

British Poetry and Drama: 14th to 17th Centuries PYQ 2022

Q1. Identify the lines and critically analyse them:

She was so charitable and so pitous

She wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous

Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.

Of smale hounds hadde she that she fedde

With rosted fessh, or milk and wastel- breed

But soore wepte she it oon of hem were deed.

Ur if men smoot it with a yerde smerte:

Ans. The identified lines are from **Geoffrey Chaucer's "The General Prologue"** of The Canterbury Tales. They describe a character known as the Prioress, who is portrayed as being compassionate and tender-hearted.

"She was so charitable and so pitous"

These lines highlight the Prioress's compassionate nature and her inclination towards acts of charity. The word "charitable" suggests that she is generous and willing to help others in need. The term "pitous" refers to being full of pity or compassion, emphasizing her empathetic nature.

"She wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous

Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde."

These lines emphasize the Prioress's extreme sensitivity and tenderness. She is depicted as someone who would weep even at the sight of a mouse caught in a trap, whether it was dead or bleeding. This demonstrates her deep capacity for compassion, extending even to small creatures.

"Of smale hounds hadde she that she fedde

With rosted fessh, or milk and wastel-breed

But soore wepte she it oon of hem were deed."

These lines further illustrate the Prioress's compassion, extending to her treatment of animals. She owned small hounds and took care of them, feeding them with roasted meat, milk, and fine bread. The last line reveals that she would be deeply grieved if any of her dogs were to die, indicating her emotional attachment to them.

"Ur it men smoot it with a verde smerte"

This line is a continuation from the previous line and refers to the Prioress's reaction to her dog being hurt. If someone were to hit or harm her dog, she would be greatly affected, as indicated by the

phrase "smoot it with a verde smerte." This further emphasizes her deep emotional connection to her pets and her sensitivity to their well-being.

In **critical analysis**, these lines present the **Prioress as a character of great empathy and compassion, particularly towards animals**. Chaucer uses these descriptions to satirize the Prioress's excessive sentimentality and to comment on the priorities of religious figures in the medieval period. By emphasizing her extreme emotional reactions to the suffering of small creatures, Chaucer subtly critiques the Prioress's misplaced focus on worldly matters instead of spiritual devotion.

Overall, these lines contribute to the characterization of the Prioress and serve as a commentary on the social and religious values of the time, highlighting the discrepancy between outward displays of piety and true spiritual depth.

Q2. Identify, explain and critically comment:

Call country ants to harvest offices,

Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime,

Nor hours, days, months, which are the rays of time

Ans. The identified lines are from John Donne's poem "**The Sun Rising**." Let's analyze and comment on them:

"Call country ants to harvest offices"

In this line, Donne uses a metaphor to describe the sun as calling upon country ants to perform their harvest duties. It symbolizes the sun's power and influence over nature, suggesting that its rising signifies the start of a productive day.

"Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime"

Donne presents the idea that love is universal and transcends any limitations imposed by seasons or geographical boundaries. Love, in its essence, remains constant and unaffected by external factors. The poet suggests that love is not subject to change and is not influenced by the passing of time or the variations in climate.

"Nor hours, days, months, which are the rays of time"

This line further reinforces the idea that love is timeless and not bound by the divisions of time. The poet suggests that the traditional measures of time—hours, days, and months—symbolize the rays of time, but love exists outside of these temporal constructs.

Critical Commentary:

Donne's lines express a metaphysical perspective on love and time. The poem as a whole conveys the speaker's disregard for the external world and its demands, as he argues that the only reality that matters is the love shared between him and his beloved.

The **metaphor of calling country ants** to harvest offices signifies the sun's commanding power, suggesting that love, like the sun, can bring order and productivity to the world. It implies that love has the ability to organize and harmonize all aspects of life.

The statement that love is unaffected by seasons, climate, and the passing of time reflects Donne's belief in the eternal nature of true love. He suggests that love exists in a realm beyond the temporal and physical, emphasizing its transcendence over worldly limitations.

Critically, Donne's portrayal of love as unchanging and independent of time can be seen as both idealistic and romantic. While it celebrates the everlasting nature of love, it may also overlook the complexities and challenges that relationships face in the real world. Love, in practice, is influenced by various external factors, including time, circumstances, and the changing dynamics between individuals.

Furthermore, Donne's focus on love as an abstract concept can be seen as a departure from the realities of human relationships. The poem's emphasis on the timeless nature of love may overlook the significance of growth, change, and adaptation within a relationship.

