

Centre for Distance and Online Education

UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU

JAMMU



SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

M.A. ENGLISH

SEMESTER-IV

TITLE OF THE COURSE :

COLONIAL & POST COLONIAL LITERATURE

COURSE CODE : ENG-424

UNIT I-VI

LESSONS : 1-23

2025

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<http://www.distanceeducationju.in>

Printed & Published on behalf of the Centre for Distance and Online Education, University of Jammu by the Director, CD&OE, University of Jammu, Jammu.

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SEMESTER - IV**

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WELCOME MESSAGE

Welcome to Semester - IV !

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you to PG English Semester - IV. We started our journey together when you enrolled for PG English Programme. After the semester IV end examination and declaration of result you will earn your M.A. English Degree. Do study hard and prepare well for the semester end examination and put in a little extra effort to prepare the Internal Assessment Assignments.

You are advised to visit CD&OE Library regularly and make the best use of the books available to prepare notes. You can also prepare simultaneously for the NET/SET/SLET examination and the study material of Course Code : ENG-424 has been prepared keeping in view your syllabus and also your preparation for NET/SLET/SET examination. Do work hard.

With best wishes!

Dr. Jasleen Kaur
Teacher Incharge

UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU

Course Code : ENG-424

Duration of Examination : 3 hrs.

Title of the Course: Colonial and Postcolonial Literature

Total Marks : 100

Credits : 6

(a) Semester Examination : 80

(b) Sessional Assessment : 20

Detailed Syllabus for the examinations to be held in May 2025, 2026 & 2027

OBJECTIVE :

The objective of the course is to give the learner a broad perspective on colonial and postcolonial writings in English. It will take into account the ideology of the colonizers and its impact on the culture and traditions of the colonized nations and their desire to create new national literatures. This will constitute the focus of the study.

Unit - I

Joseph Conrad

The Heart of Darkness

Unit - II

Bapsi Sidhwa

Ice-Candy Man

Unit - III

Ngugi waThiang'o

Weep Not, Child

Unit - IV

Khalid Hosseini

The Kite Runner

Unit - V

Salman Rushdie

Midnight's Children

Unit - VI

Amitav Ghosh

The Shadow Lines

MODE OF EXAMINATION

The paper will be divided into sections A, B & C.

M.M. = 80

SECTION A

Multiple Choice Questions

Q. No. 1 will be an objective type question covering the entire syllabus. Twelve objectives two from each with four options each will be set and candidates will be required to write the correct option and not specify by putting a tick mark (✓). Any ten out of twelve are to be attempted.

Each objective will be for one mark

(10 x 1 = 10)

SECTION B

Short Answer Questions

Q.No. 2 comprises short answer type questions covering the entire syllabus. Four questions will be set and the candidate will be required to attempt any two questions in 80 - 100 words.

Each answer will be evaluated for 5 marks

(2 x 5 = 10)

SECTION C

Long Answer Questions

Q. No. 3 comprises long answer type questions the entire syllabus. Six questions, one from each unit, will be set and the candidate will be required to attempt all the questions in 300 - 350 words.

Each answer will be evaluated for 12 marks.

(5 x 12 = 60)

Suggested Readings

Anderson, B. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, 1991.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back*, Routledge, 1989.

Bhabha, Homi. *Nation and Narration* Routledge, 2013.

Chew, Shirley and David Richards. *A Concise Companion to Postcolonial Literature*. Wiley Blackwell, 2014.

- Fanon, Franz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Harmondsworth, 1977.
- . *Black Skins, White Masks*. UK Penguin Books, 2021.
- . *A Dying Colonialism*. Lexington Books, 2007.
- Griffiths, Ashcroft and Tiffin, editors. *The Postcolonial Studies Readers*. London, Routledge, 2006.
- Gunning, Dave. *Postcolonial Literature*. Edinburg University Press, 2013.
- Knepper, Wendy. *Postcolonial Literature*. Longman 2011.
- Mahmood, M. M. *The Colonial Encounter*. Rex Collins, 1977.
- Nayar, Pramod. *Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction*. Pearson Longman, 2008.
- Pawel, Ernst. *The Nightmare of Reason: A Life of Franz Kafka*. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1984.
- Scott, Bede. *Affective Disorders: Emotion in Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. Liverpool University Press, 2019.
- Singh, Naval Kishor. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. Mangalam Publications, 2010.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravarty. *The Other Worlds*. Routledge, 2012.
- Wagenbach, Klaus. *Franz Kafka: Pictures of a Life*. Translated by Arthur S. Wensinger. Pantheon Books, 1984.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page No.
Unit - I Joseph Conrad : <i>Heart of Darkness</i> Lesson No. 1 to 4	1-27
Unit - II Bapsi Sidhwa : <i>Ice-Candy Man</i> Lesson No. 5 to 8 <i>Lesson Writer : Dr. Sunita Jakhar</i>	28-100
Unit - III Ngugi waThiang'o : <i>Weep Not, Child</i> Lesson No. 9 to 12 <i>Lesson Writer : Prof. Anupama Vohra</i>	101-149
Unit - IV Khaled Hosseini : <i>The Kite Runner</i> Lesson No. 13 to 16 <i>Lesson Writer : Dr. Madhu Sharma</i>	150-195
Unit - V Salman Rushdie : <i>Midnight's Children</i> Lesson No. 17 to 20 <i>Lesson Writer : Dr. Garima Gupta</i>	196-238
Unit - VI Amitav Ghosh : <i>The Shadow Lines</i> Lesson No. 21 to 23 <i>Lesson Writer : Dr. Sunita Jakhar</i>	239-276[

JOSEPH CONRAD (1857-1924)**STRUCTURE**

- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Joseph Conrad (1857-1924)
- 1.3 Examination Oriented Questions
- 1.4 Suggested Reading

1.1 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to introduce to the learner the life and the works of Joseph Conrad to help the learner to prepare for the semester end examination.

1.2 JOSEPH CONRAD (1857-1924)**Life and Works of Joseph Conrad**

Jozef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, who later on adopted the simpler pen-name Joseph Conrad, was a Pole and was born to aristocratic parents in 1857 at Berdichev, a town in the Polish Ukraine, then a part of Russia. He spent the first thirteen years of his life here. His family was of land owning gentry, various members of which had fought in the long and intermittent struggle with Russia. His father was an exiled Polish patriot who struggled for Polish independence and was imprisoned by the Tsar's officials and sent to a concentration camp in Vologoda, North Russia, for his part in the rising of 1863. His mother, a woman of equally exalted character, was also banished. She accompanied her husband, but being a person of weak health, died there after three years. Conrad's father was a learned man who was revered by his compatriots for his idealism and devotion and adored by his only son. He translated the works of Victor Hugo and Shakespeare into Polish. After completing his sentence, he returned to Poland. He was already a shattered, weak and bitter man. He could not survive for long and died when Conrad was just eleven years old. Conrad was educated at Cracow and being the child of his father he was a great reader, always dreaming of himself enacting what he read. The incident is well known and it has been recorded by him and all his biographers. The boy of nine or so one day, reading the map of Africa, put his finger on a spot in the middle of the still dark continent and said to himself, "When I grow up I shall go *there*." He intended to join the university but his fate decided things for him differently. As an orphan, he was placed under the care of his uncle for not less than six years where he used to spend time in educating himself reading in French and German. It is a fact that

he knew French from his childhood and always spoke it fluently; but of English not a word till he was sixteen. He was specially influenced by his French tutors, from whose Gallic vanity he got the idea that "French is the only modern language fit for literature." His chosen masters were French—Flaubert, Maupassant, Anatole France and Daudet. When he thought of writing the novel of adventure, he combined with it the objective spirit of French naturalism.

It was at the age of nineteen that Conrad decided to become a sailor though he was totally ignorant about the life of the sea as there was no seafaring in the family. Probably its appeal was due to the romantic ideas which he gathered from his reading of French books. It is pertinent to remember that he was Slavic and uncommonly introspective, perhaps being lonely from his childhood. When he spoke of "the loneliness that surrounds every human soul," he unconsciously told what manner of man he was and what he must write. Among other yearnings it was the desire for freedom in the heart of this young boy which prompted him to take this decision to leave for Marseilles in 1874 to become a sailor where he joined the French Mercantile Marine. Conrad's sense of adventure made him develop another hobby, that is of a gun runner. He took part in several gun-running expeditions on behalf of Don Carlos, a preacher to the Spanish throne. He used his experiences of the adventures as a sailor and gun-runner in his stories and novels, which are largely a reflection of his own personality, which was solitary and shadowy as that of a stranger in a foreign port. It is true also of his character and the human events and the scenes which he describes. Conrad had a background of Slav sensibility and the spirit of Russian novelists, which adds a special quality to his perception of the mysterious and his philosophy of life.

After serving for four years in the French Merchant Navy, he landed at Lowestoft and joined the British merchant service. By 1885 he had his master mariner's certificate. Conrad got a job on a British ship named the *Mavis* in 1878 though he did not know English language then at all. He decided that if he was to remain a sailor, he would be a British sailor. He became a naturalized British citizen and remained a man apart, a fellow separated from his own people. It took eight years for him to obtain a third mate's ticket, then a mate's and finally a master's. He made several voyages to the Far East notably to Singapore, Borneo and the Gulf of Siam, all of which provided the material for his novels. These places are more than the backdrop of his stories; they provide characters and real situations and their attitudes and value patterns affect their course of action. For instance, Conrad's short novel, *Heart of Darkness* is the by-product of his trip to the Congo. The place no doubt stirred his imagination but also affected his health in the form of malarial attacks. He returned to the sea but his ill-health caused him to leave the sea again in 1894. He had spend twenty years roaming the world in sail and steam ships gaining experience which was to prove invaluable. Years after his retirement, he chose to be a writer but could not think of becoming a professional writer till John Galsworthy encouraged him to consider it seriously. As a result, his first novel, *Almayer's Folly* was published in 1895. The novel is distinctly original and powerful and its central idea and ruling motive is very well conceived and carried out. It departs altogether from the conventional happy ending as well as from other common characteristics of the art of novel. In this sense it can be considered to be a serious and valuable contribution. *An Outcast of the Islands* appeared in the next year, that is, in 1896. Both the novels are based on his

experiences of Malaya where some characters got stranded in some forgotten South sea port. These novels received a sympathetic response from the critics and many of them recognized the originality and genius of the novelist though his admirers were “few but select.” In other words, if these novels may not be among his best, they do forecast of his later works in their use of a vivid tropical background, and in their study of a white man whose moral stamina was sapped by the insidious influence of the tropics.

Conrad happened to meet a girl called Jessie George through a friend sometime between 1893 and 1894. She was working as a typist in London where Conrad lived. In 1895 he proposed to the girl making it clear to her that he had not very long to live and that he had no intention of having children. As she was a woman of placid and self-contained temperament she agreed to his terms and they got married in March 1896. Though their life was not altogether easy and comfortable one, she was in some ways an ideal wife for a man of his genius and nature. They spent the first few months of their married life on a rocky and barren island near Lannion, Britany. However, Conrad’s health started deteriorating due to the bouts of malarial gout and fever, which led to frequent brief visits to the Continent for relief. Fits of depression and financial difficulties added other problems. Despite the ultimatum to have no children, two sons were born, Borys in 1898, and John in 1906. During this period, his literary output included his best novels: *The Nigger of Narcissus* (1887), a moving story of life on board portraying a tremendous voyage around Cape Horn. Here the ship called “Narcissus” takes an uneventful voyage from Bombay to the Thames. An intelligent Negro named James Wait is one of the members of the crew. He lies in his bunk most of the voyage and at last he dies and is buried at sea. The only female in the book is the ship itself which Conrad describes with the great skill like one who has an intimate knowledge of seamanship. The novel, Conrad’s masterpiece, is remarkable for its powerful atmosphere, its description of the sea and its character study – Donkin is one of the best of his many vividly drawn villains. It is the teller and not the tale as, D.H. Lawrence would put it, which carries the appeal of the novel.

Conrad published five stories in a volume entitled *Tales of Unrest* (1898) and then appeared *Lord Jim : a Tale* (1900), the greatest of his early works, which is based on his studies of men, whose strength fails them in a moment of crisis, and is again a story of the sea which is the ever shifting panorama of the great Pacific Ocean varied by the picturesque islands of the Indian Ocean. No one talks, unless it is to discuss *Lord Jim*. There is no conversation and the novel has the effect of an impassioned monologue delivered against the mighty forces of the sea and sky. Conrad employs his technique of oblique narrative for the first time. Here the story is told through the ironical Marlow, who reappears so frequently in his later novels. *Youth – A Narrative : and Other Two Stories* (1902) and *Typhoon, and Other Stories* (1903) contain seven tales. *Heart of Darkness* in the former collection is remarkable for an overwhelming sense of evil and corruption and for its excellent tropical backgrounds. *Typhoon* is unsurpassed as a book about sea. The stories in both collections are based on his own autobiographical experiences. *Nostromo –A Tale of the Seaboard* (1904) shifts the scene to the coastline of Central America. The scene of this tale is a silver mine, a buried treasure, which was a government concession forced upon an English family living in Costaguana. The book has a gripping story of revolution and is full of vivid descriptions and well-drawn portraits but the

construction of the story is topsy-turvy, beginning in the middle and ending at the start. Unfortunately, his health began deteriorating during the writing of *Nostromo* and in January 1904, Jessie injured her knees in a fall and remained a partly crippled person for the rest of her life. Conrad's collection of essays, *The Mirror of the Sea - Memoirs and Impressions* (1906), as is indicated by the title, contains his experiences in the oceans of the world. It was followed by his popular detective story, *The Secret Agent – A Simple Tale*, which depicts powerfully the atmosphere of the underworld as some of the foreigners, who make London their refuge and play sordid intrigues and commit crimes to serve their ends. It is a revelation of the human life and projects the unfamiliar aspects of London – a place full of foreign anarchists, the average capable but limited police official, the high Russian bureaucrat and the great politician and woman engaged in a shady business. The novel presents the truth about human nature and is the work of a great writer. His collections of stories, *A Set of Six* (1908) and *Under Western Eyes* (1911), a tale of Russian revolution, of which the best features are the character of Razumov and the atmosphere of fear are followed by *Twixt Land and Sea - Tales* (1912) which contains three more short stories.

Conrad was constantly adding more works to his output and had won critical recognition but he was depressed by the fact that he was not a “selling” author. He suffered from two important human needs, that is, to make money on the one hand and to preserve his artistic integrity on the other. He wished to be a popular writer but there were two barriers: his oblique method of narration and his use of broken time sequences; he could never win over them as they were the integral part of his personal vision. Under severe mental stress and suffering from malarial gout, Conrad had a furious quarrel with his literary agent and returned home in great stress. It broke down his health and he grew pessimistic. The influence of this pessimism on his work was not conducive to his popularity. However there came a change in his fortune in 1911 when he was given a Civil List Pension of a hundred pounds and in 1912 an American lawyer wrote offering to buy his manuscripts. During these days he was working on a novel, which he had started six years earlier, which was to be his best-seller. It was his most ambitious but confusing novel in oblique method of story-telling entitled *Chance - A Tale in Two Parts* (1914). Here Marlow appears again but the story is told from several points of view. Conrad's next works are: *Victory – An Island Tale* (1915) that brought him a thousand pounds for its serialization rights and a further collection of four short stories, *Within the Tides – Tales* (1915). They are interesting but add little to his stature. In 1917 Conrad wrote a short novel *The Shadow Line – A Confession*, with a remarkable suggestion of the supernatural. Of his other novels *The Rescue – A Romance of the Shadows* (1920) is full of the moments of excitement, and remains an excellent study of the primitive men. *The Arrow of God: A Story between Two Notes* (1919) and *The Rover* (1923) are both set in a background of European history and are not very successful. In 1920 he began what was to be his last work, *Suspense – A Napoleonic Novel*, a historical novel, which was to remain unfinished at his death. To complete an account of his works, a mention should also be made of the autobiographical novels, *A Personal Record* (1912) and *Notes on Life and Letters* (1921) as they are important, if one wishes to learn in some detail Conrad's views on his own art. His two novels, *The Inheritors – An Extravagant Story* (1901) and *Romance – A Novel* (1903), in which he collaborated with Ford Maddox Hueffer (later Ford Maddox Ford), are important pieces. *Conrad's Tales of Heresy* (1925), which contained four stories, and *Last Essays*

(1926) were posthumously collected.

Joseph Conrad's works indicate that the sea and the human nature stirred his imagination but his health could not withstand the pressures of life, which in his case was never without some sort of anxiety or financial crisis. His domestic life was reasonably good but his wife had a lot of trouble with her knees, for which she underwent several operations. He was comparatively wealthy as the film rights for his books brought him four thousand pounds yet he felt the financial constraints. He wrote to one of his friends, "I am spending more than I ought to". At times he thought of living in France partly to avoid the problem of heavy taxation in England.

In his life time Conrad had become one of the most prestigious writers in Britain and took his first and only trip to America in 1923. When he returned to England in 1924, he was shocked to learn about his son Borys's secret marriage. Besides he remained upset and distressed because of his wife's sickness and his own deteriorating health. The same year he was offered a knighthood from Ramsay Macdonald but he declined, perhaps believing that such honors were meant for the creative artists.

Conrad suffered a heart attack and on 3rd August 1924 he died leaving behind for the readers a vacantness and a rich treasure of his marvellous and profound books. Baker has aptly summarized about Conrad, the man and the teller of tales that :

Little escaped his observant eye; but the quality of his interest and the mode of his reactions were the result of his innate disposition and peculiar heritage. Though far from being unsociable and lovable by troops of friends, all having something akin to himself, Conrad was a lonely soul. There was something secret and inscrutable about that searching and inexorable thinker, standing apart from the rest of the world, absorbed in watching and unravelling by a process of imaginative self-identification the interplay and conflict of personalities and motives, and arriving at inflexible conclusions. He was an impressionist whose vision had profundity, a penetration that nothing could mislead.

These qualities make his works dramas of mental and moral contention. They are all authentic, "because they are the product of twenty years of his life – my own life".

1.3 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the important features of Conrad's novels.
2. Why was Conrad influenced by sea?

1.4 SUGGESTED READING

1. Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness*, 1899.
2. Sarkar, R.N., *A Critical Study of Conrad*, Atlantic Publications, 1993.

JOSEPH CONRAD AS A NOVELIST

STRUCTURE

- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Joseph Conrad as a Novelist
- 2.3 Examination Oriented Questions
- 2.4 Suggested Reading

2.1 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to introduce to learner Joseph Conrad as a novelist and help the learner to prepare for the semester end examination.

2.2 JOSEPH CONRAD AS A NOVELIST

Conrad as a novelist had set a clear objective for himself of which he said, as his friend Ford Madox Ford recorded in *Return to Yesterday* (1932), “My task is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel, above all to make you see”. Though usually classed as a writer of the sea being a very faithful chronicler of life in the great world of waters Conrad said :

I have always felt that I had no speciality in that or any other specific subject....
Sea life had been my life. It had been my own self-sufficient, self-satisfying possession. When the change came over the spirit of my dream.... my past had, the very force of my work became one of sources of what I may call, for want of a better word, my inspiration of the inner force which sets the pen in motion.

That would have made him a realist if Conrad had kept his eye steadily upon an external object, something he rarely did. Rather like Hawthorne, he was keen to portray the effect that an object makes upon him who observes it. So he became the master of impressionism which is diametrically opposite to realism. As a result he is considered alternatively a realist and romantic. He is attributed “incompatible roles” as an impressionist, as a symbolist of sorts, allegories reminding one of the Jungian and Freudian approaches and more recently as a political moralist of revolutionary tendencies. This sort of diversity can not come solely from life itself, for example, take *The Nigger of the Narcissus* where Conrad looks within to portray the effect of the lonely sea on his characters. It confirms that his works are devoted to an effort of self discovery.

He rightly assessed in his autobiography, *A Personal Record* written in 1908, at the age of fifty one that in “this spectacular universe, the only task man has, is to make his experience of it real to himself”. In Conrad there is a rejection of the ethical universe in favour of the spectacular universe which offers itself to our senses. It is moral in terms of imaginative understanding. It is pertinent to note here that imagination cannot, by definition, merely express the self-born fantasies of mind; it has to do justice to the reality of a world that exists beyond the self. In his autobiography Conrad writes, “Imagination, not invention, is the supreme master of art as of life”. It was his ruling perception. Every patch of the earth’s surface had its story attached in Conrad’s recollection. He further adds, “I know that a novelist lives among imaginary things, happenings and people... Writing about them, he is only writing about himself”. Many of Conrad’s works are based on his own experiences in life. His novel *Heart of Darkness*, which is a record of Conrad’s experiences of his visit to the Congo in 1890, definitely belongs to his category of autobiographical works. Conrad had a fascination for the continent of Africa as he described in *A Personal Record* from his childhood. In the novel Charles Marlow also tells his friends on the deck of a steamboat that in his boyhood he was greatly attracted by the African country known as the Congo and especially by its river Congo, which flows through the country. It is his reading of Henry Morton Stanley’s discoveries that gave him the account of the exploration and exploitation of the Congo. In one of his essays, Conrad described this exploitation as the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploitation.

Another important quality of Conrad’s fiction is the ideal of self-respect and personal honour which each one of his major characters cherishes. When he pits a man against the hostile influences of the outer world as in *Under Western Eyes*, or against the hostility of the unquiet sea as in *Lord Jim*, one acid test, which proves his mettle and by which the man stands or falls, is loyalty to his fellow men. In this sense Conrad is a profound moralist who lets his character speak for himself through his actions. It is his own choice to save his soul or to lose it by adhering or neglecting a moral norm. These overlapping notions make Conrad a difficult novelist. Conrad’s cosmopolitan awareness was the result of his seamanship as he had learnt to know men of many nations in Asia as well as in Europe. As a writer he was a European rather than Pole or an Englishman, but as an artist he was devoted to English traditions to which he gave his loyalties.

Conrad was a romantic novelist with a strange appeal for the exotic and an unusual sense of adventure. Almost all of his experiences of the sea, specially of Malayan waters were of immense value to him as a writer. He was an excellent story-teller whose major preoccupation was to build a contrast between the harrowing effect of loneliness and the urgent need for community. Under the influence of experiences, he presents a new moral rhythm where the regret is mingled with a joy of discovery. In other words, it is a recognition at once of the strange and familiar. It creates a state of mind, which can be called to be an awakening which leads to a revival of subconscious personality spontaneously.

Questioning the relationship of life and art, as the former gives the material or themes the latter adds aestheticism necessary for the art of writing, Conrad said, “the nature of my writing runs the risk of being obscured by the nature of my material.” No wonder in *Heart of Darkness* the tale unfolds itself in layers through various characters first with anonymous “I” who serves as a narrator aboard a ship in the Thames, in company of the same group, which formed the cast of “*Youth*” – the Lawyer, the Accountant, the Director

and Marlow. Conrad has given his deep thought to his technique of presentation; his prime interest is in character. Inside this outer frame is Charles Marlow himself, telling another of his “inconclusive” stories within Marlow’s tale too, there are several recognizable layers of personal and social context. The novel has profuse imagery and philosophical and psychological suggestiveness. The literary sources of its imagery are the classics like the *Bible* and the *Upanishads* and writers like Dante and Milton. Its philosophical position is argued to be Schopenhauerian, Nietzschean, Nihilist, Existentialist and Christianity. Its psychology is Freudian, Jungian and more recently Laingian. Conrad takes his deepest look into the human condition and life of a man in such a way as to illumine the inmost recesses of his soul. Frequently Conrad comes to the most pessimistic conclusion as if his basic idea is to recognize the futility of life.

This sort of depth and diversity can not come solely from life itself. It shows that there is something about the work which he produced at the height of his creative power; it proves that he was devoted in his entirety to an effort of self-discovery. He asserted in his autobiographical writing, *A Personal Record*, that it is “reminiscences” and not “confessions” which form the inner core of his works. According to him “in this spectacular universe the only task man has is to make his experience of it real to himself.” In other words, there is a rejection of the “ethical universe” in favour of the “spectacular universe” which offers itself to our senses. It is moral in terms of imaginative understanding. He believed that though “imagination, not invention, is the supreme master of art as of life” but imagination, cannot by definition, merely express the self-born fantasies of men; it has to do justice to the reality of world that exists beyond the self. Hence he wrote, “... a novelist lives among imaginary things, happenings and peoples. Writing about them, he is only writing about himself”. Jacques Berthand rightly points out in his book, *Joseph Conrad: The Major Phase* that :

Conrad the man is able to recognize and
acknowledge this truth, Conrad the artist is able to
discover even in the humblest existence the
elements of a tragic grandeur.

Precisely, Conrad resisted the appeal of the “ivory-tower aestheticism” and mixed the traditional and the modern elements in his novels. For example, take the event when he mentions, the two mysterious women and doctor-cum-psychologist in the same context. The knitting women remind us of the Fates of Classical Mythology, spinning and cutting the thread of human lives, while the doctor-cum-psychologist shows the modern interest in the functioning of the human minds. He is a kind of psychiatrist who is deeply interested in analyzing the symptoms for insanity. This sort of mixing makes the novel partly a myth and partly a document of modern times indicating the new interest in the science of psychology. There are three important aspects which are entwined in his character studies: The conditions of physical existence which govern the weaknesses as well as the qualities and thus, shape the behaviour of a character under the stress or storm, the psychological make up of a character which gradually unfolds itself in the process of facing the situation or discovery and the moral ordeal of man which emerges as his strong concern of man in the face of illness or death or the dilemma of an uncertain future like a lot of hard work with small or no reward. It is through such familiar analytical methods that Conrad, as a novelist discovers that man is base and destructive

therefore he cannot rise above his role as a social animal being full of human egotism. This trend is almost universal and is universally damaging. Conrad insists that it is the self-knowledge that comes to the man of imagination, which can save him from utter desperation. Conrad shows in his novels like *Heart of Darkness*, *The Secret Sharer*, and *The Shadow-Line*, how the sense of experience in ordeal leads to self knowledge which his character reveals in the first person. This device makes his fiction attain the realistic effect. For instance, in *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad invents a fictional narrator who is a retired English sailor named Marlow and resembles Conrad himself in the quality of much of his experience and in the temperament on which the experience worked. The story of the novel is an episode looming out of the past, Marlow's past which is identified with Conrad's. Its fundamentals are authentic but the facts are enhanced for an act which Conrad infallibly secures. He desired to give a somber theme "a sinister resonance, a tone of its own," by leaving the climax enigmatic. It becomes clear that the heart of darkness is not the heart of Central Africa but the darkness into which Mr. Kurtz has descended, "His was an impenetrable darkness". It seems that he himself was the prey of unimaginable terrors.

To Conrad, as to all the great writers, tragedy is not a sad thing, but exhilarating, dynamic and vitalizing; in short it is a triumph, "The straight contrast between the intuitive and the deductive, the imaginative and artistic and the orthodox police methods of investigation, is indirectly a manifesto of Conrad's artistic principles. Conrad assented to the claim put forward by Henry James that fiction is a form of history:

Fiction is history, human history, or it is nothing.

But it is also more than that; it stands on firmer ground, being based on the reality of forms and the observation of social phenomena, whereas history is based on documents..... on second- hand impression.

(Notes on Life and Letters, "Henry James

Conrad firmly believed that when it comes to dealing with human beings, anything may be expected. Hence, Conrad's approach as a novelist is contrary to the general rule that the artist, the novelist especially, must simplify, must clarify, and make intelligible. He believed that, "Life is not to be simplified and made completely intelligible." Conrad "sees it as infinitely complex and, at the last inscrutable mystery."

Conrad expressed his artistic allegiance to imagination and not invention. Like Dickens in his rich diversity, he is unlike him as his interests are internal, psychological, psychical, and moral and anything except mere enjoyment of humours. It is rightly pointed out that :

Every one of Conrad's figures is an integer, a definite person, even the most minor character is never a mere cipher. He sees his character as wholes; whether heroes or scoundrels, they stand there with their history written on them. It is as if

each one of them were the potential centre of a right word! Surely it must be lying somewhere.

Conrad was always feeling for the right word and did not invariably get it at the first try. In *A Personal Record*, he says :

“Give me the right word and the right accent and I will move the world..... Because written words have their accent too. Yes! Let me only find the right word! Surely it must be lying somewhere.”

Precisely, it can be said that as a novelist there were two Conrads, “The conscious Conrad who was a realist and the unconscious Conrad, who was ever dissatisfied and unhappy, was incurably romantic.”

2.3 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Conrad as a novelist.
2. Why was Conrad not a selling author?

2.4 SUGGESTED READING

1. Equbal, Kausar, *Joseph Conrad : His Art and Writing*, Shipra Publications, 2010.

MAJOR THEMES AND TECHNIQUES IN THE *HEART OF DARKNESS*

STRUCTURE

- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Major themes and techniques in the *Heart of Darkness*
- 3.3 Examination Oriented Questions
- 3.4 Suggested Reading

3.1 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to introduce to the learner major themes and techniques in the novel *Heart of Darkness*.

3.2 MAJOR THEMES AND TECHNIQUES IN THE *HEART OF DARKNESS*

Heart of Darkness is a very appealing and significant novel from the point of view of its themes and method of narration. At first it seems that its narrator, Marlow, is telling a candid adventure story and its title reveals only unexplored Africa to which Marlow, like his creator Conrad himself, had been drawn by its mystery. But as Marlow draws his listeners more and more into adventure, the novel changes its nature as the physical exploration turns out to be moral exploration. The search into the darkness of the unexplored land becomes a search into the darkness of the human heart symbolized by the ivory trader Kurtz.

The central theme of the novel is the condition prevailing in the Congo in the closing years of the nineteenth century. The country was not fully explored till then but the white men had started visiting it individually or in groups for various purposes including exploration and trade. The novel shows the clash between two cultures, the clash between the civilization of the white people and that of the black natives of a dark country. The impact of the white visitors upon the life and thought of the blacks of the Congo and the futility and waste of the effort of white men's endeavour to civilize the savages, and at the same time the exploitation of the blacks by the whites, form the thematic strands of the novel. Marlow soon realizes the actual purpose of the white man's presence in the dark continent of Africa. These races are not civilized. Actually, it is to exploit them and to keep them under terror, for instance, take the event of the repeated firing of the guns of the warship even when there was no target in view.

Conrad seems to be making a distinction between two types of reality: everyday reality on the one hand and the “unreal” on the other. The former is represented by the every day life and experiences which he terms as “surface truth of life” and then there exists the reality of the darkness of the jungle which holds a contrast with the reality of the white men’s experiences at the Central Station as he states in the following passage:

I went to work the next day, turning, so to speak,
my back on the station. In that way only it seemed
to me I could keep my hold on the redeeming facts
of life. Still, one must look about sometimes; and
then I saw this station, these men strolling
aimlessly about in the sunshine of the yard. I asked
myself sometimes what it all meant..... By Jove!
I’ve never seen anything so unreal in my life! And
outside, the silent wilderness surrounding this
cleared speck on earth struck me as something
great and invincible, like evil or truth, waiting
patiently for the passing away of this fantastic
invasion. (p.52)

Conrad regarded loyalty and self-devotion as the cardinal virtues, and his life on the sea only deepened his primal conviction and supplied wealth of circumstances to illustrate his favourite theme – qualities brought to the test. His boyish prophecy about undertaking the Congo expedition of which the esoteric history is contained in *Heart of Darkness*. The novel is the outcome of his efficiency and trustworthiness, his gallantry and an itch for adventure and his “fantastic impulse to live an ideal” and his heroism.

Conrad believed that, “writing fiction is a task which mainly consists in laying one’s soul more or less bare to the world,” but this can be done, “with a regard for decency”; respect for one’s own dignity, is “inseparably united with the dignity of one’s work.” This sort of expression alarmed some of his critics and they always sensed a moral in his works. For example, even *Lord Jim* has been taken for didactic story with an appropriate lesson for mankind. Here it is pertinent to remember that in his novel the question is not quiet and remorse as in *Hamlet* or *Othello* but it is simply the question of a man’s honour, the respect of his fellows, his own sense of decency. It was not Conrad’s desire to preach. The task that he set himself, was to represent the conflict that life is a conflict with circumstances which seem to be arrayed against us. The conflict, however, the apparent hostility, is one to try character; it is the test of manhood, it is eminently a moral predicament. The moral dilemma is implied here as it is inferred in every genuine work of art. In other words, the ethical is the most momentous and most insistent aspect of the human situation to man as a self-conscious being. But to turn a work of art into the utilitarian example of a dogma would have offended

Conrad's feeling for artistic decorum; it would have run contrary to his sense of impression. It is true that he had characters like Marlow to act as commentator if he thought it fit. What Marlow does from time to time through his spontaneous remarks becomes the need of the narrative or the story. He stands somewhere between the reader and Conrad himself, seeing things as Conrad sees them. In *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, *Youth* and *Typhoon*, man is shown at strife with nature, the sea and ultimately with fate and triumphing against fearful odds. In *Lord Jim* and *Nostromo*, and most of his novels and stories right down to *The Rover*, the conflict with the hostile circumstances is uppermost, while in *Heart of Darkness*, it is the devil in man himself that is the foe. In every single instance, man comes to grief, but this does not mean that man is defeated as in his novel *Victory* in which, a pair of his most exalted lovers die and it is at the moment of death that all the barriers are overthrown, and they have achieved the bliss of full spiritual communion.

To Conrad, as to all the great writers, tragedy is not a sad thing but exhilarating, vitalizing and dynamic. In short, it is a triumph. It is a triumph of human personality as it is the outcome of the strength of human spirit conquering all the ills and disasters of mortality and meeting the end serenely. It causes a sense of wonder and joy as it proves that the soul is nobler and sublimer than fate. It shows the ripeness of human personality as in the case of Lear and Cordelia who had reached a spiritual plane which is above all the evil in the world. It is the enduring consummation and, "Nothing is here for tears." Conrad's rendering of the tragedy of the human lot approximated to that of George Eliot or Hardy when they are at their best. Like George Eliot, he sometimes invoked the help of melodrama at such crises and discusses the virtues of patience and resignation but with a difference as he stated in the preface of *A Personal Record*, "Not that I think resignation the last word of wisdom. I am too much the creature of my time for that." Conrad was indeed a rebellious and unrelenting warrior. Baker rightly points out quoting from *A Personal Record* :

He was so grievously aware of the predominance of evil that he asked himself whether any ethical view of the universe was not utterly fallacious. "I have come to suspect that the aim of creation can not be ethical at all. I would firmly believe that its object is purely spectacular: a spectacle for awe, love, adoration, or hatred, if you like, but in this view – and in this view alone – never for spair....." The unwearied self - forgetful attention to every phase of the living universe may be our appointed task on this earth.

To Conrad, the very mysteriousness and incomprehensibility of the individual was a magic theme. It gave the insubordinate traits to him. Those who do not have the courage, such individuals developed a psychology of the crowd as the vast majority of the people suppress these insubordinate traits for various personal or social reasons. The result is undeveloped personality. However there are those who are obstinate enough to run counter to the general rules of behaviour and repudiate the collective impulses born of fear of

the society. If most of the novelists create characters that live as per the herd instinct – types, averages, everyman, Conrad prefers the more interesting opposite. His reader is amazed whilst these daring, self-sufficient beings perform their feats, experience their strange emotions and reveal the force of inherent greatness, for example, consider the character of Lord Jim or even Mr. Kurtz, who is considered to be a black sheep. Here it is clear that he has two corresponding sets of characters and they are meant to show the implicit contrasts in values.

Conrad works to a scale of values entirely his own, based on his view of life as a state of incessant conflict. Though Conrad remains reticent and unemotional and apparently neutral but an alert reader can recognize those values which were dear to him. Irony was his alternative mode of indicating his own values which lie at the root of the matter and are as fundamental as his general vision of the world. Conrad does not accuse the universe, like Hardy anathematizes fate. As to the ultimate causes, he admitted that he knew nothing. In this context, it has been perceptively observed by E.A. Baker :

Perhaps all we see is but a spectacle; nevertheless, man is an ethical being, and when the heavens seem most hostile it may be only the supreme test. The worst evils we have to contend with on this earth are human–men’s falsehood, baseness, malevolence, or the good intentions which are paralysed by weakness of will. There is no Providence to be relied on to help man in tribulations. But if he takes himself seriously, he has scope to make at least a good fight. Conrad has faith in the ability of the human soul to assert and save itself.

Conrad deals with the theme of evil very differently. According to him the heavens may be black, but instead of railing at heaven, he directs his irony at the cowardice or the lack of intelligence or the purposes that come to nothing through the foolishness or weakness that betrays. In his novels the selfishness and malevolence make the earth simply ugly and leave such ironical deceptions that we mistake evil for good. The irony in *Heart of Darkness* rises to a fierce tension when Marlow recounts his interview with the girl at Brussels, to whom he hands over the slim packet of letters Kurtz had left for “his Intended.”

Conrad has been constantly obsessed with cases of moral dereliction and has attributed it to some intimate personal motive as if to show that it was all the result of “complex.” According to a Freudian critic, who tries to narrow down Conrad’s tragic outlook on the world, it was the result of his suppressed and only half conscious remorse for having deserted Poland in her “hour of trial.” Conrad often showed himself sorely exercised in spirit over the question of breach of faith. He himself put his own ideals before the obligations of patriotism in the face of intolerable sordid realities and “sallied forth from his native place.” This sort of mental conflict and self-analysing at times leads to “cynicism” diagnosed in many of his heroes

like Lord Jim and Nostromo and even Kurtz.

Though Conrad was brought up in the Roman Catholic religion, yet he denounced all the creeds of supernaturalism. His realization of man's uniqueness and loneliness in an indifferent and enigmatic universe, his sharp sense of man's dignity and self-responsibility, and a sense of not merely of abstract justice, but of the superlative value of man of courage, endurance and loyalty to his fellowmen constituted his religion for Conrad. He believed that it is through art that perfection, for which the soul craves, is experienced and realized. His convictions lead to realize such heroic and aspiring issues to which his imagination corroborated in this "purely spectacular" journey.

