

# British Literature: Poetry and a play, Selections from living Literatures PYQ 2022

**Q1. Explain and comment on the following lines with reference to the context:**

Not so," ' (quod I) "let baser things devise

To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:

My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,

And in the heavens write your glorious name.

**Ans.** These lines appear to be a part of a poem "sonnet 18" by William Shakespeare where the speaker is having a conversation or dialogue with someone. **Let's break down the lines and analyze them in the context provided:**

"Not so," ' (quod I) "let baser things devise

To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:

My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,

And in the heavens write your glorious name."

**In these lines**, the speaker is addressing someone and expressing a contrary viewpoint to what the other person might be suggesting or believing. The phrase "Not so" indicates that the speaker disagrees with the notion being discussed. The "(quod I)" part is a parenthetical expression which means "I said." It's a way to attribute the following words to the speaker.

**The speaker's statement can be summarized as follows:**

The speaker disagrees with the idea that "baser things" (lesser or more mundane things) should embrace the idea of fading away into dust (symbolizing oblivion or obscurity). This is in contrast to the belief or proposal being put forth by the other person.

**Instead**, the speaker asserts that the person being addressed should seek to attain immortality through fame. In other words, they should aim to be remembered and celebrated through the ages.

The speaker declares that their poetry will play a role in achieving this goal. The rare virtues possessed by the person will be immortalized in the speaker's verses. This suggests that the speaker's writing will serve as a testament to the person's exceptional qualities and accomplishments.

The speaker goes further to claim that the person's name will not only be remembered on Earth but also in the heavens. This implies a celestial significance, suggesting that the person's fame and name will be elevated to a divine or eternal level.

**Overall**, these lines convey a sense of admiration and reverence for the person being addressed. The speaker firmly believes that their poetic words will ensure the person's legacy lives on and ascends to a lasting state of renown. The lines reflect a common theme in poetry, where the power of verse is believed to transcend time and preserve the memory of remarkable individuals.

**Q2. Discuss Milton's use of the Parable of the Talents in the sonnet 'On his Blindness'.**

**Ans.** John Milton's sonnet "On His Blindness," also known as "Sonnet 19," reflects on the poet's struggle with his loss of sight and his feelings of unfulfilled potential. The parable of the talents, which originates from the Bible (Matthew 25:14–30), serves as a metaphorical framework through which Milton contemplates his own situation. In the parable, talents refer to a form of currency, but they are also symbolic of abilities or gifts that individuals possess.

In the sonnet, Milton compares himself to the servant in the parable who was given one talent and buried it, rather than investing or multiplying it. **Let's take a closer look at how Milton uses the Parable of the Talents in the sonnet:**

"When I consider how my light is spent  
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,  
And that one Talent which is death to hide  
Lodged with me useless, though my Soul more bent  
To serve therewith my Maker, and present  
My true account, lest he returning chide;  
'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?'  
I fondly ask. But patience, to prevent  
That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need  
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best  
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best, his State  
Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed  
And post o'er Land and Ocean without rest:  
They also serve who only stand and wait.'"

**Milton's use of the Parable of the Talents can be observed in the following ways:**

**Loss of Sight as Loss of Talent:** In the opening lines, Milton reflects on his blindness ("how my light is spent") and the sense that he has lost a valuable talent or ability. The word "light" here not only refers to physical sight but also symbolizes his intellectual and creative capabilities.

**One Talent Buried:** Milton likens himself to the servant who received one talent and buried it, not making use of it. He considers his blindness as the talent that is "lodged with [him] useless." This implies his frustration at not being able to fully utilize his literary gifts due to his visual impairment.

**Serving God:** Just as the servant in the parable wanted to serve his master with the talents he was given, Milton desires to serve his Maker despite his blindness. He fears that he won't be able to fulfill his duty ("My true account") because of his physical limitations.

**God's Response:** Milton's contemplation of whether God expects him to continue working despite his blindness echoes the servant's concern about his master's expectations. The phrase "Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?" reflects his internal struggle and questioning.

