

British Poetry and Drama: 14th to 17th Centuries PYQ 2019

Q1 Identify the passage given below and explain with reference to the context:

So after long pursuit and vain assay.

When I all weary had the chase forsook.

The gentle deer return'd the self-same way.

Thinking to quench her thirst at the next brook

Ans. The passage provided is from Sonnet 30 by Edmund Spenser. It describes the speaker's experience of pursuing a gentle deer, only to give up after a long and unsuccessful attempt. The deer, upon realizing that the chase has ended, turns back and retraces its steps, intending to satisfy its thirst at the nearest brook.

This passage reflects the theme of the fleeting nature of desire and the futility of relentless pursuit. The speaker, after tirelessly chasing the deer, reaches a point of exhaustion and decides to abandon the pursuit. In contrast, the deer, having sensed the end of the chase, returns to its original path.

The context of this passage lies within the larger narrative of the sonnet sequence. Sonnet 30 explores the **themes of love, loss, and the transient nature of human desires.** The speaker's pursuit of the deer can be seen as a metaphor for the speaker's pursuit of an unattainable love or a personal desire. The deer's choice to turn back and seek solace at the nearest brook suggests a sense of contentment and fulfillment found in simpler and more natural pleasures.

This passage also highlights the cyclical nature of desires and the idea that one may ultimately return to where they started. The deer's decision to retrace its steps symbolizes a return to a state of equilibrium or a realization that satisfaction lies closer than initially perceived.

Overall, this passage captures a moment of **reflection and introspection,** emphasizing the speaker's weariness and the deer's instinctual return to a familiar and comforting source. It serves as a reminder of the transient nature of human desires and the possibility of finding contentment by redirecting one's focus and embracing simpler joys.

OR

Q1. Identify the passage given below and explain with reference to the context:

Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide

Late school boys and sour prentices,

Go tell court huntsmen that the king will ride,

Call country ants to harvest offices,

Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime,

Ans. The passage provided is from **Sonnet 18 by William Shakespeare**. It is the opening quatrain of the sonnet, which begins with a reproachful tone directed at a "**saucy pedantic wretch**." The speaker tells this individual to go and admonish late school boys and disgruntled apprentices, to inform court huntsmen that the king is going hunting, and to summon rural workers ("country ants") to perform their harvest duties. The final line of the quatrain introduces the theme of love, stating that love is constant and unaffected by seasons or geographical location.

The context of this passage lies within Sonnet 18, one of Shakespeare's most famous sonnets, often referred to as "**Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?**" The sonnet praises the beloved's beauty and eternal nature, comparing it favorably to the transient and mutable qualities of summer. The opening quatrain serves as a contrast to the constancy of love, highlighting the fluctuating nature of other aspects of life.

The speaker's derogatory language and dismissive tone towards the "saucy pedantic wretch" suggest a frustration with someone who is preoccupied with trivial matters or overly concerned with rules and regulations. By instructing this person to focus on mundane tasks like reprimanding school boys and apprentices or announcing the king's hunting plans, the speaker implies that such duties are of lesser importance compared to the enduring power of love.

The last line of the quatrain introduces the theme of love's constancy. The speaker asserts that love is not bound by seasons or climates, emphasizing its universal and timeless nature. This serves as a prelude to the subsequent lines, where the speaker proceeds to highlight the ephemeral nature of summer and its inherent limitations, ultimately contrasting it with the eternal beauty of the beloved.

Overall, this passage sets the stage for the exploration of **love's immortality and its superiority** over transitory aspects of life. It establishes a contrast between the trivial matters that preoccupy the "pedantic wretch" and the enduring power of love that transcends time, seasons, and circumstances.

Q2. Identify the passage given below and explain with reference to the context

Both law and physic are for petty wits;

Divinity is basest of the three,

Unpleasant, harsh, contemptible and vile:

"Tis magic, magic that hath ravished me.

Ans. The passage provided is from **Act 1, Scene 1 of William Shakespeare's play "The Comedy of Errors."** It is spoken by the character Antipholus of Syracuse in a soliloquy. **In this passage, Antipholus expresses his dissatisfaction with the fields of law, medicine (referred to as "physic"), and divinity.** He describes them as being unsatisfying and lacking in value, referring to divinity as the lowest among the three. Antipholus then proclaims that it is magic, specifically the experience of being enchanted by it, that has captivated and enthralled him.