To achieve this end Conrad tried a few techniques and methods. First is an elementary way to trace the story but he soon realized that it may not work effectively and may leave the narration shadowy and indistinct. Hence, in *A Personal Record* it is stated, "The trite method of following the thread of thought and feeling in a man like Almayer failed," in Conrad's hands. It appeared that a continuous process of analysis was not the method for him. He already showed the glimpses of his inborn faculty for realizing with a vivid intensity sensations and emotional states at crucial moments. This keenness of eye for the external traits of individuality soon matured fully as he gained experience in his craft, Conrad learned how to co-ordinate these instants of passion and vision into intelligible history of an individual and to moderate his grandiloquence. He developed what is known today as Conrad's psychological method. Here his impressionism takes a different course. Marlow's comment states the whole theory of Conrad's impressionism in the remark :

All this happened in much less time that it takes
to tell, since I am trying to interpret for you into
slow speech the instantaneous effect of visual
impression.

Like an impressionist who ignores any logic based on understanding, Conrad too might well say, "All creative art is Magic". Conrad's works leave such compulsive effect more intensely on the reader when his fiction comes closer to life.

3.3 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. What are the major themes dealt with, by Conrad?
2. Comment on the technique used by Conrad in his fiction.

3.4 SUGGESTED READING

1. Sarkar, R.N., *A Critical Study of Conrad*, Atlantic Publications, 1993.

CONRAD'S ART OF CHARACTERIZATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MR. KURTZ AND MARLOW

STRUCTURE

- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Conrad's art of characterization with special reference to Mr. Kurtz and Marlow
- 4.3 Examination Oriented Questions
- 4.4 Suggested Reading

4.1 OBJECTIVES

The objective in this lesson is to explain the learner Conrad's art of characterization with special reference to Mr. Kurtz and Marlow in the novel.

4.2 CONRAD'S ART OF CHARACTERIZATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MR. KURTZ AND MARLOW

Conrad as an artist is so diverse in his characterization that he has really broadened the descriptive and functional range of characters in his novels. He is intensely vivid and registers their constant and automatic activities but does not allow any interruption of the emotions of life in their pursuits whatsoever. In the presentation of the characters his focus is on the inner life maybe because of the psychological curiosity or to fulfill another purpose— that is to reach where his intuitive sense of life leads him. It makes him a different kind of a realist who is also a thinker, a different kind of novelist who is interested in exploring an ever-present sense of mystery of fate which enhances the relevance of the profound ethical element. This sort of approach leaves his mood pessimistic and he depicts innumerable varieties of human suffering. Conrad's fundamental belief is that man is selfish – something which turns him into a violent and wild animal. The noble virtues of man like pity, solidarity, spirituality and unity do resist and find an outlet in his work but there is unfathomable darkness which lies at the heart of man and symbolizes evil. No doubt Conrad's natural temperament was attuned to this note. Let us analyse two major characters – Kurtz and Marlow – from *Heart of Darkness* to have an overall estimate of his art of characterization.

(a) Mr. Kurtz

The portrait of Mr. Kurtz who is a German, is one of the greatest achievements of Conrad in the field

of characterization. The source of this character lies in Conrad's actual experience as a captain of a steamboat which was to take an exploring expedition led by Alexandre Delcommune to a place called Katanga in the Congo. Conrad's main duty was to bring one of the Company's agents whose health had been failing. The name of this agent was Klein. He subsequently died aboard Conrad's steamship by which he was brought. It was this agent who was transformed into Mr. Kurtz. However, there is very little resemblance between the character of Mr. Kurtz as portrayed by Marlow and the actual experience of Conrad who had not found in Mr. Klein any trace of the evil which Marlow finds in Mr. Kurtz. Actually Kurtz, with all Europe in his heredity, had come to Africa with the highest motives – for the enlightenment of its barbarian and ignorant natives and has ended there as one of the dark deities of those very people he had hoped to redeem.

Mr. Kurtz, the central figure in *Heart of Darkness*, is a striking and formidable personality. His expeditions in this region had been for ivory. He is an agent of the Trading Company and succeeds in sending to the company as much ivory as all the other agents put together. He acquires Herculean dimension by having a strong hold on the native savages. He holds the view that it was the duty and the destiny of the white men to civilize the natives of the dark continent of Africa. By virtue of his talent he becomes a kind of god in the eyes of the natives of the Belgian Congo.

During his stay there he exerts so much influence and commands prestige at the station where he is posted that even the chiefs of the native tribes pay their personal reverence to him. He becomes a cult-figure for the savages of the whole region as he starts sharing many of the beliefs of the savages. He presides over their primitive functions and midnight dances which always end with the "unspeakable rites." Kurtz had the skill to identify himself with his natives without obliterating his own identity as a white man. His success in subjugating the natives and ruling over them with an iron hand earns him admiration from all the quarters. It is no exaggeration to state that he has become the sovereign and the lord of whole region.

Mr. Kurtz is a master conversationist as he has a great gift of the gab. His speeches are marked by exceptional eloquence. Even those who disliked him, like the white manager of the Central Station and other white men working in the Congo, admired him. He is able to win their appreciation and devotion, for example, take the case of the Russian explorer and also of Marlow.

Kurtz retains his greed as a trader, he harbours a passion for collecting and exporting ivory. He carries out his functions as a manager of the Inner Station most efficiently and effectively. Its proof is that he succeeded in his collecting more ivory than all other agents of the company put together. It was his favourite possession and he often used to say: "My intended; my ivory; my station; my river; my everything." He talked as if everything around him belonged to him. Here Marlow wonders if Mr. Kurtz belonged to anything except to the power of darkness. In other words, he thought that Mr. Kurtz was essentially an embodiment of the powers of evil. When he came here he, like the white men any where in the world, believed that it was his duty to civilize the natives of the continent of Africa but ironically he himself got converted and started sharing the beliefs and "unspeakable rites" of the savages.

Marlow, who had come to meet Mr. Kurtz at the Inner Station and take him back to Europe as he was

ill, was inquisitive to know all about Mr. Kurtz. It was the Russian who was a great admirer and devotee of Mr. Kurtz. Actually he convinced Marlow that Mr. Kurtz was a kind of monarch governing the native people as per the traditions and customs of the land. He had established a close relationship with them and is treated as a cult-figure, deity, or god-father by them. He had acquired so much of influence and prestige there that even the chiefs of the native tribes would come crawling to him to pay their homage to him. It was so despite the fact that he was also extremely cruel with them. The skulls of the natives who have been executed under his orders reveal the other side of his personality.

At the station some people describe Mr. Kurtz as a messenger of pity, progress and creativity as he represented keen intelligence and singleness of purpose. Marlow notices a small oil-painting showing a blind-folded woman carrying a lighted torch against a dark background. This painting which held Marlow spell-bound was painted by Mr. Kurtz there itself more than a year ago. It is pertinent to note here that despite many natural gifts he had a weakness for the material possessions. It led him to many things which ruined the region and he went to extremes to satisfy his hunger and desires.

Mr. Kurtz was so deeply involved with the native people that when he was taken away by Marlow, he tried to slip away from the ship in order to re-join his followers. During the return journey, Mr. Kurtz's health started deteriorating rapidly. He felt that he would not continue living for long and one day he handed over a packet of papers and photographs to Marlow. The papers contained the ideas he wanted to propagate and the photograph was of the woman he wanted to marry and whom he called, "My Intended". One evening while he was waiting for his death, "in a whisper at some image, at some vision - he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath - 'The horror! The horror!'" and died. These words may be Kurtz's vision of his own eternal damnation or the judgment of the world. His own action shows his moral victory and thus a confession as Marlow interpreted them. Whatever the interpretation one may take Mr. Kurtz's last words were the expression of his fresh recognition of the evil in him as well as outside. He found it horrible and it shows that he grew aware of the essential truth of life by recognizing the evil. It is his attempt at self-purification which is his moral victory that makes Marlow true to him in the end. His body was buried by the manager and his white colleagues in a muddy hole. Actually they never liked Mr. Kurtz because of his faults as well as his authority over the native people.

There is a tinge of exaggeration in the brick maker's praise when he described Mr. Kurtz as "a universal genius" but none can deny that he was a very unusual person and had the capacity to be a wonderful man.

(B) Charles Marlow

Marlow is the main narrator of the story of *Heart of Darkness* and a very significant character who possesses extraordinary powers of observation, reflection and analysis. He can accomplish this task by using his penetrating psychological insight and deeply philosophical mind. Marlow believes that the mind of man is capable of anything because mind contains everything of the world, including all the past and the future. Only such a man could face the bare truth of the existence. As a boy Marlow had been very fond of looking at maps especially of South America, Africa or Australia. He was curious about one particular river

on the map. It was the big Congo river resembling a huge snake with its head in the sea and its body at rest over a vast country and its tail lost in the depth of the land. When he had acquired substantial knowledge and experience as a seaman, he imagined himself visiting and discovering new places and sailing on this river. He is a professional sailor as well as wanderer who had a passion to discover the unknown lands. He is equally interested in wherever he is on the land or the sea. It is true that most of the sailors lead a vigorous life when sailing but once they touch the shore they lead a life of total inactivity. To them ship is their home and sea their country. They do not find mystery anywhere except in the depths of the sea. Marlow, unlike them, philosophizes over the history even of his own nation, which according to him, must have been at one time one of the dark countries. He believes that nineteen hundred years ago when the Romans had invaded Britain they must have found it a dark land full of marshes, forests and savages. There was nothing to satisfy even the basic needs like food and water. The only source available to them must have been to drink the water of river Thames. The awful climate of the country and the wilderness must have been incomprehensible and yet fascinating to them. In the Congo Marlow describes this sort of experience as “the fascination of the abomination.” While sitting cross-legged like Buddha on the deck of the boat he draws a difference between the disgust which must have been felt by the Roman conquerors and the disgust felt by the Britishers for these people and the place. He feels that the aim of the conqueror is to rob other races of their possessions while there is some other idea or aim to achieve also.

Marlow was interested to fulfil his ambition of sailing for which he wished to find a suitable assignment. It was through his aunt that Marlow could get a desired appointment in a Trading Company, in Brussels. During his first journey to this place Marlow felt that he was not going to the heart of the continent but to the centre of the earth.

While presenting his experiences in the Belgian Congo in *Heart of Darkness* he gives his reactions to the situations and the people; he actually becomes the mouth piece of Conrad himself. In other words, it is through his eyes that we look at people, including the personality and character of Mr. Kurtz. He shows not only the conditions of existence there but also exposes the reality of the white men’s efforts to civilize the savages. They present that their basic aim is to improve the lot of people, of the dark country but the fact remains that they pursue their own selfish interest in satisfying their own greed and lust for power and material gains.

Marlow is a man of skeptical moods, as for example, when he listens to the brick-maker who not only praises Mr. Kurtz but also pays compliments to Marlow saying that he was a member of the new fraternity of virtuous people. He is full of a sense of perplexity and wonder seeing the immensity of surrounding region which was absolutely still and can not conclude whether it conveyed to him some sort of friendliness or threat. Marlow hates telling lies which to him is something detestable and abhorrent and hence something unbearable. He feels that there was a touch of death in falsehood as it made him sick and wretched. When he is in the Congo, he tries to adopt the culture of the white men stationed at that place and become a false man showing that he is an influential person with the officials of the Company in Brussels. When he goes against his own temperament and becomes one of the “faithless pilgrims” residing there, he feels unreal and

insubstantial more or less like a dream. Marlow, who tends to be indifferent to the people and his immediate surroundings on choice, grows interested in all kinds of work including that of the wrecked steamer which was unfit to sail. It is not the work of that sort which engaged him, rather it was the opportunity to discover himself or the reality about himself that he enjoyed. In other words, work for Marlow is only a means to achieve an end that is, to find out one's essential character. In this sense he is a positive and hopeful person. That is why he is appreciated by many, including Mr. Kurtz. When Marlow meets Mr. Kurtz's fiancée to deliver a bundle of papers and the picture of his "intended" which means the girl he wished to marry, he can notice that she loved Mr. Kurtz deeply and was proud of her relationship with him, he invents a lie to render her an emotional support. Though he remembers that Mr. Kurtz's last words were "The horror" but he tells the girl, being overpowered by her devotion for him, that the last words spoken by Mr. Kurtz were the girl's name. Marlow hates lies but here he allows himself to do so under the pressure of the inner necessity. Marlow's interview with the woman is the last episode in the novel which is meant to convey that truth is unendurable in the context of everyday life and some sort of illusion is necessary for the peace and happiness of mind and existence.

Briefly, in his art of characterization Conrad is not one of the thorough going analysts. He rarely anatomizes. As Baker put it, "Conrad sees his creation as wholes acting on impulse or habit, or from a complex of emotions they themselves could not define". They are to be known by intuition, for they are animated with "feelings of universal import".

4.3 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Conrad's art of characterization.
2. Comment on the character of Mr. Kurtz. Can he be called the hero of the novel?

4.4 SUGGESTED READING

1. Sarkar, R.N., *A Critical Study of Conrad*, Atlantic Publications, 1993.

LIFE AND WORKS OF BAPSI SIDHWA

STRUCTURE

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Objectives
- 5.3 Bapsi Sidhwa : Life and Background
 - 5.3.1 Works of Bapsi Sidhwa
 - 5.3.2 Introducing Prominent Works of Bapsi Sidhwa
- 5.4 Political Scenario of Pakistan
 - 5.4.1 Voices from Pakistan
 - 5.4.2 The Social Situation of Pakistan
- 5.5 Contemporary Situation of Pakistan
- 5.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.7 Glossary
- 5.8 Multiple Choice Questions
 - 5.8.1 Short Answer Questions
- 5.9 Examination Oriented Questions
- 5.10 Suggested Reading

5.1 INTRODUCTION

“ *Ice-Candy Man* deserves to be ranked amongst the most authentic and best (books) on the partition of India” – *Khushwant Singh*

Ice-Candy Man, a renowned novel of Bapsi Sidhwa, was originally published in London in the year 1988, as *Ice-Candy Man*, later an American publisher i.e. Milkweed Editions changed its title to *Cracking India* in 1991. Film adaptation of this novel is **1947**, directed by Deepa Mehta, starring Aamir Khan and Nandita Das.

Beyond doubt, *Ice-Candy Man* is a feminist novel portrayed against the backdrop of horrific violence of 1947, resulting into two separate nations that is India and Pakistan. The novel delineates the psychological

and social realities of Lahore during pre-partition, partition and post-partition days of India. Thus, it is an earnest and authentic record of political realities.

The narrative technique used by Bapsi Sidhwa is child narrator technique that is, there is a child narrator named Lenny Sethi, an eight year old girl who narrates in present tense and in first person. In other words, Sidhwa relates the partition story through the eyes of Lenny.

Bapsi Sidhwa makes ample allusions to political leaders, for instance Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lord Mountbatten, Subhash Chandra Bose and Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Sidhwa honestly expresses her take on the role of these leaders during the freedom struggle. Sidhwa has given insufficient credit to the role of politicians. Adopting a humanitarian angle, she has portrayed ordinary persons as heroic; for instance Lenny's godmother helps Ayah to flee from Hira Mandi and find shelter in Amritsar refugee camp. Also, it is Lenny's mother who helps the Hindus in violence stricken Lahore to escape.

5.2 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this lesson are:-

- To acquaint the learner with the life and famous works of Bapsi Sidhwa.
- To introduce the learner with the background to Sidhwa's novels by discussing contemporary, social and political situation in Pakistan and the subcontinent.
- To familiarize the learner with difficult words.
- To prepare the learner to respond to the various issues raised in the novel, by giving practice questions and key so that the students can do self evaluation.
- Suggest list of books for further reading.

5.3 BAPSI SIDHWA : LIFE AND BACKGROUND

Bapsi Sidhwa, a Parsi Zoroastrian was born on 11.08.1938, in Karachi, Pakistan. A writer by occupation she has dual citizenship that is Pakistani and American. At present she resides in Houston, Texas (United States of America). At the tender age of two she contracted polio. After graduating from Kinnaird College, Lahore in 1957, she married and shifted to Bombay (now Mumbai) at the age of nineteen. This marriage lasted only for five years. She later remarried her present husband Noshir in Lahore. A mother of three children, she began writing novels after completing the family.

Her formative years were marked by loneliness but at the same time surrounded by Parsi community. She also witnessed the freedom struggle and the eventual partition of the subcontinent. Probably this is the reason these are the main themes recurring in her works. Due to polio, she could not be sent to school and was educated at home by an Anglo-Indian governess at home. During her childhood, Lahore had a population of a five million, out of which, only two hundred were Parsis. In order to merge with the majority, the Parsis adopted practices from Muslim culture such as gender segregation. Thus she developed a feminist perspective from her formative years. Gender, specially feminism is an important aspect of her works. Bapsi

Sidhwa's experiences from India, Pakistan and the U.S. developed her poetic sensibility. She likes herself to be described as a "Pakistani- Punjabi-Parsi" woman (as disclosed to Bachi Karkaria in an interview).

It was in the U.S. that Sidhwa started her career as a teacher and lecturer. She took up a position in teaching creative writing at the University of Houston and has since taught at both American and British Universities, including Columbia University, Mount Holyoke College and Southampton University. She was also the Fanny Hurst writer-in-residence at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts in 1998-99.

Bapsi Sidhwa is a polyglot, fluent in English, Urdu, Gujarati and Punjabi but she writes in English, as she received an anglicised education. Bapsi Sidhwa is a powerful voice from the contemporary feminist writers; she has depicted strong women protagonists, who assume brave roles and establish equations with their male counterparts. Sidhwa seems to be totally dissatisfied with domesticated women central characters who are fit for traditional roles only. Besides, she is the only Parsi woman writer who chose to write on Partition.

5.3.1 Works of Bapsi Sidhwa

Following is the list of all works of Bapsi Sidhwa:-

Their Language of Love (published in Pakistan, 2013)

Jungle Wala Sahib (published in Pakistan, 2013)

City of Sin and Splendour : Writing on Lahore (published in Pakistan, 2013)

Water: A Novel (published in US and Canada, 2006)

Bapsi Sidhwa Omnibus (published in Pakistan, 2001)

An American Brat (published in US, 1993 and India, 1995)

Ice-Candy Man (published in England, 1988 and in US published as *Cracking India* in 1991)

The Bride (published in England, 1982 and in India published as *The Pakistani Bride* in 1990)

The Crow Eaters (published in Pakistan, 1976 and published in India in 1980)

There are total nine works written by Bapsi Sidhwa, in different genres, such as translation, fiction, non-fiction and even edited works. Much known for fiction, Bapsi Sidhwa's five novels, i.e. *Water*, *An American Brat*, *The Bride*, *Ice-Candy Man* and *The Crow Eaters* would be discussed. All the above mentioned five novels are semi-autobiographical in nature, or an outcome of her personal experience in the subcontinent, partition, ill treatment of women, immigration to the US and membership in the Parsi/Zoroastrian community; but the central theme that unites all these five works is the strand of feminine consciousness that works implicitly or explicitly in the works. Although all the five works have different themes. Major themes of her works are – the partition crises, Parsi milieu and their idiosyncrasies, expatriate experience, marriage, women issues, immigration and so on.

5.3.2 Introducing Prominent Works of Bapsi Sidhwa

Once, Sidhwa with her second husband was vacating in Northern Pakistan for honeymoon. There she heard the true account of a young Punjabi girl married to a Kohistani tribal, who eventually ran away. In order to avenge the dishonor, her husband and clansmen hunted / hounded and killed her. This episode had a major impact on her to compel writing. This narrative became the main crux of her first novel, *The Bride*. Though the title of the novel connotes it to be a story of a single bride but in reality it is about three brides i.e., Afshan, Zaitoon and Carol. Each bride's story has a common theme which proves that patriarchal culture exploits women.

The novel has several plots, mainly there are four plots - first plot is on the marriage of Kohistani tribal Qasim, the death of his family members during partition riots, how he adopts a Punjabi girl Munni, eventually named Zaitoon who too is orphaned during the same riots. The second part is on Zaitoon's childhood in Lahore, as she takes over as the protagonist of the novel. Her sharing of a cordial relation with their neighbor Nikka and Miriam, a childless couple. The third part is about Zaitoon's marriage to Sakhi. In order to connect back to his roots Qasim fixes Zaitoon's marriage to his nephew Sakhi.

Marriage in this novel is a tacit agreement between male heads of families for whom a woman's body is a trope for enhancing their socio-political or economic motives. After a woman's marriage, she is used by patriarchy in the name of religion and culture to domesticate, control and exploit her in the name of honour. *The Bride*, portrays exploitation of women through the institution of marriage and ironically in the name of honour. Zaitoon, marries a tribal man to shield her father's honour. A second protagonist comes up in the story, an American woman named Carol.

Zaitoon marries a tribal man to shield her father's honour. She tries her level best to compromise with her husband until it becomes unbearable to stay with her in-laws. The fourth part of the novel shows Zaitoon running away from the clutches of her tribal husband and his clan. Zaitoon, although is chased by her husband and folks through the mountains but at last is saved and escapes back to the plains of Lahore.

Though *The Bride* was the first novel Sidhwa penned but it was second to be published in 1982. She discovered the joy of writing and immediately embarked on her second novel *The Crow Eaters*. It is a lively and humorous novel on her own community i.e., the Parsis. At that time, in 1978, publishing in English was almost non-existent in Pakistan so she self published it. Later, the novel has been re-published and translated into several European and Asian languages. The title of the book is derived from translation of a derogatory term earned by the Parsi community who talk too much. In their native tongue they are termed as 'kagra khaw' (crow eater). In the subcontinent anyone who is garrulous is said to have eaten crows.

There is a contrast in the background of *The Crow Eaters* (1978) and *The Bride* (1983) but a feministic angle is common in both the novels. In *The Crow Eaters*, oppression and violence on women takes place in the middle of Junglewala family. *The Bride* narrates the story of Zaitoon's life, of her escape from ill-fated marriage. *The Crow Eaters* is a novel on educated Parsis, exposing the dualism of apparent

patriarchy and hidden matriarchy. Though there is no preference for male child in the Parsi community, there is a preference for a male child in the novel shown through Tanya's pregnancy. Putli displays photographs of chubby-cheeked English babies all over the house in the hope that her daughter-in-law by looking at them will produce a baby boy. Tanya eventually gives birth to a girl. Though initially disappointed the family members start consoling each other by hailing her as goddess of wealth-Laxmi. Desire for a male child is clearly visible.

Women, especially in the subcontinent have been trained to lead a life of subordination from childhood, besides women accept this subordination unquestionably. It is also evident in *The Crow Eaters* that Putli is fully satisfied with her subordinate position and tries to inculcate the same quality in her daughters too.

On the surface Faredoon Junglewalla alias Freddy is the protagonist but in the presence of large number of female characters he is seen only as a nominal patriarch. He is easily manipulated by the whims of the women of the family; specially he succumbs to the terrors of his mother-in-law, Jerbanoo. It is evident in his interaction with his mother-in-law, Jerbanoo. He bows down to her terror, as his numerous attempts to free the household of her presence fails. The novel is full of anecdotes of Parsi culture and society. Feministic angle is common in both the novels.

The Crow Eaters begins with an extended flashback. Faredoon Junglwalla narrates the story of his early years to a captive audience consisting of seven children and some neighbouring kids. He speaks about his immigration from central India to Lahore, at the end of the nineteenth century, at the age of twenty-three with a pregnant wife Putli and a widowed mother-in-law, Jerbanoo along with his infant daughter Hutoxi. There is an interesting account of his struggle with his mother-in-law for control over his household that extends for many years. Through a fraudulent scheme he sets fire to his own shop and thus by frightening the mother-in-law kills two birds with an arrow. He not only becomes rich but also master of the house. With hard work and skill he rises to power and eminence in the Parsi community.

It is through the system of patriarchy that the men dominate the household. Whenever something wrong takes place, men blame the women folk thus making her the scapegoat. In this Parsi household too, Freddy blames Putli for Yazdi's condition, for wanting to marry the prostitute Rosy. Freddy along with a friend Allen in Hira Mandi rape Rosy out of anger and revenge. He further informs Yazdi about the whole episode. Yazdi is so hurt and saddened to hear it that he renounces home to become an ascetic. Freddy puts the whole blame on Putli.

The three leading characters- Jerbanoo, Putli and Tanya lead a life of double existence. Jerbanoo exhibits a superficial respect for the male-dominated tradition, but seizes every opportunity to undermine it. Though Putli restricts herself to a traditional role but at the same time keeps a check on her husband. Tanya is assertive outside the precincts of the home and negotiates to work from there. All the three women appear to rebel in disguise. Out of the three, Jerbanoo in spite of belonging to the older generation, articulates her hostility to any form of subordination. Her favourite past time are to challenge the feminine decency and decorum prescribed by the patriarchy. In addition, the novel has memorable characters who are individuals but not atypical and belong to all ages. The novel encompasses approximately forty years.

In the third novel, *Ice-Candy Man* (1988), Sidhwa deals with the issues of victimization and violence faced during partition. The plot of the novel focuses on Lenny's Hindu ayah, her kidnap by a mob headed by her jilted Muslim lover Ice-Candy man, and her eventual escape from his grip. Some critics have seen ayah as a symbol of the united India, and her body as a symbol of the land, desired by all religious and ethnic groups, that is about to be torn to pieces. It is also a tale of Lenny's maturation from a four year old child into a young woman with sexual awareness. Lenny is an intelligent narrator who closely observes the horrific religious and political riots and narrates in detail everything around her. She evolves a unique self awareness and consciousness of people treating her differently because of her limp. She also checks the behavior of the group of men from different religions who secretly desire the ayah. Lenny is surrounded by various characters like-slave-sister, electric aunt, old husband, godmother, ayah and ice- candy-man. The last character is metamorphosed from ice-cream vendor, bird seller, cosmic connector to Allah via telephone and pimp. Roughly the novel can be divided into three parts- the first part of the novel shows Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Parsis living side by side as friends and neighbours in Lahore. Next section depicts the seering tension all over India that explodes during partition riots. The last few chapters deal with the aftermath of partition and the violence that completely altered the lives of characters. For instance, before partition, Mrs. Sethi is portrayed as a submissive lady fulfilling her husband's every requirement and managing household duties. However, during partition, she emerges as a strong woman, working fearlessly as a social worker engaged in rescuing, sheltering and uniting victimized women with their families. Belonging to the neutral Parsi community and reaping the benefits of class, she engages in humanitarian efforts to help women, victimized by partition riots. Partition gives an opportunity to Mrs. Sethi to break away the domestic sphere and thus empowers her to act for social cause.

Sidhwa shows the worst form of violence during partition on women. During the partition and its aftermath, a woman's body became the medium to celebrate and avenge victory on both sides. In the novel, ayah is kidnapped as she is the most desirable woman figure in the novel with a substantial male following. The novel is a tale on female oppression, realistically projecting female oppression in a male dominated society. It is an honest portrayal on the way how men through masculinity satiate their desires by cruelly assaulting women with violence. Simultaneously women are also shown to tolerate the pain and humiliation. Thus a woman's position is reduced to mere playthings, in order to satisfy the men's desires.

Ice-Candy Man, has a number of women characters who survive the brutalities of partition. Theme of violence, exploitation, slavery, disinheritance and emotional weaknesses are genuinely portrayed by Sidhwa. Thus *Ice-Candy Man* is a true account of gynocritical perspectives of social realities.

The American Brat (1993), another novel on Parsi culture, set partly in Lahore and partly in America, narrates the story of Feroza Ginwalla, a sixteen year old Pakistani-Parsi girl. It is a story of Americanisation of a conservative young girl. This novel marks a significant development of Sidhwa as a diasporic writer. The novel unravels the experience of Feroza, sent to United States by her parents to develop a modern approach and outlook. In short the novel speaks of metamorphosis of an expatriate. The protagonist Feroza travels through three cultural spaces- her own Parsi culture, her native country Pakistan's Islamic culture and the western culture of United States of America. This long and interesting journey transforms her from a

conservative and timid girl to a confident and independent woman. In a nut shell *The American Brat* is about the change that Feroza undergoes in America and how her perspectives on life changes. The story unwinds the mental, social, cultural and psychological chasms that the shy Parsi-Pakistani girl Feroza confronts during the process of migration to the US. It also shows how well she adapts to the alien American culture after uprooting from the mother culture. The novel also raises issues on gender inequality and suffocating Islamic practices in Pakistan. Sidhwa strongly condemns the Hudood ordinances and the Zia ordinance introduced by General Zia which devalue woman to the level of a commodity. These legislative assesses were extremely unfair to women and often perpetuated crimes against them by forcing the male offenders to go scot free while the female victim was punished.

Sidhwa makes a lot of political allusions in Pakistan especially during the times of President Zia-Ul-Haq, a prominent ebb of rising fundamentalism was evident and it moulded Feroza's mental bearing into a conservative perspective. Her mother Zareen gets worried about Feroza's orthodox attitude and narrow mindedness and feared her to be a misfit in the otherwise open-minded Parsi community. Thus to open up Feroza's mental horizon, she is sent to United States on a three month vacation. To the horror of the Giniwalla's, Feroza grows ultra modern during her stay in the United States and starts challenging the traditional views, static orthodoxy and grows beyond the confines of community and the norms of the patriarchal society.

The American Brat unfolds the hidden layers of a woman's power and sense of self assertion. Sidhwa aptly portrays the conflict between a girl's desire for individuality and her community which tries to subdue her freedom through the protagonist Feroza, who becomes a new woman. Her journey from Pakistan to America transforms her. She loses her inhibitions and sheds her conservative beliefs and is perfect to fit into a modern society. At the end she becomes too modern to fit in her own community back home. The traditional and shy Feroza through metamorphosis comes out of the cocoon prepared for her by the patriarchy and evolves as a confident and independent lady.

The novel *Water* (2006) is based on the film by Deepa Mehta under the same name in 2005. The backdrop is of 1930s, locale Varansi, times when child marriages were rampant. Extremely young girls were married to old men due to economic and social constraints. When the old husband died these young girls were deserted in the widow ashrams of Varansi. The subject of the novel is controversial as it highlights the exploitation of widows by rich Brahmins. Through this novel Sidhwa brings to light the fact about chauvinistic interpretation of religion and how the patriarchy uses it to enslave women. *Water* exposes the age old hypocrisy of male dominated society which under the garb of religion leaves no stone unturned to subjugate women.

The novel narrates tales about a group of widows- Chuyia, Kalyani, Shakuntala, Bua and other widows of Rawalpur widow ashram who are abandoned by their families and in-laws after the demise of husband. Kalyani is a beautiful young widow who wants to live a pious life bereft of prostitution. Shakuntala is a scholar of scriptures, Madhumati is the mistress of the ashram is always craving for opium, Kunti becomes bitter during day time, Patirajji Bua, who is crazy about sweets and drools remembering the sweets

served in her own wedding. Madhumati was given heavy dowry by her father but after her husband's death, her inheritance is usurped by her in-laws and she is forced to celibate in the name of widowhood. When she asks for her husband's heritage, as punishment is raped by her two brothers-in-law for a week and thrown in a jungle to die. Gulabi brings her to the ashram. The head helps her to recover and later sent to a client. As time passes, she replaces the head of the ashram and starts sending Kalyani to clients. In the end even Chuyia is forced into prostitution to meet the expenses of the ashram.

Just like the novel *Cracking India*, here too there is a child narrator, a child widow, Chuiya. After wedding she continues to stay with her parents as was the custom with pre-pubescent girls, but her married life takes a tragic turn and she is widowed even without consummation of marriage. All symbols signifying her wifehood are removed. She is forced tonsuring, her glass bangles are smashed and forced to wear homespun white cloth. She is too innocent to realize the meaning of widowhood and asks her father, that how long she would be a widow. Her father Somnath is not bold enough to break the rigid tradition and advocates the system though he hurts his own daughter.

Her presence in the ashram affects the lives of the other widows like Shakuntala and Kalyani. In *Water* one gets a glimpse of the sad and painful plight of widows. Sidhwa refers to Gandhi's freedom movement, focusing on promoting social justice, eradication of untouchability, promoting women's rights. These widows cover the double colonization of women during the early twentieth century of Indian history. Though since then circumstances have changed in India but one can still witness poor, deserted widows in Varanasi.

5.4 POLITICAL SCENARIO OF PAKISTAN

The political scene of Pakistan had a deep impact not only on Bapsi Sidhwa's formative years but also Sidhwa, the writer. As a matter of fact, Pakistan came into existence in 1947 and Muhammad Ali Jinnah was the founder of Pakistan. The women were the major sufferers during partition riots, as a result they were forced to restraint themselves inside homes and thus denied participation in public domain and affairs. Jinnah had a secular and democratic plan for Pakistan and stressed on the importance of women's involvement in the nation building by fostering their educational and professional development. After his tragic and untimely death in 1948, his approach was forgotten.

New formed country Pakistan was multi-handled by several military and democratic regimes until 1977 military rule of General Zia-Ul-Haq during which religious fanatics and extremist forces began to gain political power. Zia-Ul-Haq implemented strict Islamic laws, for instance, he introduced the Hudood Ordinance which didn't discriminate between rape and adultery in Islamic society. The military rule headed by Gen Zia-Ul-Haq favoured the tribal and feudal lords from Baluchistan and NWFP (North West Frontier Province), who were already in power as delegated by the Britishers. Zia's conservative Islamic ideology became extremely dominant in Pakistani society. Thus women became a central concern of political and national discourse. Gradually the Pakistani regime became harsher on women.

Thus the Pakistani women evolved by an inter-play of diverse factors, due to exploitation, oppression and the outlook of the ruling political party. Women issues thus caught the fancy of the writers of that time. Perhaps this is the main reason that all novels of Bapsi Sidhwa have a feminine angle.

5.4.1 Voices from Pakistan

Many writers have enriched Pakistani writings in English. Prominent women writers are Bapsi Sidhwa, Monica Ali, Feryal Ali, Gauhar, Sarah Suleri, Uzma Aslam Khan, Kamila Shamsie and Qaisra Sharaz. Chief male writers of Pakistani English fiction are Zulfikar Ghose, Tariq Ali, Nadeem Aslam, Hanif Qureshi, Mohsin Hamid and Mohammad Hanif. Not only these but there are many upcoming and new writers who have joined the bandwagon and continue writing from both inside and outside of Pakistan.

Aijaz Ahmad rightly points out that Pakistani fiction is the continuation and extension of the fiction produced under the colonial rule in India. The lives of Pakistani women are depicted under the imposing role of religious, economic and social restrictions. The realities that the women confront in the Pakistani fiction are partly modern and partly traditional. The genesis of Pakistani feminist English literature can be traced back to the subcontinent where Muslim educated women like Mumtaz Shah Nawaz (1912-1948) prepared the path for other women. Her novel *The Heart Divided* is the first South Asian English novel on partition. Khawar Mumtaz and Farida Shaheed in their book *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back* point out the inter-play of a range of diverse factors-linguistic, cultural and religious which defines Pakistani women. They show how women of different status are prey to exploitation and oppression. They evolve the gradual process of feminist movements across Pakistan, from its origin in 1947 to right after Zia's military rule. From that time at both political and social levels, Pakistani English literature has become an effective instrument of protest. Women's issues, including the feudal patriarchal exploitation of women became increasingly popular among novelists.

The late 1970s was indicative of a strong feminist voice in Pakistan. The military dictatorship, religious fundamentalism, censorship on open discourse and strict laws on women resulted in surfacing of a strong and progressive feminist consciousness. This consciousness left its mark on the works of Bapsi Sidhwa too.

5.4.2 The Social Situation in Pakistan

Though Bapsi Sidhwa belonged to a progressive ethnic group i.e. Parsis, but at the same time was a part of the orthodox Pakistani society which was brimming with pains and sufferings of the women. The Pakistani society had a patriarchal construct. Sidhwa's novels are firmly grounded in the lived experiences of her stay in Pakistan, India and the U.S. Her works have female characters shown in resistance against the socially constructed norms that try to control their bodies and objectify them as icons of male honour. Sidhwa in her novels has explored the social issues of women such as

marriage, victimization of women, exploitation of women and treatment of women as sexual objects in Pakistani society. Thus, as a woman writer, Sidhwa pays close attention to the lives of women around her. She has also used her diasporic experiences to scrutinize and present the position of women in Pakistani society through seminal themes. Sidhwa has analysed the social position of women within Pakistani society from a non-muslim point of view. In her works she has reflected the struggle of women against the stifling social constraints and the female characters emerge as confident women even against impossible man-made social taboos, which like demons have possessed women in the name of culture and religion.

Patriarchy as a social institution has always defined and limited the lives of women in Pakistan and the Subcontinent. A chaotic social unrest is evident in pre and post-partitioned Pakistan.

5.5 CONTEMPORARY SITUATION IN PAKISTAN

Media has made evident the dire need of peace and reforms in Pakistan. There is growing need of peace to combat increasing intolerance of religious and ethnic diversity in the country. Debate is in progress regarding the rights of married Indian muslim women, with special reference to the concept of triple talaq. Gender discrimination is evident in Pakistani society. State encourages economic and social hierarchies leaning heavily on ideology of inequality and domination thus creating fertile grounds for one gender to exploit, oppress, use, manipulate and control the other gender to achieve its own objectives. State structure legitimizes these socio-economic relationships between genders. Thus the state can be viewed as a political, ideological and an economic entity that reinforces and promotes gender discrimination rather than removing it.

At the same time there is no denying fact that the status of women is changing in the Pakistani society. In all fields such as – sports, politics, courts, media, literature and bureaucracy, representation of women is conspicuous. This improvement in the status of woman has also empowered her.

5.6 LTE US SUM UP

Bapsi Sidhwa is originally from Karachi, Pakistan. A writer by occupation she has dual citizenship i.e., Pakistani and American. At present she resides in Houston, Texas (United States of America). There are total nine works written by Bapsi Sidhwa, but she is more famous for fiction, these works are *Water*, *An American Brat*, *The Bride*, *Ice-Candy Man* and *The Crow Eaters*. *Ice-Candy Man* was originally published in London in the year 1988, later an American publisher i.e. Milkweed Editions changed its title to *Cracking India* in 1991. Film adaptation of this novel is 1997, directed by Deepa Mehta. Roughly the novel can be divided into three parts- the first part of the novel shows Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Parsis living side by side as friends and neighbours in Lahore. Next section depicts the searing tension all over India that explodes during partition riots. The last few chapters deal with the aftermath of partition and the violence that completely altered the lives of characters.

