

ENGLISH

Soban Singh Jeena University, Almora, Uttarakhand

Introduction to English Prose

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1.1 Introduction to the Course:

An essay is a kind of prose writing usually of moderate length. The word “essay” derives from the French root word “*assayer*”, which means “to attempt,” or “to try.” So, in a way, an essay “attempts” to throw some light on the subject that an essayist deals with. There are two kinds of essays. One is informal essay (also called personal essay) and the other one is formal essay. You can write anything you like in a personal essay so long as it offers the readers interest and pleasure. It is written in a light style. Its purpose is to delight and entertain the reader. The style of the essay is usually familiar and conversational in mode. The subjects can often be trifle such as in “Apology for Idlers”, “On Tremendous Trifles”, “On Bores” and so on. A formal essay is a serious one as it makes an evaluation or judgement. It discusses the pros and cons of the topic in question. The style is objective and serious. A good essay however, is nuanced, thought-provoking and unbiased. The judgement is based on factual findings.

In this module, we are going to study English essays written in the 17th and 18th Centuries. We are going to read “Of Studies” and “Of Great Place” by Francis Bacon, “Sir Roger at the Theatre” by Joseph Addison, “The Trumpet Club” by Richard Steele, “Man in Black” by Oliver Goldsmith, and “The Vindication of Issac Bickerstaff” by Jonathan Swift. The essays are eclectic in nature. However brief Bacon’s essays may be, they always offer the readers a complex variety of matter. Most of his essays are didactic in nature. One of the most enduringly popular creations of Addison and Steele is the humorous character of Sir Roger, a benign old landlord whose kind nature and peculiar habits make him the main character in many

of their essays. Both Addison and Steele use the English language in such a way that differs from the floral and exalted style adopted by many British prose writers of the 16th and 17th centuries. As their target audiences were ordinary middle class men and women, they adopted simple vocabulary and syntax in their essays.

1.2 Outcome of the Course:

1. The students will be able to gain an introductory knowledge of the development and significance of English essays.
2. They will be able to trace the growth of English essays through the contributions of some of the greatest essayists.
3. They will get the opportunity to read a wide variety of subject matters that the genre serves.
4. They will also learn about the respective writing style of each essayist.
5. They will be encouraged to write essay on any particular subject from an objective point of view.

1.3 Francis Bacon (1561-1625): An Introduction

Francis Bacon (1561-1625) was a philosopher, scientist, statesman, and essayist. He also served as the Attorney General and Lord Chancellor of England. He claimed “all knowledge as his province” and advocated a shift from the traditional learning of Scholasticism and humanism to a system based on empirical and inductive principles which formed the foundation of modern science.

Bacon was born in London in 1561. He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge. To study law, he then enrolled himself in the law program at Honorable Society of Grey’s Inn, where he found the curriculum boring and old fashioned. The curriculum was based on Aristotelianism and Scholasticism, while Bacon preferred the new Renaissance Humanism. Bacon left school after a year and started working for the ambassador of France for two and a half years until he was forced to return to England because of the unexpected death of his father. He was left a meager inheritance which created financial troubles for him.

In 1581, Bacon became a member in the House of Commons. He returned to Gray’s Inn and completed his legal studies. In 1582, he got appointed as a barrister. He wrote his first political memorandum, *A Letter of Advice to Queen Elizabeth* (1584), which resulted in advancement of his political career. In 1603, Bacon was conferred with Knighthood after the ascension of James I to the British throne. He rose in political ranks until he became Lord Chancellor of England, one of the highest political positions of England. In 1621, Bacon was accused of corruption and impeached by the Parliament.

After the end of his political career, Bacon devoted himself to his passion, the philosophy of science. He worked hard to create new methods for the sciences with focus on empirical and scientific experiments. Bacon believed in gathering data, analyzing it and conducting experiments to observe nature scientifically. He wanted to use science as a tool for the development of humanity. The evolution of a scientific approach based on a new standard of reason became popular at that time. It was “known as the Baconian method, essentially referring to the use of inductive reasoning based on observation” (Historic UK, np).

Bacon wrote political pamphlets and essays during his tenure as a statesman. Bacon’s most noted work is *The Advancement of Learning* (1605). Bacon’s essays are aphoristic in style. They deal with practical aspects of day-to-day life and are filled with pearls of wisdom. His other important works are *Novum Organum Scientiarum* (1621), *The New Atlantis* (1626), *Essays* (three editions in 1597, 1612 and 1625). While the first edition carried only 10 essays, the final edition of *Essays* (1625) carried 58 essays. Bacon’s earliest essays when read in the original versions—“seem little more than collections of maxim-like sentences: sometimes actual quotations, more often epigrammatic expressions of traditional or universal sentiments” (Chaudhury xvi). The readers of Bacon’s *Essays* can easily understand that they are impersonal pieces. As the outcome of his research of ancient mythology, he published *On the Wisdom of the Ancients* (1609).

“Of Studies” is one of Bacon’s most important essays in the collection *Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral* (1625). His other important essays are “Of Great Place”, “Of Travaile”, “Of Revenge”, “Of Marriage and Single Life”, “Of Truth”, “Of Friendship”, and “Of Love” etc.

Important Works:

- i) *A Letter of Advice to Queen Elizabeth* (1584)
- ii) *Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral* (three editions in 1597, 1612 and 1625)
- iii) *The Advancement of Learning* (1605)
- iv) *On the Wisdom of the Ancients* (1609)
- v) *Novum Organum Scientiarum* (1621)
- vi) *The History of Henry VII* (1622)
- vii) *Historia Ventorum* (1622)
- viii) *Historia Vitae et Mortis* (1622)
- ix) *De Augmentis Scientiarum*
- x) *The New Atlantis* (1626)

1.4 Bacon's Writing Style:

Bacon is often called the “father of modern essay”, but he was in fact influenced by the French essayist Montaigne. Bacon adopted the genre “essay” from the French essayist Montaigne and took it to perfection in his own time itself. Bacon’s essays were more terse and filled with proverbs. His earlier essays were simply collection of his thoughts in a concise and pithy manner without much attention to literary beauty. But as they gained in popularity, Bacon began polishing his prose style and expanding his ideas in a more elaborate manner. He started using historical references and Latin quotes as well which enriched his essays and made them more scholarly.

