Please check the examination details below before entering your candidate information

Candidate surname	Other names

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

Centre Number | | | | | |

Candidate Number | | | | |

Monday 7 January 2019

Afternoon (Time: 2 hours) | Paper Reference **4ET1/01**

English Literature

Paper 1: Poetry and Modern Prose

You must have:
Question Booklet and Booklet of poems from Part 3 of the Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English Anthology (enclosed)

Total Marks

Instructions

- Use **black** ink or ball-point pen.
- **Fill in the boxes** at the top of this page with your name, centre number and candidate number.
- Answer the question from Section A, **ONE** question from Section B and **ONE** question from Section C.
- Answer the questions in the spaces provided
  – *there may be more space than you need.*

Information

- The total mark for this paper is 90.
- The marks for **each** question are shown in brackets
  – *use this as a guide as to how much time to spend on each question.*
- Copies of the *Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English Anthology* may **not** be brought into the examination.
- Copies of the texts studied may **not** be brought into the examination.
- Dictionaries may **not** be used in this examination.

Advice

- Read each question carefully before you start to answer it.
- Check your answers if you have time at the end.

Turn over ▶

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SECTION A: Unseen Poetry

Question 1

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(Total for Question 1 = 20 marks)

TOTAL FOR SECTION A = 20 MARKS

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SECTION B: Anthology Poetry

Indicate which question you are answering by marking a cross in the box ☒. If you change your mind, put a line through the box ☒ and then indicate your new question with a cross ☒.

Chosen question number: **Question 2** ☒ **Question 3** ☒

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TOTAL FOR SECTION B = 30 MARKS

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SECTION C: Modern Prose

Indicate which question you are answering by marking a cross in the box ☒. If you change your mind, put a line through the box ☒ and then indicate your new question with a cross ☒.

Chosen question number:

Question 4 ☒	**Question 5** ☒	**Question 6** ☒
Question 7 ☒	**Question 8** ☒	**Question 9** ☒
Question 10 ☒	**Question 11** ☒	**Question 12** ☒
Question 13 ☒		

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TOTAL FOR SECTION C = 40 MARKS

TOTAL FOR PAPER = 90 MARKS

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

Monday 7 January 2019

Afternoon (Time: 2 hours) | Paper Reference **4ET1/01**

English Literature

Paper 1: Poetry and Modern Prose

Question Booklet

Do not return this booklet with your Answer Booklet.

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Answer THREE questions:

Answer the question in Section A,
ONE question from Section B
and ONE question from Section C.

The poems for use with Section B are included with this paper.

	Page
SECTION A: Unseen Poetry	4
SECTION B: Anthology Poetry	6
SECTION C: Modern Prose	
To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee	7
Of Mice and Men, John Steinbeck	7
The Whale Rider, Witi Ihimaera	8
The Joy Luck Club, Amy Tan	8
Things Fall Apart, Chinua Achebe	9

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SECTION A: Unseen Poetry

Answer the question in this section.

You should spend 35 minutes on this question.

Read the following poem.

Mum Dad and Me

My parents grew among palmtrees,
in sunshine strong and clear.
I grow in weather that's pale,
misty, watery or plain cold,
around back streets of London.

Dad swam in warm sea, at my age.
I swim in a roofed pool.
Mum – she still doesn't swim.

Mum went to an open village market
at my age. I go to a covered
arcade one with her now.
Dad works most Saturdays.

At my age Dad played
cricket with friends.
Mum helped her mum, or talked
shouting halfway up a hill.
Now I read or talk on the phone.

With her friends Mum's mum washed
clothes on a river-stone. Now
washing-machine washes our clothes.
We save time to eat to TV,
never speaking.

My dad longed for a freedom in Jamaica.
I want greater freedom.
Mum prays for us, always.

Mum goes to church
some evenings and Sundays.
I go to the library.
Dad goes for his darts at the local*.

Mum walked everywhere, at my age.
Dad rode a donkey.
Now I take a bus
or catch the underground train.

James Berry (1988)

**darts at the local* – a game played at a local bar

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1 Explore how the writer presents the family in this poem.

In your answer, you should consider the writer's:

- descriptive skills
- choice of language
- use of form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poem.

(Total for Question 1 = 20 marks)

TOTAL FOR SECTION A = 20 MARKS

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SECTION B: Anthology Poetry

Answer ONE question from this section.

You should spend 40 minutes on your chosen question.

EITHER

2 Re-read *La Belle Dame sans Merci* and *My Last Duchess*.

Compare the ways the writers present a story in *La Belle Dame sans Merci* and *My Last Duchess*.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems.

(Total for Question 2 = 30 marks)

OR

3 Re-read *The Tyger*.

Compare how the writers present power in *The Tyger* and **one other** poem from the anthology.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems.

(Total for Question 3 = 30 marks)

TOTAL FOR SECTION B = 30 MARKS

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SECTION C: Modern Prose

Answer ONE question on ONE text from this section.

You should spend 45 minutes on this section.

***To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee**

EITHER

4 'I maintain that the Ewells started it all.' (Scout)

Explore the importance of the Ewell family in this novel.

You must consider the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question 4 = 40 marks)

OR

5 Show how the setting of Maycomb is significant in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

You must consider the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question 5 = 40 marks)

***Of Mice and Men*, John Steinbeck**

EITHER

6 Discuss the relationship between Curley and his wife in this novel.

You must consider the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question 6 = 40 marks)

OR

7 Examine the significance of animals in *Of Mice and Men*.

You must consider the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question 7 = 40 marks)

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***The Whale Rider*, Witi Ihimaera**

EITHER

8 Explore the relationship between Koro Apirana and Nanny Flowers in this novel.

You must consider the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question 8 = 40 marks)

OR

9 Discuss the significance of the natural world in *The Whale Rider*.

You must consider the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question 9 = 40 marks)

***The Joy Luck Club*, Amy Tan**

EITHER

10 Explore the theme of marriage in *The Joy Luck Club*.

You must consider the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question 10 = 40 marks)

OR

11 Discuss the relationship between An-mei Hsu and Rose Hsu Jordan in the novel.

You must consider the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question 11 = 40 marks)

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***Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe**

EITHER

12 '*Things Fall Apart* is full of unnecessary violence.'

How far do you agree with this view?

You must consider the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question 12 = 40 marks)

OR

13 Explore the relationship between Ezinma and her parents in the novel.

You must consider the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question 13 = 40 marks)

TOTAL FOR SECTION C = 40 MARKS
TOTAL FOR PAPER = 90 MARKS

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Acknowledgement:
Mum Dad and Me by James Berry

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

Monday 7 January 2019

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English Literature

Paper 1: Poetry and Modern Prose
Poetry Booklet – Part 3 of the Edexcel Anthology

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If –

If you can keep your head when all about you
    Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
    But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
    Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
    And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream – and not make dreams your master;
    If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
    And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
    Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
    And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
    And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
    And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
    To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
    Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
    Or walk with Kings – nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
    If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
    With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
    And – which is more – you'll be a Man, my son!

Rudyard Kipling

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Prayer Before Birth

I am not yet born; O hear me.
Let not the bloodsucking bat or the rat or the stoat or the
club-footed ghoul come near me.

I am not yet born, console me.
I fear that the human race may with tall walls wall me,
with strong drugs dope me, with wise lies lure me,
on black racks rack me, in blood-baths roll me.

I am not yet born; provide me
With water to dandle me, grass to grow for me, trees to talk
to me, sky to sing to me, birds and a white light
in the back of my mind to guide me.

I am not yet born; forgive me
For the sins that in me the world shall commit, my words
when they speak me, my thoughts when they think me,
my treason engendered by traitors beyond me,
my life when they murder by means of my
hands, my death when they live me.

I am not yet born; rehearse me
In the parts I must play and the cues I must take when
old men lecture me, bureaucrats hector me, mountains
frown at me, lovers laugh at me, the white
waves call me to folly and the desert calls
me to doom and the beggar refuses
my gift and my children curse me.

I am not yet born; O hear me,
Let not the man who is beast or who thinks he is God
come near me.

I am not yet born; O fill me
With strength against those who would freeze my
humanity, would dragoon me into a lethal automaton,
would make me a cog in a machine, a thing with
one face, a thing, and against all those
who would dissipate my entirety, would
blow me like thistledown hither and
thither or hither and thither
like water held in the
hands would spill me.

Let them not make me a stone and let them not spill me.
Otherwise kill me.

Louis MacNeice

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Blessing

The skin cracks like a pod.
There never is enough water.

Imagine the drip of it,
the small splash, echo
in a tin mug,
the voice of a kindly god.

Sometimes, the sudden rush
of fortune. The municipal pipe bursts,
silver crashes to the ground
and the flow has found
a roar of tongues. From the huts,
a congregation: every man woman
child for streets around
butts in, with pots,
brass, copper, aluminium,
plastic buckets,
frantic hands,

and naked children
screaming in the liquid sun,
their highlights polished to perfection,
flashing light,
as the blessing sings
over their small bones.