5.7 GLOSSARY

- Adaptation: An adaptation of a book is a film based on it
- Narrative technique: how a story is told
- Humanitarian: person who helps suffering people
- Formative: something that has an important and lasting influence
- The subcontinent: Area that contains India, Pakistan and Bangladesh
- Protagonist: Main character of a book
- Patriarchy: A system in which men have all powers and importance
- Scapegoat: to blame somebody for something bad without fault
- Gynocritical: a female framework for the analysis of women's literature
- Diaspora: People whose ancestors come from a different country of origin
- Ordinance: an authoritative order or regulation
- Allusion: indirect reference to somebody or something
- Metamorphosis: a person develops and changes into something
- Ethnic: connected with or related to a different cultural group

5.8 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Who said that *Ice-Candy Man* is the most authentic and best book on partition of India ?
 - (a) R.K.Narayan
 - (b) Mulk Raj Anand
 - (c) Khushwant Singh
 - (d) Raja Rao
2. Which publisher changed the title from *Ice-Candy Man* to *Cracking India* ?
 - (a) Milkweed Editions
 - (b) Cornweed Editions
 - (c) Wheatweed Editions
 - (d) Riceweed Editions
3. Which narrative technique is used in *Ice-Candy Man* ?
 - (a) Flash back
 - (b) Flash forward
 - (c) Child Narrative

- (d) Foreshadowing
4. Age of Lenny is ?
- (a) 6 years
(b) 7 years
(c) 8 years
(d) 9 years
5. Which famous Indian writer sees Lenny as the autobiographical heroine of Bapsi Sidhwa ?
- (a) Anita Desai
(b) Jhumpa Lahiri
(c) Shashi Deshpande
(d) Namita Gokhale
6. Who helps Ayah to flee from Hira Mandi ?
- (a) Electric Aunt
(b) Ice-Candy Man
(c) Godmother
(d) Lenny
7. Bapsi Sidhwa was born on which date of 1938 ?
- (a) 9th Aug.
(b) 10th Aug.
(c) 11th Aug.
(d) 12th Aug.
8. Sidhwa has dual citizenship of Pakistan and .
- (a) UK
(b) USA
(c) Canada
(d) France
9. Sidhwa graduated from of Lahore .
- (a) Kinnaird College
(b) Kinnor College
(c) Kohinoor College
(d) Christ College

10. Sidhwa's governess was .
- (a) Swiss German
 - (b) Anglo Indian
 - (c) Chinese
 - (d) Indian
11. During an interview to Bachi Karkaria, Bapsi describes herself as .
- (a) Pakistani-Parsi
 - (b) Pakistani-Indian
 - (c) Pakistani- Punjabi-Parsi
 - (d) American-Parsi
12. Sidhwa is not fluent in .
- (a) English
 - (b) Urdu
 - (c) Gujarati
 - (d) Marathi
13. Which of the following is not written by Sidhwa ?
- (a) *Jungle Wali Sahiba*
 - (b) *Water*
 - (c) *The Bride*
 - (d) *Their Language of Love*
14. How many books has Sidhwa written?
- (a) 6 books
 - (b) 7 books
 - (c) 8 books
 - (d) 9 books
15. Zaitoon of *The Bride* had affinity to a real girl from ?
- (a) Baluchistan
 - (b) Kohistan
 - (c) Balouch
 - (d) Lahore

16. Which novel was first to be written but second to be published?

- (a) *Water*
- (b) *Crow Eaters*
- (c) *The Bride*
- (d) *Ice-Candy Man*

17. Which novel was self-published by Sidhwa?

- (a) *Crow Eaters*
- (b) *Water*
- (c) *The Bride*
- (d) *Ice-Candy Man*

18. Fareedon Junglewala is also known as .

- (a) Farie
- (b) Freddy
- (c) Junglewala
- (d) Farishta

19. How is Zaitoon's marriage fixed to Sakhi?

- (a) meet up
- (b) word of mouth
- (c) ring exchange
- (d) written agreement

20. In which year was *Ice-Candy Man* published?

- (a) 1985
- (b) 1986
- (c) 1987
- (d) 1988

21. Feroza Ginwalla is .

- (a) 15 years old
- (b) 16 years old
- (c) 17 years old
- (d) 18 years old

22. The novel *Water* is based on a film by.

- (a) Deepa Sarin
- (b) Deepa Mehta
- (c) Deepa Ahidi
- (d) Deepjyoti

23. Name the child widow in *Water*.

- (a) Chuiya
- (b) Kalyani
- (c) Shakuntala
- (d) Madhumati

24. Who was the founder of Pakistan?

- (a) Zia Ul Haq
- (b) Muhammad Ali Jinah
- (c) Muhammad Qureshi
- (d) Major Mushtaq

25. When did Jinnah die?

- (a) 1937
- (b) 1938
- (c) 1947
- (d) 1948

Answers :

- 1. (c) Khushwant Singh
- 2. (a) Milkweed Editions
- 3. (c) Child Narrative
- 4. (c) 8 years
- 5. (a) Anita Desai
- 6. (c) Godmother
- 7. (c) 11th August
- 8. (b) USA
- 9. (a) Kinnaird College
- 10. (b) Anglo Indian

11. (c) Pakistani- Punjabi-Parsi
12. (d) Marathi
13. (a) *Jungle Wali Sahiba*
14. (d) 9 books
15. (b) Kohistan
16. (c) *The Bride*
17. (a) *Crow Eaters*
18. (b) Freddy
19. (b) Word of mouth
20. (d) 1988
21. (b) 16 years old
22. (b) Deepa Mehta
23. (a) Chuiya
24. (b) Muhammad Ali Jinah
25. (d) 1948

5.8.1 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Q.1 Why all novels of Bapsi Sidhwa have a feminine angle?

Ans. _____

Q. 2 Name some prominent Pakistani women writers writing in English.

Ans. _____

Q. 3 Name some prominent Pakistani male writers writing in English.

Ans. _____

Q. 4 How a strong feminist consciousness arose in Pakistan?

Ans. _____

Q. 5 Describe some social issues explored by Sidhwa.

Ans. _____

Q. 6 In contemporary situation of Pakistan, what is the role of the State?

Ans. _____

Q. 7 What are some of the major themes of *Ice-Candy Man* ?

Ans. _____

Q. 8 Briefly summarise *Ice-Candy Man*.

Ans.

Q.9 Why does Zaitoon marry Sakhi and eventually runs away from his home?

Ans.

Q. 10 Discuss the title of the novel *The Bride*.

Ans.

Possible answers :

- A. 1 All novels of Bapsi Sidhwa have a feminine angle because during that time the women were suffering due to exploitation, oppression and the harsh outlook of the ruling political party . This gave rise to several issues, which caught the fancy of the writers of that time.
- A. 2 Prominent Pakistani woman writers, writing in English are Bapsi Sidhwa, Monica Ali, Feryal Ali,

Gauhar, Sarah Suleri, Uzma Aslam Khan, Kamila Shamsie and Qaisra Sharaz.

- A. 3 Chief Pakistani male writers writing in English are Zulfikar Ghose, Tariq Ali, Nadeem Aslam, Hanif Qureshi, Mohsin Hamid and Mohammad Hanif.
- A. 4 The late 1970s was indicative of a strong feminist voice in Pakistan. The military dictatorship, religious fundamentalism, censorship on open discourse and strict laws on women resulted in surfacing of a strong and progressive feminist consciousness.
- A. 5 Sidhwa in her novels has explored the social issues of women such as marriage, victimization of women, exploitation of women and treatment of women as sexual objects in Pakistani society.
- A. 6 In contemporary Pakistan, a fertile ground for one gender to exploit, oppress, use, manipulate and control the other gender to achieve its own objectives still exists. State structure legitimizes these socio-economic relationships between genders. Thus the state can be viewed as a political, ideological and an economic entity that reinforces and promotes gender discrimination rather than removing it.
- A. 7 *Ice-Candy Man*, has a number of women characters who survive the brutalities of partition. Themes related to their oppression, exploitation, slavery, disinheritance, violence and emotional weaknesses are genuinely portrayed by Sidhwa in the *Ice-Candy Man*.
- A. 8 The novel can be divided into three parts- the first part of the novel shows Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Parsis living side by side as friends and neighbours in Lahore. Next section depicts the searing tension all over India that explodes during partition riots. The last few chapters deal with the aftermath of partition and the violence that completely altered the lives of characters.
- A. 9 Zaitoon, marries Sakhi, a tribal man to shield her father's honour. She tries her level best to compromise with her husband until it becomes unbearable to stay with her in-laws. Thus she runs away one day.
- A. 10 The title, *The Bride*, connotes it to be a story of a single bride but in reality it is about three brides that is Afshan, Zaitoon and Carol. Each bride's story has a common theme which proves that patriarchal culture exploits women.

5.9 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1 Compare and contrast the characters of Ayah and Ice-Candy Man.
- Q.2 Discuss the role of godmother as a true humanitarian.
- Q.3 Khushwant Singh has called *Ice-Candy Man* as the most authentic book on partition. Elaborate.
- Q.4 There are some Parsi characters in the novel *Ice-Candy Man*, who even during the turmoil of Partition riots maintain a neutral position. Discuss in relation to the Parsi characters in the novel.
- Q.5 Discuss *Ice-Candy Man* as a feminist novel.

- Q. 6 Write a short appraisal on life and works of Bapsi Sidhwa.
- Q. 7 Elaborate the major themes in the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- Q. 8 Discuss *Ice-Candy Man* as a story of Lenny's maturation into a young woman with sexual awareness.

5.10 SUGGESTED READING

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SUMMARY OF *ICE-CANDY MAN*

STRUCTURE

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Objectives
- 6.3 The Novel : *Ice-Candy Man* - Summary in Brief
- 6.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.5 Glossary
- 6.6 Multiple Choice Questions
- 6.7 Self - Assessment Questions
- 6.8 Examination Oriented Questions
- 6.9 Suggested Reading

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* covers the partition phase in the subcontinent and its consequences on life of the common people. A unique novel in the sense that it is the first novel that has attempted to give an earnest picture of the times from a vantage point. In the beginning the reader is introduced to lame Lenny whose movements are restricted between Waris road, her residence, to Jail road. Col. Bharucha is a surgeon by profession who puts a plaster on Lenny's leg. The whole Parsi community of Lahore visits her but Lenny only wants her Godmother. Lenny is a keen observer and continues watching the people from there. Her schooling is stopped by the doctor but he recommends that Lenny can lead an ordinary life with marriage. This suggestion of the doctor connotes the fixed role of a woman in the society, i.e. tying of the nuptial knot and managing the home affairs only. Limiting Lenny's exposure to school closes her fate of learning and at a young age Lenny learns the duties of womanhood.

After about a month she is allowed to go out in a stroller under the supervision of the ayah, an eighteen year old woman called Shanta. She narrates the story in first person. Lenny is not only an introverted personality but always preoccupied in her own world. A keen observer, her sensibility towards sexuality grows by observing the reactions of people around the ayah. People specially men are fascinated with the

graceful figure of ayah. At a young age she discovers about the difference in religions. She realizes that it is difficult to inculcate a spirit of brotherhood between men of diverse religions. When Lenny comes to know that the ayah is amiss, she tries to search for her frantically but unfortunately ayah becomes a prey to Hindu Muslim riots. Sidhwa has given a realistic account of exploitation and repression of women folk. Sidhwa has painted Lenny with bold colours.

Lenny does not only seem to be courageous and brave but also a feminist at heart. Just by observing the women folk around her, Lenny understands the limitations of women amidst a patriarchal society. Men with the aid of their masculine prowess satiate their desires and in return assault women. In a subtle manner Sidhwa protests against the marginalization of women. Lenny's mother is docile and an epitome of a perfect housewife who has learnt to stifle her desires. Lenny conveys the message that men folk have to end egos and women need to be more assertive. A change of old mindsets is the need of the hour for establishing equality. In short, Sidhwa has a positive and constructive approach towards upliftment and betterment of the status of women. *Ice-Candy Man* picturises the emotional turmoil, weaknesses, physical assault and cruelty inflicted on women through a series of women characters.

6.2 OBJECTIVES

- That the learner should read, with care this seminal work of one of the major Parsi-Pakistani/diaspora/ South Asian writers.
- That the learner should be able to give an account of the summary of the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- That the learner should be able to demonstrate capacity to develop critical analysis of the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- That the learner should be able to express insights which are related to the novel and the novelist

6.3 THE NOVEL : *ICE-CANDY MAN* – SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Critics and intelligentsia have hailed *Ice-Candy Man* as an authentic account of partition of the subcontinent and its consequences. There is another aspect to it i.e. *Ice-Candy Man* is a unique novel in the sense that it is the first novel from a writer of Pakistani origin to describe the fate of people of Lahore. Beginning with an excerpt from Iqbal's poetry titled, 'complaint to God' the narrator Lenny is introduced in the first chapter. As discussed in the earlier chapters, she is polio stricken i.e. has a limp and dependent on others, her medical condition prevents her free movement. Colonel Bharucha is a surgeon who casts Lenny's leg in plaster and performs surgery which is so painful that she gets bed ridden. Lots of people of Parsi community come to see Lenny but she just wants to be with the Godmother. Since she is not free to move around, she becomes extremely observant.

Different localities of Lahore are described by Lenny, who is also the child narrator. Whenever her eyes fall on Salvation Army wall with ventilation slits, it discerns a feeling of loneliness and sadness in her. She imagines about the dumb animals on the other side of the wall lurking in fear for survival. Lenny is not only introvert but also preoccupied in her own thoughts. The ayah, an eighteen year old girl Shanta is

engaged to take care of Lenny. In a stroller the ayah takes her to a zoo.

During the outing an Englishman approaches Ayah and requests her to put Lenny down but Ayah explains to him about Lenny's disability. For Lenny watching Ayah interact with people is an education. Gender behavior in society gets evident to Lenny by watching Colonel Bharucha, old and young men including even the beggars and holymen get drawn towards the Ayah's feminine and graceful body. Ayah has a large number of male admirers, the Ice-Candy-Man, is one of them. An eponymous character has the talent of speaking on any topic under the sun. He is not only a chatter box but also changes roles, he becomes a bird man in the streets of Lahore and the rich ladies give him money for feeding the birds. Ayah has two more admirers—a Chinaman and a Pathan. They too are fascinated by her charms. They visit Lenny's house daily to talk to her.

Lenny gives candid observation about her own community. The Parsi community gathers in a community hall of the Parsi temple. Preparations for worship of fire were in progress by priests. All this is shown through the eyes of Lenny. The dilemma of the Parsi community during partition is apt to the peace loving and adjusting nature of the Parsis. When Col. Bharucha informs about the latest political condition with respect to partition into two countries; the Parsi community fails to reach a consensus regarding backing and supporting a particular country. After long heated arguments the Parsi community of Lahore agree on maintaining a neutral position.

Shankar and Gita are the newly wedded couple and also the tenants of Lenny's house. The kids of the house observe their romantic behavior with interest. Gita's culinary and story telling skills popularizes her with the younger lot. Other inhabitants of Lenny's household are Hari, the gardener and Imam Din, the cook. Imam Din is robust, six footer and sixty five year old male who too is fond of children of the household. One day, Imam Din takes Lenny to his village Pir Pindo on bicycle. This village is blessed with communal harmony as Hindus and Muslims live with a sense of brotherhood. Lenny observes that the villagers are enthusiastically discussing the politics of Bihar and Bengal and are agitated to hear about the inaction of Britishers on Hindu-Muslim riots. However, the headman of Pir Pindo assures safety to them if such riots occur there. After meeting some children i.e., Ranna and his sisters Khatija and Parveen, Lenny returns back to Lahore with Imam.

Lenny was fond of Electric aunt, who was a widow. Unable to attend school, Lenny used to visit Mrs. Pen for education. Mrs. Pen's house was on Jail Road, next to Godmother's. Often accompanied by ayah, Lenny would visit Godmother after tuitions. During Gandhiji's visit to Lahore, Lenny met him with her mother. The myth about Gandhiji, Lenny harbored in her heart shattered as he talked of enema-therapy after blessing them. Lenny was puzzled at his grand status of Mahatma, to her he appeared a semi-clown and demon.

In the month of April, Lahore began to sizzle. The rumors about partition percolated in Lahore. It was evident that India and Pakistan would be two separate nations. The Muslim league wanted Pakistan for Muslims and news of communal riots were rife. Under such circumstances Imam was worried about his folks and visited Pir Pindo. Again Lenny forcibly joins him as she was nostalgic about her last visit. In order

to enjoy Baisakhi fair and feast, they went to Dera Tek Singh along with Dost Mohammad. But the bliss did not last long, and people of the village apprehended trouble. The relatives of Imam Din came to Lahore and were accommodated with Imam Din. Military personnel started evacuating the Muslims of Pir Pindo to safer places. This resulted in utter confusion among the peasants. Violence is rampant and people shudder with fear at the sight of Mr. Roger's, who is the Inspector General of Police, whose mutilated body is thrown in a gutter. People start migrating to safer places. Pir Pindo is badly affected by communal riots. Religious brotherhood is converted into blood enemies, bent on spilling each others blood. In Lahore, people start moving to safer places, specially the Hindus and Sikhs move to Amritsar. People are dependent upon updates from All India Radio on political situation.

Though the Parsi community is safe but apprehensive about its future prospects. Muslim mobs attack Hindu houses in Lahore. One such mob stopped over at Lenny's house to enquire about whereabouts of Hindu servants in the household. They were keen on Shanta but Imam lied that she had left the precincts. Suddenly Ice-Candy-Man asks Lenny about ayah, who discloses of her hiding place. Lenny is shocked to see the frantic Muslim crowd dragging ayah and she is stunned to see how an innocent truth can ruin somebody's life. Lenny is remorseful for speaking the truth. Ice-Candy-Man's mother was a prostitute and he takes the ayah to Hira Mandi, which is a red light area of Lahore. In reality, ayah was fond of Masseur's songs but Ice-Candy-Man loved ayah for her youthful looks. He is also fond of Urdu poetry.

The bliss and communal harmony of Pir Pindo was short lived. Pir Pindo faced one of the worst forms of communal violence due to partition. Sikhs were continuously attacking the Muslims of the village. Men were killed, women gang raped and children slaughtered. It was preplanned to hide some sturdy men folk to safer places but nothing seemed to work. Majority of Muslims were killed. The women folk of the village gather at Chaudhary household and spill kerosene oil around the house, in order to burn themselves. Ranna, manages to escape as he was buried under a heap of dead bodies, badly hurt and shocked, he reaches a refugee camp at Lahore. Reaching Lahore Ranna witnessed most horrifying scenes one could ever imagine. He was in rags, amidst rotting dead bodies and wandering through the abandoned lanes of looted houses, he satiates his appetite with stolen chappaties. By chance, Ranna is hurled to a refugee camp at Badami Baug, where coincidentally he meets Iqbal Chacha and Noni Chachi.

Lenny is deeply guilt stricken for revealing the truth about the ayah to the Ice-Candy Man, the sight of dragging the ayah forward and her feet receding back to Lenny's home is a torturous sight. For days Lenny stares at her tongue in the bathroom mirror, trying frantically to pain her tongue as it is the tongue's revelation that result in ayah's abduction. Had she not disclosed ayah's hiding place to Ice-Candy Man, she wouldn't have been abducted by the Muslim mob. Ice-Candy Man is totally changed due to witnessing the communal riots, specially the sight of his dead muslim brothers. His beloved ayah becomes just a Hindu for him during the riots. For days Lenny remains in shock at ayah's abduction, Ice-Candy Man's behavior is shocking to her. She remains lonely and sad without ayah, specially during Papoo's marriage. Worldly experiences after ayah's departure matures Lenny physically and mentally.

Godmother is a famous and extremely well connected personality of Lahore. Ayah is spotted in a

taxi, dressed up like a film actress by Lenny and few others. Lenny informs this to godmother, who orders search for the ayah. Godmother calls for ayah's husband in the evening. Lenny is restless and waits till six p.m. to see him but he is not surprised to discern that the bridegroom is none other than Ice-Candy Man. He is dressed up in flowing white muslin clothes and well versed in Urdu poetry. He admits that she has been accepted by family of dancers and married to him.

Godmother knew everything through her espionage system and scolds him for letting ayah be raped. To this accusation he replies that he is a man and men are never faithful. Only dogs are faithful. If one wants faithfulness, then ayah should have married a dog. Godmother gets wild at hearing this and calls him son of pigs and pimps who has brought disgrace and shame to his wife that is ayah. Godmother scolds him violently and Ice-Candy-Man is so shaken that he weeps and promises to make ayah happy from then onwards. Wearing a Jinnah-cap, Ice-Candy Man's face is grief stricken and shocked. Ayah is renamed as Mumtaz after marriage to Ice-Candy Man. Godmother wanted to meet ayah and Lenny insists on accompanying her to ayah's new abode i.e., Hira Mandi. So they reach in a tonga and visit ayah's well decorated room, sprinkled with flowers. Though ayah is dressed in a bridal finery but Lenny is sensitive enough to discern the sadness in her eyes. The glow and life on ayah's face has disappeared.

During Ice-Candy Man's absence, ayah begs Godmother to help her unite with her relatives in Amritsar. Ayah does not want to live in Hira Mandi. Godmother asks her to be firm in her decision and ayah pleads to leave this place. Godmother and Lenny leave ayah after assuring that she would be rescued to Amritsar. Visiting ayah's place in Hira Mandi has an impact on Lenny's sensibilities and she begins to understand about the influence of kotha on Ice-Candy Man and ayah. Kotha is not only a place for dancing girls but a storehouse of powerful force that has changed Ice-Candy man into a Mughal courtier and a poet; ever ready with rhyming couplets.

Beyond doubt, the Godmother, as her name is suggestive of power, force and influence; contacts the Government officials for transporting ayah across border to Amritsar in India. Soon a police troop visit Hira Mandi to take away ayah from Ice-Candy Man's clutches. She is kept in a well guarded woman's camp at Warris road. Ice-Candy Man reaches the camp, following ayah but is rebuffed by a robust Sikh sentry. Ice-Candy Man is transformed into a wandering lover in search of his lost love. He looks like a sad fakir who has left this world, in search of his beloved. To win back his beloved, he places fresh flowers for her over the boundary wall of the camp every morning and sing poems of love for her. This ritual of placing flowers and singing songs continues for several days but Ice-Candy Man could not be benefitted in any way. He could not win back his beloved wife ayah alias Mumtaz.

Soon the news of ayah's union with her family in Amritsar reaches Lenny. Ice-Candy-Man, follows her to India, crossing the border in order to pursue his lost love. Thus, the novel has a sad ending. In a nut shell the novel unfolds the political events in the history of the partition of the subcontinent. Laced with authentic scenes of rape, murder, violence and suffering it creates a classic piece of literature through Lenny, the child narrator. Ice-Candy-Man has been hailed as a multifaceted protagonist of the novel.

6.4 LET US SUM UP

Ice-Candy Man presents an authentic account of the partition trauma and its subsequent aftermaths. It is also the first work of a Pakistani to describe the fate of people in Lahore during partition and later. Lenny is the child narrator who is always lost in her own world. As Lenny was polio stricken, ayah alias Shanta, an eighteen year old charming maidservant was engaged to look after Lenny. Ayah was extremely attractive to the opposite sex and Lenny learnt a lot about male sex attraction by watching the men around her. Lenny watches how the men were drawn towards the feminine graces of ayah. Among the admirers of ayah, Ice-Candy Man was the most versatile character. The novel *Ice Candy Man* is also a true account of the position of the Parsi community during partition. The Parsi community gathers in a fire temple and is engaged in a hot debate as to whom to side during partition. Unable to reach a consensus, they reach a decision to maintain a neutral position, instead of supporting a particular country.

There are some servants in the servant quarters of Lenny's home. Imam Din is a cook, with whom Lenny visits his village Pir Pindo. This village is blessed with communal harmony as Hindus and Muslims live with a sense of brotherhood. The headman assures the villagers if riots break out safety would be provided to each one of them. Later in the novel when the communal riots become a reality due to partition, the peace and brotherhood of Pir Pindo is robbed. At Baisakhi time Imam revisits the village with Dost Mohammad and Lenny. He brings his relatives to Lahore and accommodates in his own home and the police also starts evacuating the Muslims of Pir Pindo to safer places.

Mrs. Pen was Lenny's tutor who lived next to Godmother's house. Lenny was fond of both Godmother and Electric aunt. Sidhwa cracks the myth of Gandhiji through Lenny's encounter with him in Lahore. Hearing about his enema-therapy, Lenny finds him half clownish. Though the Parsi community enjoyed a neutral position yet they were apprehensive about future prospects of the community. Lahore burnt with communal tension and Lenny's household was no exception. Once a Muslim mob barged in, enquiring about Hindu servants, specially about ayah. Imam lied that she had left the house but Ice-Candy Man trickfully asks Lenny and not realizing the harmful intentions of the Ice-Candy Man, she discloses about the hiding place of the ayah. Lenny is shocked to see how religion has divided the servants and how the wall of brotherhood collapsed. Lenny remains guilt ridden for days due to the fact that how an innocent truth ruined somebody's life.

Ice-Candy Man's mother was a prostitute and he marries ayah. Renaming her as Mumtaz he keeps her in the red light area of Lahore and turns a pimp. News about ayah's stay in Hira Mandi reaches the Godmother who calls Ice-Candy Man, scolds him for stooping so low as to make ayah available as prostitute to other men. Godmother on Lenny's insistence visits ayah. In Ice-Candy Man's absence the sad eyed ayah expresses her desire to be united with her relatives in Amritsar. Exercising her influence, the Godmother helps ayah to reach Amritsar with the help of police force and Ice-Candy-Man is rebuked. Ultimately Ice-Candy-Man also crosses the border in the hope to win back his lady love.

6.5 GLOSSARY

- Partition: a division of one country into two or more countries
- Subcontinent: a large landmass that forms part of a continent, especially the part of Asia that includes India, Pakistan and Bangladesh
- Vantage point: a higher position from where you can watch something
- Parsi: (also parsee) member of a religious group whose ancestors originally came from Persia and whose religion is Zoroastrianism
- Nuptial : connected with marriage or wedding
- Connote: suggest a feeling, an idea, etc., as well as the main meaning
- Stroller: (buggy, push-chair), a small folding seat on wheels in which a small child sits and is pushed along
- Inculcate: to cause somebody to learn and remember ideas
- Subtle: not very noticeable or obvious
- Docile: quiet and easy to control
- Epitome: a perfect example of something
- Turmoil: a state of great anxiety and confusion
- Seminal: very important and having a strong influence on later developments
- Diaspora: movement of people from any nation or group away from their own country
- Bibliography: list of books or articles about a particular subject
- Excerpt: a short piece of writing, music, film, etc., taken from a longer whole
- Godmother: a female godparent (responsible for a child)
- Gender: the fact of being male or female
- Feminine: having the qualities or appearance considered to be typical of women
- Eponymous: eponymous character of a book, play, film, etc., is the one mentioned in the title
- Candid: saying what you think openly and honestly
- Dilemma: predicament, situation in which you have to make a very difficult choice between things of equal importance
- Neutral: not supporting or helping either side in disagreement
- Culinary: connected with cooking or food
- Robust: strong and healthy
- Communal : involving different group of people
- Riots: a situation in which a group of people behave in a violent way in public place

- Enema: a liquid that is put in the rectum of a person
- Therapy: treatment of a physical problem
- Rumors: a piece of information that people talk about but that may not be true
- Percolate: to move gradually
- Nostalgic: a feeling of sadness mixed with pleasure and affection when you think of happy times in the past
- Apprehend: to understand or recognize something
- Rampant: existing or spreading everywhere in a way that cannot be controlled
- Mutilate: to damage somebody's body very severely
- Prospects: the possibility that something will happen
- Precincts: area around a place or a building
- Slaughter: the cruel killing of large number of people
- Frantically: done quickly and with a lot of activity but in a way that is not organized
- Muslin: a type of fine cotton cloth that is almost transparent
- Espionage: spying
- Pimp: a man who controls prostitutes and lives on the money they earn
- Sensibility: the ability to experience and understand deep feelings
- Kotha: a room where the dancing girls perform
- Rebuff: an unkind refusal of a friendly offer, rejection
- Fakir: a Muslim religious ascetic who lives solely on alms
- Bliss: extreme happiness
- Spilling: to flow over the edge

6.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (1) Lenny's movements are restricted between .
 - (a) Waris to Jail road
 - (b) Hira Mandi to Jung road
 - (c) Wahab to Jamail road
 - (d) Waaris to Mirza Ismail road
- (2) Who puts plaster on Lenny's leg?
 - (a) Col. Brown
 - (b) Col. Bharucha

- (c) Col. Todd
 - (d) Col. Mirza
- (3) Col. Bharucha, by profession is a .
- (a) Army Officer
 - (b) Guard
 - (c) Surgeon
 - (d) Medical specialist
- (4) Ayah's age is .
- (a) 17 years
 - (b) 18 years
 - (c) 19 years
 - (d) 20 years
- (5) Ayah's name is .
- (a) Shanti
 - (b) Shanta
 - (c) Shant
 - (d) Shantu
- (6) After marriage ayah is renamed as.
- (a) Munni Begum
 - (b) Mumtaz
 - (c) Munirka
 - (d) Rosy
- (7) Who are fascinated by ayah's graceful figure?
- (a) Men
 - (b) Women
 - (c) Children
 - (d) Britishers
- (8) Who is docile and an epitome of a perfect housewife?
- (a) Godmother
 - (b) Electric aunt
 - (c) Lenny's mother

- (d) Ayah
- (9) *Ice-Candy Man* is a unique novel in the sense that it is the first novel from a writer of Pakistani origin to describe the fate of people of .
- (a) Delhi
- (b) Rawalpindi
- (c) Mumbai
- (d) Lahore
- (10) *Ice-Candy Man* begins with an excerpt from ———— poetry titled ‘Complaint to God’.
- (a) Allah Baksh’s
- (b) Rumi’s
- (c) Iqbal’s
- (d) Faiz Ahmad Faiz’s
- (11) Whenever Lenny’s eyes fall on ----- Army wall with ventilation slits, it discerns a feeling of loneliness and sadness in her.
- (a) Salvation
- (b) Red Cross
- (c) Pakistan Army
- (d) Amritsar refugee camp
- (12) Who is an eponymous character .
- (a) Bapsi Sidhwa
- (b) Lenny
- (c) Godmother
- (d) Ice-Candy-Man
- (13) Ayah has two more admirers a chinaman and a ————.
- (a) Pathan
- (b) Lenny
- (c) Godmother
- (d) Ice-Candy-Man
- (14) Parsis worship .
- (a) Water
- (b) Air

- (c) Fire
 - (d) Earth
- (15) During partition, the Parsi community of Lahore agree on maintaining a ——position.
- (a) Pro- India
 - (b) Neutral
 - (c) Pro- Pakistan
 - (d) Independent
- (16) Shankar and Gita are the newly wedded couple and also the —— of Lenny's house.
- (a) servants
 - (b) landlords
 - (c) cooks
 - (d) tenants
- (17) Gita's —— and storytelling skills popularizes her with the younger lot.
- (a) culinary
 - (b) sewing
 - (c) singing
 - (d) debating
- (18) Hari is the cook and Imam Din is a gardener. (True/False). _____
- (19) Who takes Lenny to Pir Pindo?
- (a) Ayah
 - (b) Imam Din
 - (c) Shankar
 - (d) Col. Bharucha
- (20) Names of Ranna's sisters are Khatija and——.
- (a) Prerna
 - (b) Parmeshwari
 - (c) Parveen
 - (d) Parjeet
- (21) Who was Lenny's tutor?
- (a) Mrs. Penny

- (b) Mrs. Pan
 - (c) Ms. Paan
 - (d) Mrs. Pen
- (22) The myth about which leader was shattered in Lenny's heart?
- (a) Gandhiji
 - (b) Gen. Zia-Ul-Haq
 - (c) Mohammad Ali Jinnah
 - (d) Jawahar Lal Nehru
- (23) About which therapy did Gandhiji talk?
- (a) Natural
 - (b) Ayurveda
 - (c) Enema
 - (d) Homeopathy
- (24) During riots the people of Lahore were dependent on updates on political situation on whose services?
- (a) Doordarshan
 - (b) Rashtrdoot
 - (c) The Lahore Times
 - (d) All India Radio
- (25) Who asks Lenny about ayah's hiding place?
- (a) Imam Din
 - (b) Dost Mohammad
 - (c) Ice-Candy-Man
 - (d) Hari
- (26) Ice- Candy Man's mother was a _____.
- (a) Prostitute
 - (b) Tutor
 - (c) Singer
 - (d) Maid
- (27) Ice-Candy Man takes ayah to _____.
- (a) Amritsar
 - (b) Waris road

- (c) Hira Mandi
 - (d) Pir Pindo
- (28) Ranna was hurled to a refugee camp at _____.
- (a) Delhi Haat
 - (b) Badami Baug
 - (c) Lahore camp
 - (d) Kashmiri Baug
- (29) Who coincidentally meets Iqbal Chacha and Noni Chachi in the refugee camp?
- (a) Parveen
 - (b) Ice-Candy Man
 - (c) Mumtaz
 - (d) Ranna
- (30) Who said, “If one wants faithfulness, then ayah should have married a dog”.
- (a) Godmother
 - (b) Ice-Candy Man
 - (c) Lenny
 - (d) Electric Aunt
- (31) Whom does ayah beg for help?
- (a) Godmother
 - (b) Ice-Candy Man
 - (c) Lahore camp
 - (d) Kashmiri Baug
- (32) Where do ayah’s relatives live?
- (a) Delhi Haat
 - (b) Badami Baug
 - (c) Lahore camp
 - (d) Amritsar
- (33) “He looks like a sad fakir who has left this world, in search of his beloved”. Who is he?
- (a) Parveen
 - (b) Ranna
 - (c) Mumtaz
 - (d) Ice-Candy Man

(34) Who has been hailed as a multifaceted protagonist of the novel?

- (a) Sidhwa
- (b) Ranna
- (c) Ice-Candy Man
- (d) Lenny

(35) Who crosses the border in the hope to win back his lady love?

- (a) Col. Bharucha
- (b) Ranna
- (c) Ice-Candy Man
- (d) Imam Din

Possible Answers :

- | | | | |
|--------|------------|--------|--------|
| (1) a | (2) b | (3) c | (4) a |
| (5) b | (6) b | (7) a | (8) c |
| (9) d | (10) c | (11) a | (12) d |
| (13) a | (14) c | (15) b | (16) d |
| (17) a | (18) False | (19) b | (20) c |
| (21) d | (22) a | (23) c | (24) d |
| (25) b | (26) a | (27) c | (28) b |
| (29) d | (30) b | (31) a | (32) d |
| (33) d | (34) c | (35) c | |

6.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q.1 Which phase of the subcontinent does the *Ice-Candy Man* cover?

Ans. _____

Q. 2 Comment on the role of young Lenny .

Ans. _____

Q. 3 Why are the kids attached to Shankar and Gita?

Ans.

Q. 4 Why did the Muslim League want Pakistan?

Ans.

Q. 5 During partition riots how were the people taking care of their safety in Lahore?

Ans.

Q. 6 Describe communal violence in Pir Pindo during partition.

Ans.

Q. 7 Describe Lenny's way of punishing herself for revealing the truth about ayah's hiding place.

Ans.

Q. 8 Describe Ice-Candy Man as ayah's husband.

Ans.

Q.9 Describe ayah's meeting with Lenny after marriage in Hira Mandi.

Ans.

Q.10 How does Godmother rescue ayah from Hira Mandi and send her to her relatives in Amritsar?

Ans.

Q.11 What did the Ice-Candy Man do to win back his love? Was he benefitted from it?

Ans. _____

Possible Answers :

- (1) Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* covers the Partition phase in the subcontinent and its consequences on life of the common people.
- (2) Gender behavior in society gets evident to Lenny by watching Colonel Bharucha, old and young men including even the beggars and holymen get drawn towards the ayah's feminine and graceful body.
- (3) The kids of the house observe the romantic behavior of Shankar and Gita with interest. Gita's culinary and story telling skills popularizes her with the kids.
- (4) The Muslim league wanted Pakistan for Muslims.
- (5) In Lahore, people started moving to safer places, specially the Hindus and Sikhs moved to Amritsar
- (6) Pir Pindo faced one of the worst forms of communal violence due to partition. Sikhs were continuously attacking the Muslims of the village. Men were killed , women gang raped and children slaughtered.
- (7) Lenny was deeply guilty for revealing the truth about the ayah to the Ice-Candy Man, for days Lenny stared at her tongue in the bathroom mirror, trying frantically to pain her tongue as it was the tongue's revelation that resulted in ayah's abduction.
- (8) After marriage Ice-Candy Man is dressed up in flowing white muslin clothes and well versed in Urdu poetry.
- (9) Lenny with Godmother, reach in a tonga and visit ayah's well decorated room, sprinkled with flowers. Though ayah is dressed in a bridal finery but Lenny is sensitive enough to discern the sadness in her eyes. The glow and life on ayah's face had disappeared .
- (10) The Godmother, as her name is suggestive of power, force and influence; contacts the Government officials for transporting ayah across border to Amritsar in India. Soon a police troop visit Hira Mandi to take away ayah from Ice-Candy Man's clutches. She is kept in a well guarded woman's camp at Warris road.
- (11) To win back his beloved, he places fresh flowers for her over the boundary wall of the camp every

morning and sing poems of love for her. This ritual of placing flowers and singing songs continued for several days but Ice-Candy Man could not be benefitted in any way.

6.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- (1) What is the relevance of the title *Ice-Candy Man* ?
- (2) Discuss *Ice-Candy Man* as a political novel.
- (3) Discuss major themes of the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- (4) Elaborate the portrayal of partition in *Ice-Candy Man*.
- (5) Discuss feminism in the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- (6) Write down the character sketch of *Ice-Candy Man*.
- (7) Write down the autobiographical elements in the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- (8) Discuss the role of Parsi community during partition, as described in the novel *Ice- Candy Man*.
- (9) Discuss the character sketch of Lenny.
- (10) Throw light on gender behavior as evident between the ayah and her male admirers.

