studies and help readers understand the artistic techniques employed by writers. Each term is explained in simple language with suitable illustrations to make learning easy and enjoyable. The final unit deals with the Critical Appreciation of an Unseen Poem. Many students find this task difficult because they have to analyze a poem without any previous preparation. This book provides practical guidance on how to read an unseen poem carefully, identify its theme, language, imagery, tone, and poetic devices, and write a clear and effective appreciation.

B A III Semester V (NEP 2.0) Major English - Paper VIII
Introduction to Literary Criticism- I

Syllabus

Module No.	Subtitles of the Module	Page No
I	**An Introduction to Literary Criticism** A] Nature of Criticism B] Function of Criticism	
II	**Classical Criticism** A] Theory of Imitation. B] Ideal Tragic Hero.	
III	**Literary Terms** A] Irony B] Satire C] Humour D] Paradox	
IV	**Critical Appreciation of an unseen poem**	

Nature of Question Paper (80 Marks)

Q.1 A) Multiple Choice Questions with four alternatives. (Module I to IV) 10

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence each. (5 / 7)
(Module I to IV) 10

Q.2 Answer the questions in about 250 to 300 words each. (A or B) 15
(Module I)

Q.3 Answer the questions in about 250 to 300 words each (A or B) 15
(Module II)

Q.4 Write short notes on the following (Any 3 out of 5) 15
(Module III)

Q.5 Write Critical Appreciation of an unseen poem (Module IV) 15

Internal Assessment (20 Marks): Seminar/Group activity.

Module I - An Introduction to Literary Criticism

A] Nature of Criticism B] Function of Criticism

A) Nature of Criticism-

The word 'criticism' has been derived from Greek word ' Kritikos' which means 'able to judge'. In this sense criticism means 'judgment.' It was first used in English literature by Dryden in the preface of '*The State of Innocence'* (1677). According to Dryden, 'criticism is a standard of judging well'. After the publication of Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1711), the word criticism was firmly established in English literature. The word criticism is difficult to define exactly. But various critics have different opinions about the nature of criticism. The most common definition of criticism can be made as follows-

"Criticism is a study concerned with defining, classifying, analyzing, interpreting and evaluating works of literature."

Some other definitions of criticism are as follows-

"Criticism is the act of analyzing and judging the quality of something, specially a literary or artistic work."

"Criticism is the commentation and exposition of works of art by means of written words." – T. S. Eliot

"Literary criticism is a judgment of books, reviewing and finally the definition of taste of tradition and of classic." – Rene Wellek

Criticism is a creative activity in its nature. Critics evaluate the work of art and become creative. The chief source of literary criticism is Aristotle's *Poetics*. The literary critics have divided criticism into three main types – Legislative Criticism, Theoretical Criticism and Descriptive Criticism.

The nature of criticism will be clearly visible to us when we through these types.

i) Legislative Criticism-

It includes books of rhetoric. It lays down rules and prescriptions for the guidelines for writers. These rules are established by Greek and Roman Critics like Aristotle, Longinus Horace etc. This type of criticism was practiced by the Elizabethans with the exceptions of Sir Philip Sidney.

ii) **Theoretical Criticism**-

Theoretical Criticism is also known as aesthetic criticism. It is a study of general principles of beauty in the work of art. This criticism is different in its nature from other types. It formulates principles

related with poetic and nature. Sidney, Dryden, Coleridge, I A Richards wrote theoretical criticism. The first half of the 20th century is the landmark in Theoretical Criticism.

iii) **Descriptive Criticism-**

Descriptive Criticism is the act of analyzing works of literature that actually exist. It is actually based on discussion, analysis, appreciation and interpretation of individual literary works. This criticism is done only for reader's enjoyment. It is always about a particular text. Dryden was the chief practitioner of Descriptive Criticism. One of the great advantages of Descriptive Criticism is that the judgment of critics can be confirmed by readers.

Descriptive Criticism is also classified under certain categories according to its nature as follows-

a) Impressionistic Criticism

It concentrates on the direct impression of the individual reader. The critic is not concerned with analysis, biography or abstract questions of aesthetics but with his own language an experience or impression or the work of art. Walter Pater, Oscar Wild, Arthur Symons are the dominant Impressionistic critics.

b) Judicial Criticism-

Judicial criticism judges works of literature in the light of rules and conventions. It compares literature with the criteria of literary excellence and explains the effect of a work by reference to its subject, techniques, style and organization. Dr. Jonson, E M Forster are the chief exponent of this type of criticism.

c) Inductive Criticism

Its basic view is that rules and laws of art should be discovered in the practice by the artist himself. Inductive critic is an investigator and not a hanging judge of literature.

d) Evaluating Criticism

In this type, Critics make an attempt to evaluate a literary work on the standards which may be aesthetic, moral or purely personal. It takes into account all the elements which form literature-rhythm, movement, thought and emotion, imaginary and symbolism, words and meaning etc.

e) Comparative Criticism

This criticism is popularized by Mathew Arnold. In this type evaluation is made by comparing one work with other works of the same genre. e.g. Homer's *Illiad* may be compared with *Mahabharat* etc. the nature of this criticism is based on mere comparison.

f) New Criticism-

New Criticism is objective criticism which is different in nature and function. It studies the literary work as it really is. According to New Criticism writer's psychology, biography, historical background should not be considered while evaluating a work of literature. Literary product is self -sufficient and has its own object.

Thus, there are several types of criticism which seem distinct from each other in nature. Each criticism has its own characteristics, biographical criticism, psychological criticism, sociological criticism also play an important part in the development of nature of criticism.

To sum up we can say that the nature of criticism is a complex one. It is creative, self -sufficient, unbiased and philosophical in nature.

Q. Discuss the Nature of Literary Criticism.

Literary criticism is the study, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of literary works such as poems, plays, novels, and short stories. It helps readers understand the meaning, beauty, and value of literature. A literary critic carefully reads a text and explains its ideas, themes, language, style, and artistic qualities. Literary criticism is not only about pointing out mistakes. It is mainly about understanding and appreciating a literary work.

The nature of literary criticism is analytical. A critic studies different parts of a literary work, such as its characters, plot, setting, language, imagery, and symbols. By examining these elements, the critic explains how they work together to create meaning and produce an effect on the reader.

