
Unit 1.1 □ Two Essays—"The American Scholar" and "The Poet" : Emerson

Structure :

- 1.1.0 Introduction
- 1.1.1 The "American Scholar" : Background to the Essay
- 1.1.2 Central Theme of the Essay
- 1.1.3 The Three Influences
- 1.1.4 The Duties of the Scholar
- 1.1.5 The Concluding Section of the Essay
- 1.1.6 The Poet : Background to the Essay
- 1.1.7 Emerson's Introduction to His Essay "The Poet"
- 1.1.8 Emerson's Ideas about "The Poet" 's Nature and Functions
- 1.1.9 The Materials and the Method of "The Poet"
- 1.1.10 Conclusion to the Essay : the General Condition of "The Poet"

1.1.0 □ Introduction

Ralph Waldo Emerson, who is acknowledged to be one of the greatest thinkers of nineteenth century America, was born in Boston, Massachusetts (USA) in 1803. His father (who was a preacher) died when Emerson was still a child, but he was brought up and given a good education by his mother and his aunt. A year after his father's death in 1811, Emerson started attending the Boston Latin School, and in 1817 was admitted to Harvard College from where he graduated in 1821.

For the first few years of his professional life, Emerson taught at his brother William Emerson's school before studying for the church and being ordained as a priest in the Second Church, Boston, in 1829. But after the death of his first wife, Ellen he resigned from the Second Church. The year 1833, Emerson spent in visiting Italy, France, and England, before coming back to America and commencing his professional career as a writer, essayist, poet, and public lecturer. He settled down in the New England village of Concord.

Emerson is called "the Father of American Transcendentalism" The term "Transcendentalism" needs explication. Essentially, the Transcendentalist

movement was a movement against the rationalistic thought that had dominated Europe throughout the eighteenth century. The roots of Transcendentalism go back to English and German Romanticism. Romantic trends reached America around 1820. Rather like the belief of the European Romantics in the spiritual essence of nature, the American Transcendentalists also believed in the oneness of the created world and its creator, God. They also believed that the individual soul of each man was identical to the world itself, that the microcosm of the human soul was the macrocosm of the world. In 1836, the American Transcendentalists organized themselves as a group called the " Transcendental Club", and began publishing a quarterly, *The Dial*, which was edited by first Margaret Fuller and then by Emerson himself.

Emerson's first long essay, "Nature", was published in 1836, and in the following year (1837) appeared "The American Scholar" which was an essay that had been originally delivered as the " Phi Beta Kappa Address". Before the students of Harvard. In 1838, Emerson also delivered the " Divinity School Address" at Harvard, and in 1841 and 1843 he published two books of essays, *Essays: First Series* and *Essays: Second Series*. In 1847 appeared the poetry of Emerson in a volume entitled *Poems*, and a further collection of his poems, *May-Day and other Pieces* came out in 1876. *Representative Men* (1850) contains the lectures delivered in Oxford and London. *English Traits*(1856) presents Emerson's opinions about the English character. *The Conduct of life* (1860) and *Society and Solitude* (1870) are two volumes of essays. Throughout his life, Emerson had always maintained a series of journals, and these were published several years after his death. The following discussion will however concentrate on Emerson's two essays,

1.1.1 □ "The American Scholar" : Background to the Essay

"The American Scholar" was delivered as a formal lecture at Harvard on 31 August 1837. Emerson was given only about two months notice to prepare this address, but he put into it his ideas about what a scholar in a new nation like America should be, ideas that had been developing in his mind for a long time. " I should write for the Cambridge men [Harvard was a college in Cambridge , Massachusetts] a theory of the scholar's office", Emerson wrote in a journal entry in July 1837. "It is not all books which it behoves him [the scholar] to know," wrote Emerson, "least of all to be a bookworshipper". Rather, what was important was for the scholar to be "able to read in all books that which alone gives value to books.....to read the incorruptible text of truth."

The essay is important, first, because it asserts what has been called a new spirit of American intellectual nationalism. Many earlier American authors had felt that their writings were inferior to the best that was being produced in England and Europe. However, Emerson asserted that "We [i.e., Americans] have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe", and that it was now time for the new American scholar to express his own thoughts and to build up a tradition of American thought. It is because of this spirit of Emerson that the essay became justifiably famous. Emerson's contemporary, the American poet Oliver Wendell Holmes praised the essay and called it an "intellectual Declaration of Independence." Another respected poet and critic of the day wrote in the same strain and declared : "we were still socially and intellectually moored to English thought till Emerson cut the cable and gave us a chance at the dangers and glories of the blue water."

1.1.2 □ Central Theme of the Essay

In writing "The American Scholar", Emerson had a two-fold intent—to define not only the truly "American" (and not English or European) scholar, but also to set out his ideas about the work and the functions of such a scholar. These ideas are set out in the first seven paragraphs of the essay and this constitutes a kind of introduction to the whole piece. Emerson begins his discussion by talking about an "old fable" (actually Platonic in origin) which told of the gods dividing "Man" into "men" so that "he might be more helpful to himself", the analogy being of the division of the hand into fingers so that work could be done better. This fable implies that just as there is one hand constituted out of many different fingers, so too there is one man behind all the different kinds of men. However , Emerson laments that in America, Man has become divided into separate individuals each of whom does his own work in isolation from all the other individuals. This has the original unity of the One Man become dispersed, and instead of being " priest, and scholar, and statesman, and producer, and soldier" all together, Man has become many "men", each doing his work in isolation from the work done by the others. As Emerson says about the state of his contemporary society, it is "one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk, and strut about so many walking monsters—a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man."

In this condition of the social state in which the "original unit" (man) has been "minutely subdivided", the Scholar has become the "delegated

intellect." Emerson states that while in the right condition, the Scholar should be "Man thinking", now he has degenerated into being "a mere thinker, or still worse, the Parrot of other men's thinking." But, according to Emerson, this negative trend is reversible, and the American scholar may yet become One Man in his thought if he opens himself up to three key influences—those of Nature, of the Past (Books), and the Future (Action). The next few paragraphs of the essay are devoted to a discussion and elaboration of Emerson's thinking on these important influences.

1.1.3 □ The Three Influences

About Nature, Emerson says the rising and the setting of the sun, the coming of night and the stars, the blowing of the wind and the growing of the grass all show that Nature is a continuous, never-ending process, a "web" created by God which has neither beginning nor end, and is a "circular power returning into itself." The scholar is the man whom the spectacle of Nature attracts most. The scholar observes Nature and discovers that in it, thousands of most different and even contradictory things are united. And from realizing this, he understands that Nature is not chaotic but has a law of unity within it, which is also a "law of the human mind." Nature then becomes to man "the measure of his attainments", for the less he knows of Nature the less he knows of his own mind. And as Emerson sums up, the "ancient precept 'know thyself' and the modern precept 'Study nature' " thus mean the same thing.

The second crucial influence on the mind of the scholar is that of the Past, whether this is inscribed in or embodied by literature, art, or any other human institution. However, Emerson in his essay singles out books as "the best type of the influence of the past," and he devotes his discussion to books alone. According to Emerson, books were born of man's experience of the world around him and were the result of a process of sublimation by which "short-lived actions," "business", and "dead fact" were transformed into "immortal thoughts," "poetry", and "quick thought." Yet, no book is totally perfect, and this is why new books have to be written for and by each new generation of men. In fact, if one loses sight of the fact that no book is perfect, then one will be inevitably led to an unthinking worship of books written in the past and mistake dogma for truth. Books written on a credulous acceptance of whatever was stated in the past are works not of "Man thinking" but merely of "men of [lesser] talent" who believe it "their duty to accept the view which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon, have given, forgetful that

Cicero, Locke and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote these books." Such men who blindly worship books and hold as truth all that is contained in them, Emerson calls "bookworms".

The right use of books, Emerson argues, is for them to inspire the "active soul" of man. Hence, the really valuable relationship is not between man and book, but man and nature, a relationship which results in the transmutation of "life into truth." Thus Emerson declares unequivocally : " Books are for the scholar's idle times. When he can read God directly, the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts of their readings." Of course, Emerson does admit that History and "exact science" must be learnt by "laborious reading", but he indicates that such study is useful only when it contributes to the scholar's ability to think by himself. Therefore, books (like the past too) are useful in so far as they inspire the scholar: "Genius looks forward; the eyes of a man are set in the forehead, not in his hind-head."

Having stated this, Emerson thus moves on to discuss the third important influence on the scholar—that of the Future or of Action. Emerson indicates that a scholar should not be a recluse but rather a man of action, for without the experience of action—"handiwork or public labour"—"thought can never ripen into truth." Action "is the raw material out of which the intellect moulds her splendid products," and so the scholar who engages himself in appropriate action has the benefit of getting "the richest return of wisdom." And finally, the value of action lies in the fact that if "thinking is the function", then "living is the functionary." Put simply, this means that even if the scholar runs out of thought, he can always live a life of action.

1.1.4 □ The Duties of the Scholar

After having spoken about the three influences necessary for the development of the American scholar: "the office of scholar," writes Emerson, "is to cheer, to raise, and guide them by showing them facts amidst appearances". He must perform "the show, unhonoured and unpaid task of observation." The scholar must also willingly accept a life of poverty and solitude. But what he gets in return is the knowledge that he is " the world's eye....the heart." He is the communicator and announcer of "whatever new verdict reason from her inviolable seat pronounces on the passing men and events of to-day." The scholar's statements have an effect on his hearer because they know that by "going down into the secret of his own mind, he has descended into the secrets of all minds." Thus the scholar's audience "drink his words, because he fulfils for them their own nature." But the main point that Emerson makes

is that at the root of all the powers of the scholar lies "self-trust" or self-confidence and conviction which "are the keys to success in every sphere of life."

Apart from this, the other duty of a scholar is to be free from fear. "Fear always arises from ignorance," writes Emerson, and the scholar must have self-confidence enough to be able to influence other men with his ideas, illuminate them, and so free them from fear. Most people, explains Emerson, are of "no account", merely "bugs" and "spawn", "the man" and "the herd". Most people too are in thrall to money and power. But if they are woken up, "they shall quit the false good and leap to the true." And Emerson implies that the scholar is the man who can bring about this awakening. This is therefore the scholar's main function—"the upbuilding of a man".

1.1.5 □ The Concluding Section of the Essay

The concluding paragraphs of "The American Scholar" have a clearly exhortatory purpose. In writing them, Emerson wished to tell his college audience that they had the ability of discovering themselves, of understanding for themselves "the inexplicable continuity of this web of God," of realizing the process of Nature as a "circular power returning into itself," and finally of living and acting in the light of these perceptions. Emerson in the concluding part of his essay writes as an optimist with unbounded faith in what has been called the American Dream, an idea of progress : that the American Man can accomplish both social reform and material success. The "conversion of the world" is what Emerson visualizes at the end, and the scholar will help to bring about this for he will believe "himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men."

1.1.6 □ "The Poet" : Background to the Essay

Emerson's ideas about the nature, role and function of the Poet were first expressed by him in a lecture entitled "The Poet" which he delivered as one of a series in 1841-42. Around the same time he composed a poem called "The Poet" some lines from which he took as an epigraph for his essay, which was published later in his collection *Essays : Second Series* in 1844. The epigraph outlines Emerson's basic idea that the function of the poet is two-fold : first to notice "Through worlds, and races, and terms, and times/.....musical order, and pairing rhymes", and second to communicate this realization to other

men as had done the "Olympian bands who sung/Divine ideas below/
which always finds us young,/And always keeps us so."