In **conclusion,** Donne's lines from "The Sun Rising" present a metaphysical view of love as a force that transcends time and external conditions. While it highlights the enduring and powerful nature of love, it may also neglect the complexities and temporal aspects of human relationships. Nonetheless, the poem offers a romanticized perspective on love's ability to bring order and meaning to the world.

Q 3. Identify the passage given below and explain with reference to 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 you provided is from **Christopher Marlowe's play "Doctor Faustus,"** specifically from **Act 1, Scene 1.** It is spoken by the character Faustus, a highly intelligent scholar who is dissatisfied with the limitations of traditional knowledge and seeks supernatural power through a pact with the devil.

In this passage, Faustus expresses his disillusionment with the fields of law and medicine (physic), considering them suitable only for mediocre minds. He then goes on to state that of the three fields he mentions, divinity is the most contemptible and base. Faustus uses strong language to describe divinity, referring to it as unpleasant, harsh, contemptible, and vile.

The **context of this passage is significant in understanding Faustus's character and his motivations.**

As a scholar, Faustus has achieved great intellectual heights but remains unsatisfied and yearns for more profound knowledge and power. He believes that traditional academic disciplines, represented here by law, medicine, and divinity, are limited in their scope and unable to provide him with the ultimate knowledge and fulfillment he desires.

Faustus's dismissive attitude towards divinity reflects his rebellion against conventional religious beliefs and institutions. He sees divinity as a discipline that lacks the transformative and extraordinary qualities he seeks. By denouncing divinity, Faustus sets the stage for his subsequent pursuit of forbidden knowledge through necromancy and his fateful pact with the devil, which allows him access to magic and dark powers.

The concluding line, "**Tis magic, magic that hath ravished me,**" reveals Faustus's fascination with the supernatural and his belief that magic holds the key to the extraordinary and alluring knowledge he seeks. This line foreshadows his ultimate downfall and the consequences of his Faustian bargain.

Overall, this passage from "Doctor Faustus" captures Faustus's dissatisfaction with traditional knowledge, his contempt for divinity, and his deep desire for forbidden and magical powers. It sets the tone for the play's exploration of the themes of ambition, power, and the consequences of pursuing limitless knowledge.

Q4. "Better a witty fool than a foolish wit." discuss this line with reference to Twelfth Night.

Ans. The line "Better a witty fool than a foolish wit" is spoken by the character Feste, the professional clown and fool in William Shakespeare's comedy play, Twelfth Night. Feste's character embodies both wit and foolishness, and his statement suggests that it is preferable to possess wit, even if it comes across as foolishness, rather than being a person who lacks wit but attempts to appear intelligent.

In Twelfth Night, Feste is known for his clever wordplay, humor, and ability to see through the deceptions and pretenses of other characters. He often employs his wit to expose the follies and weaknesses of those around him. Feste's role as a fool allows him to speak his mind freely and critique the actions and motivations of the other characters, often using humor as a means to convey his insights.

The **statement "Better a witty fool than a foolish wit"** reflects **Feste's self-awareness** of his role as a fool and his understanding of the value of wit. Feste recognizes that his foolishness is intentional and serves a purpose. He uses his wit to provoke thought, challenge assumptions, and provide social commentary. Despite being perceived as a fool, Feste's words often carry deeper meanings and truths.

In the play, there are characters who could be considered "foolish wits" in contrast to Feste. For example, Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Sir Toby Belch are portrayed as witty characters, but their wit is often shallow and used for mere amusement or to mock others. Their attempts at wit lack depth and insight, making them appear foolish. Feste, on the other hand, demonstrates a more profound understanding of human nature through his wit.

Feste's remark can also be seen as a comment on the value of authenticity and self-awareness. He embraces his role as a fool and uses it to his advantage, highlighting the foolishness of those who pretend to be something they are not. By acknowledging and embracing his own folly, Feste is able to express his wit genuinely, without the pretense of false intelligence.

In conclusion, Feste's statement "Better a witty fool than a foolish wit" encapsulates the theme of wit and folly in Twelfth Night. It underscores the importance of genuine wit and insight, even if it is expressed through the guise of foolishness. Feste's character exemplifies this idea, as he employs his wit as a fool to entertain, challenge, and reveal the truths that lie beneath the surface of the play's comedic situations.

Q5. Write a short note on Calvin's idea that "while some are granted salvation, others are doomed"

Ans. Calvin's idea, often referred to as predestination or the doctrine of election, asserts that God has preordained certain individuals for salvation while others are predestined for damnation. This theological concept was formulated by John Calvin, a prominent Protestant theologian during the Reformation era.

According to Calvin, salvation is solely determined by God's sovereign choice and not by any human merit or effort. He believed in the total depravity of humanity, asserting that all people are inherently sinful and incapable of saving themselves. In Calvin's view, God's choice to save or damn individuals is not based on their actions or worthiness, but rather on His own divine will and purpose.

