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# QUESTION PAPER

June – 2023

(Solved)

BRITISH LITERATURE

B.E.G.C-133

Time: 3 Hours ]

[ Maximum Marks: 100

Note: All questions are compulsory.

Q. 1. Explain the following passages with reference to the context:

- (i) “If it were done when ’tis done,  
then ’twere well  
It were done quickly : if the assassination  
Could trammel up the consequence,  
and catch  
With his surcease success; that but  
this blow  
Might be the be-all and the end-all-here,  
But here, upon this bank and school of time,  
We’d jump the life to come”.

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from *Macbeth* by Shakespeare.

Explanation: Macbeth begins his soliloquy by saying that if the act of killing Duncan would truly be the end of it, and there would be no consequences, it is better to get it over and done with as quickly as possible (Shakespeare provides us with perhaps the very first use of the word ‘assassination’ in these lines, by the way).

A ‘trammel’ was a net for catching partridges, although Kenneth Muir, in his annotations to the play in the Arden Shakespeare edition, “Macbeth” (Arden Shakespeare: Second Series), points out that ‘trammel’ also meant to fasten the legs of horses together so they couldn’t run off.

When Macbeth says ‘his surcease’, he is probably referring to Duncan’s (‘his’) death (‘surcease’: a legal term meaning to stop something, but used elsewhere in Shakespeare with the suggestion of a euphemism for ‘death’).

- (ii) “Out, damned spot! out, I say !  
One : two : why,  
then, ’tis time to do’t. Hell is murky!  
Fie my Lord, fie! a soldier and afeard?”

What need we fear who knows it, when  
none can call our power to account?”

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from *Macbeth* by Shakespeare.

Explanation: ‘Out, damned spot’ is one of the most recognisable phrases uttered by Lady Macbeth in William Shakespeare’s great tragedy. The scene mirrors Macbeth’s earlier references to his own guilt, and acts as a clear indication of how the once-defiant and determined Lady Macbeth, one of Shakespeare’s most fully realised female villains, has become undone by her own conscience. And she reveals all of this while she’s asleep.

Lady Macbeth says that no amount of washing will cleanse her hands. The murder of Duncan has been done, and since there is no undoing it, she cannot do anything to banish her guilt regarding the king’s assassination. Macbeth addresses the blood she thinks is on her hands when she says, ‘out, damned spot.’ She tries to wash Duncan’s blood from her hands, metaphorically indicating the guilt she feels for her part in his murder.

- (iii) “How strange it is to be talked to in such  
a way! You know.

I’ve always gone on like that –  
I mean the noble attitude and  
the thrilling voice. I did it  
When I was a ting child to my  
nurse. She believed in it. I  
do it before my parents. They  
believe in it.”

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from *Arms and the Man* written by W.B. Yeats.

Explanation: *Arms and the Man* is considered as an anti-romantic comedy, Raina lives in an artificial world of romance and considers herself to be in love with Sergius. Her notions of love come from reading

Byron and Pushkin and from operas she has seen in Bucharest. Sergius has led a triumphant charge against the Serbs in a recent battle at Slivnitsa and is the hero of the hour, the idol of the regiment. The play shows how Raina in a romantic fashion picks up a picture of Sergius and gazes at it proudly. She adores the picture of Sergius with feelings that are beyond expression. She does not kiss it but looks upon it as if it were something holy.

(iv) "Thou hast betray'd thy nature  
and thy name

Not rendering true answer,  
as beseem'd

Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight:  
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,  
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere  
This is a shameful thing for men to lie."

**Ans. Context:** These lines are taken from 'Morte d' Arthur' by Tennyson.

**Explanation: Ref.:** See Chapter-15, Page No. 138, Lines 66-82'.

(v) "If thou should'st never see my face again,  
Pray for my soul. More things are  
wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of  
Wherefore let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me  
night and day."

**Ans. Context:** These lines are taken from 'Morte d' Arthur' by Tennyson.

**Explanation: Ref.:** See Chapter-15, Page No. 139, Lines 242-275'.

**Q. 2. Write short notes on the following:**

(i) The British novel in the nineteenth century.