**God's Independence:** The resolution comes in the form of an answer that echoes the parable's message. The response he hears can be interpreted as God assuring him that He doesn't require human effort or gifts, as He is self-sufficient. Those who humbly accept their circumstances and bear their challenges with patience are also serving God.

In "On His Blindness," Milton uses the Parable of the Talents to grapple with his own feelings of inadequacy and frustration due to his blindness. Through this metaphor, he finds solace in the idea that his dedication to God and his patient acceptance of his limitations are meaningful acts of service, regardless of his inability to create in the same way he once did. The sonnet reflects a deep spiritual and emotional struggle and ultimately offers a message of acceptance and faith.

**Q3. Explain and comment on the following lines with reference to the context:**

**Where are the songs of spring? Ay, Where are they?**

**Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,-**

**While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,**

**And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;**

**Ans.** These lines are from John Keats' poem "To Autumn," which celebrates the beauty and richness of the autumn season. **Let's break down and analyze the lines in the context of the poem:**

"Where are the songs of spring? Ay, where are they?"

Think not of them, thou hast thy music too—

While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,

And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;"

**In these lines, the speaker reflects on the transition from spring to autumn and contrasts the two seasons. Here's the analysis of each part:**

**"Where are the songs of spring? Ay, where are they?":** The speaker begins by posing a rhetorical question about the songs of spring. Spring is typically associated with vibrant life, growth, and the joyful songs of birds and nature. The speaker's tone here is reflective and slightly nostalgic. The repetition of "Where are they?" emphasizes the absence of the springtime songs.

**"Think not of them, thou hast thy music too—":** The speaker advises not to dwell on the absence of spring's songs. The word "Ay" is an archaic form of "yes," emphasizing the acknowledgment of spring's absence. However, the speaker suggests that there's no need to lament this loss, as autumn has its own unique "music." This "music" represents the beauty and richness of autumn, which might not be as overtly lively as spring's songs but is equally significant and captivating.

"While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,

**And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;":** The speaker shifts the focus to describing the scene of autumn. "Barred clouds" refer to clouds that are patterned with lines or bars, suggesting a sense of enclosure or constraint. Despite this, the clouds still "bloom," which is an interesting contrast, as clouds typically don't bloom like flowers. This unique description might imply that even in the decline of the day (the "soft-dying day"), there's beauty and vibrancy to be found, just as flowers bloom in spring.

**The phrase "stubble-plains"** refers to the fields after the harvest, where the stalks of crops have been cut and only short, leftover stubble remains. The "rosy hue" suggests a warm and golden color, possibly from the setting sun casting its glow on the fields. This image conveys a sense of tranquility and warmth despite the approaching end of the growing season.

**Overall,** these lines capture the essence of "To Autumn," where Keats finds beauty and significance in the cycle of seasons and the natural world's changes. The comparison of spring's songs with autumn's "music" invites readers to appreciate the subtler, mature beauty of the autumn season rather than mourn the passing of spring. It's a reflection on the fleeting nature of life and the need to find value in every phase of existence.

**Q4. Explain and comment on the following lines with reference to the context:**

**Them seated on a three-legg'd chair,**

**Takes off her artificial hair:**

**Now, picking out a crystal eye,**

**She wipes it clean and lays it by.**

**Ans.** These lines are from the poem "A Lady's Dressing Room" written by Jonathan Swift, a satirical work that mocks the idealized notions of female beauty by exposing the less glamorous and more mundane aspects of a woman's preparation and appearance. **Let's break down and analyze the lines in the context of the poem:**

"Them seated on a three-legg'd chair,

Takes off her artificial hair:

Now, picking out a crystal eye,

She wipes it clean and lays it by."

In these lines, the speaker describes a scene in which a woman is undressing and preparing for bed, revealing the unglamorous and sometimes repulsive aspects of her appearance routine. **Here's an analysis of each part:**

**"Them seated on a three-legg'd chair,":** The lines begin by setting the scene with the woman sitting on a "three-legg'd chair." The choice of a three-legged chair might be a subtle hint at instability or imperfection, mirroring the theme of exposing the less flattering aspects of the woman's appearance.

