

People' s Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Hamma Lakhdar University of El-Oued



Faculty of Arts and Languages

Department of English Language

**Literature: A Course for L2 Graduate Students in English
Language Studies (LMD Program)**

Designed by:

Dr Dida Nassireddine

dida-nassireddine@univ-eloued.dz

2025/2026

Contents

About the Course :	1
1. What is Literature?.....	3
2. What is a Literary Movement?.....	5
3. The Historical Development of Romanticism.....	6
4. Romanticism vs. Neoclassicism: Practice Exercise	11
5. The Characteristics of Romanticism	14
6. Traditional vs Lyrical (Modern) Ballad	18
7. Romanticism in Poetry: Examples	21
8. Transcendentalism (1835-1846).....	26
9. Gothic Fiction (1764-1830).....	31
10. Extended Practice on Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher”	39
11. Realism 1850 – 1900.....	45
12. Naturalism (1860-1900)	50
13. Expressionism (1900- 1925)	55
Conclusion	61
References.....	62

About the Course:

Literature course introduces El-Oued University's EFL students to that idea that does literature does not exist in isolation. It recounts the historical, social, cultural, and philosophical conditions of successive generations. It represents the intellectual currents known as literary movements. These movements reflect the collective shifts in values and form: from reason to imagination, from tradition to modernity, and from faith and order to a fascination with mystery and complexity. In this course, students will be able to trace the evolution of literature through these movements, beginning with romanticism, moving through transcendentalism, gothic fiction, realism, naturalism and ending with expressionism. Students will be guided by historical context, textual analysis, and critical reflection.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the two semesters, students will be able to:

1. Knowledge & Understanding:

- Define the concept of a literary movement and distinguish it from literary genre and period.
- Identify the historical and ideological foundations of literary movements from the mid-18th century to the early 20th century.
- Recognize the key themes, symbols, and stylistic features characteristic of each movement.

2. Analytical Skills:

- Perform close reading of poetry and prose using textual evidence.
- Compare and contrast how different movements respond to previous literary traditions.
- Develop the ability to interpret literature through historical and philosophical lenses.

3. Critical and Creative Engagement

- Engage in informed discussion about the relationship between literature and society.
- Reflect on how literary movements express evolving human concerns such as nature, self, freedom, reason, and fear.

- Present interpretations both orally and in written form using academic language and critical vocabulary.

1. What is Literature?

Upon successful completion of this lesson, the student will learn:

➤ **Learning Objective:**

- ✓ Define Literature and distinguish it from other genres of writing.
- ✓ Identify its defining qualities.
- ✓ Explain the function and purpose of literature in society.

1. Which definition conforms most closely to your idea of what literature is? Why?

- a. Literature is “‘feelings’ and ‘thoughts’ in black and white”.
- b. Literature is “the use of language to evoke a personal response in the reader or listener”.
- c. Literature is “a world of fantasy, horror, feelings, visions . . . put into words”.
- d. Literature means “to meet a lot of people, to know other different points of view, ideas, thoughts, minds . . . to know ourselves better” (Long 2, 2013).

2. What is Literature:

The word " literature," it should be noted here, is derived from the Latin word “*litera*”, which means " letter." According to Matthew Arnold’s famous definition, Literature, with an upper-case ‘L’, is “the best that has been known and said in the world” (as qtd.in Widdowson 4, 2004). “In its broadest sense, literature includes all writing, but excludes works which aim at instruction. In a narrow sense, it includes only the works which aim to give pleasure [...or] reflect nature or human life in a way to arouse our sense of beauty” (Long 4, 2013).

3. Qualities of Literature

a. **Expression of Truth and Beauty:**

Literature reproduces the truth and beauty present in the world but often unobserved and overlooked until revealed by a sensitive and creative mind.

b. Revelation:

All artistic work is a form of revelation. Just as architects transform stone and wood into meaningful structures, true literary artists express hidden truths and beauty through words.

c. Suggestiveness:

Literature appeals primarily to the emotions and imagination rather than to the intellect alone.

d. Permanence:

Lasting literary works continue through time, while lower works fade away. What is truly valuable remains and survives.

Conclusion:

Literature is the artistic expression and articulation of life in words of truth and beauty in concrete imagery. It is the written record and documentation of man's spirit, of his thoughts, emotions, history, and aspirations. In other words, it is a book of history, chronicling the history and evolution of the human soul. Literature has two aspects, one of simple pleasure and appreciation, the other of analysis and meticulous description.

2. What is a Literary Movement?

Upon successful completion of this lesson, the student will learn:

➤ **Learning Objective:**

- ✓ Define a literary movement and identify the shared characteristics.
- ✓ Analyse how historical events, cultural assumptions, and philosophical ideas that shape literary movements.
- ✓ Compare previously studied literary movements.

1. Definition:

According to *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, “a literary movement is a term used to describe a group of writers or works that share similar styles, themes, or philosophical ideas, often emerging within a specific historical period and reacting against previous literary traditions”.

A literary movement is the grouping of texts and writers that share similar characteristics, such as style and themes, recognised and classified by critics to help study literature within specific periods (historical, cultural and social contexts). Literary movements often arise as a result of significant social, political, or intellectual changes, mirroring the life and spirit of their time (Abrams 2014).

2. Characteristics of Literary Movements

- Literary movements often display common stylistic features, such as definite literary devices, forms, style, narrative techniques, etc.
- They often discuss similar themes, such as individualism, alienation, human nature, man vs. nature, man vs. himself, childhood, etc.
- They are shaped by the dominant social, political, and intellectual developments of their time.

3. Examples of Literary Movements:

Neoclassical Extract (Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, 1711)

“True wit is nature to advantage dressed,
What oft was thought, but ne’er so well expressed;
Something, whose truth convinced at sight we find,
That gives us back the image of the mind.”

Alexander Pope reflects the spirit and interests of his age. He emphasises the Neoclassical philosophy that reality and truth are based on the mind, reason, clarity, intellect, order, and universal truth, rather than on fantasy or imagination.

4. Significance of Literary Movements

- Literary movements help us divide literature into specified periods, one piece at a time, instead of reading and analysing long periods, making literature more manageable and informative
- They also enhance our appreciation of literary evolution, reflecting the changing forms and ideas of literature over time.
- They also give a larger context for analysing literary works within their historical and cultural frameworks.
- They often help us recognize common literary directions and recurring themes across different literary works.
- They also enable us to trace and appreciate literary evolution.

Conclusion

Literary movements react to the social, cultural, and political changes of their era. They may be considered a historical, encyclopaedic book that reflects the flourish, progress, and demise of civilisation. Not only do they enlighten the minds of their readers, but they also increase their appreciation of previous literary achievements and of their culture and identity. In short, they make literature amusing, arresting, and accessible to all levels of members of society.

3. The Historical Development of Romanticism

Upon successful completion of this lesson, the student will learn:

➤ **Learning Objective:**

- ✓ Define Romanticism and explain its historical background.
- ✓ Identify the main characteristics of Romantic literature.
- ✓ Analyse how social, political, and philosophical changes shaped the Romantic movement.

Introduction:

It should be noted that literary movements categorise certain dominant literary schools whose members, during certain periods of time, share and favour certain philosophical concepts, themes, or aesthetic qualities. To have a broad conception of romanticism, to understand how and why it came into being, we first need to relate it to previous literary movements. Romanticism appeared as a reaction against the literary and philosophical beliefs of Neoclassicism, which lasted from 1660 until 1798. The proponents of Neoclassicism argued that writers or poets should imitate the classical texts of Ancient Greece and Rome following their aesthetic qualities and ideals. They also supported the contention that the individual was born to be part of his social fabric, devoid of any particular traits or styles. Society constructed the individual's identity and behaviour by dictating the social accepted norms or standards that ensured the continuity and stability of society, not the individual. The Neoclassicists pointed out that human beings are flawed and need to be controlled by decorum and reason. They claimed that art should have no purpose other than to entertain and educate people. This function could guarantee immunity against chaos, impoliteness and social conflicts.

Scholars suggest that “romanticism” as a term itself is relatively immune to narrow definitions. In the Middle Ages, the word “romantic” meant those vernacular languages which were

derived from Latin, the language of learning and education at that time. Additionally, “roman” denoted “courtly romance”, i.e. an imaginative work of fiction. In the 17th century, in France and Britain, it carried pejorative connotations such “fanciful, bizarre, exaggerated, chimerical” (Cuddon 768). In France, however, it had positive connotations such as “sentimental”, “tender”, “gentle” “sad”. From then on, the word “romance” acquired significance worldwide, especially in literary movements.

1. The Forerunners of the Romantic Movement:

a. Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805)

The German poet Friedrich Schlegel was pointed at as the first person who had brought the term “romanticism” to literary contexts, defining it as "literature depicting emotional matter in an imaginative form". He considered imagination to be superior to reason. He emphasised its importance of personal and subjective experiences in shaping new literary forms and styles.

b. Kant’s Book the *Critique of Judgment* (1790)

For Kant, art is a matter of pleasure. It is the embodiment of the individual’s experiences and dreams. Here, we understand that Kant favours “aesthetic genius” over the “scientific mind”. In other words, art is a reliable means of revealing absolute truth; where science stops, art begins. Thus, art is the expression of the “inexpressible”. It is a bridge between the metaphysical and physical worlds. It is a journey to worlds of higher ideals and experiences. Kant also believes that when human beings discover absolute truth, individuals will enforce unity and order. He also presents the idea of the **sublime**, which is an intense mixed feeling of fear and beauty that will later be used creatively by the Romantics in their poetry.

