Pearson Edexcel International GCSE (9–1)

Monday 12 May 2025

Morning (Time: 2 hours)

Paper reference **4ET1/01**

English Literature

PAPER 1: Poetry and Modern Prose

Question Booklet
Do not return this Booklet with your Answer Booklet.

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Answer THREE questions:

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

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

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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.

Vocation

When the gong sounds ten in the morning and I walk to school by our lane.
Every day I meet the hawker* crying, 'Bangles*, crystal bangles!'
There is nothing to hurry him on, there is no road he must take, no place he must go to, no time when he must come home.
I wish I were a hawker, spending my day in the road, crying, 'Bangles, crystal bangles!'
When at four in the afternoon I come back from the school, I can see through the gate of that house the gardener digging the ground.
He does what he likes with his spade, he soils his clothes with dust, nobody takes him to task if he gets baked in the sun or gets wet.
I wish I were a gardener digging away at the garden with nobody to stop me from digging.
Just as it gets dark in the evening and my mother sends me to bed,
I can see through my open window the watchman walking up and down.
The lane is dark and lonely, and the street-lamp stands like a giant with one red eye in its head.
The watchman swings his lantern and walks with his shadow at his side, and never once goes to bed in his life.
I wish I were a watchman walking the streets all night, chasing the shadows with my lantern.

Rabindranath Tagore (1909)

**hawker* – a person selling items in the street
**Bangles* – bracelets

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1 Explore how the writer presents the wishes of a child in this poem.

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

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

Support your answer with examples from the poem.

(Total for Question 1 = 20 marks)

TOTAL FOR SECTION A = 20 MARKS

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SECTION B

Anthology Poetry

Answer ONE question from this section.

You should spend 40 minutes on your chosen question.

EITHER

2 Re-read *Blessing* and *War Photographer*.

Compare the ways the writers present different types of experience in *Blessing* and *War Photographer*.

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 *Prayer Before Birth*.

Compare the ways the writers present a strong point of view in *Prayer Before Birth* 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 Discuss the theme of punishment in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

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

(Total for Question 4 = 40 marks)

OR

5 Explore Atticus' relationship with his children, Jem and Scout, in the novel.

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

(Total for Question 5 = 40 marks)

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

EITHER

6 In what ways is Slim a significant character in the novel?

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

(Total for Question 6 = 40 marks)

OR

7 Examine the theme of loneliness in *Of Mice and Men*.

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

(Total for Question 7 = 40 marks)

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

EITHER

8 In what ways is power demonstrated in *The Whale Rider*?

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

(Total for Question 8 = 40 marks)

OR

9 'The whales are the most important characters in the novel.'

How far do you agree with this view?

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 How is Rose Hsu Jordan significant in the novel?

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

(Total for Question 10 = 40 marks)

OR

11 'It's just so embarrassing.' [Waverly Jong]

'Embarrass you be my daughter?' [Lindo Jong]

Discuss this and other examples of embarrassment 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 Examine the introduction of Christian faith and its effects in the novel.

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

(Total for Question 12 = 40 marks)

OR

13 How is Ikemefuna significant in *Things Fall Apart*?

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

(Total for Question 13 = 40 marks)

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

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Acknowledgement:

Vocation by Rabindranath Tagore

https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/vocation/

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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

Search For My Tongue

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

મને હતું કે આબ્બી જીભ આખ્ખી ભાષા,

(munay hutoo kay aakhee jeebh aakhee bhasha)

મેં થૂંકી નાખી છે.

(may thoonky nakhi chay)

પરંતુ રાત્રે સ્વપ્નાંમાં મારી ભાષા પાછી આવે છે.

(parantoo rattray svupnama mari bhasha pachi aavay chay)

ફુલની જેમ મારી ભાષા મારી જીભ

(foolnee jaim mari bhasha mari jeebh)

મોઢામાં ખીલે છે.
(modhama kheelay chay)

ફુલની જેમ મારી ભાષા મારી જીભ

(fulllnee jaim mari bhasha mari jeebh)

મોઢામાં પાકે છે.
(modhama pakay chay)

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

Sujata Bhatt

Half-past Two

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

U A Fanthorpe

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Piano

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

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

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

D H Lawrence

Hide and Seek

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

Vernon Scannell

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

La Belle Dame sans Merci. A Ballad

I

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

II

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

III

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

IV

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

V

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

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

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

IX

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

X

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

XI

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

XII

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

John Keats

**manna* – Food from heaven

Poem at Thirty-Nine

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alice Walker

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War Photographer

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

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

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

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

Carol Ann Duffy

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

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The Tyger

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

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

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

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

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

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

William Blake

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

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My Last Duchess
Ferrara

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

Robert Browning

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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
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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Search For My Tongue, Sujata Bhatt, Carcanet Books
Half-past Two © U A Fanthorpe. First published in Neck-Verse (Peterloo Poets, 1992)
Piano by D H Lawrence from *The Top 500 Poems,* ed William Harmon, Columbia University
Hide and Seek, Vernon Scannell, Faber and Faber 2011
Sonnet 116 – Shakespeare's Sonnets – 1999, © Shakespeare, Penguin Classic, William Shakespeare, 1609
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Half-caste by John Agard. Source: 'Half-caste', John Agard, Hodder Children's Books, 2005
Do not go gentle into that good night by Dylan Thomas from *Selected Poems: Dylan Thomas* (Penguin Classic, 2000), Dylan Thomas, 1951
Remember by Christina Rossetti from *Selected Poems: Rossetti* (Penguin Classic, 2008), Christina Rossetti, 1862

Please check the examination details below before entering your candidate information

Candidate surname	Other names

Centre Number | Candidate Number

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE (9–1)

Monday 12 May 2025

Morning (Time: 2 hours)

Paper reference **4ET1/01**

English Literature

PAPER 1: Poetry and Modern Prose
Answer Booklet

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

Total Marks

Instructions

- Use **black** ink or ball-point pen.
- **Fill in the boxes** at the top of this page with your name, centre number and candidate number.
- Answer the question from Section A, **ONE** question from Section B and **ONE** question from Section C.
- Answer the questions in the spaces provided – *there may be more space than you need.*
- Plan your answers in the lined spaces provided. Plans will not be marked unless no other response is provided.

Information

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

Advice

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

Turn over ▶

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SECTION A

Unseen Poetry

Question 1

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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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SECTION C

Modern Prose

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

Chosen question number:

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

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

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

Question number

1

Tagore presents the child's wishes as a longing for freedom from the rules that govern his own day. Each adult he watches seems to him to live without timetables, punishment or bedtimes, so the wishes reveal less about the jobs themselves than about the child's sense of being controlled. The title, "Vocation", is quietly ironic: a vocation is a calling, yet the only thing that "calls" the child is the school "gong", while the work of the hawker, gardener and watchman looks to him like pure play.

Structurally, the poem follows a single day, and the time markers frame every wish. "When the gong sounds ten in the morning", "at four in the afternoon" and "Just as it gets dark in the evening" give the child's life a rigid, clock-bound rhythm. The onomatopoeic "gong" is loud and institutional, so the reader feels how his hours are measured out by others. The three-part pattern of observation followed by "I wish I were" creates a refrain with the simple logic of a child: I see it, so I want it.

The hawker is described almost entirely through negatives. The list "there is no road he must / take, no place he must go to, no time when he must come home" piles up clauses separated by commas, and the repeated modal "must" exposes what the child resents in his own life. The hawker's cry, "Bangles, crystal bangles!", is repeated word for word in the wish, suggesting that the child wants even the sound of that life; "crystal" makes the trade seem glittering and precious, though an adult reader may sense that a street seller is really poor and tired.

