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# QUESTION PAPER

June – 2024

(Solved)

BRITISH LITERATURE: 18TH CENTURY

BEGC-108

Time: 3 Hours ]

[ Maximum Marks: 100

Note: This question paper has **three** sections. Attempt the questions as instructed in each section.

## SECTION-A

Q. 1. Attempt the short notes on the following:

(a) Satire

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 40, 'Satire in the Classical and the Neo-Classical Age'.

(b) Epistolary Novel

Ans. An epistolary novel is a literary work told through a series of documents, such as letters, diary entries, newspaper clippings, e-mails, or other personal records. This format allows the story to unfold in an intimate and immersive way, often giving readers direct access to a character's inner thoughts and emotions. Since these novels rely on first-person perspectives, they create a sense of realism and authenticity, making readers feel as if they are uncovering private correspondences. A key feature of the epistolary form is its ability to present multiple viewpoints, as different characters may contribute letters, providing varied perspectives on the same events. This can lead to an intriguing element of unreliable narration, where bias, deception, or misunderstanding shape the storytelling. Classic examples of epistolary novels include *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, which unfolds through letters, journal entries, and newspaper reports, and *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, framed as a series of letters. More modern works like *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky use this form to create an emotional connection with readers. The epistolary novel can be monologic (one character's letters), dialogic (an exchange between two characters), or polylogic (multiple characters contributing documents). While this style allows for deep psychological insight and an engaging, detective-like reading experience, it also presents challenges, such as maintaining coherence and avoiding repetition. Despite these challenges, the epistolary novel remains a powerful storytelling device that offers a unique and personal narrative experience.

(c) Sensibility

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-13, Page No. 114, Q. No. 16 and Q. No. 17.

(d) Enlightenment

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 51, Q. No. 1.

(e) Ballad

Ans. A ballad is a form of narrative poetry that tells a story, often passed down through oral tradition before being written down. Ballads are typically composed in quatrains (four-line stanzas) with a rhyme scheme of ABCB or ABAB and a rhythmic pattern that makes them easy to memorize and recite. Traditionally, ballads focus on themes of love, tragedy, adventure, or supernatural events, and they often feature repetitive refrains.

Ballads originated in medieval Europe, particularly in England and Scotland, where they were sung or recited as folk tales. Over time, they evolved into literary ballads, where poets like Samuel Taylor Coleridge (*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*) and William Wordsworth (*The Ballad of Lucy Gray*) refined the form with more sophisticated language and deeper themes. Traditional folk ballads, such as *Barbara Allen* and *Lord Randall*, remain popular examples of this style.

Ballads are known for their dramatic storytelling, simple language, and strong emotional appeal. They often begin in medias res (in the middle of the action), and their characters and plots develop quickly with minimal background description. Many ballads use dialogue and incremental repetition, where lines are slightly altered as the story progresses, to build suspense.

(f) "But I, who had more experience, could plainly discern some rudiments of reasoning, and to be fairer judging than the dogmatical, enthusiastical and ignorant scribblers."

Ans. These lines reflect the satirical tone of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, particularly in the section where Gulliver, having spent time among the rational Houyhnhnms, begins to see human reasoning as deeply flawed. He claims that, due to his experiences, he can recognize at least some "rudiments of reasoning"

in certain individuals, implying that while reason exists in humanity, it is often underdeveloped or misused. However, he contrasts this with the behaviour of “dogmatical, enthusiastical, and ignorant scribblers,” referring to those who stubbornly cling to their beliefs without true understanding, become overly passionate without rational thought, or write and spread misinformation. This critique is in line with Swift’s broader satirical attack on the intellectuals, philosophers, and writers of his time, who often claimed to be rational thinkers but were instead biased or uninformed. Through this passage, Swift suggests that true reason is rare, and most self-proclaimed intellectuals are closer to the irrational, corrupt Yahoos than to the logical and noble Houyhnhnms. The passage ultimately serves as a reflection on human nature, highlighting the tension between reason and ignorance in society.

**(g) “The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power, and all that beauty, all that wealth e’er gave.”**

**Ans. Context:** These lines are taken from *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* by Thomas Gray.

**Explanation:** See Chapter-14, Page No. 119, ‘Summary’.

#### SECTION-B

**Note:** Answer the following questions:

**Q. 2. How does Crusoe adopt to life on the island? Mention the survival kits he develops.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-2, Page No. 19, Q. No. 8.

