Please check the examination details below before entering your candidate information

Candidate surname	Other names

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

Centre Number | | | | | |

Candidate Number | | | | |

Wednesday 15 May 2019

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

English Literature

Paper 1: Poetry and Modern Prose

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

Total Marks

Instructions

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

Information

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

Advice

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

Turn over ▶

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SECTION A: Unseen Poetry

Question 1

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(Total for Question 1 = 20 marks)

TOTAL FOR SECTION A = 20 MARKS

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SECTION B: Anthology Poetry

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

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

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TOTAL FOR SECTION B = 30 MARKS

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SECTION C: Modern Prose

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

Chosen question number:

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

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TOTAL FOR SECTION C = 40 MARKS

TOTAL FOR PAPER = 90 MARKS

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

Wednesday 15 May 2019

Afternoon | Paper Reference **4ET1/01**

English Literature

Paper 1: Poetry and Modern Prose

Question Booklet

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Answer THREE questions:

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

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

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

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SECTION A: Unseen Poetry

Answer the question in this section.

You should spend 35 minutes on this question.

Read the following poem.

A Cottage in the Lane

Whatever tragedies occurred in that house
Where finally she lived out her life alone,
No one knew or cared, least of all
Those who thought the place was theirs:
The squirrels nesting in the roof,
The mice in the cellar, and in the eaves*
The birds that came each spring
And nested there, and sang
A song as pure as the rain-washed air.
How full her mind was, or how blank,
How rich she was or how poor
Was to them of no concern.
For all they knew the house was theirs,
So quietly had she lived in one small room.
An electric fire, a lamp,
And no desire to be elsewhere.
Now that the ghost-in-waiting she became
Has finally evaporated into the air,
The *For Sale* board's gone up,
A flag of surrender nailed against the cottage wall.
And the squirrels, the mice, the birds,
And all the rest who thought the place was theirs
Will soon move on. It's either that or else
Be caught in a pest-controller's snare.
Change is in the air.
Rich, green-wellied* weekenders
Prowl through the undergrowth where once
A dynasty* of toads held court.
The place will soon be bought.

Brian Patten (2007)

Glossary
**eaves* – the edge of a roof
**green-wellied* – green waterproof Wellington boots
**dynasty* – generations of powerful rulers or leaders

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1 Explore how the writer presents the cottage and its inhabitants in this poem.

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

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

Support your answer with examples from the poem.

(Total for Question 1 = 20 marks)

TOTAL FOR SECTION A = 20 MARKS

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SECTION B: Anthology Poetry

Answer ONE question from this section.

You should spend 40 minutes on your chosen question.

EITHER

2 Re-read *Prayer Before Birth* and *Half-caste*.

Compare the ways the writers present concerns about society in *Prayer Before Birth* 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 *Blessing*.

Compare how the writers present a moment in time in *Blessing* and **one other** poem from the anthology.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems.

(Total for Question 3 = 30 marks)

TOTAL FOR SECTION B = 30 MARKS

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SECTION C: Modern Prose

Answer ONE question on ONE text from this section.

You should spend 45 minutes on this section.

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

EITHER

4 Explore the importance of Tom Robinson in this novel.

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

(Total for Question 4 = 40 marks)

OR

5 In what ways is friendship significant in *To Kill a Mockingbird*?

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

(Total for Question 5 = 40 marks)

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

EITHER

6 Explore the character of George in this novel.

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

(Total for Question 6 = 40 marks)

OR

7 'We're gonna have a little house and a couple of acres…' (George)

How important are plans for the future in *Of Mice and Men*?

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

(Total for Question 7 = 40 marks)

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

EITHER

8 'The whales are very important characters in this novel.'

How far do you agree with this view?

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

(Total for Question 8 = 40 marks)

OR

9 Explore the theme of love 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 Discuss the theme of fate in the novel.

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

(Total for Question 10 = 40 marks)

OR

11 How are male characters presented in *The Joy Luck Club*?

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 'The clan had undergone such profound change…'

How is change significant 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 Ikemefuna and Nwoye in the novel.

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

(Total for Question 13 = 40 marks)

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

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A Cottage in the Lane by Brian Patten

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English Literature

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

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If –

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

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

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

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

Rudyard Kipling

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Prayer Before Birth

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Louis MacNeice

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Blessing

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

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

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

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

Imtiaz Dharker

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Search For My Tongue

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

મને હતું કે આખ્ખી જીભ આખ્ખી ભાષા,

(munay hutoo kay aakhee jeebh aakhee bhasha)

મેં થૂંકી નાખી છે.

(may thoonky nakhi chay)

પરંતુ રાત્રે સ્વપ્નામાં મારી ભાષા પાછી આવે છે.

(parantoo rattray svupnama mari bhasha pachi aavay chay)

ફૂલની જેમ મારી ભાષા મારી જીભ

(foolnee jaim mari bhasha mari jeebh)

મોઢામાં ખીલે છે.

(modhama kheelay chay)

ફળની જેમ મારી ભાષા મારી જીભ

(fulllnee jaim mari bhasha mari jeebh)

મોઢામાં પાકે છે.

(modhama pakay chay)

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

Sujata Bhatt

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Half-past Two

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But he never forgot how once by not knowing time,
He escaped into the clockless land 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

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Poem at Thirty-Nine

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alice Walker

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War Photographer

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

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

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

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

Carol Ann Duffy

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

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The Tyger

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

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

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

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

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

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

William Blake

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

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My Last Duchess
Ferrara

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

Robert Browning

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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 yu
I'm sure you'll understand
why I offer yu half-a-hand
an when I sleep at night
I close half-a-eye
consequently when I dream
I dream half-a-dream
an when moon begin to glow
I half-caste human being
cast half-a-shadow
but yu must come back tomorrow
wid de whole of yu eye
an de whole of yu ear
an de whole of yu mind

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an I will tell yu
de other half
of my story

John Agard

Do not go gentle into that good night

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dylan Thomas

Remember

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

Christina Rossetti

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

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1

Patten presents the cottage as a small, quiet world whose real owners are not the people on the deeds but the creatures and the solitary woman who shared it with them. The poem moves from a gentle elegy for that hidden life to a sharp, almost satirical warning about what replaces it, so that the cottage becomes a symbol of something fragile and private about to be consumed by wealth and "Change".

The opening is deliberately understated. "Whatever tragedies occurred in that house" hints at pain without telling us anything, and "No one knew or cared" suggests that the woman's isolation was both her choice and society's neglect. Patten then turns the idea of ownership upside down: the squirrels, mice and birds are "Those who thought the place was theirs". The list moves through the house from "roof" to "cellar" to "eaves", so the animals seem to occupy every level of it, and the simile "A song as pure as the rain-washed air" makes the cottage feel innocent and harmonious.

The woman herself is presented through paired opposites: "How full her mind was, or how blank, / How rich she was or how poor". The balanced structure refuses to judge her, and the conclusion "Was to them of no concern" is quietly moving, because the creatures accept her in a way that people perhaps never did. The detail of "one small room" with "An electric fire, a lamp" is sparse and domestic, yet the line "And no desire to be elsewhere" turns poverty into contentment.