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-5, Page No. 43, 'The Novel in the 19th Century'.

(ii) Thomas Hardy and the novel of realism.

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-6, Page No. 52, 'Thomas Hardy and the Novel of the Realism'.

(iii) Fate and chance in the plot of *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-8, Page No. 77, Q. No. 1.

(iv) The influence of Ibsen on the drama of George Bernard Shaw.

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-9, Page No. 86, Q. No. 1.

(v) The main themes of Tennyson's poem *Morte d' Arthur*.

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-16, Page No. 143, 'Themes of the Poem "Morte d' Arthur" '.

**Q. 3. Write short essay on the following:**

(i) Justify the title of the play *Arms and the Man* by Bernard Shaw.

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-12, Page No. 113, Q. No. 1.

(ii) The role of 'Nature' in the novel *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-7, Page No. 63, 'Nature: Its Role in the Novel'.

(iii) Why is Tennyson considered to be a representation poet of the Victorian age?

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-13, Page No. 121, 'Victorian Poetry with Special Reference to Tennyson'.

**Q. 4. Answer the following:**

Write a critical essay on the major characters in *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-8, Page No. 69, 'A Brief Sketch of the Major Characters in *Far from the Madding Crowd*'.

**Or**

Discuss the allegorical significance of Tennyson's poem 'Morte d' Arthur.

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-15, Page No. 140, 'Allegorical Significance' and Q. No. 3.

■ ■

# Sample Preview of The Chapter

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# BRITISH LITERATURE



## Macbeth : An Introduction

### INTRODUCTION

Humanism and Machiavellian were among the thoughts and ideas that shaped the English dramas towards the closing years of the sixteenth century when Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was written. Secondly, experimentations and innovations were the trends. In this chapter, we will study these aspects, the Elizabethan period and sources of the play *Macbeth*.

### CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

#### THE ELIZABETHAN WORLD

Renaissance refers to a rebirth of Classical Greek and Latin literature in England. This movement started in the latter half of the sixteenth century and continued up to the early seventeenth century. Scholars divide Renaissance into early, middle-high and late Renaissance.

In the sixteenth century, the changes due to this reawakening led to a reorientation of the relation between man and the world he lived. A relook at the classics helped writers posit a new idea of man who was at the centre of the scheme of things. Writers responded creatively through various mediums to interpret the position of man in the universe.

A main factor was the development in scientific ideas, a shift from the Ptolemaic idea of the universe to that of Copernicus, which brought in modern outlook. Copernicus was to prove that the Sun was the centre of the universe and the Earth was only a planet revolving around the Sun. This astronomical change had a major impact on the way in which man was perceived. Besides, the wisdom of the classics had a major impact in the Elizabethan period.

Other major changes were in the authority. King Henry VIII challenged the authority of the Church. The

king wanted to divorce his wife Catharine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn which was not allowed under Catholicism. That was a defiance against the authority of the Pope of Rome and the Church. This led the establishment of Protestant faith, also called the period of Reformation. Later a move to restore the powers of the Church through Counter-Reformation followed. It caused a split in the church.

When Elizabeth came to power, she struggled to establish her sovereignty as she had to contend with dissatisfaction among the Catholics. Under her rule, England saw various levels of social mobility. At the religious level, the Anglican settlement tried to create peace among the religious factions. She managed to keep the Protestant spirit alive through the settlement.

In the economic aspect, England was changing into a world of mercantile capital. The traders and merchants gained both mobility and power with money. Shakespeare belonged to this world. Boris, Ford had the opinion that the most of Elizabeth's five-million subjects were living in country and their prosperity depended on foreign trade. The rise of merchant capital had an impact on all the main events of the reign which included the long duel with Spain, ranging from Ireland to the Indies; the raids on Spanish treasure and the sudden expansion of English trade to touch all four of the known continents. The feudal world of England was churning. The nobility was becoming economically weak and the other social groups especially the ones who were trading were gaining power.

The consolidation of power by Elizabeth were shown in the works of literature like Sidney's *Arcadia* (1580) and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590). Elizabeth consolidated her reign with the defeat of the Spanish forces with the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588.



