



SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI COLLEGE

Affiliated to Bharathidasan University

Nationally Accredited at 'A' Grade (4th Cycle) by NAAC | An ISO 9001 : 2015 Certified Institution

TIRUCHIRAPPALLI – 620 002.

Department of English

STUDY MATERIAL

POETRY-II

22ACCEN5

SUBMITTED BY

Dr. V. ANITHA

POETRY II:
STUDY MATERIAL:

UNIT I – William Wordsworth: Ode on Intimations of Immortality

2 Marks Questions (about 3–4 sentences)

1. What does Wordsworth mean by “trailing clouds of glory”?

Wordsworth suggests that children come into the world carrying traces of their divine origin, as if they have just left heaven. The phrase “trailing clouds of glory” beautifully captures this sacred connection. It means that in childhood, we still remember where we came from before birth.

2. How does the poem reflect Wordsworth's philosophy of nature?

The poem shows Wordsworth's belief that nature is a source of spiritual truth and comfort. Even though adults lose the divine vision of childhood, nature helps them remember deeper truths. For Wordsworth, nature is both teacher and healer.

3. What mood dominates the beginning of the poem?

The opening mood is one of sorrow and loss, as Wordsworth mourns his fading sense of wonder. He realizes he can no longer see the world as magically as he did in childhood. This melancholy tone sets the stage for reflection.

4. How does the poet find consolation despite his loss?

Wordsworth finds consolation by accepting the natural process of growing up and by cherishing the memories of childhood. He realizes that though direct vision is lost, human beings gain maturity and understanding. Memory and nature together heal his sorrow.

5 Marks Questions (about 250 words)

1. Explain the central idea of Ode on Intimations of Immortality.

Wordsworth's poem reflects on how, as children, we feel deeply connected to a divine or heavenly source. This spiritual light fades as we grow, leading to sorrow. Yet the poet argues that although we lose this direct vision, we gain strength, wisdom, and the ability to reflect on the past. The poem's message is not entirely sad; it also celebrates the gifts that come with adulthood, like philosophical thinking and emotional depth. Wordsworth shows how childhood memories can still inspire us and keep alive the sense of wonder. This blend of loss and hope forms the heart of the poem.

2. Discuss the structure and style of the poem.

The ode is structured in eleven stanzas, combining lyrical beauty with philosophical meditation. Wordsworth uses rich imagery like “celestial light” and “clouds of glory” to evoke the divine nature of childhood. The poem's style is highly reflective, shifting from sorrow to acceptance. Its language is formal yet deeply personal, drawing the reader into the poet's inner journey. The use

of apostrophe and personification gives life to abstract ideas. Overall, the structure mirrors the poet's emotional movement from mourning to consolation.

3. How does Wordsworth contrast childhood and adulthood?

In the poem, childhood is depicted as a sacred time when the soul remembers its divine origin. Children naturally see the world with wonder and joy. In contrast, adulthood brings practical concerns and forgetfulness of this heavenly source. However, Wordsworth does not reject adulthood completely. He suggests adults gain other gifts: deeper thought, emotional maturity, and the ability to reflect on their past. This contrast is central to the poem's exploration of human growth.

10 Marks Question (about 500 words)

1. Analyse Ode on Intimations of Immortality as a poem of loss and recovery.

Wordsworth's Ode on Intimations of Immortality is both an expression of deep loss and a hopeful recovery. At its heart, the poem mourns the fading of the spiritual vision that characterizes childhood. Wordsworth begins by lamenting that "the things which I have seen I now can see no more," expressing sorrow that he can no longer view nature with the same sense of magic and divine presence. Childhood, he suggests, is a time when the soul is closest to heaven; children come "trailing clouds of glory" from their divine source. This connection to the eternal gives them a natural joy and wonder that adults lose as worldly concerns take over.

However, Wordsworth does not let the poem remain only in sadness. Through reflection, he discovers ways to recover a sense of meaning. He finds consolation in memory and the moral growth that adulthood brings. Though the immediate vision is gone, the memory of childhood still offers inspiration. The mature mind gains the power to reflect on life, to appreciate beauty more deeply, and to develop sympathy and moral strength. Wordsworth realizes that these gifts are valuable in their own right.

