




**Poetry**  
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**Lecture 28**  
**Alexander Pope-1**

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## Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

- Historical and Literary Context
- Alexander Pope
- Dr John Arbuthnot
- *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*
- Structure, Advertisement, Epigraph
- Selected Passages
- First Three Parts (1-146)
- Analysis



Alexander Pope was a unique eighteenth-century English poet born in 1688 and he died in 1744. He almost ruled the literary world single-handedly. He was a friend of Dr John Arbuthnot. Just before his death, he wanted something to be written. So, Alexander Pope wrote this memorial poem for Arbuthnot. We will look into the structure, passage called advertisement and the epigraph before we get into the selected passages in the first part of this lecture. We will see the first 3 parts. This poem has 7 parts and so, we will see the first 3 parts in this lecture now.

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## Historical and Literary Context



- Restoration Age (1660-1700)
- Neoclassical Age (1700-1740)
- Johnsonian Age (1740-1798)
- Protestant and Catholic conflicts
- **Wit, Irony and Satire, Heroic Couplets**
- Coffee Houses, Periodical Essays
- Political, literary and social satires
- Dryden's *MacFlecknoe* and *Absalom and Achitophel*
- Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Dunciad*



To begin with the historical and literary context, we can recall that Alexander Pope's period covers Restoration Age, Neoclassical Age and even touches this Johnsonian Age or as we noted earlier in another lecture Pre-Romantic Period. In this period what we have notice most importantly, is the conflict the constant conflict between Protestants on the one hand and Catholics on the other hand.

We also have to notice that during this period something strange happened. The amount of importance given to wit, irony, satire and heroic couplets reflects the kind of intellectual oriented kind of pursuits of this time. This was further enabled by some discussions poets and writers would have in coffee houses by speech conversation, by writing through periodical essays.

Their writings would be concerned more with political, literary and social satires. A few great satires of this period are Dryden's *MacFlecknoe* and *Absalom and Achitophel*. And in the case of Pope, we have *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Dunciad*, apart from the one that we are going to look at that is, *An Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot*.

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## Pope (1688-1744)



- Roman Catholic
- Short and hunchbacked
- Privately educated
- Extraordinary Master of English
- Satirist and epigrammatist
- "To err is human; to forgive divine."
- "A little learning is a dangerous thing."
- Successful in making money out of poetry
- A member of Scriblerus Club
- A friend of Dr. Arbuthnot, Dr. Swift, John Gay, etc.







A decisive character about Pope was that he was a Roman Catholic. That was a disadvantage for him. He could not attend University. He could not get jobs. He could not own lands. So effectively he was prevented from participating in English Society as a citizen. At the same time, he also had some personal problem, that is physically he was short and hunchbacked. This disability also was not in his favour. So he had to get education privately. He made use of this private education to his advantage in an extraordinary way, unimaginable way. He took this as a challenge to master English, like nobody else did in England at that point of time. He became a great satirist and also an epigrammatist that is one who can write short sentences with full of wisdom. We have some examples here. Many of us may be familiar with this and some may not know who the author is. 'To err is human to forgive divine.' That is an antithetical statement from Pope. It may not be his own wisdom but he was able to write all these ideas in memorable ways. Another one is, 'A little learning is a dangerous thing.' There are many and these are 2 just for example.

At the same time we have to notice that, he was extremely successful in making money by writing poetry through one system called subscription. He was almost earning around 9000 pounds in eighteenth century, in early eighteenth century only through selling his translations of Homer and Virgil; Unimaginable. There was a club called Scriblerus Club. Alexander Pope was a member of it. His friend, Dr Arbuthnot, Dr Swift that is Johnathan Swift and John Gay were members of this group. Who is this Dr Arbuthnot?

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## Dr John Arbuthnot (1667-1735)

- A Scottish physician
- A man of letters
- A member of the Scriblerus Club
- A close friend of Pope
- Introduced the character of John Bull, a personification of England, in his political satires
- Moved to France after Queen Anne's death





He is not doctor like Dr Jonson. That was a degree but this one is a medical degree. This Arbuthnot was a physician and he was a physician to the Queen Anne. He was a distinguished man of letters. He was also a member of this Scriblerus Club and a very close friend of Pope. In fact, something very interesting of we have about this Arbuthnot. He was also writing political satires at the time and he created a character called John Bull as the personification of England. When Queen Anne died, he could not survive there and so he moved to France.

