

Lesson Plan: Christopher Marlowe, *Edward the Second*

Department of English, Buniadpur Mahavidyalaya (Affiliated to the University of Gour Banga)

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A. Course Details

Item	Details
Paper	British Literature: 16 th & 17 th Century (ENG-DC-MJ-301)
Module	II, OPTION: 1
Programme	Four Years' Undergraduate Programme (NEP 2020), English Major
Semester	III
Prescribed text	Christopher Marlowe, <i>Edward the Second</i> (c. 1592)
Number of classes	10 scheduled (3 introductory + 7 on the text) and 2 remedial
Duration of each class	60 minutes
Prescribed edition	<i>Edward the Second</i> , ed. Martin Wiggins and Robert Lindsey, New Mermaids, 2nd ed. London: A and C Black, 1997
Teacher	Dr. Tanim Dutta, Assistant Professor and Head, Department of English

B. Rationale

Edward the Second cannot be read without the world that produced it: a play of 1592 about a reign of 1307–1327, written for an audience whose own court turned on favourites and patronage. The first three classes therefore establish the historical and dramatic context, the next four work through the text scene by scene, and the last three take up character, dramatic art and theme.

C. Objectives of the Module

- To trace the transition from the Middle English period to the Renaissance and to identify the features of the new age, above all the movement from a theocentric to a homocentric universe.
- To place the play within the Tudor dynasty and the Elizabethan Age, and within the secularisation of English drama by the University Wits.
- To introduce Marlowe, his works, and the composition, publication and sources of *Edward the Second*, including its anachronisms and its conversion of chronicle history into domestic tragedy.
- To secure a close knowledge of the text — its action, characters and major scenes.
- To examine the central themes: Machiavellianism, failed kingship, private against public virtue, and the critique of religious authority.

D. Expected Learning Outcomes

On completion of the module, students will be able to:

- Explain the shift from the medieval to the Renaissance world view and its bearing on Elizabethan drama.
- Situate Marlowe among the University Wits and account for the secularisation of the English stage.
- Narrate the sources and publication history of the play and explain how Marlowe alters Holinshed.
- Analyse the principal characters and comment critically on the major scenes.
- Argue a case on the play's themes with close textual reference, in the form required by the examination.

E. Class-wise Plan

Class	Topic	Objective	Discussed	Outcome	Readings
1	From the Middle English Period to the Renaissance	To trace the transition between the two periods and to establish the conditions from which Elizabethan drama arose.	Decline of feudalism and of the medieval church; the barren fifteenth century after Chaucer; Caxton and the printing press; the fall of Constantinople and the revival of classical learning; humanism; the Reformation in England; the growth of drama out of the mystery, miracle, morality and interlude.	Explains the passage from the medieval to the Renaissance world and the origins of English drama.	Legouis and Cazamian; Daiches, Vol. I; Albert, <i>History of English Literature</i>
2	Features of the Renaissance: Theocentric to Homocentric Universe	To identify the defining features of the Renaissance and the transformation of the world picture.	The medieval theocentric order and the chain of being; the homocentric turn — humanism, individualism, intellectual curiosity, the thirst for knowledge and power; Copernicus and the new science; voyages and discovery; Machiavelli and political realism; scepticism and the questioning of authority; the strain upon the doctrine of order and obedience.	Defines the features of the Renaissance and explains the theocentric to homocentric shift with examples.	Tillyard, <i>The Elizabethan World Picture</i> ; Burckhardt, selected chapters; Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i>
3	The Tudor Reigns, the Elizabethan Age, Play Houses, and the University Wits	To place the play in its political and theatrical moment and to introduce Marlowe and the text.	The Tudor dynasty from Henry VII to Elizabeth I and the Tudor myth of order; the Elizabethan Age — court, patronage, censorship, the public playhouse; the University Wits and the secularisation of English drama; Marlowe's life and works; <i>Edward the Second</i> — composition c. 1592, acted by Pembroke's Men, entered in the Stationers' Register on 6 July 1593 five weeks after Marlowe's death, first extant edition the octavo of 1594, later editions of 1598, 1612 and 1622; Holinshed's <i>Chronicles</i> (1587) as source; the invention of Lightborn; anachronism, with Elizabethan court politics and favouritism transposed upon a fourteenth-century reign; twenty years of chronicle telescoped into a continuous action; chronicle history turned into domestic tragedy.	Gives an account of Marlowe and his works, and of the date, publication, sources and generic character of the play.	Boas; Ellis-Fermor; Cheney, <i>Cambridge Companion</i> , Chs. 1–2; Forker, Revels edition, Introduction
4	The Text I: Act I	To open the close reading of the text and to examine the exposition of the conflict.	Gaveston's opening soliloquy and the letter; his plans for Italian masques and shows; the trampling of the Bishop of Coventry; Edward's lavish titles to Gaveston; the barons led by Mortimer Senior and Mortimer Junior; Isabella's first appeal; the terms in which favouritism is condemned.	Narrates the action of Act I and identifies the lines of conflict established in it.	Text, Act I; New Mermaids Introduction

