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Department of English

Semester V: Classical Literature and History of English Literature

1. What are the basic elements of tragedy, according to Aristotle?

According to Aristotle's *Poetics*, a perfect tragedy consists of six basic elements, ranked in order of importance:

The Six Elements

- **Plot (*Mythos*):** The arrangement of incidents. It is the most important element, requiring a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- **Character (*Ethos*):** The moral element that reveals a person's choices. The tragic hero must be noble but flawed.
- **Thought (*Dianoia*):** The themes, arguments, and insights revealed through the speeches of the characters.
- **Diction (*Lexis*):** The choice and arrangement of words, including the use of metaphors and verse.
- **Melody (*Melos*):** The musical element, primarily delivered by the Chorus, which should be fully integrated into the play.
- **Spectacle (*Opsis*):** The visual theatrical production, including costumes and scenery. Aristotle ranked this lowest.

2. What was the significance of the Athenian city?

Classical Athens was the ultimate superpower of ancient Greek culture, politics, and intellect, serving as the foundational cradle of Western civilization.

For these below mentioned reasons classical Athens has a significant status in the European culture and civilization:

- **Democracy:** Created the world's first direct democracy (*demokratia*), allowing citizens to vote directly on laws.
- **Philosophy:** Birthed Western philosophical thought through iconic thinkers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.
- **Theatre:** Invented both tragedy and comedy, hosting massive dramatic festivals like the City Dionysia.
- **Architecture:** Set Western architectural standards with iconic structures like the Parthenon on the Acropolis.
- **Maritime Empire:** Controlled the Delian League, using its massive naval fleet to dominate Mediterranean trade and politics.

3. What is an epic?

According to **M.H. Abrams** in *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, an **epic** (or heroic poem) is a long verse narrative on a serious subject, told in a formal and elevated style, and centered on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation, or the human race.

Abrams categorizes epics into two distinct historical types based on their mode of creation:

- **Traditional (Primary / Folk) Epics:** Shaped by a literary artist out of historical or legendary poems handed down by oral tradition. Examples include *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, and *Beowulf*.
- **Literary (Secondary) Epics:** Composed by poets who deliberately imitate the traditional form. Examples include Virgil's *Aeneid* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

4. What is the difference between primary and secondary epic?

The fundamental difference between a primary and a secondary epic lies in its **origin and composition**: primary epics originate from oral traditions, while secondary epics are written compositions created from the start by a single author.

- **evolution vs. Imitation:** Primary epics evolve naturally out of the folklore and shared history of a culture. Secondary epics are deliberate artistic imitations of those older primary forms.
- **The Role of the Audience:** Primary epics were composed to be performed aloud before a live audience, utilizing repetitive phrases (epithets) to help the poet memorize the lines. Secondary epics were created to be read silently from a page by a literate audience.
- **National vs. Universal Scope:** Primary epics celebrate national origins and tribal survival. Secondary epics often carry a broader, self-conscious philosophical purpose, such as Milton's desire to "justify the ways of God to men."

5. What is mythos or plot in Aristotle's Poetics?

In Aristotle's *Poetics*, **Mythos** (translated as **Plot**) is defined as the "arrangement of the incidents." Aristotle identifies it as the most important of the six elements of tragedy, famously calling it the "**soul of a tragedy**."

Core Concepts of Mythos

- **Structure:** A plot must be a whole, with a clear **beginning, middle, and end**.
- **Unity of Action:** Every incident must be organically linked. If an event can be removed without ruining the story, it does not belong.
- **Probability and Necessity:** Events must follow each other logically based on cause-and-effect, not by random chance or coincidence.
- **Magnitude:** The plot must be long enough to show a character's realistic downfall, but short enough for the audience to remember completely.

6. Discuss Oedipus Rex as Greek tragedy.

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle held up Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* (also known as *Oedipus the King*) as the absolute, perfect model of a Greek tragedy. It fulfils every structural, thematic, and emotional requirement of the genre.

The Perfection of Mythos (Plot)

Aristotle called the plot the "soul of tragedy," and *Oedipus Rex* is structurally flawless:

- **Unity of Action:** The entire play focuses on a single goal—finding the murderer of King Laius to lift the plague from Thebes. There are no subplots or filler scenes.
- **The Aristotelian Unities:** The story unfolds within the span of a single day (**Unity of Time**) and takes place entirely outside the royal palace of Thebes (**Unity of Place**).
- **Cause and Effect:** Every revelation leads logically and inevitably to the next, driven by human inquiry rather than random chance.

Simultaneous Reversal and Recognition

Aristotle argued that the most powerful plots feature **Peripeteia (Reversal of fortune)** and **Anagnorisis (Recognition of truth)** happening at the exact same moment.

- **The Climax:** When the Corinthian messenger arrives to relieve Oedipus of his fear of the prophecy, the information he provides accidentally reveals that Oedipus is actually Laius's son.

- In a single flash, Oedipus falls from the highest peak of kingly pride to the lowest depth of ruin, realizing he has murdered his father and married his mother.

3. The Tragic Hero and Hamartia

Oedipus perfectly embodies the Aristotelian tragic hero:

- **Noble Stature:** He is a king, renowned for his intellect, and deeply loved by his people for saving them from the Sphinx.
- **Hamartia (Tragic Flaw / Miscalculation):** His downfall is not caused by pure malice, but by a combination of *hubris* (excessive pride) and his well-intentioned, relentless pursuit of the truth. His anger toward the blind prophet Tiresias and Creon highlights his short temper.

Fate vs. Free Will

A defining element of Greek tragedy is the inescapable power of the gods and fate:

- The play dramatizes cosmic irony. The very steps Oedipus and his parents took to escape the prophecy (abandoning the baby, fleeing Corinth) are the exact actions that ensured its fulfilment.
- While his fate was predestined, his actions are driven by his own free will, making his ultimate downfall tragic rather than merely sad.

5. Catharsis (Pity and Fear)

The play perfectly evokes *catharsis*—the purging of the audience's negative emotions:

- **Pity:** The audience feels deep pity for Oedipus because his intentions were noble, yet his punishment is devastatingly severe.
- **Fear:** The audience experiences terror realizing that if a man as wise, powerful, and virtuous as Oedipus can be completely destroyed by fate, no human being is safe.

7. What King Oedipus' tragic flaw?

King Oedipus' tragic flaw (*hamartia*) is **hubris**, which means excessive pride and arrogance.

How His Flaw Defeats Him

- **Defiance of the Gods:** He believes he can outrun and outsmart the divine prophecies of Apollo.

- **Overconfidence in Reason:** He relies entirely on his own intellect, believing that because he solved the Sphinx's riddle, he can solve any problem alone.
- **Blinded by Anger:** His pride makes him quick-tempered. He rashly kills a stranger at a crossroads (who turns out to be his father) and fiercely accuses innocent people, like Tiresias and Creon, of treason when they tell him truths he does not want to hear.
Ultimately, his stubborn pride drives him to relentlessly pursue the truth of his identity, leading directly to his horrific downfall.

8. What is *tragodia* and how it is related to Greek tragedy?

Tragodia is the ancient Greek word from which the modern English word "tragedy" originates. It literally translates to "**goat song**".

It is broken down into two root words:

- **Tragos** : meaning "goat".
- **Oide** : meaning "song" or "ode"

Historians and scholars offer three primary theories for why this serious art form was named after goats:

- **Religious Sacrifice:** Early Greek tragedies evolved from festivals honouring **Dionysus**, the god of wine, theatre, and fertility. During these religious rituals, a goat (an animal sacred to Dionysus) was sacrificed while the chorus chanted a ritual lament.
- **The Competition Prize:** In early Athens, dramatic competitions were held at the *City Dionysia* festival. The legendary performer **Thespis** won the very first competition in 534 BCE. It is highly believed that the grand prize awarded for the best play or performance was a live goat.
- **The Costumes of the Chorus:** The earliest performers and chorus members used to dress up in **goatskins** or wear masks to resemble *satyrs* (mythological, goat-like companions of Dionysus) while singing their choral hymns, known as dithyrambs.

As the art form evolved through playwrights like Sophocles and Aeschylus, *tragodia* shifted away from its raw, goat-related ritual origins. It grew into the formal, sophisticated dramatic genre we recognize today—focusing on the noble downfall of mythic heroes

9. Discuss Miracle play.

A **Miracle play** (also known as a **Saint's play**) is a type of vernacular drama that developed in medieval Europe. It focused entirely on the **lives, miracles, and martyrdom of Christian saints** or the divine interventions of the Virgin Mary.

Along with Mystery plays (which told Bible stories) and Morality plays (which used allegory to teach virtues), Miracle plays were a cornerstone of medieval theatre.

Key Features of Miracle Plays

- **The Subject Matter:** The plots revolved around real or legendary acts of saints. The most popular subjects were **Saint Nicholas** (the patron saint of children and sailors) and **the Virgin Mary**, who frequently appeared at the climax of the play to save a sinner.
- **The Dramatic Structure:** Most Miracle plays followed a strict **three-part structure**:
 1. A character commits a terrible **sin** or faces extreme **suffering**.
 2. The character prays to a saint or the Virgin Mary for help.
 3. A spectacular **miracle** occurs, resulting in divine rescue and spiritual conversion.
- **The Transition to the Vernacular:** Originally, these plays were performed in Latin by monks inside churches. By the 12th and 13th centuries, they moved outside to the marketplaces and were performed in the **vernacular** (the local everyday language, like Middle English or Old French) so regular townspeople could understand them.
- **Spectacle and Special Effects:** Because they depicted divine interventions, medieval actors used creative stagecraft to show "miracles," such as secret trapdoors, sudden bursts of smoke, or rigging to make actors look like they were flying.

10. Discuss Mystery play.

A **Mystery play** (derived from the Latin *ministerium*, meaning "occupation" or "craft") is a major genre of medieval drama that dramatized **stories from the Christian Bible**.

Unlike Miracle plays, which focused on the lives of saints, Mystery plays covered the entire biblical history of humanity, from the **Creation of the world to the Last Judgment**.