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## *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*

- A verse epistle in which the addressee also speaks
- Published in 1735
- Written in the last period of Pope
- "an example of Pope's satire at its best" (Swinden, 32)
- A Horatian satire with Juvenilian conventions (Weinbrot, 240)
- Famous for the attacks on Atticus (Addison) and Sporus (Lord Hervey)
- A glimpse into the life of Pope and his times



Now, let us come to 'An Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot.' It is a poem for celebrating friendship. It is a poem celebrating the man called Arbuthnot but this poem also has some satirical elements. That is why this is a poem, which is partly personal partly public, but it is a very intense poem. It is a verse epistle, a letter written in poetry that is verse in which he addresses the addressee. We also have Arbuthnot speaking in this poem. That is why we say the addressee also speaks.



It was published in 1735. Just after this publication, Arbuthnot died in about 8 weeks or so. This is a poem that was written during the last period of Alexander Pope and it is considered to be an example of Pope's satire at its best. It is a kind of mixed form of satire because it has Horatian intention, but it has Juvenilian conventions. That means it has both positive and negative or not so ill will. At the same time, it uses ill will.

That is why the intention of Pope is actually mixed and the one hand he wants to show his love for Arbuthnot, on the other hand he wants to show his hatred for his enemies. So, this love and hatred come together combined. That is why it is both a Horatian and Juvenilian satire. It is very famous for Pope's attacks on Atticus that is Addison and Sporus that is Lord Hervey. This poem gives a glimpse into the life of Pope and his times that is early eighteenth century.

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**Structure**

- Total lines: 419; heroic couplets with some triplets
- Advertisement and Epigraph
- **Seven Part-Structure** (Burt 2007)
- Part 1: 1-68; Inconveniences of Pope's fame
- Part 2: 69-124; Dangers of Pope's fame
- Part 3: 125-146; Pope's summary of his writing life
- Part 4: 147-260; Pope's critics; Atticus (Addison), Bufo
- Part 5: 261-304; Pope's attitude to career and life
- Part 6: 305-333; Sporus – Lord Hervey
- Part 7: 335-419; Pope's virtues – father, mother, fr



The structure of the poem is given here. It has 419 lines on the whole. It uses heroic couplets and some triplets are also there. It begins with an advertisement and has an epigraph and 7 part structure



we have derived from one critic called Burt. We have given the reference. You can see that and read it. Easily it is available.

Part 1 deals with the inconvenience of Pope's fame. It is not easy to be famous person. Part 2 tells us about the dangers of Pope's fame. 3 tells us about Pope's summary of his writing life. Part 4 describes Pope's critics that is Addison and Bufo. Part 5 shows Pope's attitude to his own career and life. Part 6 deals with Lord Harvey, that is Sporus and part 7 shows Pope's own virtues particularly about his father, mother and friend.

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### Advertisement


- A "bill of complaint" written over a period of time
- Published in response to the attacks of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Lord Hervey on Pope's person, morals and family
- To provide "truer information" to the public
- A conscious attempt to expose certain people
- Dedicated to his friend Dr. Arbuthnot
- Resemblances to living people could be found but left nameless and so the author is blameless.



What is this advertisement about? This is actually a passage which describes the subject matter of this poem. Pope begins with this expression. He calls it a bill of complaint written over a period of time, not written in a short time. This poem, he published in response to the attacks of Lady Mary, Wortley Montagu and Lord Harvey on Pope's person, morals and family. Pope was provoked to write this epistle actually.

So, in response to Lady Montagu and Lord Harvey, Pope gives a truer information to the public what he is and what he is not. So, when he tells about himself, he exposes the weaknesses of other people also. He dedicates his poem to his friend, Dr Arbuthnot. He says, there are certain resemblances to living people, but he does not mention them by name and so he says the author is blameless.