2. Romanticism

In the 18th century, in Britain, the term “romantic” explored other dimensions, from its focus on sentiments and sensibilities to passionate devotion to nature and its beauty accompanied by glorification of the individual over society. It attempted to correct Neoclassicists’ principles and

to propose alternative hypotheses and ideas regarding human nature. Romanticism began in 1798 with the publication of a collection of poems, *Lyrical Ballads*, written by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and ended in 1850, with Wordsworth's death. One should not be oblivious to the fact that the emergence of the Romanticist movement coincided with remarkable developments such as the French revolution, political upheavals, the industrial revolution, the Napoleonic wars, and the questioning of the authority of the Church. All these changes had led to a greater awareness of the significance of individual freedom over social rules and orders imposed by science, tradition, or the Church.

The Romantics, disillusioned with wars and unpleasant realities, tried to create imaginative, ideal worlds that inspired reflection on inner reality and dreams of people. Tired of the Church's lies and manipulation, they turned to the doctrines of **pantheism**, which is the belief that regarded the universe as a manifestation or extension of God, or that God is in unity with His creations rather than separate from it. This unity was manifested in literature in the elevated forms, language and styles of poetry rather than in novels that had a lower aesthetic value. This period was also characterised by women novelists who represented the emancipated spirit of the Romantic Movement. In the era of Neoclassicism, women had no intellectual achievements or participation in society. Thus, they were seen as a threat to the then male-dominated culture. The period witnessed greatest poets and novelists such as Jane Austen, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Sir Walter Scott, William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats.

3. The Primacy of Aesthetics:

Romanticism devoted meticulous attention to aesthetic values, ideals and appreciation of art. It regarded art as an expression of one's longing for the beautiful, which the self aspires to see, taste, experience, or read. Aesthetics is "a branch of philosophy that explores the nature

of art, beauty, and taste, with the creation and appreciation of beauty”. Consequently, the main purpose of art is not action, but abstraction and contemplation:

- ✓ Art becomes a source of truth.
- ✓ Art plays a great role in healing the human soul: unifying humans with nature.
- ✓ The exaltation of imagination faculties or senses.
- ✓ The unity of reason with feelings in appreciating the beautiful.

In his poem “Ode on a Grecian Urn”, John Keats comments on the relationship between beauty and truth:

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

In their *Lyrical Ballads*, Coleridge and Wordsworth conclude that truth lies solely in poetry and that man dies while poetry lives forever.

“Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man”

Conclusion

We have seen an overview of the philosophical and literary contexts that led to the emergence of Romanticism, which was seen by critics as a reaction to the values and beliefs of the Neoclassicists who had given reason, society and science central importance over the experience and freedom of the individual. We also explored the Romantics’ key concerns and how they reacted to the recent changes and developments of their era. Furthermore, we have expanded on the main subject and focus of aesthetics, revealing that it is a branch of philosophy that specialises in setting the accepted standards of beautiful art.

4. Romanticism vs. Neoclassicism: Practice Exercise

Upon successful completion of this lesson, the student will learn:

➤ **Learning Objective:**

- ✓ Understand Romanticism in contrast to Neoclassicism.
- ✓ Identify and discuss their key differences in themes and style.
- ✓ Compare the key principles of Romanticism with those of Neoclassicism.

Introduction:

This lesson sharpens the student's focus on the shift from Neoclassicism to Romanticism in English literature. It analyses the movement from reason, order, and tradition to imagination, emotion, and individual experience. Through comparison, students will be able to trace how historical and intellectual changes reshaped literary ideals and artistic expression.

1. A comparison between Neoclassicism and Romanticism:

	Enlightenment/Neo-Classicism	Romanticism
literary forms	elevated, proper language, artifice;	innovation and originality "primitive"; folk & fairy tales. romance. common language; every day experience; humble, rural; fanciful, picturesque, rugged
literary mode	satiric mode; reason provides knowledge; talk about ideas	lyric mode: self-expression feelings provide knowledge. Poetry takes its origin from emotion recalled in tranquility"
Reality	empirical, physical, mathematical	long ago, far away, transcendent, supernatural; internal
aesthetics/nature	order: measured, compressed,	organic, dynamic, audacious, expansive; combine contraries: grotesque, sublime

	controlled, balanced	
Plot	driven by ideas, events, reason	driven by character, emotions, passion, tragic endings
Characters	universal; everyman; puppets	unique, sacred individual; outcasts, rebels, nonconformists, Satanic hero-villain, mad scientist, Great Outlaw
authority, wisdom	age & experience; located in society	youth & innocence; located in the individual
Society	order & authority inherently good; should protect man	inherently oppressive to man alienation
ideal man	The writers brings intelligence and wit to the service of mankind One Truth: intellectual	- poet brings nature's miracles to our attention, puts us in touch with joy -Many truths of daily experience
man in nature	brutish	innately good; noble savage
Limits	man should be satisfied within his limitations; work is noble	no limits, dissatisfaction, adventure, leisure: "painful feeling of incomplete destiny"

(<https://www.coursehero.com/file/13103356/Enlightenment-and-Romanticism/>)

1. The two poems below represent Neoclassical and Romantic poetry. Read them, and identify and compare the characteristics of each.

2. Questions and Discussion:

1. How does Pope's view of human nature differ from Wordsworth's?
2. How does reason guide Pope's poem, and emotion guide Wordsworth's?
3. What is the role of nature in each poem?
4. How do their poetic forms (couplet vs. sonnet) reflect their movements?
5. How does each poet view God or the divine?

1. An Essay on Man: Epistle II**by Alexander Pope (1733)**

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of mankind is man.
Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state,
A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the stoic's pride,
He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest;
In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast;
In doubt his mind or body to prefer;
Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err;
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
Whether he thinks too little, or too much:
Chaos of thought and passion, all confus'd;
Still by himself abus'd, or disabus'd;
Created half to rise, and half to fall;
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurl'd:
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!

Conclusion:

Neoclassicism, as seen in Pope's poem "An Essay on Man," prefers reason, order, and balance, focusing more on moral values and critical thinking. Romanticism, shown in Wordsworth's "The World Is Too Much With Us", emphasises emotion, imagination, and a deep connection with nature. The two movements represent the transition from universal order and truth to subjective experience and inner feeling.

2. "The World Is Too Much With Us"**by William Wordsworth (1807)**

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;—
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn

5. The Characteristics of Romanticism

Upon successful completion of this lesson, the student will learn:

➤ **Learning Objective:**

- ✓ Identify the main characteristics of Romantic literature.
- ✓ Explain how Romantic writers stress imagination, emotion, and individual experience.
- ✓ Analyse how Romanticism abandons classical rules and traditions.

Introduction:

In the previous topic, “The Historical Development of Romanticism”, we explored the literary and philosophical contexts that had given rise to Romanticism. We demonstrated how Neoclassicism concentrated on rationality and science as a means of disclosing absolute truth, turning full attention to society's interests over the individual's. We also explained how the Romantics suffered spiritual and physical anguish caused by wars and revolutions, which created an urgent desire to transcend reality for something more imaginative, beautiful and soothing.

One may feel tempted to list some of the main characteristics of Romanticism so that we can arrive at a fundamental understanding of the application of their principles to poetry and fiction. These principles are:

deepened appreciation of the beauties of nature; a general exaltation of emotion over reason and of the senses over intellect; a turning in upon the self and a heightened examination of human personality and its moods and mental potentialities; a preoccupation with the genius, the hero, and the exceptional figure in general, and a focus on his passions and inner struggles; a new view of the artist as a supremely individual creator, whose creative spirit is more important than strict adherence to formal rules and traditional procedures; an emphasis upon imagination as a gateway to transcendent experience and spiritual truth; an obsessive interest in folk culture,

national and ethnic cultural origins, and the medieval era; and a predilection for the exotic, the remote, the mysterious, the weird, the occult, the monstrous, the diseased, and even the satanic. (Encyclopædia Britannica 2025)

The aforementioned features of romanticism emphasise that nature is essential to the individual, whose desire for nature is comparable to a fish's need for water. Correspondingly, the literary text becomes a clear reflection of this harmonious relationship, which is transformed into artistic innovations in style and form. The Romantics enthusiastically embrace the idea of the “genius”, which means that the poet inherently has some powers beyond the mind’s capacity to explain. United with nature, he or she rises above physical worlds and objects towards utopian visions and ideas. It is obvious that the Romantics dislike formal “rules and traditional procedures” because “imagination” requires that the individual be free and passionate. This should reflect their focus on the importance of spontaneity and freedom of speech, thought and action. As a result, they were eager to embrace new and eccentric ideas and things. There are other features that we should mention below, too:

- ✓ Nature is seen as a refuge from the artificiality of civilisation.
- ✓ The Romantics try to create unity between nature and the world of the spirit.
- ✓ Nature is viewed as a spiritual and healing force.
- ✓ Nature is “organic” (that is, it lives, grows, feels, breathes, etc.), unlike the Neoclassicists who view nature as a machine, mechanical and predictable.
- ✓ The poem is also “organic”, which means it develops from within until it reaches an “organic unity” and a “perfect form”.
- ✓ They adopt the lyric form of poetry, which fits the expression of intense feelings.
- ✓ Rhyme, metre and alliteration restrict the poet’s creativity and spontaneity.
- ✓ The poem should be open-ended, showing that life is characterised by “incompleteness” or is a “fragment” that mirrors the mystery and unknowability of the universe.