Calvin's doctrine of predestination emphasizes the absolute sovereignty of God. It asserts that before the foundation of the world, God elected certain individuals to receive His grace and mercy, leading to their salvation. Conversely, those who are not chosen are left in a state of damnation, forever separated from God.

Critics of Calvin's doctrine of predestination argue that it portrays a harsh and deterministic view of God, seemingly disregarding human free will and personal responsibility. It raises questions about fairness, justice, and the nature of God's love and mercy. However, proponents of Calvin's ideas contend that it highlights the unconditional nature of God's grace and emphasizes the importance of humility and reliance on God's sovereignty.

It is **essential to note** that Calvin's idea of predestination is a **matter of theological debate and interpretation,** with various Christian denominations holding differing views on the subject. While some embrace Calvin's ideas as a fundamental aspect of their faith, others reject or modify them to varying degrees.

Ultimately, Calvin's notion that some are granted salvation while others are doomed reflects his understanding of God's sovereignty and the human condition. However, it is crucial to approach this topic with sensitivity and respect, recognizing that theological perspectives on salvation and predestination can differ among individuals and religious traditions.

Q6. Chaucer is seldom harsh on his character and yet he does not condone their vice. Discuss with reference to the General prologue Canterbury Tales.

Ans. Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales," specifically the General Prologue, offers a diverse cast of characters representing various social classes and moral backgrounds. While Chaucer rarely displays outright harshness towards his characters, he does not hesitate to expose their vices and flaws. Rather than explicitly condemning these vices, Chaucer relies on satire and irony to critique and comment on the moral shortcomings of his characters.

Chaucer's portrayal of the characters in the General Prologue is nuanced and multi-dimensional. He presents each character with a certain degree of sympathy, understanding that they are products of their social context and human nature. However, he also reveals their moral weaknesses and shortcomings, providing a subtle critique of their actions and behaviors.

For example, consider the character of the Pardoner. Chaucer describes the Pardoner as a man with a gift for preaching and selling indulgences but with a dubious moral character. He highlights the Pardoner's fraudulent practices, such as selling fake relics and pocketing the money for himself. Chaucer does not explicitly condemn the Pardoner's vice but rather allows readers to draw their conclusions about his moral corruption.

Another example is the Wife of Bath, who is portrayed as a bold and lively character. Chaucer presents her as a woman who has had multiple husbands and unabashedly embraces her sexuality. While he does not explicitly condemn her promiscuity, he subtly exposes the potential moral consequences of her actions through his description and her Prologue.

Chaucer's approach to character portrayal in "The Canterbury Tales" reflects his understanding of human nature and the complexities of moral judgment. He avoids outright condemnation, instead opting for a more nuanced and satirical approach. By showcasing the vices and flaws of his characters, Chaucer invites readers to reflect on the moral implications of their actions, leaving the ultimate judgment to the audience.

Furthermore, Chaucer's use of irony and satire serves as a tool for social commentary. Through his characters, he critiques the moral decay and hypocrisy prevalent in medieval society. By satirizing the vices of his characters, Chaucer indirectly condemns the larger social and moral shortcomings of his time.

In **conclusion,** Chaucer's portrayal of characters in "The Canterbury Tales," particularly in the General Prologue, is marked by a combination of sympathy and criticism. While he seldom employs outright harshness or condemnation, he exposes the vices and flaws of his characters through satire, irony, and social critique. Chaucer's nuanced approach invites readers to reflect on the moral implications of these vices and serves as a commentary on the moral decay and hypocrisy of medieval society.

Q7. Discuss Isabella Whitney's poem "IW to her unconstant lover" as a response to conventional depiction of women in Elizabethan love sonnets

Ans. Isabella Whitney's poem "IW to her unconstant Lover" can be seen as a response to the conventional depiction of women in Elizabethan love sonnets, offering a counter-narrative that challenges the idealized and often submissive portrayal of women. By presenting a strong and independent female voice, Whitney subverts the traditional gender roles and expectations prevalent in the poetry of her time.

In Elizabethan love sonnets, women were typically depicted as passive objects of desire, often described in idealized and unattainable terms. These sonnets celebrated the beauty, purity, and obedience of women, perpetuating the idea that a woman's worth lies primarily in her physical appearance and her ability to conform to societal expectations. Women were often positioned as objects to be won or conquered by the male suitor, and their agency and individuality were often overlooked.

