NEERAJ®

POPULAR LITERATURE
B.E.G.C.-106
B.A. English (Hons.)- 3rd Semester

**Chapter Wise Reference Book
Including Many Solved Sample Papers**

Based on

C.B.C.S. (Choice Based Credit System) Syllabus of

I.G.N.O.U.

& Various Central, State & Other Open Universities

By: *Kshyama Sagar Meher*

MRP ₹ **280/-**

Content

POPULAR LITERATURE

S.No.	Chapterwise Reference Book	Page

BLOCK-I : POPULAR LITERATURE : AN INTRODUCTION

BLOCK-II : GENRES OF POPULAR LITERATURE I : CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND YOUNG ADULT FICTION

BLOCK-III : GENRES OF POPULAR LITERATURE II : DETECTIVE AND SCIENCE FICTION

BLOCK-IV : GENRES OF POPULAR LITERATURE III : GRAPHIC AND VISUAL NARRATIVES

■■

QUESTION PAPER

June – 2023

(Solved)

POPULAR LITERATURE   B.E.G.C.-106

Time: 3 Hours]   [**Maximum Marks: 100**

Note: *There are three sections in this paper – A, B, and C. Attempt questions from all three sections. Attempt four questions from Section A, two from Section B and three from Section C.*

SECTION – A

Q. 1. Write short notes on any *four* of the following:

(a) **Mass culture.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 4, Q. No. 3.

(b) **Literary canon.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 10, 'What is a Literary Cannon?'

(c) **Kitsch.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 12, 'The Idea of Kitsch'.

(d) **Genre Fiction.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 19, 'Popular Literature as Genre Fiction'.

(e) **Fantasy novel.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 42, Q. No. 4*(e)* and Page No. 39, 'Fantasy Novels'.

(f) **Literary taste.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 11, 'The Notion of 'Taste'.

SECTION-B

Note: Answer any *two* of the following questions:

Q. 2. Discuss the relationship between popular culture and ideology.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 7, Q. No. 1.

Q. 3. What is the difference between "classic" and "popular"? Illustrate through examples.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 14, Q. No. 2 and Page No. 11, 'Classic and the Classical' and Popular Classics'.

Q. 4. Write a note on popular literature from the perspective of Gender.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 21, 'Gender and Popular Literature'.

Q. 5. Discuss briefly *Through the Looking Glass* as Fantasy fiction.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 51, Q. No. 2.

SECTION-C

Note: Answer any *three* of the following questions:

Q. 6. How does *Funny Boy* deconstruct social gender constructs that govern the private and public liver of individuals?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 75, Q. No. 4.

Q. 7. Discuss *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* as an example of "unconventional" defective fiction.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-10, Page No. 93, Q. No. 5 and Page No. 94, Q. No. 6.

Q. 8. How does *Bhimayana* employ the intricacies of Gond Art? Elaborate.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-13, Page No. 120, 'Bhimayana as a Graphic Narretive and Gond Art'.

Q. 9. How is Vishal Bharadwaj's *The Blue Umbrella* a "creative" adaptation of Ruskin Bond's novella?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-16, Page No. 147, 'Defining the Novella' and Page No. 148, 'The Blue Umbrella'.

Q. 10. Analyze "The ones who walk away from Omelas" from the perspective of Gender.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-12, Page No. 114, Q. No. 2.

Q. 11. Write a brief account on the sociological approach reading of popular literature.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 20, 'Sociological Reading of Popular Literature'.

■■

QUESTION PAPER

December – 2022

(Solved)

POPULAR LITERATURE
B.E.G.C.-106

Time: 3 Hours]   **[Maximum Marks: 100**

Note: *There are three sections in this paper – A, B, and C. Attempt questions from all three sections. Attempt four questions from Section A, two from Section B and three from Section C.*

SECTION–A

Write short notes on any *four* of the following:

