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By: Kshiyama Sagar Meher



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Mob.: 8510009872, 8510009878 E-mail: info@neerajbooks.com

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**Sample Preview
of the
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Sample Question
Papers**

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QUESTION PAPER

June – 2024

(Solved)

AMERICAN POETRY

M.E.G.-18

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks : 100

Notes: Answer five questions in all. Questions No. 1 is compulsory. All questions carry equal marks.

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

(a) Post-war American poetry

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 23, Q. No. 4.

(b) Early twentieth century American poetry

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-14, Page No. 138, Q. No. 4.

(c) Sylvia Plath's diaries and letters

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-21, Page No. 193, Q. No. 1.

(d) Dualism in John Crowe Ransom's poetry

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-25, Page No. 231, Q. No. 4.

Q. 2. Enumerate in detail about American poetry in the post-colonial era.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 23, 'American Poetry in the Post-Colonial Period'.

Q. 3. Discuss the genteel poets of "Harvard School" and enumerate their poetry.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 39, Q. No. 3.

Q. 4. Justify the title of the poem, "On Being Brought from Africa to America."

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 61, Q. No. 2.

Q. 5. How does Emerson emphasize the importance of seeking refuge in God?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 72, Q. No. 32 and Q. No. 30.

Q. 6. Critically examine the Harlem Renaissance in the context of early twentieth century American poetry.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-14, Page No. 139, Q. No. 6.

Q. 7. "Poetry was a weapon during the American War of Independence." Discuss.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-24, Page No. 221, Q. No. 6.

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QUESTION PAPER

December – 2023

(Solved)

AMERICAN POETRY

M.E.G.-18

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks : 100

Notes: Answer five questions in all. Questions No. 1 is compulsory. All questions carry equal marks.

Q. 1. Critically interpret any two of the following stanzas with reference to context:

(a) Then the theater was changed to something else. Its past was a souvenir.

Ans. This stanza from Wallace Stevens' poem "Of Modern Poetry" reflects on the evolution of artistic and literary forms, particularly poetry, and their relationship with the past. "Then the theatre was changed to something else" suggests a significant shift from an earlier form or concept of art (the "theatre") to a new form or idea. It reflects the need for art to evolve and adapt over time. The "theatre" here can symbolise traditional art forms or practices that have been redefined or replaced by new ones. This change underscores the dynamic nature of artistic expression. "Its past was a souvenir" implies that the earlier form of art has become a mere memento or memory. While it holds sentimental value, it is no longer actively engaged in the current artistic dialogue. The past, in this sense, is preserved as a memory but is not central to contemporary artistic practice. The stanza speaks to the necessity of continual reinvention in art. Traditional forms, once central to the artistic landscape, may become relics of the past. The evolution of art requires moving beyond these past forms to remain relevant and impactful. The "theatre" might also symbolise broader cultural or societal structures that undergo transformation. The change could represent shifts in cultural norms, societal values, or collective memory. The past becomes a "souvenir", emphasizing how historical contexts are often relegated to the background as new paradigms emerge.

(b) Some view our sable race with scornful eye, "Their colour is a diabolic dye."

Ans. This line from Phillis Wheatley's poem "On Being Brought from Africa to America", addresses and critiques prevailing racist attitudes.

"Some view our sable race with scornful eye" indicates the disdainful attitude of some people toward Black individuals. The term "sable race" refers to

people of African descent, and "scornful eye" denotes contempt or disapproval. It reflects the societal prejudice and the negative perception held by certain individuals towards Black people. "Their colour is a diabolic dye" encapsulates a racist belief that the colour of Black skin is somehow evil or cursed. The use of the word "diabolic" implies a connection to malevolence or sin, suggesting that Black skin is seen as a mark of inferiority or moral corruption. This reflects the dehumanising stereotypes used to justify discrimination and enslavement.