The poem's structure supports this journey from grief to acceptance. It begins in melancholy, moves through philosophical questioning, and ends in renewed faith. Wordsworth uses powerful imagery—light, clouds, and heavenly glory—to symbolize the soul's divine nature. He personifies nature as a comforting guide, suggesting that even if the divine vision is dimmed, nature still helps us remember our spiritual home.

In conclusion, the poem beautifully balances the sorrow of lost innocence with the hope found in memory and mature understanding. It shows that while childhood wonder fades, it leaves behind traces that continue to enrich and guide us through life.

UNIT I – S.T. Coleridge: Kubla Khan

2 Marks Questions

1. Where is Kubla Khan's palace built?

Kubla Khan builds his palace in Xanadu, by the sacred river Alph. This setting blends human art with wild nature, symbolizing the creative imagination.

2. What is the effect of the river Alph in the poem?

The river Alph flows through deep caverns, creating an atmosphere of mystery and danger. It symbolizes the hidden, subconscious forces of creativity.

3. Why is Kubla Khan called a fragment?

Coleridge claimed he was interrupted while writing, so the poem feels unfinished. Its incomplete nature adds to its dreamlike quality.

4. How does Coleridge create a sense of wonder?

Through vivid, exotic imagery and musical rhythm, Coleridge transports readers to a magical landscape. His descriptions of domes, rivers, and gardens create a fantastical world.

5 Marks Questions

1. Explain the significance of the pleasure dome.

The pleasure dome represents human creativity and artistic vision. Built by Kubla Khan, it stands amid wild nature, suggesting the artist's attempt to bring order to chaos. The dome, with its bright walls and towers, contrasts with the dark caverns and violent river, reflecting the dual forces in artistic creation: harmony and wild inspiration.

2. Discuss the musical quality of the poem.

Kubla Khan is famous for its sound patterns: rhyme, alliteration, and rhythm create a chant-like effect. Lines like "A sunny pleasure dome with caves of ice" show contrasts that add to its melody. This musicality enhances the poem's dreamlike atmosphere, making it feel like a spell or incantation.

3. What role does imagination play in the poem?

Imagination is central to Kubla Khan. Coleridge uses his imagination to create a vision that feels both real and unreal. The poem itself becomes a metaphor for the creative process: sudden, powerful, and partly uncontrollable. Imagination links the human mind to mysterious forces beyond reason.

10 Marks Question

1. Analyse Kubla Khan as a poem about the creative process.

Kubla Khan reflects Coleridge's ideas about artistic creation as both deliberate and spontaneous. The poem describes Kubla Khan's construction of a "stately pleasure dome," symbolizing the artist's effort to create something beautiful and ordered. Yet this dome is surrounded by wild nature: "caverns measureless to man" and a "sacred river" bursting from a chasm. This contrast shows that creativity arises when imagination (the wild, unconscious force) meets conscious design (the dome).

Coleridge's language is rich and musical, echoing the unpredictable flow of thought. He describes a visionary moment where, if he could "revive within" himself the memory of a song sung by a damsel, he could recreate paradise itself. This longing reflects the poet's struggle to capture fleeting inspiration. The poem's unfinished state, which Coleridge called a fragment, highlights this struggle: the artist's vision often exceeds what can be expressed in words.

Through its vivid imagery and shifting tone, *Kubla Khan* becomes more than a description of a distant land. It is an allegory of poetry itself: a mysterious, partly unconscious act that combines order and chaos. Coleridge shows that imagination is both a gift and a burden, offering visions that can never be fully realized. Thus, the poem celebrates the power of the creative mind while acknowledging its limits.

UNIT II – John Keats & P.B. Shelley

2 Marks

1. How does Keats describe Autumn in the opening lines?

Keats begins the poem with the famous phrase “Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.” He presents Autumn as gentle, full of warmth and ripeness. This calm and content mood sets the tone for the poem.

2. What is the main mood of the poem?

The mood of the poem is peaceful and reflective. Keats accepts the slow fading of life represented by Autumn, celebrating it rather than mourning it. The poem feels calm and full of quiet richness.