Q. 1. Fantasy Novels.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 42, Q. No. 4*(e)*.

Q. 2. Detective Fiction.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 83, Q. No. 1.

Q. 3. Sensation Fiction.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 80, 'Sensation Fiction'.

Q. 4. Hard Boiled Novels.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 80, 'Hard-Boiled Novels'.

Q. 5. Utopia.

Ans. Utopian science fiction comes under the utopian literature which defined as the verbal construction of a particular quasi-human community where socio-political institutions, norms and individual relationships are organized according to a more perfect principle than in the author's community. It is concerned with the "Larger collective social and cultural machinery – socio political institutions, norms and relationships – rather than individual characters or character psychology". The creation of a new space, new world, newer environment, with the help of 'novum' extrapolated from the world the reader/author, inhabits alternatively serves as an analogy for the real, experiential world and connects science fiction with the utopian genre.

Fredric Jameson says that the utopian genre is constructed around the here and the now and thus, "defamiliarize (s) and restructure(s) our experience of our own present". Tom Moylon says, utopian text "resists the closure of ideology" and is oppositional to the formations and structures of ideology. Introducing the influential term of 'critical utopias', Moylon describes, it as one in which the texts "Reject utopia as a blueprint while preserving it as a dream" wherein through the broken narrative strategies employed within the text, the ideological structures are dismantled. Moylon says, critical utopias as a textual space emerge as the key impulse "To open up a radical path to a not yet realized future". Utopian science fiction makes the readers critically aware of the "problems of the reigning social order" and deconstructs the commonly accepted beliefs and conventions of the society, leading it open to changes.

Q. 6. King's Abbot as a Fictional Setting.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-10, Page No. 92, Q. No. 4*(a)*.

SECTION-B

Answer any *two* of the following questions:

Q. 7. Do you think cinema expands the understanding of literature? Discuss with reference to cinematic adaptations of popular literature.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-15, Page No. 145, Q. No. 2 and Page No. 142, Q. No. 2.

Q. 8. Attempt a discussion on 'Chick Lit' as a genre of popular literature with emphasis on its gender politics.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 30, 'Gender Politics and Popular Literature'.

Q. 9. How is language used in *Through the Looking-Glass*? Explain the ambiguities and wordplay in the novel.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 52, Q. No. 4.

POPULAR LITERATURE

BLOCK-I : POPULAR LITERATURE : AN INTRODUCTION

What is Popular Literature?

①

INTRODUCTION

The term "popular" has been derived from the Greek word "populus", which means people. Literature reflects the culture of its times. "Popular literature" includes both fiction and non-fiction. In this chapter, we will discuss some of the salient points of the larger debate that surrounds the concept of the popular and popular literature. We will study the relationship between literary merit and the marketplace, popular literature and media.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

CULTURE, CIVILISATION AND IDEOLOGY

The evolution of the concept culture can be traced back to Latin *cultura*, derived from the root *colere*, which means inhabit, cultivate, protect, honour with worship. Initially, culture was used to refer to the tending, growth or cultivation of something, usually crops or animals.

In the 16th century, culture referred to the growth or cultivation of human attributes. By the 18th century, it became synonym with the concept of civilisation. During the Enlightenment, the official, elite culture of European societies, was sanctified. With the rise of industrialization in the 18th century, the term 'Civilisation' was limited to describing the development of economic, social and political institutions and the word 'culture' referred to a specific set of codes of conduct or attitudes which were held to be best exemplified in works of art, of the select few, who are the proclaimed guardians of good taste. In the 19th century, the meaning of 'culture' widened and was differentiated from that of 'civilisation'.

In *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), Mathew Arnold mentioned real culture as the best that had been thought and said in the world. In the 19th century, culture was used in the plural. It included the term 'folk' or 'peasant' culture. Thus, the term 'cultures' refers to at least two kinds, one of the 'select few' and the other, of the people especially the peasantry. In most academic quarters, the term 'culture' stands for those artistic pursuits that are considered to be of a certain value or standard. Other forms of activity such as entertainment, recreation or leisure are looked as 'mass culture'. Raymond Williams says culture is "One of the two or three most complicated words in the English language."

We can say that the term culture refers to all of those activities or practices, which produce sense or meaning. This includes the customs and rituals that govern or regulate our social relationships on a day-to-day basis as well as those texts – literary, musical and audio-visual – through which the social and natural world is represented or signified.

