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By: Dharamdeep



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QUESTION PAPER

June – 2023

(Solved)

AMERICAN LITERATURE

M.E.G.-6

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Attempt five questions in all. Question No.1 is compulsory.

Q. 1. Write short notes on the following:

(a) Harlem Renaissance

Ans. Harlem Renaissance, a blossoming (c. 1918–37) of African American culture, particularly in the creative arts, and the most influential movement in African American literary history. Embracing literary, musical, theatrical, and visual arts, participants sought to reconceptualize “The Negro” apart from the white stereotypes that had influenced black peoples’ relationship to their heritage and to each other. They also sought to break free of Victorian moral values and bourgeois shame about aspects of their lives that might, as seen by whites, reinforce racist beliefs. Never dominated by a particular school of thought but rather characterized by intense debate, the movement laid the groundwork for all later African American literature and had an enormous impact on subsequent black literature and consciousness worldwide. While the renaissance was not confined to the Harlem district of New York City, Harlem attracted a remarkable concentration of intellect and talent and served as the symbolic capital of this cultural awakening.

The Harlem Renaissance was a phase of a larger New Negro movement that had emerged in the early 20th century and in some ways ushered in the civil rights movement of the late 1940s and early 1950s. The social foundations of this movement included the Great Migration of African Americans from rural to urban spaces and from South to North; dramatically rising levels of literacy; the creation of national organizations dedicated to pressing African American civil rights, “uplifting” the race, and opening socioeconomic opportunities; and developing race pride, including pan-African sensibilities and programs. Black exiles and expatriates from the Caribbean and Africa crossed paths in metropolises such as New York City and Paris after World War I and had an invigorating influence on each

other that gave the broader “Negro renaissance” (as it was then known) a profoundly important international cast.

(b) Revolutionary prose in America

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-16, Page No. 90, ‘The Context of Revolutionary Prose in America’.

(c) Ideology of Puritanism in American Literature

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 3, ‘The Emergence of Puritanism as the Hegemonic American Ideology’.

(d) Imagery in Emily Dickinson’s poetry.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-24, Page No. 149, ‘Theme and Imagery in Emily Dickinson’.

Q. 2. “Freedom and slavery in at the centre of Huckleberry Finn.” Discuss.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-13, Page No. 74, Q. No. 1.

Q. 3. Critically evaluate the concept of self in Whitman’s poetry.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-25, Page No. 154, Q. No. 1.

Q. 4. Discuss the chief characteristics of American Transcendentalist prose citing examples from the poems that you have read in your course.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-17, Page No. 101, ‘The Prose of American Romanticism-I’.

Q. 5. Critically assess *The Bluest Eye* as a novel of protest against racism.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-45, Page No. 298, ‘Scapegoating as a Motif’.

Q. 6. Discuss ‘Death of a Salesman’ as a critique of 20th century American capitalist society.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-37, Page No. 258, Q. No. 1 and Page No. 259, Q. No. 4.

Q. 7. Discuss the features of Imagism in Ezra Pound's poetry with suitable examples from the given poems in your course.

Ans. Around 1912 Pound helped to create the movement he called "Imagism," which marked the end of his early poetic style. In remarks first recorded in the March, 1913 Poetry and later collected in his Literary Essays as "A Retrospect", Pound explained his new literary direction. Imagism combined the creation of an "image"—what he defined as "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" or an "interpretative metaphor"—with rigorous requirements for writing. About these requirements, Pound was concise but insistent: (i) Direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective (ii) To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation (iii) As regarding rhythm: To compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome." These criteria meant (i) To carefully observe and describe phenomena, whether emotions, sensations, or concrete entities, and to avoid vague generalities or abstractions. Pound wanted "explicit rendering, be it of external nature of of emotion" and proclaimed "a strong disbelief in abstract and general statement as a means of conveying one's thought to others." (ii) To avoid poetic diction in favour of the spoken language and to

condense content, expressing it as concisely and precisely as possible. (iii) To reject conventional metrical forms in favour of individualized cadence. Each poem, Pound declared, should have a rhythm "which corresponds exactly to the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed."