Her death is handled through euphemism. She becomes a "ghost-in-waiting" who has "evaporated into the air", which suggests she was already fading during her life and that she leaves no mark at all. This gentleness contrasts with the abrupt "The

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For Sale board's gone up", and the metaphor "A flag of surrender nailed against the cottage wall" makes the sale a defeat, as if the house has been conquered.

The repetition of "who thought the place was theirs" now sounds ironic, because the earlier certainty that "the house was theirs" has collapsed. The caesura in "Will soon move on. It's either that or else" creates a blunt pause before the threat of the "pest-controller's snare", and the matter-of-fact tone makes their eviction seem routine and therefore more disturbing.

The final lines present the new inhabitants with clear distaste. The alliterative "green-wellied weekenders" mocks them as wealthy outsiders who visit rather than belong, and the verb "Prowl" turns them into predators. They are set against the mock-heroic "dynasty of toads" who "held court", an image that grants the humble creatures a long, almost royal history now ending. The short statement "Change is in the air" echoes the woman evaporating "into the air", linking her death to the death of the place itself.

The single stanza of free verse feels like one continuous story, flowing without a break from the woman's life to its aftermath. The half-rhyme of "air" and "snare" and the final rhyme of "court" with "bought" give the ending a hard closure. "The place will soon be bought" is flat and final, and the passive verb hides the buyers, suggesting that money simply acts. Overall, Patten presents the cottage and its inhabitants with tenderness, and its loss as a quiet tragedy.

2 Both MacNeice and Agard present society as a force that damages the individual, but their concerns take very different forms. MacNeice's unborn child fears a whole world of violence, propaganda and dehumanisation, and responds with

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desperate prayer; Agard's speaker faces one specific prejudice, the label "half-caste", and responds with mockery and challenge. One poem is terrified of what society will do; the other is confident enough to make society explain itself.

The voices of the poems are central to this difference. In "Prayer Before Birth" the speaker is the most powerless person imaginable, a child "not yet born", and the refrain "I am not yet born" opens every stanza like the start of a litany. The verbs that follow, "hear me", "console me", "provide me", "forgive me", are pleas addressed upwards, and the child is always the object of the sentence, things are done to "me". Agard's speaker, by contrast, controls the conversation from the first line. "Excuse me / standing on one leg / I'm half-caste" sounds polite, yet the image of standing on one leg is already a joke at the expense of the term. The repeated imperative "Explain yuself" turns the accuser into the accused, so while MacNeice's child asks society for mercy, Agard demands that society justify itself.

Both poets use sound and repetition to show how society operates on people. MacNeice's internal rhyme and alliteration in "with tall walls wall me", "with wise lies lure me" and "on black racks rack me" make society's methods sound mechanical and inescapable, as if imprisonment, drugging and torture are built into the language. "Wise lies" is especially chilling, suggesting that propaganda is clever enough to seduce. Agard's repetition of "wha yu mean / when yu say half-caste" works differently: it is the insistent rhythm of an argument, and each return to the question exposes how little meaning the phrase has. Both poets therefore use repetition to bind their poems, but MacNeice's builds dread, while Agard's builds pressure on the listener.

Their language reflects their attitude to society's norms. MacNeice uses formal, almost biblical English, with archaic touches such as "Let not" and "hither and /

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thither", fitting a prayer written in the shadow of the Second World War. Agard rejects standard English altogether, writing in Caribbean dialect with phonetic spellings such as "yu", "dem" and "mih", and the expletive "ah rass". This is itself a challenge to the society he criticises: a voice that refuses to conform to "correct" English also refuses the idea that anything mixed is inferior. His analogies with Picasso mixing "red an green", "england weather" and Tchaikovsky mixing "a black key / wid a white key" show that mixture produces art and nature, and the pun in "half-caste till dem overcast" ridicules the English as much as the term.

The concerns become most personal in the way each poem presents the self being broken apart. MacNeice fears that society "would dragoon me into a lethal automaton" and "make me a cog in a machine, a thing with / one face", where the repetition of "a thing" strips the child of humanity. The simile of "water held in the / hands" that would "spill me" shows identity draining away. Agard turns the idea of fragmentation into satire: he offers "half-a-hand", closes "half-a-eye" and dreams "half-a-dream", taking the label literally until it becomes absurd. Where MacNeice is genuinely afraid of becoming less than whole, Agard shows that the "half" exists only in the listener's limited perception.

Form reinforces these ideas. MacNeice's stanzas grow longer and their lines step further across the page, as though the threats are multiplying and the child's development is speeding towards birth, until the final single line "Otherwise kill me" falls with shocking brevity. Agard uses almost no punctuation apart from obliques, creating the freedom of the spoken voice, and his ending opens outwards rather than closing down: the listener must return "wid de whole of yu eye" to hear "de other half / of my story". MacNeice ends with a choice between wholeness and death; Agard ends with an invitation.

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Ultimately, both poems criticise societies that reduce people to something less than human, whether a "cog" or a "half". MacNeice's concern feels universal and despairing, shaped by war, while Agard's feels personal and defiant. I find Agard's poem more hopeful because it places the problem in the society's mind, and the solution in its willingness to listen.

3 Both "Blessing" and "War Photographer" are built around a single moment in time, but the moments mean very different things. Dharker captures a sudden burst of joy, when a broken water pipe transforms the daily suffering of a poor community into a celebration. Duffy captures a slow, private moment in a darkroom, as a photographer develops images of suffering and is forced to remember the instant he took them. One moment releases people from hardship; the other traps a man inside it.

The poems begin by establishing the ordinary condition that the moment interrupts. Dharker opens with two blunt statements: "The skin cracks like a pod. / There never is enough water." The simile makes the people's bodies as dry as dead plants, and "never" shows that drought is permanent. Even the imagined water is tiny, "the drip of it, / the small splash", and yet it is already "the voice of a kindly god". Duffy also starts with stillness, but it is the stillness of isolation: "In his darkroom he is finally alone". The word "finally" suggests relief, yet the "spools of suffering set out in ordered rows" show that the suffering of others has been neatly controlled, as if the moment of violence has been filed away.

Both poets use religious imagery to give their moments significance, but with opposite effects. In "Blessing" the burst pipe is presented as a miracle: the people form "a congregation" and the poem ends as "the blessing sings / over their small

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bones". Water becomes a gift from heaven, and the moment feels sacred and joyful. Duffy's darkroom glows red "as though this were a church and he / a priest preparing to intone a Mass". However, this is a funeral rather than a celebration, and the stark line "All flesh is grass", echoing the Bible, reminds us how quickly human life is cut down. Dharker's god is "kindly"; Duffy's religious language highlights the absence of comfort.

The language of the central moment is also contrasted. Dharker fills hers with sound and movement: the pipe "bursts", "silver crashes to the ground" and the flow finds "a roar of tongues". The metaphor of "silver" shows how precious the water is, and the list of containers, "brass, copper, aluminium, / plastic buckets", conveys frantic, joyful chaos as every "man woman / child" rushes out. Duffy's key moment arrives quietly, almost like a horror film: "Something is happening". A face "faintly" begins to "twist" in the developing tray, "a half-formed ghost", and the image becomes a memory of "the cries / of this man's wife" and "how the blood stained into foreign dust". Dharker's moment explodes outwards, while Duffy's seeps slowly back into the mind.

