

MEG - 03
BRITISH NOVEL
ASSIGNMENT 2020 - 2021
(Based on Blocks (1 - 9))

Max. Marks: 100

Answer all questions.

1. Do you think Fielding attempts to correct distortions in human behavior through the moral view point of *Tom Jones*? 20
2. Examine the various narrative techniques in *Wuthering Heights* critically. 20
3. What is your understanding of the Pip – Estella relationship in the *Great Expectations*? Illustrate with examples. 20
4. How are the issues of race and imperialism woven into the narrative of the *Heart of Darkness*? 20
5. How does Muriel Spark handle time in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*? 20

ASSIGNMENT SOLUTIONS GUIDE (2020-2021)

MEG-3 BRITISH NOVEL

Q1. Do you think Fielding attempts to correct distortions in human behavior through the moral view point of Tom Jones?

Ans.

Fielding began writing Tom Jones in 1746. It had been a wildly ambitious book which, in attempting to portray the nuances of real world, angered many but ultimately delighted generations of readers through both its influence and sprawling narrative. The book's conception owes much to Fielding's personal life. At the time, he was deeply traumatized by the 1744 death of his wife Charlotte Cradock, and his lingering affection is clear in his assertion that the character of Sophia Western is predicated on her. There are wistful comments from the narrator regarding the immortalization of the author and his muse, and Sophia's gentility and resolve makes her a fitting monument to Charlotte.

The novel wasn't completed until 1748, almost a year after Fielding married Mary Daniel, his former wife's maid. She was pregnant by Fielding, and despite the gossip and social criticism, he stood proudly by his new wife. There are elements of this happy union within the happy marriage of Nightingale and Nancy Miller later within the novel. Tom Jones, like its eponymous hero, was heavily condemned upon its debut. Fielding's exploration of a replacement sort of writing and entertainment was labeled as corrupt and harsh, albeit his purpose was clearly to present attribute for exploration and comment by the reader, instead of to protest against its various weaknesses. Thomas Sherlock, the Bishop of London, protested that the earthquakes which rocked London in February and March of 1750 were divine punishment for the publication of this, and other, immoral texts. References to the episodes of casual sex were frequently cited as inappropriate, despite Fielding's intent (as stated within the Preface) "to recommend goodness and innocence."

The narrator provides that his purpose within the text are going to be to explore "human nature." As such, his story veers between several extremes - comedy and tragedy, low and society, moral and base. Squire Allworthy, a person defined by his interminable kindness, returns to his Somersetshire estate to seek out a toddler abandoned in his bed. He gives the kid to his sister Bridget to seem after, and that they investigate to work out that the child's mother may be a girl named Jenny Jones. She leaves the world, and Allworthy decides to boost the boy, Tom Jones.

Tom is mentioned alongside Allworthy's nephew Blifil, Bridget's son. They're educated by two men of differing outlook, Thwackum and Square. Blifil may be a miserable and jealous boy. Tom is an impetuous character who supports his friend, the poor gamekeeper Black George Seagrim, even when that support causes him trouble. Meanwhile, through his relationship with Squire Western, Allworthy's boorish but affable neighbor, Tom slowly falls crazy with the squire's daughter Sophia, who also involves love him.

However, Tom cannot pursue Sophia because his girlfriend Molly, daughter to Black George, grows pregnant with what he believes to be his son. When he's revealed to not be the daddy of Molly's child, Tom is liberal to pursue his emerging love for Sophia. Blifil conspires against Tom, and he's unjustly clothed of Allworthy's house and faraway from Sophia. Further, because Tom may be a bastard child, Squire Western refuses to support Tom's suit for Sophia, and instead wishes her to marry Blifil in order that he can consolidate their lands.

