



SHIVAJI UNIVERSITY, KOLHAPUR

CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

M. A. Part-II : English

Semester-III : Paper G3 E3

African and Caribbean Literature

Semester-III : Paper G3 E4

Australian and Canadian Literature

(Academic Year 2019-20 onwards)

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Preface

Dear students,

It gives us immense pleasure to provide you the self-instructional material for Elective Group-III New Literatures in English papers E3 and E4. Elective paper E3 is entitled 'African and Caribbean Literatures' and elective paper E4 is entitled 'Australian and Canadian Literatures'. These papers aim to acquaint you with various trends and movements in African, Caribbean, Australian and Canadian Literatures including such genres as poetry, fiction and plays.

However, It is always better to consult the prescribed syllabus of these papers. Each of these papers contain four units which are further divided into a general topic and some representative texts. The general topics are meant for providing the contexts in which the prescribed texts have to be studied.

The list of reference books given at the end of the unit will help you to pursue your study of these topics. Eight texts prescribed in the syllabus are included in this book but they are in the form of study material not the original texts. The unit writers have made them simple and brief. You must read the original texts to get the feel of the original and understand them in the right spirit. These units are only notes for your guidance. You must refer to the original materials in the books prescribed in the syllabus.

We hope that the study material in this book will prove to be of great use for your study and advancement of knowledge.

We thank all those people who helped in accomplishing the great task of preparing this book for students of Centre for Distance Education.

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Paper G3 E3 : African and Caribbean Literature
Paper G3 E4 : Australian and Canadian Literature

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Each Unit begins with the section objectives -

Objectives are directive and indicative of :

1. what has been presented in the unit and
2. what is expected from you
3. what you are expected to know pertaining to the specific unit, once you have completed working on the unit.

The self check exercises with possible answers will help you understand the unit in the right perspective. Go through the possible answers only after you write your answers. These exercises are not to be submitted to us for evaluation. They have been provided to you as study tools to keep you in the right track as you study the unit.

Dear Students

The SIM is simply a supporting material for the study of this paper. It is also advised to see the new syllabus 2018-19 and study the reference books & other related material for the detailed study of the paper.

Unit-1

In the Castle of My Skin

by George Lemming

The Present Unit is divided into the following sections:

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Detailed Summary
 - 1.2.1 Chapter 1
 - 1.2.2 Chapter 2
 - 1.2.3 Chapter 3
 - 1.2.4 Chapter 4
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 - 1.2.9 Chapter 9
 - 1.2.10 Chapter 10
 - 1.2.11 Chapter 11
 - 1.2.12 Chapter 12
 - 1.2.13 Chapter 13
 - 1.2.14 Chapter 14
 - 1.2.15 Answer Key
- 1.3 Characters
- 1.4 Themes of the Novel
- 1.5 Writing exercise

1.0 Objectives:

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand life and literary contribution of George Lamming.
- Explain the basic structure, plot, characters and themes of the novel
- Understand colonial aspect in Caribbean Novel

1.1 Introduction: Life and Works of George Lamming

In the Castle of My Skin is the first novel by Barbadian writer George Lamming. It was first published in London in 1953 by Michael Joseph, and later on, it was published in New York City by McGraw-Hill. The novel is a 'Bildungsroman' as it describes the psychological and moral growth of the Protagonist, G, from his youth to adulthood. The novel is set in the 1930s–40s in Carrington Village (Creighton Village in the novel), Barbados, where the author was born and raised; therefore, it is also considered a semi-autobiographical novel. The novel unfolds the everyday events in the life of a young boy and gradual changes in the village and society where he lives. Lamming uses 'shifting perspectives and 'unreliable narration to recount the boyhood that makes the novel modernist fiction.

Though the novel is Bildungsroman, its aim is not to explore the gradual development of the Protagonist but to expose the legacy of colonialism and slavery in Caribbean village society during the mid-20th century. The writer narrates the story of a sensitive and intelligent young boy, well nurtured by a protective mother. He grew up with his slave peers and in adverse surroundings but proved himself unlike them by choosing the different path of his life, only because of his intelligence. With the life story of the G, Lamming documents colonialism and its effect on society. Through the protagonist G's observation and experiences in his small town, Lamming masterfully exposes the effects of race, feudalism, capitalism, education, the labour movement, violent riots, and emigration. G's town is representative of Caribbean society as a whole. Lamming's other works explores Caribbean Protagonist as a migrant, travelling to London, the United States, and other nations, getting enlightened by the ideas of freedom and adverse effect of slavery, and ultimately, fights to free his native land from the colonisers. However, in this novel, he focuses on the protagonist's limited perception of his personal, domestic village life. As the novel is written in the nine/fourteen years protagonist's

restricted perspective, we have a limited scenario of significant sociocultural changes in a tradition-bound part of Barbadian island.

Author Biography:

The distinguished Barbadian novelist, essayist, and poet, George William Lamming, was born on 8th June 1927 at Carrington Village, near Bridgetown, Barbados, into a materially impoverished female-headed house. He is a child of mixed African and English parentage. After his mother married his stepfather, Lamming split his time between his birthplace and his stepfather's home in St David's Village. He was raised by his unmarried mother and by Papa Grandison, his mother's devoted godfather.

Lamming attended Roebuck Boys' School and later on Combermere High School on a scholarship, where he studied under Frank Collymore, editor of the Caribbean literary journal *Bim*. Frank Collymore encouraged Lamming to read books and write something during his early school life. As a result, Lamming became a regular writer of *Bim*.

At the age of nineteen, Lamming left Barbados for the nearby island of Trinidad, where he obtained a teaching position at El Colegio de Venezuela. In Trinidad, he worked as a teacher from 1946 to 1950 before settling in England. In Trinidad, also he continued his involvement as a writer with the journal *Bim*.

Lamming's feeling that Caribbean society was stifling his artistic ambitions compelled him to emigrate to England in 1951, where his creative writing flourished to a large extent, especially prose and poems. In England, for a short time, he worked in a factory, and in 1951 he became a broadcaster for the BBC Colonial Service. However, after these enterprises, Lamming became a leader in a Caribbean renaissance in England, along with other exiles like V. S. Naipaul. Along with fellow writers Derek Walcott, Samuel Selvon, and VS Naipaul, his prose and poetry were presented on the BBC's Caribbean Voices programmes. During the 1960s was, he was fully involved in his writing and had published four acclaimed novels. His first novel, *In the Castle of My Skin*, an autobiographical bildungsroman, published in 1953, won a Somerset Maugham Award in 1957. This novel was appreciated by the late French Nobel laureate Jean-Paul Sartre and by African-American novelist Richard Wright. His study of decolonization continued in his next three novels: *The Emigrants* (1954), *Of Age and Innocence* (1958), *Season of Adventure* (1960). The

Emigrants explores the miserable situation of Caribbean immigrants in post-World War II England. Through *Of Age and Innocence*, Lamming explores a microcosmic perception of race and ethnicity in colonial and postcolonial Caribbean societies. *Season of Adventure* is the story of a middle-class girl, Fola Piggott. The novel depicts the 'complex political and cultural world' and the failure and the ensuing collapse of the first republic of a newly independent Caribbean Island of San Cristobal. During this period, he had published a collection of essays, a non-fictional work, *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960). It is his study of cultural identity, which examines Caribbean politics, race, and culture in an international context.

After a successful writer and an activist, in 1967, he preferred to enter the educational field to spread his views regarding creative writing, Marxist ideology, and Caribbean voice. At the University of the West Indies, Kingston, he worked during 1967-68 as a writer-in-residence and lecturer in the Creative Arts Centre and Department of Education. (1967–68). Since then, he has been a visiting professor in the United States at the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Pennsylvania, Brown University, and a lecturer in Denmark, Tanzania, and Australia. Meantime he wrote two novels, *Water with Berries* (1971) (a political allegory based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*) and *Natives of My Person* (1972). After these two novels, Lamming published nothing any new important work. However, after the 1990s, there are three significant non-fictions published: *Coming, Coming Home: Conversations II– Western Education and the Caribbean Intellectual* (1995), *Sovereignty of the Imagination: Conversations III – Language and the Politics of Ethnicity* (2009), and *Caribbean Reasonings–The George Lamming Reader: The Aesthetics of Decolonisation* (2010). These nonfictions focus on his enduring concerns of 'political self-determination,' 'racism,' and 'the distressed relationships' between the European colonizer and the peoples they colonized and enslaved. In general, in Lamming's works, the reoccurring theme of the Caribbean search for identity, as is revealed in his first novel, *In the Castle of My Skin*, and also its subsequent novels. However, in these explorations of identity, Lamming comes not only to writing of the West Indian, Caribbean psyche but of humans in general. In short, he preaches his Marxist ideology and tries to tie together collective history through the shared humanity of his characters.

Lamming was honoured by various awards: In 1957, 'Somerset Maugham Award' for *In the Castle of My Skin*, in 2009 'The President's Award,' in May 2011,

the National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC), awarded Lamming the first 'Caribbean Hibiscus Award,' in 2012 'ALBA Cultural Award,' in 2013 'Clement Payne Appreciation Award,' and in 2014, he won a 'Lifetime Achievement Prize' from the 'Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards.'

Historical Context

British Colonization

During the 16th century and early 17th, almost all African continent and other Islands were unknown. However, when the Elizabethan reign encouraged British to find out new lands for trade and resources, one by one continent and remote islands were becoming visible. Captain Gordon, one of the British explorers, was the first outsider for the Caribbean Island, who landed with his fellows on Barbados in 1620. However, he was not in a mood to settle on that adverse island. After five years, another British explorer, Captain John Powell, who, on his journey homeward from Brazil, stopped on the island in 1625. Basically, he was a tradesman and had crucially identified that this fertile island is apt for plantation and most important, as he realized, that on the Atlantic, or east, the coast of the island, there were no safe, natural harbours or landing places than this. As a result, he decided that the British explorers and colonizers had to set up settlements on the "leeward" shore of this island. He returned on the island on February 17, 1627, with a party of eighty settlers, financed by himself and four other merchants, and had established the first colony in Barbados. Therefore, Powell was called the "father" of Barbadian settlement by the English. The subsequent capital of the island, and the city, Bridgetown, was the first place where settlers established their first colonies. This very city is so identical in Lamming's novel *In the Castle of My Skin*, where the riots take place.

The people of Barbados island always lived mainly in rural areas, as befits an island having an almost entirely agricultural economy. Consequently, the early settlers by Powell were not interested in spreading Christianity or finding a "New Jerusalem," but mostly, they are thinking of enriching themselves by plantation and the trade of natural resources. Like a crafty fox, without disturbing the natives, silently, the settlers had planted tobacco by clearing the woodland. Nevertheless, after eight months, their hidden agenda became visible when they imported slaves as land workers. It was just the beginning of the colonizer's imposed, despotic rule upon

the wretched, innocent natives. It reveals by one of the settler's letters to home that approximately out of 100 inhabitants, forty were slaves, and very soon, indentured servants outnumbered slaves. In 1638, out of a total population of 6000, there were 200 slaves and 2,000 indentured servants. However, very soon, this ratio was changed when the planters started growing sugarcane instead of tobacco. Though sugar and sugarcane needed significant investment, its profit is more considerable than the investment. As a result, planters encouraged people to increase the land of a plantation, and naturally, it required a large number of workers. It affected the workers' category, the indentured worker became slave labour, and slave labour became servant labour. To fulfil the need, the planters imported thousands of slaves, and now in 1652, the population of the island was estimated at 18,000 whites (freemen and indentured servants) and 20,000 Africans. Thus the "peculiar institution" of slavery was established. This slavery system was more complicated, oppressive, and set more unhealthy relationships between the white and black inhabitants of Barbados than earlier. This slavery system was so strong on the oppressors' side that it remained still effective, even after the 300 years of its establishment and more than a century after its abolition. This is what Lamming's novel, *In the Castle of My Skin*, effectively demonstrates through the story of G.

1.2 Detailed Summary:

1.2.1 Chapter 1:

The novel's story begins with the ninth birthday celebration of the Protagonist amid the heavy rainfall. In the first chapter, the author has revealed that the novel's setting is a small village, Barbados, and the story's time is the mid-1940's. As his mother informs the neighbour about his ninth birthday, they try to flatter him that the rain is a shower of blessings on him. However, the Protagonist desires pleasant weather for the celebration of his birthday. The rain that started in the morning turned a flood into the afternoon as the water level increased up to the house's veranda in which the Protagonist and his mother live. As time goes, the water starts seeping into his home, which his mother tries to dry up with sacks, but she could not do anything about the water dripping through the cracks in the roof.

The Protagonist describes the village in detail that reveals the social, cultural, and economic space of the novel. He starts narrating the village with the clay and limestone roads and further demonstrates how the village people were categorized as

per the roads on which their houses are. The street lamps were fuelled with gas and lit at six, which provides a well-lighted place to the children, youngsters, and elders to gather and tell stories, play games, and chit-chat. The people who gather in groups at the roadsides also gather at the public bathroom, which he describes as a perpetual stench of disinfecting'.

But the society divided in the name of streets is always levelled on a singular stature that is wracked village after the flood. The boy becomes nostalgic and thinks about his father, who left his mother even before he is born. When his mother finds him in distress, she starts singing a song and further gets the company of neighbours and then their neighbours, and soon the entire village starts singing on the foundation of water. But as the singing once again turns into silence, he asks his mother about the family and relatives. She answers that his maternal grandfather is dead and his grandmother lives in Panama. She very neutrally reveals that her brother who went to America is also probably dead as for the last time she heard that he was sick. He gets upset and feels lonely due to his disintegrated family. He thought that he was born in an almost total absence of family relations. His neighbour cracked the bad news that the Foster family has lost their house in flood and shelter in Guard House. Amid this social tragedy, the boy was upset for his personal reason that he could not celebrate his birthday with a cake with nine candles. To kill the boredom, he went to feed the pet pigeon at the back door but unfortunately feeds it to excess that he has to give him a phial of castor oil. But that night pigeon dies, which adds another tragedy on the day of his ninth birthday.

At night when they were laying on the bed, his mother plans for the next day and speaking about different worries she carries in her head. She worries that the drinking water stored in the barrel will be spoiled if the rainwater seeps into it. She is also concerned about the safety of the oldest couple of the village Pa and Ma. While speaking mechanically about her worries when his mother sleeps, in his imagination, he sees phantoms in the room. The chapter ends as the rain stops during the night, and the ninth birthday of the Protagonist disappears, only leaving behind the blessings in the form of rainwater, wrecked village, and a dead pigeon.

Check your progress-1

(i) What is the age of the Protagonist?

a) 9

b) 6

c) 8

d) 7

Soon the two ladies were joined by Miss Foster, who tells them another funny incident about a mischievous village boy named Gordon, a grandson of Bess. She narrates that the boy was sent to sell a fowlcock to town. On his way to the town, he saw a white man dressed in a white suit. Gordon sways the fowlcock in front of him and asks him whether he is interested in buying it, but the man was not interested. Gordon mischievously goes on swaying the fowlcock in front of him till the bird shits on his white clothes. Though the story is a funny one, it conveys a dire message regarding the conflict between the colonizer and colonized. Gordon here represents the native black people of Barbados, and the white man in white dress represents the British colonizers who want to maintain their superiority over the black natives at the public baths or by demonstrating a silent patrol of the white guard night. The children listening to the story found it exciting and immediately run-in search of Gordon to hear an exact incident, leaving behind the three ladies sitting beneath a wide cherry tree and talking about the children and the flood's destruction.

After this incident, the readers can note the change in the narrative point as it reveals the information about the village and how the British establish a rule on it. It revealed that the village was once a large estate where sugar cane grew. Mr. Creighton was the original settler of the village, but after his death, it was inherited by his son. Meanwhile, the estate was handed over to several generations of the Creighton family. The narrator reveals that the white settlers, today, live in the huge house of bricks; however, the native black population lives under the dripping roofs made out of natural materials. The difference in social, economic, and political status is made apparent through elaborating the differences. The narrator reveals how the British settlers have maintained the distinctness of their culture and, through it, maintained the rule on the land with respect and fear in the minds of the natives. The narrator criticises this situation with a pathetic satire. He describes that the native world ended somewhere along the bridge, and after that, a new and wealthy world of landlords begins. The boundary between these two worlds separates the obedient natives who fear that they should not commit any offense against the whites and the wealthy British settlers who cunningly keep the rule over the land and the minds of the natives. The British very cunningly keep the public administration in their hands, as they appoint a White superintendent to look after the public bath facility and the white soldier's patrol at night. The house has appointed a few villagers as overseers to protect their property from other hostile villagers. After the flood, they also survey

the village as if they are the masters and are responsible for the repair. The narrator divulges that the effects of the image of the landlord, the strict rules of his administration, the appointment of overseers, big brick houses, and the image of the enemy are combined into producing the idea of the Great. This kind of cultural superiority is deliberately maintained to rule the land. He thinks that the direct contact with the landlord might have given them a chance to know about the reality of white people. However, the overseers play the role of the bridge that can be used to communicate but cannot be crossed.

The second part of the chapter reveals how the public bathroom administration is strict and aggressive. But soon, the exploration moves from the serious topic of the relations between colonizers and colonized to the children's world. The narrator reveals how the younger boys place pins and coins on the rail track and find amazement when it was flattened. They also envy the older boys as they dare to keep the nails on rail tracks. But younger boys get wondered when the elder boys brandish their knives with the same trick.

In the third part, when G. returns to his home, he finds that the three ladies were still engaged in speaking with each other. Miss Foster, whose house was wrecked in earlier day flood, talks about her encounter with the landlord. As her house was wrecked in flood, the Landlord, with sympathy, offers her a cup of tea and sixty cents to repair her house. It can be seen that the help is very inadequate, but she is flattered and exclaimed that she never been thought that White people could be so nice. The three women parted on the very positive and hopeful note that nobody knows what is in the future as one is down today may be up tomorrow.

Check your progress-2

- (i) How the name of the Protagonist is revealed for the first time in the novel?
- a) through the whispers of other children
 - b) his mother calls him
 - c) Miss Foster reveals his name
 - d) Bob's mother calls him
- (ii) What happened when the children jumped from the fence?
- a) They fail in the mud
 - b) Bob fractured his left feet

- c) The fence was collapsed d) Pumpkin vine was killed
- (iii) What was the name of Gordon's granny?
- a) Barbara b) Miss Foster c) Daisy d) Bess
- (iv) Who surveyed the wretched village after flood?
- a) Creighton family b) Governor of the Public Bathroom
- c) Overseers d) the committee of the village
- (v) How much money was given to Miss foster by the Landlord?
- a) sixty-one scents b) sixty-three scents
- c) seventy scents d) sixty scents

1.2.3 Chapter 3:

Similar to the last two chapters, in this chapter also the focus of the narration is not a personal life of G, but it is an exploration of two social institutions run by the British settlers – Church and School. The narrator tries to depict how the colonizers use these social institutions to impose the cultural supremacy of Anglican people and cultivate racial inferiority among the natives.

The school which the Protagonist attends is a two-story wooden structure erected in the compound of the Church. Though the school is in the Church's compound, it is not run by the Church administration. The narrator thinks that the two buildings are in the same compound as the school inspector was an English man, and very obviously, the school was supposed to be of an Anglican persuasion. The church building is three times bigger than the school, and its dark-stained hooded windows were always closed. The dark, gloomy, mysterious, and estranged atmosphere of the Church frightens the boys. While describing the church, the narrator passes thoughtful and critical comments on the religious supremacy of the British Settlers. One of the schoolboys commented that when religion begun in the garden of Eden, it was then reinforced by the British sovereignty. He further adds that as the garden of Eden and the Empire belongs to the same person, now they are the same. He says, "The garden is God's own garden and the empire is God's only empire. They work together for us." The conversation is highly symbolic as it signifies how the white hegemony is reinforced even by the institution like the church. The school is inspected twice in a term to check the attendance of the classes

and administer quick tests to judge the progress of the students. The inspection activity of the government frightens the teachers and students. However, when the supervising minister talks about the Church's activity, no one shows distress.

As the motif of the chapter is to depict how the white hegemony is cultivated among the native students, it further reveals the event of inspection on the occasion of the celebration of Queen Victoria's birthday. The students are groomed, and the school building is decorated with various flags, especially the British Union Jack. Cultural homogenization is a major threat for the colonies as their culture is always pushed into the endangered category, and the colonizer's culture is fostered. The narrator explains it by revealing the relationship between "Good old England," that is, the Colonizer, and "Old Little England," that is colonized island Barbados. He describes how as a sensible child; Barbados has accepted all that is given by England and celebrating the Queen's birthday with great delight. The narrator compares the inspector with a parasite chigoe flea that stings and inserted its eggs into the human body. The sting swells up into a white and shining smoothness, but when this swelling is punctured with a pin, the pus spills out. The narrator finds the softness of the Inspector like the soft swelling of pus created by a parasite. He also compares the headteacher with another parasite named Leech. But this parasite is good when used for medical purposes to suck out the poisonous blood out of the wounded body. The narrator finds the headteacher like the leech.

The school inspector arrived as a representative of British Colonizers and delivered a speech on the long-standing relationship between England and Barbados. After the speech of the chief guest of the function, each class has allowed to perform and reciting for the inspector. The inspector gives awards to the classes for the best attendance in the term and the good recitations. After the awards were declared, the headteacher declares that as per the tradition of Empire Day, the pennies will be distributed to the children. But before that, the inspector makes a brief speech on the goodness of the dead Queen Victoria. During his speech, one of the boys makes a taunt on Queen Victoria that makes the boys giggle loudly. The Inspector feels this as an insult and declares that pennies should be distributed and leaves the function with dissatisfaction. The headteacher was terrified due to the incident and scolded the children for the loud giggling during the speech on Queen Victoria. He asked students to come up with who did this kind of mischief. A boy stands up to explain what happened, but instead of listening to his explanation, the headteacher starts

scolding him. When he tries to run away, the teachers and other students catch him, and the headteacher beats him brutally. Afterward, the four students carry him in the schoolyard and discuss the incident, and they admit that they have never seen the headteacher in such anger. They also discuss whether the issue should be told to the parents or not.

Afterward, when some of the boys receive pennies as per the tradition of Empire Day, they discuss the image of the King carved on the coin. The children, with their childish imagination, speculate how the coins were made and how the king must be living a lonely life in the empty rooms of his castle. However, some of the boys believe that nobody could determine that the image of the King carved on the coin is the real one as he never appears before the public and uses his duplicate.

The children also heard that Queen Victoria is liberating the slaves before her death. They wonder how people can think that they own other people. One of the boys remembered the elderly villagers' conversation about how the queen liberated the Barbados slaves. The boys try to imagine the people who were enslaved and think that these slaves should have been chained. They find the idea of enslaving other people ridiculous. The narrator also suggested that the school syllabus is not teaching that the colonizers once enslaved the people of Barbados and instead they were taught the glorious history of colonial rule.

However, the chapter ends with the breaking news of a scandal between a fellow teacher and the head teacher's wife. After the ceremony, when the classes were resumed, one of the boys picks up a sealed letter dropped by one of the teachers while walking. They think about opening the letter, but soon the headteacher noticed the letter and demanded to return it to him. But when he opens the envelope, he came across two photographs that show the intimate scenes of one of the teachers and the wife of the headteacher. Though the headteacher feels insulted and bartered by the embarrassing incident, he tries hard to maintain his professionalism and keeps silent.

Check your progress-3

- i) Which function is celebrated in the school in the presence of the Inspector?
 - a) Birthday of G.
 - b) Anniversary of the school
 - c) Empire Day
 - d) The day of the church erected
- ii) Whose birthday was celebrated in the school?

- a) Queen Victoria
 - b) Mr. Creighton
 - c) Bob
 - d) Gordon
- iii) Which tradition is followed on Empire Day?
- a) distribution of sweets
 - b) distribution of pennies
 - c) distribution of notebooks
 - d) distribution of cake pieces
- iv) What do the children think about the image of King on the Coin?
- a) It is not a worthy image of the king
 - b) The image of the king is beautiful
 - c) The face is unnatural and brutal
 - d) The image is of a different person
- v) With whom does the narrator compare the inspector?
- a) a chigoe flea
 - b) a leech
 - c) a dog
 - d) an elephant

1.2.4 Chapter 4:

The chapter begins with the conversation between Ma and Pa, the oldest couple in the village. They speak about the social, cultural, political, and economic turmoil they are witnessing. Besides, they mutually share the fear of death that is common at that age. Pa is worried that the images of the wrecked village will be imprinted prenatally on the minds of the young generation. He is also worried about the news that the Landlord is supposed to sell the land, and if he does so, where would they go. He knows that Mr. Creighton does not have an heir for his property, and nobody knows how the future master will be with them. He wonders that these changes happening in the village are for good or worse.

He further thinks about Mr. Slime, who left the school teacher's job to start Friendly Society and Penny Bank in the village. Pa knows that he was a good teacher and worried about the school as he leaves the job. Mr. Slime is the same teacher whose affair with the head teacher's wife was exposed through the photos on the Empire Day Celebration. Pa is also doubtful for the future of Penny Bank, in which the people were saving their money weekly. Ma answers his doubts and queries with simple logic and reminds him that they were the frequent beneficiaries of the Society and Bank. She thinks that God will be with him, and he will achieve success in it.

She gives the example of a pigeon and tells how it flies in the sky with the grace of God without pilot and engine, Mr. Slime will get the success similarly. Pa shows his agreement and reminds the story of Moses that Ma used to tell him. Moses is the most important prophet in Judaism. He thought, like Moses, Mr. Slime will also lead his people to rise from ignorance, poverty, and oppression. He remembers that the people who welcomed him after his speech on the future of the village. But Ma rejects the comparison of Moses and Mr. Slime, as she thinks that he is not chosen by God. She is also doubtful about his politics and thinks that the dreams he shows to people in his speeches are impossible to materialize. Pa shows his agreement and admits that he has never seen him face to face, but he also argued that they had seen Mr. Slime since his childhood. He thinks that he has left his job to establish social institutions like Friendly Society and Penny Bank for the welfare of the village. Pa admits that he gets impressed with him when in one of his speeches, he speaks about his dream to make the natives the landowner.

Further, Pa asserts that the people have accepted him as a leader. But Ma counterargues his claims and reveals that he speaks about land ownership but has never come up with any of the practical plans. Mr. Slime has never been revealed that what he is going to do with Mr. Creighton. She thinks that the Landlord will not keep quiet so easily, and when he saw that the situation is out of hand, he might sell the land. When Pa feels that he is defeated in the argument, he asks, who she thinks is right in God's sight - Mr. Creighton or Mr. Slime? She simply answers that she never thinks in that way and instead prays to God for the better.

Afterward, Pa remembers how in his youth, he had made lots of money in Panama and thinks that the youth of the village lack such kind of opportunity. Pa also reminds that Mr. Slime, in his speech, talked about the problem of the overpopulation of the island. Further, he suggested emigration to America as the only solution. Ma thinks that it will then be the same thing as Panama. Money will come and go, and people will come back and speaks about the past like you. Pa further reveals the full plan of Mr. Slime. As per his plan, if one gets the money, he can buy his land to live without giving any rents. He thinks that every man should have ambition for his land. Ma disagrees with him and argues that if one cannot take any things with him after his death, then buying land and accumulating money is worthless. In the final part of their conversation, they share their fear about death and finally sings the child's prayer before going to sleep.

Check your progress-4

- i) Who has started the Friendly Society and Penny Bank?
 - a) Mr. Slime
 - b) Mr. Creighton
 - c) Inspector of the School
 - d) United States of America
- ii) Who is Moses?
 - a) Leader of the Village
 - b) Prophet in Christianity
 - c) Prophet in Judaism
 - d) Manger of Penny Bank
- iii) What solution does Mr Slime think of for overpopulation?
 - a) emigration to Panama
 - b) establishing the new island
 - d) shooting of people
 - d) emigration to America
- iv) Whose affair was revealed at the Empire Day Ceremony?
 - a) Mr. Slime
 - b) Mr. Creighton
 - c) Pa
 - d) Headteacher
- v) Who had made lots of money in Panama?
 - a) Mr. Slime
 - b) Mr. Creighton
 - c) Pa
 - d) Headteacher

1.2.5 Chapter 5:

The chapter begins with the whistle and the rumbling of the wheels of the cart of food vendor Savory. The villagers stop the cart and make a circle around it to buy the food. The crowd creates the loud sounds of Joy, demands, and excitements, but as they buy food, they start speaking typically about their day-to-day life. They generally talk humour, censorious, and gossips. It seems that the villagers are unaware of the changes happening in the politics of Barbados and are happy with their ignorant lives. However, few of them were aware of it as they speak about bad news. They read in the newspapers and show their anxiety by understanding that the things are going from bad to worse. The narrator very critically commented that though these people were illiterate, they strongly believe what is printed is always true. The women speak about the illicit pregnancy of Cutsie and argue about the father of the child. A group of workers standing in front of Shoemaker's shop was

worried about their call of a strike at Johns and Creighton Shipping Company Limited, under the leadership of Mr. Slime. Shoemaker, Mr. Foster, and Overseer's brother speak about the consequences they may face due to the strike. They also discuss their leader, Mr. Slime, and enquire about him to a student. He reveals that he was a good teacher at school, but he does not know why he resigned. He also says that he and his brothers are members of the Friendly society established by Mr. Slime. It seems that he has won the confidence of the people of the society. It can be observed even in the talks of the workers as they are doubtful about the success of their first strike but are very assured about the able leadership of Mr. Slime.

The Overseer's brother makes fun of Mr. Creighton for pretending he a kind and generous when somebody needy asks him for few ceilings, but when it turns to be the case where lots of money has to be invested, he might have heart failure. He wonders that he has enough money to buy anything in God's world, but he is also greedy and miser. But this humorous talk soon converted into a serious discussion on what will happen if the company authority takes legal actions against the workers and sends the legal notices. But they soon agree that if the authority sends notices, they will leave the matter with the chief. Besides, on the one hand, they fear that even if they won the battle of the strike, they are just the tenants living at the mercy of the Landlord. However, on the other hand, they also think that they should not disappoint Mr. Slime as he has worked very hard to improve their coition. After the resignation from school, he gets elected in the general elections with a great majority and starts working full time for the workers' welfare. However, besides that, he also wins the confidence of other villagers who consider him a chief. Though the workers and villagers are illiterate and ignorant, they know how to trust somebody, especially a school teacher. In their discussion, they also re-considered their fear of a legal notice to the whole village and feel the idea is ridiculous as it will threaten the village's existence. They believe that Landlord considers the village his home, and he could not threaten it with a legal notice.

The British community living at Barbados also loves the island as their home, and out of affection, they call it a 'Little England.' But Shoemaker is doubtful about English people's attachment with the land, as he has read about it in the news and books, he borrowed from the high school boys. He also calls the high school boys to argue about the news he reads. He also borrows books from Highschool boys and reads them for a better understanding of the socio-political situations. In his

discussions, he always mentions a passage written by the British novelist J. B. Priestly regarding the colonial governors. According to Priestly, the colonial masters are only a small part of a gigantic thing called colonial. In his books, he has revealed that these colonial masters, with time, develop such a complex relationship with their colonies that they start thinking the temporal privilege as a permanent right.

Further in his mute mediation, he also remembers the news he had read about the civil disturbances sprung recently in the nearby island, Trinidad. He has read that "there had been several cane fires and people arched with the stones and sticks to the public building." The news report, in the end, also makes a prediction that, similar to the Trinidad, the civil riots may have sprung in the nearby islands. Shoemaker is ignorant about the details of the Trinidad riots, but he is intelligent enough to recognize today's worker's strike as a footprint of tomorrow's riots. Further, he thinks about the annual tournaments of cricket played in Trinidad and Barbados. He thinks that sooner or later when these tournaments are played, the people of Barbados will come to know about these civil riots. He also thinks that the cricket tournament many times includes British Guiana and Jamaica. The Jamaican team appears in the tournament, but they were known for the Jamaican-born cricketer George Headley who is generally mentioned as "The Black Bradman" in the newspapers. He thinks of the West-Indian Cricket team, a combined territory formulated with the mix-coloured players against the colonial masters like England or Australia. In the fighting spirit of the West Indian Cricket team and the Civil riots of Trinidad, Shoemaker formulates a speech in his mind. But when he looks at the crowd surrounded by the food cart, he thinks that the riot is impossible in Barbados as people are happy with their day-to-day lives and never thinks in terms of oppression and suppression. They think that they should get somebody to do something about their condition. Shoemaker thinks that they should do something of their own as the time is changing and change accordingly. He also gave the example of Alexander the Great, who himself had built a big empire.

Further, he explores the history of how in the Battle of Hastings, the Roman people won against Caesar. He argues that God never tolerates the ugly things in his world, and these big emperors have turned ugly with time. Mr. Foster counterargues with him and shows his surprise as how could these British settlers have started the school and imparting the knowledge of high pitch? Shoemaker lets them know that these colonial masters are using Education as a significant tool to impose their

hegemony on the colonies and substitute the cultural traditions and social legends of the lands with their history. He supported his argument by telling them that the school syllabus is neither teaching the students about the thoughts of Marcus Garvey, nor they are prescribing his speech delivered at Queen's Park.

When the men were speaking about these serious issues, a fight between two women sprung near the food cart for the trivial thing. It only ended with the brutal physical war and eventual interruption of the constable who is not good in the matters of women. At the same time, Mr. Slime drove up and parks his car in front of the men and declares that the strike has ended as the Company authorities have assured the reconsideration of wages. Though Mr. Slime declares the end of strike, he does not reveal any details regarding the conversation between the trade union and the company authorities. Though Mr. Slime assures them that the situation is satisfactory, they carry the fear about the news that the Landlord is thinking of selling the land and what will happen with them in a new situation.

Check your progress-5

- i) Who was the food Vendor in Barbados?
a) Slime b) Creighton c) Foster d) Savory
- ii) Who is mentioned as 'The Black Bradman' in the newspapers?
a) George Headley b) Marcus Garvey
c) Learie Constantine d) J. B. Priestly
- iii) Who delivered a speech at Queen's Circle?
a) George Headley b) Marcus Garvey
c) Learie Constantine d) J. B. Priestly
- iv) Who is Marcus Garvey?
a) West Indian Cricketer b) British Settler
c) Jamaican Politician d) Headteacher
- v) Which name is given to Barbados by the British Settlers?
a) Trinidad b) Little England
c) Big England d) Black England

1.2.6 Chapter 6:

The chapter begins with the expedition of G and his group to the beach through Belleville. The chapter describes in detail Belleville, which is a residential area for the colonial masters. It is well structured with avenues and manicured lawns. The place is constantly compared with the black settlement in the same village. The boys can see that the servants were working in the well-decorated houses of the white people. During the expedition, G gets struck with clouds that form different shapes. However, his friend Bob raced ahead to the beach, leaving him alone. G realizes that Bob is keeping distance from him as he has witnessed his mother beats him for keeping the company of Bob. But soon, they were joined by two more friends – Trumper and Boy Blue. The boys speak about their happy life, their family, and the local fishermen. The boys spend time playing in the surf, catching the small crabs, and narrating the funny stories of the villagers. In the course of the time when they were playing in the waves, the Boy Blue is pulled under by the forceful undertow of water, but fortunately, the fisherman saves him with his giant net. A fisherman shows his disgust for disturbing him from his work and wishes that he should have let him drown. They get frightened by the event and quickly pack their belongings and leave.

Check your progress--6

- i) Who gets struck with the cloud formation of different shapes?
a) Boy Blue b) G c) Trumper d) Bob
- ii) Who saved Boy Blue from drowning in the water?
a) Mr. Slime b) Shoemaker c) Fisherman d) Mr. Foster
- iii) How many boys were there on the beach?
a) Three b) Four c) Two d) Five
- iv) What is Belleville?
a) Colony of White people b) Colony of Black People
c) Name of the Landlord's Bungalow d) None of the above
- v) Who raced ahead to the beach leaving behind G?
a) Boy Blue b) Peter c) Trumper d) Bob

1.2.7 Chapter 7:

Chapter seven begins with a small gathering of native people for the open-air meeting of Brother Dickson. The chapter explores the missionary activities of the colonial masters and unveils the social fact of how the colonial forces cultivate Christianity among the native community of the island. Out of sheer curiosity, G, Boy Blue, and Trumper visit this gathering and understand what is happening on the stage. The tone of the narration maintains a critical distance to point out how the innocent people were fooled in the name of religion. The narrator describes how people call each other brothers and sisters. It is also especially noted that the number of women and children is higher than that of men worshipers. Initially, they were praying in silence, but soon one of the women came forward and started screaming a hymn. Trumper calls it a "got into spirit." It is described that when a worshiper gets a spirit, due to the burden of new energy, they start dancing and speaking in a strange language.

After finishing the hymn and as the crowd gains a measurable size, Brother Dickson walked over to a small boy and told him something about his soul. The boy was frightened due to this unexpected attention. Dickson threatens him with the wrath of God and inspires him to accept his sins. According to him, the acceptance and repentance of sins will save his soul. He then frequently repeats the question that "will you stay tonight?" The question is not asking for the simple act of staying at night, but it stands for salvation and acceptance of the Christian religion. Initially, the boy hesitantly rejected his idea of salvation, and he was frightened due to the unexpected and harsh behaviour of Dickson. But then Dickson changed his strategy and became tender and solicitous to him. His voice was broken with concern for his soul. He is a lovely voice, convinces him that he should not harden his heart as he is young, his sins are fewer, and he will easily get forgiveness. Though his speech was to the child, it is meant for everyone. He tries to convince the crowd that "salvation through Christ is the key to heaven." After a lot of drama, Dickson finally gets success in convincing the boy for conversion. After witnessing this incident, it seems that G and his company get deeply influenced. Especially, G, who keeps on repeating the hymn's lines, keeps silent for a long time and fumbles for the new thought.

Trumper ends the long silence as he puts forth what Mr. Slime has taught to them. According to him, these preachers make us doltish by telling such foolish

stories. He calls it a joke and declares such kind of events as "tomfoolery." Boy Blue affirms Trumper's opening and adds that he considers only two great men around them. One Landlord and the second is Mr. Slime. He thinks that Mr. Slime has become a captain of the ship, and he will decide the navigation of their future. Boy Blue thinks that through the establishment of Penny Bank and Friendly Society, Mr. Slime has made available a social platform on the island. Boy Blue further calls him a 'Black Jesus'. Though Boy Blue praises Mr. Slime, he is also critical about his social conduct. He thinks that Mr. Slime is a dreamer, and he motivates others to dream. Boy Blue thinks that dreaming all the time is not a good thing.

While speaking, G and his group reached near the house of the Landlord. They secretly entered the property with a key given by the overseer to the village girl Cutsie. The group witnessed a lavish party in the Landlord's house. It is revealed through their communication that the overseer tries to fix a meeting of Cutsie with the white sailors who were attending the party. But Cutsie rejected his idea. The boys compare their lives with the life they were witnessing in the house. Boy Blue thinks that Mr. Slime tries to bridge this gap. He thinks that Mr. Slime will provide a big life to everyone as he constantly speaks about social change.

They were hiding under the heap of dry sugarcane blades. But unfortunately, one of the sailors and the daughter of the landlord came near their hiding for the sake of privacy. When they were romancing, the ants attacked the boys, and out of pain, they shouted. The overseers try to catch them, but fortunately, they escape and return to the open-air meeting. To escape from the overseers, they also participate in the ritual happening on the stage. In the open-air meeting, the priest threatens the worshipers by telling them the parable of the barren fig tree in which Jesus curses the tree for not bearing fruit for him. In the parable, it is seen that the next morning the cursed fig tree was withered from roots. The priest suggests that if they delay in surrendering to God, they will be cut off within minutes. But when Preacher started his final call for surrender, the overseers reached the place, and they advanced towards the boys. They also entered into the circle of surrender. Public and Priest restrict them as they think of them as a disturbance in the divine work. The chapter ends with the note that the candle went out, and the crowd started singing for God in the pitch dark.

Check your progress-7

- i) Which parable is narrated by the Priest in the open-air meeting?
- a) Parable of the Fig Tree b) Parable of the Mustard Seed
c) Parable of the Hidden Treasure d) Parable of the Pearl.
- ii) What is the name of the priest?
- a) Dickson b) Peterson c) Moses d) Peter
- iii) What did the boy witness in the Landlord's House?
- a) Lavish Party b) Marriage Ceremony
c) Birthday of Landlord's Daughter d) none of the above
- iv) Who called Mr. Slime a Black Jesus?
- a) Bob b) Trumper c) G d) Boy Blue
- v) Who called Open-air meeting as a Tom-foolery?
- a) Bob's Father b) Shoemaker c) Mr. Slime d) Mr. Foster

1.2.8 Chapter 8:

This Chapter begins with an unexpected meeting of the Landlord and Ma. He inquires about the reason behind the disrespectful behaviour of people towards him. The Landlord tells her that three native boys try to assault his daughter. It is hinted that the story is different than the perception of the Landlord. It is also hinted that the couple described romancing in Chapter Seven was the Landlord's daughter and one of the Sailor guests. It is also revealed that the sailor was convincing her for the sex, but as G and his group shouted due to the ant bits, they get caught red-handed, and to escape from the situation, they pretend that three boys try to assault her. However, the Landlord becomes worried about the safety and security of his family. He also mentions that if such kind of disrespectful behaviour continued in the future, he would get rid of the island by selling it to someone else. Through their communication, it is also revealed that the island people have also started revolting against his power. They have called a stick in the shipping company of the Landlord. All these thoughts make him uneasy. When Ma narrates her meeting with the Landlord, Pa praises the efforts of Mr. Slime to bring in the changes on the island. However, Ma continued to condemn the unjust behaviour of the three boys.

2.8.2. Check your progress:

- i) According to the Landlord, who has attempted to assault his daughter?
a) Sailor b) Overseer c) Three Native Boys d) Mr. Foster
- ii) What kind of company the Landlord has owned?
a) Carrier of Vegetable and Fruits b) Shipping
c) Slave Trading d) Food supply chain
- iii) Who praised Mr. Slime for his efforts for the welfare of the Island?
a) Pa b) Ma c) Landlord d) Workers
- iv) What is the concern of the Landlord?
a) Politics of the village b) Economic Development
c) Exploration of Empire d) Safety of his family
- v) What will the Landlord do if the disrespectful behaviour continued by the natives
a) He will punish them b) He will migrate them to America
c) He will sell the island d) none of the above

1.2.9 Chapter 9:

The Chapter begins with the scene of political anarchy on the island. There is confusion in the people regarding what is happening in the city. All the shops, schools, and social gatherings were shattered, and the people hide in their homes. Mr. Foster tries to know what is happening, but when he comes to know that Guard-house is locked and there is no one to guard the village. It hinted a graver sense of danger to him that also created havoc among the people. Pa also went to Mr. Foster to get the information about the situation, but instead, the people start asking him to go back and hide in his house. In between, Bob and Trumper escape from the eyes of the elders and entered the city. But soon, Bob returns with an alarming threat that "they are coming." He was so frightened that he fainted in the arms of his mother. Trumper also returns and ensures the safety of Bob. He describes how a violent outbreak has created a dreadful mess on the road. The common people could not perceive the cause of fighting. But soon, it is revealed that the revolt was started in

Barbados and nearby islands against the colonial powers. The people from other islands came to meet Mr. Slime to appeal to him to join the revolt, but he chooses to keep aloof for the safety of the village. He tells them what he has done for the welfare of the village and assures them that he will be with the workers in any calamity. The event described in the novel is known as the slave uprising against the colonial powers in Carrabin Island. Mr. Slime continued the worker's strike.

All this chaotic situation reached to its climax when an older woman totters across the street and loudly tells that she has just returned from the city and see that her boy Po King has shot dead in the firing of the police. She describes how her son Po tries to run up the tree when the law was declared, but the police shot him down like a bird. The people wonder why people were revolting against Mr. Creighton. When Mr. Foster tries to make sense of the incoherent narration of the older woman, he realizes the fact that Mr. Slime and other workers of the Shipping company gathered to decide to call for a strike. For that, they decided to go to the governor to seek his advice regarding the legality of their strike. But when they reached the governor's gate, the guards deny them entry and summons four police officers. During the conflict between the policemen, two of the workers getting injured seriously. This violence triggered violence in the city on a larger scale. The rioters damaged the shops and other public property but have not killed anyone.

On the contrary, police killed Po King in their counteraction. The revolt gradually becomes more violent and aggressive as time passes. They scatter the commodities on the streets, cars were overturned, bread van is emptied in the gutter, the show windows were destroyed, and the streets were littered with clothes and food. The situation deteriorates when a ship called HMS Goliath enters the harbour and starts firing the shells. As a result of this counterattack, the rioters start leaving the city and entering the nearby villages.

Soon Miss Foster sees that a few men were hiding in the trees with their weapons. Bob's father also sees few men with a weapon. It is revealed that the revolutionists had reached into the village and hide themselves to attack. The villagers witness all these things from their hiding places which created confusion in their minds. They initially thought that they were looking for the overseers, but soon they realize that they were waiting for the Landlord. Soon they see the Landlord on the empty roads of the village in soiled clothes. Through his body language, it seems that he has accepted what is going to happen to him. The rebellion waited on the squire, but they

see that Mr. Slime approaching that direction, so they waited for his signal. But Mr. Slime does not give them the signal of affirmation, and the Landlord escapes from the scene. Mr. Slime thanks them for not killing the Landlord and asks them to disperse.

Check your progress-9

- i) Who was killed in the police firing?
a) Po King b) Bob c) Trumper d) Mr. Slime
- ii) Who fainted after witnessing the violent mess on the roads of the city?
a) Trumper b) Mr. Foster c) Pa d) Bob
- iii) Why do the workers want to meet the governor?
a) To sought his advice
b) To compromise regarding their demands
c) To complaint against the Landlord
d) To convince him of their demands
- iv) What is the name of the ship that fired the shells on the island?
a) HMS Goliath b) Abbotsham c) Aurochs d) None of the above
- v) Who brings the message that "they are coming"?
a) Pa b) Mr. Foster c) Overseer's Brother d) Bob

1.2.10 Chapter 10:

This Chapter begins with a sentence “The years have changed nothing. The riots were not repeated” (231). It suggests that the riot described in chapter nine was not successful as it did not bring in the change in the socio-political condition of the island. The chapter further reveals that the oldest man on the island is speaking incoherently in his deep sleep. Ma is listening to his speech and trying to make sense out of it. His incoherent speech is, in fact, a symbolic history of white and black races. He narrates that one race has God and another exists without God. He further reveals how the white race started enslaving the black race and make a trade of humans. He goes on to speak about the social changes he has witnessed throughout

his life. He revealed how the whites establish colonies and exploit the native people. Ma tries to wake him up but collapse due to a sharp pain in chest and dies.

Check your progress-10

- i) Which race started the trade of slaves?
 - a) Black b) White c) Asian d) Australoid
- ii) Which race invented God?
 - a) Black b) White c) Asian d) Australoid
- iii) What was the meaning of Pa's incoherent sleep talk?
 - a) History of races b) His love for Ma
 - c) His golden days in America d) None of the above
- iv) What happened to Ma at the end of the chapter?
 - a) She collapsed due to pain b) She overjoyed after listening to Pa
 - c) She wakes up Pa d) She slept of her chair

1.2.11 Chapter 11:

The political revolution, violence, and the worries of the elder world soon turned into the innocent world of the narrator G. In this chapter, the omnipotent narration was substituted for G's first-person narration. The narrator speaks about how he hides the pebbles and felt a secrete enjoyment when he rediscovers them. Here pebbles stand for the symbol of childhood innocence, which was lost one day. This point in the narration also shows a point of departure from the age of innocence to the adult world. It is revealed that the childhood friends of G, Trumper, Boy Blue, and Bob have now dispersed and come to the age. G has now entered high school and felt that village school is a kind of camp with an intolerable rigidity of discipline. Trumper emigrated to America, and Boy Blue and Bob have never been enrolled in high school as they remain in a different world. It seems that there is no major political event happened in this period, but the undercurrents of World War II can be observed. In meeting with students, the headmaster announced that France has fallen to Germany and is the greatest threat to the civilization. But these distant rumours and news about war turned into a real war situation when a large mercantile ship was torpedoed in the harbour. The submarine sank it with the loud crack of shelling. The

people witnessed it with utter surprise and hysteria of fear. As all these political events are happening at the backdrop, the narrator describes the life at the high school and the socio-cultural changes that have robbed his childhood innocence. It is revealed further that Bob and Boy Blue get recruited into the local police force. After high school, G also receives an appointment as an English teacher at Trinidad. He also receives a letter from Trumper in which he seems very enthusiastic and happy.

Check your progress-11

- i) What stands for the symbol of childhood innocence?
a) pebble b) G himself c) waves of sea d) leaves
- ii) Where does G get the appointment?
a) Barbados b) Dominica c) Cuba d) Trinidad
- iii) Who among the boys went to America?
a) Bob b) Trumper c) G d) Boy Blue
- iv) Who among the following gets recruited in the local police force?
a) Boy Blue b) G c) Trumper d) Mr. Foster
- v) Who announced that France is fallen to Germany?
a) Mr. Slime b) Boy Blue c) Mr. Foster d) Headmaster

1.2.12 Chapter 12:

Chapter Twelve reveals the visit of G and Pa. Pa is feeding his goat. Ma is dead, but her memories are still very strong in his mind. They speak about the changes that happened in the village. They watch the village in contempt and wonder how the trees were cut off and the railway lines were uprooted in the name of the contribution of little England into the victory of Big England. They were confused whether it is a matter of pleasure or protest. But no one can protest as the island is personal property of the Landlord. During this period, the villagers also perceive the decrease of the political power of the Landlord as Mr. Slime becomes a politically influenced person with the spread of Penny Bank and Friendly Society in the all-other regions of the island. Creighton's daughter had permanently migrated to England, and he and his wife live alone in their house on the hill. They cannot leave the village like the natives. The older man said that everything would remain the same and nothing will

be changed. If the Landlord dies in his house on the hill, someone else will take his place, and similarly, after Mr. Slime, someone will engage in trouble and tribulation with the colonial powers.

Check your progress-12

- i) Where does the Landlord's Daughter is migrated permanently?
a) America b) Trinidad c) Barbados d) England
- ii) For what reason the trees of the island were cut off?
a) World War II b) Rivalry between tenants and Landlord
c) For environmental causes d) To build the roads
- iii) According to whom nothing will change on the Island?
a) Pa b) Ma c) Miss Foster d) G
- iv) What was pa doing when G visited him?
a) Feeding to goat b) Preparing Lunch
c) Sleeping on his chair d) Speaking with Miss foster
- v) Why do the people could not protest against cutting off the trees?
a) because the island is the property of Landlord
b) because they want to cut them off
c) because nobody cares for the trees
d) because they have caused the great inconvenience

1.2.13 Chapter 13:

Chapter Thirteen is divided into three parts – Morning, Noon, and Night. The morning begins as usual as Savory is selling loaves of bread. But soon, this usual morning witnesses an unusual quarrel between a Shoemaker and a stranger in a white suit. The man is there to issue a notice of three weeks to the Shoemaker to vacate the spot as he has purchased it from the Landlord. Shoemaker quarrels with him and disrespects him with dirty language. The Shoemaker points out that nobody ever had heard such kind of thing on the island. When Shoemaker protests and rejects the notice, the man warns him and tells him that he will send his solicitor. The man left

behind the angry shoemaker and crowd of mute audience. Among the audience, there were Bob's father and Overseer's brother, who disperse the crowd and try to console the Shoemaker. The Overseer's brother identified the man as a Chief Sanitary Inspector. But as the crowd disperses, the Shoemaker starts crying as he has heart by the thought that he has to leave the spot. He was working there for the last twenty years. The spot was also used by his parents and grandparents. Bob's father tries to cheer him up by reminding him that he has given the courage to the village to follow Mr. Slime in the civil disturbances. They admit that his decision was right at that time. But the Shoemaker was in deep thought at what will happen to him if he leaves the spot. How could he manage to shift the shop? How could he manage money for the transfer? And Who will help him? There are several questions in front of him. Bob's father tries to give him confidence that if he stands in protest, everybody will stand, and if he sank, everybody would sink.

The next part is noon, in which the situation was repeated with another member of the village. A stranger visited Mr. Foster to issue him the notice of three weeks to vacate his house. He also quarrels with him and rejects the idea of leaving the spot. The stranger reminds him that the land is not owned by him, and the Landlord can sell it without his permission. He also offers that if he wants to sell his house, he would like to buy it. But he rejects the idea and became aggressive. At the same time, the Overseer comes on the scene and told the shoemaker that he doesn't know about the selling of the land but what the stranger is saying is right. When Mr. Foster becomes more impatient and aggressive, they leave his house and stand on the road. But soon, Mr. Foster comes out of his house and starts misbehaving with them. The Overseer then places a notice against the lamp-post that suggests that the Landlord has sold out a few of the spots, and if anybody has any query regarding it, they should see Mr. Slime in person. The people get more confused after reading the name of Mr. Slime on the notice. It is also clear that besides the sold-out spots, all other property will be continued on rent, and that will be collected in a similar office.

The last part of the chapter reveals the headmaster's visit to Pa to inform him that his spot is also sold out. As a kind gesture, on behalf of Pa, the headmaster has also offered his house to the Landlord and Pa's accommodation in Alms house. The older man was emotionally attached to the house, but he is more worried about his stay at Alms House because it is like a final stage of human degradation. But soon, his mind starts perceiving the sense of disappointment, frustration, and being

Trinidad from Dave, who was commissioned in Trinidad as an army man. She shows her dislike for the Trinidadian culture as she knows from Dave that nobody asks others to come home for dinner; instead, they generally arrange it in hotels. She also rejects the idea of dancing on the road in the name of a carnival. Dave has returned from Trinidad due to the problem of corruption.

Further, she also advises him to keep a good company of friends and warns him from the American people. After the meal, G complimented her for the food test and admitted that he would miss her cooking. While serving the ice cream, she tells him the recipe of a cuckoo which may not be part of Trinidadian food. When they finish their dinner, unexpectedly, Trumper comes to visit him. He seems changed as he is a confident, smart, and knowledgeable man of social exposé and political experience. They speak about America for length as G and his mother show curiosity about America. He praises America as full of economic opportunities, but he also condemns it for necked racism. Through his communication, it is revealed that he is happy with his migration and also thinking of returning with all legal procedures. Soon their communication turns towards the selling of land issues and Mr. Slims' disappointing engagement in it. Trumper thinks that buying lands through Penny Bank and Friendly Society is committed by Mr. Slime against the Black inhabitants. He thinks that Mr. Slime has deceived the people by engaging them in great dreams of ownership of lands, but actually, he buys it through their money. When he buys the land, he continued the old rental system. The worst thing is that he has sold a few of the spots to other partners and developers who want to vacate the land within three weeks without any responsibility to tenants. The changes that happened in the village- the cutting of the trees and shattering the railway lines, after the departure of Trumper to America - are frustrating. The jolly, smiling, and confident Trumper feels sad, angry, and frustrated after hearing all these things. But still, something is assuring in his speech, as if he knows something that others don't know.

After the small talk with G and his mother, he asks G to stroll for a while, and when they go outside, he offers him a farewell drink. While drinking, they speak about the changes that happened in the village. He plays the songs of Black Spirituals on the small tape of recordings he bought from America. He reveals that his favourite song is Paul Robeson's "Let my people go." The song belongs to Negro Spiritual Music Tradition that imparts Christian values and combines it with the hardship of African-Americans. Trumper is under the influence of the Black Nationalist

Movement of America. He has realized how the white hegemony has suppressed the Black community and push them into the dark allies of ignorance. He experienced in America that in the world, people were classified according to their national origin, but the Black-skinned people were termed as Nigro, despite his national origin. After this kind of experience and exposure to African Americans' socio-cultural movements, he has developed a sense of belonging to the Negro movement. He used the term "my people" for all the African Americans suffering under the white hegemony. His experience makes him realize the injustice is happening with the Black residences in the village. He becomes serious and critical about Mr. Slime. He considers him the criminal politician who stabs dagger in the back of innocent people. Trumper let him know how white people are taking advantage of their ignorance. After the drink, Trumper wishes him prosperous life in Trinidad and takes his leave.

While returning from the last drink with Trumper, G witnesses that the Shoemaker's house is being moved from the spot by a group of people. But unfortunately, it collapsed on the ground. G further meets Pa, who is angry with the people who have made this cracking sound at this hour of the night. G helps him to return to his home and bids goodbye to him. Pa suggests that it is G's last time that he is watching Pa in the house. Pa reminds him that on his ninth birthday, the rain flooded the village, and it was soon followed by the calamities like urban unrest and the selling of spots. The chain of events narrated throughout the novel was completed and concluded by Pa and G. He eventually develops a sense that he is bidding farewell to the island for the last time.

Check your progress-14

- i) Who was commissioned in Trinidad?
a) Dave b) Bob's father c) Mr. Foster d) Pa
- ii) Whose house was collapsed while moving it from the spot?
a) Pa b) Mr. Foster c) Shoemaker d) Trumper
- iii) What is the title of Trumper's favourite song?
a) Let My People Go b) Sometimes I feel Like
c) Come on in the Room d) Oh Freedom!

- iv) To whom does Trumper call "My people"?
- a) His friends in America
 - b) All the Negroes of the World
 - c) Only Black Habitants in the Village
 - d) G and his other childhood friends
- v) For what reason does Trumper praise America?
- a) Full of economic opportunities
 - b) Social equality
 - c) Educational development
 - d) Electricity for all

1.2.15 Answer Key:

Check your progress-1

- (i) a. 9
- (ii) a. excess feeding
- (iii) d. roads
- (iv) a. flood
- (v) d. perpetual stench of disinfect

Check your progress-2

- (i) a. through the whispers of other children
- (ii) d. Pumpkin vine was killed
- (iii) d. Bess
- (iv) a. Creighton family
- (v) d. sixty scents

Check your progress-3

- i) c. Empire Day
- ii) a. Queen Victoria
- iii) b. distribution of pennies
- iv) d. The image is of a different person

v) a. a chigoe flea

Check your progress-4

i) a. Mr. Slime

ii) c. Prophet in Judaism

iii) d. emigration to America

iv) a. Mr. Slime

v) c. Pa

Check your progress-5

i) d. Savory

ii) a. George Headley

iii) b. Marcus Garvey

iv) c. Jamaican Politician

v) b. Little England

Check your progress-6

i) b) G

ii) c) Fisherman

iii) b) Four

iv) a) Colony of White people

v) d) Bob

Check your progress-7

i) a) Parable of the Fig Tree

ii) a) Dickson

iii) a) Lavish Party

iv) d) Boy Blue

v) c) Mr. Slime

Check your progress-8

- i) c) Three Native Boys
- ii) b) Shipping
- iii) a) Pa
- iv) d) Safety of his family
- v) c) He will sell the island

Check your progress-9

- i) a) Po King
- ii) d) Bob
- iii) a) To sought his advice
- iv) a) HMS Goliath
- v) d) Bob

Check your progress-10

- i) b) White
- ii) b) White
- iii) a) History of races
- iv) a) She collapsed due to pain

Check your progress-11

- i) a) pebble
- ii) d) Trinidad
- iii) b) Trumper
- iv) a) Boy Blue

Check your progress-12

- i) d) England
- ii) a) World War II
- iii) a) Pa

- iv) a) Feeding to goat
- v) a) because island is the property of Landlord

Check your progress-13

- i) a) Three Weeks
- ii) c) Mr. Slime
- iii) a) Headmaster
- iv) a) Lamp-Post
- v) a) Bob's Father

Check your progress-14

- i) a) Dave
- ii) c) Shoemaker
- iii) a) Let My People Go
- iv) b) All the Negros of the World
- v) a) Full of economic opportunities

1.3 Characters

1) Bob

Bob is the childhood friend of the narrator G. The story of the novel begins as Bob enjoys looking at G, who is being bathed by his mother. Throughout the novel, he remained a sidekick of G and participated in his childhood adventure. He was present when Trumper, G, and Boy Blue entered the property of the Landlord. He has also witnessed the violence of civil unrest in the city. He fainted with the frightful scenes he has witnessed on the street. It is revealed in the end that he gets recruited by the local police force.

2) Bob's Mother

Bob's and G.'s mothers were next-door neighbours who occasionally share the mischiefs of their children. The character of Bob's mother is a minor one that very rarely participated in the main action of the novel. She is an ordinary mother image

who is fed up with the mischievous nature of her child but is also very caring about him.

3) Boy Blue

Boy Blue is also one of the members of G's childhood group who takes part in every activity of the group. In the sixth chapter, he narrates a very long story of Bots and Bambina. In the same chapter, he is saved from drowning in the sea by the local fisherman. Most of his comments reveal his critical thinking and analytical capacity. He praises Mr. Slime but many times also criticizes him for his dreaming. At the end of the novel, it is revealed that Boy Blue, along with Bob, gets recruited into the local police force.

4) Mr. Creighton:

Mr. Creighton is a colonial master of the island who owns the village and holds political power. The socio-political history reveals that he is a descendent of English parents who were plantation owners who settled the islands and set up sugarcane farming. They also take part in slave trading for agriculture. But over overtime, slavery was abolished, and sugarcane plantations declined. These families settled down on these islands and live off with rents paid to them by the slaves who settled there. Creighton's family is such a family that settled on the island and living off with the rents. His behaviour in the novel indicates that he is a perfect feudal lord who holds the political power of the village. He very strictly collects the rents of his land but is very unwilling to take the responsibility. In the initial part of the novel, when the flood washed away most of the houses, he shows his unwillingness to pay for the repairs. He shows his dissatisfaction with the disrespectful behaviour of the tenants and the strike called by them in his shipping company. During the civil unrest, it is only due to his good fortune that he escaped from the violent outbreak of the black residents. In the end, he sells his land to Penny Bank and the Friendly Society of Mr. Slime.

5) Miss Foster:

Miss Foster is another minor character of the novel. She has six children from three different men. The first three are from the butcher, two from the baker, and one, whose father had never been mentioned.

6) Mr. Foster:

Mr. Foster is a worker at the docks before the strike in the capital city. Mr. Foster is also one of the tenants whose spots were sold by the Landlord.

7) G.:

G. is the protagonist of the novel who is also a narrator for most of the chapters. The story begins on his ninth birthday and the heavy rain shower that caused the flood in the village. The story moves on with his childhood mischiefs and the major incidences of his life. After completing the schooling at village school, he went to the high school and ended his education after getting the appointment as an English teacher at Trinidad.

8) G.'s mother:

She is also a minor character who stands for the stereotype of a caring mother who looks after the welfare of a child and tries to motivate him for improvement. She is very keen on G.'s progress in school, and for that, she constantly keeps an eye on him. She restricts him from the bad company and occasionally also beats him to keep him in the discipline. Throughout the novel, she is only named G's mother.

9) Pa:

Pa is the Oldest Man in the village. Though he is not a protagonist, a few parts of the novels are narrated from his perspective. He plays a crucial role in the novel as he narrates the history of Africans in the Caribbean. Initially, he believes in Mr. Slime and, on many occasions, praised him for the establishment of Penny Bank and Friendly society. But eventually, he gets disappointed as he realizes that Mr. Slime has purchased the land by using the money of Penny Bank and Friendly Society. At the end of the novel, it is revealed that his spot is sold out to someone else, and he has to shift to Alms House.

10) Ma:

Ma is the oldest woman in the village. Throughout the novel, she appears with her husband, Pa. She is a more critical thinker than Pa. She can perceive the social changes happening around the village. The Landlord also honoured her equal and let her know his plan of selling the lands. However, she dies several years before the Landlord sales their spot.

11) The Shoemaker

Though the Shoemaker is a minor character in the story, he represents the self-educated, thoughtful, and intelligent villager who perceives the colonial injustice of the Landlord. He motivated the villagers to stand with Mr. Slime during the civil unrest. In the end, it is seen that his spot is sold out, and the notice of three weeks is issued to him to vacate the place. He tries to move his house from the spot, but it collapsed to the ground.

