



OF STUDIES- FRANCIS BACON

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8.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall

- learn one of the important forms of literature i.e Essay
- in this unit you will study the famous essay 'Of Studies' by Francis Bacon.
- themes, tone and critical analysis of the essay

8.1 ABOUT THE AUTHOR (ESSAYIST)

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) was a great lawyer, thinker statesman, historian and essayist. He claimed that "all knowledge was his province". He introduced a new system of thinking based on empiricism. His ultimate goal was to spread practical knowledge for the benefit of mankind. Bacon was knighted in 1603 and rose to the high positions like solicitor General, Attorney General and Lord Chancellor. Later he was forced to leave his post on the charge of bribery. After retirement he devoted himself to literary and philosophical work until he died in 1626.

Bacon's major works include:

1. *The New Atlantis* (A narrative fiction) (1627)
2. *The Advancement of Learning* (A philosophical work) (1605)
3. *The Idea of Progress* (A philosophical work)
4. *Essays* (First edition) 1597

5. *Norum Ogranum* (1620)

6. *Essays* (Third edition) 1625

Bacon was influenced by Plato, Aristotle, Cicero Machiavelli and Montaigne. He influenced Philosophers of later period such as Thomas Hobbes, Isaac Newton, John Locke, Thomas Jefferson, Robert Boyle etc. Bacon is regarded as the father of empiricism who argued that true knowledge should be based on inductive reasoning and careful observation of natural events. Bacon's philosophical works can be divided into three main branches scientific works religious and literary works and judicial works.

Bacon's 'Essays' are written on variety of topics like truth, death, adversity, marriage, love, envy, atheism, superstitions, friendship and so on. His style is terse and epigrammatic. Bacon was a great phrasemaker who coined many phrases and aphorisms. He is frequently quoted by orators, writers and thinkers. In 1999 edition of "The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations" there are around 91 quotations from Bacon's Essays'.

Bacon's essays are like 'dispersed meditations'. He was a great scholar and he quoted famous proverbs in Latin, French, Italian and Spanish. He often quoted directly from The Bible. Bacon's style of writing is masculine and plain. He was not a poet but his style also carries poetic touches. He had a rare gift of seeing analogies in ordinary things of life. His style is characterized by brevity, wisdom and picturesqueness.

8.2 ABOUT THE ESSAY

The Elizabethan Age was the most creative period in English literature. Just at that time, Renaissance took place in England. It was the period of revival of learning in England. Bacon said "Time is the greatest innovator." Bacon was a great thinker, scientist, innovator, statesman and essayist. This essays deal with various philosophical topics like love, friendship, marriage, wisdom, death and so on. These essays are "dispersed meditations" in true sense. They are crafted in terse aphoristic style.

This essay *Of Studies* is one of his most popular and widely read essays. Bacon's language is simple brief and clear. In this essay, he says that there are three main benefits of study delight, cultivation of better communication and a powerful means to solve problems of life. Bacon uses the words delight, ornament and ability for these three benefits of studies. However studies have disadvantage also. Too much study leads to laziness. Sometimes those who study too much become pedantic and show off their pedantry here and there. In true and genuine studies, affectation should always be avoided. The bookish knowledge has no meaning unless it is supported by practical experience of life. Practical experience helps us in applying the knowledge we have achieved from studies to real life situations.

Bacon says that studies are not for mere arguments or contradicting others. One should also keep open mind but not believe blindly whatever one reads or studies. One must cultivate critical attitude to evaluate the views of the thinkers and writers.

According to Bacon, there are different types of books that need to be read in different ways. Some books are to be read in parts skipping through the pages. Some books need to be read completely without missing any part of it. Some books should be studied very carefully and the reader should ponder over its

content with deep concentration. Such books have form and content that can be useful in our practical life.

Then Bacon tells readers about the remedies studies can provide for the diseases of mind. Every subject has its importance and use. For example, history enhances wisdom. It makes readers wise and understanding. Poetry makes the readers more creative and imaginative. Mathematics helps in acquiring subtlety. Natural philosophy makes people grave and serious. Logic and rhetoric teach them how to argue and debate.

These studies make people more civilized and sophisticated. As physical exercises cure the defects of the body, studies can cure the defects of mind. For example, bowling is good for kidneys, shooting for lungs and walking for digestion. In the same way mathematics is a strong cure for wandering, inconsistent minds. The study of laws is an effective remedy for developing good memory and curing bad memory. This essay by Bacon discusses the uses and benefits of the studies and knowledge of different subjects in human life.