With the gardener, the wish shifts from freedom of movement to freedom from

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blame. He "soils his clothes / with dust", which is exactly what a child is told not to do, and "nobody takes him to task" if he is "baked in the sun or / gets wet". The alliteration in "gardener digging / the ground" and the final "nobody to stop me from digging" convey the pleasure of messy, unsupervised activity. Tellingly, the child sees him "through the gate", an image of separation that reminds us he only watches this life from outside.

The final section is the most imaginative. As darkness falls, the description becomes stranger: the street-lamp "stands like / a giant with one red eye in its head", a simile that sounds like a fairy tale. The watchman "walks with his shadow at / his side", which makes solitude sound like companionship. The hyperbole that he "never once goes to bed in his life" is the most childlike line in the poem, because it is so obviously untrue; it reveals that the real wish is simply not to be sent to bed by his "mother". The poem ends on the verb "chasing the shadows", turning a lonely, perhaps dangerous job into a game.

The long free verse lines imitate the breathless flow of a child talking, and the continuous verbs "crying", "digging" and "walking" make each adult life seem endless. Tagore lets the reader see more than the speaker does: these are hard, low-paid jobs, and the "dark and lonely" lane hints at a reality the child cannot yet understand. The wishes are therefore touching precisely because they are innocent, idealising the freedom of adults while missing its cost.

2 Both poems present experiences shaped by suffering, but they move in opposite directions. Dharker presents a shared, physical experience of joy, as a whole community is briefly released from drought by a burst pipe, while Duffy presents a private, psychological experience of trauma, as a photographer relives the horror of

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war alone in his darkroom. One poem builds towards ecstasy; the other closes in numbness and anger.

Each poem opens by establishing the hardship that shapes the experience. Dharker begins with the stark simile "The skin cracks like a pod", a natural image that makes human bodies seem as dry and brittle as dead plants, followed by the flat statement "There never is enough water." These two short, end-stopped sentences feel parched, as if the language itself lacks flow. Duffy's opening is also stark, but it focuses on isolation rather than scarcity: the photographer is "finally alone", and "finally" suggests relief, as though solitude is the only place he can process what he has seen. The alliterative metaphor "spools of suffering" turns rolls of film into containers of pain, and "set out in ordered rows" shows him imposing control on chaos. Where Dharker's community suffers together, Duffy's photographer carries the experience of others by himself.

Religious imagery is central to both, yet it creates very different tones. In Blessing, water becomes holy: the imagined drip is "the voice of a kindly god", the crowd is "a congregation", and the poem ends as "the blessing sings / over their small bones". The experience is spiritual, a moment of grace given to people who usually have nothing. Duffy also uses the language of worship, comparing the darkroom to "a church" and the photographer to "a priest preparing to intone a Mass", but here religion suggests mourning and ritual, as if developing photographs were a funeral rite for the dead. The quotation "All flesh is grass", from the Bible, reminds the reader of human mortality. So while Dharker's sacred language celebrates life, Duffy's honours death.

The poets also contrast distance and immediacy. Dharker plunges the reader into the moment with onomatopoeia and energetic verbs: the pipe "bursts", "silver

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crashes to the ground" and the flow finds "a roar of tongues". The metaphor of "silver" shows how precious water is, while "roar of tongues" makes it sound alive and almost miraculous. Duffy, by contrast, presents war through memory and the slow process of development: "A stranger's features / faintly start to twist before his eyes, / a half-formed ghost." The soft alliteration of "features / faintly" and the image of a ghost show how the past haunts him gradually rather than all at once. The listed places, "Belfast. Beirut. Phnom Penh.", separated by full stops, are like single photographs, harsh plosive fragments of global violence.

Both poets use contrast between two worlds. Duffy juxtaposes the war zones with "Rural England", where "ordinary pain" can be dispelled by "simple weather", and fields "don't explode beneath the feet / of running children". The enjambment pushes the reader forward into that horror, just as the children run. Dharker's children are also running, but in delight: "naked children / screaming in the liquid sun". "Screaming" here is joyful, a sharp contrast with Duffy's "cries / of this man's wife". The two poems therefore show childhood experienced in radically different ways, through a sudden gift or through terror.

Structurally, Blessing grows like the water itself. After the short opening stanza, the poem lengthens into a single, rushing sentence full of commas and lists, "pots, / brass, copper, aluminium, / plastic buckets", which imitates the frantic gathering of the crowd and builds to the climax of light, "their highlights polished to perfection". War Photographer, in contrast, is tightly controlled: four regular six-line stanzas with a partial rhyme scheme, echoing the "ordered rows" of photographs and the photographer's attempt to contain his feelings. Its ending is bleak rather than climactic. The readers' "eyeballs prick / with tears between the bath and pre-lunch beers", where the internal rhyme mocks how briefly they are moved, and the final rhyme of "where" and "care" leaves the photographer staring "impassively"

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at a world that does not care.

Ultimately, both poems invite the reader to recognise lives very different from their own. Dharker's experience is fleeting but glorious, though there is a hint of sadness in "small bones" and in the fact that the blessing is accidental. Duffy's is enduring and isolating, and she implicates the comfortable reader in the indifference she criticises. Together they suggest that the same human need, for water or for compassion, can produce either communal joy or lonely grief.

3 Both MacNeice and Thomas present a strong point of view through a desperate plea at the edge of life. In Prayer Before Birth, an unborn child begs to be protected from a dehumanising world; in Do not go gentle into that good night, a son urges his dying father to resist death. One voice stands before birth and the other beside a deathbed, but both refuse to accept passively what is coming, and both express that refusal through insistent repetition, imperatives and tightly controlled sound.

The strength of each speaker's view is first established through the form of address. MacNeice's poem is a prayer, opening with the urgent apostrophe "I am not yet born; O hear me." The refrain "I am not yet born" begins almost every stanza, followed each time by a different imperative: "console me", "provide me", "forgive me", "rehearse me", "fill me". This creates a mounting list of demands, so the reader feels the child's needs multiplying as its fears grow. Thomas's poem is also a direct appeal, but its imperatives are more defiant: "Do not go gentle" and "Rage, rage against the dying of the light." The repeated "Rage" is a spondee, two heavy stresses that sound like a hammer blow, giving the speaker's view an almost violent force. Whereas MacNeice's speaker pleads to be shaped by a higher power,

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Thomas's speaker commands another person to fight.

Both poets use imagery of darkness and light to clarify their positions. Thomas's central metaphor treats death as "that good night" and life as "the light", so the reader understands that the son wants his father to cling to every last moment of life. Even the oxymoron "blinding sight" suggests that dying men may see most clearly. MacNeice, by contrast, places light within the child's mind as a source of moral guidance: he wants "a white light / in the back of my mind to guide me". Light for Thomas is life itself; for MacNeice it is conscience and innocence, the very things the child fears the world will destroy.

The speakers' viewpoints are intensified by what they oppose. MacNeice fills his poem with threats, from childish nightmares like the "bloodsucking bat or the rat or the stoat" to the cruelty of adults who might "with tall walls wall me, / with strong drugs dope me, with wise lies lure me". The internal rhyme and alliteration make these lines sound like a chant or a curse, and the oxymoron "wise lies" exposes the hypocrisy of authority. Thomas's enemy is not human cruelty but surrender. He presents four types of men, "wise men", "Good men", "Wild men" and "Grave men", each of whom refuses to die quietly. The pun on "Grave" links seriousness with burial, and the structure of these stanzas builds a kind of argument: if even the wise and good resist, then his father must too. MacNeice argues through fear; Thomas argues through example.