1.1.7 □ Emerson's Introduction to His Essay "The Poet"

It is in the first paragraph of his essay that Emerson lays out his key ideas. He indicates that both contemporary art criticism as well as literary appreciations show signs of a deep spiritual lack. Four categories of men—those esteemed as "umpires of taste," those believed to be "intellectual men", "the theologians" of the time, and even the ordinary "poet" appear to have "lost the perception of the instant dependence of form upon soul." Those who depend on the "material world" only, says Emerson, fail to understand that behind every "sensuous fact" there are many hidden meanings which are "intrinsically ideal and beautiful". As Emerson declares, all men are "children of the fire, made of it, and only the same divinity transmuted."

The greatest poets and thinkers (and Emerson names Orpheus, Empedocles, Heraclitus, Plato, Plutarch, Dante and the Swedish visionary Swedenborg) and even "the fountains hence all this river of Time and its creatures floweth are intrinsically ideal and beautiful."

1.1.8 □ Emerson's Ideas about "The Poet"'s Nature and Functions

After having defined man in the introductory section of his essay in the spirit of a Promethean "child of fire", Emerson broaches the topic of the poet's nature and functions. The poet is truly representative, writes Emerson, for he is the "complete man" among "partial men", and he "appraises us not of his wealth, but of the common wealth." This means that the poet is the only man among ordinary men, an individual who cannot receive and live by truth, but also express the truth for the benefit of ordinary men. Again, since the poet has the unique quality or gift, he stands among the three children of the Universe who may be described (according to Emerson) alternatively as "cause, operation, and effect "or as" Jove, Pluto, Neptune," or as "the Father, the spirit, and the Sun ", or as "the knower, the Doer, and the Sayer." Among these, the poet is the sayer , that is the truth-lover, the namer who represents beauty.

"Poetry was all written before time was," says Emerson and poet are those who " can penetrate into that region where the air is music," and those who write down what they have heard. These poems, the often imperfect transcripts of the "primal warblings" heard by the poets, become " the songs

of the nations." It is on this ground, too, that the real poet can be differentiated from the man of mere poetical talent, industry and skill in writing verse. Contrary to the man of poetical talent, the true poet "announces that which no man foretold....He is a beholder of ideas and an utterer of the necessary and casual." And following upon this, Emerson holds that the true poem can be identified by its possession of an argument—"a thought so passionate and alive that like the spirit of a plant or an animal, it has an architecture of its own."

1.1.9 □ The Materials and the Method of "The Poet"

In so far as all the materials used by the poet are concerned, Emerson speaks of his use of objects as symbols, and of the poet's use of language. He says that "things admit of being used as symbols because nature is a symbol, in the whole and in every part." Borrowing from the Neoplatonic idea of Plotinus that the soul is an ever-flowing fountain of which both nature and the individual's soul are emanations, Emerson writes that "The Universe is the externalization of the soul." In loving nature, ordinary man too actually worships "the symbol nature." Political parties and even nations set great store by symbols or emblems. Men use emblems everywhere, and so even if "people fancy they hate poetry....they are all poets and mystics," according to Emerson.

True poets however have another motivation in using symbols. The original poets were the Namers or the language-makers in the sense that by coining words they "symbolized the world to the first speaker and to the hearer." Or as Emerson goes on to explain, "the etymologist finds the deadest word to have been once a brilliant picture. Language is fossil poetry." Yet, the poet's powers are not dead but alive and organic, and the poet's expression grows "as a leaf out of a tree". Like the Universal Soul or Spirit which creates the world, the poet creates his poem.

Next, Emerson turns to the means or methods of the poet. One special faculty of the poet by which he is enabled to express his thoughts "Like the metamorphosis of things into higher organic forms," is his imagination or insight which is "a very high sort of seeing." Imaginative insight however does not come by study or the operation of the "conscious intellect," but from "the intellect released from all service and suffered to take its directions from its celestial life. "This is why", says Emerson, "the bands loved stimulants" like "wine, bread, narcotics, coffee, tea, opium" etc. Yet, Emerson goes on to

say that the true poet does not need such auxiliaries : " The sublime vision comes to the pure and simple soul in a clean and chaste body." The common sights and sounds of nature should be enough to inspire the poet, and as "the imagination intoxicates the poet, its effect on the poet's audience is liberating too." And so Emerson describes poets as the "liberating gods", for they "unlock our chains and admit us to a new scene."

Emerson also goes to the extent of stating that the "religions of the world are the ejaculations of a few imaginative men". But Emerson is suspicious of the mystic who fixes symbols as having one and unalterable meaning. Instead, "all symbols are flexional, "according to Emerson , and it is poetry which is truly religious, "because it encourages and makes possible the passage of the soul into higher forms."

1.1.10 □ Conclusion to the Essay : The General Condition of "The Poet"

In the last part of his essay, Emerson looks for the ideal poet in America. His point in brief is that just as other nations and civilisations had their poetry, so too must America have her own poet—even though there seems to be none in sight. America itself is a poem, says Emerson, for "its ample geography dazzles the imagination," and therefore "it will not wait long for meters." And it is on the basis of this conviction that Emerson sketches a prophetic scenario of the function of the poet. As a man who pursues beauty, as an artist striving to apprehend and express the ideal and the eternal, the poet is exhorted not to doubt but to persist even in the face of opposition and criticism till at last rage will draw out of him that "dream-power" by the "virtue of which a man is the conductor of the whole river of electricity."

Unit 1.2 □ *Walden* : Thoreau

Structure :

- 1.2.0 Introduction
- 1.2.1 Theme of *Walden*
- 1.2.2 Influences
- 1.2.3 Thoreau and Transcendentalism
- 1.2.4 Questions
- 1.2.5 Recommended Reading

1.2.0 □ Introduction

Notable among the American Transcendentalists is Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) who is the author of *Walden, or Life in the Woods*. An autobiographical narrative published in 1854, *Walden* describes nearly two years (March 1845 to September 1847) that Thoreau spent away from the town of Concord in the state of Massachusetts where he lived, in the countryside near Walden Pond. In a way, this was Thoreau's individual Transcendentalist experiment, his way of trying to fulfil a plan of self-reliance, of a programme by which the individual spirit may have the opportunity of developing in isolation and solitude. Much of *Walden* which is a book of eighteen essays was written down by Thoreau in the journal that he kept during his stay beside Walden pond. And as a whole the narrative is a complex blend of almost scientifically observed descriptions of the flora and the fauna in the region, and of allegory and parable, discourses on poetry and philosophy. Three important sections are devoted to Thoreau's interactions with an Irish family, a woodcutter of Canadian origin, and a detailed description of a bean field he had planted.

Henry David Thoreau (to give his full name) was born in the town of Concord of French and Scottish parents. His family was poor, and Thoreau had to work to pay for his college education at Harvard. However, Thoreau schooled himself to reduce his wants, and taught himself to live on a very small budget. An idealist and a man of principles, he tried always to live his life in accordance with his nonconformist ideals. In a way, his life became his subject for he wrote about his experiments in living according to his own strict principles.

1.2.1 □ Theme of *Walden*

It is acknowledged today that *Walden, or Life in the Woods* is Thoreau's masterpiece. The work is the product of the two years, two months, and two days that he spent in a small cabin he made for himself at the Walden Pond near Concord on some land that belonged to Emerson. However, in *Walden*, the real time of the twenty-six months Thoreau spent in his cabin is reduced to a period of one year. Each of the seasons is evoked in turn, and the work is so constructed that there is a progression of themes or concerns from the most simple and concrete to the highest in philosophical or metaphysical amplitude. Hence, while in a section entitled "Economy", Thoreau speaks about how much money it cost to build a cabin, at the end of the book he has gone on to speculate and hold forth on the stars in the sky.

Thoreau was a great reader of travelogues and himself wrote a number of travel books. Yet, *Walden* has been rightly described as an "anti-travel book" in so far as it is about living in one place for a considerably long period of time. In his entry in his journal dated 30 January 1852, Thoreau wrote about his staying rooted in the place and observed : "I am afraid to travel much or to famous places, best it might completely dissipate the mind." Actually, Thoreau seems to have felt that wandering from place to place was inimical to the opening up of one's innerself, for which isolation and rootedness was a must. It is because of this that *Walden* has been called a work that opened up "the inner frontier of self-discovery as no American book had up to this time." Certainly despite all its deceptive simplicity, *Walden* is no less than Thoreau's practical guide to living an ideal life of peace and contentment. The whole essay which is simultaneously both a prose poem and a deeply philosophical treatise involves the reader and challenges him or her to scrutinize his or her own life and to live life fully and meaningfully. Indeed, Thoreau's description of the building of his cabin is an image, a metaphor for the building of a soul.

1.2.2 □ Influences

Thoreau, like his contemporaries and fellow-Transcendentalists Emerson and Walt Whitman, was deeply influenced by Hindu and Buddhist philosophy. His collection of books included several Asian classics, and it has been said that he was influenced both in his philosophy of life and in his procedure of withdrawal and meditation by his reading of Indian religious texts. Also, in

so far as Thoreau's use of language and his distinctive style is concerned, it is true that he learnt much from the writing of the Greek and Latin classical authors as well as from the compositions of the seventeenth century English Metaphysical poets. A clear, concise way of expression and the liberal use of puns and metaphors show the extent of Thoreau's inspiration from the writers of the past.

1.2.3 □ Thoreau and Transcendentalism

The Transcendentalists were men committed to the ideals of anti-rationalism, a general humanitarianism of spirit, and a belief in the essential unity of the world and god. The Transcendentalists held that the individual's soul was one with God, and this conviction led to the formulation of the Transcendentalist doctrine of committed individualism and, above all, self-reliance. These traits can be seen in Thoreau, particularly in his devotion to the principles of simple living and high thought. Also, like the other Transcendentalists who regarded themselves as pioneering explorers going out of society and breaking with convention, Thoreau too was willing to face the dangers of the unknown on a quest of self-discovery. The wilderness always held a fascination for Thoreau, and in America he saw the spirit of the wilderness, a spirit that he felt had become lost in the civilized societies of ancient Greece or Rome, or even medieval and Renaissance England.

Today, Thoreau is widely read and respected for a number of reasons. In the first place, Thoreau's essay *Civil Disobedience* inspired Mahatma Gandhi to develop his policy of passive resistance as a weapon against the British. This essay also inspired the black American Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King to wrest some measure of equality for his people. Thoreau's ecological consciousness has further become the subject of much recent research in the field of eco-criticism. Finally, Thoreau's stance of independence, his sense of morality and idealism, and even his insightful poetic style have given him a permanent place in the history of American literature.

1.2.4 □ Questions

1. Write a brief essay on Emerson as an essayist.
2. What are Emerson's views concerning the nature and function of the poet and poetry? Answer with reference to the essay "The poet".
3. Critically examine what Emerson in his essay "The American Scholar" has to say about the duties and functions of a scholar.

4. "Emerson is an American essayist in that he shows a special concern for the development of an American literary sensitivity." Discuss, with reference to the two essays you have read.
5. What do you understand by Transcendentalism? What features typical of Transcendentalism can you discern in *either* Emerson or Thoreau? answer with reference to the texts you have read.
6. Bring out with reference to *Walden*, the basic premises of Thoreau's thought.
7. Is *Walden* merely an essay in the pastoral genre or a more philosophic work? Give reasons for your answer.
8. With close reference to the ideas of Thoreau as set out in *Walden*, indicate why the work is still one of abiding interest.