Bacon is also a master rhetorician who had the ability to easily persuade the reader with his strong arguments. His logic is sound and his essays are highly stylized with judicious use of images, metaphors and similes. His writing proved that the English language could be used to present deeply philosophical and complex ideas in simple words. His sentences are highly aphoristic in nature, teeming with intelligent observations and thoughts. His sentences are always short and to the point, and his arguments in the essays are very cleverly presented. Bacon's diction is Latinized and he uses classical references and allusions in his essays liberally. Bacon was an experienced philosopher and statesman when he wrote these essays, and his experience and wisdom are apparent as one goes through them closely.

1.5 “Of Studies”: Summary and Analysis

Summary:

Studies, to Francis Bacon, are a multi-edged sword. It has its own pros and cons. He begins on a positive note: “Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability” (Chaudhury 164). He notes that the best advice can originate only from those who are well read. Bacon suggests that too much study has the damaging repercussions: “To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules is the humor of a scholar” (Chaudhury 164). No sooner does he grant these disadvantages than he lists their advantages using an agricultural metaphor: “They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience; for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need pruning by study” (Chaudhury 164-5).

Bacon now returns to their potential misuse: “Crafty men condemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use” (Chaudhury 165). Bacon mentions the general purposes of studies aphoristically: “Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider” (Chaudhury 165).

Bacon mentions other uses of study that have since become oral commonplaces in English: “Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested” (Chaudhury 165). Bacon has numerous other pithy uses for studies: “Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man” (Chaudhury 166).

Bacon also warns the uninitiated about the dangers of a lack of studies: “So if a man’s wit be wandering, let him study the mathematics” (Chaudhury 167-8). Clearly, for Bacon studies ought to be an essential part of every man’s scope—even if that scope entailed a minor danger of misuse.

Analysis:

As Francis Bacon was growing up, it was customary for teachers to use the Scholastic or Aristotelian method to learn. This style is known as deductive logic, that is, by syllogistic reasoning. Public schools as we now know them simply did not exist. Nearly all learning was church oriented; thus all subjects were taught from a theological viewpoint. The style, methodology, and vocabulary of Plato and Aristotle were commonplaces. It did not take long for the young Bacon to rebel against what he saw as the heavy-handed and increasingly obsolete practices of the Scholastics. As he matured, Bacon began to use the inductive method of

reasoning, i. e., going from experimentation to general principles. He began to disparage the deductive or Scholastic style of thought through his essays.

In “Of Studies,” Bacon uses studies as a means to poke holes in the theories of the Scholastics, who often took the word of an accepted Classical philosopher in all its implications. He notes that an over-indulgence on studies will lessen the ability of one to think creatively: “To make judgments wholly by their (studies) rules is the humor of a scholar.” He further writes of the dangers of any statement that has not been verified by strict experimentation or empiricism. He thinks that studies “teach not their own use, but that is a wisdom without them and above them, won by observation.”

He concludes with a sharp slap at what he saw as the inability of the Scholastics to draw subtle and nuanced differences between related phenomena: “If his wit be not apt to distinguish or find differences, let him study the schoolmen.” Ironically, though Bacon savages the Scholastics, he nevertheless uses their preferred Latinate quotes and aphorisms to do so.

1.6 “Of Great Place”: Summary and Analysis

Summary:

Bacon opens the essay by arguing that men at the great place, in powerful position, are a three-time servant: the servant of the state, the servant of fame (popularity), and the servant of business. Hence, such people don’t enjoy have any kind of freedom at all. They don’t have a liberty to do something for themselves, nor can they act freely. Even they can’t spend their time according to their own liking. Bacon says that it is a strange obsession of a man to grab some

power by surrendering his liberty. Bacon argues that man, in order to exert power over another man, ultimately loses power over his own self. He is merely a puppet in the hands of authority.

Bacon, being realistic with an exceptional vision to see things, argues about how man reaches the high position in politics. He says that if a man wants to secure a position at a great place, he has to do certain things that are morally wrong. It is through the path of indignities that a man comes to a position of dignity. One has to corrupt himself and should compromise over certain things to make oneself an influential man. But this position is not substantive as it may result in a downfall at any time. Bacon quotes the Latin proverb as “*Cum non sis qui fueris, non esse cur velis vivere*”, which means that since you are not what you were, there is no reason why you should wish to live.

Moreover, Bacon comments on the man’s demeanour that no matter how influential a man becomes, he seeks other’s opinion to find happiness. They can’t judge for themselves, however, they think themselves as what others think of them. Bacon writes that the great people are never willing to find faults in themselves. It is impossible for a man with money and power to find his faults. However, when it comes to grieving, they always try to cure it with money as soon as possible. Moreover, he says that the great men, being engrossed in their affairs and business, are unknown to their own shelves. They don’t have enough time to think about themselves, or even to take care of their health—physical or mental. The only thing they care about is money and power until they have lost their health and then realizes that they too are mortals.

Bacon, at this point, acts as a philosopher and writes that a man, in power and authoritative place, has the opportunity to do both, good and evil. As evil is a curse, to do good

things is more aspiring to satisfy the conscience of a man. Bacon argues about the good thoughts and good dreams and says that good thoughts are better as they can easily be moulded into practical form. Furthermore, a man, in order to get a reward from God, should do some good deeds in his life.

Bacon suggests that one should analyze his actions but at the same time he should also analyze the actions of other people in his vicinity as well. One should take instances from his surrounding in order to know what is good and what is bad. A man, by seeing the best in others, can strictly judge himself. By comparing himself to others, he must find out his loopholes. Likewise, he must also analyze the examples of those who carry evil inside themselves. By adopting these methods, he will be able to understand what to avoid. Moreover, a man should revisit his past experiences to learn good things from them to hope for a better future.