3. Why is Autumn personified in the poem?

By personifying Autumn as a woman resting or watching, Keats gives the season human qualities. This makes Autumn feel alive and present, deepening the reader's connection to nature.

4. What does Keats say about the music of Autumn?

Keats notes that although Spring is famous for birdsong, Autumn has its own music too. The sounds of gnats, lambs, and crickets create a quieter, softer melody, matching the gentle spirit of the season.

5 Marks Questions (about 250 words)

1. Explain how Keats celebrates the beauty of Autumn.

In *Ode to Autumn*, Keats describes Autumn as rich and abundant, full of ripening fruits and warm sunlight. The poet paints vivid pictures of trees weighed down with apples, blooming late flowers, and bees buzzing with cloying sweetness. This celebration of growth and harvest shows Autumn not as an ending, but as a season of plenty and fulfillment. Keats personifies Autumn as a woman peacefully sitting by the cider press or sleeping in the fields, giving the season a gentle, almost dreamy character. Through detailed imagery, Keats invites readers to see the quiet beauty and contentment in nature’s slow decline.

2. Discuss the structure of the poem.

The poem is written in three stanzas, each focused on a different aspect of Autumn. The first stanza celebrates growth and ripeness; the second personifies Autumn as a quiet observer; and the third reflects on the music of the season. Each stanza uses rich sensory details—sight, sound, and touch—to bring Autumn to life. This balanced structure guides the reader gently through the season’s stages, from fullness to rest to reflection.

3. How does the poem reflect Keats’s philosophy of accepting change?

Keats doesn't resist the fading of life represented by Autumn. Instead, he finds beauty even in decline. By showing how Autumn has its own music and charm, Keats teaches readers to appreciate every stage of life. This acceptance reflects his larger belief that beauty and transience are deeply connected.

10 Marks Question (about 500 words)

1. Analyse Ode to Autumn as a meditation on life's transience.

Ode to Autumn is one of Keats's most peaceful and mature works, exploring the idea that life's beauty includes its inevitable decline. The poem begins by painting Autumn as a season of abundance: trees heavy with apples, flowers still blooming, and bees that have collected so much nectar they feel drowsy. This fullness reflects the richness of life in its prime. Yet, Keats doesn't stop with ripeness. In the second stanza, he personifies Autumn as a figure who calmly watches the harvest or rests by the cider press. This imagery suggests acceptance and quiet observation rather than resistance to change.

In the final stanza, Keats turns to sound, reminding us that Autumn has its own "music" even as life slows down. The chirping of crickets, the bleating of lambs, and the soft singing of gnats replace the livelier sounds of Spring. This shift shows that beauty does not vanish with change; it simply transforms. Through this meditation, Keats embraces transience not with sadness, but with appreciation.

The poem's language reinforces this message. Words like "soft-dying" and "mellow" convey a gentle, accepting tone. Unlike earlier poems where Keats wrestled with mortality, here he finds peace in the natural cycle of growth, maturity, and decline. By celebrating Autumn's quiet richness, Keats teaches that life's passing moments have their own unique beauty. In this way, Ode to Autumn becomes a serene reflection on living fully and finding grace in every stage of existence.

To a Skylark – P.B. Shelley

2 Marks Questions

1. How does Shelley describe the skylark at the start?

Shelley calls the skylark a "blithe Spirit," suggesting that it is joyful and pure, unburdened by earthly troubles. This sets the tone for the poem, portraying the bird as something almost divine.

2. Why does Shelley envy the skylark?

The skylark's song seems to flow naturally and perfectly, untouched by human sadness. Shelley feels human beings cannot express pure joy in the same effortless way.

3. What is the skylark compared to?

Shelley uses similes to compare the skylark to a cloud of fire at sunset, a star invisible by day, and a rose hidden in leaves. Each comparison highlights the bird's unseen yet deeply felt presence.

4. What lesson does Shelley want to learn from the skylark?

Shelley hopes to discover how the skylark sings with such joy and freedom. He believes learning this secret could help him create poetry that moves people's hearts.