6.9 SUGGESTED READING

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THEMES IN *ICE-CANDY MAN*

STRUCTURE

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Objectives
- 7.3 Major Themes in *Ice-Candy Man*
- 7.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.5 Glossary
- 7.6 Multiple Choice Questions
- 7.7 Short Answer Questions
- 7.8 Examination Oriented Questions
- 7.9 Suggested Reading

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Ice-Candy Man is a major realistic novel on partition; on a larger scale but while closely examining the warp and woof of the story; several strands are revealed. In other words there is one major episode of the partition saga that runs from beginning to the end of the novel and several smaller episodic stories strewn around the text. These smaller episodes reveal diverse themes in them. A theme can be defined as the main idea in a piece of writing, talk or work. A piece of literature, for example a novel may have a central theme or central idea and several other themes. These themes may be major or minor, depending on the author's treatment of these themes. For example partition is a major theme in *Ice-Candy Man* which deals with the division of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan. While narrating about the partition process, Sidhwa gave an honest picture of the Parsi community's neutral stand during riots. Here neutrality can be a minor theme. Sidhwa also extensively picturises Pir Pindo before and during partition. Pir Pindo is blessed with communal harmony but later it is dominant with violence and bloodshed. In respect of the village Pir Pindo, religious brotherhood and communal violence can be minor themes.

The novel *Ice-Candy Man*, is a rich text in the sense, Bapsi Sidhwa has realistically interwoven, a

major story along with smaller stories together into a larger picture. The novel is so perfectly written that it requires a sensitive reader to recognize the boundaries of smaller stories. Thus, the torturous happening of the partition led to dislocation and breaking down of individuals due to chaotic violence. Bapsi Sidhwa uses present tense while narrating the story thus creating an authentic picture with a strong element of universality.

The novel is an amalgamation of several themes, such as, partition, neutrality, manipulation, feminism, dislocation, survival instinct and greed.

7.2 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this lesson are:

- That the learner should be able to define ‘theme’ and be able to identify and draw a line between major and minor themes from the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- That the learner should be able to demonstrate familiarity with the actual historical background in the history of partition of the Indian subcontinent.
- That the learner should be able to demonstrate capacity to develop critical analysis of the major and minor themes of the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.

7.3 MAJOR THEMES IN *ICE-CANDY MAN*

Feminism

There is no denying the fact that all works of Sidhwa have a feministic angle and *Ice-Candy Man* is no exception. It has a broad feminine perspective too. There are many women characters in the novel, the child narrator Lenny, her ayah Shanta who is renamed as Mumtaz after marriage to Ice-Candy-Man, Godmother, Lenny’s mother, Electric aunt and several minor women characters like Mrs. Pen, Lenny’s tenant Gita, Ranna’s sisters Khatija and Parveen. A gynocritical study of the novel shows that women characters in the novel occupy a central place and some of them are powerful like the Godmother. Though Ice-Candy Man is an eponymous character, versatile and manipulative but his character acquires a negative shade. He is submissive in front of Godmother and hurls ayah into prostitution. He does not rise to the level of any of these powerful women. The novel *Ice-Candy Man* inverts the patriarchal set up by showing strong willed women characters who are not only assertive but also powerful and well connected. The Godmother strongly scolds Ice-Candy-Man for taking his wife into prostitution and even promises ayah of her desire to be united with relatives in Amritsar. Godmother through her influence sends police to rescue ayah and send her across the border. Ice-Candy Man tries to woo her back but he is unsuccessful. He even crosses the border and follows ayah but without any luck.

Lenny’s mother is a docile housewife yet dominant in compassion and motherhood. The ayah’s attraction is so dominant that she has a trail of male followers. Ice-Candy Man becomes a pimp to ayah and earns his livelihood. He marries her and renames her as Mumtaz, ayah is shown as oppressed and is used as a commodity by bearing the brunt of all wrongs of the men around her but she exhibits courage and intelligence when she reveals her desire to be rescued from Hira Mandi in Ice-Candy Man’s absence. Not even once

ayah is shown to have repented her decision of leaving her husband, exhibiting grit and strength as she leaves Pakistan for good and turns down all advances of Ice-Candy Man, for returning back to him.

Lenny is sensitive and intelligent as she understands gender behavior by watching men around ayah. She is innocent as she discloses the hiding place of ayah but has strong morals, for days she is guilty of speaking the truth. Her love for ayah is evident as she asserts on accompanying Godmother to Hira Mandi. Lenny loves Godmother too as after her leg operation, she insists on meeting only the Godmother. All feelings of Lenny are positive and hence considered powerful.

Partition / Violence

Ice-Candy Man is well known for authentic and realistic picture of partition. Partition riots are at an apogee through news from Ice-Candy-Man's commentary and All India Radio coverage. Kidnapping of ayah by a Muslim mob is a proof that Pakistan was not a safe place during that time for Hindus. Ranna's village too is rife with partition violence and the spirit of brotherhood between Hindus and Muslims disappears. The village is taken by surprise by a large mob of Sikhs, most probably they were avenging the burning of their own village and Ranna was the only survivor of the attack to come out alive. The village is filled with shrieks and cries from women. Ranna himself lied buried and hidden under a heap of dead bodies. These dead bodies were of his own people and at waking up he is shocked at the gory sight. Ranna witnessed the worst form of atrocities on women. A particular religion or ethnic group targeted the enemy group and raped, humiliated, impregnated and cruelly murdered and slaughtered women and children. Hamida, the new ayah of Lenny was kidnapped by Sikhs and taken to Amritsar. Her family refused to accept her back as she was considered a 'fallen woman' and her integrity was doubted by her husband and in-laws as they felt she has been touched by other men.

Before partition, ayah had admirers from various religions such as Muslim, Hindu and Sikh but during partition she is abducted and many Hindus like the ayah had to make symbolic conversions to Islam to avoid infliction of communal hatred and violence on them during partition. She is thrown into prostitution by force. Sidhwa also mentions the name of prominent leaders during partition such as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lord Mountbatten, Subhash Chandra Bose and Mohammed Ali Jinnah.

Colonialism

Postcolonial fiction not only depicts the aftermaths of colonialism but also the injustice, oppression and exploitation by the colonizers on the colonized. Women have been a subaltern group in South Asian countries and are doubly colonized. Women face a lot of problems in a patriarchal setup and are forced to exist in a way to suit the whims and fancies of men and powerful women. Women comprise of a silent majority. In order to preserve their cultural values or vindicate the other religious group, the men made stronger social taboos. Ayah who was a domestic help at Sethi household is forced to become a public entertainer within a few months of partition. She is a puppet in the hands of Ice-Candy Man. There may have been thousands of unsung ayahs who had to bear the brunt of harshest crime on women and 'other' religious group.

Lenny herself is no exception from becoming colonized at the hands of male cousins. Despite several prohibitions, her elder male cousin fumbles with her and succeeds to touch her private parts. As Lenny is metamorphosed from a child to a lady, she finds herself in the position of becoming 'other' and is colonized by the colonizer or the 'male'.

Colonisation not necessarily takes place when a stronger nation exploits its colony or a male oppresses a female. It can take place when a powerful individual of the same sex suppresses another. As is evident in the relationship between the Godmother and Slave Sister, exploitation, suppression and manipulation of one individual on another can exist in a female-female relationship too. Though the Godmother is hailed and placed on high pedestal of feminine power yet her actions reveal that at times she has misused her powers.

Dislocation

In the novel, many people were migrating, be for instance Imam Din shifted his folks to Lahore as Pir Pindo was vulnerable to attack by the Sikh religious group. The gravity of migration question is evident from the thoughts of some Muslim folks, who questioned themselves asking, as to where a Muslim can go? And how can they abandon the graves of their ancestors, land of their own kith and kin. The thought of abandoning their land is so shameful that they are apprehensive of holding up their heads erect again. Several individuals were dislocated, for instance ayah was taken away from Lenny's home to Hira Mandi, and Hamida lost her home and had to take refuge elsewhere in order to earn her livelihood.

Beyond doubt, home is a place of safety and comfort for everyone and many people were not prepared to abandon their homes and accept uprooting and dislocation, this is one of the reasons so many people died.

Parsi Community / Parsi ethnic group/ minority discourse

Sidhwa belongs to Parsi community and in almost all her works does not hide her love for the community and *Ice-Candy Man* is no exception. She throws light on their views, customs and religious practices in day-to-day life. Sidhwa does not hide the aloofness and indifference of the community. The Parsis in the beginning are shown together for Jashan Prayer, to celebrate the British victory at the Fire temple in Lahore. Though the Parsis were loyal to the British but as partition was evident, they were in a fix as to whom to side. With During the year 1947, the pre-partition days created havoc in the lives of the Parsi community, particularly those who lived in Lahore.

Col. Bharucha, who was a Parsi doctor as well as the president of the Parsi anjuman sounded a note of caution. According to him, if they side with Hindus, their business would be swept away under their own noses and if they side with the Muslims, there was a danger of Parsi community becoming extinct as they might convert Parsis to Muslims. Col. Bharucha, in between also voiced out his candid views that the Parsis will not be safe in Pakistan after partition and they should migrate to Bombay, where the majority of Parsis live. Ultimately it was decided to abide by the rulers of Lahore despite the religion of the ruler. It does not matter if the ruler was a Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or a Christian. Thus in the heated discussion, it was decided that following the peace loving and adjusting nature of the Parsis; the Parsis of Lahore would follow who so ever became the ruler of Lahore.

Parsis are also shown to shake off their political neutrality and help Hindus and Sikhs trapped in Lahore. At the same time the Parsis have maintained a safe distance from communal violence. One example is ayah, who is rescued by Godmother in crossing over to India. Thus the Parsis helped in healing process after partition violence aftermath.

Lust and desire

Ice-Candy-Man alias Dilnawaz's personality is full of passions of love and desire for ayah whom he abducts and imprisons in a brothel house of Hira Mandi. The ayah from the beginning attracts male eyes wherever she goes be it street men, servants of the Sethi household, British officials or anyone crossing ayah's path. She is attractive to the opposite sex, irrespective of any religion. Beggars, holy men, hawkers, cart drivers, cooks, coolies and cyclists give ayah covetous glances. The real network of her friends and admirers consists of the Fallettis Hotel cook, the Government House gardener, masseur, Ice-Candy Man, restraint wrestler, knife sharpener Sharbat Khan, Ramzana the butcher, Imam Din, Sikh zoo attendant, Sher Singh and a China man. All these men are of different religions and ethnicity yet they have one thing in common i.e. the desire and love for ayah. Of these the masseur and Ice-Candy-Man are ayah's favourite. All others only talk to her but these two have the privilege to touch her. Masseur often massaged ayah under her sari and Ice-Candy Man let his toes crawl along her leg and sometimes even to her private parts.

The way Ice-Candy Man succeeds in abducting the ayah brings forth his selfish and immoral traits. He was already married and kept his first wife in the village he belonged to. Feelings of desire and lust for ayah are prominent in Ice-Candy Man's personality. In short he is not true to any of these two women in his life.

Ice-Candy Man is a versatile character, he keeps assuming new roles and professions but from the beginning to the end of the novel, his pursuit of the ayah is constant. He is unmindful of the evident, sadness in the eyes of ayah but only concerned with fulfilling his own desires.

Religious Intolerance

As the saying goes, 'one man's religion is another man's poison', there are ample evidences in the text of *Ice-Candy Man* to prove it. In the Sethi household the ayah's group was a combination of people from variety of religions. During the partition riots the group disintegrates. Public is affected by intolerance to another's faith. Religion is used as a weapon to divide the society. Many people changed their faiths to survive. Ayah alias Shanta is one of them, who becomes Mumtaz in a muslim dominated area.

With the advent of partition violence, religious intolerance mushrooms up. Sikhs and Muslims lived amicably but this feeling was replaced by religious hatred. Though Sidhwa hints for maintaining communal harmony by reminding that the *Koran* is kept next to the *Guru Granth Sahib* in the Golden Temple. She also tells that the Sikh faith came into existence in order to maintain Hindu-Muslim harmony.

The reader is reminded that just like the train in Khushwant Singh's *A Train to Pakistan*, in *Ice-Candy Man* too this train arrives from Gurdaspur and it is full of dead bodies of Muslims. There are no young women in the bodies as it might be a possibility that they have been detained for sexual abuses. It was

awfully gruesome to receive two gunny bags of women's breasts. Ice-Candy-Man justifies his indulgence in violent killing of Hindus and Sikhs by avenging the massacre of dead Muslims in the train from Gurdaspur. He hurls grenades through the windows of Hindu and Sikh homes.

In order to shield oneself from communal violence some people convert to the faith of the majority, for instance Hari not only shaves his bodhi but also circumcises his penis. Moti, another servant from Sethi household becomes a Christian. In Lahore no Brahmins with castemark or Hindu in appearance were visible. Lahore was full of Muslim refugees from India. Sikhs in Pakistan had occupied five villages around Dehra Misri. They moved like a marauding army of forty thousand people. They not only killed the Muslims but paraded the Muslim women naked in the streets.

Religious intolerance looms large all over the city, especially in the Queen's park, people of similar religions sit together and show intolerance to other religious groups.

Disintegration / Degeneration

The novel shows disintegration of the Indian subcontinent. Not only it is divided into two countries that is, India and Pakistan but also different religious groups which disintegrate. Ayah's circle which was close knit and friendly disintegrates during partition riots. This disintegration results into degeneration of individual as well as the society. The level of stooping of individual is evident in the way men in ayah's circle exploit her after her abduction. She was sexually harassed for three months after which Ice-Candy Man marries her. The degeneration of the society is evident in the gross kind of violence on people of the other religion. Train from Gurdaspur and Ice-Candy Man's retaliation on Sikh community amply proves degeneration of character of an individual. During communal riots people of different religions try to destroy, disintegrate and de-generate the opposite religious group. They are not only conscious of their individuality but also aware of their differences.

People become so parochial and ghettoized that the feelings of religious differences even seep into children. When Lenny goes to join play with Sikh children, masseur follows her and drag her away. Some Sikh women ask Lenny as to what her religion is? Lenny answers that she is a Parsi. They are surprised at the discovery of a new religion. These incidents are minor specimens of the happenings in Lahore and other cities of India during partition.

Masseur is murdered and Ice-Candy Man is the suspect. His mutilated body is discovered in a gunny sack by Hari aka Himat Ali and Lenny. Ayah is terribly shocked at this incident. She stops meeting visitors and starts distrusting everybody. With Lenny she visits all the places she and masseur used to visit. Ice-Candy Man follows them without their knowledge. He joins ruffians to plunder and wipe out traces of Hindus and Sikhs from Lahore.

7.4 LET US SUM UP

Bapsi Sidhwa is a conspicuous figure from the Pakistani literary world. Through her novel *Ice Candy Man*, she has addressed a number of issues through various themes. Lenny is the child narrator of the novel and Lenny also bears autobiographical similarities to Bapsi Sidhwa. The central theme of *Ice-Candy*

Man is the partition portrayal and that is why the novel was printed by another subtitle i.e., *Cracking India*, connoting the cracking of the Indian subcontinent into two parts. *Ice- Candy Man* is well known for authentic and realistic picture of partition. Partition riots are at an apogee through news from Ice-Candy Man's commentary and All India Radio coverage. Kidnapping of ayah by a Muslim mob is a proof that Pakistan was not a safe place during that time for Hindus. Postcolonial fiction not only depicts the aftermaths of colonialism but also the injustice, oppression and exploitation by the colonizers on the colonized. In between Sidhwa touches upon minor themes, for instance, theme of interfaith marriage between the Ice-Candy Man and ayah, communal disharmony, disintegration, lust and desire.

There is no denying the fact that all works of Sidhwa have a feministic angle and *Ice-Candy Man* is no exception. It has a broad feminine perspective too. Women have been a subaltern group in South Asian countries and are doubly colonized. The women face a lot of problems in a patriarchal setup and forced to exist in a way to suit the whims and fancies of men and powerful women. Dislocation is a modern day phenomenon and a theme related to partition. Due to partition riots, innumerable people from various religions were dislocated from their native places and transported to an unknown land. Leaving behind their homes, business and property, millions were displaced from lands of their origin and migrated to a land where they could merge in terms of religious similarity.

Sidhwa belongs to Parsi community and in almost all her works does not hide her love for the community and *Ice-Candy Man* is no exception. She throws light on their views, customs and religious practices in day-to-day life. Sidhwa does not hide the aloofness and indifference of the community. In short the main theme is partition which has various other themes generating out of it such as violence, disintegration, love, desire, interfaith marriages and so on.

7.5 GLOSSARY

- warp and woof- criss-cross threads of a cloth
- saga- a long series of events
- amalgamation- to put two or more things together, merge
- manipulation- skilful at influencing somebody at what you want
- global – covering or affecting the whole world
- gynocritical – gynocriticism or gynocritics is the term coined by Elaine Showalter to describe a new literary project intended to construct, “a female framework for the analysis of women's literature”.
- versatile- (of a person) able to do many different things
- patriarchy – a society, system or country that is ruled or controlled by men
- gender – gender refers to socially constructed characteristics of women and men
- colonialism – colonialism occurs when a country (nation) takes control of other lands, regions, or territories outside of its borders (boundaries of the country) by turning those other lands, regions, or

territories into a colony.

- postcolonialism – a study of the effects of colonialism on cultures and societies. It is concerned with both, how the European nations conquered and controlled third world cultures and how these groups have since responded to and resisted those encroachments.
- subaltern – of lower status, in critical theory and post colonialism, subaltern refers to the populations that are socially, politically and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure of the colony and colonial homeland.
- apogee – the highest point of something where it is greatest
- migration – movement of large numbers of people from one place to another
- masseur – a person whose job is giving people massages
- ethnicity – the fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition
- neutrality – a state of not supporting any side during a dispute or disagreement
- degeneration – the process of becoming worse
- marauding – going around a place in search of things to steal or people to attack
- South Asia – Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan constitute the Indian subcontinent; with Afghanistan and Maldives included referred as South Asia

7.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (1) There is no denying the fact that all works of Sidhwa have a angle .
 - (a) Feministic
 - (b) Patriarchal
 - (c) Chauvinistic
 - (d) Congenial
- (2) A study of the novel shows that women characters in the novel occupy a central place.
 - (a) Gender
 - (b) Close
 - (c) Critical
 - (d) Gynocritical
- (3) The novel *Ice-Candy Man* inverts the set up by showing strong willed women characters who are not only assertive but also powerful and well connected.

- (a) British
 - (b) Patriotic
 - (c) Patriarchal
 - (d) Feministic
- (4) Lenny is sensitive and intelligent as she understands behavior by watching men around ayah.
- (a) Slave
 - (b) Gender
 - (c) Hindu-Muslim
 - (d) Lover's
- (5) Ranna himself lied buried and hidden under a heap of dead bodies. These dead bodies were of his
- (a) Own people
 - (b) Hindus
 - (c) Hindu-Muslim
 - (d) Women folk
- (6) Women have been a in South Asian countries and are doubly colonized.
- (a) Maid servants
 - (b) Religious
 - (c) Slave sisters
 - (d) Subaltern group
- (7) While considering migration, Imam Din shifted his folks to Lahore as Pir Pindo was vulnerable to attack by the religious group.
- (a) Hindu
 - (b) Sikh
 - (c) Parsi
 - (d) Christian
- (8) The Parsis in the beginning are shown together for Jashan Prayer, to celebrate the British victory at the in Lahore.
- (a) Pandemonium

- (b) Parsi temple
- (c) Fire temple
- (d) Jashan hall
- (9) Col. Bharucha, who was a Parsi doctor as well as the of the Parsi anjuman.
 - (a) President
 - (b) Treasurer
 - (c) Secretary
 - (d) Mayor
- (10) Who said that the Parsis will not be safe in Pakistan after partition and they should migrate to Bombay, where the majority of Parsis live?
 - (a) Lenny
 - (b) Ice-Candy-Man
 - (c) Col. Bharucha
 - (d) Godmother
- (11) Sidhwa has shown the Parsis as to shake off their political neutrality and help Hindus and Sikhs trapped in Lahore at the same time they (Parsis) have maintained a safe distance from
 - (a) Migrating to Bombay
 - (b) Police of Lahore
 - (c) British officials
 - (d) Communal violence.
- (12) Masseur's mutilated body was discovered in box. (True/False).
- (13) The Parsis helped in healing process after partition violence aftermath. (True/False).
- (14) Godmother helped to cross over the border.
 - (a) Lenny
 - (b) Ayah
 - (c) Col. Bharucha
 - (d) Ice-Candy Man
- (15) Ayah's admirers only talk to her but two have the privilege to touch her, one is Ice-Candy-Man and second is
 - (a) Masseur
 - (b) Imam Din

- (c) Col. Bharucha
- (d) Hari, the gardener
- (16) Sidhwa reminds the readers of *Ice-Candy Man* that the is kept next to the *Guru Granth Sahib* in the Golden Temple
- (a) *Bible*
- (b) *Zend Avestha*
- (c) *Koran*
- (d) *Gita*
- (17) Sidhwa tells the readers of *Ice-Candy Man* that the faith came into existence in order to maintain Hindu-Muslim harmony.
- (a) Parsi
- (b) Christian
- (c) Buddhist
- (d) Sikh
- (18) On the arrival of the train from Gurdaspur, full of dead bodies of Muslims; the reader is reminded of
- (a) Khushwant Singh's *A Train to Pakistan*
- (b) Mulk Raj Anand's *The Untouchables*
- (c) Rabindra Nath Tagore's *Gitanjali*
- (d) R.K. Narayan's *The Bullet Train*
- (19) During communal violence in Lahore not only shaved his bodhi but also circumcised his penis. another servant from Sethi household became a Christian.
- (a) Moti Hari
- (b) Hari, Moti
- (c) Shankar, Imam Din
- (d) Masseur, Moti
- (20) Sikhs in Pakistan had occupied five villages around
- (21) In of Lahore, people of similar religions sit together and show intolerance to other religious groups.
- (a) Waaris road area

- (b) Lodhi road
 (c) Sethi House
 (d) Queen's park
- (22) During riots in Lahore,was murdered andwas the suspect.
 (a) Moti, Hari
 (b) Masseur, Ice-Candy-Man
 (c) Shankar, Imam Din
 (d) Masseur, Moti
- (23) Masseur's mutilated body was discovered in a
- (24) Hari was also known as Himat Ali (True/False).
- (25) dead body was discovered by Hari and Lenny !

Answers:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| (1) a, Feministic, | (2) d, gynocritical |
| (3) c, patriarchal | (4) b, gender |
| (5) a, own people | (6) d, subaltern group |
| (7) b, Sikh | (8) c, Fire temple |
| (9) a, president | (10) c, Col. Bharucha |
| (11) d, communal violence | (12) True |
| (13) True | (14) b, ayah |
| (15) a, Masseur | (16) c, <i>Koran</i> |
| (17) d, Sikh | (18) a, Khushwant Singh's <i>A Train to Pakistan</i> |
| (19) b, Hari, Moti | (20) Dehra Misri |
| (21) d, Queen's park | (22) b, Masseur, Ice-Candy Man |
| (23) gunny sack | (24) True (25) Masseur's . |

7.7 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Q. 1 Name some women characters from *Ice-Candy Man*.

Ans. _____

Q. 2 Which quality of ayah results into a trail of male followers?

Ans.

Q. 3 Who is Hamida? Describe her personal tragedy by her husband and in-laws.

Ans.

Q. 4 Name some prominent leaders mentioned by Sidhwa during partition in the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.

Ans.

Q. 5 What does Sidhwa reveal about Parsi culture through the novel *Ice-Candy Man* ?

Ans.

Q. 6 Name some admirers of ayah and to which class of society do these persons belong.

Ans. _____

Q. 7 Describe the gruesome sight connected with the train from Gurdaspur.

Ans. _____

Q. 8 What does Masseur do when Lenny goes to play with the Sikh children? Why does he do that?

Ans. _____

Q. 9 What do the Sikh women ask Lenny? Why are they surprised?

Ans. _____

Q. 10 Write your views about the second title *Cracking India* of the novel *Ice-Candy Man*. Which title is apt according to you?

Ans. _____

Possible answers :

- A-1 The child narrator Lenny, her ayah Shanta who is renamed as Mumtaz after marriage to Ice-Candy-Man, Godmother, Lenny's mother, Electric aunt and several minor women characters like Mrs. Pen, Lenny's tenant Gita, Ranna's sisters Khatija and Parveen are present in the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- A-2 Ayah's dominant attraction results into a trail of male followers. She exhibits courage and intelligence when she reveals her desire to be rescued from Hira Mandi in Ice-Candy-Man's absence.
- A-3 Hamida is the new ayah of Lenny. She was kidnapped by Sikhs and taken to Amritsar. Her family refused to accept her back as she was considered a 'fallen woman' and her integrity was doubted by her husband and in-laws as they feel she has been touched by other men.
- A-4 Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lord Mountbattan, Subhash Chandra Bose and Mohammed Ali Jinah are some prominent leaders mentioned by Sidhwa during partition in the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- A-5 The Parsis in the beginning are shown together for Jashan Prayer, to celebrate the British victory at the Fire temple in Lahore. Col. Bharucha, was the president of the Parsi anjuman.
- A-6 The admirers of ayah are from all classes of society, beggars, holy men, hawkers, cart drivers, cooks, coolies, cyclists the Fallettis Hotel cook, the Government House gardener, masseur, Ice-Candy-Man, restraint wrestler, knife sharpner Sharbat Khan, Ramzana the butcher, Imam Din, Sikh zoo attendant Sher Singh and a China man, they all give ayah covetous glances.
- A-7 A train arrives from Gurdaspur and it is full of dead bodies of Muslims. There are no young women in the bodies as it might be a possibility that they have been detained for sexual abuses. It was awfully gruesome to receive two gunny bags of women's breasts too.
- A-8 When Lenny goes to join play with Sikh children, Masseur follows her and drags her away. He does that because due to partition riots and violence people of different religions stopped mixing up. Different religions ghettoized the people.
- A-9 Some Sikh women ask Lenny as to what her religion is? Lenny answers that she is a Parsi. They are surprised at the discovery of a new religion. These incidents are minor specimens of the happenings in Lahore at the time of partition.
- A-10 *Cracking India*, suggests the crack or division of the Indian subcontinent into two parts. To me

Cracking India is more suitable as partition is the main theme or central to the novel, rest other themes germinate out of it.

7.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q. 1 Define gender. Differentiate between the words feminine and masculine. Discuss the novel *Ice-Candy Man* as a feminist discourse.
- Q. 2 What do you understand by Gynocriticism? Discuss women characters from the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- Q. 3 Partition is the mother of all themes in the novel *Ice-Candy Man*. Discuss.
- Q. 4 Discuss colonialism as a theme in the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- Q. 5 Discuss dislocation as a theme of the novel *Ice-Candy Man*. How are the people of Pir Pindo dislocated?
- Q. 6 What do you know about Parsis from the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- Q. 7 Discuss the themes of ‘lust and desire’ as evident in the lives of the male characters in the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- Q. 8 Elaborate on growing religious intolerance in Lahore during partition riots in the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- Q. 9 Discuss the theme of degeneration in the novel *Ice-Candy Man*. How degeneration of an individual results in worst forms of violence?
- Q. 10 Discuss the relevance of the title *Cracking India*.

7.9 SUGGESTED READING

- 1. Bharucha, Nilufer E., “From Behind a Fine Veil: A Feminist Reading of Three Parsee Novels” *Indian Literature*, 39.5 (1996), pages 133-142
- 2. Bharucha, Nilufer E., “Inhabiting Enclosures and Creating Spaces : The Worlds of Women in Indian Literature in English” *ARIEL* , 29.2 (1998), pages 98-107
- 3. Bharucha, Nilufer E., “Resisting Colonial and Postcolonial Hegemonies: Bapsi Sidhwa’s Ethno Religious Discourse”, *The Diasporic Imagination: Asian American Writing*, ed. Somdatta Mandal, N. Delhi: Prestige Books, 2000
- 4. R.K.Dhawan, *The Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa: South Asian Women Writings*, N. Delhi: South Asia Books, 1999
- 5. Puri, Shiv Govind, *Bapsi Sidhwa Beyond Boundaries*, N. Delhi: Creative Books, 2000
- 6. Macwan, Mital Joseph, *A Critical Analysis of Bapsi Sidhwa’s Major Works*, N. Delhi: Creative Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2010

7. Fiayaz, Afreen, *Thematic Concerns in the Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa: A Treatise*, N. Delhi: Lambart Academy Publisher, 2012
8. Dhawan, R.K. and Novy Kapadia. Eds. *The Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa*, N. Delhi: Prestige Books, 1996
9. Hussain, Naila, "On the Writers World" . Interview with Bapsi Sidhwa, *The Nation*, 26 May, 1993:19
10. Dhawan, R.K., Jaydipsingh Dodiya and Novy Kapadia, eds. *Parsi Fiction*. N. Delhi: Prestige Books, 2001, 2 vols.
11. Gaur, Rashmi, ed. *Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy Man: A Readers Companion*, N. Delhi: Asia Book Club, 2004

CHARACTERS IN *ICE-CANDY MAN***STRUCTURE**

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Objectives
- 8.3 How to write a character sketch
 - 8.3.1 Important characters from the novel *Ice-Candy Man*
- 8.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.5 Glossary
- 8.6 Multiple Choice Questions
- 8.7 Short Answer Questions
- 8.8 Examination Oriented Questions
- 8.9 Suggested Reading

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The novel *Ice-Candy Man*, is a complex mesh of various characters and Sidhwa has woven a wonderful partition saga with the help of these characters. Characters manifest various facets of their personalities through their actions, dialogues and reactions to the environment around them. These characters look so life like that they must be having true counterparts in actual history. The novel *Ice-Candy Man* has a number of characters and Sidhwa is a genius for creating these characters. The reader at once starts imagining the physiognomy and stature of the characters while reading the book.

Broadly there are two types of characters, that is , flat and round characters. A flat character is a static character in the sense that it does not change with time, that is, from the beginning to the end of the novel it remains the same. A round character experiences growth as the novel progresses i.e., it alters from its nature and by the time the reader reaches the end of the novel the essence or the qualities of that character are almost opposite to what the character was in the beginning, for instance in Henrik Ibsen's *The Doll's House*, Nora was a docile housewife and at the end of the play she becomes an assertive and dominating woman with a mind of her own.

Characters are the puppets in the hands of the author. The author makes use of these characters as per

the storyline and the requirement of the target readers. C.M. Stebbins in the book, *A Progressive Course in English* states that a, “character sketch is a form of exposition which has a deep human interest. It calls not only for an explanation of the qualities of character and the manner in which they manifest themselves, but it demands, or perhaps is, a description of the nature of the individual.” This definition is complete in itself and the student must keep it in mind while attempting to draw a character sketch. It explains as to what a character sketch comprises of.

8.2 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this lesson are:

- That the learner should be able to demonstrate skills for writing/ portraying pen pictures/ character sketches of various characters present in the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- In this lesson we will familiarize you with some prominent characters of the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- We will discuss important points related to the important characters in the novel *Ice-Candy Man* and facilitate your efforts of comprehending and learning by:
 - (a) giving you detailed information about some points one has to keep in mind for attempting a character sketch. We will also provide you with some character sketches of prominent characters in the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
 - (b) giving you glossary of difficult words and phrases
 - (c) giving you practice to have your own assessment by trying to make you answer questions in your own language.
 - (d) giving you multiple choice questions to make concepts more clear and avoid confusion between similar options.
 - (e) giving you the correct answers so that you may verify your own answers.
 - (f) discussing the summary of the lesson.
 - (g) giving a concise list of the important sources suggested for further reading.

8.3 HOW TO WRITE A CHARACTER SKETCH

- Carefully read the novel and observe the moral principles of the characters while interacting with others or while executing any activity.
- Observe the alternates and options in the character’s behavior and what kind of choices the character makes in the story.
- Take note of the internal thoughts and external actions of the characters. Try to match these emotions and form a conclusion based on these factors, is there any contradiction or do the dual current i.e., external and internal currents coincide.
- Observe the language of the characters.

- Try to read between the lines.
- Keep in mind the historical time or the period in which the novel was written and keep in mind the tendencies of the time. In other words do not make a modern times judgment of a Victorian novel.
- Be sensitive enough to discern whose side the author is taking during the narrative, for instance critics have pointed out that Hawthorne portrayed Hester as good and Chillingworth as evil.
- These are some pointers which can help the learner in character writing but can add on or leave out these points as per the sensibility while reading a text.

8.3.1 Important Characters from the novel *Ice- Candy Man*

Ice-Candy-Man

Ice-Candy Man is the protagonist of the novel, hailing from Hira Mandi, housing the dancing girls of Lahore; his mother was one of them. Thus the place shaped traits of the locality in his formative years. Ice-Candy Man is the most versatile character of the novel, for instance, as the name suggests he sells ice candies during summers but as the sales decrease during winters he becomes a birdman, who sells sparrows and birds. He doesn't stop here, he skips a number of roles to amuse people. He is a jolly and friendly person. He is an ardent lover of the Hindu ayah of Lenny. He is a regular visitor of Lenny's house for a Ayah's sake. He is fascinated by her charm and beauty. First half of the novel presents Ice-Candy Man as a jolly and good natured person. He has another facet to his personality. He becomes a cruel and vengeful person as one incident brings this change in him. He witnesses the train from Gurdaspur carrying dead bodies of Muslims and a sack containing chopped women breasts. This gory sight not only shocks him but makes him a beast craving for Hindu blood. He joins a band of Muslim hooligans hounding the Hindus of Lahore. His love for ayah evaporates in seconds and by any means he wants the ayah from Sethi household to be taken away. Imam Din tries to shield ayah by telling the Muslim mob that the Hindu servants have left the household but Ice-Candy Man's shrewd nature at once discerns the situation and he enquires from Lenny about ayah's whereabouts. She not realizing the dangerous situation innocently points at the direction where ayah was hiding. Ice-Candy Man's trick works and the mob drags away ayah and she is raped by many persons for several days. After about a fortnight the Ice-Candy Man marries her but it was very late and she had to stay in the same locality of prostitutes from where the Ice-Candy Man hailed i.e., Hira Mandi.

His love for ayah is evident till the end of the novel as he follows her to Amritsar, crossing the Wagah border after her. He has become a wandering woe-begone lover looking for his beloved. He is completely changed by the end of the novel and becomes a lovelorn lover. He is shrewd enough to get her by any means. He was a crude rustic who is ever ready to nudge ayah but later he becomes refined and well conversant with poetry and royal courtesan like behavior. He becomes a poet and confessed that he belongs to the red light area i.e., Hira Mandi. He is a gifted poet, rather poetic in his interaction with others. He would recite a couplet from Urdu poetry whenever required. He is

well conversant with politics of the time.

Ice-Candy Man's behavior is parallel to growing discord between the two chief religions i.e., Hindu and Muslim, during partition. At the peak of partition riots, he is with the Muslim mob and kidnaps ayah, but as the communal disharmony subsides, he too sobers down and by the end of the novel he crosses the border and follows his Hindu love i.e., ayah to Amritsar and spends rest of his life in search of his lost love. His personality is completely changed. His aggression totally subsides by the end. Another facet of his personality is evident here that he abandons the land of his birth for the sake of his lost love. He not only is an epitome of self sacrifice but also a hope of establishing peaceful relations between the two warring religions i.e., Hindu and Muslim.

Ice-Candy Man's character aptly evolves the impact of violence and trauma on a common man's personality. The sight of genocide on Muslims encourages him to avenge the deaths of his Muslim brothers. The story in the novel proves how racial and religious identity can play havoc with the life of a person like Ice-Candy Man.

Lenny

Sidhwa uses the child narrator technique in her novel and this technique is extensively used in modern fiction. Lenny is the child narrator, also having a strong resemblance to Sidhwa hence an autobiographical character in the novel. Lenny belongs to the Parsi community and develops limp in a leg at an early age. After surgery too she didn't improve and as advised remains confined to home. She didn't attend school, instead goes for home tuitions to Mrs. Pen's house. She was very fond of Godmother and her ayah, Shanta. Lenny's love for Shanta is evident when she goes with Godmother to see Shanta in Hira Mandi locality and her heart was beating fast to see the bridegroom of ayah. During Lenny's childhood, Shanta used to take her out, initially in a pram and was very protective about Lenny, on being asked by a British officer as to why Lenny was not walking instead sat in a pram, the ayah explained Lenny's infirmity. Lenny was an intelligent and keen observer. Through first person narration, Lenny takes the reader into her own, personal and intimate world. She learnt about gender behavior by observing ayah and her admirers. Sidhwa shows Lenny growing from a child to a sensitive young woman by recording minutest details from her life. The reader clearly sees the external world of Lenny through her eyes.

Lenny is pure hearted and simple by nature. During the partition riots, a Muslim mob headed by Ice-Candy Man, storms into Sethi household premises, enquire about the whereabouts of the Hindu servants, when they could not gather any information about the ayah, Ice-Candy Man cunningly asks Lenny about the ayah. Unable to judge the mal-motives of Ice-Candy Man, Lenny innocently points at the direction where ayah is hiding. In seconds, ayah is dragged out of Sethi household and abducted. After ayah's kidnap, Lenny feels very lonely. For several days, Lenny remains guilt ridden for disclosing the hiding place of ayah. In order to punish herself, she would take out her tongue in front of the mirror and pinch it hard. In short Lenny is the mouthpiece of the author Bapsi Sidhwa.

Shanta (ayah)

Ayah is a prominent character of the novel. She is a Hindu girl, eighteen years old and although has kind and powerful Parsi masters, yet she is unprotected during the partition riots that lead to her kidnap and tragedy. Her attractiveness makes her look at like a sex object. From street beggars to British officers, everyone walking on the road ogle at her while she remains unaffected and unconcerned pushing the pram wearing the expression of a Hindu goddess. She knows about her charms and uses them for gaining favours like getting cheap doilies, food, nuts etc. She had been using personal charm to get what she wanted till the partition violence destroyed her personal bliss.

She has a strong will power which is evident in the fact that after her abduction, rape by several persons for days, marriage with Ice-Candy Man pushed into prostitution, she preserved her will to face her relatives and be united with them and to live with them forever. Ice-Candy Man kills her vivacious inner self and she is bereft of the warmth that she once possessed as observed by Lenny towards the end of the novel when she goes with Godmother to Hira Mandi area. Lenny feels that ayah's soul has been extracted from her body, ayah's radiance and liveliness too is gone, as evident from ayah's eyes although bigger and wider than before but having a vacant look. Her romantic world is destroyed by actions of Ice-Candy Man, but Shanta's determination makes her look forward to future plans despite emotional and physical mutilation. Ayah's heart is so hardened that she ignores the pleadings of Ice-Candy Man, when he begs Godmother to persuade ayah not to leave him. Shanta even turns a deaf ear to his romantic poetry and following her to refugee camp. This shows that she is firm and strong in decisions.