- ✓ The Romantics prefer symbolism and myth to allegory because, while allegory conveys one trait or meaning, symbolism and myth produce various meanings.
- ✓ By using symbols and myth, they concentrate on the "inexpressible" or the "infinite".
- ✓ Art or poetry mirrors and lightens the poets' inner world or self.
- ✓ The poet is a hero who undergoes an inner journey of self-development and –exploration.
- ✓ Romantics see themselves as outcasts from society.
- ✓ They reject all absolute systems (rules, law, etc.) and adopt personalised ones.
- ✓ Romantic poetry is characterised by simplicity and innocence.
- ✓ Romantics are obsessed with the exotic, supernatural and uncivilised, as opposed to logic and reason.
- ✓ They glorify the past, particularly the Medieval period.
- ✓ Writing fiction or poetry reflects romantic writer's addiction to opium that provides a journey of imagination into extreme feelings and experiences.
- ✓ Romantics write in a simple style and focus on humble, rustic themes.

We can divide the Romantics into two generations. The first emphasise the relationship between **nature and the self**. It includes:

- William Blake (1757-1827)
- William Wordsworth (1770-1850)
- Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)

The second, however, are interested in the relationship between **art and life**. It includes:

- George Byron (1788-1824)
- Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)
- John Keats (1795-1821)

Conclusion:

The romantic meditative mood shows the emancipating spirit of the supporters of liberation from all traditional ties. For the lovers of nature, inspiration is fuelled by the longer hours spent in contemplating the union between the spirit and substance. Poetry articulates this union through its organy, inexpressibility, mystery, veracity and simplicity.

6. Traditional vs Lyrical (modern) Ballad

Upon successful completion of this lesson, the student will learn:

➤ **Learning Objective:**

- ✓ Identify the main characteristics of traditional and lyrical (modern) ballads.
- ✓ Explain how lyrical ballads express imagination, emotion, and individual experience.
- ✓ Analyse how modern ballads adopt and adapt classical rules and conventions.

Introduction:

Originated in the Middle Ages, the traditional ballad is a song that tells a tale or a narrative of folk songs, conveyed orally. It has an unknown author. Since many singers say and repeat it, it takes different forms and tones. It is a tale narrated through dialogues and actions. The traditional ballad does not express personal feelings or attitudes, simply narrating stories without any self-reference (Abrams 2014).

The literary ballad, however, is an imitation of the traditional ballad in style, spirit and form. In comparison to the traditional one, it adds the first-person narrator or teller, making it subjective and personal. This new form of poetry was first introduced in Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. It has a known writer who expresses personal feelings, needs and judgements, such as Wordsworth's poem in the *Lyrical Ballads*, "We Are Seven".

1. The difference between Traditional and Lyrical Ballads:

Feature	Traditional Ballad	Lyrical Ballad
Origin	Anonymous folk origins; passed orally from generation to generation.	Composed by known poets (e.g. Wordsworth, Coleridge).
Purpose	To tell a story — often about love, death, adventure, or supernatural events.	To express personal feelings and emotions —the poet's inner world.
Tone & Style	Objective and narrative ; the poet acts as a storyteller.	Subjective and reflective ; the poet expresses their own feelings and imagination.

Feature	Traditional Ballad	Lyrical Ballad
Language	Simple, repetitive	simple but emotionally exciting and musical, aiming for sincerity and natural expression.
Structure	Regular rhyme and rhythm ; often uses quatrains with alternating lines of 4 and 3 beats (ABCB rhyme).	Flexible form ; rhythm and rhyme may vary to fit emotion and mood.
Themes	Folk life, common struggles, tragedies, legends.	Nature, emotion, imagination, and the relationship between man and nature.
Example	“Sir Patrick Spens,” “Barbara Allan.”	Wordsworth’s “ <i>Lucy Poems</i> ”, Coleridge’s “ <i>The Rime of the Ancient Mariner</i> .”

2. Traditional and Lyrical Ballads Form, meter and rhyme:

a. Traditional Ballads:

Traditional ballads are typically written in **ballad meter**, which uses alternating lines of **iambic tetrameter (four stresses)** and **iambic trimeter (three stresses)**. This form is flexible and allows natural variations in rhythm, making it well-suited to oral storytelling. Traditional ballads often follow an **ABCB rhyme scheme** and may include a **refrain—a repeated line or stanza that functions like the chorus of a song**.

b. Literary or modern Ballads:

As described by Wordsworth and Coleridge, they are narrative poems or songs, but they are **less focused on action and more on emotion and inner experience**. These poems blend storytelling with lyrical reflection, meaning that although they may contain a plot, their main emphasis is on **characters’ feelings, thoughts, and perceptions rather than on a sequence of events** (Abrams 2014).

Lyrical ballads may use the similar rhythmic patterns of traditional ballads but with more freedom. Their structure can vary depending on the emotional tone of the poem, and they focus more on mood, reflection, and personal experience than on strict narrative progression.

Stanza from “*Barbara Allen*” (Traditional ballad)

In **Scarlet town**, where **I** was **born**, (A) ← 4 stresses (tetrameter)

∪´ | ∪´ | ∪´ | ∪´

There **was** a **fair** maid **dwellin'**, (B) ← 3 stresses (trimeter)

∪´ | ∪´ | ∪´

Made **every youth** cry **Well-a-way!** (C) ← 4 stresses (tetrameter)

∪´ | ∪´ | ∪´ | ∪´

Her **name** was **Barbara Allen** (B) ← 3 stresses (trimeter)

∪´ | ∪´ | ∪´

Conclusion:

Traditional ballads focus on actions and storytelling, orally narrating stories of glory and achievements. Literary ballads, as described by Wordsworth and Coleridge, mix a short narrative with lyrical flavour, giving a subjective touch and account to both the poem and the life of the poet's perspective. They replicate the style and tradition of the old ballad yet renew the experience and redress the form with subjective impressions and interpretations.

7. Romanticism in Poetry: Examples

Upon successful completion of this lesson, the student will learn:

➤ **Learning Objective:**

- ✓ Identify key features of Romantic poetry through examples.
- ✓ Explain how Romantic use imagination to express emotional and individual experiences.
- ✓ Analyse the use of nature, emotion, and subjective experience in Romantic poems.

Introduction:

We should remember that the Romantics chose imagination and feeling as a method of understanding reality and arriving at absolute truth. They also opposed Neoclassicists' belief that humans are born sinful, immoral, and barbaric, and that the state, law, and civilisation are what cultivate them. The Romantics, however, embraced the view that human beings are born innocent and "innately good" and that what make them savage and inhuman are institutions and laws, combined with their detachment from nature. In this lesson, we will see a few examples of the central characteristics of Romanticism, mostly in poetry, citing well-known poets and works such as *Lyrical Ballads*, a collection of poems published by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1798. In his preface to their *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth discusses at length the importance of ordinary life as the focus of poetry, the adaptation of everyday language to poetry, and the unity of the poem woven by feelings, not by plot or action.

1. An excerpt from “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798” By William Wordsworth

Five years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs

With a soft inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone

.....

Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,

Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;

Questions and Discussion:

1. How does the picture of the scenery, seen by the poet five years ago, revive?
2. In what ways does the poet feel indebted to the beautiful forms of nature?
3. What does set the poet's serene and blessed mood?
4. What distinguishes Wordsworth's love of nature in his youth from his love of nature in later life?
5. Where does pantheism appear in the poem?
6. What does the poet mean by "nature never did betray"?
7. Comment briefly on Wordsworth's conclusion in the poem.

In Tintern Abbey, Wordsworth transforms feelings of despair and grief into joy and hope by creating conditions in which individuals can become aware of their emotions, experience unity with nature, and achieve harmony of the heart and mind. It details the importance of nature in refreshing the poet's memories and aspirations. He describes how he vibrantly recalls the woods and beautiful cliffs, the river Wye, that he visited five years ago. Wordsworth is amazed at the tranquillity and serenity nature offers to its visitors. He imagines the old place and compares it to the present physical landscape. Thus, the poet's imagination is ignited by past memories and delightful

moments spent with nature. Wordsworth symbolises nature as a haven of relief from the stress and burden of city life, depicting it as a positive force that controls people's inner life. His return to nature has enhanced and raised the poet's understanding of life and union with nature. As Wordsworth famously writes in the introduction to *Lyrical Ballads*, "all good poetry 'takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity'".

✓ **Poetic Diction**

Wordsworth's wit and excellence is not driven not from long descriptions of rural life, but instead from the use of simple repeated words and phrases that capture the routine practices and harsh conditions that characterize the life of common men.

✓ **Blank Verse (iambic pentameter + No Rhyme) :**

In Tintern abbey, Wordsworth tends to **stress the third, usually unstressed syllable**, to interrupt the metre and slow it down. This effect is demonstrated

Five years **have** past; five summers, with the length
Of five **long** winters! and again I hear

✓ **syntactic inversion:**

Wordsworth also uses another technique in "Tintern abbey" called **syntactic inversion**, i.e., reversed word orders : "Therefore am I still / a lover of the meadows".

✓ **Enjambment:**

Enjambment means sentences that continue over two or more lines: "With a soft inland murmur.—Once again / Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs"). This is suggestive of a state of mind in deep thought and contemplation.