**Q. 3. Analyse Swift’s use of satire in “Guliver’s Travels”.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-5, Page No. 41, ‘Horace, Juvenal and Swift’ and ‘Swift and “Savage Indignation”’.

**Q. 4. Discuss the role of nature in “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard”.**

**Ans.** In “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard”, Thomas Gray uses nature as a powerful backdrop to reinforce the poem’s themes of mortality, obscurity, and the universal fate of all human beings. The poem is set in a peaceful rural landscape, where nature serves as both a setting and a symbol for the transience of life and the inevitability of death.

Nature plays a dual role in the elegy. Firstly, it establishes the somber and reflective mood of the poem. The opening lines describe the evening landscape, with “the curfew tolls the knell of parting day,” as dusk settles over the countryside. The fading light, the plowman leaving the fields, and the stillness of the night all contribute to an atmosphere of quiet contemplation, setting the stage for Gray’s meditation on life and death. The imagery of nature, such as “the lowing herd” and “the beetle wheels his droning flight,” creates a sense of harmony and continuity, reinforcing the idea that life moves on even as individuals pass away.

Secondly, nature serves as a symbol of the simple, unnoticed lives of the rural poor. Gray contrasts the natural beauty and serenity of the countryside with the forgotten graves of the common people buried in the churchyard. These individuals, who lived humble lives close to nature, did not achieve fame or grandeur, yet Gray emphasizes that they, too, were shaped by the same emotions, ambitions, and struggles as the wealthy and powerful. The “ivy-mantled tower” and “yew-tree’s shade” suggest both the passage of time and the quiet dignity of those resting beneath them.

Throughout the elegy, Gray also uses nature to highlight the universality of death. Whether rich or poor, all human beings return to the earth, just as flowers bloom and wither. The metaphor of unfulfilled potential, seen in lines like “Full many a flower is born to blush unseen, / And waste its sweetness on the desert air,” suggests that many of these country dwellers possessed talents and virtues that went unnoticed, much like a beautiful flower blooming in an isolated place. This reinforces the theme that greatness and worth are not solely defined by public recognition or monumental achievements.

Ultimately, nature in *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* serves to reflect the poem’s melancholic yet consoling tone, reminding readers of the natural cycle of life and death. It provides a sense of timelessness, suggesting that while individuals may be forgotten by history, they remain an intrinsic part of the natural world, which continues to endure. Gray’s use of pastoral imagery and natural symbolism allows him to honor the common people, emphasizing their dignity and the shared human experience of mortality.

**Q. 5. How does “The Way of the World” reflect the societal norms and values of Restoration England?**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-9, Page No. 74, ‘Introduction’ and Page No. 75, ‘William Congreve, His Works and the Restoration Play’.

**Q. 6. What are the prominent literary movements in 18th Century British Literature.**

**Ans.** The 18th century was a dynamic period in British literature, marked by the rise of several significant literary movements that reflected changing intellectual and artistic trends. The dominant movement of the time was Neo-classicism, which emphasized order, reason, clarity, and decorum, drawing inspiration from classical Greek and Roman literature. Writers such as Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, and Samuel Johnson exemplified this style, often using satire and moral instruction in their works. Closely linked to Neoclassicism was the Enlightenment, a movement that championed reason, scientific inquiry, and empirical thought. Authors like John Locke, David Hume, and

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# BRITISH LITERATURE :

# 18TH CENTURY

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**BLOCK-I : DANIEL DEFOE : *ROBINSON CRUSOE***

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## Daniel Defoe: Life, Works and *Robinson Crusoe*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Understanding the political circumstances of the period when the writer lived helped in better understanding of his writing. In this chapter, we will study the biographical details of Daniel Defoe before we study his works. His fiction *Robinson Crusoe* is an adventure story, a cautionary tale upholding Christian morality, a spiritual auto-biography and a celebration of individualism. We will summarise the novel to know the factors that shape the bildungsroman of the eponymous hero.

### **CHAPTER AT A GLANCE**

#### **BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF DANIEL DEFOE**

Defoe was born in London in 1660 to a family of Presbyterian Dissenters, and educated at a dissenting academy in Newington Green. He studied science and humanities and prepared to become a Presbyterian minister, but gave up the plan and became a merchant, dealing in different commodities including hosiery.

#### **POLITICO-HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF 17TH AND 18TH CENTURY ENGLAND**

England faced volatile political situation when Defoe lived in the 17th and 18th century. Besides his luck in trade, Defoe also tried to be a polemical writer. When Defoe was born, Charles II's restoration to the throne happened. King and Parliament struggled with one another for political clout. In 1683, Defoe released his first political pamphlet.