Literary criticism is also interpretative. Different readers may understand the same literary work in different ways because they have different experiences, knowledge, and opinions. A critic offers a thoughtful interpretation based on careful reading and evidence from the text. Good criticism helps readers discover meanings that they may not notice on their own.

Another important feature of literary criticism is that it is evaluative. A critic judges the strengths and weaknesses of a literary work. This judgment is based on literary principles, not on personal likes or dislikes. A fair critic explains why a work is successful or unsuccessful by giving suitable reasons and examples.

Literary criticism is objective as well as subjective. A critic should be objective by using facts and examples from the text. At the same time, personal understanding and experience also play a role in interpreting literature. Therefore, criticism combines both logical thinking and individual response.

The nature of literary criticism is also creative. A good critic does more than explain a literary work. The critic presents ideas in an interesting and meaningful way. Many famous critics write beautifully, making criticism enjoyable as well as informative.

Literary criticism is intellectual and thoughtful. It requires close reading, careful observation, and logical thinking. Critics ask questions about the author's purpose, themes, style, characters, and message. They support their opinions with evidence from the text instead of making unsupported statements.

Another characteristic of literary criticism is that it is based on literary theories and principles. Critics often use different approaches such as classical, moral, historical, psychological, feminist, or reader-response criticism to understand literature from different points of view. These approaches help readers gain a deeper understanding of literary works.

Literary criticism is also dynamic and changing. As society, culture, and values change, new methods of criticism develop. A literary work may be interpreted differently by readers from different periods and cultures. This makes literary criticism a living and evolving field of study.

In conclusion, the nature of literary criticism is analytical, interpretative, evaluative, objective, creative, intellectual, and dynamic. It helps readers understand, appreciate, and enjoy literature in a deeper way. Literary criticism develops critical thinking, broadens knowledge, and enables readers to recognize the artistic beauty and lasting value of literary works.

II) The Function of Criticism-

The main business of a literary critic and his criticism is to distinguish between a good book and a bad one. Many books of literature cannot be understood by a reader without a critics help, so criticism helps reader to understand a literary work. But there are numerous functions for criticism because its function changes in the course of time. T. S. Eliot in his essay ***The Function of Criticism*** **(1923)** says that commentation and elucidation of work of art is the main function of criticism. But after thirty years in his essay *'The Frontiers of Criticism'* he remarks that his views on criticism are different from his previous essay. The function of criticism before thirty years cannot be true in present situation.

In another view 'investigation' or 'finding' is the function of criticism. Literary criticism tries to investigate faults in style, subject, rhythm and other aspects of literature. But only finding faults is not limited, criticism must discover its causes, background and solutions. Some critics are of the view

that critic should find out good rather than the bad. Addison points out that, 'the true critics will dwell on excellences rather than imperfection'. Alexander Pope defines critic and explains the task of criticism in superb manner.

"A true critic is a person who is endowed with knowledge and discrimination, passes disinterested judgments with modesty, courtesy and good breeding and praises the merits even of his enemy."

Mathew Arnold also gives his views on criticism in his essay *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time*. He says that 'criticism is a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world.

Critics from Aristotle to the end of the 20th century spoke differently about the function of criticism. Lamb, William Hazlitt, T. S. Eliot, F R Levis, Goethe also gave their opinions about the task of criticism. Thus with the help of above comments we may point out following functions of criticism.

1. To help the reader to understand literary work is the chief function of criticism.
2. To provide aesthetic pleasure to the readers
3. Criticism helps to analyze power of beauty and poetic truth
4. Criticism must distinguish between what is temporary and permanent.
5. The important function of criticism is to pass disinterested judgments about literature
6. To analyze writer's experience of life, its psychology, social forces in relation to creation of literary work
7. Illumination and exposition are no doubt the function of criticism
8. To explain poetic devices, its significance and its total effect in the work of literature is also the function of criticism.
9. Another function of criticism is to make comparative study of literature and decide the value of literary work.
10. According to Addison, the function of criticism is pure appreciation.

Thus criticism is a task of great skill. It is an instrument of judging well. But critic must know how to handle it. Critic is an interpreter; he is appreciator; he is guide; he is a judge; he is an explorer. The function of criticism is manifolds. The function of criticism is therefore theorizing, judging, legislating and appreciating a literary work.

Q. Explain the Function of Literary Criticism.

Literary criticism performs many important functions. It helps readers understand, interpret, appreciate, and evaluate literary works such as poems, plays, novels, and short stories. A good critic explains the meaning of a literary work in a clear and logical way. Literary criticism makes the study of literature more interesting, enjoyable, and meaningful.

1) One of the main functions of literary criticism is to explain the meaning of a literary work. Sometimes a poem or a story contains difficult words, symbols, or hidden ideas. A critic carefully studies the text and explains its meaning in simple language. This helps readers understand the author's thoughts and message more clearly.

2) Another important function is to interpret literature. Different readers may understand a literary work in different ways. A critic offers a thoughtful interpretation based on careful reading and evidence from the text. This allows readers to discover new ideas and deeper meanings that they may not have noticed before.

3) Literary criticism also helps to evaluate the quality of a literary work. A critic examines the strengths and weaknesses of a poem, play, novel, or story. The judgment is based on literary principles such as theme, language, style, structure, characterization, and artistic beauty. A fair critic gives reasons and examples to support every opinion.

4) Another function of literary criticism is to increase the reader's appreciation of literature. When readers understand the language, imagery, symbols, and techniques used by the writer, they enjoy the literary work more. Criticism helps readers recognize the beauty, creativity, and emotional power of literature.

5) Literary criticism also guides readers in selecting and understanding good books. There are thousands of literary works available, but criticism helps readers identify important and valuable works. It provides useful information about the themes, style, and significance of different writers and their works.

6) A further function of literary criticism is to encourage critical thinking. It teaches readers to analyse ideas carefully instead of accepting everything without question. Students learn to compare different opinions, form their own judgments, and support their views with evidence from the text. This develops logical thinking and analytical skills.

7) Literary criticism is also helpful to writers**.** Constructive criticism points out the strengths of a literary work and suggests areas for improvement. It encourages writers to improve their language, style, imagination, and creative expression. In this way, criticism contributes to the growth of literature.

8) Another important function is to preserve literary standards. Critics encourage writers to maintain high quality in their works. They appreciate originality, creativity, and artistic excellence while discouraging poor writing. This helps improve the overall standard of literature.

9) Literary criticism also connects literature with society**.** It explains how literature reflects social life, culture, history, politics, and human values. Through criticism, readers understand the relationship between literary works and the world in which they were written.

