

Syllabus for Semester 2nd (English Literature) (Batch 2017)

CC2: British Drama

Unit1: Marlowe: Tamburlaine Part1

Unit2: Shakespeare: Twelfth Night

Unit3: Shaw: Pygmalion

Unit4: Osborne: Look Back in Anger

Introduction to British Drama:

The drama arose in England, as in other Catholic countries of Europe, in the attempts to the clergy to teach the masses the tenets of the Christian faith by dramatizing the services of the church at Christmas and Easter. The plays were in Latin, the language was of the liturgy, and the actors were clergy. Such scriptural plays in Latin are known to have been performed as early as the twelfth century. They became very popular after the institution by the Pope of the festival of Corpus Christi early in the fourteenth century. The sets of plays which were given separately at Christmas and Easter were now combined into one cycle performed on the occasion. Their language now was English and the plays had an admixture of comic element to make them more interesting. As the churchyards could not hold the growing crowds, the performance of the plays was taken over by the towns. As the Corpus Christi festival was celebrated with a Pageant or procession, these plays were performed on moving platforms which themselves came to be called as 'pageants'. The whole of the scriptural story from the birth of Christ to his crucifixion and ascension was enacted in the cycle of plays called **Miracles** or **Mysteries**. A distinction is sometimes made between mysteries and miracles the former denoting plays dealing with the lives of the saints.

The complete cycle of plays was spread over several days. Each guild or trade union of the town made itself responsible for the production of the play appropriate to it. For example, the play of the flood would be assigned to the guild of shipwrights, the adoration of the Magi who presented the infant Christ with gold and jewellery to the guild of goldsmiths, and so on.

The Miracles were well established by the fifteenth century and were very popular. Four cycles of these plays besides minor ones have been preserved. Named after their own they are: Cycles of York, Chester, Coventry and Wakefield (also called Townley plays after the family that owned them.) The York collection, the biggest, consists of 48 plays.

The second stage in the development of the drama was reached in moral plays or Moralities. These grew up side by side with the miracles in the 15th century. The earliest extant morality, the *Castle of Perseverance*, dates back to early fifteenth century. The Morality was a sort of allegory of human life showing man struggling between Good and Evil. The characters were abstractions personifications of virtues and vices. The early moralities like *Mankind*, *Hickscorner* and others are mediocre. The only exception is *Everyman* which so good that it has been revived on the modern stage in both England and America. Everyman is summoned to God by Death. He seeks company and visit one after another, Fellowship (friends), and Goods (earthly possessions), but in vain. He at last remembers Good Deeds who willingly accompanies him. The moral is obvious.

The University Wits:

William Shakespeare's immediate predecessors who prepared the way for the emergence of the well chiselled and well-defined Elizabethan drama are commonly known as 'the university wits'. They are so called because they were all men of academic training and had been brought into personal touch with the new learning. They had absorbed the spirit of the renaissance at one or other of the great institutions of scholarship- Oxford and Cambridge. On account of their classical learning and national genius, they ensured the triumph of a new taste that stood for free and flexible form of drama. Arranged roughly in order of time, the names of these university wits are : John Lyly (1558-97), Thomas Lodge (1558-1625), Robert Greene (1560-92), Christopher Marlowe (1564-93) and Thomas Nash (1567-1601). They formed a unified group and each contributed something to the evolution of the drama into the forms in which Shakespeare the greatest English dramatist so far, was to take it up. George Peele handled blank verse with more ease and variety than was common at the

time. He was fluent. He also had humour and a fair amount of pathos. Robert Greene was known for his genial humour and less austere method than those of other tragedians. Thomas Nashe was a born journalist, but in those days the only scope for his talents lay in pamphleteering. He took an active part in the political and personal questions of the day. He finished Marlowe's *Dido*. His prose tale *The Unfortunate Traveller* or *the life of Jacke Wilton* (1594) is regarded important in the development of the English novel. Thomas Lodge can be distinguished by his exquisite lyrics. The most famous of his romances is *Rosalynde* (1590) which Shakespeare followed very closely in his pastoral comedy *As You Like It*. Thomas Kyd is one of the most important of the university wits. Of his surviving plays *The Spanish Tragedy* is the most important of its horrific plot, involving murder, frenzy, and sudden death. There is largeness of his *tragic* conception about the play that resembles the work of Marlowe, and there are touches of style that dimly foreshadow the great *tragic* lines of Shakespeare.