Key Features of Mystery Plays

- **Biblical Scope:** Plays were organized into massive chronological sequences called **cycles**. A single cycle could include dozens of individual plays covering the Fall of Lucifer, Noah's Flood, the Nativity, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection.
- **Produced by Trade Guilds:** The word "mystery" also refers to the **trade guilds** (associations of craftsmen) that produced them. Guilds took responsibility for specific plays that often humorously matched their professions:
 - The **Shipwrights** or Water-leaders staged *Noah's Ark*.
 - The **Bakers** staged *The Last Supper*.
 - The **Goldsmiths** staged the *Adoration of the Magi*.
- **Movable Pageant Wagons:** The plays were performed outdoors during religious festivals, most notably **Corpus Christi**. Audiences stood at various stations across a town while actors performed on double-decker **pageant wagons** that moved from street to street like a modern parade.
- **Blend of Comedy and Piety:** While the core message was deeply religious, medieval writers added everyday humour, local slang, and comedy to keep the crowd entertained. A famous example is *The Second Shepherds' Play*, where a comical sheep-thief tries to hide a stolen sheep by disguising it as a newborn human baby in a cradle.

11. Discuss Morality play.

A **Morality play** is the third major genre of medieval drama (alongside Mystery and Miracle plays). Instead of staging Bible stories or the lives of saints, Morality plays use **allegory to teach a moral lesson** about human salvation.

These plays were highly popular in the 15th and 16th centuries, serving as a bridge between medieval religious drama and professional Elizabethan theatre.

Key Features of Morality Plays

- **The Everyman Protagonist:** The main character represents **all of humanity**. They are usually given universal names like "Everyman," "Mankind," or "Humanum Genus."
- **Allegorical Characters:** The supporting characters are personifications of abstract concepts. The protagonist is caught in a spiritual tug-of-war between:
 - **The Virtues:** Mercy, Justice, Good Deeds, Conscience, and Charity.

- **The Vices:** Greed, Pride, Gluttony, and the Seven Deadly Sins.
- **The Universal Plot:** The storyline almost always follows the same spiritual journey:
 1. The protagonist is innocent or ordinary.
 2. They are tempted by Vice and fall into sin.
 3. They experience a spiritual awakening or face death.
 4. Repentance leads to salvation through the help of the Virtues.
- **Professional Actors:** Unlike Mystery and Miracle plays—which were community events staged by local trade guilds—Morality plays were often performed by small, **professional troupes of traveling actors** who performed in market squares, inn yards, and noble halls.

12. What is university wit?

The "**University Wits**" is a term used to describe a prominent group of late 16th-century English playwrights and pamphleteers who transformed the landscape of Elizabethan drama. They are widely recognized for laying the structural and poetic foundations that paved the way for William Shakespeare.

Key Characteristics

- **The Origin of the Name:** They were called "University Wits" because they were highly educated, secular intellectuals who held degrees from the prestigious universities of **Oxford or Cambridge**. The phrase itself was actually coined much later, by the 19th-century literary historian **George Saintsbury**.
- **Impact on Drama:** Before their emergence, English theatre relied heavily on simple medieval morality plays and interludes. The University Wits infused classical learning, sophisticated wit, structural coherence, and heroic themes into public theatre.
- **The Shakespeare Connection:** As the literary elite of London, they professionalized playwriting. Some members notably looked down on Shakespeare initially because he lacked a formal university degree.
- **Examples:** Christopher Marlowe, Robert Greene, Thomas Nashe, John Lyly, George Peele, Thomas Lodge and Thomas Kyd.

13. What is comedy of humours?

The "**Comedy of Humours**" is a dramatic genre popularized in **late 16th-century Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre** by the playwright **Ben Jonson**. In this type of comedy, each character is governed by a singular,

overriding personality trait—known as a "humour"—that dictates all of their behaviour and drives the plot forward.

The genre is based on the **ancient medical theory of Humourism** (developed by Hippocrates and Galen). According to this theory, the human body and temperament are ruled by the balance of **four primary fluids (humours)**:

- **Blood (Sanguine)**: Causes an excess of courage, optimism, or excessive cheerfulness.
- **Phlegm (Phlegmatic)**: Results in apathy, laziness, or a dull, unemotional personality.
- **Yellow Bile (Choleric)**: Leads to an angry, impatient, and hot-tempered disposition.
- **Black Bile (Melancholic)**: Produces deep depression, moodiness, or obsessive brooding.

Key Characteristics

- **Flawed Archetypes**: Instead of developing multi-dimensional, complex characters, Jonson created highly exaggerated caricatures. Characters were often named after their dominant trait (e.g., *Morose* for a man who hates noise).
- **Social Satire**: The primary purpose of a Comedy of Humours was to hold a mirror up to contemporary society. By making fun of characters driven by obsession, greed, or vanity, the plays aimed to correct and cure social vices.
- **The Climax & Resolution**: The plot usually involves normal characters setting traps or tricks to expose the eccentric characters. Once the obsessed character's "humour" is publicly mocked or broken, balance is restored.

Every Man in His Humour, Every Man Out of His Humour, The Alchemist & Volpone

14. What is the difference between classical and English Renaissance drama?

The core difference between the two is their approach to rules: Classical drama strictly followed rigid structural rules, while English Renaissance drama broke those rules to prioritize narrative freedom, action, and emotional depth.

Direct Comparison

Feature	Classical Drama	English Renaissance Drama
The Three Unities	Strictly obeyed the Unities of Action (one plot), Time (within 24 hours), and Place (one setting).	Completely rejected the unities. Plots span years, feature multiple subplots, and jump across countries.
Genre Purity	Strictly separated. A play was either a pure tragedy or a pure comedy; mixing them was forbidden.	Tragicomedies are common. Comic relief characters (like fools or gravediggers) are routinely inserted into deep tragedies.
On-Stage Violence	Forbidden. Murders, battles, and deaths happened off-stage and were reported to the audience by a Messenger.	Showcased explicitly. Duels, stabbings, blindings, and executions happened live on stage to thrill the audience.
The Chorus	Central element. A collective group (the Chorus) narrated the background, commented on themes, and represented society.	Minimal or absent. Replaced by internal monologues (soliloquies) where individual characters spoke their thoughts directly to the audience.
Character Focus	Focused on Fate and the Gods . Characters were often noble puppets trapped by divine destiny.	Focused on Human Psychology and Agency . Characters possessed free will, complex inner conflicts, and distinct human flaws.

Performance Space	Performed in massive, open-air amphitheatres with masked actors using formalized, stylized movements.	Performed in commercial, thrust-stage theatres (like The Globe)

15. What is metaphysical poetry?

Metaphysical poetry is a term used to describe a distinct style of 17th-century English poetry characterized by its highly intellectual, witty, and deeply philosophical approach to themes like love, religion, and morality. The writers of this movement rejected the smooth, idealized, and sweet love poetry of the Elizabethan era, choosing instead to write poems that were intellectually challenging, psychological, and often argumentative. Like the "University Wits," the phrase was not used by the poets themselves; it was coined much later by the 18th-century critic **Samuel Johnson**, who used it with a hint of criticism to describe poets who wanted to "show their learning" rather than write pure poetry.

Key Characteristics

- **The Metaphysical Conceit:** This is the defining feature of the genre. A conceit is an elaborate, highly unusual **comparison between two completely dissimilar things**. For example, comparing two lovers' souls to the twin feet of a mathematician's compass.
- **Intellectual Wit and Argument:** These poems are rarely just emotional outpourings. They are structured like logical, clever, and often paradoxical arguments designed to convince the reader (or a lover) of a specific point.
- **Colloquial and Abrupt Language:** Instead of smooth, rhythmic verses, these poets used conversational, rough, and direct speech patterns, often starting a poem with an abrupt exclamation (e.g., "*For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love*").
- **Fusion of Passion and Intellect:** The poets used advanced scientific, geographical, medical, and philosophical theories of the 17th century to express intense personal emotions like religious devotion or romantic love.

John Donne, George Herbert, Andrew Marvell, Henry Vaughan & Richard Crashaw.

16. Discuss the literary significance of the Age of Chaucer.

The **Age of Chaucer** (spanning roughly 1340 to 1400) holds an unparalleled literary significance as it marks the **birth of modern English**

literature. Named after its most towering figure, Geoffrey Chaucer, this era served as a vital bridge transitioning from the medieval mindset to the early dawn of the Renaissance.

Legitimising the Vernacular: Chaucer made the deliberate, game-changing decision to write his masterpieces in the **East Midland (London) dialect**.

□ **Vivid Characterisation:** In *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer created complex, multi-dimensional, and highly relatable characters.

□ **Social Satire:** Rather than moralising blindly, literature from this period used wit and irony to hold a mirror to medieval society. It fearlessly critiqued the corruption within the Catholic Church, changing the tone of societal commentary forever.

rhyme Royal: He introduced the *Rhyme Royal*, a seven-line stanza form (ababbcc) that elevated the musicality of English verse.

17. What is revenge tragedy?

A **revenge tragedy** is a dramatic genre in which the dominant motive is retaliation for a real or imagined injury. Originating in its modern form during the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, the plot typically centres on a protagonist who takes the law into their own hands to avenge the murder of a loved one, often guided by a ghost.

Core Characteristics of Revenge Tragedy

For a play to be classified as a classic revenge tragedy, it generally includes the following conventions:

- **A Ghostly Visitation:** The spirit of the murdered victim typically appears to a close relative to reveal the killer and demand vengeance.
- **The Avenger's Madness:** The protagonist often feigns madness to safely plot their revenge, though the line between fake and real insanity frequently blurs as the plot progresses.
- **A Play-within-a-Play:** The avenger often uses a theatrical performance or a disguised masquerade within the story to trap, expose, or execute the murderers.
- **A Rising Body Count:** The plays are notoriously bloody, featuring torture, execution, and mutilations, culminating in a final scene where almost all major characters—including the avenger—die.
- **The Failure of Justice:** The state's legal and political systems are depicted as corrupt or powerless, leaving the avenger with no choice but to seek personal justice.

