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## UNIT 3 ANALYSIS OF CANTO 3

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### 3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

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Our aim through this unit is to present a detailed analysis of Canto 3 from the poem ‘The Rape of the Lock’. At the end of the study of this Unit, you will understand:

- the characteristics of a classical epic
- what is a mock epic
- the detailed analysis of Canto 3
- how Canto 3 incorporates a majority of the epic features.
- what makes ‘The Rape of the Lock’ both an epic poem and a satire.

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the previous Unit, you were given a brief summary of the complete poem ‘The Rape of the Lock’ that consists of five Cantos. It is important to know the entire poem so that it becomes easy to understand Canto 3 which is prescribed for detailed study.

The poem narrates a trivial incident involving two aristocratic families and this incident is exaggerated into a full blown battle, almost paralleling the classical battle between the Greeks and the Trojans depicted by Homer nearly two thousand five hundred years ago in his monumental epic *The Iliad*. *The Iliad* remains an epic poem and does not feature satirical elements like ‘The Rape of the Lock’ which is both a mock epic poem and a poetic satire. It is considered as one amongst the great satires of English literature. Alexander Pope and John Dryden were the chief poet satirists of this period while the celebrated prose satirist was Jonathan Swift.

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## 3.2 THEME OF ‘THE RAPE OF THE LOCK’

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Pope’s poem ‘The Rape of the Lock’ is based on a real life incident in which a British Peer, Lord Petre, fascinated by the beauty of an aristocratic lady, Arabella Fermor, clips a lock of her hair to preserve it as a memento. This results in a fight between the two families. John Caryll—a friend both of Pope and of the two families—requested Pope to write a poem satirizing the triviality and foolishness of the dispute and engineer a reconciliation between the two warring families.

Pope’s ‘The Rape of the Lock’ is a masterly satire where he interweaves a real but trivial incident into an epic. Pope modeled his poem on the theme and style of the Greek Classics, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* and juxtaposed the silly conflict between the two families with the battle between two mighty armies depicted in the great epics. Thus the poem is labelled a mock heroic poem. While the story is essentially about the triviality of the fight between two families over the cutting a ringlet off Arabella’s gorgeous hair, it also mirrors the vanity and the frivolous life of the aristocrats in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Pope uses the grandiose devices of the ancient Greek epics to mock the inanities and vanities of 18<sup>th</sup> century courtiers and ladies. The basic themes of the poem are:

- the triviality of courtly life,
- the heroine Belinda’s (who represents all the elite women) narcissistic obsession with her beauty,
- the vanishing of her lock of hair pointing to the short shelf life of youthful beauty,
- the ascendancy of the lock of hair to heavens to shine like a star in the sky forever, thereby reflecting the immortality of beauty that is best captured in art and poetry in contrast to the evanescence of physical beauty,
- the gender disparity in a patriarchal society that shows the male conquest of women (the snipping of Belinda’s lock by the Baron) and
- lastly the wisdom in Clarissa’s speech (which is essentially Pope’s speech) about the fleeting nature of beauty with an inherent message to focus on moral uprightness rather than focus on physical beauty that is of a transient nature.

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## 3.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF A CLASSICAL EPIC

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The three major ancient epics that are known as the classical epics are Homer’s *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* (8th Century B.C) and Virgil’s *The Aeneid*. (between 29<sup>th</sup>—19<sup>th</sup> Century B.C). Later in the 17<sup>th</sup> century we have the classic epic *Paradise Lost* by John Milton which incorporates all the essential features of an epic employed by Homer and Virgil. The essential features of an epic are given below. It is not that every epic written thereafter follows all of them, but a majority of the main features are evidenced in most epics:

1. Every epic has one or two heroes like Achilles and Hector in *The Iliad*, Odysseus in the *Odyssey* and Aeneas in *The Aeneid*. When we refer to

someone as a hero, it is to be understood that he is an exceptional character, someone larger than life (like some of our Bollywood/Hollywood heroes), a skilled warrior, gifted with intelligence, strength and courage of an extraordinary kind. We have our epics *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* where the heroes are Rama and Krishna respectively. They are not gods, but gods who come down to earth and live and act like human beings. Ram is known as the *Maryada Purushottam*, the perfect Man. Krishna is known as *Purushottama* that is Supreme *Purusha* or Supreme Being, foremost among all men. The epics are not only about men and women, but also about the gods and goddesses who intervene in the affairs of men and direct the turn of events.