Sophia hates Blifil, and is tortured by her father's cruel insistence. Allworthy gives Tom a good sum of cash to support himself, but it's stolen by Black George. Tom considers joining the military. He meets up with Partridge, a teacher-cum-barber whose reputation was ruined when he was believed to be Tom's father years before. Partridge initially believes that he can return to Allworthy's favor if he reunites the person with Tom, but Partridge ultimately becomes a faithful companion along the way. Tom frequently shows his benevolent spirit by helping an unsuccessful highwayman, a beggar and a woman in distress - all gestures which are richly repaid later within the novel. Sophia is locked up for refusing to marry Blifil. She flees, and both Tom and Sophia attempt to locate one another on their respective journeys to London.

She discovers he has slept with Mrs. Waters (a woman he rescues) which he's mentioning her name to strangers, and she or he decides he must not love her. She then heads to London, and Tom follows her. While in London, Tom takes up with the promiscuous and wily Lady Bellaston, with whom Sophia is staying. She promises to assist him but endeavors to stay the lovers apart. Sophia is additionally roughly courted by Lord Fellamar. Her aunt, Lady Western, is anxious for her to marry him, whereas her father remains adamant that she is going to marry Blifil. Sophia decides she is going to marry no-one without her father's consent, but also will not be told whom to marry.

Tom is innocently trapped during a duel and imprisoned. His friend Nightingale, loyal companion Partridge, and devoted landlady Mrs. Miller investigate the course of Tom's imprisonment and sustain his contact with Sophia. There's tension when it's initially believed

that Mrs. Waters is Tom's mother, but this is often revealed to be untrue. Allworthy is shocked to get that Tom is his nephew, Bridget's illegitimate but first-born son, which Blifil has known about this since his mother's death. It's discovered that Blifil engineered Tom's imprisonment to urge him out of the way. The fees against Tom are dropped and his marriage to Sophia is blessed by both Allworthy and Squire Western. Blifil is banished but has an annuity from Allworthy and Tom. Sophia and Tom live happily, on the brink of Nightingale and Mrs. Miller's daughter Nancy, whose union Tom facilitated. Partridge is given an annuity to start out a replacement school and marries Tom's first girl, Molly Seagrim.

Fielding has here changed the concept of virtue. He has presented his virtuous protagonist with manly weakness. Tom Jones may be a virtuous person whose love for Sophia is pure but his weakness forced him to possess relations with three other women. Mr. Allworthy is praised as a virtuous man everywhere in the region. Blifil was considered virtuous but he has none. Tom the hero steals but to assist his servant. Virtue in Tom Jones is to be taken in broad sense. The writer's view is different than other writers. He believes that a person is filled with weakness but yet he can remain virtuous.

Q2. Examine the various narrative techniques in Wuthering Heights critically.

Ans.

The various narrative techniques in Wuthering Heights critically

Wuthering Heights was Emily Brontë's only novel, and it's considered the fullest expression of her highly individual poetic vision. It contains many Romantic influences: Heathcliff may be a very Byronic character, though he lacks the self-pity that mars many Byronic characters, and he's deeply attached to the wild life. When the novel was written, the height of the Romantic age had passed: Brontë lived a really isolated life, and was in some sense behind the days.

Wuthering Heights expresses criticisms of social conventions, particularly those surrounding problems with gender: notice that the author distributes "feminine" and "masculine" characteristics without reference to sex. Brontë had difficulties living in society while remaining faithful to the items she considered important: the perfect of girls as delicate beings who avoid physical or mental activity and pursue fashions and flirtations was repugnant to her.

Class issues also are important: we are sure to respect Ellen, who is educated but of low class, quite Lockwood. Any reader of **Wuthering Heights** should recognize immediately that it's not the type of novel that a gently-bred Victorian lady would be

expected to write down. Brontë sent it to publishers under the masculine name of Ellis Bell, but however it took many tries and lots of months before it had been finally accepted. Its reviews were almost entirely negative: reviewers implied that the author of such a completely unique must be insane, hooked in to cruelty, barbaric. Emily's sister Charlotte's novel *Jane Eyre* was far more successful.

Emily was always wanting to maintain the secrecy under which the novel was published, understandably. She died soon after the publication, and Charlotte felt obliged - now that secrecy was not necessary - to write down a preface for the novel defending her sister's character.

