

SEMESTER NOTES
WAYS WITH WORDS
FIRST SEMESTER B.A/ BSC/BBA/B.COM/BTTM

PREPARED BY,
JOHN JOSEPH
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
CPA COLLEGE OF GLOBAL STUDIES, PUTHANATHANI

EDITED BY,
MUFEEDA SULTHANA.M
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
CPA COLLEGE OF GLOBAL STUDIES, PUTHANATHANI

ENG1A02 WAYS WITH WORDS
LECTURE HOURS PER WEEK:5 CREDIT:4
INTERNAL20,EXTERNAL 80, EXAMINATION 2.5 HOURS

1. OBJECTIVES:

- A. To help students develop the acumen to read, appreciate and discuss literature.
- B. To introduce students to the linguistic qualities of literary text and to unravel the meanings of the text.
- C. To acquaint the students with different genres of literature and to analyse them.

Module 1- Poetry

- Sonnet 29 - William Shakespeare
- Ode to Autumn - John Keats
- A Road Side Stand - Robert Frost
- The House Of My Childhood - Dilip Chitre
- Old Folks Laugh - Maya Angelou
- Once Upon A Time - Gabriel Okara
- The Times They Are A-Changing – Bob Dylan

Module 2- Short Stories

- Appointment In Samarra – W Somerset Maugham
- A Shocking Accident – Graham Greene
- Lamb to the Slaughter – Roald Dahl
- It Used To Be Green Once – Patricia Grace

Module 3- Prose

- Bores – E V Lucas
- Night Walkers and Mystery Mongers:
Sense and Nonsense at the Edge of science – Carl Sagan

Module 4- One-Act-Play

- Something Unspoken – Tennessee Williams

LESSON 1: SONNET 29 BY WILLIAMSHAKESPEARE

- The sonnet 29 was composed around 1592. Many writers and scholars think that sonnets of Shakespeare contain autobiographical elements. Shakespeare had

married very young and after the birth of his children, he came to London and became an apprentice at acting. He started getting small acting jobs and later became a dramatist and producer. Quite unfortunate for Shakespeare, the plague in 1592 caused all the theatres in London to shut down. This was also the time when Robert Greene, a friend and fellow playwright started attacking Shakespeare because of professional rivalry. This must have been the reason for the poet to say that he was out of favour with fortune and men's eye as he was jobless, moneyless and friendless.

- A sonnet is a lyric poem of 14 lines, written in a single stanza. In sonnet 29 there are three Quatrains and one Couplet with rhyming scheme, **abab cdcd efef gg**.

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- The sonnet has two themes, One is wealth and the other is friendship and hope. The speaker

of the poem has lost wealth and all hope and he feels God doesn't

care for him anymore. He wishes to be surrounded by good friends, who could cheer him up. The poet is sad, sorrowful and desperate. He feels lonely and the loneliness is reflected in the Sonnet. The poet brings in the imagery of a lark in the sonnet. The imagery of the lark is a beautiful one. Shakespeare uses the lark as a symbol of hope and joy. The lark rises from the sad dark earth at the break of the day. Day break brings the thoughts of his beloved to the poet. As the bird sings songs at the heaven's gate, it brings in rejuvenated hope to the poet and he starts singing with the lark at heaven's gate (to God). The poet then thinks about his friends and their love for him. Suddenly all his thoughts turn positive and he feel happy and content at last.

LESSON 2: ODE TO AUTUMN BY JOHN KEATS

- In the poem, 'Ode to Autumn', Keats virtually personifies autumn as a close bosom friend of the sun. Autumn is the misty season. It is also the time when

fruits ripen. Autumn is considered as a friend of the sun and both are working together to ripen the fruits of the season like apple and grapes. In the poem the image of a lady goddess is used to describe the autumn.

- Autumn works with the sun to bring fruits to the vines that grow on the cottages. It also works with the sun to grow apples and make them ripe. The buds turn into

flowers so that the bees could prepare enough honey to make their honeycombs overflow and become sticky with honey.