Bacon, furthermore, suggests that one should preserve the dignity of his office by occupying his place properly, not by confronting or challenging others. Likewise, one should also preserve the dignity of lower offices by permitting others to do their jobs without interfering in their jobs. Moreover, one should always consult others' opinions and consider their advice whenever they might be needed. Similarly, one should not refuse the help whenever other offers.

Bacon, the great philosopher of his time, illustrates the three vices of great place: corruption, delays, roughness, and facility. He suggests that to avoid delays, a man should be punctual and appoint a proper time. Likewise, for avoiding corruption, it is necessary that one should not only bind his and his servant's hands from taking bribe but also bind the suitor's hands from the offering; moreover, it tortures not only the bribers but also the bribes. Similarly, roughness in the attitude of an authoritative man makes his workers discontent. He should

balance his behavior in a perfect way between kindness and awe. Lastly, for the facility, Bacon calls it worse than bribery and advises that one shouldn't leave one's office after the break.

Bacon, at the end of the essay, argues that a great place shows the true colour of a man. It reflects how he is in a true sense. Some people prove to be better while others the worst. There are some people whom people think to be best for the empire when they are not emperors, but by attaining power, they proved to be worst. However, Vespasian was the only emperor, who after attaining power, changed for better. It is often observed that a man while occupying a powerful position in a great place becomes a completely different man. However, he should learn to inculcate respect for others as well. A man needs others to rise at a great place, but once he is elected, he should balance himself to represent the whole society.

Analysis:

The idea of the essay is to show the readers the position and problems of influential men in great places. Francis Bacon discusses duties, and behavior of those people who occupy high position in the society. He writes that all the people who live in great places are “thrice servants” — they are servants of the sovereign or state, fame and business. Moreover, they don't have any freedom although they exercise a great power. It is a very interesting idea that powerful people have really no liberty. But it's true. They have power over other people who occupy a lower position in the society, but they lose control and power over themselves.

As Bacon is a great philosopher who not only knows a lot about human nature but also tries to teach others, to share his knowledge with people around him. In this essay, Bacon touches upon the problem of other people's opinion concerning “great men”. He writes that great persons should “borrow other men's opinion” because they can get a lot of interesting and

important things for them. The great men cannot judge themselves. They should learn what other people think of them in order to remain on the top of the ladder.

Bacon also touches upon the theme of good and evil in his essay. He argues that “in place, there is a license to do good and evil” (Nayar 3). Evil is curse. Only those people who do good will be able to have rest. Good thoughts are better than good dreams because the men have an opportunity to bring their good thought to life.

Bacon also tries to explain the readers that any man has an opportunity to analyze not only his own actions but also the actions of other people in order to understand what is good and what is bad. They should “neglect not also the examples of those that have carried themselves ill in the same place” (Nayar 3). They should follow only good examples. Moreover, the great people should be role models to other people. They should learn good lessons from their past life and take care of their future.

In conclusion, it is necessary to say that such a wise man as Bacon could not only show the strengths and the weaknesses of the great men of the society but also he could give them some recommendations concerning their way of life, their behavior and their principles. He was interested in investigation of the human nature. His natural philosophy was greatly appreciated because he represented absolutely new philosophical ideas concerning the essence of life. Overall, Bacon’s essay “Of Great Place” is one of his bold philosophical works.

1.7 Let’s Sum It Up:

We have found that Bacon’s use of aphoristic style enables him to express maximum sense in minimum words. It is the quality of Bacon's aphoristic style that so much of discussion is required to explain his short sentences. In Bacon's essays, most of the sentences are terse and

have that aphoristic quality. Proverbial and Poetic Statements—Bacon’s essays are full of great ideas of universal importance expressed in proverbial statements composed in aphoristic style.

1.8 References:

Chaudhury, Sukanta, ed. *Bacon’s Essays: A Selection*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

Nayar, M. G., ed. *A Galaxy of English Essayists: From Bacon to Beerbohm*. Trinity Press, 1986.

Francis Bacon. Historic UK: The History and Heritage Accommodation Guide.

<https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/Francis-Bacon/> 1 Jan, 2022.

accessed on 23 Nov, 2022

1.9 Model Questions:

- i) In what way does the essay “Of Great Place” reflect Bacon’s idealism?
- ii) Write a note on Bacon’s prose style as you find in his essays.
- iii) Write a note on Bacon’s aphoristic style as you find in his essays prescribed in your syllabus.
- iv) Evaluate Francis Bacon as an essayist.
- v) Write a note on the aphorisms as you find in Bacon’s essay “Of Studies”.
- vi) What are the functions of study and different branches of study, according to Bacon?

1.10 Points to Ponder:

- * Bacon is called the “Father of English Essays”.
- * Bacon’s style is known as epigrammatic style.
- * Bacon’s essays are often didactic in nature.
- * Bacon knew Latin and wrote some of his texts in Latin. We also find a lot of Latin quotations in his essays.
- * Bacon was also a philosopher.

1.11 Further Study:

Anderson, F. H. *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon*. Chicago University Press, 1948.

Bowen, Catherine Drinker. *Francis Bacon: The Temper of the Man*. London, 1963.

Croll, M. W. “Attic Prose: Lipsius, Montaigne, Bacon”. *Landmark Essays on Rhetoric and Literature*. pp. 119-145. Routledge, 2017.

Peltonen, Markku, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon*, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Vickers, Brian. *Francis Bacon and Renaissance Prose*. Cambridge University Press, 1968.

Walker, Hugh. *The English Essay and Essayists*. London, 1915.

Wallace, K. R. *Francis Bacon on Communication and Rhetoric*. Chapel Hill, 1943.