The original Imagist group included just Pound, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), Richard Aldington, F.S. Flint and later William Carlos Williams. American poet Amy Lowell also adopted the term, contributing one poem to the 1914 anthology *Des Imagistes*, edited by Pound. In following years, Lowell sponsored her own anthologies that Pound thought did not meet his Imagist standards; and wishing to dissociate himself from what he derisively called "Amygism," he changed term "Image" to "Vortex," and "Imagism" to "Vorticism." Writing in the *Fortnightly Review* of September 1, 1914, Pound expanded his definition of the image: "a radiant node or cluster, it is what I can and must perforce call a VORTEX, from which and through which and into which ideas are constantly rushing." As a much more comprehensive aesthetic principle, Vorticism also extended into the visual arts and music, thus including such artists as the Englishman Wyndham Lewis and Henri Gaudier-Breska, a French sculptor. ■■

Sample Preview of The Chapter

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AMERICAN LITERATURE

CONTEXTS OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

The Puritan Context

1

INTRODUCTION

Before we start our study of American Literature, let us first look at the context of this vast plethora of work. It all started with the Puritan migration to the new world, which initiated a new culture and literature which is now identified as American Literature and culture. It becomes important to look at a different extracts of writings of these Puritan about themselves and what they considered as their Mission in America. A look at the writing and is not difficult to note their self-justification attitude towards American civilisation. According to the puritans, they co-founded the American civilisation and the natives of the territory did not have anything to do as far as the founding of American civilisation was concerned. Unfortunately, over centuries the Puritan view of American history remained to be the dominant one.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

THE PRE-HISTORY OF THE PURITAN PRESENCE IN NEW ENGLAND

It is a historical fact that the first settlers in American continents were not puritans. They were not even the first settlers from Europe. It was in the year 1491 that an Italian sailor Christopher Columbus found his way, either by accident or by intention, to the coast of a continent which was not known to Europeans. This new continent was later given the name of America. For nearly 100 years such voyages took place, but no Englishman was a part of these voyages not until 1580s. Sir Walter Raleigh in the year 1584 organised a voyage with the intention of finding the possibility of colonising other lands. In 1606 another attempt with such intention was made, but this time it was decided that the English will establish settlements and Jamestown, Virginia. Debt settlement, however, was not successful at all and faced various disasters.

The earliest English settlers in America waste to various problems like homesickness, epidemics, and deaths. Apart from these the English also met with the resentment of the “Red Indians” led by their leader Powhatan. The “Red Indians” thought the English were exploiting their resources. The result was skirmishes. The English behaved like savages during these skirmishes, partly because they hated them so much and partly because they were so dependent on the natives, but still wanted to show their supremacy over them. The English word mass massacre the members of a tribe in the name of punishment. The attempt was a total disaster. The authorities of Jamestown engage themselves in killing, flaying and burning their own people, while various other people died diseases, starvation and epidemics.

Considering the disaster were happening in Jamestown, the Virginia company realised that if the settlement was to be saved that it was necessary for the columnists to have a personal interest. The company for other is just not likely that people would want to work hard enough in order to raise food for the company; this meant that the power of individual enterprise had to be put in action. Under this new consideration the company allowed the settlers to farm a sizeable tract of land in return for a small annual quit rent. The problems in hardship were soon dissolved. The Virginia settlers were allowed to own and cultivate the land by a legislative body in 1619. This change in the law also changed the perception of the people in the new world. Now there were not merely unimportant employees of an old company, rather they had now become significant citizens of a new nation. The tobacco crop also yielded an immense profit. Virginia settlement finally saw the dawn of prosperity.

In 1620 around 400 puritans reached Massachusetts Bay. These people came to the New World in order to

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establish a dedicated community. All these people were pilgrims. Their arrival in to the New World was an escape from the depravities of the old world. Almost 10 years later started what we today know as great Puritan migration from England. A huge number of people migrated from England to this new found world. It was the largest single expedition in the 17th century by English people. Some of the places where the puritans settle were Dorchester, Boston, Watertown, Roxbury, Mystic and Lynn.

The development of a religious sectarianism by 1640 compelled the renegades Rhode Island by abandoning Massachusetts. It was in the year 1644 that Rhode Island was chartered. The fundamental orders of Connecticut as the colony's constitution had already been adopted by certain towns in 1639. Connecticut's independent status was authenticated in the year 1662 by a Royal Charter will stop in 1623 in New Hampshire emerged the earliest settlements. With the closing of the century, New England, a name given to the entire region, became the new flourishing enclave within the English.

