

# Nineteenth Century European Realism PYQ 2022

## Q1. Write a short note on the funeral of Goriot.

**Ans.** The funeral of Goriot is a significant and poignant moment in Honoré de Balzac's novel "Père Goriot." The novel is part of Balzac's larger series of works known as "La Comédie Humaine," which offers a comprehensive portrayal of French society during the early 19th century. The funeral of Goriot, a central character in the novel, holds symbolic and thematic significance.

**In the novel,** Goriot is portrayed as a loving and self-sacrificing father who gives everything he has to his daughters, who in turn show him little to no appreciation. He lives in the same boarding house as the protagonist, Eugène Rastignac, who becomes entangled in the lives of the other residents.

**When Goriot dies,** his funeral becomes a somber event that underscores the theme of societal decay and moral degradation. Despite his daughters' wealth and social status, none of them attend the funeral. This absence highlights their indifference towards their father's death and serves as a critique of the shallow values of the upper class in Balzac's society.

**The funeral scene is a powerful representation of the stark divide between familial bonds and social aspirations.** The lack of respect shown to Goriot in death contrasts sharply with the love and devotion he displayed towards his daughters throughout his life. This moment also serves as a turning point for Rastignac, who witnesses the cold-heartedness of the aristocratic world he aspires to join.

**In summary,** the funeral of Goriot in Balzac's "Père Goriot" serves as a powerful commentary on the moral decay and societal values of the time. It encapsulates the theme of familial sacrifice juxtaposed with the superficiality of social climbing and underscores the novel's exploration of class dynamics and human nature.

## Q2. Comment on the title of the novel Dead Souls.

**Ans.** The title "Dead Souls" carries a deep and thought-provoking symbolism in Nikolai Gogol's novel of the same name. Published in two parts in 1842 and 1844, "Dead Souls" is a satirical work that explores the corruption, greed, and moral decay present in Russian society during the 19th century. The title encapsulates the central theme of the novel while also hinting at its satirical and allegorical nature.

**The term "dead souls" refers to the serfs who have died but are still listed on official documents as if they were alive.** The protagonist of the novel, Chichikov, sets out on a journey to purchase these "dead souls" in order to acquire the deeds to their land. This scheme allows him to build his social and financial standing based on the illusory wealth that the dead souls represent.

**The title operates on multiple levels.** At a literal level, it refers to Chichikov's scheme of buying deceased serfs to manipulate landownership records. Symbolically, the dead souls represent the moral decay, dishonesty, and exploitation prevalent in society, where human lives are commodified and reduced to mere numbers on paper. The title reflects the emptiness and lack of substance underlying the pursuit of material gain.

**Furthermore**, Gogol's use of satire and dark humor shines through the title. The absurdity of counting and trading "dead souls" serves as a commentary on the absurdity of social norms and the disregard for human values in a society obsessed with appearances and status.

**In essence**, the title "Dead Souls" encapsulates the novel's themes of social critique, moral decay, and the hollowness of materialism. It invites readers to reflect on the deeper meaning beneath the surface and prompts them to consider the implications of a society driven by greed and the pursuit of status.

### **Q3. Briefly describe and comment on the significance of Homais in Madame Bovary.**

**Ans.** Homais is a significant character in Gustave Flaubert's novel "Madame Bovary." He is the local pharmacist in the town of Yonville, and his presence carries both narrative and thematic significance throughout the story.

**Homais serves as a representative of the rising bourgeoisie in the mid-19th century French society.** He embodies the values of materialism, ambition, and social climbing. He is driven by a desire for recognition and success, often using his knowledge and influence to advance his own interests.

**Homais also functions as a satirical device in the novel.** Through his character, Flaubert critiques the superficiality, pretentiousness, and hypocrisy of the emerging middle class. His constant desire to appear cultured and enlightened, coupled with his limited understanding of true intellectual depth, exposes the shallowness of his ambitions.