10) Finally, literary criticism promotes the study of literature. It creates interest in reading and encourages students to explore different literary forms and authors. It develops a deeper understanding of literature and inspires readers to enjoy literary works throughout their lives.

In conclusion, the functions of literary criticism are to explain, interpret, evaluate, appreciate, guide, educate, and inspire readers. It also helps writers improve their work and preserves the quality of literature. Literary criticism is an essential part of literary studies because it helps us understand and enjoy literature in a deeper and more meaningful way.

OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS

Q. 1 Rewrite the following sentences choosing correct options.

1. The word ‘criticism’ is derived from the Greek word ‘ Kritikos which means -----

a) answer b) judgment c) meaning d) analysis

2. According to ---------- criticism is a commentation and elucidation of works of arts.

a) Arnold b) Pope c) Addison d) T.S. Eliot

3. ---------- is the chief leader of comparative method.

a) T. S. Eliot b) Mathew Arnold c) Alexander Pope d) Joseph Addison

4. Which of the following is not a function of criticism?

a) to help the reader to understand literary work b) commentation and exposition

c) to make rules for other/readers d) pure appreciation

5. Pure Appreciation is the chief function of criticism for -------

a) Pope b) Addison c) Rene Wellek d) T. S. Eliot

6. ------- criticism admits that rules must be discovered by an artist himself.

a) Historical Criticism b) Comparative Criticism

c) Judicial Criticism d) Inductive criticism

7. New Criticism does not think about writer's psychology, biography or his social background.

a) Inductive b) new c) Judicial d) impressionism

8. The word 'disinterested' was used in the definition of criticism by ---------

a) Mathew Arnold b) Pope c) T. S. Eliot d) Addison

9. Criticism does not include-----

a) defining b) analyzing c) classifying d) copying

10. -------- used the word criticism in his book 'The State of Innocence'.

a) T. S. Eliot b) Dr. Johnson c) Dryden d) Rene Wellek

Q. 2 Answer the following questions in one word/sentence/phrase.

1. Give the definition of criticism.
2. which are the different types of criticism?
3. which is the chief function of criticism?
4. who wrote an essay The Function of Criticism?
5. who popularized the comparative methods of criticism?

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Module II- Classical Criticism

A] Theory of Imitation. B] Ideal Tragic Hero.

Introduction

Classical criticism is one of the oldest and most important forms of literary criticism. It began in ancient Greece more than two thousand years ago. The ideas of classical criticism were mainly developed by the great Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle. Later, the Roman critic Horace also contributed to the development of classical literary theory. Their ideas became the foundation of Western literary criticism and continue to influence the study of literature today.

Classical criticism is based on the belief that literature should follow certain rules, principles, and standards. According to classical critics, a good literary work should have order, balance, unity, and artistic beauty. Literature should not only entertain readers but also educate them by teaching moral values and important lessons about life.

One of the central ideas of classical criticism is the Theory of Imitation, also known as *Mimesis*. According to this theory, literature is an imitation or representation of life and nature. Writers observe the world around them and present it creatively through poems, plays, and stories. However, imitation does not mean copying life exactly. Instead, writers select and arrange events to create an artistic and meaningful picture of reality.

Another important concept in classical criticism is the Ideal Tragic Hero. Aristotle explained this idea in his famous book *Poetics*. A tragic hero is a noble and respected person who has a weakness or makes a serious mistake, known as a tragic flaw. Because of this flaw, the hero faces suffering and finally experiences a downfall. The story of the tragic hero creates feelings of pity and fear in the audience and finally brings about catharsis, which means the emotional purification or release of these feelings.

Classical criticism also believes that literature should be logical, well-organized, and meaningful**.** Every part of a literary work should contribute to the whole. There should be a proper beginning, middle, and end. Characters should act naturally, and events should follow a clear sequence. This unity and order make a literary work effective and enjoyable.

The main aim of classical criticism is to judge literature according to established literary principles. Classical critics examine whether a literary work follows the accepted standards of form,

structure, language, and content. They believe that great literature combines beauty, truth, and moral value.

The influence of classical criticism can still be seen in modern literary studies. Many writers and critics continue to use the ideas of Plato, Aristotle, and Horace while analyzing literature. Concepts such as imitation, plot, character, unity, tragic hero, and catharsis remain important in the study of poetry, drama, and fiction.

In conclusion, classical criticism is the foundation of literary criticism. It teaches that literature should imitate life, follow artistic rules, present meaningful ideas, and inspire readers through beauty and moral values. The theories of Plato, Aristotle, and Horace have shaped literary studies for centuries and continue to guide readers, writers, and critics in understanding and appreciating literature.

Aristotle (384 BC- 322 BC)

Aristotle was an ancient great Greek scholar and philosopher. He was the disciple of Greek philosopher Plato. He was born on the north of Greece. He is considered as the father of western philosophy along with Plato. He has written world famous literary book ***Poetics*** in 335 BC. His book ***Poetics*** or ***The Art of Poetry*** is first book on literary criticism. There are 26 chapters and 46 pages only. It was lecture notes which was collected and published later on. Each chapter of the book gives some theories of poetry and drama. Aristotle focuses his discussion on tragedy which was dramatic rather than narrative form. He gave definition of tragedy, discusses hero of the tragedy, function of tragedy etc. in the book.

I) Theory of Imitation

The Theory of Imitation, also called *Mimesis***,** is one of the oldest and most important ideas in literary criticism. The word *"Mimesis"* comes from the Greek language and means "imitation" or "representation." According to this theory, literature is an imitation of life and nature. Writers observe people, society, emotions, and events around them and present them in the form of poems, plays, novels, and stories. However, imitation does not mean making an exact copy of real life. It means presenting life creatively through imagination and artistic skill.

The theory of imitation was first discussed by the Greek philosopher Plato. Plato believed that the real world itself is only an imperfect copy of the world of perfect ideas, which he called the World of Forms. Therefore, he argued that literature and art are copies of an already imperfect world. According to Plato, literature is "an imitation of an imitation" and is twice removed from truth. He

thought that poetry and drama could sometimes mislead people by appealing to emotions rather than reason. For this reason, Plato did not give poets a high place in his ideal society.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle**,** who was Plato's student, accepted the idea of imitation but explained it in a different and more positive way. In his famous book Poetics, Aristotle said that imitation is a natural human activity. From childhood, people learn by observing and imitating others. Therefore, literature is a natural and creative way of representing life. According to Aristotle, a writer does not simply copy reality. Instead, the writer selects, arranges, and improves real-life experiences to create a meaningful and artistic work.

