

Date :- 24/04/2020

Satire Definition :-

Satire is a technique employed by writers to expose and criticize foolishness and corruption of an individual or a society, by using humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule. It intends to improve humanity by criticizing its follies and foibles. A writer in a satire uses fictional characters, which stand for real people, to expose and condemn their corruption.

A writer may point a satire toward a person, a country, or even the entire world. Usually, a satire is a comical piece of writing which makes fun of an individual or a society, to expose its stupidity and shortcomings. In addition, he hopes that those he criticizes will improve their characters by overcoming their weaknesses.

Satire and Irony :-

Satire and irony are interlinked. Irony is the difference between what is said or done, and what is actually meant. Therefore, writers frequently employ satire to point at the dishonesty and silliness of individuals and society, and criticize them by ridiculing them.

Mac Flecknoe Summary :-

The poem identifies itself as a satire of which the subject is “the True-blue Protestant Poet T.S.” referring to the poet Thomas Shadwell.

The first line of the poem creates the illusion of its being an epic poem about a historical hero. The next lines talk about Mac Flecknoe, a monarch who instead of ruling an empire, rules over the realm of Nonsense. The king is old and thus must choose a successor to his throne. Dryden wonders whether the king will choose a poet who has talent and wit or if he will choose someone like him, a man with no literary talent.

Flecknoe decides upon his son Shadwell, a man with no talent and who is tedious, stupid, and always at war with wit. Shadwell is also described as a very corpulent man. Through Flecknoe’s words, the poet continues to insult Shadwell in a mock-heroic tone, calling him a dunce, the “last great prophet of tautology,” and “for anointed dullness he was made.” Shadwell arrives in London, outfitted like a king and lauded by the people. Flecknoe chooses for his son’s throne a neighborhood of brothels and theaters birthing bad actors. Inside those places, real drama does not exist; only simple plays are welcome. Dryden also alludes to some of the historical Shadwell’s plays, like Epsom Wells and Psyche, and mocks another contemporary writer, Singleton, who is envious that he wasn’t chosen as successor to the throne. It is clear that in this environment, Shadwell will rule over those who have no literary talent. The descriptions Dryden offers only serve the purpose of highlighting the incompetency of Shadwell and create the image of a fool ruling over peasants.

As the coronation begins, Dryden describes the streets as filled with the limbs of other poets, suggesting

that Shadwell managed to get a hold on his position at the expense of talented writers. Once more, the poet mentions human waste and links it with Shadwell's writing and compares him with a historical figure, Hannibal, to suggest that Shadwell's purpose is to destroy wit and replace it with dullness.

During his coronation, the oil used to anoint a new king is replaced by ale, signifying the poet's dullness. After the crown is placed on his head, Shadwell sits on the throne and the former king prepares to give the cheering crowd a speech.

The former king begins by presenting the land over which the new king will rule, a territory where no one lives. Flecknoe urges his son to remain true to his writing and to not let anyone make any changes in his work. Flecknoe praises Shadwell's abilities and then ends his speech by telling Shadwell to continue to remain dull and to avoid trying to be like Jonson.

Flecknoe concludes by exhorting his son not to focus on real plays but rather to work on acrostics or anagrams. His last words are cut off and he sinks below the stage. His mantle falls on Shadwell, which is appropriate because he has twice as much "talent" as his father.