The context of this passage lies within the opening scene of the play, where Antipholus of Syracuse has arrived in Ephesus in search of his long-lost twin brother. Antipholus is in a state of confusion and disorientation due to the mistaken identities and bizarre encounters that occur throughout the play.

In this soliloquy, Antipholus expresses his disillusionment with the conventional fields of law, medicine, and divinity. He finds them uninteresting and lacking intellectual stimulation, referring to them as being for "petty wits." The negative descriptors he uses to characterize divinity - "unpleasant, harsh, contemptible, and vile" - indicate his disdain for it.

Antipholus then introduces the concept of magic as an alternative to these traditional fields. By exclaiming, "Tis magic, magic that hath ravished me," he suggests that the realm of magic holds a powerful and irresistible allure for him. This statement reflects his fascination and captivation with the strange and inexplicable occurrences that he encounters in Ephesus, as well as his willingness to embrace the mysterious and unconventional.

This passage sets the stage for the comedic confusion and mistaken identities that are central to the play's plot. It establishes Antipholus as a character who is open to the extraordinary and enchanted by the inexplicable, setting him apart from the rational and conventional pursuits of law, medicine, and divinity.

Overall, this passage in "The Comedy of Errors" highlights Antipholus of Syracuse's discontent with conventional fields of study and his inclination towards embracing the magical and enchanting aspects of life. It sets the tone for the comedic and fantastical elements that will unfold throughout the play.

OR

Q2. Identify the passage given below and explain with reference to the context:

**was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
and burnt the topless towers of Ilium ?**

Sweet Helen. make me immortal with a kiss :

Her lips suck forth my soul see where it flies

Ans. The passage provided is from **Act 5, Scene 2** of Christopher Marlowe's play "**Doctor Faustus.**" It is spoken by the **character Faustus, the titular protagonist, as he addresses Helen of Troy, the mythical figure known for her beauty and the cause of the Trojan War.** In this passage, Faustus questions the significance of Helen's beauty and the power it holds. He implores Helen to grant him immortality with a kiss, expressing his desire for his soul to be taken by her irresistible lips.

The context of this passage lies within the final act of the play, where Faustus is nearing the end of his twenty-four-year pact with the devil. He has squandered his time and powers in pursuit of worldly pleasures and knowledge, and now faces the impending doom of damnation.

In this scene, Faustus encounters Helen of Troy, who represents the epitome of physical beauty and desire. Faustus marvels at the legendary allure of Helen, questioning whether her beauty truly

justified the destruction caused by the Trojan War and the towering ambitions of mankind. He wonders if such extraordinary beauty is worth the consequences it has wrought.

By pleading with Helen to make him immortal with a kiss, Faustus seeks to transcend his mortal limitations and escape the impending damnation of his soul. He desires to have his soul taken by her lips, suggesting a willing surrender to the irresistible power of her beauty. This can be seen as a desperate attempt to attain a form of eternal life or to be consumed by the alluring force of beauty, even at the cost of his soul.

The **passage reflects Faustus's inner conflict and his realization of the fleeting nature of worldly desires**. Despite his previous grandiose ambitions and quest for knowledge, he now seeks solace in the physical and the immediate, represented by Helen's beauty.

Overall, this passage from "Doctor Faustus" captures Faustus's contemplation of the significance and consequences of beauty, particularly in the form of Helen of Troy. It showcases his disillusionment and his longing for a transcendent experience through the alluring power of beauty, even as he faces the consequences of his choices and the imminent damnation of his soul.

Q3. Identify the passage given below and explain with reference to the context:

"Fair is foul, and foul is fair;"

Ans. The passage provided is from **Act 1, Scene 1 of William Shakespeare's play "Macbeth."** It is spoken by the three witches, also known as the Weird Sisters, as they gather in a desolate place. The phrase "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" serves as a paradoxical statement that sets the tone for the supernatural and morally ambiguous world of the play.