2. The classical epic is a narrative of a great historical event. In the ancient times, like our own *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, these epics were oral epics, sung to a listening audience by a bard or a singer, presumably of events that he had either himself witnessed or heard from others. It was only later that they were written. The oral epics are also known as the primary epics. When they later got written, they came to be known as the secondary epics or literary epics.
3. The plot of the epic involves a journey. In *The Iliad* it is a journey of the hero Achilles from Greece to Troy and back. In *The Odyssey*, it is the journey of the hero, Odysseus from Troy at the end of the Trojan war, back to Ithaca in Greece. In *The Aeneid*, it is a journey to Carthage. Similarly in *The Ramayana*, it is Ram's travel from Ayodhya to Lanka and back. In *The Mahabharata*, it is the Pandavas' journey across India and finally their ascent to the Himalayas. The intervention of the Gods during the journey and the resolution of conflicts with their help will finally show the balance between human will and divine will. Thus the epics are historical events as they actually happened. They are instructional as well.
4. The epic story begins in *medias res* ie. "in the midst of things", which is the practice of beginning an epic or other narrative by plunging into a crucial situation that is part of a related chain of events; the situation is an extension of previous events and will be developed in later action. In Homer's narrative poem *The Iliad*, within the first few lines, the poet narrates the ongoing events of the Trojan War, setting the stage for the action to unfold between the warring Greeks and Trojans. Similarly the *Odyssey* begins in *medias res*, or in the middle of things. *The Odyssey* is a sequel to *The Iliad*. *The Iliad* ends with the triumph of the Greeks in the Trojan war. *The Odyssey* does not begin at that point of the culmination of the Trojan War, but begins midway through Odysseus's wanderings. This device however is not noticeable in the Indian epics. In *The Mahabharata*, the background to the main action of the epic—the war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas is in the *medias res* though it is a little confusing.
5. The style or the form of an epic is commensurate or proportionate with the theme. If epics deal with exalted themes, the style is equally elevated, elegant and formal. No use of colloquial and everyday language is allowed.

6. Since the epics started as oral epics, in order to make the listener not miss out any word or description, epics use repetition. Many epithets or descriptive words or phrases are repeated. For example when the poet describes rosy fingered dawn, the phrase 'rosy fingered' is often repeated.
7. All the epics begin with an epic invocation to the Muses to inspire the poet to sing the song, followed by an announcement of the theme and sometimes a brief description of the main action of the work.
8. Another feature of the epic is its size. Normally the classical epics of Greece were either in 12 books or in multiples of 12. Homer's epics are divided into twenty four books. *The Mahabharata* is in 18 books, one and a half times of twelve. The chief characteristic of an epic is its bulky size.
9. Another essential feature of an epic is the inevitability of exaggeration while presenting the hero and his valorous deeds, his physical attributes and mental traits.
10. Supernaturalism is an inherent feature of an epic to create awe and wonder. Supernatural elements include the presence of gods, demons, angels, fairies, and use of supernatural forces like natural catastrophes.
11. Epics have an edifying quality. Morality is a key characteristic of an epic and this lends to didacticism as an essential aspect of an epic.
12. Epics are universal in themes and therefore have an appeal to the entire humanity.
13. Use of Epic simile is another feature of an epic. Epic simile or Homeric similes compare two objects that have nothing in common. Epic similes which often employ images from nature are used to give the reader a sense of great size, number, or intensity.
14. Classical epics include epic games, a trip to the Underworld, a vision of the future, and an epic catalogue of heroes, ships, armour, and armies.

### Check Your Progress 1

- (i) List some of the characteristic features of a classical epic.

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(Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.)

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## 3.4 THE MOCK EPIC

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Mock epic or alternately called Mock Heroic is a literary work imitating the style of heroic poetry in order to satirize a trivial or un-heroic subject. In short, mock epic attempts to create the feel of an epic without the heroic content. The three essential features of a mock epic are:

- The tone employed is mocking or sarcastic

**ALEXANDER POPE:  
'THE RAPE OF THE  
LOCK'**

- Use of exalted style and form that one associates with an epic and
- Treatment of a trivial subject

The epic tradition “was honed to a fine art in the late 17th- and early 18th-century Neo-Classical period. A double-edged satirical weapon, the mock-epic was sometimes used by the “moderns” of this period to ridicule contemporary “ancients” (classicists). More often it was used by “ancients” to point at the un-heroic character of the modern age by subjecting thinly disguised contemporary events to a heroic treatment.... The outstanding English mock-epic is Alexander Pope’s brilliant tour de force ‘The Rape of the Lock’ (1712–14), which concerns a society beau’s theft of a lock of hair from a society belle; Pope treated the incident as if it were comparable to events that sparked the Trojan War.”