The preface also made it clear that Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell were, in fact, different people: some readers had speculated that *Wuthering Heights* was an early work by the author of *Jane Eyre*. It appears that Charlotte herself was uncomfortable with the more disturbing aspects of her sister's masterpiece. She said that if Emily had lived, "her mind would of itself have grown sort of a strong tree; loftier, straighter, wider-spreading, and its matured fruits would have attained a mellower ripeness and sunnier bloom."

Her apology for Emily's work should be read with the belief that Charlotte's character was quite different from Emily's: her interpretation of *Wuthering Heights* shouldn't necessarily be taken at face value. *Wuthering Heights* doesn't belong to any obvious prose genre, nor did it begin a crucial literary lineage. None of its imitations can approach its sincerity and poetic power. However, it's still been a crucial influence on English literature. With the passing of your time, an immense amount of interest has grown up about the Brontë sisters, Charlotte, Emily, and Anne, and that they have achieved the status of the centers of a literary cult.

Lockwood and Nelly function the apparent narrators, others are interspersed throughout the novel – Heathcliff, Isabella, Cathy, even Zillah – who narrate a chapter or two, providing insight into both character and plot development. Catherine doesn't speak on to the readers (except in quoted dialogue), but through her diary, she narrates important aspects of the childhood she and Heathcliff shared on the moors and therefore the treatment they received at the hands of Joseph and Hindley. All of the voices weave together to supply a choral narrative. Initially, they speak to Lockwood, answering his inquiries, but they speak to readers, also, providing multiple views of the tangled lives of the inhabitants of Thrushcross Grange and *Wuthering Heights*.

Brontë appears to present objective observers, in an effort to permit the story to talk for itself. Objective observations by outsiders would presumably not be tainted by having an immediate involvement; unfortunately, a better examination of those two seemingly objective narrators reveals their bias.

For example, Lockwood's narrative enables readers to start the story when most of the action is already completed. Although the most story is being told in flashback, having Lockwood interact with Heathcliff and therefore the others at Wuthering Heights immediately displaces his objectivity. What he records in his diary isn't just what he's being told by Nelly but his memories and interpretation of Nelly's tale. Likewise, Nelly's narrative directly involves the reader and engages them within the action. While reporting the past, she is in a position to foreshadow future events, which builds suspense, thereby engaging readers even more. But her involvement is problematic because she is hypocritical in her actions: sometimes choosing Edgar over Heathcliff (and vice versa), and sometimes working with Cathy while at other times betraying Cathy's confidence. Nonetheless, she is sort of an enticing storyteller, so readers readily forgive her shortcomings.

Ultimately, both Lockwood and Nelly are merely facilitators, enabling readers to enter the planet of Wuthering Heights. All readers know quite anybody narrator, and thus are empowered as they read.

Q3. What is your understanding of the Pip – Estella relationship in the Great Expectations? Illustrate with examples.

Ans. Pip's love for the cold-hearted beauty Estella is one of the main themes of Dickens' *Great Expectations* and Pip's main motivation for becoming a gentleman. Throughout the novel Estella seems ever present even when she is miles away. His expectations and aspirations are all linked in some way to his desire for her.

Pip's obsession with Estella is somewhat confusing for today's readers, since this relationship is clearly one-sided and "[...] against reason, [...] against peace, against hope, against happiness, against all discouragement that could be."^[1] (S. 229)

In his essay I will describe the nature of their relationship. It is going to analyse what it is that attracts Pip to Estella. This means we are going to discuss if Pip's feelings towards Estella are, at all, of a romantic nature, or if there are other forces at work.

In *Great Expectations*, Mr. Jaggers advises Pip, "Take nothing on appearances." Certainly, the Pip-Estella relationship is an example of the Appearances vs. Reality theme that prevails throughout Charles Dickens's classic novel.

