

### MEG-03 (2018-19) Solved Assignment

#### 1. Trace the evolution of the British Novel during the nineteenth century. 20

**Answer-** English novel came into existence in the beginning of 18th century with the emergence of new middle class. During this time, public interest in human characters grew and this led to the popularity of autobiographies, biographies, journals, diaries and memoirs. Novelists showed interest in the newly emerged complex middle-class characters who were struggling with their morality and social issues. Tom Jones, a foundling was written by Henry Fielding during this time and focused on the social structure that prevailed in England during that time.

The first half of the 19th century was influenced by romanticism and the focus was on nature and imagination. Gothic (horror) and romantic novels were written during this time. Jane Austen wrote highly polished novels about the life of the landed gentry and social issues like marriage and property from women's perspective.

In the period between 1837 to 1901, the Victorian novelists became popular. They portrayed middle-class, virtuous heroes responding to harsh society. Stories of working class poor people were directed to incite sympathy. The development of the middle-class and the manners and expectations of this class, as opposed to the aristocrat forms were the focus of the novelists of this period. Charles Dickens emerged as a literary figure and wrote about London life and struggles of the poor in Oliver Twist.

The English novel is an important part of English literature. This article mainly concerns novels, written in English, by novelists who were born or have spent a significant part of their lives in England, or Scotland, or Wales, or Northern Ireland (or Ireland before 1922). However, given the nature of the subject, this guideline has been applied with common sense, and reference is made to novels in other languages or novelists who are not primarily British where appropriate.

It was in the Victorian era (1837–1901) that the novel became the leading literary genre in English. Another important fact is the number of women novelists who were successful in the 19th century, even though they often had to use a masculine pseudonym. At the beginning of the 19th century most novels were published in three volumes. However, monthly serialization

was revived with the publication of Charles Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* in twenty parts between April 1836 and November 1837.

Demand was high for each episode to introduce some new element, whether it was a plot twist or a new character, so as to maintain the reader's interest. Both Dickens and Thackeray frequently published this way.

The 1830s and 1840s saw the rise of social novel, also known as social problem novel, that "arose out of the social and political upheavals which followed the Reform Act of 1832". This was in many ways a reaction to rapid industrialization, and the social, political and economic issues associated with it, and was a means of commenting on abuses of government and industry and the suffering of the poor, who were not profiting from England's economic prosperity. Stories of the working class poor were directed toward middle class to help create sympathy and promote change. An early example is Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1837–38).

A number of profound social and economic changes affecting British culture from the Renaissance through the eighteenth century brought the novel quickly into popular prominence. The broadest of these were probably the advances in the technology of printing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which made written texts—once the province of the elite—available to a growing population of readers. Concurrent changes in modes of distribution and in literacy rates brought ever increasing numbers of books and pamphlets to populations traditionally excluded from all but the most rudimentary education, especially working-class men and women of all classes. As the circulation of printed material transformed, so did its economics, shifting away from the patronage system characteristic of the Renaissance, during which a nation's nobility supported authors whose works reinforced the values of the ruling classes. As the patronage system broke down through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, authors became free agents in the literary marketplace, dependent on popular sales for their success and sustenance, and thus reflecting more and more the values of a predominantly middle-class readership. The demand for reading material allowed a greatly expanded pool of writers to make a living from largely ephemeral poetry and fiction. These monumental changes in how literature was produced and consumed sent shockwaves of alarm through more conservative sectors of English culture at the beginning of the eighteenth century. A largely upper-class male contingent, reluctant to see any change in the literary status quo, mounted an aggressive "antinovel campaign." Attacks on the new genre tended to identify it with its roots in French romance, derided as a sensationalistic import antithetical to English values.