12) Mr. Slime

Initially, Mr. Slime seems to be the ideal leader of the people who think about the welfare of society. But eventually, it can be seen that he messed up with the dreams of the people of buying land on which they were living for generations. He established a Penny Bank and Friendly Society to help the people buy land for them but eventually ended up buying land in his name with the money of the people collected in the bank and society.

13) Trumper

Trumper is G.'s childhood friend. He is also critical of the political events happening in the village. He is an adventurous boy who likes to take risks which also caused trouble for his other friends. Eventually, he visited America and gets influenced by the Black nationalist movement. In the end, the naughty boy is turned into a confident and motivated youth who realised the injustice of colonial power and racism.

1.4 Themes of the Novel:

Colonialism, coming to age, and racial discrimination appears as the recurrent themes of the novel. The oppression of colonisers and the ignorance of colonised are highlighted frequently. The story moves around Barbados' small rural village that is settled by the White Planter, but when the sugarcane agriculture declined, he has rented it to the Black slaves. They were living at his mercy. He takes the disadvantage of the poor black inhabitants and collects rent from them for the land that is not actually owned by him. He is living a lavish life in another well-structured part of the village; however, the black habitants live in the worst condition. The struggle between the coloniser and colonised gets its climax when the workers call for a strike in his shipping company. The revolutionists also planned to kill him during the riots, but he escaped to safety.

Racism is the second important theme of the novel. It is explored through the title of the novel. The characters were trapped into their black skins. G and his group also discuss their colour and reveal their notions regarding their colour. They reveal how the girls from the village are held beautiful if her blackness is lightened to few shades. However, the boys were stoic regarding their colour and made a joke about being black. The theme of racism is also reflected in the incoherent speaking of Pa in his deep sleep. He reveals how the white people enslave Blacks. The theme of racism becomes more direct when Trumper returns from America. In the states, he has realized the discrimination in the name of the colour and gets influenced by the black spirituals. He makes G realize the discrimination, oppression, and suppression of the white community on their race.

The third important theme of the novel is coming to the age. The narrator has explored how the childhood days have turned into the adult world. He narrates the childhood mischiefs of the group of boys living in the small rural village of Barbados who were unaware of the harsh realities of the world. They were busy playing with crabs and clouds forming different images. The political events happening in the story are the backdrop of their innocent world. But eventually, when they complete their schooling and enter into the real world of the profession, they start realizing the hostile realities of their world. They get acquainted with the social evils that have altered their conceptions regarding the world around them. In the end, G. accepted the appointment at Trinidad and bids farewell to the island. Trumper has visited America and is thinking of permanently migrating legally to this promised land. Bob and Boy Blue are recruited in the local police force. Thus, the novel explores the childhood experiences of the narrator and at the same time also revealed the important socio-political markers of colonial history. Politics, corruption, social divide, economic oppression, and social ignorance appear as the minor but important themes of the novel.

1.5 Writing exercise:

- (1) Write an essay type of question on the major and minor themes in *In the Castle of My Skin*.
- (2) Critically discuss *In the Castle of My Skin* as a colonial discourse.



Unit-2

Death and the King's Horseman

The Present Unit is divided into the following sections:

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction: Life and Works of Wole Soyinka

2.2 Subject Matter:

2.2.1 Introduction to the Play

2.2.2 Major Characters in the Play

2.2.3 Plot Summary

2.2.4 Act-wise Summary and Analysis of the Play

2.2.5 Critical Commentary on the Play

2.3 Check your progress

2.4 Answers to Check your Progress

2.4 Exercise

2.5 Books for further reading

2.0 Objectives:

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand life and literary contribution of Wole Soyinka.
- Explain the basic structure, plot, characters and themes of the play
- Understand the nature of the play as tragedy

2.1 Introduction: Life and Works of Wole Soyinka

African playwright, novelist, poet and non-fiction writer, Akinwande Oluwole Soyinka or Wole Soyinka was born in Abeokuta, Nigeria of Ijebu parentage. He completed his primary and secondary education in Nigeria and for his graduation he went to University of Leeds, where he obtained B A (Honours English). During his

stay at Leeds, he published two stories – ‘Madam Etienne’s Entertainment’ and ‘A Tale of Two Cities’. During 1957 – 59 he was associated with Royal Court Theatre, London, as Play Reader. This association equipped Soyinka with the first-hand knowledge of western theatre. Since he belonged to Yoruba culture of Nigeria, he has read about the African theatre and learned native African tradition of theatre. He has also read extensively about the gods and goddesses of Yoruba culture. As a result, his plays provide a mixture of African and western theatrical traditions. Moreover, he has made extensive use of African belief system and its gods and goddesses in his works. Many readers find his play difficult for they represent this mixture. Until the significance of the Yoruba gods and goddesses is known, one is unable to correctly interpret his works. In order to understand his play, therefore, the knowledge of African and western theatrical traditions is must. In 1986, Soyinka was awarded with the Nobel Prize for Literature. In the same year, the government of Nigeria also honoured him with the title Commander of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFR).

His important works include:

Plays

Before the Blackout. Ibadan, Nigeria: Orisun Acting Editions, 1971.

Camwood on the Leaves. London: Methuen, 1973.

Collected Plays 1 (A Dance of the Forests, The Swamp Dwellers, The Strong Breed, The Road, The Bacchae of Euripides). London: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Collected Plays 2 (The Lion and the Jewel, Kongi’s Harvest, The Trials of Brother Jero, Jero’s Metamorphosis, Madmen and Specialists). London: Oxford University Press, 1974.

Death and the King’s Horseman. London: Methuen, 1975.

Opera Wonyosi. London: Rex Collings, 1981.

Requiem for a Futurologist. Rex Collings, 1983.

A Play of Giants. London: Methuen, 1984.

From Zia with Love and A Scourge of Hyacinths. London: Methuen, 1992.

The Beatification of Area Boy. London: Methuen, 1995.

Film

Blues for a Prodigal. Nigeria: Ewuro Productions, 1984.

Fiction

The Interpreters. London: Andre' Deutsch, 1965.

The Forest of a Thousand Daemons: A Hunter's Saga (translation of *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmole*, by D. O. Fagunwa). London: Nelson, 1968.

Season of Anomy. London: Rex Collings, 1973.

Poetry

Idanre and Other Poems. London: Methuen, 1967.

A Shuttle in the Crypt. London: Collings/Methuen, 1971.

Ogun Abibiman. London and Ibadan: Rex Collings, 1976.

Mandela's Earth. New York: Randon House, 1988.

Nonfiction

The Man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka. London: Rex Collings, 1972.

Ake: The Years of Childhood. New York: Random House, 1982.

Isara: A Voyage around "Essay." New York: Random House, 1989.

Ibadan: The Penkelemes Years: A Memoir, 1946–1965. London: Methuen, 1994.

Selected Critical Works

“And after the Narcissist?” *African Forum* 1.4 (Spring 1966): 53–64.

“Neo-Tarzanism: The Poetics of Pseudo-Tradition.” *Transition* 48 (Accra, Ghana, 1975): 38–44.

Myth, Literature, and the African World. London: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

“Who's Afraid of Elesin-Oba?” University of Ife, Nigeria: Mimeograph, 1977.

The Critic and Society. University of Ife Inaugural Lecture Series, 49 (1980).

“Reflections of a Member of the Wasted Generation.” University of Ife Mimeograph, 1984; Introduction to *A Play of Giants* (London: Methuen, 1984).

This Past Must Address Its Present: The 1986 Nobel Lecture. Statements: Occasional Papers of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, no. 3 (March 1988).

The Open Sore of a Continent: A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crisis. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

1.2 Subject Matter

1.2.1 Introduction to the Play

Death and the King's Horseman (DKH) is one of the full length five act plays that Soyinka has produced. As he informs in the preface, the play is based on an historical event that took place in 1946 in one of the historical Yoruba cities of Nigeria called Oyo. The play reveals the disastrous results of the actions of Elison Oba, his son, Olunde and the colonial District Officer, Simon Pilkings. However, for certain artistic purpose, the playwright has set the play in 1944, when the World War II was still on. Similarly, certain sequence of events and details of characterization are changed to suit the purpose of drama.

As we know, like rest of the African countries, Nigeria also includes three important cultures – Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa. Each of these cultures is further divided into different tribes at different localities. Though Yoruba culture as a whole has some important gods and deities, the different tribes have their own customs and traditions. One of such tradition and belief about Yoruba cosmology finds place in the present play. There are three worlds in Yoruba cosmology – the world of the Living, the world of the Dead and the world of Yet-to-be-Born. The tradition enacted in this play binds the three worlds together. It is, in a way, the thread that connects the three worlds. As per the belief, the Chief Horseman of the King has to commit suicide (a ritual death) after one month from the death of the king. That is, the horseman has to accompany the king in the next world, as he has done so in this life. This ensures the connection between the three worlds. This cycle goes on from one generation to another.

1.2.2 Major Characters in the Play

Elesin Oba

He is the protagonist of the play. The ‘horseman’ referred to in the title of the play is Elesin. He is the chief horseman of the king of Oyo. In his capacity as the chief horseman of the king, he has enjoyed all the pleasures of life. Nobody would

deny him anything that he pointed at. However, as per the native customs of the kingdom, after one month from the death of the king and before his burial, the chief horseman has to commit suicide (ritual death) in order to accompany the king in the next world, as he has done in this world. In the beginning of the play, at the evening of the day when his death is finalized, Elesin seems to be ready and eager to undergo the ritual death. He, accordingly, not only denies the offers made by the mother of the market, Iyaloja, but also thanks her and other women of the market for whatever they have done for him. He also challenges the 'Not I' bird referred to by the praise singer and argues that it is his duty to accompany the dead king. However, by the end of the first act, when he happens to look at a young beautiful girl, he expresses his wish to marry her with the excuse that the marriage and its output will prove to be the symbol of the union of the living and the dead worlds. This shows the weak heart of Elesin.

Elesin's eldest son is Olunde. It is noticed that Elesin is traditional in outlook and wants his son to follow his profession. However, Olunde wants to take medical education and go to England for the purpose, which Elesin did not approve of. It is only with the help of Simon and Jane Pilkings that Olunde is able to go to England for pursuing his education.

After the materialization of the marriage, though Elesin prepares to accept the ritual death, the same is interrupted by Siman Pilkings and Elesin is put into custody. When Elesin learns that in his place his son Olunde has performed the ritual death he strangles himself and commits suicide.

Praise Singer

He is a man who follows Elesin and sings for him. In his songs, he praises Elesin as how he has followed all his words throughout his life and will do so again by committing suicide as a ritual of Yoruba culture to save their universe before the dead king is buried. He too is startled with the wish of Elesin to marry a young and beautiful girl. During the death ritual he takes on the role of a diseased king to speak with Elesin. He feels disgraced and humiliated when Elesin could not complete the death ritual.

Iyaloja

She is called the 'mother' of the market place. It means that, she is the chief woman of the market and takes decisions on behalf of all the women and girls of the

market. In spite of her supreme position in the market, she is subservient to men and she is terrified when her words are taken as offence by Elesin. She is well aware of the lofty mission of Elesin in following the ritual death and therefore, she willingly gives her would be daughter-in-law to Elesin on his demand to marry her. However, she is plane enough to scorn Elesin when he is unable to undergo the ritual suicide. It is Iyaloja who asks Elesin's new wife to close the eyes of Elesin after his death and asks her to concentrate on the baby in her womb. She is thus representative of the native culture and a visionary of the new world.

Simon Pilkings

He is the colonial district officer in charge of Oyo. He is atheist, who does not believe in the religion and custom not only of the natives but his own too. He is often seen abusing religions. Therefore, he is insensitive to and unable to understand the beliefs associated with Yoruba cosmology. He represents the so called 'modern' European who does not want to understand the traditions and culture of the people whom he is ruling. It is out of his 'modern' and skeptic vintage point that he looks at every phenomenon. This explains his wearing of *egungun* (costume associated with the dead in the native culture) as a fancy dress for the ball ceremony. It is out of his 'modern' view that he wants to save the life of Elesin who is informed to commit suicide on the name of some tribal tradition. Of course, Simon is able to interrupt the ritual, but he is unable to save the life of Elesin. On the contrary, instead of one death of Elesin, his actions leads to two deaths – that of Elesin and Olunde. He is also responsible for Elesin's humiliation.

Jane Pilkings

She is wife of Simon, the colonial district officer. Though like Simon, she is ignorant about the tribal customs and traditions, she is educated enough to understand the issues related to national and social integration. As a result, she is more compassionate than her husband. She realizes the talent of Olunde and is responsible for sending him to England to pursue his education. The conversation between Jane and Olunde is highly informative and it reveals her character. Though earlier she also considers Elesin' ritual suicide as barbaric, when Olunde compares the sacrifice of a naval officer with that of his father, she understands the fact that the different cultures have different values and the self-sacrifice of a man to save his society is valued to a great extent. Such people sacrifice their lives to save their

culture. However, by the time she could convince Simon regarding this, he has arrested Elesin and Olunde has accepted the ritual death as the eldest son of Elesin.

Olunde

He is the eldest son of Elesin. He is clever and sharp. He wants to study medicine to be a doctor. However, his father was against his wish for it required him to leave the native place and the associated traditions. However, with the help of Simon and Jane Pilkings, Olunde is able to travel to England to pursue his dream. Naturally, this makes his father disown him. During his four year stay in England, he learns many habits and inclinations of English people. One of them being that the English people do not believe what they do not understand. This understanding helps Olunde convince Jane Pilkings about the noble and lofty mission of self-sacrifice that his father has to carry out. Though educated in England, Olunde has not forgotten his traditions, culture and beliefs. He has learnt the news about the King's death and he knows that his father also has to kill himself. As the eldest son of Elesin, in order to perform the final rites of his father that he has come to Nigeria (Oyo). However, when he knows that his father has failed to perform the self-sacrifice as duty, he rejects him. In order not to shatter the beliefs of people about Yoruba cosmology, he himself, as the eldest son of Elesin, performs the duty of self-sacrifice and kills himself. He is the greatest loss that the play reveals.

The Bride

She is the young and beautiful girl that Elesin notices in the market place on the eve of his scheduled self-sacrifice. As the last wish, Elesin demands the girl as his wife, who, he argues, will bear the 'seed of the union of the living world and the world of the dead'. Iyaloja honours the wish of Elesin and accepts Elesin's demand in spite of the fact that the girl is betrothed to her son. The materialization of the marriage impregnates the bride. However, Elesin's failure to perform the ritual death brings curse on her. It is she who closes the eyes of Elesin after his suicide in the prison. Iyaloja, at the end of the play, advises the bride to concentrate on the child in her womb.

Sergeant Amusa

He is a black man, but converts himself to Muslim religion. He is in Her Majesty's government service. His own people, therefore, despise him for abandoning his heritage. Though Black Muslim, he believes in superstitions

associated with Yoruba culture. For example, when Simon and Jane Pilkings wear the *egungun* he does not want to stand before them and talk to them, for the dress is associated with the dead. Simon Pilkings entrusts Amusa the job of arresting Elesin for preventing him from committing suicide. For the purpose, when he visits the market place, the young girls humiliate and make fun of him and call him a white man's eunuch.

Joseph

He is a black boy who has converted himself to Christianity. He is Pilkings' houseboy and also informs him of the native traditions and customs. However, he is often disturbed when Simon abuses Christian religion too in his speech.

The Prince of Wales

He is the Prince of Wales, region of the Great Britain. He is on his visit to the native colony to boost the morale of English officers. To celebrate his arrival, the ball competition is arranged. Olunde comes to Oyo in the same ship in which the prince has come.

The Resident

He is a colonial officer superior to Simon Pilkings. However, he is very arrogant and is highly ignorant about the native traditions and customs.

Aide-de-Camp

He is an assistant to the Resident. Like the Resident, he too is ignorant about the native traditions.

1.2.3 Plot Summary

As has been mentioned earlier, the play *Death and the Kings Horseman* is based on a historical event taken place in the Yoruba city called Oyo. When the alafin (king) of the place dies, his final ritual burial takes place after one month. But before the burial, the horseman of the king has to perform a ritual death in order to accompany the dead king. Accordingly, Elesin was to commit suicide to accompany the dead king, but the colonial district officer, Simon Pilkings, saves the life of the horseman. Though he is well-intentioned, he could not understand the significance of Elesin's death in the Yoruba cosmology which leads to the destruction of the union of the three worlds – the world of the living, the world of the dead and the world of

the unborn. As Soyinka makes it clear in the preface to the play, the play should not be read as the culture clash between the East and the West, between the culture of the colonized and that of the colonizers. The colonial officer, Simon Pilkings, is a catalyst agent only.

Death and the Kings Horseman is a full length five act tragedy. The play opens when Elesin's procession with praise singers and drummers enters into the village market place. After the procession is over, Elesin has to commit the ritual death. In the beginning, Elesin is not afraid of the coming death and is ready to accompany the dead king with courage. He therefore does not entertain the call of the Not I bird. The bird here is used as a symbol to refer to the coward people who want to flee away from their death. Elesin, on the contrary, sings of the ancestors, their heroic deeds and Yoruba culture in totality. On this day, Elesin cannot be denied anything including rich cloths, delicious food and beautiful women, for he is performing the task that will keep intact the bond between the three worlds. That is to say, he is on a mission, on a passage of the transition. Accordingly, the mother of the market, Iyaloja offers him anything that he likes in the market. But with equal broad heart, Elesin confesses that the market has given him whatever he wanted in his life and thanks Iyaloja for it. However, all of a sudden a beautiful face attracts his attention. This is a young beautiful girl and Elesin request one night with the girl. Iyaloja tries to convince Elesin that he should leave the world as an honourable man, who leaves food in feast for his children. But Elesin argues to Iyaloja that this union of him and the girl will be significant for its outcome will represent the union of the two worlds. Even though the girl is to marry Iyaloja's son shortly, to respect the honour of the man on the death passage, for the sake of the village, Iyaloja reluctantly accepts the request of Elesin.

Meanwhile Sergeant Amusa, the native Muslim in the service of the colonizers, comes to Simon Pilkings to report a message. When he enters into Pilkings' house, he finds Simon and Jane Pilkings in traditional Yoruba costume called *egungun* (which is associated with the dead in the native custom). They are preparing for a fancy dress competition called ball, organized in the honour of the Prince of Walsh who is visiting the colony. Looking at the *egungun*, Amusa denies speaking and reports the message to Simon Pilkings. Joseph, the native who converted himself to Christianity, the houseboy of Pilkings, informs Simon and Jane that Amusa does not want to speak with them because they are in the costume associated with death.

However, when Simon orders, Amusa reports them that a man will be committing suicide in the village. In order to save the life of the person, without any ill intention and also not to cause any disturbance during the visit of the prince, Simon orders Amusa to go and arrest the man. And Simon and Jane go to attend the function. When Amusa and others go to the market place, Elesin is still in bridal chamber. Iyaloja and other girls and women outside stop Amusa to enter the place. They humiliate him and call him a eunuch of the colonial power. Unable to arrest Elesin and humiliated by the rebukes of the girls, Amusa returns to Simon who is in the party.

In the village, the marriage of Elesin materializes and he comes out of the bridal chamber with blood-stained clothe to indicate that the bride was virgin and that he has successfully impregnated her. Elesin declares that now he is ready for the ritual suicide. Still his mind lingers back on the pleasures of life he has recently tested. The ritual begins and amid the beating of drums and the songs of the singers, Elesin falls in trance.

At the residence, where the party is organized, Amusa comes to meet Simon Pilkings and report him that he could not arrest Elesin and that he is humiliated instead. Looking at the noise outside (Amusa is prohibited to enter the place) Aide-de-Camp, the assistant to the Resident, arrives and tries to know the reason. He is informed by Amusa that he could not complete the duty of arresting the man who is committing suicide. In the light of the visit of the Prince and not to make an issue of the situation, the Aide-de-Cam instructs Simon to arrest Elesin immediately. Accordingly, Simon leaves the place and with sufficient escort goes to arrest Elesin.

As the ritual death approaches, the drums and music sounds in a special rhythmic tone. Elesin is falling in trance amid the music. However, his mind is lingering back on the thoughts of his consumption of the new bride. But he has prepared himself for the forthcoming death. After Simon leaves, Jane is alone at the residence. Joseph tells Jane about the significance of the music and its rhythmic patterns. She knows that the man will commit suicide and wishes that Simon should save him from doing so.

Once in Oyo, Olunde goes to meet his well-wishers, who have helped him go to England to study medicine – Simon and Jane Pilkings. After the light talk, pointing at the music, Jane asks if Olunde knows that a man will be committing

suicide in the village tonight. Olunde answers the question affirmatively and says that he has come only to carry out the last rites of the would-be dead man. He informs her that he has travelled in the same ship in which the prince has travelled. He further tells her about the death of the king and the traditions and beliefs associated with it. The death of the king means that the chief horseman, his father, has also to die; and as the eldest son of Elesin it is his duty to bury him. Olunde tries to convince Jane about the beliefs of the village people in the three worlds and the role of his father and his ritual death in maintaining the cosmic order. He calls his father's death a martyr's death. However, Jane is unable to understand the significance of the event for sheer reason of her modern world view. Olunde therefore mentions an event in the world war that has recently taken place. A captain of the ship, in order to save the lives of his colleagues and the people in the town, sacrifices his life. This is an incident in the European world, those who call themselves 'modern'. Olunde relates the role of the captain of the ship with that of his father and says that the death of his father will save the lives of the people of the village. Understanding the seriousness of the situation, Jane tells Olunde that Simon has gone to stop the suicide of the man and arrest him. Desperately, Olunde wishes that Simon should not succeed in his mission and leaves the place.

Unfortunately Simon succeeds to arrest Elesin before his death and puts him in the underground cell of his home. Elesin's hands are tied with hand cliffs. Simon is happy that he has saved a man from committing suicide. Simon is informed that some women want to visit Elesin and that they have something with them. Reluctantly Simon agrees with the condition that they should visit him from some distance. The women come and put the luggage down. When it is opened, Simon and Jane identify the body in the luggage and it is that of Olunde. Since his father could not perform the ritual death, Olunde accepted the responsibility and committed suicide. The women are here with the body of Olunde to make Elesin mutter the death message in the ears of Olunde. Unable to bear the death of his son and full of regret of his action, Elesin strangles himself with the hand cliffs and commits suicide. The new bride is sitting beside the dead body of Elesin. Iyaloja asks the bride to close the eyes of Elesin and forget the dead and focus on the unborn in her womb.

1.2.4 Act-wise Summary and Analysis of the Play

Act I

The setting of this act is the market place. It is evening and the stalls in the market are about to be closed. Elesin, accompanied by the praise singer and drummers, enters the market. Elesin is referred to as the man of enormous vitality. The praise singer and Elesin are speaking in poetic language. The praise singer teases Elesin by asking why he is in so hurry. Elesin responds that he is hurrying to meet his dead master, the king. He says, with the king, he has enjoyed everything like delicious food, rich cloths and great honour. Now it is his turn to accompany the dead king into the next world. However, Elesin laments that though the market is his home, he has neglected the market women.

The praise singer, then, sings of the story of the 'Not I' bird. He says that the farmer, the worrier and the student, all are afraid of death. When death comes, they sing the 'Not I' song out of fear of death. The Not I bird is also heard in forest when animals do not want to die. Elesin, however, says that he is not afraid of death, on the contrary, he is eager to meet death and his dead master as well.

As Elesin enters the market place, the market women also start praising Elesin. It is the day of his ritual death and nothing can be denied to him. They know that his self-sacrifice will keep intact the bond of the three worlds – the world of the living, the dead and the unborn. Accordingly, they offer him anything from the market. However, Elesin denies and asserts that he is an honourable man and he will not accept anything from the market. He says that life ends when honour ends. The market women also say that Elesin is an honourable man and he will have honourable death. This offends Elesin. In order not to bring curse of a man on death mission, Iyaloja, the mother of the market, asks for his apology.

Off stage a face attracts the attention of Elesin. It is a young beautiful girl. Looking at the girl, Elesin tells Iyaloja his intention to marry the girl. Iyaloja tries to deny his request by saying that an honourable man should leave behind something for the young generation. However, Elesin says a traveler should leave excessive load that may benefit those who are left behind. Though the girl is betrothed to Iyaloja's son, Iyaloja accepts Elesin's request. She asks Elesin to prepare himself by that time she will prepare his bridal chamber.

Analysis

This act provides all the important details that are necessary to understand the play. It unfolds the facts about the beliefs of Yoruba people regarding the cosmos and the bond of three worlds. Elesin's character as a man of honour and as a man of enormous vitality is revealed. Equally important is his eagerness to undergo the ritual suicide and meet his dead master. However, the weakness of his character, his lust for women is also underlined. Though about to die in a short while, his wish for a young beautiful girl shows that he has not yet cut his bond from the worldly pleasures. His mind is still lingering back on the pleasures of this world. The same weakness in the character of Elesin will cause his downfall and that of the total village.

Act II

The setting of this act is the house of the District Officer, Simon Pilkings, where he and his wife, Jane Pilkings, are preparing themselves for the ball competition organized in the honour of the visit of the Prince of Wales to their colony. They are practicing dance and wearing the local costume called *egungun*. One of the native policemen called Sergeant Amusa comes up to deliver a message to Mr. Pilkings. However, when Amusa finds Mr. and Mrs. Pilkings wearing *egungun* dress, he does not want to speak to Mr. Pilkings, for this dress is associated with death and how can he talk to the incarnation of death. Mr. Pilkings does not understand why Amusa is afraid to talk to him. He asks about it to his houseboy Joseph, who tells him that it is due to the costume that Amusa, though a native Muslim, does not want to talk to him. Upon the strict order of Mr. Pilkings, Amusa writes down the message and gives it to Mr. Pilkings. In the message, Amusa writes that a man in the village named Elesin is committing suicide on the name of local tradition. Considering the seriousness of the issue, without any ill intentions, Mr. Pilkings asks Amusa to go and get the man arrested. Afterwards, he and his wife go to attend the ball party.

Analysis

This act sheds light on the character of Mr. and Mrs. Pilkings. Both of them are modern in their attitude and they do not respect and believe in the native religion and associated traditions. This is clear from their wearing the *egungun* dress. Mr. Pilkings also does not believe in his own religion, i.e. Christianity. This is offending to Joseph, who has converted himself to Christianity. The order that Mr. Pilkings gives

to arrest Elesin is not out of his hatred for the native religion. Therefore, as Soyinka warns in the preface to the play, the play should not be read as conflict between the East and the West. His action of arresting Elesin is the result of his modern attitude and also his duty that the suicide may not create any problem during the visit of the prince.

Act III

As per the orders of Mr. Pilkings, Amusa and his two constables enter the marketplace to arrest Elesin. The girls outside the bridal chamber are dancing and marry making. Amusa tries to force himself in, but the market women and the girls stop him from entering. They call him a eunuch of the white people and tease him. Amusa asks the girls to let him go in or he will bring weapons to enter the chamber forcefully. The girls and women say that their husbands and sons will prove much stronger than Amusa. Listening to the noise outside, Iyaloja comes out. Amusa tells her that he is here to arrest Elesin. But Iyaloja also stops Amusa from doing so. Enraged, Amusa leaves the place with the promise that he will come again with more men and weapons.

Consuming his marriage, Elesin comes out of his bridal chamber. He is holding a blood-stained white cloth. He gives it to Iyaloja and says that it is the symbol of the union on the passage. He tells Iyaloja that let his new bride be with him by the time of his death and she should close his eyes and wash his body after his death. Elesin is informed that the king's horse and his dog are already killed. Elesin resumes his ritual of death. The praise singer and drummers start the music. Elesin seems to go in trance where he can commit suicide.

Analysis

This act is the natural development of the previous two acts. The marriage of Elesin and the young bride is materialized. The cloth that Elesin hands over to Iyaloja symbolizes that the bride was virgin and he has impregnated her. The resultant child will be the symbol of this union. Amusa's failure to arrest Elesin will cause more serious action on the part of the local administration. Elesin's resuming the suicidal ritual is expected to bind the three worlds together.

Act IV

The setting of the act is the house of the Resident and the surrounding area. The party has started and everybody is waiting for the arrival of the Prince. The Prince comes and everybody is eager to meet him and be noticed by him. Everybody is wearing different costumes. A messenger comes with a written message and gives it to the Resident. Shocked by the message, the Resident calls Mr. Pilkings and hands over the message. Outside, Amusa and other policemen are waiting. They have lost their hats in fight with the girls in the market. Amusa informs that the market women are rioting. Considering the seriousness of the situation, Aide-de-Camp asks Mr. Pilkings to arrest Elesin himself. Accordingly, Mr. Pilkings leaves and Jane comes out of the house.

Olunde, the eldest son of Elesin, comes to meet Mr. and Mrs. Pilkings. The Pilkings have helped Olunde to go to England to complete education in medicine. Simon has played a very crucial role in sending Olunde to England in spite of his father's resistance. Since Olunde has spent some time in England, Jane and Olunde talk about English people, their behaviour and their values. Olunde particularly mentions the case of a naval captain who has sacrificed his life for saving many lives. Jane does not condole the sacrificial death of the captain, for she is unable to understand the reason of sacrificing one's own life for the lives of the others.

When enquired, Olunde says that he has come to bury his father. Jane is shocked to listen to the words of Olunde for she knows that Elesin is alive. Olunde explains to her that the king's death means the death of his chief horseman too. He has started the mourning for the death of his father from the time he has learnt of the king's death. Jane cannot understand the logic. Olunde says that his father is sacrificing his life for that of the other people, for it will keep the bond of the three worlds intact. Jane informs Olunde that Simon has gone to arrest Elesin in order to prevent him committing suicide. They listen to the high rise and fall of music and Olunde informs her that his father has died. Jane cannot understand the native tradition where a living man is asked to commit suicide on the name of tradition.

Simon appears on the scene and Olunde is happy that he could not stop the sacrifice of his father. However, Olunde soon notices the sounds of shekels and his father comes on stage. Olunde could not tolerate the presence of his father and calls him 'the eater of the left overs'. He disowns his fathers and leaves the place.

Analysis

The organization of the ball party in the honour of the visiting king at the backdrop of the world war shows the practice of the English people to celebrate death. Still they cannot understand the native practice of self-sacrifice. The discussion between Jane and Olunde is highly informative. Though English, Jane cannot understand the significance of self-sacrifice of the naval captain. On the contrary, the educated in England, Olunde has not forgotten the native traditions and has total belief in the Yoruba cosmology. The aftermath of the action of the action of Simon is evident in the last act of the play.

Act V

The setting of this act is the prison cell where Elesin is kept. The act opens when the bride is sitting beside Elesin. Pilkings comes and looking at the moon, he thinks that Elesin is enjoying the night. However, Elesin blames Pilkings that he has caused dishonor to him and his people by arresting him and stopping him from committing suicide. He says his son Olunde will avenge the act of Pilkings. However, Plikings says that he will be sending Olunde back to England for further education.

Pilkings hears some noise outside and goes in its direction. He knows that it might be Iyaloja. He lets her in. Iyaloja comes and starts cursing Elesin for not undergoing the ritual death and bringing shame on the market place consequently. She also blames Pilkings for interfering the native culture and its practice. Throughout her talk, she is referring to a burden that she does not reveal yet. The Aide-de-Camp runs in to report Pilkings that some native women and men are coming in the direction of the hill. Pilkings fears that it might be Olunde with native people. Jane, however, assures Simon that Olunde will not take any of such actions. Finally Pilkings lets in the native people. They are carrying a long object covered in cloths. They put down the luggage. When it is unwrapped, it is the dead body of Olunde. Everybody is frightened to witness the scene. Elesin tries to come near to the body, but Pilkings stops him. Iyaloja asks Elesin to whisper the death message in the ears of Olunde. Looking at the body of his son, Elesin feels ashamed and, before anybody can intervene, he strangles himself with the chain that is used to bind him. Iyaloja curses Pilkings that his action has caused two deaths, instead of saving one. She asks the bride to close the eyes of Elesin and asks her to forget the dead and the living and concentrate on the unborn in her womb.

Analysis

The play ends with two deaths – that of Olunde to complete the ritual suicide and that of Elesin to hide his failure. The question is – is Pilkings responsible for these deaths? He says he is simply carrying out his duty. But for the native people duty means something else – it is self-sacrifice for the betterment of the people. This conflicting notion of duty is also underlined in the play. It is of course the tragedy of Elesin. Though he is ready to undergo the ritual death all the time, he has failed to understand that rituals are to be performed at appropriate time. It is not his unwillingness to die, but the delay he makes for the ritual is the tragic flaw of Elesin. This causes him dishonor and his status has fallen down. But the loss registered by the death of Olunde is irreparable. Olunde is said to represent the Yoruba culture where good things of other cultures are accepted. He imbibes the western culture, but at the same time he does not abandon the native values. To protect the future of his tribe, he commits ritual suicide.

1.2.5 Critical Commentary on the play

As has been pointed out earlier, the play *Death and the King's Horseman* is based on actual historical event with some alterations in terms of temporal setting of the event. This prompts us to read the play as a historical drama. However, there are a few important perspectives through which the text has been interpreted by scholars. The following are some of them.

Fall of Africa and its Cultural Values

The play is about a man who fails to perform his responsibility. Elesin Oba, the chief horseman of the king, does not undergo the ritual suicide exactly after one month from the death of the king so that he can accompany the king in the next world. This action of Elesin has broken the bond of the three worlds – the world of the living, the dead and the unborn. Of course, Mr. Pilkings interrupts the ritual and arrests Elesin, consequently stopping Elesin from performing the act. This makes Elesin a dishonourable man and he loses his respect and status in the community. But the question is – who is responsible for the fall of Elesin from an eminent position to the lower, negligible one?

In the preface of the play, Soyinka has clearly stated that the play should not be read on superficial level as 'clash of cultures'. He says that Mr. Pilkings is simply in

a role of a catalyst. Among other things, it means that Pilkings and his colonizing culture cannot be treated as responsible for the downfall. Accordingly, some critics read the play as the downfall of Africa and its values as a result of the action of African people themselves. For them, it is Elesin and not the colonizing culture that is responsible for the downfall.

In fact, when the play begins on the eve of the scheduled ritual death of Elesin in the marketplace, there is no reference of the colonizers and their roles in the ritual. People are busy with the celebration of the cosmic ritual. As per the customs, they offer Elesin whatever he wants from the market, for he is on the passage of transition and nothing can be denied to him. His suicide is as conformed as the killing of the dog and the horse of the dead king. Elesin is 'dead' when the king died exactly thirty days before. Elesin's existence in this living world after the death of the king is to prepare himself for self-sacrifice; cutting his ties with the worldly things. He has already set on the death passage. However, even by the evening of his death, Elesin could not break his ties from the worldly things and asks a beautiful young girl that attracts his attention in the market as his bride of one night.

It does not mean that Elesin did not wish to complete the ritual suicide. Immediately after consuming the marriage, Elesin sets on his role as the horseman of the dead king and is ready for suicide. Therefore, it is not his unwillingness to die but his postponement in committing suicide is Elesin's tragic flaw. Therefore, the fall of African values and culture is not due to the interruption of any foreign agency but due to the shortcomings of the Africans themselves.

Tension between the Personal and Communal Roles of an Individual

In fact the tension between the personal and communal role of an individual is universal theme to be noticed in all societies and cultures. However, Soyinka, in many of his plays, is seen expressing this theme as a part of larger cosmic pattern. One recurring crime that the protagonists of Soyinka perform is the perversion of will – where the individual giving more importance to his own happiness and perversions than the good of the community.

In the present play as well the similar crime is committed by Elesin. In fact, Elesin is highly revered in the society for his actions after the death of the king are expected to redeem the society and reinforce the bond between the three worlds of Yoruba cosmology. In accordance with his role, throughout his life as the chief

horseman of the king, Elesin is provided everything by the society, including delicious food, rich cloths and beautiful women. In fact, before Elesin notices ‘the beautiful face’ in the market, he thanks the market women and Iyaloja for everything that they have offered him in his life and boasts that he has done everything in this world and is ready to accompany the dead king in the next world, where he will find the same pleasures of life. However, his decision to take the beautiful girl as his wife gives importance to his personal happiness rather than the good of the community. Moreover, he tries to rationalize his demand with cosmic pattern by saying that the marriage will prove the bond between the world of the living and the dead. The seed of the marriage will be the symbol of this union. Elesin’s preference for the personal happiness at the times of the ritual of cosmic importance that is responsible for the fall not only of Elesin but of the total society.

Aristotelian Tragedy

Some critics read *Death and the King’s Horseman* as based on Aristotle’s concept of tragedy, for three important principles of Aristotelian tragedy find place in it – tragic flaw, error of judgment and peripeteia or reversal in the fortune of the hero. These critics treat Elesin as the tragic hero of the play.

As the chief horseman of the king and due to his role in the Yoruba cosmology, Elesin is a man of stature. Throughout the play, whenever he occupies the stage, he is surrounded by people. He is treated as important by them all. They think it a sin to offend him. He is to perform an act that will ensure the bond of the three worlds. He is a man on mission, transition from life to death. He therefore is highly revered and is offered everything that he asks for. However, when he asks for a young girl as a bride just few hours before his ritual death, his tragic flaw is evident. In this context Msiska observes:

[h]is failure to will himself to death completely is presented as a result of his weakness for worldly pleasures, and thus it is not only the interference of alterity that arrests Elesin’s transition to the other world, but also his own tragic flaw (p.75)

In fact, from the time of the king’s death for the next one month, he is expected to cut his links from the worldly pleasures and prepare himself for the ‘metaphysical confrontation’. However, approaching death also could not restrict him from the bodily enjoyment. Though he is ready for ritual suicide after the consumption of the

marriage, the delay the marriage caused provided an opportunity and time for his arrest by Mr. Pilkings.

When Pilkings arrests Elesin, he commits error of judgment, another important component of Aristotelian tragedy. Elesin sees the interruption of his ritual suicide by Pilkings as the will of god. This convenient interpretation of the event is the result of Elesin's wish to continue the worldly pleasures and to flee away from his destiny (ritual suicide). However, this erroneous judgment on the part of Elesin marks the reversal of his fortune. Thus Aristotle's notion of *peripeteia* or reversal of the fortune of the hero is evident here. This is evident in the scene in which Elesin is put in Pilkings' library as a prisoner. When Elesin is put in that cell, people wearing the death mask (i.e. *egungun*) stand before him. In fact, he is expected to wear the ritual mask and perform the ritual.

Since the play offers all the three components of Aristotelian tragedy, some critics treat *Death and the King's Horseman* as based on Aristotle's notion of tragedy.

As a Redemptive Tragedy

Redemptive tragedy is the one in which, in order to redeem the society at large, the tragic hero self-sacrifices something. Looking at such a categorization of the play, it will be clear by this time that if *Death and the King's Horseman* is a redemptive tragedy, the hero will be Olunde and not Elesin. In order to continue the tradition of the horseman's self-sacrifice after the death of the king, when his father Elesin could not complete it, Olunde sacrifices his own life in the form of a ritual suicide. With the help of his suicide, Olunde has tried to keep intact the cosmic belief of his people.

Earlier, Elesin has disowned Olunde for his decision to go to England to pursue his studies in medicine. It is only with the help of Mr. Pilkings that Olunde is able to admit himself for the studies. Though studied medicine for four years in England and observed English life style and beliefs closely, Olunde has not disowned his own traditions. When he listens about the death of the king, he presumes that his father will also have to die. And in order to bury him, as the eldest son, he comes to Africa. The modern education could not corrupt his native beliefs and detach him from his traditions. On the contrary, while trying to convince Mrs. Jane Pilkings about the relevance of his father's ritual suicide (which she thinks barbaric), Olunde relates his

father's sacrifice for his village to the sacrifice of the naval captain to save the lives of many people. He even tells Jane that Simon Pilkings should not succeed in arresting his father, for it would create unrest among the native people. But when he realizes that Simon has arrested Elesin, he leaves the place and performs the duty of ritual suicide that his father has left incomplete. His self-sacrifice ensures that the bond between the three worlds is continued. In a way, in order to redeem the lives of the villagers and to ensure the intactness of the Yoruba belief of cosmology, Olunde sacrifices his life.

Tradition and Modernity

A related theme to the earlier one is the conflict between tradition and modernity. This theme is also related to the character of Olunde. He has left his native place and his people to pursue modern education in medical science in England. Of course his father opposes his decision, for Elesin wanted Olunde, as his eldest son, to continue his role as the chief-horseman of the king after his death. However, with the help of Mr. and Mrs. Pilkings, he is able to go to England and get educated, at the cost of his father's disowning him. He spends almost four years in England and becomes a modern man. On his return, Pilkings is happy that Olunde has changed himself and wants him to go to England again to continue his education. Olunde, too, is willing to do the same. But the unexpected happenings in the village do not permit him to act as an outsider and witness the inability of his father to perform the ritual. Though modern educated, Olunde has not changed his beliefs. He is still 'traditional' in his attitude. This is proved by his visit to his native to bury his father. It is only because he believes in his native traditional culture and beliefs that he commits suicide, to complete the duty his father has failed to perform.

Postcolonial Critique: Cultural Nationalism

The play *Death and the King's Horseman* can also be read from postcolonial perspective. Colonialism brought in modernity and has sought to change the traditional African society, by calling the later barbaric in nature. The so called modern colonizers tried to educate and modernize the native people. They tried to erase the traditional beliefs and culture of the colonized. The case of Olunde in the present play is but slightly different. He himself wants to get modern education. For the purpose he is able to get the help of Mr. and Mrs. Pilkings, the district officer and his wife. After his modern education in medicine, Pilkings believed that Olunde

might have disowned his 'barbaric' culture and associated beliefs, because he has spent four years in England observing the lives of the modern British people. But as the subsequent actions of Olunde prove, quite contrary to Pilkings expectation, Olunde has not only not disowned his culture, but also performs the traditional ritual wholeheartedly and commits suicide for the purpose. This is cultural nationalism of Olunde. Though modern educated he has continued his beliefs in native traditions and has sacrificed his life for the continuation of the people's belief in traditional African values.

1.3 Check your progress

1. What is the name of the mother of the market?
2. Where does Olunde go to study?
3. What is Olunde studying in England?
4. Which costume did Mr. and Mrs. Pilkings put on for the Ball function?
5. Name the worlds that constitute the Yoruba cosmology?
6. Which bird does the Praise Singer mention in Act I of the play?
7. Who is on the visit of the colony to raise the morale of the British officers?
8. Where is Elesin put after arrest?
9. Who are to accompany the dead king to the next world during his funeral?
10. Who is referred to as the 'eater of the left overs'?
11. The Bride of the Elesin was earlier betrothed to?
12. Whom does Elesin request to close his eyes after his ritual death?

1.4 Answers to check your progress

1. Iyaloja
2. England
3. Medicine
4. Egungun
5. The world of the living, the dead and the unborn

6. Not I Bird
7. Prince of Wales
8. He is put in the library of Mr. Pilkings' home
9. The chief horseman, the favorite dog and horse of the king
10. Elesin
11. Iyaloja's son
12. His new bride

1.5 Exercise

Broad Questions

1. Discuss the view that *Death and the King's Horseman* is based on the Aristotle's notion of tragedy.
2. Bring out the conflict between the collective good vs. personal pleasure in *Death and the King's Horseman*.
3. Do you think that *Death and the King's Horseman* is a redemptive tragedy? Elaborate.
4. Comment on the view that for the tragedy in *Death and the King's Horseman* the Africans themselves are to be blamed.
5. Write a detailed note on the cultural nationalism reflected in *Death and the King's Horseman*.

Short Notes

1. Iyaloja
2. The Bride
3. The death ritual
4. Conversation between Mrs. Pilkings and Olunde

1.6 Books for further reading

1. Msiska, Mpalive-Hangson. Wole Soyinka. Northcote House, 1998.

2. Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie, and Madubuike Iheahukwu. "Towards the Decolonization of African Literature." *Transition* 48 (Accra, Ghana, 1975): 29–37, 54, 56–57.
3. Euba, Femi. *Archetypes, Imprecators, and Victims of Fate: Origins and Developments of Satire in Black Drama*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989.
4. Gates, Henry L., Jr. "Being, the Will, and the Semantics of Death." *Harvard Educational Review* 51.1 (1981): 163–174
5. Gibbs, James, Keith H. Ketrak, and Henry Louis Gates. *Wole Soyinka: A Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986.
6. Jones, Eldred D. *The Writing of Wole Soyinka*. Rev. ed. London: Heinemann, 1983.
7. July, Robert W. "The Artist Credo: The Political Philosophy of Wole Soyinka." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 19.3 (1981): 477–498.
8. Maduakor, Obi. *Wole Soyinka: An Introduction to His Writing*. New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1986.



Unit-3

Major Trends in African Short Stories

3.0 Objectives:

After studying this unit carefully, you will be able to:

- Understand the African and Nigerian literary tradition
- Know the contribution of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie to literature and feminism
- Appreciate Adichie's short stories and their literary impact
- Decipher her thematic concerns and narrative style
- Understand and appreciate the difference in the Western depiction of Africa vis-a-vis the African
- Realize the colonial impact and its legacy of strife and violence.

3.2 Introduction

3.2.1 Postcolonial Literature

Postcolonial literature is the literature written by people who suffered from subjugation and colonization and mostly addresses issues such as the after effects of decolonization, cultural identity, racism and internal conflicts. Postcolonial African literature is mainly produced between 1960 and 1970, when most African nations became politically independent and deals with issues of problems of socio-political and cultural nature in the respective countries. Postcolonial African literature reflects a note of optimism after decolonization, the atrocities perpetrated by the colonizers, the possible alienation from native cultural roots and in more recent times issues of migration. The stories featured in *The Thing Around Your Neck* reflect many elements mentioned above though they are not restricted by them, rather transcend them.

3.2.2 Nigeria

Nigeria is a large African Country, a democratic secular state, was a British colony between 1901-1960. A conglomerate of several indigenous tribes, brought

together under colonial rule. Nigeria, like India is torn by strife, riots and communal violence, usually between the Christians and the Muslims. English is Nigeria's official language with major languages such as Fulfulde, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba and several other languages. It is a country of contrasts with progress in the economic sector with a large youth population. The Igbo Christians mainly occupy the southern part while the Hausa Muslims the Northern. Nigeria has the distinction of being Africa's largest economy and an emerging global power. Many affluent Nigerians go to the United Kingdom or America for higher education or migrate there in search of a better lifestyle and more opportunities. Owing to issues such as bribery, corruption, inefficient leadership and religious intolerance, compounded by a large population, Nigeria is rife with problems such as human trafficking, drug smuggling, human rights violations, childlabour, child abuse and abuse of power by the law and order machinery. The position of women is subordinate to the men with issues such as child marriage, polygamy, domestic violence, Female Genital mutilation and maternal mortality.

Though facing such problems, Nigeria has a rich literary and cultural heritage with bestselling authors such as Chinua Achebe, Noble Laureate Wole Soyinka, Buchi Emecheta, Ben Okri, Ken Saro Wiwa and Daniel O Fagunwa with many more young emerging talents.

All this, the diversity, the rich cultural heritage, the violence and intolerance between the tribes, issues of poverty, corruption and rift are an intrinsic part of the nation, and are reflected directly and indirectly in the short stories of Chimamanda Adichie under study.

3.2.3 The notion of 'nation' and the Biafran conflict

Paul Gilroy in his *Small Acts : Thoughts on the Politics of Black Cultures*, 1993, writes that nations are created, "...through elaborate cultural, ideological and political processes which culminate in...feeling of connectedness to other national subjects...and the idea ...transcends the supposedly petty divisions of class, religion, dialect or caste" 1993, (p49). The feeling of being connected was useful to many nations during their freedom struggles from the colonial rulers. Yet, after the end of the colonial rule and political independence, the connectedness was seen to be ineffectual which is the case in Nigeria, giving rise to increasing religious or ethnic

conflict leading to a civil war. This was the result of the arbitrary determination of national borders based on the colonizer's divisions.

The borders of colonized Nigeria as established in 1914 by the British, disturbed or re-structured the pre-colonial borders of tribal lands belonging variously to the Igbo, Hausa, Fulani Yoruba and Kanuri indigenous tribes. Though these tribes together fought their colonizers and gained political independence, their difference in terms of religion, culture and language later created problems within the nation. Nigeria gained political independence on 01 October 1960, but strife began in the northern, western and eastern regions as a feeling of unity was not possible and differences could not be bridged. The two military coups in 1966 and 1967 further disturbed the situation and there was a massive migration of people, the Igbos to the east leading to the formation of the Republic of Biafra, further leading to the civil war or the Biafran war which ended on 15 January 1970 with the surrender of the Biafran forces. The situation remained volatile, oscillating between coups and military rule till 1999 when a civilian government gained power though ruled by a former military head of state.

In Nigeria, the struggle between different groups continues as they all fight to safeguard their own indigenous identity and interests. Sadly though due to factions based on difference the idea of a unified connected and integrated 'nation' remains just a construct.

The stories in this collection feature the Biafran conflict, the strife and the violent aftermath of the various resultant riots which is the colonial legacy left over by the British colonizers.

3.2.4 Depiction, Representation and Portrayal of Africa and Nigerian Literature

Traditionally Africa has been portrayed as a dark, mysterious land populated by tribals and cannibals, in contrast to the 'civilized' white Europeans. This is the purist or essentialist depiction by western writers as typified by the works of Conrad and others, relegating the Africans to the status of the 'other' and perpetuating the negative stereotypes. This resulted in the dichotomy and perpetuating of modern and progressive west as opposed to primitive Africa.

Thus, there is a limited and narrow point of view of looking at Africa and writing about it due to this propagation of the west's cultural and political domination via the perspective of typically white European made values. Also the

media's consistent portrayal of Africa and African nations as a land of starvation, disease and death, in need of western aid and largesse, has resulted in a limited, single-dimensional portrayal or representation of Africa.

Several African writers such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugiwa Thiongo, Ben Okri and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have created characters who are genuine, complex, subjective and multidimensional, in complete contrast to the purist essentialist image of previous era and western portrayal. Adichie's representation of Africa and Africans challenges the traditional portrayal as a land riddled with problems in need of a white saviour. She writes about the issues of globalization, interpersonal relationships and day to day realities in the lives of people. As colonial rule and tyranny, as well as issues of religion and ethnicity are an intrinsic part of Nigerian history and reality, she writes about them, but her portrayal focuses more on contemporary Africans facing contemporary problems. She tries to bridge the gap between the traditional dichotomous portrayal of Africa and the west as opposing binaries and stresses the common elements and experiences.

Over the past several years, Nigerian literature has elements of diasporic writing as many second and third generation writers have either migrated to the west, or partly reside there, cases in example are Ben Okri and Buchi Emecheta, Helen Oyeyemi.

It is migration to the west and a blending of the experiences of both the native and adopted country which has broadened and expanded the concept of the Nigerian identity, making globalization and migration leading to cross-cultural conflict a major theme of Nigerian third generation literature.

3.2.5 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie : A Bio Sketch

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a Nigerian writer of novels, short stories as well as nonfiction. She was born on 15 September 1977, in Enugu in an Igbo family to scholarly parents and after having studied Medicine and Pharmacy for a year and a half at the University of Nigeria, left for Drexel University, Philadelphia, America to take up studies in Communications and Political Science, later transferring to the Eastern Connecticut State University. Later she completed two master degrees, one in Creative Writing at Johns Hopkins University, 2003 and the second in African Studies from Yale University in 2008.

Adichie was a bright student which is evident from the prizes , fellowships and grants she received, some notable mentions are ‘*Summa Cum laude*’ in 2001 ;being a Hodder Fellow in 2005-06; being awarded the MacArthur Genius Grant in 2008 and the 2011-12 fellowship by the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced study, Harvard University. Several honorary degrees have been conferred upon her such as Doctor of Humane Letters , ‘*honoris Causa*’ by Johns Hopkins University in 2016, Doctor of Humane Letters ‘*honoris Causa*’ from Haverford College and the University of Edinburgh in 2017, a Doctor of Humane Letters from Amherst College in 2018 and an honorary degree from Yale University in 2019.

Adichie’s Major Writing :

<i>Decisions</i> , a collection of Poems	1997
<i>For Love of Biafra</i> , a play	1998
<i>Purple Hibiscus</i> , a novel	2003
<i>Half of a Yellow sun</i> , a novel	2006
<i>The Thing Around Your Neck</i> , short stories	2009
<i>Americanah</i> , a novel	2013
<i>Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions</i>	2017

In addition to this, several of her short stories have been published in magazines and have won awards and acclaim.

<i>That Harmattan Morning</i> BBC World service	2002
<i>The American Embassy</i> O Henry Award	2003
<i>Half of a Yellow Sun</i> David T. Wong Award	
(Pen American Centre Award)	2002-03
Ainsfield-Wolf Book Award	2007
PEN Beyond Margins Award	2007
Orange Broadband Prize	2007
Reader’s Digest Award	2008

Future Award, Nigeria, Young Person of the year	2008
International Nonino Prize	2008
<i>The Purple Hibiscus</i> Hurston-write Legacy Award	2004
Commonwealth writers prize (Africa)	2005
Commonwealth writers prize (overall)	2005
<i>Americanah</i> Chicago Tribune Heartland prize	2013
National Book Critics Circle Award	2013
PEN Pinter Prize	2018

Her stories and novels have also received more than 21 nominations.

Adichie has also been listed among prominent young writers under 40, her novel *Americanah* was selected as one of the ten Best Books in 2013 by the New York Times and she has been elected in the 237 class of the American Academy of Arts and sciences, one of the highest honours for intellectuals. She has delivered several TED Talks, Commencement Talks and class Day Speeches at Wellesley college, Harvard and Yale, has featured in various interviews

Influence

Chimamanda Adichie is considered as one of the most vocal and influential young Anglophone writers with critical acclaim as well as a large fan following. Her TED Talks, Commencement addresses and interviews showcase her candid views, concern for the minorities due to lack of representation and racism, her sense of humour and her pride in her heritage. Two of her TED Talks, *The Danger of a Single Story* and *We Should All Be Feminists* have been viewed millions of times. She expresses her own experiences upon newly arriving in America, where Africa was considered to be a land of beautiful landscape, animals, poverty and strife, ignorance, waiting for a kind white saviour. She wishes here to underline the power of the written word, which is considered to be the truth by many as well as the dangers of a one-sided representation or perspective, which reduces a nation, a culture and its people to a few adjectives which are not complimentary. Adichie emphasizes the fact that people everywhere are complex human beings, multifaceted, and focusing on a biased and prejudiced representation could lead to misinterpretation.

Her *We Should All Be Feminists* TED Talk again contains her own experiences of being a woman, a feminist, an African feminist, about gender stereotyping and expectations and the injustice this has perpetrated. She expresses the hope that the situation will be better as people and their anger has a great capacity for corrective action. Parts of this speech have been used by Beyonce in her video '*Flawless*'.

3.2.6 Adichie and the Diasporic Identity:

Chimamanda Adichie's writing contains elements of the diaspora as most of her work deals with issues of ethnicity, colonization and its aftermath, globalization, migration and issues arising from them. *For Love of Biafra*, a play by Adichie, deals with issues of ethnicity, while the resultant political and religious violence and the Biafran war is the main theme of her *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Adichie's characters seem to searching for identity, for selfhood and essence against the backdrop of various blending, merging, and conflicts of layers of identity.

Due to globalization and technological advances the geographical boundaries have become blurred and interaction and mobility have increased giving rise to migration, cultural hybridity, creation of diaspora and global identities. This has resulted, in some cases, in an identity crisis as well as the eradication of local cultures and identities. Along-with colonization, modernization and globalization have thus affected individual, indigenous cultures adversely, taking away their homogeneity and making them fragmentary and fractured.

Diaspora, meaning the expatriate community, often face acceptance, adjustment and displacement issues and experiences. Such people often find themselves dislocated and uprooted from the countries and cultures of their origin and are relocated and re-rooted in their adopted countries, thus creating a double – layered identity with cultural roots in native countries and lifestyle norms as per the adopted country. Several characters in Adichie's work are either native Nigerians living in America or Nigerians living both in Nigeria and America, native Nigerians in transnational settings.

Characters such as Nkem in *Inimitation* are often torn between the clash of loyalties between native traditions and western influence or standards. Nkem has tried to assimilate the American lifestyle as much as she can, she drives a car, her children go to American schools and she has the American Green card, she attends Pilates classes, bakes cookies, takes her children to Chillies for dinner, shops at

Walgreens, follows the western norms of beauty, hairstyle and grooming. Nevertheless, she often yearns for the Nigerian climate, food, the language, accents, in short, for the sense of belonging to a specific cultural community

3.2.7 The short story

The short story is a short piece of prose writing dealing with one specific incident or several connected incidents culminating in a 'single effect'. The characteristics of the short story are brevity, a single plot, a single setting, limited number of characters and a small time frame. The short story uses all the components of the novel, but to a smaller degree and smaller length.

The short story has its roots in the oral tradition in myths, legends, folk and fairy tales, animal fables and tales from the epics. Every nation and its culture has its own canon of stories handed down from one generation to the other. The epics such as 'Ramayan', 'Mahabharat', 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' as well as classics such as the 'Arabian Nights' and 'Jatakatha' contain a compilation of stories.

Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales' and Boccaccio's 'Decameron' are early European examples of a short story collection within a frame story, similar to the 'Arabian Nights' while Edgar Allen Poe's stories embark upon the stories of mystery and the detective story. The short story form, due to its versatility, brevity and concentrated effect, became popular and encompasses all subjects and topics.

Popular practitioners of the short story are Edgar Allen Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle, O. Henry, Thomas Hardy, H.G. Wells, Henry James, Katherine Mansfield, Guy De Maupassant, Leo Tolstoy, Rabindranath Tagore, Saki, Oscar Wilde to name just a few. Most major writers have tried their hand at writing short stories due to their immediate impact and popularity.

The short story shares with the novel all its components such as plot, character, point of view and setting though not in equal detail, only in essentials as brevity and economy are of paramount importance. In modern times the short story has been used by the writers of many popular genres such as romance, horror, mystery, fantasy and paranormal.

3.2.8 African Short Story

The African short story of recent times has its roots in two sources, one the oral stories narrated by elders to children, aimed at entertainment as well as moral education, and the second is the western short story due to the colonial impact.

Several women writers in Africa have adopted the short story as their favourite form for expression and write either in their native languages or in English. Some notable names are: Ama Ata Aidoo, Rashidah Ismaili Abu Bakr, Marcelle Mateki Akita, Lesley Nneka Arimah, Doreen Baingana, Lauren Beukes, Petina Gappah, Flora Nwapa, Veronique Tadjo, Yvonne Vera to name just a few. They write about various issues such as relationships, conflict between the modern and the traditional, patriarchy, colonial legacy, globalization and migration.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is one of the most prominent among the female writers in Africa grappling with contemporary issues, women suffering from patriarchy, the country suffering from the colonial legacy as well as rampant corruption tempered with her memories of her childhood spent in Nigeria. *The Thing Around Your Neck* consists of twelve stories, independent narratives though somehow connected thematically.

Nigerian literature of recent times is approximately divided into three generations by scholars mostly based on the historical incidents in the country. The first two generations were born in the earlier half of the twentieth century when the country was under colonial rule, with the first generation preoccupied with the suffering of the colonized nation, while the second saw the waning or end of colonial power and its aftermath. Third generation writers such as Adichie have not experienced either, though their lives were indirectly affected by the colonial rule and the Biafran or civil war.

Imitation

3.3 Storyline:

Imitation depicts Nkem, a Nigerian Ex-patriate, now Living in Philadelphia, America with her children, living the American life and the American Dream. She lives in a beautiful house, furnished lavishly and decorated with native artefacts, masks, mostly imitation. Her husband Obiora is a contractor in Lagos, earning very well and able to maintain lavish residences in both America and Nigeria. Nkem was

taken to America by her husband to have her babies, and later was told to stay on so that the children avail of American education and comforts. Initially Obiora stayed with Nkem for long periods of time, but of recent times his visits have become shorter and less frequent. The reason for this could lie in the information conveyed maliciously to Nkem by a 'friend': he has a young mistress staying in the family home in Lagos. This piece of information begins a chain of thought and action in Nkem culminating in her asserting her newly gained insight into marital relationship voicing her opinion freely and insisting on fulfilling her wishes for once.

Her husband's latest act of promiscuity leads Nkem to realize that just like the Benin mask and other artefacts in her home her marriage is a sham, a replica an 'imitation' with following her husband's orders just like the custodians of the mask were compelled to do the king's bidding. As she thinks about her marriage, her life in Nigeria before and after her marriage to Obiora, she is also musing on her life in America, her changed perspectives, her disillusionment with her old life, and her concept of happiness.

The story critiques the traditional institution of marriage with its focus on women's expected adherence to stereotypical gender roles, where they are expected to merge their personalities in those of their husbands, acquiesce to their whims and desires without a murmur of discontent or reluctance, losing their own self and identity with their lives revolving around their husbands, their lords and masters, the 'big men' similar to kings of ancient times. In return for the financial security, comfortable lifestyle and the social status of being the wife of a 'big man' the women need to sublimate themselves, forget about their personal ambitions, wishes and desire, turn a blind eye towards the husband's infidelities and be content with what he is ready or willing to confer on them rather than their own fulfilment.

The wives are not valued as persons with feelings and aspirations, but more as trophies and objects for the men's enjoyment used for perpetuating masculine power.

3.4 Characterization

Nkem:

Nkem is the central character in the story. She is a beautiful woman, no longer in the first flush of youth, though still beautiful and well groomed. She lives in America with her children, lives a luxurious and enviable life consisting of a

beautiful home, plenty of money, a housemaid to clean the house and cook and a doting husband who visits her once a year. Though on the surface, Nkem's life looks like a dream come true and she gets to do things others cannot, she is not happy and satisfied within her marriage. Since coming to America and being exposed to the different value systems there, she has realized what a sham her marriage and her status as a wife is and she finally decides to give up her passive submission and take corrective action.

Nkem has been informed that her husband Obiora has brought his girlfriend to their marital home in Lagos and allows her to use his luxury cars. The girl is very young, barely twenty, with a very modern hair-do. Nkem, though aware of Obiora's indiscretions in the past, considers this to be the ultimate insult to her status as a woman and wife. She comes to a realization that her role in their marriage is passive, secondary and only of a decorative trophy wife and decides to assert her wifely privileges. She decides that she is not going to be submissive any longer and stay in America, away from her husband and tells her husband that henceforth they will all live together as a family unit in Lagos.

Obiora:

Obiora is a rich Nigerian man, a 'big man' holding patriarchal values who enjoys all the pleasures his wealth and position can procure him. He has been listed as one of the 'Fifty Influential Nigerian Businessmen'. He married Nkem, a beautiful woman with a smooth, soft skin and 'mermaid eyes' and is proud of his beautiful wife. Later, he decided to shift Nkem to America, so that she can give birth to their children there and get a Green Card. Now Nkem and their two children live in America while Obiora lives in Nigeria in their big mansion filled with luxury and many servants to obey him. He visits his family only once a year, and they visit Lagos during Christmas. Obiora has the best of both the worlds, as he can enjoy the prestige of having beautiful homes both in Nigeria and America, a beautiful and submissive wife who listens to all his directives and commands as well as enjoying the company of beautiful young girlfriends in Lagos.

Obioara is described as a "short, ordinary, light-skinned man" who is middle-aged with a round tummy, fond of beautiful possessions such as masks and artefacts. He enjoys the prestige and privileges of being rich and is self-indulgent. Finally,

however, he is bested by Nkem when she decides to return to Lagos to stay with him and he is unable to do anything to combat her new-found assertive role.

3.5 Major Themes:

Masks and Artefacts:

Obiora always buys reproductions of native artefacts, particularly masks whenever he visits his family in America as decorations for their American home. When a friend informs Nkem about Obiora's latest girlfriend in Lagos, Nkem looks at the Benin mask and realizes that her marital life is like the mask, cold, heavy and lifeless, an imitation, not the real thing. Thus, on one level the masks represent Nkem and Obiora's marital state, while on the other, the power of the ancient kings and the sway they had over their subjects, just as Obiora has over Nkem. Obiora speaks very passionately about the cultural history and heritage of his land and is scathing about the colonizers robbing their art treasures to adorn their museums, whereas he is doing the same: taking art treasures away from his land.