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5	The Text II: Acts II and III	To follow the rebellion of the barons and the turning of the queen.	The forced recall and second exile of Gaveston; the marriage to Margaret de Clare; Isabella's isolation and her turn towards Mortimer; the capture and killing of Gaveston; the rise of the Spencers; Edward's victory over the barons and the execution of Lancaster and Warwick; Isabella and the prince in France.	Narrates the middle action and explains the change in Isabella's position.	Text, Acts II–III
6	The Text III: Acts IV and V	To study the deposition, the murder and the restoration of order.	Mortimer's escape and the invasion; Edward's defeat and flight to Neath Abbey; the abdication scene at Kenilworth and the surrender of the crown; Kent's execution; the imprisonment at Berkeley; Lightborn and the murder; the fall of Mortimer and the accession of Edward III.	Narrates the closing action and comments on the play's treatment of retribution.	Text, Acts IV–V
7	Characters	To analyse the principal characters and their development.	Edward as king, lover and sufferer; Gaveston, the base-born favourite; Mortimer Junior as the rising politician; Isabella, from neglected queen to accomplice; Kent as the conscience of the play; the Spencers, Baldock, Lightborn and the young Edward III; the barons as a collective force.	Analyses each major character and traces the development of Edward, Isabella and Mortimer.	Text; Levin, <i>The Overreacher</i> ; Leech, <i>Poet for the Stage</i>
8	Important Scenes and Dramatic Art	To examine the play's structure, language and stagecraft through its major scenes.	The opening soliloquy; the trampling of the bishop; Gaveston's death; the abdication scene and the crown; Edward in the dungeon at Berkeley; the murder scene and Mortimer's final speech on Fortune's wheel; the sober, functional blank verse of this play against the mighty line of <i>Tamburlaine</i> ; rapid structure, compression and the absence of a chorus.	Comments critically on the major scenes and on Marlowe's dramatic technique.	Text; Forker, Introduction; Cheney, Ch. on the plays
9	Themes I: Machiavellianism, Failed Kingship, Private and Public Virtue	To examine the political themes of the play.	Mortimer as the Machiavellian politician and the Elizabethan stage Machiavel; policy, dissimulation and the rise and fall by Fortune's wheel; Edward's failure as king — misrule, favouritism and the neglect of counsel; the conflict between the king's private affections and the public office of kingship; the barons between principle and self-interest; the play as an anatomy of power rather than a Tudor homily on order.	Argues a case on kingship and Machiavellianism in the play with close textual support.	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> ; Ribner; Greenblatt, <i>Renaissance Self-Fashioning</i>

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10	Themes II: Religious Critique, Desire and Tragedy; Revision	To complete the thematic study and to consolidate the module.	Anticlericalism and the critique of religious authority — the Bishop of Coventry, the Archbishop of Canterbury and papal power, Edward's defiance and the Reformation background; the bond of Edward and Gaveston and the critical debate on desire, friendship and favouritism; birth, rank and the "base upstart"; suffering and the making of domestic tragedy from chronicle; a brief survey of critical opinion; revision of the module and clearing of doubts.	Discusses the religious and personal themes and frames a complete examination answer on the play.	Text; Cheney, <i>Cambridge Companion</i> ; previous years' question papers
R1	Remedial I: Guided Reading of Key Passages	To help students who find the language of the text difficult.	Slow reading of selected passages with glossing of Elizabethan vocabulary, classical allusion and syntax; paraphrase practice; individual correction at the desk.	Reads and paraphrases a passage of the play unaided.	Text, selected passages; New Mermaids notes
R2	Remedial II: Guided Answer Writing	To bring the same students to the level required in the examination.	Framing an essay answer on character and theme; selecting and quoting textual evidence; planning within the time limit; a short supervised exercise with immediate feedback.	Plans and writes a structured answer with textual reference.	Class notes; previous years' question papers

F. Teaching Methods and Aids

- Lecture-cum-discussion, with the historical background always tied back to a passage in the play.
- Reading aloud in class, with parts assigned, so that the verse is heard as dramatic speech.
- Board notes on chronology, the Tudor line and the structure of the play.
- Comparison with Holinshed's account, so that Marlowe's alterations are seen directly.
- Question papers of previous years for examination orientation.

G. Prescribed and Reference Reading

Prescribed text. Marlowe, Christopher. *Edward the Second*. Ed. Martin Wiggins and Robert Lindsey. New Mermaids. 2nd ed. London: A and C Black, 1997.

Reference books.

1. Forker, Charles R., ed. *Edward the Second*. The Revels Plays. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994.
2. Cheney, Patrick, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
3. Levin, Harry. *The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952.
4. Ellis-Fermor, Una. *Christopher Marlowe*. London: Methuen, 1927.
5. Boas, F. S. *Christopher Marlowe: A Biographical and Critical Study*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940.
6. Leech, Clifford. *Christopher Marlowe: Poet for the Stage*. New York: AMS Press, 1986.
7. Ribner, Irving. *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.
8. Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.
9. Tillyard, E. M. W. *The Elizabethan World Picture*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1943.
10. Legouis, Émile, and Louis Cazamian. *A History of English Literature*. London: J. M. Dent (current edition).
11. Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature*. Vol. I. London: Secker and Warburg.

Background and source material. Holinshed, Raphael. *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, 2nd ed., 1587 (the reign of Edward II); Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince*, trans. any standard edition.