PG TRB (English) Coaching Class starts on 14.04.2019

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Unit II – Jacobean Age (1600-1798)

Andrew Marvell’s To His Coy Mistress

Andrew Marvell

Early Life:

- Andrew Marvell was born on March 31, 1621, in the Yorkshire town of Hull, England.
- Andrew Marvell an English metaphysical poet, Parliamentarian, and the son of a Church of England clergymen.
- As a metaphysical poet, he is associated with John Donne and George Herbert.
- His father, Rev. Andrew Marvell, was a lecturer at Holy Trinity Church and master of the Charterhouse.
- Marvell was educated at Hull grammar school and Trinity College, Cambridge, taking a B.A. in 1639.
- He started writing poems in college and two of his poems, one in Latin and the other in Greek were published in an anthology of Cambridge poets.
- He wanted to continue his studies and complete his master’s degree but his father’s accidental death and the outbreak of the civil war in 1642 forced him to abandon his studies.
- Afterwards, from the middle of 1642 onwards, Marvell probably travelled in continental Europe.

Career:

- He spent most of the 1650s working as a tutor, first for Mary Fairfax, daughter of a Lord Fairfax, then for one of Oliver Cromwell’s ward William Dutton.
- In September, 1657, Marvell was appointed assistant to John Milton, Latin Secretary for the Commonwealth.
- Marvell used his political status to free Milton, who was jailed during the Restoration (1660), and quite possibly saved the elder poet’s life.
- By touring all over Holland, France, Italy, and Spain, he totally avoided the civil war back home in England.
- In 1659 he was elected Member of Parliament for Hull, an office he held until his death, serving skillfully and effectively.
Works:

Poetry:

✓ On a Drop of Dew
✓ The Coronet
✓ Eyes and Tears
✓ Bermudas
✓ Clorinda and Damon
✓ Two Songs at the Marriage of the Lord Fauconberg and the Lady Mary Cromwell
✓ A Dialogue between the Soul and Body
✓ The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Fawn
✓ To His Coy Mistress
✓ The unfortunate Lover
✓ The Gallery
✓ The Fair Singer
✓ Mourning
✓ Daphnis and Chloe
✓ The Definition of Love
✓ The Picture of little T.C. in a Prospect of Flowers
✓ The Mower, against Gardens
✓ The Mower's Song
✓ The Garden
✓ An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland
✓ Upon Appleton House
✓ The Last Instructions to a Painter
✓ Fleckno, an English Priest at Rome
✓ To his Noble Friend, Mr. Richard Lovelace, upon his Poems
✓ To his worthy Friend Doctor Witty upon his Translation of the Popular Errors
✓ On Mr. Milton's Paradise Lost

Prose works:

✓ The Rehearsal Transpros'd
✓ An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government in England
He wrote several poems between 1645 and 1649 which express a Royalist tone, thus labeling him as a Royalist sympathizer.

Marvell’s Miscellaneous Poems were printed posthumously in 1681, from a collection owned by Mary Palmer, his housekeeper.
Marvell's poetic style:

- Marvell’s poetry is often witty and full of elaborate conceits in the elegant style of the metaphysical poets.
- Many poems were inspired by events of the time, public or personal.
- *The Picture of Little TC in a Prospect of Flowers* was written about the daughter of one of Marvell's friends, Theophila Cornwell, who was named after an elder sister who had died as a baby.
- Marvell uses the picture of her surrounded by flowers *in a garden* to convey the transience of spring and the fragility of childhood.
- This poem's title is ironically echoed by John Ashbery's poem "The Picture of Little JA in a Prospect of Flowers."
- His pastoral poems, including *Upon Appleton House* achieve originality and a unique tone through his reworking and subversion of the pastoral genre.