Structure shapes how each moment is experienced. "Blessing" is in free verse with stanzas that lengthen as the water flows; the short, end-stopped lines of the opening give way to long sentences and enjambment such as "the flow has found / a roar of tongues", so the poem itself seems to gush. Duffy uses four regular six-line stanzas with a steady rhyme, as in "rows" and "glows", reflecting the photographer's attempt to impose order on chaos. Yet the order is fragile: his hands "did not tremble then / though seem to now", and the shift from past to present tense shows the past moment breaking into the present.

The endings show the biggest difference. Dharker freezes her moment at its peak,

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with "naked children / screaming in the liquid sun", their skin "polished to perfection", and we never see the water stop, so the joy is preserved. It is a celebration, although the poignancy of "small bones" reminds us that the children's thinness will return when the pipe is mended. Duffy instead moves beyond the moment to its aftermath. Of "A hundred agonies" only "five or six" will be printed, and the readers' "eyeballs prick / with tears between the bath and pre-lunch beers", a moment of feeling so brief it means nothing. The final image, from an aeroplane, of the place "where / he earns his living and they do not care", is bitter and detached.

Overall, both poets show that one moment can reveal a whole life: Dharker uses it to celebrate the resilience and delight of a community, while Duffy uses it to criticise the indifference of comfortable readers. I find Dharker's moment more uplifting, but Duffy's lingers longer, because it asks the reader to recognise themselves in those who "do not care".

4 Tom Robinson appears in person in only a handful of scenes, yet he is arguably the moral centre of "To Kill a Mockingbird". His trial is the event towards which the first half of the novel builds, and its outcome shapes everything that follows. Through Tom, Lee exposes the racism built into the legal and social order of the 1930s Deep South, tests the courage of Atticus and the town, and gives Scout and Jem their most painful lesson about the adult world. His importance lies partly in what he is, a decent man destroyed, and partly in what his fate reveals about everyone around him.

Lee first presents Tom as an idea rather than a person. Long before he appears, the case is thrown at Scout in the schoolyard by Cecil Jacobs, and at Christmas

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Francis taunts her with a racist insult aimed at Atticus for defending a black man. Through Scout's confused reactions, Lee shows how deeply prejudice is embedded in Maycomb's children, who have learnt it from adults. Tom matters before we meet him because the case divides the town, and Atticus admits that he could not hold up his head in town if he refused it. Writing in the late 1950s, during the early civil rights movement and after cases such as the Scottsboro trials of the 1930s, Lee uses Tom to remind her readers that a black man accused by a white woman in Alabama was effectively condemned before any evidence was heard.

The jail scene is the first moment Tom becomes a real presence, and significantly he is heard rather than seen: a soft voice from the darkness asks whether the mob has gone. His vulnerability makes the threat of lynching terrifyingly real. It is Scout's innocent friendliness towards Walter Cunningham's father that disperses the mob, which suggests that the ordinary, decent instincts of individuals can briefly overcome the hysteria of a group. Tom's danger therefore shows both the worst and the best of Maycomb.

At the trial, Tom's importance becomes clearest. Lee builds Atticus's defence on concrete evidence: Mayella's injuries are on the right side of her face, so they were most likely inflicted by a left-handed man like Bob Ewell, while Tom's left arm is crippled, injured in a cotton gin when he was a boy. Logically, Tom is innocent. But Tom makes one fatal mistake when he admits that he "felt right sorry for her". In Maycomb's racial hierarchy, a black man pitying a white woman is an unforgivable reversal of status, and the courtroom's reaction shows that his real crime is not assault but kindness across the colour line. Mr Gilmer's sneering cross-examination, which reduces Dill to tears, reinforces how Tom is denied basic respect. Even the irony that Mayella, lonely and abused, was the one who kissed him is lost on a jury who will not accept the truth.

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Tom's conviction is the novel's turning point, and through it Lee shows the failure of the ideals Atticus describes in his closing speech, when he insists that "in our courts all men are created equal". Atticus himself knows he cannot win, yet the jury's long deliberation is described as a small step forward, and Miss Maudie calls it "a baby-step". This suggests Lee's cautious hope that change in the South was possible, even if slow. For Jem, however, the verdict is devastating: his faith in justice collapses, and his bitter question about how the jury could do it marks his loss of innocence. Tom is therefore central to the novel's bildungsroman structure, as the children learn that goodness does not guarantee fairness.

Tom's death deepens the tragedy. He is shot while trying to escape from prison, hit many times, and Atticus suggests that Tom had simply lost faith in white men's justice and preferred to take his own chances. The detail is crushing because it confirms that, for a black man in the 1930s, an appeal offered little real hope. Lee then uses Mr Underwood's editorial, which compares Tom's death to the senseless killing of songbirds, to connect him explicitly to the mockingbird symbol. Like the bird that only makes music and harms no one, Tom only tried to help, and to destroy him is a sin. This links him to Boo Radley, whom Scout protects at the end by recognising that exposing him would be like shooting a mockingbird. Scout's ability to make that connection shows how much Tom's fate has taught her.

Lee also uses Tom to expose hypocrisy. At Aunt Alexandra's missionary circle, the ladies pity distant African tribes while dismissing the black community of Maycomb, and Scout's narration lets the irony speak for itself. Tom's widow Helen is harassed by Bob Ewell, and only Link Deas defends her. The community's treatment of Tom's family after his death reveals that the prejudice behind the

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verdict continues.

In conclusion, Tom Robinson is important not because he drives the plot through his own actions, but because Maycomb's response to him reveals the town's true character. He embodies the injustice of a segregated society, gives Atticus the chance to show moral courage, and teaches Scout and Jem that the world is less fair than they believed. Lee perhaps leaves Tom deliberately underdeveloped to show how a black man's voice was barely heard in the South, and that silence is itself part of her criticism.

5 Friendship is significant in "To Kill a Mockingbird" because it is the force that works against the divisions of Maycomb. In a town split by race, class and gossip, Lee shows friendships that cross those boundaries, sometimes quietly and sometimes at great cost. Friendship is how Scout learns empathy, how the vulnerable are protected, and, most painfully, how a decent man is destroyed. Lee suggests that true friendship means seeing others as human beings, which is exactly what the prejudice of the 1930s Deep South refused to do.

The most obvious friendship is between Scout, Jem and Dill, and it gives the first half of the novel its warmth and innocence. Their summers of acting out stories and daring each other to touch the Radley house show children with freedom to imagine. Dill, a lonely boy passed between relatives, finds in the Finches the belonging his own family denies him, and his running away to Maycomb shows how much this friendship matters to him. Yet the friendship also allows Lee to show growing up: Jem begins to separate himself from Scout as he enters adolescence, and Scout must learn that friendship changes. When Dill cries at the trial because of the way Mr Gilmer speaks to Tom, it is through his friendship

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with Scout that she meets Dolphus Raymond and begins to understand the "simple hell people give other people".

Scout's friendship with Walter Cunningham teaches her that class prejudice is as damaging as racial prejudice. At dinner she mocks Walter for pouring syrup over his food, and Calpurnia sternly reminds her that a guest must be treated with respect, whatever his background. The Cunninghams represent the proud, poor farmers of the Great Depression who pay their debts in hickory nuts and firewood, and Scout's lesson prepares for one of the novel's most powerful moments. At the jail, her innocent attempt to talk to Mr Cunningham about his son reminds him that he is a father and a neighbour, not part of a mob, and the lynch mob leaves. Here, Lee shows that even a child's friendly gesture can break through group hatred.

Lee's most moving friendship is with Boo Radley, which develops almost invisibly. The gifts in the knothole of the tree, the blanket placed around Scout's shoulders on the night of Miss Maudie's fire, and the mended trousers left folded for Jem are acts of friendship from someone the children have turned into a monster. Their games mocking him show the cruelty of rumour, but the novel's structure gradually reverses their view. At the end Boo saves their lives from Bob Ewell, and Scout's simple greeting, "Hey, Boo", shows that she now sees him as a friend. Standing on the Radley porch, she finally understands Atticus's advice about standing in another person's shoes. Her recognition that exposing Boo would be "sort of like shootin' a mockingbird" proves that friendship has taught her moral understanding.

Friendship across the racial divide is presented as both precious and dangerous. Atticus's respect for Calpurnia, whom he treats as a member of the family and defends against Aunt Alexandra, subverts the strict hierarchy of the segregated

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South. When Calpurnia takes the children to First Purchase church, they are welcomed, although Lula's hostility reveals that suspicion runs both ways. Most tragically, Tom Robinson's kindness to Mayella Ewell is a form of friendship: he helps her with chores because he "felt right sorry for her", and she, isolated and abused, reaches out to him. In Jim Crow Alabama, such a friendship was unthinkable, and when Mayella's attempt to kiss him is discovered, she accuses him to protect herself. Lee uses this to show how racism poisons even simple human kindness.

Friendship also offers adults support when they take an unpopular stand. Miss Maudie defends Atticus to the children, telling them that some men are born to do our unpleasant jobs for us, and Heck Tate, the sheriff, protects him by insisting that Bob Ewell "fell on his knife". Link Deas gives Helen Robinson work and stands up for her when Bob Ewell harasses her. These loyalties suggest that a small community of decent people exists within Maycomb, even if it cannot change the verdict.

Even the relationship with Mrs Dubose, hardly a friendship, matters. Jem's reading to her teaches him about "real courage", which Atticus defines as knowing "you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway". Jem learns to respect someone who insults his family, which mirrors the respect Atticus extends to all.

In conclusion, friendship is significant because it is Lee's answer to prejudice. The friendships that matter most in the novel are those that cross boundaries of race, class or reputation, and they are often the ones Maycomb disapproves of. Writing in 1960, as the civil rights movement challenged segregation, Lee suggests that the empathy friendship requires is the beginning of change.

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6

George Milton is often described as Lennie's protector, but Steinbeck presents him as a far more complicated figure: loyal yet resentful, practical yet a dreamer, a man who needs Lennie as much as Lennie needs him. Through George, Steinbeck explores what it meant to be an itinerant worker in 1930s California, where companionship was rare and hope was fragile. His final act, shooting Lennie, is both the ultimate expression of his care and the moment he condemns himself to the lonely life he most feared.

Steinbeck's first description of George establishes him as Lennie's opposite. He is "small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features", while Lennie is huge and shapeless. The adjectives suggest intelligence and alertness, and "restless" hints at a man never at peace. From the start George takes control: he tells Lennie not to drink too much, takes away the dead mouse, and plans for trouble by telling Lennie to hide in the brush by the river if anything goes wrong. This foreshadows the ending and shows that George, having already fled Weed, expects disaster.

However, Steinbeck makes George's frustration equally clear. In the opening section he explodes that if he were alone he could "live so easy", with his month's pay spent on whisky and a cat house. This outburst reveals the life of a typical ranch worker, who drifts from job to job with nothing to show for it, and George's anger seems genuine. Yet his immediate guilt, and Lennie's offer to go off and live in a cave, show how quickly George softens. Steinbeck presents a relationship based on mutual dependence: George insists "I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you". In a world where, as George says, ranch workers "are the loneliest guys in the world", Lennie gives George something almost no one else has, a reason to belong.

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George's conversation with Slim is crucial to understanding him. He admits that he used to play jokes on Lennie, and once told him to jump into the Sacramento River, nearly drowning him. He confesses that Lennie made him "seem God damn smart" by comparison. This honesty complicates the idea of George as a selfless carer: his early motive was partly vanity, and his loyalty since then is partly guilt and partly the responsibility he took on when Lennie's Aunt Clara died. Steinbeck allows George to be morally flawed, which makes him more human and his eventual sacrifice more painful.

The dream of the farm is where George's character is most revealing. He tells the story of the "little house and a couple of acres" like a ritual, and Lennie knows the words by heart. For George, the dream seems at first to be something he repeats for Lennie's sake, yet when Candy offers his savings, George suddenly believes it could happen, and Steinbeck shows the men falling silent, amazed that the thing they never really believed in might come true. This is the American Dream of independence and self-ownership, a powerful fantasy for men during the Depression who owned nothing and could be "canned" at any moment. Steinbeck, who had himself worked alongside migrant labourers, presents George's dream as both beautiful and doomed.

George's practical judgement is shown in his reactions to danger. He immediately recognises Curley's wife as trouble, calling her "jail bait", and warns Lennie to keep away from her. He understands the brutal ranch hierarchy, warning Lennie to say nothing to the boss and to avoid Curley. Yet his caution is not enough, because in a society that offered no protection to the disabled, Lennie's strength and innocence could never be safely contained. When George is busy at the horseshoe game on Sunday afternoon, leaving Lennie alone in the barn, his watchfulness lapses for the first time, with fatal consequences.

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The ending is the climax of George's characterisation. After Lennie kills Curley's wife, George's first words to Candy are bleak: he knew "from the very first" that they would never get the farm. He then takes Carlson's Luger and finds Lennie by the river. The scene deliberately echoes the shooting of Candy's dog, and Candy's earlier regret that he should not have let a stranger shoot his dog gives George's choice its meaning: he will not allow Curley's lynch mob, or an institution, to kill Lennie. He tells the dream one last time, asking Lennie to look across the river so he can "almost see it", and shoots him in the back of the head. The trembling of George's hand and the flat way he speaks afterwards show the cost of this mercy.

In the final lines, only Slim understands, telling George "You hadda", while Carlson wonders what is "eatin'" the two of them. Steinbeck leaves George surrounded by men who cannot see his grief, about to become exactly the kind of solitary worker he described at the start. In conclusion, George is a tragic figure: loyal, flawed and realistic, he is the one character who truly loves, and the novel's ending suggests that in the harsh economic world of the Depression, even love could not save the vulnerable.

7 Plans for the future are central to "Of Mice and Men": they give the characters a reason to keep going, they bind George and Lennie together, and their collapse creates the novel's tragedy. Steinbeck's title, taken from Robert Burns's poem "To a Mouse", with its warning that the best-laid schemes of mice and men often go astray, signals from the outset that these plans are doomed. Through them, Steinbeck explores the American Dream in 1930s California and suggests that, for the powerless during the Great Depression, a plan for the future was often only a comforting story.

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George and Lennie's plan is the heart of the novel. George describes the "little house and a couple of acres" as a ritual, and Lennie begs to hear it again, joining in with the words he knows by heart, especially the part about tending the rabbits. The plan to "live off the fatta the lan'" is a vision of self-sufficiency: no boss, no being "canned", and the freedom to stay put rather than drift. For itinerant workers who moved from ranch to ranch with their possessions in a bindle, this was a powerful image of security. Importantly, the plan also defines their friendship. George contrasts their future with the lonely lives of other ranch hands, who have "no family" and "don't belong no place", and insists "With us it ain't like that. We got a future." The plan is therefore as much about companionship as land.

Steinbeck presents the plan as fragile from the beginning. It is told in the clearing by the river, a peaceful setting that is revisited at the end when the dream dies. The repetition of the description, almost like a bedtime story, suggests that it is a fantasy which has been told many times without ever coming closer. George's angry outburst that he could "live so easy" alone also hints that he sometimes doubts the dream is worth the cost of caring for Lennie.

The plan briefly becomes real when Candy joins it. Old, with one hand lost in an accident, and facing a future where he will be thrown off the ranch when he can no longer sweep, Candy offers his savings in exchange for a place on the farm. Steinbeck shows his desperation through the death of his dog, shot by Carlson because it is old and useless, which foreshadows Candy's own fate. In a society without pensions or welfare, the plan offers Candy dignity in old age. The moment when the three men realise they could buy the farm within a month is filled with excitement, and even George, who seemed to tell the story only for Lennie, starts

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to believe.

Crooks's response is revealing. At first he mocks Lennie, saying he has seen hundreds of men with land in their heads and none of them get it: "nobody gets no land". Yet when Candy explains that the money is real, Crooks offers to work for nothing but his keep. This shows how powerfully even a cynic, isolated by racism in his room by the barn, wants a future. However, Curley's wife quickly crushes his hope by threatening to have him lynched, and he withdraws his offer. Steinbeck shows that, for a black man in the segregated 1930s, plans could be destroyed in an instant by a white person's word.

Curley's wife's plans have already failed before the novel begins. She tells Lennie that she could have been in the movies and believes her mother stole the letter that would have made her a star. Her marriage to Curley is a reaction to that disappointment, and her loneliness shows the empty present that remains when plans are lost. Her dream reflects the glamour of Hollywood in the 1930s, offering an escape that was rarely real for poor women with few rights. Even Curley's own ambitions, as a former lightweight boxer, are humiliated when Lennie crushes his hand.

Slim stands slightly outside these dreams. He has no plan and seems content with his skill and status on the ranch, which perhaps makes him the clearest-sighted character. His quiet understanding at the end suggests that he already knows such dreams rarely survive.

The ending confirms the futility of the plans. When Lennie kills Curley's wife, Candy's desperate question about whether they can still get the farm receives George's bleak answer that he always knew they would never do it. Candy's bitter

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words to the dead body show his future collapsing. In the final scene, George describes the farm one last time so that Lennie can "almost see it" before he shoots him. The plan becomes an act of mercy, a final comfort, rather than a real future. George is left to the very life he described at the start: a month's wages spent in a cat house.

In conclusion, plans for the future are vital to the novel because they reveal the characters' deepest needs: belonging, security and dignity. Yet Steinbeck shows that the economic hardship of the Depression, along with racism, sexism and the lack of care for the old and disabled, made such plans almost impossible to achieve. The plans keep the characters alive emotionally, but their failure is what makes the novel a tragedy.

8 I largely agree that the whales are very important characters in The Whale Rider. They are not just a backdrop to Kahu's story but a second narrative that runs alongside the human one, and the novel only reaches its climax when the two stories meet on the beach at Whangara. However, I would argue that the whales matter less as individual personalities than as a living link to Maori ancestry, and as a warning about what modern humans have done to the natural world. Their importance lies in what they carry: the past, the land and the sea, and the hope of renewal.

Ihimaera makes the whales structurally central. The novel opens with the legend of the first whale rider, Paikea, and each of the four seasonal sections, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, begins by returning to the herd as it travels across the Pacific. When we first meet the herd it is off the coast of Patagonia, and later it is "Four hundred leagues from Easter Island". This alternating structure

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means that the reader is always aware of the whales moving closer to New Zealand while Kahu grows up, so the two journeys build in parallel towards the same destination. In this sense the whales are almost the engine of the plot: Kahu's destiny cannot be fulfilled until they arrive.

The bull whale in particular is given a rich inner life. He is anthropomorphised as "handsome and virile" in his youth, and as he ages he becomes deeply nostalgic, longing for the time when his "master", Paikea, rode on his back. Ihimaera gives him memories, grief and loyalty, so he becomes a character the reader feels for. Yet the female whales also have a voice. They love their leader but fear that he is turning his thoughts to "the dangerous islands to the south-west", and this tension between devotion and danger gives the whale sections real drama. I find it significant that the bull whale's weakness is his attachment to the past, because this is exactly Koro Apirana's weakness too.

This parallel is, for me, the strongest argument for the whales' importance. The bull whale, stubbornly following memory, mirrors Koro, who clings to the tradition that only a male can lead the tribe and so cannot see that his great granddaughter is the heir he has been searching for. The "old mother whale", who gently persuades her mate at the end, mirrors Nanny Flowers, who mocks and loves her husband in equal measure and quietly supports Kahu. Through the whales, Ihimaera dramatises the human conflict on a mythic scale. Context deepens this reading: Ngati Porou trace their descent from Paikea, so in Maori belief the people of Whangara and the whales are genuinely related. The whales are therefore not "other" characters but kin, part of the whakapapa that Koro is so anxious to protect.

The whales are also central to Ihimaera's environmental message. In Autumn the

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herd reaches the "Home of the Ancients", once a safe haven, only to find that calves have died from the effects of nuclear testing. Writing in the 1980s, Ihimaera was responding to French nuclear tests in the Pacific, which caused outrage in New Zealand and led to protests; the sinking of the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior in Auckland in 1985 and New Zealand's decision to become nuclear free in 1987 show how strongly the country felt. By placing the suffering on the whales, Ihimaera makes the reader see pollution through the eyes of creatures who once lived in harmony with humans. New Zealand's own history of whaling, when European settlers built whaling stations and hunted whales close to extinction, adds further guilt to the human side of this relationship.

The tragedy of the stranding in Winter shows how important the whales are emotionally. When two hundred whales beach themselves on the coast, Rawiri and the community try desperately to save them, and the scene is one of the most moving in the novel. Ihimaera shows the people's love and respect for the whales, but also how powerless they are: the beached whales refuse to return to the sea and die. The death of the herd is felt as a loss to the whole tribe, which suggests that the fate of the whales and the fate of the Maori people are bound together. If the ancient bull whale also dies, the link to Paikea will be broken.

That is why the climax depends on a whale. Kahu speaks to the bull whale, he recognises her as the descendant of his master, and he allows her to ride him back to the sea. In the epilogue, it is the old mother whale who persuades him to return Kahu to the surface. Kahu is the heroine, but it is through the whales that she proves her identity to Koro and to the reader. Without them, Koro's prejudice would never be challenged in such a dramatic and undeniable way.

Some readers might argue that the whales are symbols rather than "real"

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characters, since they exist mainly to reflect the human story and to carry Ihimaera's message about the environment. There is some truth in this: we never see the whales making choices entirely separate from the themes of the human plot. However, I think this is exactly what makes them so important. They allow Ihimaera to blend realism with Maori myth, so that the novel becomes a modern legend. Overall, I agree strongly with the view: the whales are not only very important characters, but the characters through whom the novel's ideas about ancestry, tradition and survival are most powerfully expressed.

9 Love in The Whale Rider is the force that binds the characters to each other, to their culture and to the natural world, but Ihimaera shows that love can also be blinded by tradition. The central story is one of unrequited love, Kahu's devotion to a great grandfather who refuses to return it because she is a girl, and the novel suggests that only when love is allowed to overcome rigid custom can the tribe be renewed.

Kahu's love for Koro Apirana is unconditional from the beginning. Even as a baby she is drawn to him, and as she grows she absorbs everything he teaches the boys about Maori language, chants and genealogy, often by secretly listening when she has been sent away. Her love is expressed through culture: she learns the old ways not to defy Koro but to be close to him. Rawiri, our narrator, notices how little she receives in return, describing Koro's affection for her as the kind that "dropped off the edge of the table, like breadcrumbs after everybody else has had a big feed". The simile is painfully domestic. Kahu is not starved of love entirely, but she is given only the leftovers, which shows how Koro's priorities are fixed on finding a male heir.

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The most moving expression of her love comes at the school ceremony, when Kahu gives a speech in Maori reciting her grandfather's genealogy. Rawiri tells us that he felt "so proud of her, so proud, and so sad that Koro Apirana was not there to hear how much she loved him". The repetition of "so proud" conveys overwhelming emotion, while the shift to "so sad" exposes the gap at the heart of the novel. Kahu's love is public and generous; Koro's absence is a kind of rejection. In context this matters greatly. In traditional Maori society, leadership often passed down the male line, and Koro believes he is protecting his people by searching for a boy. Ihimaera, writing in 1987 during a period of Maori cultural revival and growing debate about the role of women, presents Koro's love for his people as genuine but narrow.

Koro does love deeply, but his love is directed at the tribe and its traditions rather than at individuals. He takes the boys of the village to the marae to teach them the lore, and when none of them can retrieve the carved stone he throws into the sea, he sinks into despair. His stubbornness makes him appear unloving towards Kahu and even towards his wife. Yet Ihimaera allows him a redemption. At the end, believing Kahu may die, he begins to pray and asks the gods to forgive him, telling her "I love you". The simplicity of these words after so much resistance gives the ending its emotional power, and it suggests that love, rather than tradition alone, is what will lead the people forward.

Nanny Flowers provides a contrasting model of love: fierce, humorous and practical. She constantly argues with her husband, yet calls him "you old paka", which Rawiri explains was the affectionate name she always used for him. Their banter shows that love can include disagreement. Nanny is more like a mother to Kahu than a great grandmother, and she quietly supports her, calling her a "throwback" to the ancestors. It is Nanny who keeps the secret that Kahu retrieved the stone, waiting

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for the right moment for Koro to learn the truth. Through Nanny, Ihimaera suggests that Maori women have always held strength and wisdom within the tribe, even when men claim authority.

Rawiri's love is for his family and for his homeland. He looks after Kahu, taking her to see a film about whales when she is two, and on the way home they see orcas, an experience that profoundly affects her. His time away in Australia and Papua New Guinea teaches him to value what he left behind. In Papua New Guinea he sees how nature reclaims what humans have built, reflecting that man may carve his mark on the earth, but "Nature will take back what man had once achieved". This realisation makes his return home an act of love for his culture and for the land, and it connects his personal story to the novel's wider theme of respect for nature.

Finally, Ihimaera extends love to the whales. The bull whale is driven by his longing for his long departed master, Paikea, and this nostalgic love leads the herd towards danger. His love mirrors Koro's: both are loyal to the past to the point of risking the future. The old mother whale, who loves her mate and persuades him to return Kahu to the surface, mirrors Nanny Flowers. In Maori belief the people of Whangara descend from Paikea, so this love between whales and humans is a form of kinship, not just affection. At a time when whales were threatened by hunting and nuclear testing in the Pacific, Ihimaera's portrayal of a loving bond between species also carries an environmental message.

Overall, love in The Whale Rider is presented as the bond that holds family, culture and nature together. Kahu's patient, unconditional love finally overcomes Koro's prejudice, and the ending, with the whole family gathered around her, suggests that the future of the tribe depends on love that is willing to change.

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In The Joy Luck Club, fate is the question that divides mothers from daughters. The mothers, raised in China, grew up believing that destiny is written in omens, birth signs and the will of others, yet their own stories show them repeatedly fighting against that destiny. Their American daughters believe they are free to shape their lives, yet often drift passively into unhappiness. Amy Tan suggests that fate is not something to be accepted or rejected outright, but something that can be bargained with through will, memory and the stories mothers pass on.

The novel's structure itself suggests a game of chance and skill. Its four sections, each containing four stories, echo the four players at the mah jong table, where Jing-mei takes her dead mother's seat at the opening. Mah jong depends on the tiles you are dealt, but also on how you play them, and this is a fitting image for fate in the novel. Suyuan Woo founded the original Joy Luck Club in Kweilin during the war with Japan, when the women chose to feast and tell stories rather than wait helplessly for death. Choosing joy in the face of disaster becomes the first act of defiance against fate in the book.

Lindo Jong's story, "The Red Candle", shows a woman refusing the fate chosen for her. Promised as a small child to Huang Tyan-yu, she is married at sixteen into a household where she is miserable. The marriage candle, lit at both ends, is meant to burn through the night as a sign that the marriage can never end, and when one end goes out, Lindo cleverly turns this omen into her escape, inventing a story about the ancestors' warnings that frightens her mother in law into releasing her. Lindo uses the belief in fate against those who would trap her. This reflects the position of women in pre-revolutionary China, where arranged marriages left girls with little power, and shows that intelligence could open a door that tradition had

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closed. Her later concern that Waverly's crooked nose might bring bad luck shows how deeply such beliefs remain, though Waverly enjoys looking "devious" like her mother.

An-mei Hsu's relationship with fate is more tragic. When her youngest son, Bing, drowns at the beach, An-mei believes that her faith and her nengkan, her belief that she can control her fate through will, will bring him back. She even returns to the sea with an offering. When he is never found, her faith seems to collapse, and Tan gives us a striking image of the Bible she once carried being used to prop up a short table leg. Rose, who blames herself for Bing's death, later realises that her mother's "faith" and "fate" were blurred in her mother's English. When Rose's marriage to Ted collapses, An-mei tells her she must try to save it because "This is your fate". Yet An-mei does not mean submission; she means that Rose must speak up for herself, as An-mei learned to do after her own mother's suicide. Tan suggests that fate is something one must actively claim.

Ying-ying St. Clair represents the dangers of accepting fate passively. Born in the year of the Tiger, she was once spirited and wild, but she comes to believe that it is her destiny to marry a man who later abandons her, and then to marry Clifford. She lets her American husband interpret her words and silences for her, and when he writes the wrong birth year on her immigration papers she becomes a Dragon rather than a Tiger, losing part of her identity. Her life becomes shaped by omens and fear of tragedy. Seeing her daughter Lena trapped in an unequal marriage to Harold, she decides to tell her story so that Lena will not repeat it. Her resolution to break the precarious balance of Lena's life suggests that Tan believes passivity is a choice, not a destiny.

Jing-mei's story ends the novel with fate turned into hope. Her mother insisted

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that she could become a prodigy, and Jing-mei's rebellion over the piano seemed to prove that she could not live up to her mother's dreams. But Suyuan's deepest hope was to find the twin daughters she had been forced to abandon on the road while fleeing Kweilin. After Suyuan's death, Jing-mei travels to China with her father Canning to meet them. When she sees her sisters, she recognises her mother in all of them, and the ending suggests that fate has finally been fulfilled through the daughter's journey. The context of Tan's own life gives this ending weight: her mother left daughters behind in China, and Tan herself travelled to meet her half sisters.

Ultimately, Tan presents fate through a tension between Chinese and American attitudes. The mothers carry beliefs in zodiac signs, omens and destiny, while the daughters assume that America has given them total freedom. Neither view is entirely right. The mothers' stories prove that even in a culture of fixed destinies, women could resist, and the daughters learn that freedom means little if one never acts. Storytelling becomes the means by which fate is controlled, because in telling their stories the mothers pass on not their misfortunes but their strength.

11 The male characters in The Joy Luck Club are mostly presented on the edges of the story, seen only through the eyes of the women they marry, control or disappoint. Amy Tan gives every one of the sixteen narratives to a mother or a daughter, so men never speak for themselves, and this choice is itself significant. Many of the men, in both China and America, are presented as controlling, careless or weak, yet Tan also includes gentler figures, and the overall effect is less an attack on men than an exploration of how women in two very different societies learn to find their voices.

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In the mothers' Chinese past, men are tied to a patriarchal system that treats women as property. Lindo Jong is promised as a baby to Huang Tyan-yu and married to him at sixteen. Tyan-yu is spoiled by his mother and behaves like a child; he treats Lindo with coldness and there is no affection between them. Yet Tan makes clear that the real power in the Huang house belongs to his mother, Huang Taitai, who blames Lindo when no grandson appears. Tyan-yu is therefore as much a product of the system as a villain. Similarly, Wu Tsing, the rich merchant who takes An-mei's widowed mother as a concubine after she has been raped and shamed, is presented as weak and easily manipulated by his scheming Second Wife. His wealth gives him power over women, but Tan shows that he is not in control of his own household. Only after An-mei's mother kills herself, timing her death so that her spirit can take revenge, does Wu Tsing, fearing her ghost, promise to raise An-mei as an honoured daughter. The men of old China are frightening because of the power society gives them rather than because of their strength of character.

Ying-ying's first husband is perhaps the cruellest man in the novel. He is charming, but he abandons her for another woman while she is pregnant, and this betrayal destroys her spirit. Her second husband, Clifford St. Clair, is kinder, yet Tan presents him critically too. He never learns Chinese and confidently "translates" his wife's words, gestures and silences, putting his own meanings into her mouth. He renames her Betty and gets her birth year wrong on her immigration papers, so that she loses her identity as a Tiger. Clifford's well meaning but blind control shows that a man does not have to be violent to silence a woman. In the context of Chinese immigration to America in the mid twentieth century, Tan exposes how women like Ying-ying could become doubly voiceless, through both language and marriage.

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The American husbands of the daughters are presented in subtler but still critical ways. Ted Jordan, Rose's husband, at first seems a hero who makes all the decisions for her, but when he loses a malpractice case and Rose refuses to take responsibility for anything, he grows tired of her and asks for a divorce. Tan presents him as controlling and manipulative, particularly when he expects Rose to sign the papers and give up the house without a fight. His shock when she finally stands up to him shows that he never expected her to have a voice. Harold Livotny, Lena's husband, is perhaps the most quietly troubling. He insists that they split every cost equally, recording items on a list on the fridge, and claims this keeps their love free from money. Yet Lena earns far less than him at the architecture firm she helped him to build, so "equality" works only to his advantage. Tan shows that modern American ideas of fairness can still disguise male power.

Not all men are presented negatively. Rich Schields, Waverly's fiancé, loves her unconditionally, and his comic blunders at dinner with Lindo, such as drinking too much wine and criticising her cooking without understanding the custom of modesty, are clumsy rather than cruel. Canning Woo, Jing-mei's father, is caring and gentle. It is he who travels with Jing-mei to China after Suyuan's death and tells her the story of her mother's lost twin daughters, so he becomes the bridge between the generations at the end of the novel. Tin Jong, Lindo's second husband, is a minor figure, yet the story of how Lindo arranged their marriage through a fortune cookie shows a relationship in which the woman, for once, is in control.

Tan's presentation of men has been criticised. When the novel was published in 1989, some Asian American writers argued that it reinforced stereotypes of Chinese men as cruel and oppressive. However, it is worth noticing that the white

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American husbands are often no better, and that the novel's focus is on mothers and daughters rather than on men. Because we only hear the women's narratives, the men are filtered through memory, resentment and love, and the presentation of them could be seen as deliberately one sided.

Overall, Tan presents most of the male characters as controlling or unreliable, from the feudal husbands of China to the polite but dominating husbands of America. Yet their real function is to reveal the women. The mothers, who were taught to be silent in a male dominated society, and the daughters, who must learn to resist subtler forms of control, both grow stronger in response to these men, and that growth, rather than the men themselves, is the true subject of the novel.

12 Change is significant in Things Fall Apart because it is the force that destroys Okonkwo, divides the clan and, finally, ends a whole way of life. Yet Achebe does not present change simply as something done to the Igbo by outsiders. The novel shows a society that is already under strain from its own harsh customs, so that when the missionaries and colonial government arrive, the cracks are there to be opened. Change becomes the test of each character: those who can bend survive, while Okonkwo, who cannot, breaks.

The title, taken from W. B. Yeats's poem "The Second Coming", frames change as collapse: "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold". Achebe structures the novel to make us feel this. Part One gives a detailed, unhurried picture of Umuofia before colonialism, with its festivals, wrestling matches, marriage negotiations and religious rituals. Writing in 1958, just before Nigerian independence, Achebe was answering European novels that had presented Africa as savage and without history. By showing a complex, ordered society first, he makes the reader

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understand exactly what is lost when change arrives. The slower pace of Part One contrasts sharply with the rapid, disorientating events of Part Three.

At the start, Okonkwo is a man defined by his refusal to change. Ashamed of his gentle, indebted father Unoka, he has built his life around strength, hard work and fear of weakness. This rigidity is admirable in some ways, since it has made him a wealthy, titled warrior, but it is also dangerous. When the Oracle decrees that Ikemefuna must die, Okonkwo ignores Ezeudu's warning not to take part, and kills the boy himself because "He was afraid of being thought weak." Achebe suggests that Okonkwo's inability to soften even in private is a flaw that will later make him incapable of adapting to the world around him.

Nwoye, by contrast, is a character shaped by change. Under Ikemefuna's influence he begins to seem more manly, pleasing his father, but Ikemefuna's death causes something inside him to "give way", like the snapping of a tightened bow. Nwoye's doubts about the clan's customs, such as the abandonment of twins in the forest, make him receptive to the missionaries, and when he hears their hymns he feels that the new religion answers questions that haunted him. His conversion and new name, Isaac, represent personal liberation, yet for Okonkwo it is a catastrophe; he reflects that "Living fire begets cold, impotent ash." Achebe's own father was an early convert to Christianity, which may explain why the novel treats Nwoye's choice with understanding rather than condemnation.

Achebe also shows that change appeals to those whom the clan has rejected. The first converts include the osu, the outcasts, and mothers who have lost twins, people for whom tradition offers little but suffering. In Mbanta, the elders give the missionaries land in the Evil Forest expecting them to die, and when they do not, the old beliefs lose some of their power. Obierika, too, has quietly questioned

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customs such as the exile of a man for an accidental killing, so Achebe suggests that thoughtful members of the clan were already open to some kinds of change. Some villagers welcome the trading store and the money that the palm oil and kernel trade brings.

However, change also arrives through violence and injustice. The destruction of Abame after its people kill a white man shows the brutal force behind colonial rule. The new government brings a court, court messengers and a prison, and the leaders of Umuofia are humiliated, beaten and fined after the burning of the church. Achebe contrasts the tolerant Mr Brown, who learns about the clan's beliefs, with the zealous Mr Smith, whose intolerance encourages Enoch to unmask an egwugwu, a profound sacrilege. Change is therefore not a single force but depends on who is driving it.

When Okonkwo returns from his seven years of exile, he finds that the clan "had undergone such profound change" that it is barely recognisable. Achebe presents his return as a homecoming that fails; he had dreamed of a grand re-entry, but the village is preoccupied with the new church and government. Okonkwo mourns for the clan, which he sees "breaking up and falling apart". Obierika's observation that the white man "has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" captures how change has divided families and loyalties from within. This is why the clan does not rise up with Okonkwo when he kills the court messenger: their unity has already gone.

Okonkwo's suicide is the final, tragic proof of his inability to change. By hanging himself he commits an abomination, so even his own people cannot bury him. The novel ends with a sudden shift of perspective to the District Commissioner, who plans a book titled "The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger" in

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which Okonkwo might earn a paragraph. This ironic ending shows that colonial change also rewrites history, reducing a complex life to a footnote. Achebe's whole novel is an answer to that book.

Overall, change is significant because it reveals both the strengths and the weaknesses of Igbo society and of Okonkwo himself. Achebe does not pass simple judgement: he mourns what was destroyed but acknowledges that the clan's rigid customs left some of its people longing for something new. The tragedy is that the centre could not hold, and Okonkwo, the man who refused to bend, falls with it.

13 The relationship between Ikemefuna and Nwoye is one of the most tender in Things Fall Apart, and its destruction is a turning point in the novel. Achebe uses their friendship to show a gentler side of Igbo life that Okonkwo refuses to value, and when Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna, the bond between the boys becomes the very thing that drives Nwoye away from his father and, eventually, from the clan. Their relationship is therefore both a personal story of brotherhood and a symbol of how the rigid values of Umuofia begin to fall apart from within.

Ikemefuna enters Okonkwo's household as a sacrifice. After a woman of Umuofia is killed in Mbaino, the neighbouring village gives a young virgin and a boy to avoid war, and Ikemefuna, about fifteen, is placed in Okonkwo's care while the clan decides his fate. He is entrusted to Nwoye's mother, Okonkwo's senior wife, who, like many Igbo mothers, is known only by her son's name. The context of this exchange is important: in a society where disputes between villages were settled by compensation, a child could become a kind of payment. Achebe presents this custom calmly, without condemning it, which makes what follows even more

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shocking.

At first Ikemefuna is frightened and homesick, but he soon becomes part of the family. Achebe tells us that he grew rapidly "like a yam tendril in the rainy season", and the simile, drawn from the farming life at the centre of Igbo culture, suggests vitality and natural belonging. Nwoye, who is about twelve, is drawn to him at once and comes to see him as an older brother. Ikemefuna knows many stories, can make flutes and seems to understand the world in ways Nwoye admires. Their friendship is built on companionship and storytelling, the shared culture of the clan, rather than on competition.

Ikemefuna's influence changes Nwoye in ways that please Okonkwo. Nwoye begins to want to appear manly, and he pretends to despise women's tasks and his mother's stories, preferring Okonkwo's violent tales of war, because he knows this will win his father's approval. Achebe reveals a quiet sadness here: Nwoye still secretly loves the folk tales his mother tells, such as the story of the vulture sent to the sky to beg for rain, but he hides this side of himself. Okonkwo, haunted by the memory of his idle father Unoka, fears that Nwoye will be weak, so Ikemefuna seems a blessing. Interestingly, Nwoye shows no jealousy that his father favours Ikemefuna, which suggests how genuine the friendship is. Their relationship is shaped by the patriarchal values of Umuofia, where a man's worth is measured by strength, yields and titles.

The relationship is cut off by the Oracle's decree that Ikemefuna must be killed. Ezeudu, a respected elder, warns Okonkwo, "That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death." Okonkwo goes anyway. On the path, when Ikemefuna runs to him crying "My father, they have killed me!", Okonkwo cuts him down because "He was afraid of being thought weak." The repetition of "father" makes Okonkwo's

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betrayal unbearable, and the reader inevitably thinks of Nwoye, the son who will never forgive him.

Achebe presents Nwoye's reaction with great sensitivity. When he realises that Ikemefuna has been killed, something seemed to give way inside him, "like the snapping of a tightened bow". The image suggests a sudden, irreversible release of tension, as though the bond to his father has been broken in a single moment. Achebe links this feeling to a memory of hearing the cries of twins abandoned in the forest, a custom based on the belief that twins were evil. By connecting Ikemefuna's death with this tradition, Achebe shows that Nwoye's grief is not only for his friend but for the cruelty that the clan's customs can demand.

This loss shapes the rest of Nwoye's life. When the missionaries arrive in Mbanta during Okonkwo's exile, Nwoye is captivated by the poetry of their hymns, which seem to answer the questions that haunted him about the twins crying in the bush and Ikemefuna who was killed. He leaves his father's house and later takes the name Isaac. Okonkwo, who beats him for associating with the Christians, reflects bitterly that "Living fire begets cold, impotent ash." Ironically, the violence Okonkwo used to prove his strength is the very thing that pushes his son away. Achebe, whose own father converted to Christianity, presents Nwoye's choice with sympathy, making it clear that the colonial religion found fertile ground among those already wounded by the clan's harsher laws.

Overall, the relationship between Ikemefuna and Nwoye is significant because it shows the possibility of a softer, more loving masculinity in Umuofia, and its tragic end exposes the cost of Okonkwo's fear of weakness. Ikemefuna's death breaks not only one friendship but the bond between father and son, and through Nwoye's conversion Achebe suggests that things begin to fall apart within the family long

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before the white men arrive.