Whitney's poem "IW to Inconstant Lover" challenges these conventional representations by presenting a strong and assertive female voice. The speaker in the poem confronts her inconstant lover, expressing her grievances and frustrations. She asserts her worth and demands respect,

refusing to be treated as a passive recipient of love. This stands in stark contrast to the submissive and idolizing tone often found in Elizabethan love sonnets.

Whitney's poem also highlights the complexities of human emotions and relationships. While the speaker acknowledges her love for the inconstant lover, she also acknowledges the pain and disappointment caused by his inconstancy. This adds depth and realism to the portrayal of love and relationships, challenging the idealized notions of love prevalent in traditional sonnets.

Furthermore, Whitney's poem empowers women by giving them a voice and agency. The speaker asserts her independence and self-worth, refusing to be defined solely by her relationship with a man. She recognizes her own value and refuses to be diminished by the inconstant lover's actions. This subversion of gender roles and emphasis on female empowerment deviates from the traditional portrayal of women as passive objects of male desire in Elizabethan love sonnets.

Overall, Isabella Whitney's poem "IW to Inconstant Lover" serves as a response to the conventional depiction of women in Elizabethan love sonnets. By presenting a strong and assertive female voice, Whitney challenges the idealized and submissive portrayal of women prevalent in the poetry of her time. The poem empowers women by giving them agency and highlighting their worth beyond their relationship with men. Whitney's work stands as a testament to the diverse perspectives and experiences of women, providing a counter-narrative to the traditional gender roles and expectations found in Elizabethan poetry.

Q8. The yearning of Faustus for greater knowledge and consequently greater power to depict change in human life is symptomatic of the spirit of renaissance . Discuss Dr. Faustus as a typical renaissance hero.

Ans. Christopher Marlowe's play "Dr. Faustus" can be seen as a **reflection of the spirit** of the Renaissance through its portrayal of Faustus's yearning for knowledge and power. Faustus's insatiable thirst for greater understanding and his desire to transcend human limitations are representative of the intellectual curiosity and ambition that characterized the Renaissance period.

One of the defining features of the Renaissance was the renewed interest in humanism and the pursuit of knowledge. The period emphasized the value of human potential and the belief that individuals could attain greatness through intellectual exploration. In "Dr. Faustus," Faustus embodies this pursuit by seeking knowledge beyond the traditional boundaries and norms of his time. He is dissatisfied with the limitations of earthly knowledge and turns to necromancy and magic, attempting to gain supernatural powers and insights.

Faustus's quest for knowledge and power reflects the Renaissance spirit of exploring new frontiers and pushing the boundaries of human understanding. His desire to transcend the limitations of mortality and experience a higher form of existence resonates with the Renaissance belief in the limitless potential of human beings. Faustus's ambition and curiosity align with the Renaissance idea of the individual as the center of intellectual and creative endeavors.

Moreover, Faustus's tragic downfall in the play can be interpreted as a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked ambition and the misuse of knowledge and power. The Renaissance was a period of great advancements, but it also brought about ethical and moral dilemmas as individuals gained access to new knowledge and technologies. Faustus's pact with the devil and his subsequent

moral decay serve as a warning against the potential consequences of unbridled ambition and the pursuit of power without ethical considerations.

Additionally, the play explores themes of free will, individualism, and the questioning of authority—ideas that were central to the Renaissance mindset. Faustus's decision to sell his soul can be seen as a rebellion against religious and societal constraints, as he seeks to assert his own agency and challenge the established order. This spirit of individualism and skepticism towards authority was a hallmark of the Renaissance period, as individuals began to question traditional hierarchies and dogmas.

In **conclusion**, "Dr. Faustus" can be viewed as a typical Renaissance work due to its portrayal of Faustus's yearning for knowledge and power. Faustus's insatiable curiosity, ambition, and desire to transcend human limitations reflect the intellectual and exploratory spirit of the Renaissance. However, the play also serves as a cautionary tale, warning against the dangers of unchecked ambition and the misuse of knowledge and power. Through its exploration of themes such as free will, individualism, and the questioning of authority, "Dr. Faustus" captures the essence of the Renaissance period and its intellectual and philosophical ideals.

Q9. "Doublings and inversions are the main sources of humour in Twelfth Night." Explain with examples.

Ans. In William Shakespeare's comedy "Twelfth Night," doublings and inversions play a significant role in generating humor. These comedic techniques involve the juxtaposition or reversal of expectations, identities, and situations, leading to amusing and absurd situations. Let's explore how doublings and inversions create humor in the play with some examples:

Gender Doubling and Inversion: One of the central comedic devices in "Twelfth Night" is the cross-dressing of Viola, who disguises herself as a man named Cesario. This doubling and inversion of gender roles results in numerous humorous situations. For instance, when Viola, in her male disguise, is wooing Olivia on behalf of Duke Orsino, Olivia develops feelings for Cesario, unaware that "he" is actually a woman. The audience finds humor in the irony of the situation, as Viola/Cesario is both the object of Olivia's affections and a messenger for Orsino.

