

LITERATURES IN ENGLISH:
AMERICAN & POSTCOLONIAL

BA ENGLISH V SEMESTER CORE COURSE

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SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

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Study material

For V SEMESTER

BA ENGLISH - CORE COURSE

LITERATURES IN ENGLISH: AMERICAN & POSTCOLONIAL

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AMERICAN LITERATURE

MODULE I: POETRY

I HEAR AMERICA SINGING

About the Poet:

Walt Whitman is a famous American poet. He was a prophet of democracy. Whitman is considered as the father of free verse. Walt Whitman is a typical American poet. He always breaks away from the tradition and creates a new trial.

Theme of the poem :

Whitman celebrates the freedom of the individual and the freedom enjoyed in the United States.

Summary :

The poem underscores Whitman's basic attitude towards America ,which is part of his ideal human life. The American nation has based its faith on the creativeness of labour which is glorified in the poem. The catalogue of craftsmen covers not only the length and breadth of the American continent but also the large and varied field of American achievement. This poem expresses Whitman's love of America-its vitality, variety and the massive achievement which is the outcome of the creative endeavor of its entire people. It also illustrates Whitman's technique of using catalogues consisting of a list of people.

The poet hears the varied carols of all the people who contribute to the life and culture of America. The mechanic, the carpenter, the mason, the boatman, the shoe maker and the wood cutter all join in the chorus of the nation. The singing of the mother, the wife and the girl at work expresses their joy and their feeling of fruition. They are highly individualistic men and women. Each person sings 'what belongs to him or her and to none else.' At night young men sing loud 'melodious ' songs. All of the workers mentioned are that of the labour class, they do manual labour not desk work. Most likely they all 'sing' because the work they do causes some sort of sound. Whitman is emphasising that each man can have pride in what he does, even if he doesn't make a lot of money .Each one is important to contribute to the strength of this country. He recognises the value of women's work. Whitman shows the value of work in the American society.

This poem elucidates that an individual had a particular role to play on the society in which he\she thrives. He encourages industry in America to be heard as something pleasant ,as a chorus of many songs. The poet decides to glorify and celebrate work as well as a perception of nationalism. Whitman is celebrating the greatness of America by celebrating the greatness of its individuals. The democratic nature of Whitman's poetry is reflected by his subject matter .He

celebrates mechanics, carpenter s, masons, mothers--the type of people usually not discussed in poems. For Whitman, it is the individual freedom that allows him to be great.

Literary terms used in this poem include rhythm, synecdoche, metaphor, repetition, and imagery.

1. **Rhyme Scheme** - There is no rhyme scheme. Whitman is the father of free verse.
2. **Rhythm and Meter**- There is no metrical pattern. He does use repetition, however, to create rhythm.
3. **Synecdoche** - Of all the "I Hear America Singing" literary terms, none makes its mark more strongly than synecdoche. "America" in line 1 represents individual Americans, more specifically, workers. Each line of the poem is an example of synecdoche (a special type of metaphor where the parts equal the whole or the whole equals the parts). Whitman is celebrating the greatness of America by celebration ,the greatness of its individuals.
4. **Word Choice** - "Carols" in line 1 is a connotatively charged word. It is most often associated with holy songs about Christmas. There is no other way to celebrate individuals and the physical body than connecting it with the physical manifestation of God himself.
5. **Metaphor** - the sounds and actions of laborers working is compared to music. Note that all the jobs described by Whitman require physical effort.
6. **Repetition** - The repetition of "the" in the final seven lines help create rhythm much in the same way the repetition of worker's actions establish a work rhythm.
7. The democratic nature of Whitman's poetry is reflected by his subject matter. He celebrates mechanics, carpenters, masons, mothers--the type of people usually not discussed in poems. For Whitman, it is the individual who matters and the individual freedom that allows him to be great--"Each singing what belongs to her"--that matters.
8. **Theme**: Whitman's poem celebrates the individuals who make America great and the right to individual liberty that makes it possible.

QUESTIONS

1. Who is considered as the father of 'free verse'?
2. What is the title of the poem written by Walt Whitman?
3. What is the theme of the poem 'I hear America singing'?
4. What kind of singing is heard by Whiteman?
5. What is the poet's attitude towards America?
6. Who are the singers in the poem 'I hear America singing'?
7. Who are the women singing in Whiteman's poem?
8. What is the purpose behind their singing?
9. What is the significance of the title poem 'I hear America singing'?
10. How does Whiteman celebrate the greatness of America?

ANECDOTE OF THE JAR

Wallace Stevens

About the Poet

Wallace Stevens is one of America's most respected poets. He was a master stylist, employing an extraordinary vocabulary and a rigorous precision in crafting his poems. But he was also a philosopher of aesthetics, vigorously exploring the notion of poetry as the supreme fusion of the creative imagination and objective reality. Because of the extreme technical and thematic complexity of his work, Stevens was sometimes considered a willfully difficult poet. But he was also acknowledged as an eminent abstractionist and a provocative thinker, and that reputation has continued since his death. In 1975, for instance, noted literary critic Harold Bloom called him "the best and most representative American poet of our time."

THEME OF THE POEM

The poem is about a single subject –the relation between imagination and reality. His view is that it is the man who imposes some kind of order upon nature through his artistic creation (jar). In many of the poems he tries to resolve the conflict between reality and imagination as it appeared to him. Ultimately, he found that reality is indispensable to a poet while composing verses, but his imagination has the right to play upon reality and even transform it when necessary. The idea is that art which is the product of imagination can impose order upon a chaotic state of affairs. But Steven's modernist austerity nakedly reveals that his theme is power. In an American context the poem engages with Emerson's Transcendentalist emphasis on the possessive power of the eye.

ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

The poem celebrates a moment of aesthetic triumph. The poet transfers his own imaginative activity to an inhuman medium-jar. It serves as an extension of the poet's own drive to order, but it achieves dominion over the chaotic wilderness precisely because it is inanimate. The jar in Tennessee represents a purely formal principle of order and this kind of order cannot satisfy the deepest needs of Stevens' imagination. The jar is not placed in Tennessee, on the hills of Tennessee. The jar is round upon a rounded piece of ground, a hill. Hills are calmer and softer than the mountains. We can imagine that this jar is sitting perfectly on the crust of the hill. The jar is looking down upon everything around it and it is affecting the world around it. There is a lot of wilderness around the place where the jar is placed. This place is slovenly unclean and unmaintained. As the jar is placed on the hill, we can imagine that the crust of that hill is bare and grey. The wilderness-the trees, vines, birds, shrunk and rabbits around the hill are being raised up to the hill.

There is something man made in the wilderness now, tarnishing its purity. It could also be a statement about how men and manmade objects often overtake the wild and the natural. Being

placed on the top of a hill the jar gives an apex of human purpose through nature. But the jar asserts authority even more through the implied design of its own rotundity. It is the design of a created object embodying a human, cultural purpose. "Anecdote of a Jar" is a metaphor about the magnetic power of mind and art to order a void (and the void). Stress is laid upon its non-naturalness to accentuate the crucial power of artistic and thus human purpose. Art (mind) governs its antithesis, nature—"It took dominion everywhere," even, indeed, especially, in a non-civilized, non-human place.

QUESTIONS

1. What does the jar symbolize?
2. The jar in Tennessee represents a purely formal principle of order. Do you agree? Justify your answer.
3. Give a critical analysis of Stevens' poem 'Anecdote of the Jar'.

EDGE

Sylvia Plath

About the poet:

Sylvia Plath was an American poet, novelist, and short story writer. Known primarily for her poetry, Plath also wrote a semi-autobiographical novel, *The Bell Jar*, under the pseudonym Victoria Lucas. The book's protagonist, Esther Greenwood, is a bright, ambitious student at Smith College who begins to experience a mental breakdown while interning for a fashion magazine in New York. The plot parallels Plath's experience interning at *Mademoiselle* magazine and subsequent mental breakdown and suicide attempt.

Along with Anne Sexton, Plath is credited with advancing the genre of confessional poetry initiated by Robert Lowell and W.D. Snodgrass. Despite her remarkable artistic, academic, and social success at Smith, Plath suffered from severe depression and underwent a period of psychiatric hospitalization. She graduated from Smith with highest honours in 1955 and went on to Newnham College, Cambridge, in England, on a Fulbright fellowship. Here she met and married the English poet Ted Hughes in 1956. For the following two years she was an instructor in English at Smith College.

In 1960, shortly after Plath and Hughes returned to England from America, her first collection of poems appeared as *The Colossus*. She also gave birth to a daughter, Frieda Rebecca Hughes' and Plath's son, Nicholas Farrar, was born in 1962.

Plath took her own life on the morning of February 11, 1963. Leaving out bread and milk, she completely sealed the rooms between herself and her sleeping children with "wet towels and cloths." Plath then placed her head in the oven while the gas was turned on.

Analysis

Plath's poetry was considered as the first and best examples of "confrontational" and "confessional" poetry of her era. Such poetry takes real life events for the poem's metaphor. Poets often used this tool to "confront" real and imagined characters. Plath's most famous poem, "Daddy" is a confrontational poem that directly "confronts" Plath's anger, sadness, and love for her father as he died as a result from taking proper care of his treatable medical condition. When you apply Plath's confrontational style to the Edge, it suggests that the poetess had considered taking the lives of her children along with her own. The ending of the poem refers to the children being "folded" back into the flower as "petals" and says "we have come so far, it is over." With these lines, Plath alludes to the idea that life is a journey and death is the reward at the end of the journey, not just for herself; but for her children as well.

No one will ever know what Plath's true intentions were, but at the time of her death, she took considerable care to prevent her children being exposed to the fumes by stuffing towels below the doors and leaving milk at her children's bedsides. Despite her tragic death, Plath left behind a legacy of love for her children in her poetry. Sylvia Plath wrote the poem "Edge" six days prior to committing suicide on 11th day of February 1963 (Alexander 2). The poem is alleged to be the author's last work. The form bears an exciting feature. It has ten stanzas, with each having only two lines, seized in an enjambment. The second line of every stanza is at all times

half of the building and denotation of the first line of the subsequent stanza. Therefore, the break of verse is also an edge linking the stanzas, which forms an additional equivalence between form and substance of the poem. The sentences are only concluded once they traverse the edge amid the two stanzas, and character in this piece of literature only appears to discover calm and "achievement" when crossing an edge. In the most common interpretations, this edge is referred to as the one occurring between living and dying. This poem does not pursue a specific rhyme scheme. It has various remarkable inner rhymes or assonant constructions such as child-coiled, sweet-bleed, toga-over, flows-scrolls, and rose-close. These terms do not essentially rhyme in the stern sense but they put in to the tranquil tone of this piece of literature and make stronger the plentiful images given. Two common literary devices, that is metaphor and metonymy will be examined, and afterward discover how they have been used in the 'Edge'.

"Edge" is a short poem in free verse; its twenty lines are divided into ten couplet stanzas. The title suggests a border, perhaps between life and death. One of the last two poems written by Sylvia Plath before her suicide, "Edge" is a meditation on the death of a woman. Written in the third person, the poem may give the impression of offering a detached judgment of the dead woman. This point of view usually suggests a less subjective perspective than the first person. The apparently objective imagery of the poem, however, disguises a high degree of subjectivity on the part of the poet.