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### Epigraph from Cicero

"... you will not any longer attend to the vulgar mob's gossip nor put your trust in human rewards for your deeds; **virtue, through her own charms, should lead you to true glory.** Let what others say about you be their concern; whatever it is, they will say it anyway." (Cicero, *De Re Publica* VI.23)

- Indebted to classical authors
- A neoclassical trait



Here is an epigraph. It is like a quotation from a Roman author Cicero. It gives us some understanding of Pope's purpose in writing this satire.

“...you will not any longer attend to the vulgar mob’s gossip nor put your trust in human rewards for your deeds; virtue; through her own charms, should lead you to true glory. Let what others say about you be their concern; whatever it is, they will say it anyway.” (Cicero, *De Re Publica* VI. 23)

So many people have said something about Pope and he remembers Cicero's idea, virtue through her own chance should lead you to true glory. Do not bother about what others say. Do what you have to do. So, this is again an indication of Pope’s indebtedness to classical authors. This is yet looking back to the past particularly Latin and Greek authors is a neoclassical trade that we have observed.



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## Opening Lines, 1-6



*P:* Shut, shut the door, good John! Fatigu'd, I said,  
Tie up the knocker, say I'm sick, I'm dead.  
The dog-star rages! nay 'tis past a doubt,  
All Bedlam, or Parnassus, is let out:

5. Fire in each eye, and papers in each hand,  
They **rave**, **recite**, and madden **round** the land.

- **Tone:** Conversational
- **Interlocutors:** John Serle, Pope's attendant and gardener, later Dr Arbuthnot throughout the poem
- **Problem:** Poetasters pursue Pope for favor



Now let us begin with opening lines. We have as we said Pope speaks and we have responses from Dr Arbuthnot also. In addition to that, we have another person John who is an attendant for Pope. So, we have a kind of dialogue throughout the poem. First, he speaks to John his gardener and attendant.

*P.* "Shut, shut the door, good John! Fatigu'd, I said,

Tie up the knocker, say I'm sick, I'm dead.

The dogs star rages! Nay 'tis past a doubt,

All Bedlam, or Parnassus is let out:

5. Fire in each eye, and papers in each hand,

They rave, recite and madden round the land.

This opening reveals how Pope was irritated by a number of poets or would be poets or writers calling themselves poets come to him to meet him. They rave, recite and madden round the land. This all Bedlam and Parnassus, either they are great inspired by Muses in Parnassus, or they are inspired by the effect of moon and so they are mad. So, either this or that.



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## Pope's Desperation to Save Himself



7. What walls can guard me, or what shades can hide?  
They pierce my thickets, through **my grot they glide**;  
By land, by water, they renew the charge;
10. They stop the chariot, and they board the barge.  
No place is sacred, not the church is free;  
Ev'n **Sunday shines** no **Sabbath-day** to me:  
Then from the Mint walks forth the man of rhyme,
14. Happy! to catch me just at dinner-time.



When all these bad poets start their march towards Pope, he wants to save himself. So, he tells his attendant John 'shut, shut the door,' but he is unable to do that. So, he is asking himself questions like this:

7. "What walls can guard me, or what shades can hide?  
They pierce my thickets, through my grot they glide;  
By land by water, they renew the charge;
10. They stop the chariot, and they board the barge.  
No place is sacred, not the church is free;  
Ev'n Sunday shines no Sabbath-day to me:  
Then from the Mint walks forth the man of rhyme,
14. Happy! to catch me just at dinner-time."

No time is free for Pope. Every time somebody or other is running around Pope to get his favour, to get his recommendation, to get his permission to publish their poems. So, we find he is frustrated by this kind of constant irritation from other poets.

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### Poetasters' pursuit of Pope

- 15 Is there a parson, much bemus'd in beer,  
A maudlin poetess, a rhyming peer,  
A clerk, foredoom'd his father's soul to cross,  
Who pens a stanza, when he should engross?  
Is there, who, lock'd from ink and paper, scrawls  
20. With desp'rate charcoal round his darken'd walls?  
All fly to Twit'nam, and in humble strain  
Apply to me, to keep them mad or vain.  
Arthur, whose giddy son neglects the laws,  
Imputes to me and my damn'd works the cause:  
25. Poor Cornus sees his frantic wife elope,  
And curses wit, and poetry, and Pope.