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England saw a new ferment with the influx of renaissance ideals, the displacement of earth from the centre and the renewed interest in man coupled with the economic changes in society. The gentry was connected to the court even as it started pursuing its own monetary interests. By the end of the sixteenth century, the gentry was much better placed and tried to buy estates and on a par with the nobility.

In the sphere of economics, traditional forms of trade and agriculture existed side-by-side with the newly emerging modes of capitalist enterprise. There were an unprecedented and often conflicting number of heterogeneous developments and activities. Robert Weiman calls it an age of social compromise and economic confusion. The growth in the market first for commodities, then for land and labour and finally for money happened due to the development of an extensive cloth industry serving overseas export markets, the extraordinary influx of gold and silver and the remarkable rise in prices.

The period of Elizabeth's reign was relatively stable and yet saw the changes at both social and economic structural levels. The merchants and traders gained gradual ascendancy. The conception of man in society and its representation in literature underwent change. The man became the centre of things in a more scientific environment. All these have been reflected in the writings of Shakespeare and other writers.

#### HUMANIST THOUGHT

Humanism can be understood in terms of actual human experience and history. Humanism restored to man the dignity of existence. Man was seen controlling his own destiny. In the Elizabethan period, humanism was one of the chief ideas that influenced the writings as well as the way people lived. Earlier man's relationship with God was a subject of artistic and literary depiction, but the renaissance with its scientific thrust looked at man in his own world.

Man became the centre of everything. Humanism saw man in terms of its relationships with the other people around. Arnold Kettle says the humanist tradition means an evolving outlook that developed with man's increasing knowledge and control of the world he lives in and hence of his own destinies. Shakespeare's plays infused the ideas humanism. According to V.G. Kiernan, Shakespeare was in search of fresh and living, instead of fossilized, connections. His quest was part of the all-round emancipation of the individual that was unfolding.

Elizabeth's rule was a period of stability, but it was not without its rebellious forces. The Northern rebellion of 1569 and the Essex rebellion of 1601 were the two very famous incidents the period witnessed. In the Northern rebellion, the Catholics felt sidelined in the court and rebelled against Elizabeth favouring Mary Queen of Scots. The Elizabethan Settlement was a median between the different faiths but was not acceptable to all. This was followed by other plots to remove Elizabeth. The next significant uprising was from within the court by the Earl of Essex. The Essex Rebellion was led by Sir Robert Devereux the Earl of Essex in 1601. He was spurned by Elizabeth after he failed to curb the Irish rebellion. According to A.L. Morton, the rebellion of the Earl of Essex happened after the Queen's refusal to renew the "monopoly" for the sale of "sweet wine", which was given to him for ten years. A group of people had resisted the monopolization in trade and put forth their own interests.

#### MACHIAVELLI'S *THE PRINCE* AND JAMES'S *BASILIKON DORON*

Niccollo Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1513) raises the question of how a ruler must preserve his power; whether the ruler should use cruelty to preserve his power or should the ruler be feared or loved. The answers to these questions reflect the changes setting in the Renaissance period in Italy and its influence in England. Thus, it presented a new discourse of politicking and its working in the state. The advent of the "usurper," a shift from the king as divinely ordained, happened. Machiavelli writes "on seizing a state, the usurper should make haste to inflict what injuries he must, at a stroke, that he may not have to renew them daily, but be enabled by their discontinuance to reassure men's minds and afterwards win them over by benefits. Whosoever, either through timidity or from following bad counsels, adopts a contrary course, must keep the sword always drawn and can put no trust in his subjects, who suffering from continued and constantly renewed severities, will never yield him their confidence." The "usurper" challenged the divine sanctity of the king.

Machiavelli suggests both the method of operation and the sustenance of rule for the usurper. In the context of England, the contesting claims and political unrest were a challenge to the monarch. This gets reflected in Shakespeare's plays. For example, *The Tragedy of King Richard II* shows these changes in the relation between the monarch and the society. On the question of whether

the monarch must be “feared or loved”, Machiavelli says “it is far safer to be feared than loved”.