***The Spanish Tragedy* by Thomas Kyd (1587):** The foundational blueprint of the genre. It established the tropes of the ghost, the hesitation of the avenger (Hieronimo), and the climactic play-within-a-play.

18. Why was Chaucer called the father of modern English poetry?

Geoffrey Chaucer is called the **father of modern English poetry** because he single-handedly elevated a local, spoken dialect into a **prestigious literary language**, setting the technical and stylistic foundations for all English poetry that followed. Before him, English was considered too crude for serious literature.

His transformative contributions can be broken down into four major areas:

1. The Linguistic Victory: Choosing English over French and Latin

In 14th-century England, the language of the court and aristocracy was Anglo-Norman French, while the language of scholarship, law, and the Church was Latin. English was seen as a vulgar tongue spoken only by commoners.

- By choosing to write his major works exclusively in the **East Midland (London) dialect**, Chaucer proved that English possessed the capacity for supreme beauty, complexity, and artistic elegance.
- His success established this specific dialect as the **standard written form of English**, which directly evolved into the modern English language we use today.

19. What is Renaissance?

The **Renaissance** (literally meaning "**rebirth**" in French) was a fervent period of European cultural, artistic, political, and scientific rebirth following the Middle Ages. Spanning roughly from the **14th century to the 17th century**, it began in **Florence, Italy**, and gradually spread across the rest of Europe.

Rather than a sudden event, the Renaissance was a profound shift in mindset that bridged the gap between the medieval world and modern history.

Core Pillars of the Renaissance

- **Humanism:** This was the defining philosophical engine of the era. Instead of viewing human existence solely through the lens of religious dogma and

original sin, Humanism emphasized the value, potential, agency, and achievements of human beings.

- **Revival of Classical Antiquity:** Thinkers and artists passionately rediscovered, translated, and studied the long-lost philosophy, literature, and art of **Ancient Greece and Rome**.
- **Empiricism and Science:** The period marked a shift toward observation, experimentation, and logical reasoning, paving the way for the **Scientific Revolution**.

20. What is mock-epic poetry?

A **mock-epic** (also known as a **mock-heroic**) is a satirical literary form that treats a trivial, everyday subject with the grand, elevated style of a traditional epic poem.

By applying majestic language, heroic meters, and divine intervention to ridiculous or petty situations, the poet creates a sharp, hilarious contrast that **satirizes the superficiality of contemporary society**.

The Recipe for a Mock-Epic: High Style vs. Low Subject

To mock the classical epics (like Homer's *Iliad* or Virgil's *Aeneid*), writers meticulously copied their structural formulas but applied them to mundane things:

- **The Trivial Subject:** Instead of a devastating decade-long war or the founding of an empire, the plot centres on a minor dispute, a petty argument, or an elite social gathering.
- **Invocation of the Muse:** The poet opens by solemnly begging a goddess or muse for inspiration to tell a story that is utterly ridiculous.
- **Epic Similes and Grand Speeches:** Characters deliver long, passionate, heroic speeches over trivial matters, comparing mundane everyday items to weapons of war.
- **Supernatural Machinery:** Traditional gods, angels, or demons are replaced by minor, petty spirits (like sylphs, fairies, or gnomes) who intervene in human affairs.
- **The Epic Battle:** Instead of bloody sword fights between legendary warriors, the characters engage in verbal sparring, card games, or polite social squabbles treated as life-or-death warfare.

The Absolute Masterpiece: *The Rape of the Lock*

21. What Restoration comedy?

Restoration comedy (also known as the **Comedy of Manners**) refers to English comedies written and performed during the Restoration period from 1660 to 1710.

When King Charles II was restored to the English throne in 1660, he immediately reopened the theatres, which had been banned for 18 years under Puritan rule. The drama that emerged was fast-paced, highly sexualized, witty, and explicitly designed to entertain the cynical, aristocratic court.

Core Characteristics of Restoration Comedy

- **The Comedy of Manners:** The plots focus on the sophisticated manners, social codes, and artificial behaviours of the wealthy upper class.
- **Wit and "Badinage":** The primary currency of these plays is sharp, fast-paced, and highly intellectual verbal sparring. Characters are judged by their ability to deliver clever repartee.
- **Sexual Openness and Cynicism:** Moving far away from Puritan morality, these plays celebrate extra-marital affairs, sexual conquest, and seduction, while treating marriage as a mere financial transaction.
- **The Rise of Actresses:** For the first time in English history, **women were legally allowed to perform on stage**. This completely revolutionized the theatre, leading to the creation of bolder female characters and popular "breeches roles" (where actresses dressed as men).

22.What is comedy of manners?

A **comedy of manners** is a highly witty and satirical form of drama that **mocks the manners, artificial social codes, and superficial behaviours of the upper social classes**.

While it reached its absolute peak as **Restoration comedy** between 1660 and 1710, the "comedy of manners" is an overarching genre that has been successfully revived across different eras of literary history.

Core Characteristics of the Genre

- **Wit as Currency:** The characters are judged primarily by their intelligence and verbal dexterity. The dialogue relies heavily on sharp repartee, epigrams, paradoxes, and sophisticated insults.
- **Fashion vs. Morality:** The plot usually favours characters who are stylish, clever, and socially adept, rather than those who are traditionally moral or good.

- **The Game of Love and Marriage:** Plots frequently revolve around sophisticated romantic intrigues, illicit affairs, and clever strategies to secure wealth through marriage while avoiding the traps of jealous spouses.
- **Satire of Social Hypocrisy:** The humour comes from exposing the massive gap between a character's refined public persona and their greedy, lustful, or foolish private motives.

23.What is the periodical essay?

A **periodical essay** is a short, informal work of prose nonfiction that is published at regular intervals in a magazine, journal, or newspaper.

This unique literary form was born in the **18th century (the Augustan Age)**. Unlike standard modern news reporting, these essays were written to discuss contemporary society, morals, fashion, literature, and human behaviour with a mix of wit, philosophy, and gentle humour.

Core Characteristics of the Periodical Essay

- **Accessible, Conversational Tone:** The writers adopted a casual, middle-class persona rather than a heavy academic voice. The goal was to write as if having a polite conversation at a dinner table.
- **Focus on Everyday Morals and Manners:** Instead of tackling heavy politics or deep theology, these essays critiqued petty vanities, dating habits, gambling, fashion trends, and the general social behaviour of the day.
- **The Use of Fictional Personas (Eidon):** To avoid personal backlash and keep the writing entertaining, authors wrote under catchy, fictional pen names. These personas formed imaginary clubs or societies to comment on the world.
- **Designed for the "Coffee House" Culture:** In 18th-century London, coffee houses became democratic hubs where people gathered to read, debate, and socialize. The periodical essay was specifically designed to be read aloud and discussed in these spaces.

The Pioneers: Addison and Steele

24.What is grave yard poetry?

Graveyard poetry (also known as the **Churchyard school**) refers to a genre of 18th-century English pre-Romantic poetry characterized by its gloomy meditations on mortality, skulls, coffins, and the ghostliness of the graveyard.

Writing in a deeply melancholic and introspective tone, these poets used the graveyard setting to reflect on the fleeting nature of human life, the certainty of death, and the sublime mysteries of the afterlife.

Core Characteristics of Graveyard Poetry

- **The Gothic Setting:** The poems are almost always set in dark, atmospheric places—such as desolate churchyards, crumbling ruins, tombs, and moonlit vaults.
- **Themes of Mortality and Equality:** A central theme is that death is the "Great Equalizer." Rich or poor, powerful or weak, everyone ultimately ends up in the same dust.
- **Melancholy and Introspection:** Moving away from the cold, rational wit of the Augustan Age, these poets emphasized raw personal emotion, sorrow, and spiritual longing.
- **Pre-Romantic Elements:** The movement acted as a vital literary bridge. It rejected neoclassical rules and paved the way for both the **Gothic novel** and the **Romantic movement** (like the works of Wordsworth and Coleridge).

Thomas Gray	<i>Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard</i> (1751)	The absolute pinnacle of the genre
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25. What is the impact of French Revolution in English literature?

The **French Revolution (1789)** was the single most powerful catalyst for the birth of Romanticism in English literature. By shattering the old political order in Europe, it unleashed radical ideas of democracy, individual liberty, and human rights, completely transforming how English writers viewed the world and their craft.

The literary impact of the revolution can be split into two distinct waves: **early euphoric inspiration** and **later disillusioned introspection**.

1. The Spark of Romanticism and Liberty

In its early years, the revolution filled young English poets with immense hope and energy. They saw the fall of the Bastille as the dawn of a beautiful new world free from tyranny.

- **The Romantic Manifesto:** William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge published *Lyrical Ballads (1798)* as a direct literary revolt. Just as France overthrew political structures, they overthrew rigid neoclassical

poetic structures. They abandoned aristocratic language to write about common people and ordinary life.

- **Famous Quote:** Wordsworth perfectly captured this initial euphoria in his poem *The Prelude*:

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, / But to be young was very heaven!"

26. Discuss the differences between the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge.

While **William Wordsworth** and **Samuel Taylor Coleridge** are celebrated as the joint architects of the English Romantic movement—immortalised by their historic collaboration on *Lyrical Ballads* (1798)—their individual philosophies and approaches to poetry were starkly different.

In the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge explicitly noted that they had divided their poetic labour into **two distinct realms**: Wordsworth was to make the ordinary feel extraordinary, while Coleridge was to make the extraordinary feel real.

Key Differences Between Wordsworth and Coleridge

Feature	William Wordsworth	Samuel Taylor Coleridge
Poetic Domain	The Natural and Ordinary : Focused on rustic life, simple folk, and everyday human experiences.	The Supernatural and Romantic : Focused on the exotic, the strange, the occult, and psychological anomalies.
Source of Inspiration	External Nature : Treated the natural landscape as a living, moral teacher and a spiritual guide.	The Human Imagination : Treated nature as a mirror, believing the mind projects its own moods onto the outer world.