The bad writers are called poetasters. They constantly pursue Pope and so we have one specific passage where we title it Poetasters' pursuit of Pope.

15. "Is there a parson, much bemus'd in beer,  
A maudlin poetess, a rhyming peer,  
A clerk, foredoom'd his father's soul to cross,  
Who pens a stanza, when he should engross?  
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20. With desp'rate charcoal round his darkened walls?  
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Apply to me, to keep them mad or vain.  
Arthur, whose giddy son neglects the laws,  
Imputes to me and my damn'd works the cause:  
25. Poor Cornus sees his frantic wife elope,  
And curses wit, and poetry, and Pope."

This is the kind of reaction that he finds from his society if Arthur's son is not attending his studies, how can Pope be held responsible for that? Similarly, if Cornus' wife elopes with someone else, how can Pope, his poetry and wit be held responsible? That is the kind of unreasonable attack on Pope that, Pope is unable to bear and so he is expressing his frustration.

All these bad poets fly to Twit'nam. That is, Twit'nam is a place where he built a house for himself in a natural garden. So, all of them, that is on the river bank of the Thames, and so, people come in different ways through land, through water, they try to come there, reach him in some way or the other to catch hold of him, to get his favour and recommendation.

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**Address to Pope's Friend**

27. Friend to my life! (which did not you prolong,  
The world had wanted many an idle song)  
**What drop or nostrum can this plague remove?**

30. Or which must end me, a fool's wrath or love?  
A dire dilemma! either way I'm sped,  
**If foes, they write, if friends, they read me dead.**  
Seiz'd and tied down to judge, how wretched I!  
Who can't be silent, and who will not lie;

35. To laugh, were want of goodness and of grace,  
And to be grave, exceeds all pow'r of face.  
**I sit with sad civility,** I read  
With honest anguish, and an aching head;  
And drop at last, but in unwilling ears,

40. This saving counsel, "Keep your piece nine years."



So, Pope addresses his friend.

27. "Friend to my life! (which did not you prolong,  
the world had wanted many an idle song)  
What drop or nostrum can this plague remove?
30. Or which must end me, a fool's wrath or love?  
A dire dilemma! either way I'm sped,  
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Seiz'd and tied down to judge, how wretched I!

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And to be grave, exceeds all pow'r of face.

I sit with sad civility. I read

With honest anguish, and an aching head;

And drop at last, but in unwilling ears,

40. This saving counsel, "Keep your piece nine years."

'Keep your piece nine years,' that is advice of actually the Roman poet Horace in his book *Art of Poetry*. When poets write and they want to publish immediately the next day, Pope tells them wait for nine years and then in response all these bad poets say, "Nine years! How can we wait?" That is actually Pope's problem.



You write something, keep it for some time and then read it, revise it and then publish it. But these bad poets will not wait. And if they are enemies if they are friends, whatever they are, they read me dead or write me dead. That is what Pope feels about. This Pope should be dead. They do not want him to live. And Pope sits with sad civility what to do with these people, unreasonable people, what to do with this people who do not understand the process of writing, the process of writing quality poems.

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**Address to Pope's Friend**

41. "Nine years!" cries he, "who high in Drury-lane  
Lull'd by soft zephyrs through the broken pane,  
Rhymes ere he wakes, and prints before Term ends,  
Oblig'd by hunger, and request of friends:

45. "The piece, you think, is incorrect: why, take it,  
I'm all submission, what you'd have it, make it."  
Three things another's modest wishes bound,  
My friendship, and a prologue, and ten pound.  
Pitholeon sends to me: "You know his Grace,  
50. I want a patron; ask him for a place."




Address continues.

41. ““Nine years!” cries he, “who high in Drury-lane  
Lull’d by soft zephyrs through the broken pane,  
Rhymes ere he walks, and prints before Term ends,  
Oblig’d by hunger and request of friends:
45. “The piece, you think, is incorrect: why, take it,  
I’m all submission, what you’d have it, make it.”  
Three things another’s modest wishes bound,  
My friendship and a prologue, and ten pound  
Pitholeon sends to me: “You know his Grace,  
50. I want a patron; ask him for a place.”