King James’ *Basilikon Doron* (1599) also delves into ideas about the monarch, ‘good’ governance and his relationship to his subjects. The title is a “Greek phrase translated as ‘kingly gift’.” In it King James explains the difference between the “good king and a usurping tyrant.” The former is answerable to God and is “ordained for his people”, while the latter considers “his people to be ordained for him.” Honour for the good king meant a “due discharge of his calling,” but for the tyrant it rested in a realisation of his “ambitious pretences.” This was of course in contrast to Machiavelli’s ideas. The idea of a monarch and a “good” monarch was a contested one. It implied that change was happening in the way issues related to monarchy were perceived by the people. With the execution of Charles I and the establishment of Cromwellian republic are examples of the change.

#### DRAMA IN THE RENAISSANCE WORLD

##### Stage in the Elizabethan Period

In the Renaissance period, people in England watched bulls fighting, dogs baiting a bear, performances of acrobats and actors, one in inn yards and other informal structures. The audience stood close at hand and watched the performers. Thus, theatre evolved significantly. Starting from acrobatics and bear-baiting rings, entertainment space went to the round stage used by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. The interaction was direct, exciting and engaging. People watched the shows with real blood and gore. The people also went to watch public executions. Theatre hinged on providing entertainment and a close interaction with the audience. Frye states some of his early theatrical experience would have been with courtyards of inns, where the actors would set-up their stage at one end and play to an audience collected on the yard and on the balconies. The permanent theatre buildings erected around Elizabethan London after 1576 preserved much of the feeling of these innyards, by their placing of stage, yard and galleries. Plays were also performed at the Inns of Courts. These were “a combination of law schools, professional societies and gentlemen’s clubs”. The structure of the inn yard when transformed to the formal stage of Shakespeare’s time made space for the gentry and nobility as it did for the commoners who stood in the pit. Shakespeare’s formal theatrical association was with Lord Chamberlain’s Company. It was patronised by Henry Carey, The Lord Chamberlain, hence the name. The theatre was owned by a group of

people and this included Shakespeare. Theatre was a popular form of entertainment and it also had a commercial side to it. People invested in the theatre and made profits. Theatres were rooted in the everyday life of the people.

##### The Globe theatre

This period had many theatres. Red Lion theatre was one of the oldest. Others included the Theatre, Rose Theatre and Swan Theatre. The Globe Theatre was built by Shakespeare and others in 1599 and it continued till 1613 when it was burnt down. The Swan Theatre, which had the capacity to accommodate 3000 people, had three tiers of galleries around the stage space. Audience had to pay extra money to sit in the galleries.

At the Swan theatre, a part of the stage was extended into the audience space called the apron stage. A part of this was covered that provided protection to the actors and space to designate parts like the heaven or even keep some kinds of equipment needed in the play. There was a trapdoor to indicate hell. The space in front of the stage was called the pit and had the cheapest tickets. The “groundlings” could stand and watch the play for a nominal amount. There was no roof over that space and they had to brave weather conditions. The galleries were protected by the roof. The gallery also had rooms for private viewing, which was called the *tarras*.

The two main groups of performing companies were The Admiral’s Men and Lord Chamberlain’s Men. The Admiral’s Men performed in the Rose and Lord Chamberlain’s Men in the Theatre. These were located in the areas where the brothels were also located. Later the Lord Chamberlain’s Men performed in the Globe theatre. After King James I came to power as the King of England, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men became the official group and were called King’s Men. In 1608, the private theatres like the Blackfriars theatre was bought by Shakespeare and other partners. It catered to the elite and could accommodate about 200-300 people.

##### DRAMA AND CENSORSHIP IN ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

Numerous Acts and statutes were passed to control the kind of plays that were staged during the Elizabethan period. This is because watching plays was a popular pastime for the people in the Elizabethan period. The plays made references to the existing structures of power and that was noted by the monarchy because of the popularity of the plays. For example, *Richard II*’s popularity disturbed Queen Elizabeth. William

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Lambarde records about this in “His Notes of a Conversation with Queen Elizabeth I about *Richard II*. The tragedy was played 40 times in open streets and houses. A performance of *Richard II* was presented the day before the uprising by the Earl of Essex. The *Act of Common Council for the Regulation Of Theatrical performances in London* (December 6, 1574) was one such Act. This law banned staging of play, comedy, tragedy, interlude and public show in open places and restricted on dialogues. Violation of the law invited punishment. The church, which was a powerful space also framed the rules on which society rested and the theatre became an alternative space to contest those normative ideas.