Life and Works of Christopher Marlowe (1564-93)

Christopher Marlowe was the youngest of the university wits and also the greatest of them all. Marlowe, son of a shoemaker of Canterbury was born in 1564. He was educated at the King's School Canterbury and at Cambridge. He was accused of atheism and lived the loose life of a Bohemian. He died as the result of a drunken brawl at the age of twenty nine. His major works are the four plays- *Tamburlaine*, *Dr. Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta* and *Edward 2nd*. The minor works include two plays- *The Massacre at Paris*, *Dido: Queen of Carthage*-and the non-dramatic poem *Hero and Leander*.

The heroes of the first three plays are each consumed by a burning passion which leads to their doom. In *Tamburlaine* this passion is thirst for power. Urged by the lust of conquest Tamburlaine- Taimur Lung or Taimur, the lame- the fourteenth century Tartar, ravages the whole of Asia. Students of Indian history will remember him as the man who massacred one lakh prisoners in Delhi. Utterly contemptuous of human life and morality, this most blood-thirsty butcher of history until Hitler, has his chariot drawn by captive Kings lashed forward like horses. Marlowe shows him as a superman or demigod exulting

over his victims and hurling defiance at God in declamatory blank verse speeches of a power never heard before.

Marlowe was the foremost Elizabethan tragedian of his day. He greatly influenced William Shakespeare, who was born in the same year as Marlowe and who rose to become the pre-eminent Elizabethan playwright after Marlowe's early death. Marlowe's plays are known for the use of blank verse and their overreaching protagonists.

Marlowe attended The King's School in Canterbury (where a house is named after him) and Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where he studied on a scholarship and received his Bachelor or Arts degree in 1584. In 1587, the university hesitated to award him his Masters degree because of a rumour that he intended to go to the English college at Rheims, presumably to prepare for ordination as a Roman Catholic priest. His degree was awarded on schedule when the Privy Council intervened on his behalf, commending him for his "faithful dealing" and "good service" to the Queen.

Tamburlaine The Great:

The play (in both parts) was entered into the Stationer's Register on August 14, 1590 (as "two comical discourses"). Both parts were published in a single octavo later the same year by the printer Richard Jones. A second edition was issued by Jones in 1592. The plays were next published separately in quarto by the bookseller Edward White, Part 1 in 1605 and Part 2 in 1606.

The play is loosely based on the life of the Central Asian emperor, Timur (Tamerlane- Timur the lame d. 1405) Written in 1587 or 1588, the play is a milestone in Elizabethan public drama. Along with Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, it may be considered the first popular success of London's public stage. Whereas the real Timur was of Turkic- Mongolian ancestry and belonged to the nobility, for dramatic purposes Marlowe depicts him as a Scythian shepherd who rises to the rank of emperor.

The play opens in Persepolis. The Persian emperor, Mycetes, dispatches troops to dispose of Tamburlaine, a Scythian shepherd and, at that point, a nomadic bandit. In the same scene, Mycetes' brother Cosroe plots to overthrow Mycetes and assume the throne.

The scene shifts to Scythia, where Tamburlaine is shown wooing, capturing and winning Zenocrate, the daughter of the Egyptian King. Confronted by Mycetes' soldiers, he persuades first the soldiers and then Cosroe to join him in a fight against Mycetes. Although he promises Cosroe the Persian throne, Tamburlaine reneges on this promise and, after defeating Mycetes, takes personal control of the Persian Empire.

