

:: STRUCTURE::**10.0 Objectives****10.1 About The Author****10.2 The essay: "On The Choice Of A Profession"****10.3 Glossary****10.4 Question****10.9 Let us sum up****10.10 Key Words****10.11 Suggested Reading**

10.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we are

- To know the writer and the writing styles of the author in the Victorian age
- To know views of the author on the education system, Christianity and choice of a profession
- To know how a person can choose his profession through introspection and not following the traditions blindly.

At the end of the unit, you should be able

- To understand the views of the author on education, Christianity, and choice of a profession
- To introspect yourself and distinguish between a blind race profession and profession you enjoy
- To use some difficult words and meanings in your own way.

10.1 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Louis Stevenson, a novelist, poet and essayist was born in Edinburgh, Scotland. He has one of the masters of the Victorian adventure story. Stevenson was a sickly child and remained in ill health though but his life. He started his engineering studies but soon he shifted

to Law. His true inclination was for writing. After completing his studies, he travelled on the continents for several years to gather ideas for his writing. Some of his experiences there are mentioned in his "Inland Voyage" (1878) and "Travels with a Donkey" (1878). After that, he wrote variety of essays and short stories, which were mostly published in magazines. In 1883, he achieved recognition and fame through the publication of "Treasure Island", followed by his most successful story "Kidnapped" in 1886. He revived the novel of romantic adventure with psychological analysis and fine studies of character. In 1887, Stevenson and his wife first went to New York, then to the west coast and then to the South Seas and settled on the Island of Samoa. Here he wrote "The Wrecker" (1892), "Island Nights Entertainments" (1893) and "Catirona" (1893). He died suddenly of Apoplexy, his two books were published posthumously.

10.2 "ON THE CHOICE OF A PROFESSION" By Robert Louise Stevenson

You write to me, my dear sir, requesting advice at one of the most momentous epochs in a young man's life. You are about to choose a profession; and with a diffidence highly pleasing at your age, you would be glad, you say, of some guidance in the choice. There is nothing more becoming than for youth to seek counsel; nothing more becoming to age than to be able to give it; and in a civilisation old and complicated like ours, where practical persons boast of a kind of practical philosophy superior to all others, you would very naturally expect to find all such questions systematically answered. For the dicta of the Practical Philosophy, you come to me. What, you ask, are the principles usually followed by the wise in the like critical junctures? There, I confess, you pose me on the threshold. I have examined my own recollections; I have interrogated others; and with all the will in the world to serve you better, I fear I can only tell you that the wise, in these circumstances, act upon no principles whatever. This is disappointing to you; it was painful to myself; but if I am to declare the truth as I see it, I must repeat that wisdom has nothing to do with the choice of a profession. We all know what people say, and very foolish it usually is. The question is to get inside of these flourishes, and discover what it is they think and ought to say: to perform, in short, the Socratic Operation. - The more ready-made answers there are to any question, the more abstruse it becomes; for those of whom we make the enquiry have the less need of consideration before they reply. The world being more or less beset with Anxious Enquirers of the Socratic persuasion, it is the object of a Liberal Education to equip people with a proper number of these answers by way of passport; so they can pass swimmingly to and fro on their affairs without the trouble of thinking. How should a banker know his own mind? It takes him all his time to manage his bank. If you saw a company of pilgrims, walking as if for a wager, each with his teeth set; and if you

happened to ask them one after another: Whither they were going? and from each you were to receive the same answer: that positively they were all in such a hurry, they had never found leisure to enquire into the nature of their errand: - confess, my dear sir, you would be startled at the indifference they exhibited. Am I going to far, if I say, that this is the condition of the large majority of our fellow-men and almost all our fellow-women?