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The early targets of these attacks were those writers, including Behn, Eliza Haywood, and Delarivier Manley, who had produced original English prose "romances" based on the conventions of the French style. At the same time, however, more women in particular were writing novels that made a display of decorum and piety, often reacting to detractors who charged that sensationalistic tales of adventure and sexual endangerment had the potential to corrupt adult female readers and the youth of both sexes. The outcome of this campaign was not the demise of the novel, but the selective legitimization of novels that displayed certain, distinctly non-romantic traits. These traits became the guidelines according to which the novel as a genre developed and was valued. Most venerated by this tradition are the three leading eighteenth-century male novelists: Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding. Modern students of the novel are often unaware of the tumultuous controversy that attended its first steps at the end of the seventeenth century.

For the most part, feminist scholars have been responsible for generating the recovery of the novel's earliest roots and for opening up discussion of its cultural value in its many different forms.

**2. Would it be correct to say that Heathcliff is 'dark' and 'evil'? Discuss in the light of your understanding and analysis of Wuthering Heights. 20**

**Answer-** In Wuthering Heights, Cathy and Heathcliff pine for each other. Heathcliff is a total contradiction and continues to mistreat everyone around him, using them only to further his aims of ruining the Lintons. His passion for Cathy however remains unchanged and he manages to persuade Nelly to allow him to see Cathy, despite the possibility of being discovered by Edgar.

Having given Cathy Heathcliff's letter in a hope that Cathy may recover something of her passionate self, Nelly urges her to read it and consider seeing Heathcliff who does not wait for her answer but slips into the room.

Cathy blames Heathcliff and Edgar for her melancholy which upsets Heathcliff. She claims that Heathcliff is "in my soul" and has treated her poorly but then they lock in an embrace that Nelly can hardly explain. Heathcliff is desperate for Cathy to explain why, if she loved him as she claims - "what right had you to leave me?"

This quote from Chapter 15 confirms Heathcliff's understanding that the bond was so strong between them that only Cathy's own actions could have parted them. Nothing - even "misery and degradation and death"- would have caused Heathcliff to reject her. When Cathy agreed to marry Edgar she not only caused her own broken heart but Heathcliff's too. Heathcliff can never forget what he overheard Cathy say - "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now" (ch 9) and unfortunately he never heard her claim "I am Heathcliff" so he fails to understand her intentions and she has no understanding of his feelings of rejection. This is Heathcliff's attempt to make her understand what she has done.

Wuthering Heights may be perceived to be just another novel, waiting to be read by the average reader, sitting on some remote bookshelf. This narrow-mindedness will be out of the mind of the reader when he turns past the first page; this novel is anything but conventional. Some characters have more depth to us than many real-life people, and one such character is Heathcliff. Ravaged by the past and bent on avenging everyone who mistreated him (and their loved ones), he is called insane by many. That first impression would be true if the character was taken, placed alone, and analyzed. "Insane" would be the result, unless the character is analyzed properly - against the backdrop of his past, his surroundings, and his loved ones.

Considering Heathcliff's past, he has almost every right to be insane. He was abused - after Mr Earnshaw died, he was no longer treated as an equal part of the family. He became a servant - working on the field all day, not having access to education, and so on. This greatly scarred him; those actions on behalf of Hindley and the Lintons are responsible for Heathcliff's emotional state and his grudge against everyone but Catherine. This grudge - is responsible for many major events, such as the capture and "imprisonment" of Cathy and Nelly, and Heathcliff's

decision to force the marriage between Cathy and Linton. That shows that the people surrounding Heathcliff are to be blamed for his actions.

The reasons for Heathcliff's torment don't stop there. Quite probably the most important reason is Catherine - or rather, the absence of her. His whole life prior to Catherine's death, he spent thinking of her. Their love was more than the love of any other couple - it was on a spiritual plane. They could connect emotionally in a way that no other people could. Catherine once said: "Nelly, I am Heathcliff!"