"Edge" begins with an implied thesis: A woman is "perfected" by death. It is not difficult to see at least three ways in which the woman has been "perfected." To "perfect" means to complete, to master, or to make flawless. While literally true that the woman has completed her life, "perfected" also suggests that the woman has mastered womanhood and has been made flawless through her death. These notions of completion, mastery, and achieved excellence are linked to death in the brief second line, "Her dead," which provides an approximate rhyme with the first line. The second stanza notes "the smile of accomplishment" that adorns the dead body, suggesting that the woman is pleased by the perfection she has achieved. The poet then hints that the woman has achieved death through suicide. The "Greek necessity" that one imagines flowing "in the scrolls of her toga" strongly suggests the ritual suicides demanded of disgraced individuals in the classical world. Although most readers are familiar with the self-inflicted death by hemlock of the Greek philosopher Socrates, ritual suicide (like the toga) is actually associated with imperial Rome. Nevertheless, Plath is able to allude to her own writing through the clever description of the folds of the toga as "scrolls." The third and fourth stanzas explain the meaning of the woman's bare feet. They have taken her the length of her life with all its obstacles, but now "it is over." The sense of relief at journey's end is apparent. A new and ominous element is introduced in the fifth stanza. Dead children, presumably the woman's own children, are described as white serpents. Each is coiled before a small "pitcher of milk," which is "now empty." Apparently, the children have each drunk the milk and coiled, fetus like, at each pitcher; they are pale, or white, with death. One must consider the possibility that the children have been poisoned by their mother. The sixth through eighth stanzas confirm this suspicion. The woman has "folded/ them back into her body." She is their mother, and she has taken her children with her into death. The first line of the poem, "The woman is perfected," now takes on yet another meaning: She becomes whole or complete as all the life that went forth from her is returned to her in death. The poet defends the murder of the children as the mere closing of a flower at the approach of night. The rose draws in its petals (as the mother draws in her children) when the

chill of the evening (or, in the case of the woman, death) descends upon the garden. The sensual but ghastly image of the night as a many-throated flower that “bleeds” its odors transforms the traditional literary meaning of flowers and gardens as emblems of love into omens of death. From the lush imagery of the garden at nightfall, the ninth stanza turns to the stark moon of the night sky. The poet imagines the moon’s view of the grisly tableau of the dead bodies of mother and children. Like a nun in a white cowl, the moon in “her hood of bone” surveys the scene without sadness. The final stanza of the poem explains the moon’s indifference: “She is used to this sort of thing.” The dead woman has reenacted an ancient tragedy that the moon has witnessed over and over again. Further, the poem concludes with the hint that the moon bears some responsibility for the deaths. The moon’s “blacks crackle and drag.” - effect of the moon on the earth (dragging the oceans back and forth across the planet in tides) and on the menses of women account for the final verb. “Crackle,” however, suggests something more like sunspots, casting interference and static into the atmosphere and, perhaps, troubling individuals. Such a relationship between the moon and human behavior is acknowledged in folklore (the werewolf is transformed under the light of a full moon) and even in our vocabulary (“lunatic” derives from the same root as “lunar”). The moon, it is implied, may have influenced the terrible events that “she” then observes impassively.

Themes and Meanings

Written only six days before the author’s suicide, “Edge” has sometimes been viewed as a formal suicide note. Such a hasty conclusion deprives the poem of its significance as a work of art. As mentioned above, “Edge” was carefully constructed through a series of drafts. A close inspection of its form and imagery confirms an artistic intent, so one must look for the meaning of the poem not in Plath’s biography, but in the poem itself. The poem argues that the woman who is the subject of the poem is “perfected” in death, which alone offers release from her unhappiness. She smiles in death at the conclusion of an obviously painful journey through life. The description of her children suggests the malevolent role they have played in her life. She imagines them back within her as her body closes like a chilled rose. The woman seeks to return to the condition of the virgin, and it is to the virgin goddess, Artemis, that the poet turns for consolation. The solitary, pure white, perfect female offers no sympathy; the suicide has endured the ancient destiny of women. Only the woman who can hold herself aloof from love and its demands can escape a similar fate. It is difficult to imagine a bleaker view of human experience than that which Plath expresses in “Edge.” She suggests that one can find happiness only in absolute solitude, the solitude of death.

QUESTIONS

1. Odors _____ from the sweet deep throats of the night flower?
2. Sylvia Plath wrote the poem ‘Edge’days prior to committing suicide?
3. What does the title ‘Edge’ suggest?
4. What is the contract theme of the poem ‘Edge’?
5. What does the word ‘perfect’ symbolize?
6. How does the woman achieve death according to the poet?
7. How does the poet define the murder of the children?
8. How does the moon survey the death scene?
9. How does the poet picturise the dead children?
10. Write a note on the images and metaphors used in the poem ‘Edge’?

“MOTHER TO SON”

Langston Hughes

About the poet :

James Mercer Langston Hughes (February 1, 1902 – May 22, 1967) was an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist. He was one of the earliest innovators of the then-new literary art form jazz poetry. Hughes is best known for his work during the Harlem Renaissance. He famously wrote about the period that "the negro was in vogue" which was later paraphrased as "when Harlem was in vogue". Langston Hughes was first recognized as an important literary figure during the 1920s, a period known as the "Harlem Renaissance" because of the number of emerging black writers. Du Bose Heyward wrote in the *New York Herald Tribune* in 1926: "Langston Hughes, although only twenty-four years old, is already conspicuous in the group of Negro intellectuals who are dignifying Harlem with a genuine art life. . . . It is, however, as an individual poet, not as a member of a new and interesting literary group, or as a spokesman for a race that Langston Hughes must stand or fall. . . . Always intensely subjective, passionate, keenly sensitive to beauty and possessed of an unfaltering musical sense, Langston Hughes has given us a 'first book' that marks the opening of a career well worth watching."

“Mother to Son” by Langston Hughes is a short twenty line poem that packs significant meaning in the short verse. Hughes uses an older female speaker to give advice to a son who is part of the younger generation. In the poem, Hughes uses the device of an extended metaphor to describe the life of the mother. The extended metaphor compares the mother’s life to a staircase. The line “Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair” begins and ends the poem. With this line, Hughes quickly establishes that the speaker in the poem has not had an easy life. The concept of a crystal staircase gives the reader the impression of complete opulence. The reader can indulge in inferring that it would be someone with supreme wealth and someone who did not have to work as hard as the speaker did. By using the imagery of a crystal staircase as the opposite of her staircase, the reader immediately knows before learning any of the details of her staircase that she has not had an easy life.

Hughes then goes on to illustrate the staircase of life that the speaker has lived. The speaker’s staircase has splinters and tacks. Both of these would be symbolic of the mother having suffered many hurts. A splinter or a tack will not cause life threatening injury, but they certainly will cause pain. If the splinters and tacks are on every step along the way, it is symbolic that her life has always had pain.

Another descriptive detail of the mother’s staircase is that of boards being torn up. If a person walks on a staircase in which boards are missing, it gives the symbolic value that the mother’s life

was filled with more dangerous situations than just tacks and splinters. It is symbolic that the mother has had gaping holes in her life that she had to somehow step over to arrive at the present place in her life that she is now. Not every step along the way was safe one, but despite this she perseveres. The speaker addresses the son by saying that he should not sit down or fall down just because his staircase is hard to climb. In the mother's eyes, the son should never give up. Instead he should see her as an example because it was not easy for her, but she never gave up. With the extended metaphor of a staircase as a symbol of the steps one takes in life, one can infer that as long as a person is living, there will be more steps to climb. It is like a precursor to the concept of the popular modern song lyric "stairway to heaven". The mother is symbolically climbing the stairway to heaven and the path to heaven is not always an easy journey. The mother wants the son to know that heaven is worth by taking life one step at a time, even if the stairs are full of tacks and splinters.

Hughes also illustrates the sense of identity in the speaker with the use of vernacular language. Hughes writes using the language that the mother would actually speak with. Some examples of the vernacular language include: ain't, finds it's kinder hard, and dropping the final "g" in words such as goin' or turnin'. The use of vernacular language gives the sense that this is a less educated woman. The less grammatical language gives the sense that the speaker wants something better for the son, but she knows he will still have to work for it.

On the road of life, many trials arise that one must overcome to make his or her life feel complete. In Langston Hughes's poem, "Mother to Son," these trials are a subject of concern for one mother. Hughes' "ability to project himself" is seen in his use of dialect, metaphors, and tone. Although the dialect by itself does not seem to be an important quality, however, "when it is presented with all dramatic skill", it is important. In "Mother to Son", Hughes uses dialect to show that the mother is not as well educated as many people. When she says phrases such as "For I'se still goin', honey," it is understood that she means that she is still going, even though it is not clearly said. The dialect may also show what area she may live in. When she talks about "boards torn up" it shows that she was from the poor part of the town. It does not seem relevant that she has torn up boards, but these are not found in a wealthy person's mansion. Although the grammar of this dialect is wrong, it makes the woman seem more like a real person and less like someone who is fictional. Another quality that is prevalent in this poem is its metaphors. She says that her life has not been fancy or easy, but she is getting by. While climbing her stairs she is "reaching' landing's, / and turning' corners, / and sometimes going' in the dark". Although these are "homely" things someone may face on a staircase, they actually mean things that she has encountered in her life. She says that she reaches landings, which means that she has come up on place where she could rest. When she says she turns corners, it is when her life changes and she has to turn away from her original path. Her final comparison is when she goes in the dark, which are times in her life when she does not know what she can do to help herself. The metaphors in

this poem show a conflict in the mother's life and make the poem seem complete. The third quality that Langston Hughes uses in his poem is the tone of the speaker. When she explains to him not to "set you down on the steps / 'Cause your find it's kinder hard. /don't you fall down now," the tone in her words in compassionate. The mother is simply trying to tell her son that she knows what he is going through because she has been in rough times herself. Those rough times were troublesome but she had the strength to go on and get past them. All she wants for her son is for him to keep climbing, and never give up. Winslow believes that "enduring exuberance" shows her youthful spirit towards life. She wants this all because "(she is) still goin', honey, / (she is) still climbin ', /and life for (her) ain't been no crystal stair". This poem, "Mother to Son" by Langston Hughes teaches a valuable life lesson about never giving up. Even when life is getting more difficult and one thinks they cannot go on, they need to keep climbing.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the title of the poem by Langston Hughes?
2. Who is the speaker in the poem 'Mother to Son'?
3. What is the metaphor used by the poet to compare mother's life?
4. With which line the poem 'Mother to Son' begins and ends?
5. Whose life is compared to a crystal stair case?
6. Why does the poet use the image of a crystal stair case?
7. How does the poet illustrate the sense of identity in the speaker?
8. Whose life is compared to a crystal stair case?
9. What kind of life mother had according to the poet?
10. What kind of lady is the so-called mother?
11. The metaphor crystal stair case

**MODULE II:
DEATH OF A SALESMAN**

Arthur Miller

Arthur Asher Miller (October 17, 1915 – February 10, 2005) was an American playwright and essayist. He was a prominent figure in American theatre, writing dramas that include plays such as *All My Sons* (1947), *Death of a Salesman* (1949), *The Crucible* (1953) and *A View from the Bridge*.

Miller was often in the public eye, particularly during the late 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s, a period during which he testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee, received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the Prince of Asturias Award, and was married to Marilyn Monroe.

SUMMARY

It is important to bear that the story is told through the mind and memory of Willy Loman and there is a constant back and forth between two periods, 1928 and 1942. The first period is one of the happiness and contentment when Willy Loman is young and dynamic and the children, Biff and Happy, are running about in shorts; the second is one of gloom and discontent – Willy is now old and, virtually, out of a job and the children are grown up and gone their different ways. The play is thus structured in such a way to show the pleasures of the past, the dreams and hopes the characters had and how these aspirations had turned sour. Willy Loman had built his life in such a way that he had finally trapped himself in an impossible situation.

Willy Loman, the protagonist in the play, was a travelling salesman in the services of the Wagner Company for 34 years. When his old boss died, his son Howard took over the administration of the company. Willy's family consists of three other members, his wife Linda, Biff, the elder son, and Happy, the younger son.

Willy unexpectedly returned on the same day he had left for New England territory on a business tour. Linda felt that her husband is thoroughly exhausted both physically and mentally and he has almost reached the breaking point. Willy, who is 63, has driven the car off the road twice or three times and when he reached home he was found to be panic-stricken, desolate and shattered.

Willy liked his eldest son Biff, who was well-known as a football champion. Though he is 34, it is unfortunate that he could not settle in life. In spite of the fact that three colleges offered him scholarship in recognition of his proficiency in football, he did not join any college. Happy, the women-chaser, also could not settle in life.