2.1 Joseph Addison (1672-1719): An Introduction

Joseph Addison (1672–1719) was born in Wiltshire, England. He was an English essayist, poet, playwright, and politician. He was educated at Charterhouse School, where he first met Richard Steele, and then at The Queen's College, Oxford. He met Jonathan Swift in Ireland and remained there for a year. Later, he helped form the English literary congregation Kit-Kat Club and renewed his friendship with Richard Steele. In 1709, Steele began to publish the *The Tatler*, and Addison became a regular contributor. Addison contributed 42 essays to the *The Tatler*, while Steele composed 188. Steele was his long-standing-friend and collaborator. With Steele he founded *The Spectator* magazine (1711-14). *The Spectator* published 555 issues before being temporarily discontinued in 1712; another 80 issues were brought out by Addison in 1714.

In 1705 he published a poem called “The Campaign”, celebrating the recent victory of the allied forces over France in the Battle of Blenheim, which secured him the position of the Commissioner of Appeals and subsequently Under-Secretary of State in the ruling Whig government. In 1705, Addison was made Under-Secretary of State and accompanied Lord Halifax on a diplomatic mission to Germany. His political career reached its zenith in 1708 when he became a member of the Parliament. He held his position of MP for ten years from different counties. His political newspaper *The Freeholder* was much criticized, and Alexander Pope in his “Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot” made Addison an object of derision, naming him “Atticus”, and comparing him to an adder. Addison died in 1719 and was buried in Westminster Abbey, near the grave of his old patron and friend Lord Halifax.

Addison's first major literary work, *An Account of the Greatest English Poets*, was published in 1694. He also translated Virgil's *Georgics* (1694). His next literary venture was an account of his travels in Italy, *Remarks on several parts of Italy, &c.*, in the years 1701, 1702, 1703, published in 1705. He wrote a play named *Cato, a Tragedy* which was produced in 1713, and was received with acclamation by both Whigs and Tories in England. The play was also a huge success in Ireland. He followed this effort with a comedic play, *The Drummer* (1716).

Addison is chiefly remembered for his essays. His noted essays include "Sir Roger at Home", "Sir Roger at Theatre", "Sir Roger at Church", "The story of Sir Roger's Disappointment in Love" (co-written with Steele), and "Mischiefs of Party Spirit".

Important Works:

- i) *An Account of the Greatest English Poets* (1694)
- ii) *Georgics*, translation of Virgil's *Georgics* (1694)
- iii) *Remarks on several parts of Italy, &c., in the years 1701, 1702, 1703* (1705)
- iv) *Cato, a Tragedy* (1713)
- v) *The Drummer* (1716)

2.2 “Sir Roger at the Theatre”: Summary

Summary:

At the Spectator Club, Addison’s friend Sir Roger de Coverley proposed to Addison that as he has not seen a play in twenty years, he has decided to see a tragedy at a theatre. Addison that Sir Roger told the last play he watched was a Church of England comedy named “Committee”. Thus they plan to watch a good tragedy--a story of distressed woman named Andromache. It is the classical tragedy that revolves around Hector’s widow (Andromache).

Knight is one of the friends of Roger and Addison. He plans to take Captain Sentry for the play. Thus, Addison, Sir Roger, Knight, Captain Sentry along with a Butler and a servant take their coach to the theatre. They get their ticket and got comfortable seats at the theatre. The play begins. Pyrrus (Son of Achilles who killed Hector in Trojan War) is the character that enters the stage first. At the end of every Act, Sir Roger passes comments about the characters and the scene to his friends.

Sir Roger was not fond of the character Andromache who is the widow and he anxiously wonders what it would become of Pyrrus who is after Andromache. On the other hand, Knight adores the characters on the stage and he passes good comments about Andromache. Captain Sentry nudges his friends not to be explicit in their comments about the characters on stage as two of the audiences were keenly observing their conversation. At the fourth Act, Hector’s ghost was expected on-stage and Knight misunderstands a page for Astynax (Andromache & Hector’s son).

The play ends with Andromache killing herself and Pyrrus left to feel sorrow about his mistakes. The friends of the spectator club were the last to leave the theatre. They all leave the

theatre with the satisfaction of watching a good tragedy. The friends escort Roger and drop him at his house safely in the coach.

2.3 Let's Sum It Up:

Addison's essays are charming and delightful in themselves, and are of great importance for the influence which they had not merely upon literature but upon life and manners. His writings are reflective of good tastes of life. His essay "Sir Roger at the Theatre" is no exception.

2.4 References:

"Joseph Addison". <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Joseph-Addison>. accessed on 28 Nov 2022.

Nayar, M. G., ed. *A Galaxy of English Essayists: From Bacon to Beerbohm*. Trinity Press, 1986.

2.5 Model Questions:

- i) Write a note on Addison's use of humour as you find in the essay in your syllabus.
- ii) How did Addison enliven morality with wit in his essays?
- iii) Make a character sketch of Sir Roger de Coverley as you find in Addison's essays.

2.6 Points to Ponder:

- i) There was a huge influence of periodical essays on 18th century British urban culture.
- ii) We find a vivid representation of gender in 18th periodical essays.
- iii) There is a significant contribution of the periodical essay to the evolution of English literary criticism.

iv) Dr. Samuel Johnson's praise of *The Spectator* as a model of prose style established Addison as one of the most admired and influential masters of prose in the language.

2.7 Further Study:

Bloom, Edward A., Lillian D. Bloom, eds. *Joseph Addison and Richard Steele: The Critical Heritage*. Routledge, 2013.

Bond, Donald F., ed. *Critical Essays from the Spectator by Joseph Addison: With Four Essays by Richard Steele*. Oxford UP, 1970.

David, Paul, ed. *Joseph Addison: Tercentenary Essays*. Oxford University Press, 2021.