The ceremonial Benin mask is copper coloured with big abstract features called 'noble' by Nkem's American neighbours, and was used for protecting the kings and warding evil off. Obiora's purchases are always accompanied by stories about their cultural significance and he has told Nkem that the custodians of the masks had to kill people on the king's orders. Though initially Nkem enjoyed the stories, lately she takes them just as another narrative, as her implicit trust in Obiora is diminishing.

Obiora condemns the British for taking away their original, priceless treasures away as 'war booty' as he considers taking away the artefacts as taking a slice of their cultural history away leaving them with mere reproductions. The Christian missionaries too played their part as they branded the masks and idols as 'heathen artefacts'

In recent times, Nkem, with her new understanding and insight has realized that though everyone considers the masks to be noble and beautiful, they were not so for the young men who were compelled to kill strangers in order to provide heads near their dead kings as protection, thus glorifying and romanticizing the masks and the kings, but suppressing the labour of the youths. She identifies with the custodians of the masks as they had no choice but to kill for their king, and no protection "...wishing they had a say" Adichie (p 40). Thus, the masks represent to Nkem, the

tyranny and dictatorship of the kings and are a symbol of slavery, and abuse of power by the kings, which is continued by the 'big men' like Obiora even today. The three artefacts mentioned in the story are the Benin mask, the Nok Terra Cotta and the most recent purchase, the bronze Ife head, all of which are now Nigerian art treasures, no longer in Nigeria, and undoubtedly have stories of violence and bloodshed attached to them.

The recent purchase by Obiora presents a note of optimism and change as, this time, he has purchased an original, an Ife bronze head, previously used to decorate the places of the kings. On a symbolic level it foreshadows the change in Nkem and Obiora's marital relations, a change for the better and a new beginning.

Food:

Food is often a metaphor found in diaspora literature and is connected to the culture of the country of origin and serves as an important part of their identity. In a foreign land it provides a connection to the motherland and creates a sense of belonging. For the expatriate community it is a bond to the way of life they have left behind them in their native land and provides comfort and familiarity in a foreign, possibly hostile land and culture. For Nkem and her maid Amaechi, food and cooking is a major connection for bonding and friendship. Though their relationship is that of master-servant and back in Nigeria, would be strictly adhered to in a feudal manner, in America, away from their country and community, food acts as a bridge and brings them closer. Nkem also realizes that, though she is a rich man's wife, she and Amaechi lead similar lives. Food indicates nostalgia and missing the motherland. Their shared woe about not getting real African yams for the 'jiakwuwo' pottage is symbolic of their yearning for the motherland and the need to belong to a community.

Nkme's supervision and instructions while Amaechi is cooking is indicative of the hierarchical power relationship between them, though Amaechi is a much better cook than Nkem.

Nkem reminisces about the near starvation she faced in childhood when her mother made soups from inedible foul smelling leaves. In stark contrast to that, they now have choice ingredients and plenty of American restaurants serving one person enough food for three. Also, her children, brought up in America, surrounded by plenty, refuse to pick up food fallen on the floor and allow it go waste.

Hair

Hair is another prominent symbol in Adichie's writing in general and in *Imitation* in particular. Straight hair symbolizes the norms of beauty belonging to a culturally dominant power structure, the West. Nkem uses relaxer lotion on her hair so that it is not curly and unruly and keeps her hair long because Obiora likes it that way. He calls himself a 'bigman' and thinks that long hair is more suitable for a big man's wife though his latest girlfriend has extremely curly short hair which highlights his hypocrisy and duplicity as he has different standards for his wife and girlfriends. Nkem has never questioned her blind and passive adherence to Obiora's wishes where her personal choices were concerned. When she is maliciously told about Obiora flaunting his latest girlfriend by establishing her in the marital home and by letting her drive his luxury cars, she feels humiliated and rebellious. Her hair then becomes a metaphor for her rebellion and self assertion when she refuses to uncurl her hair and further chops it off very short and applies texturizer in order to curl it. Her realization that much of her life is governed by her husband's wishes and desires suddenly dawns upon her and she decides to be more expressive and assertive in future.

Obiora notices her short curly hair immediately and comments on it expressing his wish that she grow it back as it is a prop to his image as a 'big man'. Amaechi too is shocked at Nkem chopping her hair short and wonders what had actuated such an act. Obiora thinks that Nkem is following a fashion trend currently in vogue which underscores the fact that nobody expects her to act on her own impulses and volition.

In another act of defiance, Nkem has not waxed her pubic hair like she used to do prior to Obiora's visits previously. Hair then stands for rebellion, defiance and clearly indicates that Nkem will not pander to her husband's wishes anymore as far as her personal appearance is concerned. If she accepts him with his ponderous, floppy belly and loud snores at night, he must accept the new assertive version of her.

In an interview to channel 4 News, Chimamanda Adichie claimed that hair, particularly, an African black woman's hair is political, as curly, kinky hair or dreadlocks are assumed to be a symbol of being angry, soulful or artistic while straight hair is considered sophisticated and more akin to the norms of American,

Western or white notions of beauty, thus coercing many African women to straighten their hair in order to be accepted and assimilated.

Power, Patriarchy and Masculinity:

Nkem is married to Obiora, who is a rich man who has taken her as raw 'bush girl coming from a poor family to a life of luxury. He has a mansion in Lagos with plenty of servants to look after it and also a beautifully furnished luxurious house in Philadelphia, America. Obiora took Nkem to America to have their first baby and never brought her back home except for occasional visits. She lives in America with their two children who go to American Schools and have thoroughly internalized the American way of life. Obiora lives in Nigeria, where he is a 'big man', meaning a rich influential man with powerful connections, and his visits to America and his family are becoming shorter and less frequent. Nkem has always been grateful to him for marrying her and giving her a secure and privileged life and has always tried to abide by his wishes and decisions about all areas of her life, down to her appearance and clothing.

Nigerian society is patriarchal, with women being considered subservient to men and try to better their lives with matrimony or relationship with rich men. It is an accepted norm and a status symbol for a rich man to have several girlfriends and Obiora is no exception. Nkem is a beautiful woman with an oval face, glowing skin and 'mermaid eyes' and she enhances her beauty with frequent trips to the salon for hair treatments and pubic bikini-line waxes. She is Obiora's prized possession and a trophy wife he is proud about due to her looks. Obiora is a self-centred man, rich and powerful and knows how to have his own way in every matter. It suits him to have a beautiful wife and children living in a beautiful home in America who he visits once a year which leaves him to enjoy the power, prestige of wealth and the company of beautiful young girlfriends all the year round. He enjoys all the perks of being a 'big man' in Nigeria though he does not like America very much as he is not treated like a king there. In the American egalitarian culture, the power and dominion of such men feels diminished as their women, wives or girlfriends as well as the servants have rights equal to them. Obiora is a middle-aged man with a fat belly and has average looks, though by virtue of his money, he has been able to secure a beautiful wife and a string of beautiful girlfriends, his latest being a very young girl barely twenty years old. He has the best of both the worlds and enjoys the power and privileges his wealth procures for him.

Obiora belongs to the group or league of rich men who enjoy a high status in Nigeria, have huge luxurious mansions, cars and servants to cater to their comforts. They have subservient beautiful wives and young girlfriends they can flaunt and exhibit as it boosts their sense of power, attainment and masculinity. They can afford to buy houses in America, send their wives to have babies there, send their children to American schools, procure green cards for their families, and have a string of mistresses. All this is enjoyed by Obiora, while at the same time Nkem's grateful obedience and submission to his decisions and desires contributes to his being or looking a 'big man'.

Marriage:

A major theme in *Imitation* is marriage and its implications for men and women which are drastically different. Nkem realizes that her marriage is a sham, an imitation, just like the imitation artefacts Obiora buys for her. She is his trophy wife, beautiful, with soft skin and 'mermaid eyes', is agreeable to Obiora, giving in to every decision he makes from moving to America to have children to settling there for the sake of the children, beautifying and objectifying herself for him, being an obedient and grateful wife. In her own way, she is initially happy in America and with her marriage, surrounded by luxury, living the life of a rich man's wife but gradually, she begins to realize the powerlessness of her situation, is unhappy by her husband's continual absence, not being involved in decision-making, not being able to express her opinions and not being treated as an equal partner in the marriage. Her life revolves around Obiora, governed by his directives and decisions about herself and the children, with her whole personality tailor-made for his convenience and demands.

Often, as there is safety and prestige in being married to a rich man, many women's goals are centered on achieving this objective which initially brings happiness, though in the long run it is not fulfilling and brings discontent, as the husbands place more importance on their jobs and position. Another downside of having a rich husband is their practice of having girlfriends which is considered prestigious for rich men.

Initially in Nigeria, when Nkem was a 'bush-girl' office worker, Obiora took notice of her, took her out to lunch and dinner, treated her with respect, put her siblings in school, introduced her to his friends, moved her to a flat with a balcony

and married her even when he need not have. By Nigerian Standards, Obiora has been a generous husband, a true 'big man' though this is no longer enough for Nkem as her vision, perspective and values have changed now. She is no longer happy with being the decorative wife of a rich man with property in two countries, a luxurious lifestyle, social status and an absentee husband.

Nkem had been an obedient wife, grateful to be married to a rich man who pampered her and gave her a lifestyle coveted by many, and had accepted passively all that Obiora had decided for her: that she would have her babies in America; that she would stay in America and the children would be enrolled in American school; that she should enroll for computer courses, that he would only visit her in the summer as he is burdened with work due to government contracts. Obviously, contracts, money and position are more important to Obiora than his family and though Nkem was not happy with her life, she accepted many issues uncomplainingly and moulded her behaviour as per her husband's wishes, styling her hair to his liking and waxing her pubic hair before his visit. She had also chosen to ignore Obiora's suspected infidelities in the past as in Nigeria, most rich, married men, the 'big men' were expected to have a girlfriend as it was considered to be a status symbol.

Nkem knows that there is something lacking in her marriage and symbolically associates it with the Benin mask: lifeless, cold and heavy. Due to patriarchal conditioning she condones and justifies his promiscuity and absences and creates a narrative justifying his behaviour for herself and her American neighbours. It is America and its spirit which help her realize her powerlessness and mute acceptance of all that is decided by Obiora on her behalf, and she decides to voice her opinions and choices. She realizes that she wants to be noticed as a person with an individual identity and not just an aid or accessory contributing to her husband's social position. She decides to exercise her wifely privileges and firmly tells Obiora that she is shifting back to Nigeria with the children so that they could be a family together again.

The American Dream

Nkem lives in America, where restaurants served one person enough food for three and where people don't eat food fallen on the floor. America is seen by developing countries as the land of opportunity, plenty, liberty and equality

providing hope of success and prosperity to everyone. It is also a safe country where you need not fear armed robberies at night. Nkem was brought to America by Obiora when she was pregnant with her first child and has stayed there since, going to Nigeria on occasional visits. America and her American home in Philadelphia seems like home to her now, while her mansion in Lagos seems more like a palatial hotel.

She has a beautiful home, luxuriously furnished and decorated by the native artefacts Obiora buys on his visits to them, and has a native maid Amaechi who cooks and cleans meticulously. Nkem and her children have become thoroughly Americanized now, the children go to American schools, interact with American children and have internalized American mannerisms. Nkem has a Green Card, drives a car, shops in malls, goes to Pilates classes with her neighbour, bakes cookies and feels 'at home' in America where neighbours are friendly and helpful.

Apart from external lifestyle changes, there are changes in Nkem's behaviour and attitudes too as she has imbibed the American egalitarian way of life which becomes obvious through her interaction with Obiora and her maid Amaechi. Gradually over time, as Nkem and Amaechi are thrown together more, due to Obiora's increasing absence, they form a bond which dissolves the traditional hierarchy of power and master servant formality. They become more friendly, discuss cooking, television shows, customs and traditions, exchange childhood memories and have established a 'tradition' of sharing a small drink in the evenings. Due to lack of friends, Nkem shares confidential information with Amaechi which is only possible in America as back home in Nigeria, there are clearly drawn lines between the rich people and the poor.

It is America which makes Nkem realize that her reaction to her husband's affairs and promiscuity is different now, and is unacceptable. It is a fact that before she married Obiora, Nkem herself had taken married men as lovers in order to support her family as this is an accepted way of life in Nigeria. Her former lovers have helped her to finance her father's surgery, house repairs and purchase of furniture. However, America has changed Nkem so much that she refuses to ignore Obiora's transgression and expects more from him than the comforts and luxuries he provides. She wishes them to be equal partners in their marriage rather than have him making all the major decision about the family and herself. She refuses to passively accept his dictatorial ways and decides that henceforth they will all live together as a family unit in Lagos, Nigeria,

Everyone in the developing world takes it for granted that life in America will ensure everlasting happiness for emigrants, though disappointment and disillusionment settle eventually. Nkem realizes that a luxurious home, lavish lifestyle, Social prestige, money and other trappings of wealth and privilege cannot ensure happiness, contentment and fulfilment. What she lacks is a sense of belonging to a community, having a marriage on equal terms and be respected as a real person with desires.

Significance of the Title

A friend's phone call about her husband's latest girlfriend compels Nkem to reflect upon her life in America which so far seemed prestigious, exciting and enviable. All aspects of it now seem fake, imitations from her lifestyle, hairstyle, cooking to her relationship with her husband. The lovely life, the American dream she lives seems empty as there is no personal fulfilment in it, and she seems to imitate a life of everybody's dream, not her own. The story's title is apt as it reflects and explores imitation prevalent at various levels in Nkem's life. The artefacts bought by Obiora for their American home are imitations too, though they are good quality reproductions. The food cooked by Amaechi, supervised by Nkem is not real Nigerian food, but merely an approximation as it is not possible to get real, native ingredients necessary for certain dishes. Nkem's hairstyle is a sham as well as she keeps her hair long and uses, relaxer lotion to uncurl it, as curly hair deviates from the notions of American beauty. Her marriage turns one to be the biggest imitation as Nkem and Obiora have never been emotionally intimate, and operates upon the principle of demand and supply. Obiora wanted a beautiful and submissive wife, who would give in to all his demands, would be a good mother to his children and who would make him feel powerful and proud, while Nkem wanted a secure and comfortable life and the prestige of being a rich man's wife.

Even Nkem's rebellious act of cutting her hair is ambiguous and could be interpreted as a feeble attempt at imitating the hairstyle of Obiora's latest girlfriend, a very young girl with very short, curly hair.

The end of the story presents an optimistic note as for the first time, Obiora has brought a real original artefact, breaking the pattern of buying imitations. Nkem realizes the reality of her sham marriage and deciding to act upon it, announces to Obiora that she will no longer stay alone in America, but will return to Nigeria with

him making the family complete. She has finally realized that real is always better than imitation and it is better to accept Obiora's promiscuity, face it squarely and take steps to stop it.

3.6 Test Yourself Questions:

Answer the following in one line each:

1. Name the masks/artefacts mentioned in the story.
2. What are the names of Nkem and Obiora's children?
3. Where does Nkem live in America?
4. Who informs Nkem about Obiora's latest girlfriend?
5. Where in Nigeria does Obiora have a mansion?

3.6.1 key to Test Yourself Questions:

1. Benin mask, Ife bronze head and Nok terra kotta.
2. The children's names are Adanna and Okey.
3. Cherrywood Lane, Philadelphia.
4. Nkem's so called friend, Ijemamaka.
5. Obiora has a mansion in Lagos.

A Private Experience

3.7 Storyline:

A Private Experience narrates the story of two women who meet under exceptional and stressful conditions. These women belong to vastly different religious, social, and economic backgrounds and would never have met otherwise. The story opens with a violent riot between Igbo Christians and Hausa Muslims in Kano, which is a common occurrence in certain parts of Nigeria.

Chika is an affluent Igbo Christian girl from Lagos, visiting her aunt in Kano, out shopping with Nnedi, her sister, when violence erupts and they are separated in the melee. Chika is helped by a stranger, a Hausa Muslim woman to climb into an abandoned store, where they spend the night speaking and sharing snippets of their lives. Chika is a medical student, her aunt a high-ranking official and her sister, a

rebellious student studying political science in Lagos. But all this and her affluent, socially prominent background is of no help when a rioting mob descends into mindless violence and mass hysteria. At such a point it is a local, poor woman, an onion-seller by profession, who comes to her aid and shares her shelter with Chika. Both women are worried as both have lost sight of their companions, Chika of her younger sister and the woman of her eldest daughter, share their worries and try to reassure each other of their safety.

The story is a third person narrative seen from Chika's perspective and readers see the Hausa woman from what Chika thinks or guesses about her. She is an older woman, judging from her manner of clothing, a Hausa Muslim in impecunious condition and is comparatively calm and serene as she is used to violence and rioting common to the area. Chika, brought up in safety and affluence, is shocked by the mass hysteria outside their shelter. The woman's clothes, jewellery and profession all point to her poor economic condition, and her family's struggle for survival. In spite of their differences, several factors bring the woman together, chief among which are fear and feminine sisterhood.

The Hausa woman shares her scarf with Chika, provides the much-needed calm assurance about Nnedi, binds her wound and wishes her well. In return Chika shares her medical expertise with the woman and recommends a treatment for her troubles and pain. It is as though their tiny, dilapidated shelter is a haven, removed from all issues and differences of politics, religion and ethnicity hyped by the government and media and allows them to connect in a human, womanly manner. It is a private experience shared by the two diametrically opposite women who will never meet again, though the brief encounter will have important repercussions and implications for them both.

3.8 Characterization

Chika

Chika is a young Igbo Christian, studying medicine in the University of Lagos, who is on visit to her aunt living in Kano, when a riot disrupts her entire life. Chika belongs to a rich family, which is evident from clues such as visits to London, ownership of an original Burberry purse, fashionable clothes and a silver finger-rosary. Chika is with her sister Nnedi, a student of political science and an activist who is lost in the riots, never to be found. Chika has attended a few rallies in the

university campus, but the riot and the violence shock her and as an educated, politically aware woman, she is disgusted by the politicizing of religion and ethnicity, manipulated by the politicians and the media. Chika has led a protected life so far and the sheer mindless destruction at the riots makes her aware of man's inhumanity to others in the name of religion. Later, when Chika sees the dead bodies lined on the road, it is difficult to make out whether they were Christians or Muslims in life which fact underscores the futility of religious strife.

Chika empathizes with the Hausa woman who has lost a daughter in the riots and who has small babies waiting for her at home. Initially she underlines all the differences between them, but finally they bond as woman who have lost near ones. Chika also offers medical advice to the woman who suffers from cracked nipples.

The Hausa Woman

The Hausa woman is a Muslim onion-seller with five children who had come to the market with her eldest daughter to sell onions and groundnuts. She is a northerner, lean and slender, wears a headscarf and her poverty is obvious from her cheap clothes. She is very kind and maternal and pulls Chika to a store for safety. She has no religious bias, is used to riots and accepts them as fate. Her faith is simple as she prays to God for the safety of her daughter Halima and Chika's sister Nnedi. She does not understand the intricacies of communal politics and accepts the violence as a way of life.

In the volatile and violent frenzy of the destructive men outside, the women in contrast comes through as protective and humane. She lets Chika sit on her wrapper, wipes off her wound with her scarf and ties it as a bandage. Though poor, uneducated and unsophisticated, the Hausa woman is wise and compassionate and send greetings and good wishes to Chika's family at their parting the next morning.

It is the Hausa woman, whose quiet dignity and gentleness in the face of suffering, which make Chika understand the realities of the riot, and her sister's disappearance which she is refusing to accept. Though Chika initially stereotypes, judges and patronizes the woman due to her poverty, she is touched by the woman's readiness to share her meagre belonging with her and greatly appreciates her kindness. It is the shared grief and experience of violence which brings them closer.

3.9 Major Themes:

Loss:

At the beginning of the story, when the riots break out and people run towards safety, Chika loses her Burberry purse while the unnamed woman loses a necklace of plastic beads. This underlines the disparity in their socio-economic backgrounds though the loss is of equal poignancy. Later, however, they realize that their great loss is going to be of dear family members, as Chika has lost her sister Nnedi and the Hausa woman has been separated from her eldest daughter. Riots and violence are always the result of a loss of logic, reason and humanitarian understanding as the warring factions of Igbo Christians and Hausa Muslims hack and club each other. Though later, Chika is unable to differentiate between which dead bodies belong to a specific community. Riots cause losses of property, lives, livelihoods and harmony, giving rise to duality, mistrust and enmity. Religious intolerance leads to blind hatred and lack of understanding resulting in human beings losing their humanity, people losing faith in the systems and machinery of politics, politicians, law and order as well as media, as multiple killings are whitewashed and compressed in mild-sounding headlines.

Ethnic and Religious Conflict:

The experience of the religious riots, lasting for a mere several hours, turns out to be a life-changing experience for Chika as her sister Nnedi is lost in the carnage that follows. Nnedi and several others are later mildly and neatly written of as collateral damage by the media summed up as a result of the riots which are “religious with undertones of ethnic tension”.

The riots also illustrate how issues of ethnicity and religion, fuelled by the colonizers are still in existence kept alive by the politicians for their own selfish gain who manipulate the masses and exploit such incidents to their own advantage. A Possibly innocent incident of a Christian Igbo driver running over a copy of the Holy Quran leads to countless people dying, innocents being burned and butchered, children being separated from their parents and fear and self-preservation taking over, where previously, before the riots, all these people of several religions and ethnicities lived in peaceful co-existence, happily shopping in the marketplace proves how brittle the peace and co-existence are. The common people, many of them poor, working – class traders and labourers like the Hausa woman, allow themselves be

provoked by others and commit acts of violence and destruction which are utterly senseless, tragic and unproductive.

The ethnic and religious conflict is aided by other issues such as corruption, feelings of alienation, deprivation and hopelessness as the Hausas are less affluent than the Igbos. Thus the festering hostility erupts into mindless blood thirst at any minor provocation leading to death and doom. A Possibly innocent incident of a Christian Igbo running over a copy of the holy Quran leads to countless people dying, innocents being burned and butchered where previously, before the riots all these people of several religions and ethnicities lived in peaceful co-existence, happily shopping in the marketplace proves how brittle the peace and co-existence are. The common people, many of them poor, working – class traders and labourers like the Hausa woman, allow themselves be provoked by others and commit acts of violence and destruction which are utterly senseless, tragic and unproductive.

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Bonding and kinship:

In spite of the religious and ethnic hatred resulting into violence, the Hausa Muslim woman and Chika, the Igbo Christian share a bond. The woman pulls Chika into an abandoned store, thus saving her life and looks after her till the next morning when it is safe to go out. This proves that against the backdrop of hatred, violence and destruction, it is possible to have kinship, sympathy and empathy. The two women connect as women. People, not belonging to any religion or ethnicity, their togetherness is actuated by fear and the search for safety and the Hausa woman's protective instincts.

Though totally dissimilar in terms of religion, ethnicity, education, socio-economic background, wealth and connections, the riot is a shared private experience which brings the two women together. Also they have both lost people they love, Chika, her sister Nnedi and the Hausa woman, her eldest daughter Halima. They are both the victims of a system, regime, in danger and fugitives from the violent masses outside. The scarf the Hausa woman uses a bandage for Chika's wound emerges as

the symbol of their bonding, a personal reminder of the kindness of a nameless stranger.

3.10 Narrative Technique

The Story plunges the readers into the action immediately, not giving any previous information, thus ensuring their complete absorption in the story. The writer uses flash-forward and backward technique to provide reference and context to present events as well as a foreshadowing of future events. Thus, though the women are confined to a store and nothing much is happening, the action seems to weave between the past, present and future. Also, due to the narration of past events, Nnedi who is absent, seems to be present as a character.

There is an element of 'depersonalization' as Chika feels the riots should not be happening to her and Nnedi as they are guests here, outsiders who have only heard about riots through newspaper articles, BBC news and political rallies at the University campus. Also, due to their financial position, social status and her aunt's exalted position at the Secretariat, Chika cannot believe that things like riots and bloodshed in real life would ever affect her. This disbelief and the shock allows her to remain partly objective and focused in the present and sane, so that she is better able to accept Nnedi's disappearance as well as possible danger to her own life. It is much later that the shocking reality of Nnedi's disappearance and the enormity of the mindless violence seep in.

3.11 Test Yourself Questions:

Answer the following in one line each:

1. Where do the riots take place?
2. What is the name of the Hausa woman's daughter?
3. What is the Hausa woman's profession?
4. What did Nnedi study at the University?
5. What does China's aunt do?

3.11.1 key to Test Yourself Questions:

1. The riots take place in Kano.
2. The Hausa woman's daughter is Halima.

3. The Hausa woman sells onions in the marketplace.
4. Nnedi studies Political Science in the University.
5. Chika's aunt is the Director at the Secretariat.

Ghosts

3.12 Storyline:

Ghosts is a story set in a University campus in Nigeria and is told from the perspective of James Nwoye, a retired University professor who is seventy one years old. James sees a very old colleague, Ikenna Okoro, who was rumoured or considered to be long dead. Most people James meets at the university are old employees, from professors, clerks to drivers who have retired, but are awaiting their pensions and other settlements.

The entire setting of the story, the symbols and the metaphors used in the story create a bleak and dreary atmosphere, adding to the sorrow and loss foreshadowed by the title. Everything in the story from the deplorable current academic and administrative situation, from bribery and corruption in high places in the university, to the atmosphere of total lack of political activism and intellectual enquiry seems depressing and negative. The minister of education and the Vice Chancellor of the university are blamed for stealing the pension funds and most people find it difficult to procure sufficient food for themselves. James, by virtue of his having been a professor and Dean and having a daughter settled in the United States is more fortunate than the others and at the prompting of one of the men buys some bananas and nuts for the men. Looking at the men, sitting out in the blazing sun with tanned, seamed faces, James remembers his dead wife's insistence on him using moisturizer as he feels all the men should use moisturizer.

He is startled to see Ikenna Okoro who was rumoured to have died during the Biafran war when everybody else was in the process of evacuating the Nuskka campus. Ikenna reassures James that he is alive and that he left the country on a Red cross plane and has been living in Sweden since then as he lost all his close relatives in the war. Even James and his wife Eberé had left for America and had come back six years later, after having lost their daughter Zik in the war.

Ikenna justifies his flight to Sweden by telling James that he has been politically active for the Biafran cause and has conducted many rallies for it. They share

information about others, common acquaintances, though James feels let down by Ikenna's seeming betrayal and flight to safety. James also informs Ikenna that though Ebere has been dead for the last three years, she visits him regularly in order to rub moisturizing lotion into his skin.

James's daughter Nkiru, lives in America, has a young son and wants James to move in with them as he is all alone there. He speaks to her regularly though he has never mentioned Ebere's visits to her. He muses about life, the war, his grandson not speaking the native Igbo language and about the corruption in the academic field where degrees and diplomas can be bought and about the fake drug cartel in the country. He finally decides to go to bed and wait for Ebere's visit.

Much of the story's action seems to depend upon the Biafran war and its aftermath. On a personal note, James has lost a daughter while Ikenna has lost a lot of family members. James has also lost faith, in people like Ikenna, who spoke with vehemence but could not practice what they preached and thus sabotaged the Biafran cause; in academics which has become a marketplace selling degrees and the systems and institutions in the country which are riddled with corruption.

3.13 Characterization:

James Nwoye:

James Nwoye is a retired seventy-one year old Professor of Mathematics in the University. He was a scholarly man, educated in America, where he went on a scholarship and later taught at Berkley. The story is told from James's perspective and narrates his impressions of issues and people. James Nwoye is at the University office to inquire about his pension which he is not able to receive like many others. The University coffers seem to be empty and the disgruntled people speak about corruption being the reason for this. The Minister for Education as well as the Vice Chancellor of the University are suspected of the misappropriation of the pension amount. It is on the campus that James sees Ikenna, an old colleague, supposed to be dead long ago. It is the conversation between them which supplies readers with information about the Biafran war and its aftermath for James and Ikenna. Normal life on the campus was disrupted as there was a lot of looting and vandalism. James lost his young daughter Zik, had to leave the country and shift to America temporarily, lost his precious books and other important documents and with the Biafran side losing the war, has lost the dream of a separate country. James is a

broken man as he seems to have lost everything that mattered to him. He has another daughter, Nkiru, a doctor in America, who sends him money. James lost his wife Ebere due to the corruption in the medicine industry, a fake drug cartel. Ebere, though dead, visits James regularly and rubs moisturizer on his dry skin. With so much that James has lost, with so much disillusionment he faces, Ebere's visits are the only bright part of his existence and he seems to live for them

Ikenna Okoro

Ikenna was a lecturer in the sociology department on the University campus of Nsukka . Though Ikenna and James were not close friends, everybody knew Ikenna as he was an activist with a good command over rhetoric. He was a defiant, rebellious man with a total disregard to rules which he thought were unjust. He was always protesting against some issue or the other whether it was the conditions of the non-teaching staff, or the new dress code brought by the Vice Chancellor, or the Biafran cause. Ikenna was admired by most people on the campus for his scholasticity, had studied at Oxford and his passionate desire for the betterment of society. On 06 July, 1967 thirty-seven years ago, at the height of the Biafran war, Ikenna was rumoured to have been killed by Federal soldiers when the Nsukka campus was protected by the Militia against the approaching federal soldiers, most people had fled their staffrooms and residential quarters, James and his family among them, they had seen Ikenna go back inside the campus gates. Later, after the fall of the Biafran state, when reports had reached them about a lecturer who had been killed while arguing with the federal soldiers, everyone had assumed it to have been Ikenna. Thus, after Thirty-seven years of absence and no communication, James could not believe that Ikenna was still alive. His spontaneous reaction was that it was Ikenna's ghost he saw in front of him.

Later, Ikena explains that, he had been taken out of the country, on a Red Cross plane and had been in Sweden all these years. He seems to be a changed man, less confident and assertive, looking colourless and justifies his long absence and silence by telling James that he had organized many rallies for fund-collection in support of the Biafran independence cause.

James describes Ikenna as a shrunken man with light skin and frog like eyes and feels disappointed and disgusted with him for his cowardly act of running away from the country.

3.14 Symbols, Metaphors and Themes:

Ghosts:

The ghosts in the title superficially refer to Ebere, who visits James after her death, the reappearance of Ikenna who was taken to be dead by everybody, Zik, James's daughter who died in the war and for the Biafran cause, which also died due to people deserting and sabotaging it. The ghosts also refer to the past which refuses to be forgotten by people like James who lost people and families for a foregone cause. Both James and Ikenna have guilt about leaving the country after the Biafran side lost and running away rather than help in the restoration of the campus. The memories of the past are nightmarish, ghostly and refuse to leave James, weighing him down while Ebere's visits, equally ghostly seem to give meaning to his life which is otherwise meaningless and arid. She literally moisturizes his life and existence when she moisturizes his skin, maintaining a sense of family and belonging.

Ghosts are also a symbol of James's native Nigerian upbringing, cultural heritage and customs that his Western education has not been able to get rid of. James carries a lot of baggage, burden of unvoiced sorrow, unresolved anger and guilt which can only be lessened and smoothed by Ebere's ghostly visits and ministrations. In a way Ikenna, James, Ebere, Zik the Biafran war and James's past and memories, all are ghosts.

Loss

Loss is an important theme in *Ghosts* as it underscores James's entire life. The Biafran cause which he supported and which he think should have sustained is lost due to saboteurs and betrayers with the dream of a Biafran Republic lost for ever. Due to the war, he has lost his first born daughter Zik, had to leave the country as well as hopes for a new future. The new political regime is ineffectual as all offices and departments are rife with corruption, bribery and a total disregard for people's suffering. James has been a professor, a Dean at the university and is disillusioned by the commercialization of the academic sector. Human life is held cheap as there is a huge cartel of fake and expired drugs ruling the pharmaceutical sector. James and his late wife Ebere had to flee the Nsukka campus to save their lives and upon returning for a brief visit, realize that all their prized possessions, rare books, James's graduation gown, the furniture and the knick knacks are lost forever. Now James is a

widower, all alone, an old, lonely, disillusioned, man, with nothing to do or look forward to except his daughter's phone calls and the ghostly visits of his wife Ebere.

James also feels powerless as he is not able to control any aspect of his life: he has not received his pension; he feels responsible for Ebere's death caused by the lack of proper medication; he is not able to communicate freely with his grandson who does not speak their native language. By believing and relying on Ebere's ghost, James also seems to have lost touch with reality and lives in his own private world. Also, everybody seems dispirited and apathetic as people carry on with their lives unwilling to do anything or take up any positive action.

Bribery and corruption

Bribery and corruption run rampant in academia and many officials with high designations are involved in it. James, along-with several other retired university workers, has not received any pension. Everybody including the clerks, though apologetic, is used to money not coming in. The disgruntled men claim that the minister of education has stolen their pension funds, while the Vice Chancellor gets his fair share of blame too.

It seems that the Biafran war was lost due to corruption by the sabos, the saboteurs, who turned traitors and abandoned their worthy cause for personal safety.

At the university, the new lot of teachers and professors seem to be interested only in politics and money making. Students too seem interested not in knowledge but only in degrees. Josephat Udeana, a Vice Chancellor for six years, misappropriated a lot of university funds, controlled promotions and appointments and did not allow any one come in his way. Bribery has become a way of life. The fake or expired drug racket in the country has killed many innocent people, James's wife Ebere among them.

3.15 Imagery

A sense of sorrow, guilt, helplessness, hopelessness and despair is conveyed through imagery very effectively in this story. Right from the landscape to James's skin, everything is arid, dried up and infertile. People are described as "dried – up looking", (P 57) "faces and arms looked like ash" (P 59), armchairs with worn leather and peeling paint, everything is dry, dusty and soiled with only the ghosts seeming real. The men waiting for their pension are poor, hungry, looking dried-up

and older than their years. They have no other source of money and due to corruption, inflation, illness, their lives are as miserable as the dry, hot dusty weather. The University campus of Nsukka, with a glorious and scholarly past, has lost its glory and with corruption at all levels, is a ghost of its previous graceful presence. Everything seems to have layers of dust piled upon it. The imagery seems to reflect the atmosphere of apathy, despair and negativity prevalent on the campus as well as in the country. Also, the title as well as the constant references to the past, the dead, the exiled and the alienated add to the dull and dreary atmosphere.

3.16 Test Yourself Questions:

Answer the following questions in one line each:

1. What are the names of James's daughters?
2. Which subject did Ikenna teach at the University?
3. What is the name of the corrupt Vice Chancellor mentioned in the story?
4. Where did James teach after leaving Nigeria after the Biafran war?
5. What does James's daughter do?

3.16.1 key to Test Yourself Questions:

1. James's daughters are Zik and Nkiru.
2. Ikenna taught Sociology.
3. The corrupt Vice Chancellor named in the story is Josephat Udeana.
4. James taught in Berkley, America, after he left Nigeria after the Biafran war.
5. James's daughter Nkiru is a doctor in America.

3.17 Exercises

Question for self study

Imitation

- 1) Discuss some important themes in *Imitation*
- 2) Do you think the 'American Dream' can be attained? Does it bring happiness and fulfillment?

- 3) Discuss the significance of masks and artefacts in *Imitation*
- 4) Why do you think Nkem cuts her hair short and curls it?
- 5) Explain the significance of the title *Imitation*
- 6) Comment on the feeling of alienation, isolation and exile felt by Nkem.
- 7) Discuss the marital relationship between Nkem and Obiora
- 8) Discuss food as an important motif in *Imitation*
- 9) Comment on the theme of patriarchy and female subjugation in *Imitation*
- 10) Do you think the story ends on a positive note for Nkem.

A Private Experience-

- 1) What is the incident that causes communal riots in Kano?
- 2) Describe the Hausa woman in detail.
- 3) Comment on the westernized lifestyle of Chika and Nnedi
- 4) Describe the feeling of bonding and kinship that develops between Chika and the Hausa woman.
- 5) What do you think has happened to Nnedi and Halima ? will Nnedi ever be found?
- 6) What role do politics and media play in communal violence?
- 7) Explain the significance of the title *A Private Experience*
- 8) Do you think Chika will meet the Hausa woman again?
- 9) Comment on the narrative technique and structure of *A Private Experience*
- 10) What comment does Adichie make about religious intolerance and hatred?

Ghosts

- 1) Explain the significance of the title *Ghosts*
- 2) Describe Ikenna in detail.
- 3) Why has James visited the university?
- 4) Discuss the theme of bribery and corruption as seen in *Ghosts*

- 5) Explain what has happened to James's daughter Zik.
- 6) How did Ebere, James's wife die?
- 7) Why does James feel disgusted with Ikenna?
- 8) Explain in brief the Biafran war as seen in *Ghosts*
- 9) What food does James buy for the people waiting at the University?
- 10) Why does Ebere Still visit James?



Unit-4

Major Trends in African And Caribbean Poetry

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4.0 Objectives:

After studying this unit you will be able to:

- understand the literary scenario in African and Caribbean Countries
- find similarities and differences in the literary tradition of the countries in the region prescribed
- salient features of African and Caribbean poetry
- know the life and works of the poets prescribed
- analyze and appreciate poetry in general
- understand the central ideas and themes in the prescribed poems

4.1 Introduction

Let's try to understand what is postcolonial poetry? 'Postcolonial poetry' means poetry written by non-European peoples in the shadow of colonialism, both before independence and in the immediate period leading up to it, particularly works that engage, however obliquely, issues of living in the interstices between Western colonialism and non-European cultures.

We can trace the references of this in the critical works such as Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Chinweizu, Onwuchekwu Jemie and Ihechukwu Madibuike's *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature* (1980), Kamau Brathwaite's *History of the Voice* (1984), and Robert Young's *Postcolonialism* (2001). Decolonization movements swept almost all parts of Asia, Africa, Oceania, the Caribbean and elsewhere, particularly from the time of Indian and Pakistani independence in 1947 through the 1970s, the period when British, French, Belgian, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish and other modern European colonial powers withdrew control over most of the earth's surface.

Postcolonial poetry is the poetry produced in countries that were once colonies, especially of European powers such as Britain, France, and Spain. Postcolonial theory also looks at the broader interactions between European nations and the societies they colonized by dealing with issues such as identity, language, representation, and history. Native languages and culture were replaced or superseded by European traditions in the colonial societies. Acknowledging the

effect of colonialism's aftermath—its language, discourse, and cultural institutions—has led to an emphasis on hybridity, or the mingling of cultural signs and practices between colonizer and colonized.

4.2 Major Trends in Post-colonial Poetry

Post-colonial poetry should be seen in relation to colonial poetry, and appreciated as 'resistance' and 'subversion of former colonizer. Hence, national identity, landscape, rituals, and national culture and tradition form the core of post-colonial poetry. The present trend in post-colonial poetry is to assert one's national identity and glorify the landscape of one's own country. The leading post-colonial poets in Africa, Australia, Canada, India and West Indies write to underline their national identity and highlight their landscape. The poets of Africa in whose works the image of "Africa" comes alive are Okorp' Bitek, Dennis Brutus, Wole Soyinka, J. P. Clark, Christopher Okigbo, David Rubadin, Noemia De Sousa and Feavien Ranaivo.

African poets make the best use of their native tradition in their creative writings and they are very successful in acclimatizing the traditional belief to English language. They do not follow the British poets blindly and show the courage to write poetry in their own way. It is in this aspect that African poetry has affinity with post-colonial poetry. C. D. Narasimhaiah has rightly observed this trait in African poetry in the following words:

Similarly the African poet summoned courage to affirm Black is beautiful and reject Bach and Mozart as rhythms fit for Yeats and Eliot, as for him he wishes to laugh, cry, grimace which elevated the drum beat into poetry. Where generally the English poet showed fear and anxiety in the face of death, here in what may be called an African Ode to Autumn. The African poet for example Wole Soyinka explores in the traditional Yoruba way the metaphysical dimensions of life and death through agricultural images of the harvester witting for the fruit of life, death (Das 1995: 10).

Poets like Wole Soyinka and Christopher Okigbo have tried to infuse their sense of belonging and belief into the texture of their poetry.

The African poets have a sense of 'belonging' and pride in using English language in their own way. Chinua Achebe calls this 'an African language' for

literary purpose. That is the reason their poetry assumes an identity which is both lovable and enduring.

These African poets try to reinforce their sense of liberty and freedom through their poetry. The image of “Africa” dominates their thinking process and they seek in identity which is both enduring and lovable. David Diop’s “Africa” is a bright example of a poet’s desire to celebrate the country.

The “image” of Australia in Australian poetry has undergone a sea change since William Wentworth wrote his poem “Australasia” at the Cambridge University for the Chancellor’s Gold Medal Poetry competition. The image of the native land has become central to the modern Australian poets such as A. D. Hope, Judith Wright, Mary Gilmore, Douglas Stewart and James McAuley. The making of an image of the “Native land” and the “native idiom” are the two characteristics which are common to all post-colonial poets.

Australian landscape comes alive in Judith Wright’s poetry. For her Australia has been the outer equivalent of an inner reality, first and persistently, the reality of exile’ second though perhaps we now tend to forget this, the reality of newness and freedom’. This double aspect of the Australian mind, Judith Wright discusses in her book, *Preoccupations in Australian Poetry* (Melbourne : O.U.P., 1965). David Malouf, a leading Australian poet in the 1970s, too has given beautiful images of ‘Australia’ in his poetry.

In the post-colonial Canadian Poetry there is the employment of the image of the native of the native land in all walks of life. G. D. Roberts and Archibald Lampman are pioneers of Canadian Poetry. Duncan Campbell Scott has contributed immensely to the formation of national consciousness in Canadian Poetry. Important Canadian Poets include A. J. M. Smith, P. K. Page, Margaret Avison, Margaret Atwood, Anne Wilkinson, Charles Mair, Robert Finch, Dorothy Livesey and A.M. Kelm. In a poem called “Notes towards a poem that can never be written”, Margaret Atwood depicts the Canadian predicament which could be the predicament of any post-colonial poet of the contemporary time.

The theme of landscape and national identity makes a rewarding study when applied to Indian English poets. Indian landscape has inspired the Indian English poets to create newer and more fascinating images of ‘India’ that have not been created before. The postcolonial Poets from India are Nissim Ezekiel, A.K.

Ramanujan, Vikram Seth, Kamala Das, Jayant Mahapatra, Keki N. Daruwalla, Arun Kolatkar, Eunice De Souza, Dom Moraes, Dilip Chitre, Meena Alexander, Shiv K. Kumar, Jerry Pinto and others. Postcolonial writers try to portray a true picture of India. There is a struggle for self identity reflected in their writings.

New Zealand gained significance in the 1930s and it sought for reality in the distinctive character of the country, 'the individuality of New Zealandness'. Poets like R.A.K. Mason, A.K.D. Fairburn, Denis Glover and Curnow rose to prominence and wrote their best poetry in the 1930s. Most of the New Zealand poets believed in tradition. Nationalism too has a great appeal for them.

Against the backdrop of the colonial exploitation, the West Indies poet has to choose between the cultural past and native tradition, on the one hand, and the English language, on the other. The last stanza of the poem expresses Walcott's dilemma as a poet. Walcott not only tries to acclimatize an indigenous tradition to English language but he also struggles hard to keep up multi-cultural commitment and, therefore, it appeals to people cutting across continents. The last stanza of the poem contains a series of questions – partly rhetorical, for Walcott has chosen to retain both his native tradition and the acquired English language.

Finally it can be said that post-colonial poetry can be appreciated better as a 'resistance' to the former colonizer and an assertion of national identity, which fully explains the theory of post-colonialism. The resistance to former colonizer and projection of native tradition is the core of post-colonial literature.

4.3 African Poetry- Text, Summary and Analysis

4.3.1 Dennis Brutus:

Dennis Brutus' parents were schoolteachers and they instilled a love of literature in their son; he also was able to get a reasonable education. At an early age he became aware of the injustice and inequality in South African society; an active boy, he saw the results in sport; non-whites had not the opportunity, equipment nor place to become good athletes. None were allowed on prestigious national teams. He saw the system in South Africa as a form of Nazism, developed and strengthened by the white South African government after World War II. Brutus was teaching at a school then and he began to challenge apartheid on many levels, including education and sport. He lost his job, was arrested, shot and jailed for his activism in 1964.

The accounts of his time in jail are horrific, the conditions were appalling and the prisoners were dehumanized in this terrible system. Brutus, as were all prisoners, was beaten and tormented; but he still cared for others he saw as weaker and more vulnerable – young men who were tortured until they accepted rape and constant sexual abuse. He managed to express his feelings and observations in poetry that carries the smell and feel of horror.

In a series of stanzas entitled, **Robben Island Sequence**, he describes the bleak setting and the soul destroying labour that prisoners on this infamous hellhole endured.

*“ neonbright orange
vermillion
on the chopped broken slate
that graveled the path and yard
bright orange was the red blood
freshly spilt where prisoners had passed; ...”*

Some died, others were broken, but Brutus survived; perhaps poetry and political conviction helped him through.

*“...Take out the poetry and fire
or watch it ember out of sight,
sanity reassembles its ash
the moon relinquishes the night..
But here and there remain the scalds
a sudden turn or breathe may ache,
and I walk soft on cindered pasts
for thought or hope (what else) can break.”*

Brutus not only survived; after leaving prison and going into exile, he helped bring the conditions in South Africa to world attention. He organized massive and wide reaching actions that saw the government South Africa isolated and despised throughout the world. Brutus organized successful boycotts of white-only South African athletes' attendance at the Olympics and many touring sport events.

Brutus was working hard throughout Europe and North America to expose apartheid. One group that got support, even from governments like Mulroney's Conservatives in Canada, was The Aid and Defense Fund to help families of jailed

and killed political activists and to provide legal assistance to those arrested for their political actions. Brutus writes that international support was crucial for the anti-apartheid struggle and its success.

Brutus connects all struggles and remained to the end deeply committed to justice in South Africa. He participates in and supports the new movements against neoliberalism and privatization in South Africa, the oppression by the World Bank and the IMF and South Africa's new role as a sub-imperialist power for the USA.

He is criticized for his global view and for his long distance involvement (he lived abroad for many years before returning recently to SA); but he remains connected, optimistic and active. When speaking about cultural change he says that, "...that one of the things we are doing is to engage ourselves in the struggle to recover and rediscover our humanity..." He thinks that resistance is part of presenting to society that there are other ways of being and that creative political engagement requires that we participate in the creation of 'another possible world' as the Social Forum process calls it. In an interview in 2002 Brutus says that, "*The reality is that Africa has been recolonized. It is the neocolonial process that is now paralyzed*" by conflicts in which South Africa arms both sides, so he concludes, "*don't send in the killer to clean up the killing. Find alternatives among themselves.*" A call that was also eloquently stated by Wangari Maathai in her Nobel Prize acceptance speech in 2004 when she said that solutions to problems must come from us.

This seems to be at the heart and to be the strength of Brutus' life work – not only protest but constructive resistance that creates new ways of living together and serving liberation and justice, "*in the struggle for the liberation of humanity in Africa and the rest of the world, in an attempt to achieve our full potential, our full dignity, our full humanity.*"

This connected engagement is very clear when he talks about his poetry. He says he could not be a full time poet, that poetry is an outflow of his personal and political life. He says that the poet as a pet has no obligation to be committed to social activism – he believes that the poet as a human being, that all human beings have an obligation.

"*We ought all to be committed because we are people, we're all part of the same human environment.*" He says he could not make a total commitment to poetry

because it, “*would do damage to what I now regard as essential to integrity for me. Which means social concern.*”

Although some of his poetry may seem fleeting and fragmented, when looked at in the total context it is part of a continuous flow of life, work, feelings and relationships. That gives it a vivid power and a particular strength.

i) *A Simple lust is all my woe*

A simple lust is all my woe:

the thin thread of agony

that runs through the reins

after the flesh is overspent

in over-taxing acts of love:

only I speak the others' woe:

those congealed in concrete

or rotting in rusted ghetto-shacks;

only I speak their wordless woe,

their unarticulated simple lust.

(December 1971)

Summary and Analysis:

Dennis Brutus' poem *A simple lust is all my woe* expresses the agony of African people. The condition of the native African people is worst. The colonial rulers are exploiting the natives. The native people are unaware about this. Neither they can express themselves, nor fight for their rights. They have been exploited economically, socially, culturally, physically and sexually. These people suffer but they did not have any voice to rise against this system. Those who try are tortured and made to suffer a lot.

Brutus through this poem tries to give a voice to the unarticulated simple lust of these common people. These were living in their ghettos suffering and accepting the torture by the white rulers.

5. Their flesh is overspent in the _____ acts of love.
a) over- burdened b) increasing c) over-taxing d) simple

ii) *Robben Island Sequence*

I

neonbright orange

vermilion

on the chopped broken slate

that graveled the path and yard

bright orange was the red blood

freshly spilt where the prisoners had passed;

and bright red

pinkbright red and light

the blood on the light sand by the sea

in pale lightyellow seas and

in the light bright airy air

lightwoven, seawoven, spraywoven air

of sunlight by the beach where we worked:

where the bright blade-edges of the rocks

jutted like chisels from the squatting rocks

the keen fine edges whitening to thinness

from the lightbrown masses of the sunlit rocks,

washed around by swirls on rushing wave water,

lightgreen or colourless, transparent with a hint of light:

on the sharp pale whitening edges

our blood showed light and pink,

our gashed soles winced from the fine barely felt slashes,

that lacerated afterwards:

the bloody flow
thinned to thin pink strings dangling
as we hobbled through the wet clinging sands
or we discovered surprised
in some quiet backwater pool
the thick flow of blood uncoiling
from a skein to thick dark red strands.

The menace of that bright day was clear as the blade of a knife;
from the blade edges of the rocks,
from the piercing brilliance of the day,
the incisive thrust of the clear air into the lungs
the salt-stinging brightness of sky and light of the eyes:
from the clear image, bronze-sharp lines of Kleynhans laughing
khaki-ed, uniformed, with his foot on the neck of the convict who had fallen,
holding his head under water in the pool where he had fallen
while the man thrashed helplessly
and the bubbles gurgled
and the air glinted dully on lethal gunbutts,
the day was brilliant with the threat of death.

II

sitting on the damp sand
in sand-powered windpuff,
the treetops still grey in the early morning air
and dew still hanging tree-high,
to come to the beginning of the day
and small barely-conscious illicit greetings
to settle to a shape of mind, of thought,
and inhabit a body to its extremities:

Nelson Mandela had been imprisoned. Out of his 27 years of imprisonment he had spent 18 years in the prison on Robben Island.

The first part describes the Robben Island situation physically. It describes the path on the Robben Island where the prisoners had passed. The oozing red blood from the bodies of the prisoners had made the path neonbright orange. Even the sand on the sea also had the colour of the blood of the prisoners. The sand had tinted with bright red, pink bright red and light colours. The sea is described as pale lightyellow. The air is light oven, seawoven and spraywoven. In that atmosphere the prisoners used to work with physical torture. These prisoners were made to work hard in the lime quarries. The chisels broke the light brown masses of the sunlit rocks. These rocks were washed around by swirls on rushing wave of sea water.

The blood of these prisoners was mixed into the lime water and it became pink. When the sea water touched the wounds the pain was clearly visible on the faces of the workers. As these workers moved from one place to another in some quiet backwater pool, the thick flow of their blood was uncoiling from their skin to thick red strands.

The danger of the bright day was as clear as the blade of a knife. The prisoners had to succumb the salty and lime powdered air into their lungs. The uniformed guards were laughing on the prisoners. Not only do they laugh but torture the prisoners a lot. Brutus has narrated one incident where one guard put his foot on the neck of the convict who had fallen down. The guard had held the prisoners head under the water in the pool. The man thrashed helplessly. The bubbles gurgled out of his mouth into the pool water. The death of the man doesn't bring any difference to anybody except the other prisoners. Brutus calls this day a brilliant one with the threat of death.

The second part begins with a new day. The day is not bright as the previous day. The air contained the sand powder. The tree tops are still gray and the dews are hanging high on the tree. The Greetings of the morning have become illicit. These greetings will shape the thoughts and minds of the prisoners in such a way that they have to work with full strength of their body. They have to extend their capacity to the extreme point. Here in this prison, the prisoners, political victims or a some-time-fighter, all are treated equally with equal brutality. The porridge which is served to the prisoners was also not of good quality. They had to wait for it and the wind used

to form tight skin on the cooling porridge. The windgusts used to drop sandspray on the porridge. The overall tone of the atmosphere is depressing one. It was very difficult for the prisoners to remain a human being till the end of the day.

At the end of the day the old prisoners came along with their favourite warders. They wanted to select the young prisoners so that they could assign their work to the young prisoners.

In the third and the last part Brutus describes how these prisoners were a bruised and broken motley lot. One morning all the prisoners were lined up for taking to the hospital. There prisoners were given castor oil regularly. When Brutus looked at each of the prisoner he found that not a single prisoner was in a good condition. All of them had injured at one or the other part of their body. Some had split heads, some smashed ankles, torn and bloodied legs. The warders who wore the uniform were clearly showing the racial discrimination.

The poem has the background of the apartheid movement in South Africa. The white people in the South Africa had created a separate settlement for the coloured people. In the District Six of Cape Town these coloured people were asked to vacate their houses and move away from that place. One night the police came with the lorries and put the household material of the coloured people into those lorries and dropped them out of the city and asked to go anywhere but not to stay at that place. The District Six was reserved for the white settlement. This movement of Apartheid created a great racial discrimination amongst the native Africans. Those who protested the attitude of the government were captured and sent to Robben Island as political victims. Amongst them were Nelson Mandela and Dennis Brutus along with many others. Robben Island sequence symbolically describes the sufferings of these people. Dennis Brutus had tried to describe the sufferings by using the colour adjectives, especially the adjectives that depict the colour of the blood.

Terms to remember:

Gravel: small, rounded stones, often mixed with sand

Jut: to (cause to) stick out, especially above or past the edge or surface of something

gash: a long, deep cut, especially in the skin

wince: to show pain or embarrassment suddenly and for a short time in the face, often moving the head back at the same time

lacerate: to cut or tear something, especially flesh

hobble: to walk in an awkward way, usually because the feet or legs are injured

menace: something that is likely to cause harm

incisive: expressing an idea or opinion in a clear and direct way that shows good understanding of what is important

Kleynhans: Family Name, originated from Germany

Gurgle: (of babies) to make a happy sound with the back of the throat

Composure: the feeling of being calm, confident, and in control

Windgust: a sudden strong wind

motley: consisting of many different types that do not appear to go together

Check Your Progress

Fill in the blanks with the correct option given below

1. The first part of the poem describes the path on the Robben Island where the _____ had passed.
a) people b) prisoners c) guards d) colonizers
2. The oozing red blood from the bodies of the prisoners had made the path _____ orange.
a) crimson b) clear c) neonbright d) bright
3. The _____ of that bright day was clear as the blade of a knife.
a) menace b) hazard c) gift d) beginning
4. The windgusts used to drop sandspray and forming tight skin on the cooling _____.
a) atmosphere b) mind c) porridge d) prisoners
5. some mornings we lined up for 'hospital' it meant mostly getting _____.
a) relief b) food c) treatment d) castor oil

4.3.2 Frank Chipasula:

Poet and editor Frank Mkalawile Chipasula earned a BA at the University of Zambia, an MA in African American Studies at Yale University, and both an MA in creative writing and a PhD in English literature at Brown University. Exiled from his native Malawi, Chipasula frequently engages with the themes of censorship and exile. His poetry collections include *Visions and Reflections* (1972), *O Earth, Wait for Me* (1984), and *Whispers in the Wings: New and Selected Poems* (2001).

Chipasula's honors include the BBC Poetry Prize and two Pushcart Prize nominations. He edited *Bending the Bow: An Anthology of African Love Poetry* (2009) and *When My Brothers Come Home: Poems from Central and Southern Africa* (1985). He co-edited, with his wife, Stella Chipasula, *The Heinemann Book of African Women's Poetry* (1995). Chipasula has taught at several universities, including the University of Nebraska and Southern Illinois University. He is currently Assistant Professor of English at St. Olaf's College.

i) *Ritual Girl*

There is a girl dragging heavy
foot-chains, drained of her dance;
The razor sharp barbed wire
cuts deep into her bound wrists.

We nicknamed her butterfly,
lusty brown skin, dark fertile land;
painted lips like a fresh sore,
scorched hair straight like bamboos,

she could pass for a roadside bar whore
as she fainted under her ninth man
in a row, her dance ebbing slowly:

Pound me as you dehusk your maize

*Wash me like you wash your millet
Thrash me like you strip your rice
Till I am burning, spent and pure*

That was in college, many moons ago, yet
my mind hugs the clear-cut images
of her dreamy eyes like lunar lakes
we worshipped, sought in reverence;

frail lecherous flesh, sensuous dimples,
insatiate grave, every sailor's port
of call where seagulls led us to rest
where we searched for cool clear water.

The snake-skinned banjo wailed for her
plaintively, the tea-chest bass groaned for her.
We loved her as every exile loves the *patrie*;
Now our laments flow through every poem.

The lips of the singers are heavy
with her suitors' names fed to the lions;
in the dark dungeons her lovers languish
as she drags the heavy foot-irons painfully.

Summary and Analysis:

Frank Chipasula expresses his knowledge and relationship to his country through the poem "Ritual Girl". The poet picturizes Malawi's past through this poem. Speaking of a girl, "drained of her dance", scorching her hair to as straight as bamboo cane, the poet manages to evoke a sense of loss through poetics of disorder. The poem expresses traditional customs, ceremonies and rituals of life in Malawi. Here the girl is a symbol of poet's Homeland. He portrays the homeland as it is

dragging heavy foot-chains. The razor sharp barbed wire cuts deep into her bound wrists. She is controlled by *the others*.

The poet remembers how they had nicknamed her as butterfly. Butterfly is a symbol of freedom here. The lusty brown skin symbolizes fertile land. But now it is changed completely. The lips are no more fresh now. Even it appears red, the redness is not due to physical beauty but due to the scars it bears. The hair has also lost its beauty. It has become scorched straight like bamboos. The girl/homeland has undergone horrific changes. It indicates that now, “she could pass for a roadside bar whore”. As the roadside bar whore is easily available for everyone and can be utilized in ques. The poet expresses how, “she fainted under her ninth man in a row, her dance ebbing slowly”.

The song she sings encompasses crops like “maize”, “millet”, and “rice”. “The snake skinned banjo and the people” the lips of the singer are heavy. It wails and groans for the ritual girl.

The poet tries to relate himself with the girl. He says, “we loved her as every exile loves the patrie”. As everyone who is exiled for his land loves the homeland we love her (the homeland). The patriotic feeling clearly indicated that the girl is a symbol of homeland here. The homeland is dragging her heavy foot-irons painfully.

As Englund (1998: 1166) expresses, “while relationship to a specific location, as well as to other people, is particularly central to ideas about fathoming home, an environment is easily effected by affecting people’s emotions in that place. In turn the sadness evoked in Chipasula’s poetry speaks not only of his personal loss but at the loss of collective in Malawi; land, people and customs.

(Joanna Woods: 2015 *From Home and Exile: A Negotiation at Ideas about Home in Malawian Poetry*, Langaa RPCIG, Bamenda, Cameroon)

Terms to remember:

Scorched: to (cause to) change colour with dry heat, or to burn slightly

Dehusk: uncover

Reverence: a feeling of profound respect for someone or something.

Frail: Physically weak.

Lecherous: given to excessive indulgence in sexual activity.

insatiate: impossible to satisfy.

banjo: a stringed instrument of the guitar family that has long neck and circular body.

plaintive: expressive of sorrow or melancholy; mournful; sad.

patrie: homeland

languish: lose vigor, health, or flesh, as through grief

Check Your Progress

Fill in the blanks with the correct option given below

1. The poet picturizes Malawi's _____ through the poem Ritual Girl.
a) situation b) past c) beauty d) culture
2. The Ritual Girl is a symbol of poet's _____ .
a) past b) beloved c) family d) Homeland
3. We nicknamed her _____ .
a) della b) butterfly c) cindrella d) peacock
4. She could pass for a roadside bar _____ as she fainted under her ninth man in a row.
a) whore b) maid c) dancer d) girl
5. We loved her as every exile loves the _____ .
a) girl b) prison c) patrie d) place

ii) ***Friend, Ah You Have Changed!***

A river never flows back into its source.

Ah, friend you have changed; neckless,
your smile is so plastic
your cheeks are blown-out balloons
and your once accordion ribs
are now drowned under mountains of fat;
your belly is a river in flood threatening your head,
your woollen three-piece exaggerates the cold.

Prisoner behind high concrete walls
wearing transparent crowns of broken glass,
guarded by sharp-toothed bulldogs
whose barks pierce the spines of passers-by
and spiked gates standing firmly vigilant
as you entertain company with imported spirits
bought with the people's tax money,
discussing your mischiefs, rallies where you fed
your audiences on false promises.

I am still where you left me, strapped ever to my hoe
in the dust, my fingers clutching the discarded rosary
praying for rain to grow enough for the Party,
put Boyi in school and pay the soaring hospital bills
while the priest claims his half for God Almighty
sending the eternal fire raging, through my mind.

Though I am pushed near the edge
of your skyscraping platform to touch your shoe for salvation
you do not see me, your eyes rivetted on imaginary
enemies whom you vanquish with our chorus strung together.
The picture men will not notice me buried in this crowd
and the papers will print your shout clearly into news.

Ah friend, how you have changed,
You will never flow back here.

Summary and Analysis:

Frank Chipasula's poem "Friend, Ah You Have Changed!" is an indication of relationship between two individuals, groups, communities and so on. The first and the last lines of the poem are connected to each other.

The first line, "A river never flows back into its source" indicates that something that flows/moves ahead cannot be brought back. The change taken place is usually permanent. Here the nature, the tendency, attitude and the behavior of the friend is changed. This changed behavior of a friend troubles the other. Chipasula symbolically states how two friends are in two different positions. The one who has taken advantage of everything making compromise with the future of his own people gets all the pleasures of the earth, while his own people, community is striving for all these things. They do not have enough to satisfy their daily needs.

The friend has changed. Like the inward nature, his appearance is also changed. Due to obesity he has become neckless, his smile has become plastic, his cheeks are blown-out like balloons, his thin accordion ribs are now drowned under mountains of fat. His bulging belly threatens his heavy head. He wears woolen three-piece in the hot atmosphere, which exaggerates the unexistent cold.

Here prisoners who fought for the freedom, betterment of the country are still behind the concrete walls, wearing transparent crowns of broken glass and guarded by the sharp toothed bulldogs. At this time the friend is busy in entertaining foreign company bought with people's tax money. The friend discusses his mischief with these people. He made false promise to his own people and came into power.

The speaker tells the friend, "I am still where you left me". He is still tied to his hoe. He still works in the discarded rosary, praise God for rain so that he could grow something which can satisfy his needs. He has to pay for the party funds, send his boy to school, pay the hospital bills. These are his daily needs and he must work for this. Even the priest takes half of what he earns on the name of God Almighty.

The speaker is fade up of all these worries. He thinks that he should visit his friend. But he changes his mind. The speaker says that though he had been pushed by the circumstances to touch the shoe of his friend for salvation the friend could not see him. Because the eyes of his friend were settled on some imaginary enemy and not on the speaker. The speaker thinks that he will never be noticed and the newspapers printed next day will only print the shouts of his friend.

At the end the speaker confirms his view that his friend is completely changed and will never come back to his people.

Here the relationship between a political leader and the common men is symbolically expressed by the poet. The friend is a political leader who has sought this position with the help of his people. But he has completely forgotten that he has to work for the betterment of his people. He has changed completely.