Imtiaz Dharker

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Search For My Tongue

You ask me what I mean
by saying I have lost my tongue.
I ask you, what would you do
if you had two tongues in your mouth,
and lost the first one, the mother tongue,
and could not really know the other,
the foreign tongue.
You could not use them both together
even if you thought that way.
And if you lived in a place you had to
speak a foreign tongue,
your mother tongue would rot,
rot and die in your mouth
until you had to spit it out.
I thought I spit it out
but overnight while I dream,

મને હતું કે આખ્ખી જીભ આખ્ખી ભાષા.

(munay hutoo kay aakhee jeebh aakhee bhasha)

મેં થૂંકી નાખી છે.

(may thoonky nakhi chay)

પરંતુ રાત્રે સ્વપ્નામાં મારી ભાષા પાછી આવે છે.

(parantoo rattray svupnama mari bhasha pachi aavay chay)

ફૂલની જેમ મારી ભાષા મારી જીભ

(foolnee jaim mari bhasha mari jeebh)

મોઢામાં ખીલે છે.

(modhama kheelay chay)

ફળની જેમ મારી ભાષા મારી જીભ

(fulllnee jaim mari bhasha mari jeebh)

મોઢામાં પાકે છે.

(modhama pakay chay)

it grows back, a stump of a shoot
grows longer, grows moist, grows strong veins,
it ties the other tongue in knots,
the bud opens, the bud opens in my mouth,
it pushes the other tongue aside.
Everytime I think I've forgotten,
I think I've lost the mother tongue,
it blossoms out of my mouth.

Sujata Bhatt

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Half-past Two

Once upon a schooltime
He did Something Very Wrong
(I forget what it was).

And She said he'd done
Something Very Wrong, and must
Stay in the school-room till half-past two.

(Being cross, she'd forgotten
She hadn't taught him Time.
He was too scared of being wicked to remind her.)

He knew a lot of time: he knew
Gettinguptime, timeyouwereofftime,
Timetogohomenowtime, TVtime,

Timeformykisstime (that was Grantime).
All the important times he knew,
But not half-past two.

He knew the clockface, the little eyes
And two long legs for walking,
But he couldn't click its language,

So he waited, beyond onceupona,
Out of reach of all the timefors,
And knew he'd escaped for ever

Into the smell of old chrysanthemums on Her desk,
Into the silent noise his hangnail made,
Into the air outside the window, into ever.

And then, *My goodness*, she said,
Scuttling in, *I forgot all about you*.
Run along or you'll be late.

So she slotted him back into schooltime,
And he got home in time for teatime,
Nexttime, notimeforthatnowtime,

But he never forgot how once by not knowing time,
He escaped into the clockless land for ever,
Where time hides tick-less waiting to be born.

U. A. Fanthorpe

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Piano

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.

D. H. Lawrence

Hide and Seek

Call out. Call loud: 'I'm ready! Come and find me!'
The sacks in the toolshed smell like the seaside.
They'll never find you in this salty dark,
But be careful that your feet aren't sticking out.
Wiser not to risk another shout.
The floor is cold. They'll probably be searching
The bushes near the swing. Whatever happens
You mustn't sneeze when they come prowling in.
And here they are, whispering at the door;
You've never heard them sound so hushed before.
Don't breathe. Don't move. Stay dumb. Hide in your blindness.
They're moving closer, someone stumbles, mutters;
Their words and laughter scuffle, and they're gone.
But don't come out just yet; they'll try the lane
And then the greenhouse and back here again.
They must be thinking that you're very clever,
Getting more puzzled as they search all over.
It seems a long time since they went away.
Your legs are stiff, the cold bites through your coat;
The dark damp smell of sand moves in your throat.
It's time to let them know that you're the winner.
Push off the sacks. Uncurl and stretch. That's better!
Out of the shed and call to them: 'I've won!
Here I am! Come and own up I've caught you!'
The darkening garden watches. Nothing stirs.
The bushes hold their breath; the sun is gone.
Yes, here you are. But where are they who sought you?

Vernon Scannell

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Sonnet 116 'Let me not to the marriage…'

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments; love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no, it is an ever-fixèd mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

William Shakespeare

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La Belle Dame sans Merci. A Ballad

I

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
    Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has withered from the lake,
    And no birds sing.

II

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
    So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
    And the harvest's done.

III

I see a lily on thy brow,
    With anguish moist and fever-dew,
And on thy cheek a fading rose
    Fast withereth too.

IV

I met a Lady in the meads
    Full beautiful – a faery's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
    And her eyes were wild.

V

I made a garland for her head,
    And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
    And made sweet moan.

VI

I set her on my pacing steed,
    And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
    A faery's song.

VII

She found me roots of relish sweet,
    And honey wild, and manna*-dew,
And sure in language strange she said –
    'I love thee true'.

VIII

She took me to her elfin grot,
    And there she wept and sighed full sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
    With kisses four.

IX

And there she lullèd me asleep
    And there I dreamed – Ah! woe betide! –
The latest dream I ever dreamt
    On the cold hill side.

X

I saw pale kings, and princes too,
    Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried – 'La Belle Dame sans Merci
    Thee hath in thrall!'

XI

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
    With horrid warning gapèd wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
    On the cold hill's side.

XII

And this is why I sojourn here
    Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
    And no birds sing.

John Keats

**manna* – Food from heaven

Poem at Thirty-Nine

How I miss my father.
I wish he had not been
so tired
when I was
born.

Writing deposit slips and checks
I think of him.
He taught me how.
This is the form,
he must have said:
the way it is done.
I learned to see
bits of paper
as a way
to escape
the life he knew
and even in high school
had a savings
account.

He taught me
that telling the truth
did not always mean
a beating;
though many of my truths
must have grieved him
before the end.

How I miss my father!
He cooked like a person
dancing
in a yoga meditation
and craved the voluptuous
sharing
of good food.

Now I look and cook just like him:
my brain light;
tossing this and that
into the pot;
seasoning none of my life
the same way twice; happy to feed
whoever strays my way.

He would have grown
to admire
the woman I've become:
cooking, writing, chopping wood,
staring into the fire.

Alice Walker

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War Photographer

In his darkroom he is finally alone
with spools of suffering set out in ordered rows.
The only light is red and softly glows,
as though this were a church and he
a priest preparing to intone a Mass*.
Belfast. Beirut. Phnom Penh. All flesh is grass.

He has a job to do. Solutions slop in trays
beneath his hands, which did not tremble then
though seem to now. Rural England. Home again
to ordinary pain which simple weather can dispel,
to fields which don't explode beneath the feet
of running children in a nightmare heat.

Something is happening. A stranger's features
faintly start to twist before his eyes,
a half-formed ghost. He remembers the cries
of this man's wife, how he sought approval
without words to do what someone must
and how the blood stained into foreign dust.

A hundred agonies in black and white
from which his editor will pick out five or six
for Sunday's supplement**. The reader's eyeballs prick
with tears between the bath and pre-lunch beers.
From the aeroplane he stares impassively at where
he earns his living and they do not care.

Carol Ann Duffy

**Mass* – A religious service
***Sunday's supplement* – A regular additional section placed in a Sunday newspaper

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The Tyger

Tyger, Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!

When the stars threw down their spears
And waterd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?*

Tyger, Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

William Blake

**Did he who made the Lamb make thee* – God

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My Last Duchess
Ferrara

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
'Frà Pandolf' by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say 'Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much,' or 'Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat': such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart – how shall I say? – too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace – all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men, – good! but thanked
Somehow – I know not how – as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech – (which I have not) – to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, 'Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark' – and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
– E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

Robert Browning

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Half-caste

Excuse me
standing on one leg
I'm half-caste

Explain yuself
wha yu mean
when yu say half-caste
yu mean when picasso
mix red an green
is a half-caste canvas/
explain yuself
wha yu mean
when yu say half-caste
yu mean when light an shadow
mix in de sky
is a half-caste weather/
well in dat case
england weather
nearly always half-caste
in fact some o dem cloud
half-caste till dem overcast
so spiteful dem dont want de sun pass
ah rass/
explain yuself
wha yu mean
when yu say half-caste
yu mean when tchaikovsky
sit down at dah piano
an mix a black key
wid a white key
is a half-caste symphony/

Explain yuself
wha yu mean
Ah listening to yu wid de keen
half of mih ear
Ah lookin at yu wid de keen
half of mih eye
and when I'm introduced to you
I'm sure you'll understand
why I offer yu half-a-hand
an when I sleep at night
I close half-a-eye
consequently when I dream
I dream half-a-dream
an when moon begin to glow
I half-caste human being
cast half-a-shadow
but yu must come back tomorrow
wid de whole of yu eye
an de whole of yu ear
an de whole of yu mind

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an I will tell yu
de other half
of my story

John Agard

Do not go gentle into that good night

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Dylan Thomas

Remember

Remember me when I am gone away,
    Gone far away into the silent land;
    When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
    You tell me of our future that you planned:
    Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
    And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
    For if the darkness and corruption leave
    A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
    Than that you should remember and be sad.