This particular passage tells us about the kind of request made by these poetasters or bad writers. Some kind of favour. Like, they want to have the friendship of Pope or they want a prologue or introduction from Pope in his own writing and also, they want to earn some money, 10 pounds. So if they can get all these things by getting a patron through Pope, so they want if the writing is not

good. they want him to improve it but our Pope, our poet does not have enough time for them. So he tells them keep away, but they will not keep away from him and so he makes enemies out of these writers.


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### Attacks on Pope's Person

115. There are, who to my person pay their court:  
I cough like Horace, and, though lean, am short,  
Ammon's great son one shoulder had too high,  
Such Ovid's nose, and "Sir! you have an eye"—  
Go on, obliging creatures, make me see

120. All that disgrace'd my betters, met in me:  
Say for my comfort, languishing in bed,  
"Just so immortal Maro held his head:"  
And when I die, be sure you let me know  
Great Homer died three thousand years ago.



When these poetasters are unable to get any favour from him, they attack him. So, Pope says,

115. "There are, who to my person pay their court;  
I cough like Horace, and, though lean, am short,  
Ammon's great son one shoulder had too high,  
Such Ovid's nose, and "Sir! you have an eye"-  
Go on, obliging creatures, make me see.
120. All that disgrace'd my betters, met in me:  
Say for my comfort, languishing in bed.  
"Just so immortal Maro held his head:"  
And when I die, be sure you let me know  
Great Homer died three thousand years ago."

All these references to Horace, Alexander the Great that is Ammon's great son, even Ovid, these writers later we have Maro that is Virgil. All these writers are compared to Pope for wrong reasons. To abuse Pope physically. To refer to his physical disabilities like his cough, his hunchbacked body or his nose. Pope anyway does not care for them. He continues his life.


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**Why Write?**

125. Why did I write? what sin to me unknown  
Dipp'd me in ink, my parents', or my own?  
As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,  
I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came.  
I left no calling for this idle trade,

130. No duty broke, no father disobey'd.  
The Muse but serv'd to ease some friend, not wife,  
To help me through this long disease, my life,  
To second, Arbuthnot! thy art and care,

134. And teach the being you preserv'd, to bear.



Pope is not writing like other poets just for making some money or to get some kind of favour from others. So, he gives some justification for why he is writing. Why I write? He explains.

125. "Why did I write? What sin to me unknown

Dipp'd me in ink, my parents', or my own?

As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,

I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came.

I left no calling for this idle trade,

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The Muse but serv'd to ease some friend, not wife,

To help me through this long disease, my life,

To second, Arbuthnot! thy art and care,



134. And teach the being you preserv'd, to bear"



Pope was constantly suffering from some kind of disease or other. Dr. Arbuthnot was caring for him and so, he says this long disease. He was not married so he says, not wife. He did not disobey his parents. He did not choose his writing for making money.

He was not dipped in ink like Achilles was dipped in River Styx to be protected. So, Pope says there was something inherent in him. There was something that he practiced to become a poet. So even as a child, he says, I list the numbers that is when he was speaking, he was uttering verses for the numbers that is verses, poetic lines came to him spontaneously by some inspiration. So, he wrote.

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**Why Publish?**

135. **A:** But why then publish? **P:** Granville the polite,  
And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write;  
Well-natur'd Garth inflamed with early praise,  
And Congreve lov'd, and Swift endur'd my lays;  
The courtly Talbot, Somers, Sheffield read,  
140. Ev'n mitred Rochester would nod the head,  
And St. John's self (great Dryden's friends before)  
With open arms receiv'd one poet more.  
Happy my studies, when by these approv'd!  
Happier their author, when by these below'd!  
145. From these the world will judge of men and books  
Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cookes.



Alright, one writes. Then why publish? Here also Pope gives some kind of justification when Arbuthnot ask him.