3.1 Richard Steele (1672 – 1729): An Introduction

Sir Richard Steele (1672 – 1729) was an Irish writer, playwright, and politician. He is chiefly remembered for the magazine *The Tatler* (co-founded with his friend Joseph Addison in 1709). Of the 271 essays published in *The Tatler*, Joseph Addison wrote 42, Richard Steele wrote roughly 188, and the rest were collaborations between the two writers. Steele gave his character Bickerstaff, physician and astrologer of an entire, fully developed personality. Steele described his motive in writing *The Tatler* as “to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity, and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behaviour”. In collaboration with Addison, he made significant contribution to the development of the periodical essay.

In 1684 he began attending Charterhouse School, London, where he met Joseph Addison. After starting at Christ Church, Oxford, he went on to Merton College, Oxford. He then joined the Life Guards of the Household Cavalry in order to support King William’s wars against France. He rose to the rank of captain within two years. In 1706 Steele was appointed to a position in the household of Prince George of Denmark, consort of Anne, Queen of Great Britain. Steele became a Whig Member of Parliament in 1713. He was soon expelled for issuing a pamphlet in favor of the Hanoverian succession. When George I of Great Britain came to the throne in the following year, Steele was knighted and given responsibility for the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London. He returned to parliament in 1715.

While at Drury Lane, Steele wrote and directed the sentimental comedy *The Conscious Lovers*, which was an immediate hit. However, he fell out with Addison and with the

administration over the “Peerage Bill” (1719), and in 1724 he retired to his second wife’s homeland of Wales, where he spent the remainder of his life. He died in 1729.

Steele’s first published work, *The Christian Hero* (1701), attempted to show the differences between idealized and actual masculinity. It expressed didactic lessons. The people thought it to be sheer hypocrisy because Steele did not necessarily follow his own preaching. He was severely criticized for publishing this booklet when he himself enjoyed boozing, occasional duelling, and amorous dalliance around town.

Steele wrote a comedy that same year titled *The Funeral*. This play was performed at Drury Lane and became a huge success. It brought him to the attention of the King and the Whig party. Next, Steele wrote *The Lying Lover*, one of the first sentimental comedies, but a failure on stage. In 1705, Steele wrote *The Tender Husband* with contributions from Addison. Later that year he also wrote the prologue to the play *The Mistake*, by John Vanbrugh, also a fellow member of the Kit-Kat Club with Addison and Steele.

Important Works:

i) *The Christian Hero* (1701)

ii) *The Funeral or, Grief a-la-Mode* (1702)

iii) *The Lying Lover* (1703)

iv) *The Tender Husband* (1705)

v) *The Conscious Lovers* (1722)

3.2 “The Trumpet Club”: Summary

Steele’s essay “The Trumpet Club” indicates the growing popularity of club life in the early years of the 18th century. The word trumpet is probably used in connection with the idiom “to blow one’s trumpet” meaning to boast; and each member of the trumpet club does just that. The satirical essay speaks of how the narrator chose to relax before retiring for the night.

After a hard day’s work, the narrator made it his custom to spend the evenings in the company of men where he did not have to exercise his mind much. Their talks lulled him to sleep because those were boring and repetitive. The number of members of the club had come down from the original 15 to 5. Among the five members, he was considered the most learned, i. e., intelligent. He was referred to by the members as ‘scholar’ ‘philosopher’. The narrator then gives a pen sketch of the members-- the oldest is named Sir Jeffery Notch (notch means to make a score- reference to sports) who lost all his wealth in gambling on hounds (racing dogs), horses, and gaming cocks.

The next member is Major Matchlock (matchlock is a kind of gun) who had participated in the last civil wars and his talk bordered on the same. His greatest heroic deed was when London workers pushed him off his horse during a demonstration.

The third member is referred to as Dick Reptile (a kind of snake that is slow and sluggish). He is very laconic in his speech, laughs at all the jokes, irrespective of quality. He would bring with his young nephew, who would sit silent, or even if he passed a comment or laughed at the jokes, would be told by his uncle “Ay, ay Jack, you young men think us fools; but we old men know you are” (Nayar 31).

The next member Sir Jeoffery is not referred to by name; his only claim to fame was that he knew the notorious Jack Ogle well and would tell stories of his adventures.

The members met every evening at 6 pm and dispersed at 10 pm, and the conversation was the same as it was for the past few years. On his way home, the narrator would reflect with himself, the talkative nature of old men who would spin the same yarn (meaning repeat the same stories over and over again). This made him also think that when a young man began to talk over a particular incident, over a period of time, the story would get elongated so long as to compete with the *Canterbury Tales* (A number of long stories to have been told by a band of pilgrims on their way to Canterbury, a place sacred for the tomb of St. Thomas Becket).

One way to avoid getting into this pitfall, according to the narrator, is to store up knowledge and observation in our youth and recall it in our declining (old age) years so that they can use it in evening discussions. This can make a man, in his old age, a man of wisdom comparable to that of Nestor (a character in the *Iliad* known for his wisdom and eloquence).

3.3 Let's Sum It Up:

Steele humorously narrates each of the club members' eccentricities and their personal experiences as well. Steele suggests the readers that we must store such knowledge and observation. By sharing those with others, we can make our old age boredom-free. We must turn our ridiculous experiences into wholesome entertainment for the advantage of mankind.

3.4 References:

Nayar, M. G., ed. *A Galaxy of English Essayists: From Bacon to Beerbohm*. Trinity Press, 1986.

“Sir Richard Steele”. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Richard-Steele>. accessed on 28 Nov 2022.

3.5 Model Questions:

- i) How did the bencher entertain the members of the Trumpet Club?
- ii) What position did the *Spectator* enjoy among the members of the club?
- iii) What importance did the clubs and coffee houses enjoy in the 18th century, as per your reading of the essays by Addison and Steele?
- iv) What ideas have you gathered of the Trumpet Club and its members from your reading of Steele’s essays?

3.6 Points to Ponder:

- i) Steele and Addison were one of the long-lasting collaborators in the history of English literature.
- ii) Steele was a member of the Kit-Kat Club, which Addison formed.

