



**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**Vol. 13. Issue 1. 2026 (Jan-March.)**

**ISSN**  
INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA  
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

## **Picaresque Elements in Joseph Andrews**

**Dr. Gajender Kumar**

Assistant Professor of English  
Govt. College for Women, Ateli

[doi: 10.33329/ijelr.13.1.1](https://doi.org/10.33329/ijelr.13.1.1)



### Article information

Article Received:13/12/2025  
Article Accepted:02/01/2026  
Published online:06/01/2026

### Abstract

Joseph Andrews is one of the famous novels of Henry Fielding published in 1742. It is a parody of Samuel Richardson's novel Pamela. The novelist targets the moral and sentimental elements of Pamela in his novel. He creates the male protagonist, Joseph Andrews, who embodies the same virtues as Pamela, but with a more robust and Masculine Character. The story follows a handsome & virtuous Youngman Joseph Andrews who sets out on a journey with his friend Parson Adams. Along the way, they encounter various characters, including the Fanny Goodwill who later becomes his beloved. Henry Fielding satirizes the social norms, politics and literary conventions of 18<sup>th</sup> century England. It exposes themes of virtues, morality and human condition.

**Keywords:** Parody, Sentimental, Protagonist, Setout, Encounter and Exposes.

Joseph Andrews is one of the well-known novels of Henry Fielding based upon Samuel Richardson's Pamela. The hero of the novel is Joseph Andrews a virtuous and Handsome Youngman who works as a footman of Lady Booby. She develops an unwanted romantic interest in Joseph Andrews. He rejects his attempts. He is dismissed from job in return. Joseph Andrews sets out on a journey to find out his beloved Fanny Goodwill accompanied by his friend Parson Adams. They face many challenges, including highwaymen, innkeepers and Lady Booby's attempts to seduce Joseph. The novel follows their adventures, exploring themes of virtue and morality.

The picaresque novel has certain features.

- a) The episodes and adventures are not connected chronologically.
- b) The protagonist is usually a rogue who moves from one place to another.
- c) It comments on social issues and criticizes social norms.
- d) Travel and journeys are in abundance.
- e) It portrays the society realistically what has been happening in society is pasted truly.
- f) It focuses on journeys not on the destinations.

Now the question arises whether Joseph Andrews is a picaresque novel or not. It has certain features of picaresque novel. It begins with Joseph Andrews a boy of ten years found himself tending

animals as an apprentice to Sir Thomas Booby. He proves his worth as a horseman and caught his mistress's eye. She employs him as her footman. Lady Booby is fascinated by his charm so much that she offers herself to him in her chamber during trip to London. He rejects her attempts. After his refusal, she dismisses him from job and lodgings. As Joseph sets out his journey for London, the novelist introduces Fanny Goodwill the heroine and beloved of Joseph Andrews who have been earlier denied to get married by Parson Adams a close friend. He suggested them to get married only after settlement. On his Way to See Fanny, Joseph is mugged and laid up met Parson Adams in an inn coincidentally who is on his way to London to sell three volumes of his sermons. Later the thief is found and brought to inn. Joseph is reunited with his possessions. The rogue is gentle and kind as he sees the loveletter of Joseph and Fanny Goodwill, he returns their belongings. The rogue, despite being an outlaw, shows more kindness and compassion than many other high upper-class characters in the novel. Parson Adams discusses about sermons with another Parson and a traveler in the inn. Later he discovers his sermons missing. While conversing with his wife, he comes to know that she packed his shirts inspite of sermons as he requires it more. Now Joseph Andrews & Parson Adams decide to search Fanny.

The episode of Etty and Joseph Andrews is a significant one in the novel. Etty the chambermaid in the inn is also attracted by the charm of Joseph Andrews but he rejects her attempts. It shows the virtuous trait of Joseph Andrews and the absurdity of Etty. It highlights the romantic tradition in the era. The novelist uses the episode to satirize the conventions of romance and artificiality of literary tradition at the time Mr. Tow-Wouse finds an opportunity to indulge in illicit relationship with Etty. Both embrace each-other. Mrs. Tow-Wouse chases the maid and realizes her husband a kind of penance.

