ENGLISH LITERATURE
SUBJECT CODE – 30
Fiction, Short Story [Part-B]

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JAMES BALDWIN (1924-1987) – One of the first writers to do so was James Baldwin, whose work addressed issues of race and sexuality. Baldwin’s best known for his novel “Go tell it on the Mountain”(1953) is semi-autobiographical novel, examines the role of the Christian Church in the lives of African-Americans, both as a source of repression and moral hypocrisy and as a source of inspiration and community. It also, more subtly, examines racism in the United States.

Notes of a Native Son deals with the racial themes. He wrote deeply personal stories and essays while examining what it was like to be both Black and homosexual at a time when neither of these identities was accepted by American culture. In all, Baldwin wrote nearly 20 books, including such classics as “Another Country” and “The Fire Next Time (a black protest)”, Giovanni’s Room and Sonny’s Blues. His other works are Nobody knows my name.

He had a harsh childhood. He suffered in the hands of his tyrant father. He was fond of reading ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’ which became his inspiration too. He lived in extreme poverty but his love for a young Swiss named Lucien Happersberger motivated him for the novel Giovanni’s Room. His known play is The Amen Corner and Blues for Mister Charlie which was based Emmett Till case. Further, he wrote Nothing Personal, a text to accompany photographs by his old school friend.

Going to meet the man is a collection of short stories, Tell me How Long the Train’s been gone is a long novel about a Black actor named Leo Proudhammer. A Rap on Race is a tape recorded conversation with Margaret Mead.

RICHARD WRIGHT (1908-1960): -”He was born to be the greatest writer of all Black writer. He was born in Mississippi. He wrote an autobiography named ‘Black boy’. He joined the communist party later on. By 1935, he completed his first novel, Cesspool, published as lawd Today (1963) and also published his story “Big Boy Leaves Home” in the magazine New Caravan. He also worked with the National Negro Congress and of South Side Writers group., of whom Anna Bontemps and Margaret walker were also a part. Wright is best known for his novel “Native Son” (1940), which tells the story of Bigger Thomas, a Black man struggling for acceptance in Chicago. The novel combines urban realism with naturalism and protests the conditions and the environment in which the Black lived in the urban north. Baldwin was so impressed by the novel that he titled a collection of his essays “Notes of a Native Son” in reference to Wright’s novel.

Baldwin’s idol and friend was author Richard Wright, whom Baldwin called “the greatest Black writer in the world for me.
However their friendship fell apart due to one of the book’s essays, “Everybody’s protest Novel” which criticized “Native Son” for lacking credible characters and psychological complexity. Among Wright’s other books are the semi-autobiographical novel Black Boy (1945), The Outsider (1953) and White Man, Listen! (1957) and Uncle Tom’s Children.

RALPH ELLISON (1914-1994):- The other great Afro-American novelist and literary critic of the period is Ralph Ellison, best known for his novel “Invisible Man” (1952) which won the National Book Award in 1953. Even though Ellison did not complete another novel during his lifetime, Invisible Man was so influential that it secured his place in literary history. Invisible Man is narrated in the first person by the protagonist, an unnamed Black man who considers himself socially invisible. Ellison conceived his narrator as a spokesman for Black Americans of the time. The narrator begins with the claim that he is an “invisible man”. His invisibility, he says, is not a physical condition—he is not literally invisible—but is rather the result of the refusal of others to see him.

It addresses many of the social and intellectual issues facing African-Americans early in the twentieth century, including Black Nationalism, the relationship between black identity and Marxism, and the reformist racial policies of Booker T. Washington, as well as issues of individuality and personal identity.

After Ellison’s death, a second novel “Juneteenth” was pieced together from the 2000 plus pages he had written over 40 years. It was published in 1999. Another unfinished novel “These Days before the Shooting” got published in 2010. The story revolves around a man named Bliss of indeterminate race who is raised by a black Baptist minister named Alonzo Hickman. As an adult he assumes a white identity and eventually becomes a race-baiting United States Senator named Adam Sunraider. He also wrote some essays like Shadow and Act and Going to the Territory.

After Ellison there was rise of female black poets during Civil Rights Time, most notably Gwendolyn Brooks, who became the first African-American to win the Pulitzer Prize when it was awarded for her 1949 book of poetry, Annie Allen. Along with Brooks, other female poets who became well known during 1950’s and 1960’s are Nikki Giovanni and Sonia Sanchez.

During this time, a number of playwrights also came to national attention, notably Lorraine Hansberry and Amiri Baraka.
Beginning in the 1970s, African American literature reached the main stream as books by Black writers continually achieved best-selling and award winning status. This was also the time when the work of African American writers began to be accepted by academia as a legitimate genre of American literature.

