Please check the examination details below before entering your candidate information

Candidate surname	Other names

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

Centre Number | | | | | |

Candidate Number | | | | |

Wednesday 13 May 2020

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

English Literature

Paper 1: Poetry and Modern Prose

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

Total Marks

Instructions

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

Information

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

Advice

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

Turn over ▶

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SECTION A: Unseen Poetry

Question 1

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(Total for Question 1 = 20 marks)

TOTAL FOR SECTION A = 20 MARKS

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SECTION B: Anthology Poetry

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

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

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TOTAL FOR SECTION B = 30 MARKS

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SECTION C: Modern Prose

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

Chosen question number:

Question 4 ☒ **Question 5** ☒ **Question 6** ☒

Question 7 ☒ **Question 8** ☒ **Question 9** ☒

Question 10 ☒ **Question 11** ☒ **Question 12** ☒

Question 13 ☒

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

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

Wednesday 13 May 2020

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

English Literature

Paper 1: Poetry and Modern Prose

Question Booklet
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Answer THREE questions:

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

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

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

SECTION A: Unseen Poetry

Answer the question in this section.

You should spend 35 minutes on this question.

Read the following poem.

Friday

We are driving home.
Work is over, the weekend ours
like a gift voucher
to spend as we feel inclined.

We pass the armed guard
of whitethorn*, the guard
of honour of poplars*,
until our favourite

half-mile stretch
where a canopy of branches
spans the road
like a triumphal arch.

Our car tunnels into
this leafy underpass,
entering its funnel,
its decompression chamber*.

Sheep are shearing fields;
lambs bound like woolly dogs
just released from the leash.
We have squeezed through

the filter of trees
and now, renewed, detoxified*,
we are on the downward
slope towards home.

Dennis O'Driscoll (1999)

Glossary
**whitethorn* – a type of bushy tree
**poplars* – tall, slender trees
**decompression chamber* – a room used by deep sea divers to relieve the effects of pressure and stress
**detoxified* – made pure or clean

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1 Explore how the writer presents a journey home 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 *Hide and Seek* and *War Photographer*.

Compare how the writers present isolation in *Hide and Seek* 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 *Piano*.

Compare the ways the writers present recollections of the past in *Piano* and **one other** poem from the anthology.

You should make reference to language, form and structure.

Support your answer with examples from the poems.

(Total for Question 3 = 30 marks)

TOTAL FOR SECTION B = 30 MARKS

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SECTION C: Modern Prose

Answer ONE question on ONE text from this section.

You should spend 45 minutes on this section.

To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee

EITHER

4 In what ways is the Radley family important in the novel?

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

(Total for Question 4 = 40 marks)

OR

5 'There are different types of unhappiness in this novel, from the trivial to the heart-breaking.'

Discuss the theme of unhappiness in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

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

(Total for Question 5 = 40 marks)

Of Mice and Men, John Steinbeck

EITHER

6 'He was a jerkline skinner, the prince of the ranch.'

In what ways is Slim important in *Of Mice and Men*?

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

(Total for Question 6 = 40 marks)

OR

7 Explore the theme of loss in the novel.

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

(Total for Question 7 = 40 marks)

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

EITHER

8 Explore **one** character who, in your opinion, has great power in *The Whale Rider*.

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

(Total for Question 8 = 40 marks)

OR

9 In what ways is change important in the novel?

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

(Total for Question 9 = 40 marks)

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

EITHER

10 Explore the character of An-mei Hsu in the novel.

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

(Total for Question 10 = 40 marks)

OR

11 'I once sacrificed my life to keep my parents' promise.' (Lindo Jong)

Discuss the theme of sacrifices that people have made 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 'Ezinma is a very significant character 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 12 = 40 marks)

OR

13 In what ways is the theme of honour important 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:

Friday by Dennis O'Driscoll

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

Wednesday 13 May 2020

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

English Literature

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

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If –

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

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

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

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

Rudyard Kipling

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Prayer Before Birth

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Louis MacNeice

Blessing

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

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

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

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

Imtiaz Dharker

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Search For My Tongue

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

મને હતું કે આખ્ખી જીભ આખ્ખી ભાષા,

(munay hutoo kay aakhee jeebh aakhee bhasha)

મેં થૂંકી નાખી છે.

(may thoonky nakhi chay)

પરંતુ રાત્રે સ્વપ્નામાં મારી ભાષા પાછી આવે છે.

(parantoo rattray svupnama mari bhasha pachi aavay chay)

ફૂલની જેમ મારી ભાષા મારી જીભ

(foolnee jaim mari bhasha mari jeebh)

મોઢામાં ખીલે છે.

(modhama kheelay chay)

ફળની જેમ મારી ભાષા મારી જીભ

(fulllnee jaim mari bhasha mari jeebh)

મોઢામાં પાકે છે.

(modhama pakay chay)

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

Sujata Bhatt

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Half-past Two

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

U A Fanthorpe

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Piano

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

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

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

D H Lawrence

Hide and Seek

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

Vernon Scannell

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Sonnet 116 'Let me not to the marriage…'

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

William Shakespeare

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La Belle Dame sans Merci. A Ballad

I

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

II

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

III

I see a lily on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever-dew,
And on thy 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

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

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Do not go gentle into that good night

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dylan Thomas

Remember

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

Christina Rossetti

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

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1

O'Driscoll presents the journey home not as a dull commute but as a ceremony of release, almost a rebirth. The drive becomes a kind of passage in which the pressure of the working week is slowly drained away, so that by the end the speaker and companion arrive home "renewed". The poem moves from the language of celebration, through images of enclosure and cleansing, to a calm, gentle descent, and its form traces that emotional change step by step.

The opening line, "We are driving home.", is a short, plain declarative sentence in the present tense, which places the reader in the car with the travellers. The full stop gives a sense of finality, as if work has been firmly closed off. The simile comparing the weekend to "a gift voucher" is deliberately ordinary and modern: free time is something they have earned and can now "spend as we feel inclined". The financial verb "spend" is witty, because it borrows the language of work and money and turns it into pleasure, suggesting that time itself is now their currency. The possessive "ours" stresses ownership; for once their time belongs to nobody else.

The writer's descriptive skills transform the roadside into a royal or military welcome. The whitethorn becomes an "armed guard" and the poplars a "guard / of honour". The repetition of "guard" suggests protection, and the shift from "armed" to "honour" moves from defence to celebration, as though the trees first shield the travellers and then salute them. This builds towards the climax of the third stanza, where the canopy "spans the road / like a triumphal arch". The simile is grand, perhaps playfully hyperbolic: an ordinary couple driving home on a Friday are greeted like victorious generals. O'Driscoll seems to suggest that surviving the week is itself a small triumph.

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The fourth and central stanza changes the tone. The verb "tunnels" makes the car seem like a burrowing animal, and the images of the "leafy underpass", "funnel" and "decompression chamber" create a sense of narrowing and pressure. The glossary reminds us that a decompression chamber relieves the stress of deep sea divers, so the metaphor implies that work is a crushing depth and that the travellers must pass through a careful transition before they can breathe freely. The listing of these images, each one renaming the canopy, mirrors the car moving deeper into the trees.

Once through, the world seems released and joyful. The inversion "Sheep are shearing fields" is a playful reversal, as if the sheep are now doing the work, cropping the grass, and the usual order of labour has been turned upside down for the weekend. The simile "lambs bound like woolly dogs / just released from the leash" is full of energy; the bouncing verb "bound" and the image of a leash being slipped clearly mirror the travellers' own freedom. The lambs become a reflection of how the speaker feels.