POPULAR CULTURE

Some of the famous exponents of popular culture such as: Ray B. Browne, Marshall Fishwick, Bruce Ludke, John Cawelti, Russel B. Nye, C. W. E. Bigsby and Leslie Fiedler have defined various facets of popular culture.

To define popular culture, Browne uses the symbol of the eyeball. On the one end is folk culture and on the other is elite culture. The middle, constituting the largest portion is the iris, comprises the popular culture which is ever expanding, growing and always seeing widely, intently and deeply. And the eyeball is horizontal not vertical. Thus, Browne says it is inappropriate to think of one culture as "high" and another as "low".

In the 19th century, Mathew Arnold's school of thought expressed concerns that popular culture was a

threat to cultural and social authority but the Frankfurt School, a group of German intellectuals noted with deep interest the displacement and menace caused by the explosion of mass culture from newspapers and cinema to popular fiction and Jazz. They argued that it produces the opposite effect and maintains social authority.

In 1944, the German intellectuals Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno coined the term 'Culture Industry' to designate the processes of mass culture. Turner in his seminal study *Structure and Anti-Structure* says that popular culture is world turned upside down in a stratified society. Pierre Bourdieu says that the celebration of 'the remarkable of the unremarkable'– the everyday, forms the core of Popular Culture.

Thus, popular culture is the television we watch, the cinema we give patronage to, the type of food – fast, junk or conventional, that we eat, the type of attire we wear, the music we appreciate, the things we spend money on. It is the whole society we live in. It is virtually our life and the world that surrounds us.

Popular Culture, Mass Culture, Commodity and the Marketplace

Popular Culture can be said as mass culture. Its quantitative dimension can be defined by looking at the popularity of a commodity in the market. Popular culture is widely favoured or well-liked by many people. By examining the market such as sales of books, sales of albums and videos, we can make out what pupular culture is. Scrutinising the market research figures on audience preferences for different television programmes, we can understand the popular culture. Popular culture is thus, defined as mass culture. It has been seen that many new products fail to make a mark despite extensive advertising; many films fail to recover even their promotional costs at the box office and that about 80 per cent of music and video albums released every year lose money. Such statistics give an idea about the popular culture.

Popular Culture as Residual Category

Popular Culture as a residual category implies that it is the culture which is left over after we have decided on what high culture is. According to this definition, popular culture includes cultural texts and practices which fail to meet the required standards to qualify as high culture.

Popular Culture is thus, inferior culture to high culture. This is supported by claims that popular culture is mass-produced commercial culture, whereas high culture is the result of an individual act of creation.

Thus, the high culture deserves a moral and aesthetic response whereas the popular culture requires a cursory glance and has little to offer.

Popular Culture and the Idea of Hegemony

Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci uses the term hegemony to refer to the way in which dominant groups in society seek to win the consent of the sub-ordinate groups in society through a process of intellectual and moral leadership. Known as neo-Gramscian hegemony theory, it sees popular culture as a site of struggle between the resistance of subordinate groups and the forces of incorporation of the dominant groups in the society. Thus, according to this theory, popular culture is not the imposed culture of the mass culture theorists, nor is it the culture that emerges from below or the culture of the people. It is a terrain of exchange and negotiation between the two. The terrain is marked by resistance and incorporation, a condition of ideological struggle between dominant and sub-ordinate cultures. Popular culture has also been defined as modern majority culture, protest culture, a counter tradition in literature, para or sub-literature, lowbrow as against highbrow, public enterprise as opposed to private enterprise and vulgar as contrasted with *avant-garde*. However, popular culture has been accepted as a legitimate, though slightly contested, site for serious study and discussion.

Popular Culture and America

Critics claim mass culture has been imported from America after their invention in great American cities. This claim has a long history in the theoretical mapping of popular culture. It is believed that the American culture led to the decline of the British culture. Popular culture hit the Americans in the 1920s. In the 1940s, the Bowling Green University critics for the first time expressed their concern over the adverse impact of this culture over other cultures. Fiedler says that the American culture has been popular under a "thin overlay of imported European elitism". He also points out what non-American cultures talk of the incursion as a "Creeping Americanization" of their cultures, a synonym for "Vulgarization".