- Keats compares autumn into someone sitting on the granary floor, with hair waving in the wind. Sometimes the autumn looks like somebody waiting and watching the apple juice oozing out from the cider press.

- Spring is the season of flowers. Spring comes after the winter and so the season is a time for music and celebration. The poet assures everyone that autumn also

has a music and choir of its own. The music of the autumn consists of the singing of the hedge crickets, choir of the gnats, bleating of the lambs, whistles of the redbreast bird and the twittering of the swallows.

- Keats's poem is full of images from the nature and the countryside. Keats also deals with the theme of life and death or birth and rebirth in the poem. Life is a

big cycle. After autumn, comes winter which is a symbol of death. However, after every winter comes the spring, which is a sign of life and rebirth. So there is life in death and also the prediction that there is life or rebirth after death.

LESSON 3: 'A ROADSIDE STAND' BY ROBERT FROST

- The road side stand is a very symbolic poem. It symbolizes the poor people's desire to have a good life. But unfortunately their wish remains just a dream, just

as the roadside stands selling farm produce remains without any sales. The cinemas and the motion pictures show the wealthy and glamorous life of the city people and tell that if there is money, one would be able to enjoy a luxurious and well off life in the city rather than the boring and hard life in the villages. For men, money has become the most important thing in the world. Money makes me confident and his spirit becomes lifted. In the village, there is hardly any money and the villagers lead a very dull and unhappy life.

- The attitude of the city people towards the roadside stands is that of selfishness and disregard. A car may stop in front of the roadside stand to ask about the

price of something, to use the yard to reverse the car, to ask where the road led to or to ask whether petrol was available. They never bought anything from the village farmers.

- Euthanasia means mercy killing. It means taking pity or having sympathy for somebody and killing them to stop their continued suffering. In the poem, we

come across poor farmers putting up their farm produce with the hope of selling it to the city travelers, thus to make a living. The farmers have a rosy picture of city life as he has seen in movies or cinemas. The poor farmer wishes to make some money from the city people so that he and his family could buy some luxuries or have a better living. The city travelers stop to make several enquiries, but nobody really buys anything so as to help the poor village farmers. We see the real estate brokers parading as if to help the poor farmers, promising them a good life, which actually never materialise. All the villagers are left with unrealistic hopes and dreams of a good life. It is slow poisoning or killing.

Euthanasia or mercy killing would be a far better way out of this slow poisoning.

- The poem takes a definite stand against modernization. The road side stand is a symbol of a village past that is fast disappearing. It is a proof of declining agricultural prosperity in villages and the insensitivity of the modern ways of life.

LESSON 4: THE HOUSE OF MY CHILDHOOD BY DILIP CHITRE

- Childhood nostalgia is the theme of the poem, 'The House of My Childhood'. The poet visits the house, where he had spent his childhood. The poet is standing in

the abandoned house of his childhood. There is nothing but silence. Only memories are left behind. There is nobody in the house, it stands abandoned. There is nothing except his grandmother's grindstone and a few brass figurines. Not even furniture is available in the house. He walks around the house as if he was a toddler, taking his first steps. The poet is overtaken by his childhood memories. There is nobody, no one to talk to. Silence fills the house and his memories.

Everything in the house is grey. Grey is the colour of loneliness, sadness and desolation. To the poet, everything about his old house and childhood smells of sadness and *desolation*. The grindstone left behind in the house must be bringing to the poet's mind, the traditional kind of food of yesterdays of childhood. The food that all were taking as children. He must have remembered his mother and grandmother sitting near the grindstone, grinding grains to prepare perhaps traditional eatables. 'To toddle' means to walk with unsteady steps like a small kid. Although the poet has become an old man now, the house of his childhood reminds him of the days when he was a small kid.

- The poem also conveys the idea that modernity will always abandon old things, even if they were once valued things. Old houses, old goddesses, old people,

everything will be abandoned when modernity takes over. Everything that is of good value in today's world will one day become old and be abandoned. Only memories and desolation shall remain.