The final stanza completes the idea of cleansing. "We have squeezed through / the filter of trees" uses the present perfect to show the transition is complete, and the verb "squeezed" recalls the earlier pressure. The adjectives "renewed, detoxified" are placed side by side without a conjunction, and the clinical word "detoxified" suggests that work had been almost poisonous. The poem closes quietly with "the downward / slope towards home", where the gentle gradient suggests relaxation and ease rather than effort.

Structurally, the six quatrains of free verse, with their short alternating indented lines, create an irregular, flowing movement like a road winding between trees.

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Enjambment carries the reader across stanza breaks, as in "the guard / of honour", so the poem never fully stops, imitating continuous travel. The unnamed "We" keeps the experience universal, so any reader who has felt the relief of a Friday evening can share it. Overall, O'Driscoll presents the journey home as a ritual passage from the pressure of work into the freedom and peace of home.

2

Both Scannell and Duffy present isolation as something first chosen and then revealed to be painful. The child in Hide and Seek seeks out solitude as part of a game and ends abandoned, while the photographer in War Photographer seeks the solitude of his darkroom but finds that it forces him to relive suffering he has witnessed. In both poems, being alone exposes a deeper loneliness: the child is forgotten by friends, and the photographer is cut off from a public that does "not care".

Each poem opens with isolation as a positive state. Scannell begins with the excited imperatives "Call out. Call loud", and the child is confident that "They'll never find you in this salty dark". Being hidden is a source of pride. Duffy's photographer is "finally alone", and the adverb "finally" suggests relief, as though he has longed for privacy after his work. Yet the settings already hint at discomfort. The toolshed is a "salty dark" where "The floor is cold", while the darkroom is lit only by a red light which "softly glows, / as though this were a church". Duffy's religious simile makes the photographer's isolation solemn and ritualistic, a priest preparing "a Mass" for the dead, whereas Scannell's sensory details of sacks that "smell like the seaside" keep the child's isolation childlike and physical.

The voices of the poems create isolation in different ways. Scannell uses second

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person address throughout, so the child seems to talk to themself: "Don't breathe. Don't move. Stay dumb. Hide in your blindness." The caesurae break the line into short commands, building tension, and "blindness" suggests that the child is unable to see what is happening outside. The reader is placed inside this isolated mind, sharing the child's partial view. Duffy instead uses a detached third person, "he", which mirrors the photographer's professional distance. His isolation is emotional rather than physical: his hands "did not tremble then / though seem to now", and the contrast between past and present shows that only in solitude can he feel what he suppressed in the field.

Both poets also show the isolation of others. In War Photographer the developing image becomes "a half-formed ghost", and the "stranger's features" suggest a victim who is alone and anonymous in his suffering. The memory of "the cries / of this man's wife" and of how "the blood stained into foreign dust" shows that the photographer was isolated even while among people, as he had to seek "approval / without words" before taking the picture. Scannell, by contrast, presents the friends only through sound: "Their words and laughter scuffle, and they're gone." The verb "scuffle" makes them fleeting and careless, and the abrupt "they're gone" foreshadows the child's abandonment, although the child does not yet realise it.

The endings are where isolation becomes most painful. Scannell's child emerges triumphantly, "I've won!", but is met only by silence: "The darkening garden watches. Nothing stirs." The personification of the garden and of the bushes that "hold their breath" makes nature seem the only witness, eerie and hostile. The final rhetorical question, "But where are they who sought you?", leaves the child utterly alone and turns a game into a lesson about loneliness and perhaps betrayal. Duffy's ending is colder still. From the aeroplane he "stares impassively" at the place where "he earns his living and they do not care". The final rhyme of "where"

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and "care" sounds closed and bitter. Here isolation is social: the photographer is cut off from both the victims, whom he leaves behind, and the readers, whose eyes "prick / with tears between the bath and pre-lunch beers". Duffy's juxtaposition of brief tears with comfortable routine shows that his work makes him separate from an indifferent society.

Form reinforces these differences. Scannell writes a single unbroken stanza of twenty-seven lines, which mirrors the continuous passing of time while the child waits, and occasional rhyming couplets such as "door" and "before" add a playful, game-like rhythm that makes the final silence more shocking. Duffy's four regular six-line stanzas with a controlled rhyme scheme reflect the "ordered rows" of photographs, suggesting that the photographer imposes order on chaos to cope with it. The list of places, "Belfast. Beirut. Phnom Penh.", with its caesurae and plosives, shows that the suffering he records is global, while he returns alone to "Rural England".

Overall, both poems present isolation as a state that begins with a sense of control and ends in emptiness. Scannell explores an intimate, childhood experience of being forgotten, which may even echo his own wartime experience of hiding as a soldier, while Duffy uses one man's solitude to criticise the wider world's indifference to suffering. For me, Duffy's poem is the bleaker, because the child's loneliness lasts a moment, whereas the photographer's isolation is the permanent cost of his job.

3 Both Lawrence in Piano and Fanthorpe in Half-past Two present recollections of the past as vivid, almost timeless experiences that shape the adult who remembers them. However, while Lawrence's speaker is overwhelmed by a memory he cannot

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resist, so that it becomes a source of grief, Fanthorpe's narrator recalls a moment of childhood confusion with gentle humour, and the memory becomes a source of wonder. In both poems, the past is not simply remembered but re-entered.

Each poem is triggered by a particular moment. In Piano, the memory is set off by sound: "Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me". The soft sibilance and the time of day, "dusk", create a reflective, fading atmosphere, and the present tense shows memory happening as we read. The phrase "Taking me back down the vista of years" presents memory as a journey through a long view of time, as if the speaker is helplessly carried. Fanthorpe opens instead with the fairy tale formula, "Once upon a schooltime", which instantly frames the recollection as a story. The compound "schooltime" signals the poem's playful method of fusing words, and it also suggests that the recollection belongs to a child's view of the world, where everything is measured by routine.

The details recalled are sharply sensory in both poems. Lawrence remembers "the boom of the tingling strings" and a child "pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings". The onomatopoeic "boom" captures how loud the piano sounded from beneath it, while the sibilance of "smiles as she sings" conveys the tenderness of the mother. The memory is intimate and physical: the boy is literally beneath his mother, safe. Fanthorpe's recollections are also sensory but stranger: the boy escapes "Into the smell of old chrysanthemums on Her desk, / Into the silent noise his hangnail made". The anaphora of "Into" creates a sense of drifting deeper, and the oxymoron "silent noise" shows how intensely a bored child notices tiny things. Both poets therefore suggest that childhood memories are preserved through small, concrete details rather than great events.

The key difference lies in how the adult feels about the past. Lawrence is

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resistant at first: "In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song / Betrays me back". The adjective "insidious" and the verb "Betrays" suggest that memory is a seductive, almost treacherous force that overpowers his adult self. He longs for "the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside / And hymns in the cosy parlour". The contrast between cold "winter outside" and the "cosy" interior idealises the past as a place of warmth and security, perhaps more perfect in memory than in reality. Fanthorpe's narrator, by contrast, is distant and amused. The parenthesis "(I forget what it was)" admits that the details are hazy, and the capitalised "Something Very Wrong" and "Her" capture a child's sense of the teacher's enormous authority while gently mocking it. The adult narrator can see what the boy could not: the teacher "hadn't taught him Time".