There is also an episode of Beau Didapper & Mrs. Slipslop a maid servant of Lady Booby. She tries to seduce Joseph Andrews who rejects her attempts. Later on, Beau Didapper who accidentally enters in the room of Mrs. Slipslop thinking it to be the room of Fanny. Mrs. Slipslop hugs him with equal ardor thinking Joseph Andrews. When she realizes it is not Joseph but Beau Didapper. She screams and physically assault the Beau to make it appear she is a victim of an attempted rape. The noise draws the attention of Parson Adams. Mistaking the situation in the dark, Adams accidentally punches Mrs. Slipslop while trying to defend her. Beau Didapper exits seizing the opportunity.

The episode of Leonara in the novel is a famous story within a story. It is connected with the events surrounding Joseph Andrews and Parson Adams at an inn. Leonora and Horatio are engaged to be married. In Horatio's absence, the flashy Bellarmine arrives and proposes to Leonora, who is immediately swayed by his seeming wealth and superior social status. When Horatio returns, Leonora treats him as a mere acquaintance. This leads a confrontation where Horatio wounds Bellarmine in a duel. Finally, when it is appeared that Bellarmine is not as rich as appears. His interest in Leonora was only for Money which her father refuses to provide. Consequently, Bellarmine abandons her. In a twist of situational irony, Horatio inherits a large fortune, but he leaves Leonora alone.

The episode of Mr. Wilson has also its own importance as it reveals the real identity of Joseph Andrews. In book 3, chapter 3 where Mr. Wilson tells Joseph, Parson Adams and Fanny the long story of his dissolute youth, financial ruin, happy marriage to Harriet and the mysterious theft of his eldest son, revealing later that Joseph is that stolen son, connecting their lives and leading to Joseph's happy marriage with Fanny.

The novel satirizes various social issues and norms of 18<sup>th</sup> century England. The novelist critiques the rigid class structure and social mobility of the time through the character sketch of Lady Booby, Parson Adams, Joseph Andrews and Mr. Wilson. Joseph Andrews who works as a footman of Lady Booby later identified as a son of Mr. Wilson. Hypocrisy, Love, Marriage status of woman in society, Servant -master relationship, Morality and Virtue have been discussed in the novel. Lady Booby is a rich lady and have higher class status but falls in one sided love with Joseph Andrews. Women like Mrs. Slipslop, Lady Booby are involved in extra -Marital affairs, illicit relationship between Mrs.

---

Slipslop and Beau Didapper, Lady Booby's attempts to persuade even her servant Joseph Andrews, illicit relationship between Innkeeper Mr. Tow- wouse and inn-maid Etty reflect the social status of the Time.

The novel has travelling and adventurous journeys as key elements. Joseph and Parson Adams embark on journey from London to the countryside, encountering various characters and misadventures. They face robbers, innkeeper disputes, comic misunderstandings along the way. The novelist pokes fun at travel literature conventions and the idea of gentlemen travelers.

Joseph Andrews solidifies its picaresque nature by ending its episodic journey with a satirical reveal – Joseph 's true Parentage, stolen as a baby, link to Mr.Wilson, a classy happy ending where virtue (Joseph& Fanny) triumphs but the novelist uses the picaresque framework to parody social hypocrisy and virtue, contrasting corrupt society with Joseph's innate goodness and Parson Adams ideals.

## References

- [1]. Battestin, M. (1959). *The moral basis of Fielding's art: A study of Joseph Andrews*. Wesleyan University Press.
- [2]. Battestin, M. C. (1993). *Henry Fielding: A life*. Ardent Media.
- [3]. Cauthen, I. B. (1956). Fielding's digressions in *Joseph Andrews*. *College English*.
- [4]. Cleary, T. R. (n.d.). Henry Fielding: *The history of the adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his friend Mr. Abraham Adams*. *The Literary Encyclopedia*.
- [5]. Fielding, H. (2001). *Joseph Andrews* (P. A. Scanlon, Ed.). Broadview Press.
- [6]. Fielding, H. (1999). *Joseph Andrews/Shamela* (J. Hawley, Ed.). Penguin.
- [7]. Fielding, H. (1902). *The works of Henry Fielding* (Vol. 11). J. D. Morris.
- [8]. Goldberg, H. (1969). *The art of Joseph Andrews*. University of Chicago Press.