LESSON 5: OLD FOLKS LAUGH BY MAYA ANGELOU

- The poet in the poem, "When Old Folks Laugh" is of the opinion that it is very difficult for young people to laugh, because they are always worried about life

and its problems. Sometimes the young people have to pretend that they are laughing when actually they are not. Now when we look at older people, we understand that their laugh is real. Old folks are able to forgive because they know that death is near and they have finished their quarrels with life and are preparing themselves for life after death. There are happy days and sad days in everybody's life. The best and the worst are the good and bad days in their life.

- There are several images of ageing in the poem. Greying hair, jiggling bellies like tambourines, wobbly heads, brittle necks, saliva dripping from the mouth and silly smiles are the images that portray old age in the poem.

- In the opinion of the poet, the old aged people are not afraid of death because they have lived their lives and seen all the good things and bad things happening

in life. Old age is a very difficult period in life. For the old people, death will be a final release from all the pains and hardships of this worldly life. However, old people laugh because they have forgiven everyone and everything and are patiently waiting for death. Death will be a happy ending of this life and the beginning of a better and beautiful promised life for them. So, old people dream of a painless end to their life on this earth.

LESSON 6: ONCE UPON A TIME BY GABRIEL OKARA

- In the past people used to laugh with their heart. In the present, they laugh with their teeth and lips, there being absolutely no sincerity. It means people laugh without showing real emotions or sincerity.

- Like wearing different dresses, the poet has also learnt to wear different faces for different occasions. Thus he wears a home face, office face, street face, host face, party face etc.

- The poem, “Once Upon a Time”, describes the pain of growing up and the loss of innocence as one grows up. When you were a child, you smiled from your heart

and the smile was sincere. When you liked someone or loved someone, it came from the heart. As you grew up, you lost that innocence and started play-acting. Now you have learned how to smile an insincere smile with your teeth, without any feeling in your heart. As you grow up, not only your smile, but your words and actions also become insincere. Growing up is pain because you lose your innocence as you grow up.

LESSON 7: THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGING BY BOB DYLAN

- The song “The Times, They are A- Changing” is a political poem. The poet is asking the young generation to fight against the discriminations in the society.

The poem is a warning to those people who are the ruling class to start changing their style, behaviour and attitude. If not, they will sink like a stone or will be defeated by the changing times.

- The poet asks the writers and critics to keep their eyes wide open, because the wheel of fortune is still spinning and the loser may turn around and still win the

game. There is a battle raging outside between the establishment and the common people. The battle, the poet is talking about is the civil rights movement raging outside. People in those days were struggling for civil rights and there was a big fight against racial and gender discrimination.

- The poet says that “the first one will be later the last”, which means that those people who are in power may lose it later and those who are on the street,

fighting the government may gain power. The poet also addresses those Senators and Congressmen who are in power not to block the door to the people who wants to see change, not to prevent changes from happening. The whole theme of the poem is that changes are inevitable and no one has the power to stop changes.

LESSON 8: APPOINTMENT IN SAMARRA BY W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

- Fatalism is the belief that whatever is fated to happen will happen, no matter what you do to prevent it.

- The story, ‘Appointment in Samarra’ is about a servant who goes to the market place in Baghdad to buy provisions for his master. In the market place, the

servant sees death. Death seemed surprised at seeing the servant in Baghdad. The servant on the other hand is terrified. He turns back, goes to his master, borrows his horse and flees to Samarra.

- However, what happens in the end is that the servant finally meets his death in Samarra. Running away did not help the servant. His death was predetermined to

happen in Samarra. That was the reason why death seemed surprised to see him in Baghdad. So running away to Samarra on the fastest horse did not help the servant. In fact the servant when he ran to Samarra, was running to meet his death. However, fatalism is a very negative attitude, because you can always blame fate for your laziness and all things bad happening to you. It is only people with a defeatist and foolish attitude who will believe in fatalism.