Both poems explore time itself. Lawrence's speaker is pulled out of the present entirely, and the "glamour / Of childish days" overwhelms him. Fanthorpe makes the loss of time into the subject of the recollection: unable to read the clock, the boy enters "the clockless land of ever". The run-together compounds, "Gettinguptime, timeyouwereofftime", show how a child understands time through events rather than numbers. Whereas Lawrence's recollection traps him in grief, Fanthorpe's preserves a magical moment of escape, "Where time hides tick-less waiting to be born".

The endings show the emotional power of memory most clearly. Lawrence concludes that "my manhood is cast / Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past." The metaphor of the "flood" suggests memory as an overwhelming natural force, and the simile "like a child" shows him regressing completely; ironically, remembering childhood makes him a child again. Fanthorpe ends more positively. The boy is "slotted" back into routine, a mechanical verb, but "he never forgot" his escape, so the memory is treasured rather than mourned.

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Form supports these attitudes. Piano uses three quatrains of rhyming couplets in long, flowing lines, which mimic the rhythm of music and the swell of emotion, and the rhyme of "clamour" and "glamour" contrasts the loud present singer with the glowing past. Half-past Two uses irregular stanzas and free verse with conversational parentheses, reflecting the wandering, unstructured world of a child's imagination. Both poets use enjambment, but Lawrence's carries the reader into sorrow, while Fanthorpe's carries us into wonder.

Overall, both poems show that recollections of childhood can transport an adult back in time. For Lawrence the past is a lost paradise that makes the present painful, whereas for Fanthorpe it is a moment of private freedom that continues to enrich the adult's understanding of time.

4 The Radley family is important in To Kill a Mockingbird because it frames the whole novel. The Radleys first appear as the stuff of childish ghost stories, yet by the end their son, Boo, has become the quiet hero who saves Jem and Scout. Through this family, Lee explores how a small Southern town in the 1930s punishes those who do not conform, how rumour creates monsters, and how a child learns to see others as they really are. In this way the Radleys are central both to the plot and to Lee's moral message about prejudice and empathy.

From the opening chapter, the Radley Place is presented as a forbidding, almost Gothic space within ordinary Maycomb. Scout describes its closed shutters, rotting shingles and neglected yard, and the local belief that a baseball hit into the Radley yard is a lost ball. Lee borrows the conventions of Southern Gothic fiction, the haunted house and the hidden figure, to show how the children's imaginations

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feed on what they cannot see. Miss Stephanie Crawford's gossip, and Jem's lurid description of a creature who eats raw squirrels, turn Arthur Radley into "a malevolent phantom". The children's games of daring each other to touch the house, and later acting out the "Boo Radley" story, are comic, but Lee implies that the whole town shares the same fearful fascination. The Radleys therefore introduce a key idea: Maycomb would rather invent a monster than try to understand a neighbour.

The family is also important because it shows how Maycomb treats difference. Miss Maudie explains that old Mr Radley was one of the "foot-washing" Baptists, a strict believer who regarded pleasure as sinful, and the family keep to themselves, do not go to church with the rest of the town and keep their shutters closed on Sundays. In a community bound together by church, visiting and gossip, this withdrawal is treated as deeply suspicious. Calpurnia's comment that Mr Radley was "the meanest man ever God blew breath into" suggests that the real cruelty in the house may have belonged to the father. When Arthur got into trouble as a teenager with a group of boys, his father chose to keep him locked away rather than allow him to be sent to the state industrial school, and he was never seen again. Lee seems to criticise a culture where family pride and respectability matter more than the wellbeing of a child. The story of the scissors attack, told secondhand, is never confirmed, which reminds the reader how unreliable Maycomb's stories are.

Lee was writing from her own experience: in Monroeville, her childhood town, a neighbouring family was said to have kept their son shut away for many years after he got into trouble with the law. By weaving this into the novel, she shows that the Radleys are not exaggerated grotesques but a recognisable product of small town Southern life, where reputation and silence could imprison people as

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effectively as bars.

Nathan Radley, who takes his father's place after his death, continues this pattern of control. When Boo begins leaving gifts in the knothole of the oak tree, including chewing gum, Indian head pennies and two carved soap figures of Jem and Scout, Nathan fills the hole with cement, claiming the tree is dying. This is one of the saddest moments of the first half of the novel. Jem's silent tears show that he has begun to realise that Boo was reaching out and that his brother deliberately cut him off. The gifts reveal Boo as gentle and lonely, while Nathan's act of cruelty reflects the way adults in Maycomb shut down kindness that does not fit their rules.

Boo's quiet interventions gradually change the children's view of him. He mends Jem's torn trousers after they are caught on the fence, and folds them neatly for him to find, and during Miss Maudie's fire he places a blanket around Scout's shoulders without her noticing. These moments structure the novel's slow movement from fear to understanding. After the trial, Jem reflects that he is beginning to understand why Boo has stayed shut up all this time: "it's because he wants to stay inside." Having seen the injustice done to Tom Robinson, Jem realises that the outside world can be crueller than the Radley house. This links the Radley plot closely to the trial plot, which might otherwise seem separate.

The climax shows the Radleys' full importance. When Bob Ewell attacks the children on Halloween, it is Boo who rescues them, kills Ewell and carries the injured Jem home. Heck Tate decides to say that Ewell fell on his own knife, arguing that dragging a shy man into the limelight would be a sin, and he declares that the town should "let the dead bury the dead". Scout's response, that exposing Boo would be "sort of like shootin' a mockingbird", connects him directly to the

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novel's central symbol. Like Tom Robinson, Boo is an innocent who has done nothing but good, yet is damaged by society's prejudice. Unlike Tom, he is protected at the end, which offers a small measure of hope.

Finally, standing on the Radley porch, Scout sees the street from Boo's point of view, fulfilling Atticus's advice that you never understand someone until you "climb into his skin and walk around in it". Her reflection that Boo gave them "our lives" shows how fully her judgement has changed. Writing in the late 1950s, as the Civil Rights Movement challenged segregation, Lee uses the Radley family to show readers that fear of the unfamiliar is learned and can be unlearned. The Radleys are therefore important not only as a mystery that drives the plot, but as the means by which Scout, and the reader, grow from prejudice towards empathy.

5 Unhappiness runs through To Kill a Mockingbird in many forms, and Lee deliberately places the trivial beside the heart-breaking. Scout's frustrations at school and at family gatherings sit alongside the grief of Tom Robinson's family and the loneliness of Mayella Ewell and Boo Radley. Because the story is told through Scout's eyes, the reader experiences unhappiness as she does: at first as a matter of personal annoyance, and later as a recognition of the suffering that injustice causes others. This movement from small grievances to serious sorrow is the structure of a bildungsroman, and it allows Lee to show how a child in 1930s Alabama, and the reader of 1960, comes to understand the cruelty of a prejudiced society.

The most trivial unhappiness belongs to Scout in the early chapters. On her first day at school, she is punished by Miss Caroline for being able to read and then for trying to explain that Walter Cunningham cannot accept money he cannot pay

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back. Her indignation is comic, and she later rubs Walter's nose in the dirt in revenge. At Finch's Landing at Christmas, she resents Aunt Alexandra's insistence on dresses and being made to sit with the younger children. These episodes are humorous, but Lee uses them to show the restrictions of Southern society. Alexandra's wish for Scout to become a lady reflects the ideal of the Southern belle, which protected women but also confined them, and Scout's unhappiness at being forced into this role is an early form of resistance.

However, even Scout's minor unhappiness is linked to bigger issues. When her cousin Francis repeats the insults that adults in the family have used about Atticus defending Tom, Scout attacks him. Her anger is childish, but its cause is serious: the town's racism has entered her own family. Similarly, Jem's fury at Mrs Dubose's insults leads him to destroy her camellias, and his punishment of reading to her reveals her own private suffering. After her death, Atticus explains that she was battling a morphine addiction and calls her the bravest person he knew, defining courage as knowing "you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway". Lee shows that unhappiness can also produce dignity, and that people the children dislike may be fighting hidden battles.