In 1597, the Privy Council passed an order against the “disorders” committed in the playhouses. As per this decree, no play should be performed in London city and the playhouses also should be brought down. Stephen Gosson, a staunch critic of theatre, considered theatre as immoral in its import and suggested a movement away from theatre. Philip Stubbes called the performer as the devil’s partner. John Rainolds condemned the performance of female roles by men. Henry Crosse called plays as “scandalous and scurrilous”. Some others like Thomas Lodge who wrote *A Reply to Stephen Gosson’s School of Abuse, in Defence of Poetry, Music and Stage Plays* (1579) as a response to Gosson’s virulent attack on theatres stated: First therefore, if it be not tedious to Gosson to hearken to the learned, the reader shall perceive the antiquity of play-making, the inventors of comedies and therewithall the use and commodity of them. So that in the end I hope my labour shall be liked and the learned will sooner conceive his folly. In *An Apology for Actors* (1611), Thomas Heywood looked at “playing as an ornament of the city.” The debates and arguments around it continued. In 1642, the Puritan influence and a conservativeness that sought to hold this free flow of ideas led to the shutting down of theatres.

The monarchy, disturbed by playwriting and watching, passed Acts and Decrees to control and censor plays. The actor was equated with vagabonds. In 1572, the *Act For The Punishment Of Vagabonds, And For The Relief Of The Poor And Impotent* was passed and brought back in 1604. According to the Act, “fencers, bearwards, common players of interludes, and minstrels wandering abroad” were “adjudged, and deemed as rogues and vagabonds” and punished accordingly. According to *An Act To Restrain Abuses Of Players*, (1606), if any person committed profanity

against God or his name he shall have to pay ten pounds for every such offense. Theatres were also shut down due to plague. John Stow in *Survey of London* records that “between December 1592 and the following December, 11,000 people in London out of about 200,000 died owing to the plague”.

Peter Thomson also wrote in “Playhouses and Players in the time of Shakespeare” that, “It became an established custom to order the closing of the London theatres when registered deaths reached forty in any one week.” Germaine Greer too corroborates this. The playhouses were known to be unhealthy places, which is why they were the first institutions to be closed down in times of plague.

#### DATE OF THE PLAY

When Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* around 1606, King James I was the monarch. He was the first Scottish king to become the monarch of England. He faced rebellions and one was the failed rebellion of the Gunpowder Plot. *Macbeth* captures the tensions and contradictions that belong to the Jacobean age. Based on William Warner’s poem *A Continuance of Albion’s England* (1586) that mentions *Makbeth*, scholars say the play was written between 1599 and 1606. In 1605, a Latin playlet, Dr. Gwin’s *Tres Sibyllae* was written and performed for King James in Oxford. The title translated as “Three Sibyls” praised the King and recognised his royal connection to Banquo and established him as King of England and Scotland. The greetings of the three sibyls to King James in *Tres Sibyllae* were echoed in the witches’ predictions to Macbeth in Shakespeare’s play. English astrologist Simon Forman records in *Book of Plaies* how the play was performed on April 20, 1611 at the Globe. Forman’s record of the play is primarily a summary and differs from the Folio account of the play in 1623. Nostbakken says Shakespeare may have had a court performance in mind because the Scottish historical setting, the Banquo legend, the inclusion of witches and the debate about kinship indicate that.

#### SOURCES OF MACBETH

*Macbeth* is believed to have been based on Raphael Holinshed’s *The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1587). Other historical documents that might have influenced the play are John Major’s *A History of Greater Britain* (1521) and George Buchanan’s *History of Scotland* (1582). Most researchers believe that Shakespeare relied primarily on Holinshed’s *Chronicles*. According to the history, *Macbeth* was the eighty-fifth king of Scotland and ruled from 1040 to