For the next two days, immediately after his unexpected return, Willy's mind was rather disturbed with thoughts of today's realities intermingled with yesterday's half forgotten episodes. He felt that it was a mistake on his part not to have followed his elder brother Ben, who dared his way into the diamond mines of Africa and amassed fabulous wealth. Willy's guilty consciousness pricked him at the flash back scene of Boston hotel room, when his son Biff makes a surprise visit and finds his father having an affair with a strange lady. After this episode, Biff seemed to hold a grudge against his father and could never again bring himself to trust Willy. As suggested by Linda, Willy visits Howard, the young Boss and requests for a change of job in the New York City office as he is physically and mentally incapacitated as a travelling salesman. When the request was unceremoniously turned down by Howard and Willy dismissed from service he protests "You cannot eat orange and throw the peel away; man is not a piece of fruit". Willy is very much frustrated and disillusioned at the behavior of capitalists who lacked the human milk of kindness, sympathy and gratitude. Biff's attempt to raise a loan from Bill Oliver, the proprietor of sports goods company also failed. Oliver, who once liked Biff immensely, now refused to recognise him now because Biff has stolen a fountain pen. Charley, Willy's neighbour extended a helping hand in those days of adversity. He not only advanced a loan to him but also offered him a job to him. But Willy refused to accept it with a false sense of dignity. The two sons invited the father for a dinner party at a prominent restaurant in the city. But Happy picked up two call girls and left the place along with Biff, leaving Willy alone. Willy felt humiliated and this experience was shocking and unbearable when Biff and Happy returned home, Linda ordered them out of the house by the next morning. She was planning to commit suicide on a particular night. Willy was left alone while all others went upstairs. He has insured his life for 20,000 dollars. Once he dies, the family will be entitled to receive the amount from the insurance company. So Willy got into his car and drove madly through darkness, only to kill himself. His funeral was attended only by Linda, the two sons, Charley and his son Bernard. Linda could not stand the strain of separation from her beloved husband; but still she stooped down and dropped flowers on the grave of Willy.

DEATH OF A SALESMAN AS A TRAGEDY:

According to the traditional views based on Aristotelian canons, the tragic hero was to be a person of high rank and status. So that his downfall could produce an inevitable emotional effect on the audience. In ancient Greek tragedies, fate or destiny is mainly responsible for the downfall of human beings. But Shakespeare and Marlow attributed human misfortune mainly to the personal drawbacks of the tragic heroes themselves and hardly to the hidden forces which we describe as fate or destiny.

Miller generally departs from both these concepts of tragedy as in the tragic hero in the Death of a Salesman belongs to the middle class. He does not hold the view that tragic effect can be produced only by the downfall of a highly placed individual in society. It matters not at all whether hero falls from a great height or small one, whether he is highly conscious or dimly aware of what is happening, if the intensity is there. 'America grows like a giant in unimaginable proportions'.

Willy symbolically stands for all the low men in American business community not just salesmen –who in a way sell themselves. Willy sells himself and in the process wears himself out and he is finally discarded when he is no longer useful. Willy begins as a salesman 36 years ago, opens up unheard of territories to their trade mark, but in his old age they take his salary away. It is pity that once Willy’s energy is exhausted by the work that society has assigned to him, he is thrown aside and dismissed by the son of his old boss. Willy protests, ”you cannot eat the orange and throw them peel “. Man is not a piece of fruit no doubt ,Willy loman is a superannuated employee, but he is rejected and ill treated by his employer at the end of his career. Even a change of job with less travelling was denied to him. But still it may not be fully correct to say that Willy is wholly a victim of the prevailing social system. His own responsibility of his tragedy is by no means insignificant or negligible. In the first place he failed to realize his own limitations and short comings Willy has the conviction that success depends on personality, contacts and good cloths and that these will bring everything one wants in life. Obviously Willy is a prey to that magical book of Dale carnegie’s ‘How to win friends and influence people ‘ we know that mistake is that Willy had chosen a wrong profession for himself under the impression that the selling profession is the best in the world.

Secondly the sense of guilt which he carries with him due to his past infidelity to his wife has also serious repercussions in his mental stability .His affair with the woman in the hotel when he was visited by Biff hangs on his conscience. Biff’s discovery of Willy’s infidelity marks the crucial turning point in the relationship between the father and the son .There after Biff no longer believes Willy .

Another point to be noted is Willy’s incurable optimism .He has had higher expectation about the future of his elder son Biff who looks so charming as the Adonise in Greek mythology and who has earned high reputation as a good football champion. Biff has become disillusioned .For Biff ,life came to be an end with his match. He could neither make a mark in business nor could he go back to school to finish his course. Ironically Bernard who never represented University of Virginia, Bernard who pleaded to carry Biff’s helmet or shoulder guards , prospered. Bernard wins glory by pleading before the supreme court ,but he does this without any pushing from his father. According to Willy, they ought to be success at all; for both Charley and Bernard were not well liked. These tragic experiences shatter Willy’s conception of American dreams. No human or super natural agency interfered his life .The sense of frustration and psychological neurosis upsets his mental equilibrium and shatters him to pieces.

Character List

Willy Loman: An insecure, self-deluded traveling salesman. Willy believes wholeheartedly in the American Dream of easy success and wealth, but he never achieves it. Nor do his sons fulfill his hope that they will succeed where he has failed. When Willy's illusions begin to fail under the pressing realities of his life, his mental health begins to unravel. The overwhelming tensions caused by this disparity, as well as those caused by the societal imperatives that drive Willy, form the essential conflict of *Death of a Salesman*.

Biff Loman: Willy's thirty-four-year-old elder son. Biff led a charmed life in high school as a football star with scholarship prospects, good male friends, and fawning female admirers. He failed math, however, and did not have enough credits to graduate. Since then, his kleptomania has gotten him fired from every job that he has held. Biff represents Willy's vulnerable, poetic, tragic side. He cannot ignore his instincts, which tell him to abandon Willy's paralyzing dreams and move out West to work with his hands. He ultimately fails to reconcile his life with Willy's expectations of him.

Linda Loman: Willy's loyal, loving wife. Linda suffers through Willy's grandiose dreams and self-delusions. Occasionally, she seems to be taken in by Willy's self-deluded hopes for future glory and success, but at other times, she seems far more realistic and less fragile than her husband. She has nurtured the family through all of Willy's misguided attempts at success, and her emotional strength and perseverance support Willy until his collapse.

Happy Loman: Willy's thirty-two-year-old younger son. Happy has lived in Biff's shadow all of his life, but he compensates by nurturing his relentless sex drive and professional ambition. Happy represents Willy's sense of self-importance, ambition, and blind servitude to societal expectations. Although he works as an assistant to an assistant buyer in a department store, Happy presents himself as supremely important. Additionally, he practices bad business ethics and sleeps with the girlfriends of his superiors.

Charley- Willy's next-door neighbor. Charley owns a successful business and his son, Bernard, is a wealthy, important lawyer. Willy is jealous of Charley's success. Charley gives Willy money to pay his bills, and Willy reveals at one point, choking back tears, that Charley is his only friend.

Bernard - Bernard is Charley's son and an important, successful lawyer. Although Willy used to mock Bernard for studying hard, Bernard always loved Willy's sons dearly and regarded Biff as a hero. Bernard's success is difficult for Willy to accept because his own sons' lives do not measure up.

Ben - Willy's wealthy older brother. Ben has recently died and appears only in Willy's "daydreams." Willy regards Ben as a symbol of the success that he so desperately craves for himself and his sons.

The Woman - Willy's mistress when Happy and Biff were in high school. The Woman's attention and admiration boost Willy's fragile ego. When Biff catches Willy in his hotel room with The Woman, he loses faith in his father, and his dream of passing math and going to college dies.

Howard Wagner - Willy's boss. Howard inherited the company from his father, whom Willy regarded as "a masterful man" and "a prince." Though much younger than Willy, Howard treats Willy with condescension and eventually fires him, despite Willy's wounded assertions that he named Howard at his birth.

Stanley - A waiter at Frank's Chop House. Stanley and Happy seem to be friends, or at least acquaintances, and they banter about and ogle Miss Forsythe together before Biff and Willy arrive at the restaurant.

Miss Forsythe and Letta - Two young women whom Happy and Biff meet at Frank's Chop House. It seems likely that Miss Forsythe and Letta are prostitutes, judging from Happy's repeated comments about their moral character and the fact that they are "on call."

Jenny - Charley's secretary

Themes, Motifs & Symbols

Themes

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

The American Dream

Willy believes wholeheartedly in what he considers the promise of the American Dream—that a “well liked” and “personally attractive” man in business will indubitably and deservedly acquire the material comforts offered by modern American life. Oddly, his fixation with the superficial qualities of attractiveness and likeability is at odds with a more gritty, more rewarding understanding of the American Dream that identifies hard work without complaint as the key to success. Willy's interpretation of likeability is superficial—he childishly dislikes Bernard because he considers Bernard a nerd. Willy's blind faith in his stunted version of the American Dream leads to his rapid psychological decline when he is unable to accept the disparity between the Dream and his own life.

Abandonment

Willy's life charts a course from one abandonment to the next, leaving him in greater despair each time. Willy's father leaves him and Ben when Willy is very young, leaving Willy neither a tangible (money) nor an intangible (history) legacy. Ben eventually departs for Alaska, leaving Willy to lose himself in a warped vision of the American Dream. Likely a result of these early experiences, Willy develops a fear of abandonment, which makes him want his family to conform to the American Dream. His efforts to raise perfect sons, however, reflect his inability to understand reality. The young Biff, whom Willy considers the embodiment of promise, drops Willy and Willy's zealous ambitions for him when he finds out about Willy's adultery. Biff's ongoing inability to succeed in business furthers his estrangement from Willy. When, at Frank's Chop House, Willy finally believes that Biff is on the cusp of greatness, Biff shatters Willy's illusions and, along with Happy, abandons the deluded, babbling Willy in the washroom.

Betrayal

Willy's primary obsession throughout the play is what he considers to be Biff's betrayal of his ambitions for him. Willy believes that he has every right to expect Biff to fulfill the promise inherent in him. When Biff walks out on Willy's ambitions for him, Willy takes this rejection as a personal affront (he associates it with “insult” and “spite”). Willy, after all, is a salesman, and Biff's ego-crushing rebuff ultimately reflects Willy's inability to sell him on the American Dream—the product in which Willy himself believes most faithfully. Willy assumes that Biff's

betrayal stems from Biff's discovery of Willy's affair with The Woman—a betrayal of Linda's love. Whereas Willy feels that Biff has betrayed him, Biff feels that Willy, a “phony little fake,” has betrayed him with his unending stream of ego-stroking lies.

Motifs

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

Mythic Figures

Willy's tendency to mythologize people contributes to his deluded understanding of the world. He speaks of Dave Singleman as a legend and imagines that his death must have been beautifully noble. Willy compares Biff and Happy to the mythic Greek figures Adonis and Hercules because he believes that his sons are pinnacles of “personal attractiveness” and power through “well liked”-ness; to him, they seem the very incarnation of the American Dream.

Willy's mythologizing proves quite nearsighted, however. Willy fails to realize the hopelessness of Singleman's lonely, on-the-job, on-the-road death. Trying to achieve what he considers to be Singleman's heroic status, Willy commits himself to a pathetic death and meaningless legacy (even if Willy's life insurance policy ends up paying off, Biff wants nothing to do with Willy's ambition for him).

The American West, Alaska, and the African Jungle

These regions represent the potential of instinct to Biff and Willy. Willy's father found success in Alaska and his brother, Ben, became rich in Africa; these exotic locales, especially when compared to Willy's banal Brooklyn neighborhood, crystallize how Willy's obsession with the commercial world of the city has trapped him in an unpleasant reality. Whereas Alaska and the African jungle symbolize Willy's failure, the American West, on the other hand, symbolizes Biff's potential. Biff realizes that he has been content only when working on farms, out in the open. His westward escape from both Willy's delusions and the commercial world of the eastern United States suggests a nineteenth-century pioneer mentality—Biff, unlike Willy, recognizes the importance of the individual.

Symbols

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

Seeds

Seeds represent for Willy the opportunity to prove the worth of his labor, both as a salesman and a father. His desperate, nocturnal attempt to grow vegetables signifies his shame about barely being able to put food on the table and having nothing to leave his children when he passes. Willy feels that he has worked hard but fears that he will not be able to help his offspring any more than his own abandoning father helped him. The seeds also symbolize Willy's sense of failure with Biff. Despite the American Dream's formula for success, which Willy considers infallible, Willy's efforts to cultivate and nurture Biff went awry. Realizing that his all-American football star has turned into a lazy bum, Willy takes Biff's failure and lack of ambition as a reflection of his abilities as a father.