POPULAR LITERATURE

Stories, songs, fiction, romances and plays have existed since time immemorial. However, serious consideration of the broad field of popular literature as a significant category only started in the 20th century.

The Advent of Postmodernism

In the 20th century, the advent of postmodernism ended the elitism and celebrated the victory of

commerce over culture. It removed the difference between authentic and commercial culture.

The relationship between television commercials and music can be taken as an example. Artists now have had hit records because their songs have appeared in television commercials. Now both song or product are being marketed and sold. Postmodernists like Fredrick Jameson, Baudrillard, Lyotard, Susan Sontag and Hal Foster have accepted this.

Defining Popular Literature

Popular literature is not a category, a type, a sub-genre, or the invention of the authors of the books, or authors who we have been taught to believe belong to popular literature. Songs, stories, legends, fables and kitchen maid romances not worthy to be taught are included under popular literature category. Several academicians like Leslie Fiedler resisted a blind alignment to the academia as the center, but promoted the 'popular' in discourse. Fiedler considers "popular song and story, mostly story" as popular literature. Fiedler says popular literature has been "ghettoized", but has endured on its own.

Genres of Popular Literature

Popular literature includes different genres such as romance, fantasy and science fiction. It includes kitchen maid romances written by women and romantic story narrated the woes faced by two young people engaged in a forbidden love. Popular literature include fantasy like children's literature. *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll is an example. Issac Asimov's stories of scientific adventures and make believe kingdoms come under this category. America's cowboy cult stories, the Westerns, set in the frontier were hugely popular. Mysteries have also become popular because of the characters like *Auguste Dupin* by Edgar Allan Poe and Sherlock Holmes by Arthur Conan Doyle. Satyajit Ray's *Feluda* stories have also been popular among the people. The Spy Fiction, which started with Fennimore Cooper, became more popular with James Bond in the mid-20th century. Now popular literature has also included new forms of writings like comic books, graphic novels based on mythology, folk legends, fables, myths, cartoon strips and terribly tiny tales.

Inverse Relationship between Literary Merit and Popular Literature

Popular literature attain success in market, but they are not taught in schools and colleges on the notion floated by elitist critics is that they are not worthy for serious attention and cannot be admitted into academia.

These so-called guardians of "good" taste "ghettoize" certain writers even before reading their works. Even librarians "ghettostack" these books. They call them as juveniles, teenage diction and pornography. Such books are never considered for any major prize. Fiedler calls this an "untouchable category." However, today, the borders that divide the pop from the elite are merging. Media also has a role in this.

Literature and Media

In the last two decades, a paradigm shift has happened for literature as other modes of represen-tations – cinema, stage, television, comic books, etc – have promoted them. As mass public culture, art practice and vehicle of propaganda, literary adaptations on celluloid and cinema have created an extended narrative text for the audience. About 50 per cent of the films today are based on popular literature. Ian Fleming's James Bond spy thrillers is an example.

Agatha Christie also has created a discourse around the enigmatic *Hercule Poirot* to paint a social landscape fraught with tensions and distrust, put up in a series of formulaic, manipulative texts. However, when literature flows into other forms of popular culture such as films, soap operas and comic books, sub-versions of different types occur. Inventions take place in the form of violence and sex and many distortions also take place.

Popular Literature Today

Popular literature has now got the attention of a literate reading public. For example, Chetan Bhagat, the creator of campus novels, has captured the pulse of the youngsters. This is because he gives them narratives in which the youth live and survive. Some writers like Surender Mohan Pathak, who writes in Hindi, are no longer considered as trashed. They have now been the subject of literary and academic conferences and university curricula. The doyen of chick-lit, *Advaita Kala* and several of her kind would like to equally claim academic space within the elite corridors, but they are yet to be included.

Marc Angenot in Pawling's *Popular Fiction and Social Change* says, "Para literature occupies the space outside the literary enclosure, as a forbidden taboo, a degraded product."