I stop a banker. "My good fellow," I say, "give me a moment." "I have not a moment to spare," says he. "Why?" I enquire. "I must be banking," he replies. "I am so busily engaged in banking all day long that I have hardly leisure for my meals." "And what," I continue my interrogatory, "is banking?" "Sir," says he, "it is my business." "Your business?" I repeat. "And what is a man's business?" "Why," cries the banker, "a man's business is his duty." And with that he breaks away from me, and I see him skimming to his avocations. But this is a sort of answer that provokes reflection. Is a man's business his duty? Or perhaps should not his duty be his business? If it is not my duty to conduct a bank (and I contend that it is not) is it the duty of my friend the banker? Who told him it was? Is it in the Bible? Is he sure that banks are a good thing? Might it not have been his duty to stand aside, and let some one else conduct the bank? Or perhaps ought he not to have been a ship-captain instead? All of these perplexing queries may be summed up under one head: the grave problem which my friend offers to the world: Why is he a Banker? Well, why is it? There is one principal reason, I conceive: that the man was trapped. Educations, as practised, is a form of harnessing with the friendliest intentions. The fellow was hardly in trousers before they whipped him into school; hardly done with school before they smuggled him into an office; it is ten to one they have had him married into the bargain; and all this before he has had time so much as to imagine that there may be any other practicable course. Drum, drum, drum; you must be in time for school; you must do your Cornelius Nepos; you must keep your hands clean; you must go to parties - a young man should make friends; and, finally - you must take this opening in a bank. He has been used to caper to this sort of piping from the first; and he joins the regiment of bank clerks for precisely the same reason as he used to go to the nursery at the stroke of eight. Then at last, rubbing his hands with a complacent smile, the parent lays his conjuring pipe aside. The trick is performed, ladies and gentlemen; the wild ass's colt is broken in; and now sits diligently scribing. Thus it is, that, out of men, we make bankers.

You have doubtless been present at the washing of sheep, which is a brisk, high-handed piece of manoeuvring, in its way; but what is it, as a subject of contemplation, to the case of the poor young animal, Man, turned loose into this roaring world, herded by robustious guardians, taken with the panic before he has wit enough to apprehend its cause, and soon flying with all his heels in the van of the general stampede? It may be that in after years, he shall fall upon a train of reflection, and begin

narrowly to scrutinise the reasons that decided his path and his continued mad activity in that direction. And perhaps he may be very well pleased at the retrospect, and see fifty things that might have been worse, for one that would have been better; and even supposing him to take the other cue, bitterly to deplore the circumstances in which he is placed and bitterly to reprobate the jockeying that got him into them, the fact is, it is too late to indulge such whims. It is too late, after the train has started, to debate the needfulness of this particular journey: the door is locked, the express goes tearing overland at sixty miles an hour; he had better betake himself to sleep or the daily paper, and discourage unavailing thought. He seems many pleasant places out of the window: cottages in a garden, angles by the riverside, balloons voyaging the sky; but as for him, he is booked for all his natural days, and must remain a banker to the end. If the juggling only began with school-time, if even the domineering friends and counsellors had made a choice of their own, there might still be some pretension to philosophy in the affair. But no. They too were trapped; they are but tame elephants unwittingly ensnaring others, and were themselves ensnared by tame elephants of an older domestication. We have all learned our tricks in captivity, to the spiring of Mrs. Grundy and a system of rewards and punishments. The crack of the whip and the trough of fodder: the cut direct and an invitation to dinner: the gallows and the Shorter Catechism: a pat upon the head and a stinging lash on the reverse: these are the elements of education and the principles of the Practical Philosophy. Sir Thomas Browne, in the earlier part of the Seventeenth Century, had already apprehended the staggering fact that geography is a considerable part of orthodoxy; and that a man who, when born in London, makes a conscientious Protestant, would have made an equally conscientious Hindu if he had first seen daylight in Benares. This is but a small part, however important, of the things that are settled for us by our place of birth. An Englishman drinks beer and tastes his liquor in the throat; a Frenchman drinks wine and tastes it in the front of the mouth. Hence, a single beverage lasts the Frenchman all afternoon; and the Englishman cannot spend above a very short time in a café, but he must swallow half a bucket. The Englishman takes a cold tub every morning in his bedroom; the Frenchman has an occasional hot bath. The Englishman has an unlimited family and will die in harness; the Frenchman retires upon a competency with three children at the outside. So this imperative national tendency follows us through all the privacies of life, dictates our thoughts, and attends us to the grave. We do nothing, we say nothing, we wear nothing, but it is stamped with the Queen's Arms. We are English down to our boots and into our digestions. There is not a dogma of all those by which we lead young men, but we get it ourselves, between sleep and waking, between death and life, in a complete abeyance of the reasoning part. "But how, sir," (you will ask) "is there then no wisdom in the world? And when my admirable father was this day urging me, with the most affecting expressions, to decide on an industrious, honest and lucrative employment--?" Enough, sir; I follow