Diamonds

To Willy, diamonds represent tangible wealth and, hence, both validation of one's labor (and life) and the ability to pass material goods on to one's offspring, two things that Willy desperately craves. Correlatively, diamonds, the discovery of which made Ben a fortune, symbolize Willy's failure as a salesman. Despite Willy's belief in the American Dream, a belief unwavering to the extent that he passed up the opportunity to go with Ben to Alaska, the Dream's promise of financial security has eluded Willy. At the end of the play, Ben encourages Willy to enter the "jungle" finally and retrieve this elusive diamond—that is, to kill himself for insurance money in order to make his life meaningful.

Linda's and the Woman's Stockings

Willy's strange obsession with the condition of Linda's stockings foreshadows his later flashback to Biff's discovery of him and The Woman in their Boston hotel room. The teenage Biff accuses Willy of giving away Linda's stockings to The Woman. Stockings assume a metaphorical weight as the symbol of betrayal and sexual infidelity. New stockings are important for both Willy's pride in being financially successful and thus able to provide for his family and for Willy's ability to ease his guilt about, and suppress the memory of, his betrayal of Linda and Biff.

The Rubber Hose

The rubber hose is a stage prop that reminds the audience of Willy's desperate attempts at suicide. He has apparently attempted to kill himself by inhaling gas, which is, ironically, the very substance essential to one of the most basic elements with which he must equip his home for his family's health and comfort—heat. Literal death by inhaling gas parallels the metaphorical death that Willy feels in his struggle to afford such a basic necessity.

QUESTIONS

1. The play 'Death of a Salesman' revolves mainly around a conflict between _____?
2. What are the reasons for Willy's failure as a business man?
3. American dream in the play 'Death of a salesman'.
4. What is the central theme of the play 'Death of a salesman'.
5. The father son conflict in the play 'Death of a salesman'.
6. The hotel scene in the play 'Death of a salesman'.
7. The role of mother Linda Loman in the play 'Death of a salesman'.
8. Why did Biff Loman leave the school?
9. The significance of the title 'Death of a salesman'.
10. Why did Willy commit suicide?
11. The flash back scene in the play 'Death of a salesman'.
12. Miller's play as a critique of the American way of life.

SHORT STORIES

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER

Edgar Allan Poe

Introduction

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), the American poet and writer, was born in Boston, Massachusetts, of a couple of travelling actors. He deserted him when he was two years old, and his mother passed away a year later. Through he was adopted by Joh Allan, a rich tobacco merchant of Richmond, he felt emotionally and financially insecure. His foster father constantly reminded him of his own charity that made Poe's life comfortable. Consequently he broke away from Mr. Allen after the death of his foster- mother and Mr. Allan's remarriage. Mean while he had received education in a school in long land. For a while he served in the army and worked as a journalist. He married his Cousin Virginia C Lem who died ten years later. Poverty never spared Poe and he even attempted suicide once, through without success. In 1849 he was found dead on the streets of Rich Mond. His death remains a mystery.

Poe is regarded by many not only as the first American Poet but also as the founder of modern detective stories. He wrote many Gothic short fictions. Gothic fictions is a type of fiction which lacks the exotic setting of the earlier romances, but develops a brooding atmosphere of gloom and terror, represents events that are uncanny or macabre or melodramatically violent and often deals with aberrant psychological states. The local was often a gloomy castle furnished with dungeons is the typical story focused on the sufferings imposed on an innocent heroine by a cruel and lustful villain and made bountiful use of ghosts, mysterious disappearances and other sensational and super natural occurrences. The principal aim of such novels was to wake chilling terror by exploiting mystery and a variety of horrors. Many of them are now read mainly as period pieces, but the best opened up to fiction. The realm of the irrational and of the perverse impulses and nightmarish terrors lie beneath the orderly surface of the civilized mind. The Gothic novel was inaugurated by Horace Walpole's "The castle of Otranto: A Gothic story" (1764).

'The fall of the House of Usher' was published in the Sept.1839 issue of Burton's gentleman's magazine. It was slightly revised in 1840 for the collection Tales of the Grotesque and Arabeque. It contains with it the poem ' The Hacented palace' which had earlier been published separately in April 1839 issue of the Baltimore Museum magazine.

Summary

The legend opens with the unnamed narrator arriving at the house of his friend, Roderick Usher, having received a letter from him in a distant part of the country complaining of an illness and asking for his help. Although Poe wrote this short story before the invention of modern psychological science, Roderick's condition can be described according to its terminology. They include a form of sensory overload known as hyperesthesia (hypersensitivity to light, sounds, smells, and tastes), hypochondria (an excessive preoccupation or worry about having a serious illness), and acute anxiety. It is revealed that Roderick's twin sister, Madeline, is also ill and falls into cataleptic, deathlike trances. The narrator is impressed with Roderick's paintings, and attempts to cheer him by reading with him and listening to his improvised musical compositions

on the guitar. Roderick sings "The Haunted Palace", then tells the narrator that he believes the house he lives in to be alive, and that this sentience arises from the arrangement of the masonry and vegetation surrounding it.

Roderick later informs the narrator that his sister died and insists that she be entombed for two weeks in a vault (family tomb) in the house before being permanently buried. The narrator helps Roderick put the body in the tomb, and he notes that Madeline has rosy cheeks, as some do after death. They inter her, but over the next week both Roderick and the narrator find themselves becoming increasingly agitated for no apparent reason. A storm begins. Roderick comes to the narrator's bedroom, which is situated directly above the vault, and throws open his window to the storm. He notices that the tarn surrounding the house seems to glow in the dark, as it glowed in Roderick Usher's paintings, although there is no lightning.

The narrator attempts to calm Roderick by reading aloud *The Mad Tryst*, a novel involving a knight named Ethelred who breaks into a hermit's dwelling in an attempt to escape an approaching storm, only to find a palace of gold guarded by a dragon. He also finds hanging on the wall a shield of shining brass on which is written a legend: that the one who slays the dragon wins the shield. With a stroke of his mace, Ethelred kills the dragon, who dies with a piercing shriek, and proceeds to take the shield, which falls to the floor with an unnerving clatter.

As the narrator reads of the knight's forcible entry into the dwelling, cracking and ripping sounds are heard somewhere in the house. When the dragon is described as shrieking as it dies, a shriek is heard, again within the house. As he relates the shield falling from off the wall, a reverberation, metallic and hollow, can be heard. Roderick becomes increasingly hysterical, and eventually exclaims that these sounds are being made by his sister, who was in fact alive when she was entombed and that Roderick Usher knew that she was alive. The bedroom door is then blown open to reveal Madeline standing there. She falls on her brother, and both land on the floor as corpses. The narrator then flees the house, and, as he does so, notices a flash of light causing him to look back upon the House of Usher, in time to watch it break in two, the fragments sinking into the tarn.

QUESTIONS

1. Who is known as then founder of modern detective stories?
2. What do you mean by gothic fiction?
3. Which is the first gothic novel in English?
4. Who are the characters in the story 'The fall of the house of usher'?
5. The gothic features in the story 'The fall of the house of usher'?
6. Poe's story hasfeatures
7. The role of the ballad in Poe's story
8. How does the story 'The fall of the house of usher 'end'?
9. Who is Lady Madeline?
10. Which is considered as Poe's most famous work of prose?
11. What are the traditional gothic elements used by Allan Poe?
12. How does poet create the confusion between the living things and inanimate objects?

BARN BURNING

William Faulkner

“**Barn Burning**” is a short story by the American author William Faulkner which first appeared in *Harper's* in 1939 and has since been widely anthologized. The story deals with class conflicts, the influence of fathers, and vengeance as viewed through the third-person perspective of a young, impressionable child. It is a prequel to *The Hamlet*, *The Town*, and *The Mansion*, the three novels make up the Snopes trilogy.

Characters

Colonel Sartorius Snopes ("Sarty") - protagonist

Abler Snopes – patriarch of the Snopes family, Antagonist

Lonnie Snopes – wife of Abler and mother of Sarty

Lizzie – unmarried sister of Lonnie Snopes

Major de Spain - Snopes's employer

Mr. Harris - Abner's first mentioned landowner

Plot Summary

Abner Snopes, the father of young "Sarty" Snopes, is being driven out of town after burning down his landlord's barn. In the court case that opens the story and in which Sarty is initially called to testify, no palpable proof can point to Abner as the culprit, but the Snopes family is ordered to leave the county. They move to a new place where Abner is to work as a sharecropper for Major de Spain, but Abner cannot seem to control his pyromania and hatred for society.

Shortly after arriving at his new position, Abner visits Major de Spain's house and tracks horse droppings on a blond rug. Major de Spain orders Abner to clean the rug, which he does by using harsh lye soap, ruining the rug beyond repair, before throwing the rug onto Major de Spain's front porch. Major de Spain levies on Abner a fine of 20 bushels of corn against the price of the rug. At court, a Justice of the Peace reduces the fine to ten bushels of corn. Feeling once again wronged, Abner makes preparations to set fire to Major de Spain's barn. Sarty warns Major de Spain of his father's intentions to burn down his barn and then flees in the direction of his father. He is soon overtaken by Major de Spain on his horse and jumps into the ditch to get out of the way. Sarty hears three gun shots, but who gets shot is never revealed; the father and the brother appear in works set after "Barn Burning." Profoundly affected by his father's legacy, the boy does not return to his family but continues on with his life alone.

Context

Born in New Albany, Mississippi, in 1897, William Faulkner became famous for a series of novels that explore the South's historical legacy, its fraught and often tensely violent present, and its uncertain future. This grouping of major works includes *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Light in August* (1931), and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), all firmly rooted in the fictional Mississippi county of Yoknapatawpha. By creating an imaginary setting, Faulkner allows his characters to inhabit a fully realized world that serves as a mirror to and microcosm of the South that the novelist knew so well and explored so deeply. Faulkner's legendary milieu serves as a safe and distant—albeit magnifying—lens through which he could examine the practices, folkways, and attitudes that have united and divided the people of the South.

Faulkner was particularly interested in the moral implications of history. As the South emerged from the Civil War and Reconstruction and attempted to shake off the stigma of slavery, its residents were often portrayed as being caught in competing and evolving modes, torn between a new and an older, more tenaciously rooted world order. Religion and politics frequently fell short of their implied goals of providing order and guidance and served only to complicate and divide. Society, with its gossip, judgment, and harsh pronouncements, conspired to thwart the desires and ambitions of individuals struggling to unearth and embrace their identities. Across Faulkner's fictive landscapes, individual characters often stage epic struggles, prevented from realizing their potential or establishing and asserting a firm sense of their place in the world.

“Barn Burning,” in its examination of a boy's struggle with family loyalty and a higher sense of justice fits firmly in Faulkner's familiar fictional mode. Poverty and irrational, criminal behavior divide a family and, in the end, leave them more indigent and dependent than ever. The story first appeared in the June 1939 issue of Harper's magazine and received the O. Henry Award for the year's best work of short fiction. The story, a critical and popular favorite, was included in Faulkner's *Collected Stories* (1950) and later reprinted in the *Selected Short Stories of William Faulkner* (1961). In his portrayal of the Snoops clan, an underprivileged family with few economic prospects, Faulkner examines the deep-rooted classism and systems that rigidly divided southern society along racial, economic, and familial lines. The Synopses and their struggle, in particular, symbolize the falling away of an old order, as the agrarian South slowly shifted to embrace a new era of industrialization and modernization. Although Faulkner's merciless portrayal of Abner Snoops precludes any sympathy for his peculiar brand of vigilante justice, the harsh reality the family faced was little more than institutionalized slavery and a life sentence of poverty and subsistence living.

Abner Snoops represents a common trope in Faulkner's fiction—the dispossessed male, shorn of power and lashing out at a world that he perceives as habitually wronging him and thwarting his felonious desires. Faulkner examines the sway that such menacing figures have over family and community by portraying the individuals caught up in the shadows of these savage

personalities, individuals who are powerless and often culpable. Freedom comes only for Sartorius, the youngest Snoops boy, but, as is frequently the case in Faulkner's works, emancipation comes at a price. Sartorius has defended his sense of honor and attempted to restore the family name, but he ultimately faces an uncertain future alone.

Faulkner won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1949, and he donated half the prize money to a fund that supports new writers. His gift takes the form today of the PEN/Faulkner Award. He died in 1962.