Defoe vociferously expressed his politico-religious affiliation. After the death of Charles II, his brother, James, took charge in 1685 and aggravated the already explosive political situation. James II, a Roman Catholic and an ally of England's political rival France, was seen by his opponents as a danger to the Church of England as well as to civil liberties during a time when the country had just come out of a civil war (1642-1651) that was fought to protect liberties. Towards the end of 1688, James II was displaced by his nephew and son-in-law, William of Orange, after a series of episodes called the 'Glorious Revolution.' Defoe was a passionate supporter of William III and became his leading pamphleteer and eulogised this revolution as championing the cause of the Protestant people of England against persecution and discrimination of religious minorities.

After William III died, "Tories" became more powerful and Defoe faced a series of setbacks and was constantly persecuted as a Dissenter. Dissenters were generally "Whigs" and the political tide once again turned against them after William III's death. In response to ever-increasing aggressive Toryism, Defoe wrote "The Shortest Way with Dissenters," where he lampooned High Anglican extremism that led to his prosecution and brief imprisonment. After his release from jail, he was stuck in a public pillory for three days. Subsequent ministries appointed Defoe as a propagandist and also a spy. His circumstances, both social and financial, compelled him to swear loyalty to



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the Tory party when he served as Queen Anne's pamphleteer. However, he faced financial problems and died of a stroke while trying to escape from an indefatigable creditor in 1731.

**DANIEL DEFOE – LIFE, WORKS AND THE ENGLISH NOVEL**

Robinson Crusoe was published in 1719. After this, a series of other fictional narratives followed including its sequels – *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* and *Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, and other works like *Moll Flanders*, *Colonel Jack*, *Captain Singleton*, *Memoirs of a Cavalier*, *Journal of the Plague Year* and *Roxana*. These writings made him the progenitor of the English novel.

With the fictional writings of Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding, the period saw the development of realistic writing in the fictional works. The genre of the novel replaced the courtly form of romance, which was primarily obsessed with the ideals of chivalry. Written in an allegorical mode, romances had dealt with idealised figures of knights and ladies and traced their fantastical expeditions in picturesque landscapes and were usually concerned with universal truths instead of the particularity of the experience. The courtly forms of literature required a taste refined by education in classical learning and cultivated leisure.

The novels dealt with the middle class and their aspirations and values that started to be conspicuous since the 18th century. The development of the realist novel renounced the magical and the outlandish and very self-consciously tried to attempt a faithful imitation of "social reality." *Robinson Crusoe* was one of those first few fictional accounts that constantly drew attention to the authenticity of an individual's experiences and its narrative style urged the readers to believe in the "realism" it foregrounds by giving minute details.

**SUMMARY OF ROBINSON CRUSOE**

A quick summary of *Robinson Crusoe* is given below.

**Summary of the Preface**

*Robinson Crusoe* is a "Private man's adventures in the world." It can also be called a "Just history of fact." It is unassuming, sincere and didactic in its style and instructs one to acknowledge and pay due respect to "The wisdom of Providence."

**Summary of the Story**

This is the story of *Robinson Crusoe*, an Englishman from the town of York. Crusoe narrates

his own story. The youngest of the three sons of a fairly well-to do merchant of German origin, Crusoe highlights how his father tries to persuade him to study law for a secure life and not waste the privileges inherited from of his social position. Crusoe tries to fulfil his familial commitments and obligations, but he is unable to suppress his desire for the sea voyage. Much to the grief of his parents, he gives in to temptation and goes on a ship bound for London on September 1, 1651 with one of his friends. During his first sea journey, he faces a violent storm that drives him and his friend very near to death. He takes it as a divine warning that he should quit sea voyage. However, Crusoe does not get daunted by this and establishes himself as a successful merchant on a ship leaving from London. He makes a fortune as a merchant and plans another voyage.

His second voyage brings misfortune for him as his ship is besieged by the Moorish pirates and Crusoe is captured and made a slave in the North African town of Sallee. Once out fishing, Crusoe and another slave boy, Xury, manage to escape and sail away. A good natured Portuguese captain helps them reach Brazil and expresses a desire to buy Xury from Crusoe. On this, Crusoe faces some moral dilemma, but agrees to sell him on the condition that the captain will set him free after ten years. In Brazil, Crusoe sets himself up as a tobacco plantation owner and becomes financially successful. The success makes Crusoe restless to do something and he plans to get black slaves from West Africa. However, things do not go as per plan and he ends up shipwrecked and miserable on the Trinidad coast.

