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FOR B.A PART I (English-Hons)

Heroic Couplet in the context of 'The Rape of the Lock' by Pope :-

measuring of two lines of ten syllable each in iambic meter, rhyming together is called Heroic Couplet. It was the typical measure, rhymed or unrhymed used in epic & Heroic Poetry to narrate the exploits of heroes. It was used at first by Chaucer with great mastery & skill. The Elizabethans also used. But they used it like loose blank verse with the sense running on from one couplet to another & often till every end of a paragraph. It was Dryden who laid the lines along which it was developed by Pope, who freely acknowledges that he had learned versification entirely from the Restoration Poet.

We find that there is no splitting of couplets as in Dryden & others which means that the sense of any one of the two lines is linked up with the sense of the couplet which has preceded. Generally there is a single rhyme & only one syllable of the last word of each of the two syllable lines of a couplet rhymes. The use of double rhyme, that is two syllables rhyming with each other, is save with Pope. He has save brilliance. His couplets are well polished, refined & correct. His couplets have been criticised for lack of variety and in the hands of the followers the couplet tended to be dull, flat and monotonous.

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Thus Pope's couplets are closed that is to say, the sense does not run on from one couplet to another. The meaning is complete with each couplet. Every couplet tends to become a unit by itself and can be taken out & enjoyed irrespective of its context.

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