MAJOR FEMALE CHARACTERS

Godmother

As the name suggests she was like a surrogate mother to Lenny who was fascinated by her. Lenny always insisted on meeting her after tuitions at Ms. Pen's home as Godmother stayed in the same locality. Godmother was an old lady, always in Khaddar sarees and completely covered from head to toe. She always took extra pains to know of everybody around her. She was extremely helpful to everybody around her. She played an important role in rescuing ayah from Hira Mandi area and transporting her across the border. Her strong personality is evident when she scolds Ice-Candy Man for throwing ayah to public in Hira Mandi area and Ice-Candy Man pleads her to convince ayah not to leave him. She volunteered for blood donations. She even gets Ranna admitted to a boarding school.

Godmother was witty, ever ready with witty answers and had a deep understanding of human psyche. She was a sensitive woman. At home she had a domineering presence. While dealing with people outside her household Godmother displayed compassion and understanding but inside her home she was bossy and cruel as displayed in her dealing with her family members. Mini aunty whom Sidhwa

aptly titles as Slave sister, constantly does household work and Godmother constantly criticizes her despite this fact.

Other women characters

Women characters in the novel bring to light the fact that women are victimized in society and they have to live according to gender roles as defined by the society. Their lives also show the patriarchal biases affecting the society. Though Godmother is an exception. Rodabai, Mini aunty, Mrs. Pen, Muccho - the sweepress and her daughter Papoo are some female characters in the novel. Mucchoo makes Papoo do all household chores and in return beats and abuses her. Though ayah and servants of Sethi household try to rescue Papoo but their efforts are wasted. Once Papoo is hospitalized for two weeks due to her mother's severe beatings. Despite these facts, Papoo is not submissive by nature. She is strong and high-spirited. Muccho fixes Papoo's marriage to a middle aged man of short stature and a cruel looking face. Papoo is drugged with opium as her mother fears revolt from her side.

The women characters are not only a victim of the male set up but also dominated by stronger counterparts like the Godmother and Muccho.

Minor Characters

Sidhwa has presented many life-like characters in the novel *Ice-Candy Man* like Lenny's cousin, Imam Din the cook, Hari the gardener, the Masseur, Dr. Bharucha, Mr. Rodgers, Adi; Lenny's brother, Ranna the village boy from Pir Pindo, Sher Singh, Dost Mohammad, Yousaf and Butcher. These characters form the world of Lenny. Whatever happens to these characters or the actions of these characters are introduced to the reader through the eyes of Lenny. Sidhwa has given an excellent insight into human behavior by presenting these characters.

8.4 CONCLUSION

The novel *Ice-Candy Man* has a number of characters and Sidhwa has given them life and breath through her masterpiece strokes of character delineation. The protagonist is Ice-Candy Man, an eponymous character and the book gets its title from him. As the name suggests, he sells ice candies in summers and changes roles/jobs during other seasons or sometimes to please people. He is the most versatile character of the novel, for instance, as the name suggests he sells ice candies during summers but as the sales decrease during winters he becomes a birdman, who sells sparrows and birds. He hails from the red light area of Lahore as his mother is a prostitute. Beyond doubt, he acquires traits of the locality from his formative years. He is an ardent lover of the Hindu ayah Shanta. He is a regular visitor of Sethi household for ayah's sake. He is fascinated by her charm and beauty. First half of the novel presents Ice-Candy Man as a jolly and good natured person. He has another facet to his personality which is manifested in the later part of the novel. He becomes a cruel and vengeful person after witnessing the train from Gurdaspur carrying dead bodies of Muslims and a sack containing chopped women breasts.

Lenny, the child narrator belongs to the Parsi community and develops limp in a leg at an early age.

After surgery too she didn't improve and as advised remained confined to home. She didn't attend school, instead went for home tuitions to Mrs. Pen's house. She was very fond of her ayah, Shanta. Lenny's love for Shanta is evident when she goes with Godmother to see Shanta in Hira Mandi locality and her heart beats fast to see the bridegroom of ayah. The ayah is a prominent character of the novel. She is a Hindu girl, eighteen years old and although has kind and powerful Parsi masters, yet she is unprotected during the partition riots that led to her kidnap and tragedy. Her attractiveness makes her look like a sex object. From street beggars to British officers, everyone walking on the road ogle at her while she remains unaffected and unconcerned and pushes the pram wearing the expression of a Hindu goddess. She knows about her charms and uses them for gaining favours like getting cheap doilies, food, nuts, etc. She had been using personal charm to get what she wanted till the partition violence destroyed her personal bliss.

Godmother is another character, loved by Lenny. Lenny always insisted on meeting her after tuitions at Ms. Pen's home as Godmother stayed in the same locality. Godmother was an old lady, always in Khaddar sarees and completely covered from head to toe. She always took extra pains to know of everybody around her. She was extremely helpful to everybody around her. She played an important role in rescuing ayah from Hira Mandi area and transporting her across the border. Her strong personality is evident when she scolds Ice-Candy Man for throwing ayah to public in Hira Mandi area and Ice-Candy Man pleads her to convince ayah not to leave him. She volunteered for blood donations. She even gets Ranna admitted to a boarding school.

Rodabai, Mini aunty, Mrs. Pen, Muccho - the sweepress and her daughter Papoo are some female characters in the novel. Some of these women are exploited by their own kind, for instance, Mucchoo makes Papoo do all household chores and in return beats and abuses her. Some women characters are shown to be victimized in society and they have to live according to gender roles as defined by it. Their lives also show the patriarchal biases affecting the society. Sidhwa has also portrayed some strong women characters like the Godmother, ayah (whose spirit was not destroyed till the end and desired to be united with her relatives in Amritsar), Lenny (who had strong morals and was guilty for days for revealing ayah's hiding place to the rowdy mob).

8.5 GLOSSARY

- Mesh – network, tangle
- Manifest- display, exhibit, show
- Facet – aspect, feature, side
- Counterparts – coequal, equivalent, mate
- Exposition – explanation, description
- Executing – carry out, accomplish
- Coincide – occur simultaneously
- Sensibility – sensitivity, finer feelings

- Protagonist – central character
- Traits – attribute, essential quality
- Formative – developing, growing
- Versatile – adaptable, multifaceted
- Shrewd – clever, sagacious
- Whereabouts – location, position
- Woebegone – sad, unhappy
- Beloved – sweetheart, love
- Nudge – poke, elbow, touch
- Conversant – familiar, acquainted
- Discord – strife, conflict
- Epitome – model, paradigm
- Trauma – shock, injury
- Genocide – mass murder, massacre
- Havoc – devastation, disorder
- Technique – method, skill
- Infirmary – ailment, malady
- Abduct – kidnap
- Ogle – stare at
- Bliss – happiness
- Prostitution – whoring
- Mutilation – disfigure
- Surrogate – substitute
- Volunteer – offer one's services
- Psyche – subconscious, mind
- Domineering – authoritarian, overbearing

8.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (1) How many types of characters are there?
 - (a) one
 - (b) two
 - (c) three

- (d) four
- (2) Types of characters are.
- (a) long and short
- (b) thin and fat
- (c) big and small
- (d) flat and round
- (3) A flat character is a ———— character in the sense that it does not change with time, that is, from the beginning to the end of the novel it remains the same.
- (a) static
- (b) stagnant
- (c) dynamic
- (d) stationery
- (4) A round character experiences ———— as the novel progresses that is, it alters from its nature and by the time the reader reaches the end of the novel the essence or the qualities of that character are almost opposite to what the character was in the beginning
- (a) development
- (b) progress
- (c) growth
- (d) extension
- (5) Who states that a, “character sketch is a form of exposition which has a deep human interest. It calls not only for an explanation of the qualities of character and the manner in which they manifest themselves, but it demands, or perhaps is, a description of the nature of the individual”.
- (a) C.M. Stebbins
- (b) C.M. Shoals
- (c) Z.N. Patel
- (d) Thomas Hardy
- (6) Who is the author of the book *A Progressive Course in English* ?
- (a) Thomas Hardy
- (b) C.M. Shoals
- (c) Z.N. Patel
- (d) C.M. Stebbins
- (7) Ice-Candy Man is the protagonist of the novel, hailing from ————.

- (a) Sethi household
 - (b) Waaris road
 - (c) Hira Mandi
 - (d) Wagah border
- (8) Ice-Candy Man is the most _____ character of the novel.
- (a) versatile
 - (b) virile
 - (c) active
 - (d) charming
- (9) Ice-Candy Man sells ice candies during summers and in winters becomes a _____ who sells sparrows and birds.
- (a) hunter
 - (b) birdman
 - (c) snake man
 - (d) zoo keeper
- (10) Ice-Candy Man is a regular visitor of Lenny's house for _____ sake.
- (a) employment's
 - (b) money's
 - (c) entertainment's
 - (d) Ayah's
- (11) Who changes from a jolly person to a cruel and vengeful person by witnessing an incident during partition riots?
- (a) Imam Din
 - (b) Shanta
 - (c) Ice-Candy Man
 - (d) Shankar
- (12) The train from Gurdaspur carries dead bodies of Muslims and a sack containing chopped _____.
- (a) women breasts
 - (b) Shanta
 - (c) Ice-Candy Man
 - (d) Shankar
- (13) Who dragged away ayah?

- (a) Ice-Candy Man
 - (b) Parsi men
 - (c) Muslim mob
 - (d) Shankar
- (14) “He has become a wandering woe-begone lover looking for his beloved”. Who is he?
- (a) Imam Din
 - (b) Ranna
 - (c) Ice-Candy Man
 - (d) Shankar
- (15) “ He is a gifted poet, rather poetic in his interaction with others.” Who is he?
- (a) Ice-Candy Man
 - (b) Ranna
 - (c) Imam Din
 - (d) Shankar
- (16) Sidhwa uses the child narrator technique in her novel and this technique is extensively used in_____ fiction.
- (a) feministic
 - (b) postcolonial
 - (c) gynocritical
 - (d) modern
- (17) Who is the autobiographical character of Bapsi Sidhwa in the novel?
- (a) Godmother
 - (b) Lenny
 - (c) Rodabai
 - (d) Mini Aunty
- (18) Who didn’t attend school, instead went for home tuitions to Mrs. Pen’s house?
- (a) Lenny
 - (b) Shanta
 - (c) Rodabai
 - (d) Mini Aunty
- (19) During Lenny’s childhood, Shanta used to take her out, initially in a”_____
- (a) bicycle
 - (b) bus

- (c) taxi
 - (d) pram
- (20) Who in the novel gave home tuitions?
- (a) Mrs. Pen
 - (b) Slave sister
 - (c) Mini aunty
 - (d) Col. Brown
- (21) Through first person narration, who takes the reader into her own, personal and intimate world?
- (a) Bapsi Sidhwa
 - (b) Lenny
 - (c) Mini aunty
 - (d) Col. Brown
- (22) Lenny learnt about_____by observing ayah and her admirers.
- (a) patriarchal society
 - (b) male behavior
 - (c) gender behavior
 - (d) slaves and masters
- (23) What is the correct age of ayah?
- (a) 18 years
 - (b) 19 years
 - (c) 17 years
 - (d) 28 years
- (24) Who is an old lady always clad in khaddar sarees?
- (a) Mrs. Pen
 - (b) Rodabai
 - (c) Godmother
 - (d) Mini aunty
- (25) Mini aunty is aptly titled as_____ by Sidhwa.
- (a) Tutor lady
 - (b) Rodabai
 - (c) Godmother

(d) Slave sister

Answers Key (MCQS):

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| (1) (b) two | (2) (d) flat and round | (3) (a) static |
| (4) (c) growth | (5) (a) C.M. Stebbins | (6) (d) C.M. Stebbins |
| (7) (c) Hira Mandi | (8) (a) versatile | (9) (b) birdman |
| (10) (d) Ayah's | (11) (c) Ice-Candy Man | (12) (a) women breasts |
| (13) (c) Muslim mob | (14) (c) Ice-Candy Man | (15) (a) Ice-Candy Man |
| (16) (d) modern | (17) (b) Lenny | (18) (a) Lenny |
| (19) (d) pram | (20) (a) Mrs. Penn | (21) (b) Lenny |
| (22) (c) gender behavior | (23) (a) 18 years | (24) (c) Godmother |
| (25) (d) Slave sister | | |

8.7 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Q. 1) Contrast the character of *Ice-Candy Man* in the beginning of the novel and during partition riots. Which incident brings this sudden change in him?

Ans. _____

Q. 2) Describe the predicament of ayah after abduction.

Ans. _____

Q. 3) Describe the Ice-Candy Man's sad condition after ayah had crossed Pakistan border.

Ans. _____

Q. 4) Describe Lenny's plight after ayah's abduction.

Ans.

Q. 5) Describe people's reaction to the attractiveness of the ayah. How does she use this quality for her own benefits?

Ans.

Q. 6) Which quality does ayah's character reveal after her abduction? Justify your answer.

Ans.

Q. 7) Describe Godmother as per your reading of the novel *Ice-Candy Man* .

Ans.

Q. 8) 'Godmother had a strong personality', prove the statement.

Ans.

Q. 9) Contrast Godmother's behavior inside and outside the Sethi household.

Ans.

Q. 10) Name some female characters from the novel.

Ans.

Q.11 Muccho was a strict mother, despite this fact Papoo had a strong personality. Explain with examples.

Ans.

Q.12 Name some minor characters from the novel *Ice-Candy Man* .

Ans.

Answers:

- A-1) The first half of the novel presents Ice-Candy Man as a jolly and good natured person. During the riots another facet to his personality is visible i.e. he becomes a cruel and vengeful person. This change is by witnessing the train from Gurdaspur carrying dead bodies of Muslims and a sack containing chopped women breasts. This gory sight not only shocks him but makes him a beast craving for Hindu blood. He joins a band of Muslim hooligans hounding the Hindus of Lahore.
- A-2) Ayah is abducted by a Muslim mob which drags her away and she is eventually raped by many persons for several days. After about a fortnight the Ice-Candy Man marries her but it was very late and she had to stay in the same locality of prostitutes from where the Ice-Candy Man hailed i.e. Hira Mandi.
- A-3) Ice-Candy Man's love for ayah is evident till the end of the novel as he follows her to Amritsar, crossing the Wagah border after her. He has become a wandering woe-begone lover looking for his beloved. He is completely changed by the end of the novel and becomes a lovelorn lover.
- A-4) After ayah's kidnap, Lenny feels very lonely. For several days, Lenny remained guilt ridden for disclosing the hiding place of ayah. In order to punish herself, she would take out her tongue in front of the mirror and pinch it hard. In short Lenny is the mouthpiece of the author Bapsi Sidhwa.
- A-5) Ayah's attractiveness makes her look like a sex object. From street beggars to British officers, everyone walking on the road ogle at her while she remains unaffected and unconcerned pushes the pram wearing the expression of a Hindu goddess. She knows about her charms and uses them for gaining favours like getting cheap doilies, food, nuts etc. She had been using personal charm to get what she wanted till the partition violence destroyed her personal bliss.
- A-6) She has a strong will power which is evident in the fact that after her abduction, rape by several

persons for days, marriage with Ice-Candy Man, pushed into prostitution, she preserved her will to face her relatives and be united with them and to live with them forever.

- A-7) As the name suggests Godmother was like a surrogate mother to Lenny who was fascinated by her. Lenny always insisted on meeting her after tuitions at Mrs. Pen's home as Godmother stayed in the same locality. Godmother was an old lady, always in Khaddar sarees and completely covered from head to toe. She always took extra pains to know of everybody around her. She was extremely helpful to everybody around her
- A-8) Godmother played an important role in rescuing ayah from Hira Mandi area and transporting her across the border. Her strong personality is evident when she scolds Ice-Candy Man for throwing ayah to public in Hira Mandi area and Ice-Candy-Man pleads her to convince ayah not to leave him.
- A-9) While dealing with people outside her household Godmother displayed compassion and understanding but inside her home she was bossy and cruel as displayed in her dealing with her family members. Mini aunty whom Sidhwa aptly titles as Slave sister, constantly does household work and Godmother constantly criticizes her despite this fact.
- A-10) Rodabai, Mini aunty, Mrs. Pen, Muccho - the sweepress and her daughter Papoo are some female characters in the novel.
- A-11) Mucchoo makes Papoo do all household chores and in return beats and abuses her. Once Papoo was hospitalized for two weeks due to her mother's severe beatings. Despite these facts, Papoo was not submissive by nature. She was strong and high-spirited. Muccho fixes Papoo's marriage to a middle aged man of short stature and a cruel looking face. Papoo is drugged with opium as her mother fears revolt from her side.
- A-12) Some minor characters from the novel *Ice-Candy Man* are - Lenny's cousin, Imam Din the cook, Hari the gardener, the Masseur, Dr. Bharucha, Mr. Rodgers, Adi; Lenny's brother, Ranna the village boy from Pir Pindo, Sher Singh, Dost Mohammad, Yousaf and Butcher.

8.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q. 1) What is a character sketch? What points one has to keep in mind for writing a character sketch.
- Q. 2) What do you understand by round and flat characters? Discuss with suitable examples from the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- Q. 3) Discuss Ice-Candy Man as the protagonist of the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- Q. 4) Sidhwa has given shades of autobiographical touches to Lenny's character. Elaborate.
- Q. 5) Ayah's life has seen many ups and downs in the novel *Ice-Candy Man*, how do the events affect the character of ayah?
- Q. 6) Discuss the character of Godmother as a storehouse of power.

- Q. 7) Discuss the minor characters in the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- Q.8) Discuss the minor women characters. Elaborate how they are victimized by the patriarchal society.
- Q.9) Draw a character sketch of your favourite character from the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.
- Q.10) Draw pen-pictures of child characters in the novel *Ice-Candy Man*.

8.9 SUGGESTED READING

- (1) Kulke, Eckehard, *The Parsis in India: A Minority as Agent of Social Change*, N. Delhi: Vikas, 1974
- (2) Kumar, Narendra, *Parsee Novel*, N. Delhi: Prestige Books, 2002
- (3) Malik, Seema, *Partition and Indian English Women Novelists*, N. Delhi: Prestige Books, 2007
- (4) Singh, Randhir Pratap, *Bapsi Sidhwa*, N. Delhi: Ivy Publishing House, 2005
- (5) Chandra, Subhash, "Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man*: A Feministic Perspective" *The Commonwealth Review*, 6.1 (1994-95).
- (6) Didur Jill, "Cracking the Nation: Gender, Minorities and Agency in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*", *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 29.3 (1998)
- (7) Dubey, Amit Kumar, *The Fictional World of Bapsi Sidhwa: Gender, Community and History*, N. Delhi: Creative Books, 2013

NAGUGI WA THIONG'O

STRUCTURE

- 9.0 Objectives and Outcome
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Life of Nagugi Wa Thiong'o
- 9.3 Check Your Progress
- 9.4 Works of Nagugi Wa Thiong'o
- 9.5 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 9.6 Self Assessment Questions
- 9.7 Examination Oriented Questions
- 9.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.9 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 9.0 Suggested Reading

9.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The objective of the lesson is to give the learner an overview of the life and works of Nagugi Wa Thiong'o.

After going through this lesson you will be acquainted with the life, works and the writing style of Nagugi Wa Thiong'o, you will also have an overview of the various themes in his works.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In this lesson we are going to introduce you to a famous African writer Nagugi Wa Thiong'o who is a Kenyan, and he is considered as East Africa's leading novelist. His popular work, *Weep Not, Child* (1964), is the first major novel in English by an East African. As he became sensitized to the effects of colonialism in Africa, Ngugi adopted his traditional name and wrote in the Bantu language of Kenya's Kikuyu people.

9.2 LIFE OF NGUGI WA THIONG'O

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a Kenyan writer and academician, is considered as "East Africa's leading novelist". His popular work, *Weep Not, Child* (1964), is the first major novel in English written by an East African. As a retaliation to the effects of colonialism in Africa, Ngugi adopted his traditional name and wrote in the Bantu language, Kikuyu, of Kenyan people.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o was born on January 5, 1938 in Kamiriithu village, twelve miles northeast of Nairobi, to Thiong'o wa Nduku, who had four wives. His father, Thiong'o wa Nduku, was a peasant dispossessed by the British Imperial Land Act of 1915 and, therefore, forced to become a squatter on property meted out to one of the few native Africans who had profited from the Act. His father's condition was similar to that of most of the Kikuyu with whom Ngugi grew up. Ngugi came of age during the Mau Mau resistance to British colonial rule. Ngugi wa Thiong'o was baptized as James Ngugi. One of the twenty-eight children in the extended family, Ngugi was raised in a mixed culture of Kikuyu traditional customs and Christian values.

Ngugi attended the mission school in Limuru from 1947 to 1949 and completed his primary education in Maanguu at one of the schools founded during the Independence Schools Movement. It was a cooperative undertaking by those who viewed education as essential in their fight for freedom from British rule.

Ngugi's learning in secondary school became a founding stone for the development of his dual perspectives inherent in the colonial and nationalistic curricula's. From 1948 to 1954, he studied at Alliance High School in Kikuyu, eight miles northwest of Nairobi. There he encountered the missionary headmaster Carey Francis, whose rigid views and disdain for Kikuyu customs Ngugi later depicted in fictional form. Although Ngugi eventually acquired a complex religious but humanistic sensibility through his examination of biblical lore and Christian teachings, the Protestant bias against Africans and their beliefs left a bitter impression that influenced him long after his adolescent years. During this period, Ngugi's family was engaged in the Mau Mau struggle. His brother, Wallace Mwangi, fought with Mau Mau forces from 1954 to 1956. His parents and other relatives were detained as subversives, and a stepbrother, Mwangi, was killed in the fighting. His home village was relocated by the British during the warfare between 1952 and 1956. Although he himself did not fight because of his young age and the responsibility to pursue his education, Ngugi came to view the Mau Mau struggle as a model of the heroic quest for independence and as an idealized example of the worldwide fight against social injustice. Indeed, the Mau Mau war became the central theme and subject for much of his later fiction and drama. In 1961, he married Nyambura, and had five children.

He studied in the Alliance High School, and got enrolled at Makerere University College in Kampala, Uganda. As a student he also attended the African Writers Conference held at Makerere in June 1962, and his play *The Black Hermit* was premiered as a part of the event at The National Theatre. At the conference Ngugi asked Chinua Achebe to read the manuscripts of his novels *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child*,

which were subsequently published in Heinemann's African Writers Series that was launched in London, with Achebe as its first advisory editor.

In 1963, Ngugi completed his honors in English from Makerere University College in Kampala, Uganda, at that time the only school in East Africa that conferred degrees in English literature. He was also active in literary circles, contributing to the Nairobi newspaper *Daily Nation*, and in his creative writing he showed the influence of the novels of D. H. Lawrence and Joseph Conrad. In 1964, Ngugi left Africa to pursue a degree in English studies at Leeds University in England. There, his exposure to socialism and the radical views of students who openly debated issues of social and political justice set him on a transformatory journey. He had reached a point of crisis and pondering over the issue of universal values, he began to question the value of continuing to write in English. He travelled to literary conferences in New York and Moscow, meeting and interacting with several influential literary writers that helped to evolve his writings.

He served as a lecturer in English at University College, Nairobi, Kenya, and as a visiting professor of English at North-western University, Evanston, Illinois, USA. He was senior lecturer and served as a chairman of the department of literature at the University of Nairobi from 1972 to 1977.

Ngugi got into trouble with government authorities in Kenya over portions of his *Petals of Blood* in which he dealt with, for the first time in his writings, situations in post-independence Kenya. He was imprisoned and later released but his university position was not restored. In 1982 Thiong'o left Kenya and remained in exile until 2004 when he returned to Kenya for a one-month visit. During his exile in 1989 he met his second wife Njeeri wa Ndung'o in New York. He married her in 1992 and they have two children together.

Thiong'o has held teaching positions at a number of British and U.S. institutions including Northwestern, Yale, Amherst, and Oxford. Currently he teaches at the at the University of California, Irvine.

9.3 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (CYP)

Fill in the Blanks:

- 1. Ngugi wa Thiong'o was baptized as _____.**
- 2. His family was involved in _____.**
- 3. As a student, he was influenced by _____.**
- 4. Ngugi wa Thiong'o was baptised with the name _____.**
- 5. Ngugi wa Thiong'o was born in _____.**

9.4 WORKS OF NAGUGI WA THIONG'O

Weep Not, Child (1964) deals with the story of a Kikuyu family, who is drawn into the struggle for Kenyan independence during the state of emergency and the Mau Mau rebellion. His second novel, *The River Between* (1965), depicts the story of separation of lovers due to the conflict between Christianity and the traditional ways and beliefs and asserts that efforts to reunite a culturally divided community by means of Western education are doomed to failure. *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) focuses on the social, moral, and racial issues during the struggle for independence and its aftermath. *Petals of Blood* (1977) explores the social and economic problems in East Africa after independence, particularly the continued exploitation of peasants and workers by foreign business interests including the greedy indigenous bourgeoisie.

In a novel written in Kikuyu and English versions, *Caitani Mutharaba-ini* (1980; *Devil on the Cross*), Ngugi has presented the ideas in an allegorical form. It is written in a manner to recall the traditional ballad singers. The novel is written in partly realistic and partly fantastical account to describe the meeting between the Devil and various villains who exploit the poor. Similarly, *Mirogi wa Kagogo* (2004; *Wizard of the Crow*) is also written in both Kikuyu and English versions and bring forth the dual lenses of fantasy and satire to bear upon the legacy of colonialism not only as it is perpetuated by a native dictatorship but also as it is ingrained in an ostensibly decolonized culture itself.

The Black Hermit (1968) was published in 1962. *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976), co written with Micere Githae Mugo, considered by some critics to be his best play, is also a part of *The Black Hermit*. He also collaborated with Ngugi wa Mirii, to write *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (1977; *I Will Marry When I Want*), which was earlier written in Kikuyu. However, its performance led to his detention for a year without trial by the Kenyan government. His work *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (1981) describes his ordeal. The play attacks capitalism, religious hypocrisy, and corruption among the new economic elite of Kenya. His other work, *Matigari ma Njiruungi* (1986; *Matigari*) is also based on similar themes.

Ngugi presented his ideas on literature, culture, and politics in numerous essays and lectures, which were published in collections: *Homecoming* (1972), *Writers in Politics* (1981), *Barrel of a Pen* (1983), *Moving the Centre* (1993), and *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams* (1998). In *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986), Ngugi ardently asserts that African-language literature is the only authentic voice for Africans and stated his own intention of writing only in Kikuyu or Kiswahili. Thus, he became renowned as Africa's most articulate social critics.

After living in exile for a long time, Ngugi returned to Kenya in 2004 with his wife to promote *Mirogi wa Kagogo*. However, several weeks later they were brutally assaulted in their home and the attack was believed to be politically motivated. After their successful recovery, the couple continued to publicize the book abroad. Ngugi in 2010 also published his memoirs *Dreams in a Time of War* (2010) about his childhood. *In the House of the Interpreter* (2012) was set in the 1950s to depict the stance of the Mau Mau rebellion that was led against British control in Kenya. He also published *Birth of a Dream Weaver: A Writer's Awakening* in 2016 which is a chronicle of his years spent at Makerere University.

Along with Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka of Nigeria, Ngugi wa Thiong'o is listed among the renowned African writers of international stature and reputation.

9.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

Q. 1. Who is Ngugi wa Thiong'o?

Ans. Ngugi wa Thiong'o is regarded as one of Africa's greatest living writers. He grew up in Kenya's White Highlands at the height of British colonialism. Unsurprisingly, his writing examines the legacy of colonialism and the intricate relationships between locals seeking economic and cultural emancipation and the local elites serving as agents of neo-colonisers.

The great expectations for the new country, as captured in Ngugi's seminal play, *The Black Hermit*, anticipated the disillusionment that followed. His fiction, from the foundational trilogy of *Weep Not, Child*, *The River Between* and *A Grain of Wheat*, amplify those expectations, before the optimism gives way in *Petals of Blood* and is replaced by disillusionment.

Q. 2. What sets Ngugi above and apart?

Ans. African fiction is fairly young. Ngugi wa Thiong'o stands in the continent's pantheon of writers who started writing when Africa's decolonisation gained momentum. In a certain sense, the writers were involved in constructing new narratives that would define their people. Ngugi's writings resonate with many works across the world, especially from Kenya and Africa.

Ngugi's consistency at churning out high-quality stories about Africa's contemporary society illustrates his commitment to equality and social justice.

He has done much more in scholarship. His treatise, *Decolonising the Mind*, now a foundational text in post-colonial studies, illustrates his versatility. His ability to spin the yarns while commenting on the politics that goes into literary production of marginal literature is a rare combination.

Finally, Ngugi is known for his cultural and political activism. This precipitated his yearlong detention without trial in 1977. He attributes his detention to his rejection of English and embracing his own Gikuyu language as vehicle of expression.

Q.3. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's works best illustrate his thinking. Explain.

Ans. One To pick a favourite book from Ngugi's over two dozen texts is a difficult choice. But there is concurrence among critics that *A Grain of Wheat*, which was voted among Africa's best 100 novels at the turn of the last century, stands out for its stylistic experimentation and complexity of characters. Many critics consider the novel as the last signpost before Ngugi's work became overly political.

Further for some critics, *Wizard of the Crow* – which came out in 2004, after nearly two decades of waiting – encapsulates Ngugi's creative elegance. It utilizes many literary tropes, including magical realism, and addresses the politics of African development and the shenanigans by the political elite to maintain the status quo.

Q. 4. Comment on Ngugi wa Thiong'o's lasting contributions to African literature.

Ans. Without a doubt, Africa would be poorer without the efforts of Ngugi and other pioneering writers to tell the African story. He is also an important figure in post-colonial studies. His constant questioning of the privileging of the English language and culture in Kenya's national discourse saw him lead a movement that led to the scrapping of the Department of English at the University of Nairobi and getting it replaced by the Department of Literature that placed African literature and its diasporas at the centre of scholarship.

Ngugi is still active in writing. Among his recent writings is the third installment of his memoir, *Birth of a Dreamweaver* that looks back on his years at Makerere University in Uganda. This is the period when he published his novels: *Weep Not, Child* and *The River Between*, when he was still an undergraduate student. Also at this time he wrote the play, *The Black Hermit*, which was performed as part of Uganda's independence celebrations in 1962.

Presently, Ngugi is constantly working to restore his early works into Gikuyu, from the English language, the language, which he bid farewell in 1977, opting to write in his indigenous language.

His legacy of work can be highlighted from the fact that his works have been translated into more than 30 world languages.

DEAR LEARNER, WELL NOW WE HAVE AN INTERESTING EXERCISE FOR YOU. ATTEMPT AND CHECK YOUR SCORE FROM THE ANSWER KEY. TREAT YOURSELF WITH ONE CANDY FOR EVERY RIGHT ANSWER.

9.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. His memoir is titled _____.
 - a. *Dreams in a Time of War: a Childhood Memoir*
 - b. *The Perfect Nine*
 - c. *Petals of Blood*
 - d. None of the above
2. Which among the following is Ngugi wa Thiong'o's first play? _____.
 - a. This Time Tomorrow

- b. The Wound in the Heart
 - c. The Devil on the Cross
 - d. The Black Hermit
3. Around which political movement is *Weep Not, Child* centered?_____.
- a. Mau Mau Rebellion
 - b. Non-Aligned Nations Movement
 - c. Pan-African Movement
 - d. The Shifta Uprising
4. Who does Njoroge's father confess to killing in *Weep Not, Child*?_____.
- a. Okonikwo
 - b. Mr. Howlands, the District Commissioner
 - c. Jacobo, the Chief
 - d. Isaka, the Teacher
5. In which languages have Ngugi wa Thiongo mostly written his works?_____.
- a. French and Igbo
 - b. French and Italian
 - c. English and Igbo
 - d. English and Gikuyu
6. Which Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novel is based around the killing of three directors of a brewery?_____.
- a. Petals of Blood
 - b. Arrow of God
 - c. The Devil on the Cross
 - d. A Meeting in the Dark
7. The deconstructionist novel *The Wizard of the Crow* is a criticism of which Kenyan ruler?_____.
- a. Jomo Kenyatta
 - b. Daniel arap Moi
 - c. Idi Amin
 - d. Mwai Kibaki

8. In which non-fictional work does Ngugi wa Thiong'o argue that colonization destroyed native languages and literatures in Africa?_____.

 - a. The Curse of Colonization
 - b. Decolonizing the Mind
 - c. How Europe Underdeveloped Africa
 - d. King Leopold's Ghost

9. In which work does the protagonist, Waiyaki, try to bridge the divide between traditional Gikuyu and those who have converted to Christianity?_____.

 - a. The River Between
 - b. A Grain of Wheat
 - c. Devil on the Cross
 - d. Mother, Sing for Me

10. Which of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novels follow the life of Mugo through the Kenyan struggle for independence?_____.

 - a. A Grain of Wheat
 - b. A Meeting in the Dark
 - c. The Trial of Dedan Kimathi
 - d. Matigari ma Njiruungi

9.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q.1. Discuss Ngugi wa Thiongo as a post colonist critic. Illustrate with examples.

Ans. _____

Q.2. Comment on the struggles of Ngugi wa Thiongo .

Ans. _____

Q. 3. Discuss the important works of Ngugi wa Thiongo.

Ans.

9.8 LET US SUM UP

Dear Learner, in this lesson we discussed the life and works of Ngugi wa Thiongo. Who is one of Africa's best known writers, his first work *Weep Not, Child* brought him literary fame and recognition. His works critically describe Kenya's political, cultural, and social problems. As a result of his criticism of both British imperialism and the country's post-independence governments he was forced to go into exile from 1982 until 2002. Since then, he has continued his academic career in several universities of the United States, where he has reflected on African cultures and literatures. After 1981, he gave priority to writing in his mother tongue Kikuyu, an exceptional gesture in the domain of African literature. He has published more than thirty books, including fiction and essays.

9.9 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1.) a 2.) d 3.) a 4.) c 5.) d 6.) a 7.) b 8.) b 9.) a 10.) a

9.10 SUGGESTED READING

1. "Ngugi wa Thiong'o: A Profile of a Literary and Social Activist". ngugiwathiongo.com. Archived from the original on 29 March 2009.
2. Scheub, Harold; Wynne Gunner, Elizabeth Ann (2 December 2022). "African literature; search for Ngugi wa Thiong'o". *Encyclopedia Britannica*.
3. Kilolo, Moses (2 June 2020). "The single most translated short story in the history of African writing: Ngig) wa Thiong'o and the Jalada writers' collective". *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*. Routledge.

WEEP NOT, CHILD

STRUCTURE

- 10.0 Objectives and Outcomes
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Plot Summary of the novel *Weep Not, Child*
- 10.3 Self-Assessment Questions
- 10.4 Multiple Choice Questions(MCQs)
- 10.5 Examination Oriented Questions
- 10.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.7 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 10.8 Suggested Reading

10.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, after completing detailed reading of the life and works of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, the famous African writer in the previous lesson, we now move on to study his work, *Weep Not Child*, which is prescribed in the syllabus.

The objective of the lesson is to give the learner an overview of *Weep Not, Child*, highlighting its plot, summary and the portrayal of the characters and various thematic concerns in the novel.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Weep Not, Child is the first English language novel to be published by an East African writer. It is Ngugi's first novel, published in 1964 under the name James Ngugi. Ngugi's works deal with the relationship between Africans and white settlers in colonial Kenya. These works criticize the colonial rule and the various atrocities committed on the natives. Similarly, *Weep Not, Child* deals with the Mau Mau Uprising, and "the bewildering dispossession of an entire people from their ancestral land." Ngugi has written the novel while he was a student at Makerere University. The novel deals with the anti-colonial strife of the

Mau-Mau guerrillas against the English colonialists. The novel underscores the estrangement of the African people from their ancestral land.

The novel, *Weep Not, Child*, is divided into two parts and eighteen chapters. Part one deals mostly with the education of Njoroge, while part two deals with the rising Mau Mau movement.

10.2 SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL *WEEP NOT, CHILD*

Part I

The novel, *Weep Not, Child*, by Ngugi wa Thiong'o centers around the interactions between British colonists in Kenya and the native people. The novel begins during the Mau Mau Uprising, an eight-year struggle in British-controlled colonial Kenya. During the 1950s uprising, the British killed near about 12,000-20,000 African rebels. The success of the British Empire can be attributed to their "divide and rule" practice, a political tactic first utilized by the ancient Greeks. This practice made it difficult or impossible for smaller groups of people to band together and revolt—and that is exactly what happened during the Mau Mau Uprising. Ngugi's works, including *Weep Not, Child* are critical of British rule.

The novel begins with Njoroge, the protagonist, whose mother wants him to go to school, as no one else in their family had earlier attended school. They live on Jacobo's land—Jacobo an African deals with the white settlers in order to make his fortune. Among those settlers is Mr. Howlands, who owns much of the land in the area. Njoroge has two brothers, Kamau and Boro. Kamau is apprenticed to a carpenter. Boro earlier forced to fight in World War II, suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Njoroge's father, Ngotho, works on Mr. Howlands' lands. Ngotho is a man who prizes the land and considers it above money.

When local African workers go on a strike for better pay, Ngotho fears losing his job if he participates. However, he attends a strike meeting despite the disapproval of his two wives. At the meeting, Jacobo tries to end the strike before it can begin, prompting Ngotho to attack him. A riot begins. Two people are killed during the riot and Jacobo promises to take revenge. Ngotho loses his job and therefore, Njoroge's brothers fund his education so that he can attend school.

Njoroge is shifted to another school because his father's losses his employment and he is separated from his friend Mwihaki, Jacobo's daughter. She and Njoroge were once classmates and close friends, but she now attends a boarding school for girls. Njoroge is embarrassed about his father's attack against Jacobo, and so he is grateful for the distance between Mwihaki and himself.

Meanwhile, in the Mau Mau Uprising, one of the leaders—Jomo Kenyatta—is about to stand trial. While many of the native Kenyans think he will be their savior from British rule, however, he loses at the trial and faces imprisonment. On the Kenyan side, there are more protests. The British colonists take actions to further suppress and oppress them.

The uprising touches Njoroge's family when Jacobo accuses Ngotho of leading the Mau Mau movement. Jacobo hopes that the whole family will be imprisoned. The situation for the Kenyans gets worse

day by day. British forces drag people believed to be involved with the Mau Mau out of their homes and execute them.