3.7 Further Study:

Bloom , Edward A., Lillian D. Bloom, eds. *Joseph Addison and Richard Steele: The Critical Heritage*. Routledge, 2013.

Bond, Donald F., ed. *Critical Essays from the Spectator by Joseph Addison: With Four Essays by Richard Steele*. Oxford UP, 1970.

4.1 Oliver Goldsmith (1728–1774): An Introduction

Oliver Goldsmith (1728–1774) was an Anglo-Irish novelist, playwright, dramatist, essayist, and poet, who is best known for his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), his pastoral poem *The Deserted Village* (1770), and his plays *The Good-Natur'd Man* (1768) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (first performed in 1773). It is widely assumed that he is the writer of the classic children's tale *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* (1765).

In 1744, Goldsmith went up to Trinity College, Dublin. In his studies in theology and law, he fell to the bottom of his class. In 1747, along with four other undergraduates, he was expelled from the college for their alleged role in a riot. He was graduated in 1749 as a Bachelor of Arts, but without the discipline or distinction that might have gained him an entry to a profession in the church or the law. His education seemed to have given him mainly a taste for fine clothes, playing cards, singing Irish airs, and playing the flute.

He settled in London in 1756, where he briefly held various jobs, including an apothecary's assistant and an usher of a school. For his huge addiction to gambling, he was perennially in debt. Goldsmith produced a massive output as a hack writer on Grub Street for the publishers of London, but his few painstaking works earned him the company of Dr. Samuel Johnson.

It is often asserted that Goldsmith, along with Sheridan, was responsible for an anti-sentimental Comic Drama, which criticized the sentimental excesses of the dramatic crafts of the Eighteenth Century. In reading Goldsmith's works, the readers hope to gain deep insight into human nature. Goldsmith is a humorist and his works can be seen as a contribution to the

humorous literature of the age. He is a satirist as well and whatever mode of writing he adopted, as we have seen, he wrote brilliantly and well.

During his last decade “Goldsmith’s conversational encounters with Johnson and others, his foolishness, and his wit were preserved in Boswell’s *Life of Samuel Johnson*” (Encyclopaedia Britannica np). Goldsmith eventually became deeply enmeshed in huge debts despite his considerable earnings as an author. After a short illness in the spring of 1774, he breathed his last.

Important Works:

i) *The Vicar of Wakefield*, a novel (1766),

ii) *The Good-Natur'd Man*, a play (1768)

iii) *She Stoops to Conquer*, a play (1773)

iv) “The Deserted Village”, a poem (1770)

v) “The Traveller; or, a Prospect of Society”, a poem (1764)

vi) *The Citizen of the World, or, Letters from a Chinese Philosopher*, a series of essays (1762)

vii) *Pictorial History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Death of George II* (in 4 vols.), published in 1849.

viii) *History of the Earth and Animated Nature* (8 vols.), published in 1774.

ix) *History of Rome* (2 vols.), published in 1851.

x) *Life of Richard Nash, of Bath, Esq.*, a biography (1762)

4.2 “The Man in Black”: Summary and Analysis

Summary:

“The Man in Black” is an essay from this collection of essays *The Citizen of the World*. The man is a charitable man. He cares about others, gives to others, and shares with others, but he pretends to not care about the well-being of others. He is ashamed to display his natural benevolence. While he pretends to have a disliking for mankind, he’s not very good at pretending to be. The author reveals that his poker face is not up to par. “... While his looks were softened into pity, I have heard him use the language of the most unbounded ill-nature” (Nayar 40).

The “Man in Black” is so concerned with the place of the poor, that he complains to the author of how ignorant the countrymen, or wealthy, are to the state of living of the poorer people. He says that the poor only want a few things – food, housing, clothes, and warmth but cannot obtain those things due to the negligence of the fortunate. The man in black gives a beggar a piece of silver, but when doing so, he appears “ashamed” to present his weakness to the author. The man has too much pride to show his soft feelings for the less fortunate.

When a man with a wooden leg passed the author and the man in black, the author ignored him. The man in black showed much attention to him, but instead of giving him alms, he called him a pretender. But once hearing the sailor’s story of fighting in defense of the country while others “did nothing at home”, the man gave alms to him.

The man in black and the author meet a woman who is an obvious example of helpless,

but he has no money to give her. He becomes shameful, as it appears from the expression of his face. But once he finds a “shilling’s worth of matches” in his pocket, he places it in her hands. He becomes pleased with himself seeing the smile on the woman’s face. This anonymous man, the Man In Black, is a man of benevolence, and is bluntly shameful of it. There is no understanding of why he feels shame.

The man is one who cannot display kind behavior without being ashamed of it. He wants the world to see him as a man who does not care too much about the well-being of others; much less, the unfortunate. He is the “Man In Black”, because he conceals his benevolence under the black apron. He does not want to be noticed for it. He is, the Man in Black.

Analysis:

In this essay, Goldsmith takes a dig at the then contemporary society. He attacks the social and political milieu that was dominant during the Anglo-Saxon period in England.

Goldsmith subtly discourages some of the deficiencies of the then society through this article. Through this essay he mocks at the prevalent English society for showcasing the trend of displaying ‘what you are not’ in actuality. In a subtle way, he ridicules the pretentiousness of the society by portraying a contrasting character. That’s why Goldsmith created the character The Man in Black. The mockery of the then society is exhibited through a routine walk and conversation between the Man in Black and his friend.

The Man in Black is a very interesting character. He is inconsistent. He does not practice what he preaches. Inwardly, he is a broad-hearted man, and genial person with a compassionate heart. Outwardly, however, he seems unkind, looking like a rude and stern person. This is in

contrast with his inner personality. Goldsmith is mentioning this man as the 'Man in Black' because this man appears black outside but white and pure inside.