5 Marks Questions (about 250 words)

1. What does the skylark symbolise in the poem?

The skylark becomes a symbol of pure, untroubled inspiration. Its song rises effortlessly, far above human pain and doubt. Shelley sees the skylark as representing the ideal poet or artist: free from the limitations that come with human fear, regret, or sadness. By observing the skylark, Shelley reflects on the gap between human experience—full of sorrow—and perfect artistic expression.

2. Explain the imagery used to describe the skylark.

Shelley uses rich and varied imagery: the skylark is like a cloud of fire lighting up the sky at sunset, a rose spreading its scent unseen, and a star shining faintly at noon. Each image captures something unseen but deeply felt. This imagery helps create the idea that true beauty and inspiration may be hidden but still powerfully affect the world.

3. What contrast does Shelley draw between humans and the skylark?

Humans, Shelley says, experience joy but it is always mixed with pain, regret, and fear of the future. The skylark's song, however, seems completely free of such burdens. This contrast makes Shelley long to learn the bird's secret so he can bring the same purity and happiness into his own art.

10 Marks Question (about 500 words)

1. Discuss *To a Skylark* as a meditation on poetic inspiration.

In *To a Skylark*, Shelley uses the image of the skylark to explore the nature of artistic inspiration. The poem opens with praise for the skylark as a "blithe Spirit," suggesting the bird is not just an ordinary creature but a symbol of pure creative power. Shelley watches the skylark soar and hears its song high above, unseen yet deeply moving.

Through a series of similes, Shelley describes the skylark as a cloud of fire at sunset, a rose whose scent fills the air though the flower itself is hidden, and a star invisible by day. These images reveal that true art may not always be directly visible but can still deeply influence the world. The skylark becomes a metaphor for poetry: something born of unseen inspiration that moves hearts and minds.

Shelley contrasts this with human experience. People know happiness, but it is always mixed with pain, regret, and fear of loss. Even the sweetest human songs carry traces of sorrow. The skylark's song, however, seems free of these burdens, flowing naturally and purely. This difference leads Shelley to long to understand the bird's secret, hoping to capture the same spontaneous joy in his own writing.

By the poem's end, Shelley sees the skylark as an ideal that poets strive toward: a voice beyond suffering, whose music brings light and joy without being weighed down by human flaws. *To a Skylark* thus becomes not just praise of a bird, but a thoughtful reflection on what it means to create art that can transcend human pain and touch something eternal.

UNIT III – Robert Browning & Alfred Lord Tennyson

My Last Duchess – Robert Browning

2 Marks Questions (3–4 sentences each)

1. Who is the speaker in My Last Duchess?

The speaker is the Duke of Ferrara, who shows the portrait of his late wife to a visitor. His words reveal his controlling and arrogant nature. The dramatic monologue form helps readers see the Duke's character indirectly.

2. What does the Duke reveal about his wife?

He says she had a kind, cheerful nature and smiled easily at others. But instead of appreciating this, he felt jealous and offended. His words suggest he thought her friendliness was disrespectful to his status.

3. What does “I gave commands” imply?

The Duke casually says, “I gave commands; then all smiles stopped together,” implying he ordered her death. The calm tone makes his cruelty even more shocking.

4. Why is the poem called a dramatic monologue?

In a dramatic monologue, a single speaker talks to a silent listener, unintentionally revealing his character. Browning uses this to let the Duke expose his pride, possessiveness, and lack of remorse.

5 Marks Questions (about 250 words)

1. Describe the character of the Duke.

The Duke appears cultured and polite, but his speech shows deep flaws: arrogance, possessiveness, and cruelty. He couldn't tolerate his wife's natural warmth because it made him feel less important. His cold statement, “I gave commands,” hints he arranged her death, yet he feels no guilt. This contrast between refined speech and ruthless action makes the Duke a complex character.

2. Discuss the poem's use of irony.

Browning uses dramatic irony: the Duke tries to justify himself, but his words reveal his true nature. He complains his wife smiled at everyone, but readers see this as a sign of her kindness, not guilt. The Duke's attempt to sound reasonable only makes him seem more controlling and dangerous.