Aristotle believed that literature represents universal truths rather than only particular events. A story may be imaginary, but it can still express real human emotions, values, and experiences. For example, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is not the story of a real prince, yet it presents universal themes such as love, revenge, duty, and human weakness. In this way, literature helps readers understand life more deeply.

According to Aristotle, writers may imitate people, actions, emotions, and situations. They may present characters as better than ordinary people, worse than ordinary people, or exactly as they are. This creative freedom allows writers to produce different kinds of literature such as tragedy, comedy, and epic poetry. The aim of imitation is not to copy life exactly but to reveal its deeper meaning and beauty.

The Theory of Imitation also explains why literature is both realistic and imaginative. Writers use their imagination to create interesting stories, but these stories are based on human life and experience. As a result, readers can connect with the characters and events even if they are fictional. Good literature entertains readers, teaches important lessons, and helps them understand themselves and society.

The influence of the Theory of Imitation can still be seen in modern literature. Most novels, plays, films, and poems are based on real-life experiences, social issues, and human emotions. Although writers use imagination, their works continue to reflect the world around them. This shows that the idea of imitation remains relevant even today.

In conclusion, the Theory of Imitation is the foundation of classical literary criticism. Plato regarded imitation as a copy of reality and was doubtful about its value, while Aristotle considered imitation to be a creative and natural process that reveals universal truths. According to Aristotle, literature is not a simple copy of life but an artistic representation that helps readers understand human

nature, society, and the meaning of life. Therefore, the Theory of Imitation continues to be one of the most influential ideas in the study of literature.

II) Ideal Tragic Hero

The concept of the tragic hero is given in the chapter XIII of the *Poetics*. The function of tragedy is to arouse the emotion of pity and fear. The ideal tragic hero must be able to evoke these emotions in the audience through his usual suffering and heroic endurance. The entirely good or bad character undergoing the change from prosperity to adversity arouses neither pity nor fear. The downfall of a thoroughly good person shocks or repels us and likewise the tragedy of a bad man will satisfy our moral sense.

The ideal tragic hero should be a man of eminence. The action of eminent man would be serious, compete and of certain magnitude.

The hero should not only be eminent but also basically a good man, though not absolutely virtues. The sufferings, fall and death of an absolutely virtuous man would generate feelings of disgust rather than those of terror and compassion which a tragic play must produce.

The hero neither should be a villain or a wicked person for his fall and death would not please and satisfy our moral sense. Without generating the feeling of pity, compassion and fear.

The ideal tragic hero should be basically a good man with minor flaw or tragic trait in his character. The entire tragedy should issue from this minor flaw or error of judgment. The fall, suffering and tragic death of such a hero would certainly generate the feeling of pity and fear.

The tragic hero's suffering begins with Peripetia and Anagnorisis. Being essentially a moral character he suffers mentally more. The audience too shares his unusual suffering and the latent emotions of pity and fear are aroused and shaken violently for Catharsis.

Hamartia -

Hamartia is confusing term in the book Poetics. Critics have tried to explain it in their own way. To some critics 'hamartia' is an error in judgment and to others it is a moral lapse. According to A C Bradley, it is the tragic flaw in the life or character of a tragic hero. Hamartia, therefore, is an unintentional act. The agent aims at one thing and something else happen contrary to all reasonable expectations.

The term 'Hamartia' has been interpreted in various sense-

It is an error due to insufficient knowledge of the circumstances concerned. The hamartia of Othello would refer to an error of judgments, an error that is due to a hasty or careless examination of the situation.

Another kind of error more properly called misfortune. It is an error arising from unavoidable ignorance. This appears powerfully in the case of Hamlet, who would not have only definite idea about his mother's share in the guilt.

There is also a purely moral hamartia when the action is not deliberately but it is consciously and intentionally done. King Lear's action in banishing Cordelia comes here.

Hamartia may actually refer to a defect of character. It may mean a vice that is the necessary consequences of a depraved will. The over vaulting ambition of Macbeth and the character of Richard III can be cited as good example of this.

Q. Write a note on the concept of ideal tragic Hero.

The Ideal Tragic Hero is one of the most important concepts in Classical Criticism. It was explained by the Greek philosopher Aristotle in his famous book *Poetics*. According to Aristotle, a tragic hero is the main character in a tragedy who is noble, respected, and admired by society. Although the hero has many good qualities, he also has one weakness or makes a serious mistake. This weakness finally leads to his downfall.

According to Aristotle, the tragic hero should belong to a high social position, such as a king, prince, queen, or a respected leader. Such a person has great responsibilities and is admired by many people. When a noble person suffers or falls from a position of honour, the audience feels a stronger emotional effect.

An ideal tragic hero is good and virtuous, but not perfect. He is brave, honest, kind, and intelligent. However, like every human being, he has some weakness. This weakness is called hamartia, or the tragic flaw. The tragic flaw may be pride, anger, jealousy, ambition, or a wrong decision. It is this flaw that causes the hero's misfortune.

Another important feature of the tragic hero is that his downfall is caused mainly by his own actions or mistakes**.** He is not completely innocent, nor is he completely evil. Because of a wrong choice or error in judgment, he loses his position, happiness, or even his life. This makes the story realistic and meaningful.

As the tragedy develops, the hero often realizes his mistake. This moment of self-discovery is called anagnorisis**,** or recognition. The hero understands the truth about himself and accepts the consequences of his actions. This realization gives the tragedy a deeper emotional impact.

The suffering of the tragic hero creates feelings of pity and fear in the audience. The audience feels pity because the hero is basically a good person who suffers greatly. They feel fear because they realize that anyone can make mistakes and face similar problems. These emotions finally lead to catharsis**,** which means the purification or release of emotions. According to Aristotle, catharsis is the main purpose of tragedy.

There are many famous examples of tragic heroes in literature. Oedipus in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* is a tragic hero because he unknowingly commits serious mistakes that lead to his downfall. Macbeth in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* becomes a tragic hero because of his uncontrolled ambition. Hamlet in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is another example, as his hesitation and indecision contribute to his tragic end.