Crusoe comes to terms with his situation and undergoes an emotional turmoil after going through intense grief and despair. He feels gratitude to God for having saved his life and decides to start his life afresh. He makes twelve trips to the wreck's remains to get guns, food and other items that can prove useful to him. To protect himself from savages, he perseveres to build himself a "fortress."

On the coast, he finds goats which provide him with sustenance. He erects a cross and carves it with the date of his arrival on the island, September 1, 1659, and makes a notch every day so that in the absence of anything to record time, he does not get lost in a sea of chronological confusion. He also maintains a journal where he records his daily activities, including his struggles and achievements and serendipitous moments such as candle-making, accidental discovery of sprouting grains, his building of a cellar and many such episodes.

In June 1660, Crusoe falls sick and he believes that an angel visits him and makes him to repent. While drinking tobacco-steeped rum, Crusoe has an epiphany and comes to believe that his soul has been purified and God has delivered him from his former sins. He starts reading the New Testament that he finds in the wreck and sees his island experience not as a punishment but as a kind of deliverance from his erstwhile life where he has sinned. After his recovery he maps and surveys the area. He finds a cornucopian valley where he builds a shady retreat for himself. After experiencing a surge of positivity and optimism at the prospect of being on the island, he declares himself as its “King.” Meanwhile, he finishes his ink and discontinues the writing his journal. He trains a pet parrot, adopts a goat as his pet and learns various skills such as basket-weaving, bread-making and pottery.

Out of a gigantic cedar tree, he makes a big canoe from its wood. When he realises that it is not viable to the canoe to the sea, he builds a smaller boat and sails around the island.

He narrowly escapes drowning when his boat is tossed by a forceful wave. He expresses his gratitude to God for sparing his life.

He gets elated with his “absolute command” over all the subjects of his little kingdom on the island and provides the readers with an inventory of his possessions which includes his two homes, the “fortress” and the “country seat,” grape valley, agricultural lands and enclosures for the grazing of his cattle.

He continues his hard work for several years without any disruptions. One day, Crusoe is horrified to see a man’s footprint on the island. He assumes the footprint to be that of a cannibal who he believes resides close by. After that he arms himself and becomes very vigilant. He takes various steps to avoid being discovered or seen by the cannibals.

While reading the *Bible* one day, he hears gunshots and comes to find the next day a ship wrecked on his coast. On investigation, he finds that the men on it are either dead or gone. He rummages through the ship and realises that it is Spanish and manages to find some ruined provisions and clothing, gold bars, etc. Crusoe thinks of leaving the island and wonders about what might have happened had he heeded his father’s warnings and never left home or had he been satisfied with the profit of the tobacco plantations in Brazil.

Soon he finds out that the island is scattered with dead human bodies which resemble the aftermath of a cannibal feast. Soon after that, he sees a group of thirty cannibals heading for the shore with their victims. One of the victims who is about to be slaughtered, manages to flee and seeks shelter in Crusoe’s home. Crusoe guards him and slays and injures some of the cannibals and eventually defeats most of them. The victim promises total submission to Crusoe and vows to serve him selflessly. Crusoe calls him Friday to solemnise the day on which he is rescued. He teaches him a few English words and some fundamental Christian tenets.

Friday tells him more about the cannibals and appries Crusoe that the cannibals are responsible for rescuing the men from the shipwreck that Crusoe encountered earlier and those men, the Spaniards, are residing in close proximity among the natives.

Friday and Crusoe make a boat to visit the land of the cannibals. But they manage to leave, they see the arrival of twenty-one cannibals in canoes. The cannibals have three victims in their custody and one of them is *prima facie* a European. Crusoe and Friday kill most of the cannibals and secure the release of the captives. One of the rescued victims is Friday’s father. The other rescued man is a Spaniard. All of them come to Crusoe’s dwelling for food and shelter. Crusoe makes provisions to welcome them into his community.