Now a powerful figure, Tamburlaine turns his attention to Bajazeth, emperor of the Turks. He defeats Bajazeth and his tributary kings, capturing the emperor and his wife Zabina. The victorious Tamburlaine keeps the defeated ruler in a cage and feeds him scraps from his table, releasing Bajazeth only to use him as a footstool. Bajazeth later kills himself on stage by bashing his head against the bars upon hearing of Tamburlaine's next victory. Upon finding his body, Zabina does likewise.

Tamburlaine conquers Africa and names himself emperor of that continent. Now he sets his eyes on Damascus, a target which places the Egyptian sultan, his to-be-father-in-law, directly in his path. Zenocrate pleads with her future husband to spare her father. He complies, instead making the sultan a tributary king. The part 1 with the wedding of Tamburlaine and Zenocrate, who is crowned Empress of Persia.

In part 2, Tamburlaine prepares his sons to be conquerors as he continues to attack neighbouring kingdoms. His oldest son, Calyphas, preferring to stay by his mother's side and not risk death, incurs Tamburlaine's wrath. Meanwhile, the son of Bajazeth, Callapine, escapes from Tamburlaine's jail and gathers a group of tributary kings to his side, planning to avenge his father. Callapine and Tamburlaine meet in battle, where Tamburlaine is victorious. But finding that Calyphas remained in his tent during the battle, Tamburlaine kills him in anger. Tamburlaine then forces the defeated kings to pull his chariot to his next battlefield.

Tamburlaine shows his extravagant savagery in Babylon also. When the governor of the city attempts to save his life in return for revealing the city treasury, Tamburlaine has him hanged from the city walls and shot. He orders the inhabitants-men, women, and children-to be bound and thrown into a nearby lake. Lastly, Tamburlaine scornfully burns a copy of the Quran and claims to be greater than God. In the final act, he becomes ill but manages to defeat one

more foe before he dies. He bids his sons to conquer the remainder of the earth as he dies.

Multiple Choice Questions On Tamburlaine

- 1. What item does Tamburlaine claim is the finest ever?**
 - (a) Gold.
 - (b) Loyalty.
 - (c) Victory.
 - (d) Sword.

- 2. How many soldiers arrive to confront Tamburlaine?**
 - (a) 1,000.
 - (b) 3,000.
 - (c) 10,000.
 - (d) 5,000.

- 3. Mycetes believes Tamburlaine will become:**
 - (a) Tired.
 - (b) Vain.
 - (c) Overconfident.
 - (d) Careless.

- 4. Who approaches Tamburlaine on behalf of Persia?**
 - (a) Cosroe.
 - (b) Techelles.
 - (c) Zenocrate.
 - (d) Theridimas.

- 5. Who wants to claim the throne?**
 - (a) Tamburlaine.
 - (b) Corsoe.
 - (c) Mycetes.
 - (d) Menaphon.