135. **A:**“But why then publish? Pope replies. Granville the polite,

and knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write;

Well-natur'd Garth inflamed with your early praise,

And Congreve lov'd, and Swift endur'd my lays;

The courtly Talbot, Somers, Sheffield read,

140. Ev'n mitred Rochester would nod the head,  
And St. John's self (great Dryden's friends before)  
With open arms receiv'd one poet more.  
Happy my studies, when by these approv'd!  
Happier their author, when by these belov'd!
145. From these the world will judge of men and books,  
Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cookes."

He published his poetry because great authors of the time, great patrons of the time like Granville, Walsh, Garth, they all approved his writings. Writers like Congreve, Swift they all appreciated his writing and even the metered Rochester that is Bishop Rochester nodded his head. Similarly, St. John also approved, appreciated Pope's writings. So when these great people, great patrons appreciated, he started publishing his poems. Not these enemies, poetasters who would not understand real poetry or good poetry. By appreciating Pope, they received him and gave him some place in society.

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**Thematic Contrast**

- Good Writers and Bad Writers
- Friends and Enemies
- Security and Insecurity
- Normal and Mad people
- Writing and Publishing
- Fruitful and Idle Trade
- Approval and Disapproval
- Encouragement and Discouragement
- Happiness and Unhappiness

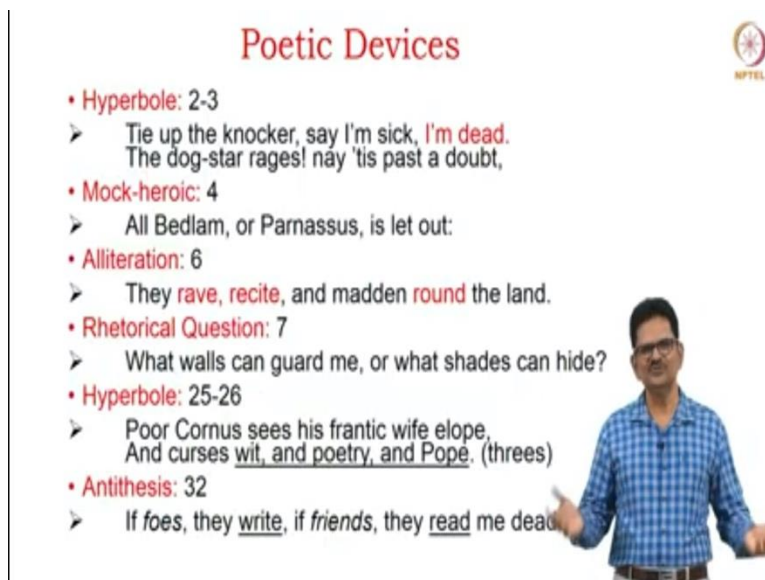


So in the selected passages that we have discussed, we see some thematic contrast. On the one hand, we have good writers. On the other hand, we have bad writers. So good writers of Pope, they

come to one category. If they are friends, they give him security, social security in the sense the he gets a place in literally life.

Life is normal for him and so he writes and publishes and his life is fruitful and he gets approval from others because of the encouragement and that gives him happiness as an author. On the other hand, we have bad writers. They become enemies. They constantly threaten Pope. Even it was rumoured that Pope was attacked physically by some people, his enemies and so Pope calls them mad people and he tells them it was their idle trade. They chose writing because he wanted to earn money but in the case of Pope, he did not and similarly bad poetry did not get enough approval and so they were discouraged and these writers were unhappy. So, these 2 kinds of writers': happy writers, unhappy writers, they are contrasted and Pope tells us which is the right way to choose.

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**Poetic Devices**

- **Hyperbole:** 2-3
  - Tie up the knocker, say I'm sick, I'm **dead**.  
The dog-star rages! nay 'tis past a doubt,
- **Mock-heroic:** 4
  - All Bedlam, or Parnassus, is let out:
- **Alliteration:** 6
  - They **rave, recite**, and madden **round** the land.
- **Rhetorical Question:** 7
  - What walls can guard me, or what shades can hide?
- **Hyperbole:** 25-26
  - Poor Cornus sees his frantic wife elope,  
And curses wit, and poetry, and Pope. (threes)
- **Antithesis:** 32
  - If foes, they write, if *friends*, they read me dead.