- ✓ **Dramatic monologue:** A lyric poem in which an imagined speaker addresses a silent listener, usually not the reader:

The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts

2. Romantic Union with Nature:

Romantic unity with nature means that the poet personifies nature, or one of its elements, into a spirit that breathes, thinks, feels, experiences, lives, dies etc. Through imagination, seeking perfection and eternity of bliss and life, the poet spiritually unite with nature. The example is Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind":

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share
Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Percy Bysshe Shelley first wishes to be a dead leaf, a light cloud, or a rolling wave blown and swept by the wind. He wanted to be an instrument for the wind ("Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is: / What if my leaves are falling like its own!"). Thus, we notice that the poet's sensitive soul is similar to the sad tone produced by the wind as it blows through the leaves of a tree in autumn. Finally, he wishes to be in perfect harmony and unity with nature until they become one,

expressing the ultimate objective and wish of every Romantic poet: (My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!”).

Conclusion:

In this lesson we have drawn a few examples of how to approach romantic poetry, especially identifying the features of Romantic poetry. We have also tried to explain the Romantics’ the glorification of nature that was triggered by their intense desire for harmony with nature's spirit. In a sentence, the Romantics worshipped Nature.

8. Transcendentalism (1835-1846)

Upon successful completion of this lesson, the student will learn:

➤ **Learning Objective:**

- ✓ Define Transcendentalism and its key principles.
- ✓ Explain the historical impact of Transcendentalism on American literature and culture.
- ✓ Analyse how Emerson and Thoreau portray nature, intuition, and spiritual experience.

Introduction:

Transcendentalism first began as a religious and philosophical movement. Then, it was incorporated into the literary field. Critics think that the exact period of transcendentalism's rise and end was from 1836 to 1846. It was founded by a group of Boston pastors, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, who insisted that the church had become too rigid or conservative, that is, rejecting and opposing reform. These pastors supported the view that the human soul has innate knowledge that guides the individual to what is right and wrong, not the church's rules and laws. The Transcendentalists advocated equality, the right of women, and individualism, and opposed slavery and class differences. Although transcendentalism initially originated from Romanticism, it was primarily an American literary movement concerned with the issues of America and its literature, politics, culture, etc. Among the important Transcendentalists' works are Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; or Life in the Woods* (1854); Ralph Waldo Emerson's essays such as "Nature" and "Self Reliance" (1836); Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855); and novels like Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851).

1. What is Transcendentalism?

“Transcending” means going beyond sensual perception and the physical world.” Transcendentalists follow the same Romanticist beliefs, adding that intuition is the only trusted means of transcendence to higher values and wisdom. The word “transcendental” was taken from Immanuel Kant’s writings in which he doubted the validity of sense experience or knowledge compared to “intuitive knowledge”. Its central principle is that:

The conviction that human beings could elevate themselves beyond their baser animal instincts, attain a higher consciousness, and take part in the spirit of the divine. (Jerry and Ladd 34)

Ralph Waldo Emerson is one of the key representatives of Transcendentalism, who points to the example of the similarity between a child's innocence and nature. Unlike an adult who has lost his natural affinity with Mother Nature, a child innately appreciates the true essence of nature. This is articulated in his well-known essay "Nature":

To speak truly, few adult persons can see nature. Most persons do not see the sun. At least they have a very superficial seeing. The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and the heart of the child. The lover of nature is he whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood. (As qtd. in Jerry and Ladd 36)

2. Transcendentalism and Beauty:

Emerson believes that the artist should achieve one primary purpose, which is to represent the beauty of nature in his or her works, reminding people of its spiritual guidance and connection. Thus, beauty leads humans to their God. The human soul loves beauty, and “the world thus exists to the soul to satisfy the desire of beauty” (ibid.). In his essay “Nature,” Emerson states:

The world thus exists to the soul to satisfy the desire of beauty. This element I call an ultimate end. No reason can be asked or given why the soul seeks beauty. Beauty, in its largest and profoundest sense, is one expression for the universe. God is the all-fair. Truth, and goodness, and beauty, are but different faces of the same All.

3. The Characteristics of Transcendentalism:

Emerson concludes that the central principles of Transcendentalism are, as listed below:

- ✓ “Nature is the symbol of the spirit”.
- ✓ Nature is the direct path that leads to God. It is a refuge and a guide at the same time.
- ✓ Nature purifies the soul.
- ✓ Knowledge is based on feeling and intuition.
- ✓ The human soul has innate wisdom, and religion should not be limited to church or religious convention, contradicting Locke’s idea that wisdom is acquired through experience.
- ✓ Solitude and meditation.
- ✓ Nonconformism.
- ✓ Freedom of thought.
- ✓ “Insist on yourself; never imitate,” writes Emerson, for “imitation is suicide.”
 - Everyone is unique: individualism, self-trust, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency.
- ✓ The rejection of materialism and favouring spirituality: “matter has more reality than spirit”.
- ✓ Celebration of the self, love, desire, sexuality, and pleasure (Whitman’s “Song of Myself”):

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you
- ✓ Social reform and liberation.
- ✓ Democratic ideals and human potential.
- ✓ Truth resides in the spiritual world.

- ✓ Transcendence occurs through meditation.
- ✓ One's focus should be on the "here and now".
- ✓ Transcend common thoughts, beliefs, and experiences.

4. Transcendentalists' Style:

- The essay form is used to express their ideas.
- The adoption of free verse: irregular line length and a lack of rhyme or regular rhythm
- The tone of transcendentalism is exaltation (intense, serious, deep, and meaningful).

5. Practice:

1. Henry D. Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) (selected from the chapter: Solitude)

I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time. To be in company, even with the best, is soon wearisome and dissipating. I love to be alone. I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude. We are for the most part more lonely when we go abroad among men than when we stay in our chambers. A man thinking or working is always alone, let him be where he will. Solitude is not measured by the miles of space that intervene between a man and his fellows. The really diligent student in one of the crowded hives of Cambridge College is as solitary as a dervish in the desert. The farmer can work alone in the field or the woods all day, hoeing or chopping, and not feel lonesome, because he is employed; but when he comes home at night he cannot sit down in a room alone, at the mercy of his thoughts [...] Society is commonly too cheap. We meet at very short intervals, not having had time to acquire any new value for each other. We meet at meals three times a day, and give each other a new taste of that old musty cheese that we are. We have had to agree on a certain set of rules, called etiquette and politeness, to make this frequent meeting tolerable, and that we need not come to open war. We meet at the post-office, and at the sociable, and about the fireside every night; we live thick and are in each other's way, and stumble over one another, and I think that we thus lose some respect for one another.

Questions and Discussion:

1. Why does Thoreau say he went to the woods?
2. What does Thoreau mean by “live deliberately”?
3. What does Thoreau think are the “essential facts of life”?
4. Why does Thoreau worry about reaching death and realizing he “had not lived”?
5. What does Thoreau mean when he says, “Simplify, simplify, simplify”?
6. Why does Thoreau say he likes being alone?

Conclusion:

Transcendentalism underlines the importance of individualism, intuition, and the spiritual power of nature. It questions materialism, social norms, and deeply held beliefs. Emerson and Thoreau draw these ideas in their writings, which helped shape American literature, thought, and social change.

9. Gothic Fiction (1764-1830)

Upon successful completion of this lesson, the student will learn:

➤ **Learning Objective:**

- ✓ Identify the central principles of Gothic fiction.
- ✓ Analyse the historical development of Gothic fiction.
- ✓ Study examples such as Edgar Allan Poe's short stories or Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

1. History of the Goths

The Goths are Germanic tribes who led to the collapse of the Roman Empire. Archaeologists have reported that these tribes first settled in the Baltic and eventually moved down to the Black Sea. In the third century, the Goths conquered Rome under Alaric, who took it in 410 AD and set up kingdoms in Italy and France. It is well recognised that, other than their destruction of the Roman civilization and literature, the Goths left no literature of their own. Until about the seventeenth century, the word "Gothic" meant all things medieval. However, the Renaissance, however, first used the term in an aesthetic context to describe a style of architecture attributed to the Germanic tribes. In contrast to the classical style, the Goths were regarded as "barbaric, disordered, and irrational" (Punter 4). Critics view the mediaeval age (5th–15th cent.) as "a cultural wasteland, primitive and superstitious" (ibid.). What is noticeable here is that the Gothic Age, or Mediaeval, was in opposition to the Classical Age in many terms:

Where the classical was well ordered, the Gothic was chaotic; where the classical was simple and pure, Gothic was ornate and convoluted; where the classics offered a world of clear rules and limits, Gothic represented excess and exaggeration, the product of the wild and the uncivilized, a world that constantly tended to overflow cultural boundaries [...] Gothic was the archaic, the pagan, that which was prior to,

or was opposed to, or resisted the establishment of civilized values and a well-regulated society. (Punter 7)

2. Gothic Fiction:

Gothic fiction, or Gothic Romance, is a genre of prose fiction that was first founded by Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* (1765). Gothic fiction is another term for dark romanticism, which emphasises "human fallibility, self-destruction, judgement, and punishment, as well as the psychological effects of guilt and sin". Romantics are optimistic but dark Romantics are pessimistic. Gothic fiction is "romantic tales of terror and the supernatural". Writers tried to imitate Walpole's novels. The Gothic is characterised by: the mediaeval period, dark ruined castles, secret passages, gloomy corridors, dark basements, chaos, imprisonment, decay, death, terror, irrationality, cruelty, persecution, ghosts, vampires, isolated settings, evil, gothic doubles, etc. Other examples are Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1894); Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818); Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897); Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; and Edgar Allan Poe's works. They all attempted to reflect the spirit and vogue of the nineteenth century, when science and reason had become a great threat to mankind. The Gothic seeks to explore the existential mystery and terror of the nature of humankind.

3. The Purpose of Gothic Fiction:

The Gothic is intended to evoke terror and horror in the reader; terror is psychological fear, while horror is physical revulsion.