Form plays a crucial role in each poem's strong point of view, but in contrasting ways. Do not go gentle is a villanelle, a strict form with only two rhymes and two repeated refrains. The rigid structure mirrors the son's single-minded insistence, as the two refrains alternate and finally come together in the last stanza, as if he is gathering all his strength into one final plea. Yet the tight form also suggests

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helplessness, since repetition is all he can do against something inevitable. MacNeice uses free verse, but with an equally deliberate shape: the lines in each stanza stretch further and further across the page, so the lists of horrors seem to spill out uncontrollably. In the penultimate stanza, the fear of being made "a cog in a machine, a thing with / one face, a thing" shows the voice losing its individuality, and the repetition of "hither and / thither" enacts being blown apart.

The endings reveal the strength of each speaker's feeling most clearly. Thomas suddenly becomes personal: "And you, my father, there on the sad height". The contradictory imperatives "Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears" show that the son would accept any emotion at all, even anger, as long as his father is still alive. MacNeice ends with a shocking short line, set apart: "Otherwise kill me." After the long, crowded stanzas, its brevity is chilling. It makes clear that the child would rather not exist than become a "stone", turning the prayer into an ultimatum.

Overall, both poems express powerful, uncompromising views about the value of being fully human. Thomas's speaker cannot bear to see life surrendered, while MacNeice's speaker cannot bear to see humanity corrupted. Thomas's strength of feeling comes through rigid control and echoing refrains; MacNeice's through overflowing lists and accumulating dread. I find MacNeice's ending more disturbing, because it reverses Thomas's plea: where the son begs his father to live, the unborn child asks to die rather than lose his "entirety".

4 In To Kill a Mockingbird, Lee presents punishment as something that should teach and correct, but which in Maycomb is too often used to protect prejudice and social order. The novel contrasts the fair, proportionate discipline Atticus gives his

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children with the brutal or unjust punishments the town inflicts on those who break its unwritten rules, especially Tom Robinson and Boo Radley. Through Scout's gradual understanding, Lee asks her readers in 1960, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, to question who in society truly deserves to be punished.

The earliest punishments in the novel are small and comic, yet they already reveal Maycomb's rigid codes. On her first day at school, Scout is punished by Miss Caroline, who taps her hand with a ruler, partly for explaining that Walter Cunningham will not accept money he cannot repay. Miss Caroline, an outsider from north Alabama, does not understand the pride of poor farming families during the Great Depression, so Scout is punished for knowing her community too well. Shortly afterwards Calpurnia scolds Scout in the kitchen for criticising Walter's table manners, insisting that a guest must be treated with respect. These moments show that punishment can carry a moral lesson: Calpurnia's correction teaches Scout empathy across class lines, foreshadowing Atticus's advice that you must climb into someone's skin and walk around in it.

Atticus's own approach to punishment is the novel's model of justice. When Jem destroys Mrs Dubose's camellias after she insults Atticus for defending a black man, Atticus does not beat him but sends him to apologise and then to read to her every afternoon for a month. The punishment fits the crime and turns into an education, because Jem later discovers that Mrs Dubose was fighting to break her morphine addiction before she died. Atticus uses this to teach him that real courage is knowing you are beaten before you begin but seeing it through anyway. Lee suggests that punishment should repair harm and develop understanding rather than simply inflict pain, which is exactly what Maycomb's wider justice system fails to do.

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The most powerful example is Tom Robinson, whose punishment is the novel's central injustice. Accused of raping Mayella Ewell, Tom is convicted by an all-white jury despite Atticus proving that Mayella's injuries were on the right side of her face and that Bob Ewell is left-handed, while Tom's left arm is useless. His real "crime" in the eyes of the town is that he admitted to feeling sorry for a white woman, which crossed the racial hierarchy of the Jim Crow South. Lee draws closely on the Scottsboro case of 1931, in which nine young black men were falsely accused of raping two white women and faced lynch mobs and all-white juries. Tom's fate is even harsher than his sentence: trying to escape from prison, he is shot seventeen times. Mr Underwood's editorial compares his death to the senseless slaughter of songbirds, linking him to the title's symbol. Punishment here is not justice at all but a tool to maintain white supremacy, and the reader shares Jem's bewildered anger after the verdict.

Mayella herself is a victim of punishment, which complicates our response to her. Tom's testimony and the evidence suggest that Bob Ewell beat her after seeing her with Tom. She is punished at home for desire and punished in court by exposure, yet she in turn shifts the punishment onto Tom. Lee shows how poverty, isolation and patriarchal violence trap her, so she is both cruel and pitiable. Bob Ewell's own response to humiliation in court is to seek private revenge: he spits in Atticus's face, threatens Helen Robinson and finally attacks the children on Halloween. Lee presents this as the opposite of lawful punishment, the kind of vengeance that grows when a society tolerates hatred.

Boo Radley shows a quieter form of punishment, imposed by family and community. As a teenager he got into trouble with some boys from Old Sarum, and rather than letting him go to the industrial school, his father confined him to the house, where he has remained hidden for years. Maycomb then punishes him

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again through gossip, blaming him for "any stealthy crimes" and turning him into a monster in the children's games. The children's own mockery, acting out his life in the yard, is a kind of punishment Atticus stops, telling them to leave him alone. Lee uses Boo to show how a community can punish difference simply by refusing to understand it.

The ending deliberately reverses the trial. When Boo kills Bob Ewell to save Jem and Scout, Heck Tate insists that Bob fell on his own knife, saying, "Let the dead bury the dead this time, Mr Finch." For once, the law chooses not to punish, because dragging a shy, gentle man into the spotlight would be a sin. Scout understands this through the novel's central image: it would be "sort of like shootin' a mockingbird". This moment shows how far she has developed in this bildungsroman; she now judges punishment by its moral rightness rather than by rules alone.

Overall, Lee uses punishment to expose the gap between law and justice in the segregated South. The fair discipline within the Finch household highlights the cruelty of a society that destroys the innocent, like Tom, and isolates the vulnerable, like Boo, while the guilty Bob Ewell is only stopped outside the courts. Writing as the Civil Rights Movement challenged these same injustices, Lee invites her readers to recognise that a community reveals its true values through whom it chooses to punish.

5 Atticus's relationship with Jem and Scout is built on honesty, respect and moral example rather than authority. Lee presents him as an unconventional parent in a traditional Southern town: a widower who treats his children as thinking individuals and teaches them through his conduct as much as his words. As the novel

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progresses, the children's view of him shifts from mild embarrassment to deep admiration, and this changing relationship becomes one of the main ways Lee charts their moral growth in a society divided by race and class.

From the opening chapters, Lee makes the relationship unusual. Jem and Scout call their father "Atticus" rather than a more familiar name, which suggests a relationship of equals, and their mother's death when Scout was two means that he raises them with the help of Calpurnia. He reads to Scout every night, and when Miss Caroline forbids her to read at home, Atticus agrees a "compromise": they will carry on reading together if she keeps going to school. This shows his willingness to reason with a child rather than simply command her. Yet the children are not uncritical. Scout reports that he is "feeble", nearly fifty, and that he does not hunt, play poker or drink like other fathers. Lee uses this to show that the children judge him by Maycomb's narrow ideas of masculinity, standards the novel will gradually overturn.

The mad dog episode is a turning point. When Tim Johnson comes down the street, Heck Tate hands Atticus the rifle and he kills the dog with a single shot, and the children learn that he was once known as "One-Shot Finch". Jem's pride is matched by his understanding of why Atticus never boasted about it: he chose not to use a gift that gave him an unfair advantage over living things. Atticus's earlier advice, "it's a sin to kill a mockingbird", gains weight here, because the children see that his gentleness is a matter of principle rather than weakness. Jem's refusal to let Scout boast about it at school shows he is beginning to absorb his father's values.