1.2.5 □ Recommended Reading

1. H.H. Clark (ed.). *Transitions in American Literary History*
2. Robert E. Spiller. *The Cycle of American Literature*
3. F.O. Matthiessen. *American Renaissance*
4. Brian Harding. *American Literature in Context II : 1830-1865*
5. David Morse. *American Romanticism*, Vol. I
6. Robert E. Spiller, *The Literary History of the United States*
7. Milton Konvitz and Stephen E. Whicher (ed.). *Emerson : A Collection of Critical Essays*
8. James McIntosh. *Thoreau as Romantic Naturalist : His Shifting Stance toward Nature*
9. Sherman Paul. *The Shores of America : Thoreau's Inward Explorations*
10. Frederick Garber. *Thoreau's Redemptive Imagination*

Unit 2.1 □ Moby Dick : Herman Melville

Structure :

- 2.1.1 Objective
- 2.1.2 A Brief Sketch of Melville's Life and Works
- 2.1.3 Melville's Whaling Sources in *Moby Dick*
- 2.1.4 Story-line of the Novel
- 2.1.5 Critical Analysis
 - (i) Introduction
 - (ii) Characters in the Novel
 - (iii) *Moby Dick* as a Tragic Novel
 - (iv) Symbolism
- 2.1.6 Language and Style
- 2.1.7 Conclusion
- 2.1.8 Questions
- 2.1.9 References

2.1.1 □ Objective

The objective of this unit is to introduce an American writer Herman Melville who belongs to the pre-civil war decades. This period may be interpreted as an age of the prophet and an age of the poet. We may refer to Transcendentalism as the significant ideology of the age.

It was an age of idealism with a sincere belief in self-reliance and immense possibilities in man. One of the great writers of the American Renaissance, Melville in *Moby Dick* shows not only an emerging self-reliant individualism and spiritual exploration but also how 'the transcendental identity of Self and Nature' is 'always beyond the grasp of the individual mind' and the pursuit often proves to be a 'dangerously self-reflexive activity' (*Columbia Literary History of the United States*, p. 436)

It was also a new Romantic age with its special emphasis on self. It was further an age of skeptical writers, artists of irony and detachment like Hawthorne and Melville who were closely attached and friends.

2.1.2 □ A Brief Sketch of Melville's Life and Works

Herman Melville (1819 - 1891), the author of *Moby Dick* was a Romantic writer in American Literature. He was greatly influenced by Lord Byron, Sir Walter Scott, Goethe and Washington Irving and also by Wordsworth, Coleridge and Robert Southey. Melville was much influenced by the American Revolution, so much so that he may be called the child of American Revolution.

Melville was born in New York City. He belonged to the rooted and distinguished family, the Calvinist Melvilles of Boston in America. Melville's father died as bankrupt, financially ruined. Melville is an uprooted person who had to face a hard and harsh world of alienating social forces. In his writings, Melville's male characters normally move from deprivation to hardship and bitter struggle of life. We may refer to the most famous of them, Ishmael in *Moby Dick*, the classic Wanderer.

Melville struggled through life as bank-clerk, salesman, farmer and school-teacher. In *Moby Dick* the writer Melville, himself is identified with Ismael. His father went bankrupt and then died in debt when Melville was still a boy. Melville began his career on a ship bound as a cabin-boy on a voyage from New York to Liverpool. This was the background of his bleak experience (making him feel extremely alone) behind his work *Redburn* (1849). His unique experience of exploration of the American frontier, down the Erie Canal and the Mississippi led to *The Confidence Man* (1857). In 1941, Melville sailed as seaman aboard the whaler, *Acushnet*. It was a long voyage into the Pacific. His experience of the Marquesas Islands is portrayed in *Typee*. It is based on his experience as a peer at *Polynesian Life* (1846). *Typee* was his first book. While joining an Australian ship, Melville faced mutiny on board and was imprisoned in Tahiti. 'Omoo : A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas' (847) was based on this experience. Melville admitted to his friend and guide, the famous American writer of the time, Hawthorne that he acquired his experience of life and writing at sea and the alternative worlds. A whaling ship and the extensive reading while at sea was for him his Yale and Harvard, the famous institutions of learning.

2.1.3 □ Melville's Whaling Sources in *Moby Dick*

Melville had read series of whaling stories in the May 1938 issue of a popular New York magazine, the *Knickerbocker*. It published J. N. Reynolds's "Mocha

Dick : or the White Whale of the Pacific : A Leaf from a Manuscript Journal". There is another story published by the Albany Argus in 1839, "Method of Taking the Whale". The source is Thomas Beale's "The Natural History of the Sperm Whale".

Melville may have thought of writing about whaling in his early age. He thought of shipping on a whaler in Sag Harbor, actually signed on the merchant ship for a voyage to Liverpool. He sailed on the whaler, the *Acushnet* at the beginning of 1841. He was deeply influenced when he read Owen Chase's account of the sinking of the *Essex* by a vengeful whale. Melville read books on whaling—Frederick Debell Bennett's "Whaling Voyage round the Globe", J. Ross Browne's 'Etchings of a Whaling Cruise', William Scoresby Jr's "The Voyage to the Northern Whale Fishery". Apart from sources in printed form, Melville shared his personal experiences with those of his shipmates on three whalers and their accumulation of stories from previous voyages. In this process, Melville could plan, at sea, on voyage, a book about the pursuit of a great white whale by the name Mocha Dick. Henry T. Cheever's "The Whale and His Captors" published in 1849, influenced him.

Moby Dick is an original composition, based on the assimilation of both nautical and non-nautical books. Two most important books that influenced *Moby Dick*, though they are non-nautical books, are the Bible and Complete works of Shakespeare. Some great classics of English literature and some European classics also influenced the making of *Moby Dick*.

2.1.4 □ Story-Line of the Novel

The story runs that in the superstition of some whalers, there is a white whale. The whale, Moby Dick possesses supernatural power. People believe that to capture or even to hurt, it is beyond the capacity of man. In the face of this sea-monster, the skill of the whaler is useless : his harpoon does not wound it. The White Whale shows a ferocious strategy when it attacks the boats of its pursuers. Ahab, the mariner and Captain loses his limb while pursuing his chase of the sea-monster. The mono-maniac captain Ahab again pursues the sea-monster as the master of the *Pequod*, his whaling ship. The loss of the leg exasperates Ahab, his reason is shaken. Under these circumstances, he undertakes the voyage, his only thought is to chase his antagonist, the White Whale. The interest of the novel pivots on Captain Ahab. Ahab's enmity to Moby Dick, the white whale, has been aggravated to

monomania. He thus is predestined to defy his enemy, Moby Dick to mortal strife, in spite of his former defeat in the chase, his loss of leg. Ishmael, the narrator of the story narrates this wild huntman's chase through unknown seas. He is the only one who remains to tell about the destruction of the ship and the doomed Captain Ahab by the victorious, indomitable Moby Dick.

The novel consisting of 135 chapters, may be divided into five major parts :

I Chapters 1-22 Ishmael Queequeg

The entire first part is concerned with the narrator Ishmael and his developing friendship with the harpooner Queequeg. The Christian Ishmael participates in Queequeg's religious ceremonies. Their bonds of friendship being sealed, they set out offering their services in a whaler Pequod.

II Chapters 23-45 Ahab and Moby Dick.

Though the spectre-like image of Moby Dick, the whale appears in the first chapter as a 'snow hill in the air' in the second part, still invisible, his huge and menacing bulk looms large. Captain Ahab comes to the forefront, mesmerizes the crew, makes them participate in a diabolical sacrament pledging their vows to kill the whale.

III Chapters 46-72 The Business of the Pequod

As Melville observes Ahab's monomania does not deter him from his main business which is to harpoon whales and collect oil. In an important scene, a sperm whale is converted to oil. As the Pequod comes across several ships, Ahab's passion to seek Moby Dick flares up and Ishmael's insight into the nature of man's fate deepens.

IV Chapters 73-105 Whales and Whaling

Starting with the incident of Stubb's killing of a Right whale, the narrative comes to halt for some chapters as information about whales and whaling is conveyed to the reader, Ahab's gold coin, the 'doubloon' is sailed to the mainmast as prize for the sailor who can first spot Moby Dick.

V 106 – 135 The Search and the Chase

His part is dominated by Ahab as the source of his obsession and the purpose of the voyage is introduced. The crew reaffirm their pledge to kill Moby Dick. As Ahab's defiance persists his ego swells, neither Starbuck nor Pip can dissuade him ; he identified with Fedallah and the final three-day chase begins. The Pequod is smashed by the enraged whale. Ahab is killed entangled with the harpoon. Ishmael alone is the sole survivor of the catastrophe ; he appears in the final section floating alone on the sea.

2.1.5 □ Critical Analysis

(i) Introduction

Moby Dick is a sea novel, a classic American novel for all time. At first, Melville started the novel as a record of facts of the whaling industry in America, but later on along with his vast reading of Shakespeare, the Bible, American and European classics and his association and involvement with Hawthorne, the great contemporary American writer, he wrote a "wicked" book to interrogate the so-called innocence of his age, he offered a critique of the dominating philosophy of his age. *Moby Dick* became a powerful Romantic Faustian tragedy' of humanity confronting both nature and divine power. *Moby Dick* is a distinctive American novel. It offers a critique of the ambiguity and duplicity of transcendental knowledge and pursuit. Melville creates a tragic novel because Melville considers nature as 'deceitful hieroglyph'. He believes that Captain Ahab's story is the story of *Narcissus* who struggles the lure and fascination of the great sea.

As a sea-novel, *Moby Dick* is an intermixture of naval observation, magazine and article writing, satiric representation and reflection. It is also a critique of conventional civilized life.

The novel is a South-Sea, whaling voyage, narrated by Ishmael, one of the crew of the ship 'Pequod' from Nantucket. The novel consists of details of usual sea-matter in the branch of Industrial marine. It gives us pictures of preparations for the sea-voyage, the trial marine, the chase and capture of whale, the story of the economy of cutting up whale. There are also descriptions and detailed digressions on the nature and characteristics of the

Sperm whale, the history of fishery. Life in American sea-ports is thus broadly depicted in *Moby Dick*.

(ii) Characters in the Novel

Moby Dick has three central characters—the wandering narrator Ishmael, the monomaniac captain Ahab and the White Whale, Moby Dick.

The dynamic force of the novel is of course Captain Ahab. He is the dark protagonist, the maimed supremo of the quarter-deck. His monomania to chase and kill the white whale persists throughout the novel till it drowns and kills all his men, both in mind and body except Ishmael, the narrator. He is the dominant character and source of the action of the novel. Ahab's bitter revenge on an antagonist who represents massivity of nature, results in a mythic struggle, Ahab, "ungodly, God-like man" appears to be a challenger of the universe. Through Ahab, Melville both invokes and challenges the great transcendentalist belief that the cosmos or universe is good. Ishmael as he narrates, wrestles with the complexities of Ahab's language, origin and identity. Ahab is represented as the unique man of tragic proportions. Ahab is steeped in rage and sorrow and because of his torn body and bleeding soul, he became monomaniac and mad. Ishmael constructs images of excavation. Melville delves into the depths of Ahab's being. Ahab is an image of individual and ancestral identities. Ishmael depicts Ahab's schizophrenia as a fierce dialectic. Ahab's essential self falls prey to his frantic self.

There are two other characters who reflect aspects of Ahab's madness—Fedallah and Pip. Fedallah represents the demonic aspect of Ahab's "characterizing mind" and Pip is the insane, distorted, maimed symbol and justification of Ahab's purpose.

The gods also demonstrate a final projection of Ahab's insanity, monomania of chasing and killing the white whale, Moby Dick. Ahab remakes the gods in his own image and language—his rhetoric. He symbolises a self-imposed myth of Prometheus in his extreme suffering. Ahab is the novel's most dramatically resonant character.

Ahab's antagonistic force is *Moby Dick*, himself. He is the particular white whale, "spouting fish with a horizontal tail". Legends and lores have been created round his story. Moby Dick, the white whale looms a huge phantom, a phantasy figure in the restless dreams of the Pequod's Captain and crew. He is the prime antagonist figure in the novel.