Gothic fiction is a special kind of literature. It can convince people to believe that there is nothing to be afraid of. It wakes up the terror in our soul and then turns it into a pleasure experience. The mixture of horror and pleasure enter our soul and purify us [...] Although we don't know whether to laugh or cry, this expression on horror is effective to some degree. Because the daily life looks very natural and it has no depression of horror sometimes [...] Gothic fiction creates lots of horrible scenes which bring a strong thrill to

people and make people feel safe while experiencing the extreme danger and death. People are provided with a particular relaxation and pleasure. That is where the endless charm of Gothic fiction lies in [...] This aesthetic pleasure is some kind of pleasure in our internal sense. Simply, maybe we can feel great pleasure from destruction. Everyone will have this experience which can be call “so cruel pleasure” [...] So, the purpose of literature is to arouse people’s emotion and let out people’s horror, pain and mercy. We not only get the aesthetic pleasure from the horror and evil, but also a kind of “purification”. (Pang et al. 16)

4. The difference between Romanticism and the Gothic:

The broad difference is that Romanticism was always associated with men, while the gothic was often identified with women. To begin, we should list the central features of Romanticism to understand how they differ: Romanticism positively encourages “imagination, individualism, idealism, inspiration, intuition, freedom, beauty of nature”. The Gothic draws the reader’s attention to the damaging consequences of Romanticism. In Romanticism, nature is beautiful and calm, while the Gothic represents nature as hostile and threatening. Imagination and freedom can bring about amazing achievements; it can also cause massive damage, including environmental destruction and emotional distress. To illustrate, the Gothic novel Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’s *Frankenstein* examines the dark possibilities of Romanticism, when a scientist tempers with the human nature that resulted in the creation of a monster. The misuse of imagination by the mad scientists Frankenstein endangers the whole existence of human beings. Thus, we can infer that the illusion of the Romantics of an ideal future or utopia becomes a nightmare of a world ruined or dystopian.

5. Elements of Gothic Literature:

Excerpted from G. Jackson, Lisa. "Summer Reading Assignment (2017:2018)", 2012. web access 24/01/2021

a. Setting & Atmosphere

There are old, rundown structures, especially castles or great country manors that are declining from former greatness. Other features:

- Hidden passages
- Trap doors
- Winding stairs
- Dungeons or secret rooms

There are bleak, foreboding environments.

- Dark, dense forests
- Imposing mountains
- Foggy moors
- Gloomy, stormy weather
- Areas far away from civilization

The atmosphere is one of suspense, mystery, horror, or dread.

b. Protagonist

The protagonists of Gothic literature are isolated or alone. This isolation can be self-imposed or a result of circumstances beyond her control.

- Physical isolation (trapped in a house far from civilization)
- Emotional isolation (cut off from the people around her)

The plot tends to involve hidden secrets which threaten the protagonist.

-Female Protagonists and Male Protagonists

- Persecuted maidens
- Fainting spells
- Ailing health
- Troubled past
- Dark attributes

c. Emotions

-Emotions run high for both male and female characters.

- Characters are often passionate and strong-willed, defying others or even their own common sense in pursuit of their goals.
- Women are often curious and have a tendency to swoon, while men storm and rage in reflection of unseen inner torments.
- The events emphasize high emotion and often reflect a heightened sense of drama.
- Examples include murders, kidnappings, people going mad and tragic illnesses.

d. Damsels in Distress

- The "damsel in distress" motif appears quite often in Gothic literature, with women threatened by tyrannical men or just the circumstances in which they find themselves.
- They often appear frightened and may suffer from some kind of ailment.

e. Foreboding

- Ominous implications precede dark events in Gothic literature.
- Unlucky omens appear, ancient curses linger in the air, and dark forces beyond the protagonist's control thwart his ambitions.

f. Decay

- The overall impression of a Gothic world is one of decay: a formerly great family, community, country or individual who has peaked and now begins a slow process of decline.
- This appears both in the landscape (crumbling buildings) and in the characters themselves.

g. The Supernatural

- The supernatural often appears in Gothic literature, particularly ghosts and unexplained manifestations.
- In some Gothic novels, elements ultimately have a rational explanation, but the implication always suggest something not of this world. Other such beings may include apparitions, monsters, demons, and vampires.
- Characters' dreams bleed into reality or death-like states.

Practice: Read this excerpt from Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart":

Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart"

And now have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the senses?—now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew that sound well too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man's terror must have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment!—do you mark me well? I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me—the sound would be heard by a neighbor! The old man's hour had come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once—once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over

him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more. [...]

The officers were satisfied. My manner had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted. [...]

No doubt I now grew very pale;—but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased—and what could I do? It was a low, dull, quick sound—much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I gasped for breath—and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly—more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations, but the noise steadily increased. Why would they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observation of the men—but the noise steadily increased. Oh God! what could I do? I foamed—I raved—I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder—louder—louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God!—no, no! They heard!—they suspected!—they knew!—they were making a mockery of my horror!—this I thought, and this I think. But any thing was better than this agony! Any thing was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die!—and now—again!—hark! louder! louder! louder! louder!—

“Villains!” I shrieked, “dissemble no more! I admit the deed!—tear up the planks!—here, here!—it is the beating of his hideous heart!”

Questions and Discussion:

1. Extract the elements of Gothic fiction from the story.
2. How does the narrator’s claim of sanity contrast with his actions?
3. How does the story show the conflict between reason and emotion?
4. How does obsession become dangerous?

Conclusion:

This lesson gives a historical background to Gothic fiction, starting from the arrival of the Goths and their impact on culture, moving through the Middle Ages, and leading to the renewed interest during the Romantic age. It characterises the essential features of Gothic fiction and helps students map the movement within the wider context of earlier literary movements, such as Romanticism.

10. Extended Practice on Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher"

Upon successful completion of this lesson, the student will learn:

➤ **Learning Objective:**

- ✓ Identify the key features of Gothic fiction in Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher".
- ✓ Analyse Poe's characterization and the development of mood and suspense.
- ✓ Examine Poe's stylistic and syntactic features.

I. Introduction:

"The Fall of The House of Usher" is a short gothic story written by Edgar Allan Poe in 1839. Poe was born in 1809 in Boston, and died in 1849. He is considered the father of modern detective stories. In this short story, Poe recounts the story of Roderick Usher, one of the last descendants of the Usher family, together with his sister, Madeline. Usher suffers from physical and emotional illness, which urges him to call his childhood friend to accompany him and ease his distress and fear. His boyhood friend, the narrator, welcomes his friend's invitation and accepts it at once, only to find the Usher house in a state of decay and disrepair. Unsurprisingly, like the house, Roderick Usher appears debilitated and diseased. Once inside the house, the narrator notices the dim rooms and long, dark passages and gathers that Usher is nervous and frightened of his own house. In an endeavour to lift his spirits, the narrator tries to reassure his friend by listening to him play his guitar or helping him write lyrics for his songs. However, all his attempts were in vain. Roderick's twin, Madeline, has a grave disease that will soon end her life. Roderick is determined to bury his sister in the house, which makes the narrator sceptical of the personal motives of Roderick. After entombing Madeline, Roderick grows more uncomfortable and uneasy. One night, Roderick and the narrator notice a bright gas moving, which the narrator deems completely natural. As a strategy to ease Roderick's uneasiness, the narrator reads to him the story of "Mad Trist" by

Sir Launcelot Canning, and while he is reading, he hears noises that match the pictures in the story. He convinces himself that these noises are simply the creation of his imagination, but he soon learns that Roderick has been hearing them for days. Roderick assumes that he might have buried his sister alive, and she is trying to escape from her coffin. In a blood-stained white robe, Madeline appears and attacks Roderick, who immediately dies of fear. As the narrator escapes from the house, the ushers' house falls behind him.

In his fiction, Poe showed a mastery of gothic conventions of mystery, hypersensitivity, madness, "freakish aspirations," premature burial, and death obsession. Edgar Allan Poe investigated human responses to horror, ranging from curiosity to insanity. He accentuated the tragic consequences of romanticism in which human beings are uncontrolled by rules and laws.

1. Analysis of the Atmosphere of Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher":

In fiction, the atmosphere is the mood, feeling, or atmosphere created in the reader's mind. It also enables the reader to foreshadow events and the characters' destiny. Poe chooses selected words that help him shape the atmosphere in his stories.

✓ An example from the "Fall of the House of Usher":

I had so worked upon my imagination as really to believe that about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity—an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up from the **decayed trees**, and the **gray wall**, and the **silent tarn**—a **pestilent** and **mystic vapor**, **dull**, **sluggish**, **faintly discernible**, and **leaden-hued**. (Poe's FHU 6)

We may choose the adjectives "gloomy, dark, frightening, etc." to describe the atmosphere of this passage or the whole story.

2. Analysis of Characters:

We selected four elements: Roderick's fear of death; the burial of Madeline alive; Madeline's coming back from the grave; and victimised characters and inner horror.

a. Roderick's fear of death and ghosts:

Roderick is distressed and paralysed by the ambiguous concept of death. This obsession with death heightens his fears of the grave, diseases, and the sight of blood. The reappearance of his sister from the grave scares him to death. This could be a reflection of the author's psyche in his fiction, which confirms his deepest fears and scepticism about metaphysical dimensions when death is the end of life, not the beginning. The return of Madeline from the grave conveys the impression that souls have no other place to go, save their return to take revenge on their killers or roam about aimlessly.