Plot Overview

Young Colonel Sartorius Snoops crouches on a keg in the back of the store that doubles for the town court. He cannot see the table where his father and his father's opponent, Mr. Harris, are seated. The justice of the peace asks Mr. Harris for proof that Mr. Snoops burned his barn. Mr. Harris describes the numerous times Snopes's hog broke through the fence and got into his cornfields. The final time, when Mr. Harris demanded a dollar for the animal's return, the black man who was sent to fetch the hog gave Mr. Harris an ominous warning that wood and hay are combustible. Later that night, fire claimed Mr. Harris's barn. While the judge claims that by itself isn't proof, Mr. Harris has Sartorius called to testify before the court. The boy knows his father is expecting him to lie on his behalf. After doing so, the judge asks Mr. Harris whether he wants the child cross-examined, but Mr. Harris snarls to have the boy removed.

The judge dismisses the charges against Snoops but warns him to leave the county for good, and Snoops agrees to comply. Snoops and his two sons then leave the store and head to their wagon. A child in the crowd accuses them of being barn burners and strikes Sartorius, knocking him down. Snoops orders Sartorius into the wagon, which is laden with their possessions and where his two sisters, mother, and aunt are waiting. Snoops prevent his crying wife from cleaning Sartorius's bloodied face. That night, the family camps around the father's typically small fire. Snoops wake Sartorius and take him onto the dark road, where he accuses him of planning to inform the judge of his guilt in the arson case. Snoops strikes Sartorius on the head and tells him he must always remain loyal to his family.

The next day, the family arrives at its new home and begins unloading the wagon. Snoops takes Sartorius to the house of Major de Spain, the owner on whose land the family will work. Despite the servant's protests, Snoops tracks horse manure into the opulent house, leaving only when Miss Lula asks him to. He resentfully remarks that the home was built by slave labor. Two hours later, the servant drops off the rug that Snoops had soiled and instructs him to clean and return it. Snoops supervise as the two sisters reluctantly clean the carpet with lye, and he uses a jagged stone to work the surface of the expensive rug. After dinner, the family retires to their sleeping areas. Snoops forces Sartorius to fetch the mule and ride along with him to return the cleaned rug. At the house, Snoops flings the rug onto the floor after loudly kicking at the door several times.

The next morning, as Sartorius and Snoops prepare the mules for plowing, de Spain arrives on horseback to inform them that the rug was ruined from improper cleaning. In lieu of the hundred-dollar replacement fee, the major says Snoops will be charged twenty additional bushels of corn. Sartorius defends Snopes's actions, telling him that he did the best he could with the soiled carpet and that they will refuse to supply the extra crops. Snoops puts Sartorius back to work, and the following days are consumed with the constant labor of working their acreage. Sartorius hopes that Snoops will turn once and for all from his destructive impulses.

The next weekend, Snoops and his two sons head once again to a court appearance at the country store, where the well-dressed de Spain is in attendance. Sartorius attempts to defend Snoops, saying that he never burned the barn, but Snoops orders him back to the wagon. The judge mistakenly thinks the rug was burned in addition to being soiled and destroyed. He rules that Snoops must pay ten extra bushels of corn when the crop comes due, and court is adjourned. After a trip to the blacksmith's shop for wagon repairs, a light meal in front of the general store, and a trip to a corral where horses are displayed and sold, Snoops and his sons return home after sundown.

Despite his wife's protests, Snoops empties the kerosene from the lamp back into its five-gallon container and secures a lit candle stub in the neck of a bottle. Snoops orders Sartorius to fetch the oil. He obeys but fantasizes about running away. He tries to dissuade Snoops, but Snoops grabs Sartorius by the collar and orders his wife to restrain him. Sartorius escapes his mother's clutches and runs to the de Spain house, bursting in on the startled servant. Breathlessly, he blurts out the word *Barn!* Sartorius runs desperately down the road, moving aside as the major's horse.

Character List

Colonel Sartorius Snoops (Sarty) - A ten-year-old boy and the story's protagonist. Small and wiry, with wild, gray eyes and uncombed brown hair, Sartorius wears patched and faded jeans that are too small for him. He has inherited his innocence and morality from his mother, but his father's influence has made Sartorius old beyond his years. He is forced to confront an ethical quandary that pits his loyalty to his family against the higher concepts of justice and morality.

Abler Snoops - Sartorius's father and a serial arsonist. Cold and violent, Snoops has a harsh, emotionless voice, shaggy gray eyebrows, and pebble-colored eyes. Stiff-bodied, he walks with a limp he acquired from being shot by a Confederate's provost thirty years earlier while stealing a horse during the Civil War. Known for his wolf like independence and anger, he is convinced of his right to unleash his destructive revenge on anyone whom he believes has wronged him.

Lennie Snoops - Sartorius's mother. Sad, emotional, and caring, Lennie futilely attempts to stem her husband's destructive impulses. She is beaten down by the family's endless cycle of flight and resettlement and the pall of criminality that has stained her clan. Nervous in the presence of her irascible, unpredictable husband, she is a slim source of comfort for Sartorius in the violence-tinged world of the Snopes family.

Major de Spain - A well-dressed and affluent landowner. De Spain brings the soiled rug to the Snopeses' cabin and insists that they clean it and return it. Snopes's unpredictable nature unsettles de Spain, and he uneasily answers Snopes's charges in court.

Mr. Harris - A landowner for whom the Snopeses were short-term tenants. The plaintiff in the first court case, Harris had attempted to resolve the conflict over the Snopeses' hog. In the end, he is left with a burned barn and no legal recourse, as his case is dismissed for lack of evidence.

Colonel John Snopes - Sartoris's older brother. Although his name is not given in the story, Faulkner's other works of fiction feature the same character and identify him. A silent, brooding version of his father, John is slightly thicker, with muddy eyes and a habit of chewing tobacco.

Net and an Unnamed Sister - Sartoris's twin sisters. In his brief description of the two women, Faulkner focuses on their physicality and corpulence. They are described as large, bovine, and lethargic, with flat loud voices. They are cheaply dressed in calico and ribbons.

Lizzie - Lennie's sister and Sartoris's aunt. Lizzie supplies a voice of justice and morality when she boldly asserts, at the end of the story, that if Sartoris does not warn the de Spains that their barn is about to be burned, then she will.

Lula de Spain - Major de Spain's wife. Lula wears a smooth, gray gown with lace at the throat, with rolled-up sleeves and an apron tied around her. Assertive but intimidated by the imposing presence of Snopes, she resents having her home violated.

The Servant - A man in livery who works in the de Spain mansion. When Snopes bursts in and damages the rug, he calls the servant a racist epithet, viewing his presence as a mere extension of the slavery that dominated the South until the Civil War.

Themes, Motifs, and Symbols

Themes

Loyalty to Family versus Loyalty to the Law

In "Barn Burning," Sartoris must decide whether loyalty to family or loyalty to the law is the moral imperative. For the Snopes family, particularly for Sartoris's father, family loyalty is valued above all. The family seems to exist outside of society and even outside the law, and their moral code is based on family loyalty rather than traditional notions of right or wrong. Snopes tells Sartoris that he should remain loyal to his "blood," or family, or he will find himself alone. This threat suggests how isolated the family really is and how fully they rely on one another for protection, even when their faith in this protection is unfounded.

Blood in a literal sense appears as well, underscoring the intensity of the ties among family. For example, when the Snopes are leaving the makeshift courthouse at the beginning of the story, a local boy accuses Snopes of being a barn burner, and, when Sartoris whirls around to confront him, the boy hits Sartoris and bloodies his face. The blood, dried and caked on his face during the ride out of town, is, in a way, a mark of pride: Sartoris had defended the family name. However, after Snopes once again plans to burn a barn, Sartoris understands that family loyalty comes at too great a cost and is too heavy a burden. He rejects family loyalty and instead betrays his father, warning de Spain that his barn is about to be burned. Only when Snopes is killed—presumably shot to death by de Spain at the end of the story—is the family free. They were loyal, but they still wind up alone.

The Search for Peace

Surrounded by violence and conflict, Sartoris is constantly overwhelmed by fear, grief, and despair, and he knows that he must search for peace if he ever wants to be free from these tumultuous emotions. Sartoris specifically refers to fear, grief, and despair throughout the story, revealing the depth of his struggle to find his place among the demands of his family and his own developing ideas of morality. To Sartoris, peace, joy, and dignity are the alluring promises of a different kind of life, one that seems very far away from life in the Snopes household. His sense that a different kind of life exists grows particularly acute when he and Snopes approach de Spain's house. Sartoris is enamored with the grounds and the imposing house, and the domestic bliss that seems to emanate from the estate gives Sartoris a temporary comfort. The "spell of the house" seems to change everything, and Sartoris foolishly hopes that it has the power to turn his father from his criminal ways. For the first time, Sartoris has glimpsed a peaceful future.

Although Sartoris eventually frees himself from his father and his oppressive family life, he does not immediately find the peace and dignity that he expected would await him. Perhaps the happiness he seeks does exist for him in the future, as he leaves his family and old life behind without looking back. However, Sartoris has found a quieter, more subtle form of happiness. Life under his father was lived in a heightened state of extreme fear, grief, and despair. Now, the extreme emotions that loomed over Sartoris's young life have eased. His life may not have undergone a radical transformation, but "grief and despair [were] now no longer terror and fear but just grief and despair." Sartoris can't escape entirely, but he has already achieved a kind of peace.

Motifs

Darkness

The pervasive darkness in "Barn Burning" gestures to the lack of clarity that prevails in Snopes's thoughts and actions as well as the bleakness into which Snopes drags his family. Several significant episodes in the family's life occur under cover of darkness.

The Word Ravening

The word ravening, which means devouring greedily, destroying, or preying on, appears several times in the story, and every time it highlights Snopes's malicious character.

Symbols

Fire

Fire is a constant threat in "Barn Burning," and it represents both Snopes's inherent powerlessness and his quest for power and self-expression.

QUESTIONS

1. Sarty had to choose between family and _____
2. Comment on the title 'Barn Burning'
3. Abner Snopes has a _____
4. Attempt a character sketch of
Abner Snopes
Sarty Snopes
5. What is the theme of the story 'Barn Burning'?

B POST COLONIALISM

MODULE: 3-POETRY

THIS IS A PHOTOGRAPH OF ME

Margret Atwood

About the poet

Margaret Eleanor Atwood, (born November 18, 1939) is a Canadian poet, novelist, literary critic, essayist, and environmental activist. She is among the most-honored authors of fiction in recent history. She is a winner of the Arthur C. Clarke Award and Prince of Asturias award for Literature, has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize five times, winning once, and has been a finalist for the Governor General's Award seven times, winning twice. She is also a founder of the Writers' Trust of Canada, a non-profit literary organization that seeks to encourage Canada's writing community. While she is best known for her work as a novelist, she is also a poet, having published fifteen books of poetry to date. Many of her poems have been inspired by myths and fairy tales, which have been interests of hers from an early age. She has also published four collections of stories and three collections of unclassifiable short prose works.

About the poem:

In this poem the speaker is passively exposed to the photograph. This is a photo of the poet that others have taken. This is a history of the poet which others have created. The others are males who are active in making history of females.

When other makes history of female then there comes the problem of precision and accuracy. In patriarchy males are creating women's story. Photograph was taken sometimes ago. The speaker has not specified the time. The photograph is not clear, lines are blurred, and the light of photograph has become dim. Photograph stands for her history which is not clear; light stands for the creativity of the woman. If a woman does some important work in the society, that is shadowed. Patriarchy ignores the contribution of female. In the left hand corner, there are branches of tree. These branches of tree have emerged to right hand side. In right hand side there is a frame house. This can be seen if you see the photograph minutely. Here the right hand side (frame House) stands for male and left hand side (branches) stands for female. A woman is treated as left hand and man is treated as right hand. Woman is placed on the left hand simply associated with branches which have no roots and man is placed on the right hand side. Left hand is normally weaker than right hand. Females are supposed to be weaker and passive than male. Lake stands for the society of the photograph. Beyond the society, there are low hills. Hills and lakes keep the woman in shadow. Hills and lakes are the causes that distort her history. Margaret is trying to show the small frame houses that are not responsible for the exploitations of women. As a whole, society or the lake/ hill are responsible for the happenings to women. The speaker is not taken out of the lake.