**"Takes off her artificial hair:"** The satirical nature of the poem becomes evident as the woman removes her "artificial hair." This phrase refers to a wig or hairpiece, implying that the woman's beauty is not entirely natural. The act of taking off the wig underscores the artificiality and the extent to which beauty standards can involve deception.

**"Now, picking out a crystal eye,"** The woman then proceeds to "pick out a crystal eye." This refers to a decorative eye for a doll or a prosthetic eye, suggesting that even her eyes might not be as natural as they seem. The use of the word "crystal" emphasizes the artificiality of the eye, highlighting the contrast between the idealized image of beauty and the reality.

**"She wipes it clean and lays it by."** The woman cleans the eye and puts it aside. This action further reinforces the absurdity and grotesqueness of the beauty routine. The phrase "lays it by" suggests the detachment and routine nature of these actions, as if they're a commonplace part of her daily ritual.

**In this context**, the lines serve to emphasize the discrepancy between the idealized image of beauty and the unglamorous reality of maintaining that image. Swift uses satire to highlight the absurdity of society's obsession with outward appearances and the lengths to which individuals may go to achieve an unattainable standard of beauty. The use of specific details like the three-legged chair, artificial hair, and crystal eye creates a vivid and somewhat shocking picture that challenges conventional notions of femininity and beauty.

**Q5. Write a short note on the following topic:**

**The relationship between Desdemona and her father in Othello**

**Ans.** The relationship between Desdemona and her father in William Shakespeare's play "Othello" is a complex and significant aspect of the story. Desdemona is the daughter of Brabantio, a Venetian nobleman. Their relationship evolves and undergoes challenges as the plot unfolds. **Here's a brief note on the topic:**

The relationship between Desdemona and her father Brabantio in "Othello" is characterized by contrasts and conflicts that highlight the clash between traditional authority and individual autonomy. At the beginning of the play, Desdemona's elopement with Othello, a Moorish general, without her father's consent becomes a pivotal event that shapes the narrative.

**Protective Father-Daughter Dynamic:** At the outset, Brabantio is portrayed as a protective and loving father. He cares deeply for Desdemona and is distraught when he learns of her marriage to Othello. His initial reaction reflects his sense of betrayal and his belief that his authority as a father has been undermined.

**Cultural and Racial Conflict:** Brabantio's objections to Desdemona's marriage to Othello are rooted in both cultural and racial differences. Othello's Moorish background is a source of discomfort for Brabantio, who sees the marriage as a violation of societal norms and values. The contrast between Othello's ethnicity and Desdemona's whiteness intensifies the conflict.

**Desdemona's Independence:** Desdemona, on the other hand, demonstrates her autonomy and independent thinking by choosing Othello as her husband. Her willingness to defy her father's wishes

indicates her strong will and her belief in the power of love. This dynamic showcases Desdemona's agency and challenges traditional notions of parental control in matters of marriage.

**Shift in Loyalties:** Desdemona's loyalty shifts from her father to her husband after her marriage. While she maintains her affection for Brabantio, her commitment to Othello takes precedence. This transition highlights Desdemona's devotion to her husband and her desire to build her own life.

**Tragic Outcome:** Unfortunately, the strain caused by Brabantio's disapproval sets the stage for the tragic events of the play. Othello's jealousy and mistrust, fueled by Iago's manipulation, lead to Desdemona's eventual death. The tragedy underscores the consequences of Brabantio's inability to adapt to the changing circumstances and his inability to reconcile with his daughter's choices.

**In "Othello,"** the relationship between Desdemona and her father reflects the broader themes of love, societal norms, individual agency, and the clash between different cultures. The tensions between tradition and individual desires contribute to the play's exploration of jealousy, manipulation, and tragic downfall. The evolution of their relationship serves as a microcosm of the larger conflicts that shape the narrative.