According to Oxford reference, “Almost invariably a poem in heroic couplets, the mock epic typically employs elevated poetic diction (which Pope said should generate ‘pompous expressions’), focuses on a single ‘heroic’ incident or action, and incorporates selected elements from the machinery of some classical epic. Although the mock epic satirical poem, which flourished in the later 17th and 18th centuries, portrayed real characters and events (often thinly disguised) in contemporary and local settings, its literary ancestry may be traced back to classical antiquity.”

A close reading of the entire poem will show how far Pope has employed epic features from the ancient epics in his poem that has a trivial subject as its theme. We have spoken about the announcement of the subject or the theme of the poem and an invocation of the Muses as two basic features at the beginning of an epic. The protective armour given by the gods and goddesses is another epic device we can see in this poem. The poem has a rich range of literary allusions and an ironic commentary on the contemporary social world with a sense of suppressed energy threatening to break through the veneer of civilization.

**Check Your Progress 2**

(i) What are the features of a mock epic?

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(ii) Why is ‘The Rape of the Lock’ known as a mock heroic poem?

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(iii) What epic devices are used by Pope in Canto 3

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Then each, according to the rank they bore;  
For Sylphs, yet mindful of their ancient race,  
Are, as when women, wondrous fond of place.

Behold, four Kings in majesty rever'd,  
With hoary whiskers and a forky beard;  
And four fair Queens whose hands sustain a flow'r,  
Th' expressive emblem of their softer pow'r;  
Four Knaves in garbs succinct, a trusty band,  
Caps on their heads, and halberds in their hand;  
And parti-colour'd troops, a shining train,  
Draw forth to combat on the velvet plain.

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The skilful nymph reviews her force with care:  
"Let Spades be trumps!" she said, and trumps they were.

Now move to war her sable Matadores,  
In show like leaders of the swarthy Moors.  
Spadillio first, unconquerable lord!  
Led off two captive trumps, and swept the board.  
As many more Manillio forc'd to yield,  
And march'd a victor from the verdant field.  
Him Basto follow'd, but his fate more hard  
Gain'd but one trump and one plebeian card.  
With his broad sabre next, a chief in years,  
The hoary Majesty of Spades appears;  
Puts forth one manly leg, to sight reveal'd;  
The rest, his many-colour'd robe conceal'd.  
The rebel Knave, who dares his prince engage,  
Proves the just victim of his royal rage.

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Ev'n mighty Pam, that kings and queens o'erthrew  
And mow'd down armies in the fights of loo,  
Sad chance of war! now destitute of aid,  
Falls undistinguish'd by the victor Spade!

Thus far both armies to Belinda yield;  
Now to the baron fate inclines the field.  
His warlike Amazon her host invades,  
Th' imperial consort of the crown of Spades.  
The Club's black tyrant first her victim died,  
Spite of his haughty mien, and barb'rous pride:  
What boots the regal circle on his head,  
His giant limbs, in state unwieldy spread;  
That long behind he trails his pompous robe,  
And of all monarchs, only grasps the globe?

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The baron now his diamonds pours apace;  
 Th' embroider'd King who shows but half his face,  
 And his refulgent Queen, with pow'rs combin'd  
 Of broken troops an easy conquest find.  
 Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, in wild disorder seen,  
 With throngs promiscuous strow the level green. 80  
 Thus when dispers'd a routed army runs,  
 Of Asia's troops, and Afric's sable sons,  
 With like confusion diff'rent nations fly,  
 Of various habit, and of various dye,  
 The pierc'd battalions disunited fall.  
 In heaps on heaps; one fate o'erwhelms them all.

The Knave of Diamonds tries his wily arts,  
 And wins (oh shameful chance!) the Queen of Hearts.  
 At this, the blood the virgin's cheek forsook,  
 A livid paleness spreads o'er all her look; 90  
 She sees, and trembles at th' approaching ill,  
 Just in the jaws of ruin, and codille.  
 And now (as oft in some distemper'd state)  
 On one nice trick depends the gen'ral fate.  
 An Ace of Hearts steps forth: The King unseen  
 Lurk'd in her hand, and mourn'd his captive Queen:  
 He springs to vengeance with an eager pace,  
 And falls like thunder on the prostrate Ace.  
 The nymph exulting fills with shouts the sky;  
 The walls, the woods, and long canals reply. 100

Oh thoughtless mortals! ever blind to fate,  
 Too soon dejected, and too soon elate!  
 Sudden, these honours shall be snatch'd away,  
 And curs'd for ever this victorious day.