your thoughts, and will answer them to the utmost of my ability. Your father, for whom I entertain a singular esteem is, I am proud to believe, a professing Christian: the Gospel, therefore, is or ought to be his rule of conduct. Now, I am of course ignorant to the terms employed by your father; but I quite here from a very urgent letter, written by another parent, who was a man of sense, integrity, great energy, and a Christian persuasion, and who has perhaps set forth the common view with a certain innocent openness of his own: "You are now come to that time of life," he writes to his son, "and have reason within yourself to consider the absolute necessity of making provision for the time when it will be asked, Who is this man? Is he doing any good in the world? Has he the means of being 'One of us'? I beseech you," he goes on, rising in emotion, and appealing to his son by name, "I beseech you do not trifle with this till it actually comes upon you. Bethink yourself and bestir yourself as a man. This is the time--" and so forth. This gentleman has candour; he is perspicacious, and has to deal apparently with a perspicacious pick-logic of a son; and hence the startling perspicacity of the document. But, my dear sir, what a principle of life! To "do good in the world" is to be received into a society apart from personal affection. I could name many forms of evil vastly more exhilarating whether in prospect or enjoyment. If I scraped money, believe me, it should be for some more cordial purpose. And then, scraping money? It seems to me as if he had forgotten the Gospel. This is a view of life not quite the same as the Christian, which the old gentleman professed and sincerely studied to practise. But upon this point, I dare dilate no further. Suffice it to say, that looking round me on the manifestations of this Christian society of ours, I have been often tempted to exclaim: What, then, is Antichrist? A wisdom, at least, which professes one set of propositions and yet acts upon another, can be no very entire or rational ground of conduct. Doubtless, there is much in this question of money; and for my part, I believe no young man ought to be at peace till he is self-supporting, and has an open, clear life of it on his own foundation. But here a consideration occurs to me of, as I must consider, startling originality. It is this: That there are two sides to this question as well as to so many others. Make more? - Aye, or spend less? There is no absolute call upon a man to make any specific income, unless, indeed, he has set his immortal soul on being "One of us." A thoroughly respectable income is as much as a man spends. A luxurious income, or true opulence, is something more than a man spends. Raise the income, lower the expenditure, and, my dear sir, surprising as it seems, we have the same result. But I hear you remind me, with pursed lips, of privations - of hardships. Alas! Sir, there are privations upon either side; the banker has to sit all day in his bank, a serious privation; can you not conceive that the landscape painter, whom I take to be the meanest and most lost among contemporary men, truly and deliberately prefers the privations upon his side - to wear no gloves, to drink beer, to live on chops or even on potatoes, and lastly, not to be "One of us" - truly and deliberately prefers his privations to those of

