BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION
George Crabbe (1754-1832)
- noted for his unsentimental realism in portraying people and events and his precision in describing visible nature;
- born in Aldeburgh, a poor fishing village in Suffolk;
- his father sent him to schools at Bungay and Stow Market; in 1768 he was apprenticed to a surgeon;
- first literary success in 1772; his poem on hope won a prize offered by Wheble's Lady's Magazine; in 1774 Inebriety was published;
- after finishing apprenticeship and attempted to practice in Aldeburgh, he moved to London in 1780 to try his literary fortunes;
- in March 1781 he appealed in desperation to Edmund Burke, who recognized the merits of the man and his poems: with Burke's aid Crabbe published three long poems: The Library (1781), The Village (1782), and The Newspaper (1785).

TEXT OF WORK
Read the poem with annotations at: http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poem/574.html

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY
The Village (Book I)
composed: 1780-1783, published: 1783; revised for publication (Poems) 1807

Topical summary of poem: the subject proposed - remarks upon pastoral poetry- a tract of country near the coast described - an impoverished borough smugglers and their assistants - rude manners of the inhabitants - ruinous effects of a high tide - the village life more generally considered: evils of it - the youthful laborer- the old man: his soliloquy - the parish workhouse: its inhabitants - the sick poor: their apothecary - the dying pauper - the village priest;

- the first example of Crabbe's special talent for telling with literal and compelling truth the often sordid stories of rural and village folk;
- contrasts the traditional representation of the rural idyll in Augustan poetry with the realities of village life;
- his attempt to portray realistically the misery and degradation of rural poverty; Crabbe made good use in The Village of his detailed observation of life in the bleak countryside from which he himself came.

Excerpt from The Cambridge History of English and American Literature in 18 Volumes (Volume XI):
Crabbe went to Belvoir in or about August, 1782. In May, 1783, the publication of The Village revealed his peculiar qualities as a poet. The poem had been completed and revised under Burke’s guidance, and submitted by Reynolds to Johnson, who declared it “original, vigorous, and elegant,” and made an alteration which cannot be wholly approved. The originality of the poem won it immediate success. Such a work may, almost, be said to have been needed. (...) Goldsmith, in The Deserted Village, and Gray, in An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard, though completely free from pastoral affectation, had, at any rate in Crabbe's opinion, idealised the life and character of the villager. Crabbe, who, perhaps from early youth, had contrasted his knowledge of life round Aldeburgh with the “smooth
alternate verse” (...) conceived the idea of telling the truth about country folk as he saw it. (...) He knew the life of the country poor by personal experience; and his studies in botany and other branches of natural science (...) enabled him to substitute for the graceful vagueness of pastoral poets a background drawn with minute exactness. (...) The desire to tell the truth as he saw it was the intellectual passion which governed Crabbe in all his mature poetry. The side of truth which he saw was, however, nearly always the gloomy side. (...) An unhappy youth spent in a rough home may have tinged Crabbe’s mind; but his sturdy dislike of sentimentalism was an enduring characteristic. So he becomes linked with the “realists” of later times. Man is not to be served by iridescent visions of what he is not, but by pity awakened by the knowledge of what he is. In spite of this revolt against sentimentalism, The Village, like Crabbe’s later poems, shows substantial fairness. Its picture is not all gloom. If we contrast his clergyman with the parson of The Deserted Village, the poem is entirely free from the note, to be described, perhaps, as petulant[.] (...) The workmanship of The Village reaches a point which Crabbe never passed. The poem had the advantage, as we have seen, of revision by Burke and Johnson, and the heroic couplets, which were always Crabbe’s favourite metre, lack the fluency of The Library, and the rugged carelessness of his later poetry. They are sufficiently polished, without losing any of his peculiar sharpness; and his love of epigram and of antithesis, that amounts almost to punning, is kept in check. The “originality and vigour,” if not the “elegance,” of the poem, were immediately recognised. (...) Horace Walpole wrote to Mason, Crabbe “writes lines that one can remember.”