At the same time, the story of *Moby Dick* is not only about Captain Ahab or the White Whale, it is also about Ishmael, the narrator, Ishmael, the wanderer. There are two identities of Ishmael. Ishmael as narrator represents the sensibility of the novel, manifests the imagination and poetry of the story, the romance and adventure of the sea-voyage of the whaler. The other Ishmael is a major character in the story. Narrator Ishmael grows out of Ishmael, the individual, the young man who is experiencing as he grows old. Ishmael is in the cobbled streets of New Bedford, carpet-log in hand, in a cold winter night ; he is in search of lodgings. Ishmael's rich imagination is stirred by all that is hidden, mysterious and unspoken in the great riddles of mankind. Ishmael also has a unique sense of wonder—wonder of the wide Pacific world, at the creatures of the deep, wonder at man, dreamer, doer, doubter, wonder at the incomparable power of the massive whale.

We may say that Ishmael is also writer Melville in another name. Melville's experience, imagination, poetry and scholarship are identified within the voice of the narrator.

Ishmael the observer and story-teller, dominates the story and the course of action as its speculative and varying narrative voice, rather voices. 'Call me Ishmael' the book begins and grows out of the singleword 'I'. He is also the single voice and single mind, from whose spool of thought the whole story is unwound. His contemplativeness and dreaming contribute to the reflective essence of the story. His gift for speculation explains the terror we come to feel at the fabulousness and whiteness of the whale and the wonder at the terrors of the deep sea. His mind ranges, almost with mad exuberance, through piles of images and in the wonderful chapter on the masthead, his reveries transcend space and time. He is the symbol of man, who is the only survivor of the voyage ; probably it is the necessity to keep one person alive as witness to the story that saves Ishmael from the general wreck.

Ishmael seems absolutely alone at the end of the book floating on the Pacific Ocean. He gives us an impression that life can be confronted only in the loneliness of each heart. The focus seems to be on the sceptical experience—scarred mind of Ishmael, his personal vision and the richness and ambiguity of all events. As in so many 20th century novels the emphasis is on the subjective individual consciousness. His mind is not a blank slate but passively open to events, constantly seeking meaning in everything it encounters. He is an exile, searching alone in the wilderness, suffering from homelessness, but more from doubt, uncertainty and the agony of disbelief.

He is a modern man, cut off from all belief and certainty, constantly in doubt, in the eternal flux like the Sea.

Ishmael's illusion of innocence is the root cause of his isolation. At the beginning of the novel Ishmael envisions Moby Dick, the 'hooded phantom' as innocent, identifies him with the spotlessness of his own immaculate soul. On the other hand he has an acute antipathy toward all human beings, the vast pretense of the world, its mark of innocence—'civilized hypocrisies and bland deceits'. As he enters the Spouter-Inn in New Bedford, he comes across a simple scene which embodies in miniature, all the evil which the world's mask of innocence hides. A beggar lies shivering in the Streets 'Poor hazarus, chattering his teeth against the curbstone for his pillow, and shaking off his tatters with his shiverings. He is struck by the human indifference to the beggar's misery.

In course of the novel, Ishmael is going to make a series of discoveries that constitutes the 'affirmation' of *Moby Dick*. At first Ishmael gloomily perceives that the world is what is promises to be. Ironically, the first step in his development is the companionship he forms not with a Christian, but a cannibal. He gradually overcomes his initial fight at Queequeg's austerity and his repugnance at his cannibalistic tattooing and comes to perceive redeeming qualities: 'Through all his unearthly tattooings I thought I saw the traces of a simple honest heart.' Association with this savage expands his knowledge about human beings and their relationships. Queequeg becomes the instrument of the restoration of Ishmael's faith and respect for man as he gradually realises the spiritual possibilities of comradeship. His voyage deepens his awareness of the plight of mankind and the complex human interrelationship and interdependence as well as the value of love. Queequeg restores Ishmael's respect for man. Transfigured by his experience he achieves a balance of intellect and heart, knowledge and love and also wisdom.

(iii) *Moby Dick* as a Tragic Novel

Moby Dick has been called a tragedy and Ahab, a tragic hero of impressive stature. It is a world of moral tyranny and violent action in which the principal actor is Ahab. With the entry of Ahab a harsh new rhythm enters the book. He seeks to dominate nature and inflict his will on the outside world. As Ishmael is all rumination, Ahab is all will and determination. Both are thinkers. But while Ishmael is a bystander who believes in man's utter unimportance

and insignificance in nature, Ahab actively seeks the whale bent on revenge, asserting man's supremacy over nature. The reader watches his sway over his crew with awe, fear and fascination. The question remains, how does the reader judge Ahab's rage against the universe and his monomaniac revenge? Is his determined devotion to an evil purpose his tragic flaw? Is his greatness a kind of disease, with an element of morbidity in it? A commanding figure, he calls together the entire ship's company to exact their total allegiance. Starbuck questions Ahab's motive 'To be engaged with a dumb thing, captain Ahab, seems blasphemous'. The angry Ahab cries out a curse on Moby Dick.

He tasks me ; he heaps me ; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate ... I will wreak that hate upon him. Talk not to me of blasphemy, man ; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me.

Starbuck is silenced by the sheer force of Ahab's will. Noble by nature, Ahab seems created on the epic scale to act out his role on that high level. A hero of the old type, he tries to reassert man's place in nature by terrible force. But soon his desire for revenge grows beyond the bounds of human containment. Ahab becomes mad, but it is a madness that conserves all its cunning and craft to achieve its end. Ahab realises that his madness is the result not of a disintegrated mind but of a supreme intelligence : 'I'm demoniac, I am madness maddened ! That wild madness that's only calm to comprehend itself.' The self-knowledge ultimate, gives way to self-delusion. Outwardly convinced of his own innocence in his effort to rid the world of evil, he realises deep within him the magnitude of his gradual and awful commitment to the devil. What began as personal revenge becomes an obsessive hatred of evil and a consuming cosmic defiance. His defiance of God as symbolized by the sun, soon follows. After the diabolical ceremony of the rededication of the entire crew to the death of Moby Dick Ahab swears his continued rebellion : 'I now know thee, thou clear spirit (of five), and I now know that thy right worship is defiance'. Drunk with the success of his defiance Ahab moves from one act of dangerous rebellion to another. He even envisions himself as Apollo : 'I drive the sea'. The crew observe him : 'In his fiery-eyes of scorn and triumph, you then saw Ahab in all his fatal pride.' Ahab sins against man and God and like his namesake becomes 'wicked'.

Ahab's harpooner, Fedallah seems an embodiment of Ahab's demoniac subconscious, symbolizing Ahab's dedication to evil. Fedallah's oppressive presence is felt more and particularly when outraged Ahab defiantly challenges God's wisdom. Their relationship becomes so close, intertried

and ambiguous that to the crew, they seem two aspects of the same being : 'as if in the Parsee Ahab saw his forethrown shadow. Towards the end of the novel Ahab becomes Fedallah. Ahab in his dark dedication has transformed himself into his own monstrous impulse for evil—Fedallah. Ahab, as he gazes down into the deep sea, knows that the devil Fedallah possesses his soul and that he himself in his 'fatal pride' has come to embody all the evil he had attributed to Moby Dick.

(iv) Symbolism

Moby Dick may be read as a symbolic fable, Moby Dick, the whale standing for primeval dragons and sea monsters which embody the forces of chaos that rule over Creation. As James E Miller Jr observes : 'all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified and made practically assailable in Moby Dick. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down ; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shall upon it.'

At the opening of the tale we are confronted with the complexity of Moby Dick's whiteness. Ishmael sees him innocent as Ahab later will identify him with evil. When Moby Dick will be finally unmasked and unhooded he will be revealed as neither innocent nor evil but an 'inextricable entanglement', like life itself. After exploring the full and complex meaning of Moby Dick for Ahab, Ishmael confesses : 'What the White Whale was to Ahab, has been hinted ; what, at times, he was to me, as yet remains unsaid.' Here Ishmael dissociates himself from Ahab's view of the whale, thus giving us important clues as to the real meaning of *Moby Dick*. Chapter 42 ('The Whiteness of the Whale') provides a key to Moby Dick's complex symbolism. Though whiteness is associated with many agreeable things—'the innocence of brides, the benignity of age' 'yet lurks an elusive something in the innermost idea of this hue, which strikes more of panic to the soul than that redness which affrights in blood.' Thus whiteness contains both innocence and terror, both attracts and repels. While exploring the complexity of the meaning of whiteness Ishmael ascribes the colour (or its absence) to the entire universe 'the great principle of light for ever remains white or colourless in itself...would touch all objects, even tulips and roses, with its own blank tinge—pondering all this, the palsied universe lies before us a leper...And of all these things the Albino Whale was the symbol. 'The whiteness of Moby Dick is a reflection

of the inscrutable whiteness of the entire universe.' In him are inextricably bound together both good and evil, innocence and horror.

As a 'poor old whalehunter' Ahab may have posed special problems of elevation and speech. Melville invoked traditional heroic associations of war, royalty, scripture and myth. Ahab is linked to champions like Perseus and St. George, a self-appointed redeemer setting out to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah and 'slay the dragon that is in the sea.' Apart from this universal myth, Melville presents his hero in the resonant idiom of Shakespearean tragedy also, as we have seen. As a contrast to the Ahabian element, we are offered the productive sanity of Ishmael. As Ahab who began as humanity's redeemer grows more furious and becomes a villain Ishmael emerges as a symbol for a new democratic man, redeeming the world from emptiness through his won creative energy.

2.1.6 □ Language and Style

The structure, method and style of the novel do not an organic whole, but an unceasing, restless series of movements. To quote Ishmael's own words : "There are some enterprises in which a careful disorderliness is the true method."

It was after the publication of *Moby Dick* that Victor Hugo's great romances of the sea and land came out. The fantastic learning, the episodic style, the wonderful picturings of the sea in all its beauty and terror emphasize the kinship between Melville's *Moby Dick* and Victor Hugo's "Les Travailleurs de la Mer." Melville may be compared with Coleridge ; he is fantastically poetical, like Coleridge in the "Ancient Mariner". But *Moby Dick* is far more real than Coleridge's poem. The grief-stricken captain, his eerie monomania, the crew as half-devils, the incessant chase of the ever-elusive, vindictive, ferocious white whale, the storms and calms, the ups and downs of sea-weather, the weird scenery of the pursuit of the white whale in moonlight and daylight are so terrifically real and fantastic. The informations regarding whales, sea-fisheries, within the novel do not interfere with the overall effect of the epic quality of the novel.

We may focus on Melville's use of extraordinary vocabulary. Its wonderful diction may be compared to that of Chapman's translations of Homer.

One of the striking features of the book is its Americanism. Whaling is particularly an American industry, particularly the Nantucketers are the keenest, the most daring and the most successful. In *Moby Dick*, Melville's intimate knowledge of whaling, whale-hunting and his intense interest to recreate the whaler's life in all its details are both comprehensible, interesting and fascinating.

Melville is distinctly American in his style. Ideologically, his treatment is epic-like and expansive ; it has Elizabethan force and freshness. We may locate very distinctively the influence of his extensive reading of the Bible, Shakespeare and other great American and classical literature. Picturesqueness of the New world is represented in the novel. There may be certain mannerisms which may appear tedious like the constant moral tone, use of bombastic language, use of too much allusions. On the whole, Melville may be compared with Walt Whitman in his contribution to American prose. Melville is excellent in creating atmosphere, to present to the people of the land the very salt of the sea-breeze.

2.1.7 □ Conclusion

Moby Dick is a great and significant American novel. Melville offers a critique of the ambiguity and duplicity of transcendental knowledge, the light and the dark, the dangers of "craving after the indefinite" in the book. To Melville, nature is a baffling hieroglyph. *Moby Dick* conveys multiple layers of meaning. It conducts its own narrative and linguistic search for the meaning of the 'the whale'. Like any major novel, *Moby Dick* has lent itself to multifarious readings and *Moby Dick* in that sense is a pioneer of the modern novel.