Language & Style	Simplicity: Used the "language really spoken by men," rejecting artificial poetic diction.	Ornate & Archaic: Used rich, musical, and deliberately archaic vocabulary to create a dreamlike atmosphere.
Philosophical Focus	Pantheism & Memory: Explored how "spots of time" (memories) act as a source of emotional healing.	Metaphysics & Psychology: Heavily influenced by German philosophy, exploring guilt, sin, and altered states of consciousness.
Key Masterpieces	<i>The Prelude, Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, Ode: Intimations of Immortality.</i>	<i>The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Kubla Khan, Christabel.</i>

27. What is negative capability?

Negative Capability is a literary concept coined by the romantic poet **John Keats** in a **1817 letter** to his brothers, George and Thomas. It describes a writer's ability to exist in a state of uncertainty, mysteries, and doubts without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.

In simpler terms, it is the capacity to embrace ambiguity and the unknown rather than forcing a neat, logical conclusion onto things that cannot be easily explained.

Core Concept: The Rejection of Certainty

Keats argued that the greatest writers do not let a desire for absolute truth, morality, or rigid philosophical systems ruin a beautiful artistic moment.

- **The Artistic Mind:** A mind with negative capability is fluid, receptive, and open to the world. It can observe a tragic, beautiful, or terrifying

situation and simply experience it without trying to judge it or categorize it into "right vs. wrong" or "true vs. false."

- **The Egotistical Mind:** Keats contrasted negative capability with what he called the "Egotistical Sublime" (a trait he often associated with William Wordsworth). This is when a writer forces their own personal philosophy, morals, and identity onto the subject, refusing to let the poetry speak for itself.

28. What are the characteristics of the formal essay in the Romantic Age?

During the **Romantic Age** (roughly 1798–1837), the essay landscape was overwhelmingly dominated by the *informal* or *personal* essay (championed by writers like Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt). However, the **formal essay** also underwent a major evolution.

In this era, the formal essay was redefined as a **long-form, serious, and deeply analytical piece of prose** published in influential literary reviews. Unlike the casual tone of personal essays, formal essays focused strictly on objective topics like philosophy, political theory, and literary criticism.

Core Characteristics of the Romantic Formal Essay

- **Philosophical and Critical Depth:** Instead of discussing everyday manners or domestic life, formal essays tackled weighty intellectual matters. They were used to establish new theories of poetry, analyze the nature of the human mind, or critique contemporary books.
- **Elevated, Authoritative Diction:** The tone was serious, academic, and highly structured. Authors used sophisticated vocabulary and logical arguments to persuade their readers, completely avoiding the conversational "I" or chatty anecdotes of informal writing.
- **The Rise of Review-Culture (The Periodical Format):** Formal essays were explicitly designed as long-form reviews or political manifestos for the era's new, powerful intellectual journals, such as *The Edinburgh Review* and *The Quarterly Review*.
- **A Polemical and Argumentative Edge:** These essays were frequently written to spark intense public debates. Writers used them to fiercely attack or passionately defend the new radical wave of Romantic poetry and political thought.

29. What is dramatic monologue?

A **dramatic monologue** is a type of poem in which a **single fictional or historical character speaks to a silent listener at a critical moment of**

crisis, unintentionally revealing their true psychological nature, flaws, and hidden motives.

While the form has roots in classical literature, it was perfected as a distinct poetic genre during the **Victorian Era**, most famously by **Robert Browning**.

Three Core Criteria of a Dramatic Monologue

According to literary scholars, a true dramatic monologue must meet three specific rules:

- **A Single Speaker (Who is NOT the Poet):** The speaker is a clearly defined character—often eccentric, deeply flawed, or villainous—with a voice completely distinct from the poet's own personal identity.
- **A Specific Dramatic Situation:** The poem takes place in a highly specific, theatrical setting during a moment of intense crisis or revelation.
- **A Silent Audient / Listener:** There is a distinct listener present within the scene. While this listener never speaks out loud, their reactions, gestures, or physical presence are constantly implied through the speaker's words.

The Ultimate Masterpiece: *My Last Duchess*

The absolute definitive blueprint of the genre is **Robert Browning's *My Last Duchess***.

30. What is regional novel?

A **regional novel** (often called the **novel of locality**) is a genre of fiction in which the author sets the entire story within a specific, distinct geographical region.

In these novels, the setting is not just a passive background; it functions almost like a living character. The landscape, local history, distinct dialects, customs, and social habits of that specific area **directly shape the lives, behaviours, and destinies of the characters**.

Core Characteristics of a Regional Novel

- **A Hyper-Specific Setting:** The plot is tied irrevocably to a particular locale—such as a remote countryside, a specific county, or an isolated fishing village. Moving the characters to a different setting would completely break the story.
- **Authentic Local Dialect and Speech:** Authors meticulously capture the exact accents, vernacular phrasing, idioms, and speech patterns unique to the inhabitants of that region.

- **Preservation of Customs and Folklore:** The narrative heavily incorporates local traditions, superstitions, occupational habits (like farming or mining), and distinct social hierarchies.
- **The Clash of Old vs. New:** A frequent theme is the struggle between the traditional, isolated way of life in the region and the disruptive forces of modern, outside civilization (like industrialisation or urbanization).

The Master of the Genre: Thomas Hardy and "Wessex"

The absolute definitive pioneer of the regional novel in English literature is **Thomas Hardy**.

31. Mention five women writers along with their masterpieces of the Victorian Age.

The **Victorian Age** (1837–1901) saw a spectacular rise in the prominence of women writers, many of whom initially had to publish under male pseudonyms to ensure their work was taken seriously by publishers and readers.

Here are **five monumental women writers** of the Victorian Age along with their defining masterpieces:

- **Charlotte Brontë** (published under the pen name *Currer Bell*)
 - **Masterpiece:** *Jane Eyre* (1847)
 - **Significance:** A groundbreaking novel that revolutionized prose fiction by focusing intimately on the inner psychological growth, passion, and moral independence of a lonely governess.
- **Emily Brontë** (published under the pen name *Ellis Bell*)
 - **Masterpiece:** *Wuthering Heights* (1847)
 - **Significance:** A dark, atmospheric novel set on the stormy Yorkshire moors that challenged Victorian moral standards with its intense, chaotic depiction of destructive romantic obsession and revenge.
- **George Eliot** (real name *Mary Ann Evans*)
 - **Masterpiece:** *Middlemarch* (1871–1872)
 - **Significance:** Widely considered one of the greatest novels in the English language, it is a masterclass in psychological realism that intricately maps the social and political dynamics of a changing provincial town.
- **Elizabeth Gaskell**
- **Masterpiece:** *North and South* (1854)
- **Significance:** A foundational "industrial novel" that addresses the severe class, gender, and economic conflicts between the rural, traditional south of England and the harsh, industrialized northern manufacturing towns.

- **Christina Rossetti**
- **Masterpiece:** *Goblin Market* (1862)
- **Significance:** A vibrant, deeply symbolic narrative poem that uses fairy-tale imagery to explore complex Victorian anxieties regarding female desire, commercialism, temptation, and sisterly redemption.

32. Why was the 18th Century called the Augustan Age?

The 18th century—specifically the period spanning from **1700 to roughly 1745**—is called the **Augustan Age** because English writers deliberately modelled their literature, style, and ideals after the classical Roman writers who flourished during the reign of the Roman Emperor Augustus Caesar.

In Rome, the original Augustan Age was a golden era of peace, political stability, and high artistic refinement led by literary masters like **Virgil, Horace, and Ovid**. Eighteenth-century English writers saw a direct parallel between that era and their own.

Core Reasons for the Name

- **A Parallel of Political Stability:** In 1714, the accession of King George I brought an end to decades of violent British civil wars, executions, and religious upheavals. Just as Emperor Augustus had brought peace to Rome after the assassination of Julius Caesar, the new British monarchy brought a welcomed era of political peace and economic prosperity.
- **The Pursuit of "Neoclassicism":** Writers of this period believed that the classical rules of ancient Rome and Greece represented the absolute pinnacle of human artistic achievement. They sought to imitate these forms, prioritizing **reason, order, logic, restraint, and symmetry** over raw emotional expression.
- **The Coronation of the "English Horace":** Prominent English authors actively adopted the styles of ancient Roman poets. For instance, **Alexander Pope** translated Homer and wrote imitations of Horace, while **Jonathan Swift** used biting Roman-style satire to critique political corruption.

33. What is the role of imagination in the Romantic Poetry?

In **Romantic poetry**, the **Imagination** was not merely treated as a tool for daydreaming or inventing fiction; it was celebrated as the supreme creative force, a spiritual faculty, and the primary vehicle for discovering truth.

Moving away from the cold, mechanical rationalism of the 18th-century Enlightenment, the Romantic poets elevated the Imagination to a divine level, viewing it as a living bridge between the human soul and the universe.

The multifaceted role of imagination can be understood through its primary functions:

Before the Romantic movement, the mind was viewed as a passive mirror that simply reflected the external world. The Romantics completely inverted this concept.

- **Active Transformation:** They argued that the mind actively alters, colours, and creates the world around it.
- **Coleridge's Definition:** Samuel Taylor Coleridge famously split this into the **Primary and Secondary Imagination**. The Primary Imagination is the living power of all human perception, while the Secondary Imagination is the artistic force used by poets to consciously shatter, dissolve, and re-create reality into beautiful new forms.
- For Romantic poets, logic and scientific reason were limited, cold forces that "murdered to dissect." Imagination, however, was seen as a holy faculty capable of grasping transcendent, spiritual truths that science could never explain.
- **Dissolving the Self:** Through the poetic imagination, a writer could completely lose their identity and merge with the subject they were observing—whether it was a nightingale, a mountain peak, or a poor rustic beggar. Keats referred to this supreme open-minded state as **Negative Capability**.
- The Romantics felt that urbanization and industrialisation were alienating humans from the natural world. They used the Imagination as a spiritual glue to repair this broken bond.

34. Who did criticize the Pre-Raphaelite Poetry as the “flashy school of poetry” and why?

The Pre-Raphaelite poets were actually famously criticized as the “**Fleshly School of Poetry**” (often misremembered or adapted in some exam prompts as "flashy").