8.3 TEXT OF THE ESSAY

STUDIES serve the delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability is in the judgment and disposition of business. For expert men can execute and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels and the plots and marshaling of affairs, come best from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to make judgment wholly by their rules, is the humor of a scholar. They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience: for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need pruning. By study; and studies themselves do give forth directions too much at large, except they are bounded in by experience. Crafty men condemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them: for they teach not their own use; but that is wisdom without them and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others; but that would be only in the less important arguments, and the meaner sort of books; else distilled books are like common distilled waters flashy things. Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And therefore if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit: and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not. Histories make men wise; poets witty; the mathematics subtle; natural philosophy deep; moral grave, logic and rhetoric able to contend. Absent studies in mores. Nay there is no stand or impediment in the wit, but may be wrought out by fit studies: like as diseases of the body may have appropriate exercises. Bowling is good for the stone and reins; shooting for the lungs and breast; gentle walking for the stomach; riding for head; and the like. So if a man's wit be wandering let him study the mathematics; for in demonstrations, if his wit be called away never so little, he must begin again. If his wit

be not apt to distinguish or find differences, let him study the schoolmen; for they are *cyminisectors*. If he be not apt to beat over matters, and to call up one thing to prove and illustrate another, let him study the lawyers' cases. So every defect of the mind may have a special receipt. **- Francis Bacon**

8.4 KEY WORDS

Delight	: pleasure, joy, happiness
Discourse	: written or spoken communication debate, discussion
Execute	: to implement, to put into practice
Counsel	: advice , guidance, instruction
Marshall	: to bring to gather, to organize people or things to achieve some aim
Sloth	: Laziness
Affectation	: pretension, show, pretense, snobbery
Crafty	: Cunning, tricky, wily, sly
Contemn	: to treat with contempt, despise, disdain
contradict	: deny, refute, dispute, counter
Confute	: prove a person or an assertion wrong
Swallow	: gulp down, devour, eat up
Diligence	: persistent work, effort, industriousness
Deputy	: inordinate, assistant, proxy, adjutant
Extract	: to squeeze out pluck out draw out
Distilled	: purified, refined, processed
Flashy	: showy, flamboyant, expensive, brightly-coloured.
Conference	: meeting , formal meeting for discussion
Confer	: to grant a title degree or right
Wit	: intelligence, cleverness, humour, good sense
Grave	: serious, solemn sober
Rhetoric	: oratory , art of effective speaking
Contend	: struggle to surmount difficulty
Stond	: hindrance, halt, post, stand
Impediment	: obstruction, obstacle, barrier
Abeunt studia	:
in Mores	: (Latin) Studies determine character
Wrought	: Shaped by hammering, fashioned in a certain way
Demonstration	: proof, confirmation, display, presentation
Apt	: suitable, appropriate
Distinguish	: differentiate, separate
Cymini sectores	: hairsplitters/ dividers of cumin seeds, skilled in analysis
To call up	: to call someone to do something, to invite
Defect	: shortcoming

8.5 SUMMARY OF THE ESSAY

The Essay *Of Studies* by Bacon is regarded as his masterpiece which possesses rich vocabulary, fresh ideas and highly useful and relevant themes. It appeals to people of all times. Bacon highlights the importance of Studies in the beginning of the essay. Studies have three main benefits delight, better communication and a remedy for solving problems of life, studies without practical application is meaningless. True learned people execute plans quite efficiently. Bacon further says that reading makes a full man; conference a ready man and writing makes an exact man.

Bacon states that too much study leads to laziness. Pedantry and affectation are the blemishes of superfluous studies. Studies are not for arguments and contradicting others. One should be open minded in order to learn but one must not accept everything blindly. Critical attitude is necessary in genuine study. Bacon further says that some books are shallow: some are packed with meaning. Therefore some books can be read in parts and some need to be read carefully and with deep concentration. Bacon says that studies help in removing certain defects in a person and make one wise and understanding. Studies also make a person civilized and refined in behavior and attitude.

8.6 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ESSAY

Of Studies is one of the most popular essays of Francis Bacon. It is formal essay with a serious tone. It is an intellectual discourse that appeals seriously to the intellectual readers. It is also didactic in nature. It is full of wisdom and knowledge. It aims at a teaching the readers the value of knowledge in pragmatic manner.

Francis Bacon uses the methods of comparison and contrast showing similarities and differences in the topics discussed in the essay. He also uses the method of illustration giving example for explaining his arguments and statements. For example, he compares and contrasts different types of books and how they should be read. He says “Some books are to be tasted, other to be swallowed and a few to be chewed and digested”.

Bacon’s essays are reflective in nature. They are short pieces with profound philosophical ideas written in aphoristic style. Like a lawyer, he tries to convince the readers and prove his points.

Of Studies deals with the themes of studies. He says that three important purposes of studies are providing pleasure more effective communication and enhancing our capabilities. Bacon also briefly states that excessive studies lead to laziness, vanity and hypocrisy. True education and knowledge should be backed by practical experience. He says that knowledge without practical experience and application is harmful and worthless. Experience makes us wise and judicious. We learn to choose the essence and eliminate the unnecessary things.