Flash fiction has emerged as a significant form of literature. Ernest Hemmingway's "For sale: Baby shoes, never worn" was applauded as a story with intense depth, gravity and minimal expressions. Today flash fiction provides a unique reading experience. The United States made significant contributions in flash fiction with *Narrative* and *Smith* magazines. In India,

Terribly Tiny Tales has been popular on social media in 2013 with Anuj Gosalia.

Launched in 2016, *Mirakee* is another writing mobile application that has been a platform for flash fiction writers. It allows a writer embellish their writing in an image form. *Mirakee* has become an instrument which helps writers to explore the realm of flash fiction.

In the 21st century, India saw the rise of a new kind of readers who have become an increasingly emboldened social class. Chetan Bhagat's *Five Point Someone* (2004), *One Night at a Call Centre* (2008) and *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008) have seen commercial success. Romance and campus fiction became the two genres that gave the Indian audience a literature that was thoroughly Indian. Post 2000s, the new brigade of engineers or management graduates-turned authors held, the baton of commercial Indian fiction. Durjoy Datta who was not just a commercial author, but a social media person, is an example.

Post 2000s, the new brigade of engineers or management graduates-turned authors held, the baton of commercial Indian fiction such as Durjoy Datta who was not just a commercial author, but a social media person.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q. 1. What are the early understandings of the term 'culture'?

Ans. The concept of culture has evolved from Latin *cultura*, originated from the term *colere*, which means: inhabit, cultivate, protect, honour with worship. Initially, culture was used as a 'noun of process' to refer to the tending, growth or cultivation of something, usually crops or animals. In the 16th century, 'culture' meant the growth or cultivation of human attributes. By the 18th century, it became synonymous with Enlightenment's concept of civilisation. With the rise of industrialization in the 18th century, the term 'civilisation' was limited to describing the development of economic, social and political institutions and the word 'culture' was regarded as a specific set of codes of conduct or attitudes which were held to be best exemplified in works of art, of the select few, who are the proclaimed guardians of good taste. In the 19th century, the meaning of 'culture' widened and started to be different from 'civilisation'.

Q. 2. In what ways is culture understood as 'high' and 'low'?

Ans. When we define popular culture as a residual category that implies it is the culture which is left over after we have decided on what high culture is. As per this definition, popular culture includes cultural texts and practices which fail to meet the required standards to qualify as high culture. Thus, popular culture can be said as inferior to high culture. This is supported by claims that popular culture is mass-produced commercial culture, whereas high culture is the result of an individual act of creation. The high culture thus, deserves a moral and aesthetic response whereas the popular culture requires a cursory glance and has little to offer.

Q. 3. Define popular culture and elaborate on its multiple connotations.

Ans. Popular culture, also called mass culture and pop culture, is generally recognized by members of a society as a set of the practices, beliefs and objects that are dominant or prevalent in a society at a given point in time. Popular culture also includes the activities and feelings produced as a result of interaction with these dominant objects. The primary driving force behind popular culture is mass appeal.

Ray B. Browne uses the symbol of the eyeball to define popular culture. He says on the one end there is folk culture and on the other it is elite culture and the middle, constituting the largest portion is the iris, comprises the popular culture. He believes popular culture is ever expanding, growing and always seeing widely, intently and deeply. The eyeball is horizontal not vertical. Thus, it is inappropriate to think of one culture as "high" and another as "low".

Mathew Arnold's school of thought in the 19th century suggested that popular culture was a threat to cultural and social authority, but the Frankfurt School, which comprises a group of German intellectuals, noted the displacement and menace caused by the explosion of mass culture. They argued that it produces the opposite effect and maintains social authority.

German intellectuals Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno coined the term 'Culture Industry' to designate the processes of mass culture. Turner says that popular culture is world turned upside down in a stratified society. Pierre Bourdieu says that the celebration of 'the remarkable of the unremarkable'– the everyday, forms the core of Popular Culture.

Popular Culture is called mass culture because popular culture is widely favoured or well-liked by many people. By examining the market such as sales of books, sales of albums and videos, we can make out what pupular culture is. Scrutinising the market research figures on audience preferences for different television