Christina Rossetti

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Surname	StemUp Model Solution
Answer booklet	Write the question number in the left-hand margin at the start of each answer.

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1

James Berry presents a family divided not by conflict but by time and place. The speaker's parents grew up in Jamaica, while he is growing up in London, and the poem quietly sets their two worlds side by side. On the surface it records progress and convenience, yet underneath it suggests that the family has gained comfort at the cost of warmth, closeness and shared experience.

Berry's descriptive skills are clearest in the contrast of settings. The parents grew "among palmtrees, / in sunshine strong and clear", a phrase whose alliteration and confident pair of adjectives makes Jamaica feel vivid and certain. London, by contrast, is a tired list: "pale, / misty, watery or plain cold". The adjectives drain colour from the scene, and "plain cold" sounds almost like a shrug, as if the speaker cannot find anything better to say about it. Even "back streets of London" feels marginal.

This contrast between openness and enclosure runs through the poem. Dad "swam in warm sea", whereas the speaker swims "in a roofed pool"; Mum went to "an open village market" but now visits "a covered / arcade". The repeated idea of being roofed and covered suggests that modern life is safer but more confined, which perhaps explains why the speaker wants "greater freedom".

The structure reinforces these comparisons. Almost every stanza moves from past to present, and the shift in tense, "grew" to "grow", "swam" to "swim", works like a refrain that measures the distance between generations. The repeated phrase "at my age" keeps the reader comparing the speaker with his parents at the same point in life. The poem is in free verse with short, mostly end-stopped lines, and

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each stanza is self-contained, which mirrors a family in which each member occupies a separate space. Dad "works most Saturdays", Mum "goes to church", the speaker "go[es] to the library": their activities are listed side by side but never overlap.

The most striking moment comes when the speaker uses "We" for the only time: "We save time to eat to TV, / never speaking." Machines have taken over the labour that once brought people together, so that where Mum's mum washed clothes "with her friends" on a river stone, now "washing-machine washes our clothes". The alliteration and the missing article make the machine sound like the subject of the household, doing things on its own. The time saved is not spent on each other, and the isolated final line "never speaking" lands with quiet sadness.

Yet Berry does not present the family as broken. The single line "Mum prays for us, always" stands out because of the inclusive "us" and the emphatic final word, suggesting that the mother's faith and love still hold the family together. The plain, conversational language, with its simple names "Mum" and "Dad", gives the poem the voice of a child observing honestly rather than complaining.

The ending returns to movement: Mum "walked everywhere" and Dad "rode a donkey", while the speaker takes "a bus / or catch[es] the underground train". The underground is an apt final image, fast and efficient but hidden from the sunlight of the parents' past. Overall, Berry presents a loving but fragmented family, in which modern comfort has brought freedom and distance at the same time.

2 Both Keats and Browning tell the story of a doomed relationship between a man and a beautiful woman, but they tell it in opposite ways. Keats uses the

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traditional ballad to create a haunting, dreamlike tale in which the man is the victim of a mysterious woman's power, while Browning uses dramatic monologue to let a powerful man tell his own story and, without meaning to, reveal himself as the destroyer. In both poems, what is left unsaid is as important as what is told.

The openings establish very different storytellers. Keats begins with an unnamed questioner: "O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms, / Alone and palely loitering?" The question draws the reader into a mystery, and the pathetic fallacy of "The sedge has withered from the lake, / And no birds sing" creates a dead, wintry landscape that mirrors the knight's condition. Browning, by contrast, opens in the middle of a conversation: "That's my last Duchess painted on the wall". The possessive "my" and the chilling adjective "last" immediately suggest a man who collects wives as he collects art, and the casual tone hints that she has been replaced. Where Keats's story begins with suffering, Browning's begins with ownership.

The women are presented through the men's eyes in both poems, and both are beautiful. The faery's "hair was long, her foot was light, / And her eyes were wild", the simple balanced clauses typical of ballad description, while the repetition later in "wild wild eyes" suggests something untameable and dangerous. The Duchess, too, is remembered through her looks, the "spot / Of joy" in her cheek and the "faint / Half-flush" painted by Frà Pandolf. However, the Duke's description turns her warmth into an accusation: she had a heart "too soon made glad", and "her looks went everywhere". What the reader sees as innocence and kindness, he sees as disloyalty, so Browning invites us to read against the speaker.

The balance of power is the key difference. The knight is passive and powerless: he "made a garland for her head", set her on his "pacing steed" and was taken to her "elfin grot". She feeds him "honey wild, and manna-dew" and speaks "in

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language strange", so he cannot even be sure of what she means when she says "I love thee true". Keats presents him as enchanted and helpless, and the title tells us she is a woman "sans Merci", without pity. The Duke, on the other hand, holds all the power. He refuses even to correct his wife, declaring "I choose / Never to stoop", and the enjambement throws weight onto his pride. His story climaxes in the brutally brief "I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together." The euphemism hides a murder, and the caesura after "commands" gives a terrible pause in which the reader realises what has happened.

Form shapes the way each story is told. La Belle Dame sans Merci is a ballad of twelve quatrains, with the short fourth line in each stanza, such as "And no birds sing", cutting the rhythm off abruptly so that each stanza ends on a sense of loss. The story moves from the questioner's voice to the knight's own narrative, which gives a frame like a folk tale. My Last Duchess is written in rhyming couplets of iambic pentameter, but the heavy enjambement means the rhymes are barely noticed. This creates the effect of a smooth, controlled speaker whose polished surface hides violence, just as the curtain he draws hides the portrait. His hesitations, such as "how shall I say?", seem calculated rather than genuine.

Both poems are ambiguous. Keats never explains who the lady is, whether she meant to harm the knight, or whether the "pale kings, and princes too" are a real warning or a nightmare. Browning never states that the Duchess was killed, leaving the reader to piece it together. Yet the endings work differently. Keats's final stanza circles back to the first, "Alone and palely loitering", trapping the knight in an endless cycle of suffering. Browning ends by moving on: the Duke talks of the dowry and points out Neptune "Taming a sea-horse", a statue that symbolises his desire to dominate, "cast in bronze for me". The final word "me" shows that his story has always been about himself.

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Ultimately, both poets use a love story to explore power and destruction. Keats creates sympathy for a male victim of a supernatural femme fatale, while Browning exposes a male tyrant through his own words. For me, Browning's story is more disturbing, because its horror is human and told with such calm pride, whereas Keats's horror remains distant and mysterious.

3 Both William Blake's The Tyger and Imtiaz Dharker's Blessing present power as something awe-inspiring and almost divine. In The Tyger, power belongs to a fearsome creature and, behind it, to the even greater creator who could make it. In Blessing, power belongs to water, a force so precious to a drought-stricken community that its sudden arrival feels like an act of God. Both poets therefore link natural power to religious wonder, but Blake's poem is filled with fear and unanswered questions, while Dharker's ends in joyful celebration.

Blake establishes the tiger's power through striking imagery from the very first line: "Tyger, Tyger, burning bright, / In the forests of the night". The contrast between the fiery brightness and the darkness of the forest makes the tiger blaze out of the page, and the alliteration of "burning bright" gives the line a forceful beat. The question "What immortal hand or eye, / Could frame thy fearful symmetry?" moves straight from the tiger to its maker. "Fearful symmetry" is a paradox: the tiger is beautifully ordered, yet that perfection is terrifying. Dharker also begins with an image of power, but it is the power of absence: "The skin cracks like a pod. / There never is enough water." The simile and the blunt, end-stopped second line show how drought controls the people's bodies and lives. Where Blake opens with overwhelming presence, Dharker opens with desperate lack.

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Both poets turn natural power into something sacred. Blake asks "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?", wondering whether the same God created innocence and savagery, and the climactic image "When the stars threw down their spears / And waterd heaven with their tears" suggests that even the heavens surrender to this act of creation. In Blessing, water is imagined as "the voice of a kindly god", and the crowd that gathers is "a congregation", a religious noun that makes the scene feel like worship. The title itself presents water as a gift from above. However, the gods are very different: Blake's creator is "dread" and dangerous, while Dharker's is "kindly", which reflects the contrasting attitudes of fear and gratitude.

Language of force and violence is central to both poems. Blake uses the vocabulary of the blacksmith's forge: "What the hammer? what the chain? / In what furnace was thy brain?" These short, hammering questions, with their heavy stresses, recreate the noise and heat of the creator at work, and possibly the industrial furnaces of Blake's own time. The verbs "seize", "twist" and "clasp" make creation sound physically daring, and the repeated "dare" suggests that the creator's power borders on reckless. Dharker's language becomes similarly forceful when the "municipal pipe bursts" and "silver crashes to the ground". The metaphor "silver" shows how valuable the water is, and "crashes" and "a roar of tongues" give it a loud, almost animal energy, like Blake's tiger. Yet in Blessing the violence is welcome, because it brings life.