2.1.8 □ Questions

1. Analyse *Moby Dick* as a pioneering modern novel.
2. Examine the whaling sources of *Moby Dick*.
3. Write a note on Melville's treatment of two significant characters in *Moby Dick*— Captain Ahab and Ishmael.
4. Comment on Melville's treatment of language and style in *Moby Dick*.
5. Examine the importance of the role of the narrator in *Moby Dick*.

6. Assess *Moby Dick* as a tragedy or Ahab as a tragic hero.
 7. Discuss how Melville uses symbolism in *Moby Dick*.
-

2.1.9. □ References

1. Bryant, John, ed. 1986. *A Companion to Melville Studies*. Westport, CT.
2. Hayford, Harrison, Hershel Parker. 1968. *The Writings of Herman Melville*. Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library.
3. Parker, Hershel and Harrison Hayford. Editors. 2002. *Moby Dick : Herman Melville*. W. W. Norton & Company Inc : A Norton Critical Edition.
4. Parker, Hershel and Harrison Hayford. 1970. *"Moby Dick as Doubloon" : Essays and Extracts (1851—1970)*. New York : W. W. Norton.
5. Ruland, Richard and Malcolm Bradbury. 1992. *From Puritanism to Postmodernism : A History of American Literature*. Penguin Books.
6. Vincent, Howard. 1949. *The Trying out of "Moby Dick"*. Boston : Houghton Mifflin.
7. Richard Chase ed. 1962. *Melville : A Collection of Critical Essays*. Prentice Hall, Twentieth Century Views.

Unit : 2.2 □ *The Old Man and the Sea* : Ernest Hemingway

Structure :

- 2.2.1 A Brief Sketch of Hemingway's Life and Works
- 2.2.2 The Making of *The Old Man and the Sea*
- 2.2.3 The Background
- 2.2.4 Story-Line of the Novel
- 2.2.5 Critical Analysis
 - (a) The Code hero
 - (b) Tragic Vision
 - (c) Themes
 - (i) Religious analogies
 - (ii) Universal brotherhood
 - (iii) Contention or fight
 - (iv) Plurality
 - (d) Santiago-Manolin Relationship.
 - (e) Dreams
 - (f) Ending
 - (g) Structure, Technique and Style
- 2.2.6 Questions
- 2.2.7 References

2.2.1 □ A Brief Sketch of Hemingway's Life and Works

Ernest Hemingway, the famous American writer was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1899. At the age of seventeen, he left his home and joined the *Kansas City Star*, the newspaper as a reporter in 1917. During the First World War, he joined war as an ambulance driver on the Italian front, but he was severely wounded and returned home. He was awarded the honour of a brave soldier—the Croce dignerra. Later on, in the year 1921, he moved to Paris. Hemingway became part of the expatriate circle of Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound and Ford Madox Ford. His first book, "Three stories and Ten Poems", was published in Paris in 1923. It was followed by the short story selection "In Our Time". When "The Sun Also Rises" was published in 1926, he became the voice, the spokes-person of the "lost generation" and an eminent writer of his time.

This was followed by a series of publications—“Men Without Women” in 1927, “A Farewell to Arms” (1929). Hemingway settled in key West and later in Cuba in 1930s. He travelled widely to Spain, Italy and Africa. He wrote about his varied experiences of life in “Death in the Afternoon” (1935), on bull-fighting in Spain and big-game hunting in Africa. Spanish Civil War was the background of his famous novel, “For Whom the Bell Tolls” (1939). Hemingway hunted U-boats in the Carribean and covered the European front during the Second World War.

The Old Man and the Sea is the most popular novel and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1953 and in 1954 Hemingway won the Nobel Prize in Literature, “for his powerful, style-forming mastery of the art of narration.” Hemingway was one of the significant writers of the American fiction in the twentieth-century. He died a tragic death, committed suicide in Ketchum, Idaho in 1961. His other works include “The Torrents of Spring” (1926), “Winner Take Nothing” (1933), “To Have and Have Not” (1937), “The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories” (1938), “Across the River and Into the Trees” (1950) and posthumously, “A Moveable Feast” (1964), “Islands in the Stream” (1970), “The Dangerous Summer” (1985) and “The Garden of Eden” (1986).

2.2.2 □ The Making of the *Old Man and the Sea*

In April 1936 issue of Esquire, Hemingway wrote an article entitled “On the Blue Water : A Gulf Stream Letter”, Hemingway began with a debate with one of his friends on the relative adventure and thrills of deep-sea fishing and big-game hunting. He describes the joy and beauty of life on the Gulf-Stream. He further goes on to describe his own fishing experiences and also adds stories told to him by his Cuban friend Carlos. One of the stories was about a giant marlin. Three years later, he wrote about a new book of short fiction he was planning to write : “One about the old commerical fisherman who fought the sword fish all alone in his skiff for four days and four nights and the sharks finally eating it after he had it alongside and the fisherman could not get it to the boat. That’s wonderful story of the Cuban Coast.” It was in January 1951, fifteen years after its first appearance in Esquire that Hemingway returned to the “Santiago Story” as he termed it.

At first Hemingway planned to publish the tale as part of a collection

called 'The Sea Book' which became the novel *Islands in the Stream*. But soon he decided to sever it from the rest of the novel and published it separately as *The Old Man and the Sea*.

The Old Man and the Sea was published in *Life Magazine*. Later, the novel appeared in book-form. It was a great success. Santiago's story describes the loss of a gigantic fish, at the same time it enables its author to win the Nobel Prize, the greatest prize of his career.

2.2.3 □ The Background

Ernest Hemingway was committed to his own times. He belonged to his own generation, stricken by the "unreasonable wound" of war. Hemingway believed that the writer is a performing artist. He is the discoverer of his personal being and crisis through action, through experience. In order to express his unique experience, the writer challenges the truth of language and form. As an expatriate in Paris, Hemingway wrote of his multifarious experiences in different parts of Europe, bullfighting in Spain, war on the Italian front, the Spanish Civil War, big game hunting in Africa. His short stories deal with American materials ; many stories deal with the Michigan woods.

Hemingway emphasized inner strength, the things one can not lose. Hemingway's hero crosses the dangerous estate with an air of ease that cloaks but does not entirely conceal what lies behind—tension, insomnia, pain, wounds, the nightmare of the age.

Hemingway believes in tight linguistic economy, he sets his limits on false experience and rhetorical abstractions. It was first displayed in his short stories like "Three Stories and Ten Poems" (1923) and in "Our Time" (1929). Hemingway portrays the wartime violence—"nature consumes its own creations and the corpses of the dead seem no more important than the slaughtered cattle in Chicago stockyards". Hemingway's honesty as a writer is suffused with personal experience, historical loss and tremendous human suffering. His works derive directly from encounter with experience. It implies acquaintance with a new historical condition.

Sometimes, specifically in his later fictions, Hemingway represents the sense of a direct encounter between struggling man and the seemingly implacable universe. According to Hemingway, writing must express the real thing, the sequence of emotion and facts which made the emotion. War

was Hemingway's natural subject. He had become a soldier writer, a heroic stylist. In the anti radical postwar climate, Hemingway's pre-war sense of political commitment faded ; he was left with his own legend and a sense of life's fundamental struggle. This was expressed in the plain, powerful myth of "The Old Man and the Sea" (1952). To quote from *The Old man and the Sea*, "But man is not made for defeat A man can be destroyed but not defeated". As the legendary hero, Hemingway, himself reached his last years, the message took on a darker look. He, a man of action was battered by action, his body was bruised by plane accident, his brain was damaged. Towards the end of his life, Hemingway worked on five more book-length manuscripts, but it was hard for him to complete them. On July 2, 1961, Hemingway killed himself with a shotgun, the victim of depression, paranoia and increasing physical disability. The writer of physical action came to the end of his great strength. His fictional world is complex, nuances of meaning lie under his plain prose surfaces. For every reader of Hemingway, his prose expresses the hard clarity and underlying existential pain which characterized the modern age.

2.2.4 □ Story-Line of the Novel

The central action of the story is an old man's trial by the marlin and the sharks. The old man of the title of the book is a Cuban fisherman. He bears the symbolic name of Santiago, his gentle suffering, strength and apparent defeat, transforms him into an image of Christ on the cross. 'Santiago' also is connected literally with Saint James, the apostle, he is the fisherman, and martyr from the Gulf Stream.

Early one morning, after long days of bad fishing luck, the old man rows out into the deep Gulf Stream. It swings in above the long island of Cuba. Towards the noon of the first day, the old man hooks a gigantic marlin. For two days and two nights, the gigantic fish pulls him in his boat far out into the sea. The man hangs for life onto the heavy lines, becomes a human towing bitt, fighting a battle of endurance against the power of the fish. On the third day, he succeeds in bringing the marlin to the surface and killing it with his harpoon. But the fish is too large to put aboard, he lashes it alongside his skiff and sets his small, patched sail for the long voyage home. Then one by one and later in rapacious ripping packs, the sharks move in on his trophy. By the time he has reached his native harbour, there is nothing

left of it except the skeleton, the bony head and the proud, sail-like tail.

In its main outlines, the story is thus apparently simple but actually intricately designed as we shall presently see.

2.2.5 □ Critical Analysis

(a) The Code hero : It is a plot familiar to Hemingway's readers. It is almost an epic pattern. The hero undertakes a hard task. He is scarcely equal to it, because of ill luck, hesitation, wounds, treachery or age. With tremendous effort he seems to succeed. But in the process he loses the prize itself, or the final victory or his life. His gallantry, courage or heroism remains. One thinks of Hemingway's special understanding of the hero, his code and his world.

The *Old man and the Sea* moves round such a 'code hero' and a familiar Hemingway theme—the theme of the undefeated—a story of novel triumph under the cover of an apparent smashing defeat. The old fisherman could be traced back to several Hemingway 'code heroes'. As Philip Young observes :

Particularly he is related to men like..Manuel Garcia, " The Undefeated" bullfighter who lose(s) in one way but win(s) in another. Like Manuel Santiago is a fighter whose best days are behind him and, worse, is wholly down on his luck. But he still dares, and sticks to the rules and will not quit when he is dicked. He is undefeated, he endures, and his loss, therefore, in the manner of it, is itself a victory.

This is the essence of the Hemingway 'code hero'. Santiago is the first of the code heroes to grow old though Hemingway's early short stories did have some aging athletes in them. He reminds us of Jack, the prizefighter and Manuel Garcia, the 'Undefeated' bullfighter. He is a fighter too. One thinks of Francis Macomber in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. But then his best days are behind him. His will not be the energetic death of the fighter or hunter. He is too old to live upto the demands of his profession ; he is wholly down on his luck. But he still dares, sticks to the rules and he will not quit. Undefeated he endures and his loss becomes a sort of victory.

The unalterable facts of physical destruction scar the surface of Hemingway's. world. As Malcolm Cowley says, no other writer of our time has presented 'such a profussion of copses....so many suffering animals. 'His imagination projects a nascent feeling of terror and anxiety. In fact for him, death is a symbol for the hostile implacability of the universe. Happy endings are rare, the humour is black ; but the novels abound in courage and endurance. The heroes fight against the darkness that threatens to devour them. Young

men like Jakes Barnes (*The Sun Also Rises*) or Robert Jordon (*For Whom the Bell Tolls*) and older men like Santiago acknowledge 'nada' or 'nothingness', hate it and struggle tirelessly against the void. They try to subdue afflictions like insomnia, fear of the dark, passivity and dependence. They never entirely are able to master the art of living. Yet Hemingway's novels are parables about the heroic capabilities of man in general. In fact the central heroic action of *The Old Man and the Sea*, Santiago's trial by the marlin and sharks is reflected in miniature actions like man-of-war bird chasing the flying fish, or the hawks threatening the tired warbler on his way to the shore. There are references to Santiago's victory after a difficult twenty-four hour hand-wrestling contest with the Negro from Cienfuegos and to Santiago's admiration for the great Di Maggio, acting as a champion in spite of his pain or to the Christ figure to which I shall come later. This 'technique of superimposing parallel heroic actions', according to Katherine T. Jobes, implies that 'the heroic ideal symbolized by Santiago can be easily generalized.' Thus every reader can discover 'a personally meaningful image' of moral heroism in this timeless parable. In a remark about his purpose in *The Old Man and the Sea* Hemingway himself confirms such an impression given by the story :

I tried to make a real old man, a real boy, a real sea and a real fish and real sharks.

But if I made them good and true enough they would mean many things.

The elemental simplicity of the humble Cuban fisherman and his adventure contribute to a symbolic type of common human experience. Though Santiago the author also seems to explore the stresses of aging and impending death.

(b) Tragic Vision : This brings us to the tragic vision of man projected by Hemingway through the novel. Throughout the novel Santiago with his epic individualism, powerful and wise in craft, is given heroic proportions. He hooks the great marlin, fights him with the epic skill and endurance demonstrating 'what a man can do and what a man endures'. Later when the sharks attack the marlin he is determined to 'fight them until I die' because he wants to prove that 'man is not made for defeat....A man can be destroyed but not defeated.' The theme of the undefeated is central to the story.

And all the qualities that Santiago associates with the fish—courage, calmness, endurance, nobility and beauty are qualities that are valued most in life, qualities which redeem life from meaninglessness and futility—qualities that Santiago wishes to imbibe in himself. As for dexterity and agility, again these are characteristics Santiago shares with the marlin, his worthy antagonist.

And Santiago must catch the great fish not just for physical need, but for his pride and his profession. It is pride in his skill and craft as a fisherman : 'I know many tricks'. No fisherman reads sky and sea with greater assurance. Like a fire, proud bullfighter he is alert, methodical, patient and determined. And he is prouder of being a man than of being an expert. 'What a man can do and what a man endures'. Like Juan Belmonte and Manuel Garcia Santiago blends humility with pride.

But is pride his hubris? 'You violated your luck when you went too far outside' the old man thinks. The question of sin and guilt seems to bother him and persists. Santiago tries to deal with it honestly.

'And what beat you? he thought.

'Nothing' he said aloud. 'I went out too far'.

The marlin is a deep water fish. Santiago could not have caught it if he had not gone far inside the sea. And his spate of bad luck, the condition of being a 'salao', looked down upon with pity, would not have come to an end if he had refused to go far out into the sea. Santiago cannot resolve the question of guilt for himself, neither can he, as a fisherman rule out the necessity factor 'you were born to be a fisherman as the fish was born to be a fish.' 'You killed him for pride and because you are a fisherman' (105). The inevitable doom faces all' joined by the necessity of killing and being killed.' After months of failure, does Santiago decide to risk all by reaching beyond man's reach, by going too far out.' In fact, some critics argue that *The old Man and the sea* is much like Greek tragedy. The tale of courage, endurance, pride, humility and death sounds 'classical'. The purity of its design, the fatal flaw of pride and mature acceptance of things as they are, is classical in spirit. Going too far out is typical of the hero Greek Tragedy, so is Nemesis assuming the guise of sharks—the inevitable penalty for hubris. As Philip Young says, 'It is specially like Greek tragedy in that as the hero fails and falls, one gets an unforgettable glimpse of what stature a man may have.' When the sharks begin to devour the fish Santiago thinks that he is violated his luck by going out too far. It is actually humility that leads him to say that. Not that it is an admission of guilt or sin or even regret. Had he not ventured all alone out so bravely, he could not have discovered the grandeur a man may command even in failure. And his past memories, memories of his youth, grace, strength and determination seem to goad him on. To conquer the unconquerable. What stands as an obstacle to his goal is not his propensity to go too far out but rather the sheer bad luck of being too old. He reminds us of doomed artists whose skills come to nothing.

In fact the sense of failure is an essential ingredient of the predicament of a tragic protagonist. Santiago's admirable qualities can hardly make up for the unredeemable loss resulting from going too far out and the bad luck of being old. The Tourists from the portside café are impressed by the bigness of the fish's skeleton. A man's magnificent performance does not compensate for his failure. The boy weeps and natives shrug as the old man returns to his newspaper-lined bed in his shabby shack.

The qualities which make Santiago a superior individual, are, as we have seen, courage nobility, determination, skill tenacity and also abysmal suffering, fighting spirit and endurance. At the same time he is entirely human, his humanness manifesting itself in small realistic touches like the brown blotch on his face, his peculiar idiom, his love of big-league baseball and his dreams of lions on a yellow African beach. He faces the malice and vengeance of the universe and accepts defeat gracefully and with resignation.

(c) Themes : Since the novel *The Old man and the Sea* has only two characters of any consequence and the principal character Santiago has been already discussed in the previous section, a separate unit on 'characters' seems redundant. The character of Manolin will be taken up in a subsequent unit.

(i) Religious analogies, Christian allusions : The novel abounds in religious analogies. It has been read even as a Christian allegory by some critics. Is there something of the Christian saint in Santiago (St. James in English)? He appears to achieve humility which is possibly the most difficult and saintly of the Christian virtues. There is even a suggestion of St. Francis in response to animal life and especially to birds. As Carlos Baker observes, he is "a man of humility, natural piety and compassion."

Here one must add that an interesting change is noticed in course of the novel. At the beginning the great fish is associated with Christ. The fish itself is an ancient Christian symbol. Santiago exclaims : 'Christ! I did not know he was so big I'll kill him though...In all his greatness and his glory.' The word Christ is suggestive and the echo in the next sentence is unmistakable 'for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.' Then does it follow that Santiago, who kills his brother, the fish, is here identified with Cain and the crucifiers of Christ ? The old man cannot evade the sense of sin in connection with the killing of the fish. But later, when he leans forward and almost unconsciously tears a piece of the fish and eats it, the fish becomes

a part of his life. The reader experiences, a kind of communion and now onwards the old man's experience is related to the Passion of Christ. There is a transfer of Christian allusions and symbols, so long applied to the giant fish, to the fisherman. The old man in his noble futile struggle to preserve the fish from the sharks, becomes identified with Christ figure.

As Santiago sees the sharks coming to attack the fish, he cries out 'Ay!' The authorial comment runs 'there is no translation for this word and perhaps it is just a noise such as a man might make, involuntarily, feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood. As Santiago leaves the skiff, he falls and lies for a moment with the mast across his shoulders and when he reaches the shark he lies down in the attitude of the crucified Christ. His hands are scarred reminding us of the hand of our lord. The mast he carries up the hill resembles the Cross. When in the end, he carries the mast uphill to his cabin, falls exhausted and collapses on his cot, his 'face down...with his arms out straight and palms of his hands up' the allusion is obvious. The figure of Santiago is Christ-like because the novel shows the way the old man is crucified by the forces of a capricious and violent universe leading us on to Christ's lesson of humility and love. Santiago stands out as a fisherman and as a teacher of the younger generation of fishermen like Manolin. The Christian symbols do not transform the novel into a Christian allegory ; the essential humanism stands out. The Christian elements serve to reaffirm the humanist theme of struggle, suffering and triumph. Both Christians and humanists share love and compassion. Apart from the suggestion of Christian martyrdom which comes at the end and humility without self-consciousness and sentimentality, the Franciscan quality of Santiago also comes under the label of Christian analogies.

(ii) Universal brotherhood, kinship with all creatures : Starting with a humble awareness that 'man is not much beside the giant birds and beasts' Santiago feels the same kinship with all living things, the elegant green turtle or the playful lions. It all stems from Santiago's great respect for the whole of life, a reverence for life's struggle and for mankind in general. It is a powerful novel; its power is the power of love and veneration for humanity and sense of kinship with and fellow-feeling for all creatures of the world. Santiago comes to feel his deepest love for the fish, the creature he kills, a worthy antagonist whom he comes to pity, respect and admire :

You are killing me, fish, the old man thought. But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more

noble thing than your brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who.

Santiago is very fond of the flying fish as they are his principal friends on the ocean. He is sorry for the birds specially for the small, delicate dark terns, always flying and looking and never finding what they want to find. He feels deep affection for the porpoises. Lonely as he is, he constantly requires the companionship of others. What comes out is his sense of community with all created things. This includes the stray land bird that perches momentarily on his taut lines, everything above and beneath the blue water and the big fish which becomes his alter ego.

(iii) Contention or fight : The other interpretation of the novel sees it as a fight between two opposite polarities, as a contention of the victor and the victim, the pursuing and the pursued. The dolphin pursues and catches the flying fish ; the dolphin in its turn is caught by the old man who is nourished by the big fish. Each form preys on the other for food and life and then in turn becomes a prey to another. As the first shark attack Santiago, he cries out 'everything kills everything else in some way.'

In fact, all the noble creatures in the novel—the marlin , the mako shark or the turtle (Santiago show empathy for each of them) put up a good fight and demonstrate their fighting spirit, and transcend defeat by displaying intense life and vitality at the moment of death. One remember's Santiago's words. 'A man can be destroyed but not defeated.' And vitality seems to be transmitted through the ritual of eating of the victims, flesh, providing continuing vitality to the victor. Does Santiago nourish himself by the act of killing and eating the flesh of his brother fish, thus becoming the marlin? imaginatively the old man gathers inspiration and vital nourishment from his mythical brothers—the powerful Negro, De Maggio and Manolin who seem to stand for his former youthful self. This seems to be the obverse of Santiago's 'everything kills everything else'—'everything nourishes everything else in some way.'

(iv) Plurality : This is a pointer to the basic assumption in ecology—participation in the same natural rhythms of the universe. This reading is opposed to interpretation of the novel as a 'fight'. In Hemingway's harmonious view of the world, life exists in plurality ; there is no contradiction in that plurality ; there is no contradiction in that plurality and even the sharks have their place. All this contributes to an understanding of the plural nature of the universe.

(d) Santiago Manolin relationship : Incidentally, one must remember that the relationship between Santiago and the boy Manolin, the second and the only other character in the novel (if we do not count the fish marlin to be one) is of special kind.

Santiago, the old man has a meaningful and memorable relationship with the boy Manolo, his follower and admirer. Manolin undoubtedly heightens our sympathy for the old fisherman. At the beginning and end of the story, we watch Santiago through the boy's admiring and pitying eyes. From the charitable Martin who is the owner of the Terrace, Manolo brings Santiago a last supper of black beans and rice, fried bananas, stew and two bottles of beer. In the morning on the day of the journey Manolin arranges for the breakfast of coffee fixes the bait, helps Santiago to launch the skiff and sees him off in the dark with a wish for his luck on this eighty-fifth day. The love of Manolo for Santiago is that of a disciple for his master in the arts of fishing. He also loves Santiago like a father. At the end of the novel Manolo again brings coffee and food for Santiago, ointment for his injured hands, planning to work together in future.

But from Santiago's point of view, the relationship runs deeper. It is true that the old man constantly thinks of the boy while fishing. During the ordeal he feels that the boy would be a help in a time of crisis 'I wish the boy was here'. Like many other aging men, Santiago finds something reassuring in the image of the past in the present, in the young manhood of the boy. Through the agency of Manolo, he is able to recapture in his imagination, the same strength, courage and confidence of his own young manhood as a fisherman.

Some critics see in Manolin Hemingway's experiment in symbolic doubling. Manolin is seen to stand for old Santiago's lost youth. In a way the boy provides sentimental education, Santiago enjoys, in his need for love and pity. Thus Manolin takes over some functions hitherto performed by the heroine in Hemingway's other novels.