**Furthermore**, Homais plays a role in Emma Bovary's downfall. His advice and influence contribute to her misguided pursuit of romantic ideals and her reckless spending. He supports her in seeking medical treatments beyond her means, which exacerbates her financial troubles and ultimately leads to her tragic end.

**Homais' significance extends beyond his direct interactions with Emma.** His presence reflects the larger societal changes and values of the time. He represents the disruption of traditional norms and the rise of materialistic ambitions that contribute to the characters' disillusionment and tragedies.

**In conclusion**, Homais in "Madame Bovary" is a multi-dimensional character who symbolizes the aspirations, pretensions, and moral shortcomings of the emerging bourgeoisie. His interactions with other characters and his role in the unfolding events highlight the tension between societal expectations and personal desires, contributing to the novel's exploration of individual discontent and societal disillusionment.

### **Q4. Write a short note on Porfiry Petrovich.**

**Ans.** Porfiry Petrovich is a notable character in Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel "Crime and Punishment." He serves as the chief investigator in the case of the murders committed by the novel's protagonist, Rodion Raskolnikov. Porfiry is a complex and intriguing character who plays a pivotal role in the narrative's development.

**Porfiry is portrayed as an astute and perceptive investigator with a keen intellect.** He possesses a deep understanding of human psychology and uses this insight to manipulate and engage with the people he encounters, particularly Raskolnikov. His approach is characterized by psychological probing rather than relying solely on concrete evidence. He employs an unconventional method of indirectly pressuring suspects to confess, all the while maintaining an air of congeniality.

**One of the most significant aspects of Porfiry's character** is his philosophical and psychological engagement with Raskolnikov's theory of the "extraordinary man" who is beyond conventional moral laws. Porfiry uses these discussions to subtly challenge Raskolnikov's beliefs and provoke him into revealing more about himself.

**Porfiry's interactions with Raskolnikov serve as a dynamic cat-and-mouse game,** where he skillfully navigates Raskolnikov's mental state and gradually pushes him toward confession. His approach is not only a means of solving the crime but also a way to explore the depths of human nature and morality.

**In addition to his role as an investigator,** Porfiry serves as a symbolic figure representing the complexities of morality, justice, and guilt. He embodies the rational and empathetic side of law enforcement, contrasting with Raskolnikov's inner turmoil and moral conflict.

**In conclusion,** Porfiry Petrovich in "Crime and Punishment" is a multifaceted character who serves as both an investigator and a philosophical counterpart to Raskolnikov. His keen intellect, psychological insight, and methodical approach make him a compelling presence in the novel, highlighting the intricate interplay between crime, morality, and the human psyche.

#### **Q5. Briefly describe Belinsky's critique of Gogol in his "Letter to Gogol"**

**Ans.** Vissarion Belinsky's "Letter to Gogol" is a significant literary critique in which he expressed his thoughts and concerns about Nikolai Gogol's work, particularly "Dead Souls." Belinsky was an influential Russian literary critic of the 19th century and played a role in shaping the direction of Russian literature.

**In his letter,** Belinsky praised Gogol's talents and originality as a writer but also offered a critique of what he saw as Gogol's inconsistency in portraying Russian society. Belinsky appreciated Gogol's ability to capture the absurdities and contradictions of Russian life, particularly in his satirical portrayal of characters and situations. He admired Gogol's ability to reveal the inherent flaws in social structures and human behavior.

**However,** Belinsky also expressed his disappointment in Gogol's seeming departure from the realistic portrayal of Russian life in the latter part of "Dead Souls." He felt that Gogol's shift towards a more mystical and spiritual direction, as seen in the unfinished second part of the novel, detracted from the social critique that he believed was essential for Russian literature.

**Belinsky's critique reflects his belief in the role of literature as a mirror of society.** He believed that literature should expose social injustices and critique societal norms. His concerns stemmed from his desire for Gogol to continue his insightful portrayal of Russian reality, rather than veering into metaphysical realms.

**In essence**, Belinsky's "Letter to Gogol" is a nuanced critique that highlights his appreciation for Gogol's talent while also urging him to stay grounded in his portrayal of Russian society's complexities. This letter not only showcases the dynamics between writers and critics during the era but also sheds light on the evolving nature of Russian literature during the 19th century.