### **3. Would you consider the novel Great Expectations to be the story of Pip's education in life? 20**

**Answer-** Pip's "expectations" come true only in the most ironic of ways (and even then, only briefly). Pip becomes obsessed with becoming a gentleman after meeting the beautiful but cruel Estella while playing at the house of her wealthy guardian, Miss Havisham. When Mr. Jaggers, Miss Havisham's lawyer, visits Pip several years later and informs him that he is due to inherit a fortune, Pip assumes that Miss Havisham is his benefactor.

This in turn leads him to a second conclusion: that Miss Havisham intends him to marry Estella. With this in mind, Pip leaves his blacksmithing apprenticeship and goes to London, where he receives a gentleman's education and lives on an allowance as he waits to come into full possession of his property.

In the first stage of Pip's life he is young and does not understand what it means to be a gentleman and how it can affect his life. Pip basically asks for three wishes in the first stage. He wants education, wealth, and social advancement. These three wishes are mostly so he can impress Estella, who is the symbol of this first stage. Pip does not want to be a lowly blacksmith like Joe. He wants to be intelligent. He wants to be considered a person of high importance. At the end of this stage he moves to London and begins to see the problems in the fog ahead.

In the second stage Pip is able to live his dreams of being educated and wealthy. As the second stage progresses he has less and less time for other people outside of his little circle. He mistreats Joe and Biddy. He finds he is embarrassed to be around them. His relationship

with Estella also worsens. They had not seen each other in years and the small bond that they had broke in time. Estella then marries Drummle instead of Pip and all his hopes for her are lost as well. Pip also begins to spend too much money and goes into debt even with his secret benefactor giving him money. Once Pip discovers who his benefactor truly is all his dreams are shattered.

Shortly after he turns twenty-three, however, Pip returns home to find Magwitch—the convict he helped escape years earlier—in his apartment. Magwitch explains that he has been Pip's mysterious benefactor for all these years; Miss Havisham had simply led Pip on as part of her greater scheme to avenge herself on men. Pip is horrified to learn that his future is not at all what he had expected it to be:

Miss Havisham's intentions towards me, all a mere dream; Estella not designed for me; I only suffered in Satis House as a convenience, a sting for the greedy relations, a model with a mechanical heart to practice on when no other practice was at hand; those were the first smarts I had (chapter 39).

He further feels that he cannot accept Magwitch's fortune, knowing that it came from a convict, but this in and of itself poses a problem because he is by this point deeply in debt.

Ultimately, Pip does warm to Magwitch and helps him in his (unsuccessful) escape attempt. In the end, however, he has little to show for his career as a gentleman beyond self-knowledge: Estella marries Bentley Drummle, and Pip is saved from debtor's prison only thanks to Joe's kindness. Dickens even subverts another common literary trope when Biddy, Pip's faithful childhood friend, declines his marriage proposal in favor of Joe. With nothing left for him in England, Pip joins Herbert in Egypt and begins working as a clerk, ultimately achieving modest success in this position. As for Estella, the novel is ambiguous; Dickens wrote two endings, one of which holds out the hope that Pip and Estella may ultimately end up together, in partial fulfillment of Pip's early "expectations." The original ending, however, makes it clear that the two go their separate ways.

#### **4. Examine Dorothea's ideas of marriage in Middlemarch? 20**

**Answer-** One of the central themes that runs through Middlemarch is that of marriage. Indeed,

it has been argued that Middlemarch can be construed as a treatise in favour of divorce. I do not think that this is the case, although there are a number of obviously unsuitable marriages. If it had been Elliot's intention to write about such a controversial subject, I believe she would not have resorted to veiling it in a novel. She illustrates the different stages of relationships that her characters undergo.

It is very interesting to trace the development of Dorothea as a character, especially in relation to her ideas of marriage and romance as illustrated in her relationship to Casaubon. Note the way that when she first becomes enamoured of him, it is the idea of becoming subservient to him and rejoicing in her position as an intellectual inferior that is part of the relationship. It is not love that attracts Dorothea to the corpse-like Casaubon, rather her sense of duty; her desire to be like one of Milton's daughters. Dorothea, orphaned at a young age, would seem to long for a husband who can fill the role of the father she lost. Casaubon's age is no deterrence, indeed she would rather marry a teacher / father figure than a romantic person at the beginning of the novel. She learns, though, that this is a bad idea, and so finds herself attracted to Ladislaw.