The children also witness the unhappiness of others who are isolated. Dill, who runs away from his mother and stepfather and hides under Scout's bed, explains that they do not seem to want him around. His habit of inventing stories about his father suggests a lonely child compensating for neglect. Boo Radley's unhappiness is never directly spoken, but his attempts at friendship through the gifts in the tree, and the cruelty of Nathan Radley cementing the knothole, suggest a man imprisoned by his family. Jem's silent crying after the tree is filled shows that he recognises this sadness. Lee suggests that Maycomb's rigid social codes create loneliness wherever someone does not fit.

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The heart-breaking unhappiness of the novel is centred on the trial. Mayella Ewell, living in poverty behind the town dump with a violent, drunken father, is so isolated that Scout concludes she "must have been the loneliest person in the world". Her tears in court are those of a frightened young woman trapped between her father's abuse and the rules of a racist society. Tom Robinson's unhappiness is even more profound. His simple admission, "I felt right sorry for her", is treated as an outrage because a black man was not supposed to pity a white woman. In the Jim Crow South, the word of a white woman, however poor, outweighed that of a black man, and Lee's original readers would have recognised echoes of the Scottsboro case of the early 1930s, in which young black men were falsely accused of rape.

The verdict brings unhappiness to the younger characters as well. Dill is made to cry by the way Mr Gilmer sneers at Tom, and Dolphus Raymond tells him he is crying about "the simple hell people give other people". Jem's tears and his protest, "It ain't right, Atticus", show the collapse of his belief in justice. Lee presents this as the painful loss of innocence that comes with growing up. When Tom is shot seventeen times while trying to escape from prison, the grief becomes overwhelming. Helen collapses when Atticus brings the news, and Lee shows the cost of injustice reaching beyond one man to his wife and children. Mr Underwood's editorial comparing Tom's death to the senseless slaughter of songbirds connects his suffering to the central mockingbird symbol.

Some characters, though, show that unhappiness can be faced with courage. Miss Maudie responds to the loss of her house with humour, claiming she has always wanted a smaller house and more room for her garden. Atticus, hurt by the town's response, refuses to show bitterness, even when Bob Ewell spits in his face.

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Through such figures, Lee suggests that dignity is a choice.

Writing in the late 1950s, as the Civil Rights Movement challenged segregation, Lee uses the range of unhappiness in the novel to guide her readers. The trivial grievances of childhood draw us in, but they are gradually replaced by an awareness that the deepest unhappiness is caused by prejudice. By the end, when Scout stands on the Radley porch and sees the world from Boo's point of view, she has learned that understanding others' suffering is the beginning of moral maturity.

6 Slim is important in Of Mice and Men because he represents the best of what a man could be in the harsh world of the 1930s ranch. Described as "the prince of the ranch", he holds an authority that comes not from money or ownership but from skill, wisdom and natural dignity. Steinbeck uses him as a moral centre and a point of comparison for the other men, as a friend and confidant for George, and finally as the one character who understands and accepts George's decision to kill Lennie. Through Slim, Steinbeck suggests that compassion and understanding are possible even in a society shaped by loneliness and economic struggle.

Steinbeck's introduction of Slim is unlike that of any other character. He enters the bunkhouse and moves "with a majesty only achieved by royalty and master craftsmen". The language of royalty, echoed in the phrase "prince of the ranch", elevates a worker who drives mule teams to the status of a nobleman. As a jerkline skinner, Slim could drive a long team of mules with a single line, and this skill gives him a standing that the other workers respect. Steinbeck adds that "his slightest word was taken" as authority, and that there was "a gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke". The calm,

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measured rhythm of the description reflects Slim's own steadiness. His "hatchet face" is described as "ageless", which gives him an almost timeless, mythic quality, and some readers have linked him to the knightly figures of the Arthurian legends that Steinbeck loved, a model of honour among ordinary men.

Slim's importance is clear in the social hierarchy of the ranch. During the Great Depression, most ranch hands were itinerant workers, drifting from job to job with no security, and Steinbeck had worked alongside such men in the Salinas Valley. Slim's skill gives him a more stable position, yet he does not abuse it. In contrast, Curley, the boss's son, has power only through his father and constantly tries to prove himself through aggression. When Curley suspects Slim of being with his wife, Slim's cold reply forces Curley to back down and apologise. Whit's earlier warning that nobody knows what Slim can do suggests that his authority does not need to be proven by violence. Steinbeck therefore contrasts true authority, based on respect, with false authority based on inheritance and fear.

Slim also shows a balance of practicality and kindness. When his dog has a litter of nine pups, he says he "drowned four of 'em right off" because she could not feed them all. This seems harsh, but it reflects the realism of ranch life, where survival matters more than sentiment. Yet he generously gives Lennie a puppy, and he is the first to see past Lennie's size to his innocence, saying that he is like a kid. Slim's view that he can tell a mean man when he sees one, and that Lennie is not mean, shows his perceptiveness.

His role in the shooting of Candy's dog is important. When Carlson complains about the smell and argues that the dog should be shot, the men look to Slim, and his quiet agreement seals the dog's fate. Slim's decision is not cruel, but it shows that, on the ranch, anything that is no longer useful is disposed of. This

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episode foreshadows the ending, and Candy's later regret that he should have shot his dog himself plants the idea that George will eventually take responsibility for Lennie.

Slim is crucial to George's story because he is the only character George truly confides in. George reveals what happened in Weed and admits that he used to play tricks on Lennie, such as telling him to jump into the river even though he could not swim. Slim's comment about how few men travel together, and his wondering whether everybody in the world is scared of each other, captures the loneliness of migrant workers, whose lives allowed little trust or companionship. By listening without judgement, Slim offers George the friendship that the world of the novel otherwise denies. After Lennie crushes Curley's hand, Slim protects George and Lennie by persuading Curley to say his hand was caught in a machine, saving them from being sacked.

Slim's moral authority is most significant at the end. When Curley's wife is found dead, it is Slim who calmly assesses the situation and tells George that, if Lennie is caught, he will be locked up or killed brutally by Curley. This helps George reach his terrible decision. After George shoots Lennie, Slim alone understands. His words, "You hadda, George. I swear you hadda", are repeated for emphasis, offering absolution. He leads George away, saying, "Me an' you'll go in an' get a drink." In contrast, Carlson's final question, "Now what the hell ya suppose is eatin' them two guys?", shows the insensitivity of the other men. The novel's last image is of the one friendship that has survived, however briefly.

Slim is also notable for his lack of prejudice. Unlike most of the men, he does not mock Crooks, and he greets Curley's wife politely and calls out a friendly word to her, treating her with a basic courtesy others deny her. At a time when racism,

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sexism and disregard for the old and disabled were common, Slim's fairness makes him a model of decency.

Overall, Slim is important because he embodies the values Steinbeck admired: dignity in labour, compassion and moral understanding. Yet he has no dream of his own and remains part of the ranch system, which perhaps suggests that even the best men of the Depression era could offer comfort, but could not change the harsh society around them.

7 Loss is at the heart of Of Mice and Men. Almost every character has already lost something before the story begins, whether family, health, status or opportunity, and the novel's structure moves relentlessly towards the greatest loss of all, Lennie's death and the end of the dream that sustained George, Lennie and Candy. Steinbeck, writing in 1937 during the Great Depression, presents loss as both personal and social: his characters suffer individually, but their losses also reflect the economic collapse that left millions of Americans without land, work or security. Even the title, taken from Burns's line about the best laid schemes of mice and men going wrong, prepares us for plans that will be lost.