Izvadak iz Poezije engleskog romantizma:
“Oni [kritičari] s pravom ističu grubi i gorki realizam Georgea Crabbea (...) koji je ponio iz ranog djetinjstva provedenog na obalama pokrajine Suffolk u južnoj Engleskoj. (...) Crabbe je rano shvatio svu ispraznost i očigledni nesklad između sentimentalističke engleske pastoralne poezije i stvarnosti o kojoj ona navodno piše. Englesko selo potkraj 18. stoljeća doista nije Arkadija nego krajolik bijede i sirotinje, prljavštine i grubosti, poroka i jala. (...) U ponešto naturalističkom maniru Crabbe iznosi svoj programski stav da će opisivati seoski život baš onakvim kakav oni jeste ('Village life – as it is'), ali je zanimljivo da on to čini u herojskom distihu klasicizma, a ne u nekoj slobodnijoj pjesničkoj formi primjerenijoj njegovom vremenu. [Compare with Goldsmith: Kritičari ne mogu oprostiti Goldsmithu preveliku sentimentalnost, iako je upravo to ključno obilježje prevladujućeg pjesničkog idioma u prelaznom vremenu od klasicizma ka romantizmu (Dizdar 51)]. Na taj način je on postao neka vrsta spone između klasicizma 18. i realizma 19. stoljeća, a da se nije uspio uklopiti u nadolazeću plimu romantizma. Njegova kritička oštrica uperena je protiv idilične slike sela, pa ne čudi što se često smatra da je pjesma 'The Village' nastala kao odgovor na Goldsmithovu poemu 'The Deserted Village'. Crabbe ne vjeruje u tješiteljsku ili pak spasiteljsku moć poezije i pjesnika (...). On naglašava (pa i prenaglašava) negativne strane seoskog života, ali njegov naturalizam ne posjeduje neku jasniju koncepciju koja bi promijenila stanje koje opisuje.” (Dizdar 51-52)

(4) GLOSSARY
languor n. (4) – a relaxed, comfortable feeling
plod v. (25) – to work slowly, heavily or laboriously
forbear v. (32) – to refrain from doing; to resist; to give up to do something
trifling adj. (33) – negligible, not worth considering
fervid adj. (43) – ardent, fervent, very passionate; characterized by intense emotion
**tinsel** n. (48) – a decoration consisting of thin strips of shiny metal foil
**frowning** adj. (49) – showing displeasure or anger
**quoit** n. (96) – a ring toss game
**obliquely** adv. (96) – sidelong, at an oblique angle, sideways
**striping** n. (98) – a youth passing from boyhood to manhood
**throng** n. (98) – multitude, a large gathering of people; host, swarm
**hoarse** adj. (100) – gruff, deep and harsh sounding
**pinnacle** n. (102) – tender; a small sailing ship
**knave** n. (107) – rogue; a false, dishonest, or deceitful person
**rapine** n. (111) – plunder, rape; the seizure of property by force
**septennial** adj. (114) – every seven years (related to the Septennial Act of 1715 which extended the maximum lengths of Parliament in Great Britain from 3 to 7 years)
**hapless** adj. (124) – deserving or inciting pity; very unlucky; ill-fated
**imperious** adj. (127) – disdainful, overbearing, haughty
**niggard** adj. (131) – miserly, stingy, selfish
**dog-star** n. (144) – the star Sirius, visible at dawn (!)
**scythe** n. (146) – an edge tool for cutting grass (B/H/S – kŪsā)
**loth** adj. (158) – unwilling or reluctant
**repast** n. (161) – meal
**deign** v. (171) – condescend; to think fit or in accordance with one's dignity
**hoary** adj. (182) – gray; showing characteristics of age, esp. gray and white hair
**furrow** n. (189) – long, shallow trench in the ground
**hillock** n. (201) – knoll, a small natural hill
**succour** (also **succor**) n. (221) – assistance in time of difficulty; relief
**putrid** adj. (230) – in an advanced state of decomposition; rotting or rotten (e.g. flesh)
**doleful** adj. (231) – full of grief, mournful, evoking sadness
**dejected** adj. (236) – sad and dispirited
**moping** adj. (239) – apathetic, gloomy, dazed; carrying oneself in a depressed lackadaisical manner
**jarring** adj. (250) – affecting in a disagreeable way
**rafter** n. (263) – the framing member which supports the roof sheathing; structural members of a roof that support the roof load and run from the ridge to the eaves (overhang)
**band** n. (264) - a restraint put around something to hold it together
**thatch** n. (264) – house roof made with straw or other plant
**lath** n. (265) - a thin, narrow strip of wood, nailed to the rafters, studs, or floor beams of a building, for the purpose of supporting the tiles, plastering, etc.
**beguile** v. (272) – to divert, to take away by trickery or flattery; delude
**physic** n. (281) – the skill of healing
**sapient** adj. (287) – perspicacious; acutely insightful and wise
**unheeded** adj. (293) – ignored, disregarded
**remonstrance** n. (293) – the act of expressing earnest opposition or protest
**fain** adv. (298) – gladly
**whist** n. (313) – a card game similar to bridge
**bier** n. (322) – a coffin along with its stand
**torpid** adj. (330) – inert, slow and apathetic
**defer** v. (344) – postpone, hold back to a later time
(5) APPENDIX
Excerpted from: Fairer, David and Gerrard, Christine. (Check sources cited list for citation.)

The Village

― George Crabbe, The Village: Book I


End of Stan.tk Study Guide.
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