By quoting this racist viewpoint, Wheatley is not endorsing it but rather highlighting and criticising the prejudice she encounters. Her inclusion of this line serves to draw attention to the irrationality and cruelty of such racist attitudes. Wheatley's poem as a whole challenges these prejudiced views. By placing these racist sentiments in the context of her own conversion to Christianity and moral refinement, she argues against the idea that skin colour dictates one's moral or spiritual worth. The line is imbued with irony; while it reflects the discriminatory views of others, it implicitly critiques those views by juxtaposing them with the Christian values of equality and redemption. This sets up her broader argument that Black people, regardless of their skin colour, are capable of spiritual and moral redemption.

(c) And whoever heard such whisperings? Whoever saw such fellowships?

Ans. In the poem "By the Riverside" by J.C. Ransom, the lines "And who ever heard such whisperings, Who ever saw such fellowships?" reflect a profound moment of divine or spiritual revelation and transformation. It suggests that the speaker is experiencing or witnessing something extraordinary and ineffable. The "whisperings" imply subtle, intimate communications or revelations that are beyond ordinary human perception or understanding. It evokes a sense of mysticism and the supernatural. "Who ever saw such fellowships?" implies a rare and

Sample Preview of The Chapter

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AMERICAN POETRY

**BLOCK 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POETRY:
THEMES AND ISSUES**

Contextualizing American Poetry: Colonial Period



INTRODUCTION

Poetic writing in early America began in the colonies of then-Puritan New England. Colonial American poetry is heavily influenced by British models and Puritanism, which can be seen in the poetic structure, diction, and thematic development. The need to preserve the integrity of the Puritan ideals that created the settlements dominates the early poetry. As the colonists gained confidence, the poetry they wrote reflected their desire for independence more and more. It reflected the Puritan psyche, which became imprinted in the poetic nerve, by touching on various subjects such as love, religion, God, and Puritan values, among others. In this chapter, we will know about some early American poets and the context.

Colonialism in the United States of America: An Overview

Colonialism in America began with the white entry into the land, which was originally inhabited by the Arawacks. The white men swarmed into the country, bringing cards, money, fiddles, whiskey, and blood corruption with them. Europeans, specifically Spanish, Dutch, French, and English immigrants, conquered, plundered, and adopted America. The settlers did not know how to live in the wilderness in the early days of the colonial period, and they faced many difficulties. Through trial and error and the assistance of so of the more friendly Native American tribes, the colonists learned how to live in the wilderness over time. Small cities and towns were well established by the 1700s. The colonists gradually developed their own traditions, practises, and ways of life. They eventually came to believe that this new land was their true home. They

eventually adopted American soil as their home away from home. Many other ships carrying a swarming number of Europeanized colonists soon followed the Mayflower, which brought the first human cargo to America. Colonial settlers arrived in the Americas for a variety of reasons. While some came to seek religious freedom, others came with the intention of making money. Many came to conquer lands, while others were amateur explorers and seafarers seeking to discover the world. They established 13 colonies, which are now known as the states of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Roanoke, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maryland, Georgia, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Delaware. There were other scattered colonies, such as St. Augustine, which is now known as Florida.

Colonial Territorial Occupation: Natives' Displacement

Dutch: Hudson River; **English:** Jamestown, Manhattan Island; **French:** St. Lawrence River; **German and Scots-Irish:** New York, Pennsylvania; **Swedes:** Delaware River; **Spanish:** Florida; **Africa:** Slavery – all colonies.

The Colonial Timeline in America

1565: The Spanish establishes St. Augustine.

1607: Jamestown, the first permanent English colony in North America, was founded in Virginia.

1620: The Mayflower arrived in Plymouth, Massachusetts, and the “Mayflower Compact” was signed.

1626: Indians sold Manhattan Island to the New Amsterdam colony.

1638: Swedish settlers establish the colony of New Sweden in Delaware.

1681: William Penn received a charter for the colony that would become Pennsylvania.

1692: 20 “witches” were sentenced to death in Salem, Massachusetts.

1718: French established New Orleans.