Terms to remember:

accordion: A portable box-shaped free-reed instrument; the reeds are made to vibrate by air from the bellows controlled by the player.

bulldog: a sturdy thickset short-haired breed of dog with a large head and strong undershot lower jaw; developed originally in England for bull baiting.

mischiefs: Reckless or malicious behavior that causes discomfort or annoyance in others.

strapped: tied

discarded: rejected

skyscraping: very high, sky-high

rivettted: *here* settled

Check Your Progress

Fill in the blanks with the correct option given below

1. A river never flows back into its _____.
a) origin b) sea c) destination d) source
2. Chipasula symbolically states how two friends are in two different _____.
a) country b) places c) positions d) villages
3. Your woolen three-piece _____ the cold.
a) sustains b) exaggerates c) ends d) saves from
4. You entertain company with imported spirits bought with the people's ____.

- a) tax money b) blood c) sufferings d) exchange
5. Your eyes rivetted on imaginary _____ whom you vanquish with our chorus strung together.
- a) country b) people c) enemies d) lovers

4.4 Caribbean Poetry- Text, Summary and Analysis

4.4.1 Edward Brathwaite:

Kamau Brathwaite, original name **Lawson Edward Brathwaite**, also published as **Edward Brathwaite** and **Edward Kamau Brathwaite**, (born May 11, 1930, Bridgetown, Barbados—died February 4, 2020, Barbados), Barbadian author whose works are noted for their rich and complex examination of the African and indigenous roots of Caribbean culture.

Brathwaite is part of a population of Caribbean islanders of African descent. At the time, the island was under British colonial rule. At the elite Harrison College, where Brathwaite was enrolled in the late 1940s, he and some friends started a school newspaper. He contributed mainly jazz-related essays, and he also began publishing poetry in the paper and in a literary journal (*Bim*.) In 1949, Brathwaite was awarded a scholarship to Cambridge. There he studied history and English and graduated with honors in 1953. From 1955 to 1962, Brathwaite worked as a member of the British colonial service on the Gold Coast, which became Ghana. The British Broadcasting Corporation aired over fifty of his poems between 1953 and 1958 on the program *Caribbean Voices*. On a leave of absence from his post in Ghana, Brathwaite met teacher and librarian Doris Monica Welcome, whom he married in 1960. They had one child together, a son. In England again, Brathwaite began work on his doctoral degree at the University of Sussex in 1965; he was awarded his Ph.D. in history in 1968 for research on slave and Creole culture in the Caribbean. During this time he created a portion of the poetry trilogy, *The Arrivants* (1973). He also was pivotal in the creation of the Caribbean Arts Movement in 1966 and became the founding editor of the movement's journal, *Savacou*, which was established in 1970. After receiving a Guggenheim fellowship, Brathwaite began composing another trilogy of poems: *Mother Poem* (1977), *Sun Poem* (1982), and *X/Self* (1987). During the 1970s Brathwaite began using the name Kamau, which was given to him in Ghana. In 1991 he moved to the United States to work in the Comparative Literature Department at

New York University. In addition to the Guggenheim fellowship, Brathwaite was also awarded a Fulbright fellowship and, in 1994, the Neustadt International Prize for Literature.

In addition to several later collections of poetry, notably *Barabajan Poems, 1492–1992* (1994), Brathwaite produced a number of cultural, historical, and literary studies, among them *Folk Culture of the Slaves in Jamaica* (1970; rev. ed., 1981), *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770–1820* (1971), *History of the Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Anglophone and Caribbean Poetry* (1984), and *Roots* (1986).

i) 'Miss Own',

1

Selling calico cloth on the mercantile shame-
rock, was one way of keeping her body and soul-seam together
surrounded by round-shouldered backras on broad street
by cold-shouldered jews on milk

market

in the dark ghetto store
the bolt of cloth tugged, turned, revolved upon its wooden thunder

revealing rivers of green beige and muslin
lightnings of foreigner factories, bourgs

sign a bill here

and the sotrewalker
plodding prodding

indentured to the merchant's law
the merchant's whip

the merchant's weakly pay

comes

on his own flat foot to
sign the bill here
figures snakes and foxes
for some pampered child's penthouse apartment high above new york
listening, on her wheel of self-indulgent sorrow
to roberta flack

while our barrow boy calls
rags ole rags : cloze ole cloze
got any ole bottles today?

She sippin she drink
an i slippin out into de heat o de sun
to buy what me scrape from she barrel

2

selling half-soul shoes in the leather
department, was another good way of keeping her body and soul-
seam together

toes: scorn: instep: honeycomb of boxes: stretch up: pull down:
put down: open

the tanneries of morocco, of algeciras, sokoto, of boot
leg lacquered italy: buffalo and cow horn rumbling

into the stockyards of styx of chicago
abattoirs of spout and thunder: sloped slaughterhouses of the
chamois studded bronx:

cries calls clanks butchers' halls' bulls' knives stretch-
ing up: pulling down: putting down: open-

ing up the blood of the in-
growing toe-mail: worship of creak and spine

ache

3

for the shoe is a safe cottage to the illiterate peasant
needing light, running water, the indestructible plastic of the soft
ill
lit/erate present

sign a bill here

and she kneels before the altar of the golden calf
altering its tip and instep
keeping body and soul-seam together

and the merchant smiles, lost in his foundries
setting out on his barefooted pilgrimage
across the invertebrate prairies

Summary and Analysis:

Brathwaite's poem "Miss Own" depicts fragmented reality of the Afro-Caribbeans. The Afro-Caribbeans were left without a culture through which they possibly could protect their honor or dignity. By picturing this character of Miss Own Brathwaite has tried to depict the condition of Afro-Caribbean slave women. The Afro-Caribbean people were taken in as slaves and had to cope with labels of humiliation and degradation. In the poem "Miss Own," a female character is shown to be an insecure and unstable character. She is humiliated as she is sarcastically and repeatedly asked by her master to "sign a bill here". This shows that she is treated with disgust and is made fun of, because he knows that she is not capable of reading or signing any bills. He will remain signing bills, while she will never have such a chance. Slaves are also not trusted to take the task of signing. Despite such humiliation, the poet is persistent to prove that the African culture can still be traced here and there in the Caribbean community.

The woman represented here had to work in a merchant's shop selling cloths. It is a way for her to keep her body and soul together. Because whatever she is earning is not enough for her to satisfy her daily needs. She can only survive by what she earns. When she is supposed to receive money or her wages from the master, he asks her to sign the bill, which she can't.

The barrow boy calls, "rags ole rags;... got any ole bottles today?" the people work for their needs. Any kind of work is not restricted. The only thing that they have to survive by doing that.

The woman then works in the leather department selling half-soul shoes. She does every kind of work there. The leather and products of leather from different countries are available there. She thinks a shoe shop is a safe cottage for illiterate peasant. But here also the master asks her to sign the bill. She cannot hide this humiliating treatment. She kneels before the alter of the golden calf. She doesn't have any other way to keep body and soul together. The master smiles. He is lost in his foundries. The humiliation and the inhuman treatment given to the slaves were much common in the Afro-Caribbean countries. The wages were low and the slaves had to work a lot to survive themselves. Every individual had to work for their survival.

Terms to remember:

Muslin: plain-woven cotton fabric.

Bourgs:

Plod: the act of walking with a slow heavy gait.

Prod: To push against gently.

tanneries: workplace where skins and hides are tanned.

Algeciras: Algeciras is a port city in the south of Spain, and is the largest city on the Bay of Gibraltar

Sokoto: Sokoto is a city located in the extreme northwest of Nigeria, near the confluence of the Sokoto River and the Rima River

Lacquered: varnished

Styx: (Greek mythology) a river in Hades across which Charon carried dead souls

Abattoirs: A building where animals are butchered

Chamois: Hoofed mammal of mountains of Eurasia having upright horns with backward-hooked tips.

bronx: A borough of New York City.

clanks: to make a short loud sound like that of metal objects hitting each other, or to cause something to make this sound

Check Your Progress

Answer the following questions in one sentence.

1. What does Brathwaite want to indicate through the character of Miss Own?
2. Where does the woman work in the beginning?
3. Where does the woman feel comfortable?
4. What is the woman being asked repeatedly by her master?
5. According to the poet what kind of treatment was given to the slaves?

ii) 'Xango'

1

Hail

there is new breath here

huh

there is a victory of sparrows

erzulie with green wings

feathers sheen of sperm

hah

there is a west wind

sails open eyes the conch shell sings hallelujahs

i take you love at last my love

my night my dream my horse my gold/en horn my Africa

softly of check now

sweet of pillow

cry

of thorn

pasture

to my fire

we word with salt this moisture vision

we make from vision

black and bone and riddim

hah

there is a gourd tree here

a boy with knotted snakes and coffle wires

a child
with water courses valleys clotted blood

these tendrils knitted to the cold
un

pearl and wail
the earth on which he steps breaks furl

in rain

bow

tears

the
tiger clue

in his

the bamboo
clumps the bougainvillea

bells

his syllables
taste of wood of cader lignum vitae phlox

these gutterals

are his own mon general mon frere

his childhood of a stone
is rolled away he rings from rebels of the bone his liberated day

2

over the prairies now
comanche horsemen half

it is the buff the brown the rose
that brings them closer

the thousand tangled wilful heads
bull yellow tossing

the stretch the itch the musk
the mollusc in the nostril

the flare of drum
feet plundering the night from mud to arizona

the bison plunge into the thunders river
hammering the red trail blazing west to chattanooga

destroying de soto francisco coronado

un
hooking the wagons john

ford and his fearless cow

boy crews j

p morgan is dead

coca cola is drowned

the statue of liberty's never been born

manhattan is an island where cows curise on flowers

3

and all this while he smiles carved terra cotta

high life/ing in abomey

he has learned to live with rebellions

book and bribe

bomb

blast and the wrecked village

he is earning his place on the corner

phantom jet flight of angels

computer conjur man

he embraces them all

for there is green at the root of his bullet

micelangelo working away at the roof of his murderous rocket

he anointeth the sun with oil

star.tick.star.tick.crick.et.clock.tick

and his blues will inherit the world

4

he comes inward from the desert
with the sheriffs

he flows out of the rivers out of the water
toilets with shrimp and the moon's monthly oysters

he comes up over the hill/slide with grave
diggers he walks he walks

in the street with moonlight with whistles with police kleghorns
with the whores pisstle

5

after so many twists
after so many journeys
after so many changes

bop hard bop soul bop funk
new thing marley soul rock skank
bunk johnson is ridin again

after so many turns
after so many failures pain
the salt the dread the acid

greet
him
he speaks
so softly near

you

hear

him

he teaches

face

and faith

and how to use your seed and soul and lissome

touch

him

he will heal

you

word

and balm

and water

flow

embrace

him

he will shatter outwards to your light and calm and history

your thunder has come home

Summary and Analysis:

Brathwaite's poem takes its title, "Xango," from the West Indian version of "Shango," a spirit or deity in Yoruba spirituality and religion. The son of Yemaja and the mother goddess, protector of birth is Shango the god of thunder who is one of the popular worldwide acclaimed legends from West Africa, to be precise Nigeria. He is referred to as Chango or Xango in Latin America and also Jakuta. Like most Yoruba names and their meanings, Shango means to strike (Shan = strike). In Brazil, Shango is worshipped as a thunder and weather god by the Umbandists and also In Santeria, Shango (Chango) is the equivalent of the Catholic saint St. Barbara.

Magic, thunder and lightning characterized his reign as the fourth ruler of the kingdom of Oyo. He was known to be very mean and strict on his subjects that even in his palace he had enemies. Like most kings in ancient times it's allowed to have multiple wives and concubines and Shango was no exception. Among his numerous wives was Oya, who stole Shango's secrets of magic; Oschun, the river goddess was Shango's beloved because of her gastronomic abilities; and Oba, who always offered him ears to eat in order to win his love but was in anger and was sent away by Shango.

Folklores has it that in one of his angry moments he caused thunder to come down to burn some of his children and wives. In regret he left his kingdom to Koso where he later hanged himself. After his death his enemies decided to attack his subject but before they go to the palace a potent thunder struck them and killed them all, from that day he attained the honor of a god.

It is believed that he can eat fire and has special dances that he performs, Shango comes down and strikes with his head and gives three rounds down to the drums. He flaunts his axe and touches his testicles and makes threatening gestures. Like lover, he tries to demonstrate the size of his penis, bends and make winks to the women. The dancers imitate his movement. No other orisha will give higher jumps, dance more violently or make stranger gestures. The dances of Shango usually are erotic or warrior like. Commonly Shango is portrayed with an axe (the symbol of thunder), and his favorite colors are red and white, which are regarded as being holy.

The poem is divided into five parts. Each part contains fragment of clauses and sentences. The poem is structured in such a way that most of the part of the paper remains blank. Most of the lines contains single words. The blank white space on

the paper indicates the emptiness. This emptiness is there in the life of the people who are waiting for Xango. Somewhere the poet wants to say that Xango will save the country from the then prevalent situation.

In this poem the poet tries to explain the situation of the country which is colonized by the white people. The loss of culture, tradition and language is highlighted in this poem. The language which Brathwaite uses throws light on the language of the people. The most important aspect of the poem is that Brathwaite uses the language of his people, the way they speak English. Here the language is not refined one.

The country is waiting for the return of Xango who will save the country as he saved his people.

Gaurav Majumdar in his paper entitled Prediction, Proximity, and Cosmopolitanism in Global Spectacles: Kamau Brathwaite's "Xango" has given appropriate analysis of the poem. For better understanding some part of the article is quoted here. Gaurav Majumdar says, "the title of which signals a recognition of the multiplicity of the self (gesturing to the existence of a former, or "ex-," self, pertinent still and constructed genealogically). This enlarges a crucial argument and a constitutive impulse in much of Brathwaite's poetics and scholarly work. The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770–1820, Brathwaite melancholically describes the cultural impoverishment of the West Indian subaltern as a function of historical neglect: "Blinded by the wretchedness of their situation, many . . . slaves . . . failed, or refused, to make conscious use of their own rich folk culture (their one indisputable possession), and so failed to command the chance of becoming self-conscious and cohesive as a group."

Shango is a "Sky Father," the bearer of thunder and lightning, and, for some communities, the god of music in general, as well as of entertainment, drums, and dance. Shango is revered as a legal ancestor, the third king of the Oyo Kingdom. In the pantheon of the Caribbean Lukumí religion, Shango occupies the center, representing the adherents' West African Oyo ancestors. From these ancestors' initiation ceremonies, slaves in the Caribbean derived all Orisha initiations (including those performed in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela for several centuries). The title of Brathwaite's poem could also be linked to "Sango," a trade language widely used in Chad. The title's link with trade is significant for the poem's staging of a language

of exchange and dissemination. Brathwaite's mapping of dissemination extends through the figure of another important divinity, Erzulie, who is relocated to the Caribbean from Dahomey and invoked in the middle of the poem. Erzulie is a voodoo cluster of female spirits, sometimes represented as the goddess of love and elemental forces. The line evoking her—" . . . my love / . . . my Africa"—signals a displaced voice, trying to re-place or relocate itself (107).

Brathwaite signals the poem's rage at displacement and dispossession by deploying various visual strategies in the text, particularly by using blank space as an index of absence. For much of the first part of the poem, the arrangement of lines, estranged from one another through two lines of blank space, allows us to read the blank space in connection with the text's proclamations of a subversive power. (This arrangement recurs, albeit less frequently, in the other sections of the poem.) Propelling the text's desire for Xango's reappearance, the blank spaces in the text point to his currently incoherent, unavailable, or damaged presence. While Brathwaite points to the performance of culture, this is text as a performative event that underscores its signaling of this presence.

The Heinemann Book of Caribbean Poetry that Brathwaite takes his models from "the griots of West Africa, the jazz and blues men of the American South, the calypsonians and the 'folksongs' of the plantation experience," Ian McDonald and Stewart Brownsay, "Brathwaite set out to 'break English.'"

Alongside its formal signs of damage-by-colonization, the poem makes that postcolonial assertion in Brathwaite's poetics: it tries to "break English" through its aggressive orthographic appropriation of grammar and standardized language ("riddim" for "rhythm," "un" for "one") and through its flexing and reconfiguration of normative language in lexical and visual puns: the earth on which he breaks furlin rainbowtears.

This section of the poem triggers a strange semiotic weaving and unweaving in anticipation of the poem's later processes. The word "unfurl" becomes "un . . . furl," signaling an interruption as well as an emergence—an "unfolding"—into the world. Additionally, the words "furl" and "tears" produce a visual pun: the lines themselves "furl" meaning, compacting it into parts of words that bring out the polysemy of the words "rain bow," both visual and lexical ("rainbow," "rain bow"—which could be read literally or as "bowing, subservient rain"). The "furling" of meaning continues,

through new formulations: “the tiger clue” (pugmark? urine scent? broken claw?) and “conjur man” (does this signal a conjurer or magician, or is the formulation “conjur” a verb, an injunction to con- jure up a man with the powers of Xango?) Manifestly disrupting standardized meaning, the blank spaces in the poem, then, work as visual metaphors for the overt disruption of belonging, of language, and of racial, epistemological, and psychological coherence.

As marks of absence, however, the blank parts of the page can also be read as the unoccupied or freshly opened space of potential: a sign of what may be. Later, the poem suggests that “time and bomb and cricket,” which were instruments for different kinds of colonial violence, now function as, potentially, the postcolonial’s weapons (110). Timothy Reiss notes that, in the poem’s Biblical reference to sparrows (“whose fall god would heed as much as a human’s”), the sparrows are meek and traumatized, but “we have also seen them become something mightier: victims who turn against the oppressors their own instruments to be free to occupy their own geography and make their own history.”

The poem’s broken, floating lines, then, demarcate spaces that have the potential to be filled with a resistant eloquence, a new anticolonial language, an inaugural version of which the poem itself attempts.

Recognizing new forms of (and metonyms for) colonialism, the poem sets itself against the names of colonizers and neocolonial forces and institutions. As it evokes the colonial aggressions of the conquistadors and explorers Hernando de Soto and Francisco Coronado, it conflates these figures with those of John Ford, J. P. Morgan, and Coca-Cola (109). The formal counter to the neocolonialism (of Hollywood and multinational corporations) implicit in the latter set of names is staged through the percussive, assertive rhythms of Brathwaite’s language, but also through montage and switches in perspective. As its focus moves from “my gold/en horn my africa,” to “over the prairies now” where “comanche horsemen halt,” before winding its way to the locale of Xango’s “high life/ing in abomey,” the poem expands its network of resistance to the United States, in solidarity with Native Americans, and then to Benin (*ibid.*, 107, 108, 109). The resistance of the displaced has its circuits in these contaminated associations. The poem’s subversive, global affiliations with a series of figures announce diffuse, dispersed points of resistance for displaced populations.

Tracing these, the poem maps the vast territory where the language of resistance—the voice of Xango—lies submerged. This language—taken from its English moorings and refashioned into a hybrid, affiliated series of political ripostes—announces the capacity of the language of the colonized to combat the authority of its supposed purity. Short sonic bursts of defiance — like “hah” and “huh”—punctuate the text’s assertions and are often privileged so much that they form an entire line of the text. In their tattoo of monosyllables, in their meter, and in their rhythm, the lines underscore global solidarity, enacting a recuperation of the blues (with their tradition of monosyllables that cap a sentence or a claim), while also evoking older West African musical traditions that nourished the blues” (Majumdar: 2011).

Terms to remember:

Erzulie: the Haitian African spirit of love, beauty, jewelry, dancing, luxury, and flowers

Sheen: a bright, smooth surface:

Hallelujahs: (an emotional expression of) praise and thanks to God

coffle : a gang of negro slaves being driven to market.

bougainvillea: a climbing plant, common in hot countries, that has red or purple flowers

cader lignum-vitae: of several trees in the family Zygophyllaceae (order Zygophyllales), particularly Guaiacum officinale, native to the New World tropics.

phlox: a genus of American herbs, having showy red, white or purple flowers.

gutturals: articulated in the throat/ : being or marked by utterance that is strange, unpleasant, or disagreeable

frère: brother (French word)

Arizona: a state in the southwestern region of the United States. It is also part of the Western and the Mountain states.

Chattanooga: Chattanooga is a city in and the county seat of Hamilton County, Tennessee, along the Tennessee River bordering Georgia.

terra cotta: Terra-cotta, (Italian: “baked earth”) literally, any kind of fired clay but, in general usage, a kind of object—e.g., vessel, figure, or structural form—made from fairly coarse, porous clay that when fired assumes a colour ranging from dull ochre to red and usually is left unglazed.

Abomey: the capital of the Zou Department of Benin.

conjur: a security software

anointeth: anoint + -eth, (archaic) third-person singular simple present indicative form of anoint

shrimp: a very small sea creature similar to a prawn but smaller, or its flesh eaten as food:

bop: to dance to pop music

marley: Robert Nesta Marley, was a Jamaican singer, songwriter and musician.

skank: Slang. to dance rhythmically in a loose-limbed manner.

lissome: attractively thin and able to move quickly and smoothly

Check Your Progress

Answer the following questions in one sentence.

1. Who is Xango?
2. What does the poet want to indicate through this poem?
3. Why do the people of the country wait for Xango?
4. What does Xango bear with him?
5. What do the words “time and bomb and cricket” suggest?

4.4.2 Derek Walcott:

Derek Walcott was born in 1930 in the town of Castries in Saint Lucia, one of the Windward Islands in the Lesser Antilles. The experience of growing up on the isolated volcanic island, an ex-British colony, has had a strong influence on Walcott’s life and work. Both his grandmothers were said to have been the

descendants of slaves. His father, a Bohemian water colourist, died when Derek and his twin brother, Roderick, were only a few years old. His mother ran the town's Methodist school. After studying at St. Mary's College in his native island and at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, Walcott moved in 1953 to Trinidad, where he has worked as theatre and art critic. At the age of 18, he made his debut with *25 Poems*, but his breakthrough came with the collection of poems, *In a Green Night* (1962). In 1959, he founded the Trinidad Theatre Workshop which produced many of his early plays.

Walcott has been an assiduous traveler to other countries but has always, not least in his efforts to create an indigenous drama, felt himself deeply-rooted in Caribbean society with its cultural fusion of African, Asiatic and European elements. For many years, he has divided his time between Trinidad, where he has his home as a writer, and Boston University, where he teaches literature and creative writing. *Derek Walcott died on 17 March 2017.*

i) *The Hotel Normandie Pool*

I

Around the cold pool in the metal light
of New Year's morning, I choose one of nine
cast-iron umbrellas set in iron tables
for work and coffee. The first cigarette
triggers the usual fusillade of coughs.
After a breeze the pool settles the weight
of its reflections on one line. Sunshine
lattices a blank wall with the shade of gables,
stirs the splayed shadows of the hills like moths.

Last night, framed in the binding of that window,
like the great chapter in some Russian novel
in which, during the war, the prince comes home
to watch the soundless waltzers dart and swivel
like fishes in their lamplit aquarium,
I stood in my own gauze of swirling snow

and, through the parted hair of ribboned drapes,
felt, between gusts of music, the pool widen
between myself and those light-scissored shapes.

The dancers stiffened and, like fish, were frozen
in panes of ice blocked by the window frames;
one woman fanned, still fluttering on a pin,
as a dark fusillade of kettledrums
and a piercing cornet played 'Auld Lang Syne'
while a battalion of drunk married men
reswore their vows. For this my fiftieth year,
I muttered to the ribbon-medalled water,
'Change me, my sign, to someone I can bear.'

Now my pen's shadow, angled at the wrist
with the chrome stanchions at the pool's edge,
dims on its lines like birches in a mist
as a cloud fills my hand. A drop punctuates
the startled paper. The pool's iron umbrellas
ring with the drizzle. Sun hits the water.
The pool is blinding zinc. I shut my eyes,
and as I raise their lids I see each daughter
ride on the rayed shells of both irises.

The prayer is brief: That the transparent wrist
would not cloud surfaces with my own shadow,
and that this page's surface would unmist
after my breath as pools and mirrors do.
But all reflection gets no easier,
although the brown, dry needles of that palm
quiver to stasis and things resume their rhyme

in water, like the rubber ring that is a
red rubber ring inverted at the line's center.

Into that ring my younger daughter dived
yesterday, slithering like a young dolphin,
her rippling shadow hungering under her,
with nothing there to show how well she moved
but in my mind the veer or limb and fin.
Transparent absences! Love makes me look
through a clear ceiling into rooms of sand;
I ask the element that is my sign,
'Oh, let her lithe head through that surface break!'

Aquarian, I was married to water;
under that certain roof, I would lie still
next to my sister spirit, horizontal
below what stars derailed our parallel
from our far vow's undeviating course;
the next line rises as they enter it,
Peter, Anna, Elizabeth – Margaret
still sleeping with one arm around each daughter,
in the true shape of love, beyond divorce.

Time cuts down on the length man can endure
his own reflection. Entering a glass
I surface quickly now, prefer to breathe
the fetid and familiar atmosphere
of work and cigarettes. Only tyrants believe
their mirrors, or Narcissi, brooding on boards,
before they plunge into their images;
as fifty I have learnt that beyond words

is the disfiguring exile of divorce.

II

Across blue seamless silk, iron umbrellas
and a brown palm burn. A sandalled man comes out
and, in a robe of foam-frayed terry cloth,
with Roman graveness buries his room key,
then, mummy-oiling both forearms and face
with sunglasses still on, stands, fixing me,
and nods. Some petty businessman who tans
his pallor a negotiable bronze,
and the bright nod would have been commonplace
as he uncurled his shades above the pool's
reflecting rim – white towel, toga-slung,
foam hair repeated by the robe's frayed hem-
but, in the lines of his sun-dazzled squint,
a phrase was forming in that distant tongue
of which the mind keeps just a mineral glint,
the lovely Latin lost to all our schools:
'*Quis te misit, Magister?*' And its whisper went
through my cold body, veining it in stone.

On marble, concrete, or obsidian,
your visit, Master, magnifies the lines
of our small pool to that Ovidian
thunder of surf between the Baltic pines.
The light that swept Rome's squares and palaces,
washing her tangled fountains of green bronze
when you were one drop in a surf of faces –
a fleck of spittle from the she-wolf's tooth –
now splashes a palm's shadow at your foot.

Turn to us, Ovid. Our emerald sands
are stained with sewage from each tin-shacked Rome;
corruption, censorship, and arrogance
make exile seem a happier thought than home.
'Ah, for the calm proconsul with a voice
as just and level as this Roam Pool,'
our house slaves sigh; the field slaves scream revenge;
one moves between the flatterer and the fool
yearning for the old bondage from both ends.

And I, whose ancestors were slave and Roman,
have seen both sides of the imperial foam,
heard palm and pine tree alternate applause
as the white breakers rose in galleries
to settle, whispering at the tilted palm
of the boy-god Augustus. My own face
held negro Neros, chalk Caligulas;
my own reflection slid along the glass
of faces foaming past triumphal cars.

Master, each idea has become suspicious
of its shadow. A lifelong friend whispers
in his own house as if it might arrest him;
markets no more applaud, as was their custom,
our camouflaged, booted militias
roaring past on camions, the sugar-apples
of grenades growing on their belts; ideas
with guns divide the islands; in dark squares
the poems gather like conspirators.

Then Ovid said, 'When I was first exiled,

I missed my language as your tongue needs salt,
In every watery shape I saw my child,
no bench would tell my shadow “Here’s your place”;
bridges, canals, willow-fanned waterways
turned from my parting gaze like an insult,
till, on a tablet smooth as the pool’s skin,
I made reflections that, in many ways,
were even stronger than their origin.

‘Tiled villas anchored in their foaming orchards,
parched terraces in a dust cloud of words,
among clod-fires, wolfskins, starving herds,
Tibullus’ flute faded, sweetest of shepherds.
Through shaggy pines the beaks of needling birds
picked me at Tomis to learn their tribal tongue,
so, since desire is stronger than its disease,
my pen’s beak parted till we chirped one song
in the unequal shade of equal trees.

‘Campaigns enlarged our frontiers like clouds,
but my own government was the bare boards
of a plank table swept by resinous pines
whose boughs kept skittering from Caesar’s eye
with every yaw. There, hammering out lines
in that green forge to fit me for the horse,
I bent on a solitude so tyrannous
against the once seductive surf of crowds
that no wife soften it, or Caesar’s envy.

‘And where are those detractors now who said
that in and out of the imperial shade

I scuttled, showing to a frowning sun
the fickle dyes of the chameleon?
Romans' – he smiled – 'will mock your slavish rhyme,
the slaves your love of Roman structures, when,
from Metamorphoses to Tristia,
art obeys its own order. Now it's time.'
Trying his toga gently, he went in.

There, at the year's horizon, he had stood,
as if the pool's meridian were the line
that doubled the burden of his solitude
in either world; and, as one leaf fell,
his echo rippled: 'Why here, of all places,
a small, suburban tropical hotel,
its pool pitched to a Mediterranean blue,
its palms resting in their concrete oasis?
Because to make my image flatters you,'

III

At dusk, the sky is loaded like watercolour paper
with an orange wash in which every edge frays-
a painting with no memory of the painter-
and what this proof recites is not a phrase
from an invisible, exiled laureate,
where there's no laurel, but the scant applause
of one dry, scraping palm tree as blue eve-
ning ignites its blossoms from one mango flower,
and something, not a leaf, falls like a leaf,

as swifts with needle-breaks dart, panicking over
the pool's cloud-closing light. For an envoi,

write what the wrinkled god repeats to the boy-
god. 'May the last light of heaven pity us
for the hardening lie in the face that we did not tell.'
Dusk. The trees blacken like the pool's umbrellas.
Dusk. Suspension of every image and its voice.
The mangoes pitch from their green dark like meteors,
The fruit bat swings on its branch, a tongueless bell.

Summary and Analysis:

The Hotel Normadie Pool is situated on the outskirts of Port of Spain. Walcott used to stay at this hotel during his visits to Spain. During one such visit he wrote the poem "The Hotel Normandie Pool," which appeared in his collection, "The Fortunate Traveller." In this poem it is Ovid who appears at poolside to counsel the poet. Disguised as a sandaled businessman "in a robe of foam-frayed terry cloth," he whispers a phrase in Latin and introduces himself as the ancient poet condemned to permanent exile: Why here, of all places, a small, suburban tropical hotel, its pool pitched to a Mediterranean blue, its palms rusting in their concrete oasis?

The question occurs to a less august visitor as well. "The greatest writers have been at heart parochial, provincial in their rootedness," Walcott himself answered this question. He said, "I think Shakespeare remains a Warwickshire country boy, Joyce a minor bourgeois from Dublin. I think Dante's love of Florence was very intense. Hardy's place, of course, was rural Essex, you know." Walcott's place for writing had been Trinidad, and it was from that remote West Indian island that he had fashioned the cadences and idioms of a poetry generally recognized as one of the major literary achievements of his time.

"Derek Walcott handles English with a closer understanding of its inner magic than most (if not any) of his English-born contemporaries," said Robert Graves of his "Selected Poems," and the Irish poet Seamus Heaney, reviewing "The Star-Apple Kingdom," declared that Walcott "possesses English more deeply and sonorously than most of the English themselves." With the publication of his sixth volume of poetry in the United States, "The Fortunate Traveller," Walcott had begun to acquire the wider audience in poetry.

The Normandie has become Walcott's temporary home in Trinidad since his second divorce several years ago ("at 50, I have learnt that beyond words is the disfiguring exile of divorce," he writes in "The Fortunate Traveller"). Lately, he has been spending more time in the United States, teaching, lecturing and overseeing productions of his plays.

The United States has given Walcott an audience that Trinidad or St. Lucia could never have provided, but he still preferred the Caribbean and went back as often as he could, spending long summers in Port of Spain with his two teen-aged daughters by his second marriage.

Despite their highly worked texture, Walcott claimed that he did not revise his poems. "I want the casual, relaxed throw of the thing, like something draped over a chair." Lately, impatient with poetry, he had resorted to more or less spontaneous composition, typing out drafts as they occur to him instead of laboring over them line by line. "I said to myself, 'I'm going to kill these poems, abort them on the typewriter.' The way to write a poem is to refuse to write one, you know?" Walcott had a typical habit of working. The morning after his arrival on a late flight from New York, he was up at dawn, his typewriter set out on a table by the Hotel Normandie pool, books and manuscripts piled up on a deck chair by its side. And finally he used to assume his place and put the words on paper using his typewriter. It was the natural course of words flowing out onto the paper.

The Hotel Normandie Pool is Walcott's poem describing his vision at the pool side in the hotel. The poem is divided into three parts. He had written the poem sitting under the iron umbrella at the pool side of Hotel Normandie. The first part throws light on Walcott's family life. The second part expresses his interaction with the classical poet Ovid and the third part describes the evening and is closure of the poem.

On one fine New Year's morning Walcott sat under iron umbrella set in iron tables for work and coffee at the pool side of Hotel Normandie. It was a usual place for Walcott where he used to sit and write his poetry. Walcott has described his regular routine of smoking cigarette, observing the morning atmosphere and the movements of the people at the pool. He has described how the morning sun spread the shadow of the hills like moths there. The poet here reflects on the experience he had last night, "Last night, framed in the binding of that window, like the great

chapter in some Russian novel in which, during the war, the prince comes home to watch the soundless waltzers dart and swivel like fishes in their lamplit aquarium.” The poet stood in his swirling white clothes. Standing at the window he felt that the pool had widened the gap between the poet and those light-scissored shapes of the hill. The music was still continued.

While watching outside he feels that the dancers were stiffened and frozen in panes of ice blocked by the window frames. He describes how a woman fanned there, how a cornet player played a tune of ‘Auld Lang Syne’. At that moment a battalion of drunk married men reswore their vows. Here Walcott uses the image of *Battalion* for the group of married men. The word battalion indicated how each individual in the group come together with a single aim and wants to perform a single action together. He tells the reader that it was his fiftieth year. He muttered to the ribbon-medalled water asking it to change him, his sign, so that he could bear someone.

The poet then comes back to the present moment where he was sitting at the poolside. He reflects on the shadow of the pen on his wrist. This indicates that he is writing something, obviously this poem. He compares this shadow with the shadow of birches in a mist as cloud filled his hand. At that moment a dew drop fell on the paper and the poet felt that the drop had punctuated his writing. Due to the morning wind the iron umbrella shook and made a sound which the poet has compared with the ringing of bell. The rays of the sun fell on the pool water. The surface of the pool shines and creates blinding reflection of light. The poet has used the metaphor of Zink for the pool water. He tells that the pool water has blinded his eyes. He shut his eyes due to the reflection of sun rays into the water. As he raised his lids he saw his daughters swimming in the pool. He recalls how his younger daughter dived yesterday in the red rubber ring like a young dolphin. Her rippling shadow was moving quickly under her. He was unable to compare her movements with anything. He feels the comparison is beyond words. His love for his daughter made him ask the element, “Oh, let her lithe head through that surface break!”

The poet recalls his love, his family, his son and daughters and his divorce also. He says that time cuts down on the length man can endure his own reflection. When he comes out of the room, he immediately recognizes the familiar fetid atmosphere of work and cigarettes. It had become his routine there at Normandie. He feels that only tyrant believe their mirrors or Narcissi, brooding on boards before they plunge

into their images. The poet expresses his satisfaction that at the age of fifty he has learnt that the disfiguring exile of divorce is beyond words. One cannot explain it through words.

The second part deals with Walcott's imaginary interaction with the classical poet Ovid who appears at poolside to counsel the poet. The poet saw a sandalled man came out across blue seamless silk, iron umbrellas and a brown palm burn in a robe of foam-frayed terry cloth, with Roman graveness that buried his room key. The man rubbed oil on both his forearms and face. While doing that he did not remove his sunglasses. The man stood there, fixed his eyes on the poet and nodded. The poet thinks that the man might be a petty businessman who tanned his pallor a negotiable bronze. The man uncurled his shades above the pool's reflecting rim. The man was in white towel, toga-slung; the foam hair resembled with the towel. The man looking at the poet said a phrase in lovely Latin. That Latin phrase went through the cold body of the poet, veining it in stone. He had become dumbfounded listening to the man. The poet thinks that the man who spoke with him in Latin was Ovid who had come there to guide him. He addresses him as Master and feels that his visit has magnified the lines on marble, concrete, or obsidian, and reduced the gap between the small pool of Normandie and that Ovidian thunder of surf between the Baltic pines.

The poet then describes the greatness of the classical poet and requests Ovid to turn to him. He says, "Our emerald sands are stained with sewage from each tin-shacked Rome; corruption, censorship, and arrogance make exile seem a happier thought than home. He states that his ancestors were slave and Roman. He states the Roman History, how the Boy God, Caligula was in power, how he was considered a Negro even during the present days.

The poet describes the present situation saying that each idea has become suspicious of its shadow. No one has trust on the others. A lifelong friend whispers in his own house as if it might arrest him. The markets have no applauds. Now there is control of the military. Ideas with guns have divided the islands; and the poems gather like conspirators in dark squares.

When the poet expresses his feelings, Ovid answers. He says, "When I was first exiled, I missed my language as your tongue needs salt, in every watery shape I saw my child, no bench would tell my shadow "Here's your place"; bridges, canals, willow-fanned waterways turned from my parting gaze like an insult, till, on a tablet

smooth as the pool's skin, I made reflections that, in many ways, were even stronger than their origin". He stated that since desire was stronger than its disease, his pen's beak parted till they chirped one song in the unequal shade of equal trees. Ovid continues his speech stating that campaigns enlarged his frontiers like clouds. But his own government was the bare boards of a plank table swept by resinous pines whose bough kept skittering from Caesar's eye with every yaw. He further stated that they tried to catch him, but he bent on solitude so tyrannous against the once seductive surf of crowds that no wife or Caesar's envy could soften it.

Finally Ovid asks the poet where are those detractors now? Romans will mock your slavish rhyme. He refers the *Metamorphoses* of *Tristia* and says that art obeys its own order. History of art and history of people are two different things. You have to concentrate on art and not on people. Now it's your time. You have to work. Ovid finished his speech and tying his toga gently he went inside the hotel.

The poet looked at the figure going in. Even after his departure the poet feels Ovid's existence there. He says, "There, at the year's horizon, he had stood, as if the pool's meridian were the line that doubled the burden of his solitude in either world; and, as one leaf fell, his echo rippled: 'Why here, of all places, a small, suburban tropical hotel, its pool pitched to a Mediterranean blue, its palms rusting in their concrete oasis?'" and the answer that the poet finds is, "Because to make my image flatters you".

In the concluding part of the poem the poet has accepted the importance of art. Now the time is changed. The poem had begun in the morning. Now it is evening. The poet feels that at dusk, the sky is loaded like watercolour paper with an orange wash in which every edge frays. He considered that the sky is a painting with no memory of the painter. Every evening has a new canvas and a new picture. He considers his poem is not a phrase from an invisible, exiled laureate without a laurel. The nature is praising his art now. The applause is given by one dry scraping palm tree and the blue evening had ignited its blossoms from one mango blossom. The poet feels that something like a leaf fell down, but it was not a leaf. For the poet it occurred suddenly and it came out to him so swiftly that it was his art. It was his creation. It was his poem. The nature then goes to its usual routine. Everything rests as usual. The fruit bat swings on its branch. The poet compares this act of hanging to the tongueless bell. The art doesn't have the value if it doesn't get its recognition.

The poet finally realizes that he should not bother about what others say. He must work for his creation. He must work for his art.

Terms to remember:

Fusillade: a general discharge or outpouring of anything

Lattice: a structure made from strips of wood or other material that cross over each other with spaces between

gable: the top end of the wall of a building, in the shape of a triangle, where it meets the sloping parts of a roof

splay: to spread wide apart:

moths: an insect with wings that is similar to a butterfly, usually flies at night, and is attracted to light:

waltzers: A person who dances the waltz.

dart: to move quickly or suddenly:

swivel: turning around a central point to face in another direction

gauze: a very thin, light cloth, used to make clothing, to cover cuts and to separate solids from liquids, etc.:

birch: a tree with smooth, often white bark (= outer covering) and thin branches

slither: (of bodies) to move easily and quickly across a surface while twisting or curving

hungering: to want something very much/ to want something very much

undeviating: Showing no deviation; constant and steady.

fetid: Smelling extremely unpleasant

Narcissi: plural of Narcissus, A beautiful youth who rejected the nymph Echo and fell in love with his own reflection in a pool. He pined away and was changed into the flower that bears his name.

Uncurl: to straighten or become straightened out from a curl or curled position.

Toga: a piece of clothing worn by people in ancient Rome, consisting of a long piece of cloth wrapped around the body and hanging loosely from the shoulders

squint: to partly close your eyes in order to see more clearly:

glint: to produce small, bright flashes of light reflected from a surface:

obsidian: a volcanic glass similar in composition to granite, usually dark but transparent in thin pieces, and having a good conchoidal fracture.

Ovidian: Of or pertaining to the Latin poet Ovid; resembling the style of Ovid

Thunder: the sudden loud noise that comes from the sky especially during a storm

Baltic: belonging to or relating to the Baltic Sea or the countries surrounding it

Proconsul: (Roman History) an official, usually a former consul, who acted as governor or military commander of a province, and who had powers similar to those of a consul.

Augustus: Also called Octavian (before 27 b.c.). Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus Augustus Caesar, 63 b.c.–a.d. 14, first Roman emperor 27 b.c.–a.d. 14: reformer, patron of arts and literature; heir and successor to Julius Caesar/ a title of office given to rulers of the Roman Republic after Octavianus.

Caligula: The third of Rome's emperors, Caligula (formally known as Gaius) achieved feats of waste and carnage during his four-year reign

Triumphal: used to refer to something that celebrates a great victory (= winning a war or competition) or success

Camouflaged: using or wearing camouflage (= plants, paints, or clothes used to hide soldiers and equipment so that they cannot be seen against the area around them)

Camion: a strongly built cart or wagon for transporting heavy loads; dray.

Parched: (especially of earth or crops) dried out because of too much heat and not enough rain

Tibullus: Al·bi·us, c54–c19 b.c., Roman poet.

Tomis: may refer to the historical name of Constanța, a city in Romania

Resinous: connected with or producing resin (= a thick, sticky substance produced by some trees)

Skittering: (especially of a small animal, bird, or insect) to move very quickly and lightly

yaw: If an aircraft or ship yaws, it moves slightly to the side of its intended direction:

scuttle: to move quickly, with small, short steps, especially in order to escape

frown: to bring eyebrows together so that there are lines on the face above eyes, often while turning the corners of mouth downwards, showing annoyance, worry, sadness, or thinking hard

Metamorphoses: a series of mythological tales or legends in verse (a.d. 7–8) by Ovid

Tristia: The Tristia ("Sorrows" or "Lamentations") is a collection of letters written in elegiac couplets by the Augustan poet Ovid during his exile from Rome

Mediterranean blue: the sea surrounded by southern Europe, North Africa, and Western Asia

Scraping: removing an unwanted covering or a top layer from something, especially using a sharp edge or something rough

Check Your Progress

Answer the following questions in one sentence.

1. At which place the Hotel Normandie is situated?
2. Who appears in this poem to counsel the poet?
3. How old Derek Walcott was while writing this poem?
4. Which line in the poem indicate that Walcott was writing something at the pool side?
5. What does the poet compare the swinging fruit bat with?

ii) *The Season of Phantasmal Peace*

Then all the nations of birds lifted together
the huge net of the shadows of this earth
in multitudinous dialects, twittering tongues,
stitching and crossing it. They lifted up

the shadows of long pines down trackless slopes,
the shadows of glass-faced towers down evening streets,
the shadow of a frail plant on a city sill –
the net rising soundless as night, the birds' cries soundless, until
there was no longer dusk, or season, decline, or weather,
only this passage of phantasmal light
that not the narrowest shadow dared to sever.

And men could not see, looking up, what the wild geese drew,
what the ospreys trailed behind them in silvery ropes
that flashed in the icy sunlight; they could not hear
battalions of starlings waging peaceful cries,
bearing the net higher, covering this world
like the vines of an orchard, or a mother drawing
the trembling gauze over the trembling eyes
of a child fluttering to sleep;

it was the light
that you will see at evening on the side of a hill
in yellow October, and no one hearing knew
what change had brought into the raven's cawing,
the killdeer's screech, the ember-circling chough
such an immense, soundless, and high concern
for the fields and cities where the birds belong,
except it was their seasonal passing, Love,
made seasonless, or, from the high privilege of their birth,
something brighter than pity for the wingless ones
below them who shared dark holes in windows and in houses,
and higher they lifted the net with soundless voices
above all change, betrayals of falling suns,
and this season lasted one moment, like the pause

between dusk and darkness, between fury and peace,
but, for such as our earth is now, it lasted long.

Summary and Analysis:

Derek Walcott's "The Season of Phantasmal Peace" is an extraordinary poem which describes the condition of the earth. The first stanza describes that all the nations of birds lifted together the huge net of "all the shadows of this earth in multitudinal dialects, twittering tongues, stitching and crossing it". Derek Walcott uses the image of nations of birds which is unique one. It is not nations of people but the nations of birds. These birds have their own language, own dialects, the tongues are twittering, stitching and crossing each other. The birds are carrying huge net of shadows of earth through the trackless slopes, evening streets, city sill and it is not only the shadow of the earth but of all the objects that are present, visible on this earth.

The net becomes soundless as night. The birds become soundless during the night. The silence remains through the darkness, through the dust. It will continue till there was no season, decline or weather. Only the phantasmal light will continue, where no shadow will be there. Walcott here imagines of a light where there will be no shadow, a light which will bring peace, equality and respect for all. That is the reason he calls it phantasmal light.

When people try to see what is being carried over, if they look up, they could not see what the wild geese drew. They could not see the ospreys trailing behind; they could not hear the battalions of peaceful cries. The birds are bearing and carrying the net higher. They cover an orchard or a mother draws the trembling cloth over the trembling eyes of a child fluttering to sleep.

In the third stanza the poet addresses the reader and says that "in yellow October you will see the light on the side of a hill at evening". Those who hear the sound of the birds will not know what change has been brought into their sound. No one will be able to find the change in raven's cawing, the ember-circling chough. It was their seasonal passing, love. Their love was made seasonless. The poet compares human life here, season of love in birds and seasonless human love, which now has become the tendency of birds also. The birds have feeling of pity for the wingless human beings. The human beings shared dark holes in windows and in houses. The birds do

not consider the change below and lift the net higher and higher. They do not consider the betrayals of falling suns. The poet says, for birds this season lasts for one moment only. This one moment is like a pause between dusk and darkness; between fury and peace. This pause is a very thin line almost invisible. No one can differentiate or identify the point where dusk ends and darkness begins, or where the fury ends and peace begins. But in the present condition of the earth the moment of pause lasted for a long time.

Derek Walcott has compared the world of human beings with that of birds. This comparison is opposite. Here the nations of birds are controlling the human world. The first stanza tells us how the nations of birds with their multitudinous dialects lifting the net of the shadows of this earth. It is exaggeration, but is the reality of the postmodern world in the postcolonial period. Everywhere darkness is there and only phantasmal light is the hope. In the phantasmal light not a single shadow dare to exist.

In the second stanza the poet tries to show how the birds are covering the earth. This covering is to hide something without considering the beauty, importance and significance. The birds cover the earth with shadow as vines cover the orchard or a mother who is trying to sleep her child. There is a difference in these two activities. The vine covers the orchard for its own survival, but the mother covers the baby so that the baby can take rest without any disturbance. The mother cares the baby where she moves from self to other. But the act of vine is for survival of self at the cost of the others. By showing these two activities Walcott tries to show the phantasmal situation of the postcolonial world.

In the final stanza the poet shows how the human beings are unaware of the change in the modern world. The postcolonial world has brought change not only in human nature but also in the behavior of the birds. Human beings see the light on the side of a hill. This hill represents the other external world. The human beings in the modern world are engrossed in the physical activity, physical love. Their love has become seasonless. This tendency is reflected in the act of birds also. This phantasmal season for bird lasted one moment only like the pause between dusk and darkness or between fury and peace. But for human beings this pause is longer one, because human beings are unable to come out of their self and move towards the others. Now the earth needs a movement towards the external world.

In the words of the literary critic Denis Donoghue, Walcott "has formed itself upon grander desires and fulfillments than anything his themes are ready to achieve." His poems are heavily Latinate, dense with rhetoric and elaborate imagery, the long lines unfurling with Elizabethan prodigality, as in this stanza from "The Season of Phantasmal Peace": Then all the nations of birds lifted together the huge net of the shadows of this earth in multitudinous dialects, twittering tongues, stitching and crossing it. They lifted up the shadows of long pines down trackless slopes, the shadows of glass-faced towers down evening streets, the shadow of a frail plant on a city sill - the net rising soundless as night, the birds' cries soundless, until there was no longer dusk, or sea-son, decline, or weather, only this passage of phantasmal light that not the narrowest shadow dared to sever."

Terms to Remember

Multitudinous: consisting of many things or parts

Phantasmal: unreal, imaginary, having no material existence

Osprey: a large bird of prey that eats fish

Gauze: a very thin, light cloth, used to make clothing, to cover cuts and to separate solids from liquids, etc.

Killdeer: an American plover, *Charadrius vociferus*, having two black bands around the upper breast

screech: a harsh, shrill cry or sound

ember: a piece of wood or coal, etc. that continues to burn after a fire has no more flames

chough /chuff: small, crow-like bird

Check Your Progress

Answer the following questions in one sentence.

1. What did the nations of the birds lift together?
2. How does the net rise at the night?
3. How does the net cover this world?

4. Why does the poet say that the season for our earth lasted long?
5. What does phantasmal light suggest in the poem?

4.5 Self Assessment Questions

1. Assess and elaborate the patriotic feelings expressed in the African poetry.
2. Briefly enumerate the features of Caribbean poetry with reference to the poems you have studied.
3. Attempt a critical estimate of Derek Walcott as a poet.

4.6 Key to Check Your Progress

A Simple lust is all my woe

Fill in the blanks with the correct option given below

1. d) unarticulated
2. b) African
3. a) apartheid
4. c) exploitation
5. c) over-taxing

Robben Island Sequence

Fill in the blanks with the correct option given below

1. b) prisoners
2. c) neonbright
3. a) menace
4. c) porridge
5. d) castor oil

Ritual Girl

Fill in the blanks with the correct option given below

1. b) past
2. d) Homeland

3. b) butterfly
4. a) whore
5. c) patrie

Friend, Ah You Have Changed!

Fill in the blanks with the correct option given below

1. d) source
2. c) positions
3. b) exaggerates
4. a) tax money
5. c) enemies

'Miss Own'

Answer the following questions in one sentence.

1. Through the character of Miss Own Brathwaite has tried to depict the condition of Afro-Caribbean slave women.
2. The woman works in the cloth shop in the beginning.
3. The woman feels comfortable in the leather department selling half-soul shoes.
4. The woman is asked repeatedly by her master to sing the bill.
5. According to the poet the slaves were given humiliating and inhuman treatment.

Xango'

Answer the following questions in one sentence.

1. Xango is a spirit or deity in Yoruba spirituality and religion.
2. The poet wants to indicate the loss of culture, tradition and language in the African countries through this poem.
3. The people of the country are waiting for the return of Xango who will save the country as he saved his people.
4. Xango bears thunder and lightning.

5. The words “time and bomb and cricket,” suggest different kinds weapons of colonial violence.

The Hotel Normandie Pool

Answer the following questions in one sentence.

1. The Hotel Normadie is situated on the outskirts of Port of Spain.
2. In this poem it is Ovid who appears at poolside to counsel the poet.
3. Walcott was fifty years old while writing this poem.
4. The lines, “Now my pen’s shadow, angled at the wrist/ with the chrome stanchions at the pool’s edge” indicate that Walcott was writing something at the pool side.
5. The poet compares the swinging fruit bat with the tongueless bell.

The Season of Phantasmal Peace

Answer the following questions in one sentence.

1. The nations of birds lifted together the huge net of the shadows of this earth.
2. The net rises soundless at the night.
3. The net covers this world like the vines of an orchard, or a mother drawing the trembling gauze over the trembling eyes of a child fluttering to sleep.
4. The human beings in the modern world are engrossed in the physical activity, physical love, this has become seasonless. So the poet says that the season for our earth lasted long.
5. The phantasmal light suggests hope for the better world in future.

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Unit-1

Major Trends in Australian Drama *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*

Ray Lawler

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1.0 Objectives

After studying this unit you will be able to

- Study development and major trends in Australian Drama
- Understand the contribution of Ray Lawler to Australian Drama
- Know life and works of Ray Lawler
- Analyze the play *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*
- Assess the characters in the play *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*
- Examine various themes reflected in the play
- Understand and appreciate the play

1.1 Introduction

The first section of the present unit takes a brief survey of development and major trends in Australian Drama and the second section discusses the text, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* by Ray Lawler, a noteworthy playwright who contributed to the native tradition of Australian drama significantly.

Ray Lawler, in full Raymond Evenor Lawler, was born on 23 May, 1921 at Footscary Melbourne, Australia. He is an actor, producer and playwright whose play *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* is credited with changing the direction of modern Australian drama. The newly formed 'Elizabethan Theatre Trust' chose Lawler's *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* for its first staging in 1955 and Lawler staged this play in Melbourne in 1956 and the play's success further led to the production in London in 1957. Play's film version was made in 1959. This play criticised Australian cultural stereotypes in a natural style of language, free of cliché and represented a major break with the established tradition of Australian Drama.

Lawler has many plays to his credit and in order to understand Lawler's contribution to the tradition of Australian drama it is essential to take a brief review of Australian drama.

1.2 Major Trends in Australian Drama

In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, English culture entered and settled in Australia which is reflected through the medium of theatre also. Theatre in

Australia was emerged in 1788. F.C. Brewer surveys the development in Australian drama in his book *The Drama and The Music New South Wales* (1892). The development of Australian Drama can be studied through three periodizations.

Phase I : 1788- 1990

The History of Australian drama can be traced back to the colonial idea of theatre from the drama of David Burn which reflects a belief in theatre as a powerful cultural media in a new society. The History can also be traced in discussion and debate about theatre from the beginning of the colony in the official utterances of those who sanctioned and patronised early armature and convict productions who subsequently legislated and licensed theatres in to existence. Until 1800, convicts were involved in all dramatic ventures of which there is no concrete record.

As referred earlier in a new society especially in a convict society drama was one of the most civilized of human pursuits. It was an instrument for reforming vicious tendencies and maintaining social stability. Convict theatre was sanctioned for serving the useful social function. David Burn's historical tragedies established his reputation as a founder of Australian drama. David Burn, wrote eight plays over the early two decades of the first phase of Australian Drama. His famous plays are *The Bushrangers* (1829) and *Sydney Delivered* (1845). The play *Bushrangers* deals with the themes of convictism and bushranging.

Most of the plays written in this period are modelled on the popular English plays. H. C. O. Flaherty's *Life in Sydney* or *The Ran Dan Club* (1843), is a picaresque theme play modelled on the popular English play *Tom and Jerry* or *Life in London*. James Tucker's *Jemmy Green in Australia* was probably written at Port Macquarie in 1845 and was modelled on the same English play. George Farquhar's first play *The Recruiting Officer* was performed before sixty audiences at Port Jackson, in the presence of Governor Phillip and the officers of the garrison.

In the 1830s and 1840s the local items such as songs, ballads, recitations, comic or satirical skills were introduced throughout the performances. Edward Geoghegan was a significant Australian dramatist in this period. He wrote nine plays and performed at the Royal Victoria in the 1840s. His famous play *The Currency Lass* presents a story of a native girl who is very talented and makes arrangements for a marriage very skilfully.

A local play *Negro Vengeance, A Tale of the Barbados* was written and performed in Maitland in the decade of 1840s and in the later 1840s and early 1850s Francis Belfield, a Melbourne actor, wrote three plays *Retribution* or *The Drunkard's Curse*, *Rebel Chief* and *Zisca the Avenger* which were performed by Queen's Theatre Company.

Pantomime, a popular Victorian form, which deals with the scope for local or topical allusion is also emerged in the Australian Drama .Pantomime is a mixture of romance and realism. The famous manuscript of John Lazar's *Grand Easter Pantomime* at the Royal Victoria in Sydney in 1846 includes *St. George and the Dragon* or *Harlequin* and *The Seven Champions of Christendom*. This expresses the local scenes, background, people and society of Sydney. 'The Christmas Pantomime' includes *Harlequin Jack Spratt* or *The Fire Fiend* and *The Fairy of the Evening Star* was performed at the Royal Victoria in Sydney in 1844.

One of the major developments in Australian drama was the result of discovery of gold. In the early 1850s, gold was discovered in New South Wales and Victoria. It gave a new impetus to Australian drama. The sudden growth in population is the initial effect on theatre construction. It is in goldfields townships like Ballarat, Bendigo and Bathurst as well as the main cities like Melbourne and Sydney. By the mid 1850s Melbourne and Sydney constructed the theatres of the capacity of three thousand audiences at one time and one place. The major theatres established in Australia were 'Melbourne's Theatre Royal' and Sydney's 'Prince of Wales Theatre'.

Marcus Clarke was the prominent playwright of the late 1860s and 1870s, who through his works reveals the difficulties and problems faced by the talented playwrights in the increasing period of specialization. He wrote twenty odd plays, fragments and more than dozen of them were performed. His dramatic writings were the experimentation with the available forms and sense of frustration. Clarke's *His Natural Life* discusses the theatrical imagination, methods of melodrama, its dialogue and character, plot and creation and effect of using spectacle and tableau (models).

The period between 1870s to 1890s is known as the golden era of Australian theatre. It is also referred to as the time of local melodrama. Australian and Anglo-Australian melodrama flourished through the works of Alfred Dampier and George

Darrell. The themes of Australian melodrama such as convictism, bush-ranging and gold discovery are handled due to competition with other kinds of drama.

George Darrell is one of the best Anglo- Australian melodramatists. His sixth play *The Sunny South*, published in decade of 90s, is about the colonial life, bush-ranging, goldfield's excitement etc. It has achieved fifteen hundred performances in Sydney and Melbourne in 1883, 1885, 1891 as well as in London and America and touring productions throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Alfred Dampier was another reputed author, co-author, adaptor, producer and actor of the Australian melodrama. His first successful stage adaptation of *His Natural Life* in 1886 gave him a popularity through a decade. In this period he produced more than dozen plays. The later period included contemporary urban melodramas such as Thomas Somer's *Voice of the Night* (1886), *Marvellous Melbourne* (1889) and *The Great City* (1891).

This phase shows American influence on Australian melodrama in the plays of Cooper as well as Darrell, but it is strong in Dampier's work. *The Sunny South* in the comparison with *Marvellous Melbourne* is a much more fragmented and violent play.

The dominance of large-scale overseas theatrical interest and rise of the film industry in the early 20th century and beginning of non-commercial theatre become major causes of decline of Australian melodrama.

Phase II : 1900- 1960

The second phase starts with the establishment of permanent theatre. With this locally written plays began to appear in increasing numbers, especially in Sydney. The most significant Australian playwrights of this period were Edward Geoghegan, Louis Esson and Ray Lawler.

This period witnessed the fruitful and uneven development due to tensions and pressures of new dramatic practices and changing social realities. The new drama established in this period tries to emphasize the aspects of oppositions to the established theatrical practices. The motivation of the new kind of local drama from the mid 1960s, results in an earlier 'post-colonial' or 'nationalist' phase in Australian drama. Louis Esson and Ray Lawler are two major dramatists of this period. These two major figures tried to emphasize the notion of an emergent national identity as the distinctive aim of the drama of this period. Ray Lawler's play *Summer of the*

Seventeenth Doll reflects the expression of these changes and contributes to the formation of a national consciousness. The stereotypical Australian behaviour is explored and reinterpreted by Lawler in this play.

By the 1930s the fortunes of commercial theatre had reached at certain level. The strength of commercial theatre began to rise. This continued to show a false picture of the oppression of commercial systems. The most innovative little theatres like 'The Adelaide Repertory Theatre', 'The Melbourne Repertory Theatre', and 'Sydney Repertory Theatre' in the 1930s and 1940s contributed to the new theatre movement in Australia's main cities. Further the late 1950s saw the revival of Australian realism which evoke Australian life in tragic images of frustration, alienation and bafflement.

Derivativeness is another major characteristic feature of Australian drama. The most significant concept handled in this period by local dramatist is national identity. A major problem in this phase is an actual conflicts and tensions in Australian society. The tragic conflict is a significant element in the 20th century Australian drama and is very much reflected in the works of Louis Esson, and newly emerging women writers like Katharine Susannah Prichard and Betty Roland.

The Repertory Movement is a reaction to the commercial theatre managements which is introduced to Australian audiences through the works by Ibsen, Shaw, and Chekhov. 'The Adelaide Repertory theatre' began in 1908 and decided to produce one Australian play each year. 'Melbourne Repertory theatre' produced 13 Australian plays between 1911 to 1917 out of 65 plays. 'Sydney Repertory theatre' produced three Australian plays in 24 productions in association with the commercial management of J. and N. Tait. Dorris Fitton's 'Independent Theatre' performed 80 Australian plays in the period between 1930 to 1972.

The New theatre Movement performed the contemporary works of non-Australian writers. Louis Esson, Vance Palmer, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Douglas Stewart, Patrick White and Hal Porter are famous Australian playwrights in this period and others like Summer Locke-Elliott, Ray Lawler and Alan Seymour became expatriates. Louis Esson (1879- 1943) was the most innovative and prolific playwright in the early decades of the century who wrote 14 plays in the period 1910 and late 1920s among them nine were performed. Esson's plays challenge the conventions of melodrama and social comedy in the late 19th century.

Another significant playwright, Vance Palmer's best play *The Black Horse* (1923) deals with a tragic scenario of country life through the conflict between mother and father. His other play *Hail tomorrow*, written in 1943-45 and published in 1947, is a historical play based on the Queensland Shearers Strike of 1891-92. Sydeny Tomholt's *Bleak Dawn* (1936) was one of the first plays dealing with the condition of a divorced woman in Australia written in this phase.

The well known woman playwright who wrote realistic play in Australia in 1950s was Katharine Susannah Prichard. Her famous play *Brumby Innes* won the playwright's competition under the Triad magazine in 1927. The play presents sexual relations and racism in Australia while Betty Roland's *The Touch of Silk* (1928) studies manners and morality of the bourgeois society in the Australia's rural township.

Douglas Stewart contributed by writing a verse drama to Australian tradition of drama. He penned five plays and two stage plays between 1939 and 1947. He described the Australian history and legend through his work.

Phase III: Drama since 1960

In the period after 1960 Australian drama achieved a creative significance comparable with that of fiction, poetry and other arts. This phase emphasized on theatrical values to discover modes of drama. Jack Hibberd's *A Stretch of the Imagination* (1972) is one of the major achievements of the new wave of Australian drama. Hibberd challenges the methods and assumptions of the established Australian theatre. The dominance of naturalism in Australian drama is fully underlined in this period. Further a major development with a new preoccupation with Australian history has been highlighted.

After 1960 drama was established as a well-known genre in comparison with other literary genres in Australia by challenging the old literary traditions. Many dramatists have the influence of English writers and until the early 1960s only nationalism is presented through plays.

European theatre movements like expressionism, symbolism, Brechtian theatre, absurdist theatre used in Australia in 1960s through the work of modern playwrights. They are Patrick White, Jack Hibberd, David Williamson, Alexander Buzo, John Romeril, Barray Oakley, Dorothy Hewett, Michael Boddy, Robert Ellis, Ron Bair, and Bill Reed etal.

In recent Australian drama naturalism is used by two famous substantial playwrights David Williamson and Peter Kenna in 1960s and 1970s. They described the power politics, conflicts and social issues through the creation of characters and situations. Williamson's *The Removalists* stages violence in Australian society. Williamson and Kenna introduced expressionism in Australian drama and theatre by presenting the changing behaviouristic patterns and situations among younger generations of Australia.

Patrick White, a well-known figure of this phase, wrote four plays between 1961 to 1964. *The Ham Funeral* reveals the history of time, space and social issues which are concerned with the human behaviour of Australian life.