Bacon says that cunning and crafty people abhor studies. Simple and ordinary people admire studies while wise people use them wisely to solve the problems of life. They observe and analyze ideas and filter them coming to conclusions quite impersonally.

About reading, Bacon says that one should read not to refute others’ ideas or contradict them. It should not be used for pointless discussion or debate.

True study should be analytical and rational devoid of biased attitude. Bacon says that there are different types of books that require different modes of reading. Some books can be given cursory reading only. Some others can be read quickly and in parts. Important books need to be read slowly, minutely and with deep contemplation. Some books can be read by others who provide synoptic view of the books.

Bacon further says that reading makes a full man; conference a ready man; writing an exact man. Reading adds perfection to the personality of an individual. Conference gives a person the skill of arguing and debating. Writing makes a person exact by removing his weaknesses and ignorance. It also helps in enhancing one's memory.

Bacon discusses the uses and importance of studying history, poetry, mathematics, philosophy and logic. History makes a person wise. Poetry makes one more creative and imaginative. Mathematics provides one logical sense and philosophy makes a person serious and moralistic in attitude. Studies are useful in removing certain defects of mind as physical exercises remove physical defects.

Bacon has used some archaic words, some figures of speech and Latin phrases in this essay. This style is straightforward, direct and assertive.

8.7 TONE OF THE ESSAY

Bacon's essays are reflective and philosophical in nature. His essays always appeal to the intellect. *Of Studies* is an essay with a serious, reflective tone. It discusses the uses and benefits of studies. It also discusses its disadvantages. The essay very aptly explains how different types of books should be read and how different fields of study help the readers by curing certain types of mental problems of the readers. The essay is didactic and expository in tone.

8.8 THEMES OF THE ESSAY

Of Studies is the first essay of the first collection of ten essays by Francis Bacon published in 1597. In the edition of 1612, it was revised adding new sentences and changing some words. The theme of the essay is "Studies". Bacon was a thinker and pragmatic philosopher. He believed that one must put one's theoretical knowledge into practice. Knowledge without practical experience is meaningless. He says "Studies serve for delight and aesthetic pleasure. They also help in decoration of speech and effective communication. Studies also help in developing and sharpening one's ability".

Bacon advocated scientific enquiry in studies. He says that studies "perfect nature, and are perfected by experience: for natural abilities are like natural plants that need proyning (pruning) by study".

Bacon also discusses the disadvantages of superfluous and pedantic studies. He says that too much study makes a man lazy. Superfluous study makes a person snobbish and pedantic. Crafty men condemn studies; simple admire them while the wise make use of it wisely. True wisdom can be achieved through keen observation and critical analysis. Bacon makes a very systematic classification of different types of books. He says that some books are shallow and they can be read in parts skipping some parts of them. There are some books that need to be chewed and digested. Bacon says that different fields of study help in different ways" history makes men wise; poets witty;

mathematics subtle; natural philosophy deep; moral grave; logic and rhetoric able to contend”.

Studies also remove certain defect of human mind as physical exercises remove physical ailments or defects. *Of Studies* deals with the theme of benefits of study uses of study, disadvantages of study, knowledge, wisdom and how different kinds books should be read. The essay is full of profound wisdom, experience and observation.

8.9 BACON’S STYLE AND DICTION

Bacon’s style is full of vitality and clarity of thought and language. Bacon’s essays are often didactic and expository. He used the method of comparison and contrast in his essays. He borrowed references and quotes from great Greek and Latin thinkers, philosophers and writers. He also quoted from the Bible quite frequently. In *Of Studies*, he used figures of speech like similes and litotes. Litotes is an understatement in which positive statement is expressed by negating its opposite for example; “To spend too much time in studies is sloth”.

Bacon used archaic words like “maketh” (makes) “doth” (does) nay (no), stond (hindrance) etc. In this essay Bacon has used Latin phrases(i) (cumini sectaries (skilled in qualities) and a Abuent studia in Mores in mores (studies determine character)

Bacon made use of parallelism by using parallel sentences, structures, phrases, clauses and words. He often used colon, semi colon and comma to juxtapose parallel or opposite sentences, phrases clauses etc. His technique is straightforward and assertive. There is a fine combination of thought and brevity and picturesqueness. His style is aphoristic and his words, phrases and quote are often quoted. His quotes are like gems of wisdom.

Check Your Progress: 1

8.10 ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN BRIEF.

1. What are the uses of studies according to Bacon?

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2. How do the expert men use studies?

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3. What are the disadvantages of too much studies?
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4. What does Bacon compare natural abilities with natural plants?
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5. What is the importance of practical experience in studies?
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6. Why do crooked and crafty men contemn (condemn) studies?
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7. What is the right way of reading or studying?
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8. How should one read different types of books?
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9. “Some books are to be chewed and digested” Elucidate the statement.