From the first meeting of Pip with Estella, Pip falls victim to believing in appearances. The beautiful, haughty girl whose name means "star" is elevated in Pip's esteem simply because she lives with the rich Miss Havisham and is dressed in lovely clothes and speaks in a deprecating way to him, calling him

"common." Immediately, because this vision of superior loveliness who speaks properly has termed him "common," Pip experiences a humiliation. But, despite her cruel ways, Pip falls hopelessly in love with the beautiful Estella, perhaps even because she is unattainable. He perpetuates his delusions by hoping that if he becomes a gentleman, Estella will accept him as an equal and requite his love.

Of course, the truth is that from the beginning, Pip's birth has more legitimacy than that of Estella's. For, his parents were married and, albeit poor, they were certainly not criminals as are the parents of Estella, whose birth came out of the streets of London.

In addition to the theme of Appearance vs. Reality, the relationship of Pip and Estella also points to a salient theme in the works of Dickens: Class Stratification. The theme of social class is central to *Great Expectations* as it acts as extends into the other themes such as the Appearance theme. Pip's angst over being "common," as Estella has labeled him, is his driving force to become a gentleman and entertain the "great expectations" of having bettered himself sufficiently so that he will become worthy of Estella. But, of course the class structure is a false one in *Great Expectations*, thus paralleling the Appearance vs. Reality theme, as Pip later learns; rather, it is what one is as a person that is truly of value. Estella, for all her beauty and daintiness is but common in her heart; she is incapable of noble thoughts and acts while Joe, the humble blacksmith is truly a good and noble man.

Q4. How are the issues of race and imperialism woven into the narrative of the Heart of Darkness?

Ans. Both race (or even racism) and imperialism are treated as the common attitudes of white people at the time the book takes place. This book is set on the river Thames around the turn of the 20th century. Generally speaking, the Europeans aboard the ship (as well as most other Europeans at this time) are largely ignorant of the lives of the natives they encounter traveling. Because these natives look so very different, the general attitude is that they are sub-human - closer to animals than they are to humans. This is evidenced by the repeated referrals of black people as "niggers," "cannibals," "criminals," and "savages."

Kurtz's treatise, called the "International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs" is yet further evidence of the elitist attitude carried by white men at this time. It is one thing to merely refer to those peoples in passing as less than human - here is a man (and the characters who support his thinking) who genuinely believes they are harmful to civilized society, so he plans to educate others to fear them.

Marlow is one of the few characters whose thoughts pose an opposition to the general attitude of indifference if not blatant disrespect. He is often reflecting with sympathy on different situations in which groups of black men are seen working or enslaved. His thoughts rarely drive him to action and even his actions (like sharing the biscuit with the man on his ship) are as slight as his sympathy - but it is clear the author presents this opposing viewpoint to remind the audience of the humanity of a group of people who are viewed and mostly treated, like animals.

Q5. How does Muriel Spark handle time in The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie?

Ans. In *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, by Sparks, time is manipulated in order to demonstrate how Brodie's grand plans turn out. In other words, rather than writing the work in strict chronological order, Sparks intersperses the present and future to see how Brodie's molding of her young set works out.

The story is told in chronological order covering the period from the fall of 1930 to the summer of 1939, yet at certain points the story suddenly leaps into the distant future, revealing important information that, in a more traditional story structure, would be withheld until it occurs in chronological order. In this

way, the present of the novel is seen in contrast to the future, through the lens of retrospect it is reframed and can be reinterpreted. One example of how this technique works is in the several passages which show the students' later assessment of Miss Brodie: Mary Macgregor, at twenty-three and recently dropped by a boyfriend, looks back on her school years as her happiest time. Eunice tells her husband of twenty years that she intends on their return to Edinburgh to lay flowers on the grave of Miss Brodie because she was "full of culture." And Sandy, who betrays Miss Brodie and thus contributes to her being forced to resign, later admits that her career in psychology and success as an author results from the impression Miss Brodie made on her.

Perhaps the unconventional use of chronology in the novel reflects Brodie's unconventional use of her students for her own fulfillment and political purposes, though probably not--the novel's structure works better than Brodie's teaching methods and unconventional ideas.