Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

English Literature

Paper 1: Poetry and Modern Prose

Tuesday 22 May 2018 – Morning
Question Booklet

Paper Reference
4ET1/01

Do not return this booklet with your Answer Booklet.

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Answer THREE questions:

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

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

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SECTION A: Unseen Poetry

Answer the question in this section.

You should spend 35 minutes on this question.

Read the following poem.

Purple Shoes

Mum and me had a row yesterday,
A big, exploding
howdareyouspeaktomelikethatI'mofftostayatGran's
kind of row.

It was about shoes.
I'd seen a pair of purple ones at Carter's,
heels not too high, soft suede, silver buckles;
'No,' she said.
'Not suitable for school.
I can't afford to buy rubbish.'
That's when we had our row.
I went to bed longing for those shoes.
They made footsteps in my mind,
kicking up dance dust;
I wore them in my dreams across a shiny floor,
under flashing coloured lights.
It was ruining my life not to have them.

This morning they were mine.
Mum relented and gave me the money.
I walked out of the store wearing new purple shoes.
I kept seeing myself reflected in the shop windows
with purple shoes on,
walking to the bus stop,
walking the whole length of our street
wearing purple shoes.

On Monday I shall go to school in purple shoes.
Mum will say no a thousand furious times
But I don't care.
I'm not going to give in.

Irene Rawnsley (1993)

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1 Explore how the writer presents strong feelings in this poem.

In your answer, you should consider the poet'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 *Search For My Tongue* and *Half-caste*.

Compare the ways the writers convey feelings about identity in *Search For My Tongue* and *Half-caste*.

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 *Hide and Seek*.

Compare how the writers present personal experiences in *Hide and Seek* 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 Explore the character of Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

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

(Total for Question 4 = 40 marks)

OR

5 How significant is the theme of the mockingbird in this novel?

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 In what ways is loneliness an important theme 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 is a cruel and aloof character.'

Explore the character of Crooks in this 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 Explore the character of Kahu in this novel.

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

(Total for Question 8 = 40 marks)

OR

9 'This novel is not only about the survival of some whales.'

How important is the theme of survival in *The Whale Rider*?

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

(Total for Question 9 = 40 marks)

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

EITHER

10 In what ways is telling stories important in *The Joy Luck Club*?

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

(Total for Question 10 = 40 marks)

OR

11 Discuss the relationship between Lindo and Waverly Jong 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 How significant is the theme of fear in *Things Fall Apart*?

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

(Total for Question 12 = 40 marks)

OR

13 Explore the relationship between Okonkwo and his wives.

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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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

English Literature

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

Tuesday 22 May 2018 – Morning
Time: 2 hours

Paper Reference
4ET1/01

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If –

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

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

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

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

Rudyard Kipling

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Prayer Before Birth

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Louis MacNeice

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Blessing

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

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

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

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

Imtiaz Dharker

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Search For My Tongue

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

મને હતું કે આખ્ખી જીભ આખ્ખી ભાષા.

(munay hutoo kay aakhee jeebh aakhee bhasha)

મેં થૂંકી નાખી છે.

(may thoonky nakhi chay)

પરંતુ રાત્રે સ્વપ્નામાં મારી ભાષા પાછી આવે છે.

(parantoo rattray svupnama mari bhasha pachi aavay chay)

ફૂલની જેમ મારી ભાષા મારી જીભ

(foolnee jaim mari bhasha mari jeebh)

મોઢામાં ખીલે છે.

(modhama kheelay chay)

ફળની જેમ મારી ભાષા મારી જીભ

(fulllnee jaim mari bhasha mari jeebh)

મોઢામાં પાકે છે.

(modhama pakay chay)

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

Sujata Bhatt

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Half-past Two

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But he never forgot how once by not knowing time,
He escaped into the clockless land 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 cheek a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

IV

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

V

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

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

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

IX

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

X

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

XI

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

XII

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

John Keats

**manna* – Food from heaven

Poem at Thirty-Nine

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alice Walker

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War Photographer

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

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

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

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

Carol Ann Duffy

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

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The Tyger

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

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

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

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

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

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

William Blake

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

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My Last Duchess
Ferrara

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

Robert Browning

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Half-caste

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

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

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

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an I will tell yu
de other half
of my story

John Agard

Do not go gentle into that good night

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dylan Thomas

Remember

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

Christina Rossetti

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Half-past Two © U.A. Fanthorpe. First published in Neck-Verse (Peterloo Poets, 1992)
Piano by D. H. Lawrence from *The Top 500 Poems,* ed William Harman, Columbia University
Hide and Seek by Vernon Scannell from *The Collected Poems – 1950–93* (Robson Books Ltd, 1998)
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Surname	Other names

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

Centre Number | | | | | |

Candidate Number | | | | |

English Literature

Paper 1: Poetry and Modern Prose

Tuesday 22 May 2018 – Morning
Time: 2 hours

Paper Reference
4ET1/01

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

Total Marks

Instructions

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

Information

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

Advice

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

Turn over ▶

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SECTION A: Unseen Poetry

Question 1

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(Total for Question 1 = 20 marks)

TOTAL FOR SECTION A = 20 MARKS

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SECTION B: Anthology Poetry

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

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

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TOTAL FOR SECTION B = 30 MARKS

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SECTION C: Modern Prose

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

Chosen question number:

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

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

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

Question number

1

Rawnsley presents strong feelings as both intense and slightly absurd. The speaker's desire for a pair of shoes is felt with total seriousness, yet the poet allows the reader to smile at how a small purchase becomes a battle of wills between mother and daughter. Beneath the humour, the purple shoes seem to stand for something larger: a teenager's longing for independence and a self that is not defined by her mother or by school.

The poem opens with the conflict already over, "Mum and me had a row yesterday", and the casual, spoken grammar of "Mum and me" establishes a young, confiding voice. The most striking feature is the neologism "howdareyouspeaktomelikethatI'mofftostayatGran's". By running the words together, Rawnsley makes the row sound like two people shouting over each other, with no pauses for breath or listening. The first half belongs to the mother's outrage and the second to the daughter's threat, so the single compound captures both strong feelings colliding at once.

The bathos of the short sentence "It was about shoes" undercuts this drama. The flat statement suggests that the older narrator can see how trivial the cause was, yet the next lines show why it mattered so much. The triplet "heels not too high, soft suede, silver buckles" lingers lovingly over each detail, and the sibilance creates a soft, seductive sound. Against this, the mother's direct speech is clipped and practical: "Not suitable for school." Her full stops sound final, and "rubbish" dismisses in one word everything her daughter desires.

In the third stanza the feeling becomes longing. The metaphor "They made

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footsteps in my mind" suggests the shoes have taken over her thoughts, while "kicking up dance dust" and the dream of a "shiny floor, / under flashing coloured lights" show that they represent glamour, excitement and an adult world of dancing beyond the classroom. The colour purple itself, with its associations of royalty and extravagance, sets the shoes against the dull, sensible world of school uniform. The hyperbole "It was ruining my life not to have them" is comic, but it captures how overwhelming adolescent desire can feel.

The turn comes in another short, triumphant sentence: "This morning they were mine." The mother's change of heart is reported in one line, "Mum relented", which suggests her feelings are loving underneath the anger. The speaker's joy is then conveyed through repetition: "purple shoes" recurs, and the parallel phrases "walking to the bus stop, / walking the whole length of our street" have a steady, rhythmic beat that mimics proud footsteps.

Structurally, the poem moves from "yesterday" to "This morning" and finally to the future, "On Monday I shall go to school". The free verse allows the lines to expand and contract with her emotions, and the final stanza is built from short, defiant statements. The hyperbole "a thousand furious times" predicts the next row, while the last line, "I'm not going to give in", is deliciously ironic: she has already won, and the battle she imagines is one she is starting herself. Rawnsley ends by suggesting that the strong feelings of mother and daughter are really alike, both stubborn, both proud, and that this cycle of conflict and love is simply part of growing up.

2 Both Bhatt and Agard write about identity as something bound up with language, and both speak to a listener who has misunderstood them. However, their feelings

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differ. Bhatt's poem is inward and anxious: she fears that living in a foreign language has cost her a part of herself, and only gradually discovers that her identity is stronger than she thought. Agard's is outward and combative: his identity is not in danger of being lost, but is being insulted by others, and he turns his anger into witty, mocking argument. One poem is a quiet discovery, the other a public challenge.

Both open by responding to a question, which immediately makes identity a matter of being misunderstood. Bhatt begins "You ask me what I mean / by saying I have lost my tongue", and Agard turns the question back on his listener with the repeated imperative "Explain yuself / wha yu mean". The effect is different, though. Bhatt's tone is patient and explanatory; she then asks her reader to imagine having "two tongues in your mouth", inviting empathy. Agard's "Excuse me / standing on one leg" is mock polite, and the absurd image of standing on one leg literalises the insulting idea of being only "half" a person. Where Bhatt wants the reader to share her experience, Agard wants the reader to feel the foolishness of their own words.

The writers' attitudes to mixing are perhaps the biggest contrast. For Bhatt, two languages cannot happily coexist: "You could not use them both together". The mother tongue and the foreign tongue compete, and the brutal repetition in "rot, / rot and die in your mouth / until you had to spit it out" turns the loss of language into physical decay, as if part of her body were dying. The verb "spit" suggests disgust or rejection, which hints at a painful feeling that she has been forced to discard her heritage. Agard, by contrast, celebrates mixture as natural and creative. His three analogies, "picasso / mix red an green", "light an shadow / mix in de sky" and "tchaikovsky" mixing "a black key / wid a white key", present blending as the source of great art, beauty and music. The joke is that no one would call a

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masterpiece "a half-caste canvas", so the term collapses under its own logic.

Both poets use language from their own culture to assert identity, but for different purposes. Bhatt places Gujarati at the very centre of the poem, written phonetically, so that an English reader experiences being unable to understand. Structurally the poem therefore enacts its meaning: the mother tongue literally rises up in the middle of the English text, just as it returns "overnight while I dream". Agard writes the whole poem in Caribbean patois, with phonetic spellings such as "yu", "dat" and "mih". This is itself a statement that his voice and identity are complete and valid, not a broken version of standard English. The expletive "ah rass" gives a flash of real anger beneath the humour, while the obliques and the absence of conventional punctuation make the poem sound spoken and unstoppable, refusing the rules of the people he is challenging.

Imagery of growth and wholeness shapes both endings. Bhatt's extended metaphor transforms the dying tongue into a plant: "it grows back, a stump of a shoot", and the tricolon "grows longer, grows moist, grows strong veins" builds a sense of returning vitality. The mother tongue "ties the other tongue in knots" and "pushes the other tongue aside", so the feeling shifts from loss to triumph, and the repeated "the bud opens" slows the rhythm as if we are watching it flower. The final line, "it blossoms out of my mouth", is joyful and certain: her identity was never truly lost. Agard's second section turns the insult inside out by exaggerating it: "I close half-a-eye" and "I dream half-a-dream" show how ridiculous it is to imagine a person as literally half. He ends by demanding that the listener return "wid de whole of yu eye / an de whole of yu ear / an de whole of yu mind". The repetition of "whole" reverses the poem's key idea: it is the listener, not the speaker, who has been seeing only half.

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Both endings point towards completeness, but the routes differ. Bhatt discovers that her identity lives in her own body and dreams, and her poem closes with a private moment of reassurance. Agard insists that his identity is already whole and puts the responsibility on others to change, closing with an open invitation to hear "de other half / of my story". For me, Agard's poem is the more confrontational and socially pointed, an attack on casual racism, while Bhatt's is the more vulnerable, exploring what migration can do to a person from within. Together they suggest that identity is shaped not only by the languages we speak, but by whether others are willing to listen.

3

Hide and Seek and War Photographer both present personal experiences of isolation, and both end with a moment of painful realisation that other people do not care as much as the speaker hoped. Scannell recreates a childhood game which turns into a quiet lesson in betrayal, while Duffy presents an adult photographer whose experiences of war are so extreme that his own country cannot understand them. One experience is small and domestic, the other global and traumatic, yet both poets show a person shut away in a dark space, waiting, and then discovering that the world outside has moved on without them.

The poets choose very different voices to bring the reader inside the experience. Scannell uses the second person and a string of imperatives: "Call out. Call loud", "Don't breathe. Don't move. Stay dumb." This sounds like the child's inner voice giving himself instructions, and it places the reader in the hiding place with him, so the experience feels immediate and shared. The short, clipped sentences convey his tense excitement. Duffy, by contrast, uses the third person, "In his darkroom he is finally alone", which creates distance. This detachment mirrors the photographer's professional role as an observer, and perhaps suggests he has had to

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keep his feelings at arm's length to survive his work. Where Scannell's speaker is fully absorbed in his experience, Duffy's is trying, and failing, to keep his separate.

Both poems are set in a dark, enclosed space, and sensory imagery makes these spaces vivid. In Hide and Seek the sacks "smell like the seaside" and the child hides in "this salty dark". These details feel like real memories, and the seaside association is oddly comforting at first. As time passes, though, the imagery turns hostile: "the cold bites through your coat" and "The dark damp smell of sand moves in your throat". The personification makes the shed seem to attack him, so the reader senses the danger before the child does. Duffy's darkroom is described as "a church" in which the photographer is "a priest preparing to intone a Mass". The religious imagery suggests that developing these images is a solemn ritual of remembrance for the dead, and the biblical "All flesh is grass" reminds us of human mortality. The list of places, "Belfast. Beirut. Phnom Penh.", uses full stops to separate each conflict, as if each one is a wound he carries.

Time and memory shape both experiences. Scannell's poem moves forward in real time, with the dramatic irony building as the seekers whisper and then leave: "Their words and laughter scuffle, and they're gone." The reader realises they have given up, but the child believes "They must be thinking that you're very clever". This gap between what he believes and what we know makes the experience poignant. Duffy instead moves between present and past. The photographer's hands, "which did not tremble then / though seem to now", show that the experience only hits him once he is safe at home, and as the image develops "a half-formed ghost" emerges, triggering the memory of "the cries / of this man's wife". The enjambment here lets the memory spill across the line, as though he cannot hold it back.

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Form also contrasts in an interesting way. Hide and Seek is a single, unbroken stanza, which reflects the continuous experience of the game and the child's long wait. Occasional rhyming couplets such as "door" and "before" give a playful, childlike feel, though they become less frequent as the mood darkens. War Photographer is written in four regular six-line stanzas with a controlled rhyme scheme, echoing the "ordered rows" of the photographs. Yet this neat order seems to contain chaos, just as the photographer tries to impose control on "A hundred agonies in black and white". In both poems, structure reflects an attempt to manage a frightening experience.

The endings are where the poems connect most strongly. Scannell's child bursts out to claim victory, "I've won!", only to find "The darkening garden watches. Nothing stirs." The personified bushes that "hold their breath" create an eerie silence, and the final question, "But where are they who sought you?", is devastating. The game of being found becomes a lesson in being forgotten. Duffy ends with a similar indifference on a larger scale. The readers' "eyeballs prick / with tears between the bath and pre-lunch beers", so their sympathy is brief and comfortable. The photographer "stares impassively" from the aeroplane, and the final words, "they do not care", sound bitterly flat. Both speakers are left alone, having discovered that others will not share their experience.

For me, the poems differ most in what the experience costs. Scannell's child loses his innocence, discovering in a small way that people can abandon you. Duffy's photographer has long since lost his, and his isolation is deeper because he has seen real suffering that his audience can ignore. Yet both poets use a personal experience to make a wider point about human indifference, leaving the reader with an uncomfortable sense of how easily other people can turn away.

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4

Scout Finch is both the subject of To Kill a Mockingbird and the lens through which we see it. Harper Lee constructs her as a fiercely independent, curious and combative child whose innocence is tested by the prejudice of Maycomb, and as an adult narrator who looks back on that child with affection and understanding. The novel is, in this sense, a bildungsroman: Scout's journey from innocence to experience allows Lee, writing in 1960 at the start of the civil rights movement, to expose the racism and hypocrisy of the 1930s South through the eyes of someone too honest to accept it.

From the very first line, "When he was nearly thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow", Lee establishes the dual narrative voice. The adult Scout is calmly recalling the past, but most of the novel is filtered through the child's limited understanding. This creates frequent irony: the reader often grasps the meaning of events before Scout does. Her questions, such as what a "nigger-lover" is or why people shout at Atticus, expose ugly truths simply by asking about them. Lee seems to use Scout's naivety as a moral tool; a child who has not yet learnt the town's prejudices can show how unnatural they are.

Scout's most obvious trait is her refusal to conform. She wears overalls, fights boys, and resists every attempt to make her into a Southern lady. On her first day at school she clashes with Miss Caroline and later rubs Walter Cunningham's nose in the dirt. Aunt Alexandra, who comes to live with the family partly so that Scout will have a female influence, represents the expectations placed on white girls of good family in the 1930s: dresses, manners and an acceptance of rigid class distinctions. Scout's resistance can be read as Lee's own critique of these expectations; Lee, a tomboy herself who grew up in Monroeville, Alabama, gives Scout her own scepticism towards Southern femininity. Yet Scout is not simply rebellious. At the missionary circle she watches Aunt Alexandra and Miss Maudie

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hold themselves together after news of Tom's death, and she quietly decides that if they can be ladies at such a time, so can she. Her growth is shown not by abandoning her identity but by understanding the courage that some forms of femininity require.

Atticus shapes Scout's moral development, and his advice that you never really understand a person until you "climb into his skin and walk around in it" becomes the novel's central lesson for her. Early on, she fails to practise it: when Walter Cunningham pours syrup over his dinner, she criticises him openly, and Calpurnia scolds her for treating a guest as beneath her. This moment shows how class prejudice is absorbed even by children, and how Scout's education comes from the people around her as much as from school. Calpurnia's church, where Scout first glimpses a separate black community with its own life, its own resentment and its own dignity, widens her understanding of Maycomb's divided society under Jim Crow segregation.

The turning point of Scout's innocence is the trial and the events around it. Her most remarkable moment comes outside the jail, where she unknowingly defuses a lynch mob by talking to Mr Cunningham about his "entailment" and his son. Her innocent friendliness forces him to see himself as an individual, a father, rather than part of a mob. Lee suggests that a child's natural decency can be more powerful than adult argument, and the scene recalls the very real threat of lynching that hung over black men accused of crimes against white women, as in the Scottsboro trials of 1931. During the trial itself, Scout is less emotionally affected than Jem or Dill, perhaps because she is younger, but she begins to notice hypocrisy. When her teacher Miss Gates condemns Hitler's persecution of the Jews yet Scout remembers her speaking scornfully about black people after the trial, Scout cannot reconcile the two. Her confused question to Jem shows a mind

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that is learning to see the gap between what adults say and what they do.

Scout's relationship with Boo Radley charts her growth most clearly. At the start she joins Jem and Dill in games that turn Boo into a monster, reflecting the town's gossip and fear of the outsider. By the end, after Boo saves her and Jem from Bob Ewell, she greets him simply with "Hey, Boo", and understands why Heck Tate will not expose him to public attention: it would be "sort of like shootin' a mockingbird". Standing on the Radley porch, she sees the street from Boo's point of view, fulfilling Atticus's lesson literally. The circular structure is significant: the child who once feared Boo now protects him.

Ultimately, Lee presents Scout as a character whose innocence is lost but whose goodness is not. She learns that Maycomb contains cruelty, class snobbery and racism, but also courage and kindness, as in Miss Maudie, Calpurnia and Atticus. The novel closes as she drifts to sleep and Atticus agrees that most people are nice "when you finally see them", leaving the reader with cautious hope. In 1960, as America confronted segregation, Lee seems to suggest through Scout that prejudice is learnt, and that it can be unlearnt by anyone willing to look at the world through someone else's eyes.

5 The mockingbird is arguably the most significant symbol in Harper Lee's novel, important enough to give the book its title. It represents innocence and harmless goodness, and the "sin" of killing it becomes Lee's way of exposing how a prejudiced society destroys those who cannot defend themselves. Yet the theme is significant not only because it identifies particular victims, such as Tom Robinson and Boo Radley, but because it gives Scout, and the reader, a moral test that runs through the whole novel: whether we protect the vulnerable or join in harming

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them. Writing in 1960, as the civil rights movement challenged segregation in the South, Lee uses this gentle image to make a powerful moral point.

The symbol is introduced when Atticus gives Jem and Scout air rifles and tells them, "Shoot all the bluejays you want, if you can hit 'em, but remember it's a sin to kill a mockingbird." Scout notices that this is the only time she has heard Atticus call anything a sin, which signals its importance. Miss Maudie explains that mockingbirds do nothing but "make music for us to enjoy"; they do not eat gardens or nest in corncribs. The contrast with the bluejay, a noisy and aggressive bird, suggests a distinction between those who cause harm and those who simply give. It is significant that the lesson comes through a gun: the novel repeatedly asks who holds power over others and how they use it.

Tom Robinson is the clearest mockingbird. He is a hard-working black man who helps Mayella Ewell with her chores because he feels sorry for her, an act of kindness that leads directly to his destruction. In the racial hierarchy of 1930s Alabama, a black man pitying a white woman was itself seen as transgressive, and the jury convicts him despite Atticus proving that he could not have caused Mayella's injuries with his crippled left arm. The trial closely echoes the Scottsboro case of 1931, in which nine black youths were falsely accused of rape, and it shows how Jim Crow society made justice impossible for black defendants. Tom is later shot seventeen times while trying to escape from prison. Lee makes the symbolism explicit through Mr Underwood's editorial, which likens Tom's death to "the senseless slaughter of songbirds". By having a white newspaper editor, who is himself no friend of black people, say this, Lee suggests that the injustice is so plain that even Maycomb cannot entirely hide from it.

Boo Radley is the second mockingbird, and his story mirrors Tom's. Both are

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outsiders, both are imprisoned, Tom in gaol and Boo in his own home by his family, and both show quiet kindness. Boo leaves gifts for the children in the knot-hole of the tree, mends Jem's trousers and places a blanket around Scout during Miss Maudie's fire. When his brother Nathan fills the knot-hole with cement, Boo's only way of communicating is silenced, like a bird stopped from singing. At the climax, Boo saves the children from Bob Ewell. Heck Tate decides that dragging him into the spotlight would be a sin, and Scout shows she understands when she says it would be "sort of like shootin' a mockingbird". This is a deeply significant moment: Scout, who began the novel making games out of Boo's supposed monstrousness, now applies her father's lesson herself. The theme therefore marks the completion of her moral education.

The theme reaches further than these two characters, which is part of its significance. Children themselves are mockingbirds in the novel: Scout, Jem and Dill begin innocent, and the trial wounds them. Jem's tears after the verdict and Dill's distress during Mr Gilmer's cross-examination of Tom show the damage prejudice does to young people who have not yet learnt to accept it. Dolphus Raymond, who pretends to be a drunk so that Maycomb can explain his choice to live with the black community, is another gentle figure forced to hide his true nature. Even Atticus might be seen as a mockingbird, a man who does good without seeking reward, and whom Bob Ewell spits on and threatens. Lee's surname choice for the Finches, another small songbird, hints that the whole family is vulnerable in standing up for what is right.

Lee also uses the absence of birdsong structurally. At moments of tension, such as when Atticus faces the rabid dog, Tim Johnson, the street falls eerily still, and the tense wait for the verdict is marked by a similar hush. Silence becomes a sign that innocence is under threat. The mad dog itself can be read as a symbol of the

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racism infecting Maycomb, which Atticus, the reluctant marksman, must confront.

Ultimately, the mockingbird theme is significant because it turns the novel from a coming-of-age story into a moral parable. Maycomb is a microcosm of the Depression-era South, where poverty, class and racial segregation determined who was protected and who was sacrificed. By making the reader recognise Tom and Boo as innocents, Lee challenges her 1960 audience, many of whom still lived under segregation, to see that killing a mockingbird is not something that happened only in the past. The symbol works because it is simple enough for a child to understand, which is exactly Lee's point: the injustice of racism should be obvious to anyone who looks with an open heart.

6 Loneliness is not simply one theme among many in Of Mice and Men; it is the condition from which almost everything else in the novel grows. Steinbeck presents it as a product of the society of 1930s California, where migrant workers drifted from ranch to ranch during the Great Depression with no homes, families or security. More disturbingly, he suggests that loneliness feeds on itself: the men who suffer from it most are also the ones who build barriers against others, through suspicion, prejudice and cruelty. The friendship of George and Lennie is precious precisely because it is so rare, and its destruction at the end shows how little room this world leaves for human connection.

Steinbeck sets the theme early through George's speech by the river: "Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don't belong no place." The short declarative sentences and the double negative give the line a blunt, spoken honesty, and the generalising "guys like us" makes their loneliness representative of a whole class of workers. Even the setting

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reinforces this: the ranch lies near Soledad, Spanish for solitude. Historically, itinerant labourers were among the poorest Americans, often displaced from the Dust Bowl, and the bunkhouse with its bare walls and apple-box shelves suggests lives that can be packed up and carried away. George's next words, "With us it ain't like that. We got a future", show the dream of the farm as a direct answer to loneliness. Lennie's eager reply that he has George to look after him, and George has him, presents companionship as a form of wealth that the other men lack.

The other ranch hands are suspicious of this companionship, which reveals how normal loneliness has become. The boss questions George closely because he cannot believe a man would travel with another unless he wanted to take his pay. Slim, the most perceptive character, remarks that few men travel together and wonders whether everyone in the world is scared of each other. That idea is central: loneliness is linked to fear and mistrust, and the men protect themselves by keeping apart. Even George, who has a companion, plays solitaire repeatedly, a game for one, which perhaps hints that his bond with Lennie is also a burden that isolates him from normal life.

Steinbeck explores how loneliness damages people through the characters on the margins. Candy, old and disabled after losing his hand, is kept on only as a swamper, and his ancient dog is his only companion. When Carlson insists on shooting it, the other men treat it as common sense, and Candy lies on his bunk staring at the ceiling in silence. His later admission that he ought to have shot the dog himself, rather than letting a stranger do it, foreshadows George's decision at the end. In an America with no welfare system for the old or injured, Candy's fear of being thrown off the ranch when he can no longer work shows that loneliness is also economic: those who are no longer useful are discarded.

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Crooks's loneliness is enforced by racism. As the only black man on the ranch, he is made to live alone in the harness room and is excluded from the bunkhouse. His books and his copy of the California civil code suggest an intelligent man, aware of his rights yet unable to claim them. When Lennie wanders into his room, Crooks's first instinct is hostility, and he cruelly suggests that George might not come back. Yet his outburst, "A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody", and "I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick", reveal that his bitterness is a symptom of isolation rather than a natural cruelty. For a moment he dares to ask to join the dream, but Curley's wife's threat of lynching reminds him of his powerlessness in the segregated society of the 1930s, and he withdraws. Steinbeck shows that loneliness and prejudice reinforce one another.

Curley's wife is perhaps the most tragic example. She is never named, defined only as Curley's possession, and the men avoid her because they fear trouble with Curley. Her constant appearances in doorways, "lookin' for Curley", are a pretext for company. In the barn she finally pours out her frustration to Lennie, saying she never gets to talk to anybody and gets awful lonely. Her abandoned dream of Hollywood reflects the limited options for women in the period, when marriage was often the only route out of poverty. Tragically, her search for conversation leads to her death, so loneliness becomes literally fatal.

Structurally, Steinbeck reinforces the theme through repetition and circularity. The novel opens and closes at the same pool, but in the final scene George is alone with Lennie as he shoots him. The echo of Candy's dog, killed with a shot to the back of the head, makes the parallel unavoidable: George is now in Candy's position, without his companion. The title, from Burns's line about the best laid schemes of mice and men going wrong, signals from the outset that the dream

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will fail. When Slim leads George away and Carlson asks what is eating them, his incomprehension shows a world where friendship cannot even be understood.

Overall, loneliness is the novel's defining theme because it explains both the characters' longing and their failures. Steinbeck, who had worked alongside migrant labourers, presents their isolation as the result of an economic system that treats men as disposable. Yet he also shows that the cure, the companionship George and Lennie share, is real and valuable, which makes its loss at the end all the more devastating.

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On the surface, the statement is partly true. Crooks keeps his distance from the other men, and when Lennie wanders into his room he taunts him with real cruelty. Yet Steinbeck makes it clear that this aloofness and cruelty are not Crooks's nature but his defence. He is the only black man on a ranch in 1930s California, segregated, mocked and powerless, and his behaviour is the result of years of rejection. To call him simply "cruel and aloof" is to judge him as the ranch does; Steinbeck invites the reader to understand him instead.

Crooks is introduced indirectly long before he appears. Candy tells George and Lennie that the boss takes out his temper on the stable buck, and recounts a Christmas when the men let Crooks into the bunkhouse only so that Smitty could fight him. Even the name the men use for him comes from his crooked back, injured when a horse kicked him. Before we meet him, then, Steinbeck shows that Crooks is defined by others, by his disability and by the racial slur the men use casually. In the Jim Crow era, when racism was entrenched across America and lynching was still common, this casual contempt would have been everyday reality for a black worker.

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When Crooks does appear, in Chapter 4, Steinbeck describes him as "a proud, aloof man" who keeps his distance and demands that others keep theirs. His room in the harness shed is full of personal possessions: medicines for his back, a tattered dictionary and a copy of the California civil code. These details are telling. Unlike the bunkhouse men, Crooks is a permanent worker with things of his own, so he is in some ways more settled than them, yet his books suggest a lonely man filling his solitude with reading, and the civil code implies he is painfully aware of the rights he cannot use. His aloofness, then, looks like dignity: if he cannot be accepted, he will at least not be humiliated by asking.

This defensiveness explains his first reaction to Lennie. He tells him sharply that he has no right to come in, and when Lennie asks why he is not wanted in the bunkhouse, Crooks answers bluntly: "'Cause I'm black. They play cards in there, but I can't play because I'm black. They say I stink." The repetition of "because I'm black" shows how completely race determines his life, and the flat syntax conveys a bitterness that has hardened over time. He is not aloof by choice; he has been shut out.

The most persuasive evidence for the statement is Crooks's taunting of Lennie. He suggests that George might not come back, and keeps pressing the idea, "S'pose George don't come back", until Lennie becomes frightened and angry. Steinbeck shows Crooks taking a kind of pleasure in this torment, and it is genuinely uncomfortable to read. Yet the cruelty has a purpose. Crooks wants Lennie to feel, even briefly, the isolation he lives with every day. He goes on to reveal his own pain: "A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody", and a guy who gets too lonely "gets sick". His cruelty is less a sign of malice than a desperate way of making someone understand him. When Lennie threatens him, Crooks immediately backs down and

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reassures him that George will return, which suggests he was never truly cruel at heart.

Crooks also reveals a gentler past. He tells Lennie that his father had a chicken ranch and that as a child he played with white children. This memory shows that his isolation is not inevitable; he once knew a kind of belonging, which makes his present loneliness more painful. His cynicism about the dream, his belief that countless men have come by with land in their heads and none ever get it, grows from what he has witnessed of migrant life during the Depression. Yet when Candy confirms that they have the money, Crooks's guard drops and he offers to work for nothing if he can join them. For a moment, the "aloof" man reveals how much he longs to belong.

This hope is destroyed by Curley's wife. When Crooks tells her to leave his room, she threatens him: "I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even funny." The casual tone of the threat is chilling because it is true; a black man accused by a white woman had no protection, as the infamous Scottsboro case of 1931 had shown. Crooks is crushed. Steinbeck describes him reducing himself to nothing, and his reply, "Yes, ma'am", is toneless. Here the reader sees the real power structure of the ranch: Crooks's pride is fragile because he can be destroyed at any moment. Immediately afterwards he withdraws from the dream, telling Candy he was only joking and would not want to go to a place like that. His return to aloofness is an act of self-protection after being reminded of his place.

Overall, I would argue that the statement describes how Crooks appears, but not who he is. Steinbeck, writing in 1937, uses him to show how racism isolates individuals and then blames them for their isolation. Crooks's cruelty and aloofness are learnt responses to a society that denies him equality, companionship and

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safety. His brief moment of hope, followed by his retreat, makes him one of the most tragic characters in the novel, and through him Steinbeck asks readers to recognise the human cost of prejudice.

8 Kahu is the quiet centre of The Whale Rider: a small girl who, without ever demanding power, proves herself the true heir of Kahutia Te Rangi. Ihimaera builds her as a figure of patient, unrequited love whose spiritual gifts are ignored because of her sex, and through her he questions whether a culture fighting for its survival can afford to reject half of its people. Writing in 1987, during the Maori cultural renaissance, he uses Kahu to suggest that tradition survives not by standing still but by recognising where its strength truly lies.

From her birth, Kahu is defined by the disappointment she causes. Koro Apirana, chief of the Whangara people, has been waiting for a male great-grandchild to inherit the leadership, and the arrival of a girl is treated almost as an insult. In Maori society the leader traditionally descends through the male line, so Koro's anger is not simple cruelty: it comes from his fear that the chiefly line from Paikea will be broken. Yet Ihimaera immediately hints that Kahu is special. She is named after the founding ancestor himself, and Nanny Flowers insists on the tradition of burying her birth cord at the marae, which ties her physically to the land of Whangara. While Koro sees an ending, the women around her see a beginning, and the reader is invited to side with them.

Much of Kahu's characterisation lies in her devotion to Koro, which is all the more moving because it is rarely returned. As a toddler she follows him everywhere, and even when he repeatedly tells her "Go away", her affection does not fade. Rawiri, the narrator, presents this with gentle irony: the old man who longs for an heir

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cannot see that the child clinging to him already loves the old ways more than anyone. Ihimaera's choice of Rawiri, a sympathetic uncle, as narrator matters here, because his warmth towards Kahu steers our response and makes Koro's rejection seem increasingly blind and painful.

Kahu's hunger for her culture becomes clearer as she grows. When Koro sets up a school to teach the boys of the tribe the language, chants and lore of their ancestors, Kahu is excluded, but she sits outside and absorbs everything. This reflects a real anxiety of the period, when the Maori language was in danger of dying out and elders like Koro were desperate to pass it on to the young. The irony is sharp: Koro's whole project is the survival of Maori knowledge, yet the most gifted pupil is the one he refuses to teach. At her school concert Kahu gives a speech in Maori honouring her great-grandfather, but he does not come. Rawiri recalls that "We tried to bolster her courage by clapping loudly", and the collective "we" shows the family rallying round her, while her hurt exposes how deeply she wants Koro's approval rather than anyone else's.

The episode of the stone is the turning point in our understanding of her. Koro throws a carved stone into the sea and challenges the boys to retrieve it as a test of leadership; all of them fail. Later, Kahu dives in and brings it back, helped by dolphins. Ihimaera presents this as a quiet miracle, and crucially the women and Rawiri keep it secret from Koro. Kahu does not seek recognition; her power is shown rather than claimed. This contrasts with Koro's public, ritualised ideas of leadership and suggests that true mana may come from humility and from a bond with the natural world that he has partly lost.

That bond is central to Kahu's character. From early on she seems able to communicate with sea creatures, and the novel's interwoven sections from the

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perspective of the ancient bull whale link her to the legend of Paikea, who rode a whale to Whangara. When the herd strands itself on the beach, the men, including Koro, fail to push the bull whale back to sea. It is Kahu who swims out, climbs onto the whale and urges it to return to the deep. In this moment she literally becomes the whale rider, re-enacting the founding myth of her people. The stranding itself is linked to "the effects of the undersea radiation" from nuclear testing in the Pacific, a pressing concern in New Zealand at the time, so Kahu's act suggests a child restoring harmony between humans and a damaged natural world.

The ending confirms her role. Kahu is returned to land and, as she lies unconscious in hospital, Koro finally accepts her as his successor. Rawiri's comment that "it was Kahu's intervention which perhaps saved us all" is significant: the tentative "perhaps" fits his modest voice, but "saved us all" places a young girl at the heart of the tribe's survival. Nanny Flowers, who has always defended her, is vindicated, and Koro's change of heart suggests that tradition can adapt without being destroyed.

Overall, Kahu is less a realistic child than a symbol of hope and continuity, though Ihimaera keeps her human through her loneliness and longing for love. Through her, he challenges the gender expectations of traditional Maori society while honouring its legends, implying that the future leader of Whangara was never the boy Koro wanted, but the girl who loved him all along.

9 Survival is arguably the most important theme in The Whale Rider, because it connects every strand of the novel. On the surface the story builds towards the rescue of a stranded herd, but Ihimaera uses the whales as a symbol of something

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larger: the survival of Maori language, legend and identity in a modern world that threatens to erase them. The statement is right that the novel is "not only about the survival of some whales"; it is also about whether a people, a family and a set of beliefs can endure, and about which kind of survival is truly worth having.

The most pressing struggle is the survival of Maori culture, embodied in Koro Apirana. As chief of Whangara, he is haunted by the fear that the line descending from Paikea will end with him, and he searches desperately for a male heir. Ihimaera wrote in 1987, during a period when Maori elders were fighting to revive a language that had been suppressed for generations, and Koro's school for the boys of the tribe reflects that real effort. His urgency is understandable, even admirable. Yet Ihimaera shows that his rigid interpretation of tradition actually endangers what he wants to save, because he refuses to see the heir in front of him. Survival, the novel suggests, requires flexibility as well as loyalty.

That heir is Kahu, whose personal survival is a battle against prejudice. Koro dismisses her because she is a girl, telling her "Go away" when she clings to him, and she must endure rejection from the person she loves most. Her quiet persistence, sitting outside the school to learn the chants, diving to retrieve the carved stone that the boys could not find, shows that her love for her culture survives his coldness. The support of Nanny Flowers, a strong-willed woman who openly challenges her husband, reminds us that women in a patriarchal society have had to fight to survive and to be heard. Kahu's eventual acceptance therefore marks the survival of the culture in a renewed, more inclusive form.

Ihimaera also explores survival through Rawiri, the narrator. His journey abroad, first to Australia and then to Papua New Guinea with his friend Jeff, initially looks like an escape from small-town life. However, at Jeff's family's plantation he

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experiences racism, and he realises that his identity as a Maori cannot survive comfortably in a world that treats him as inferior. His return home is significant: it shows that individual survival is bound up with belonging to the tribe. Structurally, this section takes the reader away from Whangara, which makes the homecoming feel like a recovery of self.

The survival of the whales gives the theme its mythic scale. Ihimaera interweaves passages from the perspective of the ancient bull whale, who remembers the time when Kahutia Te Rangi rode on his back. The whales, too, are struggling to survive in a damaged world: the novel refers to "contamination" of the seas and "the effects of the undersea radiation", alluding to the nuclear testing in the Pacific that New Zealand protested against strongly in the 1980s. This turns the stranding into an environmental warning. When the herd beaches itself, the bull whale's death would symbolise the death of the ancestral bond between people and sea. Koro and the men fail to save it, but Kahu rides it back out to the deep, re-enacting Paikea's legend. The physical survival of the whale and the spiritual survival of the legend become one.

Kahu's own life is then placed in danger, and the closing chapters hold the reader in suspense as she lies unconscious after being returned to shore. Rawiri's reflection that "it was Kahu's intervention which perhaps saved us all" widens the theme to the whole community. The cautious "perhaps" is typical of his modest voice, but "saved us all" makes the girl the guardian of her people's future. Koro's acceptance of her at her bedside suggests that the tradition survives precisely because it is willing to change.

Survival is also presented as a tension between tradition and modernity. The younger generation drift away to cities and overseas, the language is fading, and

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even Kahu's father Porourangi lives partly outside the old world. Ihimaera does not reject modern life, but he implies that survival depends on carrying the past into the present rather than abandoning it or freezing it.

Ultimately, the theme of survival is central rather than incidental. The rescue of the whales is the dramatic climax, but its meaning lies in what it represents: the endurance of Maori identity, the overcoming of gender and racial prejudice, and the healing of the relationship between humans and nature. Ihimaera's message seems to be that a culture survives not through one leader's stubbornness but through love, openness and the courage of the unexpected heir.

10 Telling stories is not simply one theme of The Joy Luck Club; it is the novel's form and its purpose. Amy Tan structures the book as sixteen interlocking stories narrated by four Chinese immigrant mothers and their American-born daughters, so that the act of telling becomes the way the characters try to cross gaps of language, culture and generation. Tan herself was inspired by listening to her own mother's accounts of life in China, and the novel suggests that stories are how love, warning and heritage are handed down when ordinary conversation fails.

The importance of storytelling is signalled before any character speaks. Each of the four sections opens with a short parable, and the first tells of a woman who travels to America with a swan, hoping that her daughter will grow up speaking perfect English. When she arrives, the swan is taken from her by officials and she is left with a single feather, which she longs to give her daughter along with all her "good intentions". The feather is like the mothers' stories themselves: a small fragment of a lost world that the daughters may not value. The woman waits to tell her story until she can say it in perfect American English, which captures the

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central tragedy of the novel: the mothers fear that their words will never be fully understood.

The club itself shows stories as a source of survival. Suyuan Woo founded the Joy Luck Club in Kweilin during the war, when women met to play mah jong and tell stories to keep hope alive. Her daughter Jing-mei admits she once thought her mother's version of events was a "Chinese fairy tale", because its ending kept changing. This shows how a story can be both a shield and a burden: Suyuan reshaped her past because the truth, that she abandoned her twin baby daughters by the roadside while fleeing the Japanese, was too painful to tell plainly. After Suyuan's death, Jing-mei takes her mother's place at the mah jong table and is asked to travel to China to meet her sisters and tell them about their mother. Her journey at the end of the novel fulfils her mother's "long-cherished wish", and storytelling becomes an act of reconciliation across continents and death.

For other mothers, stories are a deliberate weapon to save their daughters. Ying-ying St Clair recounts her childhood memory of the Moon Lady and the later disaster of her first marriage, in which she lost her spirit. She tells this story to Lena, whose marriage to Harold is cold and unequal, hoping to cut through her daughter's passivity. Similarly, An-mei Hsu remembers her mother, who became a concubine and later took her own life, and urges Rose to stand up to her husband rather than let others decide her fate. In both cases the mothers use stories to transmit the hard-won lesson that a woman must not lose herself. These lessons are shaped by their experience of traditional Chinese society, where girls were often married off and expected to obey, so their stories carry a feminist edge that the daughters, raised in America, can recognise. Tan implies that a story told at the right moment can give a daughter the courage her mother once lacked, turning private suffering into a source of strength for the next generation.

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Stories can also be contested. Lindo Jong tells of being promised as a child bride to the Huang family and escaping her marriage through a cleverly invented story about the anger of the ancestors. Her survival literally depends on storytelling. Yet her daughter Waverly often misreads her mother's words, and in "Double Face" the two clash over what their crooked noses mean, each turning the same feature into a different story about fate and character. When Waverly confuses the names of places in her mother's past, Lindo insists on correcting her, determined that her story will be told accurately. Tan shows that storytelling is a struggle for control over identity as well as a gift.

Structurally, Tan's multiple first-person voices allow the reader to hear what the characters cannot hear from each other. A mother narrates a story her daughter never fully knows, and in the next chapter the daughter reveals her own misunderstandings. This dramatic irony makes the reader the true listener, and it reflects the immigrant experience of the period, when families who had fled China during and after the Second World War raised children in San Francisco who knew little of what their parents had endured.

In conclusion, telling stories is vital in The Joy Luck Club because it is the bridge between two worlds. Stories preserve Chinese heritage, warn the daughters against repeating their mothers' suffering and finally bring understanding. By the time Jing-mei meets her sisters and sees her mother's face in theirs, Tan suggests that a story has done what language alone could not: it has made a family whole.

11 The relationship between Lindo and Waverly Jong is the most combative in The Joy Luck Club, yet beneath the rivalry lies a deep and stubborn love. Amy Tan

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presents mother and daughter as remarkably alike, both proud, strategic and strong-willed, and their conflict grows from that similarity as much as from the cultural gap between a woman raised in China and a daughter raised in 1960s San Francisco. Through them, Tan explores how immigrant mothers try to pass on strength to their children and how those children can come to see that strength as a threat.

Their relationship begins as a partnership. In "Rules of the Game", Lindo teaches the young Waverly "the art of invisible strength", the idea that the strongest wind cannot be seen. This lesson, rooted in Lindo's Chinese upbringing, becomes the secret of Waverly's success as a child chess prodigy. Lindo is proud of her daughter's talent and arranges the household around it, excusing her from chores. The metaphor of chess runs through Waverly's narrative, and Tan uses it to suggest that the relationship itself is a game of strategy, with each player trying to anticipate the other's moves.

However, the partnership soon turns into a battle for control. When Lindo shows Waverly off to strangers at the market, the girl protests, "I wish you wouldn't do that, telling everybody I'm your daughter." The line reveals her embarrassment at her mother's pride and her wish to claim her success as her own. For Lindo, a daughter's achievement naturally reflects on her family, as it would in traditional Chinese culture, but to an American child it feels like theft. After their argument, Waverly runs away, and when she returns Lindo coldly ignores her. Waverly then imagines a chess game against her mother, with Lindo as a silent, menacing opponent across the board. The image transforms a mother into an enemy, showing how quickly the young Waverly interprets her mother through fear.

This pattern of projection continues into Waverly's adulthood. In "Four Directions",

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Waverly is a successful tax attorney preparing to tell her mother that she will marry Rich. She is convinced that Lindo will destroy her happiness, as she believes she did with her first husband, and she reads every comment as an attack. The dinner where Rich makes a series of cultural mistakes, such as misunderstanding Lindo's modest criticism of her own cooking, is comic, but Waverly's anxiety is painful. When she visits her mother's flat and sees her asleep, she suddenly perceives her as frail and harmless, an old woman rather than a powerful opponent. Tan uses this moment of recognition to show that much of the conflict existed in Waverly's mind. Lindo, it turns out, already knew about Rich and was not opposed to him.

Lindo's side of the relationship is revealed in "Double Face", which gives the reader access to her fears. She admits that she wanted her children to have "American circumstances and Chinese character", but realises these two things do not mix easily. She regrets that Waverly has become so American that she sees only the surface of her mother. Language deepens the distance: Waverly misunderstands parts of her mother's story, including the name of the place where she was born, and Lindo insists on correcting her, wanting her past told accurately. Tan shows the gap between a mother who thinks in Chinese and a daughter who hears only her mother's imperfect English. At the same time, Lindo recognises that America has changed her too; when she returns to China, she is treated as a tourist, an outsider in her own homeland. She is caught, like her daughter, between two identities, and the title "Double Face" applies to both of them.

Lindo's past helps explain her fierce character. In "The Red Candle" she recalls being married as a young girl into the Huang family, a marriage she knew was doomed, and escaping by inventing a clever story about the ancestors' displeasure. Her survival depended on hidden cleverness, the same invisible strength she later

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teaches Waverly. Tan suggests that Lindo's controlling behaviour comes not from cruelty but from a woman who had to fight for her freedom in a society where women had little choice, and who wants her daughter never to be powerless.

Structurally, Tan places mother's and daughter's stories in separate chapters, so the reader sees the misunderstandings from both sides. This dramatic irony makes us more sympathetic to Lindo than Waverly is, and it hints at the possibility of reconciliation. By the end of their stories, Waverly plans a honeymoon in China and wants her mother to come, a sign that she is beginning to embrace her heritage.

In conclusion, the relationship between Lindo and Waverly is a battle of equals who are bound by love but separated by culture and pride. Tan suggests that the very strength Lindo gave her daughter is what made Waverly resist her, and that understanding comes only when each finally sees the other clearly.

12 Fear is one of the most significant forces in Things Fall Apart, because it drives both the tragedy of Okonkwo and the gradual collapse of Umuofia. Achebe presents a society in which fear is woven into daily life: fear of the gods, of the dark, of shame and, finally, of the white men who arrive with a new religion and a new government. Yet the most destructive fear in the novel is internal. Achebe suggests that Okonkwo's terror of weakness, rather than any outside enemy, is what ultimately makes his world fall apart.

From the first chapters, Achebe makes it clear that Okonkwo's character is built on fear. His father, Unoka, was a gentle, idle musician who died in debt and without a title, and Okonkwo's ambition grows from a desperate wish not to

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resemble him. The narrator states plainly that Okonkwo's "whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness". The irony is that a man celebrated across the nine villages for his strength as a wrestler and warrior is secretly ruled by anxiety. In Igbo society, where status depended on titles, wealth in yams and the ability to provide for a large family, Unoka's failure was a real source of shame. Okonkwo's fear is therefore rooted in a culture that measures a man by his achievements, but Achebe shows that he takes these values to a dangerous extreme.

This fear makes Okonkwo violent and emotionally closed. He refuses to show affection to his children because tenderness seems unmanly, and he beats his wives, most notoriously during the Week of Peace, when he breaks a sacred custom by beating his youngest wife, Ojiugo. His eldest son, Nwoye, grows up afraid of him and is constantly criticised for being too much like his grandfather. Achebe hints that Okonkwo's harshness is actually producing the very weakness he fears, as Nwoye withdraws into himself.

The killing of Ikemefuna is the clearest example of fear leading to tragedy. Ikemefuna arrives in Umuofia as a frightened boy given to the clan as compensation for a murder; Achebe notes that "he was terribly afraid". Over three years he becomes like a son to Okonkwo and an elder brother to Nwoye. When the Oracle decrees that he must die, the old man Ogbuefi Ezeudu warns Okonkwo not to take part, because the boy calls him father. Yet as Ikemefuna runs towards him for protection, Okonkwo strikes him down, and Achebe gives the reason in a stark, short sentence: "He was afraid of being thought weak." The plainness of the line is devastating. Okonkwo's fear of other men's judgement outweighs his love, and the act breaks something in both him and Nwoye, who feels something give way inside him at the news.

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Fear is not only Okonkwo's burden. Ekwefi, his second wife, lives in fear of losing Ezinma, her only surviving child after the deaths of nine others. Ezinma is believed to be an ogbanje, a child who repeatedly dies and returns, and Ekwefi's anxiety reflects the high infant mortality and spiritual beliefs of the time. When the priestess Chielo carries Ezinma away at night to the Oracle's cave, Ekwefi follows through the darkness despite her terror. Achebe describes how darkness held "a vague terror" for the people, even the bravest, so Ekwefi's journey becomes an act of courage that love makes possible. Significantly, Okonkwo follows too, revealing a hidden tenderness that his fear of weakness usually suppresses.

On a communal level, fear is part of religious and social order. The egwugwu, masked ancestral spirits who judge disputes, inspire awe, and the clan's fear of offending the gods keeps people obedient to custom. When Okonkwo accidentally kills Ezeudu's son, he is exiled for seven years, not out of hatred but because the clan fears the anger of the earth goddess. Achebe shows that fear can hold a society together, but also that it can lead to cruelty, such as the abandonment of twins in the Evil Forest.

In the final part of the novel, fear turns towards colonialism. News that the village of Abame was wiped out after its people killed a white man spreads terror, and when the missionaries and the District Commissioner's men arrive, Umuofia is uncertain and divided. Achebe, writing in 1958 as Nigeria approached independence, shows how fear of British power weakens a once proud clan. Okonkwo, still terrified of appearing weak, kills a court messenger, but when his people do not rise with him he hangs himself, an act that is itself shameful in Igbo belief.

In conclusion, fear is central to Things Fall Apart. It shapes Okonkwo's violence, his

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relationships and his downfall, while also revealing the anxieties of a whole society facing change. Achebe's tragic irony is that the man most afraid of weakness ends in the very disgrace he spent his life trying to escape.

13

Okonkwo's relationship with his three wives is dominated by power and fear, yet Achebe does not present it as wholly loveless. In a polygamous and patriarchal Igbo society, a large household is a sign of a man's success, and Okonkwo's wives are part of how he displays his status. However, his violence towards them goes beyond what even his own clan considers acceptable, and through these relationships Achebe exposes how Okonkwo's fear of weakness distorts his private life. Occasional moments of tenderness, especially with Ekwefi, suggest a softer man that he is too afraid to let anyone see.

Achebe establishes the structure of the household early on. Okonkwo's compound, behind its red earth wall, contains his own obi and a separate hut for each of his wives, an arrangement that makes his wealth visible to all. Each wife cooks for him in turn, sending her dish to his obi, which reflects the ordered roles of men and women in Igbo life. Okonkwo is said to rule his "household with a heavy hand", and his wives live in "perpetual fear" of his fiery temper. The word "perpetual" suggests that fear is not occasional but the permanent atmosphere of the compound. Achebe makes clear that this harshness grows from Okonkwo's horror of resembling his father, Unoka, so his treatment of his wives is part of a performance of masculinity.

His senior wife is never named; she is known only as "Nwoye's mother". This reflects the Igbo custom of naming a woman through her eldest child, and it reminds the reader how a woman's identity was bound up with motherhood. She is

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calm and dignified, and she shows quiet authority when Okonkwo brings Ikemefuna home and orders her to look after him. Her friendship with the other wives, particularly her kindness towards Ekwefi, suggests a supportive community of women within the compound that exists alongside, and partly in spite of, Okonkwo's dominance. Achebe hints that women hold a moral steadiness that Okonkwo lacks.

The most revealing incidents involve violence. During the Week of Peace, a sacred time when no one should speak harshly to a neighbour, Okonkwo beats his youngest wife, Ojiugo, because she has gone to have her hair plaited and has not cooked his afternoon meal. Achebe stresses that he does not stop even for fear of the goddess, and the priest of the earth goddess condemns him. This episode shows that Okonkwo's temper is so extreme that it breaks the rules of his own society. Similarly, when Ekwefi cuts a few leaves from a banana tree to wrap food for the New Yam Festival, he beats her and then fires his gun at her, narrowly missing. The triviality of the cause emphasises the irrationality of his anger, and the festival setting makes his violence seem all the more jarring.

Achebe also places these episodes within wider attitudes. When Uzowulu, a man who beats his wife, is brought before the egwugwu, one elder wonders "why such a trifle should come before the egwugwu". The comment shows that domestic violence was widely tolerated, and that Okonkwo is not unusual in believing a husband may beat his wife. Achebe, writing in 1958, presents Igbo society honestly, with its strengths and its injustices, rather than idealising it in response to colonial stereotypes.

Ekwefi's relationship with Okonkwo is the most complex and affectionate. She was once the village beauty who married another man because Okonkwo was too poor

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to pay her bride price, and later she ran away to join him. There is therefore a romantic history between them. Their shared love for Ezinma, Ekwefi's only surviving child, brings out Okonkwo's gentler side. When Ezinma falls ill with fever, he anxiously prepares medicine for her, and when the priestess Chielo carries the girl to the Oracle's cave at night, Okonkwo follows Ekwefi and waits with her outside the cave until dawn. Achebe uses this scene to show a hidden tenderness that Okonkwo cannot admit openly. Ekwefi also speaks to him more boldly than the other wives, suggesting a degree of mutual respect. Okonkwo even wishes that Ezinma had been born a boy, which is perhaps the highest praise his narrow values allow, and which hints that his affection for mother and daughter is real even if he can only express it through the language of masculine worth.

Not all women in the novel are powerless. Chielo, as priestess of Agbala, commands even Okonkwo's obedience, and the senior wives at gatherings are treated with ceremony. These details suggest that women had roles of real importance in Igbo life, which makes Okonkwo's harshness seem more personal than cultural.

In conclusion, Okonkwo's relationship with his wives reveals the central flaw of his character. He provides for them and sometimes cares for them, but his fear of appearing weak turns him into a tyrant at home. Achebe shows that his inability to accept gentleness, in his wives and in himself, is part of what ultimately destroys him.