3. What is the role of art in the poem?

The Duke treats his wife's portrait as an object he can control, unlike the living woman. The painting is hidden behind a curtain only he can draw, showing his desire for total ownership. Art becomes a symbol of his power: he can freeze what he loves and remove the parts he dislikes.

10 Marks Question (about 500 words)

1. Analyse *My Last Duchess* as a study of power and control.

In *My Last Duchess*, Robert Browning creates a chilling portrait of a man obsessed with power. The Duke speaks about his late wife, but his words reveal more about himself than about her. He felt his Duchess smiled too freely, thanked people too warmly, and did not value his “gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name.” Instead of understanding her nature, the Duke saw her warmth as a threat to his authority.

The line “I gave commands; then all smiles stopped together” suggests he ordered her death. What is striking is the Duke’s calm, almost casual tone. He sees nothing wrong with destroying a life to protect his pride. This coldness makes him seem even more frightening. The poem ends with the Duke showing the envoy another work of art, suggesting he is arranging his next marriage, likely with the same controlling attitude.

Art plays a key role in the poem: the Duke keeps the portrait behind a curtain only he can draw. This shows his need to possess and control, even after death. His wife’s living, unpredictable warmth disturbed him, but the painting offers beauty without independence. Through this, Browning shows how the desire for power can destroy love and humanity.

The dramatic monologue format allows readers to see the difference between what the Duke says and what he really reveals. Browning’s skillful use of irony makes the Duke’s character complex and disturbing, turning *My Last Duchess* into a powerful study of arrogance, jealousy, and the dark side of human nature.

Ulysses – Alfred Lord Tennyson

2 Marks Questions

1. Who is Ulysses speaking to in the poem?

Ulysses speaks partly to himself, partly to his sailors, and partly to readers. This mixture makes the poem both personal reflection and public speech.

2. What makes Ulysses dissatisfied with his life at home?

He finds ruling boring and feels wasted among “a savage race” that doesn’t share his thirst for adventure. Ulysses longs for action and discovery.

3. What famous line expresses Ulysses' spirit?

“To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.” This line sums up his determination to keep exploring life until death.

4. What does Ulysses say about old age?

He admits old age weakens the body but insists the spirit still longs to act. Ulysses believes it’s better to keep striving than to grow idle.

5 Marks Questions (about 250 words)

1. Explain Ulysses' attitude toward life and death.

Ulysses refuses to spend his remaining years in comfort. He sees life as meaningful only when filled with action, struggle, and learning. Even death does not frighten him; instead, it motivates him to make the most of his limited time. His desire “to sail beyond the sunset” shows a wish to keep pushing boundaries, embracing life until the end.

2. Discuss the poem as a dramatic monologue.

Like Browning’s poems, Ulysses is a dramatic monologue: Ulysses speaks directly, revealing his thoughts and feelings. Readers hear his restless spirit, his scorn for inactivity, and his love for adventure. The poem feels like a farewell speech, full of energy and longing, making us sympathise with his desire to keep exploring.

3. How does Tennyson show the conflict between duty and desire?

Ulysses feels torn: as king, he should rule Ithaca, caring for his people. Yet his heart belongs to the sea and discovery. He plans to leave his son Telemachus to rule, freeing himself to sail again. This shows the tension between responsibility to others and loyalty to one’s own nature.

10 Marks Question (about 500 words)

1. Analyse Ulysses as a reflection on aging and heroism.

In Ulysses, Tennyson presents an old hero who refuses to accept a quiet life. Ulysses feels life at home is “an idle king” life, meaningless compared to adventure. His longing “to follow knowledge like a sinking star” shows his belief that life’s value lies in striving, not resting.

Ulysses acknowledges that age weakens the body: “Made weak by time and fate.” Yet he insists the soul remains strong, eager to act. Rather than see old age as a reason to stop, he views it as a reason to do more, while time allows. This refusal to “yield” shows heroic courage.

However, Tennyson also shows conflict: Ulysses knows his duty to rule Ithaca and care for his people. He chooses to leave this task to Telemachus, whom he praises for his calm and steady character. This contrast highlights two kinds of heroism: patient governance and restless adventure. Ulysses represents the second: the spirit that keeps pushing forward, even when strength fades.