LESSON 9: A SHOCKING ACCIDENT BY GRAHAM GREENE

- Jerome was studying in a boarding school, when his father’s accidental death happens. Jerome used to worship his father. He was a widowed man. Because

of his frequent absence from home, Jerome had earlier thought that his father was a gang member, a gun runner or a member of the British Secret Service. His father was actually a travel writer.

- When the Housemaster one day called him to his office, Jerome was not aware why he was called. It was then the Housemaster; Mr. Wordsworth informs Jerome that his father had met with an accident. Jerome imagines that his father had died in a shootout with the police or some such encounter. What actually happened was that when Jerome's father was walking to the Hydrographic Museum in Naples, a fatty pig fell on him from the balcony, causing his death.

This was indeed a "Shocking Accident" and the story was named so. At first Jerome couldn't believe the story. It was certainly a funny way to die. All through his school days, Jerome was nicknamed the 'Pig' by his schoolmates. Such was the trauma he suffered as a child.

- All the while he was growing up, Jerome had to repeat this story of his father's death to several strangers and was a cause of big embarrassment to him.

Jerome even had two version of the story about his father's death, a longer version and a shorter quicker version, depending on the situation and the mood of the listener.

- Even when he was engaged to be married, while he was taking his would-be wife Sally to his aunt's house for dinner, Jerome was worried. Jerome's aunt was a

talkative person. Jerome was worried that his aunt would tell Sally about his father's funny way of dying in such a detailed manner that would embarrass him. It was only when after hearing the story his fiancée Sally didn't laugh, Jerome became relaxed and understood that Sally was definitely the ideal wife for him.

The story is a funny way of looking at life and also shows the absurdity of everyday life of a common man.

LESSON 10: LAMB TO SLAUGHTER BY ROALD DAHL

- Mr. Maloney was a police detective. At the beginning we see Mrs. Maloney waiting anxiously at their home for her husband. She seems to be a very devoted wife, willing to do anything for her husband. It appears that she is a very dutiful and loving wife. Mr. Maloney comes home from duty and announces the shocking news that he is planning to leave her. He doesn't give any specific reason for this. The reason for Mr. Patrick Maloney to leave his wife might be that he had fallen in love with another woman.
- When Mr. Patrick Maloney announces that he is planning to leave her, probably for another woman, something snaps in her heart. In a fit of fury she takes the frozen lamb leg from the freezer and instead of cooking it, hits her husband on the head, which results in his instant death. Mrs. Maloney's initial intention was to cook the leg of lamb for her husband, but in

a fit of anger she used it to murder her husband. It can only be considered as a crime of passion.

- Mrs. Maloney had accidentally murdered her husband by hitting his head with a mutton leg. She went to the store to purchase groceries to have an alibi so that she could tell a different story to the police, when they came.

- The Murder of Mr. Maloney by Mrs. Maloney doesn't seem to be a planned murder. In the beginning our sympathies are with Mrs. Maloney who seems to be

the lamb in the story. However, later we understand that she is the killer, who slaughters her poor husband without any feeling, when her own safety and security is threatened. Here, the hunter becomes the hunted in a twist of fate.

LESSON 11 : IT USED TO BE GREEN ONCE BY PATRICIA GRACE

- The story is about a family growing up under poverty and destitution. The family under the care of the mother and father tries to bring up the children in the best possible manner. However, the poverty and the hardships make the children ashamed of themselves. The children were ashamed of their mommy too, who in their opinion was a little crazy.

- Here are a few things that their mommy did that shamed the children. She made the children wear school uniform and swimming dress that was made from old

clothes, which was not fit for them. She even put red stitches on their white dresses. She would shout at the children while they were waiting for the school bus. She gave them old and overripe fruits with holes in them for lunch. The mother wore an old dress made from a bed sheet.

- The mother drove an old green worn out car which was joke as it was not having proper brakes. It was an old rusty junk car given to them free of cost by their

uncle Raz. Uncles Raz lived in Auckland, where he was fined several times for driving the old car. As it was beyond repair he gave the car to dad. Since the car had no brakes, the children had to tell the school bus driver to stop the school bus whenever they saw their mother coming against them on the road.