Lennie's story is structured as a series of losses that grow in seriousness. In the opening chapter, George takes away the dead mouse Lennie has been stroking, and we learn that Lennie lost the mice his Aunt Clara gave him because he petted them too hard. Lennie's longing for soft things is childlike, yet each loss is caused by his own strength, which he cannot control. The pattern repeats with the puppy in the barn, and finally with Curley's wife, whose neck he breaks when she panics. Steinbeck uses this cyclical structure to make the final loss feel tragically inevitable. Lennie's fear that George will take the rabbits away from him shows

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that he understands loss only as the removal of comfort, which makes him even more vulnerable.

George's experience of loss is more complex. He often complains that he has lost his freedom by looking after Lennie: "I could get along so easy and so nice if I didn't have you on my tail." In a society where itinerant workers drifted alone from ranch to ranch, George could have lived the typical life of the migrant, spending his wages in town. Yet his anger is a mask for his dependence on Lennie, who gives his life purpose. When he shoots Lennie in the final chapter, he loses not only his friend but also his dream. His admission to Candy, "I think I knowed we'd never do her", shows that the hope of land was always fragile, and his final state suggests that he will now become one of the lonely ranch hands he described at the start, the guys who "are the loneliest guys in the world".

Candy embodies loss through age and disability. He has lost a hand in a ranch accident and is reduced to working as a swamper, and he fears that the boss will "can" him when he is no longer useful. The shooting of his old dog by Carlson is a key moment. The dog was his closest companion, and the silence in the bunkhouse as the men wait for the shot is one of the most painful scenes in the novel. Candy's later regret, "I ought to of shot that dog myself", foreshadows George's decision to kill Lennie himself. In the Depression, there was very little social security for the old or disabled, and Candy's offer of his savings to join the dream shows his desperation to avoid being discarded like his dog. When he finds Curley's wife's body, he realises the dream is lost, and his bitter words to her corpse show the depth of his despair.

Crooks has suffered the loss of family and belonging. He tells Lennie about his childhood on his father's chicken ranch, where white children came to play, but

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now he is isolated in his room by the stable because he is black. His reflection that "A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody" reveals how loss of company damages the mind. Crooks briefly allows himself to hope he might join the dream, but when Curley's wife threatens him with lynching, he loses even this small dignity, retreating into himself. Steinbeck shows how racism in 1930s California, where segregation was common, stripped black workers of both community and self-respect.

Curley's wife's losses are perhaps the most poignant because she is never even given a name. She tells Lennie that she could have been in the movies and believes her mother stole the letter from a man who promised to make her an actress. She married Curley out of spite, losing her chance of independence, and she is lonely on a ranch where the men avoid her. Her confession that she never gets to talk to anybody shows that she has lost companionship as well as dreams. Her death is the final loss, and Steinbeck's description of her afterwards, when the meanness and the ache for attention have left her face, makes her seem young and innocent. Through her, Steinbeck explores the limited opportunities for women at the time, when marriage was often the only route to security.

Even Curley suffers a loss of pride when Lennie crushes his hand, and his violent pursuit of Lennie at the end seems partly driven by humiliation. Loss on the ranch therefore breeds anger and cruelty as well as sadness.

Steinbeck's circular structure reinforces the theme. The novel begins and ends at the pool by the Salinas River, but the peaceful setting of the opening is replaced by images of death, such as the heron swallowing the water snake. The natural world continues while human hopes are lost. Ultimately, Steinbeck presents loss as the defining experience of the Depression era: the American Dream of owning land

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and living "off the fatta the lan"' is shown to be unattainable for men like George and Lennie. The novel's tragedy is not only that Lennie dies, but that, in a society without security, the loss of hope seems inevitable for everyone.

8 In my opinion, the character with the greatest power in The Whale Rider is Kahu. At first this seems surprising, because Koro Apirana is the chief, holds the sacred knowledge of the tribe and controls who is allowed to learn it, while Kahu is a small girl he repeatedly rejects. Yet Witi Ihimaera deliberately redefines power. Koro's power is the authority of an office and a tradition; Kahu's is a deeper spiritual power, connected to the ancestors and to the natural world, which in the end saves the tribe. By giving this power to a girl, Ihimaera questions the male-centred structures of Maori leadership while still honouring Maori culture.

Kahu's power is signalled from her birth. She is given the name Kahutia Te Rangi, the name of the ancestor of Whangara, Paikea, the original whale rider, which angers Koro because he believes the name should belong to a male heir. The name links her to the mythic Prologue, in which Paikea rides the whale to Whangara and throws spears that become life on the land, so Ihimaera quietly tells the reader that Kahu inherits the founder's destiny. Nanny Flowers and Rawiri bury Kahu's birth cord at the marae, a Maori custom that ties a child to her land. This ritual gives her a rootedness and belonging that Koro's rejection cannot undo.

Throughout the novel, Kahu's power is shown through her quiet persistence rather than force. She loves Koro devotedly even though he constantly sends her away, and she sits secretly at the back of his lessons for the boys, absorbing the chants and the knowledge he refuses to give her. When she wins a school speech competition and dedicates her speech to her great-grandfather, he does not

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attend. Ihimaera, through Rawiri's affectionate narration, makes the reader feel both her vulnerability and her strength: she never stops reaching for her heritage. This suggests that true power lies in endurance and love, qualities Koro has not yet learned to value.

The episode of the carved stone is the clearest proof of her power. Koro takes the boys out in a boat and throws a stone into the sea, as a test of which of them might be worthy to lead, but none can retrieve it. Later Kahu dives down and brings it back, and Nanny Flowers tells Rawiri to keep this a secret until the right time. Kahu has achieved, without fuss, what all the chosen boys failed to do. Her affinity with the dolphins and sea creatures, who seem to recognise her, reinforces that her power comes from the ancestral bond between the tribe and the sea.

The climax confirms her power completely. When the herd of whales, led by the ancient bull whale with the spiral tattoo, strands at Whangara, the men's efforts to save it fail, and Koro despairs. Kahu walks into the sea, speaks to the bull whale, climbs onto its head and rides it out, and the herd follows. Her apparent sacrifice saves both the whales and, symbolically, the people, because the whales represent the tribe's survival. When she is found and taken to hospital, Koro finally accepts her as the leader he had been searching for. The structure of the novel, moving through the seasons from Spring to Winter, presents this as a natural cycle completed: the whale rider has returned, and she is a girl.

Kahu's power is especially significant when compared with the other powerful characters. Koro's power is real: he is guardian of language and custom, and he helps set up the Kohanga Reo language nest. But his power is limited by his rigid belief that leadership must be male, and Ihimaera shows him becoming helpless when tradition alone cannot save the whales. Nanny Flowers is powerful in a

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different way, as she cheerfully declares that she wins their arguments and that she is his chief. She descends from strong women ancestors such as Muriwai and Mihi Kotukutuku, who challenged men's authority, and she reminds readers that Maori women have a history of power. Even the bull whale, nostalgic for his master Paikea, is powerful but cannot survive alone. Kahu combines Nanny's female strength with Koro's spiritual knowledge and the whale's ancient bond, which is why she is the most powerful of all.