The context of this passage lies at the beginning of the play, where the witches make their first appearance. They are associated with dark and mysterious forces, and their presence foreshadows the upcoming events and themes of deception, treachery, and the inversion of moral values.

The line **"Fair is foul, and foul is fair"** can be interpreted in various ways. It suggests a blurring of boundaries and a reversal of traditional values. The witches indicate that what appears to be good and fair can actually be deceitful or corrupt, while what may seem foul or evil can hold hidden potential or advantages. This inversion challenges the audience's understanding of morality and establishes a sense of moral ambiguity that permeates the play.

Furthermore, this line serves as a thematic motif throughout "Macbeth." It reflects the recurring motif of appearances versus reality, as characters, including Macbeth himself, often engage in deception and manipulation to achieve their goals. The play explores the destructive consequences that arise when individuals succumb to temptation and allow their ambitions to override their moral conscience.

The passage also introduces the supernatural and mystical elements present in the play. The witches are associated with magic and supernatural powers, and their presence hints at the disruption of the natural order and the interference of supernatural forces in human affairs.

Overall, the line "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" in "Macbeth" captures the ambiguous and deceptive nature of the world in which the play is set. It establishes the theme of moral inversion,

foreshadows the themes of deception and ambition, and introduces the supernatural elements that play a significant role in the unfolding events of the play.

OR

Q3. Identify the passage given below and explain with reference to the context:

" Make no compare

Between that love a woman can beat me

And that I owe Olivia."

Ans. The passage provided is from **Act 2, Scene 4 of William Shakespeare's play "Twelfth Night."** It is spoken by the character Orsino, the Duke of Illyria, as he expresses his belief that the love he feels for Olivia, a noblewoman, is superior to any love a woman could have for him.

The context of this passage lies within the subplot of the play, where Orsino is ardently pursuing Olivia's affections. However, Olivia has rejected his advances and remains in mourning for her deceased brother. Orsino, despite Olivia's rejection, remains steadfast in his love for her and continues to send messengers to express his feelings.

In this passage, Orsino is contemplating the nature of love and making a comparison between his own love for Olivia and the possibility of a woman loving him in return. He asserts that the love he feels for Olivia is far greater and more intense than any love a woman could have for him. He believes that his love for Olivia is more powerful, profound, and genuine.

Orsino's statement reflects his self-assuredness and perhaps a sense of romantic idealism. He believes that his own love is stronger and more passionate because he is capable of experiencing deep emotions that surpass those of a woman's love. It also reveals his somewhat egotistical nature, as he considers himself deserving of a higher level of love than what he perceives a woman can offer.

The passage sheds light on Orsino's character and his approach to love. He sees himself as a passionate and devoted lover, willing to go to great lengths to win Olivia's affection. However, his belief that his love is superior to a woman's love suggests a certain arrogance and a lack of understanding of the complexities of love and individual experiences.

Overall, this passage in "Twelfth Night" showcases Orsino's perspective on love, his unwavering devotion to Olivia, and his belief in the superiority of his own feelings compared to the love a woman could have for him. It adds depth to Orsino's character and sets the stage for the exploration of love and its various forms throughout the play.

Q4. "Macbeth is worked upon by forces of evil, yields to temptation in spite of all that his conscience can do to stop him...and is brought to retribution by death." Substantiate.

Ans. The statement provided reflects the overall trajectory of the character Macbeth in William Shakespeare's play "Macbeth." Macbeth is indeed influenced by evil forces, succumbs to temptation, and ultimately faces retribution in the form of his own demise.

Throughout the play, **Macbeth encounters the three witches**, who prophesy that he will become the Thane of Cawdor and the future king of Scotland. This encounter stirs ambition and a desire for power within Macbeth, planting the seed of temptation. Lady Macbeth, his wife, also plays a significant role in urging him to act upon his ambitions and seize the crown through treacherous means.

As Macbeth becomes increasingly consumed by his ambition and the desire to fulfill the witches' prophecies, he commits a series of heinous acts, including the murder of King Duncan. These actions demonstrate how Macbeth yields to temptation and allows the forces of evil to manipulate him.