The disease which had thus entombed the lady in the maturity of youth, had left, as usual in all maladies of a strictly cataleptical character, the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and the face, and that suspiciously lingering smile upon the lip which is so terrible in death [...] but then without those doors there did stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. She fell upon the threshold—then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in her violent and now final death-agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated. (Poe's FHU 18-25)

b. characters who are buried alive:

The other interesting aspect of gothic fiction is its psychological experiments carried out on the reader to evaluate the magnitude of shock that comes from reading books about people buried alive and trying to escape. In "The Fall of the House of Usher", the narrator is presented as a realistic example of the traumatic effects when people's imaginations and minds are haunted by ghosts:

Not hear it?—yes, I hear it, and have heard it. Long—long—long—many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it—yet I dared not—oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am!—I dared not—I dared not speak! We have put her living in the tomb! Said I not that my senses were acute? I now tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them—many, many days ago—yet I dared not—I dared not speak! (Poe's FHU 24).

C. Victimised Characters, Inner Horror, and Secret Sin:

Poe's characters are usually represented as having inner turmoil or conflict, which is the product of a hidden sin. They tend to be portrayed with pale faces and emaciated bodies that betray their inner struggles.

A cadaverousness of complexion; an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison; lips somewhat thin and very pallid but of a surpassingly beautiful curve; a nose of a delicate Hebrew model, but with a breadth of nostril unusual in similar formations; a finely moulded chin, speaking, in its want of prominence, of a want of moral energy. (Poe's FHU 8)

3. Sublime and Aesthetic pleasure:

Sublime is the pleasure gained from the combination of two conflicting elements: beauty and fear, as described in the previous lessons. In Poe's works of fiction, "horror is turned into beauty after the terrible experience, and pain is turned into peaceful delight after aesthetics" (W. F. Pang et al. 19). In other words, Poe turns horrifying or shocking stories into beautiful pieces of art. With regards to turning pain into peaceful delight, his readers experience a traumatic experience or imagined reality in fiction, but feel and are safe and unhurt in reality.

✓ An example of the sublime from "The Fall of the House of Usher":

"The impetuous fury of the entering gust nearly lifted us from our feet. It was, indeed, a tempestuous yet sternly beautiful night, and one wildly singular in its terror and its beauty" (Poe's FHU 20)

It may occur to us that such a night filled with gusts of strong wind cannot possibly be a beautiful scene to enjoy. Aesthetically speaking, however, Poe's mastery of rendering such an awful night beautiful is what makes his frightening stories arresting and aesthetic.

4. Poe's Stylistics features:

Poe uses some stylistic traits that truly reveal that he is the father of detective fiction. Among these stylistic features is the use of parataxis and hypotaxis, which he frequently employs in an attempt to attract his readers.

a. Parataxis:

The term "**parataxis**" refers to the process of arranging phrases or independent clauses one after the other without any subordinating or coordinating conjunctions (but, and, after, where, etc.). Paratactic sentences are linearly set up in the form of subject-verb-object. The target effect of the use of parataxis is to produce a hurried rhythm that fit the speed of events.

✓ An Example of parataxis from "The Fall of the House of Usher":

there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind—the entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight—my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder—there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters (Poe's FHU 25).

b. Hypotaxis:

It is the inclusion of multiple subordinate or relative clauses in the main clause or other subordinate or relative clauses. The intended effect is to slow down the pace of the progress of events in the story.

✓ An example of hypotaxis in "The Fall of the House of Usher" :

"I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain—upon the bleak walls—upon the vacant eye-like windows—upon a few rank sedges—and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation

more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium—the bitter lapse into every-day life—the hideous dropping off of the veil”. (Poe’s FHU 3)

5. Interpretations of Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher”:

- ✓ The external appearance of the usher’s house, surrounded and coated with decayed trees and fungi, reflects the inner and psychological state of the ushers’ minds and psyche. The fall of the house of the Usher family symbolises the fall and collapse of the family into insanity and hysteria.
- ✓ Other interpretations support the view that "The Fall of the House of Usher" represents the fall of the mind into the darkness of sleep or hypnagogia, that is, the beginning of sleep or a state between wakefulness and sleep.
- ✓ "The Fall of the House of Usher" is a great example of the use of the "Gothic double", which refers to the duality of character or personality. In gothic fiction, it means that protagonists often have their doubles, namely their fears and obsessions, reflected on other characters. For instance, Roderick, has his sister, Madeline, as his gothic double; or his inner reality or world externalised in the outside appearance of the house:
- ✓ Madeline represents the sanity of her brother, Roderick.
- ✓ Madeline’s ghost is an undying reminder that Roderick cannot bury his past.
- ✓ The house’s exterior represents Roderick’s body.
- ✓ The house’s troubled interior represents Roderick's mind.

Conclusion:

Gothic fiction stresses the importance of psychological development and complexity of characters’ identity and life. It digs deeper into what disturbs their calmness and privacy. It is a projection of the reader’s fears and anxiety on written characters to show how human beings behave in severe circumstances.

11. Realism 1850 – 1900

Upon successful completion of this lesson, the student will learn:

➤ **Learning Objective:**

- ✓ Identify key features and historical development of Realism.
- ✓ Discuss the representative writers and works.
- ✓ Read and analyse a selected Realist work in detail.

Introduction:

Realism is an artistic movement that began in France, in the 1840s and spread to many parts of Europe and America. The emergence of realism coincided with remarkable developments such as the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859); the reign of Queen Victoria in 1837; the 1861–1865 American Civil War (the abolition of slavery); and imperialism.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, founded in 1848 by a group of English painters, poets, and art critics, is also credited with the creation of realism. This group aimed to revive art qualities such as moral seriousness, directness, and minute representation of detail. For example, Gustave Courbet's painting "The Stone Breakers" ushered in the development of realism, which sought to represent reality and contemporary culture as accurately as possible. Among the pioneers of realism are **Honore´ de Balzac**, **Gustave Flaubert**, **Emile Zola** in France, **Dostoevsky and Tolstoy** in Russia, **George Eliot**, **Thomas Hardy**, **Anthony Trollope**, and **Charles Dickens** in England, and **William Dean Howells** and **Henry James** in America.

The realists endeavoured to apply a scientific approach to literature. They aimed for a "truthful, accurate, sincere, and objective representation of the real world, both the external world and the human self" (Habib 471). They rejected all the principles of Romanticism, including idealisation, escapism, nominalism, historical retrospection, imaginary worlds, subjectivity, the

unusual, and the fantastic. Instead, it focused on the immediate, the here and now, everyday life, the common, middle-class society, social change, objectivity, experience, pragmatism, utilitarianism, mimesis, positivism, relativism, and epistemology.

1. **Positivism** is “the view that all valid knowledge must be based on the methods of empirical investigation and verifiability”.

2. **Mimesis** is a Greek word for “imitation”. It was first used by Aristotle to describe how tragic plays where it referred to “the actors’ direct imitation of words and actions” (Morris, 5). Mimesis means the representation of external reality, which is related to verisimilitude. **Verisimilitude** means “the appearance of being true or real; likeness or resemblance to truth, reality or fact” (Morris, 5). Writers strive to present fiction as a mirror that reflects reality without distortion: reality as it is, not as it should be. In her novel, *Adam Bede*, George Eliot identifies one of the key objectives of realism as being "to give a faithful account of literary realism in nineteenth-century Britain of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind" (Morris, 80).

3. **Epistemology** is the study of how human beings acquire knowledge, its nature and origin.

4. **Pragmatism** is an approach that evaluates theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application.

5. **Utilitarianism** is the belief that actions are correct if they are useful, benefit a majority, or maximize the happiness of the greatest number of people in society.

6. **Relativism** is the doctrine that knowledge, truth, and morality exist in relation to culture, society, or historical context, and are not absolute.

The objectives of realism;

To achieve this objective, realists used a number of strategies:

- ✓ Descriptive and evocative details

- ✓ Avoiding the fantastical, imaginary, and mythical
- ✓ focusing on all probable events, and excusing the impossible and improbable ones.
- ✓ The presentation of characters and incidents from all social classes, not only the nobility.
- ✓ It emphasises the present or contemporary life rather than idealising the past.
- ✓ It sees the individual as a social being.
- ✓ The refrain from the use of elevated language, favouring colloquial idioms, everyday speech, directness and simplicity.
- ✓ The possibility of total objectivity
- ✓ On a moral basis, accept people in their current, imperfect, state.
- ✓ In-depth psychological characterization (Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Dickens' *David Copperfield*, Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857))
- ✓ Addressing themes of socioeconomic conflict (*Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens),
- ✓ emphasis on direct experience and induction (truth through repeated experience).
- ✓ In America, regionalism and local colour fiction
- ✓ 14- Causality (foreshadowing and facts)
- ✓ Fixed identity
- ✓ The omniscient narrator's fixed moral position
- ✓ The importance of direct observation and facts, chronological plots, continuous narratives relayed by omniscient narrators, and 'closed endings'
- ✓ The literary text expresses the author's psychology, biography, and age.
- ✓ Beauty is perceived in "ordinary" things and events.
- ✓ Realists "show" their readers rather than "tell" them.

- ✓ Focusing on the "plausibility" of events.
- ✓ Shifting from the use of Allegorical names to particular facts.

Practice:**Hard Times for These Times (1854)****Chapter I****The One Thing Needful**

‘Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!’