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10. Explain : “Reading make the full man; conference a ready man, and writing an exactman”.

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11. How does the study of history poetry, mathematics philosophy and logic and rhetoric help individuals?

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12. How does the study of certain subjects cure mental problems in an individual?

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13. What are the characteristics of Bacon’s style of writing?

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Check Your Progress: 2

8.11 CHOOSE THE CORRECT OPTION FROM GIVEN BELOW.

1. Francis Bacon belonged to _____ period.
(a) Renaissance (b) Reformation
(c) Augustan (d) Romantic
2. Francis Bacon is mainly known for his _____.
(a) plays (b) novels
(c) essays (d) scientific works
3. Bacon rose to the position of _____.
(a) Prime Minister (b) Education Minister
(c) Treasurer (d) Lord Chancellor
4. Bacon introduced new system of thinking based on _____.
(a) logic (b) spirituality
(c) empiricism (d) emotion
5. 'The Advancement of learning' is a _____ work by Bacon
(a) empirical (b) philosophical
(c) scientific (d) literary
6. Bacon believed that knowledge should be based on _____.
(a) inductive reasoning (b) deductive reasoning
(c) philosophy (d) morality
7. Francis Bacon's style is called _____.
(a) romantic (b) logical
(c) epigrammatic (d) lucid
8. Bacon's essays are called _____.
(a) jottings (b) contemplative
(c) dispersed meditations (d) philosophical reflections
9. According to Bacon studies have three benefits viz.
(a) happiness, love and compassion
(b) truth, love and mercy
(c) delight, ornament and ability
(d) entertainment, wisdom and understanding
10. Too much study leads to _____.
(a) stupidity (b) hypocrisy
(c) wavering of mind (d) laziness
11. Bacon says that in true studies _____ must be avoided.
(a) laziness (b) seriousness
(c) affectation (d) sensitivity

12. True knowledge, according to Bacon should be supported by _____
 (a) practical experience (b) hard work
 (c) sincerity (d) emotional attitude
13. Good books require _____
 (a) deep concentration (b) speedy reading
 (c) repeated reading (d) reading of reference books
14. Bacon says that history makes men _____
 (a) noble (b) good
 (c) emotional (d) wise
15. Bacon says that study of mathematics cures _____
 (a) wandering mind (b) silly mind
 (c) sick mind (d) sad mind
16. According to Bacon, scholastic philosophy is good for _____
 (a) sad mind (b) nervous mind
 (c) muddled mind (d) inconsistent mind

8.12 BACON'S FAMOUS QUOTES

- ❖ Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready and writing an exact man.
- ❖ A bachelor's life is a fine breakfast, a flat lunch and a miserable dinner.
- ❖ Knowledge is power
- ❖ In order for the light to shine so brightly, the darkness must be present.
- ❖ Truth is the daughter of time not of authority.
- ❖ Some books should be tasted, some devoured but only a few should be chewed and digested thoroughly.
- ❖ Read not to contradict and confute, not to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider.
- ❖ Imagination was given to man to compensate him for what he is not; a sense of humour to console him for what he is.
- ❖ It is sad fate for man to die too well known to everybody else, and still unknown to himself.
- ❖ Money is a great servant but a bad master.
- ❖ Wonder is the seed of knowledge.
- ❖ The job of the artist is always to deepen the mystery.
- ❖ There are two ways of spreading light to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.
- ❖ Silence is the sleep that nourishes wisdom.
- ❖ Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark and as that natural fear in children is increased with tales, so is the other.
- ❖ Nuptial love maketh mankind, friendly love perfecteth it; but wanton love corrupteth and embaseth it.

8.13 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have studied one of the most thoughtful essays by Francis Bacon. Bacon's views on studies are quite relevant today also. Bacon believes that true knowledge must be supported by practical experience. Mere knowledge without practical experience is shallow and useless. Mahatma Gandhi always emphasized on practical knowledge and skills. He said that in true education, three should be developed. Three "H's" mean head hands and heart. Head stands for intellectual development hands for skill development, and manual labour and heart for emotional enhancement.

Bacon's views on studies are not only thoughtful but pragmatic. To understand Bacon's pragmatism you are recommended to read his essays on love, death, adversity, religion, atheism and so on. You are also advised to read and learn his famous quotes.

8.14 BOOKS SUGGESTED

1. "Understanding the Essay" Edited by: Patricia Foster; Jeff Porter
2. <https://www.thoughtco.com/of-studies-by-francis-bacon-1688771>
3. <https://www.enotes.com>

Answers

Check Your Progress: 2

1. (A), 2. (D), 3. (D), 4. (C), 5. (C), 6. (A), 7. (C), 8. (D), 9. (C), 10. (D),
11. (C), 12. (A), 13. (C), 14. (D), 15. (A), 16. ()