Atticus's discipline is always tied to a moral lesson. When Jem destroys Mrs Dubose's camellias in a rage after she insults Atticus, he is made to read to her

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every day for a month. Only after her death does Atticus explain that she was overcoming a morphine addiction, presenting her as the bravest person he knew. He wants Jem to understand that real courage is not "a man with a gun in his hand" but persisting when you know you are beaten. Similarly, he tells Scout to keep her fists down when classmates insult him for defending Tom Robinson, explaining that he is defending Tom because otherwise he could not hold up his head in town or tell his children what to do. His authority over them depends on his own integrity, which is perhaps the defining feature of their relationship.

The trial tests the relationship most severely. Atticus tries to protect the children, sending them home, yet he cannot shield them from the town's hostility or the verdict itself. When the children follow him to the jail and refuse to leave, Jem's defiance is not disobedience for its own sake but loyalty, and Scout's innocent conversation with Mr Cunningham disperses the lynch mob. Lee suggests that Atticus's teaching, to see people as individuals, is exactly what saves him. After the guilty verdict, Jem weeps, and Atticus does not offer false comfort but explains honestly how the jury system and prejudice work. This frankness reflects the context of the Jim Crow South, where black men like Tom, and the Scottsboro defendants of 1931 on whom his case seems modelled, rarely received justice. Atticus refuses to lie to his children about this world, even when the truth hurts.

Lee also uses Aunt Alexandra to highlight Atticus's parenting by contrast. She believes Scout should behave like a Southern lady, wearing dresses and taking an interest in her family's breeding, and she persuades Atticus to lecture the children about living up to their name. Tellingly, he gives up halfway and tells Scout to forget it, which shows that his natural instinct is to let his children develop as individuals. At a time when Southern girls were expected to become demure "belles", Atticus's acceptance of Scout as a tomboy feels quietly progressive, and

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Lee, who was herself a tomboyish daughter of a lawyer, may be drawing on her own childhood.

By the end, the relationship has matured. After Bob Ewell's attack, Atticus at first believes Jem killed him and insists the case must go to court, because he could not keep his children's respect if he hid the truth for his own son. When Heck Tate explains that Boo saved them, Atticus thanks Boo for "my children", a simple phrase that shows how much they mean to him. The final scene, where he sits by Jem's bed and reads to Scout until she falls asleep, returns to the comfort of the opening chapters. Scout repeats his lesson about seeing people from their own point of view, and Atticus replies that most people are nice "when you finally see them".

Ultimately, Lee presents Atticus as a father whose greatest gift is moral education. Writing in 1960, as the Civil Rights Movement challenged segregation, she offered readers a vision of how prejudice might be undone through the next generation. Atticus's relationship with Jem and Scout shows that the values children learn at home, honesty, empathy and courage, can resist a corrupt society, even if they cannot yet change it.

6

Slim is significant because he represents a kind of natural authority and decency that is rare in the harsh world of the ranch. He is not the boss, nor does he own anything, yet every other man defers to him. Through Slim, Steinbeck shows what leadership based on respect, rather than money or fear, might look like during the Great Depression. At the same time, Slim is a quietly realistic figure: his wisdom involves accepting hard truths, and his final role in the novel is to recognise and comfort George after the most tragic act of all.

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Steinbeck signals Slim's importance through the way he introduces him. Unlike most characters, who are sketched briefly, Slim receives a long, almost reverent description in Chapter 2. He moves "with a majesty only achieved by royalty and master craftsmen", and he is "the prince of the ranch". The language of kingship elevates a working man to the status of nobility, and his skill as a jerkline skinner, able to drive a team of mules with great precision, gives him dignity earned through work rather than birth. Steinbeck adds that there was "a gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke", and that his word was taken on any subject, "be it politics or love". Because the novella was designed almost like a play, this description works like a stage direction: we are told how to view him before he even speaks.

This respect makes Slim significant within the ranch's social hierarchy. Curley, the boss's son, has power through his father, but the men despise him. Slim has no such status, yet when Curley comes looking for his wife and suspects Slim, Curley is the one who backs down and apologises. Whit later remarks that Curley had better leave Slim alone, since nobody knows what Slim can do. Steinbeck seems to contrast inherited authority with moral authority, and to suggest that the second is more genuine. For Steinbeck, who had worked alongside migrant labourers and sympathised with their struggles, Slim embodies the dignity of ordinary working men that the economic system ignored.

Slim is also significant because his judgement settles key moments in the plot. When Carlson insists that Candy's old dog should be shot, Candy looks to Slim for support, but Slim agrees that the dog is no good to himself and that Carlson is right. His word seals the dog's fate. This links to Slim's own pragmatism: his dog has had nine puppies and he tells the men he "drownded four of 'em right off"

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because she could not feed them all. Slim is not sentimental; he accepts that in a hard world the weak may have to be sacrificed. This is significant because it foreshadows the ending, where George must make the same kind of decision about Lennie, echoing Candy's regret that he did not shoot his dog himself.

Yet Slim is not cold. He gives Lennie one of the puppies, an act of generosity that thrills Lennie and deepens the novel's pattern of soft, small creatures in his hands. When the dog is shot, it is Slim who quietly tells Carlson to take a shovel, showing respect for Candy's grief. He is also the only man who addresses Curley's wife with easy friendliness rather than hostility, and in a world where women were treated as property or temptation, this small courtesy sets him apart.

Above all, Slim is significant because of his relationship with George and Lennie. He observes that he has hardly ever seen two guys travel together, highlighting how unusual their friendship is in an era when migrant workers moved alone from job to job. His calm, perceptive manner encourages George to confide in him, revealing what happened in Weed and how he once played tricks on Lennie. Slim understands that Lennie is not mean, and he listens without judgement, becoming the confidant George has never had. When Lennie crushes Curley's hand, it is Slim who persuades Curley to say that it was caught in a machine, protecting George and Lennie from being sacked. In this moment Slim uses his authority to protect the vulnerable.

His significance is clearest at the climax. When Curley's wife is found dead, Slim is the one who tells George that Lennie, if caught, would be locked up and strapped down in a cage, and that this would be no good. He gently implies that death might be kinder. After George shoots Lennie, Slim is the only one who understands, telling him, "You hadda, George. I swear you hadda." He leads George

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away for a drink, while Carlson wonders what is eating the two of them. Steinbeck ends with this contrast between Slim's compassion and Carlson's insensitivity, so Slim effectively becomes the moral voice that frames the tragedy.

It is notable that Slim, unlike George, Lennie, Candy, Crooks and Curley's wife, has no dream. Perhaps his contentment and security as a skilled worker free him from the desperate hopes of the others, or perhaps his realism shows Steinbeck's view that dreams were rarely fulfilled during the Depression. Either way, Slim stands slightly outside the novel's cycle of hope and loss. He is significant not because he changes events dramatically, but because he embodies the understanding, dignity and fellowship that Steinbeck believed ordinary men were capable of, even in a system that kept them isolated and powerless.

7 Loneliness is the condition that shapes almost every life in Of Mice and Men. Steinbeck presents it not simply as a personal feeling but as the product of an economic system and a society that separate people by work, race, age, gender and ability. The ranch is full of men, yet nearly all of them are alone. Against this background, the friendship of George and Lennie appears both precious and fragile, and its destruction at the end suggests that, in 1930s America, loneliness was almost impossible to escape.