This fierce attack was launched by the Scottish critic and poet **Robert Williams Buchanan** in an October 1871 article published in *The Contemporary Review* under the pseudonymous pen name **Thomas Maitland**. He explicitly targeted **Dante Gabriel Rossetti**, **Algernon Charles Swinburne**, and **William Morris**.

Why Did He Criticize Them?

Buchanan’s attack was driven by severe Victorian moral anxieties. He accused the Pre-Raphaelites of spreading **moral corruption, vulgarity, and obscenity** through their verse. His primary objections included:

- **Over-Sensuality and Eroticism:** Buchanan argued that their poetry focused obsessively on physical, animalistic passion and the human body (hence "fleshly") rather than elevating the mind or soul. He famously complained that Rossetti's sonnets bound the spiritual world down to the level of pure sensory pleasure.
- **"Art for Art's Sake":** The Pre-Raphaelites fiercely rejected the traditional Victorian demand that literature must preach a strict moral or educational lesson (didacticism). Buchanan viewed this lack of moral duty as a sign of intellectual laziness and a "morbid deviation from healthy forms of life".
- **Exaggerated Visual and Musical Effects:** Just as some might use the word "flashy" today, Buchanan believed their heavy use of jewel-toned imagery, lavish details, aesthetic formatting, and slow, hypnotic word melodies was a shallow gimmick used to mask a total lack of genuine intellectual substance.

35. What is symbolism? How did it influence the modernism?

Symbolism was a late 19th-century avant-garde literary and artistic movement that originated in France as a fierce rebellion against Realism and Naturalism. Led by French poets like **Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud, and Paul Verlaine**, the Symbolists rejected the literal, gritty documentation of the external world. Instead, they believed that art should capture **fleeting states of mind, dreams, inner experiences, and the underlying mystery of existence** through subtle, highly suggestive language.

Rather than using symbols as direct, one-to-one allegories (e.g., a rose simply meaning love), Symbolists used private, fluid metaphors to evoke **moods, sensory impressions, and emotional atmosphere** rather than concrete definitions.

When **Modernism** emerged in the early 20th century amid the chaos of rapid industrialisation and the trauma of World War I, writers needed a completely new way to express a fractured world. They heavily adopted and adapted Symbolist techniques.

1. Prioritising Imagery Over Narrative

The Symbolists proved that a poem or story did not need a straightforward, cause-and-effect plot to be powerful. Modernist writers like **T.S. Eliot** heavily

imported this into works like *The Waste Land* (1922). Instead of telling a linear story, Eliot pieces together a massive mosaic of cultural, historical, and mythic symbols (like the "Fisher King" or the dry landscape) to reflect the spiritual decay of post-war society.

2. The Architectural Shift to "Free Verse"

In their quest to capture the rhythm of the human subconscious, the French Symbolists pioneered *vers libre* (**free verse**) and prose poetry, discarding rigid classical meters. This technical liberation directly fuelled the experimental metrics of Modernist poets like **Ezra Pound** (who championed the Imagist movement) and **Wallace Stevens**, paving the way for the rule-breaking structure of modern poetry.

3. Mapping the Inner Consciousness

Because Symbolism valued the inner mind over external reality, it provided the structural toolkit for the Modernist **stream-of-consciousness** novel. Authors like **James Joyce** (*Ulysses*) and **Virginia Woolf** (*To the Lighthouse*) structure their masterpieces around word harmonies, sensory impressions, and deeply private "epiphanies" rather than physical action—a technique inherited straight from Mallarmé and Baudelaire.

4. Embracing Ambiguity and Synesthesia

The Symbolist manifesto celebrated the blending of the senses (**synesthesia**) and deliberate **ambiguity**. Modernists expanded this by creating multi-layered texts that read like hidden codes. They forced the reader to actively participate in building meaning out of an unstable, uncertain text, echoing John Keats's concept of *Negative Capability* and matching the anxiety of the early 20th century.

36. What is psychological novel?

A **psychological novel** (also known as **psychological realism**) is a genre of fiction that places its primary focus on the **interior lives, mental states,**

motives, and spiritual tracks of the characters, rather than on external plot actions.

In a standard novel, the driving force is "*What happens next?*" In a psychological novel, the driving force is "**Why does the character think, feel, or act this way?**" The external environment serves primarily as a trigger or a mirror for the character's complex mental landscape.

Core Characteristics of the Psychological Novel

- **Inward-Facing Narrative:** The outer plot is secondary. A single conversation or a minor event might spark pages of deep internal monologue, moral agonizing, or memory recall.
- **Stream-of-Consciousness Technique:** Especially in its modern iterations, writers use this technique to mimic the erratic, non-linear flow of real human thought, complete with fractured associations, sensory details, and sudden emotional shifts.
- **Flawed and Unreliable Narrators:** Because the story is filtered entirely through a character's subjective mind, the reader is often forced to navigate their biases, neuroses, traumas, or delusions, making the narrative beautifully unstable.
- **Focus on Moral Dilemmas and Guilt:** The conflict is rarely a physical battle between good and evil; instead, it is an agonizing internal struggle with guilt, identity, alienation, and desire.

37. Who did invent the epic theatre? What is epic theatre?

Epic theatre was invented and popularized by the radical German playwright and director Bertolt Brecht in the early-to-mid 20th century. While he drew inspiration from other avant-garde theatre directors of the Weimar Republic (like Erwin Piscator), Brecht formalized it into a cohesive theatrical movement.

Rather than looking to entertain audiences with an emotional escape, Brecht designed epic theatre to be a political tool that **forced spectators to think critically about society, capitalism, and human behaviour**.

Epic theatre is a highly experimental, political form of drama that **deliberately breaks the illusion of reality on stage**.

Brecht fiercely rejected traditional "Aristotelian" theatre, which tried to make the audience feel intense empathy for the characters and get swept away by the story. Instead, epic theatre aims to keep the audience intellectually alert, objective, and analytical.

Brecht achieved this by constantly reminding the audience that they were sitting in a theatre watching a constructed performance:

- **Breaking the Fourth Wall:** Actors frequently step out of character to address the audience directly, narrate the plot, or comment on their own actions.
- **Visible Stage Technology:** The lighting grids, wires, and stage machinery are completely exposed rather than hidden behind curtains.
- **Bright, Flat Lighting:** The stage remains flooded with bright, even light throughout the show, destroying any attempt to create a moody, realistic atmosphere.
- **Jarring Musical Interruptions:** Characters will suddenly burst into song to deliver a harsh political or social commentary, completely halting the emotional momentum of a scene.
- **Explanatory Placards and Signs:** Signs or projections are placed on stage before a scene begins, telling the audience exactly what is about to happen (e.g., "*In this scene, the mother loses her son*"), which eliminates suspense and focuses the mind entirely on *how* and *why* it happens.

38.What is stream of consciousness novel?

A **stream of consciousness novel** is an experimental genre of Modernist fiction that attempts to replicate the chaotic, non-linear, and continuous flow of real human thoughts, memories, and sensory perceptions inside a character's mind.

Rather than presenting a neat, logical narrative or standard spoken dialogue, this style bypasses conventional punctuation and grammar rules to show thoughts exactly as they occur—as a rapid, unfiltered "stream" where past memories, present surroundings, and random associations constantly collide

Core Characteristics of the Technique

- **Non-Linear Structure:** The narrative jumps erratically between the present moment and sudden, vivid flashbacks, mimicking how a single smell or sight can trigger a distant memory in real life.
- **Unfiltered Internal Monologue:** The writing captures the messy inner voice before it is organized into polite speech. It includes fragmented sentences, loose word associations, half-formed ideas, and raw emotional states.
- **Disregard for Standard Punctuation:** To maintain the illusion of an unbroken, flowing river of thought, writers often omit commas, periods, quotation marks, or paragraph breaks entirely .

- **Subjective Time:** A novel might span only a single day in the physical world (like James Joyce's *Ulysses* or Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*), but cover decades of emotional history through the characters' sprawling internal reflections.

39. What is imagism?

Imagism was a highly influential, avant-garde movement in early 20th-century poetry that championed absolute precision, clarity, and the use of sharp, concrete imagery.

Launched around 1912 by the American poet **Ezra Pound** alongside writers like Hilda Doolittle (H.D.) and Richard Aldington, Imagism is widely recognized as the **first organized Modernist literary movement in the English language**. It served as a violent reaction against the decorative, sentimental, and wordy style of 19th-century Victorian and Romantic poetry.

The Three Cardinal Rules of Imagism

In 1913, Ezra Pound and his contemporaries published a manifesto outlining the three strict principles that every Imagist poem must follow:

- **Direct treatment of the "thing":** Whether the subject was subjective (an emotion) or objective (a physical object), the poet must present it directly without wrapping it in vague, flowery metaphors.
- **Use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation:** Every single syllable must earn its place on the page. There was no room for filler adjectives or decorative language.
- **As regarding rhythm:** To compose in the **sequence of the musical phrase**, not in the sequence of a metronome. This meant entirely abandoning rigid classical metrics (like iambic pentameter) in favour of **free verse** (*vers libre*).

The Ultimate Blueprint: *In a Station of the Metro*

40. what is absurd theatre?

Theatre of the Absurd (or **Absurd Theatre**) refers to a avant-garde movement in drama that emerged in the late 1940s and 1950s, primarily in Paris, following the devastation and existential trauma of World War II. Coined by the literary critic Martin Esslin in his 1961 essay, the term describes plays that reflect the philosophy of **Existentialism**—specifically the belief that human existence is fundamentally **meaningless, chaotic, and empty of purpose** (or "absurd").