Form and structure also present power in different ways. The Tyger has six quatrains of rhyming couplets in a strong, regular trochaic rhythm, which gives the poem the steady, relentless pulse of a heartbeat or a hammer. Its structure is circular: the final stanza repeats the first, except that "Could frame" becomes "Dare frame". This single change shows that the speaker's wonder has grown into

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something closer to fear, as he now questions not just the creator's ability but his audacity. Blessing, in contrast, is in free verse with irregular lines that grow more excited as the water arrives. The long list "brass, copper, aluminium, / plastic buckets" piles up like the crowd itself, and the short lines "frantic hands" and "flashing light" speed the rhythm up, so that the form mirrors the rush of water.

The endings show the greatest difference. Blake leaves the reader with an unanswered question, so the power of the creator remains mysterious and slightly threatening. Dharker ends with an image of joy and fragility: "the blessing sings / over their small bones." The children are "screaming in the liquid sun", the water turning light into something they can touch, yet "small bones" reminds us of their poverty and of how quickly this blessing will end. The power of water is therefore temporary and outside the people's control, much as the power of Blake's creator is beyond human understanding.

Overall, both poets present power as something greater than humanity that inspires religious awe. Blake makes it terrifying, a force that can create both the lamb and the tiger, while Dharker shows it as life-giving and joyful but also cruel in its rarity. For me, Blessing is the more moving poem, because its power is felt in human bodies, whereas The Tyger asks a question that may never be answered.

4 Scout's claim on the novel's first page that "the Ewells started it all" is half a joke in a sibling argument, yet it proves to be the truest statement in the book. Harper Lee uses the Ewell family to set the plot in motion, from the trial of Tom Robinson to the attack on the children and the final emergence of Boo Radley. More importantly, the Ewells expose the deepest prejudices of 1930s Maycomb: they are the poorest and most despised white family in town, yet the racial

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hierarchy of the Deep South still allows their word to destroy a black man. Through them, Lee shows that racism is not a matter of class or respectability, but a system that gives even the lowest white person power over black lives.

Lee first introduces the Ewells through comedy, which makes their later importance all the more shocking. On Scout's first day at school, Burris Ewell is the "filthiest human" she has ever seen, with a cootie crawling from his hair, and he turns on Miss Caroline with vicious insults before storming out. Atticus later tells Scout that the Ewells have been "the disgrace of Maycomb for three generations". The town tolerates them by bending its own rules, letting Bob hunt out of season and the children avoid school. Maycomb has given up on the Ewells rather than helping them, reflecting a society in the Great Depression that had little welfare for its poorest families. Lee thus presents poverty and neglect as inherited, passed from generation to generation like the town's fixed family traits.

The description of the Ewell home deepens this picture. They live behind the town garbage dump, in a cabin near the black settlement, and their yard is filled with rubbish scavenged from the dump. Their position is symbolic: they live on the border between white Maycomb and the black community and their status is similarly precarious. They are "white trash", despised by the town, yet the colour of their skin places them above Calpurnia, Tom and every black citizen. Lee shows that Bob Ewell clings to this racial superiority because it is the only status he has.

Bob Ewell is presented as the novel's clearest villain. Scout's narration describes him as a "little bantam cock of a man", strutting into the courtroom, and Lee uses the animal imagery to suggest that his pride is loud, aggressive and empty. On the witness stand he is crude and disrespectful, and his testimony is designed to

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inflame the jury's prejudices. Yet Atticus's careful questioning reveals that Bob is left-handed and never called a doctor, while Tom's left arm is crippled. The reader, like Jem, can see that the evidence points to Bob himself as the man who beat Mayella. The tragedy is that this does not matter. The jury convicts Tom, and Lee, writing during the Civil Rights Movement and echoing cases like the Scottsboro trials of 1931, shows how the Southern justice system protected white accusers whatever the truth.

Mayella is the most complex Ewell, and she arguably reveals Lee's most perceptive point about the family. As the eldest of eight children, she has tried to bring beauty into her life through the red geraniums she grows in slop jars, suggesting a longing for something better. Scout realises that Mayella must have been "the loneliest person in the world", and her confusion when Atticus calls her "ma'am" shows that no one has ever treated her with courtesy. Tom's testimony that he felt sorry for her is shocking to the white jury, because a black man pitying a white woman reverses the town's hierarchy. In his closing speech, Atticus explains that Mayella has broken "a rigid and time-honoured code" by tempting a black man, and she accuses Tom to destroy the evidence of her own desire. Mayella is a victim of her father's abuse and of grinding poverty, but she chooses to sacrifice an innocent man to protect herself, showing how a racist society corrupts even its victims.

After the trial, the Ewells continue to drive the plot. Bob spits in Atticus's face and threatens him, and Atticus responds calmly that he would rather Bob take his anger out on him than on "that houseful of children". This reveals Atticus's compassion, but also his dangerous underestimation of Bob's malice. Bob loses his job with the WPA, a government relief programme of the New Deal, and blames Atticus; he then harasses Helen Robinson and lurks around Judge Taylor's house.

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Though he won, the town has seen through him.

The climax confirms Scout's opening claim. On Halloween night, Bob attacks Jem and Scout as they walk home from the pageant, and they are saved by Boo Radley, who kills him. The Ewells thus bring the novel's two plots together. Heck Tate's decision that Bob "fell on his knife" protects Boo from public attention, and Scout understands that exposing him would be like killing a mockingbird. Bob's death is a rough justice the courtroom failed to deliver, though Lee leaves the reader uneasy that the law has again been bent.

Ultimately, the Ewells are vital to the novel because they reveal the moral truth beneath Maycomb's polite surface. They are not simply villains; they are the product of a society that tolerated neglect and gave poor white people power through racism. As Atticus tells Jem, a white man who cheats a black man is "trash", no matter who he is, which suggests that Lee sees "trash" as a matter of behaviour rather than class. The Ewells may have "started it all", but Lee makes clear that it is the prejudice of the whole town that allowed them to finish it.

5 Maycomb is far more than a backdrop in To Kill a Mockingbird. Harper Lee, who based the town on her own home of Monroeville, Alabama, creates a small Southern community that acts as a microcosm of the American South in the 1930s. Its sleepy, close-knit surface seems safe and charming to the young Scout, but as the novel progresses, Lee reveals that the same closeness breeds prejudice, rigid social divisions and resistance to change. The setting is therefore significant because it shapes every character and conflict, and because Scout's growing understanding of Maycomb is the heart of her journey from innocence to experience.

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Lee's opening description establishes Maycomb as a place frozen in time. Scout calls it "a tired old town", and her memory that "there was no hurry, for there was nowhere to go, nothing to buy and no money to buy it with" captures both its slowness and its poverty. The heat seems to make everything move slowly, with ladies by nightfall like "soft teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum". The image is affectionate and humorous, filtered through adult Scout's nostalgic voice, yet the stagnation it describes is significant. A town where nothing moves is also a town where attitudes do not change. The reference to Maycomb having "nothing to fear but fear itself", echoing Roosevelt's inaugural address of 1933, places the story firmly in the Great Depression and hints that fear will drive much of what follows.

The economic setting shapes the lives of many characters. The Cunninghams are proud but poor farmers who cannot pay in money, so Mr Cunningham pays Atticus with hickory nuts, smilax and turnip greens. At lunch Walter pours syrup over his food, and when Scout criticises him, Calpurnia scolds her for shaming a guest. This episode shows Scout learning that Maycomb's poverty is real and that manners require empathy. The Ewells, living behind the town dump, show the lowest level of white poverty. Lee uses the Depression setting to show how desperation can harden prejudice, as poor white people cling to the one status that race gives them.

Maycomb is also a town where family identity is fixed. Scout explains that each family has its traits, so that people are judged by their surnames rather than their actions. Aunt Alexandra embodies this attitude, believing that "the longer a family had been squatting on one patch of land the finer it was". Lee's ironic verb "squatting" undercuts her snobbery, suggesting that heritage is not the same as

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worth. This rigid social order is significant because it explains why the town cannot see individuals clearly, whether Boo Radley, whom rumour has turned into a monster, or Tom Robinson, whom race has made guilty before the trial begins.

The physical geography of Maycomb reflects its segregation. The black community lives in its own settlement on the edge of town, worships at First Purchase church and has its own cemetery. When Calpurnia takes Scout and Jem to church, the children see a separate world with its own customs, and Calpurnia's "modest double life" of speaking differently in each community shows how carefully black citizens must navigate the town. In the courtroom, black spectators sit in the coloured balcony, physically above but socially below the white crowd. Lee uses these spaces to make the injustice of the segregated South visible, and the trial exposes how deeply racism is rooted. Atticus calls it "Maycomb's usual disease", a metaphor suggesting that prejudice is an infection everyone carries, even decent people.