Pope uses a number of poetic devices in this poem, in the selected passages that we have used. Hyperbole is what we see at first. 'Tie up the knocker, say I'm sick, I dead. The dog-star rages! Nay 'tis past a doubt.' So, he goes to the extent of saying I am dead. So, he tells John tell them Pope is dead. Do not allow them to come in and the dog-star that is on seeing the star Venus, some dogs would start barking. Like that, these bad poets are shouting.


They are restless to meet Pope. The mock-heroic element we can see on the one hand all Bedlam, on the other hand Parnassus. Mad people coming out of hospitals, mental hospitals and poets inspired by Muses coming on the other hand. We have alliteration in this line, 'They rave, recite,

and madden round the land.’ We also have a rhetorical question in line number 7. What words can guard me, or what shades can hide? Nothing. These poets are, these bad points are such a nuisance. Passionate people trying to find Pope wherever he is. Even Sunday, Sabbath day, dinner time he is not free. So, the hyperbole is very effective when it comes to line number 25 and 26. Poor Cornus, Cornus is related to Hond, a cuckolded husband, that is, when the husband’s wife elopes with somebody. So, he says, ‘Poor Cornus sees is frantic wife elope and curses wit, poetry and Pope.’


Pope is not a person to write such a love poetry, but then for everything Pope is held responsible; In such a society, which does not understand good poetry that is poetry of wit. Real poetry of wit, intelligence, ingenuity and things like that. Neo classical poetry is characterized by one particular rhetorical feature that is antithesis, ‘If foes, they write, if friends they read me dead.’ So this kind of sentence structure we will find often in Pope’s poetry.

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## Rhyme, Rhythm, and Meter



- **Rhyme: Rhymed Couplets**
- **Caesura and Enjambment: 125-126**  
 Why did I write? what sin to me unknown  
 Dipp'd me in ink, my parents', or my own? ➤  
 As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,  
 I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came.
- **Rhythm and Meter: Iambic Pentameter; 131-134**  
 The Muse | but serv'd | to ease | some friend, | not w  
 To help | me through | this long | disease, | my life.  
 To se | cond, Ar | butnot! | thy art | and care,  
 And teach | the be | ing you | preserv'd, | to bear.



We have rhyme, rhythm and meter contributing to the richness of Pope’s poetry. This is rhymed iambic pentameter. So, we have heroic couplets. We have within these heroic couplets, we have caesura, enjambment. He was able to bring about some kind of variety in his writings in such a way that this heroic couplet does not become monotonous. So, he asks questions like this. So, we can see the caesura; Why did I write? There is a pause. That is where we have this variety.

“Why did I write? what sin to me unknown

Dipp'd me in ink, my parents', or my own?

So, this enjambment, run on line we have,

As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,

I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came.

We have rhythm and meter; we have indicated how this iambic rhythm can be seen in this:

“The Muse|but serv'd|to ease|some friend|not wife

To help|me through|this long|disease|my life,

To se|cond, Ar|buthnot! thy ar|and care,



And teach|the be|ing you preserv'd|to bear.

It is fantastic rhythm that you can see but we cannot read it like this, the whole poem.

(Refer Slide Time: 28:30)

### Overall Impression

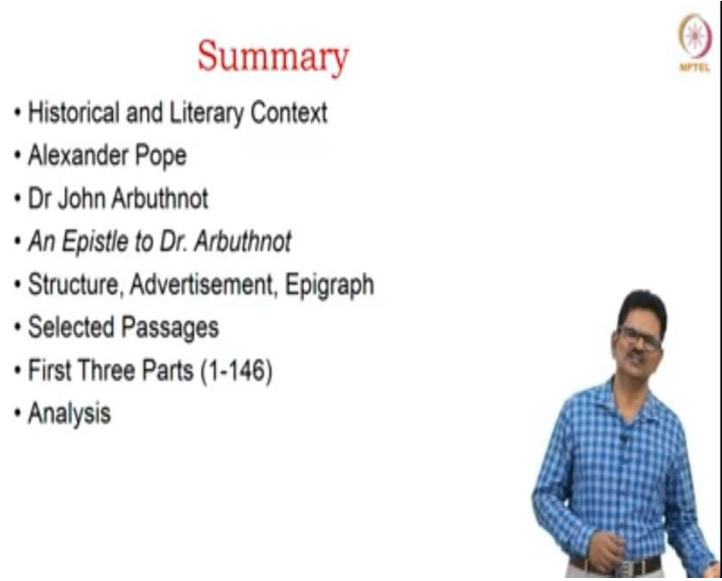
- Pope wants badly to escape from the poetasters but is unable to do so.
- He is concerned about the poor quality of writing and life in his time.
- He justifies his writing and publishing career as it came to him naturally and nurtured by mentors Congreve and Swift, among others.
- He contrasts good and bad writing, friends and enemies to indicate the right way of life.
- He uses hyperbole, mock heroic elements, rhetorical questions, antithesis, etc., to satirize the bad writers.