Core Characteristics of Absurd Theatre

- **The Breakdown of Language:** Characters frequently speak in circles, engage in non-sequiturs, experience long awkward silences, or repeat the same phrases. This is used to show that true human communication is impossible.
- **Cyclical and Static Plots:** Unlike traditional plays that feature a clear beginning, middle, and end, Absurd plays feature little to no forward plot progression. Characters often end up exactly where they started, trapped in a meaningless routine.
- **Tragicomic Tone:** The situations characters find themselves in are so bleak, desperate, and ridiculous that they become hilariously funny. It blends horror with dark, slapstick comedy.
- **Mechanical, Cliché Characters:** Characters often lack deep psychological backstories or clear motives. They function like mindless puppets or clowns wandering through an empty landscape.

The Ultimate Masterpiece: *Waiting for Godot*

41. what is surrealism?

Surrealism was an avant-garde cultural, artistic, and literary movement founded in **Paris in 1924** by the French poet and critic **André Breton**. Launched with his publication of the *Manifesto of Surrealism*, the movement sought to **liberate the human subconscious mind from the oppressive constraints of logic, reason, and societal morals**.

Deeply influenced by the psychoanalytic theories of **Sigmund Freud**, Surrealists believed that the rational mind was responsible for societal destruction (like the horrors of World War I). They argued that absolute freedom and "higher truth" could only be found by tapping into the **world of dreams, desires, hallucinations, and the subconscious**.

Core Techniques and Characteristics of Surrealism

- **Automated Writing (Automatism):** Writers would write as fast as possible without thinking, editing, or worrying about grammar. The goal was to bypass the conscious brain entirely and let the raw, unfiltered subconscious express itself on the page.
- **Juxtaposition of Bizarre Images:** Surrealist art and poetry intentionally forced completely unrelated, shocking images together (e.g., an umbrella and a sewing machine meeting on a dissecting table) to create a dreamlike, unsettling reality.
- **Dream Logic:** Narratives and scenes do not follow traditional cause-and-effect rules. Instead, they shift fluidly and strangely, mimicking the exact, illogical nature of a nightmare or a fantasy.

- **The "Exquisite Corpse" Game:** A collaborative creative game where multiple artists or writers added words or drawings to a sheet of paper, folded it to hide their contribution, and passed it to the next person. The result was a completely unpredictable, subconscious mosaic.

42. What is comedy of humours?

A **comedy of humours** is a satirical genre of drama that was popularized during the late Elizabethan and Jacobean eras by the English playwright **Ben Jonson**.

In this genre, the plot and humour do not come from mistaken identities or romantic entanglements; instead, the comedy is driven entirely by characters whose personalities are **completely dominated by one overriding eccentric trait or obsession** (known as their "humour").

The genre was based on the ancient and medieval medical theory of **humouralism**. Doctors believed the human body was filled with four distinct fluids (humours). If these fluids were perfectly balanced, a person was healthy and sane. If one fluid became overabundant, it caused a severe psychological and behavioural imbalance.

Core Characteristics of the Genre

- **Caricatured Types rather than Deep Characters:** Characters are not multi-dimensional. They are walking personifications of their specific obsessions. To make this obvious, Jonson often gave them descriptive names (e.g., *Sir Epicure Mammon* for a greedy man, or *Morose* for a man who hates noise).
- **Satirical and Didactic Purpose:** The ultimate goal of the play was to hold a mirror up to London society. By taking a character's foolish obsession to a ridiculous extreme, Jonson aimed to mock, expose, and ultimately correct the social vices of his audience.
- **Realism in Setting:** Unlike Shakespeare's faraway fantasy settings like Illyria or the Forest of Arden, Jonson set his comedies in the gritty, recognizable, everyday streets, taverns, and marketplaces of contemporary London.

Key Masterpieces by Ben Jonson

- ***Every Man in His Humour* (1598):** The foundational play of the genre (which William Shakespeare actually acted in). It established the formula of clashing, humour-driven characters.
- ***Volpone* (1605):** A darker masterpiece satirizing greed, where the characters act out their base humours under the guise of animal archetypes (the fox, the fly, the vulture).

- ***The Alchemist* (1610):** A brilliant comedy exposing human gullibility and vanity as con artists exploit the desperate obsessions of various local citizens.

43. Why did Aristotle consider tragedy is superior than comedy?

In his foundational work of literary criticism, the *Poetics*, Aristotle explicitly argued that **tragedy is superior to comedy**. His preference was not merely a matter of personal taste, but a deeply philosophical evaluation of how art affects the human psyche and mirrors the reality of existence.

His argument rests on four primary pillars:

1. Moral and Social Stature of Characters

Aristotle argued that tragedy and comedy mimic different tiers of humanity.

- **Tragedy** represents people who are **better than average** (noble kings, heroes, and gods). Their downfall carries weight because they have far to fall, making their stories grand, serious, and politically significant.
- **Comedy** represents people who are **worse than average**. It focuses on the absurdities, defects, and flaws of common or low-born characters. To Aristotle, comedy deals with the trivial rather than the profound.

2. The Gravity of the Action

To Aristotle, the purpose of art is *mimesis* (the imitation of life). He believed that the actions explored in tragedy are inherently more meaningful.

- Tragedy deals with **actions of monumental consequence**—life, death, fate, cosmic justice, and the moral choices of leaders that decide the fate of entire empires.
- Comedy deals with petty blunders, domestic misunderstandings, and minor social embarrassments that cause no real pain or permanent destruction.

3. The Mechanism of *Catharsis*

This is Aristotle's most crucial psychological argument. He believed tragedy serves a vital social and medical function through **catharsis**—the purging of the powerful emotions of **pity and fear**.

- By watching a noble hero suffer a tragic downfall due to a fatal flaw (*hamartia*), the audience experiences intense emotional release. This process leaves the audience psychologically cleansed, morally elevated, and emotionally balanced.
- Comedy merely aims to provoke laughter and amusement. While entertaining, laughter does not provide the same deep, soul-cleansing therapeutic transformation as catharsis.

4. Structural Unity and Higher Artistic Truth

Aristotle famously claimed that poetry (literature) is more philosophical than history because history merely records what *did* happen, whereas poetry shows what *could* happen according to the laws of probability and necessity.

- Tragedy requires a **strict, tightly knit plot structure** where every event logically and inevitably causes the next. This creates a powerful, unified artistic impact.
- Comedy in ancient Greece was often episodic, chaotic, and heavily reliant on random coincidences or slapstick rather than strict philosophical necessity.

44. What is the concept of the tragic hero in Greek tragedy?

Aristotle in his work *Poetics*, is a noble and relatable protagonist who experiences a disastrous downfall due to a tragic error in judgment.

Core Characteristics of the Greek Tragic Hero

- **High Social Status (Noble Birth):** The hero is usually a person of prominent social standing, royalty, or exceptional abilities, meaning their fall affects an entire community or kingdom.
- **Not Entirely Good or Evil:** The character is neither a villain nor a saint, but an intermediate person with a mix of admirable qualities and human flaws, making them relatable to the audience.
- **Hamartia (Error in Judgment):** Rather than possessing a malicious moral defect, the hero commits *hamartia*—a tragic miscalculation, missing the mark, or error in judgment, often done with good intentions or driven by excessive pride (*hubris*).
- **Peripeteia (Reversal of Fortune):** The hero's actions trigger a sudden and destructive reversal of their circumstances, turning success into failure.
- **Anagnorisis (Recognition):** The hero eventually realizes the truth of their situation and recognizes that their own actions caused their catastrophe, facing their fate with courage.
- **Catharsis (Pity and Fear):** The ultimate purpose of the hero's immense, undeserved suffering is to evoke profound pity and fear in the audience, purging these emotions and creating an emotional cleansing known as *catharsis*.

45. Discuss Oedipus Rex as the tragic hero.

Oedipus is the definitive Greek tragic hero, serving as Aristotle's primary model for the concept in the *Poetics*. His journey perfectly maps onto the

classic trajectory of nobility, a tragic flaw, a devastating reversal, and ultimate recognition.

How Oedipus Embodies the Tragic Hero

- **Noble Birth & Prominence:** Oedipus is the **King of Thebes**, beloved by his citizens for saving them from the Sphinx. He is of royal blood (unknown to him) by birth and achieved greatness through his intellect, making his subsequent fall massive and impactful to the entire state.
- **Hamartia (The Tragic Flaw/Error):** His downfall stems from his *hubris* (excessive pride) and his relentless pursuit of the truth. Believing he can outrun a prophecy from Apollo, he flees Corinth, accidentally killing his biological father (Laius) and marrying his biological mother (Jocasta) along the way. His tragic mistake is **trying to escape a fate decreed by the gods**, combined with his blind overconfidence in his own wisdom.
- **Peripeteia (Reversal of Fortune):** The turning point occurs when a messenger arrives from Corinth to comfort Oedipus by telling him he is not the biological son of the Corinthian king. Instead of relieving him, this testimony **unravels the horrifying truth** that Oedipus is Laius's killer and son, pivoting his absolute power into total ruin.
- **Anagnorisis (The Moment of Recognition):** Oedipus experiences a harrowing epiphany when he pieced together the shepherd's testimony. He cries out, "*All brought to pass, all true!*" realizing that **he himself is the pollution** cursing Thebes, having unknowingly fulfilled the exact prophecy he tried to avoid.
- **Catharsis & Punishment:** Upon the realization, Oedipus finds Jocasta dead by suicide and uses the pins from her dress to gouge his own eyes out. His physical blinding symbolizes his previous spiritual blindness. The audience feels **intense pity and fear** (*catharsis*) as a great man is reduced to a blind, exiled beggar wandering into the wilderness.

46. What is hamartia in Greek tragedy? What is Oedipus' hamartia?

Hamartia is a Greek term used by Aristotle in his *Poetics* that translates closest to "a tragic flaw," "error in judgment," or "missing the mark." Originally derived from an archery term meaning to miss the target, *hamartia* in tragedy is not a profound moral wickedness or sin, but rather a critical miscalculation, character defect, or oversight by an otherwise noble protagonist that triggers their ultimate downfall.

Oedipus' Hamartia

Oedipus' *hamartia* is a complex blend of **hubris (excessive pride)**, **blind overconfidence**, and his **relentless pursuit of the truth**.