4.3 Let's Sum It Up:

In reading Goldsmith the readers get deep insight into human behaviour. Goldsmith is a humorist and his works can be seen as a contribution to the humorous literature of the age. He is primarily a satirist. He wrote brilliantly in other types of writings as well. The present essay reflects on many of the characteristics in society and the many views of people in the 18th century society. It can be presumed that Goldsmith used the man as a metaphor. The man is covered by a black cloth while his body is white which shows the two sides of his personality.

4.4 References:

“Oliver Goldsmith”. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Oliver-Goldsmith-Anglo-Irish-author>. 6 Nov 2022. accessed on 28 Nov 2022.

Nayar, M. G., ed. *A Galaxy of English Essayists: From Bacon to Beerbohm*. Trinity Press, 1986.

4.5 Model Questions:

- i) Evaluate Oliver Goldsmith as a satirist from the perspective of the essays you have read in your syllabus.
- ii) How did Goldsmith study human nature as you understood by reading his essays?

4.6 Points to Ponder:

- i) Dr. Johnson saved Goldsmith from jail for the non-payment of his rent by reading and approving his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) for publication.

ii) Goldsmith wrote engaging letters to his relatives but most of them were about money and his own poverty.

iii) The protagonist Dr. Primrose of his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* is a thinly veiled attempt at self projection.

iv) Goldsmith was one of the nine founding members of the famous Club-- a select body, including Reynolds, Johnson, and Burke, which met weekly for supper and talk.

4.7 Further Study:

Bloom, Harold, ed. *Oliver Goldsmith: Bloom's Modern Critical Views*. Chelsea House, 1987.

Rousseau, G. S., ed. *Oliver Goldsmith: The Critical Heritage*. Routledge, 1995

5.1 Jonathan Swift (1667-1745): An Introduction

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), Anglo-Irish author, who was the foremost prose satirist in the English language. Besides the celebrated novel *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), he wrote such shorter works as *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), *The Battle of the Books* (1704), and "A Modest Proposal" (1729). He originally published all of his works under many pseudonyms such as Lemuel Gulliver, Isaac Bickerstaff, M. B. Drapier or even anonymously. He was a master of two kinds of satire-- the Horatian and Juvenalian. His ironic writing style, particularly in "A Modest Proposal", has led to such satire being subsequently termed "Swiftian".

Swift was studying for his master's degree when political troubles in Ireland surrounding the Glorious Revolution forced him to leave for England in 1688, where his mother helped him get a position as secretary and personal assistant of Sir William Temple at Moor Park. Temple was an English diplomat who arranged the Triple Alliance of 1668. In 1690, Swift left Temple for Ireland on the grounds of his poor health, but got back to Moor Park the next year. The illness consisted of fits of vertigo or giddiness, and it continued to plague him throughout his life. Death became a constant obsession of Swift's life from this point. *Drapier's Letters* (1724) was a collection of political pamphlets against the monopoly granted by the English government to William Wood to mint copper coins for Ireland. In 1731 he wrote *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*, his own obituary, published in 1739.

5.2 “The Vindication of Issac Bickerstaff”: Summary and Analysis

Summary:

Through the fictitious character Isaac Bickerstaff, Swift ridicules John Partridge, the famous almanac-maker of his time, in his essay “A Vindication of Isaac Bickerstaff” (1709). Bickerstaff presents himself as an astrologer who intends to reform his profession. He made his first prediction about the death of John Partridge himself to occur on ‘29th of March about Eleven at night’ in his pamphlet *Predictions for the Year 1708*. Swift gave another severe blow to Partridge with the publication of the pamphlet entitled *The Accomplishment of the First of Mr. Bickerstaff’s Predictions* (1708). In this work, Bickerstaff includes an observation of an individual who confirmed the death of John Partridge, thus establishing his professional success. Immediately after this, he also published a broadside elegy, “The Elegy on Mr. Partridge”, which further declared the fulfillment of his prophecy.

Swift’s essay “A Vindication of Isaac Bickerstaff” (1709) came as a response to Partridge’s publication of his almanac for 1709 in which the latter insisted that he was alive. Through the entire essay, Swift offers various examples, testimonials, and logical explanations to justify his position and to declare the success of his prophecy.

Swift begins his essay by castigating Partridge’s “rough manner” and the abusive language he used in his almanac, which came in the form of as a reply to Bickerstaff. Accordingly, he writes, “To call a man fool and villain, and impudent fellow, only for differing from him in a point mere speculative, is, in my humble opinion, a very improper style for a person of his education” (Nayar 63).

Swift then attacks Partridge's defenders, namely 'His Majesty of Portugal'. He states that his predictions were burned and destroyed in Portugal but were treated with "candor and generosity" in other states of Europe. This, Swift says, indicates the "deplorable state of learning" that existed in Portugal. He then provides more instances of learned and courteous correspondence that he had received from "illustrious persons" which stood in stark contrast with those of Partridge's, and thus, expressing his open condemnation and disparagement of Partridge's impudent reply.

Swift states that Partridge himself has not raised any objections regarding the truth of his prophecies but has proven how people can be so thoroughly blinded by prejudice. Bickerstaff dismisses the two objections that Partridge had been leveling against him. Both these objections, according to Bickerstaff, are unfounded. The first objection is claimed to have been made by a French man, which he rejects on the grounds of political and religious reasons. He says that the English would never believe "a French man, a papist and an enemy", rather they would support him "who is true to the government" (Nayar 65).

The second objection, Bickerstaff says, is the incident that led to the publication of his essay. In his almanac, Partridge in an "ungentlemanly manner" contradicted Bickerstaff's prophecy, namely his foretelling of Partridge's death to happen on March 29, 1708. In that almanac, Partridge asserted that "he is not only now alive, but was also alive on the very day that Bickerstaff predicted that he should die" (Nayar 65). This assertion forms the core of the controversy between the two. In the following paragraphs, Bickerstaff attempts to prove that his prophecy was right and that Partridge is not alive. First, he argues that 'no man alive' will make such wretched statements as those of Partridge. On reading such "damn'd stuff", his supporters "would lift up their eyes, and cry out, betwixt rage and laughter" (Nayar 65). Partridge is now

only left with two choices—either to dismiss his almanac, or to allow himself to be ‘no man alive’.