Mistaken Identity: The play's plot revolves around mistaken identity, which leads to humorous confusion and misunderstandings. Viola's twin brother, Sebastian, is believed to be Cesario by Olivia and her household. This confusion creates humorous situations when Olivia mistakenly woos Sebastian, thinking he is Cesario. The doubling of the twins and the inversion of their identities result in comical misunderstandings and mix-ups.

Fool and Master Inversion: The character of Feste, the witty fool, often engages in wordplay, puns, and clever repartee with the other characters. Feste's role as a fool allows him to invert the traditional power dynamics by mocking and jesting with his social superiors, such as Olivia and Orsino. This reversal of the expected hierarchy provides comedic relief and serves as a source of amusement for the audience.

Role Reversals: "Twelfth Night" also includes instances where characters find themselves in unexpected roles or positions. For example, the pompous steward Malvolio is tricked into believing

that Olivia is in love with him. He undergoes a transformation, becoming foolish and absurd in his attempts to win her affection. The reversal of Malvolio's usual serious and self-important demeanor generates humor as he becomes the source of mockery and ridicule.

Comic Servants: The play features humorous interactions between servants and their masters. Characters like Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek engage in drunken revelry and foolish behavior, often at the expense of their social superiors. Their antics and wordplay contribute to the overall comic atmosphere of the play.

In "**Twelfth Night**," doublings and inversions serve as effective comedic devices, creating amusing situations and highlighting the absurdities and contradictions of human behavior. Through the reversal of roles, mistaken identities, and witty wordplay, Shakespeare masterfully employs these techniques to entertain the audience and add to the overall comedic effect of the play.

Q10. Explain how Pico della Mirandola's concept of the Dignity of Man contributes to the idea of Renaissance Humanism.

Ans. Pico della Mirandola's concept of the Dignity of Man played a significant role in shaping the ideals of Renaissance Humanism. His ideas were expressed in his famous work, "Oration on the Dignity of Man," which emphasized the limitless potential and unique nature of human beings. Pico's concept contributed to Renaissance Humanism in several ways:

Human Potential: Pico della Mirandola argued that human beings possess a remarkable capacity for self-determination and self-improvement. He believed that individuals have the ability to shape their own destinies through their actions and choices. This emphasis on human agency and potential aligned with the Renaissance Humanist belief in the importance of individualism and personal development.

Intellectual and Spiritual Freedom: Pico advocated for the freedom of thought, emphasizing the value of intellectual and spiritual exploration. He believed that individuals should have the freedom to pursue knowledge and seek a deeper understanding of the world. This emphasis on intellectual and spiritual freedom resonated with the Renaissance Humanist idea of questioning traditional authority and engaging in independent thinking.

Rejection of Hierarchies: Pico challenged the prevailing medieval worldview that placed human beings within a rigid hierarchical structure. He argued that humans were not bound by fixed social or metaphysical positions but possessed the freedom to determine their own worth and place in the world. This rejection of hierarchical constraints aligned with the Renaissance Humanist rejection of the medieval emphasis on inherited status and the belief in the potential for social mobility based on merit.

Unity of Knowledge: Pico's concept of the Dignity of Man promoted the idea that all branches of knowledge, including philosophy, science, theology, and the arts, were interconnected and should be pursued collectively. He believed that individuals should seek a holistic understanding of the world, integrating diverse fields of study. This interdisciplinary approach to knowledge aligned with the Renaissance Humanist emphasis on the broadening of intellectual horizons and the pursuit of a well-rounded education.

Emphasis on Humanism: Pico's concept placed human beings at the center of intellectual and philosophical inquiry. His ideas celebrated the value of human experiences, emotions, and achievements. This focus on humanism, the study of human nature, interests, and achievements, was a central tenet of Renaissance Humanism. It rejected the medieval preoccupation with the afterlife and instead emphasized the importance of earthly existence and human achievements.

In summary, Pico della Mirandola's concept of the Dignity of Man contributed to the idea of Renaissance Humanism by **highlighting the immense potential of human beings, advocating for intellectual and spiritual freedom, rejecting hierarchical structures, promoting interdisciplinary knowledge, and celebrating human experiences and achievements.** His ideas resonated with the broader intellectual and philosophical movements of the Renaissance, inspiring a renewed focus on the individual, human potential, and the pursuit of knowledge and personal development.

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