The context of the novel deepens this reading. Published in 1987, The Whale Rider belongs to a period of Maori cultural revival, when Kohanga Reo were founded to save the Maori language and Maori people were reasserting their rights to land and identity. Ihimaera, himself of Ngati Porou descent, celebrates that revival through Koro's devotion to tradition. However, he also suggests that the culture must adapt, especially in its attitude to women, if it is to survive. At the same time, the whales' suffering from nuclear testing in the Pacific, a major issue after French tests at Moruroa and the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior in 1985, shows a natural world under threat. Kahu's power to heal the bond between people and nature therefore carries an environmental message as well as a cultural one.

Overall, Kahu has the greatest power because hers is the power that changes things. Koro's authority preserves the past, but Kahu's spiritual strength, humility and courage secure the future. Ihimaera uses her to suggest that real leadership is not a matter of gender or title, but of a deep connection to ancestors, land and sea.

9 Change is at the heart of The Whale Rider because the novel asks how a people can hold on to their identity in a world that is changing around them. Witi

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Ihimaera presents change as both a threat and a necessity: modern life, technology and environmental damage threaten the Maori of Whangara and the whales alike, yet the tribe can only survive if its leader is willing to change his own deepest assumptions. The most important change in the novel is therefore not external but internal, as Koro learns that the future of his people can be embodied in a girl.

Koro Apirana begins the novel as a man who fears change above all. As chief, he believes that Maori knowledge is being lost and that only a strong male heir can restore it. When his great-granddaughter Kahu is born rather than the boy he wanted, he is bitterly disappointed and treats her as an obstacle. His resistance is presented with some sympathy: he is not simply cruel, but a man in his seventies trying to protect a culture that colonisation has damaged. When Porourangi takes him to see how another tribe is "organising its youth" for "new challenges and the new technology", the problem weighs "heavily on his mind". Porourangi's image of him as "an old whale stranded in an alien present" is one of the most revealing lines in the novel, because it links Koro directly to the stranded bull whale later on. Both are ancient, powerful and in danger of dying because the world has changed around them.

Ihimaera shows that Koro's refusal to change his ideas about gender is what keeps the tribe from moving forward. He holds classes for the boys in the meeting house to pass on the sacred chants and knowledge, but excludes Kahu, even though she learns them secretly and loves him devotedly. Nanny Flowers, who calls him an "old paka", constantly challenges him, arguing that rules can be bent for a good reason. Her own ancestry, from women such as Muriwai and Mihi Kotukutuku who claimed authority usually reserved for men, suggests that Maori tradition itself was never as rigid as Koro believes. The novel therefore implies that change does not

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mean abandoning tradition; it can mean rediscovering parts of it that have been forgotten.

The stone episode marks a turning point for the reader, if not yet for Koro. When none of the boys can retrieve the stone he throws into the sea, Koro is plunged into despair, while Kahu quietly brings it back. Nanny Flowers keeps this secret, waiting for the moment when Koro is ready to change. Ihimaera structures the novel through the seasons, from Spring to Winter, and this gradual movement suggests that change, like the seasons, cannot be rushed but will come.

The climax completes Koro's transformation. When the whales strand and the men fail to return the bull whale to the sea, Koro believes his people are doomed. Kahu rides the whale out to sea, and the herd follows. Afterwards, at her hospital bedside, Koro finally accepts that she is the leader he had been searching for all along. This moment shows that change is not defeat: by abandoning his belief in male superiority, Koro saves what matters most to him, the survival of his people and their link to Paikea.

Rawiri, the narrator, undergoes his own important change. Like many young Maori of the 1970s and 1980s, he leaves home seeking opportunity, going to Australia and then Papua New Guinea. Abroad, he witnesses racism towards indigenous people and begins to feel how much his own home and identity mean to him. His return to Whangara reverses the pattern of young people drifting away into the cities, and it suggests that personal change can lead people back towards their roots rather than away from them. His growth also allows him to tell Kahu's story with affection and understanding.

Change in the novel is also environmental, and here it is presented as frightening.

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In the italicised whale sections, the herd mourns calves killed by nuclear radiation, and the bull whale, remembering the days when he carried Paikea, cannot understand why the seas have become so dangerous. The novel was published in 1987, soon after French nuclear testing at Moruroa provoked protests across the Pacific and the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior was sunk in Auckland harbour in 1985. New Zealand's history of whaling, which had long since declined as whale numbers fell, adds further weight to the image of whales stranding and dying. Ihimaera suggests that human damage to the natural world has broken the old harmony, the "oneness" that Koro speaks of, and that humanity itself must change to restore it.

Finally, the novel's wider context is the Maori cultural renaissance of the late twentieth century, when language nests, the Kohanga Reo, were founded to protect te reo Maori from disappearing, and Maori communities were reasserting their identity. Koro's work to keep the language alive reflects this movement. Ihimaera, however, insists that this revival must include women and young people, and must engage with the modern world rather than retreat from it.

In conclusion, change is important because it is what the whole novel moves towards. Ihimaera shows that refusing change can leave a culture stranded like an old whale, while embracing the right kind of change, one rooted in respect for ancestors and nature, allows it to survive. Kahu's ride and Koro's acceptance suggest that the tradition is not broken by change, but renewed.

10 An-mei Hsu is perhaps the clearest example in The Joy Luck Club of a woman who has had to learn to speak. Brought up in a culture that taught girls to swallow their feelings, she inherits suffering from her mother and grandmother,

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but she also inherits the lesson that silence can be broken. Through her two stories, "Scar" and "Magpies", and through her daughter Rose's chapters, Amy Tan presents An-mei as a character shaped by the oppression of women in early twentieth century China, who passes on to her American daughter a hard-won belief in finding one's own voice.

An-mei's childhood is defined by loss and by being told not to feel. Her mother, widowed young, becomes a concubine to a rich man, and An-mei's grandmother, Popo, regards this as so shameful that the mother's name is not to be spoken, and An-mei is told she is a ghost. In the early twentieth century a widow who remarried, especially as a lowly concubine, brought disgrace on the family, so Tan shows that An-mei's first grief is created by social rules rather than by any individual cruelty. The scar on An-mei's neck, caused when boiling soup spills on her as her mother returns, becomes a powerful symbol: a wound that heals over and fades, just as the memory of pain is made invisible, yet never disappears. An-mei's narration of the scar is matter-of-fact, suggesting how deeply she has learned to hide hurt.

The key scene in "Scar" is her mother cutting a piece of flesh from her own arm to make a healing soup for the dying Popo, who had disowned her. An-mei presents this as the deepest form of respect a daughter can show, something "in your bones". This reflects the Confucian ideal of filial piety in traditional Chinese culture, but Tan makes it ambiguous. The act is beautiful in its love, yet it also shows a woman whose value is measured entirely by how much of herself she will give away. An-mei grows up admiring this kind of sacrifice, which helps explain why she later struggles to understand her daughter's very different American life.

In "Magpies", An-mei lives in Wu Tsing's house in Tientsin and slowly discovers the

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truth. Her mother did not choose this life: she was tricked into it by Second Wife and forced into the position of a concubine, and the boy Syaudi, whom Second Wife claims as her own, is really her mother's son. Tan exposes the polygamous, patriarchal household as a place where women compete for status because they have no other power. The pearl necklace from Second Wife, which An-mei's mother crushes to reveal it as glass, teaches An-mei to see through false kindness. When her mother finally kills herself by eating opium, timing it before the new year so that Wu Tsing, fearing her ghost, will treat An-mei and Syaudi as honoured children, the sacrifice is both desperate and strategic. It is the only way a powerless woman can secure her daughter's future. An-mei then crushes the false pearl beneath her foot and says that on that day she learned to shout. This is the turning point of her character: she turns her mother's silent suffering into defiance.

An-mei's story about the turtle who eats the tears of women who cry, and turns them into magpies who laugh, carries her central message: crying only feeds someone else's joy. At the end of the chapter she describes Chinese peasants beating drums to drive away the magpies that are eating their crops, an image of the oppressed finally rising up, which Tan links to the revolutionary changes in modern China. An-mei's personal growth is therefore placed within a larger historical awakening.

In America, An-mei's strength coexists with fatalism. In "Half and Half", Rose recalls the family trip to the beach when her four-year-old brother Bing drowns. An-mei believes absolutely that her faith and her nengkan, her ability to make things happen, will bring him back, and she even tries to bargain with the sea. When he is never found, she places her Bible under the short leg of the kitchen table. Tan presents this with a mixture of humour and great sadness: the woman

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who believed she could control fate learns that she cannot, but she does not completely give up faith, she simply puts it in a place where it still props things up.

An-mei's relationship with Rose is a source of tension because Rose has inherited her mother's passivity without her mother's toughness. Rose lets her husband Ted make every decision and, when the marriage fails, she goes to a psychiatrist rather than to her mother, which An-mei resents. In "Without Wood", An-mei urges Rose to speak up for herself, warning that a person who listens to everyone has no backbone of their own. When Rose finally confronts Ted and refuses to be pushed out of the house, it is clear that An-mei's lesson has been passed on. Tan suggests that the language barrier and the cultural gap between immigrant mothers and American-born daughters can be bridged, though only slowly.

An-mei is therefore a character of quiet but considerable strength. Tan, whose own mother left behind children in China and suffered in an unhappy marriage, uses An-mei to show that the silenced women of the older generation did not lack courage. Her journey from a child told to forget her mother to a mother who insists that her own daughter must not stay silent makes her one of the most hopeful figures in the novel.

11 Sacrifice runs through The Joy Luck Club like a family inheritance. Amy Tan shows the Chinese mothers making enormous sacrifices, often forced upon them by war, poverty and a patriarchal society, while their American daughters, raised in comfort and freedom, struggle to recognise what was given up for them. Lindo Jong's claim that she "sacrificed" her life to keep her parents' promise captures the central irony of the novel: sacrifice is presented as an act of love and duty, yet the

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mothers want their daughters to inherit their strength without having to repeat their suffering.

Lindo's own story, "The Red Candle", shows sacrifice demanded by tradition. Promised in marriage at two years old to Tyan-yu, the son of the Huang family, she is sent to live with them as a child-servant after floods force her own family to move away. Her mother's apparent coldness is itself a kind of sacrifice, a way of preparing them both for separation. Lindo is married at sixteen to a spoiled boy who does not want her, and she obeys because she is bound by her parents' word. In early twentieth century China, arranged marriages and the low status of daughters meant that a girl's life could be signed away for family honour, so her "sacrifice" is not freely chosen. Yet Tan gives her quiet agency: Lindo vows never to forget herself, and she cleverly frees herself by inventing a dream in which the Huang ancestors reject the marriage. This suggests that sacrifice need not mean total self-erasure, and Lindo later teaches Waverly the art of "invisible strength", which Waverly uses to win at chess.

An-mei's mother makes perhaps the most extreme sacrifices in the novel. In "Scar", she cuts flesh from her own arm to make soup for Popo, the mother who disowned her for becoming a concubine, an act of filial piety rooted in traditional Chinese belief. In "Magpies", trapped as a concubine in Wu Tsing's household, she kills herself with opium, timing her death so that Wu Tsing, fearing her spirit, will raise her children with honour. Tan presents this sacrifice as both heroic and appalling, a sign of how little power women had in a polygamous household. Crucially, the sacrifice produces a change in An-mei, who learns to shout, so the mother's death gives the daughter a voice.

Suyuan Woo's sacrifice frames the whole novel. Fleeing Kweilin during the Japanese

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invasion, sick with dysentery and convinced she is dying, she leaves her twin baby daughters by the roadside with jewellery and money, hoping someone will take them in. The Second Sino-Japanese War killed millions of Chinese civilians, and Tan uses Suyuan's story to show how history forced impossible choices on ordinary women. This episode closely mirrors the life of Tan's own mother, who left three daughters behind in China and was only reunited with them decades later, which gives the novel's ending a strong personal weight. Suyuan also makes smaller sacrifices in America, cleaning a neighbour's house in exchange for Jing-mei's piano lessons. In "Two Kinds", however, Jing-mei sees only pressure, shouting that she wishes she were dead like the babies in China. The cruelty of the line, from a daughter who does not fully understand what she is saying, shows how invisible the mothers' sacrifices are to their children.

Ying-ying St. Clair sacrifices something less visible but just as important: her spirit. After a first marriage to a man who abandons her and her painful decision to end that pregnancy, she drifts into marrying Clifford St. Clair, who renames her Betty and translates her silences into his own words. In America her Chinese identity is erased, and she becomes almost a ghost in her own home. Ying-ying's sacrifice is passive rather than heroic, which is exactly why she wants Lena to avoid it. Lena's marriage to Harold, in which every cost is split equally, shows a daughter sacrificing her own needs in the name of fairness, and the vase on the wobbly table, which Ying-ying breaks, symbolises a marriage that Lena knew would collapse. Ying-ying's decision to tell her story is an attempt to give her daughter the "tiger spirit" she lost.

The daughters' journeys show them gradually understanding these sacrifices. Waverly sees her mother as critical and controlling but comes to realise how much Lindo has given up. Rose, who sacrifices herself to Ted's wishes, is urged by

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An-mei to speak up rather than give in. Most movingly, Jing-mei travels to China after Suyuan's death to meet the twin half-sisters, and as they embrace she sees her mother in their faces. Tan structures the novel so that this final reunion completes the sacrifice Suyuan made decades before: what was lost is, in a sense, recovered through her daughter.

Overall, sacrifice is important because it connects the generations and the two cultures of the novel. Tan suggests that the mothers' sacrifices were shaped by a society that gave women little choice, and that their daughters, with greater freedom in America, owe them understanding. Ultimately, the mothers do not want their daughters to sacrifice themselves in the same way; they want them to turn their mothers' suffering into strength and self-worth, which is the true purpose of sharing their stories.

12 I largely agree that Ezinma is a very significant character, although her significance lies less in what she does than in what she reveals. She is not a driver of the plot in the way that Ikemefuna's death or the arrival of the missionaries is, yet Achebe uses her as a lens through which we see the hidden tenderness in Okonkwo, the suffering of Igbo mothers, and the strict gender roles of pre-colonial Umuofia. In a novel written partly to show that African societies had complex emotional lives, Ezinma matters because she proves that Okonkwo's world is not simply one of violence.

Ezinma's first significance is the light she throws on Okonkwo. Throughout the novel he rules his household "with a heavy hand" and is driven by a fear of being thought weak like his father, Unoka. With Ezinma, however, his guard slips. He shows open favouritism towards her, enjoys her company and often thinks that she

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should have been a boy. This repeated wish is double-edged. On one hand it is affectionate, because he values her quick mind and boldness above Nwoye's gentleness; on the other it exposes how completely his idea of worth is tied to masculinity, so that even his love is expressed through regret that she is female. After he kills Ikemefuna and cannot eat for two days, it is Ezinma who brings him food, and he recovers a little in her presence. Achebe seems to suggest that the only relationship in which Okonkwo can be gentle is with someone who poses no threat to his masculine reputation, which is a quietly tragic insight into his character.