the banker? I can. Yes, sir, I repeat those words; I can. Believe me, there are Rivers in Bohemia! - but there is nothing so hard to get people to understand as this: That they pay for their money; and nothing so difficult to make them remember as this: That money, when they have it, is for most of them, at least, only a cheque to purchase pleasure with. How then if a man gets pleasure in following an art? He might gain more cheques by following another; but then, although there is a difference in cheques, the amount of pleasure is the same. He gets some of his directly; unlike the bank clerk, he is having his fortnight's holiday, and doing what delights him, all the year. All these patent truisms have a very strange air, when written down. But that, my dear sir, is no fault of mine or of the truisms. There they are. I beseech you, do not trifle with them. Bethink yourself like a man. This is the time. But, you say, all this is very well; it does not help me to a choice. Once more, sir, you have me; it does not. What shall I say? A choice, let us remember, is almost more of a negative than a positive. You embrace one thing; but you refuse a thousand. The most liberal profession imprisons many energies and starves many affections. If you are in a bank, you cannot be much upon the sea. You cannot be both a first-rate violinist and a first-rate painter: you must lose in the one art if you persist in following both. If you are sure of your preference, follow it. If not - nay, my dear sir, it is not for me or any man to go beyond this point. God made you; not I. I cannot even make you over again. I have heard of a schoolmaster, whose speciality it was to elicit the bent of each pupil: poor schoolmaster, poor pupils! As for me, if you have nothing indigenious in your own heart, no living preference, no fine, human scorn, I leave you to the tide; it will sweep you somewhere. Have you but a grain of inclination, I will help you. If you wish to be a costermonger, be it, shame the devil; and I will stand the donkey. If you wish to be nothing, once more I leave you to the tide. I regret profoundly, my dear young sir, not only for you in whom I see such a lively promise of the future, but for the sake of your admirable and truly worthy father and your no less excellent mamma, that my remarks should seem no more conclusive. I can give myself this praise, that I have kept back nothing; but this, alas! is a subject on which there is little to put forward. It will probably not much matter what you decide upon doing; for most men seem to sink at length to the degree of stupor necessary for contentment in their different estates. Yes, sir, this is what I have observed. Most men are happy, and most men dishonest. Their mind sinks to the proper level; their honour easily accepts the custom of the trade. I wish you may find degeneration no more painful than your neighbours, soon sink into apathy, and be long spared in a state of respectable somnambulism, from the grave to which we haste.

10.3 GLOSSARY

01.	Momentous	:	Very important or serious
02.	Epoch	:	a period of time in history during which important events or changes take place.
03.	Diffidence	:	to have much confidence
04.	Becoming	:	suitable for somebody or situation
05.	Dicta	:	statements that express something that people believe is always true
06.	Juncture	:	A particular point or stage in an activity or a series of events.
07.	pose	:	to create a problem that has to be dealt with
08.	flourish	:	to develop quickly and be successful
09.	abstruse	:	difficult to understand
10.	beset with	:	to affect in an unpleasant or harmful way
11.	wager	:	bet
12.	Practical philosophy	:	Practical philosophy is the use of philosophy and philosophical techniques in everyday life.
13.	Whither	:	old use for "where", "to which"
14.	errand	:	a job for somebody that involves going somewhere to take a message / deliver goods.
15.	break away	:	to be separate from
16.	avocations	:	hobbies
17.	provoke	:	to cause a particular reaction
18.	reflection	:	an image on a mirror, shiny surface or water
19.	conceive	:	to form an idea in mind.
20.	to whip	:	to make someone run quickly and violently in a particular direction.
21.	Smuggle	:	to take, send, bring goods or people secretly into or out of the country.
22.	Caper to	:	Run or jump around in a happy and exited way.
23.	Complacent	:	too satisfied with oneself or situation
24.	Wild ass's colt	:	a young male ass / horse
25.	scribe	:	a person who made copies of written document before printing was invented

26.	high-handed	:	using authority in an unreasonable way.
27.	Maneuvering	:	clever, skilful but often dishonest way of achieving aim.
28.	robustious	:	strongly assertive
29.	fall upon	:	to take hold of something with great energy and enthusiasm.
30.	retrospect	:	think about past event or situation
31.	deplore	:	to strongly disapprove
32.	reprobate	:	A person who behaves in a way that society thinks it immoral.
33.	whim	:	A sudden wish to do or have something even when it is unnecessary / unusual.
34.	betake	:	to go somewhere
35.	ensnaring	:	to make somebody unable to escape from a difficult situation.
36.	domestication	:	to make animals living with and living for humans.
37.	Mrs. Grundy	:	It is a figurative name for an extremely conventional person. It is a tendency to be overly fearful of what others might think.
38.	Catechism	:	A set of questions and answers that are used for teaching people about the beliefs of the Christian religion.
39.	staggering	:	so great, shocking or surprising that it is difficult to believe
40.	conscientious	:	taking care to do things carefully and correctly.
41.	competency	:	Ability to do something well .
42.	dictate	:	to tell somebody to do
43.	dogma	:	A set of belief held by a group which others are expected to follow.
44.	abeyance	:	not being used.
45.	candour	:	the quality of saying what one thinks openly
46.	perspicacious	:	able to understand something quickly.
47.	exhilarating	:	very exciting, enjoyable
48.	opulence	:	luxury
49.	pursed lip	:	to show disapproval
50.	truism	:	clear true statement
51.	Somnambulism	:	walking in sleep.