**Q6. Discuss the use of hyperbole and poetic conceit in the prescribed poem by Donne.**

**Ans.** In John Donne's poem "**The Sunne Rising**," the utilization of hyperbole and poetic conceit serves to intricately embellish the speaker's adoration and emotions. Hyperbole, an exaggerated statement or claim, is evident in the speaker's description of his lover's eyes as possessing the power to eclipse both the sun's beams and the Indian Ganges. This exaggeration accentuates the depth of the speaker's affection.

**Furthermore,** the poem employs poetic conceit, a type of metaphor that extends throughout the poem. The conceit of the lovers' microcosmic universe encapsulated within the confines of their bedroom exemplifies this. The sun, traditionally a symbol of grandeur and universal significance, is relegated to insignificance in the face of the lovers' intimate domain.

**In line with the speaker's impassioned sentiments,** these poetic devices contribute to the overall tone of adoration and self-absorption. Through hyperbole and conceit, Donne effectively conveys the intensity of the speaker's emotions while crafting a vivid portrayal of the lovers' secluded world.

**Q7. Elaborate on the ways Wyatt's sonnet is based on and yet departs from the Petrarchan original.**

**Ans.** Sir Thomas Wyatt, a 16th-century English poet, is known for introducing the sonnet form to English literature. His adaptation of the Italian/Petrarchan sonnet form brought about some distinctive changes, both in terms of structure and thematic focus. **Let's delve into how Wyatt's sonnet form is based on and departs from the Petrarchan original:**

**Petrarchan Sonnet Form:**

The Petrarchan sonnet, also known as the Italian sonnet, traditionally consists of an octave (eight lines) followed by a sestet (six lines). The octave usually presents a problem, a conflict, or a question, while the sestet provides a resolution, a turn, or an answer. The rhyme scheme is typically ABBAABBA for the octave and either CDCDCD or CDECDE for the sestet.

### **Wyatt's Sonnet Form:**

Wyatt introduced the English sonnet, also known as the Shakespearean sonnet, to English literature. It consists of three quatrains (four-line stanzas) followed by a final rhymed couplet (two lines). This structure differs from the Petrarchan form in that it lacks the clear octave-sestet division. The rhyme scheme is usually ABAB CDCD EFEF GG.

### **Based On and Departure from Petrarchan Original:**

#### **Structure:**

**Petrarchan:** The traditional Petrarchan sonnet's structure enforces a clear division between the octave and the sestet, allowing for a shift in focus or thought.

**Wyatt:** Wyatt's sonnet form breaks away from this division, favoring the continuous progression of thought through the quatrains and culminating in a strong, often epigrammatic couplet.

#### **Focus and Theme:**

**Petrarchan:** Petrarchan sonnets often revolve around themes of unrequited love, idealized beauty, and metaphysical concepts. The division between the octave and sestet allows for a change in perspective or resolution.

**Wyatt:** While Wyatt's sonnets still explore themes of love and desire, they often incorporate personal feelings and reflections on political and courtly matters. The structure's tighter flow encourages a more cohesive exploration of these themes.

#### **Volta (Turn):**

**Petrarchan:** The Petrarchan sonnet features a volta, a significant thematic turn that occurs between the octave and the sestet. This shift in perspective or tone contributes to the overall impact of the poem.

**Wyatt:** In Wyatt's sonnets, the volta may occur within or at the end of a quatrain, depending on the poem. The volta's placement is more flexible due to the lack of a strict octave-sestet division.

#### **Rhyme Scheme:**

**Petrarchan:** The Petrarchan rhyme scheme in the octave allows for a more elaborate exploration of a single thought, while the sestet's rhyme scheme adds to the poem's final resolution.

**Wyatt:** The Shakespearean rhyme scheme creates a more self-contained unit within each quatrain, allowing for a quicker progression of ideas. The concluding couplet brings a succinct summary or twist to the poem.