In conclusion, the ideal tragic hero is a noble and respected person who possesses many good qualities but also has a tragic flaw. His own mistake leads to suffering and downfall, and through his story the audience experiences pity, fear, and catharsis. Aristotle's concept of the tragic hero has influenced literature for centuries and continues to be an important part of the study of drama and literary criticism.

OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS

1. Aristotle was an ancient ----- Philosopher.

a) Italian b) Greek c) English d) French

2. Aristotle was born on ---------.

a) 384 BC b) 322 BC c) 390 BC d)387 BC

3. Aristotle has written the book ----------

a) The Republic b) On Sublime c) Poetics d) Drama

4. Aristotle was died on ----------.

a) 335 BC b) 390 BC c) 384 BC d)322 BC

5. Aristotle was disciple (pupil) of …..

a) Plato b) Socrates c) Horace d) Sophocles

6. Aristotle has written *Poetics* or *The Art of Poetry* in ----------

a) 335 BC b) 390 BC c) 384 BC d)322 BC

7. The book *Poetics* or *The Art of Poetry* contains ---------- chapters.

a) 26 b) 20 c) 15 d) 40

8. The famous definition of tragedy occurs in Aristotle's ----------

a) The Republic b) An Apology for Poetry c) A Defense of Poetry d) The Poetics

9. In which Chapter Aristotle has given definition of tragedy.

a) VI b) XXVI c) XIV d) XVI

10. Tragedy is an initiation of ----------.

a) Reality b) men c) action d) life

11. Tragedy arouses emotions like ----------.

a) Joy and pleasure b) pity and fear c) pity and terror d) sorrow and tears

12. Aristotle's concept of tragic hero is based on ----------.

a) Ancient tragedies b) Greek Tragedies c) French Tragedies d) English Tragedies

13. Aristotle used the term 'Hamartia' to denote ----------.

a) The goodness of the hero b) the vices of the hero

c) the thinking process of the hero d) the tragic flaw in the hero

14. According to Aristotle, there are ---------- requisites of good characterizations.

a) many b) two c) four d) six

15. A character is good, if his words and actions reveal that his ---------- is good.

a) purpose b) thoughts c) behavior d) character

16. A. C. Bradley defines Hamartia as a ----------.

a) mistake b) tragic action c) tragic incident d) tragic flaw

17. Aristotle has used the term 'catharsis' in his……..

a) theory of imitation b) definition of tragic hero

c) definition of tragedy d) explanation of poetry

18. Tragedy arouses …….

a) Anger and fear b) fear and terror c) Pity and anger d) pity and fear

19. Tragedy is an imitation of ……..

a) plot b) thought c) action d) character

20. In chapter no….. of the Poetics, Aristotle speaks about the theory of catharsis.

a) chapter IV b) chapter V c) chapter VI d) chapter VIII

21. According to …….. catharsis means an expiation.

a) Aristotle b) Plato c) Gilbert Murry d) T S Eliot

22. Which of the following is not the correct explanation of catharsis?

a) it is a purgation of our emotions of pity and fear

b) it is purification of emotions like pity and fear

c) It provides safe outlet to the emotions of pity and fear

d) it gives pleasure without arousing emotions of pity and fear.

23. Who for the first time declared poetic truth superior than historical truth?

a) Aristotle b) Plato c) Dryden d) Horace

24. Which chapter of the Poetics distinguishes between poetic truth and historical truth?

a) Chapter VIII b) Chapter XIII c) Chapter IX d) chapter X

25. According to Aristotle, 'the embellishment of artistic ornament' means…….

a) use of complex language b) use of figures of speech

c) use of simple language d) use of difficult language

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Module III - Literary Terms

A] Irony B] Satire C] Humour D] Paradox

A) Irony

Irony is an important literary device used in poems, plays, novels, and short stories. It occurs when there is a difference between what is expected and what actually happens, or between what is said and what is really meant**.** Writers use irony to make their works more interesting, meaningful, and effective. It often surprises readers and makes them think deeply about the situation.

There are three main types of irony. Verbal irony occurs when a person says something but means the opposite. For example, if someone says, "What a beautiful day!" during heavy rain, it is verbal irony. Situational irony occurs when the result of an event is completely different from what people expect. For example, a fire station catching fire is an example of situational irony. Dramatic irony occurs when the audience knows something that the characters in the story do not know. This creates suspense and excitement.

Irony is used to create humour, express criticism, reveal truth, or highlight the difference between appearance and reality. It also helps readers understand the characters and the message of the literary work more clearly.

In conclusion, irony is a powerful literary device that adds depth, interest, and meaning to literature. By presenting a contrast between expectation and reality, it makes readers think carefully and enjoy the literary work more effectively.

B) Satire

Satire is an important literary device used by writers to criticize the faults, weaknesses, and foolish behaviour of individuals, society, or institutions. Instead of giving direct criticism, writers **use** humour, irony, wit, exaggeration, and ridicule to point out mistakes and encourage people to improve. The main purpose of satire is not only to entertain readers but also to make them think about social problems and bring positive change.

The word "satire" comes from the Latin word *satura*, which means a mixture of different things**.** In literature, satire is used in poems, plays, novels, essays, and even speeches. Many famous writers have used satire to expose corruption, injustice, greed, pride, ignorance, and other social evils.

Satire works by presenting people or situations in a funny or exaggerated way. The writer may make a character appear foolish or describe an event in an unusual manner to show what is wrong. Readers enjoy the humour, but at the same time they understand the hidden message. Thus, satire combines entertainment with criticism**.**

One of the main features of satire is the use of irony. In irony, the writer says one thing but means another. Satire also uses exaggeration, where the faults of a person or situation are made larger than they really are to create a stronger effect. Another feature is ridicule, which makes wrong actions or ideas appear foolish so that people can recognize their mistakes. Through these techniques, satire attracts the reader's attention and delivers its message effectively.

The main aim of satire is to correct human weaknesses and improve society. It encourages people to think about their behaviour and social values. Satirical writing does not attack people without reason. Instead, it points out faults with the hope that individuals and society will learn from them and become better.

There are two common types of satire. Horatian Satire is gentle, humorous, and friendly. It laughs at human weaknesses without being harsh. It entertains readers while giving a mild lesson**.** Juvenalian Satire, on the other hand, is serious, bitter, and powerful. It strongly criticizes social injustice, corruption, and immoral behaviour. It aims to create awareness and inspire reform.