**Q6. Critically analyse the position of women in Paris in Balzac's Old Man Goriot, particularly in relation to their class and social milieu.**

**Ans.** In Honoré de Balzac's novel "Old Man Goriot," the position of women in Paris is intricately woven into the fabric of the narrative, revealing a complex interplay of class, social milieu, and gender dynamics. Balzac's portrayal of women in the novel highlights the stark disparities between different classes and the limitations placed upon women in 19th-century Parisian society.

#### **Class Divide and Women's Roles:**

Balzac's Paris is a city divided into distinct classes, each with its own set of norms and expectations. Women from different classes experience vastly different lives. Madame de Beauséant, a high-ranking aristocrat, embodies the struggles of upper-class women to maintain their social standing and reputation. Her personal sacrifices and her ill-fated love affair with a commoner demonstrate the **stringent rules governing the conduct of elite women**.

**In contrast**, the women from lower classes, such as Victorine Taillefer and Delphine de Nucingen, navigate a world of financial constraints and societal pressures. Delphine's marriage to a wealthy banker reflects the transactional nature of such unions, where economic considerations often take precedence over emotional connections.

#### **Marriage and Social Mobility:**

Marriage is a recurring theme that showcases the potential for social mobility through strategic alliances. Women like Delphine de Nucingen marry into wealth, striving to climb the social ladder. However, this mobility often comes at the cost of personal happiness, as marriages based on financial gain may lack genuine affection and understanding.

#### **Limited Autonomy and Emotional Suppression:**

Across classes, women's autonomy is limited by societal norms. They are expected to adhere to rigid roles as wives, mothers, or socialites. Even women of means, like Delphine, are bound by conventions that suppress their emotional desires. In a society that values appearances and social reputation, women often find themselves trapped in situations that demand emotional restraint.

#### **Moral Ambiguity and Survival Strategies:**

Balzac's portrayal of women also underscores the moral ambiguity that arises from the need to navigate a society driven by materialism and ambition. Madame Vauquer's boarding house, populated by women from various backgrounds, showcases how economic necessity drives some women to compromise their principles. Characters like Madame Vauquer and Madame Couture demonstrate the lengths women may go to secure their survival and maintain a semblance of respectability.

**In conclusion**, Balzac's "Old Man Goriot" presents a multidimensional depiction of women in 19th-century Paris. The novel highlights the power dynamics, class divisions, and societal constraints that shape women's lives and choices. Through characters from various social strata, Balzac underscores the struggles, sacrifices, and compromises that women make within a society marked by rigid gender roles and a relentless pursuit of social status.

**Q7. Comment on the differences between Part 1 and Part 2 of Dead Souls. What is the significance of Part 2 being incomplete?**

**Ans.** "Dead Souls" by Nikolai Gogol is divided into two parts, with notable differences between them in terms of style, tone, and narrative direction. These differences reflect Gogol's evolving intentions for the novel and contribute to its unique structure and impact.

**Part 1:**

Part 1 of "Dead Souls" is more cohesive and follows a linear narrative structure. It introduces the protagonist, Chichikov, and his scheme to buy "dead souls" from landowners, which will allow him to acquire wealth and social status. The focus is on satirical commentary on rural Russian society, bureaucracy, and human nature. The character interactions are more closely tied to Chichikov's journey and the unfolding of his scheme.

**Part 2:**

Part 2, which remains incomplete, takes a different turn. It departs from the linear narrative and delves into more philosophical and spiritual themes. Gogol's writing becomes more experimental, and the tone shifts to a more introspective and metaphysical exploration. The narrative becomes fragmented, and characters from Part 1 are often seen in isolation, engaging in philosophical monologues. Chichikov's character transformation and spiritual awakening become central themes, overshadowing the original plot.

**Significance of Part 2 Being Incomplete:**

The incomplete status of Part 2 adds an air of mystery and ambiguity to the novel. Gogol's decision to leave the second part unfinished has prompted much speculation and interpretation among readers and scholars.