As part of the larger Black Arts Movement, which was inspired by the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, African American literature began to be defined and analyzed. A number of scholars and writers are generally credited with helping to promote and define African American literature as a genre during this period, including fiction writers Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and poet James Emanuel etc.

AMIRI BARAKA (1934-2014):-Well known as LeRoi Jones. He was Afro-American writer of poetry, drama, fiction, essays and music criticism. Early in his career, with the publication in 1960 of his collection of poems entitled Preface to a Twenty Volumes Suicide Note-followed by The Dead Lecturer (1964) Black Art (1966) Black Magic: Poetry 1961-67 (1969) and its Nation Time (1970) he established his character themes of distrust and hatred towards the Caucasian world. By the publication in 1972 of Spirit Reach, Leroi Jones had become Imamu Amiri Baraka was well established as the leading black militant of the world of the poetry, but he was also establishing himself as a playwright, in addition, he had written a novel and a collection of short stories. He was inspired more scholarship since 1973 than any other black poet in the U.S. His earliest work was line-phrased prose, and as he matured he sometimes treated prose in the manner of Walt Whitman and Allen Ginsberg, writing in grammatical parallels. He was deeply influenced and associated with the Black Mountain School, in particular by the poetry and preachments of its founder, Charles Olson. His novel The System of Dante’s Hello (1966) was followed by a collection of short stories entitled “Tales” (1967). In addition, he has published or produced over three dozen plays, including A Good Girl is Hard to Find (1958), The Slave (1964), A Black Mass (1966) The Death of Malcolm X (1969), Four Black Revolutionaries Plays (1971) and Black power Chant (1972). He has also written non-fiction includes Blues People: Negro Music in White America (1963) A Black Value System (1970) and The Music: Reflection on Jazz and Blues written with his wife, Amina Baraka.

TONI MORRISON :-( 1931-present) She stood among the top popular novelists in the U.S. She was the first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize in literature in 1993. She has carved a niche for herself in the African history being the first winner of the most prestigious prize. Her original name was Chloe Anthony Wofford. She got extreme popularity for her first novel “The Bluest Eye” (1970) which presents a sympathetic story of a little girl Pecola Breedlove who was raped by her father under the influence of alcohol. The
victim Pecola was hated by the white society as an ugly and black girl. The novel is narrated by Claudia McTeer.

In the whole story, we found Pecola kept on asking her father if she would have white skin with blue eyes. The writer, Toni Morrison arose many sensitive questions in the novel about race, child molestation and human rights in the society.


ALICE WALKER (1944-present):- She is among the most versatile and the most outspokenly political of the major voices in late 20th century American literature. Most of her work involves several generations of families in the South, the civil rights movement in the 1960s or the history of the black diaspora. Her work is almost always a validation of black women’s lives. This concern has led her to call herself a womanist, a word she coined to mean a black woman or woman of colour who is a feminist. The word is meant to distinguish her positions as a black feminist from that of white feminists.

In 1968, she published her first volume of verse, Once based on her experiences of civil rights work and her travels to Africa.

She was a poet, feminist author but better known now as a novelist, Walker showed her talents for storytelling in her debut work, Third Life of Grange Copeland (1970).

She is best known for The Color Purple which won Pulitzer Prize in 1983. In this epistolary novel, the outermost frame is formed through the relationship between Celie and her sister Nettie, two devoted woman living in Georgia and Arica, who attempt to communicate through letters.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. **J.B. Harris** (1903-1969) took this pseudonym for writing novels-
(A) Ray Bradbury    (B) John Wyndham    (C) C. Clarke    (D) Isaac Asimov

2. Tropic of Cancer is a much admired novel written by –
(A) Bernard Malamud    (B) Henry Miller    (C) Truman Capote    (D) John Asimov

3. James Baldwin wrote which of the following novels in 1953?
(A) Giles Goat – Boy    (B) The Deer Park    (C) Rabbit, Run    (D) Go Tell it On The Mountain

4. East of Eden a novel brought out in 1952 was written by –
(A) Nelson Algren    (B) John Steinbeck    (C) Bernard Malamud    (D) Norman Mailer

5. V.S. Naipaul wrote which of the following novels –
(A) Another Country    (B) The Mimic Man    (C) The Heart is a Lonely Hunter    (D) The Deer Park

6. A Satire on contemporary spy novel Our Man in Havana brought out in 1958 was written by –
(A) C.P. Snow    (B) D. H. Lawrence    (C) Graham Greene    (D) Evelyn Waugh