The poem’s language blends personal confession and public speech, creating both intimacy and grandeur. The final call to his sailors—“Come, my friends...”—turns personal desire into a shared quest. The famous ending, “To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield,” becomes a universal motto for human resilience.

In the end, Ulysses is both a celebration of undying spirit and an honest look at the cost of such restlessness. It shows that heroism doesn’t end with youth; it can burn brightly, even as life’s sunset approaches. Through Ulysses, Tennyson speaks to anyone who refuses to let age steal their passion and purpose.

UNIT IV – W. B. Yeats & T. S. Eliot

The Second Coming – W. B. Yeats

2 Marks Questions (3–4 sentences each)

1. What does “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold” mean?

Yeats describes a world in chaos where traditional structures and beliefs collapse. It shows that society’s core values have lost power, leading to disorder and fear.

2. Who or what is the “rough beast” in the poem?

The “rough beast” symbolises a new, frightening force rising to replace the old order. Its “slow thighs” and gaze suggest cruelty and destruction, rather than hope.

3. Why is the poem called The Second Coming?

It refers to the Christian belief in Christ’s return, but Yeats imagines a dark, violent rebirth of history instead of salvation. This new “second coming” brings terror, not peace.

4. How does Yeats use imagery to create mood?

Yeats uses disturbing images: blood-dimmed tide, desert sphinx, and circling falcon to evoke fear and a sense of the world spinning out of control.

5 Marks Questions (about 250 words)

1. Explain the historical context behind the poem.

Yeats wrote this poem after World War I, during a time of political and social upheaval. Events like the Russian Revolution and the Irish struggle for independence made it feel as if history itself was collapsing. The poem reflects this anxiety, imagining a terrifying new age emerging from the ruins.

2. What role does symbolism play in The Second Coming?

Symbols like the falcon, the sphinx, and the “blood-dimmed tide” express themes of disorder and change. The falcon, which flies beyond the falconer’s call, symbolises human civilization losing touch with guiding principles. The rough beast symbolises a new historical era being born, but it’s monstrous rather than divine.

3. Discuss Yeats’s use of tone in the poem.

The tone is ominous and prophetic. Yeats speaks with a calm certainty that disaster is unavoidable. The measured, formal language makes the poem feel like a warning delivered by a prophet, adding to its power.

10 Marks Question (about 500 words)

1. Analyse The Second Coming as a vision of historical change.

In The Second Coming, Yeats presents a dark vision of history where old systems collapse and something terrifying takes their place. The poem begins with images of collapse: “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold.” This suggests that traditional beliefs, institutions, and moral codes have lost their power, leading to chaos.

Yeats believed history moved in cycles, each lasting about two thousand years. As the Christian era ends, a new era must begin—but rather than bringing peace, it brings a monstrous “rough beast.” The beast, with its gaze “blank and pitiless as the sun,” symbolises a force that will shape the next era, possibly through violence and oppression.

Imagery reinforces this mood: the “blood-dimmed tide” represents violence sweeping away innocence. The “vast image” of a sphinx-like creature in the desert hints at ancient, pagan forces returning to power. By calling this event the “second coming,” Yeats contrasts the hopeful Christian idea of Christ’s return with a dreadful, destructive rebirth.

The poem’s tone is not emotional but formal, almost resigned. Yeats does not plead for change; he accepts it as inevitable. His language blends beauty and terror, showing that history’s cycles bring both creation and destruction.

Ultimately, the poem reflects Yeats’s fear that modern society, having lost spiritual guidance, is heading toward a violent transformation. The Second Coming remains powerful because it speaks to any age that feels its old truths are crumbling and something unknown, perhaps monstrous, waits to take their place.

The Hollow Men – T. S. Eliot

2 Marks Questions

1. Who are the “hollow men” Eliot describes?

They symbolise spiritually empty modern people—lacking belief, purpose, and moral strength. They appear alive but feel lifeless inside.

2. What is meant by “This is the way the world ends / Not with a bang but a whimper”?

Eliot suggests that the world’s end won’t be dramatic or heroic but will fade quietly, reflecting modern spiritual emptiness.