- **Excessive Hubris & Defiance of Fate:** Oedipus genuinely believes he is clever enough to outsmart the gods. When a prophecy predicts he will kill his father and marry his mother, he flees Corinth to prevent it. This very act of fleeing—driven by the proud assumption that he can outrun divine destiny—places him directly on the path to fulfilling the prophecy.
- **Anger and Rash Judgment:** His quick temper and arrogance lead him to kill a stranger at a three-way crossroads after a minor dispute over who has the right of way. He does not realize that this traveller is his biological father, King Laius.
- **Intellectual Blindness:** Because he famously saved Thebes by solving the Riddle of the Sphinx, Oedipus is entirely blind to his own limitations. He boasts of his own wisdom while mocking the literal and spiritual sight of the blind prophet Tiresias, ironically remaining completely oblivious to his own true identity.
- **The Irony of the Search:** Ultimately, his tragic error is his stubborn insistence on investigating King Laius's murder. Despite warnings from Jocasta and Tiresias to stop digging, his pride compels him to unearth the truth, making him the direct architect of his own destruction.

47. What is the difference between high and low comedy?

The fundamental difference between **high comedy** and **low comedy** lies in **how they provoke laughter and the type of intelligence they appeal to**. High comedy relies on verbal wit and intellectual critique, while low comedy relies on physical humour and rowdy, everyday situations.

Core Differences

Feature	High Comedy	Low Comedy
Primary Appeal	The intellect and mind	The emotions and visceral reactions
Methods Used	Wit, satire, wordplay, and irony	Slapstick, physical mishaps, and crude jokes
Primary Subject	Social manners , upper-class behaviour, and human pretension	Universal human folly , bodily functions, and absurd situations
Purpose	To critique society and expose the absurdities of human nature	To entertain thoroughly and provide pure escapism

48. Explain Plato's cave theory.

Plato's Allegory of the Cave is one of the most famous metaphors in Western philosophy. Found in Book VII of his work *The Republic*, the theory is an

explanation of human perception, the nature of reality, and the transformative power of education and philosophy.

Through a dialogue between Socrates and Glaucon, Plato asks us to imagine humanity trapped in an illusion, mistaking everyday sensory experiences for true reality.

The Story: A Three-Stage Journey

1. Imprisonment in the Dark

- **The Setup:** Imagine an underground cave where prisoners have been chained by their necks and legs since childhood. They cannot turn their heads; they can only look straight ahead at a flat wall.
- **The Illusion:** Behind and above them, a great fire burns. Between the fire and the prisoners, there is a walkway where puppeteers carry objects (shapes of animals, trees, and people).
- **The Shadows:** The puppets cast shadows onto the wall in front of the prisoners. Because the prisoners have never seen anything else, they believe these **shadows are the actual objects** and the echoing sounds are the real voices of the shadows.

2. The Painful Liberation

- **The Release:** One prisoner is unchained and forced to stand up, turn around, and look at the fire. The bright light hurts his eyes, and the actual puppets look blurry and less "real" to him than the sharp shadows he grew up watching.
- **The Ascent:** He is then dragged up a steep, rugged path out of the cave and into the sunlight. The transition is blinding and agonizing. He cannot look directly at anything at first.
- **The Adjustment:** Slowly, his eyes adjust. First, he can look at shadows on the ground; then, reflections in the water; then, the night sky; and finally, **the Sun itself**, realizing it is the source of all light, warmth, and life.

3. The Return to the Cave

- **The Mission:** Feeling pity for his fellow prisoners, the enlightened man goes back into the cave to free them.
- **The Backlash:** Coming from the bright sunlight, his eyes are now unaccustomed to the dark. He stumbles and cannot read the shadows well. The other prisoners mock him, concluding that leaving the cave ruined his eyesight. They decide that if anyone tries to unchain them or drag them up to the light, **they will kill them** (a direct reference to how Athens executed Plato's teacher, Socrates).

49. Why did Plato wish to banish the poets from his ideal republic?

In Books III and X of *The Republic*, Plato argues that poets must be banished from his ideal city-state because they spread illusions rather than

truth, corrupt the moral character of citizens, and prioritize raw emotion over logical reason. [

To Plato, poetry encompasses theatre, epics, and all fictional storytelling (including the works of Homer). His objections are divided into three major categories:

1.The Epistemological Objection (Poetry is an Illusion)

Plato's Theory of Forms dictates that true reality consists of perfect, abstract concepts (Forms), while the physical world is merely an imperfect copy of those Forms.

- **Thrice Removed from Truth:** A poet looks at the physical world and writes about it. Therefore, a poem is a copy of a copy. Plato famously stated that the tragic poet is "**thrice removed from the king and from the truth**".
- **No Real Knowledge:** Poets write beautifully about subjects like warfare, governance, and medicine without actually being soldiers, rulers, or doctors. They deal entirely in appearances and deceptive imitations without possessing actual knowledge.

2. The Psychological Objection (Poetry Feeds the Irrational Soul)

Plato believed that a just individual and a stable society must be ruled by **reason**, with emotions and passions strictly controlled.

- **We Become What We Rehearse:** Drama and poetry rely on extreme emotional outbursts—like Achilles weeping with rage or characters wailing in grief—to entertain audiences. Plato argued that constantly witnessing and applauding these extreme behaviours trains citizens to act erratically in their private and civic lives.
- **Weakening the Intellect:** Instead of drying up the passions, poetry "**feeds and waters them,**" allowing raw emotions to govern the mind rather than intellect.

3. The Moral & Theological Objection (Poetry Teaches Bad Lessons)

Because Homer and the great dramatists served as the core educational system of ancient Greece, Plato was deeply concerned with the poor moral models they provided.

- **Misrepresenting the Gods:** Poets depicted the gods as deceptive, petty, jealous, and shifting shapes to commit crimes. Plato believed the divine should only be portrayed as perfectly good and unchanging.

- **Encouraging Immorality:** In Greek tragedies, bad things regularly happen to good people, and evil characters often prosper. Plato worried that youth reading these stories would conclude that injustice is profitable as long as one doesn't get caught.

50. What is chorus in Greek tragedy?

In Greek tragedy, the **chorus** was a group of 12 to 15 masked performers who danced, sang, and spoke in unison to provide commentary on the play's action, themes, and moral dilemmas.

Acting as a bridge between the actors and the audience, the chorus was considered the structural backbone of ancient Greek theatre.

Core Functions of the Chorus

- **The Voice of the Community:** The chorus usually represented the ordinary citizens of the play's setting (such as the elders of Thebes in *Oedipus Rex* or captive Trojan women). They reflected how the actions of the noble tragic heroes impacted the everyday public.
- **The Ideal Spectator:** They reacted to the plot in real-time, modelling the emotional responses—such as horror, pity, or relief—that the playwright wanted the audience to experience.
- **Providing Narrative Context:** Between dramatic scenes, the chorus performed lyric poems called **odes**. These odes filled in missing backstory, explained cultural or religious context, and connected the characters' immediate struggles to broader historical or divine myths.
- **The Moral Compass:** They frequently offered traditional wisdom, warned characters against *hubris* (excessive pride), and contemplated the philosophical implications of fate, justice, and human suffering.
- **Pacing and Structure:** The choral odes served as curtains or commercial breaks, separating the episodes (dialogue scenes) of the play and signalling the passage of time.

51. Why did Agamemnon and Achilles quarrel in the Book I of Iliad?

In Book I of Homer's *Iliad*, Agamemnon and Achilles quarrel over pride, power, and the distribution of war prizes, specifically the captive women **Chryseis and Briseis**. This bitter dispute serves as the catalyst for the entire epic poem.

King Agamemnon captures a woman named Chryseis as his personal war prize. Her father, Chryses is a priest of the god Apollo. When Agamemnon crudely refuses the priest's offer of a massive ransom to return his daughter, Apollo punishes the Greek army with a devastating nine-day plague. Realizing the army is dying, Achilles calls an assembly of the Greek leaders. They realize the plague will only end if Agamemnon returns Chryseis to her father without a ransom.

Furious and humiliated at the prospect of losing his prize, Agamemnon agrees to return Chryseis to save the army, but **demands an immediate replacement prize** from one of the other Greek captains. **Agamemnon retaliates by declaring he will take Achilles' personal war prize, Briseis**, just to assert his absolute dominance. Enraged and deeply dishonoured, Achilles nearly kills Agamemnon on the spot but is stopped by the goddess Athena.

52. Why did Achilles rejoin the battle?

Achilles rejoins the Trojan War for one singular, devastating reason: the death of his best friend (and companion), Patroclus.

While Achilles was refusing to fight out of spite against Agamemnon, the Trojan prince Hector pushed the Greek forces back to their ships. Desperate to save his comrades, Patroclus wore Achilles' famous armour into battle to terrify the Trojans. However, **Hector killed Patroclus in battle** and stripped him of Achilles' armour.

53.What was the reason behind the Trojan war?

According to Greek myth and Homeric epics, the direct spark of the war was the **abduction or elopement of Helen, the Queen of Sparta**, by the Trojan prince, **Paris**. This event was engineered by the gods through a sequence known as the **Judgment of Paris**: [

- **The Golden Apple:** Eris, the goddess of discord, was excluded from a major royal wedding. In revenge, she crashed the feast and threw a golden apple labelled "**To the Fairest**" among the deities.
- **The Judgment:** The goddesses Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite all claimed the apple. Zeus delegated the decision to Paris, a mortal prince of Troy.
- **The Bribe:** To win his favour, each goddess offered a bribe. Paris chose **Aphrodite**, because she promised him the love of the most beautiful mortal woman in the world—Helen. [
- **The Escape:** Paris travelled to Sparta on a diplomatic mission, seduced Helen, and carried her back to Troy.

54.Why does Zeus support the Trojans?

In Homer's *Iliad*, Zeus's alignment is complex. While he attempts to maintain supreme neutrality and oversee the ultimate layout of fate, Zeus primarily supports the Trojans due to a sacred promise made to the sea nymph Thetis.

Zeus's support for Troy stems from several specific motivations:

1. The Promise to Thetis (The Catalytic Reason)

The main driver of Zeus's actions in the *Iliad* is **restoring the honour of Achilles**.