Ezinma is also significant because of her mother, Ekwefi. Ekwefi has borne ten children and nine have died in infancy, so Ezinma is her only surviving child and the centre of her life. The belief that Ezinma is an ogbanje, a child who repeatedly dies and returns to torment its mother, places her at the heart of Igbo spiritual life. When the medicine man Okagbue makes her reveal where her iyi-uwa is buried and digs up the smooth pebble, the scene is tense and communal, and Achebe presents it without mockery. For a 1958 readership used to colonial writing that dismissed African belief as superstition, this episode treats Igbo cosmology with seriousness and shows that it gave people a way of understanding terrible infant mortality. Ezinma therefore helps Achebe achieve his wider purpose of presenting Igbo culture from within.

The mother and daughter relationship is unusually equal. Ezinma calls her mother by name, and they secretly share eggs, a food children were not supposed to eat in case it tempted them to steal. These small details suggest that within the strict patriarchal structure, women created spaces of intimacy and quiet defiance. Ekwefi's love for Ezinma is what drives one of the most memorable episodes in the novel, when Chielo, the priestess of Agbala, carries Ezinma on her back through

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the villages to the Oracle's cave at night. Ekwefi follows despite being warned not to, and Okonkwo, we later learn, goes back to the cave several times. Here Ezinma unites her parents in shared fear, and it is one of the few moments where Okonkwo's actions are guided by love rather than pride. The episode also shows the absolute authority of the Oracle in Igbo life, the same authority that earlier demanded Ikemefuna's death, so Ezinma's survival offers a gentler mirror of that earlier sacrifice.

Ezinma's significance continues into the exile and return. In Mbanta she understands her father's ambitions better than anyone and, when many suitors come, she refuses to marry until the family returns to Umuofia, also persuading her half-sister Obiageli to wait. This loyalty serves Okonkwo's plan to return in style, and it shows that Ezinma, unlike Nwoye, accepts and supports the values of the clan. Achebe draws a pointed contrast: the son Okonkwo needed to carry on his name abandons him for Christianity, while the daughter he could not use as an heir is the one who most shares his spirit. This irony deepens the tragedy, because Okonkwo's rigid belief that only sons matter blinds him to the strength in front of him.

However, it would be fair to say that Ezinma's importance has limits. She has little role in the final part of the novel, where colonialism, the church and the destruction of clan unity take over, and the central conflict of the book is between Okonkwo and change, not within his family. Her story is largely complete once she survives illness, and Achebe uses other characters, such as Obierika and Nwoye, to carry the main ideas of the ending. In that sense she is a significant supporting character rather than a central one.

Overall, I agree with the view to a large extent. Ezinma is not the engine of the

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plot, but she is essential to the novel's meaning. Through her, Achebe humanises Okonkwo, shows the emotional cost of a high infant death rate, presents Igbo religion with respect, and exposes the irony of a man who values masculinity so much that he cannot see that his daughter possesses the very qualities he admires. In a story about a society that falls apart, Ezinma represents the warmth and loyalty within it that colonial accounts ignored.

13 Honour is central to Things Fall Apart because it is the value around which both Okonkwo's life and the whole of Umuofia's society are organised. Achebe shows that Igbo honour was earned through achievement, titles and loyalty to the clan, which challenges colonial assumptions that African societies lacked order or values. Yet he also shows that Okonkwo's personal version of honour is narrower and more brittle than the clan's, and the tragedy of the novel lies in the gap between the two, a gap that colonialism exploits until honour itself seems to collapse.

From the opening chapter, honour is something won through action. Okonkwo first brings honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat, who had been unbeaten for seven years, and his fame spreads "like a bushfire". Achebe stresses that in Umuofia "age was respected" but "achievement was revered", which presents a society that rewards effort rather than inheritance. Okonkwo has taken two titles, owns large barns of yams and has three wives, all visible markers of status. In a novel published in 1958, two years before Nigerian independence, this portrait of a merit-based system with its own titles, courts and rules of conduct is a deliberate answer to writers such as Conrad, who presented Africa as a place without history or civilisation.

Okonkwo's obsession with honour is rooted in shame. His father, Unoka, was lazy,

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took no titles and died in debt, and Okonkwo cannot forget that a playmate once called Unoka an "agbala", a word for a woman and for a man without a title. His whole life is shaped by the fear of resembling him, so honour for Okonkwo becomes the opposite of everything his father was: hard work, aggression and the suppression of gentleness. Achebe suggests that this is a distortion. When Okonkwo beats his wife Ojiugo during the Week of Peace, the priest Ezeani tells him he has offended the earth goddess, and the clan fines him. This is important because it shows that the clan's honour includes restraint and respect for the sacred, whereas Okonkwo's honour is about his own reputation.

The clearest example of this conflict is the death of Ikemefuna. Being chosen to look after the boy, given to Umuofia by Mbaino as compensation, is itself an honour. When the Oracle decrees that Ikemefuna must die, the respected elder Ezeudu warns Okonkwo not to take part because the boy calls him father. Yet when Ikemefuna runs to him crying "My father, they have killed me!", Okonkwo cuts him down because he is "afraid of being thought weak". The heartbreaking simplicity of Ikemefuna's cry makes the reader feel the human cost of Okonkwo's idea of honour. Obierika later says that he would not have disputed the Oracle but would not have done the killing himself, offering a more balanced and humane model of honour. Nwoye's quiet horror at this act begins his alienation from his father, which leads directly to his conversion, so Okonkwo's pursuit of honour destroys the very lineage he wanted to protect.

Honour is also governed by the collective laws of the clan, which can be severe. At Ezeudu's funeral, which honours a man of three titles, Okonkwo's gun explodes and kills Ezeudu's sixteen-year-old son. Although it is an accident, a "female" crime, he must flee to his mother's homeland of Mbanta for seven years, and his compound is destroyed. Achebe presents this without condemning the clan: the punishment

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cleanses the earth of the offence. Obierika, however, wonders why a man should suffer so much for an accident, and his questioning suggests that Igbo society was not static or blindly obedient, but contained thoughtful people who examined its customs. Obierika's honourable friendship, as he sells Okonkwo's yams and brings him the money, shows another form of honour based on loyalty.

When Okonkwo returns, he finds that the arrival of Christianity and colonial government has turned the old system of honour upside down. Some men have abandoned their titles, the church welcomes outcasts and osu, and the egwugwu, the masked ancestral spirits who represent the clan's highest authority, are dishonoured when Enoch unmasks one. The clan's response, burning the church, is an attempt to restore honour, but the District Commissioner tricks the leaders into a meeting, imprisons them and has them humiliated before a fine is paid. For a proud people this is a deep degradation, and Achebe shows how colonial power works partly by stripping away dignity.

The ending brings the theme to its bitter conclusion. Okonkwo kills the head messenger at the meeting, but when the clan lets the other messengers escape he realises that Umuofia "would not go to war". His suicide is an abomination in Igbo custom, so the man who lived entirely for honour dies in a way that means his own clansmen cannot touch his body. Obierika's angry words, that Okonkwo was one of the greatest men in Umuofia and will now be buried like a dog, expose the tragedy. Achebe then switches to the District Commissioner, who plans to give Okonkwo's story only a paragraph in his book, "The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger". This final irony shows how the coloniser erases African honour altogether, which is exactly the distortion Achebe's novel exists to correct.

Honour is therefore important because it structures the society Achebe recreates,

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drives Okonkwo's tragic flaw and measures the damage colonialism causes. Achebe honours Igbo culture by showing its values in their full complexity, while warning that honour pursued without flexibility or compassion can become self-destructive.