1733: Georgia, the last of the original 13 colonies, was founded by James Oglethorpe.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

ENGLISH COLONIAL EXPANSION

The 16th century was a mercantile age. Europe raced to conquer and acquire as many colonies as possible. English colonies in North America grew into businesses and served as a home for England’s surplus population. This 16th entrepreneurship was primarily concerned with two issues: wealth and religious freedom. Food was scarce in 16th century England, and agricultural workers were laid off overnight as wool sales took precedence.

The Tobacco Colonies

In 1587, the first English settlement in North America was established on the island of Roanoke, which is now in North Carolina. By 1590, the Roanoke colony had mysteriously vanished. In 1606, King James I divided the Atlantic seaboard in two, giving the London Company (later the Virginia Company) the southern half and the Plymouth Company the northern half. The London Company sent 144 men to Virginia on three ships that accosted the Chesapeake Bay in the spring of 1607, soon after James I’s charter was declared. They sailed up the James River for about 60 miles to build their settlement, which they named Jamestown. By 1616, the settlers in Virginia had developed the agricultural skill to cultivate tobacco. It ensured the survival of the colony. In 1619, Virginia experienced its first slave trade. In 1632, the English monarchs granted Cecilius Calvert, the Second Lord Baltimore, a grant of 12 million acres of land at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. Maryland, named after the Queen, shared several common grounds with Virginia. Similarly to Virginia’s settlers, Maryland’s landowners were significant tobacco producers due to their vast plantations. The latter, on the other hand, is heavily reliant on the labour of indentured servants. Later, they were joined by African slaves imported and traded via the ‘Middle Passage’ or ‘Transatlantic Trade.’ Lord Baltimore, unlike the other Virginia founders, was a devout Catholic. Maryland became a religious policy and agenda for him, with the hope that his thriving colony would provide immediate asylum or refuge for his persecuted co-religionists.

The New England Colonies

The first permanent European settlement in New England was established at Plymouth Rock. In the early 1620s, four ships brought the pilgrims. A decade later, the Massachusetts Bay Company, an affluent syndicate, dispatched a much larger convoy of largely liberal Puritans to establish a new Massachusetts settlement. With the immediate assistance of the local natives, the colonists quickly learned and assimilated the necessary know-how expertise and knowledge to begin farming, fishing and hunting. Massachusetts quickly grew into a prosperous and thriving settlement. The expansion of the Massachusetts colonies resulted in the establishment of new settlements in New England. On the one hand, Puritans who shared the belief that Massachusetts was not sufficiently pious established the colonies of Connecticut and New Haven, which merged as one in 1665; on the other hand, Puritans who saw Massachusetts as far too restrictive and limiting in scope established the Rhode Island Colony, with the belief that all inclusive of the Jewish community would enjoy religious liberty. A small group of daring settlers established the colony of New Hampshire to the north of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

The Middle Colonies

In 1664, King Charles II gave his brother, James, the Duke of York, the area between New England and Virginia that was already occupied by Dutch ‘patroons’ (Dutch traders and landowners). The English settlers quickly overtook and conquered the Dutch New Netherland, renamed New York. Belgian Flemings and Walloons, French Huguenots, Scandinavians, and Germans all lived in the same area. The European settlers’ cohabitation contributed to the development of New York. In 1680, 45,000 square miles of land west of the Delaware River were transferred to William Penn, a Quaker who owned large swaths (strips) of land in Ireland.

As a result, Pennsylvania, also known as “Penn’s Woods,” was founded in William Penn’s North American assets or estates. As Penn reassured, European migration began as people believed and were enticed by the promise of religious tolerance and arable land. These new migrants from all over Europe were wealthy enough to settle comfortably in Pennsylvania and New England, much like the Puritans. They were not like the indentured serfs who came to work from misfortune and poverty. Similarly, Pennsylvania quickly prospered and became a relatively ‘egalitarian’ space, with equality prevalent among the inhabitants.