6. What was Tamburlaine's occupation before he took up war?
 - a) Shepherd
 - b) Poet
 - c) Farmer
 - d) Blacksmith

7. Tamburlaine's reference to Mycetes as "the wise king of Persia" is an example of:
 - a) Irony

- b) A pun
 - c) Exposition
 - d) Hyperbole
8. Zenocrate sees the fate of which of these characters as a potential allegory for the fate of Tamburlaine?
- a) Sigismund
 - b) Bajazeth
 - c) The Soldan of Egypt
 - d) Cosroe
9. What makes Mycetes an obvious target for a scourge of God?
- a) He disrespects the gods
 - b) He's usurped his kingdom from his more capable brother
 - c) He's corrupt
 - d) He's incompetent, a king by birth only
10. The significance of the opening scene of the Persian court is that
- a) It illustrates Marlowe's ideas about how nobles should behave
 - b) It creates suspense by delaying the introduction of Tamburlaine
 - c) It demonstrates the limitations of earthly power
 - d) It sets up a contrast between the Persian kings and Tamburlaine
11. Why might Marlowe have presented Part One of Tamburlaine as a tragedy when it isn't one?
- a) To invoke a set of expectations that he can then subvert
 - b) Writing tragedy was how one became a 'serious' dramatist
 - c) To differentiate himself from the early plays of Shakespeare
 - d) Tragedies were more popular in Elizabethan England than comedies
12. Which of Tamburlaine's three children is the most developed character?
- a) Amyras
 - b) Calyphas
 - c) Celebinus
 - d) None of them are developed very much
13. What is the best paraphrase of the quote, "Nature, that framed us of four elements...Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds"?
- a) It's the nature of human beings to aspire to more than they are
 - b) Everybody secretly wants to be king
 - c) Scythians are naturally inclined towards conquest
 - d) Nature fills everyone's mind with delusions of grandeur
14. To which of Marlowe's other plays does Tamburlaine relate most closely?
- a) Dr. Faustus
 - b) Dido, Queen of Carthage
 - c) The Jew of Malta
 - d) Edward II

14. The term “scourge of God” refers to
- A messenger from God, sent to earth to spread a warning message
 - An anti-Christ figure, bent on working against Christianity on earth
 - A tyrant or warlord whose appearance indicates an immanent apocalypse
 - A tyrant or warlord who indirectly serves God’s will by punishing the unjust
15. The most surprising feature of Tamburlaine’s appearance is
- His divergence from Classical standards of beauty
 - His relatively short stature
 - Its stark contrast to representations of other Scythians
 - His resemblance to the Renaissance figure of the poet
16. The contrast between Tamburlaine’s statement of his ambitions and his pursuit of purely earthly goals is an example of
- Hypocrisy
 - Irony
 - Contrast
 - Bathos
17. What is the clearest addition Marlowe makes to the type of the Classical hero with Tamburlaine?
- His low birth
 - His extreme cruelty
 - His skill at oratory
 - His capacity for romantic love
18. Which character besides Tamburlaine is the most developed and significant in Part One?
- Theridamas
 - Zenocrate
 - Bajazeth
 - Cosroe
19. The correspondence between Tamburlaine’s appearance and his character is best described as an example of
- The Christian concept of virtue
 - Imagery
 - The Renaissance understanding of the Classical conception of the hero
 - Symbolism
20. What is Cosroe’s biggest mistake in dealing with Tamburlaine?
- He gives him too large a reward, making him greedy
 - He forgets to ask Tamburlaine to swear loyalty to him
 - He insults Scythians, enraging Tamburlaine

- d) He underestimates him
21. What is the main function of the scene in which Tamburlaine confronts Mycetes when the latter is attempting to hide his crown?
- a) Comic relief
 - b) To connect Tamburlaine's verbal victory over Mycetes with his military victory
 - c) To demonstrate Mycetes's cowardice
 - d) To establish Mycetes' lack of competence with words
22. Generally, what does dialogue prose signify in Tamburlaine the Great?
- a) Marlowe's moral disapproval of the beliefs of the speaker
 - b) A lack of education in the speaker
 - c) The plainspoken veracity of the speaker
 - d) The coarseness of the speaker or the sentiments conveyed
23. Which of the following characters dies offstage?
- a) Olympia
 - b) Mycetes
 - c) Zabina
 - d) The King of Arabia
24. How does Tamburlaine conceive of nobility?
- a) It's a gift from god
 - b) It is achieved through deeds
 - c) It stems from the circumstances of one's birth
 - d) It's a natural gift
25. Tamburlaine responds to the pleas of the Virgins of Damascus by
- a) Sympathizing, but refusing to go back on his word
 - b) Refusing to grant mercy, but allowing them to return to the city
 - c) Having them killed and hung on the walls of the city
 - d) Agreeing to spare the women and children of Da
26. Tamburlaine's success in convincing Theridamas to join him is an example of
- a) Allusion
 - b) Hubris
 - c) Situational irony
 - d) Allegory