Many famous writers have used satire in their works. Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* is a well-known example of satire. Through imaginary voyages, Swift criticizes politics, human pride, and the weaknesses of society. His essay *A Modest Proposal* is another famous satirical work in which he uses shocking irony to criticize poverty and the neglect of poor people in Ireland. George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is also a satirical novel that exposes political corruption and the misuse of power through the story of farm animals.

Satire is not limited to literature. It is also found in newspapers, magazines, cartoons, television programmes, films, and social media. Political cartoons, comic shows, and humorous articles often use satire to comment on current events and public issues. These forms of satire make people laugh while encouraging them to think about important social and political problems.

In conclusion, satire is a powerful literary device that combines humour with criticism. It exposes human faults, social evils, and political corruption through irony, exaggeration, wit, and ridicule. Its purpose is not simply to make people laugh but to encourage them to think, learn, and

improve. Because of its ability to entertain and educate at the same time, satire remains one of the most effective and widely used literary devices in literature.

C) Humour

Wit and humour are qualities that have the potential to raise laughter. They are attitudes of life. In fact, though both generate laughter; laughter from wit is a little hollow. In simple words, saying funny things is a wit. Wit has a cutting quality than humour. As Shakespeare noted'" Brevity is the soul of wit." It is a form of intellectual humour.

Humour is a term that goes back to the ancient theory that the particular mixture of the *four humours* determines each type of personality. Now the term humour is understood as a comic utterance or a comic appearance or a temperament or state of mind or the quality that makes something seem funny and amusing. Usually it is silly or playful. It evokes either sympathetic laughter or laughter which is an end in itself. In a way humour is a harmless form of the comic. For example, we find humour in the way Charlie Chaplin looks, dresses, and acts. In Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* Malvolio's appearance, actions and utterances are humorous. Shakespeare's another character Falstaff in *Henry VI* is humorous in the way he looks and in what he does; what he says is sometimes witty. J.D. Salinger's *The Cather in the Rye* is unintentionally humours.

There are distinctions between Wit and Humour. Wit is exclusive in the sense that it addresses itself only to those who are in the know while humour is inclusive as it involves everyone to join in on the laugh. Secondly wit refers only to the spoken or written word, while humour has a broader range as it can refer to looks, behavior, dress or gestures. Thirdly, wit has a sharp edge , while humour has a light tone.

D) Paradox

Paradox is a literary or poetic device. It is mostly used in poems and plays by many writers from ancient time. Paradox is a statement or situation that may be true but seems impossible or difficult to understand because it contains two opposite facts or characteristics. For example Wordsworth's statement 'child is the father of man'.

A paradox is a statement which seems on its surface to be self-contradictory and absurd but turns out to be meaningful. The term 'paradox' is derived from the Greek word 'paradoxon' which means "contrary to expectations, existing beliefs or perceived opinions." A paradox is a statement, proposition or situation that seems logically contradictory, absurd or self-contradictory, but which

scrutinized further, may be logical or true or at least contains an element of truth at the same time. That is, though it appears self-contradictory or silly, it includes a latent truth.

A Paradox often expresses irony and incongruities and attempts to reconcile seemingly opposing ideas. Oscar Wilde's famous statement "Life is much too important to be taken seriously" is a paradox. Likewise in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Hamlet uses paradox when he tells his mother," I must be cruel, only to be kind". George Orwell's *Animal Farm* states: " All animals are equal, but some more equal than others."

In poetry the use of paradox is not confined to mere wit and pleasure; rather it becomes an integral part of poetic diction. Poets usually use paradox to create a remarkable thought. In seventeenth century, metaphysical poets extensively used Paradox in its religious and secular forms. For example, John Donne has used paradox as an underlying metaphor in his poem 'The Canonization' wherein he describes physical love as saintly. Likewise in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet statement " For saints have hands that pilgrims hands do touch and palm to palm is holy palmer's kiss." is an example of paradox.

Paradox is also a frequent element in verbal wit. In the 20th century, new critics thought about the paradox and applied it as figures of speech.

e.g. 1) she rewards me with tears.

2) Philosophers are fool.

3) Your enemy's friend is your enemy.

4) I am nobody.

Cleanth Brooks was an American Literary Critic. He outlines the use of reading poems through paradox as a method of critical interpretation. Paradoxnsion at the surface of a verse can lead to apparent contradiction and hypothesis. In his article The Language of Paradox he argues that poetry is made up of paradox which means that the language of poetry is the language of paradox.

A compressed paradox comprised of just a few words is called an oxymoron. However, while an oxymoron is usually made up of just two words or a phrase, a paradox can be expressed in many ways – as a concept or a description of a situation. in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, when Juliettells Romeo that parting is a sweet sorrow, the oxymoron "sweet sorrow" suggests paradox. In the novel *1984*, George Orwell uses paradoxical statement or oxymoron's such as – "War is Peace.", "Freedom is slavery.". "Ignorance is slavery." to criticize the totalitarian government which maintains power to wage constant war, enforce absolute obedience and nurture ignorance in the society.

The chief purpose of a paradox is to give pleasure. The use of paradox is not confined or limited to mere wit and pleasure. It becomes an integral part of poetic diction. Poets usually make use of paradox to create a remarkable thought or images out of words.

OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS

1. ---------- is a reaction against the Romanticism.

a) symbolism b) paradox c) classicism d) realism

2. --------- is contrast in statement but meaningful in real sense.

a) Realism b) symbolism c) satire d) paradox

3. ------- was the chief practicenor of symbolism in France.

a) Pope b) Baudelaire c) Shelley d) Goethe

4. The statement 'child is the father of man' is an example of --------

a) simile b) paradox c) hyperbole d) personification

5. According to Shakespeare, ----------is a soul of wit.

a) Kindness b) Intelligence c) Brevity d) Sincerity

6. Oscar Wilde's famous statement "Life is much too important to be taken seriously" is a ----------.

a) metaphor b) paradox c) connotation d) irony

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Module IV- Critical Appreciation of an Unseen Poem

It is said that poem is most complex and philosophical forms of literature. You can enjoy a poem only if you understand its full meaning. Reading properly is the first step to understand the poems. You can carefully read the poem once, twice or many times to comprehend it. After careful reading, you must be able to give its general meaning, then its detailed meaning and finally state the poets intended meaning. Then try to find out why you like the poem and what elements of the poems gives you pleasure. Every poem tries to convey some ideas or feelings. It musical qualities, its form and its presentation may be the striking features of the poem. However each poem is unique and has its own special features or qualities.