Steinbeck establishes the theme through setting from the very first line. The ranch lies "a few miles south of Soledad", and Soledad is Spanish for solitude or loneliness, so the place name quietly announces the novel's concern. The opening scene by the pool is peaceful and natural, a refuge from the world of work, and it is here that George describes the men who work on ranches as "the loneliest guys in the world". They have no family, belong nowhere, and spend their wages in

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town before moving on. This was the reality for thousands of itinerant labourers during the Great Depression, when mass unemployment forced men to travel constantly in search of short-term work. Steinbeck, who had worked on ranches himself, presents their isolation as a direct result of this rootless economic life.

George and Lennie are defined against this loneliness. George explains that they are different because they have each other and a future, and Lennie eagerly finishes the refrain: "I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you." The repeated retelling of the dream of their own farm acts almost like a ritual that protects them from isolation. Other characters notice how unusual this is. Slim remarks that he has hardly ever seen two guys travel together, and the boss is suspicious of George speaking for Lennie, assuming he must be exploiting him. In a society where trust between men was rare, companionship itself seems strange.

Steinbeck then shows how loneliness is intensified by discrimination. Crooks, the stable buck and the only black man on the ranch, is forced to live alone in the harness room because of the racial segregation of the time, reflecting the Jim Crow attitudes that excluded black workers from white spaces. His loneliness has made him bitter and defensive, and at first he tells Lennie he has no right to enter his room. Yet his defences crumble as he talks, revealing his need: "A guy needs somebody" to be near him, and if a man gets too lonely, he "gets sick". Steinbeck makes Crooks the most articulate voice on the subject precisely because he suffers it most completely. His brief hope of joining the dream, and his retreat from it when Curley's wife reminds him of his powerlessness, shows how racism destroys even the possibility of fellowship.

Candy's loneliness is linked to age and disability. Having lost his hand in an

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accident, he works as a swamper and fears that he will soon be sacked with nowhere to go, at a time when there was no welfare system to support old or injured workers. His only companion is his old dog, and when Carlson shoots it, Candy turns to the wall in silence. Later he admits that he ought to have shot the dog himself rather than letting a stranger do it. His desperate offer of his savings to join George and Lennie's dream reveals how much he fears dying alone.

Curley's wife is perhaps the most isolated figure of all. As the only woman on the ranch, and never given a name, she is defined entirely by her husband, a man she admits she does not even like. The men treat her as dangerous, calling her "jail bait" and avoiding her, so her attempts to talk are dismissed as flirting. In the barn she confesses to Lennie that she never gets to talk to anyone and gets lonely, and she tells him about her lost dream of being in the movies. Steinbeck presents her as a victim of the sexist assumptions of the 1930s, when a woman's identity and freedom depended on marriage. Tragically, her search for company leads directly to her death.

Even those with power are lonely. Curley is constantly searching for his wife, and his aggression drives the men away, while the boss is a distant figure. Lennie, too, is lonely whenever he is separated from George. On the Sunday afternoon, while the men play horseshoes, he sits alone in the barn with his dead puppy, and it is this shared isolation that brings him and Curley's wife together. Steinbeck shows that loneliness creates the conditions for tragedy.

The ending confirms how inescapable loneliness is. After George shoots Lennie by the same pool where the novel began, the cyclical structure returns us to the beginning, but George is now alone. He has become one of the men he described in Chapter 1, without family or a dream, and the farm is gone forever. Although

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Slim offers comfort, Carlson's failure to understand what has happened emphasises that most men cannot share another's grief.

Ultimately, Steinbeck presents loneliness as a social disease created by poverty and prejudice. The friendship of George and Lennie shows what people need, but the world of the Depression, with its constant movement and its divisions of race, gender and age, makes such bonds almost impossible to keep. The novel suggests that loneliness is not an individual failing but a consequence of the way society was organised.

8 In The Whale Rider, Ihimaera shows that power takes many forms: the inherited, public authority of a chief, the quieter influence of women who work behind and around that authority, the ancient spiritual power that links the people of Whangara to the sea, and the destructive power of the modern world. What makes the novel so moving is that the most obvious kind of power, Koro Apirana's, turns out to be the weakest. True power, Ihimaera suggests, belongs to whoever can keep the tribe connected to its ancestors, and that person is a young girl.

Koro is the clearest example of power at the start of the novel. As chief of the Ngati Porou at Whangara, he holds meetings on the marae, guards the tribe's sacred knowledge and teaches the boys of the village the chants, genealogies and fighting arts of their ancestors. His power, however, is bound to a rigid belief that leadership must pass through the male line. When Kahu is born, he is bitterly disappointed, and he repeatedly rejects her, banning her from his lessons even though she sits loyally at the back. Ihimaera presents this as a tragic misunderstanding of power: Koro is so focused on preserving the form of tradition that he cannot see its spirit returning in front of him. This reflects the real

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context of the novel. In the 1970s and 1980s the Maori renaissance was reviving language, ritual and land claims, and Koro's support for a Kohanga Reo shows him as part of this movement. Yet Ihimaera, himself of Ngati Porou descent, suggests that cultural survival also requires change, and that a tradition which excludes half of its people weakens itself.

Nanny Flowers offers a very different kind of power. She mocks her husband, argues with him constantly and, as she says, "He argues, and I win". Her claim that Koro "isn't any chief. I'm his chief" is comic, but it also exposes the gap between public status and real influence. Nanny draws her authority from a line of powerful Maori women, and she reminds the family of ancestors such as Muriwai, who saved a canoe of her people, and Mihi Kotukutuku, who defied the custom that women should not speak on the marae. In a society where formal leadership was male, Ihimaera shows women exercising power through memory, humour and strategy. Nanny's power is also patient: when Rawiri tells her that Kahu found the carved stone Koro threw into the sea, she tells him to keep it secret, saving the knowledge for the moment when it will be strong enough to change her husband's mind.

Kahu herself embodies a spiritual power that no lesson can teach. She is named after Kahutia Te Rangi, the ancestor known as Paikea, who rode a whale to Whangara from Hawaiki, and from the beginning Ihimaera hints that she is his heir. Nanny and Rawiri bury her birth cord in front of the meeting house, a traditional act which ties her permanently to the land, and Kahu is drawn to Koro and to the sea even as a baby. The turning point comes when the boys fail to retrieve the stone Koro has thrown into the water, a test of who is fit to lead, and Kahu dives and brings it back. Her power is quiet and unrecognised, which makes it more convincing to the reader than Koro's speeches. It is Kahu who can

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speak to the dolphins and whales, and at the climax it is she who swims out to the stranded bull whale, introduces herself and rides him back into the sea. When she survives and is found again, Koro finally accepts her as his successor. The power that saves the tribe is therefore female and young, which challenges the patriarchal assumptions that both traditional Maori and Pakeha society shared at the time.

The bull whale is a further, mythic form of power. Ihimaera begins each section with the whales, and the ancient bull, who once carried Paikea, is presented as a leader of enormous strength and memory. His herd follows him across the Pacific, and his longing for his lost master gives the novel its epic, legendary scale. Koro's warning about the whale, "When it dies, we die", shows that the whale's power and the tribe's are the same: both depend on the bond between humans and nature that the old stories describe.

Finally, Ihimaera shows the terrible power of the modern world. The whales mourn calves killed by radiation from nuclear testing, and the herd is driven from places that were once safe. The novel was published in 1987, shortly after French nuclear tests at Moruroa and the bombing of the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior in Auckland harbour in 1985, so New Zealand readers would have felt this threat sharply. The mass stranding of whales at Wainui beach, where people with no respect for the animals mock and mistreat them, shows human power used carelessly. Against this, Kahu's act represents a healing kind of power, one that restores harmony rather than dominating it.