**In summary,** Wyatt's sonnets are based on the Petrarchan tradition but depart from it in significant ways. The English sonnet's structure, focus, theme exploration, and rhyme scheme offer a distinctive poetic form that aligns with the English language and cultural context of the time. This transformation laid the foundation for the rich tradition of English sonnet writing, including the works of later poets like William Shakespeare.

**Q8. Compare the depiction of London in Blake's 'London' with that in Wordsworth's 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge'.**

**Ans.** William Blake's "London" and William Wordsworth's "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802" present contrasting perspectives on the city of London. While both poems describe aspects of the city, they differ in their tone, themes, and the emotions they evoke. **Let's compare the depiction of London in these two poems:**

**Blake's "London":**

**Tone and Atmosphere:** Blake's poem conveys a sense of social and moral decay. The tone is somber and critical, highlighting the negative aspects of city life. The poem's language reflects the speaker's dissatisfaction with the state of society and the city.

**Themes:** "London" focuses on the effects of industrialization, poverty, and oppression on the people of London. It highlights the suffering of various groups, including the poor, the marginalized, and the children.

**Imagery:** Blake employs vivid and often dark imagery to depict a city plagued by corruption, suffering, and emotional repression. The imagery creates a sense of confinement and hopelessness.

**Poetic Devices:** The poem employs repetition, such as the repetition of the word "charter'd" to emphasize the restrictions imposed on individuals by societal norms. This device underscores the sense of entrapment and restriction felt by the city's inhabitants.

**Wordsworth's "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802":**

**Tone and Atmosphere:** Wordsworth's poem presents a serene and tranquil view of the city. The tone is celebratory and reverent, emphasizing the beauty and tranquility of the scene.

**Themes:** The poem celebrates the natural and architectural beauty of London. It captures a moment of stillness and awe, suggesting a deep appreciation for the harmony between nature and human creation.

**Imagery:** Wordsworth employs imagery that emphasizes the peacefulness of the scene. The morning sun, the quiet river, and the clear sky create a sense of calm and serenity.

**Poetic Devices:** The poem uses enjambment, where lines flow into each other without clear pauses, to mirror the uninterrupted beauty of the scene. The rhyme scheme and meter contribute to the sense of harmony and order.

**In summary,** Blake's "London" portrays a city marked by suffering, oppression, and moral decay, while Wordsworth's "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802" captures a serene and sublime moment of natural and architectural beauty. The two poems reflect different perspectives on urban life, with Blake offering a critical social commentary and Wordsworth presenting a moment of transcendence and appreciation.



### **Q9. Discuss the nature of Iago's villainy in Othello.**

**Ans.** Iago's villainy in William Shakespeare's play "Othello" is complex and multifaceted. He is often considered one of the most diabolical and cunning villains in literature. Iago's nature of villainy is marked by his manipulation, deception, and malicious intent. **Here are some key aspects that characterize Iago's villainous nature:**

#### **Manipulative Mastermind:**

Iago is a master manipulator. He exploits the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of other characters, particularly Othello, to achieve his own malicious goals. He knows how to use people's emotions, doubts, and insecurities to control them.

#### **False Friendship and Betrayal:**

Iago presents himself as a loyal friend and ally to those around him, especially Othello and Roderigo. He gains their trust and then betrays them by using their trust to manipulate their actions and thoughts.

#### **Jealousy and Envy:**

Iago's villainy is largely motivated by his jealousy and envy of Cassio, whom he believes has been promoted unfairly over him. This jealousy fuels his desire for revenge against Othello and Cassio.

#### **Machiavellian Cunning:**

Iago's actions demonstrate his adherence to Machiavellian principles—using deception and manipulation to achieve his objectives. He orchestrates complex schemes to manipulate the actions of others, leading to disastrous consequences.

#### **Oxymoronic Nature:**

Iago's nature is paradoxical. He often speaks in contradictory terms and his motives are a blend of calculated planning and irrational hatred. This adds to his enigmatic and villainous persona.

#### **Racial Prejudice:**

Iago's villainy takes on a racial dimension when he exploits Othello's insecurities about his identity as a Moor. He uses racial slurs and prejudices to manipulate Othello's feelings of inadequacy and insecurity.