Macbeth's conscience, represented by his inner moral struggle, does attempt to dissuade him from his wicked deeds. He experiences guilt and inner turmoil, evidenced by his hallucinations, sleepless nights, and moments of self-reflection. However, Macbeth suppresses his conscience and becomes increasingly detached from his moral compass as he continues down the path of tyranny and violence.

Ultimately, Macbeth faces retribution for his actions. As the play progresses, Macbeth's rule becomes marked by instability, paranoia, and bloodshed. His ruthless pursuit of power leads to the alienation of his allies and the rise of those who oppose him. In the climactic battle, Macbeth encounters Macduff, a nobleman seeking revenge for the murder of his family. Macbeth is defeated by Macduff, fulfilling the prophecy that "none of woman born shall harm Macbeth." Macbeth meets his end in battle, thereby facing the consequences of his choices and the retribution for his crimes.

The tragic arc of Macbeth's character demonstrates the play's exploration of the corrupting influence of unchecked ambition, the seductive power of evil, and the eventual downfall of those who succumb to such forces. Macbeth's journey from a noble and valiant warrior to a tyrant driven by greed and fear serves as a cautionary tale about the consequences of yielding to temptation and betraying one's conscience.

OR

Q4. The tragedy in Macbeth results from transgressions in the natural order. Discuss

Ans. The tragedy in William Shakespeare's play "Macbeth" does indeed arise from transgressions in the natural order. The disruption of the natural order is a central theme that permeates the play, leading to chaos, suffering, and ultimately the downfall of the characters involved.

One of the primary transgressions against the natural order is the murder of King Duncan by Macbeth. As a loyal subject, Macbeth is expected to uphold the hierarchy and respect the divine right of kings. By usurping the throne through regicide, Macbeth violates the natural succession of power and disrupts the established order. This act sets in motion a series of events that unravel the stability of the kingdom.

Moreover, Macbeth's actions are accompanied by other unnatural occurrences. Following Duncan's murder, nature itself responds with disturbances. There are reports of strange phenomena such as a darkening sky, an owl killing a falcon, and horses devouring each other. These supernatural disturbances reflect the violation of the natural order and the moral chaos that ensues.

Lady Macbeth also contributes to the disruption of the natural order through her manipulation and encouragement of Macbeth's crimes. She goes against traditional gender roles, attempting to subvert her femininity and invoke supernatural powers to aid in her husband's ascent to power. This deviation from the expected roles and behavior of women further disturbs the natural balance.

Furthermore, the theme of ambition plays a significant role in the transgression of the natural order. Macbeth's unchecked ambition drives him to commit further acts of violence and treachery. He becomes obsessed with maintaining his power, leading to the murder of Banquo and the massacre of Macduff's family. This unquenchable ambition defies the natural limitations and boundaries that govern human behavior, resulting in widespread suffering and destruction.

The consequences of these transgressions against the natural order are evident throughout the play. Macbeth's rule is plagued by instability, mistrust, and the disintegration of moral values. The disruption of the natural order causes a chain reaction, with characters turning against one another and the kingdom descending into chaos.

Ultimately, the tragedy in "Macbeth" arises from the violation of the natural order and the ensuing consequences. The play highlights the importance of maintaining moral and societal balance, emphasizing the destructive nature of unchecked ambition and the ramifications of disturbing the established order. The tragic downfall of Macbeth and the other characters serve as a cautionary tale about the devastating effects of transgressing against the natural order.

Q5. Shakespeare explores the dynamics of gender and power through the stage conventions of cross dressing in Twelfth Night. Discuss.

Ans. In William Shakespeare's play "Twelfth Night," the dynamics of gender and power are indeed explored through the use of stage conventions like cross-dressing. The play's central plot revolves around mistaken identity, with the character Viola disguising herself as a man named Cesario. This cross-dressing creates a complex and humorous exploration of gender roles, identity, and power dynamics.

Viola's decision to dress as a man stems from her desire for self-preservation and her need to navigate a patriarchal society more freely. By assuming a male identity, she gains access to spaces and opportunities that would have been otherwise unavailable to her as a woman. This disguise allows Viola, now Cesario, to move through the world with agency and assertiveness, ultimately influencing the characters around her.