The Southern Colonies

The Carolina Colony, which spanned southern Virginia to Florida and west to the Pacific Ocean, was far less urbane and sophisticated. While farmers struggled to make ends meet in the northern half, planters owned and controlled vast estates producing “corn, lumber, beef, and pork” in the southern half. Rice cultivation began in the 1690s. On the Caribbean island of Barbados, the Carolinians and the English Planter Colony shared a strong harmonious bond. The plantations were overly reliant on slave labour. Many white masters actively participated in the Slave Trade, commissioning, deracinating, auctioning, and exploiting Africans. As a result, slavery was one of the founding layers of the Carolina Colony’s development. It was renamed North Carolina and South Carolina in 1729, respectively. In 1732, James Oglethorpe established the Georgia Colony in response to the desire to build a citadel between South Carolina and the Spanish settlements in Florida. Georgia’s progress and expansion mirrored South Carolina’s flourishing.

The Revolutionary War and the Treaty of Paris

By 1700, there were about 250,000 European and African settlers in 13 English-based colonies in the northern part of America. Around 2.5 million settlers were counted on the eve of the Revolution in 1775. Despite having little in common, they successfully united as one to fight for their independence. The American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) was declared after American colonists clashed over issues such as taxation without representation, as exemplified by laws such as The Stamp Act and The Townshend Acts. The Boston Massacre on March 5, 1770, and the Boston Tea Party on December 16, 1773, both demonstrated the colonists’ growing discontent with British rule. The Declaration of Independence, issued on July 4, 1776, listed the various reasons why the Founding Fathers felt compelled to break and depart from the rule of King George III and parliament to establish a new nation. The Continental Congress declared the “United Colonies” of America to be the “United States of America” in September of that same year. France allied with the colonists in 1778, assisting the Continental Army in defeating the British at the Battle of Yorktown in 1781. On September 3, 1783, the Treaty of Paris was signed, officially ending the American Revolution and granting independence to the 13 original colonies.

OVERVIEW: POETRY IN COLONIAL AMERICA

To white American settlers and their constructed mainstream, Native American poetry was mostly seen as indigenous in nature, but they believed that the “land of the Native Indians betrays every attribute of the concept of ‘America.’” The displacement and killing of indigenous natives was the foundation of ‘America’ as a new country. Nonetheless, unlike popular belief, their oral customs and traditions, which included hymns, songs, myths, legends, tales, and war chants, had a greater influence and were integrated into American writings. Furthermore, their “pantheistic inflections were expressed through haiku-style imagery on a diverse range of themes (Early American and Colonial Period).” Despite the native poetic lyric’s heavy influence and inclusion in “what is considered to be conventional” “American” poetry realm, the native lyric “is placed outside the realm of American poetry.” The post-factum imperial impacts of British culture and cultural norms provided a means for America to define its individualised cultural identity and existence. America re-defined and established itself primarily through its politics, literature, music, cuisine, and soon, all of which arose from, or opposed, their respective colonial origins. According to William Stanley Merwin, “I certainly do not think of the tradition of American poetry as simply a homogenised addition to the English tradition.” He effortlessly commented on the non-homogeneity of the American poetry.

The American Spirit

The colonial era in the United States of America did not witness a strong congregation of poets of significant aptitudes or achievements until the arrival on the American poetic scene of Philip Freneau from the middle Atlantic states and Edgar Allan Poe from the southern states. From the first half of the 17th century, the pioneering writers in the Americas came from the Puritan colonies, which were technically British. Protestants, particularly Puritanism, held sway over the early American socio-cultural formation. British Protestants such as Anne Bradstreet (c. 1612-1672), Edward Taylor (1642-1729), and Michael Wigglesworth were among the first American poets (1631-1705). The English Puritans asserted their proselytising gaze on American culture among the immigrants. In the first half of the 17th century, they mostly came to assail the Mayflower to William Bradford’s Plymouth colony and the Arabella to John Winthrop’s Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Puritan Spirit

The intensity of Calvinist piety inspired a number of well-read Puritans in New England to write poetry. Puritan theological ideologies and a restrictive lifestyle did not foster poetry writing and production. While the Puritans readily accepted the effectiveness and versality of history as written by Bradford, as well as sermons and rhetorical stratagems as written by Winthrop, they were often less enthusiastic about poetry. However, most of the finest and most popular among contemporaries verse from this period leans toward the theological. The most popular are *Michael Wigglesworth's* (1631-1705) *The Day of Doom* (1962), a resounding epic about Judgement Day, *The Bay Psalm Book* (1640), and *The New England Primer* (1683-).