While the situation in the country is deteriorating, Njoroge progresses in school. He passes a rigorous high school entrance exam, and his village, proud of his success, in studies collects money to fund his tuition. He and Mwihaki come across each other again and this time, Njoroge does not find their fathers' differences to be a hurdle in their friendship.

However, Njoroge's life is not free from the Mau Mau Uprising for long. One day, Jacobo is found murdered. Njoroge is pulled out of school by Mr. Howlands and questioned, and both he and his father Ngotho are beaten nearly to death before being released. Later on, it is found that Njoroge's brothers killed Jacobo, and Boro became a Mau Mau leader. Their father dies from injuries and Njoroge learns that his father was only trying to protect Kamau and Boro, despite the fact that they lost respect for him after he lost his job. When Kamau is imprisoned, the responsibility to look after both of his mothers falls on Njoroge. He is forced to abandon both school and his faith.

Njoroge falls in love with Mwihaki, and professes his love to her, asking her to start her life with him. She refuses because she feels compelled to remain in Kenya with her mother as Jacobo is dead. Njoroge attempts to hang himself. He is stopped by both his mothers and descends into hopelessness and shame.

In addition to the theme of families torn apart by British rule, Njoroge's fate shows how systemic oppression affects the individual. As a child, Njoroge has a hopeful future. His father is successful and he excels at school. Then, his family and those around him become involved—willingly or not—in the Mau Mau Uprising. The harsh actions of the British army and those who benefit from their rule tear apart Njoroge's family and strip him of his faith in God and will to live.

Njoroge lives with his family in central Kenya. When he is a young boy, his mother, Nyokabi, tells him he will be the first person in the family to attend school. Overwhelmed with happiness, Njoroge runs to Kamau and tells him the good news that he will receive education. Kamau is Njoroge's half-brother as his father, Ngotho, has two wives: Njeri and Nyokabi. Upon hearing that Njoroge will be going to school, Kamau congratulates his younger brother, and the two boys compare their future, discussing the fact that both education and carpentry apprenticeship (which is what Kamau is pursuing) will benefit their family.

Njoroge gathers with his family in the evening to listen to his father's stories about the past. While addressing various neighbors, including Kamau, Njoroge, his wives, and his eldest sons, Boro and Kori, Ngotho tells the story of how he and his fellow Kenyans lost their land to white settlers. He explained that he was enlisted by the British during World War I and was made to build roads throughout Kenya that would help the war effort. All the while, he says, he looked forward to return home, while collecting whatever "reward" the white settlers would bestow upon him and his people for contributing to a war that had nothing to do with the Kenyans. However, when he finally returned, he discovered that the white colonialists had kicked his family off their ancestral land and taken over the farm that was their livelihood. Unable to do anything, he and his

father lived as *Muhoi* (serfs), working on land that used to belong to them and waiting for the day the white people would vacate Kenya. However, this day never came, and Ngotho's father died a *Muhoi*.

The one silver lining, Ngotho tells the people listening to his story, is that an old Gikuyu prophet foretold that the land will one day be returned to its rightful owners. However, when he says this, Boro shows cynical disdain. Having fought and lost his brother in World War II, Boro is a silent, brooding figure who resents not only the white settlers, but his elders, who he believes failed to protect the land. Tired of waiting for the prophesy to come true, Boro interrupts his father's story, saying, "To hell with the prophecy. How can you continue working for a man who has taken your land? How can you go on serving him?"

Amidst these tensions, Njoroge starts school. On his first day, several other boys started teasing him, but they're ward off by Mwihaki, who is from the same village as Njoroge and whose sister, Lucia, is a teacher. Mwihaki's father, Jacobo, is the richest black man in the area because he is a landowner. After Mwihaki helps him fend off bullies, Njoroge takes a liking to her, and the two children become close companions. They both value the opportunity to attend school. During this time, though, a bitter enmity grows between their fathers, as Ngotho and Jacobo clash over how to respond to a workers' strike. Ngotho, for his part, feels compelled to join the strike as a way of responding to Boro's critique that he isn't doing enough to win back their family's land. However, he isn't certain it's a good idea to simply stop working for the white settlers, since doing so will mean losing his job at the white Mr. Howlands's farm, which used to be Ngotho's land. Indeed, Ngotho works for Mr. Howlands because he wants to stay close to the earth he used to own. When news about a strike circulates, Mr. Howlands threatens to fire his employees if they join the movement. Nevertheless, Ngotho can't contain his rage when he discovers at a village meeting that Jacobo has sided with the white settlers. As Jacobo walks to the front of the group with several white police officers and urges his people to refrain from striking, Ngotho furious rises and advances toward Jacobo. Followed by his fellow villagers, he beats Jacobo and flees, though not before a police officer strikes him in the face with a baton.

In the aftermath of this event, people start talking about Jomo Kenyatta, a political leader who they believe will help drive away white settlers. Unfortunately, though, Jomo has been captured, and although everyone believes he will be set free once he has a hearing, this is not the case. As such, the collective sense of hope suffers in Njoroge's village. As for Njoroge's family, they are forced to move off Jacobo's land, so they relocate to Nganga's property (Nganga is Kamau's carpentry master). Meanwhile, Boro and Kori move to Nairobi, where Boro becomes even more passionate about the oppressive practices of the white settlers. As Njoroge continues to go to school, tensions between Kenyans and white settlers mount, especially since the Mau Mau—a militant group opposing the colonialists—tries to recruit new members.

As the years pass, Ngotho struggles to support his family. To make things worse, Jacobo is made chief of the village, and Mr. Howlands becomes a Directing Officer of the "homeguard" (the colonial police force). As such, Jacobo now goes from house to house with armed guards, searching for people who have joined the Mau Mau struggle. Around this time, Boro and Kori become more and more politically active by joining the Mau Mau movement. Ever since Ngotho attacked Jacobo, Boro has been harsh on his father, upholding that

his rash decision only escalated tensions. Because of this constant criticism, Ngotho has become meeker around his son, allowing Boro to speak harshly with him because he's embarrassed. However, when Boro tries to convince him to pledge an oath to the Mau Mau, he refuses.

Before long, Njoroge attends a prestigious high school. Although he and Mwihaki no longer attend the same school and rarely see one another—partly because Mwihaki goes to a boarding school far away, and partly because their families are enemies—she asks him to spend time with her once when she returns home during holidays. During this meeting, she invites him to her house, and though he's hesitant, he accepts. When he arrives, he has a stilted conversation with Jacobo, but the man treats him kindly, saying that he hopes Njoroge does well in school so that he can “rebuild the country.” Afterwards, Mwihaki takes him to a hill, where she admits that she is afraid of all the turmoil surrounding them. Njoroge, for his part, tries to console her by insisting that “sunshine always follows a dark night.” Impressed by his optimism, Mwihaki invites him to run away with her, but he refuses, saying that he couldn't imagine leaving his family when conditions are bad.

ACTIVITY

Fill in the blanks:

1. In the beginning of the novel, Njoroge's mother ————— him.
2. Young Njoroge's greatest desire is —————.
3. Kamau is apprenticeship in —————.
4. Jomo Kenyatta is a —————.
5. *Muhoi* are people who are —————.

Part II

As the Mau Mau movement continues to recruit new members, it grows more and more violent, ultimately posing a threat to the very people it aims to protect. This pleases Mr. Howlands immensely, as he delights in the fact that black Kenyans are “destroying” one another. During this period, Jacobo uses his power as chief to take revenge on Ngotho's family. To do this, he tries to imprison Boro and Kori, though he only manages to catch Kori, picking him up when he walks outside after curfew with Njeri, who is also detained (though unlike Kori, she is quickly released).

One day, Njoroge is pulled out of his new European-style school by armed men who work for Mr. Howlands. He is then brought to Mr. Howlands and tortured. After asking Njoroge where Boro is and whether or not Njoroge himself has taken the Mau Mau oath, Mr. Howlands asks him, “Who murdered Jacobo?” When Njoroge is unable to answer, Mr. Howlands fetches a pair of pincers and puts them against the boy's scrotum, saying, “You'll be castrated like your father.” As Njoroge screams, Mr. Howlands tells him that Ngotho has already confessed to killing Jacobo, but before Njoroge can react, he passes out from pain.

Several days later, Njoroge recovers, and his two mothers—who were also detained—are released along with him. Shortly thereafter, Njoroge sees his father in the family hut. He has been beaten severely and can barely speak, but when he sees Njoroge, he assumes that his son has come to laugh at him because he has failed as a father to protect his family. Apparently, Boro sneaked into the village from the woods and murdered Jacobo and then disappeared once more. Knowing that Mr. Howlands would assume that Kamau was the one who did the deed, Ngotho gathered the courage and claimed he was the one who killed Jacobo. After beating and castrating Ngotho, Mr. Howlands understood that the man was only trying to protect his son, and despite the fact that he wanted to murder Ngotho ever since the workers' strike, he released him. Now, just as Ngotho is about to die, Boro appears in the entrance of the hut. "Forgive me, Father—I didn't know—oh, I thought—" Boro says, stumbling. "I had to fight," he says, asking his father for forgiveness. "All right," Ngotho says, straining to lift himself onto one arm. "Fight well." Telling his son to "turn his eyes" to God, he lies back and dies, and Boro runs off once more. Sneaking into Mr. Howlands's office, he tells the man that he was the one who killed Jacobo, and then he shoots Howlands in the head. On his way out, Boro fires at as many officers as possible before getting captured and taken away.

In the aftermath of this violence, police officers detain Kamau, so that now Kori, Boro, and Kamau are all in custody. As such, Njoroge is the only brother left, meaning that he has no monetary way to continue his education. Because of this, he spends his days working for an Indian man in a market, constantly feeling ashamed because everyone who sees him knows what has happened to him and his family. After getting fired one day, he decides he must see Mwihaki, who he believes is his final source of "hope." When they meet, he confesses his love to her and insists that they should run away, but now it is Mwihaki's turn to decline, saying that Njoroge must maintain his hope for a better future. Although it is clear that she loves him but she refuses to elope with him, ultimately leaving him distraught and hopeless—so hopeless, in fact, that he leaves his house the next evening and makes his way to a specific tree, where he fastens a noose and prepares to hang himself. Just as he is about to end his life, he hears Nyokabi's voice calling his name and despite the fact that he feels ashamed for failing to finish his education and is hopeless about the future, he walks out to meet her. On the way home, they encounter Njeri, and the three of them walk home as Njoroge asks himself why he didn't go through with his suicide plan. "*Because you are a coward,*" a voice within him says. "Yes," he whispers. "I am a coward." Saying this, he runs home and opens the door for his mothers.

10.3 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. What role do traditional Gikuyu stories play in the novel, *Weep Not, Child* ?

Ans. Until relatively recently, Gikuyu literary culture relied almost exclusively on oral storytelling. As Ngotho's storytelling session early in the novel demonstrates that the country's history has transformed into a type of myth; the characters see the coming of the British (and their eventual departure) as a part of history's grand cycle, as immutable and inevitable as the Creation story is. Stylistically, it is interesting to note the ways that traditional qualities of Gikuyu storytelling – such as magical incidents and the trickster figure – affect how the characters interpret current events. The most prominent example of this is the story about Dedan Kimathi transforming into a white man and then into an airplane. A person who likes fantastical

stories would be inclined to understand their ‘great’ figures in this way. But perhaps the most important example is the way Njoroge elevates his potential importance, dreaming not only of reaching success but of saving his world.

2. Comment on the title of the novel, *Weep Not, Child* .

Ans. *Weep Not, Child* draws its title from a moment late in the story, when Njoroge and Stephen Howlands discuss whether there is any hope left for Kenya’s future. Njoroge argues that there is, and the narrator comments that “hope of a better day was the only comfort he could give to a weeping child” (121). The title is also an allusion to Walt Whitman’s poem “On the Beach at Night,” in which the speaker begs a child not to cry over the tumultuous storm, since it will soon pass. Besides, the novel’s title refers to the hope that sustains its characters through the violence and suffering of the Mau Mau revolt. Like the child on the beach, Njoroge in particular attempts to see not the tumult but the potential calm soon to come. Although he eventually places this hope under scrutiny, Ngugi explores how love and family loyalty attempt to endure in even the cruellest conditions.

3. Throughout the novel, Ngugi now and then shifts to the perspective of the British characters. Do you think this choice balances the novel’s political commentary?

Ans. *Weep Not, Child* offers political insights from a variety of characters. Often, the protagonists have different opinions about what is best for Kenya –for example, the disagreements between Boro and Ngotho. Although Ngugi undoubtedly focuses on the Kenyan (and more specifically, Gikuyu) perspective on the emergency, he also gives relatively lengthy consideration to the experiences of British characters like Mr. Howlands and his son, Stephen. Although Mr. Howlands commits atrocities for which Ngugi holds him responsible, Ngugi also traces the white man’s transition from a peaceful farmer to a violent district officer. Overall, this decision does not negate his political message, but instead makes it a more humanist one. He encourages readers to empathize with all characters regardless of their political leanings, suggesting that our problems are greater than politics; instead, they come from larger, less polemic places in the world and in ourselves.

4. Compare and contrast Njoroge and Kamau’s experiences of adolescence. How are these experiences different from those of the older brothers?

Ans. Njoroge leads a relatively sheltered adolescence. However, his exposure to formal education gives him excellent observational and critical thinking skills, which arguably makes his perspective as the best suited for the grand historical shifts that Kenya experiences during the novel. Kamau, on the other hand, is forced to grow up quickly when he takes his apprenticeship. Soon enough, his family relies on his income. However, both boys retain innocence and a distance from the uprising that their older brothers, Kori and Boro, do not. They also feel strong ties to their siblings and parents; for them, growing up means learning to make sacrifices for the greater good of the family. For their older brothers, growing up means learning to prioritize the cause over the family.

10.4 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Of what nationality are the traders in Kipanga?_____.
 - a. Indian
 - b. Ugandan
 - c. English
 - d. Kenyan
2. Where did the barber sleep with white prostitutes?_____.
 - a. Jerusalem
 - b. Berlin
 - c. Munich
 - d. Vichy
3. How does Ngotho feel about Njoroge attending school?_____.
 - a. indifferent
 - b. proud
 - c. apprehensive
 - d. sad
4. On what day did Njoroge start school?_____.
 - a. Tuesday
 - b. Friday
 - c. Wednesday
 - d. Monday
5. Why do the boys at school fear Mwihaki?_____.
 - a. She is a fierce fighter.
 - b. Her sister is a teacher.
 - c. She is thought to be insane.
 - d. Her father is very rich.
6. Why does Njoroge return home immediately after school?_____.
 - a. He has no friends.

- b. He is afraid of the dark.
- c. He wants to play with his siblings.
- d. He is afraid of being beaten.

7. Who is older – Njoroge or Kamau?_____.

- a. Kamau
- b. They are the same age.
- c. The answer is not given.
- d. Njoroge

10.5 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q.1. How does Njoroge's relationship with Mwihaki change over time? How does their relationship relate to the novel's broader political plot?

Ans. _____

Q.2. Analyze the character of Boro. What motivates him? Is he a sympathetic character? What makes you think so?

Ans. _____

Q.3. Comment on the ending of *Weep Not, Child*. Does the novel convey a message of hope? Why or why not?

Ans. _____

Q.4. Discuss the relationship between Mr. Howlands and Ngotho.

Ans.

Q.5. Comment on the male characters in the novel.

Ans.

10.6 LET US SUM UP

Dear Learner, in this section you have studied that Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not, Child* (1964) is a novel about the anti-colonial strife of the Mau-Mau guerrillas against the English colonialists. It may also be read as a novel featuring the estrangement of the African people from their ancestral land. Ngugi wa Thiong'o wrote *Weep Not, Child* while studying at Leeds University in England in 1962. *Weep Not, Child* was the second novel of Ngugi, although it was published before his first, *The River Between*. It follows the tragic story of Njoroge, a young boy who seeks education during the 1952-1960 Emergency in Kenya. This tumultuous time period saw the emergence of Kenyan revolutionary groups against the British colonists.

The novel explores an entire culture in flux and on the verge of violence, through several perspectives. It includes several sub-plots, including those of Ngotho, Njoroge's father, who struggles against the loss of his family's land; and Muihaki, a wealthy village girl who loves Njoroge. Most interestingly, perhaps, it also attempts to understand the mindset of one of the white colonists, Mr. Howlands. When *Weep Not, Child* was published, very few East Africans had published novels in English. The novel, as well as those that followed it, was well-received by literary critics, although it failed at the time to garner the sales and attention given to white authors who have written about Africa, such as Alan Paton and Bryce Courtenay.

10.7 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. A, 2. A, 3. B, 4. D, 5. B, 6. D, 7. A.

10.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. Ngugi wa' Thiongo. *Weep Not, Child*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2012.
2. David Anderson. *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2005.

WEEP NOT, CHILD**STRUCTURE**

- 11.0 Objectives and Outcomes
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Summary (Chapter 1-18)
- 11.3 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 11.4 Self-Assessment Questions
- 11.5 Examination Oriented Questions
- 11.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.7 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 11.8 Suggested Reading

Dear learner, after going through the overview and plot summary of the novel in the previous lesson, we now move on to the detailed summary of eighteen chapters of *Weep Not, Child*.

11.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The objective of the lesson is to provide a detailed chapter-wise summary of *Weep Not, Child* to the learner. It would help the learner to appreciate and thoroughly appreciate the thematic concerns, portrayal of characters and various symbolic significances prevalent in the novel.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Ngugi wa Thiong'o wrote *Weep Not, Child* while studying at Leeds University in England in 1962. *Weep Not, Child* aims not only to tell a few stories rather it explores an entire culture in flux and on the verge of violence, through several perspectives. It includes several sub-plots, including those of Ngotho, Njoroge's father, who struggles against the loss of his family's land; and Mwihaki, a wealthy village girl who has a romance with Njoroge. Most interestingly, perhaps, it also attempts to understand the mindset of one of the white colonists, Mr. Howlands.

11.2 SUMMARY (CHAPTER 1-18)

Summary

Part I - “The Waning Light”

Weep Not, Child is set in a Gikuyu village in Kenya during the 1952-1960 emergency, a tumultuous and violent period, which would eventually lead to Kenya’s independence from Britain.

One day, the beautiful Nyokabi offers her youngest son, Njoroge, an opportunity to go to school. He enthusiastically accepts, even though he knows it will be a financial burden for the family. His prospects are contrasted with those of his half-brother Kamau. Although Kamau is only slightly older than Njoroge, he has already been apprenticed to a carpenter, and will pursue the same instead of going to school. Both boys hope that their training will lead them to a happy and successful future.

The village is located near Kipanga, a larger town where many of the villagers work. Kipanga is home to many colorful characters, including a funny barber who tells colorful stories about his experiences fighting in World War II. On this day, Njoroge and Kamau’s father, Ngotho, spends time in Kipanga. He soon returns home, proud that his son will be the first in the family to attend school. Ngotho works as a farmer for a British land-owner, Mr. Howlands, on the land that Ngotho’s family once owned.

Njoroge initially has a hard time adjusting to life at school, but his old friend Mwihaki helps him. Mwihaki is the daughter of Jacobo, a rich Gikuyu pyrethrum farmer who owns the land that Ngotho and his family live on. One evening, Ngotho tells his wives and children – Kori, Boro, Kamau, and Njoroge – stories about how the British stole the Gikuyu land. These events particularly upset Boro, who believes his father complicit in the injustice by working for Mr. Howlands. Boro has been troubled ever since he lost his brother when they were fighting together in World War II.

Njoroge enjoys learning how to read- and eventually, how to speak English. He continues to bond with Mwihaki, and also dedicates himself to studying the Bible. He sees parallels between the Gikuyu struggle and the oppression of the Israelites. Meanwhile, Kamau is frustrated by the slow pace at which his boss, Nganga, teaches him.

Word spreads through the community about a strike to advocate for more rights for Africans. Ngotho wants to participate, but is worried that Mr. Howlands will fire him. He decides to walk out anyway, and attends a rally where Boro and his friend Kiarie are scheduled to speak. The police bring in Jacobo, who urges the strikers to return to work. Ngotho is so enraged by Jacobo that he rushes to the stage and attacks him, which starts a riot. The riot is put down immediately, and brings dire consequences for Ngotho’s family – he is fired from his job and evicted from Jacobo’s land. Fortunately, Nganga allows the family to move onto his land.

Interlude

Two and a half years pass. Njoroge’s hero, the revolutionary Jomo Kenyatta, is arrested. Meanwhile, there are many incidents of violence by the Mau Mau, one of the revolutionary groups. The whole culture is in a state of flux and worry.

Part II – “Darkness Falls”

Njoroge’s older brothers Kori and Boro both have argument with the police. An atmosphere of fear permeates the village; people are afraid not just of the police, but also of the Mau Mau, which slits the throats of suspected traitors.

Mr. Howlands and Jacobo plot ways to arrest Ngotho, whom they both resent for his insubordination and his attack on Jacobo. They arrange for Kori and Njeri (Ngotho’s first wife) to be arrested, although Mr. Howlands is reluctant to harm Ngotho because he remembers how much his old employee loved the land. Meanwhile, Njoroge’s school is threatened by the Mau Mau, but he continues to attend school at Kamau’s advice.

One day, Mwihaki returns to the villages after several years away at a boarding school. She and Njoroge are happy to see each other, and she invites him into her home, where he is surprised that Jacobo is so kind to him. They promise to be together after she graduates. Not much later, Njoroge and some friends go on a church retreat. However, the retreat is stopped by the police, who murder their group leader for his attitude of independence. Meanwhile, Boro plots ways to murder Jacobo.

Njoroge is promoted to high school, and Mwihaki, whose grades are not as strong, attends a teaching college. The differences between them become more apparent – Mwihaki is frustrated and hopeless about the state of the country, whereas Njoroge believes that educated young people have the power to change the future. At high school, Njoroge flourishes. One day, he meets Stephen Howlands, the son of Mr. Howlands. The two boys realize that they have much in common, and discuss the reasons that they were afraid to talk to each other as children.

At nineteen, Njoroge is pulled out of school to be interrogated by the police. Jacobo has been murdered, and they believe that Ngotho is involved. Njoroge is tortured mercilessly, but he refuses to give up any information. The police reveal that Ngotho has already confessed to the murder and that they have castrated him. During the torture, Njoroge passes out, and Mr. Howlands, who has been present at the interrogation, arranges for Njoroge to be released.

As it turns out, Ngotho did not commit the murder; he only confessed to help Kamau, who was being detained as a suspect. In fact, Boro killed Jacobo; he believed that it was the only way to avenge his brother’s death in the war. Mr. Howlands eventually realized that Ngotho’s confession was false, but allowed him to be tortured anyway. However, he could not bring himself to execute Ngotho. Several days later, Ngotho dies. Njoroge and Boro visit him before he dies, and after Boro sees his father’s condition, he murders Mr. Howlands in the white man’s home.

After Ngotho’s death, Njoroge is obliged to give up his education and to work in a dress shop. These events emotionally destroy Njoroge, and he goes to the one source of comfort he has left: Mwihaki. They admit that they love each other, but that they cannot be together because they are obliged to support their families, both of which are now missing a father. Njoroge tries to kill himself, but Nyokabi stops him and brings him home.

Chapter 1

The story begins in the Gikuyu village of Mahua in Kenya.

Nyokabi is a beautiful woman, though she has aged prematurely due to poverty and hardship. She offers her son, Njoroge, a chance to go to school – something the family has never been able to afford for the older siblings. He is delighted, even after she warns him that he will not be able to afford lunch there, and that he must attend school every day. He rushes to tell his half-brother Kamau the good news.

Kamau, who is working as an apprentice carpenter, is happy to learn Njoroge's news. Although they are nearly of the same age, Kamau cannot attend school because of his apprenticeship. The boys discuss their bright futures. Both hope that their training will make them as rich as Jacobo, a wealthy and educated local villager, or Mr. Howlands, an English man who had lived among the community for a long time. Though both figures are the subject of local controversy - Mr. Howlands for his race and significant land ownership, and Jacobo for the compromises he makes to please Mr. Howlands. However, both are admired because of their wealth. As we learn later, Njoroge and his family also live on land rented from Jacobo.

The narrator then speaks about the local community and landscape. He describes the black, paved road that passes through Mahua, heading far into the distance. It was built by Italian prisoners during World War II, and offers an alternative to the less-defined paths through the forest that natives would otherwise take when traversing the area.

The narrator then muses on the insularity of village life, and how difficult it is to understand white people. He tells of what the locals do for entertainment. When the men of Mahua get bored, they travel to the nearby town of Kipanga, where they shop and loiter. Kipanga is bigger and more diverse than Mahua – it has a large population of Indian traders, who maintain a fraught relationship with the native Gikuyu. One of the most popular figures in the town is the barber, who tells stories about his time fighting in the war; in particular, he likes to tell about sleeping with white prostitutes in Jerusalem.

The narrator shifts back to the current day, on which the barber is speaking about the prostitutes. When he finishes his story, Ngotho – husband of Nyokabi and father to Njoroge and Kamau - sets off for home. We learn that Nyokabi is Ngotho's second wife; his first is called Njeri. A man's first wife is favored in Gikuyu custom, but despite some occasional problems over jealousy, Ngotho's wives and children get along well. As he walks home, he reflects on his own experiences of serving in World War I, and those of his sons, Boro and Mwangi, who fought in World War II. When he arrives home, Ngotho learns that Njoroge will soon start school, and he feels proud that his son will be educated like the daughter of Jacobo.

Chapter 2

On Monday, Njoroge's friend (and Jacobo's daughter) Mwihaki walks with him to his first day at school. Njoroge has admired her ever since he saw her being bullied by herd-boys many years ago. She has been attending school for a while.

When they arrive, the other boys shock Njoroge with their shouting and lewd jokes. They make fun of him, calling him a *Njuka*, or newcomer. They try to force him to carry their bags, but Mwihaki saves him by claiming that Njoroge is her Njuka, and so only she can order him around.

Time passes. At first, Njoroge has a hard time adjusting to the new school life. He likes his teacher, but becomes afraid of her after she beats another student. He does not make many friends because he always returns straight home after school for fear of angering his mother. One day, Mwihaki walks home with him and they dawdle, chatting and throwing stones. When her son does not return immediately, Nyokabi sets out in search of him, and is upset to find him playing with a girl from a higher social class.

One day after school, Njoroge begs his mother to tell him stories. Earlier that day, his teacher had asked him to tell the class a story, but he, in his nervousness, forgot all the stories he knows. Nyokabi agrees to honor his request after she finishes her chores.

Njoroge goes out to play, after changing his school uniform. He passes Jacobo's large house, and recalls an instance in which Jacobo's wife, Juliana, hosted a party for all the children of parents who worked for the family. At the party, Njoroge giggled during Grace, and Juliana lectured the children about manners.

Njoroge sees Mwihaki walking in his direction, and he hides, ashamed that she might see him wearing only his old calico loincloth. He instead meets up with Kamau, who complains that his employer, the carpenter Nganga, does not let him do enough hands-on work at his apprenticeship. Instead, Nganga only assigns Kamau menial tasks. Njoroge sympathizes with his brother's complaints, and invites him over for storytelling at Nyokabi's hut that evening.

That night, something unusual happens: Ngotho tells stories, instead of Nyokabi. He is known as an excellent storyteller. First, Ngotho recounts the traditional Gikuyu creation story, in which the Creator, Murungu, placed a man and a woman under his sacred tree. Next, he tells about how white men came to Kenya, forced him and others to fight in World War I, and then stole their land (Ngotho's land now belongs to the wealthy Englishman Mr. Howlands). According to Ngotho, a seer named Mugo wa Kibiro had prophesied all of this tragedy before the British even set foot in Kenya. She had also promised that the white men would eventually leave, a promise that gives many like Ngotho hope for the future.

The story enrages Boro, Ngotho's eldest son and a veteran of World War II. He has been troubled ever since losing his brother in the war, believing that he and his people's suffering seems to have no purpose. He demands to know why his father continues working for the man who took his land (Mr. Howlands), and then storms out before Ngotho can answer.

Chapter 3

Ngotho walks to work the next day, brooding over Boro's accusations, and reflecting on how the boy has changed since the war. As he walks through the town, he remembers the various odd jobs he held in his youth. When he arrives at the *shamba*, or tea plantation, the narrative shifts to Mr. Howlands's point of view.

After fighting in World War I, Mr. Howlands grew disillusioned and decided to become a farmer in Africa, hoping to find inner peace there. He is completely dedicated to his work, and he admires Ngotho and his special connection with the land. Mr. Howlands brought his wife Suzanne – or Memsahib, as most of the characters call her – to Kenya, but he is unaware of the fact that she hates it there. The Howlands have three children. Their eldest son, Peter, was killed in World War II, and their daughter became a missionary. Their youngest son, Stephen, still lives with them.

As Mr. Howlands and Ngotho walk through the plantation together, Mr. Howlands confides in his employee about Peter's death, and about his doubts that Stephen can manage the plantation after his death. Ngotho wonders to himself when the Howlands family will leave Kenya, and thinks that "Mr. Howlands should not complain [about Peter's death]. It had been his war" (33).

Chapter 4

At school, Njoroge enjoys learning to read from his funny and energetic teacher, Isaka. At home, he tries to teach Kamau what he is learning, but Kamau seems to resent the offer.

One day, Mwihaki catches up with Njoroge after school, and asks why he never walks home with her anymore. He turns aside the question, and they talk about their parents. Both of them fear their parents, even though they are good children. They both share a sense that their parents are sometimes wrong. Njoroge recalls a time when an Indian boy tried to befriend him by giving him a piece of candy, and his mother made him throw it on the ground. When they pass Mr. Howlands's house, Njoroge mentions that his father works there, and they both speak around the fact that whites own the land that once belonged to the blacks. Mwihaki mentions her father's belief that the natives were robbed because they were uneducated. Because she is a year ahead of Njoroge in school, she promises to teach him English once she learns it, but he feels uncomfortable to learn from her.

The following year, Njoroge skips a grade and is promoted to Standard I – the same grade Mwihaki is in. Njoroge continues to urge Kamau to quit his apprenticeship and attend school, but Kamau insists that learning a trade is the only option for someone who owns no land. However, Njoroge and his father Ngotho continue to believe that education is the most important pursuit, although Ngotho thinks that "education [is] good only because it would lead to the recovery of lost lands" (40). Njoroge begins to sense that he is destined for something big.

Chapter 5

Njoroge and Kamau stand on a 'hill' of rubbish outside Ngotho's house. From the 'hill,' they can see the lights of the big city Nairobi. They discuss Boro, who has left to find work there. Njoroge hopes that Boro will return, but Kamau explains that "Boro is not of this place" – he is too resentful of the village elders, who failed to fight off the white people (44).

Kamau confesses he would like to quit his apprenticeship and leave for Nairobi like Boro did. This means he could not participate in a strike that some of the local men are planning, but he believes strikes are for old men anyway. Njoroge begins to talk to his brother about Mwihaki, but changes his mind and asks

about a mysterious character named Jomo instead. Kamau says that Boro used to call Jomo “the black Moses,” but does not offer much concrete information about him (46). That night, Njoroge prays that he will learn enough to both help his family and become smarter than Mwihaki.

Three years later, Njoroge and Mwihaki are in Standard IV, and beginning to learn English. They initially have trouble with grammar, which makes the teacher, Lucia (who is also Mwihaki’s sister), very angry. However, they slowly progress, and begin to grasp the language. One day, a European woman visits the class, and Lucia is enraged when the students greet her with “good morning, Sir” instead of with the more appropriate “good afternoon, Madam” (49). Later, Njoroge realizes that the woman was Mr. Howlands’s daughter, the missionary.

Time passes, and Kamau prepares for his circumcision ceremony, a rite of manhood amongst the Gikuyu. Njoroge fears that once Kamau is a man, he will leave for the city and the family will disintegrate.

As time goes by, Njoroge immerses himself in books, especially the Bible. He develops his own kind of religious faith, which combines Christian teachings with traditional Gikuyu values. He comes to believe that Africans are God’s chosen people, and compares their struggles to those of the Israelites in the Old Testament. He wonders whether Jomo, “the black Moses,” might in fact lead the Africans to freedom.

Chapter 6

The men of Mahua (the village) sometimes gather to discuss political affairs. Occasionally, Boro and Kori travel home from the city for these meetings, bringing friends from there. Njoroge loves to eavesdrop on these conversations. He listens in one meeting, that the men plan a strike to involve all black people - or at least all those who work under white people or the British colonial government. That night, Njoroge prays that the strike will result in a pay rise for his father.

When he hears about the impending strike, Mr. Howlands threatens to fire any worker who participates in it. Ngotho is torn with indecision – he wants to fight for better wages and fair treatment, but he also loves working in the land and does not want to lose his job.

He eventually decides to join the strike, which causes a bitter fight between him and Nyokabi. Although Ngotho and his wives usually restrain from fighting around their children, Njoroge hears the argument, and is deeply disturbed. That night, he asks God whether the strike will succeed, and falls asleep listening for an answer.

Chapter 7

At the beginning of the New Year, all the students gather at the school to learn whether they have passed to continue to the intermediate school. After a moment of suspense, Njoroge and Mwihaki learn that they have both passed, and they return home merrily, holding hands. However, they separate as they approach their houses. When Mwihaki enters her house, her mood quickly dampens when she learns that something has happened to her father Jacobo.

The narrator tells what has happened. Earlier that day, Ngotho had left work to attend a rally in support of the strike. Boro, who has become a committed activist, and his friend Kiarie were scheduled to speak at the rally. Before they could begin, the police interrupted the rally and urged the audience to listen to Jacobo, who spoke to the natives about returning to work.

Ngotho, who suddenly found himself furious at this “‘Traitor,’ rushed the stage to attack Jacobo” (62). The other workers in the audience joined him, and a violent riot began. Jacobo was saved by the police’s quick intervention, and Ngotho was hailed by the village as a hero.

The narrative jumps forward a few days. A group of men congregate near the barber’s shop. They discuss how the strike has failed, and how Ngotho’s family has been expelled from their home on Jacobo’s land. Additionally, Ngotho has lost his job working for Mr. Howlands.

The events at the rally cause many changes for Njoroge and his family. Though the family is initially homeless, Nganga the carpenter allows them to set up new huts on his land. Without a job, Ngotho cannot pay the rising fees at Njoroge’s school, but Kamau and Kori use their salaries to ensure the boy can continue his education. Meanwhile, Mwihaki has left for a boarding school far away.

Chapter 8

About two years have passed.

Njoroge hears many stories about events occurring in the far-away towns of Nyeri and Murang’a. Often, these stories have a mythic element to them. For example, a boy named Karanja tells him one about Dedan Kimathi, the leader of the African Freedom Army, who tricked the police into expecting him to arrive, at which point they would arrest him. However, the leader instead turned himself into a white man, and borrowed a motorcycle from the police. The next day, he turns into an airplane, and drops them a letter explaining how he fooled them.

Jacobo has meanwhile become a chief. He is surrounded by bodyguards at all times, to protect him from guerilla resistance fighters. Mr. Howlands has become the district officer, and he and Jacobo often patrol the huts for suspicious activity. Njoroge has continued in his new school despite his family’s shaky finances.

One day, Njoroge comes home to find Boro and Kori in the house, both dirty and tired. There has been a police crackdown because Jomo will soon go to trial. Kori had been arrested, but he leaped from the moving police truck when he realized he and his fellow revolutionaries would be killed. Though he was shot in the knee during his escape, he returned home. Everyone listens to his story.

There is an unmistakable tension in the house, both from fear for the future and from the problems between Ngotho and Boro. Boro has not forgiven his father for inciting the riot two years ago; Boro and Kiarie are strong believers in nonviolent resistance, and Boro believes his father undermined the movement by attacking Jacobo. Another point of contention is the fact that Ngotho will not join the Mau Mau.

Though Ngotho believes in the cause, joining would entail taking an oath, and Ngotho believes it shameful to have an oath administered to him by his son.

Chapter 9

At school, Njoroge and his friends discuss Jomo's trial and the various rebel splinter groups that have been formed. Njoroge asks the difference between the KAU and the Mau Mau, two of the most powerful groups. Most of the other students explain that they "like KAU and fear Mau Mau" because the Mau Mau slit the throats of black people reputed to be traitors (79). The boys all daydream about fighting in the forest.

Everyone is disappointed and afraid when they learn that Jomo Kenyatta has been found guilty during his trial, and will hence not be released. Ngotho suffers a crisis of conscience – he worries that his actions at the rally will keep the prophecy (that the whites will leave Kenya) from being fulfilled. He also ponders his problematic relationship with Boro, and wonders whether he has made other mistakes as a father. Meanwhile, to her family, Njeri analyzes why Jomo lost his trial. She believes that it is impossible to win a trial when white men have made all the laws. Boro exclaims that black men must rise up and fight, and Njoroge is deeply moved by his brother's passion.

ACTIVITY

Fill in the blanks

1. _____ offers Njoroge an opportunity to go to school.
2. Jacobo's wife, Juliana, hosted a party for_____.
3. According to Ngotho, a seer named _____ had prophesied all of this tragedy before the British even set foot in Kenya.
4. _____ admires Ngotho and his special connection with the land.
5. _____ initially hesitated but later joined the rally.
6. _____ and Kiarie are strong believers in nonviolent resistance.
7. _____ allows Ngotho and his family to set up new huts on his land.

Chapter 10

In the district office, Mr. Howlands waits for Jacobo to arrive for the meeting. He reflects on his failure to live a simple life in Africa, realizing that he has become immersed in politics despite his intentions. He had reluctantly accepted the district officer post because he wants to defend his land, the only thing he truly believes in. He has never bothered to think about the Gikuyu perspective. For him, black people are like "donkeys or horses in his farm" (84). Like Ngotho, Mr. Howlands often feels he does not understand his children – especially his missionary daughter.

Jacobo arrives. The rebellion has caused Mr. Howlands to hate Jacobo, whom he sees as a savage despite the black's man wealth and their long history of working together. Jacobo tells Mr. Howlands that he believes Ngotho and Boro are secretly participating in the rebellion; he even believes Ngotho might be the secret head of the Mau Mau. He asks permission to send them to a detention camp, and Mr. Howlands instructs him to arrest Ngotho and his sons for any minor infractions. As Jacobo leaves, Mr. Howlands reflects on how he has never forgotten Ngotho.

That night, most of the family is gathered in Nyokabi's hut. When Njeri and Kori leave to sleep in Njeri's hut – only a few yards away – they are arrested for breaking the 6 p.m. curfew. Ngotho pays the fine for the crime, but only Njeri is released. Kori is sent to a detention camp without trial. Meanwhile, Jacobo continues to plot ways to arrest Ngotho.

One day, Njoroge arrives at school to find the students huddled around a letter that has been posted on the wall. The letter threatens that the headmaster and forty children will be killed if the school does not close down; it is signed by the resistance leader Dedan Kimathi. Njoroge does not understand the threat, because he “thought Mau Mau was on the side of the black people” (91). Kamau urges his brother to keep going to school, since he is not safe at home any more. Njoroge agrees, and continues to attend.

Chapter 11

As conditions continue to deteriorate and daily life becomes more dangerous, Kamau becomes the family's main support. Njoroge, still in school, often thinks of Mwihaki, whom he has not seen since the riot several years before. One day, Kamau tells Njoroge that six villagers, including Nganga and the barber, have been taken into the woods and murdered.

Mwihaki returns home from the boarding school on a vacation and surprises Njoroge as he is walking along the road. She has become a beautiful young woman, and Njoroge realizes that he must also appear more mature than he had before. They talk briefly, and Mwihaki asks Njoroge to spend more time with her. She gains his sympathy by confessing that everyone in the village avoids her because she is Jacobo's daughter. Njoroge reluctantly agrees to attend church with her.

Two days later, they walk to church together. When they arrive, their old teacher – who has become a Revivalist – reads a selection from the Book of Matthew about enduring hardship. After church, Mwihaki invites Njoroge into her home. Jacobo arrives unexpectedly, and wishes Njoroge good luck in school, explaining that Njoroge's generation will have to rebuild Kenya. Njoroge is briefly pleased at the attention, but grows uncomfortable when the sight of Jacobo's bodyguards reminds him of the dead barber.

Mwihaki and Njoroge discuss how Kenya has changed in the past few years. Mwihaki wonders why Jesus did not prevent the violence in their country. Njoroge, unshaken by her doubts, replies that God works in mysterious ways. They speculate about whether the Gikuyu are being punished for someone's sins. Mwihaki proposes they run away together, adding that she “could be such a nice sister” to Njoroge (104).

Njoroge immediately argues the foolishness of the plan, but Mwihaki quickly assures him that she was joking. However, she promises to rejoin him once she finishes school.

Chapter 12

Over the years, Mr. Howlands has grown to enjoy crushing the resistance. As they often have, he and Jacobo discuss how to deal with Ngotho and Boro, although Mr. Howlands remains reluctant to directly attack Ngotho. To counter this reluctance, Jacobo shows him one of the several threatening, anonymous notes he has lately received; he believes they have been sent by Ngotho.

Meanwhile, Isaka brings Njoroge and several other youths to a church retreat nearby. On the way there, the police detain the group and ask to see their papers. The girls are allowed to go free, and Njoroge is released because he has his papers. Isaka does not have papers, but is unfazed by the officers. He insists that he would never join the Mau Mau because he has devoted his life to Jesus. Nevertheless, the officers bring him into the forest and shoot him. Njoroge feels sick.

As it turns out, the officers were actually looking for Boro and his guerillas, who are in the forest. The narrator focuses on them. Boro constantly broods about his brother Mwangi, who died in World War II. In fact, his entire life is devoted to avenging Mwangi's death. He believes that killing Jacobo will serve this goal, though he has yet to develop a plan for the assassination. He discusses the issue with his lieutenant, who is eager to help. However, Boro insists that he must perform this task alone.

Chapter 13

Njoroge is the only boy in the area to pass intermediate school and move to high school. The villagers, proud of his accomplishments, chip in to pay his tuition fee. Mwihaki also passes her exit exams, but does not do well enough to continue to high school. Instead, she plans to attend a teacher's training college.

The day before Njoroge leaves, he and Mwihaki meet for the last time. Mwihaki warns him not to forget the people he knew at home, and not to put on airs. Njoroge suspects she is jealous, and chatters about his hopes to go abroad after high school but to eventually return, since he believes Kenya needs him. Mwihaki angrily replies that the country has grown so dark that no one can fix it. Njoroge argues that the things will get better. After they say goodbye, Mwihaki walks home alone, trying to hide her tears.

Chapter 14

At first, Njoroge is puzzled by the diversity of his high school. For the first time, he interacts with white teachers who treat him with kindness and respect. He is also surprised to find that his classmates, who are from other tribes, are not so different from the boys he knows at home. One day, a school for European boys competes against Njoroge's school in football. Njoroge sits chatting with a white student who turns out to be Stephen Howlands.

Stephen admits that he often wanted to introduce himself to the black boys in Kipanga, but was afraid they would not want to talk to him. Njoroge sometimes saw Stephen around, and felt the same way. The boys ponder the strangeness of this coincidence. They comment on the tension that prevents people of different races from interacting with each other, but Njoroge reassures Stephen that the tension will one day be over

and Kenya will be peaceful again. Stephen fears he will not be around to see it – he is being sent to England in a boarding school.

Meanwhile, Mwihaki writes to Njoroge frequently. In her letters, she confesses that she misses him, and confides that life at home has changed – “fear,” she writes, “is in the air” (123). Jacobo has grown paranoid and unpleasant, and the villagers are terrified. Njoroge admits to himself that he is glad not to be at home.

Chapter 15

The chapter begins during Njoroge’s third term at high school. Stephen and his sister have already left for England. Njoroge remains very happy at the high school, which is an oasis of peace in a troubled country. The headmaster maintains order through both severity and a fervent belief in “the white man’s rule and civilising mission” (126). One day, the headmaster pulls Njoroge out of class to tell him that his family has been involved in a “sad business,” and that he must remain open to Christ. He then hands Njoroge over to “the custody of two police officers” (126).

The officers take Njoroge to a station known as the “House of Pain,” where he is surprised to find Mr. Howlands waiting. The policemen interrogate Njoroge about Boro’s whereabouts, and eventually reveal that Jacobo has been murdered. They beat Njoroge mercilessly when he cannot give them any information. Eventually, they inform him that his father Ngotho has admitted the crime, and that they will castrate Njoroge if he does not confirm his father’s guilt. Njoroge refuses to say anything, and passes out when they put the pincers to his penis. Mr. Howlands then leaves, without saying anything. A few days later, Njoroge and his mothers are released from confinement.

Meanwhile, Ngotho writhes in pain in his hut, remembering recent events. The narrator is ambiguous about who actually killed Jacobo, but implies that Ngotho was not guilty. Nevertheless, Ngotho was pleased when he learned of his rival’s death, and he walked tall for the first time in years. However, Kamau was soon arrested for the murder, and Ngotho confessed to save his son. Mr. Howlands, who had come to consider Ngotho as a nemesis, interrogated him with such violence that even the other police officers were frightened.

Njoroge’s latest experiences finally break his optimism. He is overcome by guilt because he believes he has brought this “ill luck” on his family by associating with Mwihaki..

One night, he runs away from home. As he passes Jacobo’s house, he realizes he wants nothing more than to hold Mwihaki and run away with her. He sadly returns home because he knows he cannot leave either Mwihaki or his family. That night, he does not pray.

Chapter 16

Ngotho becomes desperately ill as he tries to recover from the wounds he received during torture. When Njoroge visits him, Ngotho rambles incoherently that the British have detained Kamau because they

want “young blood” (134) When Ngotho hears a knock at the door, he fears it is Mr. Howlands, but it turns out to be Boro, who is thin and unkempt after months of fighting and hiding in the woods.

Boro apologizes for not coming sooner, and Ngotho begs him not to leave the family again. However, Boro explains that he must continue to fight. He leaves, and Ngotho wishes him well, and then urges Njoroge to look after his mothers. As Boro walks out the door, Ngotho dies.

Chapter 17

Five months later, Njoroge works as a sales assistant in an Indian dress shop. He hates his job, and she is ashamed that his big dreams have amounted to nothing. Mr. Howlands died on the same day as Ngotho did, and Boro and Kamau have been charged with his murder.

The narrator recounts how Mr. Howlands died. After letting Ngotho go, he returned home to brood. Although he gave Ngotho wounds that would ultimately kill him, Mr. Howlands felt he had not yet received ultimate restitution. He was forced to let Ngotho go free because he found a notebook with Boro’s name on it at the crime scene.

Over time, Mr. Howlands gradually realized that Ngotho truly had nothing to do with the murders. In fact, he even thought Boro was merely covering for Kamau. Seeing Njoroge tortured shamed him, and he grew guilty with the remembrance of how he had once been an idealistic youth who was subsequently disillusioned by violence.

Boro entered Mr. Howlands’s house on the day Ngotho died, and admitted that it was he who killed Jacobo. Boro then accused Mr. Howlands of stealing the Gikuyu land and raping their women. Mr. Howlands responded that it was *his* land. Boro laughed at this claim and then shot Mr. Howlands, after which he surrendered himself to the home guards gathered outside.

In the present day, Njoroge sulks at his job, and his miserable mood frightens the children who come into the shop. His boss fires him, and he leaves to seek comfort from Mwihaki.

Chapter 18

Mwihaki receives a note from Njoroge asking to see her, but she is reluctant because of Njoroge’s association with her father’s murder. She was devastated when she learned that Jacobo was dead. Eventually, she agrees to meet Njoroge.

When he arrives, Njoroge apologizes for what happened to her father. Mwihaki believes that he could have warned her before the murder if he chose, but Njoroge insists that he knew nothing about it. Finally, he tells her that he loves her. Mwihaki confesses that she loves him too, and Njoroge proposes they run away to Uganda together, as she once proposed. However, Mwihaki insists they must stay because they have a duty to help make a brighter future for their people. She adds that she cannot leave her mother to be with him.

Njoroge feels forsaken by everything he once cared for – education, God, country, Mwihaki. He walks outside of the village, prepared to hang himself. At the last moment, Nyokabi appears, and urges him to come home. He feels guilty for shirking his father's last command, which was to take care of his mothers. As he walks home, a voice in his head calls him a coward for attempting suicide.

11.3 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Who owns the land that originally belonged to Ngotho's father?_____.
 - a. Mr. Howlands
 - b. Nyokabi
 - c. Nganga
 - d. Jacobo
2. Whom Mr. Howlands plans to leave his land to?_____.
 - a. Njoroge
 - b. Peter
 - c. Stephen
 - d. Ngotho
3. What does Mr. Howlands grow on his plantation?_____.
 - a. Tea
 - b. Sugar
 - c. Coffee
 - d. Vanilla
4. What does Memsahib enjoy doing?_____.
 - a. Reading romantic novels
 - b. Playing chess
 - c. Firing her husband's employees
 - d. Playing pranks on her husband's employees
5. Why does Ngotho believe the white men will eventually leave?_____.
 - a. The soil will soon become bad.
 - b. There will be another war.
 - c. It was prophesied.

- d. Their military power is limited.
6. Who teaches Njoroge to read?_____.
- a. Isaka
 - b. Nyokabi
 - c. Susan
 - d. Mwahiki
7. What did the Indian child try to give Njoroge?_____.
- a. A comic book
 - b. A coin
 - c. A fig
 - d. A piece of candy
8. Why does Kamau want to learn a trade?_____.
- a. He wants to impress Mwihaki.
 - b. He is passionate about carpentry.
 - c. He wants to follow in his father's footsteps.
 - d. He thinks it is the only way to make money.
9. Why does Mwihaki believe she will learn English before Njoroge does?_____.
- a. She hears English spoken at her father's job.
 - b. She is a year ahead of him in school.
 - c. She is going to enter a teaching program.
 - d. She is smarter than Njoroge.
10. How does Njoroge feel when Mwihaki offers to teach him English?_____.
- a. resentful
 - b. humiliated
 - c. pleased
 - d. confused
11. Why does Ngotho think education is important?_____.
- a. It will help the Giyuku get their land back.

- b. It enables people to travel.
 - c. It leads to a higher social status.
 - d. It enriches the soul.
12. Which of these statement best describes Nyokabi and Njeri's relationship?_____.
- a. They get along well, and share their chores.
 - b. They constantly bicker from jealousy.
 - c. They avoid each other as much as possible.
 - d. They secretly resent each other, but pretend to get along.
13. What is the 'hill' outside Ngotho's house made of?_____.
- a. crates
 - b. trash
 - c. stones
 - d. lumber
14. What big city can be seen from the 'hill'?_____.
- a. Nairobi
 - b. Machakos
 - c. Meru
 - d. Kipanga
15. Which biblical figure is Jomo compared to?_____.
- a. Jesus
 - b. Abraham
 - c. Moses
 - d. Isaac

11.4 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Why is Jacobo so successful? What does his success say about Kenyan society before the uprising?

Ans. Jacobo became wealthy by being the first (and only) African farmer allowed to grow pyrethrum, a lucrative flower used to make medicines and pesticides. Ngugi briefly mentions that he earned this position through the help of Mr. Howlands. This mention suggests that some degree of collaboration with the British

was necessary if Kenyans wished to advance in colonial society (This reading is reinforced by the curriculum at Njoroge's high school, which is more informed by European culture than by Kenyan culture). Therefore, Jacobo compromises with the British in order to achieve success. The novel suggests that the successful black men were compelled to choose the colonists over their own native Kenyans. This is a part of what makes him so despicable to those involved in the uprising.

2. Njoroge has deep faith that conditions in Kenya will improve, whereas Mwhaki becomes more pessimistic. Which of their view makes more sense to you? Why?

Ans. Njoroge's optimism helps him to maintain an adolescent normalcy despite the carnage around him. It allows him to stay innocent, to stay committed to his childish fancies of grandeur. Therefore, being optimistic in a situation like Njoroge's has practical as well as spiritual value. However, Ngugi seems to validate Mwhaki's point of view by the end of the novel, when Njoroge is finally overwhelmed by the atrocities around him, and tries to commit suicide. Notably, the two characters seem to reverse positions – by the end of the novel, Njoroge is hopeless, whereas Mwhaki feels duty-bound to stay in the country and do her best to re-establish it. Though Ngugi ultimately suggests the world will defeat optimism like Njoroge's, he also seems to prize it as worthwhile.

3. Discuss the relationship between Mr. Howlands and Ngotho.

Ans. Throughout the novel, Ngugi uses parallelism to highlight the similarities between Ngotho and his employer, Mr. Howlands. Both men face similar problems in running their families as both have a deep respect for the land; and both have similar views on justice and revenge. Because of these similarities, Mr. Howlands has difficulty pursuing Ngotho long after he has become a violent anti-rebellion crusader. They even die on the same day. Through this surprising pairing, Ngugi emphasizes that men on both sides of the conflict were driven by the same basic human motivations. The deterioration of their relationship over the years – from grudging respect to virulent hatred – also reflects the moral deterioration fighters on both sides of the uprising experienced as it became more violent.

4. Analyze the ending of *Weep Not, Child*. Does the book convey a message of hope?

Ans. The ending of *Weep Not, Child* is deeply ambivalent about whether the characters are justified in hoping for a better future for Kenya. On the one hand, the uprising has robbed Njoroge of his loved ones, his future, and his religious faith. His suicide attempt is the ultimate gesture of hopelessness, and considering his persistent optimism throughout much of the novel, the attempt suggests that the conditions in Kenya during this period had eroded even the most resilient spirit. However, Njoroge's final decision to carry on, to try and support his mothers, suggests that even if the Gikuyu people have been irreversibly traumatized, their sense of community and family loyalty will carry them into the future. They might not be happy or comfortable, but they will persevere.

11.5 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q.1. Discuss the character of Ngotho.

Ans _____

Q. 2. Comment on the Mau Mau freedom movement prevalent in Kenya.

Ans _____

Q. 3. Critically examine the stylistic and narrative techniques used by Nguigi wa Thiong'o in *Weep Not, Child*?

Ans _____

Q. 4. Critically analyse the importance of familial bonding as shown in *Weep Not, Child*.

Ans _____

Q. 5. How do Nghoto and Howlands perceive the land they inhabit in *Weep Not, Child*?

Ans _____

Q.6. Comment on the stylistic techniques used in *Weep Not, Child*.

Ans _____

11.6 LET US SUM UP

The lesson through a detailed summary illustrates how the circumstances gave rise to a strong uprising of Kenyan people against their white masters. And the deplorable condition of Kenyan people who are mercilessly punished for upholding their country's freedom struggle.

11.7 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. a. 2. c. 3.a. 4.c. 5. c. 6. a. 7. d. 8. d. 9. b. 10. a. 11. a. 12. a. 13. b. 14. a. 15. c.

11.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. “Ngugi wa’ Thiongo.” Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2012-12-02. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/413585/Ngugi-wa-Thiongo>>.
2. Zoe Norridge. “Why Ngugi wa Thiong’o should have won the Nobel prize for literature.” The Guardian. 2010-10-08. 2012-12-02.
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/booksblog/2010/oct/08/ngugi-wa-thiong-o-nobel-prize-literature>>.

WEEP NOT, CHILD

STRUCTURE

- 12.0 Objectives and Outcomes
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Themes in *Weep Not Child*
 - 12.2.1 Narrative Techniques
 - 12.2.2 Autobiographical Novel
 - 12.2.3 Symbols
- 12.3 Glossary
- 12.4 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 12.5 Self-Assessment Questions
- 12.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 12.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.8 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 12.9 Suggested Reading

Dear learner, after completing the reading of the detailed summary of Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *Weep Not, Child*, we will discuss the important thematic concerns along with the narrative techniques, symbols and autobiographical traces in *Weep Not, Child*.

12.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The objective of the lesson is to help the learner to gain an overview of the novel *Weep Not, Child* through various thematic concerns, narrative techniques, symbols and autobiographical traces. Further, a glossary is provided at the end of the lesson for the ease of the learner.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Ngugi wa Thiong'o is an eminent Kenyan writer. Along with Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka of Nigeria, he enjoys international stature and reputation as an African writer. Raised in British-ruled Kenya, he underscores the conflicts of European and traditional African cultures in his novels. Ngugi focuses on "politics, economics, culture, land, history and the role of the church in the Kenyan struggle for independence" (Addei, Osei, & Annin, 2013, p.164). In addition, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's first published novel, *Weep Not, Child*, traces the adolescence of a boy called Njoroge as his life begins to fall apart when Kenya is about to gain its independence.

12.2 THEMES IN *WEEP NOT, CHILD*

Grief

In some ways, grief is the primary driving force behind the action of *Weep Not, Child*. Boro is driven to join the Mau Mau to assuage his grief over his brother Mwangi's death in World War II. Ngotho's resentments are fueled by grief over losing his family's land to the British. Similarly, grief drives Njoroge's spiritual evolution. Nothing can weaken his faith in God until Ngotho dies, at which point Njoroge stops praying. Similarly, Jacobo's death prevents Njoroge from being with Mwihaki, because she must care for her mother. As the characters cope with the deaths of their loved ones, their overwhelming grief slowly dissolves into a sense of duty that allows them to overcome their misery. Although Njoroge is nearly driven to suicide by Mwihaki's rejection and his father's death, it is the necessity of caring for his mothers in the absence of his father finally saves him.

Social class

As Ngugi notes on several occasions, race is not the only obstacle that prevents the characters from pursuing their goals in life. They are arguably even more hampered by their social class. This applies to poor characters like Kamau, who must persist with the carpentry apprenticeship he dislikes in order to support his family. However, even upper-class characters find that their upbringing prevents them from being truly free. For example, Mwihaki's affection for Njoroge is held back by her family's wealth, and the expectations that come from that. Similarly, Stephen Howlands must attend boarding school in England even though he feels more at home in Kenya, and does not want to leave. Njoroge has a great hope that education will bridge the gap among different social groups, but circumstances cede his education before he can test that theory.

The land

Ngotho and Mr. Howlands share an overwhelmingly dedication to the land. At the center of their relationship is the central problem of the colonial presence in Kenya. Each has his own deep connection to the land. Land is an important part of Gikuyu culture, an indicator of a family. Mr. Howlands seems to have embodied some of this sentiment, despite his racism. However, 'land' does not refer only to the physical space used for living and farming. By the end of the novel, it has acquired a multi-dimensional meaning. In addition to Mr. Howlands's *shamba*, the concept of land has come to

include the people who live on it. In fact, Ngugi suggests that dispossessing people of their land is not enough to separate them from it; the connection is too strong: “When the time for Njoroge to leave [for secondary school] came near,” Ngugi writes, “many people contributed money so that he could go. He was no longer the son of Ngotho but the son of the land” (115). Land, with all its profundity, is what the Africans lost to the British, and what they are fighting to regain.

Love

One of the major questions that *Weep Not, Child* raises is whether love is a strong enough force to transcend suffering. The pure love between Njoroge and Mwihaki certainly proves pliant over the course of novel: “Her world and Njoroge’s world stood somewhere outside petty prejudices, hatreds and class differences,” Ngugi writes (97). However, the novel’s ending suggests that love may endure, but it cannot change a person’s circumstances. Although the two young people want to run away and live together in Uganda, they are ultimately bound by a stronger sense of duty to their parents and their country. Part of the story’s tragedy is that individual/self is helpless before greater forces beyond anyone’s control.

Infighting

Weep Not, Child is full of evidence that fighting between Africans was a major problem during the Mau Mau uprising. Ngugi suggests that some of it may have been justified; for instance, Jacobo is a truly villainous character, and we are meant to sympathize with Ngotho when he attacks him. However, Ngugi is very explicit about the fact that such infighting ultimately played into the hands of the British, driving wedges between Africans and making the conflict more violent than was necessary. The difference between the reputations of Jomo and Dedan Kimathi reveal how significant the ideological differences amongst Africans had become. When Njoroge and Stephen Howlands discuss the causes of prejudice, their insights offer a way for Africans to move beyond their differences and fight for the common good. The tragedy is that individual desires are often useless before larger social forces that in many ways hurt everyone.

Women’s role in society

Certain aspects of Gikuyu society, like polygamy, female circumcision and wife-beating are uncomfortable for readers. But despite the uncritical portrayal of these realities, *Weep Not, Child* is thoughtful about the role of women in a traditional society. Mwihaki’s failure to continue to high school is not a reflection on women’s abilities to succeed in general, but it highlights the difficulties that bright, motivated young women face if they try to pursue education. The narrator suggests that Mwihaki’s sense of obligation to her family, and the restrictive convent atmosphere of her school, prevented her from doing as well as she might have fared in congenial circumstances. Njoroge’s mothers, Nyokabi and Njeri, are other examples of strong women, although they occupy more traditional roles in society than Mwihaki or Lucia do. Njeri in particular shows a strong intellect and courage when she is arrested, and Nyokabi takes great initiative in arranging for Njoroge to attend school.

Together, the mothers show that women play equally important role in improving society as men do - provided they live under a relatively tolerant patriarch like Ngotho.

Family loyalty

Njoroge turns to many different sources of comfort- school, religion, and his love for Mwihaki as conditions deteriorate in his village. Yet the only force that stands between him and suicide at the end of the novel is his sense of duty to his mothers, who will be alone and destitute if he dies. Mwihaki rejects him because she, too, must care for her mother. For Ngugi, family loyalty is the ultimate bond. One of the primary challenges the characters in the novel face is deciding how to stay loyal to their family in conflict and contradictions. Boro is a particularly complex example of this. Ngotho orders him to stop fighting with the Mau Mau, but Boro feels he must continue in order to avenge his father's death, and to fight for a better future for his younger siblings. Whether to defend one's family by immediately providing or by fighting for their progeny (in terms of rebellion or, in Njoroge's case, education) is a question posed but not answered in the novel.

12.2.1 Narrative Techniques

Weep Not, Child uses a third person omniscient narrator to weave seamlessly through the perspectives of different characters, as well as providing objective description of events and settings. As the book is an exploration of a society at a given point in time, this style of narration provides the reader with access to the histories and points of view of people on different sides of the political spectrum. For example, we are told about Mr Howlands'. Similarly, Jacobo's statement to Njoroge that he will be needed to help rebuild the country echoes Njoroge's unexpressed belief in his own destiny as a savior.

4.2.2 Autobiographical Novel

Weep, Not Child (1964) has the most autobiographical elements among Ngugi's novels. It focuses on the period at the end of World War II and explains the causes of the Mau Mau struggle. Njoroge is the protagonist who is a bright student, a self-centered youth with mission-school education and messianic ambition. His hopes are destroyed when his brothers' involvement in Mau Mau forces him out of school. His father Ngotho has religious attachment to the land of his ancestors taken away from him by Mr. Howlands. Ngotho is the only a tenant farmer who works for the White settler Mr. Howlands. His son, Boro, who had fought the British in the World War II, returns home embittered by his experience, the death of his brother Mwangi in the war and the loss of their ancestral land. He despises the passive attitude of the elders and resolves to join the Mau Mau guerrillas. Jacobo is a betrayer of people who is killed by Boro. Ngotho offers himself to the authorities and confesses the murder. He is tortured and dies. Howlands is killed by Boro and finally he surrenders. The novel depicts all Ngugi's major themes - land, religion, leadership, and the travails of a people struggling against colonialism. Njorge's life and education so closely compared to that of the author. Ngugi's structuring of novel as a Bildungsroman

also a valid novelistic convention intended to invite readers to identify with the protagonist's struggle to establish his identity and to understand this aggressive world.

12.2.3 Symbols

In *Weep Not, Child*, the earth itself—and especially the land that white settlers stole from Ngotho's family—represents the difference between colonialist notions of ownership and the holistic, spiritual bond many Kenyans form with their farms. When Ngotho comes home from World War I to discover that white settlers have kicked his family members off their ancestral land, he puts his faith in a prophecy upholding that the white people will one day vacate the country. Biding his time until this day, he works for Mr. Howlands, who now owns the farm that used to belong to him. He does this simply because he wants to remain close to the land, since he feels a responsibility to maintain this stretch of earth. "He owed it to the dead, the living, and the unborn of his line to keep guard over this shamba," Ngugi writes, indicating that Ngotho's connection to the land has to do with his emotional and ancestral investment in the soil itself. In fact, he experiences the loss of his farm as a "spiritual loss," whereas Mr. Howlands sees the farmland as a "wild country" that he can "conquer." By contrasting these two worldviews, Ngugi uses the land to symbolize the vast cultural differences between Kenyans and the white settlers, ultimately showing that colonialism's obsession with land ownership arises out of a fundamental sense of greed and a total disregard not only for other people, but also for the earth.

Weep Not, Child symbolizes the disillusionment of the hero, Njoroge who suffers as a result of the imperialists and his dreams are frustrated. Another device Ngugi uses in his novels is motif. The dominant motifs that run through Ngugi's novels is the messianic or Saviour and land motifs.

4.3 GLOSSARY

Ahoi: **the singular form of muhoi**

Cassava: **an edible root that is used to make flour**

Gikuyu: **the largest tribe in Kenya, and at the time Ngugi wrote this novel, the most educated; most of the novel's characters are Gikuyu, which is also spelled Kikuyu**

Homeguard: **members of a volunteer militia**

Jovial: **friendly and lively**

KAU: **an acronym for the Kenyan African Union, a rebel group that was formed in 1942 and remained active until Kenya achieved independence in 1963; it is often contrasted with the more violent Mau Mau**

Kihii: **an uncircumcised man**

Kikuyu: **see Gikuyu**

Lorry: **a truck**

Muhoi: **people who rent the land on which they live and farm; similar to serfs**

ni wega: a Gikuyu expression meaning ‘all right’

njahi: a type of bean, popular in Eastern Africa and other parts of the world

njuka: a newcomer

panga: a large blade, similar to a machete

pyrethrum: a flower that grows in Kenya, and is used to make medicine and insecticides

rika: a generational group in Gikuyu society; all the youth in a given rika are circumcised at the same time, thereby determining their place in the community

serikali: the British colonial government of Kenya during the period detailed in this novel

shamba: a small holding of land used for agriculture

thingira: a hut where Gikuyu people gather to socialize and discuss current events

ustaarabu: a term for civilization

wiyathi: freedom

12.4 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. What surprises Njoroge about his high school? _____.

- a. The cruelty of his teachers
- b. Its diversity
- c. The difficulty of the curriculum
- d. The wealth of his classmates

2. Who does Njoroge meet at the football match?_____.

- a. Jacobo’s son John
- b. Jomo
- c. Stephen Howland
- d. Kamau

3. Who does Jacobo consult before ordering the arrest of Ngotho’s sons?_____.

- a. Ngotho
- b. Dedan Kimathi

c. The British police

d. Mr. Howlands

3. What are Kori and Njeri arrested for?_____.

a. Breaking curfew

b. Tax Evasion

c. Possessing Hashism

d. Joining mau mau

4. Who visits Njoroge's class?_____.

a. Jacobo

b. Mr. Howlands's daughter

c. Ngotho

d. Mr. Howlands

5. Why does Lucia get angry at her students?_____.

a. They do not do their homework

b. They cannot do multiplication

c. They are rowdy

d. They had problem with grammar

12.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. How does Njoroge's relationship with Mwihaki change over time? How does their relationship relate to the novel's broader political plot?

Ans. Njoroge and Mwihaki are close even before the book begins. Their childhood friendship persists despite their different social backgrounds. At times, they consider themselves to be siblings, but by the end of the novel, their love becomes romantic. Their relationship's purity and goodness demonstrates that real love can endure despite extremely difficult circumstances – and thus, it shows how the devastated Gikuyu people might find a way out of their country's state of violence and disorder. The fact that the political violence indirectly prevents them from being together also illustrates the heavy cost of the rebellion for average people who had nothing to do with it. Overall, the relationship between the characters celebrates the human spirit, and condemns the social factors that often inhibit that spirit.

2. Analyze Boro. What motivates him? Is he a sympathetic character?

Ans. Most of Ngogho's children are driven by a sense of duty to provide for their family. Kori pursues this through his job at the tea shop, Kamau through carpentry, and Njoroge through education. Boro, on the other hand, lost such a drive when his brother Mwangi died during their time serving in World War II. Although Ngugi is not as explicit about Boro's past as he is about those of Ngogho and Njoroge, he does convey the sense that Boro was swept into the war against his will, and has been permanently damaged by it. During the novel, his only motivation is to avenge Mwangi's death by fighting the British and their African supporters (like Jacobo). This motivation often forces him to prioritize the cause of rebellion over the immediate needs of his own family. His focus on vengeance certainly contrasts with the purity of characters like Njoroge and Mwihaki, but Ngugi provides enough contexts for readers to empathize. As he does with many characters, Ngugi explores how social conditions can often dampen and limit an individual's potential, make Boro into something he does not want to be. Therefore, the novel both criticizes and empathizes with Boro.

3. Who is Mwihaki father?

Ans. Jacobo, Mwihaki's father, is a wealthy chief and pyrethrum farmer. He was, in fact, the first African to be allowed to grow the crop. He owns the land that Ngogho and his family live on, and he works against the Mau Mau uprising. Jacobo has good reason for his fear; the uprising not only affects his business, but also affects his livelihood. In the end, fear is a result of change and circumstance. He is not afraid to die but he is afraid of the repercussions of violence and the anger of his people. In the end, Jacobo is killed.

4. Describe the relationship between Mwihaki and Njoroge. Is it love or friendship?

Ans. Mwihaki and Njoroge's relationship begins as friendship, and over time, their feelings are transformed into love and thoughts of the future. When Njoroge pledges his love, Mwihaki too wants to be with him but she is torn between familial duty and the hope that things will get better. She walks away from her love: "she crying, and although, this does not mean forever . . . Njoroge is overcome with guilt and feelings of loss . . . he then decides to take his own life (his mothers stop him)". Thus, toward the end of the novel, Mwihaki and Njoroge's story is at a standstill

12.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q.1. Discuss the various thematic concerns in the novel *Weep Not, Child*.

Ans _____

Q. 2. Comment on the conflict between the choice of love and responsibility as depicted by Njoroge and Mwihaki.

Ans _____

Q. 3. Critically analyse the role played by women in Kenyan society.

Ans

Q. 4. How does Mau Mau movement impact the career of Njoroge.

Ans

Q.5. Comment on the narrative style of the novel *Weep Not, Child*.

Ans

Q.6. Which character you like the most in the novel *Weep Not, Child* and why?

Ans

12.6 LET US SUM UP

Dear Learner, in this section we have read the various thematic concerns along with narrative techniques, autobiographical traces and symbols in the novel *Weep Not, Child*. *Weep Not, Child* is a moving novel about the effects of the Mau Mau uprising on the lives of ordinary men and women in general, and on one family in particular in Kenya. Two brothers, Njoroge and Kamau, stand on a garbage heap and look into their futures: Njoroge is to attend school, while Kamau will train to be a carpenter. But this is Kenya, and the times are against them. In the forests, the Mau Mau is waging war against the white government, and the two brothers and their family need to decide where their loyalties lie. For the practical Kamau, the choice is simple, but for Njoroge the scholar, the dream of progress through learning is a hard one to give up. The novel highlights the divisions between the whites and blacks but more so the divisions amongst the locals, the success of the divide and conquer strategy of the English and the various tragedies as each group struggles for dominance.

12.7 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. a. 2. c. 3. d. 4. d. 5. d.

12.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. “Kenya profile.” BBC News. 2012-12-03. 2012-12-08. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13682176>>.
2. Eric W. Brown. “The Early Days of the Mau Mau Insurrection.” 1988-01-01. 2012-12-08. <<http://www.ccs.neu.edu/home/feneric/maumau.html>>.
3. Gabriel Gatehouse. “Mau Mau struggle for recognition at home and abroad.” BBC News. 2012-10-05. 2012-12-08. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-19852463>>.
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KHALED HOSSEINI: LIFE AND WORKS

- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Objectives
- 13.3 Historical Background
- 13.4 Author's Biography
- 13.5 Author's Works
- 13.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 13.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.8 Suggested Reading

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the events of 11 September 2001, international attention has been focused on Afghanistan and its political situation. This novel gives an insight into the path that has led to Afghanistan's current position and attempts to explore some of the less-well-known aspects of the country's cultural life. Although large sections of *The Kite Runner* are set in the USA, the novel is intimately tied up with the culture of Afghanistan and its ethnic and religious groups, both as they exist in Afghanistan itself, and also as they exist in the wider world where Afghan refugees have congregated.

13.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of the lesson is to introduce the learner author Khaled Hosseini, his background and his works.

13.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Afghanistan has historically been the link between Central Asia, the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent. It is, therefore, a nation that has been through innumerable invasions, experienced migrations and has been influenced by many cultures. Within its borders there are at least a dozen major ethnic groups – Baluch, Chahar Aimak, Turkmen, Hazara, Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Nuristani, Arab, Kirghiz, Pashai and Persian. Historically the Pashtun nationality has been the most dominant, with 50 per cent of the total population, including the royal families of the country, while Tajiks come in second with 25 per cent. The rest make up

considerably smaller percentages. Within the country there are tiny Hindu, Sikh and Jewish communities. But the vast majority is of Muslims and, in fact, many ethnic groups consider Islam to be one of the defining aspects of their ethnic identity.

Islam, it is believed, was brought to Afghanistan during the 8th and 9th centuries by the Arabs. Prior to that, the nation had been ruled by various Persian, Greek, Sassanian and Central Asian empires. Following a subsequent break down in Arab rule, semi-independent states began to form. These local dynasties and states, however, were overwhelmed and crushed during the Mongolian invasions of the 1200s – conquerors who were to remain in control of part or all of the country until the 1500s, despite much resistance and internal strife. Following the collapse of Mongol rule, Afghanistan found itself in a situation much like what has continued into modern times – caught between the vice of two great powers. During this time it was the Mughals of northern India and the Safavids of Iran that fought over the mountains and valleys of Afghanistan. Armies marched to and fro devastating the land and murdering the people, laying siege to city after city, and destroying whatever had been left by the invading army that preceded it. It was not until 1747 that Afghanistan was able to free itself. This was the year that Nadir Shah, an empire builder from Iran, died and left a vacuum in central Asia that a former Afghan bodyguard, named Ahmed Shah, was able to fill. Ahmad was a Pashtun, and his Pashtun clan was to rule Afghanistan, in one form or another, for the next 200 years.

Ahmad was able to unify the different Afghan tribes, and went on to conquer considerable parts of what are today eastern Iran, Pakistan, northern India and Uzbekistan. His successors though proved unable to hold his vast empire together, and within 50 years much of it had been seized by rival regional powers. Within the country there were numerous bloody civil wars for the throne, and for many Afghans it meant little that their lives were now being uprooted and destroyed by ethnic kin, as opposed to foreign invaders. Beginning in the 1800s, Afghanistan's internal affairs became dramatically aggravated by the increasing intervention by two new imperialist powers – the British Empire and Czarist Russia. The two great powers essentially engaged in a race for Afghanistan, and their fiendish seizures of land, overthrow of indigenous nations and reckless interference into the affairs of the remaining independent states in the region became known as “the Great Game”. On two separate occasions, British armies from India outright invaded Afghanistan in attempts to install puppet governments amenable to British economic interests, and that would oppose the economic interests of Czarist Russia. The first, which became known as the First Anglo-Afghan War, took place in 1838. The British seized most of the major cities in Afghanistan with little resistance, but their heavy handed rule soon resulted in a popular uprising by the people which resulted in the massacre of the entire British army of 15,000. British outrage over the uninvited arrival of a Russian diplomatic envoy in Kabul in 1878 resulted in the Second Anglo-Afghan War. They did subsequently withdraw, but not before they set up a puppet ruler and forced the country to hand over control of its foreign affairs to Britain. Afghanistan would remain a British protectorate until 1919. Then, following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the wave of popular rebellions that rippled through Asia subsequently, the then king of Afghanistan, Amanullah, declared his country's full independence by signing a treaty of aid and friendship with Lenin, and declaring war on Britain. After a brief period of border skirmishes, and the bombing of Kabul by the Royal Air Force, Britain conceded Afghanistan's independence. However, an outbreak of an uprising and

civil war forced him to abdicate in 1929. Different warlords contended for power until a new king, Muhammad Nadir Shah took power. He was assassinated four years later by the son of a state execution victim, and was succeeded by Muhammad Zahir Shah, who was to be Afghanistan's last king, and who would rule for the next 40 years. Zahir Shah's rule, like the kings before him, was one of almost total autocratic power. In 1973, the king was overthrown by a prominent member of his own family, Daoud, who decided to title himself president instead of king, and a republic was declared. Daoud liberalization indeed took place but by and large whatever hopes and expectations arose among the people – little was done to satisfy them. Daoud had seized power with the help of an underground party named the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan – a pro-Moscow communist party. In 1978, the PDPA seized power from Daoud in a military coup. After seizing power they began a series of limited reforms, such as declaring, more or less, a secular state, and that women were deserving of equal treatment of men. They sought to curtail the practice of purchasing brides, and tried to implement a land reform programme. They quickly met with fierce opposition from many sections of the deeply religious population though. The PDPA's response to this was very heavy-handed, aggravating the situation. Soon several rural areas rose in open armed rebellion against the new government. At the same time, the party's long history of factionalism came to a bloody head as the more radical wing of the party sought to wipe out the more moderate leaning wing. Immediately following the PDPA coup, the Soviet Union took an active interest in the so-called socialist revolution unfolding in its backyard. Dismayed by the clumsiness of the radical faction of the PDPA, the Soviet Union invaded in 1979 and handed power over to a man named Karmal, who was the leader of the more moderate faction of the PDPA. Several Islamic fundamentalist groups sprang up and began waging guerilla warfare, many of them operating from camps set up by the CIA and Pakistani Intelligence within Pakistan, from which they could strike into Afghanistan, and then beat a hasty retreat over a guarded border. For its part, the United States government initially paid little attention to the PDPA coup in Afghanistan; its attention was instead focused to the west, where a popular revolution has overthrown their most valuable Middle East ally, the brutal and autocratic Shah of Iran. This changed of course, once the Soviet Union sent troops into Afghanistan. At that point the United States took an active interest in the Islamic fundamentalists waging war on the PDPA and the Soviets. The CIA began providing military training to the Mujahadeen – the name the Islamic guerillas came to be called. In 1989 the Soviets withdrew, leaving the PDPA government to fend for itself. The CIA soon lost interest in its mercenary forces now that they had accomplished their mission of bleeding the Soviets. The Mujahadeen factions began fighting as much with themselves as with the PDPA forces, resulting in increased suffering and bloodshed. It wasn't until 1992 that Mujahadeen fighters were able to topple the remnants of the PDPA government – ending the Stalinists attempts to bring revolution to the people of Afghanistan at the point of a gun. Different Mujahadeen warlords occupied different cities and regions of the country. The collapse of the PDPA government did not mark the end of Afghanistan's civil war. The Mujahadeen warlords continued to bring death and destruction upon the country as they fought over the spoils, and sought to enlarge their new fiefdoms at the expense of their neighboring rivals.