Instead of reading the novel as an allegory of old age longing for the return of youth, it could be read from the boy's point of view. The old man may do without the boy, it is the boy who feels that he cannot do without the old man, who is a wonderful teacher. Manolin is his great admirer. He was with the old man for the first forty days of present run of bad luck. He is intelligent enough to distinguish Santiago, 'a strange old man' who knows 'many tricks' from the other ordinary fishermen and recognizes his

uniqueness : 'There are many good fishermen and some great ones. But there is only you.'

(e) Dreams : Santiago's dreams—his actual dreams and daydreams—dreams of Di Maggio, the African sea beaches and the lions are quite significant in the novel. If the novel is about action (fishing) what is the significance of these sleep or dream sequences? They introduce another layer into the novel. They indicate Santiago's longing for inner repose, suggestive of peace and harmony. The lions and Di Maggio are perfection symbols. Santiago longs to identify himself with sources of power.

Biographical reading : The novel has been interpreted as symbolic representation of Hemingway's vision of himself in 1952. Such biographical reading identifies Santiago meticulous craftsman dedicated his vocation with Hemingway, the writer. Santiago's reputation as a champion corresponds to Hemingway's literary reputation in the 1950s. Santiago's suffering due to attacks by evil forces could be compared to Hemingway's sufferings from critics' attacks. Sharks stand for both internal and external forces working against the craftsman. Thus the old man catching fish is also a great artist in the act of mastering his subject.

(f) Ending : The novel ends with the old man sleeping and dreaming of lions. Most readers feel that it ends on a note of hope, new strength and vitality. Others notice hints for the old man's approaching death. In the closing section Manolin is crying, each time, he withdraws from Santiago's bedside. Is it reverse for contributing to his suffering ? He should have accompanied him and now it is too late. Santiago's excellent performance does not compensate for his failure. Does he lie dying at the end ? The very spectacle of the old man challenging Nature totally disregarding safety seems deliberately stoic, almost recklessly suicidal.

(g) Structure and technique style : The novel takes up the ritual journey as a motif. The journey also forms the structure of the novel—Santiago's three day sojourn on the sea. As for the prose style, it is not static. Hemingway has created his own unique style and language of expression, rooted in his innumerable experiences of life. He addresses the need of his generation. He has developed a 'spare prose', the special features being concrete nouns, few colouring adjectives, a selected vocabulary and a not very complicated

sentence structure. As Jobs remarks 'terse factuality', 'objectivity' and 'emotional control', carried over from journalism were the salient features. The repeated images and symbols are a part of an emphatic stylistic design of repeated serends, words and rhythms, lending a quality incantation and dignity of virtual to routine actions. Some of the vivid interlocking images are those of the sea, marlin and shark. The sea, for example, is not just the background, the Gulf Stream, the means of livelihood of the entire fishing community in Caribbean. It is the sea of life which man has to negotiate. Side by side we have the other aspect of the sea—the inexorable quality that evokes awe and fear, the dangers it stands for. The caprice of the sea is a reflection of the caprice of Nature and the Universe in general. Both the noble marlin and the destructive sharks belong to the sea. It combines benevolence, malice and violence. To Santiago, the sea is not merely a place or an enemy but Lamar—a woman to be loved however cruel. It stands for the unsurmountable obstacle against which Santiago must assert his manhood.

As for narrative technique Hemingway is not an innovator or pioneer but he consolidated and perfected what had been originated by modernists like Conrad, James, Proust and Joyce. He used both omniscient and subjective modes in his novels, In *The Old Man and the Sea* variations are quite interesting, the way he mixes third person narrative with interior monologue. In the first twenty pages he maintains the third person voice, but once Santiago is by himself on the sea we enter his mind. Hemingway excels in skillfully merging the different narrative modes, smoothly gliding over transitions.

2.2.6 □ Questions

1. “‘The Old Man and the Sea’ is an allegory, a fable, a Christian parable.’—Elucidate.
2. “‘The Old man and the Sea’ is a story of human strength, endurance and suffering.’—Elucidate.
3. Analyse the strength and greatness of the character of Santiago, ‘The Old man and the Sea.’
4. Analyse the creative relationship between the old man Santiago and the boy Manolo.

5. Consider Hemingway as a great artist with reference to “The Old Man and the Sea.”

2.2.7 □ References

1. Allen, Walter. 1964. *The Modern Novel*. Published by E. P. Dutton & Co.
2. Baker, Carlos. 1973. *Hemingway : The Writer As Artist*. Princeton University Press. Princeton, New Jersey.
3. Burgess, Anthony. 1967. *The Novel Now : A Guide to Contemporary Fiction*. W. W. Norton & Company.
4. Hoffman, Frederick J. 1963. *The Modern Novel in America*. Regency.
5. Lee, A Robert (editor). 1983. *Ernest Hemingway : New Critical Essays*. Vision Press Limited.
6. Marowski, Daniel and Roger Matuz. (eds.) 1987. *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Vol 41. Gale Research Company.
7. Raeburn, John. 1984. *Fame became of Him. Hemingway as Public Writer*. Indiana University Press.
8. Riley, Carolyn (editor). 1979. *Contemporary Literary Criticism (3)*. Gale Research Company.
9. Ruland Richard and Malcolm Bradbury. 1992. *From Puritanism to Postmodernism. A History of American Literature*. Published in Penguin Books.
10. Katharine Jobs. *20th Century Interpretations of The Old Man and the Sea*, Prentice Hall.
11. Jaffrey Mayers (ed). *Ernest Hemingway*.

Unit : 2.3 □ *The Sound and the Fury* : William Faulkner

Structure :

- 2.3.1. Introduction.
- 2.3.2. A Brief Sketch of Faulkner's Life and Works
- 2.3.3. The Background
 - (i) Faulkner and History
 - (ii) Faulkner and Time
 - (iii) Faulkner and Race.
- 2.3.4. Critical Analysis of *The Sound and the Fury*
 - (i) Source and Publications
 - (ii) Analysis of the plot
 - (iii) Theme and Technique
- 2.3.5. Questions
- 2.3.6. References

2.3.1. □ Introduction

William Faulkner is one of the most important literary figures in American literature. He is a Nobel Prize Laureate and recognized worldwide as a stylistic innovator. At first, Faulkner can be confusing and bewildering because of his complex prose style and narrative technique. In order to comprehend and enjoy his writing, we have to locate his origin, cultural and historical background.

2.3.2. □ A Brief Sketch of Faulkner's Life and Works

William Faulkner (1897-1962) was born William Cuthbert Faulkner in New Albany, Mississippi on September 25, 1897. He was the first child of Murry Cuthbert and Maud Butler Falkner and the great-grandson of the soldier, author, banker and railroad builder William Clark Faulkner, known as the Old Colonel. He is a legendary figure and resembles Colonel John Sartoris of Faulkner's fictional Jefferson, Mississippi and Yoknapatawpha County.

William Faulkner had served in the Royal Air Force in 1918. After the

War, Faulkner went back to Oxford, Mississippi. At home, his war with his self and consciousness began. He was not able to accept the post-war world of America, particularly its South. At that time he was writing poems and violent and effective stories, he was brooding over his own situation and the decline and decadence of the South. His thought was reconstructed into the whole interconnected pattern. This was the substance and form of all Faulkner's works.

The pattern of his writing was structured on his experience and reminiscences of Oxford, scraps of his family tradition, the Falkners as they spelled the name. Thus Faulkner invented a Mississippi County. The Yoknapatawpha County was like a mythical kingdom and in Faulkner's writing it stands as a parable or legend of all the Deep South *i.e.*, Texas, Mississippi, South Carolina and other states in the southern part of USA.

Faulkner was better equipped by talent and background than he was by schooling and formal education. Faulkner was the oldest of the four brothers. At Oxford, Faulkner attended the public school, but he did not complete his graduation. He was admitted to the University of Mississippi as a war veteran, but he did not complete his course. Faulkner was self-taught, because of his personal experience, his childhood memory and his "undirected and uncorelated reading."

Faulkner took two hard falls from horses in Virginia in 1962. William Faulkner died of a heart attack there at 1:30 on the morning of July 6, 1962.

Faulkner has written several novels and stories concerned with his mythical Yoknapatawpha County and its people. *Sartoris* was the first of the books to be published, in the spring of 1929. *The Sound and the Fury* was published six months later. It recounts the going-to pieces of the Compson family. The books that followed in the Yoknapatawpha series are *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Sanctuary* (1931), *Light in August* (1932), *Absalom Absalom!* (1936), *The Unvanquished* (1938), *The Wild Palms* (1939), *The Hamlet* (1940) and *Go Down, Moses* (1942). There are also many Yoknapatawpha stories in *These 13* (1931), *Doctor Martino* (1934) and *Mill Zilphia Gant* (1932).

All the books that Faulkner published after 1945 are concerned with Yoknapatawpha County. The exception is *A Fable* (1954), about a reincarnated Christ in the First World War. The other books, eight in number, are *Intruder in the Dust* (1948), *Knight's Gambit* (1949), *Collected Stories of William Faulkner* (1950), *Requiem for a Nun* (1951), a three-act drama, *Big Woods* (1955), *The Town* (1957), *The Mansion* (1959) and *The Reivers* (1962). In all, sixteen of Faulkner's

books belong to the Yoknapatawpha cycle, as well as half of another book *The Wild Palms* and it is difficult to count how many stories of Faulkner are based on Yoknapatawpha.

2.3.3 □ The Background

(i) Faulkner and History

William Faulkner got hold of the almost moribund tradition of the fiction of the American South and brought to it the energy and resources of experimental Modernism. His finest explorations of form and consciousness may be compared with Joyce, Proust or Virginia Woolf. Faulkner represented the distinctive, defeated nature of Southern history, its great chivalric and rural traditions broken apart by the American Civil War. In this sense, Faulkner always remained essentially a Southern writer. The disorders of Reconstruction and the growing predations of industrialization and mercantilism—these are the main sources of Faulkner's Writings. Faulkner was also under the impact of Romantic, Decadent and Modern literature.

Faulkner was greatly influenced by the writing of his own time, especially by Joyce's *Ulysses*. His work also was bred, in his own words, "by Oratory out of Solitude." He linked the Classic Southern romance with the modern sense of experimental form. It is an interrelation of a deep-seated sense of regional history with an awareness of the fracture of historical time. Past and present thus clash eternally in Faulkner's fiction. As a child, he absorbed a living history in the tales of aging Civil war veterans ; he witnessed the final destruction of the wilderness of the Mississippi Chickasaw Indians.

Faulkner's fictional world extends back to the 1790s, when a few thousand Native Americans and Black slaves peopled his Yoknapatawpha county region. By the 1830s, the New World encroaches. It is the great conflict : the conflict of man in nature and in society which echoes through Faulkner's writings. Settlers arrive from east of the Appalachians with their slaves and their notions of ownership. The conflict of the slave society of the South with the powerful and industrialised North culminated in the declaration of several southern states (called "The Confederacy") that they would break out of the USA and form an separate country. This happened during the Presidency of Abraham Lincoln (1860-65) and led to the Civil War in which the South was defeated. Civil war abolishes slavery and destroys the South, but the sins

live on : the legacy of slavery, the destruction of the Big Woods. The old, proud South found itself reduced to the status of an economic dependent of the North after the war. Those who adapted to modern, northern ways stood the best chance of survival. Landless whites displaced the crumbling planter aristocracy, ruthlessly trampling their antique codes and values in the process. Faulkner linked the destruction of the wilderness to the loss of values that bring on decline and ultimate fall.

Faulkner's fictional history closely parallels his family's history. The Civil War ended 32 years before Faulkner's birth, but it lived on still in turn-of-the-century Oxford, Mississippi. What Faulkner has written is basically about the great American divide, the Civil War. Unlike other Southern writers, Faulkner's issues in the post-civil war South were race and history, not gallantry in battle. His south was not noble. It was morally corrupt.