The Bay Psalm Book, which was published in 1640 and contains translated biblical texts in a plain style band, was the first book printed in English in the New World. It was the first book of verse to be printed in the British American colonies; they did not strive for a more poetic translation because "God's altar requires no polishings." In colonial America, *The Day of Doom* (1962) was the best-selling poem. Wigglesworth presents the main Puritan beliefs in 224 ballad metre stanzas, mostly through a debate between sinners and Christ.

The Bay Psalm Book was the Massachusetts Bay Colony's first project, and it included David's psalms translated into "idiomatic English" and adapted to the basic "hymn stanza form" of four lines with eight beats in each line and regular rhymes. It was a collaborative compilation produced by twelve "New England divines." The *New England Primer* served a similar purpose and had similar success. The goal was to give every child "and apprentice" the opportunity to read the catechism and digest moral precepts. The young reader was to learn how to read and live according to the tenets of Puritan faith by using an illustrated alphabet, poems, moral statements, and a formal catechism. It was widely assumed that Colonial Period poetry was primarily mimetic in nature. As a result, the question of literary nationalism – whether American poetry was or should be original or derivative, part of the European (especially English) tradition or a native development with the power of its rudeness – did not become pressing until the professionalisation of literature in the second quarter of the 19th century. Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor were two of the Puritans' most important poets. There are other poets

who contributed to Colonial American Poetry.

Key American Poets During The Colonial America

Anne Bradstreet (C. 1612-1672): Anne Bradstreet (March 20, 1612 - September 16, 1672) was the most prominent of the early English poets of North America and the first writer to be published in England's North American colonies. Anne was born in Northampton, England, in 1612, and grew up in a well-educated family. She was tutored in history, several languages, and literature. She was the first Puritan figure in American literature, notable for her large corpus of poetry as well as posthumous personal writings. Anne Bradstreet is the historical, metaphorical, and even biological mother of American poetry. Here Poetic collection are: *A Letter to Her Husband, For Deliverance From A Fever, In Honour of that High and Mighty Princess, Absent upon Public Employment, Another, Another (II), Queen Elizabeth, The Flesh and the Spirit, The Four Ages of Man (quaternion), Four Seasons of the Year (quaternion), Of the Four Ages of Man (quaternion), Four Elements (quaternion), The Four Monarchies (quaternion) and Upon Some Dis-temper of Body.*

Edward Taylor (1642-1729)

In 1668, Edward Taylor emigrated to New England from Leicestershire, England. He attended Harvard University and went on to become a minister in the frontier town of Westfield, Massachusetts. He put his oratory skills to use in his pastoral duties. His poems were unknown until 1937, when scholar Thomas H. Johnson discovered them in a bound manuscript book at Yale University Library and published a selection. Experimenting with different forms and styles, he began to write in a more personal and memorable vein over the next eight or nine years: love poems to his wife-to-be (*Were but my Muse a Huswife Good*), spiritual meditations on natural events, or "occurants," as Taylor called them (*The Ebb and Flow*), and emblematic, allegorical accounts of the smaller creatures of nature and domestic objects (*The Ebb and Flow*) (*Huswifery*). Taylor used an elaborate conceit and intricate stanzaic form to discipline his meditations as well as to channel, then relax emotion. He also began to weave his vision of salvation's history into his first major work, *God's Determinations touching his Elect* – a collection of thirty-five poems. Taylor's finest longer work, *Preparatory Meditations before My Approach to the Lord's Supper* (1682), came after *The Colonial and Revolutionary Periods Determinations* (1682). Taylor's major poems include: