Please check the examination details below before entering your candidate information

Candidate surname	Other names

Centre Number | Candidate Number

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE (9–1)

Time 2 hours

Paper reference **4ET1/01**

English Literature

PAPER 1: Poetry and Modern Prose
Answer Booklet

You must have:
Question Booklet and Poetry Booklet 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 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.
- Good luck with your examination.

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

Time 2 hours

Paper reference **4ET1/01**

English Literature

PAPER 1: Poetry and Modern Prose

Question 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

SECTION A

Unseen Poetry

Answer the question in this section.

You should spend 35 minutes on this question.

Read the following poem.

Walking Away

It is eighteen years ago, almost to the day —
A sunny day with the leaves just turning,
The touch-lines new-ruled — since I watched you play
Your first game of football, then, like a satellite
Wrenched from its orbit, go drifting away

Behind a scatter of boys. I can see
You walking away from me towards the school
With the pathos* of a half-fledged thing set free
Into a wilderness, the gait* of one
Who finds no path where the path should be.

That hesitant figure, eddying* away
Like a winged seed loosened from its parent stem,
Has something I never quite grasp to convey
About nature's give-and-take — the small, the scorching
Ordeals which fire one's irresolute clay*.

I have had worse partings, but none that so
Gnaws at my mind still. Perhaps it is roughly
Saying what God alone could perfectly show —
How selfhood begins with a walking away,
And love is proved in the letting go.

Cecil Day Lewis (published 1962)

**pathos* – sadness
**gait* – way of walking
**eddying* – moving in a circle
**fire one's irresolute clay* – form a personality

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1 Explore how the writer presents the parent's thoughts about the child 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 *Half-past Two* and *Sonnet 116*.

Compare how the writers present the passing of time in *Half-past Two* and *Sonnet 116*.

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 *Blessing*.

Compare the ways the writers present the story of an event in *Blessing* 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 In what ways is Boo Radley important in the novel?

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

(Total for Question 4 = 40 marks)

OR

5 Explore the theme of responsibility 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 theme of respect in *Of Mice and Men*.

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

(Total for Question 6 = 40 marks)

OR

7 'Crooks, the negro stable buck, had his bunk in the harness room …'

Examine the character of Crooks in the novel.

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 Discuss the theme of success in *The Whale Rider*.

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

(Total for Question 8 = 40 marks)

OR

9 In what ways is the relationship between Koro and Kahu important in the novel?

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 significance of loss in *The Joy Luck Club*.

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

(Total for Question 10 = 40 marks)

OR

11 'I was six when my mother taught me the art of invisible strength.' (Waverly Jong)

How is Waverly Jong important 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 Explore the theme of rejection in *Things Fall Apart*.

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

(Total for Question 12 = 40 marks)

OR

13 'Each of his [Okonkwo's] three wives had her own hut.'

In what ways are Okonkwo's wives important 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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Source information:

Walking Away from an anthology titled 'Penguin's Poems for Life', Cecil Day Lewis, Penguin 2008.

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Time 2 hours

Paper reference **4ET1/01**

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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Turn over ▶

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

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 આબ્બી જીભ આખ્ખી ભાષા,

(munay hutoo kay aakhee jeebh aakhee bhasha)

મેં થૂંકી નાખી છે.

(may thoonky nakhi chay)

પરંતુ રાત્રે સ્વપ્નાંમાં મારી ભાષા પાછી આવે છે.

(parantoo rattray svupnama mari bhasha pachi aavay chay)

ફુલની જેમ મારી ભાષા મારી જીભ

(foolnee jaim mari bhasha mari jeebh)

મોઢામાં ખીલે છે.
(modhama kheelay chay)

ફુલની 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

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 of 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 cheeks 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 water'd 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

stemup.co.uk

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 yu
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
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

Day Lewis presents the parent's thoughts as a painful memory that the speaker has slowly learned to understand. The poem moves from a sharp, almost cinematic recollection of a child leaving, through anxiety and a sense of loss, to a hard-won acceptance that letting a child go is itself an act of love.

The opening establishes how deeply the moment is lodged in the parent's mind. "It is eighteen years ago, almost to the day" uses the present tense "is" to suggest the memory is still alive, and the precision of "almost to the day" implies that the parent has marked this anniversary every year. The descriptive details are tiny but vivid: "the leaves just turning" hints at autumn, a season of change and falling away, while "The touch-lines new-ruled" suggests a fresh start.

The language of separation is often surprisingly violent. The simile "like a satellite / Wrenched from its orbit" presents the child as having once circled the parent, held by a natural force, and the verb "Wrenched" implies that the parting is torn rather than gentle, perhaps reflecting how it felt to the parent rather than the child. Yet the enjambment carries us straight into "go drifting away", and the softer verb shows the child is unaware of this drama. The gap between the parent's pain and the child's casual drift is part of the poem's pathos.

The second stanza turns to fragile images from nature. The child is "a half-fledged thing set free / Into a wilderness", a young bird not quite ready to fly, and "wilderness" reveals the parent's fear of a dangerous, unmapped world. The repetition in "finds no path where the path should be" mimics the child's uncertainty, and the parent seems to feel that uncertainty too. In the third stanza

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"eddying away / Like a winged seed loosened from its parent stem" is quieter: "loosened" is far less brutal than "Wrenched", suggesting the parent is beginning to see the separation as natural. The seed image also implies growth, as a seed must leave the stem to become a plant.

The parent admits a struggle to put these thoughts into words, describing "something I never quite grasp to convey". The metaphor of "the small, the scorching / Ordeals which fire one's irresolute clay" suggests that a personality is formed like pottery in a kiln: the pain is necessary for strength.

Form and structure reinforce this journey. The four regular five-line stanzas each follow a similar rhyme pattern, with the long open sounds of "day", "play" and "away" creating a wistful, lingering tone. The final stanza changes register. "I have had worse partings, but none that so / Gnaws at my mind still" is plain and confessional, and "Gnaws" presents the memory as a persistent, animal hunger. The tentative "Perhaps" then introduces the poem's resolution, and the closing lines read almost like a proverb: "How selfhood begins with a walking away, / And love is proved in the letting go." The echo of the title in "walking away" brings the poem full circle, but now the phrase is redefined as the beginning of the child's identity. The final rhyme of "show" and "go" gives a sense of calm closure, leaving the reader with a parent who is still hurting, but who has transformed loss into understanding.

2 Both poems present time as a powerful force that seems to rule human life, yet both end by imagining an escape from it. Fanthorpe explores time through the eyes of a young child who cannot yet read a clock, so that a short detention swells into something vast and strange, whereas Shakespeare considers time across

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a whole lifetime and argues that true love defies it. One poem shrinks time to an afternoon, the other stretches it "even to the edge of doom", and the contrast between a child's innocence and an adult's certainty shapes everything about their language, form and tone.

The openings immediately signal different relationships with time. Fanthorpe begins "Once upon a schooltime", twisting the fairytale formula so that the poem feels like a story remembered from long ago, and the compound "schooltime" shows that the child measures his life in routines rather than hours. Shakespeare opens with a solemn negative command, "Let me not to the marriage of true minds / Admit impediments", echoing the words of the marriage service. Where Fanthorpe's voice is playful and nostalgic, Shakespeare's is formal and argumentative: he is not telling a story but making a case, and the case is about permanence.

Both poets personify Time, and the capital letter in each case suggests a figure of authority. In Half-past Two the teacher "hadn't taught him Time", so Time becomes a lesson, a body of adult knowledge from which the child is shut out. The parenthesis "(Being cross, she'd forgotten / She hadn't taught him Time.)" adds an adult, slightly ironic voice that lets the reader see what the child cannot. In Sonnet 116, Time is a far more threatening figure, the Grim Reaper whose "bending sickle's compass" sweeps up "rosy lips and cheeks". The curved sickle mirrors the ageing body, and the image reminds us that beauty is mortal. However, Shakespeare insists that "Love's not Time's fool": love will not be mocked or tricked by Time as a court jester might be. So, while Fanthorpe's Time is a mystery that the child cannot master, Shakespeare's Time is an enemy that love can defeat.

The poets also use different kinds of language to make time felt. Fanthorpe builds

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the child's own vocabulary, running words together in "Gettinguptime, timeyouwereofftime, / Timetogohomenowtime, TVtime". These breathless compounds show that the child knows time only as a series of events, and the humour lies in how sensible his system is. The clock itself becomes a creature with "the little eyes / And two long legs for walking", turning an instrument of order into something from a picture book. Shakespeare, by contrast, uses images of fixity and navigation: love is "an ever-fixed mark / That looks on tempests and is never shaken" and "the star to every wandering bark". The lighthouse and the guiding star stand still while storms and wandering ships move around them, so time and change are present but powerless.

Repetition works differently in each poem. In Half-past Two the anaphora of "Into the" pulls the child deeper into a timeless state where his senses sharpen, as he notices "the smell of old chrysanthemums" and the oxymoron "the silent noise his hangnail made". The silence of time standing still becomes almost dreamlike. Shakespeare's repetitions are logical rather than sensory: "Love is not love / Which alters when it alteration finds, / Or bends with the remover to remove" uses polyptoton to show that change is part of the very definition of false love. Both poets use repetition to slow time down, but Fanthorpe does so to capture wonder and Shakespeare does so to drive home an argument.

Form and structure reinforce these attitudes. Fanthorpe uses free verse in short three-line stanzas, a loose, story-like shape that suits a child's wandering mind. The return of the teacher, "My goodness, she said, / Scuttling in, I forgot all about you", is comic, and the verb "slotted him back into schooltime" shows how easily adults return him to the clock. Shakespeare's sonnet, with its regular iambic pentameter and steady rhyme scheme, embodies the constancy it describes: the form itself refuses to alter. Its final couplet, "If this be error and upon me proved,

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/ I never writ, nor no man ever loved", stakes the poet's whole work on his claim.

Both endings move beyond time. Fanthorpe's boy "escaped into the clockless land for ever", and the phrase "for ever" ironically gives a brief afternoon eternal significance in memory. Shakespeare's love lasts "even to the edge of doom". Perhaps the deepest connection is that both poems find something timeless in human experience: for Fanthorpe it is a child's moment of innocent freedom, for Shakespeare it is love. Fanthorpe's tone is gentle and nostalgic, while Shakespeare's is defiant, but each suggests that the clock does not have the final word.

3 Both Imtiaz Dharker's Blessing and Carol Ann Duffy's War Photographer tell the story of an event, but they approach it from opposite directions. Dharker narrates a single joyful moment, the bursting of a water pipe in a parched community, as it happens, building towards an ecstatic climax. Duffy tells her story in retrospect, as a photographer develops images of war in the quiet of his darkroom, so the event is filtered through memory and guilt. One poem celebrates a gift that arrives suddenly; the other mourns suffering that the wider world quickly forgets.

The openings set up each event with great economy. Blessing starts with a stark two-line stanza: "The skin cracks like a pod. / There never is enough water." The simile makes the drought physical and painful, and the end-stopped lines feel dry and sparse, like the scarce drops they describe. War Photographer also opens with stillness, "In his darkroom he is finally alone / with spools of suffering set out in ordered rows." The alliteration of "spools of suffering" compresses terrible events into neat physical objects, and "ordered rows" hints at the photographer's attempt to impose control on chaos. In both poems, the calm before the story begins makes what follows more powerful.

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Religious imagery is central to the way both poets frame their events, but it works very differently. Dharker presents the water as divine: the imagined drip is "the voice of a kindly god", the people who gather are "a congregation", and the title itself becomes the climax when "the blessing sings / over their small bones". The event becomes almost a miracle, a moment of grace in a hard life. Duffy's photographer, by contrast, works in a red light that "softly glows, / as though this were a church and he / a priest preparing to intone a Mass." The comparison makes his work a solemn ritual of mourning, and the list "Belfast. Beirut. Phnom Penh. All flesh is grass." ends with a biblical phrase that reminds us of human mortality. Dharker's sacred language expresses joy and abundance; Duffy's expresses grief and a kind of funeral rite.

The poets use sound to bring their events to life. In Blessing, onomatopoeia charts the arrival of the water, from "the small splash" to "silver crashes to the ground", and the internal rhyme of "found" and "ground" with "a roar of tongues" makes the burst pipe deafening. The metaphor "silver" shows how precious the water is, as valuable as a metal. Duffy's sounds are quieter and more sinister. "Solutions slop in trays" uses sibilance to create a hushed, almost clinical atmosphere, and the photographer recalls "the cries / of this man's wife", so the noise of the original event survives only as an echo in memory.

Structure is perhaps where the two stories differ most. Dharker's poem moves from short, controlled stanzas to a long, tumbling third stanza full of enjambment and lists, "pots, / brass, copper, aluminium, / plastic buckets, / frantic hands", so that the form floods just as the street does. The story builds in intensity, and the last image of children "screaming in the liquid sun" is joyful and chaotic. Duffy, however, uses four regular six-line stanzas with a steady rhyme scheme, reflecting

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the photographer's need for order. The story is told out of sequence, as memories surface: "A stranger's features / faintly start to twist before his eyes, / a half-formed ghost." The developing photograph becomes a way of bringing the past event back to life, and the regular form seems to strain to contain it.

Both poems also contain contrast between two worlds. Dharker's story implicitly contrasts the constant scarcity of daily life with the brief abundance of "the sudden rush / of fortune", and the word "Sometimes" warns that this joy is rare. Duffy contrasts the war zone with "Rural England", where "ordinary pain" can be dispelled by "simple weather" and fields "don't explode beneath the feet / of running children". Both poets place children at the centre of these contrasts: Dharker's children are "polished to perfection" by the water, while Duffy's are fleeing in "a nightmare heat".

The endings reveal the poets' final attitudes. Blessing ends at the height of its event, leaving the reader with an image of light and song, and we sense that the poet wants us to share in the community's wonder while remembering that it cannot last. War Photographer ends with the photographer staring "impassively" from an aeroplane at a country where "he earns his living and they do not care." The flat, final rhyme suggests bitterness at an audience whose eyes "prick / with tears between the bath and pre-lunch beers". Dharker's story is told so that we feel the joy of the moment, whereas Duffy's is told so that we question our own indifference to suffering.

4 Boo Radley appears in person only in the final chapters of To Kill a Mockingbird, yet he is arguably the most important presence in the novel. Harper Lee uses him as a measure of the children's growth, as a living example of how Maycomb's

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prejudice creates monsters out of the innocent, and, finally, as one of the novel's two "mockingbirds", whose goodness exposes the cruelty of the town. Through Boo, Lee shows that true understanding requires us to look past rumour and fear, a lesson that had deep urgency in the segregated American South of the 1930s, and in the America of 1960 when the novel was published.

In the first part of the novel, Boo is important as a figure of Gothic fantasy. Scout tells us that the Radley Place is shunned, and that Maycomb blames Boo for every "morbid nocturnal event" from frozen azaleas to mutilated pets. Jem's description of him, feeding on raw squirrels, with blood-stained hands and a long jagged scar, turns a real man into a "malevolent phantom". Lee is gently satirical: adult gossip feeds the children's imaginations, showing how a community can construct a villain out of someone it does not understand. Boo's history, as Scout relates it, makes this especially poignant. As a teenager he fell in with a group of boys who caused minor trouble, and rather than letting him be sent to the state industrial school, his strict, "foot-washing Baptist" father shut him away at home. Lee implies that the Radleys' rigid religion and pride, and the town's acceptance of a family's right to deal privately with its own, have imprisoned Boo for decades. The reference to Tuscaloosa, and the brief imprisonment in the courthouse basement, hint at the lack of care available for vulnerable young people in the period.

Boo is also important to the structure of the novel. The children's games, from Dill's dare to touch the house to their re-enactments of "the Radley story" and their attempt to pass a note through the window with a fishing pole, give the first part of the book its sense of innocent childhood. Atticus's response, telling them to stop tormenting Boo, is the reader's first hint that the children's view is unjust, and it foreshadows Atticus's wider teaching that "You never really understand a

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person until you consider things from his point of view". Boo therefore introduces the novel's central moral idea long before the trial makes it explicit.

Gradually, Lee reverses the children's perception. The gifts in the knot-hole of the oak tree, including chewing gum, Indian-head pennies and the two carved soap figures that resemble Jem and Scout, reveal a lonely man trying to make contact with the only people who notice him. The mended trousers, folded on the fence after Jem tore them escaping the Radley yard, and the blanket placed around Scout's shoulders on the night Miss Maudie's house burns, show a quiet, protective tenderness. Jem understands first: when Nathan Radley cements the hole in the tree, cutting off Boo's one means of friendship, Jem is seen crying on the porch. Lee suggests that maturity involves recognising the humanity that the town refuses to see.

Boo's importance becomes clearer still when we set him beside Tom Robinson. Both are outsiders judged by appearance and rumour rather than truth, and both are harmless. After the trial, Jem begins to suspect that Boo stays inside because he wants to, a sad recognition that the world outside is more frightening than any ghost story. Lee implicitly links the community's fear of Boo to its fear of Tom: one is rejected for being strange, the other for being black. In 1930s Alabama, under Jim Crow laws, a black man's word was worthless against a white man's, and Lee's original readers, living through the Civil Rights movement, would have seen in both characters the same failure of empathy.

The climax of the novel turns Boo from phantom into hero. On Halloween, when Bob Ewell attacks the children on their way home from the pageant, it is Boo who saves them, carrying the injured Jem home. Scout's description of him in the Finch house is deliberately ordinary: a pale, nervous man leaning against the wall, whom

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she greets with "Hey, Boo." The gentle nickname, once a word to scare children, becomes an expression of affection. Heck Tate's decision to say that Ewell "fell on his knife" protects Boo from public attention, and Scout's reply, "it'd be sort of like shooting a mockingbird, wouldn't it?", shows that she has absorbed Atticus's earlier lesson that it is a sin to destroy something that does only good. The mockingbird motif, linked with Tom earlier in the novel, now embraces Boo, and Scout's understanding shows how far she has grown.

Finally, Boo is important because he gives the novel its ending and its moral vision. When Scout walks him home and stands on the Radley porch, she sees the street from his point of view, literally standing in his shoes, and the seasons of the past two years pass before her. She reflects that Boo gave them gifts and, finally, their lives, and that they gave him nothing in return. When she tells Atticus that Boo was "real nice", his reply, that most people are when you finally see them, closes the novel on a note of hope that sits uneasily beside Tom's death.

In conclusion, Boo Radley is important because he embodies the novel's warnings and its hopes. Through him, Lee exposes how a closed, prejudiced community like Maycomb, a microcosm of the Depression-era South, turns difference into monstrosity. Yet through Scout's changing view of him, Lee suggests that prejudice can be unlearned, a powerful message for an America confronting segregation.

5 Responsibility in To Kill a Mockingbird is not simply a matter of doing one's job. Harper Lee explores it as a moral obligation that each individual owes to conscience, to children and to the community, and she shows how rarely the people of Maycomb live up to it. Atticus Finch is the novel's model of

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responsibility, but Lee surrounds him with characters who either share his sense of duty, such as Calpurnia, Judge Taylor and Heck Tate, or who abandon it, like Bob Ewell and the jury. Writing in 1960, as the Civil Rights movement challenged segregation, Lee seems to ask her readers who is responsible for injustice, and her answer is uncomfortable: everyone who stays silent.

Atticus's most obvious responsibility is to his children, and Lee presents it as a duty to teach by example rather than by force. As a widower, he raises Jem and Scout with honesty, answering their questions directly and treating them as capable of understanding. His advice to Scout that you never really understand a person until you climb into his skin and walk around in it is the moral centre of the book, and it frames everything the children learn. He also accepts responsibility in ways that surprise them. When he shoots the rabid dog, Tim Johnson, with a single shot, Jem discovers that his "feeble" father was once known as the best shot in the county, yet Atticus never boasts of the skill. Lee suggests that responsibility involves restraint: power should be used only when it is necessary to protect others.

The heart of the novel is Atticus's decision to defend Tom Robinson. Judge Taylor's choice to appoint Atticus, rather than a young and inexperienced lawyer, shows his own sense of responsibility, because he knows that Atticus is the one man who will give Tom a genuine defence. Atticus tells Scout that if he refused the case he could not hold up his head in town, which presents responsibility as a matter of integrity, not reputation. He knows he will lose, admitting that they were "licked a hundred years before we started", but argues that this is no reason not to try. Lee places Atticus in a society governed by Jim Crow laws, where a black man accused by a white woman had almost no chance of acquittal; the Scottsboro trials of the 1930s, in which nine black youths were wrongly accused in Alabama, are a likely

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influence. By taking the case seriously, Atticus accepts a responsibility that his community wants him to ignore.

Atticus's courage outside the jail shows that responsibility can mean physical risk. Sitting alone under a light with a newspaper, he guards Tom from the Old Sarum mob, who arrive intending to lynch him. Lynching was a terrifying reality in the South, and Lee makes the danger real. Ironically, it is Scout who disperses the mob, by innocently asking Mr Cunningham about his son Walter and his entailment. Lee suggests that individuals in a crowd lose their sense of personal responsibility, and that reminding a man that he is a father and a neighbour can restore it.

Lee also explores responsibility through the lessons Jem learns. After Jem destroys Mrs Dubose's camellias in a rage, Atticus makes him read to her every afternoon. Only after her death does Jem learn that she was fighting a morphine addiction, determined to die free of it. Atticus calls this real courage: knowing you are licked before you begin but beginning anyway. The episode teaches Jem that he must take responsibility for his actions, and it also shows Mrs Dubose taking responsibility for her own life, despite her bigotry.

Calpurnia shares Atticus's role. She disciplines Scout for humiliating Walter Cunningham at lunch, insisting that any guest must be treated with respect, and she takes the children to First Purchase church, where they see the black community's dignity and poverty. She acts as a bridge across the racial divide that structured life in 1930s Alabama.

In contrast, Lee shows the devastating effects of irresponsibility. Bob Ewell neglects his children, spends his relief cheques on whisky and, by accusing Tom,

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sacrifices an innocent man to protect his own pride. Mayella, too, is responsible for her lie, although Lee makes us pity her loneliness and fear of her father. The jury, all white men, convict Tom despite clear evidence that he could not have caused Mayella's injuries with his crippled left arm. In his closing speech Atticus appeals to them, "In the name of God, do your duty", and their failure becomes the town's failure. Miss Maudie's comment that the jury's long deliberation was a small step forward suggests how slow change was, a point that would have resonated with readers in the early 1960s.

The ending complicates the theme. Heck Tate, as sheriff, takes responsibility for the decision that Bob Ewell "fell on his knife", arguing that dragging Boo Radley into the limelight would be a sin. He insists, "Let the dead bury the dead this time, Mr Finch." Atticus, who had wanted Jem's case to go before the court, finally accepts this. Atticus bends the law he has defended, yet Lee seems to suggest that responsibility sometimes means protecting the vulnerable rather than following rules. Scout's realisation that exposing Boo would be "like shooting a mockingbird" shows that she, too, has learned to weigh her responsibilities to others.

Ultimately, Lee presents responsibility as a choice that each person must make, often against the pressure of the crowd. Through Atticus, Calpurnia and Heck Tate she shows its quiet heroism; through Bob Ewell and the jury she shows the cost of its absence. In a microcosm of the segregated South, Lee leaves her readers to consider their own responsibility for the injustices of their time.

6 In Of Mice and Men, respect is one of the scarcest commodities on the ranch, as scarce as land or money. Steinbeck shows that, in the brutal world of

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Depression-era California, respect is distributed according to power, strength, race, gender and usefulness, rather than goodness. A few characters earn it through skill and fairness, most notably Slim, but many are denied it altogether. Through the relationship between George and Lennie, however, Steinbeck suggests a different kind of respect, rooted in loyalty and care, which the harsh society around them cannot sustain.

The ranch is a rigid hierarchy, and respect flows downwards from the top. The boss, though rarely seen, commands it because he controls work and wages. When George speaks for Lennie at their first meeting, the boss is immediately suspicious, warning that he has his eye on George and asking what he is trying to put over. He cannot understand why one man would take so much trouble for another. In the 1930s, with millions of migrant workers moving between ranches, itinerant labourers were easily replaced, and the boss's distrust shows how little respect these men could expect. George's anxiety to secure the job, and his insistence that Lennie stay silent, reveals how dependent they are on the goodwill of those above them.

Slim, by contrast, is respected not because of his position but because of his character. Steinbeck introduces him almost as a mythic figure, the "prince of the ranch", whose "authority was so great that his word was taken on any subject, be it politics or love." His skill as a jerkline skinner, able to kill a fly on a mule's rump with a whip, gives him a quiet power, and his calm, "God-like eyes" suggest wisdom. When Candy's dog is shot, it is Slim's judgement that settles the matter, and the narrative states plainly that "Slim's opinions were law." Significantly, Slim gives respect as well as receiving it: he listens to George without judgement, and he is the only man who does not use a racial insult for Crooks. Steinbeck seems to present Slim as an ideal of earned authority, in contrast to the inherited,

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insecure power of Curley.

Curley demands respect but never earns it. As the boss's son, he has status, yet the men mock him behind his back, and Candy describes his glove full of vaseline with obvious contempt. His aggression towards bigger men, especially Lennie, shows that he equates respect with fear. When Curley attacks Lennie and has his hand crushed, Slim persuades him to claim it was caught in a machine, so that Curley is humiliated and silenced. Steinbeck exposes the hollowness of respect that depends on threats.

The novel's marginalised characters show how little respect the 1930s granted to those who were old, black or female. Candy, the ageing swamper with one hand, knows he is valued only for his usefulness, and the shooting of his dog foreshadows his own fate. His regret that he should have shot the dog himself, rather than letting a stranger do it, suggests that respect for a loved one means taking responsibility for them, a thought that echoes powerfully at the novel's end. Crooks is denied respect because of his race. He lives alone in the harness room, excluded from the bunkhouse because, as he says, he is black and the others say he stinks. Curley's wife's threat that she could have him "strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even funny" reveals the terrifying reality of lynching, and Crooks's response, as he "reduced himself to nothing", shows how racism crushes self-respect. Yet Curley's wife is also refused respect: she is never given a name, and the men call her a "tart" and a "tramp". Her confession that she could have been in the movies shows a woman longing for a dignity that her marriage and her gender deny her. Steinbeck shows the cruel irony that the powerless often assert themselves by disrespecting those even weaker than themselves.

George and Lennie's relationship offers an alternative. Lennie's respect for George

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is total, and in the opening chapter he imitates George exactly, even copying how he sits by the pool. George's attitude is more complicated: he insults Lennie and fantasises about a life without him, yet he defends him to the boss as a hard worker and "strong as a bull", and admits to Slim that he once nearly drowned Lennie for fun and has never played a joke on him since. That confession shows respect growing from guilt and responsibility. Their shared dream of "livin' off the fatta the lan'" is a dream of self-respect, of being their own masters, which was a central part of the American Dream for migrant workers during the Depression.

The ending brings the theme to its tragic climax. After Lennie accidentally kills Curley's wife, Curley intends to have him shot in the guts in a lynching. George chooses instead to kill Lennie himself, quickly, while telling him about the farm. Like Candy's regret over his dog, George's decision may be read as a final, painful act of respect, sparing Lennie fear and cruelty. Slim's reassurance that George had to do it shows that he respects the choice, while Carlson's baffled question about what is eating them shows that men like him cannot understand such feeling.

Steinbeck therefore presents respect as something the harsh economic world of the 1930s distorts, reserving it for the powerful and denying it to the weak. Yet through Slim's fairness and George's devotion, he suggests that a deeper respect, based on loyalty and compassion, remains possible, even if it cannot save those who need it most.

7 The opening of Chapter 4 defines Crooks first by his race and his job: he is "the negro stable buck", and his home is not a bunk among the men but a shed attached to the barn. Steinbeck presents Crooks as the most isolated figure on the ranch, a proud, intelligent man reduced by racism to the status of an animal kept

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near the horses. Yet Crooks is not simply a victim. Through him Steinbeck explores the psychological damage of segregation, the hunger for companionship that afflicts every character, and the fragility of the American Dream for those whom 1930s society refused to treat as equal.

Crooks is introduced through other people's words before we ever meet him, which mirrors how he is treated on the ranch. Candy tells George that the boss gives Crooks hell when he is angry, and recounts how, one Christmas, Crooks was allowed into the bunkhouse and the men set Smitty on him, only stopping Smitty from using his feet because of Crooks's injured back. Candy tells the story with relish, as if it were harmless entertainment. The constant use of a racial slur by almost every character, even the kindly Candy, shows how normal racism was in Depression-era California. Even his name, taken from the crooked back he got when a horse kicked him, reduces him to his injury, much as the ranch values men only for their bodies.

Steinbeck's description of Crooks's room reveals his loneliness and his dignity. He has more possessions than the other men because he is a permanent worker, yet everything about the room speaks of segregation. Among the harness and liniment there are books, including a tattered dictionary and a "mauled copy of the California civil code for 1905". The legal code suggests that Crooks knows his rights, or is trying to, though in practice the law offers him little protection. His "gold-rimmed spectacles" hint at a reading, thinking man. Steinbeck describes him as "a proud, aloof man" who keeps his distance and demands that others keep theirs, and we sense that this pride is a defence: having been rejected, he rejects first.

This is clear when Lennie wanders into his room. Crooks insists, "You got no right

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to come in my room", turning the segregation imposed on him into a boundary he can control. He explains bitterly that he is excluded from the bunkhouse because he is black, and that the others say he stinks. Crooks also reveals that he grew up on his father's chicken ranch, where white children came to play, and that he did not realise the difference until later. The memory shows that racism is learned, and it deepens our sympathy for a man who once had friends. His insistence that he is not a "southern negro" suggests a pride that separates him even from the history of slavery.

Crooks's conversation with Lennie exposes his cruelty as well as his pain. He torments Lennie by suggesting that George might not come back, enjoying a moment of power over someone weaker. Steinbeck shows how oppression can breed cruelty, as the powerless seek someone further below them. Yet Crooks quickly relents, and his reflection that a guy gets too lonely and gets sick is one of the novel's most direct statements of its central theme. Crooks's loneliness is the most extreme on the ranch, but it reflects the loneliness of all the migrant workers.

The dream briefly offers Crooks hope. At first he is scornful, claiming he has seen hundreds of men with land in their heads, and that nobody ever gets to heaven and nobody gets any land. His cynicism reflects the reality of the Depression, when the American Dream seemed out of reach for most workers. However, when Candy confirms that they already have most of the money, Crooks is drawn in and offers to work for nothing but his keep. For a moment, he imagines a place where he would belong.

This hope is destroyed by Curley's wife. When Crooks tries to stand up to her and order her out of his room, she reminds him of his place with a chilling threat: "I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even funny." In the 1930s, a

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black man accused by a white woman could be lynched without a trial, so the threat is entirely real. Steinbeck's description of Crooks's response is devastating: "Crooks had reduced himself to nothing." He answers her with a "toneless" "Yes, ma'am", erasing his personality to survive. Immediately afterwards he withdraws his offer to join the dream, saying he was only joking. The scene exposes the hierarchy of the ranch: Curley's wife is herself powerless and lonely, but as a white woman she can destroy a black man with a sentence.

By the end of the chapter, Crooks is alone again, rubbing liniment into his back. The image is quietly symbolic: he can soothe his physical pain but not the damage done by prejudice. Steinbeck presents Crooks as a man of intelligence and dignity whose potential has been crushed by the racism of his society, and through him he invites readers to recognise the cost of a world where some people are denied the companionship that everyone needs.

8 In The Whale Rider, Ihimaera suggests that true success is not personal achievement but the survival of a people, a language and a relationship with the natural world. Almost every individual success in the novel is partial or overlooked, and the one that finally counts, Kahu's ride on the bull whale, is a success that the old patriarchal measures of achievement were unable to recognise. Writing in 1987, during the Maori cultural renaissance and amid anger at nuclear testing in the Pacific, Ihimaera redefines success as continuity: the tribe succeeds only when it learns to accept the leader the ancestors have actually sent.

The novel opens with a mythic success that sets the standard for everything that follows. The arrival of Kahutia Te Rangi, later known as Paikea, on the back of a whale completes a journey described as "long and arduous", and the land itself

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seems to have been "Waiting for the blessing to come". The repetition of "Waiting" gives the founding of the Ngati Porou at Whangara a sense of destiny, as if success were the fulfilment of a promise between people, land and sea. Paikea also throws spears that will flower in the future, and the last of them is said to wait in the earth until the people need it. Ihimaera therefore establishes from the prologue that the greatest success is not winning but inheriting, and that a leader is chosen by the ancestors rather than by human preference.

Koro Apirana is, in one sense, an extremely successful man. He leads the tribe, is affectionately known as "Super Maori", and works tirelessly for his culture by starting the Kohanga Reo, the language nest for the young children, and classes for adults. This reflects a real historical achievement: in the 1970s and 1980s Maori communities fought to revive te reo after generations in which children had been punished for speaking it in school, and the first kohanga reo opened in 1982. Yet Ihimaera makes Koro's success hollow because he measures it in only one way. His quest for a male heir fails, and his disappointment at the birth of a girl, so that he "won't have anything to do with her", blinds him to the success growing in front of him. His classes for boys only, which Kahu is excluded from, become a painful symbol of a tradition that is preserved in form but not in spirit.

Kahu's own successes are therefore presented as quiet and largely unwitnessed, which makes the reader feel their injustice. Her speech at the school "break-up ceremony", dedicated to her great-grandfather, and her victory in the East Coast primary schools contest for reciting the whakapapa in Maori, show that she is already the best keeper of the tribe's knowledge. However, Koro refuses to attend, so her greatest public triumph happens in his absence. Ihimaera seems to argue that a society which only values male achievement will waste the talents of half its people, a point given personal force by the fact that he wrote the novel after

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his young daughters complained that all the heroes in their books were boys.

The episode of the stone deepens this idea. Koro throws a carved stone into the sea and challenges the boys to bring it back, but none of them succeed. Kahu later dives and retrieves it, which the reader recognises as the sign Koro has been praying for. Significantly, Nanny Flowers keeps the stone hidden until the right moment, so success here is delayed, waiting, like the spear of Paikea, until the tribe is ready to see it. The structural echo between prologue and stone suggests that Kahu's worth was never in doubt; what fails is Koro's ability to read the signs his own culture has given him.

Ihimaera then widens the theme to the whole natural world. The italic chapters narrated from the perspective of the whale herd describe their suffering from nuclear testing and human greed, and in the main narrative the community, helped by others, tries to return beached whales to the sea. Their initial success is cruelly undone when two hundred whales die after coming back to the shore to "nuzzle their loved ones". This collective failure links to the context of the 1980s, when Greenpeace protested against French tests at Moruroa and the Rainbow Warrior was bombed in Auckland harbour in 1985. Ihimaera implies that a culture which loses its bond with the sea cannot really succeed at all.

The climax therefore becomes the novel's ultimate success. When the ancient bull whale strands, Koro fears that if it dies the tribe will die with it, and the men are unable to save it. Kahu walks into the sea, climbs onto the whale and speaks to it, and the whale and the remaining herd return to the deep. In Maori belief this saves the people, and it is significant that the rescue comes not through force but through kinship and language, the very things Koro has been teaching. Kahu literally becomes a new whale rider, completing the pattern begun by Paikea.

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Finally, the success that matters most is emotional. In hospital Koro admits he was wrong and tells Kahu, "Boy or girl, it doesn't matter", before confessing his love. This reconciliation is arguably the true victory of the novel, because it shows that tradition can survive by changing. Ihimaera suggests that success for the Maori in the late twentieth century depends on holding on to whakapapa and the old stories while letting go of the rigid gender roles that would otherwise break the line. Kahu's triumph is therefore not a defeat of tradition but its fulfilment.

9

The relationship between Koro Apirana and his great-granddaughter Kahu is the emotional and political centre of The Whale Rider. Through it, Ihimaera dramatises a conflict between a patriarchal reading of Maori tradition and a deeper truth within that tradition, and he resolves it not by rejecting the old ways but by showing that they were always wide enough to include a girl. The relationship is important because Koro's slow movement from rejection to love mirrors the journey Ihimaera wanted Maori society, in the 1980s, to make for itself.

From the moment of her birth the relationship is defined by Koro's disappointment. He wanted a boy to inherit the leadership descended from Kahutia Te Rangi, and when he hears that Porourangi has a daughter, he "won't have anything to do with her". His anger at her name is revealing: Nanny Flowers approves the name Kahutia Te Rangi, knowing it will infuriate him, because to Koro the ancestor's name belongs to a male heir. Ihimaera presents his attitude through the gentle, often comic voice of the narrator Rawiri, so that the reader sees Koro as stubborn rather than cruel, a man trapped by his own sense of duty to the line. Context matters here, because the legend of Paikea and the idea of patrilineal descent shape every decision Koro makes; he believes the survival of the tribe

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depends on a male chief.

Koro's refusal to take part in the custom of burying Kahu's afterbirth is a key early moment. In Maori custom, the burial of the whenua connects a child to the land, and the word itself means both placenta and land. By refusing, Koro symbolically denies Kahu her place in the tribe, and it is Nanny Flowers and Rawiri who perform the ritual instead. This creates a lasting tension between husband and wife and shows how Ihimaera uses strong women, Nanny above all, to challenge male authority. Nanny's teasing of Koro is affectionate, but her actions quietly protect Kahu's future.

What makes the relationship so moving is the imbalance of love. Kahu adores Koro and does everything she can to win his approval. As a baby she bites his toe, a small comic moment that seems to claim him as her own, and as she grows she secretly listens to the lessons he gives the boys on the marae, absorbing the language, chants and history he refuses to teach her directly. The dramatic irony is painful: the reader can see that Kahu is the best pupil Koro has, while Koro sees only that she is a girl. Ihimaera uses this to criticise a culture of exclusion, and it reflects his own motivation, since he wrote the novel after his daughters complained that the heroic characters in their books were all male.

The relationship reaches its lowest point around Kahu's school ceremony. Her speech celebrates her great-grandfather, and she recites the family whakapapa in Maori, winning a regional contest. Koro, however, refuses to attend, so her tribute is offered to a man who will not listen. Ihimaera's restraint in narrating Kahu's hurt makes the scene more affecting, because the child's loyalty never wavers even when it is not returned.

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The carved stone episode turns the relationship towards resolution. Koro throws the stone into the sea as a test for the boys of the tribe, and none can retrieve it. Kahu later dives and brings it back, and it is Nanny Flowers who decides to keep it until the moment it will do the most good. This structural delay is important: the proof of Kahu's worth exists long before Koro is able to accept it, suggesting that his blindness, not her gender, is the obstacle. The stone itself links Kahu to the ancestral power Koro believes he is protecting.

The climax with the bull whale finally forces Koro to see. The ancient whale bears an ancient tattoo, marking it as the whale ridden by Paikea, and Koro believes that if it dies the tribe will die too. When the men fail to move it, Kahu climbs onto its back and leads it out to sea. At that moment Nanny gives Koro the stone, and the two signs come together: Kahu is revealed as the chosen leader, through her bond with the whales and with Kahutia Te Rangi. Ihimaera presents this as the fulfilment of myth, so Kahu's leadership is shown to be traditional rather than a modern innovation.

The final scenes complete the relationship. When Kahu wakes in hospital, Koro admits he has been wrong and tells her, "Boy or girl, it doesn't matter", before declaring that he loves her. This confession matters because it comes from the very person who embodied resistance to change, so his transformation suggests the whole community can change with him.

Ultimately, the relationship between Koro and Kahu is important because it carries the novel's central argument. Koro represents the desperate effort to preserve Maori language and custom in a modern New Zealand that had long marginalised them, an effort the novel respects. Kahu represents the future of that culture. Ihimaera suggests that the future will survive only if the guardians of tradition

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learn to recognise the gifts of those they have overlooked, and the love between great-grandfather and child becomes the means by which an ancient story is renewed.

10 Loss in The Joy Luck Club is not simply something that happens to the characters; it is the force that shapes who they are and how they love. Amy Tan shows the mothers carrying losses from China that they cannot speak about directly, and the daughters suffering quieter losses of identity, confidence and connection in America. The significance of loss, I would argue, is that it becomes the hidden language between the generations: only when the losses are told can mothers and daughters understand one another, and the novel's structure of interlocking stories becomes a way of recovering what has been lost.

Tan announces the theme in the opening vignette, "Feathers from a Thousand Li Away". An old woman brings a swan to America as a gift for the daughter she imagines, but the swan is taken from her by immigration officials and she is left with a single feather. The image is a perfect symbol of the immigrant experience: the magnificent thing is lost at the border, and what survives is a small, apparently worthless token that must carry all of a mother's hopes. Tan suggests that each mother's story is such a feather, a fragment of a lost past offered to a daughter who may not understand its value.

Suyuan Woo's loss is the emotional frame of the novel. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, fleeing Kweilin as the Japanese approached, she was forced to leave her twin baby daughters by the roadside, believing she would die. Tan's choice to let Jing-mei learn this story only after her mother's death gives the loss a double weight: Jing-mei has lost her mother, and she discovers that her mother

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had been mourning lost children all her life. The war in which over twenty million Chinese people died is therefore made intimate through one woman's grief. This loss also has a personal origin for Tan: on the eve of the family's departure for Switzerland in 1967, her mother Daisy revealed that she had three daughters left in China, separated from her when ties between China and the United States were cut in 1949. When the aunties ask Jing-mei to travel to China to meet her sisters, the novel's ending becomes an act of restoration, as if fiction can repair what history broke.

An-mei Hsu's stories show loss passed down through women. Her mother, widowed and then disgraced, became the lowly Fourth Wife of the merchant Wu Tsing, and even lost her son to the Second Wife, who claimed him as her own. An-mei's mother eventually takes her own life, timing her death so that her spirit will have power to secure a better future for An-mei. The paradox is striking: a mother sacrifices herself so that her daughter will not lose everything. Tan suggests that in pre-revolutionary China a woman's only power might lie in such terrible self-sacrifice, and An-mei's later emigration to America is built on that loss. In America, however, An-mei suffers another loss when her son Bing drowns at the beach while she believes faith will bring him back. Afterwards she loses her faith in God, and her Bible ends up propping up a short table leg, an ironic, quiet image of belief reduced to something practical and unnoticed.

Ying-ying St. Clair experiences loss most profoundly because it is a loss of self. As a child at the Moon Festival she falls from a boat and is separated from her family, and she reflects that "In one small moment, we had both lost the world, and there was no way to get it back". The comparison with the Moon Lady, who is separated from her husband forever, turns a childhood accident into a symbol of permanent displacement. Later Ying-ying loses a child when she leaves her

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unfaithful first husband, and she lives in poverty for years. When she marries Clifford St. Clair, he changes her name and records the wrong year of her birth, so she even loses her true animal sign. Tan presents her as a ghost of herself, and the immigration papers become a symbol of how assimilation can erase identity.

The daughters' losses are different but connected. Lena admits that she feels lost inside her marriage to Harold, which is run on an obsessively equal balance sheet, and Tan links her emotional emptiness to Ying-ying's lost spirit. The vase that Lena places on an unsteady table, and which Ying-ying later knocks over, symbolises a disaster that could have been prevented if it had been faced honestly. Lindo Jong, meanwhile, feels she has lost part of her Chinese identity, since when she returns to China she is recognised as an outsider. Ironically, she has tried to make her daughter fully American, even naming her Waverly after their street, and Waverly in turn feels a loss of her Chinese heritage and, as a child, of her confidence at chess after her conflict with her mother.

The significance of loss is finally revealed in the closing chapter, when Jing-mei arrives in China and meets her half-sisters. In their faces she sees her mother, and she understands at last what part of her is Chinese. Loss here becomes the means of discovery: by travelling back to the place of her mother's greatest grief, Jing-mei recovers both her mother and herself. Tan, writing in 1989 for a generation of Chinese Americans who had often been taught to leave the past behind, suggests that losses must be remembered and told, because only then can they be transformed into connection.

11 Waverly Jong is important because she embodies, more sharply than any other daughter, the struggle at the heart of The Joy Luck Club: the battle between a

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Chinese mother's "invisible strength" and an American daughter's desire to be her own person. Amy Tan makes Waverly brilliant, competitive and often unlikeable, and it is precisely this that makes her valuable. Through her, Tan shows how the very qualities a mother passes on can become the weapons a daughter uses against her, and how those weapons can at last be put down.

The quotation in the question comes from the opening line of "Rules of the Game", and it immediately defines Waverly through her mother. Lindo teaches her to "bite back your tongue" and reminds her that "Strongest wind cannot be seen". Invisible strength is a strategy of silent resistance, the art of hiding desire in order to achieve it, and Waverly first uses it to get a bag of salted plums from a shop by not asking for them. It is significant that this lesson comes from Lindo, whose own story in "The Red Candle" shows her escaping an arranged marriage in China through cunning rather than open defiance. Waverly is important because she inherits a survival skill shaped by the restrictions on Chinese women, and then applies it in a completely different world.

Tan's choice of chess as Waverly's gift is especially meaningful. Waverly learns the game after her brother receives a chess set at a church Christmas party, and she soon becomes a child prodigy. Chess is a game of hidden strategy, so it becomes the perfect expression of invisible strength. Yet it also becomes the arena of her conflict with Lindo. When her mother proudly shows her off to strangers while shopping in Chinatown, Waverly complains that she is being used, and runs away. Returning home, she imagines her mother as an opponent across a chessboard, and the chapter ends with her pondering her "next move". Tan uses this extended metaphor to suggest that mother and daughter love each other in the language of competition, unable to see that they are on the same side. When Waverly declares that she will give up chess, and her mother withdraws her interest, Waverly loses

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her confidence, which reveals how much her strength depended on Lindo's belief in her.

Waverly's name also makes her important to the theme of identity. She is named after Waverly Place, the street where the family lives above a bakery in San Francisco's Chinatown, and the name is deliberately American, reflecting Lindo's wish that her daughter should have "American circumstances and Chinese character". Tan shows the impossibility of this combination. In "Double Face" Lindo notes that her daughter "had a sour American look on her face" when told she did not look Chinese, which captures Waverly's confused relationship with her heritage. She wants the advantages of being American, yet is hurt to be denied her Chinese self. This reflects the wider context of second-generation Chinese Americans in the post-war decades, raised between a community shaped by exclusion laws and a mainstream culture that encouraged assimilation.

As an adult, Waverly is important because she links the daughters through rivalry. Lindo and Suyuan compare their daughters constantly, and Waverly's success as a tax attorney is set against Jing-mei's sense of failure. At the New Year's dinner in "Best Quality", Waverly humiliates Jing-mei by dismissing her advertising work, showing how the mothers' competition has been inherited by the next generation. Yet Tan does not let us simply condemn her, because Waverly's arrogance is shown to mask fear.

That fear is clearest in "Four Directions", where Waverly dreads telling her mother that she is to marry Rich, a white American. She believes Lindo will turn him from a "divine man" into someone "mundane", and the disastrous dinner, where Rich misunderstands every Chinese custom, seems to confirm her fears. Waverly is also unusual among the daughters, because unlike Lena and Rose she is not submissive

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in her relationship; she has a daughter, Shoshana, from her first marriage to Marvin, and she clearly feels equal to Rich. Her anxiety, therefore, is not about her husband but about her mother's judgement. Tan uses the zodiac to express this: Waverly sees herself as a Rabbit, "thin-skinned and skittery", and her mother as a Horse, "obstinate and frank", believing they make "a bad combination". The irony is that she uses Chinese belief to explain her failure to understand her Chinese mother.

The turning point comes when Waverly goes to confront Lindo and finds her asleep, looking small and old. In that moment the powerful opponent of her imagination disappears. Waverly realises that she has been fighting a battle against a mother who loved her and wanted the best for her, and that her mother actually likes Rich. The plan for Waverly, Rich and Lindo to travel to China together suggests a reconciliation of cultures, a journey back to the origins of invisible strength.

Waverly is therefore important not only as a character but as a lens. Her story reveals that invisible strength can be both a gift and a burden, that misunderstanding between generations grows from love expressed in different languages, and that a daughter may resemble her mother most when she resists her hardest. Tan's portrait of Waverly suggests that Chinese American identity is not a choice between two sides of a chessboard, but a game played with both.

12 Rejection in Things Fall Apart works on two levels at once. On a personal level it drives Okonkwo, a man whose whole identity is built on rejecting his father, gentleness and change. On a historical level it describes a whole society facing colonisation, where rejection runs in both directions: the colonisers reject Igbo

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culture as primitive, and many Igbo people, in turn, reject the clan's traditions for the new religion. Achebe, writing in 1958 on the eve of Nigerian independence, uses rejection to show that tragedy comes not only from conquest but from the inability to accept the full, complex humanity of others, including one's own family.

The novel begins with a son's rejection of his father. Okonkwo despises Unoka, who was lazy, in debt and, in the clan's eyes, "agbala", a word that means a woman as well as a man with no title. Achebe tells us that Okonkwo's whole life is "dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness". This rejection makes Okonkwo successful, a wrestler, a farmer and a man of titles, but it also deforms him. By defining himself as the opposite of his father, he rejects any quality he associates with Unoka, including tenderness, music and conversation. Achebe implies that a self built on rejection is fragile, because it can never admit doubt.

This becomes devastating in the story of Ikemefuna. Given to Umuofia by Mbaino as compensation, the boy lives with Okonkwo's family for three years and becomes like a son. When the Oracle of the Hills and Caves decrees his death, Okonkwo is warned by Ezeudu not to take part, yet when the boy runs to him crying "My father, they have killed me!", Okonkwo cuts him down, because "He was afraid of being thought weak." The short, flat sentence exposes the cause of the killing with chilling clarity. Okonkwo rejects his own love for Ikemefuna in order to protect an image of manhood, and Achebe shows the cost in his days of sleeplessness afterwards.

The killing also leads to Nwoye's rejection of his father. Okonkwo had already rejected Nwoye's gentleness, fearing he resembled Unoka, and when Nwoye realises what has happened to Ikemefuna, Achebe writes that something seemed to give way inside him. Nwoye had also been troubled by the custom of leaving twins to

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die in the Evil Forest, and so when the missionaries arrive, the poetry of their hymns answers questions that "haunted" him. His conversion is therefore presented as a rejection both of his father and of the parts of Igbo tradition that caused suffering. Achebe is careful here: he does not present Christianity as simply good, but he suggests that a society which rejects its most vulnerable members, such as twins and the osu outcasts, leaves itself open to those who offer them acceptance.

Okonkwo himself is rejected by the clan when his gun explodes at Ezeudu's funeral and accidentally kills the dead man's son. Because the crime is classed as "female", he is exiled for seven years to his mother's village of Mbanta, and his compound is destroyed. The irony is sharp: the man who rejected everything feminine is punished by a female crime and sent to his motherland. His uncle Uchendu explains that "Mother is Supreme", offering a value that Okonkwo has always ignored. Achebe uses exile to suggest that Igbo culture contained balance and compassion which Okonkwo, in his rigidity, had rejected.

Rejection also shapes the encounter between cultures. In Abame the villagers kill the first white man, who arrives on a bicycle, because the Oracle warns that he will bring destruction; in revenge, the whole village is massacred. Here rejection of the stranger produces annihilation, and Obierika's account of the empty market is one of the most chilling moments in the novel. In Umuofia the process is slower. Mr Brown tolerates and learns about Igbo beliefs, but his successor Mr Smith rejects them outright, and the zealous convert Enoch unmasks an egwugwu, which is treated as killing an ancestral spirit. The clan responds by burning Enoch's compound and destroying the church, and the District Commissioner humiliates the leaders, including Okonkwo, in jail.

When Okonkwo returns from exile he rejects the changes he finds. He is shocked

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that men have taken the new religion and that the clan seems unwilling to fight. Obierika's lament that the white man "has put a knife on the things that held us together" explains why: the clan has rejected its own unity. At the final meeting, Okonkwo kills a court messenger, but the clan lets the other messengers escape, and he realises that Umuofia will not go to war. Rejected by his people in spirit, he takes his own life.

The ending completes the theme in a terrible way. Suicide is an abomination, so Okonkwo is rejected even in death, and his own clansmen cannot touch his body. Then Achebe shifts to the District Commissioner, who plans a book titled The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger, in which Okonkwo's story might fill a paragraph. This is the ultimate rejection: the colonial narrative dismisses a whole civilisation. Achebe wrote Things Fall Apart partly to answer European novels such as Conrad's Heart of Darkness that presented Africans without voice or history. The novel itself is therefore an act of resistance, rejecting the coloniser's story and restoring dignity to the Igbo world, while honestly acknowledging the rejections within that world that helped it fall apart.

13 Okonkwo's wives are important because they reveal the gap between Okonkwo's idea of manhood and the richer, more balanced Igbo society around him. The quotation "Each of his three wives had her own hut" presents them first as signs of his success: polygamy displays his wealth and status. Yet Achebe gives the wives, especially Ekwefi, inner lives and moments of courage that complicate this view. Through them, Achebe shows both the patriarchal structure of traditional Igbo life and the qualities of tenderness and endurance that Okonkwo rejects, qualities which, ironically, the novel suggests are part of true strength.

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The description of Okonkwo's compound makes the wives part of the architecture of his power. His obi stands behind the red wall, with each wife's hut arranged around it, alongside the barn full of yams that proves his prosperity. At meals each wife cooks a dish and sends it to him in turn, which suggests a clear hierarchy in which each woman has her place. This reflects the context of a polygamous society in which a man's standing was measured partly by the size of his household. The senior wife is never named, and is known only as "Nwoye's mother", following the custom that a first wife takes the name of her eldest child. Achebe's decision to leave her nameless is telling: her identity is defined through her role, yet she is treated with respect as the senior wife, much as at Nwakibie's obi the other wives cannot drink before the first wife arrives.

The wives are also important because they expose Okonkwo's violence. Achebe tells us that Okonkwo "ruled his household with a heavy hand", and that his wives, "especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper". The phrase "perpetual fear" makes his household sound like a place of constant tension, and Achebe links this behaviour to his terror of being like his father. When Ikemefuna arrives, Okonkwo orders Nwoye's mother to look after him, and when she asks a simple question, he silences her with "Do what you are told, woman". The wives therefore show how Okonkwo's need to appear strong turns into domination.

This is clearest in the beatings. Okonkwo beats Ojiugo, his youngest wife, during the Week of Peace, because she has gone to have her hair plaited instead of cooking his afternoon meal. Breaking the sacred week is a serious offence against the earth goddess Ani, and the priest Ezeani makes Okonkwo offer a sacrifice. Achebe uses this episode to show that Igbo society did place limits on male violence, at least when it threatened the community's relationship with the gods. Later, at the New Yam Festival, Okonkwo beats Ekwefi for cutting leaves from his

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banana tree, and when she mutters about guns that never shoot, he fires at her. Even his favourite wife is treated harshly, which emphasises that his temper respects no one.

Ekwefi is the most developed of the wives, and arguably the most important. She was once the village beauty, who fell in love with Okonkwo when he defeated Amalinze the Cat, but married another man because Okonkwo was too poor to pay her bride price, and later ran away to him. This history gives her a rare independence. Her grief is profound: she has lost nine children, believed to be ogbanje, before Ezinma survived. Achebe shows her fierce love when the priestess Chielo carries Ezinma away to the cave of Agbala at night, and Ekwefi follows in the darkness despite her terror. Remarkably, Okonkwo also follows, armed with his machete, and when Ekwefi sees him there she is moved by his care. In this episode, as when he anxiously prepares medicine for Ezinma's fever, the wives allow Achebe to reveal a softer side of Okonkwo that he usually hides.

Through the wives, Achebe also explores attitudes to women in the wider culture. Women grow crops such as coco-yams and cassava, while yams are seen as "a man's crop", so even agriculture is divided by gender. When the egwugwu judge the case of Uzowulu, who beats his wife, an elder wonders why "such a trifle should come before the egwugwu", showing that domestic violence was largely accepted. Yet the novel also gives women spiritual authority, through Chielo as priestess, and Uchendu tells the exiled Okonkwo that "Mother is Supreme" when a man is in sorrow. Achebe therefore resists presenting Igbo society as simply oppressive, and suggests that it contained a feminine principle that Okonkwo, in his extremism, failed to value. Writing in 1958, Achebe was determined to show Europe that pre-colonial Africa had a complex social order, and the wives help him present that order honestly, including its injustices.

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Finally, the wives connect to the novel's tragedy through Ezinma. Okonkwo repeatedly wishes that she "should have been a boy", because she understands him better than his sons. His inability to value a daughter, and by extension the women around him, reflects the rigid thinking that eventually leads to his downfall.

Overall, Okonkwo's wives are important because they act as a mirror. They show his wealth, his status and his cruelty, but they also reveal the qualities of patience, love and endurance that hold a family together. In a novel about things falling apart, the wives quietly represent what holds things together, and Okonkwo's failure to honour them foreshadows his failure to adapt when his world changes.