#### **Deception and Misdirection:**

Iago is a skilled deceiver. He plants seeds of doubt in Othello's mind about Desdemona's loyalty and uses fabricated evidence to further his manipulations. He is able to convince Othello of the truth of these lies through artful manipulation of his emotions.

#### **Lack of Motive Disclosure:**

One of the chilling aspects of Iago's villainy is his refusal to explicitly reveal his motives to the audience. He gives cryptic and contradictory explanations for his actions, leaving the audience to piece together the true depths of his wickedness.

#### **Ruining Lives for Pleasure:**

Iago's villainy extends beyond achieving specific goals. He takes pleasure in causing chaos, pain, and destruction in the lives of those around him. His cruelty and enjoyment of others' suffering demonstrate his sadistic tendencies.

Overall, Iago's villainy in "Othello" is driven by a combination of jealousy, manipulation, and a desire for power. His ability to exploit others' weaknesses, coupled with his Machiavellian scheming and lack of moral restraint, makes him one of Shakespeare's most compelling and horrifying villains.

#### **Q10. Elaborate on the theme of race in Othello.**

**Ans.** The theme of race is a central and complex aspect of William Shakespeare's tragedy "Othello." The play explores the impact of racial prejudice, stereotypes, and the intersections of power dynamics based on race. Othello, the titular character, is a Moor—a term used in the play to denote a person of African descent. The theme of race is intricately woven into the characters, plot, and societal context of the play. **Here's a deeper exploration of this theme:**

##### **Othello's Otherness:**

Othello's racial identity sets him apart in Venetian society. He is seen as an outsider due to his Moorish background and physical appearance. His otherness is highlighted by the way other characters refer to him using racially charged terms like "the Moor" or "the thick-lips."

##### **Prejudice and Stereotypes:**

The play portrays the deeply ingrained racial prejudice of the time. Characters like Iago and Brabantio express negative stereotypes and assumptions about Othello based on his race. Iago's manipulation of these prejudices is a central plot point that drives Othello to jealousy and destruction.

##### **Othello's Insecurities:**

Othello is not immune to the societal biases against his race. He internalizes these prejudices, leading to his own insecurities about his marriage to Desdemona. He fears that his racial difference makes him an unfit match for her.

##### **Interracial Marriage:**

Othello and Desdemona's marriage challenges societal norms and expectations. Their relationship faces opposition from Desdemona's father, Brabantio, and the prejudiced attitudes of others. The theme of interracial marriage underscores the play's exploration of race and social boundaries.

##### **Manipulation by Racial Insecurities:**

Iago exploits Othello's racial insecurities as part of his malicious plan. Iago feeds Othello's doubts about Desdemona's loyalty by suggesting that her attraction to him was based on exotic fascination, and that she would inevitably be drawn to a fellow Venetian like Cassio.

##### **Tragic Downfall:**

Othello's tragic downfall is driven by the intersection of his racial identity with his emotions. His internalization of negative racial stereotypes and Iago's manipulation lead him to question Desdemona's fidelity, eventually culminating in a jealous rage that ends in tragedy.

**Race and Identity:**

The theme of race intersects with themes of identity and self-worth. Othello grapples with issues of belonging, self-esteem, and acceptance. His internal struggle reveals the profound impact of societal prejudices on an individual's sense of self.

**Social Hierarchy and Power:**

The play portrays how race is intertwined with social hierarchy and power dynamics. The white characters, especially Iago, wield their racial privilege to manipulate and control Othello. Iago's manipulation showcases the potential for racial prejudice to be weaponized for personal gain.

**Overall**, the theme of race in "Othello" highlights the damaging effects of racial prejudice and stereotypes on individuals and society. It sheds light on the complexities of identity, the power dynamics inherent in racial differences, and the tragic consequences that can result from such prejudices. The play's exploration of race remains relevant today, prompting discussions about systemic racism, discrimination, and the need for empathy and understanding.

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