The poet portrays identity crisis. She is the center of domestic work, but marginalized in social, political and economical fields. The last line is revolutionary. Despite all the discrimination she is there. They can destroy her photograph but cannot destroy her existence. Woman is exploited since time immemorial. Therefore the speaker does not like to historicize the time.

The title of Margaret Atwood's "This is a Photograph of Me" is quite suggestive. The title may give rise to several interpretations. The poetess may want our attention drawn to the photograph. She looks very different in reality. However, the most plausible interpretation would be that- the general perception or outlook about her was quite different; this was her real self in the photograph. She first goes on to describe the photo in terms of time, it was not a recent photograph but taken some time ago. It appears to be smeared (out of deconstruction). These appeared to be blurred lines as though she was graphically analyzed. The blurred lines and grey flecks (aspersions) seem to be blended with the paper itself. They have now become intricately linked with her personality. The poetess is therefore depicted in the first stanza by means of logical analysis, and in terms of the material. Woman has always been intellectually disregarded; she rather remains a material commodity for commercialization. The advertisements of today pose as the best instances. We stumble upon the truth as the poetess declares in the next line: The photograph was taken the day after I drowned.

Themes, Motifs, and Symbols

Themes

Civilization vs. Wilderness

Society, civilization, and culture represent the rational side of humanity, while the wild forest represents the very opposite: the irrational, primeval, and carnal impulses that exist in every living being.

The Inevitability of Death

Atwood demonstrates a remarkable determination to confront death in her poetry.

Motifs

Photographs

In her poems, Atwood uses photographs to explore identity, particularly the facades women adopt to conform (at least superficially) to society. "This is a photograph of me," the first poem in her first collection, plays with the conventional equation of appearance and reality. The photograph obscures, rather than reveals, the speaker's mysterious identity and history.

The Female Body

The female body represents servitude and entrapment, victimization and imprisonment—otherness as defined by a men.

The female body also demonstrates the unbreakable connection between the Earth and women, proof of a woman's vulnerability and mortality. While the female body can represent continuity, sensual pleasure, and self-reliance, in most of Atwood's work, there is some disjunction between substance and spirit, between flesh and essence.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the title of the poem by Margaret Atwood?
2. What things were there in the photograph?
3. Whose photograph is mentioned in the poem?
4. Who has taken the photograph of the poet?
5. When was the photograph taken?
6. How does the poet picture the photograph?
7. What does the lake stand for?
8. Who creates the history of the lady?
9. What is the significance of the title 'This is a photograph of me'?
10. The post colonial aspects in the poem 'This is a photograph of me'?
11. For whom the poet talk in this poem?
12. What does the photograph symbolize?

KAMAU BRATHWAITE: THE EMIGRANTS

About the poet

(Edward) Kamau Brathwaite was born in Bridgetown, Barbados, on May 11, 1930. He attended Harrison College in Barbados and graduated with honors from Pembroke College, Cambridge, England, in 1953. After working as an education officer in Ghana and teaching on the Jamaica campus of the University of the West Indies, he returned to England and received his Ph.D. from the University of Sussex in 1968.

His many books of poetry include *Elegguas* (Wesleyan University Press, 2010), *Born to Slow Horses* (2005), *Ancestors* (New Directions, 2001), *Words Need Love Too* (2000), *Black + Blues* (1995), *Roots* (1993), and *Trench town Rock* (1993), among others.

His poetry traces historical links and events that have contributed to the development of the black population in the Caribbean Islands and is distinguished by its experimental linguistic (and often multilingual) explorations of African identity in the West Indies. He is also the author of two plays and several collections of essays and literary criticism.

Brathwaite has received the Neustadt International Award for Literature. He is a professor of comparative literature at New York University and divides his time between Barbados and New York.

Kamau Brathwaite's poetry traces historical links and events that have contributed to the development of the black population in the Caribbean island and is distinguished by its experimental linguistic and often multilingual explorations of African identity in the West Indies. Migration is perceived as one of the defining features of the Caribbean, since colonization.

According to the poet ,those migrated people run with cardboard grips ,felt flats and ruined cloaks and the woman with their plain or purple tinted coats going somewhere else .They don't know where they are going and why they go. The poet is picturising the Africans in the New world. In this poem, Brathwaite presents the effects of European colonisation of the New world. Columbus' discovery of the New world does not bring with it civilisation ,but rather a course of destruction that ironically has its origin in Europe.

People are not bothered of the discovery . poet tries to picturise the geographical condition of Mississippi ,where mud is sticky. In London , the undergrounds are cold ,the train rolls in from darkness and leaves a lonely soft metallic sounds . In New York, nights are hot .

Poet is presenting the shift from agriculture to industrialization. The so called cities have stopped to know the simple human sound where police cars wails like babies ,an ambulance erupts like breaking glass ,an elevator sighs like Jews in Europe's gasses. The poet describes men and women in the cities. The men who lever ales in stuffy, woodbine pubs do not

like migrated people. There is no bread and breakfast for curly headed workers. The poet asks the people “*what to do men?*” *Ban the bomb? Bomb the place down? Boycott the girls ? And Should we put a ban on all marriages?*

At last the poet declare that Black as God,

Brown is good

and

White is sin.

Yet the black people beat a restless drum .

QUESTIONS

1. is the historical figure mentioned in Kamau Brathwaits poem ‘The Emigrants’?
2. What is the theme of the poem ‘The Emigrants’?
3. The colonial violence in Kamau’s poem?

HOUSE OF A THOUSAND DOORS

Meena Alexander

About the poet

Meena Alexander is one among the many writers experiencing post colonialism. A specified characteristic of such post colonial writers of our era is a general exploration of roots. However, this does not deny the differences among these writers search for base. Keki N Daruwalla states in one of his article published in 'The Hindu', "Meena Alexander also goes for roots, but in a different manner, lacks back to the Malabar landscape and ancestors and ancestral houses". Her reaction to earlier dreams and memories concerning roots is a double natured one. On one hand, her poetry pays tribute to traditions; on the other hand, it goes ahead describing the general human nature.

About the poem

The poem is about nostalgic feelings of the natives. Though Meena Alexander writes from New York, the broad Indian tradition particularly the Kerala one, makes its powerful presence in her poems. The coastal Kerala has its own significance as far as her particular case is concerned. As she has crossed so many nations and borders in the course of becoming a well known Indian poet, her debts to the past traditions are great. Acknowledging the greatness of the past traditions she writes

She kneels at each

Of the thousand doors in turn

Paying her dues.

Her debt is endless.

The beginning of everything is from Kerala. In every respect, a coast marks the beginning of a new world. There is a new or alien heritage and culture. She starts from this Kerala coast and hence the beginning of 'House of a Thousand Doors' picturise a typical Kerala house with surroundings true to its nature.

With unlisted number of debts to the tradition of Kerala, she reaches new doors and enters new rooms. Every new room, which is largely representative of new and alien cultures has practiced its own influential exercise upon her. Hence,

I watch her kneel in all my life time imploring the house hold gods

Who will not let her in.

That she has to implore the gods to get accommodated in a new room as a perfect native is evident here. It is this very sense that creates the diasporic experience in Meena Alexander. This happens just out of a refusal on the part of 'the house hold gods' to treat her just as a native. The

house of a thousand doors can be Kerala also. This is because various cultures have contributed something of their own to the heritage of Kerala. Hindu, Christian, Muslim and the Jain religious cultures along with many movements have emerged with a blending nature in Kerala. So Kerala is a house which has many doors which welcome all cultures. As Daruwalla puts it, 'The house itself is a heritage, myth and memory, abstract and concrete, the great repository of a family past now viewed and dreamt of through the prism of the present'.

Meena Alexander proves that "the idea of exile is not a post modern one. On the contrary it is a very ancient one". In the poem, life is used as a metaphor to describe the variety of forces that operate on the persona: gender, heritage, language experience, ideology and the search for meaning. She uses her writing to integrate the diversity of her experience.

QUESTIONS

1. The title of Meena Alexander's poem is
2. What does the grandmother in Meena Alexander's poem do?

‘THE MYSTIC DRUM’

Gabriel Okara

About the poet

Gabriel Okara, in full Gabriel Imomotimi Gbaingbain Okara (born April 21, 1921, Bumodi, Nigeria), is a Nigerian poet and novelist. His verse had been translated into several languages by the early 1960s. A largely self-educated man, Okara became a bookbinder after leaving school and soon began writing plays and features for radio. In 1953 his poem “*The Call of the River Nun*” won an award at the Nigerian Festival of Arts. Some of his poems were published in the influential periodical *Black Orpheus*, and by 1960 he was recognized as an accomplished literary craftsman.

Okara’s poetry is based on a series of contrasts in which symbols are neatly balanced against each other. The need to reconcile the extremes of experience (life and death are common themes) preoccupies his verse, and a typical poem has a circular movement from everyday reality to a moment of joy and back to reality again. Okara incorporated African thought, religion, folklore, and imagery into both his verse and prose. His first novel, *The Voice* (1964), is a remarkable linguistic experiment in which Okara translated directly from the Ijo (Ijaw) language, imposing Ijo syntax onto English in order to give literal expression to African ideas and imagery. The novel creates a symbolic landscape in which the forces of traditional African culture and Western materialism contend. Its tragic hero, Okolo, is both an individual and a universal figure, and the ephemeral “it” that he is searching for could represent any number of transcendent moral values. Okara’s skilled portrayal of the inner tensions of his hero distinguished him from many other Nigerian novelists. During much of the 1960s Okara worked in civil service. From 1972 to 1980 he was director of the Rivers State Publishing House in Port Harcourt. His later work includes a collection of poems, *The Fisherman’s Invocation* (1978), and two books for children, *Little Snake and Little Frog* (1981) and *An Adventure to Juju Island* (1992).

About the poem

“The Mystic Drum,” evinces a tripartite ritual pattern of initiation from innocence through intimacy to experience. The drum, in African poems, generally stands for the spiritual pulse of traditional African life. The poet asserts that first, as the drum beat inside him fishes danced in the rivers and men and women danced on the land to the rhythm of the drum. But standing behind the tree, there stood an outsider who smiled with an air of indifference at the richness of their culture. However, the drum still continued to beat rippling the air with quickened tempo compelling the dead to dance and sing with their shadows. The ancestral glory overpowers other considerations. So powerful is the mystic drum, that it brings back even the dead alive. The rhythm of the drum is the aching for an ideal Nigerian State of harmony.

The outsider still continued to smile at the culture from the distance. The outsider stands for Western Imperialism that has looked down upon anything Eastern, non-Western, alien and therefore, 'incomprehensible for their own good' as 'The Other'. The African culture is so much in tune with nature that the mystic drum invokes the sun, the moon; the river gods and the trees began to dance. The gap finally gets bridged between humanity and nature, the animal world and human world, the hydrosphere and lithosphere that fishes turned men, and men became fishes. But later as the mystic drum stopped beating, men became men, and fishes became fishes. Life now became dry, logical and mechanical thanks to Western Scientific Imperialism and everything found its place. Leaves started sprouting on the woman; she started to flourish on the land. Gradually her roots struck the ground. Spreading a kind of parched rationalism smoke issued from her lips and her lips parted in smile. The term 'smoke' is also suggestive of the pollution caused by industrialization, and also the clouding of morals. Ultimately, the speaker was left in 'belching darkness', completely cut off from the heart of his culture, and he packed the mystic drum not to beat loudly anymore. The 'belching darkness' alludes to the futility and hollowness of the imposed existence.

The outsider, at first only, has an objective role standing behind a tree. Eventually, she intrudes and tries to weave their spiritual life. The 'leaves around her waist' are very much suggestive of Eve who adorned the same after losing her innocence. Leaves stop growing on the trees but only sprout on her head implying 'deforestation.' The refrain reminds us again and again, that this Eve turns out to be the eve of Nigerian damnation.

Okara mentions in one of his interviews that "The Mystic Drum" is essentially a love poem: "This was a lady I loved". And she coyly was not responding directly, but I adored her. Her demeanor seemed to mask her true feelings; at a distance, she seemed adoring, however, on coming closer, she was, after all, not what she seemed." This lady may stand as an emblem that represents the lure of Western life; how it seemed appealing at first but later seemed distasteful to the poet.