In conclusion, power in The Whale Rider is demonstrated through status, influence, spirit and destruction. Koro has the title of chief, Nanny Flowers has the practical power to shape her family, and the modern world has the power to poison the

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ocean. Yet Ihimaera's message is that the greatest power is the ability to renew a people's connection to their ancestors and to nature. By giving that power to Kahu, he suggests that Maori culture will survive not by standing still but by recognising leadership wherever it is born.

9 There is a strong case that the whales are the most important characters in The Whale Rider, because Ihimaera builds the whole structure of the novel around them and makes their survival inseparable from the survival of the people of Whangara. However, I would argue that the whales are most important not on their own but as one half of a relationship. Their significance depends on Kahu, the human who can answer them, and it is the bond between whale and child, rather than either alone, that sits at the heart of the novel.

The structure of the novel gives the whales great prominence. After the prologue, in which Paikea arrives at Whangara on the back of a whale, each of the four seasonal sections, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, opens with the herd's journey across the Pacific. In these passages Ihimaera shifts into a lyrical, mythic voice that contrasts with the chatty, humorous narration of Rawiri. This alternation suggests that two stories, human and animal, are travelling towards each other, and the reader waits for them to meet. The bull whale is given a rich inner life: he is "handsome and virile", and "even in his lumbering years of age" he remembers his adolescence and the master who rode him. By anthropomorphising him so fully, Ihimaera makes the whale a character with memory, grief and loyalty rather than simply an animal, which supports the statement.

The whales also carry the novel's deepest contextual meanings. In Maori tradition, the ancestor Kahutia Te Rangi, or Paikea, founded the Ngati Porou at Whangara

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after riding a whale from Hawaiki, and the carved figure of the whale rider stands on the meeting house. The bull whale is therefore a living link to the beginnings of the tribe. When the whale strands near Whangara, Koro declares, "When it dies, we die", making clear that the animal symbolises the tribe's mana and identity. Ihimaera, writing during the Maori renaissance of the 1980s, uses the whales to argue that Maori culture is rooted in a spiritual relationship with nature that the modern world is in danger of destroying.

That modern threat is presented chiefly through the whales. In the Autumn section, the herd returns to the "Home of the Ancients" but finds that calves have died from radiation, and the bull leads them further south. This reflects the context of French nuclear testing at Moruroa and the outrage in New Zealand after the bombing of the Rainbow Warrior in 1985, two years before the novel was published. The whales also recall New Zealand's history of whaling, when European settlers set up whaling stations and hunted whales close to extinction. In this sense the whales are important as victims through whom Ihimaera criticises human greed and carelessness. The stranding of two hundred whales at Wainui, where they die despite Rawiri and others trying to save them, is one of the most painful episodes in the novel and shows how fragile the old harmony has become.

Furthermore, the whales mirror the human characters, which increases their importance. The bull whale, clinging to his memories of Paikea and unable to move forward, resembles Koro, who clings to the idea of a male heir. The old female whale, who gently persuades the bull to change, resembles Nanny Flowers, who mocks and manages her husband until he softens. In the epilogue, it is the female whale who urges the bull to return Kahu to the surface. Through these parallels, Ihimaera suggests that both whale and human leaders must learn to accept change, and that wisdom often comes from the women around them.

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Nevertheless, I think Kahu has a stronger claim to be the most important character. She is the protagonist, the one whose birth begins Rawiri's story and whose rejection by Koro drives the plot. Her retrieval of the carved stone that the boys fail to find, and her ability to talk to dolphins and whales, prove that she is the true heir of Paikea. Crucially, the whales cannot save themselves. When the bull whale strands, Koro and the men of the village fail to move him, and it is only when Kahu swims out, tells him who she is and climbs on to his back that he returns to the sea. The whales are powerful, but without Kahu their story ends in death. Koro is important too, since his final acceptance of Kahu completes the human plot and reflects a society beginning to question its belief in male superiority.

It is also significant that the novel is narrated by Rawiri, a human who travels to Australia and Papua New Guinea and returns home with a new appreciation of his culture. His affectionate, everyday voice keeps the human family at the centre of the reader's attention, while the whales remain at a mythic distance. We care about the whales partly because of what they mean to Kahu and to Koro.

In conclusion, I agree that the whales are extremely important: they frame the novel structurally, embody the tribe's ancestry, and carry Ihimaera's warnings about nuclear testing and environmental destruction. However, I do not think they are the most important characters in isolation. Ihimaera's central idea is the reunion between humans and nature, and that idea needs both the ancient whale who remembers and the child who can answer him. Kahu, as the whale rider, is the bridge between the two worlds, and so she is, in my view, the novel's most important character.

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Rose Hsu Jordan is significant in The Joy Luck Club because she represents the danger, for a Chinese American daughter, of losing her voice altogether. Caught between her mother's Chinese belief in fate and her own American belief in choice, Rose ends up with neither, drifting through her marriage unable to decide anything. Through Rose's gradual recovery, Tan explores the novel's central concerns: the gap between mothers and daughters, the pressure on women to be passive, and the way the mothers' hard-won strength can be passed on if the daughters learn to listen.

Rose's first story, "Half and Half", shows how her passivity began in guilt. On a family trip to the beach, her mother An-mei asks her to watch her youngest brother, Bing, and while Rose is distracted the four-year-old falls from the rocks and drowns. Nobody blames Rose, but she carries the sense of responsibility for years. Tan uses this memory to suggest that Rose learned to avoid taking charge of anything, since taking charge once led to disaster. The episode is also significant for what it reveals about An-mei. Believing that "nengkan", the power to change her fate, is enough, An-mei returns to the sea, makes offerings and throws her precious sapphire ring into the water, but Bing is never found. Years later her Bible, once a sign of her faith, is wedged under a short table leg. The title "Half and Half" suggests Rose's divided identity, half Chinese and half American, and also the half-faith her mother is left with. Tan shows that both mother and daughter have been damaged by the loss, but in different ways.

Rose is also significant because her marriage dramatises the theme of female subservience across cultures. She meets Ted Jordan at university and is drawn to him partly because he is so different from the Chinese boys she has dated. An-mei disapproves of her marrying an American outsider, while Ted's mother, at a family picnic, tells Rose that she has nothing against minorities but that Ted's

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career will suffer if he marries someone of Rose's background, apparently assuming that Rose is Vietnamese. This scene places Rose in the context of 1960s and 1970s America, when the Vietnam War was fuelling prejudice against Asian Americans and interracial marriage could still be treated as shameful. Rather than resisting, Rose and Ted fall into the roles of rescued victim and heroic protector. Tan shows that this pattern is comfortable at first but corrosive: Ted makes all the decisions, even managing the money from her graphic design work, and Rose loses the ability to choose for herself. When Ted, shaken by a malpractice case, suddenly wants her to decide things, she cannot, and he asks for a divorce.

Rose's relationship with An-mei makes her especially significant in the second story, "Without Wood". An-mei tells her that she is like a weed bending in the wind, a person without wood, lacking the backbone to stand upright. When Rose admits she is seeing a psychiatrist, her mother calls it a "psyche-atricks" and is hurt that Rose would tell a stranger rather than her own mother. This comic mispronunciation also suggests An-mei's distrust of an American solution to a problem she believes requires inner strength. An-mei urges Rose to speak up for herself, and the advice carries extra weight because of the reader's knowledge of An-mei's own history: her mother was a disgraced widow who became a concubine, and An-mei learned to shout and fight only after her mother's suicide. Tan suggests that Rose's American freedom has paradoxically left her weaker than her mother, who learned strength through suffering.

Language is another reason Rose matters. She explains that she struggles to translate her feelings for her mother, and that her mother's English seems unable to hold what she means. This mirrors Tan's own experience as the daughter of a Chinese immigrant mother; Tan has said that the novel grew from listening to her mother's stories and learning to value the English her mother spoke. Rose therefore

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voices the broader generational misunderstanding that structures the whole novel, in which mothers and daughters love each other but speak past each other.