In Faulkner, there is no nostalgia for the past. The modern world overwhelms a society that deserves to collapse. Faulkner offers a critique of the past and the present, it is a parable. The devastation comes from the land itself, from its rich soil, from history, from an error or sin committed long ago and repeated thousands of times ; the doom of civilisation follows this.

With the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s, the past caught up with the South and with America. Faulkner participated in the struggle. The crisis justified the historical vision of Faulkner's writings.

(ii) Faulkner and Time

Faulkner's use of time in the lives of his characters and in the stylistic devices of his narrative, especially the Interior Monologue, is wonderful and intricate. Time in his writings is not a static dimension. It plays a significant role in the depiction of characters seen within a context larger than that of individual experience ; it includes historical reminiscences of the past. Faulknerian treatment of time is not merely chronological : it is more akin to the Greek notion of *kairos* (time as memorable event) than to *chronos* (time that can be measured).

In one interview, Faulkner stated : "I agree pretty much with the French philosopher Henri Bergson's theory of the fluidity of time. There is only the present moment, in which I include both the past and the future and that is eternity." For Faulkner, apart from the stream of living consciousness, time is merely an abstraction. The French philosopher and writer Jean-Paul Sartre also discusses Faulkner's concept of time.

Faulkner puts historical time to work in his novels. The Yoknapatawpha novels create an informal history of this fictional region of northern Mississippi. Faulkner employs history as a symbolic underpinning to events in the present. To Faulkner, "no man is himself, he is the sum of his past."

(iii) Faulkner and Race

Faulkner's principal theme is the relation between whites and blacks. Faulkner's attitudes on white and black relations in a South with its legacy of slavery were complex and ambiguous. Faulkner would weave miscegenation themes into his fiction : a number of memorable characters in his novels are of mixed parentage. Blacks lived in every section of Oxford in the early 1900s. All familiarity, hysteria about racial matters in Faulkner's novels convulsed the Mississippi of Faulkner's childhood. Lynching became a terrible symptom of white hysteria. More than 200 blacks were killed by the white mobs in Mississippi between 1889 and 1909, more than in any other state.

Faulkner absorbed the atmosphere as a boy. Strict subordination, white over black, governed racial relations in the Oxford of Faulkner's childhood. Faulkner's family, his parents, his brothers, his wife accepted segregation as though it were the natural order of things. In this matter, Faulkner stood apart. He came to be deeply troubled over the South's racial past and present.

Faulkner's attitudes toward individual African Americans were a blend of paternalism, generosity, gratitude and real affection, even love. He regarded the longtime Faulkner servant, Caroline Barr as a second mother. He maintained affectionate relations with the elderly black caretaker Nod Barnett. Faulkner was a patron of the black families who worked at the place under his benign supervision. Faulkner's attitudes toward such black people may reflect what the biographer Frederick Karl diagnoses as his unconscious racism. In the early 1940s, when racial questions had begun to claim Faulkner's attention, he consistently used the epithet 'nigger' in correspondence with his friend and editor Robert Hass. If we analyse Faulkner's writings, Faulkner's views on race in his fiction were hugely sophisticated.

His book *Intruder* is a reflection of Faulkner's confusion about racial questions. We may refer to Faulkner's observation and protest against the lynching in Mississippi of Emmett Till, a 14-year old child for whistling at a white woman and making an obscene remark to her. The killing revolted Faulkner. "Perhaps the purpose of this sorry and tragic error committed in

my native Mississippi by two white adults on an affiliated Negro Child is to prove to us whether or not we deserve to survive. Because if we in America have reached that point in our desperate culture when we must murder children, no matter for what reason or what colour, we don't deserve to survive and probably won't." In the Autherine Lucy case who got admission by court order in the University of Alabama and caused race war in the South when she was not allowed to study there, Faulkner argued for a gradual approach to integration and solution through understanding and conversion. His later utterances had a lecturing, patronizing tone, sometimes offensive and always in sad contrast to the subtlety and empathy of much of his literary output.

2.3.4. □ Critical Analysis of *The Sound and the Fury*

(i) Source and Publications

A story called "Twilight" begun by Faulkner in Paris in 1925 became the basis for the novel, which Faulkner earnestly started writing in early 1928. *The Sound and the Fury* is totally different in its style and concept of form. There are different editions of the novel. Much of the last chapter of the novel, April Eight, 1982 was published under the title "Dilsey" in *The Portable Faulkner* (1946) ; the first appearance of Faulkner's appendix to the novel, "1699-1945 the Compsons." also appeared in this volume. The appendix appeared as a foreword, titled "Compson 1699-1945." The complete novel was also published with the appendix at the end in *The Faulkner Reader* (1954), and in 1984, a corrected text edited by Noel Polk was published by Random House, New York.

(ii) Analysis of the Plot

The Sound and the Fury is Faulkner's fourth novel, first published by Cape & Smith, New York on October 7, 1929. It is widely appreciated as Faulkner's best work of fiction. Treated from different points of view, the novel concentrates on the breakdown of the Compson family over a period of three decades, from around 1898 to 1928. Faulkner explained that he started it with the image of a young girl, Caddy Compson, climbing a tree in order to look through the parlour window at her dead grandmother laid out in the house.

Caddy is the central character in the novel and her relationship with her three brothers—Quentin, Jason and Benjy Compson is the novel's integrative theme. Faulkner tells the story from multiple points of view.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, in a famous soliloquy, speaks of life as a "tale/ told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, /signifying nothing." The first chapter of Faulkner's novel is literally a tale told by an idiot, Benjy Compson. The more Faulkner writes, "the more elastic the title became, until it covered the whole family." In this chapter, the reader receives direct and immediate impressions of the world as expressed in an Interior Monologue of the longings and sensations of Benjy, the youngest son of Jason Compson Sr. and Caroline Compson. The novel opens on April 7, 1928, Benjy's 33rd birthday. He and his 14-year-old black caretaker, Luster are standing by the fence that separates the yard from the golf course that had once been the Compsons' pasture, where Benjy and his siblings spent much of their childhood. In 1909, the pasture had to be sold to supply the money for Caddy's wedding and Quentin's education at Harvard University. Benjy's reflections flutter back and forth between the present and the past and at times are permeated with unsettling flashback, as when he recalls certain incidents relating to Caddy's wedding. The scenes with Luster take place during the present, while the scenes with T. P. Gibson, Dilsey's youngest son, are set sometime between 1906 and 1912 and those with Versh Gibson between 1898 and 1900 when Benjy was a small child.

Benjy's fragmented narrative begins with Luster searching along the fence for a lost quarter. Benjy thinks back on the death of his grandmother Damuddy. Benjy recalls his name-change from "Maury" to "Benjamin", the loss of Caddy's virginity, the sale of the pasture : Caddy's wedding ; his brother Quentin's suicide and the day his body was brought home from Cambridge, his castration after he attacked a neighbour's daughter : and his father's death and funeral.

The second chapter, "June Second, 1910" takes the narrative back eighteen years and is narrated by Quentin, a romantic idealist and Hamlet-like figure, pensive brooding and guilt-ridden for his incestuous feelings for his sister. Quentin has deeply neurotic thoughts and longings. His actions are symbolic of the self destruction to come. In the end, Quentin commits suicide, thinking about his sister Caddy. Among the three narrators, Quentin alone is aware of the doom of the Compsons.

The third Chapter of *The Sound and the Fury* is narrated by Jason

Compson, Jr, the resentful and hard-hearted son, and it takes place on Good Friday, April 6, 1928. Jason is his mother's favourite and just like his mother, he is self-absorbed. Caddy's disgrace and divorce from Herbert meant the end of Jason's hopes. Caddy's daughter Quentin is despised and ostracized and Benjy is an unnecessary burden whom Jason would like to send to an asylum. Jason represents the final degeneration of the Compsons.

The final chapter is told in the third person and takes place on April 8, 1928. It is Easter morning, a day that begins badly for Dilsey, the Compsons' black servant. The house is cold and there is no firewood. Dilsey begins to make breakfast. Jason interrupts the meal to complain about the broken window in his bedroom through which. Quentin, his sister's daughter ran away.

Meanwhile Dilsey attends Easter services. She takes her daughter Frony, Frony's son Luster and Benjy to the church. The preacher starts off slowly, gradually builds to a crescendo that moves Dilsey to tears. Dilsey says "I read de beginin, en now I sees ending." Dilsey acts as a chorus to the action. Her presence also puts in perspective the whole story of the Compsons.

After lunch, Luster takes Benjy to the cellar and tries to perform a trick. Benjy starts moaning when he hears a golfer call for his Caddie. The sound of the word reminds him of his absent sister. Jason strikes Benjy and tells him to shut up. He commands and warns Luster, "If you ever cross that gate with him again, I'll kill you !" The novel ends with the now quiescent Benjy returning to the Compson home, with serene and empty eyes looking upon each passing object "in its ordered place."

(iii) Theme and Technique

Critics have compared Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury with*, Joyce's *Ulysses* because of its technique of interior monologue and its complex time scheme. The four narratives of the novel are set on four different days, three in 1928, one in 1910 and of course its stream of consciousness technique makes it a Modernist novel. As we analyse the plot, the first fractured story is set in the present of 1928 and belongs to the mind and comprehension of Benjy, an idiot with a mental age of five. We move to the monologue of Quentin Compson on the day of his suicide back in 1910. We next hear the voice of the surviving, opportunistic Jason Compson and finally the enduring voice of the black servant Dilsey.

Faulkner's remarkable Modernist strategies are reinforced by the primary consciousness of a larger history, the history of Yoknapatawpha itself. Faulkner's concept of time has to do with the endless interlocking of personal and public histories and the interrelation of the lost past with the chaotic present. A central theme of *The Sound and the Fury* is Quentin's attempt to arrest both subjective and historical time by defending his sister Caddy's virginity from psychic corruption and time's flow. Benjy himself is locked in a single continuous moment of time. Jason sees matters empirically, Dilsey from a patient sense of human continuity. It is interesting that Dilsey becomes the figure of sustenance at the end of the novel. She is a descendant of the slaves ; through her the black people come into their own while the descendants of the slaveowners disintegrate, dumb, corrupt, guilt-ridden. Themes and images thus multiply and give the novel its symbolic qualities.

2.3.5 □ Questions

1. Give a brief sketch of Faulkner's life and works.
2. Analyse the significance of Faulkner's mythical county, Yoknapatawpha.
3. Analyse the title of the novel *The Sound and the Fury* and focus on its interrelation with the underlying theme of the novel.
4. Faulkner is very often compared to James Joyce. Point out the similarities in their technique.
5. Comment on Faulkner's use of 'interior monologue' and 'stream-of-consciousness technique' in *The Sound and the Fury*.
6. Analyse Faulkner's historical consciousness with reference to *The Sound and the Fury*.
7. Faulkner's awareness and perspective towards race in America is both ambiguous and complex. —Elucidate with reference to *The Sound and the Fury*.
9. Time is the major theme, and also the philosophy in Faulkner's writing. —Elucidate with reference to *The Sound and the Fury*.

2.3.6 □ References

1. Cowley, Malcolm, ed. 1977. *The Portable Faulkner*. Penguin Books.
2. Faulkner, William A to Z. 2001. *The Essential Reference to His Life and Work*. Facts on File, Inc.
3. Gresset, Michel and Patrick Samway, S. J. 1983. *Faulkner & Idealism : Perspectives from Paris*. University Press of Mississippi.
4. Harrington, Evans and Ann J. Abadie. 1978. *The Maker and the Myth : Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha*. University Press of Mississippi.
5. Ruland, Richard and Malcolm Bradbury. 1991. *From Puritanism to Postmodernism. A History of American Literature*. Penguin Group USA Inc.
6. *The Faulkner Reader. Selections from the Works of William Faulkner*. 1971. Random House : The Modern Library, New York.