She is so possessed with the idea of contributing to the good of humanity through the assistance she can offer Casaubon, she does not even notice how patronising and self centred he is. Celia, however, when confronted with the same facts, has no illusions, and can see that Casaubon is entirely unsuitable, even if she expresses her objections to him in terms of his soup-eating technique. If Dorothea fails to see Casaubon for what he is, it is not due to circumstances (Her short-sightedness is a metaphor for her inability to perceive what everyone else can see clearly, in favour of the transcendent. Could the glasses she requires to correct her normal sight represent Celia, who is the lens through which she can see what others perceive as normal reality?), but due to her mind seeking to go beyond their earthly constraints. Dorothea, then is full of Christian hope, while Casaubon is characterised by pagan indolence and apathy - it takes Dorothea's prompting for him to even consider starting to finish his 'great' work. When Casaubon proposes marriage, she sees herself not as a bride to be married to a groom, more the Saint Theresa of the prelude preparing to take her holy vows as a nun - as a "neophyte" on the verge of a "higher initiation". She presumably sees Casaubon as the "lamp" to light her darkness (84), but fails to notice that he lives at Lowick (Low wick).

Although the marriage is obviously unhappy, neither party, I believe, could end it. Dorothea



because she is so determined to make something worthwhile come out of it, something that will benefit society. Casaubon couldn't end it, as it would be admitting that he had made a mistake in his choice of Dorothea as a wife.

Throughout our readings of *Middlemarch*, marriage has been woven into the plot with the engagements and marriages of Dorothea and Casaubon, Rosamund and Lydgate, and Celia and Sir Chettam. And while many Victorian novels consider marriage as the ultimate source of happiness, Eliot essentially criticizes this view in her portrayal of the institution.

So far, especially in Dorothea and Casaubon relationship, marriage is portrayed as negative and unromantic. For example, Dorothea essentially decides that she wants to marry Casaubon because she believes that he'll be able to help her achieve her highest potential. As she says, "marriage is a state of higher duties" (38) and this sentiment is more reflective of, as what Manuela describes as her inability to "consciously see" and her tendency to be naive and idealistic rather than any romantic inclinations.

Casaubon also furthers this unromantic portrayal of marriage. When he writes in his proposal letter that "for in the first hour of meeting you, I have an impression of you eminent and perhaps exclusive fitness to supply that need" (39), he sounds as if he's completing a business transaction rather than professing his love for or admiration of Dorothea.

Also, the cracks are already starting to reveal themselves in Dorothea and Casaubon's marriage, which may suggest that the Victorian ideal of marriage isn't actually an ideal at all. For example, "poor Dorothea...has not, as we know, enjoyed her husband's superior instruction so much as she expected" (339), and as we've read, she sometimes expresses her discontent that her marriage isn't what she expected. While we are still in the early stages of Dorothea and Casaubon marriage, Eliot already provides the audience with a more realistic portrayal of marriage by suggesting that all marriages may not have perfect fairytale ending and that it might not be the ultimate source of happiness.

**5. Would you agree that the major characters of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* reflect conflicting aspects of morality?**

**Answer-** The primary action of the novel takes place at the Marcia Blaine School for Girls in Edinburgh, Scotland, during the 1930s and focuses on a small group of students, known as "the Brodie set," and their schoolmistress, Miss Jean Brodie. The story begins in 1936, when the girls are sixteen, but quickly flashes back to 1930, when the girls—then in the junior level—began their two year course of study under Brodie's tutelage. Spark utilizes flashbacks and flash-forwards throughout the novel. A domineering eccentric who admires the fascism of Benito Mussolini, Brodie attempts to exert control over her students' lives and fantasies and to mold their beliefs and aesthetic tastes. Although Brodie's affect on each of the girls varies, they remain a distinct clique at the school after they leave the junior level and move up through the senior level.