Check Your Progress

Q.1 Why does the essayist say that wisdom has nothing to do with the choice of a profession?

Q.2 What should be the purpose of the liberal education?

Q.3 What, according to the essayist, is the condition of the majority of fellow men?

Q.4 What according to the essayist is the principal reason for not knowing the purpose of their work by majority of the people?

Q.5 What does a person miss in his daily life? Why?

Q.6 What are the elements of education and principles of practical philosophy?

Q.7 What are the views of the author on Christianity?

Q.8 What, according to author, is wisdom?

Q.9 What is a respectable income?

Q.10 What are the essayist's views on hardships? How does he convince the reader about it ?

Q.11 What does the essayist say about the choice of a profession?

Q.12 Why does the essayist regret at the end of the essay?

Use the following words and make your own sentences.

1. Beseech:
2. Industrious:
3. Avocations:
4. Whim:
5. Retrospect:
6. Competency:
7. Exhilarating:
8. Elicit:
9. Somnambulism:
10. Apathy:
11. Lucrative:

Choose a proper word from the list of the words given below and fill in the blanks. (reflection, taste his liquor, truisms, avocations, pick-logic) (answers at the end)

1. I see him skimming to his
2. He shall fall upon the train of
3. An Englishman drinks beer and in his throat.
4. He has to deal apparently with a perspicacious Of a son.
5. All these patenthave a very strange air.

Find the referential meanings of the following words.

1. Socratic Operation
2. Catechism
3. Mrs. Grundy

Write the meanings of the following phrasal prepositions and use them in your own sentences:

1. to break away
2. to caper to
3. to indulge into
4. to trifle with
5. to sum up

Answers

Q.1 Why does the essayist say that wisdom has nothing to do with the choice of a profession ?

Ans. The essayist says so because he, though his own experience and answer from the others, believes that a wise man acts upon the need and urgency of the circumstances and not through any principles, It has nothing to do with the profession of a person.

Q.2 What should be the purpose of the liberal education ?

Ans. The purpose of the liberal education should be to make a person curious, raise questions among himself and allow him to think for their answer. Because the ready-made stereotyped conventional

answers make these questions more difficult to understand. The liberal education should make a person flourish, think and act accordingly.

Q.3 What, according to the essayist, is the condition of the majority of fellow men ?

Ans. with the examples of a banker who keeps on managing the bank and of pilgrims who are walking in a hurry, the essayist describes the condition of majority of fellow-men that they are unaware of the purpose and the direction of the efforts they are making. Neither do they have leisure to find them out. They consider their efforts to be their duty, but they do not know why they are performing it.

Q.4 What according to the essayist is the principal reason for not knowing the purpose of their work by majority of the people ?

Ans. The essayist thinks that man is trapped in the conventions. Before he understands himself, he is forced to follow what others have defined for him. Before he enjoys his childhood, he is sent to school to college, to office and then he is married. He spends his entire life at the stroke of the clock. He does not have leisure to think about the purpose of his activities. His parents take pride in activating children in this way.

Q.5 What does person miss in his daily life ? why ?

Ans. A person mechanically joins the journey of daily chores. He does not pay attention to the surrounding beauty. The essayist gives an example of a train journey and says in his hurry to reach the destination, and in compulsion to remain loyal to his duties, he misses to see the pleasant places out of the window like cottages in a garden, angles by the riverside, balloons voyaging the sky etc. It is so happens because he never paid attention to his desires and joined the journey without thinking needfulness of that journey because we all are trapped in the and social conventional education and social systems.