For lo! the board with cups and spoons is crown'd,  
 The berries crackle, and the mill turns round.  
 On shining altars of Japan they raise  
 The silver lamp; the fiery spirits blaze.  
 From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide,  
 While China's earth receives the smoking tide. 110  
 At once they gratify their scent and taste,  
 And frequent cups prolong the rich repast.  
 Straight hover round the fair her airy band;  
 Some, as she sipp'd, the fuming liquor fann'd,  
 Some o'er her lap their careful plumes display'd,  
 Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade.



Coffee, (which makes the politician wise,  
And see through all things with his half-shut eyes)  
Sent up in vapours to the baron's brain  
New stratagems, the radiant lock to gain. 120  
Ah cease, rash youth! desist ere 'tis too late,  
Fear the just gods, and think of Scylla's fate!  
Chang'd to a bird, and sent to flit in air,  
She dearly pays for Nisus' injur'd hair!

But when to mischief mortals bend their will,  
How soon they find fit instruments of ill!  
Just then, Clarissa drew with tempting grace  
A two-edg'd weapon from her shining case;  
So ladies in romance assist their knight  
Present the spear, and arm him for the fight. 130

He takes the gift with rev'rence, and extends  
The little engine on his fingers' ends;  
This just behind Belinda's neck he spread,  
As o'er the fragrant steams she bends her head.  
Swift to the lock a thousand sprites repair,  
A thousand wings, by turns, blow back the hair,  
And thrice they twitch'd the diamond in her ear,  
Thrice she look'd back, and thrice the foe drew near.  
Just in that instant, anxious Ariel sought  
The close recesses of the virgin's thought; 140  
As on the nosegay in her breast reclin'd,  
He watch'd th' ideas rising in her mind,  
Sudden he view'd, in spite of all her art,  
An earthly lover lurking at her heart.  
Amaz'd, confus'd, he found his pow'r expir'd,  
Resign'd to fate, and with a sigh retir'd.

The peer now spreads the glitt'ring forfex wide,  
T' inclose the lock; now joins it, to divide.  
Ev'n then, before the fatal engine clos'd,  
A wretched Sylph too fondly interpos'd; 150  
Fate urg'd the shears, and cut the Sylph in twain,  
(But airy substance soon unites again).  
The meeting points the sacred hair dissever  
From the fair head, for ever, and for ever!

Then flash'd the living lightning from her eyes,  
And screams of horror rend th' affrighted skies.  
Not louder shrieks to pitying Heav'n are cast,

When husbands or when lap-dogs breathe their last,  
 Or when rich China vessels, fall'n from high,  
 In glitt'ring dust and painted fragments lie! 160

“Let wreaths of triumph now my temples twine,”  
 The victor cried, “the glorious prize is mine!  
 While fish in streams, or birds delight in air,  
 Or in a coach and six the British fair,  
 As long at *Atalantis* shall be read,  
 Or the small pillow grace a lady's bed,  
 While visits shall be paid on solemn days,  
 When num'rous wax-lights in bright order blaze,  
 While nymphs take treats, or assignations give,  
 So long my honour, name, and praise shall live! 170  
 What time would spare, from steel receives its date,  
 And monuments, like men, submit to fate!  
 Steel could the labour of the gods destroy,  
 And strike to dust th' imperial tow'rs of Troy;  
 Steel could the works of mortal pride confound,  
 And hew triumphal arches to the ground.  
 What wonder then, fair nymph! thy hairs should feel  
 The conqu'ring force of unresisted steel?”

### 3.5.2 Detailed Analysis

Lines 1-4 describe the place where Belinda and the ladies have arrived. This is Hampton's court (Line 4), a place for social gathering where there is much talk about the affairs of the Nation and historical forecast of the fall of foreign tyrants. But the reference to the fall of Nymphs (line 6) is a veiled attack on the aristocratic gentlemen of the society who gossip about women with as much ease as they discuss serious national issues. The mixing of the serious political talk with the trivial talk about women reflects Pope's satirical ingenuity to mock at the vacuous, inane talk among the high society men and women.

Lines 7-8 make an explicit reference to the British monarch Queen Anne, where she “sometimes counsel take and sometimes tea.”, once more an attempt to ridicule the monarch and the people assembled in the court mixing serious conversation with the leisurely activity of taking tea.