**My interpretation is that Gogol's artistic and ideological journey underwent a transformation between writing the two parts.** He appears to move away from the social and economic satire of Part 1 to more existential and philosophical explorations in Part 2. The incomplete nature of the second part leaves readers with unanswered questions and invites them to reflect on the deeper meanings of Chichikov's spiritual journey and the metaphysical themes explored.

**Additionally**, the unfinished nature of Part 2 serves as a commentary on the incompleteness and imperfection of life itself. The absence of closure mirrors the uncertainties and complexities of human existence, emphasizing the ephemeral nature of material pursuits and societal expectations.

**In conclusion**, the differences between Part 1 and Part 2 of "Dead Souls" highlight Gogol's shifting intentions and thematic explorations. The incomplete status of Part 2 adds layers of meaning and invites readers to engage with the text on multiple levels, contemplating the transformation of characters and the philosophical underpinnings of the narrative.

**Q8. "More than to fulfill desires, money enables people to conceive them." Critically analyze the relevance of money in Madame Bovary.**

**Ans.** In Gustave Flaubert's novel "Madame Bovary," the relevance of money is a recurring theme that underlines the characters' desires, aspirations, and eventual downfall. The quote "More than to fulfill desires, money enables people to conceive them" resonates deeply in the context of the novel, as characters' relationships with money shape their attitudes, motivations, and actions.

**Emma Bovary's Unfulfilled Desires:**

Emma Bovary, the protagonist, epitomizes the quote's sentiment. Money, for Emma, serves as a means to escape her mundane provincial life and fulfill her romantic and extravagant dreams. Money enables her to conceive a life of luxury, opulence, and social status, mirroring the romantic novels she reads. Her dissatisfaction with her reality drives her to pursue relationships and indulge in expenses beyond her means.

**Materialism and Social Aspirations:**

The novel also portrays the broader societal influence of money. The desire for wealth and social mobility is evident in characters like Charles Bovary and Monsieur Lheureux. Charles, Emma's husband, is content with modest means, while Monsieur Lheureux, a shrewd merchant, capitalizes on others' desires by offering goods on credit. Both characters highlight the extent to which money can shape individual motivations and the pursuit of status.

**The Perils of Consumerism:**

Emma's escalating debts and her relationship with Monsieur Lheureux exemplify the dangerous allure of consumerism driven by the illusion of wealth. The idea that money enables the conception of desires is evident as Emma's increasing debts allow her to indulge in extravagant luxuries, creating a cycle of financial ruin.

**Emptiness and Disillusionment:**

As the novel progresses, it becomes clear that the pursuit of materialistic desires and the reliance on money have profound consequences. The disconnect between Emma's fantasies and her reality leads to a sense of emptiness and disillusionment. Money becomes a tool for her escapism, but it ultimately fails to provide the fulfillment she seeks.

**Relevance of the Quote:**

The quote's relevance is profound in the novel, as characters' relationships with money go beyond fulfilling existing desires. Money becomes a catalyst for their aspirations, influencing their thoughts, decisions, and actions. The pursuit of dreams beyond their means results in disillusionment, moral degradation, and tragedy.

**In conclusion**, the relevance of money in "Madame Bovary" underscores how the desire for wealth and status shapes characters' motivations and choices. The quote aptly encapsulates the idea that money not only fulfills desires but also plays a pivotal role in conceiving them. Flaubert's exploration of materialism and its consequences serves as a cautionary tale, highlighting the complexities of human desires and the often detrimental role that money can play in their pursuit.

**Q9. " Crime and Punishment is focused on the solution of an enigma: the mystery of Raskolnikov's motivation. For Raskolnikov himself, as it turns out, discovers that he does not understand why he killed..." Discuss.**

**Ans.** "Crime and Punishment" by Fyodor Dostoevsky is indeed centered around the enigma of Raskolnikov's motivation for committing murder. The novel delves into the complexities of his psyche, his internal struggles, and his quest for self-understanding. As the story unfolds, Raskolnikov's own realization that he does not fully comprehend his own motives becomes a pivotal aspect of the narrative.