Q.6 What are the elements of education and principles of practical philosophy ?

Ans. A system of rewards and punishments, training a person to be free in a limited area, to be concerned about other's new point of a person, are the elements of education and principles of practical philosophy. It trains everyone in the same manner irrespective of regional needs and reasoning ability. This constant fear of punishment and insecurity of rewards always menace a person till his grave.

Q.7 What are the views of the author on Christianity ?

Ans. The essayist explains to the young man the necessity of using his reason to answer the question if he is doing any good in the society. One must go beyond the personal likes and dislikes and think in terms of doing good to society. If the apparent

manifestation Christianity is the teaching of Gospel then what is being antichrist?

Q.8 What, according to author, is wisdom?

Ans. Wisdom is a set of propositions which are not only professed but also acted upon.

Q.9 What is a respectable income?

Ans. A respectable income is as much as one spends. A luxurious income is something more than one spends. Unless a person has joined a race of earning more comparatively, there is no absolute or specific income. Along with earning more, spending less should also be taught and acted upon.

Q.10 What are the essayist's views on hardships? How does he convince the reader about it ?

Ans. The essayist says that there are hardships, challenges in both the professions – conventional as well as artistic.

The professional bankers have to sit all day long while the artists go the other luxuries and work upon a piece of art.

The remuneration may be more or less but the amount of delight is same.

One cannot be at two places simultaneously. If one is sure of his preference whether he wants to be a banker a painter or violinist, one must follow it.

Q.11 What does the essayist say about the choice of a profession?

Ans. he says that let the school teacher not decide your future. If one has nothing indigenous or preferences, he may have himself to be drifted in the world. But if a person has even article of inclination to do something, he must be supreme in that profession.

Q.12 Why does the essayist regret at the end of the essay?

Ans. Looking at the young generation being swayed here and there without any inclination to more on the path of their chosen profession, he regrets that even the parents want them to join the conventional, apathetic and painful lives.

10.5 The students can form their own sentences

10.6 Choose a proper word from the list of the words given below and fill in the blanks. (reflection, taste his liquor, truisms, avocations, pick-logic) (answers at the end)

1. I see him skimming to his avocations.
2. He shall fall upon the train of reflection.
3. An Englishman drinks beer and taste his liquor in his throat.
4. He has to deal apparently with a perspicacious pick-logic of a son.
5. All these patent truisms have a very strange air.

10.7 Find the referential meanings of the following words.

1. Socratic Operation: a form of argumentative dialogue between two individuals to stimulate critical thinking.
2. Catechism: A set of questions and answers that are used for teaching people about the beliefs of the Christian religion.
3. Mrs. Grundy: It is a figurative name for an extremely conventional person. It is a tendency to be overly fearful of what others might think.

10.8 Write the meanings of the following phrasal prepositions and use them in your own sentences:

1. to break away: to be separate from
2. to caper to: run or jump around in a happy and excited way
3. to indulge into: to give into something
4. to trifle with: to treat something or someone without respect
5. to sum up: to end

10.9 Let us sum up

In this unit, you have learnt

- To understand the views of the author on education, Christianity, and choice of a profession
- To introspect yourself and distinguish between a blind race profession and profession you enjoy

10.10 Key words:

Meanings of key words:

Profession:	A type of job that needs special training or skill
Avocations:	hobbies
Truisms:	clear true statement
Practical philosophy:	philosophy which can be implemented in life.
Liberal education:	concerned with increasing general knowledge and experience rather than a particular skill
Respectable income:	This can allow a person to live life comfortably
Apathetic:	showing no interest or enthusiasm
Manoeuvring:	clever, skilful but often dishonest way of achieving aim
Perspicacious:	able to understand something quickly.

10.11 Suggested reading:

1. A critical history of English Literature. vol-II : David Daiches: Secker and Warburg: 1961
2. Essays of Robert Louis Stevenson: Robert Louis Stevenson: WLP. Yale University: 1906.
3. <http://www.blupete.com/Literature/Essays/Best/StevensonProfess.html>