Later, he sends Friday and his father to survey and explore the island nearby. They encounter an approaching English ship which terrifies Friday and makes Crusoe cautious. Eleven men from that ship take three prisoners onshore in a boat. Nine of them go on an exploring expedition of the area while two of them stay back to watch over the prisoners. Friday and Crusoe manage to subdue these men and secure the release of the prisoners. One of the prisoners is the captain of the ship, which had been seized through a mutiny. Crusoe and Friday confront the rest of the mutineers. Crusoe agrees to spare their lives on the condition that the ringleader, Will Atkins, pays the price for the mutiny. These mutineers then surrender and Crusoe and the rescued captain regain control over the ship. The captain expresses gratitude to Crusoe for helping him retrieve his besieged ship and gives him many gifts. He also offers to take him and Friday back to England.

On December 19, 1686, Crusoe departs for England. On arrival in England, Crusoe finds his widow friend has kept his money safe and he has become a very prosperous man. However, all his family members

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have passed away except his two sisters. After that he travels to Lisbon to enquire about his business affairs. The Portuguese captain apprises him that his plantations have been highly profitable and arranges to sell his Brazilian lands. After that Crusoe tries to return to England by land but faces unfavourable weather and wild animals in northern Spain. On reaching England, he knows that the sale of plantations has earned him quite a fortune. Crusoe again thinks of travel and decides to pacify his desire by returning to Brazil. He gets married, and has three children. However, his wife dies soon after. In 1694, he leaves for the East Indies as a trader in 1694 and revisits his island. The island is administered as a flourishing colony.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q. 1. What do you think were the most intense political preoccupations of 17th and 18th century England?**

**Ans.** The 17th century was a time of great political and social turmoil in England, marked by civil war and regicide. The period saw division between the Whigs and the Tories. There were rivalries between Catholicism and Protestantism. The succession debate, fight between monarchy and parliament. James I ruled England from 1603 to 1625. King Charles I ruled from 1625 to 1642. It was followed by the English Civil War (1642-1651) and the English Interregnum (1651-1660), when there was no king. The English Civil War consisted of a series of armed conflicts and political machinations that took place between Parliamentarians and Royalists between 1642 and 1651. The first (1642–1646) and second (1648-1649) civil wars pitted the supporters of King Charles I against the supporters of the Long Parliament, while the third war (1649-1651) saw fighting between supporters of King Charles II and supporters of the Rump Parliament. The Civil War ended with the Parliamentary victory at the Battle of Worcester on 3 September, 1651. The Civil War led to the trial and execution of Charles I, the exile of his son Charles II, and the replacement of the English monarchy with first the Commonwealth of England (1649-1653) and then with a Protectorate (1653-1659), under the personal rule of Oliver Cromwell. Upon his death, his son took over, but proved a weak ruler with very little support. The military and religious elements that supported Cromwell began disputing with each other. After the death of Charles II, his brother, James,

took charge in 1685 and aggravated the already explosive political situation. James II, a Roman Catholic and an ally of England's political rival France, was seen by his opponents as a danger to the Church of England as well as to civil liberties during a time when the country had just come out of a civil war (1642-1651) that was fought to protect liberties. Towards the end of 1688, James II was displaced by his nephew and son-in-law, William of Orange, after a series of episodes called the 'Glorious Revolution.' After William III died, "Tories" became more powerful. The 18th century was characterised by numerous major wars, especially with France, with the growth and collapse of the First British Empire, with the origins of the Second British Empire, and with steady economic and social growth at home.

**Q. 2. How do you think the historical circumstances of England impacted Daniel Defoe's writings?**

**Ans.** Historical circumstances of England impacted Daniel Defoe's writings. For example, a year before Robinson Crusoe was published, Daniel Defoe responded to a number of important events in a manner that reveals a deepening of moral and ethical views. He never doubted the evils of Jacobitism or the benefits of the Whig succession, but as the government grew stronger after the suppression of the Jacobite rebellion in Scotland, he was not averse to making judgements about the government's positions or even opposing them on occasions. Although both John Toland and Abel Boyer seemed to find his position contradictory, Defoe felt there was little relationship between the situation that had produced The True-Born Englishman and that involving George I's attempt to reward foreigners. In Defoe's eyes, George I and the recipients of his favours bore no resemblance to William III and his heroic Dutch forces who had rescued England from James II. For the most part, however, his belief that in matters of economics and politics human beings were ruled entirely by self-interest had been reinforced by his experiences. Also, the change in the society of England, especially with the loosening up of the feudal order and the rise of middle classes influenced the Daniel Defoe's writings.

**Q. 3. Do you think Daniel Defoe had to constantly negotiate with his circumstances because he was a dissenter from the Church of England?**

**Ans.** Defoe found himself victimised and discriminated against owing to his religious affiliations. Being a minority made him susceptible to persecution