3. What tone dominates the poem?

The poem feels bleak, dry, and hopeless. Its repetitions and broken phrases create a haunting, defeated mood.

4. What do the images of “stuffed men” suggest?

They imply people are full of meaningless things: empty words, empty rituals, and no real spirit. It criticises modern life as shallow.

5 Marks Questions (about 250 words)

1. What does Eliot criticise in modern society?

Eliot sees people as lacking faith, direction, and real values. They go through life’s motions without conviction, avoiding deep feeling or belief. This emptiness, he suggests, leads to spiritual decay and cultural decline.

2. Explain the poem's imagery of dryness and shadow.

Words like “dry,” “straw,” and “cactus land” evoke a spiritual desert—life without faith feels barren. Shadows symbolise the gulf between thought and action, will and reality. Together, they show a world where nothing can grow or flourish.

3. Why is the poem fragmented and repetitive?

The broken structure mirrors the hollow men's inner emptiness and confusion. Repetition shows paralysis—they cannot move forward or change. It makes the poem feel haunting and unfinished, like the hollow men's spiritual journey.

10 Marks Question (about 500 words)

1. Discuss *The Hollow Men* as a reflection on spiritual emptiness.

In *The Hollow Men*, T. S. Eliot presents modern people as “hollow,” lacking inner conviction and real faith. The poem begins with the haunting line “We are the hollow men / We are the stuffed men,” showing people appear full but contain only meaningless things—like straw in a scarecrow.

Eliot describes a spiritual wasteland: “dry grass,” “cactus land,” and “dry cellar.” These images suggest a world where spiritual life has dried up. The “eyes” that the hollow men fear symbolise truth or divine judgement, which they cannot face.

The structure itself is broken, with repeated words and unfinished thoughts. This reflects the hollow men's paralysis—they cannot act or believe deeply. Their prayers and rituals become empty forms: “For Thine is the Kingdom,” repeated but never finished, showing they cannot complete the path to redemption.

In the poem's final lines, Eliot writes, “This is the way the world ends / Not with a bang but a whimper.” Instead of heroic destruction, the world fades out quietly, echoing the modern loss of passion and certainty.

Eliot's language is simple yet deeply symbolic. The “shadow” repeated in the poem suggests something blocking true spiritual vision. The hollow men want to cross this shadow to reach meaning but fail. The poem offers no solution, only a haunting portrait of a world where faith has died.

Through this bleak vision, Eliot warns that without spiritual purpose, people become empty figures—alive in body but dead inside. The poem remains powerful because it captures the fear that modern life, driven by routine and surface appearances, may ultimately be spiritually hollow.

UNIT V – Rudyard Kipling & W. H. Auden

The White Man's Burden – Rudyard Kipling

2 Marks Questions (3–4 sentences each)

1. What is the “white man's burden”?

It is Kipling's idea that Western nations have a duty to civilise and govern non-European peoples. The poem presents this as a noble but thankless task.

2. How does Kipling describe colonised people?

He calls them “half-devil and half-child,” showing a patronising view that they are both dangerous and immature, needing Western rule.

3. What tone does the poem use?

The tone sounds serious and moralistic, urging Westerners to act out of duty rather than selfish gain. Yet today it is seen as deeply imperialistic.

4. Why does Kipling call the task thankless?

He warns that the colonisers will be criticised, hated, and misunderstood, yet must persist because they believe it is right.

5 Marks Questions (about 250 words)

1. What message does Kipling try to convey?

Kipling urges Western nations, especially America, to take on the “burden” of empire. He presents it as a duty to help, civilise, and rule over other nations, even though this work brings little praise. Kipling frames imperialism as selfless sacrifice, but his language shows a belief in Western superiority.

2. Discuss the poem’s portrayal of colonised people.

They are described as backward, foolish, and childlike, needing firm guidance. Words like “wild,” “sullen,” and “half-devil” show Kipling’s view that they cannot rule themselves. This reflects the racist attitudes of his time, which justified empire as a civilising mission.

3. What contradictions appear in the poem?

While Kipling claims the goal is to help others, the poem also celebrates Western power and control. It warns colonisers not to expect gratitude, yet also suggests they are naturally superior. This mix of duty and pride makes the poem both an appeal and a justification for empire.