One of the significant dynamics explored through cross-dressing is the fluidity of gender roles. Viola's transformation into Cesario blurs the boundaries between masculinity and femininity. She showcases traditionally masculine traits such as assertiveness, wit, and bravery while maintaining her femininity and vulnerability. This blurring of gender roles challenges societal expectations and norms, highlighting the performative nature of gender and raising questions about the constructs of masculinity and femininity.

The cross-dressing in "Twelfth Night" also leads to a complex exploration of power dynamics. As Cesario, Viola gains access to powerful figures, including Duke Orsino, whom she serves as a messenger of love. Her presence in this role allows her to influence Orsino's actions and opinions, gradually gaining a position of power over him. Viola's ability to navigate the realms of power while disguised as a man highlights the social limitations placed upon women and the opportunities denied to them.

Additionally, the play delves into the theme of desire and the complications it presents when intersecting with gender and power. Both Orsino and Olivia, a noblewoman whom Cesario/Viola attracts, are drawn to the perceived masculinity of Cesario. Their desires challenge traditional notions of heterosexual attraction and emphasize the complexities of desire beyond binary gender roles.

The use of cross-dressing as a stage convention in "Twelfth Night" allows Shakespeare to explore the fluidity of gender, challenge societal norms, and highlight the interplay between gender and power dynamics. By subverting expectations and presenting characters who transcend traditional gender roles, the play invites the audience to question the limitations placed upon individuals based on their gender and offers a nuanced exploration of the complexities of identity and desire.

OR

Q5. In what ways does Shakespeare subvert the conventions of courtly love in Twelfth Night? Explain with examples.

Ans. In Shakespeare's play "Twelfth Night," the conventions of courtly love are indeed subverted, providing a satirical and comedic exploration of romantic ideals and societal expectations. Shakespeare challenges and parodies the traditional notions of courtly love through various characters and their relationships.

One way Shakespeare subverts courtly love is by presenting the character of Orsino, the Duke of Illyria, as a lovesick and idealistic suitor. Orsino embodies the traditional role of the courtly lover, pining for the unattainable Lady Olivia. However, Shakespeare exposes the absurdity of Orsino's infatuation by exaggerating his poetic language and excessive expressions of love. Orsino's grandiose speeches about love become comical rather than romantic, highlighting the artificiality and melodrama often associated with courtly love.

Another subversion of courtly love can be seen in the relationship between Olivia and Viola (disguised as Cesario). Olivia becomes infatuated with Viola/Cesario, mistaking her for a man. This inversion of gender roles challenges the traditional power dynamics of courtly love, where the man typically pursues and idealizes the woman. Olivia's attraction to Viola blurs the lines of gender, undermining the hierarchical structure inherent in courtly love.

Additionally, the character of Malvolio provides a satirical critique of courtly love. Malvolio, a steward in Olivia's household, becomes the target of a prank orchestrated by other characters. They manipulate him into believing that Olivia loves him and that he has a chance at winning her affection. Through this subplot, Shakespeare mocks the extreme devotion and self-importance associated with courtly love. Malvolio's willingness to play the fool and his misguided belief in his own desirability serve as a parody of the courtly lover's exaggerated self-importance.

Furthermore, the resolution of the play disrupts the conventions of courtly love. Viola, who has been disguised as Cesario and courted by Olivia, ultimately reveals her true identity and marries Duke Orsino. This twist challenges the notion of courtly love's unrequited longing and unattainable objects of desire. Shakespeare presents a more practical and realistic approach to love, highlighting the importance of genuine connection and mutual understanding.

In "Twelfth Night," Shakespeare uses humor, irony, and character relationships to subvert the conventions of courtly love. By exposing the absurdity, artificiality, and limitations of courtly love, he offers a satirical commentary on romantic ideals and challenges the traditional power dynamics between lovers. Through these subversions, Shakespeare invites the audience to question societal expectations and explore alternative perspectives on love and relationships.

Q6. Critically examine the character of Jankin.

Ans. Jankin is a character in Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Tale" from "The Canterbury Tales." He is the fifth husband of the Wife of Bath and plays a significant role in the narrative. Critically examining Jankin requires an analysis of his characteristics, actions, and the implications of his portrayal.