Yet Lee does not present Maycomb as wholly evil. The same townspeople who form a lynch mob outside the jail are dispersed when Scout innocently speaks to Mr Cunningham about his son, showing that individuals can be reached through personal connection. Miss Maudie notes that the jury stayed out for hours, which she sees as a small step forward, and she tells the children that Maycomb has men like Atticus to do its unpleasant duties. Lee suggests that change in the South will come slowly, through individuals of conscience rather than through the town as a whole. Writing in the late 1950s, as the Civil Rights Movement was challenging segregation after the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Lee seems to offer both criticism and cautious hope.

Maycomb's hypocrisy is exposed most sharply after the trial. At Aunt Alexandra's missionary tea, Mrs Merriweather pities the Mruna tribe in Africa while

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complaining about the black servants in her own town. At school, Miss Gates condemns Hitler's persecution of the Jews, yet Scout remembers hearing her say after the trial that black people needed to be taught a lesson. Through Scout's innocent narration, Lee lets the reader see what the town cannot: that Maycomb's Christian and democratic values stop at the colour line.

Finally, the Radley Place gives the setting a gothic dimension. Boo's house, with its shuttered windows and rumours, represents everything the children fear about the unknown. By the end, Scout stands on the Radley porch and sees the street from Boo's perspective, recalling Atticus's advice to climb into someone's skin and walk around in it. Lee uses this changed view of a familiar setting to show Scout's moral growth. Maycomb remains the same town, but Scout now understands it.

Overall, the setting of Maycomb is significant because it gives the novel its moral argument. Lee shows that a community's comfort, tradition and isolation can coexist with terrible injustice, and that seeing one's home clearly, with all its faults, is the first step to changing it.

6 Steinbeck presents the marriage between Curley and his wife as one of the loneliest relationships in a novel full of loneliness. Although they have been married for only "a couple of weeks", there is no sign of love, trust or companionship between them. Instead their relationship is built on possession, suspicion and disappointed dreams. Through it, Steinbeck explores the powerlessness of women in 1930s America and the insecurity of men who measure themselves by aggression, suggesting that the ranch, and the society it represents, leaves no room for genuine human connection.

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From the start, the marriage is presented through gossip rather than direct observation,. Candy tells George that Curley is "cockier'n ever since he got married", implying that Curley treats his wife as a trophy that proves his status. The crude detail of the glove "fulla vaseline", which Curley wears to keep one hand soft for his wife, reduces their marriage to something sexual and boastful, and the men's mocking laughter suggests that it is a joke on the ranch. Candy adds that the wife has "got the eye", already flirting with the workers. The reader therefore meets her as a problem before she even appears, which reflects how the men see women: as dangers or possessions rather than people.

Steinbeck's choice never to name her is crucial. She is only ever "Curley's wife", defined entirely by her relationship to her husband. Even Slim's dog Lulu has a name, which suggests that in this male world she has less identity than an animal. When she first appears in the bunkhouse doorway, she is framed by light and described through her "full, rouged lips", red fingernails and red mules decorated with ostrich feathers. The repeated red signals danger and sexuality, and George instantly calls her "jail bait" and "a rattrap". Yet her excuse, "I'm lookin' for Curley", becomes a refrain that reveals the truth: she is constantly searching for a husband who is never there, and he is constantly searching for a wife he does not trust.

Curley's behaviour suggests that his marriage feeds his insecurity rather than easing it. He is a small man and a former boxer who reportedly reached the finals of the Golden Gloves, and Candy explains that he hates big men because he is small. His jealousy drives him to hunt for his wife around the ranch, and when he suspects she is with Slim, he is humiliated by Slim's contemptuous reply: "If you can't look after your own God damn wife, what you expect me to do about it?" Unable to stand up to Slim, Curley turns on Lennie, and Lennie crushes his hand.

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Steinbeck shows how Curley's masculinity depends on dominating others, and his wife is another thing to be controlled. In the context of the Depression, when men's power and pride were threatened by poverty and unemployment, Curley's need to assert himself through violence may reflect a wider crisis of masculinity.

The emptiness of the marriage becomes clearest on Saturday night, when Curley goes with the men to the brothel in town and leaves his wife alone. She visits Crooks's room and lashes out at the men left behind, calling them the "weak ones". Her remark that she is glad Lennie "bust up Curley a little bit" shows open contempt for her husband, and her cruelty to Crooks, threatening that she could get him "strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even funny", reveals how she uses the one form of power she has. As a white woman, she ranks above a black stable hand, but below every white man. Steinbeck exposes the ranch's hierarchy of race and gender, in which those with little power often turn on those with even less.

In the barn, Steinbeck finally allows Curley's wife to tell her own story, and she confesses to Lennie, "I don't like Curley. He ain't a nice fella." She explains that she married him on the same night she met him at the Riverside Dance Palace, because she believed her mother had stolen the letter that would have taken her to Hollywood. Her dream that she "coulda been in the movies" mirrors the escapism that Hollywood offered millions during the Depression. The marriage was therefore never about love but about escape from home, and it has trapped her instead. Her desperate admission, "I get awful lonely", gains sympathy from the reader, revealing that her flirtation is a cry for company rather than malice.

The only time Curley and his wife are together in the novel is when she is dead, and even then there is no grief. Curley's immediate reaction is a vow to shoot Lennie in the guts himself. His wife's death becomes an opportunity for revenge

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and for proving his toughness, rather than a moment of loss. Steinbeck's description of her in death, with "the meanness and the plannings and the discontent and the ache for attention" gone from her face, gives her a peace and innocence she never had in her marriage. It is a bitterly ironic moment: only in death does she escape the loneliness Curley's marriage imposed.

Ultimately, Steinbeck presents the relationship between Curley and his wife as a failed version of the companionship that George and Lennie share. Where George and Lennie have each other, Curley and his wife are bound together but completely alone. Their marriage reflects the sexism of 1930s America, in which women had little independence and were often objectified, and the insecurity of men who equated power with violence. Steinbeck may also be suggesting that the American Dream offered by Hollywood and the boxing ring was an illusion that left both of them, in different ways, trapped.

7 Animals are woven into every section of Of Mice and Men, from its title to its final scene. Steinbeck uses them to characterise Lennie, to foreshadow death, and to reveal the harsh values of the ranch, where anything weak or useless is destroyed. Most importantly, animals help Steinbeck show that the itinerant workers of the Depression are themselves treated almost like animals, living by instinct and at the mercy of forces they cannot control. The novel's animals therefore reflect the vulnerability of the men's dreams and the brutal survival of the fittest that governed 1930s rural America.

The title itself introduces this idea. It comes from Robert Burns's poem To a Mouse, in which a ploughman destroys a mouse's nest and reflects that the best laid plans of mice and men often go wrong. Steinbeck's title immediately links the

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fragile hopes of his characters to those of a small, defenceless animal, and the reader is prepared from the start for a story in which plans will fail. George and Lennie's dream of owning a farm, which in the context of the Great Depression was an almost impossible version of the American Dream, is as easily crushed as the mouse's nest.

Lennie is consistently described through animal imagery, which shapes how the reader sees him. In the opening chapter he walks "the way a bear drags his paws", dips "his big paw" in the water and drinks noisily "like a horse". These images suggest enormous physical strength guided by instinct rather than thought, and they make Lennie seem both powerful and innocent, like a large creature who does not know his own force. The comparisons suggest that his violence is never deliberate. However, they also hint at danger, because a bear or a horse cannot be fully controlled.

Lennie's love of soft animals is central to the plot and to the novel's tragic structure. He carries a dead mouse in his pocket because he likes to pet it, and George explains that he kills mice by petting them too hard. This pattern is repeated with escalating seriousness: in the barn Lennie accidentally kills the puppy Slim has given him, wondering why it had to die when it was not as little as mice and insisting "I didn't bounce you hard". Moments later, he strokes Curley's wife's hair and, panicking, breaks her neck. Steinbeck uses the progression from mouse to puppy to woman to build inevitability, so that the reader dreads what is coming. The animals act as warnings that no one heeds.

The rabbits represent Lennie's dream. Again and again he begs George to tell him how they will "live off the fatta the lan'" and how he will tend the rabbits. For Lennie, the rabbits stand for safety, comfort and responsibility, the reward for

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being good. Yet even the dream is threatened by his strength, since he fears that he may not be allowed to tend them if he does a bad thing. In the final chapter, a gigantic rabbit emerges from Lennie's mind and taunts him, saying George will beat him. This hallucination shows that his guilt is expressed through the only images he understands, and the dream that once comforted him now accuses him.

The death of Candy's dog is perhaps the most significant use of an animal in the novel. Carlson insists the old dog is useless and smells, and Candy reluctantly lets him shoot it, noting that he has had it since it was a pup. The long silence in the bunkhouse as the men wait for the shot is one of Steinbeck's most powerful moments of tension. Candy's later regret, "I ought to of shot that dog myself", directly foreshadows George's decision to kill Lennie himself rather than let Curley's lynch mob do it. Both Candy's dog and Lennie are loyal, dependent creatures with no place on the ranch once they are seen as useless or dangerous. Steinbeck exposes a society with no welfare system for the old or disabled: Candy fears that when he is no longer useful he will be thrown off the ranch, and wishes someone would shoot him too, and Crooks taunts Lennie that without George he would be put in a "booby hatch" and tied up with a collar like a dog.