The gossip of the courtiers is punctured with a sarcastic comment that every word they uttered was towards bringing down the reputation of someone or the other. The parting shot is “at every word a reputation dies.”(16))

The ladies and gentlemen disperse to enjoy the pleasures of a day at court—namely, gossiping with one another about everything from the glory of the Queen to the décor of the Court. The boat ride on the River Thames to Hampton Court is Belinda's journey.

Pope spares nobody in that elite group. He targets the judges who sign death sentences in a hurried manner so that they can quickly adjourn for lunch. Thus

the opening lines of Canto 3 presents the haughtiness and arrogance of the British elite who mix levity with serious business and who conduct court work with no empathy or concern for those on whom they pass severe judgement.

Belinda sits down to a game of ombre with two gentlemen "to decide their doom" and arranges her cards. The word "doom" in connection with the card game enhances the triviality of the pastime of modern aristocratic ladies and courtiers as it is juxtaposed with serious events on a battle field where every brave warrior awaits his doom.

In the next few lines Pope borrows the epic characteristic of gods and goddesses descending to protect their protégé when he makes a reference to the Sylphs. The Sylphs descend from heavens and perch upon the cards, their hierarchical rank corresponding to the card value. This is a veiled pointer to female vanity and social hierarchy.

The card game now begins. The card table is the battlefield. Lines 46-64 are a brilliant description of the battle of cards, paralleling epic battles between humans and gods. Here the Sylphs are perched on the cards of Belinda and because of their support she wins in the early stages. Soon the Baron dominates the game.

The see-saw battle (65-100) between Belinda and the Baron is vividly described as they play their cards to gain advantage over each other. Like the epic battle, the card game witnesses battle between equal contending rivals. Pope's use of epic grandeur to depict the silly card game once again highlights the triviality of life at the court. The next fourteen lines give a visual documentary of the game of cards. Line 99 affirms Belinda's triumph; "*The nymph exulting fills with shouts the sky*"

Just when Belinda celebrates her success, we hear the poet's (the narrator's) voice that poor mortals cannot foresee their future, as all the honours that Belinda had gained will be snatched away at her hour of glory. The rape of her lock by the Baron is presented in epic terms amounting to the loss of her honour.

Meantime coffee is served in exquisite chinaware. The steam arising out of hot coffee reminds the baron of his plan to steal Belinda's ringlet. In an aside, the narrative voice foresees the consequence of such a disastrous act comparing it with 'Scyllas fate(105-124).

The mythological reference to Scylla is when she plucks a single lock of her father, Nisus' hair (which granted him and the city invincibility) to present it to Minos whom she loved. Disgusted with her lack of filial devotion, she is punished by her father and transformed into a sea bird.

The Baron goes ahead with his premeditated action of cutting Belinda's lock. Surprisingly he gets a pair of scissors from Clarissa who later in Canto 5 finds this incident trivial and sermonizes about the need to focus on leading a life of moral uprightness than on the transient nature of physical beauty. But initially she is the one who hands the Baron the scissors to chop off Belinda's lock (127-130) drawing a parallel between the epic female characters arming their knights for the war.

When the Baron tries to cut the lock all the protective guardian Sylphs spread themselves on Belinda's neck. Thrice he tries and thrice he fails (135-138.)

Pope introduces a twist. The Chief of the Sylphs discovers much to his surprise and shock that "an earthly lover (*is*) lurking in her heart"(144) in spite of all

her(Belinda’s) efforts to conceal it. In a state of shock and surprise, he abandons his vigil and gives the Baron the opportunity to snip her lock.(139-154). Pope satirizes the ladies and gentlemen belonging to the aristocratic class stating that they do not possess genuine moral chastity. Baron’s attempts to cut a lock of her hair and Belinda’s pretension of anger and distress that her honour has been violated are indicative of the sexual undertones in the poem. Ariel who had earlier tempted her with the vision of a handsome young man now feels shocked at her unspoken sexual desires. And shies away from protecting her.(139-146)

Belinda cries in protest even as the Baron exults in victory. Her cries are compared to the lamentations at someone’s death. The Baron on the other hand is overjoyed at his victory . Canto 3 ends on this note of the triumph of Baron and the violation of female chastity.