Sandy Stranger and Rose Stanley are the principal figures among the girls, and it is through them that Brodie attempts to carry on a vicarious romance with Teddy Lloyd, the school's art master. Although Brodie is in love with Lloyd, she renounces him because he is married. Brodie instead carries on an affair with Gordon Lowther, the school's singing master, but refuses to marry him.

At this point in the story—when the flashbacks have caught up to the time when the novel formally began, in 1936—a new girl, Joyce Emily Hammond, arrives at the school and manages to befriend Brodie. At the same time, the Headmistress, Miss Mackay, is attempting and failing to have Brodie removed. Joyce eventually disappears; it is later learned that she was killed in

Spain, where her brother is fighting the fascists in the Spanish Civil War. During the summer of 1938, Brodie tours Germany, where her admiration for fascism increases. At the same time, Sandy has an affair with Lloyd—Brodie had intended for Rose to sleep with him. Lloyd, who is Catholic, introduces Sandy to Catholicism. She later converts, becomes a nun, and writes a famous psychological treatise, "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace." After returning from Germany,

, Brodie tells Sandy that she encouraged Joyce to go to Spain and convinced her to switch her allegiance to the fascists. Horrified at Brodie's disregard for human life and individuality, Sandy relates the information to Miss Mackay, who forces Brodie's resignation.

Brodie, who dies of cancer seven years later, spends the remainder of her life trying to figure

out who betrayed her. Major themes in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* include control and omniscience, Sandy's psychological development, and religion. The first theme centers on Brodie's attempts to influence the girls' actions and beliefs. Brodie tells the girls that they are an elite group—the "crème de la crème"—and she takes them into her confidence and tries to imbue them with her views on culture and life. As Dorothea Walker has stated, Brodie's "determination to broaden [the girls' knowledge] with her distorted version of reality suggests both her authoritarian nature and her desire to control. Her greatest wish is really to reproduce clones of herself." Miss Brodie's admiration for fascism reinforces this theme, and Sandy, in her recollections of "the Brodie Set" and its emphasis on conformity, likens the girls to Mussolini's soldiers.

This theme is also reflected in Spark's narrative style—a number of critics have compared her authorial control over the characters with Miss Brodie's totalitarian personality and fascist impulses. Margaret Moan Rowe has stated that "Spark deftly counterpoints authorial omniscience with Brodie's attempts at omniscience; all the author plans works, not so with the plans of the character in the novel." The novel's second theme shows Sandy's development from a young girl who hesitantly accepts Brodie's declarations, to a teenager who questions the limits of her loyalty to Brodie, to a cloistered nun. As a young girl Sandy is obsessed with understanding Brodie's psychology. However, as Sandy matures, her fascination with Brodie gives way to the realization of her moral obligation to the welfare of others and compels her to put an end to Brodie's tenure at the school, thus preventing her from influencing another set of impressionable girls. Spark's characters rarely, however, act from a single motive, and the author suggests that Sandy's impulse to act against Brodie is also tinged with jealousy. The novel's third theme centers on Roman Catholicism. Brodie abhors Catholicism and tells her students that it is a religion for those who do not wish to think for themselves.

In authorial commentary, Spark notes that this is an odd view for someone such as Brodie and suggests that Brodie was best suited to the Roman Catholic church, which might have refined her excesses. Sandy's conversion to Catholicism owes to her affair with Lloyd and the influence of Brodie. Commenting on Sandy's conversion and Brodie's role in it, Walker has stated that "Spark appears to be saying that out of evil may come good, in that evil might be refined and tempered into good. To a believer like Spark, the tempering agent is Roman Catholicism."