Thus, the Australian drama has a very significant place in the World Dramatic tradition. In Phase I, 19th century, melodrama has a simple and easy understanding for the audience having happy endings that projected integrated families and equal distribution of property and wealth which is performed and celebrated in melodramatic theatre. The Phase II began in early 20th century in which dramatists challenged established forms and themes and presented social changes. In this period the theatre shows the male female stereotypes, class conflicts and urban/ rural tensions from new Australian society. In the third Phase, the modern playwrights invented the new theatre techniques such as expressionism, symbolism etc. Australian playwrights reflected the Australian society and culture throughout their works.

1.2.1 Check your Progress

1. Who wrote the play *Bushrangers*?
2. What is Pantomime?
3. Which decade is considered as the beginning of the nationalist phase in Australian drama?
4. Name two important women playwrights of 20th century Australian drama?
5. When was the The Adelaide Repertory Theatre established?

1.3 Ray Lawler : Life and Works

Raymond Evenor Lawler was one of eight children born to a tradesman in Melbourne, Australia. At the age of thirteen, Lawler started working in an engineering plant and took lessons in acting in his spare time. When he was twenty-three, he sold his first play, which was never staged. Later Lawler acted and wrote pantomimes and scripts for revues, and when he was in his mid-thirties, he became manager and director of the 'Union Theatre Repertory Company' and in that position, he worked on the script of his masterpiece, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* in which he had written a part for himself, through the character of Barney.

Lawler's work as an actor received high praise. After the early closing of the Broadway production, he moved to Denmark; later, he returned to London, then moved to Ireland in 1966. These moves were indirectly prompted by the success of *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*. Lawler could not return to Australia, nor could he live in London or New York, because of a tax situation resulting from productions of this play and the sale of film rights.

Lawler returned back to Australia in 1975, and in 1977 assisted with the production of The Doll Trilogy, comprising *Kid Stakes*, *Other Times*, and *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*.

Works of Ray Lawler

- *Cradle of Thunder* (1949)
- *The Bluff and the Fair* (1952 - a reworked version of *Hal's Belles*, 1945)
- *The Adventures of Ginger Meggs* (1952, children's musical)
- *Tram Stop 10!* (1954, co-writer of revue)
- *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*(1955)
- *Return Fare* (1955, co-writer of revue)
- *The Piccadilly Bushman*(1959)
- *The Unshaven Creek* (1963)
- *A Breach in the Wall*(1970)
- *The Man Who Shot the Albatross* (1971)

- *Kid Stakes* (1975)
- *Other Times* (1976)
- *Godsend* (1982)

1.4 Short Summary of the play *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*

The play begins with three women—Olive, Pearl, and Bubba awaiting the arrival of Barney and Roo. Every summer for the last sixteen years Barney and Roo have spent their “layoff season” at Olive’s house, which is owned by her mother, Emma. Roo is dating Olive, and Barney usually dates Nancy, but this year Nancy married and abandoned the layoff season, so Olive has invited her co-worker Pearl as a companion for Barney. Bubba lives next door, and was only a small child when the layoff seasons began.

The action of the play opens with Bubba tying ribbons on candy canes in the living room as a tradition of the layoff season in the presence of Pearl, dressed in her good black dress. Olive comes downstairs and shows Pearl a photo of Barney, Roo, Nancy, and Olive drunk at an amusement park. Olive insists that Nancy made a mistake getting married. In reply, Pearl insists that Nancy "made herself cheap" and says that Barney needs to be taken in hand. Bubba, who has gone to fetch beer, returns as Pearl asks what the candy canes are for her. Olive tries to explain Pearl that the layoff season isn't indecent: it's magical and perfect and she should think of her eighteen years old daughter, Vera. Both Pearl and Olive were enjoying drinking beer when Barney enters the house carrying Emma over his shoulder, and Roo enters behind him. Roo and Olive kiss while Barney and Pearl introduce themselves. Barney tells Olive that Roo is broken after he walked out on his job two months ago. Roo had fought with a new young employee named, Johnnie Dowd after hurting his back. They make up and call the others into the room to eat, and Roo gives Olive her ‘seventeenth kewpie doll’. The next morning, Olive, dressed for work, tells Roo that Pearl didn't like Barney's drinking or the fact that he tried to go in her bedroom late at night.

When Olive leaves, Emma talks to Roo and offers him a loan. Roo refuses. Bubba stops in to leave an envelope of photos from Nancy's wedding. She asks Roo to give it to Barney and not let Olive see. Bubba asks if the layoff season is going to be the same this year without Nancy, and Roo assures her it will be. Barney offers

Roo money instead, and says that Roo is just mad at Barney for not joining him when Roo walked off the job cane-cutting. Roo huffs upstairs as Olive comes to tell Barney that he needs to talk Pearl for pursuing her to stay. Suddenly Pearl appears and tells Barney that she doesn't approve of his "de facto wives" meaning he has three children with three different women. Barney tells her he has a lot of love to give, and isn't just out to take love. Olive, and Roo leave, and Pearl asks Barney to take her suitcases to her room as she has decided to stay.

On New Year's Eve, the group sits quietly in the living room listening to children playing outside. Barney suggests they should go to the beach, but nobody is interested. Pearl says she's knitting a sweater for Barney's son. Bubba dressed to go out, and explains that she is going to a social dance. She suggests they all go to the Morrisises' before leaving. Pearl asks who the Morrisises are, and Olive finally snaps that they're Nancy's cousins, so the group won't be going. A few minutes later, Pearl recounts a time that Olive referred to Barney and Roo as "eagles" coming down every year for the mating season, but this makes everyone else uncomfortable. Pearl goes on to say that the things they have done and the places they have gone haven't been as fantastic as Olive told her.

In the absence of Pearl and Olive, Barney tells Roo that he met up with other cane-cutters from their job in the pub by coincidence, and asks if Roo would agree to go out with them and Johnnie Dowd. Roo is angry and wants nothing to do with Johnnie. Barney insists this year hasn't been fun anyway without Nancy, but Roo insists that he owes it to Olive to stay. When Olive and Pearl return, Barney begins pouring beers for everyone and enjoys 'glamorous night'. Few hours later, Roo is asleep on the couch after work when the others return from the bar with a heavy drinking especially, Barney. Olive comes in first, wakes Roo, and warns him that Barney brought a friend. When Roo goes to the window, he sees that the "friend" is Johnnie Dowd. Barney appears on the verandah, accompanying Johnnie and Pearl. Roo finally shakes hand with Johnnie while Barney excitedly tries to kiss Pearl. She retreats upstairs. Johnnie apologizes to Roo, and the men try to arrange all going out together. Roo finally agrees to go to the races the following day, and then leaves to shower. Barney suggests that he, Johnnie, and Roo go to the races as just the three of them, and then decides it'll be better if they take Pearl, Olive, and someone for Johnnie. Barney yells for Pearl and when she appears, asks if her young daughter,

Vera, could go with Johnnie. Johnnie seems uncomfortable and Pearl even more so. She refuses and runs upstairs.

Barney then runs outside and returns minutes later with Bubba and persuades Bubba to come to the races with Johnnie, but Johnnie insists on asking Bubba himself. Bubba tells Johnnie that she wants to go with him. She tries to explain the magic of the house and the layoff season to Johnnie, but Johnnie doesn't see it. She tells him he just won't understand. Johnnie then asks Bubba for her real name, Kathie before saying goodbye and leaving.

Bubba explains Roo that she is going with Johnnie to the races the next day. Roo becomes angry when he decides that Barney and Johnnie conspired to get him to go out with them. He yells for Barney and tells Olive to leave. Roo then shoves Barney inside and accuses him of betraying him. Barney accuses Roo of being jealous of Johnnie, but Roo takes over and accuses Barney of a number of offenses.

Olive is angry that the men are fighting over one bad season, and Barney goads Roo to tell the truth of why he left their job early. Finally, Roo admits that his back was never hurt, and Johnnie's just a better man so Roo left, and says that Barney isn't even good enough now to hold Nancy. Barney tries to throw a vase filled with dolls at Roo, but Roo intercepts and the vase shatters on the floor.

The next morning, Pearl is dressed in black again and prepared to leave. Olive calls Pearl's attention to the newly cleaned living room, free of all decorations including the dolls Roo had given her. Pearl asks when Barney will return, and tells Olive she doesn't think that Olive knows Barney at all. Pearl continues, saying that nothing in the house is how Olive had described it, and she tells Olive that she'd think the same thing if she'd look at things from adult eyes. They hear a knock and Olive lets Barney in. Pearl insists that she was never trying to be Nancy, and Barney admits that Pearl is leaving for the same reasons that Nancy did. She couldn't get what she wanted here. Olive returns to bid Pearl goodbye, and Pearl leaves.

Roo comes downstairs and remarks that the dolls are destructed. Olive says that all the decorations were in bad repair and she couldn't bear to put them all back up. She insists she can live without decorations, since she's gone the summer thus far without fun and laughter. Roo tries to explain how hard it was to shake hands with Johnnie, but Olive is still angry about the fight and how this layoff season has been so awful. Emma enters as Olive runs upstairs. She sits and tells Roo that Nancy

purposefully got out while things were still good. Roo asks Emma who is to blame for things going sour, and Emma is surprised. She tells Roo that no one is specifically to blame—they're all just getting too old for the layoff season. After arguing, Roo begins to see the sense in this. Emma points out that Barney only started lying when Roo started brushing him off, and she insists that Olive is a childish fool. As she leaves, Bubba and Barney come in from the verandah, arguing about Johnnie. Bubba insists that Johnnie honestly asked her out and asked for her real name, and says that this is her chance to recreate what she's been watching for seventeen years. She insists that she won't repeat the others' mistakes, and Roo calls her “Kathie” and gives her his blessing to go with Johnnie.

Olive returns and Roo sends Barney upstairs. Olive says that it's time to “settle up” for the past seventeen summers, which horribly offends Roo. Olive insists that the way Pearl saw things and spoke about things made her feel low and cheap. As Roo comforts her, Olive admits she didn't put the dolls back out because she was angry, and Roo tells Olive she's basically a young girl. He then tells her that he's not going back to cane-cutting again—he's planning on staying. Olive is confused, and Roo explains that only Barney is leaving—Roo wants to stay and marry Olive. Olive screams "No!" and insists that Roo go back to the cane fields. She yells at him to give her back what he took. As Emma and Barney run in, Olive leaves, sobbing. Emma tells the men to leave and not come back. Barney turns to Roo and says that they can go get jobs anywhere—they should stick together, and forget about Johnnie and the others. In a rage, Roo picks up the seventeenth doll and beats it against the piano. When the doll is shattered and ruined, he lets it drop. Barney encourages Roo to leave. They look at each other and silently acknowledge what they've lost before leaving.

To sum up, the play discusses tensions in Australian life such as betrayal of a code of mate-ship, the collapse of masculine self images built on individualism, the irreconcilable conflict between middle class goal of respectability and domesticity and the claim of working class which are made to seem the part of universal pattern in human relationships. The play also discusses the local social tensions inherent in the various relationships.

1.4.1 Check your progress

1. Where did Barney and Roo spend their lay off session for last sixteen years?

2. Who has invited Pearl as a companion for Barney?
3. Who is the next door neighbour of Olive?
4. Whom did Roo fight with?
5. Who gives Olive the Kewpi Doll?
6. Who is Knitting sweater for Barney's son?

1.5 Act wise Summary of the play *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*

1.5.1 Act I

Act I, Scene I

The play begins with one of the warm Sunday afternoons in December. We are introduced to Bubba, a young woman of twenty-two, and Pearl, an older woman. While Bubba is busy in her activity of tying ribbon onto walking stick candies, Pearl in her "good black" outfit engaged in reading a magazine, sitting on the sofa, and smoking. Pearl catches Bubba's staring at her and asks Bubba "well?" in an unfriendly manner. Bubba responds Pearl by turning back to her walking sticks. Olive from upstairs shouts Bubba about her misplaced silver earrings but soon finds them. Bubba extends smiles at Pearl but she doesn't forget to make a complaint about Olive's habit of getting easily nervous. Bubba also recalls how she and Nancy used to normal her mood by cracking jokes.

Bubba explains the main reason of Olive's habit of getting easily nervous is her worry about Pearl. In a reply Pearl with irritable tone explains that she doesn't have to fit in, because her purpose of coming here is only to make a visit. Bubba supports Olive by saying that she is 'ok' with it. Bubba feels surprised when Pearl tells her not to be bad. Bubba dislikes Pearl's calling her nasty angrily and try to convince Pearl that in fact she was just picturing the scene when Nancy used to be here. Bubba assures Pearl that neither the lay off season nor Nancy is nasty. When Olive joins Bubba and Pearl, she is in green and white dress. In the mood of curiosity she asks two of them about what they are thinking about. Bubba wanted something new for conversation therefore, she prais Olive's look. Pearl openly comments of Olive's dress as pretty but in her mind considers it as "not her taste".

Olive manages with this dress very well as she knows that there is no time to change it. Pearl disagrees Bubba's being innocent, when Olive thinks so. Pearl

announces that if her daughter Vera has spoken just like Bubba did, she would have slapped her. Olive tells how innocently she behaves with Roo and Barney as if they are her uncles. When Olive observes that Pearl's suitcases are still put besides the stairs she starts laughing at Pearl and calls her a "Cautious Kate". Pearl doesn't rely upon Olive's assurance about "him" rather on her own wants to find it out for herself. Pearl reminds Olive about a photo she had promised to share with her. Olive brings the photo from a drawer and describes that the photo was taken at an amusement park two years ago. When Pearl asks Olive about Nancy, she understands that she was a good sportsperson and Barney was found of her. Pearl dislikes the way Barney holds Nancy in the photo.

In the light of this Olive informs Pearl that Roo and Barney are cane-cutters not professors. Despite Olive's claim that Pearl hasn't met anyone as charming as Barney, Pearl confirms that Barney will never touch her like that in public. Pearl considers Nancy as a victim of Barney's charm even though there was no hope of ever marrying Barney. Bubba takes a pause and when unable to continue to explain Olive tells the story of how Bubba was jealous of gifts Roo and Barney brought especially the kewpie doll on a walking stick. Until Bubba was fifteen, Barney and Roo used to bring her kid's candy to feel happy. Olive and Bubba teach them a lesson by offering walking sticks when they arrive. Consequently, they started bringing perfume or gloves for Bubba, but Olive still gets her doll every year. Olive reminds her mother (Emma) and expects her to be at home from her community choir long ago.

Olive guesses her mother might have gone to meet and get money from Roo and Barney at the airport, before they find a taxi. Both Pearl and Olive have a discussion on Roo and Barney and compare each other's opinion. Pearl becomes curious about Barney's name. Olive informs her that his real name is Arthur and Roo's real name is Reuben, and according to Pearl it's a Biblical name. Olive informs her that she'll start hating Barney before he even arrives. Pearl reacts Olive that she will not worry about them as there is another thing to worry about i.e. her daughter Vera. She cautions that if she behaves properly then only her daughter will do so. Both Pearl and Olive talk about the difference between the descent marriage and layoff season and supports it in opposite. When Pearl has some difference in opinion with Olive, later instructs her to be either polite or leave their company. While Olive is busy in drinking, Pearl starts voicing her opinions. Olive states that both they're real men

and remember what Nancy would say about Roo and Barney: when Roo and Barney walked in, the other men would stand aside for them like they were kings.

Barney comes at the doorway, along with Emma who pretends to be angry. Pearl worries about Barney and Emma. Pearl introduce herself as “Missus Cunningham,” and offers Barney her hand clumsily. Olive claims that he should call her Pearl. Along with Barney, Olive introduces Pearl and Roo, and Pearl begins to relax a little. Barney asks about Bubba and goes towards verandah to call for her. Bubba laughs and extends greetings from her house to Barney and Roo. Barney calls Olive as his favorite barmaid, and in response explains that Pearl works at the same bar as she does. Pearl looks upset as Emma rushes in and blames Olive of stealing vinegar. In response to this Olive mentions her dissatisfaction about her mother that it was not expected she should go to pick the men up at the airport. In defense Emma tries to erase the remarks of her daughter responds but Barney cuts her off.

Olive gives Barney a telegram from Nancy. She tries to convert his attention from Nancy to Pearl. Pearl refuses to take her bags upstairs and because she’s setting a bad example for her eighteen-year-old daughter. When Barney asks Olive about Pearl she says that Pearl has principles and wants to reform him. Olive assures Barney that Pearl wants to marry and will talk to him. Barney tells Olive the incident happened with Roo. It was an awful season. Roo fired one of his regular workers, Tony Moreno, and then hired a young man named Johnnie Dowd. Due to some reasons there arise conflicts between Roo and Johnnie. Roo walked off and didn't meet up with Barney again until a week ago. Olive is surprised Barney didn't walk off with Roo, and Barney explains that things were messed up and he'd never seen Roo beings wrong before. Olive asks why Roo went to Melbourne instead of coming to her. Roo explains he has a cousin there, but Olive is angry that Roo didn't come to her. She starts crying and Roo comforts her. He insists that he won't take money from her and says he'll get a job, but says they can talk about it tomorrow. He suggests they open beer, and Olive giggles and explains that she and Pearl already started drinking. Roo and Olive start laughing, and Roo turns on the radio. They call everyone into the living room to eat, and Barney passes Roo the seventeenth doll to give to Olive. When Roo gives it to Olive, she cries out happily

Act I, Scene II:

The next day morning, Emma is cleaning up the living room and finds Roo collecting Barney's empty beer bottles from the verandah. Olive knows that Pearl disliked Barney drinking and Roo adds to it by saying that he doesn't think that Pearl will agree marrying with Barney. Olive compares the seventeenth doll with other dolls and says this doll is dressed well than the others—it's beautiful, while the others are just pretty. Olive loves dolls more than coral or butterflies. Olive proposes that Roo should come to the pub, and requests him to book her seats for the theatre. Roo gets fascinated with Emma's hearing, and Emma replies that she has to listen to the goings-on in this house to protect her. She asks if Barney is broke too, which Roo says is unlikely. Emma says she'd never think of helping Barney out, and offers Roo a loan. Roo asks about the loan amount Emma seriously says that she was thinking fifty dollars. Bubba lets herself in. Emma asks Bubba the purpose of coming to them. Bubba hands over an envelope to Roo and requests him to give it to Barney. She informs that the envelope contains photos from Nancy's wedding, and wants Roo to keep it away from Olive. Bubba says that both she and Nancy cried at wedding. Roo tries to change the subject by asking when Bubba will get married.

Roo teases that Bubba will grow up to be like Barney. Bubba shyly makes an inquiry to Roo if this layoff season is going to be the same as all the others. She feels worried in the absence of Nancy. Roo promises her it'll be just the same. Bubba hugs Roo and requests Roo to do come and visit her at work before he leaves. When Emma reminds Roo about offering of loan he denies saying that he's just as untrustworthy as Barney is. As Emma asks him about his arrangement, Roo says he's getting a job, and Emma acts surprised. Roo comments on how everyone knew Barney's knocking on Pearl's door in the night but of no use. Barney receives the envelope from Roo and looks for a moment at the photos. Barney makes certain remarks on Nancy's being crazy. He asks Roo about what he is doing today. Roo informs he's getting a job, and on the other hand Barney tells Roo that he can't work during the layoff. He offers to give Roo money, but Roo refuses. Barney concludes that because of excessive pride Roo refuses to take money, and explains that he has gone mad since his fighting with Johnnie Dowd. Their dispute ends in fighting until Roo threatens to punch Barney. Olive exposes her plan of leaving with Pearl, but before going she has convinced Pearl to speak to Barney. Olive informs Barney that she is ready to speak but in a fit of anger Barney rejects the proposal and tells Olive

to let Pearl go. Olive is more shocked not only by Barney's strange behavior but also with the news that Roo is going to look for work.

Despite Pearl's trying to convince him for speaking Barney seems somewhat uninterested, and in guilty feeling feels sorry for making a fuss outside her door. Because Barney says that Pearl must've made an impression on him of Nancy. When there was real conversation between Barney and Pearl, He realizes that Barney had any "de facto wives," and Barney claims he doesn't have wives—just kids in three states. Barney asks her to stay when Pearl looks rigid and makes to leave. Even though Barney pays “maintenance” on them, Pearl sees as no comfort. She says that she's a mother, and understands what those women went through. She says there's no excuse for that kind of behaviour.

Barney feels sorry for being helpless with the present condition of Pearl and for him a young, beautiful woman is no more than a beautiful birthday gift. With the sarcastic remark of Barney, she gets angrier and asks him a question that how can he have kids everywhere. He provides some substantial reasons for not getting married but his excuses are beyond the grasping of her understanding.

Barney goes back in his past and narrates how his father kicked him out after he came across Barney's pregnant girlfriends then Barney went to Queensland to work. He tells that he looked after their financial help of women and their babies and asked the women to decide which one got to marry him.

Pearl comes across all the criminal background of Barney and the ways he behaves with women and boasts his former partners are happily settled and married to other men.

Barney tries to build his sober image in the minds of Pearl by saying that he's not as bad as Olive claims but he lives on the mercy of luck. Pearl dislikes his calling himself “lucky”.

Barney knows from Olive that Roo going to get a job. Barney curses as Roo walks. Roo says his goodbyes to Barney and Emma. Roo tells Emma to give the steak to Barney. She returns angrily to the kitchen.

Pearl comes breathlessly back down the stairs with her hat and purse. Pearl tells Barney she's off, and asks him to take her bags upstairs—but not to jump to conclusions. Barney smiles and tries to follow her, but Pearl rushes away with Olive.

Barney watches Olive, Pearl, and Roo go and then swaggers to the suitcases and carries them upstairs.

1.5.2 Check your progress

1. When the play opens what was Bubba doing?
2. What is the name of Pearl's daughter?
3. Who calls Pearl as cautious Kate?
4. What was the profession of Roo and Barney?
5. What is the real name of Barney?
6. What is the real name of Roo?
7. By which name Pearl introduces herself to Barney?
8. Who accuses Olive of stealing vinegan?

1.5.3 Act II

Act II, Scene I

The group is assembled in the living room on New Year's Eve. Barney is writing a letter, Pearl is knitting, and Olive is playing cards with Roo. Pearl asks Barney about his relations with his daughter and family but Barney insists he has kids, not a family, and swats at a mosquito. Barney suggests they all go to the beach, but neither Pearl nor Olive are interested. He reminds Olive that in past she used to spend much time at beach no matter how much time and with whom she was accompanied with. Pearl tells Barney to drop it.

Pearl calls Barney to help her in taking the measurements the sweater sleeve she's working on. Olive asks who the sweater is for, and Pearl replies that it's for Lennie, Barney's oldest son. And soon she plans to start one for Arthur, Barney's other son. Barney corrects her, saying that they call Arthur "Chippa." Meanwhile Bubba calls on the verandah and calla Olive to see her evening dress as she had promised to show Olive. Barney mocks her as she explains that she's going to a social club dance with girls from work. Barney teases Bubba about meeting a lucky man. Bubba is curious about if anyone else is going out, and advises to go visit the Morrises.

Pearl asks who the Morrises are, but everyone else ignores her as they say goodbye to Bubba. Olive shouts that the Morrises are Nancy's cousins when Pearl inquires questionably. Barney considers Pearl as special woman because none other women have knitted him a sweater.

Pearl's critical remark confuses Barney when she says that some women don't want to knit a sweater for an "eagle". Pearl admits that she knew about it from Olive and also talks about a man in the pub who talked on and on about migratory birds, at the same time Olive had started telling Pearl about Roo and Barney. Olive compares Roo and Barney with eagles coming down for the mating season. Pearl keeps laughing and tells Roo and Barney that she had no idea what to expect with everything Olive said about them. Olive, Pearl and Barney talk about the house in Selby. Pearl admits that it wasn't bad, but she expected a palace, but Pearl remarks that the house doesn't have electricity. Olive tells Pearl not to be a liar. Pearl is stunned and says she just wanted voicing her opinion, and Olive remarks that Pearl has too many opinions.

Barney suggests Olive that they should have Emma in to play the piano so they can have a sing-along. Barney calls for Emma, who's sitting outside. He pays her money to play any tunes as she likes most and she agrees as long as there's "no muckin' about." Olive murmurs that Emma will no doubt play only her favorite songs. Emma warns that if they don't take it seriously, she'll only walk out in the middle of the sing-along.

Emma starts playing the introduction to the song by looking at Olive in a fit of anger. She becomes annoyed and plays the first note a few times and says the others to try again. After singing a few lines, Emma stops again and speaks aggressively that someone is singing flat. She stares at Pearl, who looks exceptionally irritated. Barney tries to ask her to just play and not give them all singing lessons. Olive asks Emma if maybe she's singing wrong. Emma tells how the conductor at the community choir appreciates by offering a solo every year for her birthday. There raises conflicts between Emma and Olive because of the comments passed by Olive. Roo dislikes the way Olive behave with Emma and says that singing it's the one thing she's proud of.

Roo and Barney talk over Emma's vagueness. Barney laughs and exposes his desire of joining Roo at the factory since he might face financial problems.

He tells Roo that some of the “boys” from the gang are in town. Barney tells Roo that he told the boys Roo was working but kept the secret of the place. Barney continues that the boys want to go out with Barney and Roo sometime. After knowing that the boys are with Johnnie Dowd, Roo says Barney he won't go. Barney tries to convert Roo's negative impression about Johnnie by saying that now he does not dislike Roo. On the contrary, Roo tells Barney to go without him but Barney says he won't go alone. Roo is doubtful that Barney is telling they walk out on Olive and Pearl, but Barney make a comment that he is missing fun as compare to last year without Nancy anyway. Roo blames Barney in an angry tone for his leaving but Barney says that both Olive and Pearl as well are not enjoying.

He appeals with Roo to speak to Olive about it. Roo reminds Barney that Olive doesn't go out with other men and waits for the next layoff season because the layoff is so special to her. Roo tells Barney that if his money runs out he should opt to get a job. They begin to argue again when they hear Olive and Pearl coming with trays. Roo expect that they should call Emma, but Olive says that Emma will join if her mood permits her. Roo calms Olive for her feeling sorry for being dramatic earlier. Barney expects them to drink before they start kissing. Roo and Pearl turn off the lights inside as fireworks begin going off outside. Olive feels glad that they didn't go out. Olive breaks down crying and Roo tries to comfort her. Barney stares into his beer and looks ashamed as the clock rings midnight.

Act II, Scene II

A few days later, Roo, still dressed from work, is asleep on the couch as the sound of a drunk argument comes from outside. Emma advices Olive to let Roo sleep. Olive makes a plan to escape Roo seeing Johnnie, but Roo refuses because he doesn't want Johnnie to think he's scared. Barney holds of Emma's apron and asks her loudly for a kiss. Pearl and Johnnie try to control him. Emma breaks free and runs into the house. Johnnie warns Barney that he'll be in trouble. In silence, Roo stares at Johnnie and Barney.

Johnnie and Roo meet each exchange awkward chats. Barney holds out Roo's hand to shake hands. Barney turns to kiss Pearl and she runs upstairs. For Barney's behavior Johnnie apologize Roo.

Johnnie says that the boys want to see Roo, to go to the stadium tonight. Olive tells the men that Roo has other plans for the night. When Johnnie again and again

insists Roo to join them, Olive says that Roo has other plans; Roo cuts her off and agrees to go.

Johnnie enthusiastically starts to make plans, but Roo tells Johnnie to plan with Barney and Roo moves to take shower. Olive coldly asks Johnnie if he'll stay for dinner, but Johnnie declines the invitation. Johnnie suggests that he needs to have a drink with Roo, and says he'd like to have a good relationship with him. Barney insists that Johnnie and Roo actually have a lot in common. Barney suggests that just the three of them—he, Roo, and Johnnie—go to the races tomorrow instead of going out in a big group. Barney suggests they take Pearl and Olive if Roo is not interested.

He shouts up the stairs for Pearl and asks Johnnie if he'd be interested in going out with an eighteen-year-old girl. Barney reintroduces her to Johnnie. She tells Barney that Olive has been telling her all about Johnnie. Barney likes to take Pearl and Olive with them Pearl hesitantly agrees and says she used to like the races. Barney insists that it's settled and turns to Johnnie. Pearl asks if Johnnie will be going without a date. Barney begins to convince about Pearl's daughter Vera like to go with Johnnie and others. Pearl firmly says she doesn't want Vera to join bad company. Pearl loses her self-control entirely and says that all cane cutters are "tarred with the same brush" as she Barney puts the proposal of Bubba in front of Johnnie and tells him to forget about Pearl. Barney introduces Johnnie to Bubba, and tells the whole plan to Bubba and invites Bubba to the races with Johnnie tomorrow. Barney is thrilled at his planning victory, but Johnnie sourly says that not everything is settled.

Barney unwillingly keeps watch outside the room. Johnnie tells Bubba that she doesn't need to go for race. Bubba says that Barney and Roo have never brought someone from up north to this house. Johnnie asks Bubba if she lives here. When she explains that she lives next door, Johnnie suggests that Barney asking her to the races is less proper. Bubba spends a lot of time with Roo and Barney. Johnnie talks about how he spent his time in imagining about the place and says it has developed a reputation among the boys up north.

When Johnnie understands that the information he has about the place is wrong and based on lies, he asks her to tell him the truth. She unsteadily says that it's the events that create the feeling here and it's not something she can just tell him about.

1.5.4 Check your progress

1. Who are the Morrises?
2. What is the name of Barney's son?
3. Why did Roo refuses to go out with Barney?
4. Who is called as 'Chippa'?
5. Who was insisting Olive and Barney to visit the Morrises?
6. Who suggested Pearl to send Vera along with Johnnie?
7. Who introduces Johnnie to Bubba?

1.5.5 Act III

Act III

The next morning, Pearl stands in the living room dressed in black again, waiting sadly for a taxi. Olive asks Pearl if she notices anything different about the room. The room has been clean and organized with a decoration, including all the kewpie dolls. Both Pearl and Olive have a discussion on the cleaning and tidiness. They discuss how Emma always tells her that it's a sign that something is off when a person tries to move furniture alone.

Pearl asks when Barney will be back. Olive answers that he's sure to return before evening. Pearl claims that Olive doesn't prove anything as she describes about this house. Olive dislikes Pearl's talking but Pearl says that Olive is blind to everything outside the house and outside of the layoff season. Olive is blind to her choices. She tells Olive that if she'd look at the layoff like an adult, she'd find the same thing. Olive approaches Pearl and says everything she ever said about Roo and Barney was the truth. Pearl asks if Olive is blaming her for coming instead of Nancy and Pearl says she's wasting her breath if Olive won't see the truth. Then Barney knocks on the front door. Olive goes to open the door, but Pearl stops her way because she fears that Barney may convince her to stay. Olive steps around and lets Barney in. Olive tells Barney that he's just in time to say goodbye to Pearl. Both of them greet each other quietly. Pearl asks Barney where he's been, but Barney insists that only a wife can ask that question. Barney turns to Pearl, and tells her that her black dress is the most respectable dress of her clothes. He says that he doesn't mind

her leaving, but asks if she has to look like she's going to a funeral. Angrily, Pearl shoots back that she was never trying to be a second Nancy.

Barney says Pearl is leaving for the same reason Nancy did. He says that Nancy left to get married because she couldn't get what she wanted here. When Barney wanted to take Vera to the races, she knows it won't work out. Pearl knows about all the mischief's that go on at the races.

She insists that Vera will grow up to be visibly respectable even when she's not wearing black. She asks Barney to tell her the third thing a woman needs to have. Barney says only Nancy holds the capacity of who had it—and she didn't have enough to make a relationship work.

Roo comes downstairs; He looks the room over and remarks that the dolls are gone. Annoyed, Barney says the dolls weren't broken, but she couldn't stand putting back up the few things that were in good repair.

Roo offers to get Olive new decorations, but Olive says that she likes lots of things she hasn't seen recently. She likes lots of things she hasn't seen recently, like joking and laughing. She says if she can live without the laughter, she can live without decorations. Roo reminds Olive what Barney "did to him." Olive claims that Barney just got drunk and brought someone home who Roo doesn't like. Roo struggles to say that shaking hands with Johnnie was the hardest thing he's ever done Olive asks why Roo didn't leave the conflict up north, since it seems to have little to do with the layoff season.

Olive whirls away and comes face to face with Emma. She angrily accuses Emma of eavesdropping her talking with Roo and runs upstairs. Emma sits down and seems pleased as she says that it's interesting to finally see everyone fighting, and she's only sad Nancy's not here to see it.

Roo says that Nancy got married, but Emma insists that Nancy purposefully got out while things were good. Emma reminds the very first Sunday when Nancy and Olive met Roo and Barney at the aquarium, and Nancy said that Roo and Barney were the only fish out of water. Emma says that she liked Nancy, and Roo says they all did.

Emma tells Roo to look in the mirror, and when Roo resists, asks if the youthful Johnnie was a mirage. Roo insists that he's not old; Emma's old and Tony Moreno is

old. At this, Roo turns to the mirror over the fireplace and studies his reflection, looking confused and concerned. Emma tells Roo he's not ancient yet, but he's not seventeen either. Roo, still confused, considers himself or Barney responsible for the fault. Emma tells that Barney has been slipping longer than Roo has.

Emma says that Roo will certainly still be able to earn a living, but he won't be the best anymore. Emma asks Roo why he thinks Barney lied. Roo insists that lying is natural for Barney, but Emma says that Barney only started lying when women started brushing him off.

Roo asks about Olive. Emma says that Olive is a fool. She drags out the seventeenth doll from a cupboard and says that Olive was up in the middle of the night, hugging the doll and crying her eyes out, a grown woman crying over a baby doll. Emma tosses the doll on the table and goes upstairs to Olive. Roo miserably picks up the doll and fixes its skirts. Roo hears Bubba and Barney approaching. Barney tries to grab Bubba, but Bubba pulls free.

Barney asks Bubba why she needs to talk to Olive, and Bubba explains that Olive will tell her whether it's true or not that the day at the races is canceled. Roo confirms that the races are indeed off. Bubba asks where Johnnie is staying, and says she'll go tell him herself that she can come. She threatens to wait outside the bar if Barney won't tell her. When Roo approaches her, she tells him he won't be able to talk her out of talking to Johnnie. Roo tells Bubba that she's certainly entitled to talk to Johnnie, but deserves to know why she was asked to the races in the first place. Barney says it's his fault and he was drunk, but Bubba insists that Johnnie asked her personally after sending Barney out. Roo tries to tell Bubba that Johnnie was drinking and likely doesn't even remember, and Barney asks if she'd like to make a fool of herself going down to see him. Roo asks Bubba what's the reason behind going to the races. Bubba says emotionally that Johnnie asked her, and he asked to call her by her real name, this is the closest she'll come to getting to experience for her what she's witnessed for the last seventeen years.

Both Barney and Roo try persuade Bubba but in vain. Barney tries to bring down to earth Bubba, but Roo stops him and calls Bubba to him. He takes her hand and asks seriously if she's sure she knows what she's getting herself into. Bubba says that nothing else is as good as the layoff. When Roo asks if that's true even after last

night, Bubba insists that what happened won't happen to her. Softly, Roo says that Bubba has outgrown them, and Bubba agrees.

Roo asks Barney to tell Bubba where Johnnie is, and tells Bubba to arrange to meet Johnnie. Bubba says that they don't have to worry about her, and Roo replies, "We know, Kathie." As Bubba leaves Roo and Barney decide they'll beat up Johnnie if he's not good to her. Barney continues, saying that he'll go pick grapes and they'll meet back up in the north for a fresh start at the beginning of the cane season. Roo slowly says that he's not going north this year; he's staying here. He insists the cold won't be so bad and it's time he made a change, and tells a mystified Barney that he's had too much of a good thing. Barney asks if Roo's quitting because of Bubba, which Roo denies. Roo and Barney hear an argument upstairs.

Olive, dressed for work, comes down the stairs followed by Emma. Barney says to her that they were fixing the damage.

Olive asks Barney if he's upset after losing Pearl. The three speak over each other, Olive catches that someone is leaving on Monday, and then Roo firmly sends Barney upstairs to pack. Angry, Roo says that he's not leaving; only Barney is.

He tells her it's horrible to talk about money that way. She says that Pearl made her feel that way. Roo is disgusted at this, but Olive says that she couldn't stand Pearl walking around and looking at everything, but not seeing what Olive wanted her to see. She starts crying and says that she never lied to Pearl, but Pearl didn't see any of the things Olive told her about. Roo softly tells Olive that it's silly to treat her as a woman when she's really just a young girl. He kisses her and asks if she has to go to work, but Olive insists she must.

Olive asks Roo if he and Barney could come down for the afternoon, but Roo explains that Barney is still going to the races with the boys that he'll later leave with.

When Olive asks if Roo couldn't get Barney to stay, Roo replies that Barney wouldn't take a job in the city. Olive says she doesn't blame him, and Roo tenses and asks if Olive is trying to get rid of him. She replies that it just doesn't seem right for the two men to not leave together.

Roo tells Olive that he's staying here with her. She stares at him and asks how he'll meet up with Barney for the start of the season, and Roo insists that Barney will

be fine without him, since he has Johnnie now. He says that he's not going back ever again, and takes Olive in his arms.

Roo tells Olive that he wants to marry her. Olive freezes in fear for a moment before almost shouting "No!" at Roo. Roo is shocked at her reaction and asks her what's wrong, and she says that he has to go back. Olive denied marry him.

Olive demands Roo to give her back what he's taken. Roo grabs her wrists and tells her it's all gone. Olive falls to the floor and cries that she'll kill Roo before she lets him take it. He gets on the floor with her, hits it, and says that they're going to be here for the rest of their lives. Emma and Barney run in, and ask about the mess going on. Olive doesn't entertain Emma. She looks at Roo one last time before taking her bag; balancing herself, and wandering away.

Emma turns to the men and controls the position. She says them to leave Olive alone and warns never come back as the layoffs are over for everyone by now. Emma suddenly seems older as she leaves for the kitchen.

Barney quietly turns to Roo and says that he doesn't bother about the other boys and Johnnie. He reassures Roo that the two of them can make a fresh start anywhere.

He motivates Roo that for them sky is the limit and tries to divert Roo's look away from the seventeenth doll, which sits on the piano. Roo begins to beat the doll against the piano until it's crushed and its clothes are torn. Barney pats on Roo's shoulder and cheers him to be wise. He locks eyes with Barney, and they silently admit what they've lost. They leave the house.

1.6 Major/Minor Characters

CHARACTER LIST

Olive Leech, 39-year-old barmaid, daughter to Emma and in a relationship with Roo.

Emma Leech, an old lady approaching seventy. Olive's mother, the owner of the house they spend their summers.

Bubba Ryan, 22-year-old neighbour of Olive & Emma .

Barney Ibbot, 40-year-old sugarcane farmer, Roo's best mate. A man with medium height and solid built. He looks very assertive and confident in his manners.

Roo Webber, 41-year-old sugarcane farmer, in long-standing relationship with Olive. His manners seems to be free and easy going.

Pearl Cunningham, a widow in her forties with an 18-year-old daughter who works with Olive. She is earning a living by her job of barmaid.

Johnnie Dowd, 25 year old sugarcane farmer, in Roo & Barney's team of cutters and competitor of Roo.

Analysis of the Characters

Roo Webber

Roo is a leader of sugarcane cutters in northern Australia. He's the best of the best at his job and takes great pride in this fact. Every layoff season, from December to April, he and his best friend, Barney, head south to spend their time off with Olive and Nancy . Two months before the start of the seventeenth layoff, Roo fired Tony Morena and hired a young man, Johnnie Dowd, to replace him. Johnnie was good enough that Roo felt threatened, and after a fight, Roo walked off the job. He was exceptionally hurt that Barney didn't walk off with him, and holds a grudge against Johnnie for usurping his position as ganger. When Roo and Barney arrive in Carlton, Roo is already out of money. Emma insists that Roo is trustworthy and offers him a loan, but Roo declines and decides to get a job. This is something that he seems to find distasteful, but the others find downright insulting. Despite this, Roo's relationship with Olive remains strong, affectionate, and tender. He brings her a kewpie doll every layoff as a token of his love, and she's particularly taken with the seventeenth doll. Though Roo continues to participate in the group's festivities and outings, his new job at the paint factory means the group doesn't often go out late. Like Olive, Roo sees the previous layoff seasons as magical and special, and is hurt and dismayed that Pearl doesn't see what they see. Roo places so much value in Barney's loyalty that he refuses to forgive Barney for not walking off the job with him. Roo is particularly incensed when Barney attempts to orchestrate an outing with Johnnie and some of the other boys from up north. This culminates in a fight between Roo and Barney, after which Roo realizes that he hasn't done anything wrong he's just old. This realization brings about an entire change in demeanor. Roo decides to give up his job as a cane cutter and asks Olive to marry him, something both Roo and Olive previously despised in favor of their freewheeling lifestyle.

When Olive refuses, Roo destroys the seventeenth doll and agrees to take new migrant jobs with Barney.

Olive Leech

Olive is a thirty-seven-year-old, happily employed barmaid who lives with her mother, Emma, in Carlton, Victoria. Olive looks forward to the layoff season when her lover, Roo, and Roo's friend Barney visit and spend five months vacationing away from the cane fields where they work. Every year Roo brings Olive a kewpie doll, and Olive arranges them throughout the living room. She sees them as a symbol of Roo's love for her. For the seventeenth summer, Olive invites her co-worker Pearl to take Nancy's place. Olive laments Nancy's absence regularly and also speaks disparagingly about marriage in general. When Pearl talks about how she doesn't see the charm in any aspect of the layoff season, Olive angrily silences her. As the play goes on, Olive becomes progressively more distraught that Pearl seemingly refuses to see the magic of the season, though Olive eventually comes to the understanding that a person needs to have experienced the last sixteen layoffs to truly understand the significance and the beauty. Her relationship with Roo is generally tender and caring, though Olive is very upset when Roo has to get a job. After Roo and Barney fight and break a vase, Olive spends the night tidying the living room of all the decorations, including the dolls, and doesn't redecorate when she's done. Emma tells Roo that she saw Olive sobbing in the middle of the night, cuddling the seventeenth kewpie doll, something that makes Roo understand the extent of Olive's intense immaturity. When Roo asks Olive to marry him, she's shocked, hurt, and confused, and yells for Roo to give her the seventeen summers back. Her refusal of marriage is a refusal to mature, grow up, and accept the reality that the layoff seasons as she knows them are over.

Pearl Cunningham

Pearl is one of Olive's coworkers at the pub, though she's much less content with her position than Olive is. Pearl is a widow about Olive's age with an eighteen-year-old daughter named Vera, and she hopes to marry Barney. She believes marriage will allow her to quit her job and lead a more "proper" life, as well as set a good example for Vera. Though Pearl accepts Olive's invitation to join her for the layoff season, she's skeptical of the entire arrangement: she sees the lifestyle as indecent and infinitely less desirable than marriage, and she fears that she's setting a

terrible example for her daughter. Pearl also fails to see the charm and the fun in the layoff season activities, and becomes extremely offended when Olive silences her for voicing her opinions on the matter. Though Pearl is wary of becoming involved with Barney, she does eventually agree to stay for the season and have a relationship with him. She believes Barney is desperately in need of marriage and seeks to reform him and his relationships with his children. Pearl never fully grasps the significance of the layoff season to Barney, Roo, and Olive, and when she points out how shabby something is or how much fun they didn't have, she seems not to notice when it makes the others sad. The last straw for Pearl comes when Barney asks her if Vera can accompany Johnnie Dowd to the races. This causes her to reassume what Barney terms her "protective mother" guise, call things off with Barney, and leave Emma's house before the end of the season.

Barney Ibbot

Barney is Roo's best friend. Though Olive describes him as being short, the stage directions indicate that he's only short in relation to Roo. He's about forty, beginning to gray, and has a potbelly. Until this layoff season, Barney had been in a relationship with Nancy. He's sad that Nancy married someone else, and Roo confides to Bubba that Barney may have even cried when he found out. However, Barney refuses to be tied down, and it's implied that he had (and has) a number of other women he sees. He insists to Pearl that he's not out to get all the love he can; rather, he says he just wants to give as much love as possible. Though Pearl seems to warm to the idea, she takes great offense that Barney has three children with three different women. He insists that he couldn't choose one to marry, and that he did the right thing because he paid the required child support. Throughout the play, Barney drinks heavily. His relationship with Roo, which has been inseparable in previous years, is faltering because Barney refused to walk off the job with Roo in the north. Roo sees this as the ultimate betrayal, made worse only by Barney's open admiration of Johnnie Dowd, the young man who took Roo's place as "ganger." During Roo and Barney's massive fight, Barney admits that he lied when he said that Roo hurt his back to protect Roo's pride, though Roo continues to see it as evidence of Barney's untrustworthiness. Though Barney initially decides to pick grapes with Johnnie after the fight, when Olive turns down Roo's offer of marriage, Barney reaffirms his loyalty to Roo. The two leave together.

Bubba Ryan

Bubba is a twenty-two-year-old young woman who lives next door to Emma. She's been joining in on the layoff season festivities since she was a small child and views Barney and Roo as uncles. When she was fifteen she, Nancy, and Olive forced Barney and Roo to accept that Bubba wasn't a child anymore, but though they started bringing her adult gifts like perfume, they never fully accepted that she's an adult. She views the layoff season as a magical time and desperately wants to recreate the magic for herself. Bubba sees her opportunity to do so when Barney introduces her to Johnnie Dowd, a young man he and Roo worked with up north. Johnnie asks Bubba for her real name (Kathie) and remarks that Barney, Roo, and Olive haven't accepted the fact that Bubba is an adult. Despite her admiration for Johnnie, Bubba is hurt and defensive when Johnnie refuses to see the magic of the layoff season that she's seen for the past sixteen years, and is very slow to warm to Pearl for the same reasons. However, she agrees with Barney when he suggests that she's outgrown the layoffs of the past, and it's implied that she goes out to create her own layoff season magic with Johnnie.

Emma Leech

Emma is Olive's seventy-year-old mother. She allows the layoff season shenanigans to take place at her home in Carlton, Victoria, and Olive lives with her the rest of the year. Emma is a wry, irritable old lady who's always looking to eke money out of her houseguests, Barney and Roo in particular. She loves to eavesdrop and is generally cantankerous, though she cooks for her houseguests and tidies after them. She also loves to sing, and her voice is something she's exceptionally proud of. She kindly offers to lend Roo money and tries to support him in other ways throughout the play. She enlightens Roo to the fact that he's old and implies that she thought more highly of Nancy than she does of Roo, Barney, or Olive. Emma especially doesn't think very highly of Olive, as she thinks it's silly and immature for a grownup woman to cling so tightly to the kewpie doll that Roo brings.

Johnnie Dowd

Roo hired Johnnie to replace Tony Moreno in the cane fields up north. He's a young, strong, and burly man. Roo soon found that Johnnie was stronger and faster than he was, which resulted in a fierce sense of rivalry and finally, a fight. Johnnie was made "ganger" after Roo left and for much of the play, Roo describes Johnnie as

a good-for-nothing upstart. When Johnnie appears in person, he's kinder, more sensible, and infinitely more emotionally intelligent than Roo made him out to be. He encourages Roo to shake hands and honestly wants to get on Roo's good side. When Barney tries to set Johnnie up with Bubba, Johnnie takes it into his own hands and steals Bubba's heart by asking her for her real name. Like Pearl, Johnnie is disillusioned by what he finds at the house. He finds it drab and not at all like Roo and Barney said it was.

Nancy

Nancy was one of the original four who stayed at Emma's house for the layoff season. Though she never appears in the play, she married several months before the seventeenth layoff season, the other characters mention her often. She was in a relationship with Barney and used to work at the pub with Olive. Olive, Barney, and Roo describe her as having been a lot of fun, and Olive often uses Nancy's words to tell Pearl about Roo and Barney. Emma insists that Nancy knew the layoff seasons wouldn't last forever and got out while it was still good.

1.7 Themes and Symbols

- **Youth and Growing Up**

Summer of the Seventeenth Doll is the story of four youths Roo, Olive, Barney and Nancy. Roo and Barney are skilled sugarcane cutters who spend their layoff season with Olive and Nancy in all manner of youthful activities. They have been practicing this for sixteen years but their seventeenth year is different because of two incidents Nancy married another man leaving Barney and Roo had a insulting conflict in the cane field. These changes the lives of these four friends creating darkness in the youthful atmosphere of layoff season. The play also presents the character's struggle to adapt to the basic facts of adulthood. During the seventeenth summer, Roo, Barney, and Olive work hard to maintain their sense of immaturity and youth in spite of the fact that they all are between the ages of 35 and 40. Especially, Barney and Olive expect to spend their time in going out on the town and drinking and do the activities which they used to enjoy in their early twenties. Though the characters behave like they are in twenties their bodies shown the noticeable effects of again created by Nancy.

To fill the gap Nancy is absent Olive invites Pearl who is widow. She doesn't find layoff season activities charming rather finds them immature. Olive intentionally tries to cultivate her image to seem young. Though they all try desperately to choose youth, on New Year's Eve the group quarrel over what activity to do while Bubba, the young neighbor girl goes out for dancing. It clearly shown that older generation attempt to stay youthful is failing.

The play ends with the characters unsettled about their age and failed to understand each other and achieve the goals. The symbol of disintegrating butterflies is very apt suggesting youth is no longer with Olive. Finally showing process of aging is inevitable.

- **Idealization Vs. Reality**

Instead of allowing the summers of the last sixteen years to remain past and creating new routine which fits to their adult age, Olive and Barney tried to spend their idealized layoff season. For the last sixteen years the four friends Barney, Nancy, Roo and Olive have their idealized routine of layoff season. They used to spend their layoff season at Emma's house in engaging themselves in the activities like lounging, drinking going out and enjoying sex. Their lifestyle is shallow and immature which shakes their lives in the Seventeenth Summer due to Nancy's decision of marriage to other person. To replace Nancy Pearl is added to their group. Roo's rival, Johnnie Dowd also join's because of Barney. Both Pearl and Johnnie, the outside perspective make them realize that their idealized summer is less fantastic. For last sixteen years they think this layoff seasons as 'heaven and perfect time to live'. But Nancy's decision gave them hint that the layoff season is not as idyllic as they imagined. Johnnie when heard about the stories of Kewpie dolls he recognizes the absurdity of the middle aged adult's attempt to follow youthful lifestyle. Layoff season for Roo and Barney is sad and reinforces how Roo and Barney are out of touch with reality. They cannot acknowledge the reality that Bubba, a young neighboring girl who witnessed the layoff seasons for last sixteen years is no longer younger. For them, it is essential that Bubba, remain a child in their eyes and nobody is aging. The fight between Roo and Barney is also a painful act in the play due to the failure in understanding the thin line between idealized world and reality.

- **Gender relation**

The play expresses the character's ideas of masculinity. Character of Barney, Roo and Johnnie believe in muscle power and perform backbreaking manual labor of sugarcane cutting for seven months. They enjoy with women in layoff Season. Olive's comment to Pearl that 'Roo and Barney are real men' defines her perception of masculinity. Nancy's decision to leave Barney reflects Nancy's independent choice. Nancy's marriage to other man is her refusal of Barney's masculinity. Even when Roo asks Olive for marriage Olive refuses the proposal which shows Olive's belief in individuality. Both Nancy and Olive participate in layoff season, but the season is not the same for them as it is for the male characters.

The end of the play reflects how refusal to redefine gender roles hampers everyone that is for both the genders.

Symbol of Kewpie Dolls

Kewpie Dolls were immensely popular until the mid 20th century. In every layoff season Roo gifts Olive a Kewpie Doll and Olive accepts it as a symbol of Roo's love for her. But at the end of the play it expresses Olive's immaturity for her relationship with Roo. At the end of the play when Olive denies Roo's proposal of marriage and he destroys the Seventeenth Kewpie Doll thus it symbolically destroy their youthful.

Relationship also on the other hand we can interpret that hanging dolls for Sixteen summer kept Olive away from the realities of life.

1.8 Answers to check your Progress

1.2.1

1. David Burn
2. Popular Victorian form of drama which combines both romance and realism
3. Decade 1960's
4. Katherine Prichard and Betty Roland
5. in 1908

1.4.1

1. At Olive's house

2. Olive
3. Booba
4. Johnnie
5. Roo
6. Pearl

1.5.2

1. Booba was busy trying ribbon on to Candy canes/
2. Vera
3. Olive
4. Cane cutters
5. Arthur
6. Reuben
7. Missus Cunningham
8. Emma

1.5.4

1. Nancy's Cousin
2. Lennie
3. Because of the presence of Johnnie
4. Barney's other son
5. Bubba
6. Barney
7. Barney

1.5.6

1. Because she couldn't get what she wanted with Barney
2. Pearl
3. Barney

1.9 Exercises

1. Write a detailed note on developmental stages of Australian Drama.
2. Discuss the projection of Australian experiences and characters in the first half of 21st Century Australian Drama.
3. Discuss the various themes reflected in *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*.
3. Write short notes on
 - i. Character sketch of Roo
 - ii. Character sketch of Olive
 - iii. Character sketch of Barney
 - iv. Character sketch of Pearl
 - v. Symbol of Doll in *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*.

1.10 Books for Further Reading.

Holloway Peter [ed.], *Contemporary Australian Drama*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1981

Kramer Leonie [ed.], *The Oxford History of Australian Literature*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1981.

Radic Leonard, 'The State of Play: The Revolution in the Australian Theatre since the 1960s', Penguin Books, Melbourne, 1991

Cousins Jane, 'Gender and Genre: The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll', *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media and Culture*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1987)



Unit-2

Major Trends in Canadian Fiction

The English Patient

Michael Ondaatje

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2.0 Objectives:

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- a) understand major trends in Canadian Fiction
- b) know the significance of Michael Ondaatje in Canadian fiction
- c) appreciate *The English Patient* as a postmodern novel
- d) assess the plot and its development
- e) comprehend the features of novel with reference to *The English Patient*
- f) understand major trends in Canadian fiction in the light of *The English Patient*

2.1 Section I: Major Trends in Canadian Fiction

2.1.1 Introduction

The term Canadian fiction is applied to the works written and published by the Canadian writers. In an article entitled “Canadian Literature” published on Encyclopaedia Britannica, Kathy Mezei, David M. Hayne and Kathleen Kellett-Betsos define it as: “Canadian literature, the body of written works produced by Canadians” (Web). A historical survey of Canadian literature presents various stages of development since the beginning to the present day. Earlier it was merely an “imitation or emulation of metropolitan norms” but then the Canadian writers begin to assimilate “in a desire to forge a distinctive national culture – a reconfiguration or reevaluation of that which had been considered marginal” they turned to create their own literary artefacts (Kroller 155). Initially Canada was expressed only through the records of various outside visitors like explorers and British officers which started the tradition of documentary in Canadian fiction with the emphasis on “geography, history, and arduous voyages of exploration and discovery [representing] the quest for a myth of origins and for a personal and national identity” (Mezei et al. Web). The immigrants’ experiences, nationality, identity and historical romances were some of the major issues in the next period.

The Canadian fiction in the period of transformation is juxtaposed with postmodernism, postcolonialism, multiculturalism and feminism. The primary emphasis, in the process of decolonization, is laid on the dismantling of the dominant European codes. The Canadian writers investigate new styles and techniques which

helped them in putting forth the new subject in new and Canadian style. They depict the Canadian national identities which lead them to rewrite the past and re-assess the place of Canada in the history of literature. So far, various writers tried to depict the different subjects including philosophy, feminism, psychological aspects of the life, war, education, socio-cultural issues, etc which mark major shifts in the approaches as well as phases in Canadian fiction.

2.1.2 Major Trends in Canadian Fiction

Early Canadian literature is shaped in the form of **travelogues and explorations** which has been recorded by the various visitors in a simple language depicting the heroic journeys to the unknown places. Geography, history and expeditions in search of new land dominate the literature since the beginning to 1900 which also reveal the quest for traditional myths and the search for national identity. The Canadian imagination moves around the assessment of psycho-sociological tendencies and the environmental scenarios of Canada. The earliest records of the travelogues can be cited in the form of Samuel Hearne's *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean* (1795) and John Franklin's *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea* (1823), and other writers such as Simon Fraser and Sir Alexander Mackenzie who succeeded in presenting the regional history.

The **historical romances** were also popularized during the period with an emphasis on the native folklores, mythology and gothic tales of the regional people. The works of Julia Catherine Beckwith Hart's *The Nun of Canada* (1824), William Kirby's *The Golden Dog* (1877), Rosanna Leprohon's *Secret Marrying and Secret Sorrowing* (1864), John Richardson's *The Prophecy* (1832), James De Mille's *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* (1888) and Roberts's *The Kindred of the Wild* (1902) focus on the history, myth and regional tales with an emphasis on original narrative accounts.

The modern Canadian literary period adores the traditional customs and culture of Canada between 1900 and 1960. In the early phase of modern period the novels dealing with local themes and **social realism** replaced the historical romances. The socio-political life of the region coupled with psychic exploration of farmers in sometimes satirical tone is often sketched in the works of the writers such as Lucy Maud Montgomery (*Anne of Green Gables*), Sara Jeannette Duncan (*The*

Imperialist), Ralph Connor (*The Man from Glengarry*), Stephen Leacock (*Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*), Martha Ostenso (*Wild Geese*), Frederick Philip Grove (*Settlers of the Marsh* and *Fruits of the Earth*). In the later phase of modernist novels, the focus shifted from the society to the **individual** who is trapped in the **social, moral and religious anguishes**. Set against the backdrop of the world war, the novels of the period project restless human being torn within because of love and family or because of social and religious expectations. Sinclair Ross' *As for Me and My House* (1941), W.O. Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind* (1947) Ernest Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley* (1952) Hugh MacLennan's *The Watch That Ends the Night* (1959), Ethel Wilson's *Swamp Angel* (1954), etc. are some of the popular novels dealing with the struggle of individual to find a way to live a successful life.

The period after 1960s is often considered as the postmodern period in Canadian literature which puts forth socio-cultural upheavals of the contemporary period. The Canadian literary intellectuals began to reread and rewrite Canadian history which has created a new form of **historical metafiction** in Canadian literature. They started to re-examine the historical and political events of the country with a prime focus on the issues of territory, dispossession, appropriation, and interrogation. Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage* (1984) presents history blending with contemporary issues; Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1981) focuses on the devastating effects of emigration and imprisonment during and after the World War II. Morley Callaghan's *A Time for Judas* (1983), Matt Cohen's *The Spanish Doctor* (1984), Urquhart's *The Stone Carvers* (2001), Sandra Birdsell's *The Russlander* (2001), and Austin Clarke's *The Polished Hoe* (2002) are other examples of historical metafiction.

The philosophical movements of Leninism, existentialism and decolonization during the 1960s and 70s started cultural transformation in the form of **Quite Revolution** leading the literary writers to raise the questions of French immigrants. Under the influence of postmodernist philosophy, the French Canadian writers such as Jacques Godbout (*Hail Galarneau!* and *The Night of Malcolm Hudd*) who writes in joule dialect unfolding the territorial problems of the working class community, Ducharme (*The Swallower Swallowed*) and Aquin (*Next Episode* and *Blackout*) who throw light on the effects of nihilism and terrorism upon the contemporary society, Jacques Ferron (*The Penniless Redeemer*) who parodied traditional values in the society, Godbout (*D'Amour P.Q.*) who unfolds the existential powerlessness of the

contemporary society, present the regional issues in regional language of the local people.

Another major trend that started in Canadian fiction is **psychological novel** which helped the writers to explore the state of mind. The Canadian imagination begins to investigate human thoughts, feelings and reasons in order to unravel the behavioural patterns of human psyche. The novelist like Carol Shield presents the oppressed lives of women in the novels such as *Swann* (1987), *The Stone Diaries* (1993), and *Unless* (2002) where women are trapped in psychological trauma created with the struggle of emotion and desire to find a meaning to life. The plight of immigrants have been presented by the writers such as Austin Clarke, Joy Kogawa and Rudy Wiebe who pointed out the problems faced by the migrated communities in Canadian societies. The **immigration novels** such as Kattan's *Farewell, Babylone* (1975), Etienne's *The Crucified Negro* (1974) and *By the Cliff's Edge* (2004), Emile Ollivier's *Mother Solitude* (1983), Sergio Kokis's *Funhouse* (1994) and Ying Chen's *Ingratitude* (1995) depict the feeling of alienation and sense of belongingness in other country.

One of the significant trends that emerged in Canadian fiction is the awakening of women writers which gave rise to **feminist novel**. The feeling of oppression is coupled with the realization of isolation in the male dominated society where the patriarchal control marginalizes their position in family as well as society. This feeling is expressed in the articulations of the writers such as Robert Kroetsch, Margaret Atwood, and Carol Shields who questions the code of patriarchal society which assign the marginal roles to women. Atwood's *The Handmaids Tale* (1985) presents the suppression of women, Richard Wright's *Clara Callan* (2001) questions the gender roles, Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* (1966) unfolds the predicament of women – are some of the examples of female consciousness. **Magic realism** has also been a recurrent trend in Canadian fiction popularized by the writers like Timothy Findley, Jane Urquhart, Margaret Atwood and Leon Rooke. The novels like Atwood's *The Edible Woman* and Rooke's *The Magician in Love* (1981) explore magic realism.

The development of **science fiction** is another dominant trend emerged in Canadian fiction through the hands of the writers like William Gibson, Chester Brown and Bernice Eisenstein who present the influences of technology over the modern mind. William Gibson's novels like *Neuromancer* (1984), *Count Zero*

(1986) and *Mona Lisa Overdrive* (1988) unfold the human life trapped in the technological world of computers. In addition to these trends, writing regional novels, depicting Canadian landscape, neo-Gothic articulations, near-future fiction and poet's novel have also been popularized by the Canadian literary sensibility. Thus, Canadian fiction has been shaped in various phases revealing the socio-cultural, economical and political upheavals of the contemporary society.

2.1.3 Check your progress:

- 1) *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea* is written by _____
 - a) Samuel Hearne
 - b) **John Franklin**
 - c) Rosanna Leprohon
 - d) John Richardson
- 2) _____ historical romance is written by William Kirby.
 - a) ***The Golden Dog***
 - b) *The Nun of Canada*
 - c) *The Kindred of the Wild*
 - d) *The Prophecy*
- 3) Who of the following is the author of *The Mountain and the Valley*?
 - a) Sinclair Ross
 - b) W.O. Mitchell
 - c) **Ernest Buckler**
 - d) Hugh MacLennan
- 4) *Quiet Revolution* was started in _____
 - a) 1880s & 90s
 - b) 1910s & 20s
 - c) 1930s & 40s
 - d) **1960s & 70s**
- 5) *Unless* is _____ novel
 - a) historical
 - b) social realism
 - c) feminist
 - d) **psychological**
- 6) Who of the following is science fiction writer?
 - a) **William Gibson**
 - b) Leon Rooke
 - c) Carol Shield
 - d) Austin Clarke

2.2 Section II: Michael Ondaatje: *The English Patient* – Summary and Analysis

2.2.1 Introduction

Michael Ondaatje is the prominent Canadian writer in English who has marked the world with his innovative ways and liberating views in a spectacular descriptive prose style. He was born on 12th September, 1943 in Ceylon now Colombo in Sri Lanka. After separation of his parents, when he was an infant, he lived with the relatives and educated at S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia in Colombo. In 1954, he moved to England to live with his mother where he attended Dulwich College and then, in 1962 attended Montreal at Quebec. However, at the age of eighteen, he migrated to Canada and joined Bishop's University in Lennoxville, Quebec, for the next three years where he met the poet D. G. Jones; and then completed his graduation in Arts from the University of Toronto in 1965. He completed his post-graduation in 1967 from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.