Death:

- Marvell died on 16 August, 1678 of tertian ague, and the malpractice of the attending physician.
- He was buried in the church of St. Giles-in-the-Fields.
- His tombstone has the inscription from his poem ‘*Garden*’.
To His Coy Mistress

Text

_Had we but world enough and time,_
This coyness, lady, were no crime._
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day._
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews._

My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate._

_But at my back I always hear_  
_Time’s winged chariot hurrying near;_  
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found;
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long-preserved virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust;
_The grave’s a fine and private place,_
_But none, I think, do there embrace._
Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour
Than languish in his slow-chapped power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Through the iron gates of life:
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

Background:
- "To His Coy Mistress" is a metaphorical poem written by the English author and politician Andrew Marvell (1621–1678) either during or just before the English Interregnum (1649–60).
- It was published posthumously in 1681.
- This poem is considered one of Marvell's finest and is possibly the best recognized carpe diem poem in English.
- This poem is a philosophical poem mixed with the feeling of love.
- It is a fine lyric with beautiful style.
- The theme of love has been expressed in a very intelligent way in this poem.

Summary:
- The poet tells his lady that it they had unlimited time at their disposal the shyness would not be a mistake.
- If they had plenty of time they could sit down and consider what they would do each long day.
She might go to the banks of the far away river Ganges in India and pick up rubies.
He might walk along the banks of the river Humber in England singing or composing sad songs.
He would love her ten years before great Biblical flood that Noah outlasted in his ark.
She would have gone on being shy until all Jews became Christians at the end of the world.
His love would have cultivated and nurtured like a vegetable.
In such a condition his love would have slowly grown into a vast empire but with no consciousness.
He would have spent a hundred years just to praise the beauty of her eyes.
He would have gazed at her forehead for another hundred years.
He would have spent two hundred years to worship each of her breasts.
Another thirty thousand years would have been spent for the rest of her body.
He would have spent an age to every part; the last age would have shown her heart.
His lady deserves such an adoration, and he would never be miserly in his love.

But the poet always hears the sound of the speedy whizz of Time's winged chariot which is hurrying nearer and nearer.
In Greek mythology, the sun was personified as the god Apollo, who rode his golden chariot from east to west each day.
In other words time is very short, and on the other side there is the desert of vast eternity.
He would never see her beauty again.
She would be lying buried in an underground cellar where his songs cannot resonate.
There in the tomb it would be the worms who would be getting the first taste of her virgin body, and her strangely preserved honour would have become dust.
His lust also would have become ashes.
The grave is a beautiful private and undisturbed place; but nobody would be able to embrace there.
Now, the poet is about suggesting that the youth is the best time of life.

Her youthful skin still is fresh and bright as morning dew drops.

They are still young and have the chance, and while their hearts are burning with passion they may enjoy themselves.

They should devour the pleasures of love like two amorous birds of prey.

It is better for them to devour the pleasures of love rather than permit time devour them with slow moving jaws.

Like a cannon ball tears the iron gates of a castle, they may gather all their burning passion and consummate their love.

The poet reminds his mistress that they cannot make sun stand still and extend the night, but they can make the sun run and they can fulfill the consummation of their love when night comes.
Andrew Marvell’s To His Coy Mistress

1) Which poet helped Milton in writing when he became blind? (SET – 2012)
   (A) Andrew Marvell   (B) Henry Vaughan   (C) John Donne   (D) None of the above

2) Who among the following is a metaphysical poet? (PG – 2004)
   (A) Pope   (B) Marvell   (C) Gray   (D) Collins

3) “But at my back I always hear, Time’s Winged Chariot hurrying near”.
   Who wrote the above lines? (PG – 2003)
   (A) Donne   (B) Shakespeare   (C) Milton   (D) Marvell

4) ‘To His Coy Mistress’ uses the ancient theme of………….. (PG – 2012)
   (A) Tempus fugit   (B) Carpe Diem   (C) Memento Mori   (D) Aphorism

5) What are the rivers mentioned in Andrew Marvell’s ‘To His Coy Mistress’?
   (DIET – 2016)
   (A) Ganges and Humber   (B) Avon and Thames
   (C) Ganges and Indus   (D) Humber and Indus