Two major symbols are seen in Canto 3- The Lock and the Card game. Just as Helen’s abduction in the Greek classic, *The Iliad* triggered the war between the Greeks and the Trojans, Belinda’s lock is the cause of the gender war between the two sexes. The Lock also symbolizes female chastity. ‘The Rape of the Lock’ is thus made into the rape of Belinda’s honour and reputation. The Lock also stands for Belinda’s obsessive vanity over her beauty. The two ringlets have such an alluring power that the Baron wants at least one of them. The 18<sup>th</sup> century had its strong views on female chastity. Women should guard themselves against disreputation to their honour. It is not clear if Pope endorses this view or not. But what is clear from a reading of the whole poem is that he relishes mocking at the pretensions of the aristocratic society that flaunts high morality mainly for the female gender. He is equally scathing about the ladies who seem to place great emphasis on beauty, seeking to attract the opposite gender.

The Game of Cards is equated with the epic battles in the Greek Classic, *The Iliad* .The contrast between the battle of heroes and warriors, with the Card game Ombre, shows Pope’s savage use of mockery at the expense of the latter. The contrast is to highlight the inane and vacuous pastime of the upper class at the court. Pope uses dextrously the rituals associated with a battle once again to show by contrast the seriousness of epic narratives and the triviality of the 18<sup>th</sup> century court narrative.

**Check Your Progress 3**

(i) What are the two main symbols in Canto 3? Explain their significance.

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(ii) Give examples of Pope’s satirical comments about the 18<sup>th</sup> century aristocratic society in Canto 3.

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(Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.)

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### 3.6 GLOSSARY

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Memento:	Keepsake marking the memory of an incident or an event or a particular time and experience
Engineer:	To arrange for something to happen, especially in a useful and skillful way
Inanities:	Lack of sense, meaning, substance and ideas
Narcissistic obsession:	Excessive preoccupation with or admiration of oneself
Muses:	Greek Goddesses who are a source of artistic inspiration
Euphemism:	A mild, indirect, or vague term for one that is considered harsh, blunt, or offensive
Evanescence:	Disappearance/vanishing
Patriarchal:	A society where the head of the families are men
Transient:	Passing with time
Commensurate:	Corresponding, proportionate
Nymphs:	Water elementals who live in streams, rivers, cloud...
Levity :	Lack of seriousness
Ombre:	A card game with three players
Ariel:	Angel in Christian and Jewish mysticism
Sylphs:	In classical mythology sylphs are imaginary beings-both male and female that inhabit the air.
Matadore:	In Card games, one of the highest trumps
Spadilles:	In card games cards (in ombre and quadrille) known as the ace of spades
Manillio :	The second best trump
Basto:	The ace of Clubs
Plaebeian:	One of the common people
Knave:	Jack in a pack of cards, A playing card showing the figure of a servant or Soldier
Pam:	The Knave of clubs
See-saw:	Oscillating from one extreme to another
Codille:	In the game of ombre a term indicating that the game is won
Scylla:	The mythological reference to Scylla how she was changed into a bird forever after she plucked one of her father's hairs, a magical hair on which his power depended.

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### 3.7 SUMMING UP

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In this unit we have discussed the following:

- what is a classical epic
- what are the characteristics of the classical epic
- what is a mock epic. How do you distinguish a mock epic from a classical epic
- the analysis of Canto 3 of 'The Rape of the Lock' and
- the interweaving of satire into the mock epic poem

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### 3.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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#### Check Your Progress 1

- (i) Some characteristic features of a classical epic include larger than life heroes, narration of a great historical event; plot involves a journey; repetition of phrases; invocation to the Muse; mammoth size and inclusion of supernatural elements etc.

#### Check Your Progress 2

- (i) Features of a mock epic include a mocking or sarcastic tone and use of an exalted style while dealing with a trivial subject.
- (ii) 'The Rape of the Lock' is a mock heroic poem because it uses the epic form which is a genre meant for serious subjects. Here the style is applied to a trivial issue.
- (iii) Pope uses epic devices like invocation of the Muses, armour given by gods, rich literary allusions and irony among other things.

#### Check Your Progress 3

- (i) The two main symbols are the lock of hair and the game of cards. The lock of hair symbolizes female chastity and the game of cards is compared to the epic battles in the Greek tragedy *The Iliad*.
- (ii) Pope uses satire to comment on the 18<sup>th</sup> century aristocratic society. He ridicules the Queen who mixes serious conversations with the leisurely activity of drinking tea; he comments that the courtiers gossip and tear down others' reputations all the time. His use of grand epic style to present a trivial card game is also part of his satirical strategy.