There was a short difference between the way of life of the new England and the way of life of the Virginians. The Virginians wanted to acquire the ownership of property – live a life of aristocracy, while the New Englanders on the other hand wanted to attain an ideal. For these people the old England had been demonized and they seek to establish “a Jerusalem renewed”. They consider themselves to be God's emissaries, with a mission into the wilderness. A strict sense this was the real mission or the agenda of the Puritan project in America.

WHO WERE THE NEW ENGLAND PURITANS?

According to Perry Miller, puritanism was the result of an agitation during the latter half of the 16th century within the church of England. It was a movement, a movement of reform of the church of England. These people grew discontent in the Church of England and emerged against the dominant theology of the era. They sought to reform the Anglican ideals. The Church of England broke away from Roman Catholic Church during 1530s, it became the test and while proceeding with its revolt against Roman Catholic Church it disestablished the monasteries and rectify any abuses practiced. Puritanism withdrew from the belief that the need for reform has not been ended and reform must be continued. They believed that there are various abuses remaining which need to be corrected and that there are various practices still surviving from the days of Papacy must be renounced. Ideally they wanted to attain the purity of the Church established by Christ himself, for the Church of England. During the 1560s when the name of Puritan was first acquired by the advocates of purification, no one had any idea about the ultimate goal of this process or how far the process itself will continue to prevail. Unfortunately, these points there wasn't any agreement ever and this failure of unanimity became

the very cause of the failure of the English puritanism. Some puritans held the view that the abolition or change was required only for certain ceremonies. Some of them desired to break away from the set of forms of a pope and make up their own players on the inspiration of the moment, while others went on to propose a radical revision of the entire structure of ecclesiastical government. In spite of their differences one can say the puritans were those who wanted to proceed with the ongoing movement. This movement was opposed by Anglicans, who held the view that already gone too far, that the excesses of Roman Catholic church has been done away with and things should stop where they were.

Considering the area are differences one can easily say the issues which involved in the differences of these two views were limited to a small number of questions. Both views agreed on everything except those concerns of puritans, which according to them needed further reform. Till the second decade of 17th century Puritans to certain extent were able to influence the church of England by their thoughts and ideals, but this influenza subsided after Charles I became the new King of England. He started working with those who did not follow the lines of puritans, in order to initiate a determined counter offensive. Anglicans maintained that Episcopal system as now they were being supported by the monarch. They also were successful in sustaining their existing infrastructure concerning the devotional services. Anglicans venerated the prayers of the prayer book and the sacraments as the center of their belief and of all worship.

For puritans these leaves and these practices were retrogressive, they were shocked and bewildered by such practices when various priests try to resist these practices and beliefs they were immediately dismissed from the pulpits. Puritans also held the view, almost like everybody else, that the Church of England was the main force working at the center of national life there this very force were corrupted then there would be no ray of hope left in the middle of chaos. According to puritans England had stepped in to an anarchic condition. The puritans ideals and beliefs were actually the emerging bourgeois values which advocated temperance, caution and hard work. They believed that the protector is also the publisher and therefore they would not tolerate the sins of their children and in order to chastise them would send plagues and other disasters will stop and according to puritans slowly escape from these punishments was to establish a completely purified church in England.

Anglicans have their own values and ideas. For them it was decaying and his officers of the church of England, who were entitled to take decisions as far as religion and religious matters were concerned. For Anglicans this was the law and there it was in the benefit of every citizen to abide by this law. However, puritans refused to follow. They argued that listening to humans masquerading as the god's Minister would be to bring

back the hypocrisy and irrationality of the Church which was supposed to have been eradicated by Protestant Reformation. During this time Roman Catholic monarchs were gaining victory against Protestantism with the counter Reformation of Roman Catholic Church. The puritans charged the Anglicans for conspiring with Roman Catholic Church and working through the king and his followers so that the destruction of Protestantism in England can take a concrete shape.