10 Marks Question (about 500 words)

1. Analyse The White Man’s Burden as an imperialist poem.

The White Man’s Burden was written in 1899 to encourage the United States to take over the Philippines. Kipling frames imperialism not as conquest for profit but as a heavy responsibility. The “burden” is to civilise, educate, and improve colonised people’s lives.

Kipling warns this work will bring no thanks; colonisers will face hate, rebellion, and misunderstanding. Yet he insists they must do it out of duty. His language paints the colonised as “half-devil and half-child,” showing they are seen as dangerous yet childish, unable to govern themselves. This reflects the deep racism of the time.

The poem’s tone is solemn, almost religious, presenting empire as a noble mission. But behind the noble words lies a belief in Western superiority: that European nations know best, and others must accept their rule. Kipling says the colonisers will “seek another’s profit / And work another’s gain,” but critics note the real profits often went to the colonisers themselves.

Today, the poem is widely criticised as imperialist propaganda. It justifies domination by calling it help and denies colonised people’s voices and agency. Yet it is also a historical document that shows how empire was defended not just by force, but by moral arguments.

Through rhythm, repetition, and commanding language (“Go bind your sons to exile”), Kipling makes the call sound urgent and righteous. The White Man’s Burden remains controversial

because it expresses both the moral self-image and the arrogance of imperialism, turning conquest into a “burden” worn proudly.

Lullaby – W. H. Auden

2 Marks Questions

1. Who is the speaker addressing?

The speaker addresses a lover sleeping beside him, reflecting on love, beauty, and mortality.

2. What mood does the poem create?

It feels tender yet realistic: full of love but aware of time and imperfection. It combines passion with gentle sadness.

3. What does Auden say about beauty?

He accepts that beauty fades, yet the moment’s love is real and precious. Love remains meaningful despite impermanence.

4. What is the significance of “mortal, guilty, but to me / The entirely beautiful”?

It shows love as both honest and forgiving: the lover has flaws, yet the speaker loves fully, without illusion.

5 Marks Questions (about 250 words)

1. What is the poem’s main message about love?

Auden sees love not as perfect or eternal but as deeply human, with flaws and limits. Even knowing beauty and passion will fade, the speaker cherishes the present moment. Love becomes most true when it accepts imperfection.

2. How does the poem balance tenderness and realism?

Auden writes with warmth and care, describing the lover’s “faithless arm.” Yet he openly acknowledges love’s temporary nature. This honesty deepens rather than weakens the poem’s tenderness, making it more real and moving.

3. Discuss Auden’s view of time in the poem.

Time appears as both threat and truth: it will take away beauty and youth. But the speaker does not despair; instead, he uses this awareness to value the present moment of closeness and peace.

10 Marks Question (about 500 words)

1. Analyse Lullaby as a reflection on love and mortality.

Lullaby begins with tenderness: the speaker watches his lover sleep, calling him “mortal, guilty, but to me / The entirely beautiful.” Auden presents love as real and valuable precisely because it is brief and flawed.

Throughout the poem, time and imperfection are central. The speaker knows beauty will fade and passion will cool. Yet rather than mourn, he celebrates what is real now. Love becomes an honest acceptance, not an illusion: the lover may be “faithless,” but in this moment, he is wholly loved.

Auden's language blends softness and clarity. Phrases like "Noons of dryness find you fed / By the involuntary powers" show love as something natural and powerful. The poem's rhythm is gentle, like a lullaby, calming the lover and perhaps the speaker himself.

Mortality adds depth to love: knowing it won't last makes it more precious. The poem refuses romantic idealism; it admits weakness and guilt. Yet it finds beauty in this honesty. By ending not with despair but with acceptance, Auden shows that true love is not about perfection or eternity but about presence, compassion, and forgiveness.

In the end, Lullaby becomes a poem of mature love: love that sees clearly, accepts flaws, and still loves completely. The speaker's awareness of time's passing gives the moment its intensity. Far from weakening love, mortality strengthens it, teaching us to hold dear what we cannot keep forever