Ondaatje began his career in teaching English at University of Western Ontario in London; but, in 1971, left the job in order to pursue Ph. D. and joined Glendon College in York University, where he taught English literature. He began his literary career at the age of 24 with the publication of a collection of poems entitled *The Dainty Monsters* in 1967. However, his early poems – Social Call, The Love Story, In Search of Happiness – appeared in *The Mitre* were published in 1962. Some of his poetry collections include *The Man with Seven Toes* (1969), *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid: Left-Handed Poems* (1970), *Rat Jelly* (1973), *Elimination Dance* (1978), *There's a Trick with a Knife I'm Learning to Do: Poems 1963-1978* (1979), *Secular Love* (1984), *All along the Mazinaw: Two Poems* (1986), *Two Poems, Woodland Pattern* (1986), *The Cinnamon Peeler: Selected Poems* (1989), *Handwriting* (1998), and *The Story* (2006).

Ondaatje published his first novel *Coming Through Slaughter* in 1976, where he fictionalizes the history of Charles Buddy Bolden, a character from the folklores. Published in 1987, his next novel *In the Skin of a Lion* deals with lives of the immigrated people who have put their hands in the development of Toronto. In 1992, he published *The English Patient*, where he unfolds the lives of the four characters through their memories in the abandoned villa which helped to rediscover the meaning to their lives. In *Anil's Ghost* (2000), he projects the horrors and traumas of

the South Asian Civil War through the life of Anil Tissera, who investigates the series of political murders. Appeared in 2007, *Divisadero* is divided in two sections – the first projecting the lives of a man in farm who adopts the child; the second reveals Anna’s investigations in the life of European writer Lucien Segura. The novel *The Cat’s Table* (2011) deals with the life of eleven years old boy called Michael who undertakes the journey of three-weeks through a large ship. Ondaatje’s last novel *Warlight* (2018) is published recently and deals with the life of a fourteen years boy Nathaniel who adventures the series of events after his parents left him with his sister to Singapore.

Thus, Ondaatje is the significant writer in the Canadian literary world whose fiction inter-fuse prose and poetry together in order to express the traumas and tensions of life. The literary artefacts he has created lead him to win several awards and recognitions including the Governor General’s Award for *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, the Giller Prize and the Prix Médicis for *Anil’s Ghost*, the Booker Prize for *The English Patient*. He is honoured with the highest order The Order of Canada and Shri Lanaka Ratna.

The novel *The English Patient* is the most critically acclaimed work which won Booker McConnell Prize in 1992 revealing Ondaatje as a skilled draughtsman presenting the historical records with accuracy and articulating them with fragmented narrative techniques taking back and forth of the events. Set at the backdrop of World War II, the novel presents the journey of four characters from the self-destruction to rediscovering the meaning to their lives. Initially, though they are alive, they just live through the memories only to find that the present is terrific and unworthy to live a meaningful life; but in the course of time, they learn from each other and identify the opportunities rooted in future.

2.2.2 List of Characters:

1. The English Patient:
 - one of the four major characters in the novel
 - burned in plane crash and survived by Bedouins
 - reveals his story through his memories
 - one of the desert explorers

- in love with Katharine, the wife of Geoffrey Clifton
- could not save Katharine from the plane crash
- arrested by the army but disappeared from their track
- finally appears as the Hungarian spy Count Ladislaus de Almásy who worked for Germans

2. Hana

- a nurse in abandoned villa
- takes care of the English patient
- reading books is only pass-time for her
- does not respond to the feelings of Caravaggio
- falls in love with Kip
- feels happy in the company of Kip, who brings her back to life
- finally reveals the reason of her despair

3. Kip:

- his real name is Kirpal Singh
- an Indian Sikh working as a sapper in English army
- defuses the bombs near villa
- in love with Hana
- feels Hana as his responsibility
- befriends Caravaggio even he is the reason of love triangle
- comfortable with the English patient
- reveals the reason of his coldness
- finally abandons Hana and sets himself as a doctor

4. Caravaggio:

- professionally thief but plays significant role in the war
- works for English army

- admitted in the hospital but does not speak
 - in love with Hana and rushes to villa when listens about her
 - tries to convince Hana but fails
 - finds Kip as a hurdle in his love story
 - pushes the English patient to confess that he is Almasy
5. Hardy:
- a sapper and companion of Kip
 - gives Kip the feeling of being human
 - reaches to villa with Kip but then leaves to other places
 - dies in the explosion
6. Geoffrey Clifton:
- joins the English patient's expedition to find the lost Oasis Zerzura
 - takes his wife Katharine to the expedition
 - a pilot, messenger and reconnaissance for the explorers
 - aristocrat, protective and appreciates his wife
 - discovers the affair of his wife with the English patient
 - plans the suicide-murder plane crash
 - later exposed as a part of British Intelligence
7. Katharine:
- wife of Geoffrey Clifton
 - fond of reading and getting knowledge about new things
 - falls in love with the English patient
 - finds difficulties in love course
 - could not dare to talk about her love with her husband
 - breaks-up her affair with the English patient
 - severely wounded in plane crash

- dies in desert
8. Lord Suffolk:
- a gentleman, mentor of Kip
 - leader of bomb-defusing sappers in British Army
 - teaches Kip the English customs
 - dies while defusing a 250 kilogram bomb
9. Miss Morden:
- a secretary of Lord Suffolk
 - brilliant and a splendid judge of character
 - Kip liked her
 - dies in the bomb explosion which Lord Suffolk tried to defuse
10. Mr. Fred Harts:
- a sapper working under Lord Suffolk
 - killed in bomb explosion Lord Suffolk attempted to dismantle
11. Madox:
- a member of group of explorers and friend of the English patient
 - warns the English patient to remain away from Katharine
 - commits suicide when finds the support of Church to war
12. Patrick
- father of Hana and friend of Caravaggio
 - Hana loves him so much
 - joined war
 - wounded and burned in the war
 - the army left him in desert where he dies
13. Clara:
- step-mother of Hana

- informs Hana about the death of her father
- in the end of novel, Hana writes letter to her exposing the guilt she felt after the death of her father

14. Bell:

- one of the explorers and the group member of Almasy

15. Ranuccio Tommasoni:

- officer in German Army
- in-charge of the operation when the thumbs of Caravaggio are cut

2.2.3 Summary:

The first chapter of the novel, called ‘Villa,’ opens in a garden in front of a hospital, where a nurse called Hana realizes sudden changes in atmosphere and rushes back to the hospital. She goes in one of the rooms, where her burned patient is laid on the bed. She washes his burned body in every four days, nurses it with calamine and peels plum for him. She has been nursing his black-purple wounded body for the last few months and is aware about its burns so much that, now, she thinks him as if her despairing saint. She reads various books to him when she finds him restless at the night and also moves in his bed sometimes in order to warm his body whenever he feels cold. He tells her that he was burned in plane crash and was saved by the Bedouins – the nomadic who have seen numbers of plane crashes from the beginning of World War II in 1939; but, they have, perhaps, seen him burning yet only alive man in the deserts. They carried him across the deserts and saved his life; but he lost his memory and knows nothing except he was English. He remembers how he was saved by the Bedouins and especially a man who places mask of herbs and oiled clothes on burns every day after the careful examination of his body. He also remembers how the Bedouins tied his eyes in order to restore his senses of touch, hear and smell. He was healed with the silence he experienced day and night frequently listening to the foot-steps of the people and rarely opening his mouth to sallow soft dates the man used to chew for him. When he was admitted later in the hospital in Pisa, he felt the same man standing besides his bed chewing soft dates.

The hospital is, in fact, a nunnery called Villa San Girolamo in the town, which was besieged by German Army at the end of World War II. When the German Army

left the town, the Allies seized the German bastion and turned Villa San Girolamo into a hospital where they can treat the wounded soldiers; and another villa called Villa Medici into a general cottage. After the victory of Allied, the town was abandoned by the army, which then moved to the south – a safer place to live. The other nurses and patients in the hospital moved with the army to the south, but Hana determined to live in the villa with her English patient. She has decided to leave the job of nursing other patients in war, and resolved to take care of only the burned patient. She has only been remained behind with the burned English patient in that cold stone villa where fewer rooms are left to use and most of them are inaccessible and sealed for safety as they have been mined by the German Army. She chooses various rooms as per the light, wind and temperature she needs to sleep in.

Hana is twenty years young girl, but unaware about her own safety. Though the town is frequently visited by the burglars, she feels safe in the villa. The six feet crucifix, which she takes with her as a scarecrow, gives her the feeling of being safe. She used to work in the garden where she has planted orchard, which now provides sufficient vegetables for both of them. In addition to this, she occasionally sells soaps and sheets left behind by army in the hospital to a man in town in exchange of meat and beans from him. Other than this, reading books is the only means to pass the time for her. She goes in the library which is mined with bombs and is sealed for safety to pick up the books. She is aware about the dangers of entering in the library but takes it as a private game, where she walks forward and backward in her own foot-steps. This time she collects the book called *The Last of the Mohicans* and walks out of the library playing her private game and then closes the door and replaces the seal of warning. She finds that some of the sections of the book are missing and compares it with the villa as some of the rooms in it are prohibited to enter. She also realizes that some of the pages in book are joined together, which she feels as a discovery like Robinson Crusoe, who found a drowned book entitled *Narrative of 1757* illustrated by N. C. Wyeth. She identifies herself with the characters mentioned in the book and moves with their lives.

Hana finds a copy of *The Histories* by Herodotus which lies on a small table besides the English patient's bed. He brought this book with him through the fire. He has added the new pages from other books with the information he finds useful or he has recorded his own observations about various deserts, the permanent or continuously changing winds, or even the secret winds of deserts which has an

ability to wipe out everything including humanity. Hana begins to read the book, but is soon distracted by the patients' eye on her. He tells her about Bedouins, who saved him from the fire. They have been waiting for him to recover from his burns; and when they removed the mask of oasis reeds knitted together on his face, he feels that he bears a grass and remembers his favourite grass garden at Kew.

The Bedouins supposed that the English patient is useful for them as he knows about the places and has purposefully crashed his plane in desert. He has the information about seas, ability to identify the unknown places in maps and customs of different tribes scattered in various places; therefore he was aware about the traditions of Bedouins. He walked with them in the darkness for the next four or five days and finally reached to canyon, where he found the museum of weapons from different countries and from different periods. He then gives them his knowledge about the mechanics of the guns, showed how to fire a gun and drew some maps for them.

The second chapter, which is entitled as 'In Near Ruins,' begins with the introduction of a new man admitted in the military hospital in Rome. His hands have been bandaged for the last four months; and he has not uttered even a single word except his serial number to the doctors, which reveals his identity as a member of Allies and not a part of German Army. The marks on his body place him among the war heroes, who expect silence after the war. He hears the name of Hana while he was passing by a group of doctors talking about a nurse and patient, and breaks his silence to know more about her. The doctor report him that Hana is living with the English patient in the old nunnery at the hills to the north of Florence, which was converted into a hospital by the Allies. They also inform him that Hana is probably in partial shell shock and refused to leave the hospital for the sake of the patient, who can be transferred to the south but, as she believes, cannot be saved while relocating to another place. The man immediately leaves to Florence, walks twenty miles to north and reaches to the Villa.

His arrival trembles Hana as she knows the man as David Caravaggio, who then occupies one of the rooms and makes himself comfortable. Next day Caravaggio talks with Hana, who tells him to do not persuade her to leave the place; and if he intends to live there, they will need more food. She has enough vegetables and beans, but she will need chicken to satisfy them three. However, he says that he has lost his nerves and killing chicken reminds him the way Germans had chopped his hands. He

tells her that he used to work for Allies, who sent him to German function in order to steal the documents, where a German officer's mistress called Anna took his photographs in the party. He stalked in Anna's room at night while she was having a sex; she saw him there, but he mimed her to remain silent otherwise he will kill her and managed to take away the camera.

Caravaggio recalls the past days and his friendship with Hana's father. He frequently visited her in Toronto before the war, but now she is in love with the dying English patient. He tries to make her aware that she is wasting her life for a ghost. She narrates how her father joined war and how she became a nurse. In her childhood, Caravaggio taught her number of things including how to perform somersaults. Then she was admitted to Women's College Hospital in 1943 where she was trained as a nurse. During the Sicilian attack, she was sent abroad to take care of wounded soldiers, where she worked day and night. She has cut her hairs and not even seen herself in the mirror; all her feelings became cold and she begins to behave harshly with the patients. She has even broken the laws of hospital and taken the tennis shoes of one dead patient, which she still uses. When the war moved to north, she thought that her war is over and determined to do not move with rest of the people. She decided to stay behind with the burned patient whose burned bones have become fragile and who cannot be moved anywhere else. She has replaced her uniform with the brown frock to keep her away from the memories of war and even looked at her own reflection in order to find herself.

Caravaggio walks with Hana in the garden where, while changing the bandage of his hands, she finds that his both thumbs have been cut off. He tells her that he was caught by the Germans while jumping from Anna's window, although it was not her fault. Ranuccio Tommasoni was the in charge who called the nurse to cut off his thumbs. The German's tortured him until they listened bombing outside signalling Allies arrival. It reminds Hana that she thought Caravaggio as Scarlet Pimpernel. As they return in the Villa, they hear the yelling of English patient, who is shouting as a dog entered in his room.

The English patient tells Hana that he guesses the room belonged to Polizano in about 1483, which takes her in another period. She is pleased with the descriptions of the period. He further reads the great maps for her from the book he has brought with him from the fire. At the back blank pages of the book *The Last of the Mohicans*, Hana writes how she always love Caravaggio and how he cared her; and then

concealed the book on the shelf. Afterwards, she walks to the library, where she begins to play piano. She is first time playing a song on piano since her stay alone in the last three months. While playing a song taught by her mother, she notices two men with wet guns in the lightening flash. She finds that they are soldiers and one of them is Sikh, but she continues to play until she finishes the song.

Third chapter named as ‘Sometimes a Fire’ opens with the description of last mediaeval war fought in Italy in 1943 and 1944, where German army destroyed everything with the orders of Field Marshal Kesselring. Mediaeval scholars on an average of sixty years old belonged to Oxford colleges were called to Umbria in order to talk about art in them. The English army wanders to these numbers of places along with the sappers. The young Sikh is one of those sappers, who have crossed the rivers as the bridges on them are destroyed during the war. Now, he has reached to the Villa with another sapper called Hardy, where he sets up a tent in the far reaches of the garden. Initially, he does not enter in the Villa; instead he walks past to dismantle the mines around. After finishing his job, he bathes in the garden and eventually is seen by Hana, who is attracted towards him.

When Hardy leaves for other places in the town, the Sikh remains near the Villa. His presence makes Caravaggio irritating as he begins to follow Caravaggio, which is, in fact, his habit developed during the war. He has reached to Villa on the stormy night because of Hana’s piano playing, which he thought may be a pencil mine within the musical instrument. The army usually left such mines attaching to the taps, spines of books and fruit trees so that the owners – when they return – may be destroyed. Hana watches him working in the garden defusing the wires which shows her love for his physicality and innate sensuality.

Now-a-days, Caravaggio spends most of his afternoons in the library as books have become mystical creatures for him. He finds there Hana asleep and wakes her for morphine, who then throws light on some more events of past in her life. She tells that she was pregnant last year but had an abortion when she heard about her father’s death. She was in hospital at Italy when she courted a man who died in war. The death of her lover, father and child, and her work in the hospital between the wounded soldiers made her to live for death. Then she met the burned English patient – the event that leads her to separate herself from the talks of other nurses and deaths.

After a week's stay of the Sikh with Hana and Caravaggio, his name is for the first time revealed as Kirpal Singh. He has also been nicknamed as Kip since his first bomb disposal report in England when the officer said him kipper grease for he was covered with butter at that time. Hana feels that Kip may not like the English patient and tries to keep them separate. However, she is pleased to find kip one day taking with the English patient about bombs and the region of Tuscany. Sometimes she thinks about her father Patrick and the conversation between them when they skip some of the syllables out of shyness. She is aware about the fact that her step-mother Clara and Caravaggio gave her the exposure of real world.

The books such as Tacitus' *Annals* which Hana reads for the English patient open with an author's assurance of order whereas the novels such as Kipling's *Kim* or Fabrizio's *The Charterhouse of Parma* commence with hesitation or chaos. She feels as if Kip has been appeared out of *Kim* as she was reading the book before he came there. She also finds the section of King David from the Bible glued in the notebook of the patient, who is described as old and stricken in years. In the north of Villa, Kip discovers a large mine with much complexity where all the wires were in black colour. Hana helps him to cut the right wire and dismantle the bomb; however it has become an intense experience for him which is in a way nightmare for him. She tries to make him comfortable; but he is annoyed with her presence while defusing the bomb as he now begins to feel for her.

After the incident, Caravaggio finds a gramophone and tells Hana that he will teach a dance to her. He calls Hana as dear worm – the name which her father uses to call her – and begins the lesson; meanwhile Kip smells cordite and leaves immediately to the place of explosion only to find the dead body of his second-in-command Hardy. Here in the Villa, Hana begins to think about Kim and the way he is comfortable with the English patient, who is like his mentor Lord Suffolk. She identifies herself with the young boy in *Kim* and Kip as the officer Creighton. After burying Hardy, Kip returns to the Villa and finds that Hana is still awake while others two are asleep. He wishes to touch her, but initially could not dare. He just wanted to make her feel as he has been angry earlier in the afternoon on her for being involving in defusing bomb without caring for her life. Finally he cuts the hearing aid of the patient and then puts hand on the shoulder of Hana.

Caravaggio tries to find out whether Hana and Kip love one another by separately talking to them. He asks Kip whether he will love Hana if he finds her

intellectually inferior than him; and he answers that Hana is in love with the English patient because he knows more and his words can seduce anyone. Then he talks with Hana and advises her to think about Kip rather than the English patient who is on his death bed. He intends to take her home and out of Dodge City. However, she is less affected by the words of Caravaggio. After Caravaggio and the English patient are asleep, she skips to the tent of Kip at two or three in the morning and sleeps with him.

The fourth chapter entitled as ‘South Cairo 1930-1938’ opens with the silence of the Western world about the deserts, especially after the writings of Herodotus in 425 B.C. till the twentieth century. In 1920, National Geographical Society conducted some lectures at Kensington Gore in London dealing with deserts after the postscript history on this pocket earth. However, in 1939, the expeditions again began making the Libyan Desert as the theatres of war. The English patient tells Hana that he was the part of expedition in 1930, which aimed to search the lost oasis Zerzura in Gilf Kebr, which is the part of Libyan Desert. In the expedition, his group faced a horrible sandstorm that swept everything including the food and animal they had taken for their survival in the desert. However, they kept moving until they came across a desert town El Taj, where the English patient found the chances of survival.

The group of English patient continued their expedition until he met Geoffrey Clifton in 1936, who joined them with his wife Katharine making their expedition much easier with his plane. The introduction of Katharine created tension among the group members – Bell, Almasy and Madox – but soon the English patient fell in love of her voice when she recited a poem. A few months later, he danced with her in Cairo taking him more closer and leading him to fall in love with her.

Chapter five entitled as ‘Katharine’ opens with Katharine’s dream in which she saw the English patient is angry on her for being close to him and woke up screaming. When he met her later, she talked him with lofty intellectualism revealing her sexual desires for him. She madly loves him and wanted more erotic pleasures leading to frequent quarrels and wounds given to him. She even expected that her husband should be revealed about their affair, but never dared to tell him. Her frustrations led her to physically assault the English patient, who found himself unable to live without her. Finally she decided to break up with the English patient before her husband discovers their affair.

In the sixth chapter, which is named as 'A Buried Plane,' Hana injects morphine to the English patient, who continues his memories of 1936 in Cairo, where he was dominated by the memories of Katharine. He asked Madox the name of the hollow at the base of woman's neck who advised him to do not follow Katharine. The memories of the English patient creates doubts in the minds of Caravaggio, who tells Hana that he thinks the English patient as Count Ladislaus de Almasy – a Hungarian working for the Germans – the great explorer in 1930, who went on in search of lost oasis Zerzura. In the war, he guided to German spies and helped them to find Cairo. Hana does not agree with Caravaggio; therefore, he gives the instance of the three interesting names – Cicero, Zarzura and Delilah – out of eight the English patient has suggested to give the villa dog. According to him, Cicero was used as a code name for spy and Zerzura was more complicated. Almasy helped Eppler to travel from Tripoli to Cairo; he carried Du Maurier's *Rebecca* as a code book with him. However, he was arrested with the help of Samson that relates him to Delilah. Caravaggio wants to give Brompton – the cocktail of morphine and alcohol – to the English patient so that he could speak truth, but Hana rejects his advice as the war is over now and it does not matter for her whether the patient is English or not.

Caravaggio manages to inject Brompton to the English patient who begins to speak about the events in his life before plane crash. The English patient says that in 1943, he was in Gilf Kebir, when his truck was blasted by the army, so he walked for Uweinat, where Madox buried a plane in the desert. He searched the place for the four nights and found the plane near Ain Dua, where three years earlier Geoffrey planed the plane crash to murder Katharine. Geoffrey died in crash, Katharine was seriously wounded but Almasy remained safe, who then took Katharine to the Cave of Swimmers. She was unable to walk therefore he left her there and went out for help, but could not return to the place again. Three years later he found the body where he has left her, approached her naked and made love to her body and then kept her in plane, which was set to fire because of oil leakage. He found the body falling down the plane and slipped into the parachute, where the body was kept, as it was impossible for him to live without her; however, the parachute was also set to the fire when he was coming down.

Hana enters in the English patient's room and finds that he is talking with Kip. He tells Hana that they both are facing the same situation as they are born somewhere else and living at other places fighting to get back or away from the life.

He further tells that he knows Kip's teacher Lord Suffolk and his secretary Miss Morden. Hana realizes that Kip is also emotionally torn like her.

Chapter seven 'In Situ' begins with the familial background of Kip, who is second child in Sikh family living in Westbury, England. As per the tradition in the family, the elder son joins army, the second son becomes a doctor and the younger son starts his own business. However, as the war outbreaks, Kip joined engineer unit of Sikh regiment who was assigned to dismantle mines. He began to work under Lord Suffolk, who not only trained him in defusing bomb, but also taught him the customs and cultures of English people. However, he experienced a painful moment in Erith, when his mentor Lord Suffolk along with Miss Morden and some other group members were killed while he was defusing a 250 kilogram bomb. He suppressed his emotions and went alone to defuse second bomb mined half mile away from the place of incident – the event made him popular and he was offered the place of leader, which he eventually rejected and fled to Italy in order to be out of site of others.

Kip describes the mission assigned to his squad – of twelve men – under the leadership of Lord Suffolk in September 1940 at Blitz, where 2500 bombs were mined. He then details how his mentor has been killed with new invention in the bombs and how he has developed his knowledge about it.

Kip informs Hana about his family and especially about his elder brother, who had been put into a jail for refusing to join army. His brother always behaved aggressively and opposed everything he feels against him; and, on the other hand, Kip is more silent compared to his brother.

Chapter eight, which is named as 'The Holy Forest,' focuses on the development in the relationships between Kip, Hana and Caravaggio. Kip presents a ladybird to Hana which she touches to the feet of the English patient and then moves through his body. Here in the library, Caravaggio accidentally nudges the fuse box, which Kip grabs before it falls off the counter and prevents explosion. The incident terrifies Caravaggio leading him to feel that he owes his life to Kip and driving Kip to remember earlier event where he defused a leaked Esau bomb with the help of Hardy.

Kip spends most of the time with the English patient who reminds him of a fir tree in the garden of Lord Suffolk. After the dinner, Hana goes in the library where

she lays on a couch while Kip is waiting for her there. Caravaggio is also there, who pretends to be asleep and is aware of Hana lying on the couch. After a while, he walks towards her and extends his arm, but is grabbed by Kip leading him to leave the room. When Caravaggio leaves the room, Hana and Kip have a sex in library. It is also described that they also sleep together for a month without having a sex, which leads Kip to remember how he scratches his ayah after the death of his mother.

Entitled as ‘The Cave of Swimmers,’ chapter nine reveals the love story of the English patient before the plane crash. He saw Katharine when she unexpectedly joined the group of explorers with her husband Geoffrey Clifton and he was attracted towards her bony knees in khaki shorts. When she returned from Cairo after a month, she began to read voraciously everything about the deserts. She was fifteen years younger than him, but to his surprise, she was inclined to acquire knowledge. He gave her the copy of Herodotus’ *The Histories*, which she reads in the party arranged by Geoffrey after the expedition. She is fascinated with the story of King Candaules marriage with a woman having exceptional beauty which he often describes to Gyges and even offers him to see her naked eventually caught by the queen while leaving the room. He reveals her the plot arranged by Candaules. She gave him choice that either he should kill Candaules and usurp the kingdom or else sacrifice his life. So he killed Candaules and took over the kingdom and the queen. Katharine finished by the story and looked at the English patient, who since then became very formal in his behaviour with her until she asked him one day to ravish her and they became lovers.

Geoffrey was unaware about the affair, but Madox warned the English patient to remain away from Katharine. The English patient also tells that he always used to carry the copy of Herodotus and Madox carried Anna Karenina. In 1939, Madox returned to England, where he heard a sermon in honour of war and killed himself. The English patient further tells how Katharine returned to her husband. He belonged to an aristocratic family and a huge circle of friends; and though they tried to hide their affair from Geoffrey, his family members would discover it, hence they decided to break away.

As Caravaggio injects more morphine to the English patient, he begins to talk about Almasy and Katharine, but does not confess that he is Almasy which confuses Caravaggio. He tries to ask for clarification, but the English patient continues with his story where he reveals that he left the Cave of Swimmers for help and walked three days without having anything only to find that he is arrested in El Taj. He told

them that his wife is injured but they did not believe in him and put him behind bars. Caravaggio asks whether he has killed Katharine and he says that Geoffrey was the British Intelligence. Caravaggio tells him that the British Intelligence knew about the affair between Almasy and Katharine before Geoffrey discovered it and after the death of Geoffrey, the British Intelligence followed the English patient and captured him at El Taj. Caravaggio was also the part of British Intelligence who knew that Almasy was supposed as a dangerous spy, who was on their track until 1942, but then suddenly he disappeared from the hospital in Cairo. The English patient says that he was not aware about it.

In chapter ten, which is named as 'August,' Hana asks Caravaggio whether the English patient is Almasy and he replies that he is fine. Then Kip and Caravaggio celebrates the 21st birthday of Hana and Kip prepares a meal for her. He also tries to learn more about Hana, who just intends him to talk about present. She even sings a song called Marseillaise; and Caravaggio remembers that she has sung the same song when she was 16 years old, but now there is a considerable difference in her singing as her voice appears of a tired traveller.

Kip remembers the incident in Italy on October 1943, when the German army mined bombs in the Naples and he was sent in the squad of 12 sappers to defuse the bombs. The bombs were mined brilliantly with the links to the electrical wires which will turn the city into the flames when the power of the city is turned on at 2.00 am. They have finished the work at 1.00 am and then aborted from the place but they were not safe until they saw light in the city.

In the end of the novel and to the August day, Hana sees Kip in the garden with his earphone and radio when he suddenly hears something. He screams and sinks on his knees, then rushes to his tent, returns with his riffle and runs towards the villa. He appears in the room of the English patient and begins to weep; then informs him that the Allies has exploded Japan's Hiroshima and Nagasaki which is the result of their Western wisdom. He points the gun to kill the English patient who is the representative of the Western world but is unable to do so. He leaves them and travels on his motorbike to the south, but is surprisingly skids and falls into the water.

In the final section of the novel, Kip has become a doctor having a wife and two children in India. His wife works in a garden which reminds him of Hana, who is

now thirty four years old and who always sent him letters but as he never replied, she stopped to write him.

2.2.4 Plot Analysis:

The initial exposition of the novel *The English Patient* places Michael Ondaatje among the finest novelists, who have unfolded the sensuous, mysterious and rhapsodic world with philosophical flavours. The surrealistic note and the impressionistic scenes overcome the beginning absence of identities of main characters provoking the readers to engage themselves in the fragments of the memories of English patient. The plot of the novel is divided into ten chapters, each having a separate title which ultimately relates to the places they describe and the memories related with it. The first chapter entitled ‘Villa’ opens with a twenty years old nurse called Hana who has determined to stay in the Italian villa called Villa San Girolamo, even after other nurses and patients moved to the south which is a safer location. Her self-destructive motives are clearly revealed through her behaviour as she does not think about her safety in the abandoned town, which has become the centre of burglars’ frequent invasions and as she prefers to live in villa, which is mined with bombs. Another thing which reveals her self-destructive intention is her decision to nurse the burned patient who is destined to die and there are no better opportunities of happy life forever with him.

The narratives of the English patient present the imagery of his life vividly. The incident of plane crash marks the rising action in the development of plot, which presents the image of a man on fire coming down with a collapsing plane. English patient’s journey with nomadic reveals Ondaatje’s poetic discerns which are further coupled with his philosophical perceptions depicted through the use of herbs for recovering a person almost died with the burns – showing his black body and purple bones. The English patient lives in his memories disclosed through the stories of his life which he exposes to the nurse. On the other hand, Hana tries to live in her own fantasy and through the people she reads in the books she finds in the library.

The Bedouins sketched in the novels appear to be non-human creatures as there is no woman in the tribe, which raise the question of their next generation and the way they live including celebrating a gun-fire. They have survived the burning man from the crash and tried to heal his burns with the herbs and oiled clothes. However, their motive behind saving a man remains unclear until they carry him in the canyon,

where they disclose the huge storage of weapons made in different nations in various periods and asks him to share his knowledge about the mechanics of guns and identification of places.

The setting of the first chapter also provides a significant ground as the villa is reminiscent of the World War II. The description of the sealed rooms, variations in temperature, light and wind in the rooms available, the dead ends or open spaces at the end of the corridors, the puzzle game Hana plays while going in and out of the library present the image of haunted house.

The second chapter entitled 'In Near Ruins' is set in Rome at the Allies military hospital, where a man is admitted from the last four months. His identity is not revealed except his serial number to the doctors and until the next couple of pages when he meets Hana in the villa. In fact, the name of Hana is also first time referred here in the conversation between her and Caravaggio. The records of her self-destructive motives continues through the observations of Caravaggio, who comments that she is chained to a dying man, which is, in reality, her own spiritual death. The passive approach towards life is the gift of her service as a nurse, where she learned not to mention the names of patients but calls them as buddy, negligence towards health, continuous hunger, coldness in feelings and passions; even she has neglected her own face and not seen in the mirror for the months as if she has learned that death is inevitable and will follow her soon after the death of her father in war.

The opening pages of the second chapter expose the similar nature of David Caravaggio, who has not spoken even a single word except his serial number to the doctors or anyone else in the hospital and confined himself to the grey light of the hospital as if he is also waiting for a death. It is only when he listens the name of Hana, he finds the ray of hopes and speaks with the doctors so that he can know whereabouts of her. When he meets her, he realizes that she is inclined to die with the English patient; and tries to convince her emotionally so that she may come out of her madness finally meeting with despair.

The horrific situation after the war is exposed through the description of doctors soon followed by the journey of Caravaggio and the terrors of war are experienced through the story of Caravaggio who was captured by the Germans. The mentioning of chicken reminds him his misfortunes when a nurse was brought to chop his hands which still affects his nerves and makes him paralysed even though somewhat he has

been physically recovered. He is survived only because the German Army has to leave the place. The effects of war are seen with the references to shot dead and half eaten horses, rushes of people at railway stations, people hanged on the bridges, dead cattle, the odour of the dead, etc.

Thus, the second chapter ends with the arrival of two soldiers while it is raining outside with thunder and lightning and while Hana is playing a song taught by her mother for the first time in her last three months alone stay. She not only accepts the soldiers but also welcomes them in the villa as she prepares food with them in the kitchen, which is, in fact, an act of accepting a life in the ruins.

The third chapter which is entitled as 'Sometimes a Fire' really sets a fire in the plot with the introduction of a new character in a love triangle that was created in the second chapter. Kirpal Singh, who is also known as Kip, is an Indian working as a sapper in English army, in whom Hana finds the antithesis of her despairing saint. She is attracted towards him and becomes happy in his company. Her love for him is revealed when she tries to keep him away from the English patient. She has even disregarded her safety when she goes in his tent at night. She does not only want to make him comfortable by laying down beside him when he has defused the complicated bomb, but she intends to secure the object of her love. In fact, the incident works as a significant moment in the lives of both Hana and Kip. It is here, Kip's love for her is revealed who is angry over her help in dismantling the bomb ignoring her own security. He stays near the villa only to make sure that the area is de-mined and Hana is safe there.

Caravaggio is disappointed with the arrival of Kip as he sees rival in him and tries to persuade Hana to live for some reason and to rediscover life in some form, which ultimately drives her in the arms of Kip as she does not want the philosophical love of Caravaggio, which she hated and inclined to death. His act of teaching dance and calling her as dear worm is perhaps the symbol of his deep and passionate love ignited since his visits to her father, which dragged him there. The English patient does not play major role in this chapter except a few references and scenes.

The fourth and fifth chapter entitled as 'South Cairo 1930-1938' and 'Katharine' takes back to the story of the English patient, who was the member of a group of explorers during the period of 1930 to 1938 – the experiences of expedition which shaped much of his character as well as his knowledge about the world that is

revealed through the book where he has recorded his observations. These chapters also add a significant development in the plot through the torturous love affair between the English patient and Katharine, the wife of Geoffrey Clifton. The tension created in the earlier chapter with the presentation of love triangle is somewhat alleviated with the projection of deserts and various expeditions; but again the problems in relations and the conflict in emotions is presented revealing certain psychological impulses in the life of human beings.

Katharine wants erotic pleasures from the English patient and is mad for the English patient. Probably she has suppressed her feelings by marrying Geoffrey, who is perhaps unable to satisfy her desires. She finds a perfect soul mate in the English patient, who is more intellectual and passionate than her husband. She intends to let the public know about her affair and therefore purposefully causes wounds and marks on his body. She badly wants him for the life-time, but she is also afraid to expose her affair to her husband; instead, she decides to break-up the relationships with the English patient, which shows that she values more to the customs than to the emotions. The sandstorm in the fourth chapter ends in the fifth chapter, which not only destroys the lives of explorers but it literally swallows the lives of the lovers – who are unable to define their love.

The sixth chapter – ‘Buried Plane’ – continues the story of romance between the English patient and Katharine finally leading to the tragic conclusion. The lovers have decided to break up because Katharine wanted to declare her affair publically but the English patient was not ready to accept her socially. Hence, she felt that she will not change him probably to open up his heart, which will not give any sense to their relations. Ironically, it is at this stage, Geoffrey came to know about their affair and decides to end their lives. It is interesting to note that only Geoffrey dies in the crash whereas other two survives – that highlights his intentions to kill himself and set free Katharine so that she may find her love.

The English patient refuses to accept his relations with Katharine and treats her harshly in the public life. In fact, it is this behaviour of the English patient that leads Geoffrey to suspect about them provoking to keep an eye on them. After the plane crash, the English patient identifies the intentions of Geoffrey; he saves Katharine from the wreckage of plane and carries her to the Cave of Swimmers where she can remain safe until he calls for a help. Sarcastically he returns after three years only to find dead corpse; but his lust for her body is still same and makes love to it.

Caravaggio is suspicious about the English patient and tries to find out his real name, which is, in reality, his attempt to persuade Hana to change her mind and leave with him to the safer location both emotionally and physically. However, Hana rejects every attempt that Caravaggio made in order to prove the patient is not English as for her it is sufficient that he is human being. In the end of the chapter, a significant change is seen in the development of Hana who is more concerned for Kip than the English patient. In the English patient, she looks for the death and coldness she expects, but in Kip she tries to search her own self, her own emotional chaos and the trauma of living dead life.

Chapter seven 'In Situ' exposes the familial background of Kip, who volunteered to bomb dismantling squad without following the profession of doctor which is destined to him as he is second child in a Sikh family in Punjab now living in England. He seems to enjoy the work under the tutorship of Lord Suffolk, whose death makes him cold and emotionless. At the age of twenty one, he learned to cope up with the situations as he experienced the death of his mother, the rejection of his father – who is still alive as he thinks – and the death of his mentor, who is his second father. His talks about his elder brother throw more light on his nature and the way he becomes frigid. Though he is clever and can replace his mentor in his abilities, he is unable to handle pressure and therefore flees to Italy without shouldering the responsibility of leadership.

The eighth chapter which is entitled as 'The Holy Forest' throws light on the further developments in the relations between Hana and Kip and between Kip and Caravaggio. Kip's present in the form of ladybird, which she touches to the body of the English patient highlights the understanding and deep emotions they feel for one another. The erotic feelings between them are overcome with spiritual one as Kip remembers his mother when he is asleep with Hana. On the other hand, Caravaggio feels that he owes his life for Kip as he has saved him from the explosion. The English patient seems to disappear here from the narrative and most of the part is dominated by Kip, who begins to realize the rays of hopes in the form of Hana.

The ninth chapter which is called 'The Cave of Swimmers,' shed light on the tragedy of the English patient who could not save his would be wife and is arrested as a second rate spy. His deeper love for Katharine is revealed once more as he has forgotten his own identity and even mentioned Katharine as his wife. Caravaggio tries to lead him to the point of confession where he may agree that he is Almsy, but

he failed in his attempts. It is also interesting to note that Geoffrey himself pushed his wife in the arms of the English patient with his constant praising words at one side; and at other, he was unable to fulfil her intellectual needs which she finds in the English patient. Therefore the anecdote which she reads in the party perfectly suits to their lives where Geoffrey stands for King Candaules, the English patient represents Gyges and Katharine is representative of the queen. Though Katharine and the English patient madly love one another, the social status of the English patient leads to break the affair. However, Geoffrey once again gave an opportunity of reunion to them which he fails to grab in any way.

The last chapter called 'August' echoes the tragic conclusion of love in the ninth chapter, where Kip and Hana, after a deep emotional attachment, like the English patient and Katharine failed to define their love. It is here the reasons of Hana's confinements in the villa are revealed – her father is died with burns and she was unable to save him as she was far away from him. She finds the same situation in the English patient and therefore she is chained to him. She is also ready for a new start with Kip and therefore when he tries to get information about her past through Caravaggio, she asks him to talk about only her present.

On the other hand, Kip became a mature character who begins to identify his own journey which ultimately leads him towards a new life and not to the death. He leaves the villa after he hears the bombing in Japan and starts a new life as a doctor which was destined to him as the family ritual. But, he is more like the English patient, who is unable to forget Hana even after his marriage. Thus, each character is provided with his/her own space and time to develop, realize and in the process they all recognize their roles in life and experience transformation. Hana, who expects death, is transformed as she comes out of her coldness, Caravaggio, who is thief and never trusted anyone, follows his love for Hana, Kip, who has suppressed his emotions, finds the essence of life, and finally the English patient, who is in fact Almsy, has forgotten everything for the sake of his love for Katharine.

2.2.5 Check Your Progress:

1. Hana takes care of _____ in the abandoned villa.
 - a) Caravaggio
 - b) Kim
 - c) the English Patient
 - d) Patrick

2. _____ saved the English patient when he fell burning in plane crash.
 - a) Hana
 - b) Bedouins
 - c) Katharine
 - d) Libyans
3. The name of the villa which turned into a hospital is _____.
 - a) San Girolamo
 - b) San Bonifacio
 - c) Tehzeeb
 - d) Medici
4. _____ turned the villa into a hospital.
 - a) British Army
 - b) German Army
 - c) Italian Army
 - d) Allies Army
5. Hana is a _____.
 - a) Nurse
 - b) General
 - c) Officer-in-Charge
 - d) Second-in-Command
6. Hana sells _____ in exchange of meat and beans to a man.
 - a) Soaps and sheets
 - b) Oil
 - c) Bombs
 - d) Clothes
7. Hana compares herself with _____ when she discovers the joined pages of *The Last of the Mohicans*.
 - a) Anna Karenina
 - b) Robinson Crusoe
 - c) Kim
 - d) Lorna Doone
8. _____ illustrated *Narrative of 1757*.
 - a) Daniel Defoe
 - b) Rudyard Kipling
 - c) N. C. Wyeth
 - d) Herodotus
9. When the mask of oasis reeds is removed from the face, the English patient remembers his favourite garden at _____.
 - a) Naples
 - b) El Taj
 - c) Libyan
 - d) Kew

18. Clara is _____ of Hana.
- a) Mother
b) Sister
c) Step-mother
d) Mother-in-law
19. A 1930s expedition of the English patient was aimed at the search of ____.
- a) Zerzura oasis
b) El Taj
c) Cave of Swimmers
d) Sahara
20. Katharine is the wife of _____.
- a) Almasy
b) Geoffrey
c) Lord Suffolk
d) Madox
21. According to Caravaggio _____ is used as a code name for spy.
- a) Delilah
b) Zerzura
c) Cicero
d) Cairo
22. _____ is the secretary of Lord Suffolk.
- a) Hana
b) Morden
c) Anna
d) Katharine
23. Katharine reads the story of _____ from *The Histories*.
- a) King Candaules
b) Rebecca
c) Libyan Desert
d) King David
24. Kip and Caravaggio celebrates the _____ birthday of Hana.
- a) 18th
b) 19th
c) 20th
d) 21st
25. _____ hears on radio the news of bombing on Japan.
- a) Kip
b) Hana
c) Caravaggio
d) the English patient

2.3 Section III: Themes, Symbols and Character Analysis

2.3.1 Themes in the Novel:

1) Journey to rediscover identity:

All the four major characters in the novel undertake the journey to rediscover their own identity with reference to one another. Hana, who is working as a nurse, purposefully lives in the abandoned villa – despite being dangers to live there – only in order to hide her identity from the world where she works or live. She wants to avoid being discussed in the hospital, therefore she stays behind; but the real reason, which is revealed in the end of the novel, is that being a nurse, working to care for the wounded soldiers, she failed to save her father wounded and burned in the war, which is a cause of her grief. Her depression is also revealed when she refused to acknowledge the letter sent by her step-mother Clara about the death of her father. She sees the burned English patient in the place of her father and chained herself to die with him. However, her journey to rediscover her identity begins with the arrival of Kip in whose company she has forgotten the English patient.

The identity of the English patient is a mysterious question in the novel as he cannot be identified with his burned body and he has forgotten himself including his name in the plane crash. In the course of time, it is revealed that he has distanced himself from his own identity, which he wishes before the plane crash and when he was having an affair with Katharine. He also may have hidden his identity in order to forget the past – the loss of his beloved Katharine, and the death of his friend Madox, who shot himself when he discovered that the church is supporting to the war. His love for Katharine is so deep that he has forgotten himself when he was arrested by the British Intelligence and mentions her as his wife. However, it is Caravaggio, who interrogates him to reveal his real identity finally knowing that he is Almasy, a famous Hungarian spy working for German Army. Ironically, the English patient is unaware about his fame in the world, which Caravaggio tells him.

The journey of Kip's rediscovery begins in the villa when he meets Hana and falls in love with her. The death of his mother and then of his mentor Lord Suffolk made him colder to respond to the physical world, but with Hana he begins to identify his future. His attempts of dismantling the bombs around villa were not only his efforts to ensure the safety of Hana, but he was ensuring his own future. However, the news of bombing on Japan surprisingly takes turn leading him to adopt

the profession of doctors according to the tradition of his family, which is also an act of his rediscovering identity. Similarly, Caravaggio, a professional thief then working for British Intelligence, learns from his experiences that war is futile and in the end does not expose the real identity of the English patient to Hana. After the war, he has stopped speaking to anyone else in the hospital except his serial number, but the news of Hana leads him to Hana, which is the beginning moment in the process of rediscovering his own identity.

2) Transformation:

The English Patient projects a transformation of its characters from the death drive to the life, from the frigidity to the emotions, from the meaninglessness to the meaningful life, and from loneliness to establishing a connection with life. The English patient seems to be living in death only because he is unable to free himself from the memories of his beloved Katharine. It is through the story he tells to Hana, Caravaggio and Kip in the fragments he finds the way of liberation. Hana is inclined to death as she could not save her father, who was far away from her, the guilt of which she tries to compensate caring burned patient and probably seems to die with him. She is driven to the life with the arrival of Kip, who makes her happy and forget about her guilt ultimately leading her to find essence in living life. Similarly Kip has also no hopes in life because of the death of his mother; hence, he volunteered himself to the war, where he once again finds the way to life in the form of his mentor Lord Suffolk. However, he meets once again to despair with the death of Lord Suffolk and inclined himself to death until he reaches to the villa, where Hana drives him once again to life.

The transformation of the characters from the frigidity of the emotions to the passions is also a significant process in their development. The English patient tells that he was very rational and cerebral when he met Katharine and even refused to express his love publically with the harsh treatment to her. On the other hand, Katharine is passionate as she is described as firebrand and the same she expects from her lover. When she finds that she is unable to transform the English patient, she decides to separate herself. Paradoxically, the English patient's passions overcome his frigidity after the plane crash who calls Katharine as his wife. It is this passion and love that kept him alive when he was burned beyond recognition. Similarly Hana and Kip, who are turned to the frigidity and coldness in life after the deaths of their loved ones, are moved to the passionate life. In the end of the novel,

Hana reconnects to life sending a letter to her step-mother Clara, where she expresses that she wants to live and asks her to take away from the desert where she is trapped.

The journey from loneliness to establishing meaningful connections is also dominant in the novel as all the four major characters are living an isolated life without any attachment either with the world or with the persons with whom they are living. Hana has alienated herself from the world and decided to live in the unsafe villa with the English patient, Kip has lost his mentor and then loses his mate, Caravaggio has isolated himself to the grey light of the hospital, and the English patient has cut off himself from the rest of the world. They preferred to live in isolation because they find comfort in their loneliness which separates them from the harshness of the world. However, soon they begin to identify and understand one another and connect themselves with each other.

3) Aftermaths of War:

The novel is set at the backdrop of World War II where Ondaatje unfolds different lyres of destructions of war in the form of devastated places, shattered cities, bridges, structures, and affected people. Many cities are mined and set like a trap so that they can be uninhabited or destroy the humanity. The buildings and places are damaged physically, which can be witnessed in the form of villa where Hana lives with the English patient. Some sections of roofs and walls in the villa are missing so that some rooms are littered with leaves and debris. Many of the rooms are mined and are sealed for the safety including the library where Hana plays a game to get the books. Kip appears at the villa only because he hears the sound of piano and supposes that it may be a pencil bomb set by the German Army.

Kip reveals that most of the times he worked to restructure the damaged bridges destroyed by the German Army in their retreat. When he hears the news of bombing on Japan, he imagines that the atomic explosions may have filled fire in the streets of Asia; the bodies may have been melting in the extreme heat, and the shadow of humans disappearing in the air. The soldiers who have been admitted to the hospital, where Hana works, are severely wounded, some have lost their body parts, some have been burned in explosions, and the wounds of some have been eaten by worms. Caravaggio is the live example of the results of war, who has lost his both thumbs. The journey of Caravaggio reveals how the cemeteries have been filled with the people and the smell of burning or dead bodies; at some places the scattered, half-

eaten bodies of horses, the dead bodies of people hung on the bridges show the devastating effects of war.

The psychological effects of the war are also revealed in the novel. Hana lost her father Patrick, Kip lost his mentor Lord Suffolk, the English patient lost his beloved Katharine, which leads all these characters to cut themselves off from the world and drives to death. The emotional trauma is so deep that they begin to feel guilty for the death of their dear ones. The English patient could not survive his severely injured beloved Katharine and begins to live in her memories; Hana could not reach to her burned father Patrick and begins to see him in the English patient.

4) **Intertextuality:**

The novel *The English Patient* has a number of references from the other books and novels. Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, R. D. Blackmore's *Lorna Doone*, Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* are some of the novels referred in the narratives of the characters along with the books such as Herodotus' *The Histories*, which gives the descriptions of the geographical locations such as deserts mentioned in the novel. Kip occasionally refers to the textbooks dealing with the components of bombs. Hana finds books as the only escape from the trauma of her life and many times she is seen assimilating with the characters in the novels she reads. For instance, she reads Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and re-imagines the story casting herself in the role of Kim and connects Kip's arrival from the novel. The books also provide her a different attitude with which she looks at the world. It can be witnessed in her analysis of the books such as Tacitus' *Annals* which opens with an author's assurance of order whereas the novels such as Fabrizio's *The Charterhouse of Parma* commence with hesitation or chaos.

Books serve as the identity codes for spies in the war which is revealed through the comments of the English patient who carries Herodotus' *The Histories* as his code. He also gives the same copy to Katharine when she wants to do something different rather than singing a song or reciting a poem in the party offered by her husband Geoffrey for the success of the English patient. The story of King Candaules she reads in the party is, in fact, the beginning point of the affair between the English patient and Katharine; in which she identifies herself with the queen and offers the role of Gyges to the English patient against her husband who plays the role of King with his continuous praises for his wife in front of others.

It is also interesting to note that the characters not only refer to the books, but they use it to record their impressions or observations. The English patient has pasted the number of pages from journals and other books which he finds informative to the copy of *The Histories* he carries. Similarly Hana marks her impressions in the books she took from the library and puts them back on the shelf. She writes whatever she feels about her life on the blank pages of the book; she also mentions the information about Kip, which she finds useful.

5) Nationality and Race:

The geographical and national boundaries are clearly visible in the novel through the experiences of the characters, who hide their identities and live away from the native community. The English patient hides his national identity and lives with the alternate name which can help him to survive in the desert, where people, torn with the geographical boundaries, fight for their nations and ready to kill one another. It is revealed that the concept of nation is the prime force in the war, which has even converted the professional thieves like Caravaggio to work for the nation and then, when he is trapped in the clutches of Germans, undergoes an inhuman physical pain including cutting of his thumb. Since his arrival in the villa, he continuously suspects about the identity of the English patient. He interrogates the patient in order to know the real name because he is sure that the patient is Almasy, the most wanted and appreciated spy. When he reveals his suspicion to Hana, she is not interested in knowing who exactly the patient is and which nation he belongs to. However, he finally succeeds in revealing the identity of the English patient as the Hungarian spy Almasy working for the German Army, but at this stage his nation becomes unimportant for him; so he hides the truth from Hana and Kip for whom, also, nation does not matter.

The English patient, who seems to have forgotten who he is, may have chosen purposefully the present identity. Though he has not exposed himself as English, he has taken the advantage of physical burns beyond recognition only to live in the memories of his love. When he was in love with Katharine, he intended to erase his history, which is, in fact, his attempt to erase his national identity so that his familial and subsequently the geographical boundaries may not constrain his love for the British girl. His final journey takes him to the perfect place – in the villa – where nation is not important; rather the human being is more important as it is noted by

Hana. When Caravaggio expresses his doubts about the patient's nation, she tells him that the war is now over clearly highlighting that the nation is unimportant now.

The racial discrimination plays a significant role in the development of Kip, who recognizes that racism has limited him only to the profession of the sapper and he is not acceptable in the society or community where he lives only because of the colour of his skin and nation where he is born. He is only Indian in the British Army, who has volunteered to the war against his brother's warnings. He experiences racial discrimination as he is not spoken outside his work; the women has limited their conversation with him and the fellow solders never interact him outside the work area. He feels human in the foreign land only in the company of Hardy, who accepts Kip and calls him readily as 'sir' where others give belated responses. The power of race and nation is once again visible in the end of the novel, where, with the news of bombing on Japan, Kip abandons the villa, his job as a sapper and Hana with whom he is deeply in love, and returns to India – to his own people and nation.

2.3.2 Symbols in the Novel:

1) Books

Books have become a significant symbol in the novel which metaphorically represent a number of things including a way of escape from the traumas of the life. Hana finds a sanctuary in books after she experiences a shell-shock in her profession where the wounded and paralysed soldiers numb the mind. Reading books is not only pass time for her in the abandoned villa, but it is the means of living which takes her to the different world. Books have become the soul mate to her, where she records most of the feelings about Kip. In fact, reading books is the only safe zone for her both physically and psychologically. She feels safe in the company of books even when the library is mined; and she finds solace only in the books which help her to forget her guilt.

2) Desert

The desert dominates much of the sections in the novel and symbolizes a monument of the historical development since the civilization was in the cradles. It takes back to ancient period when it was firstly explored and recorded in Herodotus' *The Histories* which reveal the passion of the Western world for the desert. The desert is described thoroughly with all the details of the climate changes: the extreme

heat experienced during the day in opposition to the cold felt at night, the sudden changes in the mood of the wind from the quiet and peaceful atmosphere to the unexpected storms, and the silence broken with the screams of the war. The memories of the English patient discloses his experiences in the desert where he got the essence of his life – the fame as an explorer, the deep love for Katharine, survival from the plane crash – which is narrated in the fragments missing the chronological order.

3) Bridges:

The bridges are presented symbolically in the novel. The acts of destroying bridges by the German Army is their attempt to cut the world in pieces and disconnect the people, further alienating them to be confined within the geographical boundaries. On the other hand, Kip – representative of the Western world – works in the sapper unit that many times construct the Bailey bridges in order to replace the damaged bridges and help the Allies Army. He metaphorically represents a means which bridge the gap between nations and the people. He volunteered himself to the bomb defusing unit which is, in fact, his attempt to establish peace in the scenario of the war. However, the bridge in him is destroyed in the end of the novel who finds all his attempts fruitless when he hears the news of bombing over Japan and abandons the Western world and subsequently the customs taught to him by Lord Suffolk.

c) Character Analysis:

1) The English Patient

The English patient is one of the major characters in the novel and dominates much of the sections expressing his memories in fragments. When he is introduced, he is admitted in the abandoned hospital where a nurse called Hana takes care of him. He reveals his memories dealing with his life before and after the plane crash in which his entire body is burned beyond recognition. He falls down burning in the desert and is saved by the Bedouins who applied various herbs in order to recover him from his burns. In the course of time he learns that they are keeping alive only for their secret purpose. When they find him recovered from the injury, he is carried to the interior sections of the desert where he came across a large section of weapons and felt it as if a weapon museum in desert. The Bedouins had collected number of weapons from different countries, but unfortunately they did not have knowledge to

operate it; therefore, they wanted him to share his information and teach them the mechanics of operation.

The English patient's story also reveals that his real name is Count Ladislaus de Almasy, a Hungarian wandering in the deserts as an explorer and involved in the war as a spy working for the German Army. In one of the expeditions, his group is joined by Geoffrey Clifton, who surprises the group with the introduction of his wife Katharine. From the beginning, Almasy is attracted towards her, but he has tried to avoid her in the public events. He is surprised with her hunger for knowledge which creates passions in him. In the party offered by Geoffrey in order to celebrate his success, she reads the story from the book called *The Histories* which sets as a starting point of their affair; however, he refused the domination of Katharine either or her acceptance in the public events, which leads them to break up the relations.

After the end of the affair between Almasy and Katharine, Geoffrey came to know about their relations who planned a murder suicide – leading to injure severely his wife and his instant death. Almasy took her out of the plane crash to the Cave of Swimmers, but as she was unable to move anywhere, he left her there in order to search for the help. However, he is arrested by the British Intelligence and, in spite of his admission that his wife is injured and needs help, he is put behind bars, where he spent three years of his life. When he returned, he began the search of Katharine only to find the dead corpse, where he made a love with her and then took her in a plane, which was set to the fire because of the oil leakage and he fell burning in the desert.

In the hospital at the abandoned village, Hana takes care of the English patient, who refused the shifting of the patient as she believes that he will not be saved during the move. He listens to the stories which she reads for him and sleeps rarely. He remembers his journey from his burning, but he has forgotten his name and the past history. When Caravaggio appears and interrogates him, he reveals the name of Almasy but denies that he is Almasy, a famous spy.

2) Hana

Hana, another major character, is twenty years young nurse living in the abandoned hospital with the burned English patient. She washes his burned body in every four days, nurses it with calamine and peels plum for him. She has been nursing his black-purple wounded body for the last few months and is aware about its burns so much that, now, she thinks him as if her despairing saint. She reads

various books for him when she finds him restless at the night and also moves in his bed sometimes in order to warm his body whenever he feels cold. She is determined to live in the villa with her English patient even when the other nurses and patients in the hospital moved with the army to the south. In fact, she decided to leave the job of nursing and resolved to take care of only her burned patient in that cold stone villa, where fewer rooms are left to use and most of them are inaccessible and sealed for safety. She chooses various rooms as per the light, wind and temperature she needs to sleep in.

Hana is unaware about her own safety; rather she feels safe in the villa. The six feet crucifix, which she takes with her as a scarecrow, gives her the feeling of being safe. She used to work in the garden where she has planted orchard, which now provides sufficient vegetables for both of them. In addition to this, she occasionally sells soaps and sheets left behind by army in the hospital to a man in town in exchange of meat and beans from him. Other than this, reading books is the only means to pass the time for her. She identifies herself with the characters mentioned in the book and moves with their lives. She goes in the library to pick up the books, where the danger of entering in the library becomes a private game.

Hana trembles with the arrival of David Caravaggio and tells him not to persuade her to leave the place; and if he intends to live there, they will need more food. She has enough vegetables and beans, but she will need chicken to satisfy them three. Caravaggio recalls the past days and his friendship with Hana's father. He frequently visited her in Toronto before the war, but now she is in love with the dying English patient. He tries to make her aware that she is wasting her life for a ghost. She narrates how her father joined war and how she became a nurse. In her childhood, Caravaggio taught her a number of things including how to perform somersaults. Then she was admitted to Women's College Hospital in 1943 where she was trained as a nurse. During the Sicilian attack, she was sent abroad to take care of wounded soldiers, where she worked day and night. She has cut her hairs and not even seen herself in the mirror; all her feelings became cold and she begins to behave harshly with the patients. When the war moved to north, she thought that her war is over and determined to do not move with the rest of the people. She decided to stay behind with the burned patient. She has replaced her uniform with the brown frock to keep her away from the memories of war.

Hana remembers how she always love Caravaggio and how he cared her; and then walks to the library, where she begins to play song taught by her mother on piano. She tells him that she was pregnant last year but had an abortion when she heard about her father's death. She was in hospital in Italy when she courted a man who died in war. The death of her lover, father and child, and her work in the hospital between the wounded soldiers made her to live for death. Then she met the burned English patient – the event that leads her to separate herself from the talks of other nurses and deaths.

She falls in love with Kip, a sapper, and begins to find a meaningful existence to her life. She also helps him to defuse a bomb mined near the villa – the moment which brought them closer to one another. She even skips to his tent at the morning, where they made love. However, in the last section of the novel, she is left alone in the deserts from where she urges her mother to free her.

3) Kip

Kip is a nickname of an Indian Sikh Kirpal Singh, who is working as a sapper in British Army during the Second World War. As per the tradition of the family, he has to be a doctor, but he volunteered himself to the war. He works under the leadership of Lord Suffolk in the engineering unit which aims to dismantle the bombs mined by the German Army. He hears the sound of piano and approaches the villa with his mate Hardy to discover the pencil bomb probably mined in the piano. When Hardy leaves to other places in town, he remains near villa in order to defuse the surrounding. He sets up his tent outside the villa, where, while taking a bath, Hana is attracted towards him. Initially, he is not accepted in the villa for his habit of washing the hands frequently, but slowly Caravaggio and Hana become familiar with him and he becomes comfortable in their company.

Kip is involved in defusing a complicated bomb, when Hana rushes to help him – the event leads him to be very harsh with Hana as he begins to feel for her and considers her as his own responsibility. In the evening, he hears the sound of explosion and goes there only to find the dead body of his mate Hardy. He buries Hardy's body in the desert and returns to the villa where the English patient and Caravaggio were sleeping while Hana was waiting for him. He intends to touch her so that he can make her feel as he has been angry earlier in the afternoon on her for

being involved in defusing bomb without caring for her life. Finally he cuts the hearing aid of the patient and then puts hand on the shoulder of Hana.

Kip reveals his family history, which presents the internal conflict in his mind. After the death of his mother, he was looked after by the ayah in whom he tried to find the love of his mother. After joining the British Army, Lord Suffolk helped him to be comfortable in the foreign nation. Lord Suffolk became his mentor and taught him the customs of British people. However, the death of his mentor leads him to be cold towards his emotions. Since then for the first time in villa, he began to feel for Hana. He befriends with the English patient with whom he shares lots of things. In one instance, he saves the life of Caravaggio, who also begins to feel that he owes his life to Kip. In the end of the novel, when he hears the bombing on Japan, he withdraws himself from the villa and settles down in India as a doctor and having wife and children.

2.4 Answers to Check Your Progress

Section I:

1. b) John Franklin
2. a) *The Golden Dog*
3. c) Ernest Buckler
4. d) 1960s & 70s
5. d) psychological
6. a) William Gibson

Section II:

1. c) the English Patient
2. b) Bedouins
3. a) San Girolamo
4. d) Allies Army
5. a) Nurse
6. a) Soaps and sheets
7. b) Robinson Crusoe
8. c) N. C. Wyeth
9. d) Kew

10. d) Caravaggio
11. c) Twenty miles
12. b) Caravaggio
13. a) Anna
14. a) Sicilian
15. c) Ranuccio Tommasoni
16. b) *The Last of the Mohicans*
17. d) Indian
18. d) Mother-in-law
19. a) Zerzura oasis
20. b) Geoffrey
21. c) Cicero
22. b) Morden
23. a) King Candaules
24. d) 21st
25. a) Kip

2.5 Exercise:

a) Answer the following questions in about 400-500 words.

- 1) Discuss in detail the major themes in the novel.
- 2) Elucidate the journey of major characters to rediscover their identity.
- 3) Comment on the theme of transformation reflected in the novel.
- 4) Write a detailed note on the aftermaths of the war demonstrated in the novel.
- 5) Write in brief the features of postmodernism with reference to intertextuality observed in the novel.
- 6) Melting boundaries of nation and race: Elucidate with reference to the novel.
- 7) Comment on the various symbols used in the novel.

b) Write short notes in about 100 to 150 words.

- 1) Sketch the character of the English patient
- 2) Comment on desert as a symbol used in the novel
- 3) The character of Hana
- 4) The symbolic use of bridges
- 5) Sketch the character of Kip
- 6) Metaphorical use of books
- 7) Caravaggio

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Unit-3

Major Trends in Canadian Short Stories Selected Stories from *Too Much Happiness*

Alice Munro

Selected Stories from *Too Much Happiness* by Alice Munro

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Presentation of Subject Matter

3.2.1 Short Story as a Literary Genre

3.2.2 Elements of Short Story

3.2.3 Canadian Literature

3.2.4 Canadian Short Story

3.2.5 Alice Munro : A Bio Sketch

3.3 Deep Holes

3.3.1 Storyline

3.3.2 Characterization

3.3.3 Major Themes

3.3.4 Title of the Story

3.3.5 Exercises

3.4 Face

3.4.1 Story line Face

3.4.2 Themes

3.4.3 Characters

3.4.4 Exercises

3.5 Too Much Happiness

- 3.5.1 Story Outline
- 3.5.2 Themes
- 3.5.3 Characters
- 3.5.4 Significance of Title
- 3.5.5 Exercises
- 3.6 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 3.7 Exercise
- 3.8 References and Further Reading

3.0 Objectives:

After studying this unit carefully, you will be able to:

1. Understand the Canadian literary tradition
2. Understand the great contribution of Alice Munro in the field of Canadian Literature
3. Appreciate Alice Munro's short stories and their literary impact
4. Understand Munro's thematic concerns and narrative style
5. Study the sources, setting and structure of the novel
6. Study the characters in the novel and the problems they confront

3.1 Introduction

This unit discusses the life and works of the famous Canadian short story writer Alice Munro. It also presents the comprehensive summary of her three select stories, *Face*, *Deep Holes* and *Too Much Happiness*. It also presents the major and minor characters in the novel and commentary on theme, title and other aspects.

3.2 Presentation of Subject Matter

3.2.1 Short Story as a Literary Genre:

The story is one of the oldest literary genres in the world. Icelandic storytellers in ninth and tenth centuries were popular for their prose narratives called “Sagas”. They used these Sagas to narrate the events and experiences they came across. Later the same sagas came before the society in the written form. The nineteenth century proved short story as an important branch of literature. This century experienced the interest of common people of Europe and America in literature as the result of higher literacy rate. Moreover, in those days, short story was an affordable genre of entertainment. Consequently, short story became one of the prominent aspects of life. The short story writers like Anton Chekhov in Russia, Guy de Maupassant in France, and Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe in America often published the stories in newspapers. They introduced the stories that could be read in single sitting.