One of the most important areas of differences between Anglicans and Puritan thoughts was the nature of the mankind. According to puritans human beings are completely at the mercy of God. In the natural condition humans are controlled, not by the region and rational faculty but by passion. They argued that if a man achieves salvation, he achieves so because God has willed it and not because he has done something on his own.

On the other hand, Anglicans believed that human beings are discriminating creatures. There is no doubt that they also believed that all human beings are sinners but at the same time they held the view that human beings have been given free will to some extent, that is to some extent human beings have control over their own destinies. The Anglicans believe that the only way for the salvation is to choose to live with God's way and take sacraments regularly.

The Anglicans asserted that one should not only have faith but also treat other people with love. For them the first table of 10 Commandments was important, but along with that the second table was equally important which consists of questions such as – are we loving to each other? Are we obedient and dutiful to appropriate worldly authority? In short the Anglicans allayed their stress on the second table of the 10 Commandments.

On the other hand the puritans argued that the first four Commandments, that is, the first table of the 10 Commandments was important, according to which it is important for humanity to revere God, and consider God to be of supreme importance and there must not be anything or any person in their lives before God. The Puritans thought that human beings are so doomed and naturally rotten that their rational faculty is weakened by their passion and every step they take, takes them away from God. In short they choose evil knowingly. So the question of importance is that everyone go to hell then. For puritans the answer was no, they believed that in order to save some of the humanity and God had sent Jesus Christ, for the reasons known only to God himself.

THE NEW ENGLAND PURITANS AS THEY SAW THEMSELVES AND THEIR MISSION IN AMERICA

It was in pursuit of a Utopian goal that the great Puritan migration from England to Massachusetts Bay Colony took place in 1630 under the leadership of Puritan John Winthrop's fleet. The idea was to establish a Utopia in the New World, so that it can be served as

an example to the old. Those who already lived in America were not a matter of concern for Winthrop or his Utopian goal. According to recent estimates North America was a continent which was occupied by millions of Native Americans for thousands of years. So it was almost impossible for puritans to make a lasting bridgehead among so numerous a people. Earlier almost half of the Native American population was annihilated by a disease called bacilli, which was brought to New England by English fishermen in 1616 and which assumed epidemic proportions and thus creating such a heavy destruction.

Englishman did not consider this event as a tragic human disaster rather they thought that the God wanted to vacate the land for them. Shortly after the arrival of puritans another devastation in 1630s came in the form of smallpox which again killed thousands of more Indians.

As the local Indians did not have much strength left they did not put up any great resistance and made room for the Puritans. And puritans claimed that since the land was not occupied or there was no one to claim it therefore, they can rightfully take it. And also the English considered themselves to be civilised and Indians to be uncivilised. They thought Indians do not have proper means and knowledge to cultivate and improve the land and walk on the way towards progress.

There was a discussion among the puritans whether the Indians should be converted to Christianity or not. But the problem was that unlike Spanish who came earlier, the puritans did not bring the Christian missionaries so that they can be spread among Indians and convert them to Christianity. They only brought few Christian ministers to meet their own needs. Soon after the authorities of the Massachusetts Bay Colony declared that the Indians were also subject to their laws and order and therefore they tried to manipulate and control their more behaviour. This however did not go as smooth as it was desired. A strong and sturdy Indian tribe called Pequots, resisted the authorities, this soon developed into the Pequot War of 1637. The result of this war was that the tribe was almost obliterated. The peace was established for next 40 years. As was the case in Virginia, in New England also both puritans and Indians lived separately in their own enclaves without having any sort of connection.

THE EMERGENCE OF PURITANISM AS THE HEGEMONIC AMERICAN IDEOLOGY

While writing about the Puritan migration, the historian Francis Jennings has written: "so-called settlement of America was a resettlement, re-occupation of land made waste by the diseases and demoralization introduced by the newcomers." However, the emergence of Puritanism as the hegemonic American ideology is only partially explained by the destruction and obliteration of the old cultures of the newly world by the new émigrés from the old world.