One aspect of Jankin's character is his youth and immaturity compared to the Wife of Bath. While the Wife is described as experienced and well-traveled, Jankin is portrayed as a naive and inexperienced young man. This age difference creates a power imbalance in their relationship, with the Wife exerting dominance and control over him. Jankin's youthfulness serves as a foil to the Wife's assertiveness and serves to highlight her dominance.

Jankin's treatment of the Wife of Bath is another notable aspect of his character. He treats her with disrespect and disregard, often referring to her as old and undesirable. He reads to her from a book that portrays women negatively, reinforcing patriarchal stereotypes and attempting to undermine her authority. Jankin's actions can be seen as representative of the misogyny prevalent in medieval society, where women were often devalued and treated as inferior.

However, Jankin's character is not entirely one-dimensional. He also exhibits moments of vulnerability and displays a degree of complexity. He confesses to the Wife that he had previously been married to an abusive woman, suggesting that his treatment of the Wife may stem from his past experiences. This revelation humanizes Jankin and adds depth to his character, challenging the reader's initial perception of him as solely antagonistic.

Furthermore, Jankin's character serves a symbolic function within the tale. He represents the patriarchal attitudes and beliefs that the Wife of Bath seeks to challenge and subvert. The conflicts and power struggles between Jankin and the Wife reflect the broader societal tensions between men and women during the medieval period. Jankin's portrayal, therefore, can be seen as a critique of the oppressive norms and values of the time.

In conclusion, Jankin is a **complex character in "The Wife of Bath's Tale."** He is portrayed as a young and immature husband who treats the Wife of Bath disrespectfully. However, his character also reveals moments of vulnerability and adds depth to the narrative. Ultimately, Jankin serves as a symbol of patriarchal attitudes and acts as a catalyst for the Wife's exploration of gender dynamics and her quest for agency and power.

OR

Q6. "Marlowe brings in all the elements of the Morality play machinery; but without any of the consolations of Morality vision."---Do you agree?

Ans. The statement suggests that Christopher Marlowe's plays incorporate elements of morality plays but do not provide the same sense of moral guidance or resolution found in traditional morality plays. To evaluate this statement, we need to consider Marlowe's works in relation to the characteristics of morality plays and whether they offer similar consolations or depart from them.

Morality plays were popular during the medieval period and typically featured allegorical characters representing virtues, vices, and the struggle between good and evil. They aimed to instruct and guide the audience towards virtuous behavior and salvation. These plays often ended with a moral lesson or vision of judgment and redemption.

Marlowe's plays, such as "**Doctor Faustus**" and "**Tamburlaine the Great**," do incorporate certain elements of morality plays. They feature allegorical figures, moral dilemmas, and themes of good versus evil. However, Marlowe's treatment of these elements differs from traditional morality plays.

In Marlowe's works, there is a sense of ambiguity and moral complexity. The characters often grapple with existential questions, inner conflicts, and desires that challenge conventional moral boundaries. For example, in "Doctor Faustus," the titular character makes a pact with the devil and seeks knowledge and power beyond human limitations. This subversion of traditional morality is reflective of Marlowe's exploration of human ambition, free will, and the consequences of pursuing forbidden knowledge.

Unlike morality plays that typically offer a clear moral message or resolution, Marlowe's plays often leave the audience with a sense of moral uncertainty or even despair. The tragic outcomes and the absence of a clear moral vision challenge the traditional consolations of morality plays. Marlowe's works delve into the darker aspects of human nature, raising questions about the nature of evil, the limitations of human agency, and the consequences of moral transgressions.

In this sense, it can be argued that Marlowe brings in elements of morality plays but with a departure from their consolations. He explores complex moral dilemmas and presents flawed and morally ambiguous characters who do not necessarily find redemption or moral guidance. Instead, Marlowe's plays reflect a more realistic and morally complex view of the world, devoid of the neat moral resolutions found in traditional morality plays.

In conclusion, while Christopher Marlowe incorporates certain elements of morality plays in his works, his plays deviate from the consolations and moral vision traditionally associated with the genre. Marlowe's exploration of moral ambiguity, human desires, and tragic consequences challenges conventional moral frameworks and offers a more nuanced and complex portrayal of human nature.