The ranch's attitude to animals reflects its attitude to people. Slim drowns four of Lulu's puppies at birth because she cannot feed them all, a practical decision that shows the harsh logic of survival during the Depression. Even Curley is likened to an animal when Lennie crushes his hand and Curley flops "like a fish on a line", which reduces the bully to a helpless creature. Steinbeck seems to suggest that on the ranch, everyone is part of a natural food chain, and the weak are always destroyed.

The cyclical structure of the novel confirms this. It begins and ends at the same

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pool by the Salinas River, a peaceful place where animals come to drink. In the final chapter, a heron seizes a water snake and swallows it while its tail waves frantically. This unsentimental image foreshadows Lennie's death and reminds the reader that nature is indifferent to suffering. When George shoots Lennie while describing the rabbits, Lennie dies looking towards his dream, but the heron makes clear that the strong will always prey on the weak.

Overall, Steinbeck uses animals to give a brutal world its symbolism. They reveal Lennie's innocence and danger, predict the tragedy, and expose the cruelty of a society that discards anything that is no longer useful. Through them, Steinbeck questions whether the men of the Depression were treated as any better than the animals they worked beside.

8 Ihimaera presents the marriage of Koro Apirana and Nanny Flowers as a long, loving partnership disguised as a war. On the surface it is a comic battle of insults, threats and stubbornness, but underneath it lies a deep loyalty and understanding. More importantly, their relationship dramatises the central conflict of the novel: Koro stands for a rigid, male-centred reading of Maori tradition, while Nanny Flowers stands for the strength of women within that same tradition. The way their quarrel over Kahu is finally resolved becomes a model for how the tribe itself must change.

From the start, the relationship is presented through the affectionate, slightly mocking eyes of Rawiri, the narrator, who clearly adores both of them. Nanny's insults are constant and inventive: she calls her husband an old "paka" and dismisses him as "deaf, dumb, blind and stubborn". Koro, for his part, blames her defiance on her "Muriwai blood", as if her strength were an inherited disease. The

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humour is important because it stops either figure becoming a mere symbol. Yet even the comedy carries meaning. Koro's jibe about Muriwai, the female ancestor from whom Nanny descends, accidentally reminds the reader that Maori history already contains powerful women, which is exactly the truth Koro refuses to accept about Kahu.

The birth of Kahu turns their usual bickering into a serious conflict. Koro is desperate for a male heir from the line of Kahutia Te Rangi, the ancestor who rode the whale to Whangara, and when Porourangi's first child is a girl he is bitterly disappointed. Nanny, however, approves of the baby being given the name Kahutia Te Rangi, fully aware that her husband will see it as a man's name stolen by a girl. When Koro refuses to take part in burying the baby's pito, Nanny arranges the custom herself with Rawiri's help, so that Kahu is bound to the marae and the land. In a society where such rituals connect a child to the tribe for ever, Nanny's action is quietly radical: she uses tradition itself to secure Kahu's place, rather than rejecting it. Ihimaera suggests that the customs Koro guards so jealously are more generous than his interpretation of them.

Their relationship also reveals how power really works in the household. Nanny regularly threatens Koro with divorce and even with violence, and she sums up their marriage with the line "He argues, and I win". This reversal is comic, but it also undermines the idea that Koro, the chief, is in total control. In a community where speaking rights on the marae and the passing on of sacred knowledge belonged to men, Nanny's authority at home suggests that women have always held real influence, even when it is unofficial. Ihimaera, writing in the 1980s, when Maori women were increasingly challenging their exclusion from leadership, uses Nanny to show that female strength is not a foreign idea imported from outside but something rooted in Maori life.

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Koro's cruelty to Kahu tests the marriage most painfully. Kahu worships her great-grandfather, yet he rejects her again and again, and he refuses to attend her end-of-year school ceremony, where she gives a speech about him. Nanny's anger here is real rather than playful, and the reader shares it. However, Ihimaera never lets Koro become a villain. His harshness comes from fear: he believes the tribe is losing its language, its mana and its sense of purpose, and he sees a male heir as the only way to save it. Nanny understands this, which is why she nags rather than leaves. Her loyalty to him and her loyalty to Kahu pull against each other, and this tension gives their relationship its emotional weight.

Nanny's most important act is keeping a secret. When Koro throws a carved stone into the sea and challenges the boys of his school to retrieve it, they all fail. It is Kahu who dives and brings it back, but Nanny tells Koro nothing and hides the stone. This is a clever piece of structure on Ihimaera's part, as the reader knows that Kahu is the chosen one long before Koro does, so dramatic irony builds sympathy for both the child and the frustrated old woman. Nanny waits for the moment when the truth will be undeniable, and only gives Koro the stone after Kahu has climbed onto the back of the ancient bull whale and led the stranded herd back to sea. Her patience suggests wisdom: she knows that her stubborn husband must be shown, not told.

The ending confirms that the bickering was always a form of love. At the hospital, with Kahu unconscious, Nanny scolds Koro as usual, and Koro, humbled, jokes that she should divorce him and marry "old Waari over the hill". Nanny's dry agreement brings the familiar comedy back, but now it feels like relief and forgiveness. When Kahu wakes, Koro finally tells her that he loves her and admits that he was wrong. The marriage survives because Koro is able to change, and because Nanny

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never gave up on him.

Ultimately, Koro and Nanny Flowers represent two sides of a culture in crisis. Through their relationship, Ihimaera suggests that Maori tradition does not need to be abandoned to survive, but must be read more generously, so that the strength of women like Nanny, and the leadership of a girl like Kahu, can bind the people together again. The words "hui e, haumi e, taiki e", calling for everything to be joined together, could easily describe their marriage itself.

9 In The Whale Rider the natural world is far more than a setting. The sea, the land and above all the whales are living presences with memories, voices and desires of their own, and Ihimaera uses them to explore what has been lost between humans and nature, and between the Maori people and their own past. The novel suggests that the broken relationship with nature and the weakening of Maori identity are the same wound, and that healing one will heal the other.

The most striking way Ihimaera gives significance to the natural world is through structure. Alongside Rawiri's chatty, humorous narration, he places italic sections told from the perspective of the whale herd and its ancient bull leader, who still longs for the master who once rode him, Kahutia Te Rangi. These passages are written in a grand, almost mythic voice, so that nature is given a dignity and inner life equal to, or greater than, that of the human characters. The prologue sets this up by describing the land and sea waiting for the arrival of the whale rider, as though nature itself had been longing for human partnership. By sharing the whales' consciousness, the reader is forced to see the modern world from outside human interests.

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This view is a sorrowful one. The whales remember a time of "oneness" with humans, and Koro Apirana and Rawiri both recall a "helpful partnership" between people and the creatures of the sea. Koro believes this partnership ended when humans began to kill the whales, and the whales now see humans as the "greatest threat of all". The idea of a lost golden age is important to the novel's context. Maori belief places people within whakapapa, a genealogy that links humans to the land, the sea and all living things, so the slaughter of whales is not simply an environmental issue but a betrayal of kin. Ihimaera wrote at a time when commercial whaling had devastated whale populations and when international concern led to the ban on commercial whaling in 1986, so the novel's grief is rooted in real history.

The natural world is also used to bring global, political dangers into the story. The whale herd mourns calves that have died after the nuclear testing at Moruroa in the Pacific. The novel was published in 1987, only two years after the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior was bombed in Auckland harbour while protesting against French nuclear tests, an event that caused outrage in New Zealand. By making whales the victims of this testing, Ihimaera links the suffering of nature with the wider exploitation of the Pacific by outside powers, and invites readers to see environmental damage as a moral and colonial issue.

Rawiri's journey abroad develops the theme in a different way. In Papua New Guinea he works on a plantation and sees nature not as a partner but as an opponent in a "battle". His wry admission that the land could hardly be tamed "but we tried", and his recognition that "Nature will take back what man had once achieved", suggest the arrogance of trying to dominate the natural world. Yet even far from home, nature calls Rawiri back: he listens to the sea in a shell and sees the shape of a whale in the clouds, and he realises he must return to Whangara.

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The sea therefore represents belonging. For Rawiri, as for many young Maori of his generation who left rural communities for cities or other countries, reconnecting with nature means reconnecting with his tribe and identity.

Kahu is the character most closely bound to the natural world, and this is central to her significance as the true heir. She seems to understand the dolphins and whales, and she is deeply upset by cruelty towards them. When Rawiri takes her, aged only two, to a film about whale hunting, she is deeply distressed, and on the way home she calls out to a group of orcas, warning them to swim away. Ihimaera hints that Kahu's gift is not learnt but inherited from the ancestor whose name she carries. While Koro searches for a leader among the boys of his school, nature has already chosen.