7. Evelyn Waugh wrote a savage satire on American funeral customs entitles –
(A) The Loved One    (B) The Quite American    (C) The Conscience of the Rich    (D) The Acceptable World

8. Who amongst the following novelists wrote of ‘denaturized humanity’ characterized by a sense of loveliness?
(A) Anthony Dymoke Powell    (B) Lion Poles Hartley    (C) Henry Greene    (D) Graham Greene

9. Henry Yorke wrote the pen-name of –
(A) Henry James    (B) Henry Greene    (C) Henry Miller    (D) Henry Treece

10. His short – stories of the R.A.F. brought him fame. Who was the writer?
(A) Kingsely Amis    (B) Joyce Cary    (C) John Masters    (D) H.E. Bates

11. The Jacaranda Tree (1949), the most noteworthy novel, in which the novelist wrote to Burma and India, is written by –
(A) H. E. Bates    (B) Frederick Raphael    (C) William Cooper    (D) John Braine

12. Whose lecture provoked F. R. Leavis to deliver a counterblast in the Richmond Lecture of 1962?
(A) Alan Sillitoe    (B) George Orwell    (C) Graham Greene    (D) C.P. Snow

13. Having left a distinguished military career, he became the novelist. Identify him.
(A) John Barrington Wain    (B) John Braine    (C) John Arden    (D) John Masters
14. Bhowani Junction brought out in 1954 was an outstanding novel authored by –
(A) Colin MacInnes  (B) Stan Barstow  (C) Kingsley Amis  (D) John Masters

15. His four novels are known collectively as The Alexandria Quartet. Who was the novelist?
(A) Lawrence George Durrell  (B) James Patrick Donleavy  (C) Colin Henry Wilson  (D) Keith Spencer Waterhouse

16. Who amongst the following novelist was by birth an American but established himself in Ireland?
(A) Pamela Hansford Johnson  (B) William Cooper  (C) James Patrick Donleavy  (D) Malcom Lowry

17. Who amongst the following novelist was by profession a rugby player?
(A) Arthur Koestler  (B) Fredrick Raphale  (C) David Storey  (D) Mervyn Peake

18. The glittering Prizes brought out in 1976 was written by –
(A) George Barker  (B) David Gascoyne  (C) Frederick Raphael  (D) Alexander Comfort

19. Harry Sumerfield Hoff wrote his novel under the pseudonym of –
(A) Robert Conquest  (B) Kingsley Amis  (C) William Cooper  (D) Vernon Scannell

20. Who amongst the following writers is considered as the Originator of the Angry Young Man?
(A) John Braine  (B) William Cooper  (C) John Barrington Wain  (D) Kingsley Amis

21. Hurry on Down brought out in 1953, a more carefully considered portrait of the Angry Young Man was written by –
(A) John Braine  (B) William Cooper  (C) John Barrington Wain  (D) Kingsley Amis

22. Who amongst the following novelists objected firmly to being termed as Angry Young Man?
(A) John Barrington Wain  (B) Anthony Burgess  (C) Ian Fleming  (D) Kingsley Amis

23. Who played the living role in John Osborne’s Look Back in Anger?
(A) Richard Burton  (B) John Osborne  (C) Collin Wilson  (D) John Braine

24. Kingsley Amis made his debut as a novelist from –
(A) Lucky Jim  (B) That Uncertain Feeling  (C) I Like It Here  (D) Girl, 20

25. Jim Dixon is a famous anti – hero portrayed by Kingsley Amis in –
(A) Lucky Jim  (B) Take a Girl Like You  (C) One Fat Englishman  (D) The Egyptologist

26. Choose a Booker Prize winning novel by Kingsley Amis –
(A) The Old Devil  (B) You Can’t Do Both  (C) Black and White  (D) The Anti-Death Spark

27. Kingsley Amis married from 1965 to 1983 to the novelist –
(A) Elizabeth Jane  (B) Mervyn Peake  (C) Jean Iris Murdoch  (D) Mariel Sarah Spark
28. Who amongst the following novelist is by birth an Australian?
   (A) Arthur Keostler  
   (B) Alan Sillitoe  
   (C) Colin Maclnnes  
   (D) Alan Stewart Paton

29. Cry, the Beloved Country brought out in 1948 is a novel by –
   (A) William Gerald Golding  
   (B) Anthony Burgess  
   (C) Alan Stewart Paton  
   (D) Arthur Keostler

30. Alan Stewart Paton is –
   (A) the West Indian short story writer  
   (B) the American poet  
   (C) the South African novelist  
   (D) the British Dramatist

ANSWERS

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