The puritans took joy and pleasure inviting their experiences and recording the adventures in the New

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World. Certainly John Winthrop was not the only one making notes of his every adventure and experience on the alien land the puritans considered the ability to write as a symbol of civilised European traveller. These writings either includes Indians, slates, Africans, and aboriginals and treats them harshly or they do not include them at all. The puritans treatment of these people can be very well understood by the following paragraph taken from William Bradford's "Of Plymouth Plantation" written in 1638 – 46; published, 1857:

Those that escaped the fire were slain with so; some hewed to peeces, others run throu' with their rapiers, so as they were quickly dispatchte, very few escaped. It was a fearful sights to see them thus frying in the fyer, and the streams of blood quenching the same, and horrible was the stincke and sente thereof, but the victory seemed the sweete sacrifice, and they gave the players thereof to God, who had rocked so wonderfully for them, thus to enclose their enemies in their hands, and give them so speedy a victory over so proud and insulting and enemy.

What's clear from the passage is that in spite of his protestations about sordid nest of the massacre, Bradford applauds the slaying of the native Indians. But this is not that, the real shock comes from the candidness of Puritan theologian Cotton Mathers writing of the genocide. He writes, "It was supposed that no less than 600 Pequot souls were brought down to hell that they."

In Bradford's writing and all other such writings, there are two motifs which flow throughout the text. The first motif is that when puritans came to America, the America was a thoroughly savage. That's the place was entirely uninhabitable and therefore uninhibited. And the second motif is that the America had nothing to do with Europe, whatever it was to become depended completely on the wishes of the puritans.

While writing the America Bradford says that before the puritans arrived in America the landscape was so wild that no civilised person would have ever encountered such wildness, he continues, "if they looked upon them, there was the mighty ocean which they passed and (which) was now a main bar engulfed a separate them from all the civil parts of the world." While talking to his first readers, that is, the children of the next generation, he says: "our fathers were Englishman, which came over this great ocean, and were ready to perish in this wilderness; but they cried unto the Lord, and he heard the voice and looked on their adversity."

What Bradford is actually doing is that he is consciously inventing a historical tradition in his book. According to Myra Jehlen, "It proposes are some fundamental terms for organising the experience of colonisation." Some of these terms proposed by Bradford's book are re-definition of wilderness and civilisation and the opposition between them. There is an ambiguity in the explanation and the definition of both these terms. Wilderness on one hand is something

which is without any trace of cultivation and on the other hand is as because of its untouched character that has the potential, great potential for exceptional construction. In the same way the civilisation, which had been left by the Puritans forever was suggestive of great compositions but at the same time it was also an adobe of destructive of viciousness.

The final impression of the Bradford's book is not that of a contrast between the polarities of civilisation and wilderness. There is a curious resemblance in the situation where. They are not like antithetical emblems rather they are more like mirror images. Puritans did not leave mind and antithetical good when they first step onto the new world, rather they left another kind of evil. And the complaints they made about absence of towns, inns or houses in the New World does not advance any solution rather it only measures their problem.

The emergence of Puritanism as the hegemonic American ideology is the result of the assertion of the plate and elite that it was they who found America as inscribed in their numerous chronicles (such as that search).

TERMINAL QUESTIONS

Q. 1. Who were the first settlers from Europe in America? What was their motives for trying to settle in America?

Ans. The early 1600s saw the beginning of a great tide of emigration from Europe to North America. Spanning more than three centuries, this movement grew from a trickle of a few hundred English colonists to a flood of millions of newcomers. Impelled by powerful and diverse motivations, they built a new civilization on the northern part of the continent.

The first English immigrants to what is now the United States crossed the Atlantic long after thriving Spanish colonies had been established in Mexico, the West Indies and South America. Like all early travellers to the New World, they came in small, overcrowded ships. During their six- to 12-week voyages, they lived on meager rations. Many died of disease; ships were often battered by storms and some were lost at sea.

Most European emigrants left their homelands to escape political oppression, to seek the freedom to practice their religion, or for adventure and opportunities denied them at home. Between 1620 and 1635, economic difficulties swept England. Many people could not find work. Even skilled artisans could earn little more than a bare living. Poor crop yields added to the distress. In addition, the Industrial revolution had created a burgeoning textile industry, which demanded an ever-increasing supply of wool to keep the looms running. Landlords enclosed farmlands and evicted the peasants in favor of sheep cultivation. Colonial expansion became an outlet for this displaced peasant population.

The colonists' first glimpse of the new land was a vista of dense woods. The settlers might not have