The significance of Rose is finally confirmed by her change. When Ted sends divorce papers and wants the house, Rose at first wavers, but she eventually refuses to sign, telling him that he cannot simply pull her out of his life. She is amazed by her own force: "The power of my words was that strong". Tan structures this as a moment of rebirth. Rose dreams of Old Mr Chou, the guardian of the door to dreams from her childhood, and sees her mother in the overgrown garden, suggesting that Rose is beginning to grow roots and wood of her own. The garden, which Ted had neglected and which has been overrun by weeds, becomes a symbol of her life which she can now reclaim.

In conclusion, Rose Hsu Jordan is significant because her story shows the cost of passivity for women of both cultures, the pain of guilt and divided identity, and the healing that comes when a daughter finally hears her mother's advice. Writing in the late 1980s, influenced by the feminist movement's emphasis on women finding their voices, Tan uses Rose to argue that strength is not abandoned in the move from China to America. It is waiting to be inherited.

11 In The Joy Luck Club, embarrassment is one of the clearest signs of the cultural gap between the Chinese mothers and their American daughters. The exchange between Waverly and Lindo, "It's just so embarrassing" and "Embarrass you be my daughter?", captures the problem perfectly: the daughter is ashamed of her mother's Chineseness, while the mother is wounded that her pride could be mistaken for something shameful. Yet Tan shows that embarrassment flows in both directions, and that beneath it lies a deeper fear of not belonging. By the

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end of the novel, embarrassment is revealed as a barrier that love and understanding can, at least partly, overcome.

The quoted exchange comes from "Rules of the Game", when the young Waverly, a chess champion, walks with Lindo through the market in Chinatown. Lindo shows her daughter off to everyone they meet, and Waverly finally protests that her mother is using her to show off. Lindo's broken English in her reply is significant: her question sounds like a challenge, implying that the daughter is the one who should be ashamed for rejecting her mother in public. For Lindo, a daughter's success is a family honour, reflecting the Chinese idea that a child's achievements belong to the parents who sacrificed for them. For Waverly, growing up in 1950s San Francisco, it is an exposure of her difference. Waverly runs away, and when she returns, her mother pointedly ignores her. Tan shows that embarrassment here is really a contest of power and identity between two strong-willed people.

The theme returns when Waverly is an adult. In "Four Directions", she brings her American fiancé, Rich, to dinner, and he embarrasses her by breaking every unspoken rule: he drinks too much wine, struggles with his chopsticks and, when Lindo criticises her own cooking in the customary modest way, he takes her at her word and pours soy sauce over the dish. Waverly is mortified, but Tan also invites us to laugh at her, since she is just as anxious about her mother's approval as she was as a child. In "Double Face", Lindo's own perspective is given. When Waverly takes her to the hairdresser before the wedding, the stylist remarks on how alike they look, and Waverly is embarrassed. Lindo, however, remembers how proud she was to resemble her own mother. She reflects that she has two faces, one Chinese and one American, and that in China she is now seen as a foreigner. Tan uses this double perspective to show that embarrassment depends on which culture's eyes you are looking through.

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Jing-mei's embarrassment is perhaps the most painful. In "Two Kinds", her mother Suyuan, believing that in America you can be anything, pushes her to become a prodigy, partly to compete with Lindo and Waverly. Jing-mei rebels by refusing to practise properly, and at the church talent show she plays Schumann's "Pleading Child" so badly that the audience is left awkwardly silent. Both mother and daughter are humiliated in public, particularly in front of the other Joy Luck families. Jing-mei's furious response, wishing she were dead like the babies her mother left in China, turns embarrassment into cruelty. Later, at the crab dinner in "Best Quality", Waverly embarrasses Jing-mei in front of everyone by dismissing her advertising copy, and Suyuan seems to agree that her daughter lacks style. Tan shows that the mothers' competition, which they see as a form of love, often leaves their daughters feeling exposed.

The mothers' stories reveal that embarrassment, or rather shame, has deeper roots in their Chinese past. In "Scar", An-mei's grandmother Popo disowns An-mei's mother for becoming a concubine after her husband's death, a disgrace so great in traditional Chinese society that her name cannot be spoken. In "Magpies", An-mei sees how her mother lives as the despised fourth wife of the merchant Wu Tsing, tricked by Second Wife. Tan based this story partly on her own grandmother, who was made a concubine and took her own life. Ying-ying's shame is different again: abandoned by her first husband while pregnant, she becomes withdrawn and fatalistic, almost a ghost in her later American life. Her daughter Lena, in "Rice Husband", is ashamed to admit that her marriage to Harold is failing, hiding behind their strict system of splitting every bill. Ying-ying, who sees through the arrangement, urges her daughter to stand up for herself. Here embarrassment is linked to the silence of women in both cultures.

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Tan also shows that embarrassment can be outgrown. After the quarrel in "Four Directions", Waverly comes to see that her mother is not a formidable enemy but an old woman who loves her, and she plans to take Lindo with her on her honeymoon to China. Jing-mei, who at the start of the novel feels embarrassed and inadequate when the aunties ask her to take her late mother's place at the mah jong table, travels to China at the end to meet her half-sisters. As the three women embrace, she finally recognises the Chinese part of herself she had once tried to deny.

In conclusion, embarrassment in The Joy Luck Club is a sign of a divided identity. The daughters, eager to be fully American in a society that saw them as foreign, are embarrassed by their mothers' accents, customs and pride, while the mothers, who survived war, poverty and shame in China, are hurt that their sacrifices are misunderstood. Drawing on her own experience as the daughter of an immigrant mother, Tan suggests that embarrassment fades when daughters begin to listen to their mothers' stories, and that what once seemed shameful becomes a source of identity and strength.

12 In Things Fall Apart, Achebe presents the introduction of Christian faith not as a simple story of light arriving in darkness, as many European writers of the colonial period imagined it, but as a complex and ultimately devastating process. Christianity offers genuine comfort to some of the Igbo, especially those whom the clan has rejected, yet it also divides families, undermines traditional authority and opens the way for colonial government. Achebe's title, taken from Yeats's poem "The Second Coming", suggests that the centre of Igbo society cannot hold once the new religion takes root.

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The first sign of the change comes in Part Two, during Okonkwo's exile in Mbanta, when Obierika reports the fate of Abame. A white man arrives on a bicycle, which the villagers call an iron horse, and the Oracle warns that he will be the first of many who will destroy the clan. The villagers kill him, and soon afterwards white men return and massacre the people at the market. Achebe places this violence before the missionaries arrive in Mbanta, so that the reader understands, as the Igbo do not yet, that religion and military force are connected. Okonkwo's response, that the people of Abame were fools for not fighting back with weapons, shows his belief that strength alone can resist the newcomers, a belief that the rest of the novel tests and destroys.

When the missionaries reach Mbanta, Achebe uses gentle comedy to show the clan's initial confidence. The interpreter speaks a different dialect, and his word for "myself" sounds like "my buttocks", which makes the villagers laugh. The doctrine of the Trinity seems absurd to them, and Okonkwo dismisses the missionaries as mad. The elders give them land in the Evil Forest, expecting the spirits to kill them within days. When the Christians survive, however, some villagers begin to believe that their god has special power. Achebe shows that Christianity's first converts are those on the margins: the efulefu, or worthless men, the osu, or outcasts, who are forbidden to mix with freeborn people, and women such as Nneka, whose twins have repeatedly been abandoned in the forest. By welcoming these people, the church exposes the cruelties within Igbo tradition, and Achebe, whose own father converted to Christianity, is honest about why the new faith appealed.