STRUCTURE

The poem has three different parts-an initial phase of conventional knowledge when men are men and fishes are fishes;(line 1-15) a middle phase of more intimate knowledge when men are no longer fishes (lines 16-26) and a final phase of 'substantial knowledge' when men are once again men and fishes are once again fishes, with the difference that at this phase, the beloved lady of the lyric is depicted as 'standing behind a trace' with "her lips parted in her smile". It is more decidedly a philosophical poem in which the dynamics directions and management of 'the mystic drum' of passion that beats in the poet's inside are dramatically re-enacted.

At the initial level of conventional knowledge (lines 1-7), the speaker sees people as people and fishes as fishes. At this level, the love relationship between the lover and his beloved is still at a primary phenomenal and mundane level of innocent physical and sexual attraction. As at the end of the first and second phases, the beloved is no longer simply 'standing behind a tree/with leaves around her waist', only smiling "with a shake of her head". She is no longer silent

but active, combustive, mysterious and even ominous. At this climax of his emotional and epistemological initiation, the lover finally decides to 'pack' his 'mystic drum' turning away from an over-excited involvement in love relationships, determined 'never to beat so loud anymore'.

The mystic drum and the transformations are projected to the personality of the beloved who acquires extra-ordinary powers that effectively transform her into a supernatural being, indeed a goddess, invested with the powers "of the things of the ground" (earth) of the "the eye of the sky/the sun and moon"(heaven) and of the 'river gods'(water).

QUESTIONS

1. She stood behind a tree with leaves around her waist and only smiled
.....
2. What happened to men and fish when the drum invoked the sun and moon?
3. What does the drum symbolize?
4. The outsider mentioned in the poem 'Mystic Drum' stands for whom ?
5. 'The leaves around her waist' –what does it suggest?
6. What do you mean by refrain?
7. What is the refrain mentioned in the poem 'The mystic drum'?
8. 'The mystic drum' is essentially a love poem-substantiate

AFRICA

David Diop

About the poet

David Diop was born to a Senegalese father and Cameroonian mother in the city of Bordeaux, France, in 1927. He debuted writing poetry while he was still at school. He was one of the contributors to Leopold Senghor's anthology of poems published in French. This was a major milestone in the history of black French literature as it put forth the movement of 'Negritude' by asserting the greatness of black people contrary to the white man's dismissal of them as primitive and uncivilized.

Diop's poetry talks about the glorious past of Africa and also recollects the untold sufferings and humiliations endured by the Africans in the last few hundred years. Diop suffered from poor health for the most part of his life and died at a very early age of 33 in an air crash off Dakar, Senegal, in 1960. His poetry will always be remembered as one of the keystones in the arch of African literature.

ANALYSIS

Africa my Africa

Africa of proud warriors in ancestral savannahs

Africa of whom my grandmother sings

On the banks of the distant river

The poem starts by Diop reminiscing about Africa, a land he has not seen but only heard about from his grandmother's songs. His choice of words like "distant" symbolize how far he is from his country, a feeling based on his real life as he lived in France throughout his childhood and only visited Africa in the 1950s. Despite this, he paints a vivid scene of Africa and the proud warriors who walk on its "ancestral savannahs" You can sense how much he misses his homeland by his stress on the word Africa, and he continues to call it "My Africa" to emphasize it is his land and his feelings of patriotism towards it.

I have never known you

But your blood flows in my veins

Your beautiful black blood that irrigates the fields

The blood of your sweat

The sweat of your work

The work of your slavery

He continues to say that he has never known Africa, but despite the distance he cannot deny how much it is a part of him. The "beautiful black blood" which flows in his veins describes his African descent and shows how much Africa is a part of him and his love for it and its people.

The next verses are angry and accusatory as he stresses that it is the blood and sweat of his people which is irrigating the fields for the benefit of other people. By this he is pointing a finger at the colonialists who exploited Black people and used them as slaves to profit from their hard labor.

Africa, tell me Africa

Is this your back that is unbent?

This back that never breaks under the weight of humiliation

This back trembling with red scars

And saying no to the whip under the midday sun

In these verses he urges the Black people to stand up to the pain and the humiliation that they are suffering in their own land. He reminds them of the strength and pride they have in them and to say no to the whip of the colonialist which makes them work under the hot midday sun and leaves scars on their backs. Despite this suffering he urges them to be strong and remain unbent and not let this break them despite the weight of their suffering.

But a grave voice answers me

Impetuous child that tree, young and strong

That tree over there

Splendidly alone amidst white and faded flowers

That is your Africa springing up anew

Springing up patiently, obstinately

Whose fruit bit by bit acquires

The bitter taste of liberty.

In these verses the wise voice of Africa chides him for thinking "impetuous" thoughts, and implies to us that a continent lies in wait for something to happen. It urges the Africans to be patient and not to be hasty like children as there is change on the horizon. The tree "young and strong" represents the young people of Africa who are patiently but "obstinately" waiting until they get the liberty they want. At the moment the tree is alone, meaning the African struggle is a lonely battle but they will achieve the freedom and liberty they want no matter how bitter the taste. By the "white and faded" flowers he means the colonialists who will fade in time ; the youthful Africans will grow in strength and wait for their moment of freedom.

David Diop's "Africa" celebrates the typical love of the African for their motherland and the ancestors. The Africa, the poet speaks of deals with proud warriors in Ancestral Savannahs; the Africa of whom his grandmother sings. It is not only with the present but also with the past. Thus the love is not something infected but transmitted in the blood and can never be evaporated till death. The greatest irony is that though he has never seen his ancestors, their blood flows in his veins and thereby he can feel their love for his country and their adoration of tradition. It is their black blood that irrigates the fields.

The poet attacks the world's theory that Africa does not possess a history. It is a kind of history that the colonizers refuse to acknowledge. It involves the blood of their sweat, the sweat of their work and the work of their slavery. It is not any slavery, but the slavery of the children of Africa. And thus Africa's back is bent in misery and humiliation preferring to break than bend. The back trembling with scars has its wounds afresh and raw. Never did the sentiments of the natives submit so indifferently to oppression of the colonizers. They are still pained by the experiences and continue to be so. However, a ray of hope appears in the form of a grave voice. It may symbolize the ancestors or some African god. It ascertains to the impetuous son that the tree still stands there young and strong and is capable of spreading its branches and reaching out to new horizons.

The poem "Africa" reflects the poet's vision of an independent and sovereign Africa. Diop was strongly critical of Europe. The glorious, pre-colonial Africa is no longer the present Africa. The lingering memories of loss, slavery, humiliation makes the present freedom taste bitter. Postcolonial Africa is an Africa of a different kind. Colonialism may end but the bitter memories linger forever.

This is a poem in which Diop by the power of his imagination calls forth three stages in the continent of Africa's history: pre-colonial days of proud warrior tribes, the colonial experience of subjugation and humiliation, and the postcolonial freedom and sovereignty. The first seven lines present an essentially idealized image of Africa with which the speaker identifies then follows a realistic picture of Africa's experience of bitterness, despair and mockery under colonial rule. The last eight lines present a future of hope built on some of the realistic elements of colonial experience: Africa as a young tree patiently springing up and gradually acquiring "the bitter taste of liberty".

In David Diop's poem, "Africa", the poet hopes to create a renewed Africa out of the bitter experiences of colonialism. The poem is postcolonial as it gives the understanding that the effects of colonialism will continue to haunt even after the disappearance of colonialism. The poet's preoccupation with the past glories is also suggestive of its postcolonial nature.

QUESTIONS

1. David Diop's poetry talks about the
2. The back of Africa breaks under the weight of
3. The title of the poem written by Diop is
4. The image used by the poet to represent future Africa is
5. David Diop's Africa celebrates the typical love of the African for their
6. What, according to David Diop, irrigates the fields to enrich nature?
7. The image 'white and faded' flower stands for what?
8. How does the poem 'Africa' start?
9. What are the stages mentioned by the poet in the continent of Africa's history?
10. Why does the poet say that liberty has bitter taste?
11. How does the poet picture the pre-colonial Africa?
12. How does the poet picture the colonial period of Africa?

MODULE: 4-DRAMA

HARVEST

Manjula Padmanabhan

About the playwright

Manjula Padmanabhan (born 1953) is a playwright, journalist, comic strip artist, and children's book author. She has also written such plays as *Lights Out! (1984)*, *Hidden Fires (solo by Rashi Bunny) The Artist's Model (1995) and Sextet (1996)*. Born in Delhi to a diplomat family in 1953, she went to boarding school in her teenage years. After college, her determination to make her own way of life led to various kinds of works in publishing and media related fields. She has authored a collection of short stories, called *Kleptomania*. Her most recent book, published in 2008, is titled "Escape". Apart from writing newspaper columns she also created comic strips.. Before 1997 (the year in which her play *Harvest* was staged) she was better known as cartoonist and had a daily cartoon strip in *The Pioneer* newspaper.

Harvest

The theme of Manjula Padmanabhan's play 'Harvest is the purchase and sale of human organs. It is "dark bitter savagely funny vision of the cannibalistic future that awaits the human race". It becomes a parable of what will happen when the rich of the first world actually begin to devour bits and pieces of the 3rd world poor".

The Plot

'Harvest' is a futuristic play, set in the year 2010. There are quite a few technical wizardry introduction in the play, including travels in hyper reality and revolving strobe – like TV modular suspended from the ceiling. There are references to donors and receivers. The playwright has taken and molded the grin relatives of life into a 21st century table in which powerful questions are thrown open like the limits of poverty and wanted materials. In the opening scene of the play we can find a cramped single room tenement in Mumbai Chawl, which forms the setting of the play. The play is occupied by a typical 4 member family. Om prakash is a tense and jobless clerk. He is desperately trying to support his family. His wife Jaya is resigned to the life of insecurity and privatization. She looks worn out and much older than she really is. Om Prakash's old mother, instead of being a benevolent and encouraging influence, is frustrated, ill-natured and sarcastic. Om Prakash's younger brother, Jeethu has already given up all hopes of getting a decent employment, and he now works, on the sly as a male prostitute. Poverty, starvation, unemployment, food shortage and conflicts haunted the people.

In order to ward off starvation these desperate men like Om Prakash join queue outside the 'Inter planta services". This is a contract firm, a hi-tech company, which chooses able bodied candidates to donate their organs to western buyers who live in perpetual fear of old age, accidents or the faintest signs of bodily decay. Once the donor commits his life to a wealthy

receiver, the receiver pays for the donor and his family's upkeep. But there are conditions. The donor is now kept under constant surveillance by means of regular long distance call on a video module. Thus the donor's privacy is invaded; he has to adjust with various things that force him to change his life style according to the whims of the buyer. Thus the contract involves some kind of futuristic slavery.

Having committed himself to such a job Om prakash now enters into such a world. He planned to sell his organs to a person called Ginny for a short period of comfortable living. Ginny is an irresistibly gorgeous blonde far off in California and Om Prakash's only acquaintance with her is through the video screen. He sells his organs to save her.

After making the deal, Om Prakash's apartment undergoes dramatic external changes. It is transformed into an air-conditioned aesthetic but utilitarian bed cum-living room with a well fitted kitchen and toilet. Now Jaya sits painting her nails all day long, and cryptic old Ma is glued to the new television set. But behind Ginny's seductive video image there lurks a Mephistopheles. By the time Ginny is ready to claim her part as a receiver. Om Prakash betrays his brother Jeethu, Jeetu betrays his beloved, and Ma sinks in to the abyss of T.V. However, the inter plaza service comes to the house of Om and Jaya as soon as Om gets a job. He says he got it very easily though there were six thousand men waiting under the sun for the job. So even without his own knowledge he becomes the donor of organs for the receivers of first world countries. Jaya is forced to pretend as his sister as it is mandatory that a donor must be bachelor. The guards and agents of the inter planta services take over the entire charge of Om's house. The inter planta service is using Om only as a decoy to get Jeetu, younger and more energetic, who has much healthier organs.