The climax confirms this. When the herd strands itself on the beach at Whangara, the men, led by Koro, are unable to return the bull whale to the sea, and the tribe fears that its death will mean the death of the people. Only Kahu, swimming out alone, can climb onto the ancient whale's back and lead the herd to safety. The novel's structure, moving through Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, makes this winter crisis feel like the end of a natural cycle, with Kahu's survival suggesting rebirth. The harmony between humans and nature, and the future of the tribe, are restored together.

Finally, the repeated phrase "hui e, haumi e, taiki e", meaning join everything together, bind it together, let it be done, expresses the novel's deepest message. The preservation of Maori language and custom is presented as essential to rebuilding the bond with the natural world. Ihimaera suggests that the whales and the people are part of one story, and that by listening to nature, as Kahu does, a community can recover both its environment and its soul. For me, the natural

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world is therefore the most significant element of the novel, because it is the measure against which every human choice is judged.

10 In The Joy Luck Club, marriage is rarely a source of happiness. Across two generations and two cultures, Amy Tan presents it as a test of a woman's sense of self: in pre-revolutionary China, marriage is a trap imposed by family and tradition, while in modern America it appears to offer freedom and equality but often produces a quieter kind of loss. By placing the mothers' stories alongside their daughters', Tan suggests that the real problem is not the institution itself but whether a woman is able to keep her own voice within it.

The mothers' first marriages show the brutality of a patriarchal system in which women were treated as property. Lindo Jong is promised as a small child to Huang Tyan-yu, sent to live with his family at twelve, and married at sixteen to a boy who neither loves nor wants her. Tan presents the household through Lindo's sharp, humorous voice, but the reality is a kind of servitude in which her mother-in-law blames her for failing to produce a son. The red marriage candle, lit at both ends so that the couple's union will last, becomes a symbol of a fate decided for her. Lindo's escape is a triumph of cunning: she invents a dream of ancestral warnings and convinces the family the marriage is doomed, using the superstitions that bound her as the means of her freedom. Tan suggests that Chinese women, denied open power, learnt to win through intelligence and indirection, and Lindo's resolve to honour her parents while never forgetting herself becomes the moral core of her story.

An-mei Hsu's mother suffers an even crueller fate. Widowed, then dishonoured through a trick arranged by the manipulative Second Wife, she becomes a

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concubine in Wu Tsing's household, a position that brings her shame and powerlessness. Her suicide, timed so that her spirit will have power over the household, shows how few choices were available to women in a society that accepted polygamy and valued women mainly as bearers of sons. Ying-ying St Clair's first husband is a womaniser who abandons her for another woman, and her decision to abort their child shows how deeply the marriage has destroyed her. In all three stories marriage is something done to women rather than chosen by them.

Tan contrasts these with the mothers' second marriages in America, which are calmer but not always fulfilling. Suyuan Woo meets Canning Woo after fleeing Kweilin, and his tender memories of her, and his journey with Jing-mei to China to meet her lost twin daughters, suggest a marriage built on shared survival. Ying-ying's marriage to Clifford St Clair is more troubling. Clifford, an American, translates her words into English and, in doing so, consistently changes them, putting simple feelings into her mouth that she never expressed. This becomes a powerful image of how an immigrant woman can be silenced even by a well-meaning husband, as Ying-ying, unable to speak for herself in the new culture, becomes a passive and ghostly figure.

The daughters' marriages, set in late twentieth-century America, seem at first very different. They choose their own husbands, often white Americans, and divorce is accepted rather than shameful. Yet Tan shows that freedom of choice does not guarantee equality. Lena St Clair and her husband Harold Livotny divide every cost exactly, recording their spending on a list on the fridge. Their marriage looks modern and fair, but Lena earns far less than Harold in the firm she helped him build, and the list even includes ice cream that she never eats. The unstable table in their house, which Ying-ying notices at once, becomes a symbol of the hidden

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imbalance. Like her mother, Lena has let a man define her reality.

Rose Hsu Jordan's marriage to Ted collapses for a related reason. Early in their relationship Ted's mother warns Rose that others may not accept a mixed marriage, showing the prejudice that Chinese Americans could face. Later, Rose lets Ted make every decision, until he becomes tired of her lack of opinions and asks for a divorce, demanding the house. Only when An-mei urges her to speak up for herself does Rose finally refuse to be pushed aside. Waverly Jong, divorced from Marvin Chen and engaged to Rich Schields, fears her mother's criticism will poison this new relationship too, showing how the mothers' judgements continue to shape their daughters' marriages.

These parallels are central to the novel's structure. By arranging the stories in pairs, Tan reveals that the daughters, who believe themselves completely American, unknowingly repeat their mothers' passivity, but also that the mothers' hard-won strength is available to them. The irony is that the mothers, who were trapped by arranged marriages, are the ones who teach their daughters to resist, while the daughters, apparently free, have to learn how to use that freedom. Tan, writing in 1989 as the daughter of Chinese immigrants, presents a generation caught between Chinese ideas of duty and fate and American ideals of individual choice.

Ultimately, Tan presents marriage as a mirror of power. Whether arranged in China or chosen in California, it becomes destructive when a woman loses her voice and survivable when she keeps it. The novel's hope lies in moments like Lindo's escape and Rose's stand, which suggest that strength can pass between generations even across the gap of language and culture.

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The relationship between An-mei Hsu and her daughter Rose is one of love expressed through misunderstanding. An-mei, shaped by a childhood of suffering in China, is determined that Rose will never be as powerless as she and her own mother once were, yet the very lessons she tries to pass on seem lost in translation between Chinese and American ways of thinking. Amy Tan presents their relationship as a journey from silence and fear towards a hard-won recognition that Rose has inherited her mother's strength after all.

An-mei's attitude to her daughter cannot be understood without her own past. In "Scar" and "Magpies" she remembers being raised by her grandmother after her widowed mother was disgraced, and later living in the wealthy household of Wu Tsing, where her mother was a despised concubine. She learnt, as a Chinese girl, to swallow her own unhappiness and to desire nothing. Her mother's suicide, which secured An-mei's status in the household, also taught her that a woman can find power even in the most desperate situations. Tan places these memories next to Rose's story so that the reader can see why An-mei is so fierce: she has seen what happens to women who say nothing. Her belief that to know yourself you must "peel off your skin", and that of your mother and grandmother, shows that for her identity is something passed down through generations of women.

Rose, however, grows up in America and at first rejects her mother's world. As a child she believes everything An-mei tells her, including the story of Old Mr Chou, who guards the door to dreams and will chase disobedient children. This shows both the power of An-mei's words and a cultural gap, as Chinese stories and warnings take on a frightening, almost magical quality to an American child. As Rose grows older she values American opinions more, and she turns to friends and a psychiatrist rather than to her mother. An-mei is hurt by this, criticising her for seeking a stranger's advice, and also for being too thin. Like many of the mothers

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in the novel, An-mei rarely praises her daughter, partly from a superstitious fear that drawing attention to good fortune invites the anger of fate.

The most painful episode in their relationship is the death of Bing in "Half and Half". Rose is given the job of watching her younger brothers on a family trip to the beach, and four-year-old Bing drowns while she is distracted. Rose blames herself, and her guilt shapes her adult timidity. An-mei's reaction reveals her extraordinary faith: she believes she can change fate, and she returns to the beach with Rose, praying and even throwing an offering into the sea in the hope of bringing Bing back. When it fails, An-mei loses her faith and uses her Bible to prop up the short leg of a kitchen table. Tan uses this object as a symbol of their relationship: something once sacred is now hidden but still holding things in balance. Rose's sense that her mother's strength failed may explain why she struggles to believe in her own.

The cultural divide becomes sharper when Rose marries Ted Jordan. An-mei dislikes Ted because he is American, and Ted's mother is quietly prejudiced, warning Rose that not everyone will accept a mixed marriage. During their marriage Rose allows Ted to make every decision, and when he grows tired of her indecision and asks for a divorce, she collapses. An-mei's verdict that her daughter is "without wood" draws on the Chinese elements: without wood, a person bends to whichever wind blows and listens to everyone except herself. Tan presents this not as cruelty but as a diagnosis, and it captures the central problem of Rose's life.

The surprise in "Without Wood" is that An-mei does not tell Rose to save her marriage, as a traditional Chinese mother might have been expected to. Instead, she urges her to speak up for herself. This reversal is significant in context: An-mei, raised in a patriarchal society where wives endured in silence, wants her

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daughter to claim the equal rights that American society seems to offer but that Rose has never used. Tan suggests that the immigrant mothers saw clearly what their daughters could not: that freedom is useless without a voice.

Rose's change is shown through dreams. She dreams of Old Mr Chou and of her garden, and of her mother planting weeds that grow strong and wild. The weed is a perfect image for the inheritance An-mei gives her: unwanted, perhaps, but tough and impossible to destroy. When Ted brings the divorce papers and demands the house, Rose refuses to give it up and insists that he cannot simply remove her from his life. Afterwards, she phones her mother, a small but meaningful gesture showing that she is ready to listen.