The appreciation of poem broadly can be divided into two steps – content and structure.

Content –

- **Speaker-**

  After careful reading of the poem, try to find out the speaker and listener in the poem. We understand the speaker from the pronouns used in the poems. There may be an object or person. Sometimes the poet is the speaker in the poem. The speaker in the poem addresses someone or reader.

- **Subject** – The poet writes poem about some object or emotions. Generally title of the poem indicated subject matter of the poem. From the description and narration in the poem we can understand the subject of the poems.
- **Theme or central idea** – the poem is the expression of poet's ideas or feelings. Theme of the poem is the central idea of the poem. It revolved around the idea or emotion of the poet which the poet wants to focus. It is not suggested directly we have to understand it through the association of words. Very often the poem's title indicates the themes of the poem
- **Mood or tone** – The poems have certain mood or tone. It includes happy, delightful, melancholy, serious, light ironic, thoughtful, satirical, sad etc. we find the mood from the expressions used in the poem.
- **Title** – Title of the poem is important because very often the poem's title indicates the themes of the poem.

Structure –

- **Form or types of the poem-**

  The forms or types of poems can be classified into two groups – Lyrical poems and narrative poems. Sonnet, Song, Ode, Elegy and Ballad are the lyrical poems. The balled and the epic are narrative poems.

- **Stanza pattern** –

  Stanza pattern is one of the typical features of poems. The poems can be divided into stanzas. The poem has either regular or irregular stanza pattern. Regular stanza pattern means the poem has similar stanzas of two, three, four, six, eight lines etc. The irregular stanza means there is not similar stanzas in the poem. Sonnet is restricted form of poem which contains only fourteen lines and the fixed stanza pattern.

- **Rhyme and rhythm** –

  Rhyme and rhythm are the important features of poems. Rhyme usually occurs at the end of lines in poem and consists of words having the same sound. e .g. bright-light, etc. When we read the poem aloud, we can hear a definite sound pattern in the lines of the poem. It is called rhythm and it is the most striking of all the sound devices. It always helps to convey the poet's intention and gives the reader some indication of the poet's mood.

- **Figures of speeches** –

  Poet uses different figures of speeches to make poem more beautiful such as Metaphor, Simile, Alliteration, Repetition, Metonymy etc. Metaphor and Similes are used for comparison.

- **Symbols and imagery** –

  Poem is the complex form of literature and the ideas of the poets are not directly stated in the poem but they are indirectly suggested by using symbols and imagery. The use of Symbols and imagery make the poem complex. Symbol is a word or object which stands for something else.

  Imagery means the mental pictures, musical notes and tactile perception produced by the poem. Certain objects have their association with something, so it gives the better understanding of the poet's experience. It signifies all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in

the poem by literal description or allusion. The poet may present images through simile, metaphors and personification and the reader can easily understand them.

- **Language** – The language of the poem is simple, complex or difficult to understand. Language is the typical feature of a poem and particular poet. Sometimes it is also called the style of the poet. The poet may write poems in descriptive, reflective or narrative style. In descriptive poems poet describe people, places or the poet's experiences, scenes or objects. The poet uses more picture words and static words. The reflective poem contains a thought or a great deal of description on which the poet comments. The narrative poem tells a story or some happening. The poet uses more action words in this type of poem.
- **Other poetic devices -**

  Archaic words- Some poets use some words from old English which are not used in today's English such as thou, thy, wert, thee etc.

  Blank verses – the lines which has no rhyme scheme and follows five part metrical pattern is called blank verse

  Free verse – the lines of the poems are written without metrical pattern or rhyme scheme.

  Heroic couplet - Stanza of two lines having rhyme scheme is called Heroic Couplet. It follows five part metrical pattern.

  Deviation – breaking the grammatical rules of language for artistic purpose. e.g. Ten thousand saw I in a glance.

  In examination you will be given one unseen poem for critical appreciation and asked

  multiple choice questions on it. Here are some examples of such poems with answers.

Practical Criticism – Poem

The Quiet Evening

The sun slips down behind the hill,
The world grows soft, the air is still.
A gentle breeze begins to play,
And carries all the noise away.
The birds return to nests so small,
Their tired wings now rest from all.
The sky turns gold, then deep to gray,
As slowly fades the light of day.
A lonely star appears so bright,
To guard the silence of the night.
And in this calm, my thoughts feel free,
Like waves that drift upon the sea.

Q. Read the poem and answer the questions given below.

1. What is the central theme of the poem?
2. Describe the mood created in the poem. How does the poet achieve it?
3. Identify and explain any two poetic devices used in the poem.
4. How does the poet describe the transition from day to night?
5. What is the significance of the 'lonely star' in the poem?
6. Explain the meaning of the last two lines in your own words.
7. Do you think the poem reflects inner peace or loneliness? Give reasons for your answer.

Model Answers -

1) The central theme of the poem is the beauty and calmness of evening. It shows how nature becomes peaceful as day changes into night and how this quiet time allows the poet to feel relaxed and free in thoughts.
2) The mood of the poem is calm, peaceful and slightly reflective. The poet creates this mood by using soft and gentle images such as the setting sun, still air, returning birds and the quiet night. Words like 'soft, still, and gentle breeze help build a soothing atmosphere.

3) Imagery: The poet uses visual images like ‘the sun slips down,’ ‘sky turns gold,’ and ‘lonely star’ to help readers imagine the scene clearly. Personification: The poet gives human qualities to nature, such as ‘the breeze begins to play’ and ‘star appears to guard,’ making the description more lively and meaningful.
4) The poet describes the transition gradually. First, the sun sets behind the hill, then the air becomes still, birds return to their nests, and the sky changes color from gold to gray. Finally, a star appears, marking the arrival of night.
5) The ‘lonely star’ symbolizes the beginning of night and adds to the quiet and peaceful mood. It may also represent guidance or hope, as it ‘guards’ the silence of the night.
6) The last two lines mean that in the peaceful evening, the poet’s mind feels free and relaxed. His thoughts move freely, just like waves in the sea, without any disturbance or worry.
7) The poem mainly reflects inner peace rather than loneliness. Although the word ‘lonely’ is used for the star, the overall tone is calm and comforting. The poet feels free and relaxed, which shows a sense of peace rather than sadness.