3.2.2 Elements of Short Story:

It is granted that short story is a story that is short. But what is the exact concept of shortness in short story is difficult to define. The brevity in subject, character and language, unity of impression, time, and place are the elements that give shortness to short story. Some of the short story writers consider the careful selection of the story’s setting, character, or plot as most influential factors to give it smallness. Edgar Allan Poe in North America preferred unity of effect, as the essential element of short story. In the first half of the twentieth century the “unity of effect” is heightened in the short stories whereas throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century the end of the story became an important element of short story. The critics from B. M. Éjxenbaum to Charles E. May are the supporters of this view. According to this view the end must be catchy and satisfactory. The Irish author James Joyce is well known for concluding his short stories effectively, that is reflected in his collection, especially, in his 1914 collection *Dubliners*. This tradition is effectively followed by several Canadian writers like Morley Callaghan, Joyce’s contemporary, nineteenth-century author, Duncan Campbell Scott and 2013 Nobel laureate Alice Munro.

3.2.3 Canadian literature:

Canadian Literature has been created in Canadian English, Canadian French, and Canadian Gaelic, and more recently by First Nations and immigrants of other ancestral backgrounds. Canadian literature has wide geographical and historical influence. It represents Canada's diversity in culture and region. Canadians have been less willing to accept the diverse languages of Canada, such as Canadian Gaelic. Although the media of Canadian literature is English it is based upon many distinct oral traditions, languages, and cultural practices. However, in recent decades Canada's literature has been strongly influenced by immigrants from other countries. Since the 1980s Canada's ethnic and cultural diversity has been openly reflected in its literature. Canada is one nation and one state though it has two 'home cultures' viz., French and British. History reveals that it became vulnerable to the dominant American culture as it had engrossed a large number of immigrants.

3.2.4 Canadian Short Story:

In Canada pleasure is the prominent aspect of short story. According to the Canadian scholars, short story is a specific genre that is meant to pleasure reading. Perhaps Thomas Chandler Haliburton is the first short story writer. He published his *Clockmaker* stories in serial form in the newspaper the *Novascotian*. Later he assembled these stories and published them as a book. V. S. Pritchett calls the short story a "hybrid" genre that is drawn from both poetry and newspaper reporting. Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood, Mavis Gallant, Thomas King, André Alexis, Rohinton Mistry, Sheila Heti, Stephen Leacock, Clea Young, Lisa Moore, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Heather O'Neill, Carol Shields, Eden Robinson, Madeleine Thien, and countless others are Canada's well-known short story writers.

Canadian short story is very close to the American short story as to some extent it shares the history of American genre. In both Canadian and American traditions, short fiction has its roots in sketch, anecdote and in the various prose forms that arose in the nineteenth century which was the account of personal experience. In both countries short fiction began through the magazines, weeklies, tabloids, or Sunday-school papers. The nearness of American and Canadian fiction remained for long time. The friendship between Ernest Hemingway and Canada's Morley Callaghan shows this affinity through the revolution in writing that commenced by the older Hemingway spread to the writing of the younger Callaghan. Besides the similarity

the Canadian short fiction remained away from the world whereas comparatively American fiction got much popularity. Both Canadian and American short-story traditions had strong local-color traditions of last decades of the nineteenth century. These stories were regional in origin and very popular.

Canada is divided into distinct regions like the Maritimes, the Eastern Townships of Quebec, Southwestern Ontario, urban Montreal, the Prairie provinces, and so on. Accordingly the short fiction in Canada reflects the region of the writer. The writers like Sarah Oren Jewett, Kate Chopin, and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman reflected south border of Canada through the short fiction. By days passing Canadian short story began to lead toward naturalism and realism.

Check Your Progress-1

Answer in one word/phrase/sentence

1. What do the people used to call short story?
2. Who is the popular story writer of America?
3. To whom did the Canadian short story get proximity?
4. Who published first his *Clockmaker* stories in serial form the first time in Canada?
5. Where are the roots of Canadian and American short stories?

Terms to Remember

1. Fiction – creative writing
2. Proximity- nearness
3. Commence – Begin
4. Assemble – Collect
5. Comprehensive - Detail

3.2.5 Alice Munro : A Bio Sketch

Alice Munro, full name, Alice Ann Munro, a popular short story writer, was born on 10th July, 1931 in Wingham, Ontario. Alice Munro's literary works are on the verge of short and long fiction. The readers may feel confused to see the length of

it. Her literary work, *Lives of Girls and Women* (1977) is generally considered as a novel but she calls it as the collection of linked stories. She is the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature of 2013.

Alice Munro's father, Robert Eric Laidlaw, initially was a fox and mink farmer but later turned to turkey farming. Her mother, Anne Clarke Laidlaw was a school teacher. In her teenage Munro published her first story, "*The Dimensions of a Shadow*", in 1950 while studying English and journalism at the Western Ontario University under a two-year scholarship. During this period she worked as a waitress, a tobacco picker, and a library clerk. In 1951, she left the university, where she had been majoring in English since 1949, to marry fellow student James Munro.

Munro married twice in her life. She married with James Munro in 1951. This couple got three daughters Sheila, Catherine, and Jenny respectively in 1953, 1955, and 1957 but unfortunately Catherine died the day of her birth. In 1963, the couple moved to Victoria where they opened a Book Shop, Munro's Books. It is a popular bookstore which is still in business. Munro's gave birth to her fourth daughter Andrea in 1966. Alice got divorced from James Munro in 1972. Then she returned to Ontario to become a writer in residence at the University of Western Ontario. She received an honorary LLD in 1976 from the institution. Munro again decided to marry to fill up the space in her life that is created by the divorce. She married with Gerald Fremlin, a cartographer and geographer in 1976. The couple settled in a farm outside of Clinton and Ontario and then they shifted to a house in Clinton. Munro lost her husband, Fremlin on 17th April 2013 at his age of 88. Earlier this couple had also purchased a home in Comox, British Columbia. Prior to the death of Fremlin, in 2009, Munro was detected cancer and received the treatment for cancer and bypass surgery.

Munro's stories explore human complexities through simple prose style. Her stories are most often set in her native; Huron County in Southwestern Ontario. Strong regional focus and the omniscient narrator are the features of her fiction. She makes her characters often to follow the deep-rooted customs and traditions. Comparing to male characters her female characters are more complex. Generally, her early stories explore the world of a girl coming of age, her relation with her family and her emotional attachment with the small town where she is grown up. In her recent works, such as *Hateship*, *Friendship*, *Courtship*, *Loveship*,

Marriage (2001) and *Runaway* (2004), she has shifted her focus to the psychological situation of middle age and the elderly women.

Munro has received several literary awards, including the 2013 Nobel Prize in Literature as the master of the contemporary short story", and the 2009 Man Booker International Prize for her lifetime body of work *Too Much Happiness*. It is the collection of ten short stories which won the Man Booker International Prize in 2009. In these ten stories, Munro extends and expands her vision of the mysterious and sometimes overwhelming effect of the bonds between people - friends, lovers, husbands and wives, parents and children, even strangers. She is also a three-time winner of Canada's Governor General's Award for fiction. She had received the Writers' Trust of Canada's 1996 Marian Engel Award, as well as the 2004 Rogers Writer's Trust Fiction Prize for *Runaway*. She is the first Canadian and the 13th woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. Munro's first collection of stories, *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968), won the Governor General's Award, Canada's highest literary prize. It was repeated for her *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971), a collection of interlinked stories. In 1978, Munro's collection of interlinked stories, 'Who Do You Think You Are?' received a second Governor General's Literary Award. Munro is described as one of the greatest contemporary writers of fiction. She is also compared with Anton Chekov.

Munro's fame was spread from one country to another. Her public outward shows and readings from 1979 to 1982 to Australia, China and Scandinavia made her quite well-known in the world. In 1980, Munro held the position of writer in residence at the Universities, University of British Columbia and University of Queensland. Since 1980s, Munro has published a short-story collection at least once every four years. Almost twenty of Munro's works have been made available for free on the web; sixteen stories have been included in Munro's own collection more than twice, with two of her works scoring even four republications: "*Carried Away*" and "*Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*". Moreover some of her stories have film adaptations including *Martha, Ruth and Edie* (2002), *Away From Her* (2006), *HateshipLoveship* (2013) and *Julieta* (2016). In 2002, her daughter Sheila Munro published a childhood memoir, *Lives of Mothers and Daughters: Growing Up With Alice Munro*.

Check Your Progress-2

Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. When did Alice Munro receive Nobel Prize in Literature ?
2. Which is the first published story of Alice Munro?
3. Which is the setting of Munro's stories?
4. With which award Munro was honored for her story collection, *Too Much Happiness*?
5. In which universities Munro held the position of writer in residence?

Terms to Remember

1. Contemporary- Current
2. Devastating - disturbing
3. Compilation - Collection
4. Expand- Deepen

3.3 Deep Holes

3.3.1 Storyline:

'Deep Holes' is the fourth story of Alice Munro's collection, *Too Much Happiness*. "Deep Holes" has complex twists that reflect the author's feelings as a mother and an artist. Sally, the protagonist of the story, the mother, has three children- Kent, Peter, Savannah. Kent is the son of about 10-12 with a lot of irresponsible confidence. Peter is six years old son. When grown, goes into medicine. Savannah is six month old daughter, named after a geological feature. But the main focus is on Sally a passive wife, Alex her domineering husband, and Kent her rebellious oldest son. Sally's husband Alex is a geologist. He has retired from his job but continues his work because of interest. Then Sally works as his assistant. While working with him Sally catches his geological curiosity and gets much information.

The story begins with a family picnic that abruptly ends when Kent literally falls into a "deep hole." The interactions leading up to following this accident reveals layer upon layer of unsolved issues of the family. The story describes the picnic that is arranged to celebrate Alex's publication of his first solo paper, in *Zeitschrift für*

Geomorphologie. This picnic is arranged in Osler Bluff because this region is described largely in his research, and also because Sally and the children have never been there. Sally takes sandwiches, devilled eggs and crab salad with her and Alex takes champagne. Though at the entry point of the place caution is given, through the excitement, Kent falls in the deep hole. Alex and Sally pull him out but during this he becomes unconscious. Alex takes him to Collingwood Hospital. Though no internal injury he gets his both legs broken. It compels Kent to take six months leave from the school but this leave period makes him too much mature. This time brings him very much close to his mother, Sally. On the contrary, there remains a constant gap between father and son. Kent has never good relations with his father. Sally reveals him her hidden interests which she employs for his school assignments. She tells him her attraction for remote islands; not to the Hawaiian Islands or the Canaries or the Hebrides or the Isles of Greece, where everybody wanted to go, but small or obscure like Ascension, Tristan da Cunha, Chatham Island and Christmas Island and Desolation Island and the Faeroes. When he completes his school works she encourages him to go ahead with Extra Projects. After his recovery he selects the hard sciences, not the soft earth sciences for projects.

There comes a twist in the story. After six months at college Kent disappears from the house. His one of the friends reports that he is in West Coast. After some days Sally gets the news about him through a letter. The letter informs about his working at a Canadian Tire in a suburb just north of Toronto. Alex and Sally try to bring him back to college but he rejects to do so for now he is earning and also enjoying beer and friends. Three years later he sends one more letter from Needles, California. But this is just a formal letter where there is no guilt or care of anyone in the house. The letter consists of many pages informing about his own life, not the practical side of his life but what he believed he should do. That becomes the last letter by him. But during this period there happens a lot at Sally. Peter enters the medicine, Savanna the law. Alex gets his retirement and plans to write a book. So Sally starts to work for him as an assistant. Unfortunately, he gets physical problem and very soon meets to his tragic end. Kent has no knowledge of these developments and at other side Sally has no information of Kent's present situation.

The story develops with a turn that brings one more opportunity to reappear Kent. Once, in the summer, after Alex's death, Savanna looks Kent helping the victims of fire in a fire in Toronto. Though Savanna was just nine years old when

Kent left the house still she recognizes him and informs about it to Sally. After some days Sally goes to meet him. She feels shocked to see his present living style, look and thoughts. Though he is not H.I.V. positive or a physic or he has no habit of smoking pipe he looks quite weak because he was suffering from malaria before some years. She observes that his philosophical speech makes him too much elder and mature. He said, “What do I know? Before that? Before that. Man’s days are like grass, eh? Cut down and put into the oven. Listen to me. Soon as I meet you again I start the showing-off. Cut down and put in the oven—I’m not interested in that. I live each day as it happens...You know you can only save yourself. So what is the point? I don’t usually try to get anywhere talking to people. I usually try to avoid personal relationships. I mean I do. I do avoid them.”

Actually Sally finds that he and his companions are doing some recycling with stuff they pick up. They pick up newspapers and bottles and then they make a bit here and there take turns soliciting the public. Sally finds that he wants to change his complete identity. Even he changes his own name as Jonah. He inquires about the property of Alex after his death. But he realizes that as no one had information of Kent everything was given to Sally and Peter and Savanna. Looking Kent’s interest Sally tries to give some of the share of her property to him but he doesn’t need it for him but for social welfare. He doesn’t wish to keep any relations with anyone even with his mother. When Sally goes to meet him, he leaves Sally for half an hour after formal speaking. After coming back he feels surprised to see her still sitting there. Sally comes back with anger for herself. She wants to give something to Kent but she knows he would not accept the same. She knows he is dying but will not accept clean food but accept the dirty things.

The story presents well-knit plot that shows the black holes that are created between the father and son and after the death of father between the mother and son. Up to the end the mother tries a lot to fill the gap but she gets no success in it.

Check Your Progress-3

Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. What is the profession of Alex?
2. Why Alex and Sally arrange a picnic?
3. Where does Alex arrange the picnic?

4. Why Alex arranges the picnic to Osler Bluff?
5. Where does Savanna look Kent after his leaving the house?
6. From which disease Kent suffers when he lives away from the family?

Terms to Remember

1. Undertone- Suggest
2. twist- turn
3. Domineering- bossy
4. Rebellious- disobedient
5. Geological - environmental

3.3.2 Characterization:

1. Sally - Sally is the mother of Kent, Peter and Savannah, and wife of Alex. She always tries her best to make balance in her family. In the beginning of the story she has two small male children as well as a six month female old baby. Similar to Munro's era Sally from first to end of the story has no personal space. She always works and thinks for her family. She loves and co-operates her husband very much in all his works. After his retirement she starts to work as his assistant in his work of geography. Unfortunately she loses her husband very soon.

Alice has portrayed Sally's character with certain weak points. She always exists in service to her husband and family. She remembers who likes how much mustard on their sandwich. She is an 'overly anxious mother'. There is always care and anxiety in her mind for her children. In the picnic she worries for the danger nearby and really Kent falls in the deep holes. Being the conscious mother she gets timely awareness of the danger and saves him. Then starts her service for Kent; she takes each and every care of Kent in the hospital, in homework, project completion etc. But she becomes anxious of Kent as he leaves the house. Still showing no complaint towards anyone she goes to meet Kent Even when tug between being and letting the children run free. Her two other children leave her alone for education and career purpose. Thus, slowly she turns towards loneliness.

It seems Sally's character is the mouth piece of Munro. Alice Munro had married to a geographer. Her own children left her alone. Like many of Munro's older woman

characters, Sally has developed psychological tricks to help her to cope with her inferior, older-woman status and widowed situation - she has a lifelong habit of imagining herself on an island.

2. Alex - Alex is Sally's husband. He is an insensitive geologist. After his retirement he continues his work, using Sally as his assistant. The pair becomes close during this time as Sally catches his geological curiosity. Later in life he goes into hospital for an operation but never comes home back. He is a representative of husbands of Alice's era. He considers the work of organizing a picnic is the wife's job but he isn't even aware that this work extends far beyond just preparing the picnic.

Always there is a gap between his son, Kent and him. His attitude towards Kent makes Kent to feel the hatred for him. Though he is ahead in saving Kent from the deep holes Kent considers that it is his mother who saved him. This gap later increases wide. After some days Kent leaves the house thinking that his father has no love for him. Even after listening the news of Alex's death Kent gets no emotions about him. Instead he asks for the property he has left.

Kent — Kent, the protagonist in the story is the son of Alex and Sally. He is the elder son of Sally and Alex about 10-12 in the beginning of the story. In the entire story he is depicted as a person who is unable to adjust to his ambition and life. This results in his neurotic growth and is very well understood in the light of Horneyan theory. According to this theory lack of warmth, affection, and love from the family are various reasons that results in one's neurotic behavior.

Kent has the false thoughtless confidence for himself. In his teen years he decides he'll become an important scientist. Beyond his intellectual capacity he studies the hard sciences. In order to be like his father, Kent tries hard but Alex's rude and harsh behavior makes him to get disturbance in his life. In order to overcome such a situation he runs away from his family. Years after he writes a letter to his mother, depicting his state of mind and the reason for his departure. "It seems so ridiculous to me", he said "that a person should be expected to lock themselves into suit of clothes. I mean, like the suit of clothes of an engineer or doctor or geologist and then the skin grows over it, over the clothes, I mean, and that person can't ever get them off (102).

Later Kent turns into a beggar, lives in a far off land. He changes his name to 'Jonah' and detaches himself completely from the family. He begins to live with poor people. Actually it is the emotional hunger that he fulfills among these people that makes him to live with them. The basic aim of Kent was to prove his identity to his family. When Sally scolds Kent to tell about him and not of "those beggars", he screamed, "These people are my life" (112). Kent's concept of life depicted at the end of the story reveals his transformation into a stable being. He is happy with his new identity and wants to live his rest of the life in the same manner. He is representative of the children who lack proper affection, warmth, affection, and love from the family

Kent's character is like a Chris McCandless archetype - bright, unmotivated by sex. He considers himself spiritual, scornful, thoughtless with his own health and dismissive of the people who have given him the most. The estranged son in Munro's story is perhaps an exaggerated version of young men everywhere, who almost always distance themselves from their mothers to a degree.

Peter — Peter is six year old son of Sally and Alex. Later when grows, goes into medicine. It is a minor character in the story.

Savannah- Savannah is six month old daughter in the beginning of the story. She is named after a geological feature. Savanna had never known Kent very well because she was just nine years old when Kent leaves the house. But the impact of her father's death would have made her to know about family need. She thinks about the loneliness of her mother. She hopes Kent's company would soften the grief of her mother so once when she looks Kent on TV she searches his address and arranges her mother's meeting with him. She wishes to fulfill the dream of her father that she would be a lawyer.

Check Your Progress-4

Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. Who is the protagonist of the story?
2. Who is the eldest son of Sally?
3. What does Kent do after leaving the house?
4. Which name Kent accepts for him after leaving the house?

5. What does Peter do as a grown up?

Terms to Remember

1. Archetype — Prototype
2. Unmotivated- Unenthusiastic
3. Inconsiderate- Selfish
4. Anxious- Worried
5. Estranged- Alienated

3.3.3 Major Themes:

Emotional labor of mother:

Or Psychological conflict of Sally:

Alice Munro is a leading Canadian short story writer. She is a significant writer for her style of reflecting soul of her characters through her stories. Her characters convey the mysteries of the human mind. The selected short story, “*Deep Holes*” also performs the same. It defines the impact of conflicts, tensions and disturbed relationship on the psyche of characters. Such psychological problems are well understood through psychoanalysis. She writes about human sufferings, repression, conflicts, and inner turmoil. She brings forth the hidden darkness of the human mind in a very revealing manner.

Alice Munro is an expert at depicting the poignant labor of motherhood. “*Deep Holes*” is not the story of the son - it’s the story of the mother, who deals with the failures of a child. It is a tragic story that is centered on the emotional labor and mental load of mother. Sally, the mother character in this story is a family centered character. She devotedly loves her husband as well as her children. The story reflects her love, care for her family. In the beginning of the story this love and care reflects through a family picnic. Her timely help saves her elder son, Kent, who falls in deep holes. Sally and her husband drag him out of the deep hole but while taking Kent out he becomes unconscious. Alex takes him to Collingwood Hospital. Though no internal injury he gets his both legs broken. This accident enhances the gap between the father and the son. Kent gives full credit to his mother for saving his life. His despise for his father makes Kent to lose his interest in the family. This incident brings several changes in his life. He leaves the house and college. Even he informs

about him through just a letter after several days and then nothing. After the death of Alex, coincidentally, Sally finds him. It is the great anguish of Sally that a mother meets her son after a long gap with great hopes and gains nothing. Because she realizes that Kent is now no more her son but a person has devoted to the spiritual side; that is of community. Even he has left behind his own name that is given by his parents. Shocked Sally thinks of running away from the dirty place where he lives but still she waits for him. When Kent comes back after a full half-hour, he feels surprise to see his own mother still there. Actually Kent's reaction itself is a great shock for the mother. Sally would love to reconnect with her estranged son. She does not reconnect with her son. The meeting has driven them further apart. The story depicts how children can grow with dislike for mothers. Now she must live with that.

“Deep Holes” is a tragedy, because Sally does not get what she desires. How does a mother cope with it? Sally's shortcoming, therefore, is that she exists in service to her husband and family. Munro's female characters are not expected to be 'strong female characters'. Finding a way to live happily as a wife and mother is Sally's own kind of strength. But she fails in her exercise and the tragic situation snatches not only her husband from her but also her son. At the end of the story she accepts her estranged life.

Psychological, emotional and generational gap:

Alice Munro is a leading Canadian short story writer. She is a significant writer for her style of presenting the generational gap at all level. *“Deep-Holes”* is a story about a son who grows completely and mysteriously alienated from his family. The readers meet the full family together only once in the beginning when they go to the picnic to Osler Bluff to celebrate Alex's achievement. But the elder son's falling in the deep holes brings many changes in the family. Kent who is full of prejudices about his father, Alex, gets more hatred for his father. He becomes more and more away from his father. When the limit crosses of his despise very soon he leaves the house and disappears for several days. Later he informs about him through the letter but it shows no feeling for the family. Thus, the story begins with the journey of Kent's family. Munro is a well known for crafting such kind of stories in which human emotion plays greater roles. She presents how the fluctuation of emotion results in psychological crisis in the characters. In the beginning of the story, at the picnic spot, the board indicating *“Deep-Holes”* is seen. It symbolically predicts the emotional as well as the generational gap between father and son. In the entire story

Kent is depicted as a person who is unable to adjust to his ambience and life. This results in his emotional disturbance. It is very well understood in the light of Horneyan theory. According to this theory, lack of warmth, affection, and love from the family are various reasons that result in one's neurotic behavior.

The protagonist of the story, Kent is always hungry of the love and attention of his father. He tries his level best to prove himself before his father. On the contrary, Alex always neglects towards him. Alex shows indifference towards him. He calls him as "a sneak and trouble maker and the possessor of dirty mind" (96). Both Sally and Alex regard Kent as a trouble maker in the family. Alex's rude and harsh behavior shatters his world and he quits from the game. He gets frustrated. His frustration reflects through a letter he writes to Sally. He writes, "It seems so ridiculous to me that a person should be expected to lock themselves into suit of clothes. I mean, like the suit of clothes of an engineer or doctor or geologist and then the skin grows over it, over the clothes, I mean, and that person can't ever get them off (102)".

The effect of the internal conflict in Kent turns him in a beggar. There comes drastic change in his life style. From his name to living style, to friend circle, to his work and thoughts, there comes complete change. He changes his name as 'Jonah' and accepts to live away from the family. He begins to live with poor people and for poor people. Actual reason of his change in life style is his emotional, psychological and generational gap that is created in the family because of his father's approach. While accepting the new life style he gets no gap among them. So when Sally calls the people with whom he lives as "those beggars", he screams, "These people are my life" (112). Earlier when he lives with his family no one understands his feelings. He accepts this life to find the stability. He feels happy and satisfied with his new identity and desires to live his rest of the life. It shows his attachment with them. He creates his own family where he finds no psychological, emotional and generational gap.

Desire:

The present story reflects the theme of desire. In the era of Alice Munro the women characters especially, mothers and wives were not allowed to express desires. In Munro's short stories the women characters are not shown expressing their own desire. Theirs are quiet desires which allow these women to continue fulfilling the

roles they have been channeled into, without rocking the patriarchal boat. The women are never blamed for the milieu which formed them. They are not expected to be 'strong female characters'. Finding a way to live happily as a wife and mother is its own kind of strength.

Sally in "*Dead Holes*" always lives for fulfilling the desires of her husband and children. Her desire always lives suppressed. Her inner soul and taste is revealed through her help to Kent in Project completion. There she reveals her like, of imagining herself on an island, knowing the new world which is not shown on the map. But she arranges the picnic according to the wish of her husband and for celebrating his achievement. Later though she would love to reconnect with her estranged son she accepts the alienation, Kent's life style. She can't express her desire for the union of the family. The minor character in the story, Savannah, daughter of Sally also wishes to fulfill the desire not of own but of his dead father, to enter in law.

Symbolism:

The story "*Deep Holes*" is a tragic story. It is quite symbolic. In the beginning of the story the writer has shown the picnic scene in which the protagonist of the story, Kent falls in the deep holes. These deep holes are quite symbolic as from first to the end there remains the emotional gaps among the human relations. In the end Sally does not get what she desires. She does not reconnect with her son. The meeting with Kent that takes place after several years still increases the gap between them.

Sally has a lifelong habit of imagining herself on an island. These islands are symbolic. In her imagination, these islands are real, geolocatable places. It signifies the separation of her family. Even after providing the utmost care to everyone, she has to bare the alienation. Alex's untimely death, Kent's departure from the family, other two children's living away from Sally gives the loneliness to her. At the end of story when Sally disappoints to see the indifference of Kent and his unwillingness to leave the beggarly style of living she feels disappointed. This 'separateness' is symbolized through the lasagne-for-one she eats after the disappointing visit. It is very pathetically described by Munro through following lines:

She heats up a single serving of lasagna. She buys these separated, precooked, and frozen portions now. They are quite good and not too expensive when you think that there's no waste.

But later she controls herself and decides to compromise with her life. She decides to live her own life enjoying her friend circle, calling the friends. She enjoys small luxuries such as a glass of wine with her meal. And then she looks at the people who are elder than her and learned to live their own life for themselves, who have learned to live on their own islands.

3.3.4 Title of the Story:

Alice Munro is a leading Canadian short story writer. This Nobel laureate is excellent in describing the psychology of characters. Her works highlight the soul and inner speech of the mind. Even the title of her stories contains duet meanings that can be interpreted through a deep psychological coming. In this story, Munro not only speaks about the crevasses that are seen through naked eyes, but also the spaces created in human relations that hurt the people a lot and affect their life. These unnoticed spaces are more dangerous than the visible one.

“Deep Holes” reveals the mysteries of the human mind through the characters. It explains the impact of conflicts, tensions and disturbed relationship on the psyche of characters. It depicts the disturbed familial relationships and their effect on the psyche of a growing child. The title of the story is significant as it reflects sufferings, repression, conflicts, and inner turmoil of Kent and his parents. The whole story reveals the emotional black holes between the parents and their elder son, Kent. Kent always assumes the dryness of relation between his father and him. There is always divergence of Kent with Alex that creates minor disputes and indifference on the different approaches of life.

Throughout Kent's journey, Munro very cleverly shows the result of the minor conflicts between father and son that turn into isolation of the son. From his early childhood Kent begins to feel a lack of warmth, affection, and love from his own family. Especially, his father's treatment to him creates much wider gap between them. He starts to dislike Alex. Kent begins to consider that his father is not the ideal and his best option was to leave his family behind and initiate a new life. The negligence of his father motivated him to become a beggar and find a new family for love and affection. This journey of Kent's life throughout the story exemplifies the

evolution of conflict between him and his father. The reader experiences the consequences of a father's indifference towards his son. Furthermore, the metaphorical deep holes Kent and Alex experience in their relationship ultimately shape the story as a whole and cause Kent to isolate himself from personal, familial and societal acquaintances.

As Sally, the narrator itself points out in the story, "...far beneath her shoes was a crater filled with rubble never to be seen, that never had been seen, because there were no eyes to see it at its creation or throughout the long history of its being made and filled and hidden and lost." (104) After Alex's death Sally gets the news about Kent's beggar like life and tries to fill the holes in their relation. But she realizes the radical change that Kent has accepted in his life. He goes beyond practical and normal life. He just wants to live for community. Even he wipes his own identity and gets new name as Jonah. He shows no love or excitement to meet his mother and no interest in the property. His present situation makes Sally to accept the black holes in the relations.

Thus, the story depicts the physical black holes that signify the psychological black holes, gaps in the relations.

Check Your Progress-5

Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. Where does Alex take to Kent after the accident?
2. Who drag Kent out of Deep Holes?
3. What is the reason behind uncommon behavior of Kent?
4. How do the women characters behave in Munro's stories?
5. What kind of relation is there between Alex and Kent?

Terms to Remember

1. Negligence- inattention
2. Psychological- emotional
3. radical- drastic
4. mystery- Vagueness

5. Ultimately – In the end

3.3.5 Exercises

Answer the following in detail:

1. Discuss the symbolism in the story “*Deep Holes*”.
2. Draw the character sketch of Sally.
3. Draw the character sketch of Kent.
4. Discuss Psychological, emotional and generational gap in the story, “*Deep Holes*”.
5. Discuss the disturbed motherhood described in the story “*Deep Holes*”.

Write Short notes

1. Relationship between Alex and Kent
2. Post-colonial situation in the story “*Deep Holes*”.
3. Character sketch of Alex
4. The end of the novel
5. The title of the novel

3.4 Face

3.4.1 Story line *Face*:

“*Face*” is the sixth story of the story collection *Too Much Happiness* by Alice Munro. It is a semi-novel. It is presented in the form of the biography of the narrator. Munro describes here the reflection of past on present of the narrator. The story throws light on the composite effects that childhood events perform on adult life. This is the story of a person, who has had a successful career as a public figure, as a radio broadcaster, is ironically, allowed him to keep his face hidden from many people who feel a strong connection to him.

The story begins with the disturbance that takes place in a well settled family because of the newly born son. The baby’s birthmark of **dark purple** color covering the right side of the baby’s face shocks the father. The father’s disappointment and despise gives mental agony not only to the son but also to the wife. When he first looks at him he expresses his disappointment as, “What a chunk of chopped liver”.

Then there starts the growth of the child facing the father's extreme bitterness and his mother's devotion towards him. For the narrator his father is the beast and mother is the rescuer and protector. In the childhood the narrator never gets the awareness of his mark till his girlfriend, Nancy, daughter of Sharon Suttles, paints her face with red to look like him. Till then he has no knowledge of the darkness of the mark. He considers it as great insult and decides to punish her. But his mother's angry and emotional reaction on this act creates a great show off. This incident becomes a turning point in his life. After this incident the narrator's mother sends him in a boy's school.

The story progresses with the narrator's life with his friends. The narrator's friends call him as Grape-Nuts. In this life though he is taunted by friends it is quite normal to keep a nick name to everyone. So he never feels sorry for the same. Surprisingly enough he becomes an actor on radio, an announcer. He begins to act in the regular plays of Shakespeare and novels of Ibsen on national radio. Then he gets the work of an announcer, first in Winnipeg, then back in Toronto. In addition to it, he hosts an eclectic musical show for twenty years. He becomes a popular person. It is the great irony that a person who is most disliked for his birthmark becomes a popular one without coming before the people. It is his strange popularity that he becomes a very public figure and also a very private one, much beloved and much alone.

Meanwhile his father gets a stroke in his early fifties and he becomes bed ridden. His mother offers fully to his service with no complaint for several months. But in reply his father never misses a chance to scold and use evil words for the mother. On his death the narrator gets no pain or grief for his death. But he dislikes his mother's tolerance, saintly figure. After some years he loses his mother.

While narrating the life story of the narrator the narration progresses towards the narrator's attempts to seek the love from the girl-friends. Since this is ultimately a story about the possibility of love, Munro balances the unlikely illusion of being destined for a romantic love with the strange and uncontrollable accidents. The story states the behavior with a strong sense of fate. He comes across several women in his life but no where he finds the true love that accepts his face with the birth mark. He gets everyone leaving him on the half road. But only one, his childhood friend Nancy, who paints her own face red for looking like him proves as his true friend. As because of education he separates from Nancy in his youth he forgets her. Even he

does not remember her face properly. But her strange information gives him the sense of pure love that someone expresses for him. Once after the death of his father he realizes a shocking thing that Nancy who had painted her face was not to tease him but to look like him. Later she repents over her deed and to get the similar mark on her face she cuts her cheek seriously. In his description of the event, he clarifies for readers that Nancy was not “taunting”, rather “bursting with satisfaction, as if this was what she had been aiming for her whole life”. In the old age the narrator’s mother she expresses her wish that he should have married to the girl who cut her cheek for him, “that girl who sliced up her face”.

The story is presented in the form of first person narration where the narrator goes on narrating his life story where he comes across several personages where he is severely hated for his birth mark. But the selfless love by his mother, Nancy, various listeners and by a girl in the hospital when he gets wasp-stung also satisfies him in the life.

Check Your Progress-6

Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. Which literary form is applied to present the story Face?
2. What was the age of the narrator’s father when he got stroke?
3. Which career helps the narrator to gain popularity without showing his face to the world?
4. Who proved as the true friend of the narrator?
5. What is the color of the birthmark on the face of the narrator?

Terms to Remember

Broadcaster – Announcer on Radio

Burst- Disintegrate

Unfurl- Open

Ultimately -Eventually

Composite – Complex

3.4.2 Themes:

Disappointment / Failure in marriage/ womanhood:

Alice Munro is very popular for presenting the poor situation of the women those who suffer through the of dominance of husbands. Munro belongs to the era in which the women were considered as an inferior to the male. The women used to suppress their desires and very calmly accept their fate without any complaint. Especially the torture of the husband was accepted in those days easily. The narrator's mother in the story "*Face*" belongs to such class of women. Her grief starts with the marriage with someone who is born and bred in complete dissimilar atmosphere. There are so many divergent things between the narrator's mother and the father. The narrator's father belongs to very rich family. He is well educated from well known college and belongs to big business. He likes to play golf and crazy of sailing whereas his mother has never gone to college. Even she has to borrow money to attend the school from the teachers. She is afraid of sailing. She feels awkward at golf, and she is not beautiful and stylish and modern as his father likes. Like the external factors both do not match each other regarding even their natures. The father is very rude, always commenting to everybody and keeps superiority complex. He doesn't miss a chance to scold his wife and on the contrary his mother is quite tolerant, loving and patient lady. In addition to it she gives birth to a son who has a large birth mark on his left chick. The narrator's father feels disappointed to his son. Then he never loves and shows affection towards his son as well as wife. He does not take breakfast, lunch or dinner with his son. But his mother takes the meal with him and part of her dinner also, the rest with his father. Still she never refers her husband brutal but while speaking with the narrator she refers him as His Grace.

The narrator feels very sorry for his father's dominant nature that causes him to get brain stroke. But even after depending on mother he never stops using abusive words for her. Still she continues her service towards him. Even for her whole life she tolerates his extra marital relations. She never asks her husband what is his relation with Sharon Suttles, who lives in Belle's cottage or later in his apartment free of cost with her daughter, Nancy. The narrator's mother is a woman who doesn't seem to exist outside the sacredness of her home. She is the woman whose identity is fully constructed around the consent and support to her husband. She has the hint that Sharon is her husband's mistress still her behavior towards Sharon never differs. She does not keep hatred for Sharon till Nancy paints her face to look like the

narrator. According to the era of Munro, narrator's mother acquires self-sacrifice, compromise and patience. After the death of the narrator's husband one of the women calls his mother as, "a saint" which he dislikes. Such a lady in her old age calls herself as cruel and her husband who for whole life gave miseries to her as a kind person. In her old age, for her, he is, "a magnificent lover" and that she herself, "a pretty bad girl." Her nature represents the mentality of contemporary women.

Physical appearance and Identity:

The present story, "*Face*" moves around the impact of physical appearance of a child on the various approaches of the people. The unknown narrator in the story faces the hatred from of his father first to end because of the birth mark he gets at one whole side of his face. It is dark purple at one side. Even though it's a male child his father is shocked to see his face. He angrily reacts, "What a chunk of chopped liver." The story begins with the father's reaction and then continues the narrator's narration of his story that moves around his birth mark.

The narrator never gets a single moment of love from his father. He continuously expresses his anger and hatred for the boy that he never accompanies his son at the meal. His mother, on the contrary tries her level best to give him love. But one incident in his life transforms his whole life. In his childhood while playing with his neighbor girlfriend Nancy, he shocks to see Nancy getting her whole face painted red. She wishes to look like him. He feels it as his great insult. His mother thinks that if he will live with the boys he will not remember this insult. So she sends him in a boy's school. In the school his friends call him as Grape-Nuts. When he talks about his girlfriends he is only trying to say how normal people are extra kind to different looking people just to show them generous. On the contrary, the narrator describes a gardener, Pete who shows great anger and hatred for the narrator. Pete used to drag one leg after him and used to carry his head bent to one side. Both are flawed, the obvious victims of physical misfortune. He narrates the reason, "Each may be reminded by the other of something he'd sooner forget." However, "*Face*" recommends that there is hope and optimism at the side of physically flawed people. The narrator manages to have a successful career as a voice actor and radio presenter. He also doesn't blame his school days and as an adult, he gets many more friends. Even several women come in his close contact. His fondness for his job on National Radio shows how he tries to find solace in something where he need not be judged based on his looks. He had an identity based on his voice.

The most powerful plus positive aspects of the physical disturbance is shown as the true love he seeks from Nancy though it remains only in the mind of Nancy. Nancy's action of painting her face and then cutting her own cheek to have similar mark is the symbol of selfless love and acceptance beyond the physical level. Later the narrator gets stung by wasp to his right eye that causes him to be hospitalized. She meets him in the hospital and reads the poetry to entertain him. Though the narrator doesn't realize who the poetry reader is, he gets little idea that she might be Nancy herself.

Love:

The story "*Face*" shows the truth that love is not based on sight and physical appearance. The narrator suffers from his father's despise and sympathy by his several friends on his physical indifference. But there comes a person in his life that shows that love is not based on physical appearance. Nancy, his childhood friend, paints her face red to look like him. Her intention is not to tease him but to have similarity with him. Later she cuts her own face to have similar mark on her own face. He realizes that Nancy is the only person who has fully accepted him as he is; who has seen him not as flawed but as complete. Even he realizes the sense of love through one more incidents. Once the narrator gets stung by wasp to his right eye that causes him to hospitalize a girl comes to entertain him by reading poetry. Though the narrator doesn't understand rather it is kept secret by the writer who the poetry reader is.

Irony:

The story "*Face*" is presented in an ironical form. There are two examples that show irony. Firstly, the narrator who from his birth onwards becomes the cause of disturbance in the relation of his parents. His birthmark on the face makes his father feel insulted. The person who is such a rich and famous personality considers his own son as the point of insult. He feels nervous to come to his own house. He begins more drinking and smoking. He gets stroke in his early fifties and also dies soon. How ironic it is for a boy who is responsible for his mother's disturbed married life because of the birthmark. For his parents and almost everyone the mark is something disruptive whereas with Nancy, it is something desirable. At least he has never met someone else like Nancy, who not only accepts him unquestioningly but develops an attachment where his hiding the face is not needed.

“*Face*” narrates the story of a person, who has had a nun beaten career as a public figure, as a radio broadcaster which has, ironically, allowed him to keep his face hidden from many people who strongly feel to connect him. He lives his entire life hidden from them. At last he gets a successful life on many levels. At his retirement, he gets various letters from listeners who consider him as real friend with whom they can share their joys and sorrows.

Further the narrator’s father who is very much unkind and brutal towards his wife, one who hates his family for his whole life, one who has all bad habits like, drinking, smoking, keeping extra marital affair, is refereed by the narrator’s mother as ‘His Grace’. This title is ironic considering that the narrator’s father is a graceless person who neither appreciates his son nor his wife. Instead of loving them, he hurts them through his insensitive behavior. Besides, the narrator acknowledges that immediately after his birth his father was unwilling to accept him.

Check Your Progress-7

Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. Why is the narrator grief-stricken?
2. Why does Nancy paint her face red?
3. What makes Pete to show anger towards the narrator?
4. What are the contrasting aspects between the narrator’s parents?
5. Whom does the narrator’s mother address as ‘His Grace’?

Terms to Remember

1. Divergent- Different
2. Unbeaten – Popular
3. Disruptive– troublesome
4. Recommend- Suggest
5. Transform - Change

3.4.3 Characters

Father:

The narrator's father in the story, "*Face*" is the son of an uneducated rich man who owned a tannery and then a glove factory. He is a popular person around the town. He seeks education from a college and then joins an organization. Later when the glove factory closes he enters the insurance business. He is a good golfer, an excellent sailor. He is a brutal, unkind and egotistical person. He is a drunkard, smoker and enjoys extra-marital affairs. No one knows why Sharon Suttles, a widow lives without rent in his Bells' Cottage. Even how she gets the job at him it also remains unnoticed. So the narrator expresses his doubt whether there is illicit relation between them. Actually narrator's father is a dissatisfied in his marriage. There is no match between husband and wife. His wife is totally contrasting to him, uneducated, simple living, submissive natured lady who belongs to poor family.

The narrator's father always hates each and everything that he comes across. His superiority complex provokes him to hate and despise everything, foods, makes of automobiles, music, manners of speech and modes of dress, radio comedians, and, later on, television personalities, along with the usual variety of races and classes. The narrator describes him, "At home, my father's most vivid quality was a capacity for hating and despising." He is such a dominating figure that the narrator describes his nature as *Calls a spade a spade*. Even the birth of male child also does not satisfy him. When he first looks his baby with a big purple mark on the face he feels too much disappointed and decides not to allow baby in his house. Though his wife comes with the baby he never shares any meal or a moment with the baby. On the contrary, he feels the child as the point of insult for him. So the child has to bare his tremendous hatred and disgust. Because of his too much drinking habit he gets a stroke in his fifties, and soon he dies after several months in bed. In the bedridden situation also he scolds a lot to his wife. In the end the narrator's mother refers him as 'His Grace', kind. It is an ironical remark she throws after his death. For his whole life he tortures her too much that she sarcastically calls him so.

Mother:

The narrator's mother in the story is a very simple, kind hearted lady who doesn't get the opportunity to go to college. She belongs to poor class family till her marriage but she marries with a very rich, unkind, dominant fellow. Because of the

opposite natures her marriage life is quite disturbed. Her husband always scolds her for the dissatisfaction. Further when she gives birth to a purple mark baby the gap in husband and wife still enlarges.

Though her husband is very much unkind towards the baby, she never feels the child's mark as lacuna. On the contrary, she considers it as sign of beauty. She says, "It makes the white of that eye look so lovely and clear". She eats the meal and part of her dinner with him and the rest with her husband. She sits through his meal with the narrator but eats with the husband. But she takes each care to protect her son from the teasing. When Nancy paints her face red to look like the narrator his mother immediately takes the decision of sending him off for the school in the boys school so that he should not remember the childhood event played by a girl. Even not to disturb him she keeps the secret of Nancy's cutting her chick to get the permanent mark like the narrator. But at last she unfolds the event at her son. She is such a kind fellow that along with her son she takes neighbor's daughter on beach, trains her to swim. She offers her service towards her husband till his death without complaint. At the funeral, a white-haired woman says to the narrator, "Your mother is a saint." In her old age she calls herself as a very unkind fellow whereas her husband as kind. She calls him as 'His Grace'.

Narrator:

The narrator in the story "*Face*" is an unknown one. The whole story is his life story that moves around his ups and downs, hate and love he receives throughout his life. His story begins with his birth where his father rejects to accept him because of his face mark. He receives no love from his father till the end. But he gets love, affection and care from his mother. For him, his father is the beast, and mother the rescuer and protector. Because of his mother he considers his birthmark not as dark red but to be a soft brown color till Nancy's painting her face red. Then his mother sends him to school where he starts a new life. There his mark makes his life something uncommon. He becomes, "The mother-coddled purple-faced lad, thrown suddenly amid the taunts, the ruthless assaults, of young savages." His friends give him the name Grape-Nuts.

The character of the narrator shows that the face matters less. He, though lives hiding his face for his whole life, he becomes a popular public figure, a radio broadcaster. His liking for his job on National Radio just shows how he tries to find

solace in something where he need not be judged based on his looks. He gets an identity based on his voice. Further his birth mark does not come in his way of getting friends. He has so many friends, even girl friends. But in this regard he realizes that the people are extra kind to different looking people just to show themselves kind and generous. Still he feels satisfied in the case of true love with who, unfortunately he doesn't directly connects in his youth. His childhood friend Nancy, tries to copy him firstly by painting the face red and then by cutting her face to get permanent mark.

Nancy:

Nancy is a childhood girl friend of the narrator. Nancy lives with her mother Sharon Suttles. Her father was a doctor. But she loses her father very soon and begins to live with her mother in Bells' Cottage. Nancy and the narrator used to play with each other in the childhood. She is just half years younger than him. She proves for him as a turning point in his life. Once in the childhood Nancy paints her face with red paint to look like the narrator. She has no dislike for the narrator on the contrary, she wants to end the gap between them. Even she cuts her own face at the right side for getting the similar mark on her face. Nancy not only accepts him unquestioningly but also develops an attachment with him.

Sharon Suttles:

Sharon Suttles is the neighbor of the narrator and mother of Nancy. For a few years in the childhood of the narrator Sharon used to live in Bells' Cottage of the narrator free of cost. She comes to town with her husband, a doctor who was setting up his first practice, and within a year or so he dies by blood poisoning. Then she continues to live in the town with her baby, having no money and, "no people." This must have meant no people who could help her. At some point, she gets a job in the narrator's father's insurance office and comes to live in Bells' Cottage.

Vemala: Velma is the maid servant of the narrator's family.

Pete :

Pete is a gardener. There is resemblance between the narrator and Pete that both are physically indifferent, uncommon fellows. Pete drags one leg after him and carries his head bent to one side. So he works slowly but diligently and is more or less always in a bad temper. The narrator's mother shows him sympathy so the

narrator also speaks with him in soft-voice and respect, but Pete dislikes it. Both are flawed, the obvious victims of physical misfortune. He narrates the reason, “Each may be reminded by the other of something he’d sooner forget.”

Check Your Progress-8

Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. Who is Vemala?
2. Who is Pete?
3. What was the profession of Nancy’s father?
4. Who is Sharon Suttles?
5. Where do Sharon and Nancy live?

Terms to Remember

1. Resemblance - Similarity
2. Munificent – generous
3. Solace – Comfort
4. Diligently – Meticulously
5. Discard- Reject

3.4.4 Exercises

Answer the following questions in detail:

1. Discuss “*Face*” as an ironical story.
2. Draw the character sketch of the narrator.
3. Draw the character sketch of Mother.
4. Comment on the significance of physical appearance and Identity reflected in the story “*Face*”.
5. Comment on the title of the story “*Face*”.

Write Short notes

6. Relationship between the narrator and his father.
7. Post-modern reflection of female life reflected in *Face*

8. Character sketch of Nancy
9. The end of the story
10. The title of the story

3.5 *Too Much Happiness*

3.5.1 Story Outline:

“*Too Much Happiness*” is the title story of the collection of stories entitled *Too Much Happiness*. The biography, *Little Sparrow: A Portrait of Sophia Kovalevsky* (1983) by Don H. Kennedy is the book that Alice Munro plainly accepts as the main source of inspiration for her story. Alice Munro finds a way of introducing the multiple independent variables of Sophia’s life through a stratagem that apparently starts with an intimation of linear time. The story focuses on the last weeks of Sophia’s life and follows the train journey from Genoa to Stockholm where she meets to her end some days after her arrival. With stops in Paris and Berlin, the journey takes about eight days and provides the narrative with an elementary linear subtleties that moves towards an ending, the geographical destination of Stockholm and Sophia’s imaginary anticipation of marriage and at last her death. Sophia Kovalevsky died because of pneumonia in February 1891, a month after her forty-first birthday.

This Chekhovian tale opens just as Sophia, the protagonist recovers from the suicide of her first husband and the death of her sister. She accepts an academic post in Stockholm. It takes place in the final weeks of her life, but covers the rest of her life in flashbacks. These last days consist largely of a train journey that takes her around Western Europe, including Paris, Germany, and finally back to Stockholm, her home. Although the story is set just before her death, it includes several flashbacks that end up telling the story of her life. It is in the form of memories. The story is divided in four sections.

First Section begins with the meeting with Maksim Maksimovich Kovalevsky that takes place in 1891, as Sophia is walking through a cemetery in Genoa with him. The readers learn that they share the name Kovalevsky, because Sophia is the widow of his distant cousin. As they walk through the cemetery, she teases that one of them will now die this year, because that's what happens after people walk through a

cemetery. This turns out to be prophesying, or a hint at what is to come later in the story, since she dies at the end of 'Too Much Happiness.'

The story develops with the flashback narrating the love affair between Maksim and Sophia. They meet in 1888, and immediately Sophia falls in love. Sophia is a well-known mathematician, unusual for a woman in those days whereas Maksim is Law Professor. She manages her career with her daughter. Though contrasting, she thinks that Maksim will not bother the contrast and he will give the scope to her talent. But Maksim finds her fame as an academic to be threatening. When she wins the Bordin Prize the situation becomes worse. He appears to be jealous. He rejects to marry her saying that he needs peace. He rejects her love because of her reputation and popularity.

The second section starts with her journey to Paris to see Victor Jaclard, her dead sister's husband. It is really her young nephew, Urey, her sister, Anuita's child. This journey gives the flashback of whole story related with her sister and her (Sophia) first husband in the year 1871. The flashback reminds her sister's love for a Communard, in Paris. Then she remembers that Aniuta's search for her husband on the streets of Petersburg. The flashback shows how her late husband, Vladimir, rescues Jaclard by bribing the general to escape to Switzerland. Even he gives him his own passport. This flashback reminds her of the huge Parisian hospital full of dead soldiers and bloodied citizens, and one of the dead persons is her own husband, Vladimir. She runs away from all these casualties, looking for Maksim, who is safe from the fighting in the Hotel Splendide. She is sure Maksim will get her out of this. When she reaches in Paris she goes to meet her nephew Urey. But at first she meets with her dead sister's husband Jaclard. He greets her cold heartedly and recalls the memories where he fought for his nation. Though he is helped a lot by giving passport and money by Vladimir he shows no gratitude towards it. He speaks very rudely about his late wife. Sophia comes to know that he has remarried with a French governess. When Sophia meets to her nephew she realizes that he has tremendous hatred for her (Sophia). He expresses his hatred towards her by hating Mathematics. He says that he likes to run omnibus rather than being Mathematician. He uses ill words for her profession. Still she gives him some money. The section ends with Sophia's wish that perhaps in future Urey will show respect and love towards his aunt though after her death.

In the third section Sophia describes her train journey to Paris. She likes Paris very much though she has not very good memories of the wives of the officers in Paris. They keep a proper distance from the Russians. She memorizes how she was greeted and given the Bordin Prize for her skill in Mathematics. But they rejected to give her job. Now she feels very much excited to visit a Mathematics professor Weierstrass whose house is on Potsdam Street in Berlin. She remembers his house, students and his two sisters. She remembers how she was initially avoided by the professor. But later by looking her brilliance he accepted her to teach her. Weierstrass realized that Sophia was a brilliant student; the kind that he had always hoped would come his way. Later their relation progressed from teacher and pupil to fellow mathematicians. While remembering her days in the house of professor she remembers how professor's family and he himself felt surprised and pitied to the marriage of Sophia with Vladimir. Here the narration unfolds the relation between Vladimir and Sophia. Both had come together not for universal purpose. In Russia the girls alone were not sent outside without the consent of parents so she married with Vladimir for liberty. After the marriage both went abroad and did not continue to live under one roof anymore. Heidelberg, then Berlin for Sophia, Munich for Vladimir. He visited Heidelberg when he could to meet Sophia but when Sophia used to be in the company of her sister Aniuta and her friends Zhanna and Julia. While remembering the past Sophia reaches in the professor's house but feels shocked to meet him as he is suffering from pneumonia. It seems perhaps she will not meet him again. She tells the news of death of her sister, suicide of her husband and her remarriage with a Russian who will not bother her progress. She assures that she will get more scope to her talent and teaching with him. It's clear from Sophia's thoughts in the story that she cares very much about his opinions. In the past he always used to help her. When she had no money he used his impression at his student cum friend Mittag-Leffler for the job and she became the first woman professor working full time in a European University. In time, she became close friend of his sisters. So she visits them on her way back to Stockholm on her train journey.

The forth section describes Sophia's memory after her graduation how she spent her life lively with her husband and her sister keeping her degree and knowledge aside. Even she neglects the letters of Weierstrass for to be in touch of Mathematics. Meanwhile, she lost her parents and by inheritance she got the property which she

invested in public baths attached to a greenhouse, a bakery, and a steam laundry. She and Vladimir dreamed a lot but the weather in Petersburg as well as the builders and other people's cheating and unstable market made them indebted. She started writing theater reviews and popular science pieces for the newspapers, more marketable talent and not so disturbing to other people or so exhausting to herself, as mathematics. Then they shifted to Moscow to check their luck.

The last section starts with her further journey to Stockholm. She leaves Berlin in the early afternoon by saying goodbye to Weierstrass. In this journey she feels too much cold, sore throat and cold. In the train she meets with a man, a doctor on the island of Bornholm who speaks so closely with her that she gets the image of her would be husband, Maksim in him. He forbids her to go Copenhagen as there is smallpox in Copenhagen. So she changes her route. He helps her to get the train ticket and also gives medicine for her sore throat. Then her mind begins to get various thoughts related with Anuita, Jaclard, Vladimir. At last her train journey finishes in Helsingor, border of Denmark. From there she starts her journey through a ferry to Stockholm. During this journey she passes through various parts of Denmark, Sweden and Germany. She is completely confused of French money, German money, Danish money. Once while getting a porter in Sweden she offers him Danish money which doesn't work. The porter leaves her luggage there so she has to run behind the train carrying the heavy luggage. Anyhow she reaches in the train with the help of the conductor but in it she begins coughing. Then she remembers her first stumbling on trigonometry, when she was twelve years old. Professor Tyrtoev, a neighbor at Palibino, had dropped off the new text he had written to be read by her father. She studied the chapter on optics in her so small age in which she had no basic knowledge of Mathematics. It shows her inborn talent of Mathematics. At last on Friday she reaches in Stockholm and also successfully delivers her lecture at 2.00 'o'clock. Then she goes to Teresa Guldens' house in fresh mood wearing party dress. When comes back she calls her colleague Mittag-Leffler asking him to get her his doctor. When he himself comes with the doctor she speaks with him frankly and enthusiastically about Mathematics then again about her husband then about the doctor of Bornholm whom she meets in the train. But later she asks about her past husband. The doctor suspects about her kidney problem. She expresses her wish to meet Fufu in a Gypsy costume. After suffering for two days, on Monday, she dies at four o'clock. But before the death she asks Teresa Gulden to

look after Fufu. She speaks her last words, “Too Much Happiness”. At last her wish of marrying Maksim remains incomplete. It seems she was full of ambitions and hopes about her life but she meets her death so early. The people bury Sophia in the New Cemetery, in Stockholm, at three o’clock in the afternoon. Maksim after some time of her entombment returns to his homeland, to lecture in Petersburg. He founded the Party for Democratic Reform in Russia, taking a stand for constitutional monarchy. The Czarists find him much too liberal. Lenin, however, denounces him as a reactionary. Fufu practices medicine in the Soviet Union, dying there in the mid-fifties of the twentieth century. She shows no interest in mathematics, so she says that Sophia’s name has been given to a crater on the moon.

The story is a brilliant amendment of Munro’s Chekhovian art. It is based on the life of the 19th-century Russian mathematician Sophia Kovalevsky, and takes place in Europe rather than the author’s native Canada. It is set in the final days of the life of Sophia Kovalevsky whose life is fictionalized in this short story. Munro’s this story is not a chronological narrative of Kovalevsky’ life but it is a complex and peculiar structure which allows the reader to inhabit Sophia’s life and to feel what it means to be Sophia Kovalevsky.

Check Your Progress-9

Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. What is the main source of the story *Too Much Happiness*?
2. When did Sophia first meet to Maxism?
3. What is the nationality of Maxism?
4. Where does Jaclard live after the death of his first wife?
5. Whom does Sophia share everything?

Terms to Remember

1. Chronological- Sequential
2. Memorize- Remember
3. Gratitude- Thankfulness
4. Amendment- Modification
5. Entombment - Burial

3.5.1 Themes:

Disturbed womanhood:

Too Much Happiness, the title story of Alice Munro's latest collection (2009), evokes the life of a historical figure, the nineteenth century Russian mathematician Sophia Kovalevsky (1850-1891), the first woman to become a professor at a European University. In 1888, Sophia was awarded the prestigious Bordin Prize by the Academy of Sciences in Paris for her anonymously submitted contribution.

The story shows how Sophia finds herself torn between the ordinary pleasures and frustrations of daily life as a daughter, wife, mother, mistress and a Mathematician. In her youth she finds herself very smart and brilliant in Mathematics. In her twelfth year she exhibits her spark in trigonometry. It shows her inborn talent of Mathematics. By growing age she finds that unmarried Russian girls who want to go abroad to study do not get the permission. So she along with her sister plans for the fake marriage with Vladimir. After the marriage both go abroad but to different places, Sophia to Heidelberg, then to Berlin and Vladimir to Munich. This white marriage helps her to study in Germany and obtain a PhD degree at the University of Göttingen in 1874.

Alice Munro very rightly describes disturbed womanhood through Sophia. Sophia like talented woman has to face several critical situations in her life only because of her womanhood. Sophia feels very happy with her magical gift for mathematics which she enhances in the company of Professor Weierstrass. But later she has to neglect towards her talent and award for the sake of her husband and relatives. She begins to seek enjoyment in the company of her sister and her husband. Even she consoles herself that anyone can have happy housewife life without any talent. So she deliberately neglects towards the suggestions of Professor Weierstrass and accompanies to her husband. Then when her family faces financial loss she prefers to write theater reviews and popular science pieces for the papers more marketable talent and not so disturbing to other people or so exhausting to herself, as mathematics.

But caught in the soul happiness and life for other's satisfaction she rescues her soul and leaves her husband handing over the responsibility of her daughter, Fufu at her friend. But later she bares the suicide of her husband and looks the death of her sister. Then again she restarts her life as a successful novelist and Mathematician.

She wins Bordin Prize of the French Academy of Sciences for her skill in Mathematics. But again her womanhood comes in the way of getting a job according to her talent. The Parisian officers felicitate her for her talent but no one gives the job according to her merit as no woman Mathematician has done the prestigious job. Even their wives do not invite her to their houses. She finds difficult to get the settlement. At last with the help of Professor Weierstrass she can get a job. Only because she is a woman, she is rejected to give membership of the said Academy and also to teach at a French University. Even she can't be eligible for a position in a Russian university although in 1889 member of the Academy of Science of Saint Petersburg accepts her as the member as a corresponding not a regular. Through the influence of her mentor, the German mathematician Karl Weierstrass, and her Swedish colleague Gösta Mittag Leffler, Sophia Kovalevsky becomes a lecturer in the University of Stockholm in 1883, but only can obtain tenure (nomination à vie) in 1889, one year before her death.

According to her settlement problem Sophia faces the male dominance also ego in her private life. After one rocky, failed marriage, which enables her to leave Russia and study abroad, she meets a man named Maksim, with whom she falls passionately in love. The celebrity Sophia's Bordin Prizer, causes Maksim, feeling unnoticed. In Stockholm and Paris he is regarded as "the usual" a man "of solid worth and negotiable reputation, with a certain bulk of frame and intellect" while she is popular as "an utter novelty, a delightful freak, the woman of mathematical gifts and female timidity, quite charming, yet with a mind most unconventionally furnished, under her curls." This contrast creates jealousy in him and he rejects to marry her. At last, after fighting with the situation Sophia dies early in her thirty first.

The complexities of family ties:

In the story "*Too much Happiness*" Alice Munro presents the life of a celebrity personality, the 19th-century Russian mathematician Sophia Kovalevsky, the first woman to become a professor at a European University. In 1888, Sophia was awarded the prestigious Bordin Prize by the Academy of Sciences in Paris for her anonymously submitted contribution.

The present life story depicts the fact that Sophia like worldwide popular personality also is not away from the intricacies of family ties. In her youth her parents oppose to her marriage with Vladimir, the marriage which is meant to get

license to go abroad for study for getting Ph.D. degree. Then she shows her talent and becomes a celebrity. Still she is caught in family ties. Even after her success as a Mathematician she sometimes finds herself in family ties. Later she lives with her husband, Vladimir and also gets a daughter, Fufu. She also bears financial loss and certain complex situations in life. A mother in her never leaves her away without thinking about Fufu. Whenever she leaves Stockholm she goes through proper arrangement of her daughter. Even at the death bed she requests Teresa Gulden, her friend to take responsibility of Fufu. She loves her sister, Anuita very much. So she gets her own husband's, Vladimir's help, to rescue her sister's husband, Jaclard from being punished as communard. She loves her sister's son, Urey very much. Though she knows he has great detestation for her, she goes to meet him. Even after receiving unwelcomed attitude and negligence by her brother in law she waits for her nephew and accepts his insulting remarks on her profession and talent. She expresses her wish that perhaps later, may be after her death he will recognize her worth. Her relation with Maxism shows how she is involved in him. She wishes to marry with this bulky man for getting love and support in her life. But unfortunately she can't get it as Maksim rejects to marry her because of her fame and prosperity.

Love and Independence

"Too Much Happiness," the title story of Alice Munro's latest collection, is a brilliant refinement of her Chekhovian art. It is based on the life of the 19th-century Russian mathematician Sophia Kovalevsky. It takes place in Europe rather than the author's native Canada. Here she exhibits the Love and Independence of women.

Sophia is the world eminent mathematician but in the story Munro displays her as a woman whose mind is completely passionate for her lover. In the beginning of the story the narration goes narrating Maksim, "He takes up too much room, on the divan and in one's mind." Sophia's passion overpowers the value of her scientific achievements. More than her achievements she has great love for him that she wishes to marry him. So she compares his bulky body with his spacious mind. She considers her happiness in marrying Maksim. She imagines her life leading towards happiness by marrying Maksim. Sophia Kovalevsky enters the story merely as a woman but once she achieves The Bordin Prize, there starts complications in the love which she doesn't imagine. She feels to get the settlement in the life after the marriage with Maksim. When Professor Weierstrass expresses doubts about his attitude she assures him that he has no objection with her work and prestige. She assumes that she can

continue her writing as well as teaching even after her marriage. The irony cuts deep when the reader learns that Maksim Kovalevsky, an academic himself, does not tolerate the fame and talent of a woman who is internationally acclaimed for her scientific achievements. Actually the prize proves her intelligence as a mathematician that makes her lover jealous. He dismisses Sophia in a letter, which bears the cruel sentence, "If I loved you I would have written differently." At last Sophia dies without marriage with Maksim. It shows how the orthodox approach in Munro's time created complications in several Sophia like women's life.

The inextricability of happiness and unhappiness

The biography of Sophia Kovalevsky is a series of almost unbeatable struggles. In a letter to Anne-Charlotte, quoted by Kennedy, Sophia says, "you were happiness, and I am, and most likely shall always be struggle." As a nineteenth century Russian woman Sophia cannot attend a university nor can she study abroad without the consent of her parents or without being a married woman. She uses the trick of a white marriage with a fellow liberal, Vladimir Kovalevsky, in order to be able to study in Germany and obtains a Ph.D. degree at the University of Göttingen in 1874. She accepts private tutor Weierstrass in Berlin and follows courses at the University of Heidelberg as an attendant because she cannot enroll as a regular student. She suffers terrible losses, the loss of her sister Aniuta and later that of her husband, Vladimir, who commits suicide. Then she goes to Sweden in order to earn a living for herself and her small daughter.