The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a school-room, and the speaker’s square forefinger emphasized his observations by underscoring every sentence with a line on the schoolmaster’s sleeve. The emphasis was helped by the speaker’s square wall of a forehead, which had his eyebrows for its base, while his eyes found commodious cellarage in two dark caves, overshadowed by the wall. The emphasis was helped by the speaker’s mouth, which was wide, thin, and hard set. The emphasis was helped by the speaker’s voice, which was inflexible, dry, and dictatorial. The emphasis was helped by the speaker’s hair, which bristled on the skirts of his bald head, a plantation of firs to keep the wind from its shining surface, all covered with knobs, like the crust of a plum pie, as if the head had scarcely warehouse-room for the hard facts stored inside. The speaker’s obstinate carriage, square coat, square legs, square shoulders, - nay, his very neckcloth, trained to take him by the throat with an unaccommodating grasp, like a stubborn fact, as it was, - all helped the emphasis.

‘In this life, we want nothing but Facts, sir; nothing but Facts!’

The speaker, and the schoolmaster, and the third grown person present, all backed a little, and swept with their eyes the inclined plane of little vessels then and there arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim.

Questions and Discussion:

1. Extract the central features of realism in the selected chapter.
2. How does “Facts alone” reflect Utilitarianism and pragmatism?
3. How does the description of the schoolmaster show Realist attention to everyday life?
4. What social norms or behaviours are criticised?

Conclusion:

This lesson focuses on the historical development of Realism and its context. It presents the central characteristics of the movement, including faithful depiction of life, accuracy, and attention to social conditions after Romanticism. It also highlights the renewed interest in science and facts, showing how Realist writers engaged with everyday life and society.

12. Naturalism (1860-1900)

Upon successful completion of this lesson, the student will learn:

➤ **Learning Objective:**

- ✓ Identify key features and historical development of Naturalism.
- ✓ Discuss the representative writers and works.
- ✓ Read and analyse a selected Naturalist work in detail.

Introduction:

Naturalism developed out of realism with a greater focus on Charles Darwin's biological theories in the 1860s. In literature, it was first founded by Emile Zola's essay "The Experimental Novel," in which writers subject their characters to unknown, hostile places to uncover the animalistic side of human beings. Naturalists admire the impeccability of the laws of nature and consider them the main source of truth.

Naturalism is the belief that everything that exists is a part of nature and can be explained by natural and material causes alone, and not by supernatural, spiritual, or paranormal causes. Naturalism holds that a human being exists entirely in the order of nature and does not have a soul nor any access to a religious or spiritual world beyond the natural world; and therefore, that such a being is merely a higher-order animal whose character and behaviour are entirely determined by two kinds of forces: heredity and environment. Naturalism explains everything in relation to the doctrines of determinism, which is the opposite of the notion of free will. Human beings are living in a natural environment like animals. A naturalist author will lead the reader to believe that a character's fate has been predetermined, usually by heredity and environmental factors, that the destiny of humanity is misery in life and oblivion in death, and that he/she can do nothing about it. Naturalists often perceive reality with a profound belief in objectivism, through which the author often tries to maintain a tone that will be experienced as "objective." The author presents himself or herself as an objective observer, similar to a scientist taking note of what he or she sees.

Naturalism radically expands the principles of realism. Realism uses middle-class characters, whereas Naturalism chooses the lower class. Naturalism is a darker, harsher realism, emphasising extreme objectivity and frankness. Realism emphasises moral truth and the distinctive character of the human personality, while naturalism embraces the law of nature and human animalism. Whereas realism seeks a cosmic determinism to govern the world, naturalism sees the universe as driven by biological determinism. Naturalism is more pessimistic and serious.

Naturalistic works addressed major themes such as the inevitability of death, the dark and harsh side of life, poverty, racism, sex, prejudice, disease, prostitution, dirt, survival, man vs. himself, and man vs. nature. The main pioneers of naturalism were Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris, Jack London, and Hamlin Garland.

1. The principles of Naturalism :

- ✓ Naturalistic writing is inspired by hardships such as war, urbanization, etc.
- ✓ The use of ill-educated or lower-class people.
- ✓ Protagonists are the fallen, criminals, and down-and-out.
- ✓ Characters are shaped by hereditary, instinctive, or environmental forces.
- ✓ Anti-sentimental.
- ✓ The world is amoral and there is no reward for goodness.
- ✓ Fatalistic: the belief that all events are predetermined and therefore inevitable.
- ✓ Society will not change and improve.
- ✓ Pessimistic: the representation of the negative side of life.
- ✓ The indifference of nature to humans.
- ✓ Primitivism describes living conditions that are basic, unpleasant, and uncomfortable.
- ✓ A surprising twist at the end of the story; an unexpected end.
- ✓ The rejection of transcendentalism: the depiction of characters without feeling and imagination.

- ✓ Vernacular language.
- ✓ a truthful and accurate depiction of reality.
- ✓ The absurdity of life: considering a human being to be an isolated being cast into an alien universe; considering the human world to have no inherent truth, value, or meaning.
- ✓ Human beings are not free and are determined by biological determinism.
- ✓ Human character is guided by impulses rather than by acts of will.
- ✓ The story is driven by characters rather than the plot.

2. The Narrative Structure of Naturalism

A naturalist does not view his characters as the products of past events. As all naturalists, he seldom uses the linear, chronological plots that many novelists and playwrights use. The conventional narrative structure is built upon the premise of causality, with one event resulting in the next, following each other in succession to create a cumulative result. The lack of any meaningful causal relationship between events helps to reinforce the existential idea that the human condition has no inherent meaning or structure.

Excerpt from *Émile Zola's Essay (1893) "The Experimental Novel"*

I have already repeated twenty times that naturalism is not a personal fantasy, but that it is the intellectual movement of the century... And this is what constitutes the experimental novel: to possess a knowledge of the mechanism of the phenomena inherent in man, to show the machinery of his intellectual and sensory manifestations, under the influences of heredity and environment, such as physiology shall give them to us, and then finally to exhibit man living in social conditions produced by himself, which he modifies daily, and in the heart of which he himself experiences a continual transformation. Thus, then, we lean on physiology; we take man from the hands of the physiologist solely, in order to continue the solution of the problem, and to solve scientifically the question of how men behave when they are in society...“The idea should always remain

independent; it must be enchained neither by scientific, nor philosophical, nor religious beliefs. Man must be strong and free in the manifestation of his ideas, must follow his instinct, and not dwell upon the puerile fears of the contradiction of any theories;... he must modify theory by adapting it to nature, and not nature by adapting it to theory.” From this there results an incomparable breadth. “The experimental method is the scientific method which proclaims the liberty of thought. It not only throws off the philosophical and theological yoke, but it no longer admits scientific personal authority. This is not said from pride or boastfulness. The experimentalist, on the contrary, shows his humility in denying personal authority, for he doubts his own knowledge, and he submits the authority of men to that of experiment and the laws which govern nature.” This is why I have said so many times that naturalism is not a school, as it is not embodied in the genius of one man, nor in the ravings of a group of men, as was romanticism... The experimental method alone can bring the novel out of the atmosphere of lies and errors in which it is plunged...Everyone, the great and the small, moves freely, working and investigating together, each one in his own specialty, and recognizing no other authority than that of facts proved by experiment. Therefore in naturalism there could be neither innovators nor leaders; there are simply workmen, some more skillful than others...

I have neglected until now the question of form in the naturalistic novel, because it is precisely there that individuality shows in literature. Not only is a writer’s genius to be found in the feeling and in the idea a priori but also in the form and style. But the question of method and the question of rhetoric are distinct from each other. And by naturalism, I say again, is meant the experimental method, the introduction of observation and experiment into literature...We naturalistic novelists submit each fact to the test of observation and experiment, while the idealistic writers admit mysterious elements which escape analysis, and therefore remain in the unknown, outside of the influence of the laws governing nature.

Questions and Discussion

1. How does Zola distinguish naturalism from other literary movements?
2. How does he explain the relationship between society and the individual?
3. What is the relationship between the experimental method and literature in Zola's view?
4. Does naturalism allow room for individual freedom?

Conclusion:

Naturalism views literature as a scientific observation of life. It presents human beings as shaped by heredity, environment, and social forces. Instead of imagination and idealism, it stresses objectivity, determinism, and the careful study and representation of reality.

13. Expressionism (1900- 1925)

Upon successful completion of this lesson, the student will learn:

➤ **Learning Objective:**

- ✓ Identify the key features and historical development of Expressionism.
- ✓ Discuss main Expressionist writers and their representative works.
- ✓ Read and analyse a selected Expressionist text in detail.

Introduction

Expressionism is a term coined in the early 20th century to describe a movement in art, then in literature, the theatre, and the cinema. It is “characterized by boldness, distortion, hyperbole, caricature, and mechanization and forceful representation of emotions” (Drabble 342). **Edvard Munch**’s *The Scream* (1894) laid the foundation of expressionism. Munch’s portrait “evoked qualities of colour and pattern, unrelated to content” (342). Expressionism arose as a reaction to bourgeois culture as well as to society's growing industrialization, mechanization, and urbanization. Expressionism used distorted figures and vibrant colour schemes to depict raw and powerfully emotional states of mind. For expressionists, objects have no importance when compared to essence or abstract reality. For them, “abstraction is the distillation of reality into its essence. Expressionists are not interested in presenting the world as human beings might see it or apprehend it through any of the senses, but rather as they emotionally and psychologically experience it” (Milne 260). Monologues were preferred over dialogues by the Expressionists because they better reflected the protagonists' emotional isolation and conflict. Many expressionists believed that art could not be divided into genres like poetry, plays, or fiction. Rather, they experimented with genre fusion.