Bickerstaff asserts that the whole ‘parish’ believes that Partridge’s gift of telling fortunes and recovering lost goods is mainly due to his association “with the devil and other evil spirits” (Nayar 66). Since no man alive could “converse personally with either”, it further proves that Partridge is dead.

Bickerstaff’s third evidence to confirm Partridge’s death is mainly based on the latter’s argument where he claims that he “is not only now alive, but was also alive upon that very 29th of March” (Nayar 66). He discusses the “sophistry” of this statement. He points out that Partridge never asserted that “he was alive ever since that 29th of March”, instead he claimed his living in a wrong way. Bickerstaff does not dismiss Partridge’s claim and admits that Partridge did not die till the night of 29th March, as stated in the latter’s letter to a lord, but in the predicted time. Bickerstaff goes on to say whether he has since “revived” is a matter that he leaves to his readers to ponder upon.

Addressing Partridge directly, Bickerstaff makes his final argument to justify himself. He simply asks how he can begin his career by making false predictions, especially when he has “many opportunities to be exact”. Moreover, it would be inane to make such false predictions about a man of “Mr. Partridge’s wit and learning” who “could possibly have raised one single objection more against the truth” of his prophecies.

After giving a series of logical explanations to justify the fulfillment of his prophecy, Bickerstaff then addresses one common objection against Partridge’s death—“That he still continues to write almanacs”. According to him, it is a common practice. Other authors continue to live through their works. But this is not the case with almanac-makers. They are the

“registers” of Time. Once they are gone then their “dissertations” become useless. So people tend to publish almanacs under the names of popular almanac-makers who are long dead and gone. Thus, Bickerstaff effectively removes the final objection raised against his predictions.

“A Vindication of Isaac Bickerstaff”, charged with irony and banter, ends in a humorous tone. Bickerstaff writes, “When the end of the year had verified all my predictions, out comes Mr. Partridge’s almanac, disputing the point of his death; so that I am employed, like the general who was forced to kill his enemies twice over, whom a necromancer had raised to life” (Nayar 67). He states that even if Partridge continues to live like a ‘living-dead’, it does not contradict his predictions. He ends his essay “clearly proved, by invincible demonstration” that Partridge died “within half an hour of the time” he has foretold and repudiated the ‘malicious suggestions’ raised against him to “blast” his credit by charges of perjury.

Analysis:

Vacillating between its medieval past and the “Age of Reason”, early 18th-century London was an environment in which the ancient practice of astrology held wide appeal. No astrologer was more influential than John Partridge, a part-time cobbler and quack whose *Merlinus Almanac* delivered a healthy sense of impending doom to thousands of discerning readers each year. As with all astrologers, Partridge’s predictions had a habit of being vague, noncommittal, and wrong. He was popular among the Londoners: “his position as a leading astrologer and physician went largely unchallenged among a London society eager to find order and meaning in its world” (Putnam np).

All of that was about to change in January of 1708. In that month, a short almanac under the name *Predictions for the Year 1708* was published across the city by a previously-unheard-of

astrologer identifying himself as “Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq.” The paper was written, the author claimed, “to prevent the people of England from being further imposed on by vulgar almanac-makers.” Such boastful tirades were nothing new; what made Bickerstaff’s publication unusual was that he seemed to have the results to back himself up. Following his opening rant, he moved into a long list of strikingly bold and precise predictions unlike anything that had been seen before.

Word of Bickerstaff’s pamphlet quickly spread across London. Although astrologers, Partridge among them, were notorious for predicting the deaths of notable people each year, none dared to name a specific time frame—or to target one of their own. The almanac reached far enough to be read and burned by the Portuguese Inquisition, while Partridge fanned the flames with a harshly-written reply to Bickerstaff. Some wondered if the entire commotion was a joke by Bickerstaff, but the motivation for such a thing was hard to imagine—if he were false, he would be exposed and forgotten in just a few short weeks. In the meantime, the Londoners sat in anticipation.

The essay “The Vindication of Issac Bickerstaff” is a brilliant satirical attack on the popular malpractice of astrology of the time, casting unfounded prognostications. Swift presents Partridge in the comic light, and treats him in a humorous manner. The main purpose of his sarcastic elements in this work falls into the same framework of his other satires, that is, “to vex the world rather than divert it”.

5.3 Let’s Sum It Up:

Swift did not believe in almanac-makers or fortune-tellers. By writing this essay, he criticizes the almanac-makers. He also wanted to save the Londoners from the false predictions of fortune-tellers like Mr. Partridge.

5.4 References:

Nayar, M. G., ed. *A Galaxy of English Essayists: From Bacon to Beerbohm*. Trinity Press, 1986.

“The Extraordinary Astrologer Isaac Bickerstaff”. April 2008.

<https://www.damninteresting.com/the-extraordinary-astrologer-isaac-bickerstaff/>

Accessed on 28 Nov 2022.

5.5 Model Questions:

i) Describe how Swift criticizes the almanac-makers like Mr. Partridge in his essay “The Vindication of Isaac Bickerstaff”.

ii) Write a note on Swift’s wit as per your reading of his essays.

5.6 Points to Ponder:

i) Swift adopted the pen name “Issac Bickersatff” for this essay as part of a hoax to predict the death of then famous Almanac–maker and astrologer John Partridge.

ii) He usually chose “All Fools' Day” (now known as April Fools’ Day which falls on 1 April) to target his biting satirical wit to befool and startle his readers.

5.7 Further Study:

Churton, Collins John. *Jonathan Swift: A Biographical and Critical Study*. Hardpress Publishing, 2013.

David, C. *Jonathan Swift: A Critical Study*. Anmol Publications, 2007.

Gatego, Paul J. De, R. Jay Stubblefield. *Critical Companion to Jonathan Swift: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*. Facts on File Inc., 2014.