To give a comprehensive impression of the whole poem, we have a few ideas here. Pope wants badly to escape from the poetasters, but he is unable to do because they are constantly pestering him day and night and all places. He is concerned about the poor quality of writing and life in his time. He justifies his writing and publishing career as it came to him naturally and nurtured by mentors like Congreve and Swift, among others. He contrasts good and bad writing, friends and

enemies to indicate the right way of life. Pope uses hyperbole, mock heroic elements, rhetorical questions, antithesis, etc., to satirize the bad writers beautifully, aesthetically.

(Refer Slide Time: 29:18)

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- The slide features a red title 'Summary' at the top center. To the right of the title is a small circular logo with the letters 'MPTEL' below it. Below the title is a bulleted list of topics. To the right of the list is a small photograph of a man with glasses wearing a blue and white checkered shirt.
- Historical and Literary Context
  - Alexander Pope
  - Dr John Arbuthnot
  - *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*
  - Structure, Advertisement, Epigraph
  - Selected Passages
  - First Three Parts (1-146)
  - Analysis

To sum up, we saw the historical and literary context of Pope. Basically Neo-Classical, the central part of Neo-Classical period just before that we had Restoration. Just after this we would have Pre-Romantic Period. Pope occupies a central position in Neoclassical period. Alexander Pope's life is something very interesting in the sense that he was a man who was completely devoted to writing poetry. Although he did not get University education, he developed himself. He dedicated himself to the cause of improving himself mainly to perfect his command of English.

He achieved a command of English which others could not and particularly for learners of English, if you want to achieve some command over English read a few lines. Remember 'I lisped in numbers and numbers came.' One also should be happy about the kind of good friendship that existed between Alexander Pope and Dr John Arbuthnot. It is not surprising Pope was a diseased man and Arbuthnot was a physician who could give some comfort, physical comfort, mental comfort and also writing comfort for Pope.


This particular poem, *An Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot* is a celebration of the friendship and also a condemnation of the bad writing of the time. We saw the structure of 7 parts. We saw the advertisement where Pope has justified why he wrote this and in what context he wrote this poem,

to attack his enemies to give a true account of his own life. The epigraph pointed to the virtuous life, the right way of life.

Do not worry about what others say. Be devoted to your task. The first 3 parts give us an account of how he is pursued by poets, bad poets particularly and then how he shares his anguish with his friend Arbuthnot and then how he justifies choice of writing, choice of publishing and so we understand something about the poet Pope, the personal friendship between Dr Arbuthnot and Alexander Pope. We have some references for this lecture. You can make use of them.

(Refer Slide Time: 31:39)

### References




Burt, Stephanie. 2007. "Alexander Pope: Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot." Poetry Foundation.  
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/68902/alexander-pope-epistle-to-dr-arbuthnot>

Donaldson, Ian. 1988. "Concealing and Revealing: Pope's Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot," *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 18: 181-199.

Swinden, Patrick. 1973. "Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot," *Critical Survey*, 6 (1-2): 32- 35.

Weinbrot, H. D. 2014. *Alexander Pope and the Traditions of Formal Verse Satire*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.



The first one Stephanie Burt is the reference that tells us about the structure of this poem. This is available on the internet in the webpage of Poetry Foundation. This is called poems guide. So you will find it very-very useful. You have the text and also the poems guide and if you can read others, it is also good for you. Thank you.