To Sophia the word happiness means an imagined fulfillment of total love, a homecoming to safety. She considers Maksim's body smell as, "smell of comfort and money". It shows how the prospective of marriage is seen as a freedom from hardship and conflict and scope to the talent and security and the release of a constant and intolerable tension. For Sophia, marriage to Maksim means the end of her banish in Sweden. But unfortunately again the unhappiness overcomes on happiness in her life. Maksim can't tolerate the growing popularity of Sophia and rejects to marry her. Thus, the poor mathematician dies in the unhappy mood with the tension of her daughter's responsibility.

Freedom and Constraints Imposed by Marriage:

Alice Munro has well pictured the nineteenth century Russian life of women through the character of Sophia, a successful novelist and popular Mathematician.

The story reflects the restraints on women. Sophia in her early age desires to study in Germany but in Russia women do not get the consent of the parents to go out of country without marriage. So she arranges the white marriage with Vladimir. Then this marriage becomes the passport for her to get Ph.D. degree in Germany. Here the author shows the freedom sought through marriage. The protagonist can achieve great success and can fulfill her desire because of the marriage. But Munro here creates a question whether the marriage always provides freedom. The first marriage pictures the freedom provided by marriage whereas Sophia's second marriage that doesn't take place as the constraint on the women.

When Sophia tolerates the grief of the suicide of Vladimir she goes to Sweden for the settlement and earning. But she faces insecurity and negligence of the people everywhere so she looks at Maksim as the true support. She expects the freedom from this marriage, the freedom from her strange life and her uncomfortable position in society where she sees herself reflected in the eyes of her colleagues' wives. It shows how the prospective of marriage is seen as a freedom from hardship and conflict and scope to the talent and security and the release of a constant and intolerable tension. For Sophia, marriage to Maksim means the end of her banish in Sweden. But here she misses the mark and she realizes that her popularity comes in the way of her marriage with Maksim. He rejects to marry her. The so called male dominant mentality of nineteenth century creates problems in her marriage. It shows that the marriage imposes the constraints on the talent of the women. The talent is accepted but superior talent than the husband is considered as nuisance.

Check Your Progress-10

Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. Which institute honored Sophia?
2. Which award makes Sophia a special personality in the world?
3. What female life is represented by Sophia in the story *Too Much Happiness*?
4. Why does Sophia arrange white marriage?
5. When does Sophia achieve her degree of Ph.D.?

Terms to Remember

1. prospective - Future

2. Unbeatable - Supreme
3. Intricacy – Complexity
4. Eminent – Famous
5. Detestation - Hatred

3.5.3 Characters:

Sophia Kovalevsky:

Sophia Kovalevsky, the protagonist of the story “*Too Much Happiness*” is a historical character. Sophia Kovalevsky (1850-91) was a Russian mathematician who made noteworthy contributions to analysis, partial differential equations and mechanics. She was a pioneer for women in Mathematics in the world. She was the first woman to obtain a doctorate (in the modern sense) in Mathematics, the first woman appointed to a full professorship in Northern Europe and one of the first women to work for a scientific journal as an editor. She won the prestigious award Bordin Prize of the French Academy of Sciences for her Mathematical skill and she lived through dramatic historical events, including the 1871 Paris Commune. In Stockholm, Sophia Kovalevsky began to write fiction: *Recollections of Childhood* (1889), a memoir of herself and her beloved sister Aniuta and their life on the family estate of Palabino, and *Nihilist Girl*, inspired by both her and Aniuta’s liberal ideals she also wrote her recollections of George Eliot whom she met twice, in 1869 and in 1880. Finally in collaboration with her Swedish friend Anne-Charlotte Leffler, she published a play written in Swedish, *Kämpen för Lyckam* (1887) or *Struggle for Happiness*.

The story describes Sophia as having born talent of Mathematics. In her twelfth year even though she has no basic knowledge of Mathematics she learns trigonometry. Professor Tyrto, a neighbor at Palibino, keeps a book he has written for reading by her father she learns it. Then her talent doesn’t stop her to achieve the highest degree Ph.D. Her magical gift for Mathematics is a “natural gift, like the northern lights,” which not only gives her enormous pleasure but also leads to her winning scholarly acclaim and the prestigious Bordin Prize of the French Academy of Sciences. Sophia is also a successful novelist. This is the great combination of Mathematics plus Literature in a single person.

As a nineteenth century Russian woman Sophia cannot attend a university nor can she study abroad without the consent of her parents or without being a married woman. She engages in the white marriage with Vladimir Kovalevsky to study in Germany and obtains Ph.D. degree at the University of Göttingen in 1874. She accepts private tutor, Weierstrass in Berlin and follows courses at the University of Heidelberg as an attendant because she cannot enroll as a regular student. But only because she is a woman, she can't become a member of the said Academy nor teach at a French University. She can't become eligible for a position in a Russian university although in 1889 she becomes a corresponding - not a regular - member of the Academy of Science of Saint Petersburg. Even after achieving great success she can't get a reputed job as in those days the women were not working as the professor. At last through the influence of her mentor, the German mathematician Karl Weierstrass, and her Swedish colleague Gösta Mittag Leffler, Sophia Kovalevsky becomes a lecturer at the recently erected University of Stockholm in 1883, but can only obtain tenure (nomination à vie) in 1889, one year before her death. The Parisian officers felicitate her for her talent but no one gives the job according to her merit as no woman Mathematician has done the prestigious job. Even their wives do not invite her to their houses. She finds difficult to get the settlement. At last with the help of Professor Weierstrass she gets a job.

Sophia, finds herself torn between the ordinary pleasures and frustrations of daily life as a daughter, wife, mother, mistress. Her life is not common like a common lady but it is full of problems. She suffers terrible losses, the loss of her parents, sister Aniuta, and material loss in the business and later her husband's suicide. But overcoming on this she leaves Stockholm and goes to Sweden in order to earn a living for herself and her small daughter. Sophia's character shows the pathetic picture of a woman having more troubles than joys. After the death of her husband she feels lonely. When she meets Maksim, distant relative of her late husband she feels relaxed and hopes for the better and settled tense free life ahead. Their shared nationality, and shared family name, brings them together even if there is no particular attraction. She calls him as "A real Russian". She addresses him as Fat Maksim. But unfortunately again the unhappiness overcomes on happiness in her life. Maksim can't tolerate the growing popularity of Sophia and rejects to marry her.

Sophia is the representative character of nineteenth century Russian women. In those days the women were not allowed liberty to go outside alone. The male

dominant culture used to reject the talent of women. Sophia suffers a lot through this mentality. In her forty first years she dies in Stockholm. Her dead body is buried in the New Cemetery, in Stockholm, at three o'clock in the afternoon. On death bed she hands over the responsibility of her daughter, Fufu at her friend, Teresa Gulden. She utters her last words "Too Much Happiness".

Sophia is always torn between opposite drives: the urge for independence and the wish for enveloping warmth and safety offered by men. She knows that the assurance, the commanding behavior, the manly certainties possessed by her father, her lover, Maksim, and men generally, rule out equality between the genders. She sees marriage and the construction of society as governed by a pact, an agreement between men and women.

Maksim Kovalevsky:

He is a fat and bulky person. He weighs 285 pounds, distributed over a large frame, and being Russian, he is often referred to as a bear, also as a Cossack. Though he speaks Russian, French, English, Italian he has an understanding of classical and medieval Latin. His knowledge is as expansive as his physique. He is professor of law still he is capable of lecturing on the growth of contemporary political institutions in America, the peculiarities of society in Russia and the West, and the laws and practices of ancient empires. But he is not a scholar. He is witty and popular in living easy and comfortable life due to his properties near Kharkov. However, he has been forbidden to hold an academic post in Russia, because of being a Liberal. Being a bachelor in healthy health he regards any slight infection as an insult. He meets Sophia for the first time in 1888. He has come to Stockholm to advice on the foundation of a school of social sciences. He is a distant relation of Sophia. She feels relaxed to meet him. She describes him,

"He is very joyful, and at the same time very gloomy - Disagreeable neighbor, excellent comrade - extremely light-minded, and yet very affected - Indignantly naïve, nevertheless very blasé - Terribly sincere, and at the same time very sly... "A real Russian, he is, into the bargain."” She calls him as Fat Maksim. He becomes a great source of relief for her. So she expects her marriage with him. But though Sophia considers him as liberal and broad minded actually he is jealous and envious of her fame. Once because of same name, his writing is answered with salutation, 'Respected Madam'. He says, "Alas he had forgotten,.. she was a novelist as well as

a mathematician.” He feels disappointed that he is neither “Merely a scholar and a man.” It seems he is broad minded fellow but the great achievement of fame by Sophia creates the feeling of insecurity in him and he rejects her love. When Sophia receives the Bordin Prize, Maksim feels himself ignored. He can’t tolerate the idea that his wife would be more successful than he. He dismisses Sophia in a letter, which bears the cruel sentence, “If I loved you I would have written differently.” At last he comes on the death of Sophia. After some time of her burial he returns to his homeland, to lecture in Petersburg. He establishes the Party for Democratic Reform in Russia, taking a stand for constitutional monarchy. The Czarists find him much too liberal. Lenin, however, condemns him as a reactionary. Maksim is the representative of nineteenth century Russian men who couldn’t tolerate superiority of women.

Urey :

Urey is young nephew of Sophia, her dead sister, Anuita’s son. Much time has passed to her meeting with Urey. She had met him when he was at about the age of five or six, angelically blond, trusting and sweet natured, but not like his mother in nature. Sophia has the same image of him in her mind. The story describes Sophia’s meeting with Urey after the death of his mother when he is a teenager, fifteen years old boy. As Sophia gets the news of his illness she feels anxious. So she goes to meet him in Paris, where the boy lives with his father and step mother. Sophia finds drastic change in the nature of Urey. He is now an arrogant and ill mannered boy. Urey rejects her aunt Sophia, denouncing her profession, mother tongue and womanhood. He calls Russian a barbaric language. He scolds to his father, step mother and even to his aunt, Sophia. He wants to be driver of omnibus to offer his service out of station. He comments on Sophia’s talent as, “Being a mathematician isn’t necessary, as I see it...I could not respect myself...Being a professor of mathematics.” He rudely underestimates Sophia and her Bordin prize as, “Just getting prizes and a lot of money for things nobody understands or cares about and that are no use to anybody.” Though he speaks in such harsh words to Sophia she hopes to get the proper respect from him in future, perhaps after his death.

Aniuta:

Anuita is an elder sister of Sophia. She is golden haired, beautiful but bad tempered girl. She is a bright writer. She always shows her eagerness to escape the

restrictive world of 19th-century Russia and live according to own wish, knowledge and desire. Anuitta is a story writer. She has fascination with medieval and particularly English history. But later it doesn't remain. She gets the proposal by the editor Fyodor Dostoyevsky. But she rejects it and gets love for a Communard-Jaclard a selfish, cruel and unfaithful. Even after knowing his nature she loves him. When he gets arrested for his communal activities she feels like a mad fellow. She gets the help of Vladimir, Sophia's husband to rescue him and goes to live with him in Switzerland after his release. She gets a son, Urey from him. But unfortunately she dies in her early age.

Jaclard:

Jaclard is Sophia's Sister, Anuitta's, husband. He is born as a peasant. He is physically brave and has his own ideals. He is a communard. He is a selfish, cruel and unfaithful person. Even after knowing his nature she loves him. He has hatred for the Russians and Russian language. He says, "Russians are barbaric." After the death of Aniuta he marries with a French lady who is a governess. He has no love for his own son, Urey so Urey shows no love and affection; on the contrary, he has hatred for him. He is so selfish that he forgets the help of Vladimir to go to Switzerland. He always mentions his own brave stories but never refers the help of Vladimir.

Vladimir:

Vladimir is, a tall and unattractive paleontologist. Even though there is much contrast between them, in age, in look, Sophia uses him as the license to go abroad to get higher education. She arranges white marriage with him, the marriage which is not done for universal purpose. Immediately after the marriage both leave Russia and go to abroad but to different places, Sophia to Heidelberg, then to Berlin and Vladimir to Munich. He gets his degree from Jena and he becomes a sub professor in Petersburg. Though he has a law degree he studies in Vienna and Paris and tries to make his way in Russia as a publisher of textbooks. Later after graduation of Sophia he begins to live with her. He tries his level best to keep his wife and daughter, Fufu happy. But later he gets financial ruin. Through frustration he neglects to Sophia and Sophia goes away from him for earning purpose. His helping nature makes Sophia to be a doctor in Mathematics, to win prestigious Bordin prize and become the first Woman Professor. He also saves Jacklard like selfish fellow from punishment and

helps him by bribing and giving his own passport to go to Switzerland and saves. After some years he commits suicide by keeping a bag of Chloroform on his face.

Professor Weierstrass:

Professor Weierstrass is a Mathematics professor in Berlin. He lives with his two unmarried sisters who dedicate themselves to him. He is a true teacher who is always ready to enhance the talent and give scope to his students. Initially he tries to avoid Sophia. But later by looking her talent he accepts to teach her. In no time she becomes his favorite student and later their relation progresses from teacher and pupil to fellow mathematicians. He never bothers of her female identity. He says, “Truly I sometimes forget that you are a woman. I think of you as – as a – as a what? As a gift to me and to me alone”. He feels pity for her marriage with Vladimir. But later feels relaxed by the marriage that it is white marriage. When Sophia neglects to her talent in her domestic enjoyments he reminds it. After separating from Vladimir when Sophia feels helpless and becomes penniless, Weierstrass manages a job for her with the help of past student and friend Mittag-Leffler, in Sweden. Even he suggests her to live with him as his third sister. Sophia considers him as true friend so she shares everything to him. She tells the news of death of her sister, suicide of her husband and her remarriage with a Maksim who will not bother her progress. It's clear from Sophia's thoughts in the story that she cares very much about his opinion.

3.5.4 Significance of Title:

Too Much Happiness is about a historical figure named Sophia Kovalevski, an endowed Russian novelist and mathematician. The story tells end part of the life story of this successful Mathematician. Sophia Kovalevsky died by pneumonia in February 1891, a month after her forty-first birthday. Her last words, the day before she died, were said to be “too much happiness”, the words that the Canadian writer Alice Munro takes up as the title of her own story of Sophia and of the whole of her collection of stories of 2009. Alice Munro got inspiration from the biography of Kovalevsky by Don H. Kennedy and his wife entitled *Little Sparrow: A Portrait of Sophia Kovalevsky* (1983), which quotes Kovalevsky’s last words at four o’clock in the morning on February 10, 1891: “Too much happiness.”

Being a successful novelist and Mathematician she thinks that she deserves the happiness. This happiness is added by the friendship and love with Maksim Kovalevsky. She happily looks forward to her forthcoming marriage to Maksim

Kovalesky, a distant relation and a professor of law. She considers him as a great man who offers her comfort and security. According to all these expectations and situations it seems that the title “*Too Much Happiness*” is apt. Her last words imply that Kovalevsky has been looking forward to the future with great expectation of happiness. But instead of happiness the story shows unhappy moments more in the life of Sophia. The story reflects her death as a tragedy. It is an ironical title where the man expects the happiness but he gets unhappiness. It also may suggest that it is Sophia’s acceptance of the fact that happiness never comes alone. It is inseparable part of unhappiness. It is an ironic title. The story also reflects the happiness that the protagonist seeks through her Mathematical skill, her fame, popularity and reputation that she becomes the first woman professor teaching in European university. She dies with the last words, “Too Much Happiness”. It seems that she considers relieved from the constant tension and unhappy situation and now the death is giving her too much happiness.

Check Your Progress-11

Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. Who was Sophia Kovalevsky?
2. What is the name of Sophia’s daughter?
3. Who is Sophia’s Sister?
4. Who helps Jacklard to rescue to Switzerland?
5. What does Sophia do to go abroad for higher education?

Terms to Remember

1. Reputation - Prestige
2. Endowed- Brilliant
3. Domestic – Household
4. Imply – Suggest
5. Unaccompanied – Alone

Answers to Check your progress

Check your progress-1

1. Sagas
2. Nathaniel Hawthorne or Edgar Allan Poe
3. American short story
4. Thomas Chandler Haliburton
5. in sketch, anecdote and in the various prose forms that arose in the nineteenth century which was the account of personal experience

Check your progress-2

1. 2013
2. "*The Dimensions of a Shadow*", in 1950
3. Her Native, Huron County in Southwestern Ontario
4. Man Booker International Prize
5. University of British Columbia and University of Queensland

Check your progress-3

1. a geologist
2. To celebrate Alex's publication of his first solo paper, in *Zeitschrift für Geomorphologie*.
3. Osler Bluff
4. because this region is described largely in his research, and also because Sally and the children have never been there.
5. On Television, helping the victims of fire in a fire in Toronto
6. Malaria

Check your progress-4

1. Kent
2. Alex
3. begins to live with poor people

4. Jonah
5. goes into medicine

Check your progress-5

1. Collingwood Hospital
2. Sally and her husband
3. Emotional gap between father and son
4. the women characters does not express their own desires and find a way to live happily as a wife and mother.
5. Kent had full of hatred and prejudice for Alex

Check your progress-6

1. biography
2. early fifties
3. a radio broadcaster
4. Nancy, daughter of Sharon Suttles
5. dark purple

Check your progress-7

1. Because of his birth mark on his chick
2. to look like him
3. Pete dislikes the sympathy showed to him for his physical fault.
4. The narrator's father is a rich, rude, educated businessman who likes to play golf and crazy of sailing but whereas his mother is a poor, simple, tolerant, loving but she dislikes golf and sailing.
5. To her husband

Check your progress-8

1. maid servant of the narrator's family
2. Pete is a gardener.
3. a doctor

4. Sharon Suttles is the neighbor of the narrator and mother of Nancy.
5. in Bells' Cottage of the narrator

Check your progress-9

1. The biography, *Little Sparrow: A Portrait of Sophia Kovalevsky* (1983) by Don H. Kennedy is the book that Alice Munro plainly accepts as the main source.
2. 1888
3. Russian
4. Paris
5. professor Weierstrass

Check your progress-10

1. Academy of Sciences in Paris
2. Bordin Prize
3. Disturbed and inferior woman life.
4. to go abroad to study in Germany
5. in 1874.

Check your progress-11

1. Sophia Kovalevsky (1850-91) was a Russian mathematician who made noteworthy contributions to analysis partial differential equations and mechanics and the protagonist of the story, *Too Much Happiness*
2. Fufu
3. Anuita
4. Vladimir
5. Arranges white marriage with Vladimir

Exercises

Answer the following questions in detail:

1. Discuss "*Too Much Happiness*" as the biography of Sophia.
2. Draw the character sketch of Maksim.

3. Comment on the life of Russian woman of nineteenth century.
4. Discuss the inextricability of happiness and unhappiness presented in the story "*Too Much Happiness*".
5. Discuss the theme of Freedom and constraints imposed by Marriage presented in the story "*Too Much Happiness*".

Write Short notes

1. Relationship between Sophia and Professor Weierstrass
2. Character sketch of Vladimir
3. Character sketch of Vladimir
4. The end of the story "*Too Much Happiness*"
5. The title of the story "*Too Much Happiness*"



Unit-4

Major Trends in Australian and Canadian Poetry

4.0 Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- understand the trends in Australian Poetry
 - know major concerns in the poetry of Women Poets
 - understand themes in Australian poetry
 - understand the trends in Canadian poetry
 - know major concerns in the poetry of Women poets in Canadian Poetry
 - understand themes in Canadian poetry
- Following poems from Penguin Book of Australian Verse by Harry.. are prescribed for the study
- Kenneth Slessor: 'Sensuality', 'Five Bells'
- Mary Gilmore: Eve Song, Never Admit Pain
- Following poems from 15 Canadian Poets by Gary Geddes
- Leonard Cohen: ' You Have the Lovers', 'The Genius'
- Raymond Souster: 'Young Girls', 'Night Raider'

A) Australian Literature

As rightly pointed out by Nicholas Birns, "Australian literature, because of its traditional pluralisms is well equipped to handle this new contingency. I attribute part of this to the fact that Australia has had no single dominant metropolitan area. Whereas London and New York have defined British and American literature far more than any other city in those countries, Sydney and Melbourne have kept up with each other, while Perth and Brisbane have held their own in a smaller compass. Canberra plays a key role in this book, not just as site of much of its composition, but as a potential ground of re-emergent Australian idealism — reflecting the fact that there is no single metropolitan space for the artificially built national capital to rival.

The plurality of Australian literature is its great joy, and one of the qualities that enable it to be resilient against the threats to the imagination..."

The general statement bears truth for both Indigenous Australians and those descended from later European arrivals, though the perception of what represents the community is quite radically different in these two cases. The white Australian community is integrated partly by its sense of having derived from foreign cultures, primarily that of England, being a commonwealth country and partly by its awareness of itself as a settler society with a continuing celebrating pioneer values and a deep attachment to the Australian land. For Aboriginal people, their traditional cultures, story, song and legend served to define devotion and relationships both to others and to the land that nurtured them. For modern Aboriginal people, written literature has been a way of both claiming a voice and expressing a sense of cohesion as people faced with real threats to the preservation of their culture. "Still, it shows its originality in exploring the themes of Aboriginality, mateship, egalitarianism, democracy, independent national identity, migration, the unique geographical beauty, the complex city life, 'the beauty and the terror' (concept by Dorothea Mackellar) as a character of Australia." according to Adrian C.W. Mitchell.

➤ **Aboriginal narrative : Oral Tradition**

When first confronted by Europeans, Australian Aboriginal people did not have written languages. They found that individual words were collected from first contact, but languages as systems were not written down until well into the 20th century. In fact, their songs, chants, legends, and stories, however, comprised rich oral literature, and, since the Aboriginal peoples had no common language, these creations were enormously heterogeneous. As it was unavailable for a long time or misunderstood by non-Aboriginal people, their oral traditions appear to have considerable subtlety and complexity.

The oral literature of Aboriginal people is about the ceremonies essentially. The fundamental Aboriginal beliefs are reflected in them that 'what is given cannot be changed' and that 'the past exists in an eternal present', and 'it serves to relate the individual and the landscape to the continuing spiritual influence of the Dreaming (or Dreamtime) -widely known as the Alcheringa (or Altjeringa).'This term is used by the Aboriginal peoples of central Australia—a mythological past in which the existing natural environment was shaped and humanized by ancestral beings.

Aboriginal oral tradition may be public or sacred. Narratives of 'the public' sort range from stories told by women to young children which are mostly elementary versions of creation stories— also appropriate for tourists and amateur anthropologists to the recitation of song cycles in large gatherings that are known as corroborees. Even the most uncomplicated narratives of the Dreaming introduce 'basic concepts about the land and about what it is that distinguishes right behaviour from wrong. When children are old enough to prepare for their initiation ceremonies, the stories become more elaborate and complex. Among the sacred songs and stories are those that are men's business and those that are women's business; each is forbidden to the eyes and ears of the other sex and to the uninitiated. The main concern of Aboriginal narratives is the land. As Aboriginal people travel from place to place, they name each place either informally or ceremonially and tell the tale of its creation and of its relation to the journeys of the Ancestors. This serves at least three significant objectives: it strengthens their knowledge of local geography—that is, the food routes, location of water holes, places of safety, places of danger, the region's terrain, and so on—and it also serves a social function and a religious or ritual function.

In the later period, the traditional literature in the form of songs and stories of Aboriginal people is translated by their permission. However, the young generation shows little interest in the old ways of custom. The non-Aboriginal person's knowledge of this traditional literature depends almost entirely on printed translation. Non-Aboriginal people are allowed to read it, therefore, at least twice removed from its proper context—once by its transformation from oral to written and again by its translation. Even with the most sympathetic mind and the complete set of footnotes, the non-Aboriginal person has little means of assessing the relation of custom to individual performance. In addition, there remains the residual perception of the nature of traditional Aboriginal literature formed on a number of early, well-intentioned collections of myths and legends, such as Catherine Langloh Parker's *Australian Legendary Tales* (1896) or Alan Marshall's *People of the Dreamtime* (1952), in which the stories are reshaped in order to meet European notions of narrative design and structure.

The first publishers of the traditional narratives and songs were Anthropologists Catherine H. and Ronald M. Berndt in the original language then with a translation and a commentary. The example of their work is *Three Faces of Love: Traditional*

Aboriginal Song-Poetry (1976). This approach has enabled at least an initial appreciation of the subtlety and the artistry of the-oral tradition.

In the 1970s and '80s, as Aboriginal people started writing in formal English, some started expressing themselves in what might be called Aboriginal English, the language that is different from Standard English. It is formed in short, simple sentences, and it makes considerable use of repetition with variation. It conveys a certain dignity and a rich sense of humour as well. Some versions can be found in the different narratives included in Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987) and, more sensitive still as a transcription, in Paddy Roe's *Gularabulu: Stories from the West Kimberley* (1983). In the last decades of the 20th century, the poet and storyteller Maureen Watson contributed to sustain the oral tradition by reading on radio and television and by performing at schools.

Feminist Voices

Australians performed much of the theorizing of the postcolonial in the Anglophone academy, even if Australia remained behind. The women writers of the day were "late bloomers" who entered the field of serious fiction writing in their forties or fifties. Writers such as Astley, Jolley, Jessica Anderson, Barbara Hanrahan, Olga Masters and Amy Witting were not in the favor of the culture industry. They contravened the market's preference for youth and trendiness. The place for feminism in mainstream Australian literature was hardly uncontested - the 1980s saw many gender-based battles for voice and position. Australian literature seemed to constitute an ideal world. It seemed more a land of possibility, where people of all backgrounds could affirm a sense of belonging in the world. This was, an illusion, one of many illusions brought to the Australian continent from people outside of it, starting perhaps from settlement.

The Global Australia

In the late 1980s and the 1990s, Australian publishing houses such as McPhee Gribble and Angus & Robertson, and Australian branches of world houses that had maintained a resolute Australian presence, such as Penguin, were taken over or combined with global concoction and were as a result no longer as interested in promoting a distinctive Australian voice. These initiatives were all gone from the scene by 2000, reflecting what many saw as a more general decrease of a distinctively Australian publishing space. During the 1980s, cultural and critical

theory had had a growing impact in Australian academia, the critics commented on the peak of an Australian interest in Continental critical theory and its potential Australian application that had been evident since the early 1980s. They promised a more philosophical turn for Australian literary studies, had been shaped by generations of British and Anglophile professors with an empirical, canonical outlook. This phase of theorizing, however, was veiling by the conservative turn in Australian culture and by the counter action against theory worldwide.

The internet revolution did wonderful things for Australia, connecting it to the rest of the world. And it made possible an intellectual union of the English-speaking peoples. With the arrival of the internet, there could be a much more efficient exchange of literary culture. The fall of Soviet Communism had much to do with this, dispelling as it did the last imprints of that curiously Australian natural confidence in Soviet compassion. Birns points out that "Although Nevil Shute's vision of an Australia isolated, if only temporarily, from a worldwide nuclear conflagration was a conceit, for Australian writers of the left in the mid-twentieth century the Soviet Union was so distant that it could be imagined as a fantasy land." This was true about the writers such as Judah Waten, Jean Devanny, Katharine Susannah Prichard, **Mary Gilmore** and Manning Clark.

The fall of the Berlin Wall was the final blow to this long-withered dream. Further, the biggest obstacle for Australian literature on the world scene had been irrelevance. The fact was that Australia seemed protected behind the curtain of global conflict. Although, Australia was in the American camp politically, it seemed to be much minor to hold importance in a Cold War divide between good and evil. Their Australian identity need no longer define or hold back at least selected individual Australians who sought to bestride the world stage. The 1990s saw the lapse of much of the postcolonial rhetoric of the 1980s, when Australian literature had frequently and fruitfully been compared with the literatures of other former British colonies in South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.

➤ **Kenneth Slessor**

Kenneth Adolphe Slessor OBE (27 March 1901 - 30 June 1971) was a major Australian poet, journalist and official war correspondent in World War II. He was one of Australia's leading poets, remarkable for the absorption of modernist influences into Australian poetry. The Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry is named

after him. The major poetry of Slessor was produced before the end of World War II. His poem "Five Bells"-relating to Sydney Harbour, time, the past, memory, and the death of the artist, friend and colleague of Slessor at *Smith's Weekly*, Joe Lynch—remains probably his best known poem. It was followed by "Beach Burial", a tribute to Australian troops who fought in World War II.

According to Australian writer Hal Porter, in 1965, who wrote after having met and staying with Slessor in the 1930s, Slessor was:

"...a city lover, fastidious and excessively courteous, in those qualities resembles Baudelaire, as he does in being incapable of sentimentalizing over vegetation, in finding in nature something cruel, something bordering on effrontery. He prefers chiseled stone to the disorganization of grass."

Ronald McCuaig was the first to review his literature in-depth in *The Bulletin* in August 1939 and republished in "Tales out of bed" (1944)). The review ranked Slessor above C.J. Brennan and W.B. Yeats, though it was written a year before "Five Bells". This famous poem marked Slessor's move to modernism, a move inspired. The review therefore covers the pre-modernist parts of Slessor's poetry. According to poet Douglas Stewart, Kenneth Slessor's poem "Five Visions of Captain Cook" is equally important as "Five Bells" and was the 'most dramatic break-through' in Australian poetry of the twentieth century.

In 1944, he published his distinctive volume of poetry, "One Hundred Poems", and thereafter, he published only three short poems. Instead of writing poetry, after 1944, Slessor chose to concentrate on journalism and supporting literary projects whose aim was to help flourish Australian poetry.

➤ **Analysis of the Poems: 1) 'Sensuality': Summary**

The theme of this poem is very difficult for one to analyze because of its lines mere arrangement of series non-finite clauses, as much of the content's meaning is left up to the imagination due to the vagueness of the poem. This, though, might be exactly what Slessor intended in creating such a free flowing poem. His message is that each one of these sensations are experienced, interpreted, differently by its customers. Each sensation has years of emotion, memory, and personal bias attached to it, and so he is providing a million different experiences in his poem, by giving it to the world, and allowing it to remember these feelings. The poem needs to be read for proper understanding:

FEELING hunger and cold, feeling
Food, feeling fire, feeling
Pity and pain, tasting
Time in a kiss, tasting
Anger and tears, touching
Eyelids with lips, touching
Plague, touching flesh, knowing
Blood in the mouth, knowing
Laughter like flame, holding
Pickaxe and pen, holding
Death in the hand, hearing
Boilers and bells, hearing
Birds, hearing hail, smelling
Cedar and sweat, smelling
Petrol and sea, feeling
Hunger and cold, feeling
Food, feeling fire. . . .
Feeling.

This poem was meant to express all the emotions one would experience as a soldier. Slessor traveled around with troops during World War II and experienced these feelings, despite the fact he himself wasn't a soldier but a war correspondent.

The tone of this poem is somber and even emotionless in this poem because it leaves the meaning up for uninfluenced interpretation. The only diction or anything that stands out, or makes a difference, is the first word "feeling" which is written in all capital letters. There is also an appositive comma in the second line. This is a short lived scene, as there is no sense of style after this. This 18 line poem has no particular stanza structure. This fits into the modernist period of literature perfectly. It is written in the innovative technique that also relates the WWII.

2) Five Bells: Summary

The poem has a sense of failure and loss associated with it. It mourns the death of his colleague, Joe Lynch who lost his life in an accident of drowning.

The 'Five bells' are signifiers of the life which is imagined to be present in the space of ring of a ship's bell. There are two times that are being talked about- one is the time measured using the clock, and other is the psychological time that measures the loss and the despair felt in the memories of the lost Lynch. There is a deep sense of failure and despondency associated with the poem which questions the very meaning of our existence.

The poet is sitting in a room over the Sydney Harbour and he starts narrating this poem and can hear the five bells of the clock ringing. Looking at the churning water which returns and revolves itself, the poet draws its comparison with the time and memory which follow a cycle and return back. It illustrates the confrontation of death, and the disillusioned experience of those who grieve in the remembrance of the dead soul. The sense of horror is prevalent through the poem to give it associated and the supremacy of the death which cannot be defied by anyone.

Through whole poem there are various incidents that move through the poet's mind about his interaction with Joe Lynch. He feels them scattered in the tolling of the five bells. The poet's cries to search his lost friend turn foul at various times through the poem. The dialogues where the poet addresses his dead friend fall on deaf ears. He has illustrated death and the resulting separation from his lost friend in a profound manner.

The poet has created a sense of fear accompanied by pain of loss amongst the audience so much so that no reader can be unmoved by each line of the poem. The idea that after a person is dead, all their belongings and achievements are left behind for others to remember them is conveyed through the lines "500 books all shapes...And different curioses that I obtained".

The poet's desperate search for his dead friend sustains till the end of the poem. He calls, "where have you gone?" He tries to think about his friend who drowned in the river in the ferry. The relationship between time and memory has been drawn with the image of river tides. His memory takes him to the bottom of the river where the dead man lies. The image of window creates boundary between the past and the present which can never meet. Memories can return but not the life of the man.

To conclude, the poem comments on the mortality of human life; power of Time over the world. Death is unsurpassable and the meaning of our existence is still a mystery.

➤ **Mary Gilmore**

Dame Mary Jean Gilmore DBE was an Australian writer and journalist known for her prolific contributions to Australian literature and the broader national discourse. She wrote both prose and poetry. On the basis of her connections in Sydney during the time, Gilmore found work with *The Australian Worker* as the editor of its women's section, a position she held from 1908 to 1931. She also contributed to a variety of other publications, including *The Bulletin* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Gilmore's first volume of poetry was brought out in 1910; she published prolifically for the rest of her life, mainly poetry along with memoirs and collections of essays. She wrote on a variety of themes, although the public imagination was particularly captured by her evocative views of country life. Her best known work is "No Foe Shall Gather Our Harvest", which served as a morale booster during World War II.

➤ **Analysis of the Poems**

1) **Eve -Song: Summary**

In the poem 'Eve-Song', Mary Gilmore has pointed out the status of a woman in man's life after marriage. She is supposed to be subservient to Man's whims. She thinks that she has bound him with the thread of marriage but she finds his heart is a wandering thing, not loyal to her. In the period, when it was usual for men to be disloyal, Gilmore has commented on it. His loitering and staying outside the house is beyond the bonds of woman. She thinks that more she tries to bind, he will be there. But she finds that more she tries to bind, she is herself trapped in the trap. She gave birth to children and she is lost her ease in their nourishment. The line, 'that more than man was love and prize' expresses that woman can find more trust and safety in their spouses. It raises another question that marriage take place, not for women to live or enjoy but to fulfill social expectations. Still, at the heart, she has root of loss and the dismay she cannot express.

In third stanza, she expresses how man says to be strong and never proves it properly. His love is not a true flame that burns forever, but it is momentary, transient. The 'Truth' of a man is a door that wind can open and shut. Although,

knowing the reality of man's frail nature again and again, woman forgives him, accepts him. Perhaps, that is the fate of woman.

Mary Gilmore refrains the lines,
'I span and eve span
A thread to bind the heart of man.'

The reference to 'Eve' in the bible is a strong allusion. Woman is used as a puppet, an entertainer by man. It creates a deep impact on the reader's mind. The image of thread used by her stands for the gentleness, softness which ties smoothly emphasizes how it forms a chain of relations.

Through this poem, Gilmore makes it a document about women's status in Australian society.

2) **Never Admit the Pain: Summary**

Through the rich diversity of poems, too, we start to get a different understanding of Gilmore's world; of her capacity to look at truth from a number of angles; of her ability to speak of different solutions and strategies; and of the power of her intuition, her spiritual insight and understandings of different dimensions.

This poem is a motivational poem applicable not only to women but the general masses, too. The first stanza of short four lines depicts the strong mental state. She suggests burying the pain deep for expressions. Pain is inevitable in life, but those who complain are weak. The wound of the heart be covered under the curtains so that none can easily reach it. The last two lines, 'Silence is still a crown, Courage a grace' may be read as a critique of the suffocating emotional effects of femininity rather than advocating repression; we may want to understand 'grace' in the spiritual sense.

The poem is an advice to women who suffer throughout their lives. They are motivated by these powerful words to attain 'grace' through crowing silence.

Glossary

Joe Lynch: Slessor's colleague, Joe Lynch who lost his life in an accident of drowning at Sydney Harbour.

Check Your Progress

A) Choose the correct alternatives

1. Aboriginal people name each place either informally or ceremonially and tell of its creation and of its relation to the journeys of the —————
i) Children ii) Ancestors iii) Gods iv) Rivers
2. In Australia, languages as systems were not written down until well into the ———
i) 20th Century ii) 19th Century
iii) contemporary period iv) 17th Century
3. The Dreaming or Dreamtime in Aboriginal Australian Literature is known as ———
i) Visions ii) Nightmares
iii) Alcheringa (or Altjeringa) iv) Illusion
4. In the 1970s and '80s, as Aboriginal people started writing in —————
i) Standard English ii) Modern Language
iii) British English iv) formal English
5. ————— revolution did wonderful things for Australia, connecting it to the rest of the world.
i) Literature ii) Voyages iii) The internet iv) Airplanes
6. The major poetry of Slessor was produced before the end of —
i) World War II ii) World War I
iii) Aboriginal period iv) 18th Century
7. "Five Bells" relates to the death of the artist, friend of Slessor at *Smith's Weekly*, ———
i) The Editor ii) Joe Lynch iii) George iv) Jenelia

B) Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. Who were the first publishers of traditional narratives and songs?

2. Which writers were not in the favor of the culture industry?
3. Which publishing houses maintained a resolute Australian presence ?
4. What was the effect of fall of Soviet Communism on Australian society ?
5. Which poem was written by Slessor after *Five Bells* ?
6. Which prize is named after Slessor in Australia?
7. How many lines are in the poem *Sensuality* ?

C) Write answers of the following questions.

1. Discuss development of Australian Literature from Aboriginal literature to Modern literature.
2. Illustrate traits of Aboriginal Literature.
3. Discuss Kenneth Slessor's contribution in the development of Australian Literature.
4. Elaborate Contribution of feminist voices with the help of Mary Gilmore's poems.

D) Write short notes on the following

1. Global Australia
2. Feminist Sensibility in Gilmore's 'Eve-Song'
3. Themes in 'Never Admit the Pain'
4. Themes in 'Sensuality'

B) The Trends in Canadian Literature

Canadian literature is the body of written works produced by Canadians. It reflects the country's dual origin and its official bilingualism, the literature of Canada can be split into two major divisions: English and French. The literature in the beginning was contributed by writers of English in Canada who were visitors—explorers, travelers, and especially British officers and their wives - who recorded their impressions of British North America in charts, diaries, journals, and letters. These foundational documents of journeys and settlements announce the documentary tradition in Canadian literature in which geography, history, and voyages of exploration and discovery represent the quest for a myth of origins and

for a personal and national identity. Northrop Frye observed that Canadian literature is haunted by the overriding question "Where is here?" So, metaphoric mappings of peoples and places became central to the evolution of the Canadian literary imagination.

Canadian poetry over the last two centuries divides roughly in four main periods: the pre-Confederation period, the Confederation period, the modernist period and the postmodernist period. Each period has the same integrity, the same skilful moderation that is aware of the continuity of its heritage and a rebellion of personality. This division of Canadian poetry has a continuous growth contributing to the collective identity that is Canadian. Canadian poetic culture is a growth having its first stirrings of poetics culture, emergence of a national poetic culture, transitional poetic culture, modernist poetic culture and post modernist or contemporary poetic culture.

Pre-Confederation Period

The earliest documents were unadorned narratives of travel and exploration. Written in plain language, these accounts document heroic journeys to the vast, unknown west and north and encounters with Inuit and other native people, often on behalf of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, the great fur-trading companies. The explorer Samuel Hearne wrote *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean* (1795), and Sir Alexander Mackenzie, an explorer and fur trader, described his travels in *Voyages from Montreal...Through the Continent of North America, to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans* (1801). Simon Fraser recorded details of his 1808 trip west to Fraser Canyon (*The Letters and Journals of Simon Fraser, 1806-1808*, 1960). *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe* (1911) records the everyday life in 1792-96 of the wife of the first lieutenant governor of Upper Canada (now Ontario). In 1838 Anna Jameson published *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada*, an account of her travels in the New World.

Most of the earliest poems in Canadian Poetry were patriotic songs and hymns *The Loyal Verses of Joseph Stansbury and Doctor Jonathan Odell* published in 1860 or topographical narratives which reflect the first visitors' concern with discovering and naming the new land and its inhabitants. In the poem by Oliver Goldsmith, *The Rising Village* (1825) used heroic couplets to celebrate pioneer life and the growth of

Nova Scotia, which, in his words, promised optimistically to be "the wonder of the Western Skies." Immigrants found the realities of unpredictable native peoples, a fierce climate, unfamiliar wildlife, and physical and cultural deprivation when they dreamt of a new Eden. These topics were the subject of prose sketches by the Strickland sisters, Susanna Strickland Moodie and Catherine Parr Strickland Traill. Moodie's harsh, yet at times comical, *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852) was written to discourage prospective emigrants, but Traill's *Backwoods of Canada* (1836) presents a more favorable picture of the New World. The pre-Confederation poets expressed the expressions ranging from the sense of loss and displacement of an immigrant and the excitement of discovery of an explorer. They depicted the hardships and difficulties of the early settlers and created a graph of rise and progress of a new country.

Confederation Period

The second phase of Canadian literature marked the Confederation period which brought the emergence of a national literature. Near the Confederation, Canada gained poets who were national. Charles G. D. Roberts, his cousin Bliss Carman, Archibald Lampman and D. C. Scott are often called the poets of the Confederation. Their prominence between 1867 and the Great War, their concern with nationalism and their inter-related lives make them truly members of a school of poetry. They, born near the Confederation of 1867, came to their maturity in the 1890s. They drew on the Romantic and Victorian heritage of Britain and America and that was why their work became of imitative nature.

Emergence of a National Literature

Though they were influenced by both British and American models, they evolved styles and attitudes of their own, which gave rise to literature with more nationality. They carried the themes of the previous literature and tried to investigate the experience the early settlers had that of exile and isolation, a sense of incipient identity and ambivalent feelings about nature that seemed hostile and indifferent.

The order begins with Roberts, as the oldest and as the author of *Orion and Other Poems* (1880) which is a landmark in this country's literary history. But later, Lampman created his landmark by his *Orion*. Bliss Carman and Duncan Campbell Scott are also major poets of the period.

Modernist Period

i) First Phase

Beginning in the last quarter of 19th century, a movement to write about Canadian nature had been developing successfully. Obviously, there was mixed response to this movement of poetry of nature, as the Canadian poetry was partly appreciated and partly ignored. Readers agreed that Canadian poetry was charming and graceful; at the same time, most readers felt that it was something that could rightly be ignored because of other writing, English or American that was of greater interest, intensity and significance.

The critics were of the opinion that Canadian poetry was not a self-contained development. Canadian poetry bears strong marks of romanticism and transcendentalism, milder aspects of symbolism before 1900 and later a superficial contact with imagism was traced. The main forces that were stirring in English and American poetry after 1900 had, however, but little effect in Canada. E. J. Pratt, Earle Birney, F.R. Scott and A. J. M. Smith were the leading poets with a sense of national consciousness. The Canadian painters and poets got inspiration from the environment of their country. This kind of approach became a movement in the history of Canadian literature and the leaders of this movement - F. R. Scott and A. J. M. Smith who not only advocated but demonstrated in his poetry. Eater a flock of poets and writers joined this literary venture and treated Canada as a landscape of their poetry.

ii) Second Phase

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, a new sense of national consciousness was reinforced after the confirmation of Canada's status as a separate nation. This spirit was a kind of desire for a truly Canadian art and literature to confirm the Canadian identity. *The Canadian Bookman* in 1919, *The Canadian Forum* in 1920 and The Canadian Authors Association in 1921 aimed "to trace and value these developments of art and letters which are distinctively Canadian." The artists and poets made conscious efforts that the poetry in Canada should be an independent identity not the echo of poetry in England and America. In order to achieve the objective, the artists like Franklin Carmichael, Eawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Frank Arthur Eisner, J. E. H. MacDonald and Varley, who made the Group of Seven and the poets like E. J. Pratt, F. R. Scott, A. J. M. Smith and W. W. E. Ross,

to prove that art is international, accommodated the developing modern movements in England and the United States. They focused on their desire to find subjects and technique that were genuinely Canadian. They found answer in the fusion of a distinctively Canadian landscape and imported modernist technique.

Two important factors that shaped the artists' response to the landscape were: the post-Darwinian evolutionary sense of the land as the source of life and the "northern fact" of Canadian geography. The former, the evolutionary concern, so much a part of the poetry of the Confederation Group was still an important intellectual issue in Canada in the 1920s to judge from the debates in *The Canadian Forum*. The latter, as Carl Berger has indicated, was a reflection of the dominant political myth of the 1880s that attributed Canada's distinctive political identity to her northern geography.

Group of Seven

For many Canadians returning from the Great War, including W. A. Irwin who was to become editor of *Maclean's Magazine* and for some of the returning artists, Lawren Harris, Frederick Varley, and A. Y. Jackson, the hope for the future centered in the Canadian land which distinguished Canada from Europe. Besides the above mentioned artists, there were four more artists, Franklin Charmichael, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer and J.E.H. MacDonald. All these seven artists formed a group which was known as the 'Group of Seven'. They contemplated over the question of subject of poetry which could be distinctively Canadian. For them, there was a sense of leaving behind the wasted lands of the battlefields of Europe for the fresh, clear northland of Canada. In their opinion, it was the northern environment which shaped the vision of Canadians as the artist. The Group was a romantic and nationalist movement. In 1919, MacDonald believed that "the Canadian spirit in art is just entering on possession of its heritage." But as Harris was to point out, in Canada as distinct from Europe, the inspiration for art was to be found in the wilderness. The new vision of the Canadian landscape generated by the Group of Seven was vast, strong, lonely, northern. It was centered in the Pre-Cambrian Shield. Primarily a response to the wilderness of northern Ontario and Quebec, it also reflected the rugged coastlines of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and later, by 1930, the arctic shores of Baffin Island. This vision gave an outgrowth of an older social Darwinism now. In Canada, this strain was particularly associated with the north by the popular verse of Robert Service. "This is the Law of the Yukon, that only the

Strong shall thrive: / That surely the Weak shall perish, and only the Fit survive." Perhaps this Darwinian inheritance accelerated the emergent nationalist sense of a youthful "new" Canada. Although immeasurably old in geologic time, because the land was unpeopled it was seen as "young" and "virile". Canada was a country whose face was yet to be painted, whose voice was yet to be found, whose history was yet to be written. The typical Group of Seven landscape of the rock, trees, and rivers of the pre-Cambrian Shield displays the characteristics of this essentially northern land. MacDonald had described some of these characteristics in 1919 when he wrote that the Canadian spirit in art was opening a new world, "not often so softly beautiful as ruggedly strong, large, homely, free, and frankly simple in colour."

iii) Third Phase

The poets associated with *Preview* and *First Statement* offered Klein an opportunity to engage more closely than he might have otherwise done with contemporary poetry. However, Klein's response to this opportunity in the mid-forties was very different from what it had been in the late twenties and early thirties. Klein's poetry passed through two stages. The first stage comprises poems published between 1929 and 1944 - most of which were collected in *Hath Not a Jew* (1940) and *Poems* (1944). These point out his Jewish background and are written in a style that owes something to Biblical rhetorical on the one hand and to such varied English influences as the Renaissance poets and T. S. Eliot on the other. In 1944 he also published, the *Hitleriad*, a satire on Nazism written in form and style derived from Alexander Pope. The second stage of Klein's poetry coincided with a new and vigorous poetry in Montreal, centering on the Journals *Preview* and *First Statement*. The influence of the poets of these groups - which included F. R. Scott, P. K. Page, Patrick Anderson, Layton and Louis Dudek - Klein experimented, then, with a more broadly based poetry and a somewhat simpler style. A collection of this new poetry, *The Rocking Chair and Other Poems* was published in 1948 which won a Governor General's Award in 1974. Two years after his death, *The Collected Poems of A. M. Klein* was published. Klein's work, as a whole is characterized with the voice of an alien. It is also to note here that in his poetry he is the voice of three separate cultural traditions: Jewish, English and French Canadian.

Postmodernist /Contemporary Period

Canadian poetry of the eighties has been given considerable space by Margaret Atwood in the anthology *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Verse in English* (1982). She describes Canadian poetry as "spiky, though, flexible, various and vital" in the Introduction to the anthology which is very appropriately applicable to the recent verses by the young contemporary poets of Canada. The poets who are born after 1940, continuously experiment with the form of poetry to achieve an original medium of expression, and thus offer a verbal rendering of the Canadian expression which, by the virtue of its contexts is unique and engrossing. Atwood indicates that it is only in recent times that Canadian poetry has come of age, and has become abundantly productive. She accords the Canadian poetry of today a place among the great: "Canadian poetry like Canadian statesmanship or something of the sort, was finally becoming 'International' and taking its rightful place among the great." The first recurring feature of much of the contemporary Canadian poetry is its attempt to be simple, lyrical and at the same time, magical both in its music and imagery. However, the Canadian poets of today do not aim at the prismatic images of colorful romanticism. They aim at clarity of expression and a vividness of vocalization that produces, through its consistent refusal to wallow in any verbal mess, a magic of silent evocation.

The constant effort of the poet to achieve sparseness in diction and lucidity of lyric exposition of the idea does not, however, debar him / her from exploring the underworld of the subconscious stream of thoughts. The Canadian poets arrange images and metaphors in a harmonious structure that create the depth of the poet's dreams and subconscious desires. Much of the Canadian poetry of today is transfused with the light reflected from the subconscious, the credit goes to the Canadian poet for his success in exposing the subconscious through a fanciful ornamentation of translucent images and verbal felicities that stir the imagination and intellect of the reader with an immediacy that speaks of the level of achievement of the contemporary Canadian poets.

Contemporary Canadian poets aim at achieving a language of lyricism and a language of the subconscious. In the process they favor the language with metaphorical suggestiveness that satisfies the imagination of the reader as it widens its range through a paradoxical use of consciousness and terseness in the graphic evocation of the suggestive image. Thus the language of the contemporary Canadian

poetry acquires fertility in style and expression. While, on the one hand, the language in contemporary Canadian poetry is found obtaining a lyric fluidity, a suffusion of the strange light reflected from the underworld of the subconscious and metaphoric suggestiveness of wide ranging effects on the other hand, it gains in vitality and in sense of sensuous physicality through the frequent use of sexual imagery chosen with fresh, feeling and uninhibited and emancipated perception of the relationship between man and man and man and woman. Canadian poetry acquires vitality, freshness, immediacy and an all-pervading touch of the intimate and the everyday by drawing freely upon the liberated attitude towards sex in life. Sexual motifs and imagery are placed very naturally in the body of contemporary Canadian poetry about human family; thus the poets remove the categories of a social taboo from their references to sex the roughness and crudity. Canadian poets can be credited for their sensitive and imaginative initiative of language for expression of emotional and imaginative attachment to the essential things of life without any social inhibition.

However, many poems by the Canadian contemporary poets sound bewitching and even, rhythmically and photographically, enticing, but torment the reader's head as to what may be the meaning of its content. The contemporary Canadian poets are performing their functions dutifully by creating new sets of words and images for poetic effects. The experiment in language also provides room for witty exposure of the modern situation. In an interesting poem entitled, "*Wayman in Love*" Tom Wayman very interestingly portrays a dramatic situation where two lovers cannot go into bed and make love peacefully as Freud and Marx haunt their conscience and will not let them caress each other like spontaneous lovers.

Ultimately, of course, the impression left by contemporary Canadian poetry is that of intense passionate humanism. The intense humanity of the young Canadian poets permeates the poetry created by them: and that is the final hall mark of great poetry. And in that respect, the contemporary poetry of Canada transcends the barrier of the local, and attains a universality of appeal. Canadian poetry has come a long way from its early stage of imitation and directionless search for new paths; it has achieved a unique style, which the young Canadian poets can call their own, that marks it out from the English poetry written in the other countries of the world. Still the ultimate hall-mark of humanity gives contemporary Canadian poetry universality in appeal that removes from it the stigma of the local. It can be and will be enjoyed and appreciated by any poetry - lover anywhere in the world.

➤ **Analysis of the Poems:**

Leonard Cohen: 'You Have the Lovers'

The poem "You have the Lovers" by Leonard Cohen is from his 1961 anthology *The Spice box of the Earth*. As a young man, Cohen spent some time in Hydra, Greece, where he fell in love with Marianne Ihlen. In an interview with Kari Hesthamar, Cohen discusses the intimacy they shared and connects it to the landscape of Hydra and the objects there. The relationship between love and the landscape reflects the imagery of "You have the Lovers," illuminating the themes and implications of the poem. Cohen says:

"It's just a sense that I was privileged; the sunlight, the woman, the child, the table, the work, the gardenia, the order, the mutual respect and honour that we gave to each other—that's really what matters.... I don't remember how we split up, somehow we just moved and we just separated. The periods of separations became longer and longer, and then somehow it collapsed. Kind of weightlessly, like ashes falling. There was no confrontation, there was no discussion, in fact I don't remember how it happened. She was in Oslo, I was in New York struggling to make a living, and she was, I suppose, struggling to find some sort of situation, to take care of the child, and the distances grew and grew until we were leading different lives...."

Similar to the opening stanza of "You have the Lovers," Cohen emphasizes specific objects associated with the beloved. Analogous to his poem, he orders them in a hierarchy of intimacy. He writes, "You have the lovers, / they are nameless, their histories only for each other. / and you have the room, the bed and the windows". Comparable to "the sunlight, the woman, the child," Cohen positions the least intimate first. Sunlight, although familiar, can only be indirectly felt through the heat it emits, and it can be observed, its absence of texture or sound gives it an ethereal quality, removing it from humanity. The sunlight is the furthest from him; however, "the women," the closest and most intimate, is placed at the centre. Moreover, "child" has a connotation to pains; limited life experience does not allow them to comprehend romantic love. This objective onlooker is detached from their closeness.

Similarly, in "You have the Lovers," the room signifies an ambiguous space, like the sun it displaces, and locates intimacy. The "bed," a shared intimate space, is placed at the centre, and the "window," like "child," invites an outside gaze last.

Cohen uses darkness to symbolize intimacy. The lovers are being shut in the darkened room, "buried" in the bed. The windows are "blackened" and the door is closed. This is an experience that is insular and specific to them. This reflects the tension between intimacy and objectivity Cohen addresses. In an earlier description of his time spent in Hydra, Cohen says,

"when you picked up a cup you knew by the way that it fitted into your hand that it was the cup that you always had been looking for. And the table that you sat at, that was the table that you wanted to lean on, and the wine, that was ten cents a gallon, was the wine that you wanted to drink, the price you wanted to pay". He describes Hydra as a space where everything is meant for him and specific to him. However, he refers to familiar objects making a widely understood concept and feeling, very subjective similar to the insular love and intimacy developed in this poem.

Cohen evokes nature to symbolize how love will inevitably be lost. The room becomes a dense garden,

full of colours, smells, sounds you have never known.

The bed is smooth as a wafer of sunlight,

in the midst of the garden it stands alone.

In the bed the lovers, slowly and deliberately and silently

perform the act of love.

A garden signifies abundant life but also inevitable decay. Earlier lines illustrate this unavoidable loss and potential for growth. Cohen writes, "Your children grow up, they leave you, /they become soldiers and riders/ Your mate dies after a life of service/ Who knows you? Who remembers you". Analogous to the garden children represent generational continuity. The disconnection from the parents to pursue careers suggests this bond must be severed to facilitate growth. The lovers confront the prospect of their story becoming lost. This breaking of familial bonds symbolizes a loss of memory. The image of the garden represents how love is lost organically. The bed is isolated in this space and it is thin and fragile as sunlight. Sex is depicted as an act that is temporary; the conditional connection of children to their parents reflects the fleeting aspect of performance. Anonymity arises when these bonds are broken suggesting relationships temporarily establish a person's identity.

Furthermore, Cohen's evocation of the human body emblemizes an indifference towards the inevitable loss he confronts. He writes:

 Their eyes are closed,
 as tightly as if heavy coins of flesh lay on them,
 Their lips are bruised with new and old bruises.
 Her hair and his beard are hopelessly tangled.

"Coins" were used to be placed on the eyes of the dead in ancient times. The conflation of coins with flesh suggests an exchange is being made. This mutual sacrifice is associated with death and supports the reading that the end of their relationship is unavoidable. Moreover, the bruises signify overlapped time frames; the layering of new pain onto old pain suggests there has been no time for healing. Lips are used to speak and to express love; they wear the reminder of a wound, illustrating how love and the sacrifice of love will result in pain and loss. The "hopeless" entanglement of their hair reinforces this reading. Hair, in its texture, colour, and length, is a feature unique to every person. This mingling of such distinct features illustrates a false sense of unity. The naturalness of death and pain suggests the speaker is indifferent towards this loss of love.

In the subsequent lines, love is depicted as consumable. The ambiguity of who instigates physical contact reflects this interpretation they are indifferent about the unavoidable end to their love. The comparison of "her" flesh to a "mouth" suggests love is consumptive. Eating embodies a tension between temporary and long term sustenance. Food upholds the body for a short period of time, but people consume regularly. The temporary act embedded in a long-term cycle reflects the fleeting quality of love. Through evoking this in a natural and quotidian process, the end of love is normalized. This familiarization coincides with the reading that the speaker is indifferent to love's fleeting qualities.

Leonard Cohen, "The Genius"

"The Genius" by Leonard Cohen was first published in 1961 in *The Spice Box of Earth*, Cohen's second published collection of poetry. A casual reading of the poem suggests that it is about love. The repeated use of anaphora at the beginning of each of the stanzas serves to propagate this effect, "For you" being interpreted as a loving sentiment. It shows a man so overcome with love that he is willing to alter himself in

any way necessary to pacify his beloved, and to detach himself easily from his Jewish heritage.

However, a closer reading of the poem makes it clear that his repetition is not meant as a separation at all, but rather an illustration of his constant connection and devotion to Judaism. He uses each stanza as an opportunity to embody a different Jewish stereotype and can easily shift in and out of them because, to him, they are nothing more than meaningless caricatures created by jealous outsiders as a means to persecute the Jewish people. Ultimately, though, no matter how he may shift, the underlying message of each stanza is that, no matter what stereotype is placed upon him, whether it be him as "a banker jew" or "a doctor jew," he will always remain a Jew, and no amount of persecution will alter that identity.

It is through this reading of the poem that one's understanding of it shifts, which results in a change in the presence of the continually mentioned "you" from a figure of the beloved to one of the perpetrator of this suffering. This figure could be viewed as the general outside world, but I believe it holds more specific connotations alluding to the Nazi regime, particularly Hitler. Although the poem works to create a general discussion about the persecution of Jewish people by using all manner of stereotypes, the direct referencing to the Holocaust, the greatest source of Jewish persecution, helps to narrow the focus. It is possible to conclude that Cohen names the poem, 'The Genius' to represent Hitler. This idea is only strengthened through the examination of the meaning of the word "genius," of which one of the definitions reads "a person regarded as exerting a powerful influence over another for good or evil," which can most certainly be applied to Hitler's influence over the German population during his time of power.

The opening and closing stanzas work to establish this strong connection to the Holocaust theme. The striking similarity between these two stanzas is that they are the only two stanzas that use diction directly relating to the Holocaust. The final stanza contains the reference to "Dachau," one of the German concentration camps where the Jews were sent to be killed, but the first stanza also employs subtler Holocaust imagery through its use of the term "ghetto," which refers to the areas of Germany that were reserved for Jewish occupancy before the creation of the camps.

Much like the ghettos can be viewed as a precursor for the later horrors that would result, the first stanza is a prelude to how the poem will conclude in death.

The stanza begins with the speaker proclaiming that he will "dance" for this mysterious "you" figure, an innocent enough sentiment. He then says that he will "put white stocking / on [his] twisted limbs," presenting the unsuspecting reader with the first image of distorted synecdoche that will develop further throughout the work, and finally ending with the promise of death by adding "poison" to the "wells / across the town"(6-7). This reference to poison demonstrates a clear foreshadowing to the poison that will be used in the concentration camps that will end not only the poem, but also the lives of the Jewish people. In much the way that this stanza begins with innocence and culminates in death, so too does the whole poem, but it is not met without resistance.

The first stanza ends with this violent image of death committed by poison, and establishes the violent tone that will continue to be reflected throughout the entirety of the poem. In the second stanza, the speaker refers to himself as "an apostate jew," a Jewish individual who has renounced his claim to the faith, but whether this is because of his own choices or the forced choice of a greater authority is unclear until he speaks to "the Spanish priest." This event is possibly being referenced as the beginning of the Jewish persecution the speaker works to uncover and dispel throughout the poem. However, he does not choose to be silent about this injustice but rather fight against it, using both words and violent action. He even heightens this claim by adding that he knows "where the bones / of the child are hid," to prove to the priest that not only is he willing to perform a sacrifice, but he has done it before. The speaker is threatening the priest with his own demise should he try to separate the speaker from his faith.

The violence continues in the third stanza with the "banker jew," who says he will "bring to ruin / a proud old hunting king / and end his line." Initially, one could believe that perhaps the speaker will bring ruin to his reputation or finances, but the violence deepens in the final line, which promises an end to his lineage. The "proud old hunting king" can be viewed as an authoritative figure much like the "priest" and the "you" figure, and as with the other two the speaker shows that he is unafraid and quite prepared to use violence to against those who would try to harm him. It is through these references that the speaker truly cements his undying and often radical devotion to his faith.

➤ **Raymond Souster: 'Young Girls'**

In the poem, 'Young Girls' Raymond Souster uses different devices to portray a predominant image of sexual promise by the young girls. The poem depicts the beginning of sexual desire in women, the confusion they experience and tentativeness to act upon these desires. Faithfully following the schematic of a traditional English sonnet, Raymond Sousters' Young Girls depicts the coming of age in women, with conflicting emotions in regard to the male speaker. Analyzing the young girls from "this dark doorway" put the speaker in a curious light. The fact that the young girls are passing by in groups "two, three together, hand in hand" shows the reluctance to pass the speaker alone. This gives the projection that the speaker would be male. The active description of the experience believed to take place in young girls, also leads the reader into a sense that the girls are wary of the speaker. Where does his knowledge come from? The laughter gives a view of dislike for women in the speaker as he objectifies the young women seeing them blossom ready for him to try to attract. Analyzing the speaker leads to belief that Sousters' 'Young Girls' depicts the coming of age in women.

The last four stanzas have respectively five, four, three and two lines. The falling prey of a man is suggested by have lack of words or being totally trapped by,

"Drifting the summer
labyrinths of love."

Raymond Souster: Night Raider: Summary

Raymond Souster has opinionated about his writing as-

"Whoever I write to, I want to make the substance of the poems so immediate, so real, so clear, that the reader feels the same exhilaration— be it fear or joy—that I derived from the experience, object, or mood that triggered the poem in the first place I like to think I am "talking out" my poems rather than consciously dressing them up in the trappings of the academic school. ..."

So, his poems are his dialogues with the readers. The poem, 'Night Raider', presents a picture of an animal, (maybe it is human kind) as he calls it, 'I get a picture of my animal'. Poet, as an onlooker, can see the animal in the narrow alley eating the 'choicest refuse' from the newspaper wrapping. It gorges so frantically that it's not

4. Which marks Canadian Poetry bears before 1900?
5. Which two important factors shaped the artists' response to the landscape?
6. Which poem by A. M. Klein satirizes Nazism?

C) Answer the following questions in detail

1. What did the poetry of the pre-confederation period deal with? Explain with examples.
2. What were the characteristics of Canadian literature?
3. How does Cohen contribute to the Canadian Literature?
4. With reference to Canadian poets, comment on their attitude towards nature.
5. "The intense humanity of the young Canadian poets permeates the poetry created by them." Justify.
6. Give an estimate of the Canadian poets of modernist period.

D) Write short notes

- i) Group of Seven Poets
- ii) Confederation poets
- iii) Nature in Canadian Poetry
- iv) Contemporary Canadian poets
- v) Confederation period and the famous poets of the time

1.9 References to Further Study:

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