6) …………….. is a sublime example of a Carpe Diem poem and which is to genre what the
   lion is to the animal kingdom or the Oak to the vegetable kingdom: the top.
   (Engg - 2016)
   (A) Andrew Marvell’s ‘To His Coy Mistress’
   (B) Robert Herrick’s ‘Gather Ye Rosebuds’
   (C) Ben Jonson’s ‘Come, My Celia’
   (D) Edmund Waller’s ‘Go, Lovely Rose’

7) Which of the following is not mentioned as a part of her body that he would spend years
   praising or gazing at if they had unlimited time?
   (A) Her breasts   (B) Her forehead   (C) Her hair   (D) Her eyes

8) Which of the following metaphysical poems talk of vegetable love?
   (A) Valediction: Forbidding Mourning   (B) A Dialogue Between The Soul And Body
   (C) To His Coy Mistress   (D) A Garden, Written after the Civil Wars

9) By which river would she find rubies if they had all the time in the world?
   (A) Arno   (B) Amazon   (C) Humber   (D) Ganges
10) At the end of the poem, the speaker says that he and his lover cannot make the Sun stand still, but they can
   (A) enjoy the current day
   (B) outlast his cruel effects
   (C) make him run
   (D) run forward hand in hand

11) In the lines "Thou by the Indian Ganges' side / Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide / Of Humber would complain," what is the "Humber"?
   (A) The Indian Ocean
   (B) The English Channel
   (C) Lake Victoria
   (D) a river in England

12) In the title "To His Coy Mistress," "coy" means she is
   (A) already his lover
   (B) young and inexperienced
   (C) shy
   (D) married

13) When she is dead which creatures does he suggest will take away her virginity?
   (A) Worms
   (B) Beetles
   (C) Snakes
   (D) Ants

14) The most prominent thematic motif(s) of the poem is/are……
   (A) the sky and the dark cloud
   (B) the Wars of the Roses
   (C) King William's War
   (D) the time metaphor and sexuality

15) In the lines "But at my back I always hear / Time's winged chariot hurrying near; / And yonder all before us lie / Deserts of vast eternity," the "chariot" and the "deserts" are examples of
   (A) similes
   (B) feminine symbols
   (C) metaphors
   (D) understatement

16) In the last section of the poem which creatures does he want he and his mistress to imitate in their love-making?
   (A) wild tigers
   (B) gentle doves
   (C) wild lions
   (D) birds of prey

17) "Time's winged chariot" is an allusion to
   (A) Apollo
   (B) Ares
   (C) Zeus
   (D) Hermes

18) What does the speaker offer in the third stanza as the logical conclusion to be drawn from the ideas presented in the first two stanzas?
   (A) one must preserve one's honor forever
   (B) love is too painful to be endured
   (C) they should love now because there is no tomorrow
   (D) they should repent of their sins
19) By which river would Marvell himself have time to "complain"?
(A) Severn  (B) Ganges  (C) Humber  (D) Thames

20) Which momentous event in the Bible does he mention to show how long he would spend loving her if they only had the time?
(A) The Flood  (B) The Battle of Jericho  (C) Adam's Temptation in the Garden of Eden  (D) The Destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem

21) In the lines "Thy beauty shall no more be found, / Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound / My echoing Song. . . .," the "marble vault" is a reference to
(A) the grave and the Mistress's body  (B) the Mistress's perfume  (C) the Mistress's willingness to have sex  (D) the speaker's home

22) What unusual word does he use to describe his love when he says it will grow "Vaster than empires, and more slow"?
(A) animal  (B) abstract  (C) mineral  (D) vegetable

23) The structure of the poem is
(A) novelistic  (B) syllogism  (C) free verse  (D) 14-line stanzas

24) After listing the other parts of her body how many years would he spend on praising "the rest"?
(A) Sixty thousand  (B) Forty thousand  (C) Thirty thousand  (D) Fifty thousand

25) To what does he compare the youthful appearance of her skin?
(A) The morning dew  (B) The waters of a spring  (C) The bloom of a flower  (D) The passing of a cloud
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