The children knew that their mom's car didn't have brakes. So they used to ask the driver to stop the school bus.

- “But then one day, something happened, that changed everything”. The children’s father won a lottery for 50,000 dollars. They became very rich and that changed

everything. They bought a new car with the 50,000 dollars which he won in the lottery. However, the writer adds that winning the lottery did not change anything in the family. They lived the same way as before. The only thing that changed was they had food on the table and better clothes to go to school. The new car, was treated in the same shabby manner by their mother as their old car and soon became the same as their old rusty car, with paint that they could barely recognize. The new found money did not change the values of the family. The remained the same as before.

LESSON 12: BORES BY E.V.LUCAS

- According to Lucas, Bores are always bores because egotism is their foundation stone. Bores manage to get an audience because of the kind hearted nature of their audience. is to totally avoid them at all times. Bores feel that other people are always interested in hearing about them. About himself, his family, wife, children, his car, his health, his ancestry, his travels, his clothes, his dentist, etc.
- Bores are actually the axle around which the whole world moves. Bores are mostly happy because they have so much to tell and they do it so well because they always find people or audience to talk to.

LESSON 13: NIGHT WALKERS AND MYSTERY MONGERS: SENSE AND NONSENSE AT THE EDGE OF SCIENCE BY CARL SAGAN

- In the essay, Carl Sagan states that it is easy to make people believe in Mystery Mongers and Sooth Sayers because man is a gullible being.
- The hereditary information we pass from generation to generation is encoded in a single molecule called DNA.

- There are several beliefs that are at the edge of borders of science. So it is easy for men to fall prey to superstitions.

- Alexander of Abonutichus used to receive questions from people in sealed envelopes. When he was alone he secretly used to open the envelopes, put a befitting reply or prediction inside and re-seal the envelope again. He used to make a lot of money by his crooked predictions.

- Science has emerged as the most popular means of penetrating the secrets of the universe.

- Precognitive experience is that experience or feeling which gives you some kind of hint about what is going to happen in future. Such experiences are assumptions that are intensely personal and have no scientific basis.

- In the 1970's America was being bombarded by news reports of flying saucers and UFO's. Public demanded an official enquiry. The invitation from the president was to undertake a serious investigation to find out the truth of the reports. NASA had to decline the invitation, because there was hardly any truth in the reports and there was nothing left to investigate or study.

- The success of science depends on validation and testing of available data and reaching valid proofs.

- Meteorites are heavenly bodies that reach the atmosphere and fall to the earth because of earth's gravitational pull.

- The best antidote to pseudo-science is science itself. Carl Sagan exhorts everyone to believe in science so as to escape from superstition and pseudo beliefs.

LESSON 14 : SOMETHING UNSPOKEN BY TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

- “Something Unspoken” is the title of the play and the title is very relevant as it conveys the theme of the play. This is the story of two women. Cornelia is the boss and Miss Grace is her secretary. Their relationship is that of an employer and the employee.

- Miss Cornelia Scot is supposed to attend the annual meeting of the confederate Daughters. There is going to be an election for the post of regent of the club.

She doesn't attend the annual meeting because she doesn't want to contest the election as she is not sure of getting elected as the new regent of the club. She wants to be nominated, so she decides to stay away from the meeting and the election.

- Although she has high hopes of getting nominated uncontested, in the end she fails to get elected and is miserable. However, she rejects all sympathy and companionship offered by Miss Grace as she considers her as her servant and so an inferior person.

Both Miss Cornelia and Miss Grace had been living together under one roof for 15 years, but there is a wall of silence between them. Although both women are suffering from loneliness and depression, their status difference separates them and prevents them from being good friends who could support each other.

- Grace is afraid to give her honest opinion, because she is afraid of hurting and offending Cornelia. There is a wall of stiffness and indifference between them. Sad, but true!