**Raskolnikov, the protagonist**, initially justifies his crime as an act of "extraordinary" men who have the right to transgress conventional morality for a higher purpose. He believes that he can achieve greatness and alleviate poverty by ridding society of the "worthless" old pawnbroker. However, as the novel progresses, his actions haunt him, and he grapples with guilt, paranoia, and psychological turmoil.

**The turning point comes when Raskolnikov meets Sonia Marmeladov**, a devout and compassionate young woman. Sonia's moral clarity and unwavering faith in God challenge Raskolnikov's intellectualized perspective on morality. Through his interactions with Sonia, Raskolnikov begins to confront the discrepancies between his rationalizations and his emotional turmoil. He recognizes that he is incapable of fully understanding or justifying his crime.

This realization is a profound moment of self-awareness for Raskolnikov. It underscores the complexity of human nature and the limitations of intellect in comprehending the depths of one's motives. Raskolnikov's internal struggle to reconcile his theories with the reality of his emotional state reflects the novel's exploration of guilt, redemption, and the human psyche.

The enigma of Raskolnikov's motivation is not fully resolved in a neat, conventional sense. Rather, the novel invites readers to grapple with the complexity of his character and the broader themes of morality and punishment. Raskolnikov's inner journey of self-discovery and his eventual confession demonstrate the transformative power of facing one's own moral ambiguities.

**In conclusion**, "Crime and Punishment" revolves around the enigma of Raskolnikov's motivation for murder, exploring his intellectual justifications and emotional turmoil. His realization that he does not fully understand his own actions highlights the intricacies of human psychology and moral decision-making. The novel's emphasis on self-awareness, guilt, and redemption lends depth and complexity to its exploration of the human condition.

**Q10. "Balzac and Stendhal regard as typical only figures of exceptional qualities, who mirror all the essential aspects of some definite stage of development, evolutionary tendency or social group". Discuss the distinction between the typical and the average that Lukacs draws on in the above quote.**

**Ans.** In the quote provided, Georg Lukács is discussing the literary approach of Honoré de Balzac and Stendhal, particularly in relation to their portrayal of characters. The quote highlights the distinction between the "typical" and the "average" in their works. **Let's explore this distinction further:**

#### **Typical Characters:**

Balzac and Stendhal both focus on characters who are "typical" rather than "average." A "typical" character embodies essential qualities or characteristics that represent a specific stage of development, an evolutionary tendency, or a social group. These characters are not ordinary or average individuals; rather, they are exceptional and representative of certain traits or ideas.

**These typical characters serve as archetypes that exemplify broader societal themes, norms, or conflicts.** Through their experiences and interactions, these characters reflect the larger forces at play in the society or period depicted in the novel. These figures become symbolic and illustrative of the dynamics and tensions within a specific context.

#### **Average Characters:**

In contrast, the concept of the "average" character refers to individuals who represent the everyday, mundane, and unexceptional aspects of society. They do not possess extraordinary qualities or emblematic traits. Instead, they are more representative of the general population and may not reflect significant societal trends or developmental stages.

**Unlike the "typical" characters, the "average" characters do not stand out as exemplars of specific social groups or evolutionary tendencies.** They do not necessarily play a central role in advancing the thematic concerns of the novel but instead represent the more ordinary aspects of life.

#### **Lukács' Interpretation:**

Lukács' quote points to the fact that Balzac and Stendhal focus on characters who are not average but rather embody the "typical" qualities that encapsulate larger themes and developments in society. By choosing to depict characters with exceptional qualities that mirror broader societal tendencies, these authors create narratives that are rich in symbolism and reflect the complexities of their respective eras.

**In essence,** Balzac and Stendhal's preference for "typical" characters over "average" characters allows them to delve deeper into the social, cultural, and psychological intricacies of the worlds they portray. These characters become vehicles for exploring and critiquing the various dimensions of the society they inhabit, making their works not just about individual stories but also about the larger human condition.