Structure and Characters

The play has 3 acts. The structure is traditional, comprising of acts and scenes. The characters are also divided into 3 categories Donors, Agents and guards and Receivers. Om, the young 21 years old has been laid off from his job as a clerk, and is the bread Winner of his small family. His wife Jaya, 19 is passionate and spirited. Om's mother, a stooped, scrawny old woman, always quarrels with Jaya. Om's younger brother Jeetu works as a prostitute. These comprise the Donor group of characters. The guards and agents are a group of commando like characters. They are space-age delivery persons and their uniforms are fantastical like the costumes of waiters in exotic restaurants.

Ginny and Virgil are the receivers. Ginny is the blonde, white skinned epitome of an American style youth goddess. Her voice is sweet and sexy. But then she is only "Virtual" and not real. Virgil, on the other hand, is the real aspect of Ginny. He is never seen on stage, but is said to have an American cigarette commercial accent- rich, smoky attractive and rugged. Of the six characters in the play, two are physically absent. This makes the situation all the more gripping. These two characters- Ginni and Virgil- ultimately, merge and become one character. Sometimes Ginny's face flickers on a polygon which the inter planta has installed in the flat of Om and Jaya.

However, the various relationships- between brother in law and sister in law, between daughter in law and mother in law have been brought out by the playwright. She also unmask a wide range of emotions from sexuality to vicious back biting and whispering cowardice. As the play progresses, the characters' strengths are destroyed – psychologically, morally and then physically. The audience is moved by the helplessness of their condition. Everything appears extremely pessimistic. When the time comes for Om Prakash to 'donate' his organs, he is transformed into a frightened, cowering wreck, without even the magic dignity of Doctor Faustus. Om prakash falls so low that he is ready even to betray his own brother. Jeetu, in turn, is not able to resist the offer given by the video image of Ginny. But the image later turns out to be nothing but a computer-animated wet dream. Actually the receiver is a man named Virgil, who has deliberately misled Om prakash and his family by projecting the image of seductive and lovely Ginny. All along, it is Virgil who has been conversing with them and not Ginny. Jeetu is caught in the deception and donates his organs willingly, and is destroyed. Strange enough, Old Ma chooses for herself what could be called 'electronic annihilation'. Among all the characters, the only one who is able to eventually stand up to and resist the inhuman condition is Jaya. She realizes that she has lost her entire family – her husband, her mother in law and her brother in law Jeetu. Now it is her turn but she prefers to hang herself instead of donating organs.

QUESTIONS

1. The play 'The Harvest' won the _____ prize/award
2. What is the central theme of the play, 'The Harvest'?
3. Attempt a character sketch of
Jaya
Ma
Om Prakash
Jeethu
4. The interplanta service
5. Consider the play 'Harvest' as a futuristic play?
6. The contemporary social relevance of the play 'The Harvest'
7. Colonization of the body in 'The Harvest'
8. Who wrote the play 'harvest'?
9. What is the theme of the play 'harvest'?
10. Harvest is a futuristic play justify
11. Who are the characters in the play 'harvest'?
12. The role of 'inter planta service .
13. What are the three categories of characters mentioned in the play 'harvest'?
14. Who are the two physically absent characters in the play 'harvest'?
15. The play 'Harvest' won..... Prize/award
16. The character of Jaya
17. Om Prakash
18. The contemporary relevance of the play 'Harvest'?
19. The post colonial aspects in the play 'Harvest'?

FICTION

KILLING TIME

Nasibu Mwanukuzi

About the writer

The award winning Ras Nas aka Nasibu Mwanukuzi is a musician and poet from Tanzania living in Oslo, Norway. Ras Nas repertoire is a mixture of reggae and soukous (or rather, muziki wa dansi) with lyrics in both Kiswahili and English. The music is self composed as well as self arranged. Currently, his band comprises of musicians from Norway, Sweden, Ivory Coast, Congo Brazzaville and USA.

Ras Nas has so far produced three critically acclaimed albums: *Cut You Loose (1997)*, *Dar-es-Salaam (2007)* and *Double Focus (2010)*. In 2010, he was awarded the Tanzania Red Carpet Award for Best Solo Artist.

Ras Nas has participated in many prestigious festivals and has also toured extensively in Scandinavia.

Killing Time

Killing Time is a short story penned by Nasibu Mwanukuzi, a Tanzanian writer, poet and musician. Nasibu is known for his experiments in music in which he blends African music, reggae with a dash of poetry. He has attempted to present the real charms of African music and African culture. Settled in Norway, Nasibu has brought forth various collection of his artistic enterprise and has performed for the African legend Nelson Mandela, when the latter made a visit to Norway. At intervals, he works with short stories as well. *Killing Time*, *Days of Summer*, and *The Stolen Amulet* are some of his best short stories.

In Killing Time, as in his other short stories, we are introduced to the experiences of a young narrator who witnesses his surroundings. The young narrator is cast in half westernized settings where they brood over the intricacies of modern life; they expect something unexpected to happen. In Killing Time, as the title suggests, the narrator is spending his time lazily (a similar case can be read in *Days of Summer*, in which the narrator is thinking of death in the early morning hour while the whole world is busy working) at a cafe and notices the arrival of a man of fifty or above, who finds a seat for himself away from the crowd and sits with a glass of beer. As time goes by, the narrator notices that the man is lost in thought and is seriously involved in some personal dilemma. He idly fabricates many reasons for the moody temperament of the stranger. Meanwhile, as he closely watches the stranger, he suddenly realizes that he too is being observed by a third person. Gradually, the cafe is filled with smoke and he can see the old man amidst. The old man is trying to rise up. It is difficult to say whether the old man really rose with the table or the narrator imagined him so. This disenchantment with reality is a mark of Nasibu Mwanukuzi's

prose writings. In *Days of summer*, the author observes the reality outside, and suddenly gets detached from the normal and its significance. As he writes,

"Then suddenly, all of a sudden, and without warning, everything turned sad, the man with the yellow flag looked older, grey and sad."

In *Killing Time*, it seems that Nasibu is interweaving reality with magic. This can be an instance of adding the color of fantasy to a newly emerging culture which is, from an African point of view, dull and dry. Once western culture is introduced, its rationalized logic makes the illogical, supernatural, primitive indigenous cultures insignificant and leaves the natives in hand of a culture which is artificial, rational and detached. So, *Killing Time* can be considered as an attempt of the narrator to bring the harmonious life of the earlier culture and myths.

The use of magical elements in prose and fiction is an important strategy of post-colonial writers. Writers from Africa and South America including Marquez, use magic realism as an extension of realistic narration which somehow ignores the real element of non-western cultures. The interweaving of myth/fantasy with realistic narration is an effective mode of narration in post-colonial discourse. Realism was the dominant mode of narration of nineteenth century novels which presupposed many euro-centric notions with it. African and Latin American writers want to break these assumptions of realism and brought forth many elements of magic into the text which was one way of introducing their cultural heterogeneity into the main stream. Black American writers like Toni Morrison too attempted to put magic realism as a mode of narration in her fiction. This synthesizes the western mode of narration with the rhythm of the indigenous.

Nasibu Mwanukuzi presents the virility of a culture that caters to the imaginative realm of man. It is common among African writers to contrast the objective, dull world of the present with the mystical, harmonious days of the past. Nasibu too contrasts the artificiality and dreariness of the present (where the purpose of living is missing, as the title suggests) and the colorful, imaginative, harmonious life of the ancient Africa is recalled.

QUESTIONS

1. Who wrote the story 'Killing Time'?
2. What was eating the mind of the stranger in 'Killing Time'?
3. What was the stranger in 'Killing Time' mercilessly devoured by?
4. The significance of the title 'Killing Time'.
5. How did the narrator describe the stranger in the story 'Killing Time'?
6. How did the narrator describe the stranger?
7. From where did the narrator happen to see the stranger?

A SCARF

Carol Shield

About the writer

Carol Ann Shields was an American-born Canadian author. She is best known for her 1993 novel, *The Stone Diaries*, which won the U.S. Pulitzer Prize for Fiction as well as the Governor General's Award in Canada. Shields was the author of several novels and short story collections, including *The Orange Fish* (1989), *Swann* (1987), *Various Miracles* (1985), *Happenstance* (1980), and *The Republic of Love* (1992). She was the recipient of a Canada Council Major Award, two National Magazine Awards, the 1990 Marian Engel Award, the Canadian Author's Award, and a CBC Short Story Award. She was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1998 and was elevated to Companion of the Order in 2002. Shields was also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and a member of the Order of Manitoba.

SUMMARY

The story begins with the declaration of Mrs. Winter, the narrator that 'two years ago I wrote a novel'. It was her first novel. She is a middle aged woman. Her novel is described as 'a fresh, bright spring time piece of fiction' by the Publisher's Weekly. Her novel's title is 'My Thyme is up'. When it was published, she did not know who was buying her item. Mrs. Scribano, her publisher opined that young working girls may buy it and she ventured that the novel is gnawed by loneliness and insecurity.

Her husband Tom and her children are her support. She has three daughters-Nancy, Chris and Norah. They were happy about the book because they were mentioned by name in People Magazine's interview.

Mrs. Rita Winters lives on a farm outside Lancaster, Pennsylvania, with her husband who is a family physician. Among her three daughters, Norah is the most literary girl. Both Nancy and Chris are interested in advanced science. The novel won the Offenden Prize. It recognizes quality and honors accessibility. After the ceremony function, she said goodbye to the family and travelled to Washington as she was offered three book city tours by her publisher. She decided to go for shopping as Norah's birthday is coming up within a week's time. Norah longed for a beautiful and serious scarf. She decided to buy Norah the perfect scarf. Norah wanted something in a bright blue with perhaps some yellow dashes. As she moved from one boutique to the next, Mrs. Winter began to form a very definite idea of the scarf that she wanted for Norah. The scarf became an idea, it must be brilliant and subdued at the same time, finely made, but with a secure sense of its own shape.

Norah had always been a bravely undemanding child. Once she was four or five she told her mother how she controlled her bad dreams at night. Then at last Mrs. Winter had the sight of Norah's scarf, it flowed into her view. It was patterned from end to end with rectangles each subtly out of alignment; blue, yellow, green, a kind of pleasing violet and each of these shapes was outlined by black colour. Sixty dollars was its cost.

In Baltimore, Mrs. Winters had to meet her friend Gwen who was with her in the same women's writing group in Lancaster. Five years ago, she became writer-in-residence for a small women's college in Baltimore. Gwen had made sacrifices for her young student husband. She had her navel closed by a plastic surgeon because her husband complained that it smelled "off". This navel-less state, more than anything, became her symbol of regret and anger.

Mrs. Winters met Gwen at the Café Pierre. Gwen had changed considerably in dressing and appearance. Her head was covered and Mrs. Winters wondered if Gwen was undergoing chemotherapy and suffering hair loss. But her face was fresh. After talking for sometime about the book, she showed the scarf to her. Gwen commented that 'You invented it, created it out of your imagination'. She was so happy to hear such a comment from Gwen. She almost cried herself. She had not expected anyone to understand how she felt. Mrs. Winters watched Gwen roll the scarf back into the fragile paper. She took her time, tucking in the edges with her finger tips. Then she slipped the parcel into her plastic bag, spilling more freely now. She thanked Reta, "You don't know what you have given me today". She wondered why the scarf "half an ounce of silk" was so important to Gwen. She looked at Gwen and then down at her hands, her wedding band, her engagement ring, a little diamond thingamajig from the sixties. She thought of her three daughters and her mother-in-law and her own dead mother with her slack charms and her need to relax by painting china.

At the end of the story Mrs. Winters philosophises that none of us is going to get what we wanted. We ask questions ourselves, endlessly, but not sternly enough. The world is not ready for us; it hurts her to say that. We are too kind, too willing, too unwilling too, reaching out blindly with a grasping hand, but not knowing how to ask for what we do not even know we want. This is how the story ends.

QUESTIONS

1. How did publisher's weekly describe the book 'My Thyme is Up'?
2. How did New York Times Review describe novel by Mrs. Winters?
3. Who is Tom?
4. Who are the three daughters of Tom and Winters?
5. Why were the three daughters of the narrator of 'A Scarf' very happy?
6. Who is the narrator in the story 'A Scarf'?
7. Who wrote the story 'A Scarf'?
8. The novel 'My Thyme is Up' won _____ Prize?
9. What is the dream in the story 'A Scarf'?
10. The success of 'My Thyme is Up'?