According to expressionists, realism was perverting truth in its endeavour to depict it. They also turned their backs on middle-class injustice:

Man screams from the depths of his soul, the whole age becomes one single, piercing shriek. Art screams too, into the deep darkness, screams for help, for the spirit. That is expressionism.” The scream, then, a response to the sudden recognition that the self is at root alone and without intrinsic meaning, is the defining image of Expressionism. (Milne 265)

A scream, by its own nature, distorts and denaturalizes the face. This was the goal of the expressionists: to depict the misery of everyday life rather than its ordinariness.

1. Main Principles of Expressionism:

- ✓ Characters in Expressionist works have a corporealisation of interior life, in which they project their inner state onto the external environment and perceive it as a part of their own displaced body.
- ✓ Schizophrenia is a disorder in which the relationship between thinking, emotion, and behaviour breaks awry, resulting in erroneous perception, inappropriate actions and feelings, and a departure from reality into fantasy and hallucination.
- ✓ Expressionist fiction demonstrates how economic materialism pervades all aspects of personal life.
- ✓ Expressionist characters experience a greater sense of liberation when they abandon society and re-identify with the “primal beast”.

Karl Marx: “What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal.”

- ✓ Characters are forced to seek connection and communication through hostility, conflict, and antagonism due to the impossibility of benign human contact in an atmosphere of utter estrangement. Love and affection are thus transformed into savagery and violence.
- ✓ Expressionism underpins the concept that a person's inner reality, or emotional responses, are more valuable and significant than the objective reality outside the individual.
- ✓ Expressionism emphasizes the individual's reaction over the event or thing that generates it.

- ✓ Expressionists prefer to represent inner reality through the use of symbols and dream-like themes or stories rather than realistic characters, exaggeration, distortion, and fantasy
- ✓ Expressionism supports the belief that economic and social factors such as class differences, exploitation, industrial capitalism, and alienation deeply impact on the conscience and psyche of the individual.
- ✓ Expressionist poets disregarded meter, narrative, and traditional grammar in favour of focusing on symbolic imagery.
- ✓ Expressionist protagonists are frequently caught in an unfathomable world, overwhelmed by guilt and estranged from those they love.

2. Themes:

a. Alienation:

As a result of the real-life struggle, many human have a feeling of being estranged, disconnected, and unrelated to other human beings or the societal institutions that shape and guide us. Alienation is a powerful force, one that moves humans toward the negative impulses of self-pity, vulnerability, and violence, but that can also result in the positive results of deep introspection and intellectual independence. Expressionist alienation is usually related to family and society. It articulates the economic and social injustice lived by people before World War I.

b. Vision :

“The Expressionist artist becomes a vision. He does not see, he perceives. He does not depict, he experiences. He does not describe, he forms. He doesn't take what is in front of him, he searches. Now the chain of facts exists no more: factories, houses, illness, whores, screams and hunger. Now we have the vision of these” (Travers 2001, 166)

c. Sexuality:

Expressionist followed Nietzsche's call for humanity to appreciate energy and life in all of its animalism. Expressionists exposed society's hypocrisy and insincerity when it came to sex and sexuality. They satirized bourgeois morality and showed characters who desired to live life to the fullest.

d. Human Condition:

Expressionist literature depicts protagonists who fervently seek meaning in their lives. They always discover that the life they have been living is fake and not worth living. Consequently, they withdraw to explore internal reality. For both writers and characters, what is important is the journey, not the goal. This journey enables them to resist the corrosive fragmentation of the outside reality.

3. Excerpt from Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915)

One morning, as Gregor Samsa was waking up from anxious dreams, he discovered that in bed he had been changed into a monstrous verminous bug. He lay on his armour-hard back and saw, as he lifted his head up a little, his brown, arched abdomen divided into rigid bow-like sections. (...) His numerous legs, pitifully thin in comparison to the rest of his body, flickered helplessly before his eyes.

'What's happened to me?' he thought. It was no dream. His room, a proper room for a human being, only somewhat too small, lay quietly between the four well-known walls. (...) Gregor's glance then turned to the window. The dreary weather (...) made him quite melancholy. 'Why don't I keep sleeping for a little while longer and forget all this foolishness?' he thought. But this was entirely impractical (...) he always rolled again onto his back.

‘O God,’ he thought, ‘what a demanding job I’ve chosen! Day in, day out on the road. (...) If I didn’t hold back for my parents’ sake, I would’ve quit ages ago. (...) Once I’ve got together the money to pay off the parents’ debt to him (...) I’ll do it for sure. (...) In any case, right now I have to get up. My train leaves at five o’clock.’

And he looked over at the alarm clock ticking away by the chest of drawers. ‘Good God,’ he thought. It was half past six. (...) The next train left at seven o’clock. To catch that one, he would have to go in a mad rush. (...) During his five years’ service Gregor hadn’t been sick even once. (...) Apart from a really excessive drowsiness after the long sleep, Gregor in fact felt quite well and even had a really strong appetite.

As he was thinking all this over (...) there was a cautious knock on the door.

‘Gregor,’ a voice called (it was his mother), ‘it’s quarter to seven. Don’t you want to be on your way?’

Gregor was startled when he heard his voice answering. It was clearly and unmistakably his earlier voice, but in it was intermingled (...) an irrepressibly painful squeaking (...)

His father was knocking on one side door. ‘Gregor, Gregor,’ he called out, ‘what’s going on?’ (...) His sister knocked lightly. ‘Gregor? Are you all right? Do you need anything?’

‘I’ll be ready right away,’ Gregor answered, making an effort with the most careful articulation. (...) First he wanted to stand up quietly and undisturbed (...) But to continue was difficult, particularly because he was so unusually wide. He needed arms and hands to push himself upright. Instead of these, however, he had only many small limbs which were incessantly moving (...)

‘But I must not stay in bed uselessly,’ said Gregor to himself. (...) Before it strikes a quarter past seven, whatever happens I must be completely out of bed.

There was a ring at the door of the apartment. ‘That’s someone from the office,’ he told himself, and he almost froze (...) Gregor needed to hear only the visitor’s first word of greeting to recognize immediately who it was — the manager himself.

Why was Gregor the only one condemned to work in a firm where at the slightest lapse someone immediately attracted the greatest suspicion? (...) More as a consequence of the excited state in which this idea put Gregor than as a result of an actual decision, he swung himself with all his might out of the bed. There was a loud thud (...)

Questions and Discussion:

1. Extract the main principles of Expressionism in the story.
2. Is this a story of anxiety?
3. Is Gregor’s transformation physical and psychological?
4. How is guilt presented in the novella?
5. How do materialism and overloaded work function as dehumanizing forces in the story?

Conclusion:

In this lesson, we have shown that Expressionism is not only a literary movement but also a pained expression of the profound impact of materialism on modern society. The Metamorphosis illustrates how routine work and economic or social pressures lead to widespread dehumanisation, reaching the very core of family relationships. The individual becomes reduced to a mere function, and when this function collapses, even family members abandon one another. Thus, Expressionism exposes the inner anxiety of the individual while revealing the moral and emotional breakdown of modern society.

Conclusion

By the end of this course, students will understand why literature changes and how each movement succeeds another, giving a new answer to the question: What should literature do? The goal is not memorising definitions but to develop a literary awareness: connecting literary texts to their historical and social contexts and appreciating their aesthetic features and form. In so being, literature stands as a living dialogue between generations across time, in which students become actively part of it.

References

- Abrams, M. H. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. Oxford University Press, 1953.
- Abrams, M. H., and Geoffrey Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Cengage Learning, 2014.
- Baldick, Chris. *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Casaliggi, Carmen, and Porscha Fermanis. *Romanticism: A Literary and Cultural History*. Routledge, 2016.
- Cuddon, John Anthony. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. 1998.
- Drabble, Margaret. *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. 6th ed. Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Galens, David. *Literary Movements for Students: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Literary Movements* (2nd ed.). Farmington Hills: Gale, 2009.
- Habib, M. A. R. *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present*. John Wiley & Sons, 2008.
- Heath, Duncan, and Judy Boreham. *Introducing Romanticism*. Ed. Richard Appignanesi. McPherson's Printing Group, 2002.
- Ladd, Andrew, Jerry R. Phillips, and Karen Meyers. *Romanticism and Transcendentalism: 1800–1860*. Vol. 2. Infobase Publishing, 2010.
- Long, William J. *English Literature: Its History and Significance for the Life of the English-speaking world*. Simon and Schuster, 2013.
- Milne, Ira Mark, ed. *Literary Movements for Students: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Literary Movements*. Gale, 2009.
- Morris, Pam. *Realism*. Routledge, 2004.
- Pang, Wenfang, Diqiu Wang, and Shanshan Hu. "Gothicism in *The Fall of the House of Usher*." *Advances in Literary Study* 3 (2015): 15–20.
- Punter, David, and Glennis Byron. *The Gothic*. Blackwell Publishing, 2004.
- Travers, Martin, ed. *European Literature from Romanticism to Postmodernism: A Reader in Aesthetic Practice*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2001.
- Widdowson, Peter. *Literature*. Routledge, 2004.
- Wordsworth, William, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. *Lyrical Ballads*. Pearson Education, 2007.

Zhang, Xiaofen. "On the Influence of Naturalism on American Literature." *English Language Teaching* 3, no. 2 (June 2010): 195–199.

Zola, Emile. *Experimental Novel*. Cassell, 1893.

Other Sources (Non-Book / Miscellaneous)

"Romanticism." *Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite*. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2025.

Diane Thompson. "World Literature II: Rousseau and Romanticism – Study Guide." NVCC.

G. Jackson, Lisa. *Summer Reading Assignment (2017–2018)*, 2012. Web. Accessed 24/01/2021.