The Old Bench

Beneath the tree, an old bench stays,
It watches time and passing days.
The paint is chipped, the wood is worn,
Yet holds the tales of joy and scorn.

It felt the laughter of the young,
And heard the songs that lovers sung.
It knows the silence of goodbye,
And keeps the tears no one can cry.

Though seasons change and people go,
It stays the same through sun and snow.
A quiet friend, it does not speak,
Yet tells the stories that we seek.

Q. Read the poem and answer the questions given below. What is the central idea of the poem?

1) How is the old bench described in the poem? What does it symbolize?
2) Identify and explain any two poetic devices used in the poem.
3) How does the poet present the passage of time?
4) What kind of emotions are associated with the bench?
5) Explain the line: 'It keeps the tears no one can cry.'
6) Do you think the bench is just an object or something more? Give reasons.

Model Answers –

1) The central idea of the poem is that ordinary objects can hold deep memories and emotions. The old bench represents the passage of time and silently witnesses human experiences like love, joy, and sorrow.
2) The old bench is described as worn out, with chipped paint and aged wood. Despite its condition, it is strong and enduring. It symbolizes memory, time, and human experiences, acting as a silent observer of life.
3) Personification: The bench is given human qualities, such as 'it watches time' and 'it knows the silence,' which makes it seem alive and aware. Imagery: The poet uses descriptive language like 'paint is chipped' and 'wood is worn' to create a clear picture of the bench and its surroundings.
4) The poet shows the passage of time through the bench's experiences. It has witnessed different people and emotions over many years. The mention of changing seasons and 'passing days' also highlights the continuous flow of time.
5) The bench is associated with mixed emotions such as happiness, love, sadness, and loneliness. It has seen laughter, romantic moments, and painful goodbyes, showing the full range of human feelings.
6) This line means that the bench silently holds the hidden sorrows of people. It represents unexpressed emotions and private grief that people do not show openly.
7) The bench is more than just an object. Through personification, it becomes a symbol of memory and experience. It acts like a silent witness to human life, storing emotions and stories over time.

Poems for Practice

Flood Year

Walking up the driftwood beach at day's end
I saw it, thrust up out of a hillock of sand-
a frail, bleached clench of fingers dried by wind-
the dead child's hand.

And they are mourning there still, though I forget,
the year of flood, the scoured ruined land,
the herds gone down the current, the farms drowned,
and the child never found.

When I was there the thick hurling waters
had gone back to the river, the farms were almost drained.
Banished half-dead cattle searched the dunes; it rained;
river and sea met with a wild sound.

Oh with a wild sound water flung into air
where sea met river; all the country round
no heart was quiet. I walked on the driftwood sand
and saw the pale crab crouched, and came to a stand
thinking, N child's hand. The child's hand.

Butterfly on Rock

The large yellow wings, black-fringed,
were motionless.
They say the soul of a dead person
will settle like that on the still face.
But I thought: the rock has borne this;
this butterfly is the rock's grace
it's most obstinate and secret desire
to be a thing alive made manifest.

Forgot were the two shattered porcupines
I had seen die in the black forest.
Pain is unreal; death, an illusion:
There is no death in all the land,
I heard my voice cry;
And brought my hand down on the butterfly
And felt the rock move beneath my hand.

Women

Women have no wilderness in them,
They are provident instead.
Content in the tight hot cell of their hearts
To eat dusty bread.

They do not see cattle cropping red winter grass
They do not hear'
Snow water going down under culverts
Shallow and clear.

They wait, when they should turn to journeys,
They stiffen, when they should bend.
They use against themselves that benevolence
To which no man is friend.

They cannot think of so many crops to a field
Or of clean wood cleft by an axe.
Their love is an eager meaninglessness
Too tense, or too lax.

They hear in every whisper that speaks to them
A shout and a cry.
As like as not, when they take life over their door-sills
They should let it go by.

One Art

The art of losing isn't hard to master;
so many things seem filled with the intent
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.
Lose something every day. Accept the fluster
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:
places, and names, and where it was you meant to travel.
None of these will bring disaster. -
I lost my mother's watch. And look! My last, or
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident
the art of losing's not too hard to master
though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.

Winding Up

I live on the water, alone. Without wife and children.
I have circled every possibility to come to this:
a low house by grey water,
with windows always open
To the stale sea. We do not choose such things,
but we are what we have made.

We suffer, the years pass,
we shed freight but not our need
for encumbrances. Love is a stone
that settled on the sea-bed
under grey water. Now, I require nothing
from poetry but true feeling,
no pity, no Caine, no healing. Silent wife,
we can sit watching grey water,
and in a life awash
with mediocrity and trash live rock-like.
I shall unlearn feeling,
unlearn my gift. That is greater
and harder than what passes there for life.

The Mountain

My students look at me expectantly.
I explain to them that the life of art is a life
of endless labour. Their expressions
hardly change; they need to know
a little more about endless labour.
So I tell them the story of Sisyphus,
how he was doomed to push
a rock up a mountain, knowing nothing
Would come of this effort
But that he would repeat it
indefinitely. I tell them
There is joy in this, in the artist's life,
That One eludes
judgment, and as I speak
I am secretly pushing a rock myself,
slyly pushing it up the steep
face of a mountain. Why do 1 lie
to those children? They aren't listening,
they aren't deceived, their fingers
tapping at the wooden desks-
So I retract
the myth: I tell them it occurs in hell,
and that the artist lies
because he is obsessed with attainment,
that he perceives the summit
as that place where he will live forever,
a place about to be
transformed by his burden: with every breath,
I am standing at the top of the mountain.
Both my hands are free. And the rock has added
height to the mountain.

Piano

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of
The tingling strings
And presenting the small, poised feet of. a mother
who smiles as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me hack, till the heart of me weeps to belong,
To the old Sunday evenings at home with winter outside
And hymns in the cozy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.
So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child
for the past.

You Came with Shells

You came with shells. And left them: shells.
They lay beautifully on the table.
Now they lie on m
y desk peculiar
Extraordinary under 60 watts.
This morning I disturb
I destroy the window
(and its light) by moving my feet
in the water. There.
It's gone.
Last night the moon ranged from the left
to the right side
of the windshield. Only white lines
on a road strike Inc as reasonable but
nevertheless and too often.
we slow down for the fog.
I was going to say a natural environment
means this or
I was going to say we remain out of our
element or
sometimes you can get away completely
but the shells
will tell about the howling and the loss.