In the end, the relationship between An-mei and Rose reflects the novel's wider concern with how strength survives across generations and cultures. Tan, writing as a Chinese American daughter herself, shows that misunderstanding is not the same as lack of love. Rose finally becomes the woman her mother hoped for, not by becoming Chinese, but by recognising the strength of the women who came before her.

12 Things Fall Apart is certainly full of violence, from wrestling matches and inter-village wars to the killing of a boy and the massacre of an entire village. However, I would only partly agree that this violence is "unnecessary". Achebe is careful to distinguish between violence that the Igbo community sees as necessary to its laws, gods and survival, violence that comes from Okonkwo's personal fear of weakness, and the far greater violence brought by colonial rule. Much of the violence in the novel is necessary to Achebe's purpose, because it allows him to show a complex society honestly, neither romanticising it nor accepting the colonial

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view of Africans as savages.

From the opening, violence is tied to honour. Okonkwo's fame rests on throwing Amalinze the Cat in a wrestling contest, and his status grows through success in war, where he has taken human heads and drinks palm wine from the first of them on important occasions. To a modern reader this may seem brutal, but in the context of pre-colonial Igbo society, where conflict between villages was common, physical courage was a genuine means of protecting the clan and earning titles. Achebe presents this world without apology, but he also shows that Umuofia values restraint: it only goes to war when its cause is just and approved by the Oracle. Violence here is regulated rather than random.

The violence that seems most clearly unnecessary is Okonkwo's own. Achebe explains that his whole life is driven by fear of resembling his gentle, idle father Unoka, and this fear turns into cruelty. He beats his youngest wife Ojiugo for neglecting to cook his meal during the Week of Peace, a sacred time when violence is forbidden, and he has to make a sacrifice to the earth goddess Ani. He also fires his gun at his second wife Ekwefi after she takes leaves from his banana tree. These moments are not demanded by the clan; in fact the clan punishes them. Achebe suggests that Okonkwo's violence is excessive even by the standards of his own culture, and Uzowulu's beating of his wife Mgbafo, judged by the egwugwu, confirms that domestic brutality is not simply accepted.

The killing of Ikemefuna is the most disturbing example, and it shows how hard it is to separate necessary and unnecessary violence. The Oracle decrees that the boy must die, so within Igbo belief his death is a religious duty. Yet Ogbuefi Ezeudu warns Okonkwo, "That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death." Okonkwo goes anyway, and when Ikemefuna runs to him crying "My father, they

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have killed me!", he cuts him down because "He was afraid of being thought weak." Achebe's short, flat sentence exposes the true motive. The killing may be required by the gods, but Okonkwo's part in it is unnecessary and selfish, and Obierika warns him that it will not please the Earth. Nwoye's horror and later conversion show its long consequences.

Some violence is presented as necessary within the clan's moral system. When Okonkwo accidentally kills Ezeudu's son at the funeral, the men of Umuofia destroy his compound and kill his animals. Achebe makes clear that they do this without hatred, including Obierika, his close friend, because it is their duty to cleanse the land of a crime against the earth goddess. The violence is ritual justice, meant to protect the whole community. Yet Obierika also questions why a man should suffer so terribly for an accident, and why twins must be thrown away in the Evil Forest. Through him Achebe invites the reader to see a society capable of questioning itself.

In Part Three, the most unnecessary violence comes from the colonisers. After the people of Abame kill a lone white man, on the advice of their Oracle, white men return and slaughter almost the whole village on market day. The disproportion is shocking. Later, the District Commissioner tricks the leaders of Umuofia into a meeting, imprisons them, and allows his messengers to humiliate and beat them before demanding a fine. The colonial system claims to bring law and order, but Achebe shows that its prisons, courts and messengers are a form of organised violence. Writing in 1958, two years before Nigerian independence, Achebe deliberately reverses the colonial stereotype of the violent African.

Igbo resistance turns violent too. When Enoch unmasks an egwugwu, a terrible insult to the ancestral spirits, the egwugwu burn his compound and destroy the

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church. Finally, Okonkwo beheads a court messenger, hoping to start a war, but the clan lets the other messengers escape. He realises Umuofia will not fight, and he hangs himself. His last act of violence is not unnecessary in his own eyes, but it is futile, and his suicide, an abomination to the clan, shows how isolated he has become.

The novel ends with the District Commissioner planning his book, The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger, in which Okonkwo will deserve perhaps a paragraph. The bitter irony of "Pacification" reveals the novel's real point. Violence fills the novel because it fills history, but Achebe uses it purposefully: to criticise Okonkwo's fear, to explore the strengths and flaws of Igbo tradition, and above all to expose the brutality hidden beneath the language of colonial civilisation. In that sense, very little of the violence is unnecessary to the novel itself.

13 Ezinma's relationship with her parents is one of the most tender in Things Fall Apart, and Achebe uses it to reveal hidden sides of characters who might otherwise seem defined by hardship. With her mother Ekwefi, Ezinma shares an intense, almost equal bond formed through grief and fear. With her father Okonkwo, she draws out a love he struggles to show, and she exposes the limits of his rigid ideas about gender. Through Ezinma, Achebe also explores the beliefs and gender roles of Igbo society in a more intimate and humane way than the public scenes of war and judgement allow.

Ezinma's relationship with Ekwefi is shaped by loss. Ekwefi has borne ten children, and nine have died in infancy. The names she gave some of them, expressing despair, show how deeply this suffering has marked her. Ezinma, whose name

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means "true beauty", is her only surviving child, and Ekwefi lives in constant fear of losing her too. In Igbo belief, a woman's position depended heavily on the children she bore, so Ekwefi's losses also threaten her status, which makes Ezinma doubly precious. Achebe shows their closeness through small details: Ezinma calls her mother by her name rather than "Mother", which suggests a relationship more like companionship than authority. Ekwefi also secretly feeds her eggs, which were forbidden to children, a shared transgression that reveals how far Ekwefi will bend the rules out of love.

The fear surrounding Ezinma comes from the belief that she may be an ogbanje, a child who repeatedly dies and returns to its mother's womb to cause grief. When the medicine man Okagbue questions her and finally digs up her iyi-uwa, a smooth pebble wrapped in a rag that links her to the spirit world, Ekwefi is filled with hope that the cycle has been broken. Achebe presents the ritual seriously and from within the culture, so that the reader shares the family's anxiety rather than viewing it as superstition. The scene shows that Ezinma's relationship with her mother exists not only in the human world but also in the world of spirits, where the bond between them is constantly at risk.

The most dramatic expression of Ekwefi's love comes when the priestess Chielo, possessed by the Oracle Agbala, takes Ezinma away at night. Ekwefi is ordered not to follow, yet she runs behind them through the darkness, past all nine villages and to the mouth of the Oracle's cave, ready to defend her daughter even against a god. Achebe builds suspense through the long journey in the dark, and the scene shows Ekwefi's courage as the equal of any warrior's. Importantly, Okonkwo also arrives at the cave with his machete, having waited before following. Achebe suggests that, despite his gruffness, Okonkwo's fear for his daughter is just as great.

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Okonkwo's love for Ezinma is real but hidden, because showing affection is, for him, a form of weakness. He sees her as his favourite child, and he often thinks that she should have been a boy, as she seems to him to have more of the spirit he values than his son Nwoye. This reveals the painful irony at the heart of Okonkwo's character: his ideal of masculinity prevents him from fully valuing the child who most resembles him. When Ezinma sits carelessly, he sharply tells her to sit like a woman, enforcing a gender boundary even as he admires her for crossing it. In a patriarchal society with clearly divided male and female roles, Okonkwo can only praise Ezinma by imagining her as a son.

Ezinma's understanding of her father is perhaps the deepest of anyone in the novel. After Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna, he cannot eat for two days, and it is Ezinma who brings him food and insists that he eat. She seems to sense his inner turmoil without being told. When she falls ill with fever, Okonkwo rushes out to gather leaves, grasses and bark to make the medicine to steam her, showing an urgent tenderness that he never displays with his wives in public. These scenes soften the reader's view of Okonkwo and suggest that his violence hides a capacity for love.

During the exile in Mbanta, the relationship develops further. Ezinma grows into a beautiful young woman and turns down suitors from Mbanta, because she understands that her father wants his family to marry in Umuofia, where their arrival will strengthen his return. She even persuades her half-sister Obiageli to wait. Okonkwo is again struck by how well she understands him and wishes she were a boy. Here Ezinma becomes a quiet ally in his ambitions, showing a loyalty that his sons, especially Nwoye, no longer offer.

Question number

Ultimately, Ezinma reveals the gentler emotional life within Okonkwo's household and within Igbo society more broadly. Through her, Achebe challenges the colonial image of African families as loveless or primitive, presenting instead deep parental devotion shaped by spiritual belief and the pain of child mortality. Yet her story also highlights tragedy: Okonkwo's narrow idea of manhood means he can never fully embrace the child who understands him best.