- After Agamemnon publicly humiliates Achilles and takes his war prize, Briseis, Achilles withdraws from the war and begs his mother, Thetis, to intervene.
- Thetis goes to Mount Olympus and appeals to Zeus. Because Zeus owes Thetis a debt of gratitude from a past rebellion among the gods, he grants her request.
- Zeus **promises to temporarily turn the tide of the war in favour of the Trojans**. He actively strengthens the Trojan forces to drive the Greeks back to their ships, forcing Agamemnon to realize that the Greek army is absolutely nothing without Achilles.

55. Who is Odysseus?

Odysseus (known as **Ulysses** in Roman mythology) is one of the most famous, complex, and enduring heroes of Greek mythology. He is the **King of Ithaca**, a brilliant military strategist in the Trojan War, and the central protagonist of Homer's epic poem, the *Odyssey*. Unlike heroes like Achilles or Heracles, who rely on raw physical strength, Odysseus is defined by his **intellect, cunning, and verbal skill**.

Odysseus was one of the primary Greek kings bound by the Oath of Tyndareus to fight at Troy.

- **The Mastermind:** He is the brain of the Greek army. When the Greeks were failing, it was Odysseus who came up with the legendary stratagem of the **Trojan Horse**, a hollow wooden structure packed with soldiers that allowed the Greeks to sneak past Troy's walls and win the war.

The Epic Journey Home (*The Odyssey*)

- After the fall of Troy, Odysseus spends **10 agonizing years** trying to sail home to Ithaca due to the wrath of the sea god Poseidon. His journey is a

series of legendary trials where he must outsmart monsters and divine traps, including:

- Blinding the one-eyed Cyclops, **Polyphemus**
- Outwitting the sorceress **Circe**, who turned his men into pigs
- Resisting the deadly, hypnotic song of the **Sirens** by tying himself to his ship's mast
- Escaping the seductive captive hold of the nymph **Calypso**, who offered him immortality if he stayed with her

The Reclamation of Ithaca

- When Odysseus finally returns to Ithaca after a total of 20 years away (10 fighting, 10 sailing), he finds his palace overrun by rude suitors. These men are eating his food, ruining his estate, and trying to force his faithful wife, **Penelope**, to marry one of them.
- Disguised as a ragged beggar, Odysseus evaluates who has remained loyal, executes a flawless ambush alongside his son **Telemachus**, and reclaims his throne.

56.How does Oedipus become the king of Thebes?

Oedipus becomes the **King of Thebes** by saving the city from a devastating plague caused by the Sphinx, a mythical monster with the head of a woman, the body of a lion, and the wings of an eagle .

The Sequence of Events

- **The Flight from Corinth:** Oedipus leaves his hometown of Corinth to escape a horrific prophecy stating that he will kill his father and marry his mother.
- **The Crisis in Thebes:** Meanwhile, the actual King of Thebes, **Laius**, is mysteriously murdered while traveling. Around the same time, the Sphinx takes residence outside the city walls, terrorizing the citizens by devouring anyone who fails to solve her riddle. No one can defeat her, cutting the city off from food and trade.

- **The Decree:** In deep desperation, **Creon** (Jocasta's brother, who took temporary control of the city) makes a public decree: anyone who can solve the Sphinx's riddle and save Thebes will be awarded the **Theban throne** and the hand of the widowed Queen, **Jocasta**, in marriage.
- **Solving the Riddle:** Oedipus arrives in Thebes and confronts the monster. The Sphinx asks him her famous riddle: *"What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening?"*
- **The Answer:** Oedipus correctly answers, "**Man.**" (A human crawls on all fours as a baby, walks on two legs as an adult, and uses a cane/staff in old age).
- **The Reward:** Unable to handle being bested, the Sphinx throws herself from her rocky perch to her death. The ecstatic citizens of Thebes hail Oedipus as their saviour, crown him **King**, and marry him to **Jocasta**.

57. Why does Oedipus blind himself?

At the climax of Sophocles' tragedy, Oedipus blinds himself by gouging out his eyes with the sharp golden brooches (pins) from the dress of his mother and wife, Jocasta, after finding that she has hanged herself.

When the chorus asks why he chose this agonizing mutilation instead of suicide, Oedipus provides a clear mixture of emotional, moral, and symbolic reasons:

1. Shame and the Inability to Face Others (Shame Culture)

Oedipus explains that he cannot bear to look upon the world after discovering the depth of his transgressions.

- **Facing His Parents in the Underworld:** He states that if he died, his soul would have to look into the eyes of his father (Laius) and mother (Jocasta) in the afterlife. He feels his crimes of patricide and incest are too grotesque to ever face them again.
- **Facing His Children and Citizens:** He cannot bear to look at his daughters/sisters, nor can he look upon the citizens of Thebes whom he inadvertently cursed and ruled over in deep deception.

Oedipus explicitly argues that **death is too easy an escape**. He believes he deserves a prolonged, living torment for his actions. By blinding himself, he actively sentences himself to an existence of perpetual darkness, isolation, and vulnerability as an exiled beggar, taking full moral accountability for his *hubris*.

58. Why does Antigone commit suicide?

In Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone*, the protagonist commits suicide by hanging herself with a noose crafted from her own linen garments. She does this after being condemned by her uncle, King Creon, to a "living death"—locked away and immured inside a sealed stone cave.

Defiance of Creon and Retaining Autonomy

Creon sentences Antigone to be entombed alive so that the state of Thebes is technically not guilty of execution or spilling family blood, leaving her to face a slow, agonizing death by starvation. By choosing the exact moment and manner of her death, Antigone commits an **ultimate act of political protest and defiance**. She strips Creon of his supreme power over her body and refuses to let him dictate her final suffering.

59. Who is Jocasta? Why did she commit suicide?

In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, **Jocasta** is the Queen of Thebes, the widow of King Laius, and both the biological mother and wife of Oedipus. Unknowingly, she marries Oedipus as a reward after he saves the city from the Sphinx, and they go on to have four children together.

She commits suicide by **hanging herself with a noose** inside her royal bedchamber once the horrific truth of her identity and marriage is fully revealed.

Why Jocasta Commits Suicide

- **Overwhelming Shame and Psychological Horror:** Discovering that she has committed the ultimate taboos—incest with her son and producing children with him—triggers an unbearable existential collapse. The realization that her husband is the baby she once abandoned to die on Mount Cithaeron shatters her reality.
- **Grief for Her Spouses:** According to the messenger in the play, as she locks herself in her room, she cries out to her long-dead first husband, King Laius, weeping bitterly for the monstrous fate that ruined their lineage and left her sharing a bed with her own offspring.
- **The Failure to Prevent Destiny:** Throughout the play, Jocasta acts as a profound sceptic of the gods and prophecies. She confidently tells Oedipus that human beings live by chance and that oracles are unreliable, citing how she supposedly "outsmarted" Apollo's oracle by giving away her infant. Her suicide is, in part, a reaction to the terrifying realization that **she completely failed to outrun fate**.
- **The Weight of Guilt:** Jocasta realizes the truth slightly before Oedipus does. When she pieces the clues together, she frantically begs Oedipus to stop investigating his birth. When he stubbornly refuses, her final words to

him are, "*Unhappy Oedipus! That is the only name I can give you now.*" Unable to live with the public exposure and the contamination of the royal household, she rushes to end her life before the entire city uncovers the crime

60. What is anagnorisis?

Anagnorisis (pronounced *ah-nag-nor-i-sis*) is a Greek term used by Aristotle in his *Poetics* that translates closest to "recognition" or "discovery."

In literature and theatre, it represents the exact moment in a story when the protagonist undergoes a **sudden shift from ignorance to knowledge**. It is a profound, life-altering revelation where the hero uncovers the true nature of their own situation, a hidden identity, or a critical secret that shifts the entire trajectory of the plot.

Core Characteristics of Anagnorisis

- **The Discovery of Truth:** It is not a casual realization. It is a shocking epiphany where puzzle pieces snap together, forcing the character to see themselves or their actions clearly for the first time.
- **Paired with Peripeteia:** Aristotle argued that anagnorisis works best when it happens at the exact same moment as **peripeteia** (a sudden reversal of fortune). Together, they produce the highest level of dramatic impact.
- **Acceptance of Consequences:** Following the recognition, the tragic hero does not run away from the truth. They accept their fate, their flaws, or their punishment with deep, sobering clarity.
- **Tragic vs. Comic Recognition:** While most famous in tragedies, anagnorisis also happens in comedies. In a tragedy, the discovery leads to ruin (e.g., realizing you killed your father). In a comedy, the discovery usually leads to a happy ending (e.g., realizing a long-lost beggar is actually a wealthy relative).

61. What is catharsis?

Catharsis is a Greek term used by Aristotle in his *Poetics* that translates closest to "**purification,**" "**cleansing,**" or "**purging.**"

In literature and theatre, it describes the **profound emotional release** experienced by the audience at the end of a tragedy. By watching characters go through immense, devastating suffering on stage, the audience experiences intense feelings of **pity and fear**, which are ultimately purged,

leaving them feeling emotionally refreshed, balanced, and morally cleansed.

How Catharsis Works in a Story

Aristotle argued that the ultimate artistic purpose of a tragedy is to trigger this psychological and emotional cleansing through a specific formula:

- **The Generation of Pity:** The audience feels intense pity for the tragic hero because their suffering is far greater than what they deserve. We see a noble person ruined by a simple error in judgment (*hamartia*), not absolute malice.
- **The Generation of Fear:** The audience feels fear because the tragic hero is relatable. We look at them and think, *"If someone that great, smart, and powerful can fall to ruin so easily, the same thing could happen to me."*
- **The Release (The Catharsis):** During the climax—when the truth is fully revealed and the hero faces their doom—these building emotions of pity and fear peak and are safely released. The audience processes these heavy emotions in a controlled, theatrical environment, walking out of the theatre feeling an immense sense of relief and emotional clarity.

Acknowledgement

All the information provided is synthesized from various credible digital sources available online.