The most painful effect of Christianity falls on Okonkwo's own family. His son Nwoye has been troubled for years by the abandonment of twins and by the killing of Ikemefuna, and the hymns of the missionaries seem to answer these

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questions in his heart. When Okonkwo discovers that Nwoye has been to the church, he seizes him by the neck in fury, and Nwoye leaves for Umuofia to attend Mr Kiaga's school, taking the name Isaac. Achebe makes the private and the political mirror each other: just as Okonkwo's harsh masculinity drives his son away, the clan's rigid customs drive its weakest members into the church. Okonkwo's horror that his descendants might worship the white man's god shows that, for him, conversion is a kind of death.

In Part Three, Achebe contrasts two missionaries to show that the effects of Christianity depend partly on how it is introduced. Mr Brown is patient and respectful. He restrains his converts from provoking the clan, and he discusses religion with Akunna, one of the great men of Umuofia, and each learns something about the other's beliefs even though neither is converted. He builds a school and a hospital, and he urges the people to send their children so that they can become court messengers and clerks in the new order. Mr Brown may have been based partly on real missionaries such as G. T. Basden, who worked among the Igbo in the early twentieth century and knew Achebe's family. However, Achebe suggests that even this gentle approach serves colonialism, since education and the church prepare the way for British government, trade and courts.

When Mr Brown falls ill and leaves, he is replaced by the Reverend James Smith, who sees the world in black and white and condemns Igbo customs as heathen. Under him the converts become fanatical. The most dramatic example is Enoch, who unmasks one of the egwugwu during a ceremony, which in Igbo belief is equivalent to killing an ancestral spirit. In response the egwugwu burn Enoch's compound and destroy the church, though they spare Mr Smith himself, partly out of respect for Mr Brown. This act leads directly to the arrest and humiliation of the clan leaders by the District Commissioner and, finally, to Okonkwo's killing of

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the head messenger and his suicide.

Obierika's judgement summarises the effect of Christianity best. He explains to Okonkwo that the white man came "quietly and peaceably with his religion", and that the clan were amused and let him stay, but that now "he has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart". The image of a knife cutting the bonds of kinship shows that the real damage is division: brother is set against brother, son against father. Achebe even shows small, everyday changes, such as Sunday replacing the traditional Igbo market week.

In conclusion, Achebe presents the introduction of Christian faith as both a liberation for some and a catastrophe for the clan as a whole. Writing in 1958, as Nigeria approached independence from Britain in 1960, he challenges the colonial view, expressed in the District Commissioner's planned book on pacifying the primitive tribes, that Africans had no culture worth preserving. By giving the Igbo a rich, flawed and dignified society, Achebe makes the reader feel the full weight of what was lost when the new faith arrived.

13 Ikemefuna is on stage for only the first part of Things Fall Apart, yet he is one of the most significant characters in the novel. Through him, Achebe shows both the order and the harshness of Igbo law, reveals the hidden tenderness that Okonkwo fears in himself, and plants the seed of Nwoye's later conversion to Christianity. His death is the moment when Okonkwo's fortunes begin to turn, and in a sense it is the first crack through which the whole clan's things fall apart.

Ikemefuna's arrival illustrates how Umuofia settles disputes. When a daughter of Umuofia is murdered at the market in Mbaino, the clan threatens war, and Mbaino

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offers a young man and a virgin as compensation in order to keep the peace. The girl is given to Ogbuefi Udo, the husband of the murdered woman, while Ikemefuna, about fifteen years old, is placed in Okonkwo's care until the clan decides his fate. Achebe presents this as a working system of justice that avoids bloodshed, and it shows the respect neighbouring villages have for Umuofia's power. Yet Achebe also makes the reader uneasy, since Ikemefuna is entirely innocent. From the beginning he is described as an "ill-fated boy", a phrase which foreshadows his death and gives his story the shape of a tragedy within a tragedy.

Ikemefuna is significant because he brings out a side of Okonkwo that is usually hidden. At first he is frightened and homesick, but he soon becomes popular in the household, especially with the children. He is a lively boy who knows many stories and skills, and he calls Okonkwo father. Okonkwo grows fond of him but, as Achebe explains, he never shows any emotion openly except anger, because to show affection is a sign of weakness. Okonkwo's whole life is shaped by his fear of resembling his father, Unoka, whom the clan considered lazy and womanly. Ikemefuna therefore exposes the emotional cost of Okonkwo's rigid masculinity: he loves the boy but feels he must hide it, even from himself. This reflects the value that traditional Igbo society placed on strength and achievement, though Achebe suggests through characters like Obierika that Okonkwo exaggerates these values.

Ikemefuna's influence on Nwoye is equally important. He becomes like an elder brother to him, and under his influence Nwoye begins to behave more like a man, which pleases Okonkwo. Okonkwo invites both boys into his obi to hear masculine stories of war and violence, and Nwoye pretends to prefer them, though he secretly still loves his mother's folk tales. Achebe uses this to show the gentleness in Nwoye's nature that his father cannot accept, and Ikemefuna becomes the emotional link between father and son.

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The death of Ikemefuna is the turning point of Part One. After three years, the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves decrees that he must be killed. Ogbuefi Ezeudu, the oldest man in the quarter, warns Okonkwo, "That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death." Okonkwo ignores him. The men tell Ikemefuna that he is being taken home, and as he walks he thinks of his mother and sings a childhood song in his head to decide whether she is still alive. Achebe's choice to place us inside Ikemefuna's innocent hopes just before his death makes the scene almost unbearable. When a man strikes him, Ikemefuna runs towards Okonkwo, crying "My father, they have killed me!", and Okonkwo, "dazed with fear", cuts him down. Achebe states plainly that "He was afraid of being thought weak." This short sentence exposes Okonkwo's tragic flaw: his fear of weakness is stronger than his love. The context of the Oracle's authority is significant here, since Agbala governs every part of Umuofian life, yet Achebe makes clear that the Oracle did not require Okonkwo himself to strike the blow.

Afterwards, Okonkwo is unable to eat or sleep for days and drinks palm-wine to forget, scolding himself for becoming a shivering old woman. His friend Obierika refuses to have taken part and warns that what Okonkwo has done will not please the Earth goddess, the kind of act for which she can wipe out whole families. This warning seems to be fulfilled later. At Ezeudu's funeral, Okonkwo's gun accidentally explodes and kills Ezeudu's son, and Okonkwo is exiled for seven years. The killing of Ikemefuna therefore begins a chain of events that removes Okonkwo from his clan just as the missionaries arrive.

Most significantly, Ikemefuna's death breaks Nwoye. When his father returns, Nwoye knows that Ikemefuna has been killed, and something gives way inside him like the snapping of a tightened bow. He connects the killing with the abandoned

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twins he once heard crying in the forest, and these experiences leave him searching for something gentler. Years later, the hymns of the Christian missionaries seem to answer the questions about the twins and Ikemefuna that troubled him, and he converts. In this way, Ikemefuna's death links the private tragedy of Okonkwo's family to the wider historical tragedy of colonialism and the arrival of Christianity in Igboland in the late nineteenth century.

In conclusion, Ikemefuna is significant because he reveals the mechanisms of Igbo justice, exposes Okonkwo's fear of weakness, and drives Nwoye towards the church. Achebe, writing in 1958 to give a dignified and honest picture of precolonial Igbo life, does not hide the cruelty of a custom that sacrificed an innocent child. Instead, through Ikemefuna, he shows that the clan was already vulnerable from within, so that when the missionaries came, sons like Nwoye were ready to listen.