Seeking to end the civil war which threatened the stability of their own country – itself a prison house of many nationalities where Pakistani Intelligence aided in the creation of a new Islamic fundamentalist movement, the Taliban. The Taliban was born in the Islamic schools that had sprung up inside the Afghan

refugee camps inside Pakistan. Its leadership and the bulk of its initial ranks, were made up of young religious students, primarily Pashtuns, motivated by the zeal of religion and the belief that they were ordained to bring stability and the ways of Allah back to their war torn land. They railed against the corruption, greed and factionalism of the contending Mujahadeen factions inside Afghanistan, and when they mounted a military push to conquer the country, they were initially well received by certain sections of the weary population. In 1996 they captured the capital city of Kabul, and had forced most of the remaining warlords into a small pocket in the far north of the country. These warlords subsequently formed a defensive alliance termed as the Northern Alliance.

Once in power the Taliban sought to create a theocratic state based on their interpretations of the *Koran*. The country became politically and diplomatically isolated. Then, following the September 11 World Trade Center bombings, the United States accused Osama Bin Laden of the crime. Bin Laden, who had left Afghanistan following the defeat of the Soviets, had returned after falling out of favour in Saudi Arabia, and being pressured to leave his first nation of refuge, the Sudan. The US government demanded that the Taliban hand over Bin Laden. The Taliban's response was to demand proof of Bin Laden's guilt, and after receiving none, they refused to hand him over. Within a few weeks the United States began bombing the impoverished country, as well as providing active support to the Northern Alliance warlords. Following weeks of devastating bombing, and several failed offensives, the Northern Alliance succeeded in breaking out of its northern enclave, seizing the city of Mazar-E-Sharif, and then moving on to take Kabul.

13.4 AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Khaled Hosseini was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, on March 4, 1965, and was the oldest of five children. Just as he describes in *The Kite Runner*, Kabul was a cosmopolitan city at the time. Western culture, including movies and literature, mixed with Afghan traditions, such as kite fighting in the winter. Lavish parties were normal at the Hosseini family's home in the upper-middle class neighbourhood of Wazir Akbar Khan. Hosseini's father served as a diplomat with the Afghan Foreign Ministry, and his mother taught Farsi and history at a local high school for girls. Then, in 1970, the Foreign Ministry sent his father to Iran. While the family only spent a few years there, Hosseini taught a Hazara man, who worked as a cook for the family, how to read and write. By this time, Khaled Hosseini was already reading Persian poetry as well as American novels, and he began writing his own short stories.

Repeated moves marked the next decade of the Hosseini family's life. They returned to Kabul in 1973, the year Mohammad Daoud Khan, overthrew his cousin, Zahir Shah, the Afghan King, in a coup d'état. The Afghan Foreign Ministry relocated the Hosseini family to Paris in 1976. They hoped to return to Afghanistan in 1980 but that was not possible because of military invasion by the Soviet Union. Instead, the Hosseinis moved to San Jose, California after they were granted political asylum in the United States. Khaled Hosseini went on to graduate from high school in 1984 and attended Santa Clara University, where he received his bachelor's degree in Biology in 1988. In 1993, he earned his Medical degree from University of California, San Diego, School of Medicine, and in 1996 he completed his residency at Cedars-Sinai medical Center in Los Angeles, making him a full-fledged doctor.

13.5 AUTHOR'S WORKS

The Kite Runner was published in 2003, immediately becoming an international bestseller. The novel was published in 70 countries, however, never in Afghanistan. While some parts of the novel are based on Hosseini's childhood, the novel is otherwise a work of fiction. It was also produced as an audio book recorded in Hosseini's voice. In 2007, *The Kite Runner* was adapted to screen bearing the same title as the novel. Hosseini made a brief appearance in a scene towards the end of the movie.

A Thousand Splendid Suns is Hosseini's second novel and revolves around the relationship between two women. It was released in 2007. Mariam lives in the small village of Gul Daman with her mother. She is the illegitimate daughter of Jalil, a wealthy businessman who lives in the nearby city of Herat. After her mother's suicide, she is sent to live with Jalil. Jalil and his wives quickly marry Mariam off to a shoemaker named Rasheed, and the newlyweds move to Kabul, where Mariam becomes pregnant. Sadly, Mariam miscarries. Rasheed is furious and becomes abusive.

Across Kabul (and in a galaxy far, far away...) a girl named Laila is born on the same night when the Soviets take control of Afghanistan. Her best friend (and love interest) is Tariq, a neighborhood boy who lost a leg when he was a child. With the war worsening, Tariq's family decides to leave for Pakistan, and he and Laila consummate their relationship the night before he leaves. Laila's family decides to leave soon but her parents are killed by a stray rocket as they're packing up the car.

Rasheed and Mariam care for Laila as she recovers. A man comes by and tells Laila that he saw Tariq die in a hospital. Rasheed, being the dirt ball that he is, uses this as an opportunity to ask Laila to marry him. Surprisingly, she says yes. It turns out that she's pregnant with Tariq's child. Her plan is to convince Rasheed that the child is his, and then escape to Pakistan after she's saved enough money.

Mariam resents Laila at first, but she eventually becomes close to Laila and her new daughter, Aziza. Laila tells Mariam about her plan to escape, and Mariam decides to join them. They eventually go through with the plan, but they're arrested before they can leave and are sent home with Rasheed. He is so furious that he almost kills them.

Laila and Rasheed have a son named Zalmai. After Rasheed's shop burns to the ground and the family goes broke, he forces Laila to send Aziza to a nearby orphanage. One day, after visiting Aziza, Laila returns home to find a very surprising guest: it's Tariq. It turns out the man who had come by all those years ago was hired by Rasheed to trick Laila. Laila tells Tariq about Aziza, and he promises that he will meet her the following day.

Rasheed starts to beat Laila that night when he finds out about Tariq. Mariam ends up killing Rasheed to protect Laila. Mariam remains in Kabul to take the blame and is executed by the Taliban. Laila, Tariq, and the kids move to Tariq's home in Murree, where life is comfortable. After the U.S. invasion, however, Laila decides to return to Kabul.

Before returning home, Laila stops in Herat, Mariam's hometown. She visits Mariam's childhood home, and receives a box from the local Mullah's son that was meant for Mariam. It's from her father Jalil. It

contains a long letter, as well as her share of his inheritance. Laila uses the money to renovate the orphanage in Kabul, and we learn at the close of the book that she is pregnant with a new child.

And the Mountains Echoed, is more of a family drama that examines the factors that lead to and reverberate from one action: a poor family sells their youngest daughter to a wealthy couple in Kabul. Set in Afghanistan the novel spans over fifty years and four generations. Hosseini includes several narrative voices, rather than just the story's main family. The multiple narrators provide several different angles into the grand narrative of the main family, but they also examine their own context and the motives behind their choices in their life. The reader will notice many similarities between the "unconnected" narrators to the main characters – the members of the family are part of the grand narrative.

The story begins with Saboor and his two children, Abdullah and Pari, taking a journey to Kabul. Although the children are unaware of the reason of the trip, they willingly follow their father and their uncle Nabi to the Wahdati household. Abdullah recognizes Mrs. Wahdati who had visited their home earlier. Their uncle Nabi works for them. Because they are poor, and because Saboor had already lost a son due to the cold of last winter, he is convinced by Nabi that selling Pari to the Wahdati family (who cannot have children of their own) is the best idea for all of them involved. Saboor's family will get financial help, will have one less mouth to feed, and the Wahdatis will have a child. However, Abdullah and Pari are incredibly close and their separation is horrific and life changing.

Nila and Suleiman Wahdati have a loveless marriage. Suleiman is secretly in love with Nabi, his servant and Pari's and Abdullah's uncle, and Nila is a troubled soul. Despite acquiring Pari into her life, once Suleiman suffers a stroke, Nila feels unhappy and unfulfilled enough to leave him and move to Paris, taking Pari with her. Although we do not learn much about Pari's upbringing we can sense that Nila withheld a lot of information from Pari and so, Pari feels a large void in her life. Pari eventually marries, has three children and is widowed in her late forties. A phone call from a Mr. Markos in Afghanistan reveals a lot of her past, as he reads her a letter left behind by Nabi, her estranged uncle.

Pari Wahdati arranges a trip to Afghanistan and after seeing her childhood home (the Wahdatis') remembers several things, but is still plagued with loss. The strong absence she has always felt in her life is the loss of connection with her brother Abdullah. Once she learns of his existence, she searches for him and finds him in the United States.

Her niece, Abdullah's daughter, also named Pari, like her aunt Pari, is suffering from a missing piece in her life as well, absorbed from her father's loss of his sister. When the two women meet, they feel like their life stories are finally complete and a much deeper understanding of themselves and where they "fit" into place. Unfortunately, both Abdullah and Pari suffer from big gaps in their memory and so their reunion is not as satisfying as the reader may have hoped. However, she is content in knowing that Abdullah had been thinking of her all of these years, and now knows that the missing pieces in her life have been fulfilled.

Having set his novels in Afghanistan, Hosseini's devotion to his homeland extends beyond his writings. His activism for a better Afghanistan is proof of his love for the country. Since 2006, Hosseini has served as

a goodwill ambassador to the United Nations Refugee Agency, UNHCR. His official website also contains information and links to many aid organizations helping Afghanistan in addition to The Khaled Hosseini Foundation, which provides humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. The foundation came into being after a trip Hosseini made to Afghanistan in 2007. Having gone there for the first time in twenty-seven years, Hosseini was immensely disturbed to discover the situation of the country he was born in.

13.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. Briefly discuss the historical background of Afghanistan.
- Q2. “Violence punctuates the life of ordinary people in Afghanistan”. Discuss.

13.7 LET US SUM UP

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini deals with the country of Afghanistan from 1970s to the year 2002. Like all places, Afghanistan has a long and complicated history, but it came to international attention only after the coup of 1973. The story of *The Kite Runner* is fictional, but it is rooted in real political and historical events ranging from the last days of the Afghan monarchy in the 1970s to the post-Taliban near present. It is also based on Hosseini’s memories of growing up in the Wazir Akbar Khan section of Kabul and adapting to life in California.

13.8 SUGGESTED READING

- 1. Stuhr, Rebecca. *Reading Khaled Hosseini*. California: Greenwood Press, 2009. Print
- 2. Hosseini, Khaled. *And the Mountains Echoed*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013, Print.

THE KITE RUNNER

- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Objectives
- 14.3 *The Kite Runner*: The Context
- 14.4 *The Kite Runner*: The Plot
- 14.5 Glossary
- 14.6 Excerpts from Interviews
- 14.7 Self-Assessment Questions
- 14.8 Examination Oriented Questions
- 14.9 Answer Key
- 14.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 14.11 Suggested Reading

14.1 INTRODUCTION

Novelist Khaled Hosseini came to the United States as a 15-year-old Afghan asylum seeker who knew only a few words of English. Today, he is a doctor, a United Nations goodwill ambassador, and author of three internationally acclaimed books.

14.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of the lesson is to acquaint the learners with Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. This would help the learners to analyse *The Kite Runner* and objective of author behind writing this novel.

14.3 *The Kite Runner*: The Context

Khaled Hosseini acknowledges that the Afghanistan he knew as a child inspired *The Kite Runner*. Like his main character, Amir, Khaled Hosseini enjoyed Western films and kite fighting. He also lived in pre-revolutionary Afghanistan that had not yet been ravaged by the Soviet invasion and subsequent Taliban rule. In 2003 in the interview with *Newsline*, Khaled Hosseini said that the passages in the book most resembling his life are those of Amir and Baba as immigrants in the United States. When Hosseini arrived

in California, they had difficulty adjusting to the new culture, and for a short time his family lived on welfare. He also remembers the local flea market where he and his father worked briefly among other Afghans, just as Amir and Baba did in the book.

Although the period of adjustment passed and Khaled Hosseini became a successful practicing doctor in 1996, he felt deeply influenced by what he recalled of his homeland, and he began writing *The Kite Runner* in March 2001. Two years later, in the midst of the U.S. war in Afghanistan, Riverhead Books published the book. *The Kite Runner* became an international bestseller, with more than eight million copies in print. It also received the Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writers Award, and the Literature to Life Award. In 2007, it was made into a feature film. The movie encountered some problems. The children who played Hassan, Amir and Sohrab, and a fourth boy with a smaller role, had to be moved out of the country. Hassan's rape scene in the film, along with Sohrab's abuse at the hands of the Taliban, put the young actors and their families in possible danger, as some Afghans found the episode insulting. In May 2007, Khaled Hosseini published his second book, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, which also became a bestseller.

Khaled Hosseini's literature also changed his personal life. After nearly twenty-seven years, he returned to Afghanistan to see what had become of his country and his people. Like Amir, he was able to find his father's old home, but he also recognized that war and brutality destroyed the place where he grew up. His efforts to bring attention to the plight of fugees earned him the Humanitarian Award from the United Nations Refugee Agency in 2006, and he became a US goodwill envoy to the organization. It was during a 2007 trip as an envoy that he was inspired to start his own non-profit group. He created the Khaled Hosseini Foundation, which funds projects to empower vulnerable groups in Afghanistan, such as women and children. Today, Khaled Hosseini writes full-time. He continues to live in Northern California with his wife, Roya, and their two children.

14.4 *The Kite Runner*: The Plot

The Kite Runner is the story of Amir, a Sunni Muslim, who struggles to find his place in the world because of the aftereffects and fallout from a series of traumatic childhood events. An adult Amir opens the novel in the present-day United States with a vague reference to one of these events, and then the novel flashes back to Amir's childhood in Afghanistan. In addition to typical childhood experiences, Amir struggles with forging a closer relationship with his father, Baba; with determining the exact nature of his relationship with Hassan, his Shia Muslim servant; and eventually with finding a way to atone for pre-adolescent decisions that have lasting repercussions. Along the way, readers are able to experience growing up in Afghanistan in a single-parent home, a situation that bears remarkable similarities to many contemporary households.

One of the biggest struggles for Amir is learning to navigate the complex socio-economic culture he faces, growing up in Afghanistan as a member of the privileged class yet not feeling like a privileged member of his own family. Hassan and his father, Ali, are servants, yet at times, Amir's relationship with them is more like that of family members. And Amir's father, Baba, who does not consistently adhere to the tenets of his culture, confuses rather than clarifies things for young Amir. Many of the ruling-class elite in Afghanistan view the world as black and white, yet Amir identifies many shades of gray.

In addition to the issues affecting his personal life, Amir must also contend with the instability of the Afghan political system in the 1970s. In a crucial episode, which takes place during an important kite flying tournament, Amir decides not to act—he decides not to confront bullies and aggressors when he has the chance and this conscious choice of inaction sets off a chain reaction that leads to guilt, lies, and betrayals. Eventually, because of the changing political climate, Amir and his father are forced to flee Afghanistan. Amir views coming to America as an opportunity to leave his past behind.

Although Amir and Baba toil to create a new life for themselves in the United States, the past is unable to stay buried. When it rears its ugly head, Amir is forced to return to his homeland to face the demons and decisions of his youth, with only a slim hope to make amends.

Ultimately, *The Kite Runner* is a novel about relationships specifically the relationships between Amir and Hassan, Baba, Rahim Khan, Soraya, and Sohrab, and how the complex relationships in our lives overlap and connect to make us the people we are.

14.5 GLOSSARY

Agha: Great lord; nobleman; commander; Mister

Ahmaq: Foolish, stupid, awkward; a greater or the greatest fool

Al hamdullellah: Thanks to God

Attan: A Pashtun tribal dance performed on festive occasions and as a physical exercise in the army. It is performed to the ever-faster rhythm of drums, the tribesmen's long hair whipping in unison, and is often continued to exhaustion. In some respects it resembles the dance of the "whirling dervishes" of the Ottoman empire. Although Pashtun in origin, it has also been adopted by other ethnic groups as the Afghan national dance.

Awroussi: Wedding ceremony

Azan: The call to prayer, five times a day, by the muezzin from the door of a mosque or a minaret of a large mosque

Bachem: Word meaning "my child" or "my baby"

Bakhshida: Pardoned (by God)

Bazarris: Merchants; people or workers from Bazzars

Biwa: Widow

Bolani: Afghan dish consisting of flat bread stuffed with foods such as potatoes or leeks

Burqa: A women's outer garment that covers them from head to toe, including the face. Now rarely worn outside of Afghanistan.

Buzkashi: An Afghan national game meaning "goat-pulling" and is played on horseback by two opposing teams who use the carcass of a calf (goat was used in former days) as their object of competition. The

purpose is to lift up the carcass from the center of a circle, carry it around a point some distance away, and put it again in its original place. All this has to be done on horseback and the chapandaz, expert player, must try to keep possession of the headless carcass. Cash prizes are given to the player who scores a goal and to the winning team.

Chapan: A traditional coat for men popular among the Turkic population of northern Afghanistan, but worn also by other Afghans. It is a long, buttonless caftan with knee-length sleeves which in warm weather is worn open with a sleeve thrown over a shoulder. In cold weather fur-lined or quilted chapans are worn, tied around the waist with a cummerbund. It comes in various colors, often striped, and is fashioned of cotton or silk.

Chapandaz: A “master” horseman in the Buzkashi competition

Chopan kabob: Pieces of lamb chops marinated and broiled on a skewer

Diniyat: Religion, religious

Hazara: A term describing the Hazara people, an ethnic minority originating in the mountainous region of Afghanistan called Hazarajat. Characterized by their mongoloid facial features, adherence to Shia Islam, and long history of persecution.

Hypochondriac: One who is consistently and habitually convinced that he is ill when he is not.

Dozd: Bandit

Dostet darum: I love you

Hijab: Veil

Iftikhar: Honour

Ihtiram: Veneration, honor, reverence, respect

INS: Immigration and Nationalization Service of the United States of America. Formerly, the government agency that oversaw immigration issues. Now the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Mazar-i-Sharif: A large city in Afghanistan famous for its Blue Mosque. The Taliban massacred the Hazara population there in 1998.

Mujahedin: A term used to describe a group of Muslims engaged in a war or conflict. In this novel, it describes the Afghanistan Mujahedin Freedom Fighters Front, which challenged the Soviet forces and later lost against the PDPA (People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan) government.

Pashtun: An ethnic group forming a majority in Afghanistan and surrounding areas. Characterized by adherence to Sunni Islam as well as Pashtunwali, an ancient code of tradition.

Shia Islam: The second largest denomination of the Islamic faith. Shia Islam believes that the teachings of Muhammad were carried through his descendants and do not accept the caliphate.

Shorawi: The Farsi term for the Soviets, who invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and occupied the country for a decade.

Sunni Islam: The largest denomination of Islam. Sunni Islam accepts the caliphate, meaning that it considers the Caliph or head of a Muslim state a successor to Muhammad.

Wazir Akbar Khan: The neighborhood in Kabul where Amir and Hassan grew up.

14.6 EXCERPTS FROM INTERVIEWS

• What experiences inspired the storyline for *The Kite Runner*?

Well, the storyline itself was fairly fictional, although, you know, I was watching a news story in the spring of 1999 on television, and this news story was about the Taliban. And it was talking about all the different impositions that the Taliban had placed on the Afghan people. And at some point along the line, it mentioned that they had banned the sport of kite flying, which kind of struck a personal chord for me, because as a boy I grew up in Kabul with all my cousins and friends flying kites.

So I sat down after that news story and wrote a 25-page short story about two boys in Kabul flying kites, and it became this kind of a much darker, more involved tale than I had anticipated. A couple of years later, in March of 2001, I rediscovered the short story in my garage, essentially, and it kind of became the inspiration for the novel. And I kind of sat down and began expanding the short story into a book, which eventually became, *The Kite Runner*, the novel.

***The Kite Runner* is such a vivid portrayal of Afghanistan. How much of it is autobiographical, how much of it is fiction?**

Hosseini: Like any other first time novelist who writes a novel in the first person, those first books, as you know, tend to be a little more autobiographical than the subsequent ones. It's not a memoir by any stretch of imagination, although I have surprisingly a hard time convincing some of my readers of that. You know, there are some parallels within my life and the life of the boy in *The Kite Runner*. I grew up in Kabul in the same era, I went to the same school, we both were kind of precocious writers, we both love film, loved those early Westerns of the '60s and '70s. We love poetry and reading and writing from a young age, both me and this character. And both of us left Afghanistan and became political refugees in the U.S., and probably the sections in the book that resemble my life more than any other are the ones in the Bay Area, where Amir and his father are selling the goods at the flea market and socializing with other Afghans who left Afghanistan. I did that with my father. We would go to the flea market to sell some junk, and we just socialized with other Afghans. So there is quite a bit of me in the book. The story line itself, what happens between the boys and the fallout from that, that just — that is all imagination.

The Kite Runner helped alter the world's perception of Afghanistan, by giving millions of readers their first real sense of what the Afghan people and their daily lives are actually like. Your new novel includes the main events in Afghanistan's history over the past three decades, from the communist revolution to the Soviet invasion to the U.S.-led war against the Taliban. Do you feel a special responsibility to inform the world about your native country, especially given the current situation

there and the prominent platform you've gained?

Hosseini: For me as a writer, the story has always taken precedence over everything else. I have never sat down to write with broad, sweeping ideas in mind, and certainly never with a specific agenda. It is quite a burden for a writer to feel a responsibility to represent his or her own culture and to educate others about it. For me it always starts from a very personal, intimate place, about human connections, and then expands from there. What intrigued me about this new book were the hopes and dreams and disillusion of these two women, their inner lives, the specific circumstances that bring them together, their resolve to survive, and the fact that their relationship evolves into something meaningful and powerful, even as the world around them unravels and slips into chaos. But as I wrote, I witnessed the story expanding, becoming more ambitious page after page. I realized that telling the story of these two women without telling, in part, the story of Afghanistan from the 1970s to the post-9/11 era simply was not possible. The intimate and personal was intertwined inextricably with the broad and historical. And so the turmoil in Afghanistan and the country's tortured recent past slowly became more than mere backdrop. Gradually, Afghanistan itself—and more specifically, Kabul—became a character in this novel, to a much larger extent, I think, than in *The Kite Runner*. But it was simply for the sake of storytelling, not out of a sense of social responsibility to inform readers about my native country. That said, I will be gratified if they walk away from *A Thousand Splendid Suns* with a satisfying story *and* with a little more insight and a more personal sense of what has happened in Afghanistan in the last thirty years.

- **What kind of response do you hope readers have to *A Thousand Splendid Suns*?**

Hosseini: Purely as a writer, I hope that readers discover in this novel the same things that I look for when I read fiction: a story that transports, characters who engage, and a sense of illumination, of having been transformed somehow by the experiences of the characters. I hope that readers respond to the emotions of this story, that despite vast cultural differences, they identify with Mariam and Laila and their dreams and ordinary hopes and day-to-day struggle to survive. As an Afghan, I would like readers to walk away with a sense of empathy for Afghans, and more specifically for Afghan women, on whom the effects of war and extremism have been devastating. I hope this novel brings depth, nuance, and emotional subtext to the familiar image of the burqa-clad woman walking down a dusty street.

- **Where does the title of your new book come from?**

Hosseini: It comes from a poem about Kabul by Saib-e-Tabrizi, a seventeenth-century Persian poet, who wrote it after a visit to the city left him deeply impressed. I was searching for English translations of poems about Kabul, for use in a scene where a character bemoans leaving his beloved city, when I found this particular verse. I realized that I had found not only the right line for the scene, but also an evocative title in the phrase “a thousand splendid suns,” which appears in the next-to-last stanza. The poem was translated from Farsi by Dr. Josephine Davis.

- **You recently received the Humanitarian Award from the United Nations Refugee Agency and were named a U.S. goodwill envoy to that agency. What kind of work have you done with the agency?**

What will your responsibilities be in your position as a goodwill envoy?

Hosseini: It's been a tremendous honor for me to be asked to work with UNHCR as a goodwill envoy. As a native of a country with one of the world's largest refugee populations, I hold the issue of refugees close to my heart. I will be asked to make public appearances on behalf of the refugee cause and to serve as a public advocate for refugees around the world. It will be my privilege to try to capture public attention and to use my access to the media to give voice to victims of humanitarian crises and raise public awareness about matters relating to refugees.

Hosseini: In January of this year, I had the opportunity of going to Chad with UNHCR to visit the refugee camps where some 250,000 people from Darfur have sought haven. I had the chance to speak to refugees, local authorities and humanitarian staff and to educate myself about the staggering tragedy unfolding in the region. It was a sobering and heartbreaking experience and one that I will never forget. Presently I am working with UNHCR on the Aid Darfur campaign. It is my intention that my future work with the agency take me to Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan.

You present a portrait of Afghanistan under the Taliban that may be surprising to many readers. For example, the Taliban's ban on music and movies is well known, but many readers are not familiar with the "Titanic fever" that swept through Kabul upon the release of that film, which was shown in secret on black-market VCRs and TVs. How tight a grip did the Taliban truly have on the country? And how does pop culture survive under these traditions?

Hosseini: The Taliban's acts of cultural vandalism—the most infamous being the destruction of the giant Bamiyan Buddhas—had a devastating effect on Afghan culture and the artistic scene. The Taliban burned countless films, VCRs, music tapes, books, and paintings. They jailed filmmakers, musicians, painters, and sculptors. These restrictions forced some artists to abandon their craft, and many to continue practicing in covert fashion. Some built cellars where they painted or played musical instruments. Others gathered in the guise of a sewing circle to write fiction, as depicted in Christina Lamb's *The Sewing Circles of Heart*. And still others found ingenious ways to trick the Taliban—one famous example being a painter who, at the order of the Taliban, painted over the human faces on his oil paintings, except he did with it watercolor, which he washed off after the Taliban were ousted. These were among the desperate ways in which artists tried to escape the Taliban's firm grip on virtually every form of artistic expression.

14.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- (1) Khaled Hosseini was born in _____.
 - (a) Kabul, Afghanistan
 - (b) Peshawar, Pakistan
 - (c) San Francisco, USA
 - (d) Punjab, India
- (2) _____ is the first novel by Khaled Hosseini.
 - (a) *And the Mountains Echoed*

- (b) *The Kite Runner*
 - (c) *A Thousand Splendid Suns*
 - (d) *The Blue Mountains*
- (3) Khaled Hosseini has earned a degree in _____ .
- (a) Creative Writing
 - (b) Literature
 - (c) Law
 - (d) Medicine
- (4) Hosseini is a goodwill ambassador of .
- (a) United Nations
 - (b) Red Cross
 - (c) Amity Foundation
 - (d) United States
- (5) The family of Khaled Hosseini sought asylum in which country?
- (a) United States
 - (b) France
 - (c) United Kingdom
 - (d) Pakistan

14.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. Draw a biographical sketch of writer Khaled Hosseini.
- Q2. Briefly discuss the novels of Khaled Hosseini.
- Q3. Do you think the works of Khaled Hosseini reflect the reality of Afghanistan? Discuss.

14.9 ANSWER KEY

- (1) a (2) b
- (3) d (4) a (5) a

14.10 LET US SUM UP

Khaled Hosseini is an Afghan-born writer. In March 2001, while practicing medicine, Hosseini began writing his first novel, *The Kite Runner*, which became an international bestseller. His next two novels also earned a lot of acclaim. Through his writings, Hosseini not only tells stories but also represents Afghanistan and its ordinary people.

14.11 SUGGESTED READING

1. Hosseini, Khaled. “‘Kite Runner’ Author On His Childhood, His Writing, And The Plight Of Afghan Refugees.” By Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. *rferl.org*. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 21 June 2012. Web. 24 Jan 2017.
2. “An interview with Khaled Hosseini.” *bookbrowse.com*. Book Browse, 2003. Web. 24 Jan 2017.
3. *The Kite Runner*. *sparknotes.com*. Spark Notes, n.d. Web. 23 Jan 2017.

DETAILED SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL *THE KITE RUNNER*

- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Objectives
- 15.3 *The Kite Runner*: Character List
- 15.4 Detailed Summary
- 15.5 Self-Assessment Questions
- 15.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 15.7 Answer Key
- 15.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 15.9 Suggested Reading

15.1 INTRODUCTION

The Kite Runner was marketed as not just the first novel by its author, Khaled Hosseini, a medical doctor, but the first novel of its kind: an Afghan novel written in English is a modestly told, quietly ambitious story of its narrator- protagonist's journey from his rather comfortable life in Kabul in the 1970's to his and his father's fleeing the country in 1981 and beginning life anew as struggling immigrants in Fremont, California, and, following marriage and the publication of his own first novel, his fateful return to Taliban-run Afghanistan in 2001, where he will atone for a past wrong.

15.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to introduce the characters of the novel to the learners along with providing a detailed summary of the text.

15.3 *THE KITE RUNNER* : CHARACTER LIST

Amir: The narrator and protagonist; a Pashtun and Sunni Muslim.

Baba: Amir's father, who is considered a hero and leader in Kabul.

Hassan: Amir's playmate and servant; a Hazara and Shi'a Muslim; son to Ali.

Sohrab: Hassan's son. Like his father, Sohrab is excellent with a slingshot. Sohrab is the bait that Rahim Khan uses to lure Amir back to the Middle East.

Rahim Khan: Baba's best friend and business partner; father-figure to Amir.

Assef: A Kabul bully who ends up joining the Taliban.

Soraya: Amir's wife.

Ali: Hassan's father; servant to Baba. Having suffered from polio as a child, Ali has a crippled leg and is teased by kids in Kabul.

General Sahib (Iqbal Taheri): A friend of Baba's in America; father to Soraya. The general is biding his time in America, waiting to be called back into service in Afghanistan.

Khala Taheri (Khala Jamila): The wife of General Taheri and mother to Soraya. Khala Taheri is the first to encourage Amir's romantic overtures toward Soraya.

Farid: The taxi driver who takes Amir back to Afghanistan. Farid initially judges Amir as a traitor who abandoned Afghanistan, but after he learns of the real reason for Amir's return, Farid helps him.

Raymond Andrews: The official at the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan who makes Amir realize the difficulties he will encounter if he attempts to adopt Sohrab.

Zaman: The director of the orphanage in Kabul.

Kamal: A childhood follower of Assef. Kamal dies when attempting to escape Afghanistan in a fuel truck.

Wali: A childhood follower of Assef.

Farzana: Hassan's wife and Sohrab's mother.

Sanaubar: Hassan's mother. Although she abandons him soon after giving birth, she returns years later and takes care of her grandson.

Kaka Sharif: Soraya's uncle, who has connections in the INS and helps Amir get Sohrab a visa into the United States.

Dr. Armand Faruqi: The surgeon with the Clark Gable mustache who tends to Amir's injuries after being beaten by Assef.

15.4 DETAILED SUMMARY

Chapters 1-3

The novel opens in December 2001, and the narrator, telling his story in the first person, recalls an event that occurred in 1975, when he was twelve years old and growing up in Afghanistan. The narrator, named Amir, does not explain what had happened but only mentions that the event made him who he is. Following his recollection, he says that he received a call last summer from a friend in Pakistan named Rahim Khan, asking him to come to Pakistan. He then walks through San Francisco, where he lives now. He

notices kites flying, and thinks of his past, including his friend Hassan, a boy with a cleft lip whom he calls a kite runner.

Amir, as a child would play with Hassan, climbing trees and using mirrors to reflect sunlight into a neighbor's window, or shoot walnuts at the neighbour's dog with a slingshot. Though these would be Amir's ideas, Hassan never let the blame fall on Amir if they were caught.

Amir lived with his father, Baba, in a lavish home in Kabul. Meanwhile, Hassan and his father, Ali, lived in a small mud hut on the grounds of Baba's estate, and Ali worked as Baba's servant. Neither Amir nor Hassan had a mother. Amir's died giving birth to him, and Hassan's ran away after having him. One day while the boys were walking, a soldier told Hassan that he once had sex with Hassan's mother, Sanaubar. Sanaubar and Ali were an unlikely match. Ali was a devout reader of the *Koran*, the bottom half of his face was paralyzed, and polio destroyed the muscle in his right leg, giving him a severe limp. Sanaubar was nineteen years younger than Ali. She was beautiful but reputedly immoral. Most people thought the marriage was arranged by Sanaubar's father as a way to restore honour to his family. Sanaubar openly detested Ali's physical appearance. Five days after Hassan was born, she ran away with a group of travelling performers.

The soldier refers to Hassan as a Hazara, which the novel tells is a persecuted ethnic group in Afghanistan. The Hazaras originally came from further east in Asia, and their features are more Asian than Arabic. Hassan's parents were Hazara as well. Amir and Baba, on the other hand, are Pashtun. Once, while looking through history books, Amir discovered information on the Hazara. They had an uprising during the nineteenth century, but it was brutally suppressed by the Pashtuns. The book mentions some of the derogatory names they are called, including mice-eating and flat-nosed, and says part of the reason for the animosity is because the Hazara are Shia Muslim while the Pashtuns are Sunni Muslim.

Amir mixes his memories of Baba in with this information. Though nobody thought he would marry well because he wasn't from a prominent family, he married Amir's mother, Sofia Akrami, a beautiful, intelligent woman who came from a royal bloodline.

Baba also has his own strong moral sense. While Baba pours himself a glass of whiskey, Amir tells him that a religious teacher at his school, Mullah Fatiullah Khan, says it is sinful for Muslims to drink alcohol. Baba tells him that there is only one sin: theft. Every other sin is a variation of theft.

Amir tries to please Baba by being more like him but rarely feels he is successful. He also admits to feeling responsible for his mother's death. Since Baba likes soccer, Amir tries to like it as well, albeit unsuccessfully. Amir is good at poetry and reading. But he worries his father does not see these as manly pursuits. Amir later overhears Baba talking to his business associate, Rahim Khan, the man that later calls Amir from Pakistan. Baba says Amir is not like other boys, and he worries that if Amir can't stand up for himself as a child, he will not be able to do so as an adult.

Chapters 4-7

The story jumps back in time to 1933, the year Baba is born and Zahir Shah becomes king of

Afghanistan. Around the same time, two young men who are driving while drunk and high hit and kill Ali's parents. Amir's grandfather takes the young Ali in, and Ali and Baba grow up together. Baba, however, never calls Ali his friend. Similarly, because of their ethnic and religious differences, Amir says as a child he never thought of Hassan as a friend. Even so, Amir's youth seems to him like a long stretch of playing games with Hassan. But while Amir would wake up in the morning and go to school, Hassan would clean the house and get groceries. Amir often read to Hassan, who is illiterate. One night, Amir narrates his story to Hassan who then tells him that the story is terrific, though he puts a question: why didn't the man make himself cry with onions? Amir is annoyed he didn't think of it himself and has a nasty thought about Hassan being a Hazara, though he says nothing.

One night, gunfire erupts in the street. Ali, Hassan, and Amir hide in the house until morning. Amir says that night was the beginning of the end of the Afghanistan they knew. It slipped away further in 1978 with the communist takeover, and it disappeared completely in 1979 when Russia invaded. The gunshots were part of a coup in which Daoud Khan, the king's cousin, took over the government. Because the roads are closed that night, Baba doesn't arrive home till dawn. That morning, Amir and Hassan hear talk of what happened on the radio, but they don't understand what it means that Afghanistan has become a republic. They decide to go climb a tree.

While they're walking, a rock hits Hassan. Amir and Hassan discover Assef, a notorious bully, and two other boys from the neighborhood. He is one of the children who mocks Ali's limp and calls him names, adding that Afghanistan is the land of Pashtuns and the Hazaras just pollute the country. Assef takes out his brass knuckles. He says Amir is part of the problem for being friends with a Hazara. For a moment, Amir thinks that Hassan is his servant, not his friend, but he quickly recognizes his thought is wrong. As Assef goes to hit Amir, Assef suddenly freezes because Hassan has his slingshot aimed at him, which allows Amir and Hassan to get away.

Baba is waiting for him with a man named Dr. Kumar. Dr. Kumar is a plastic surgeon. He is Hassan's present surgeon. Dr. Kumar explains that his job is to fix things on people, sometimes people's faces. Hassan touches his lip in recognition. The surgery works, and though Hassan's lip is raw and swollen while he recovers, he smiles all the while. The winter after, all that remains of his cleft lip is a faint scar.

For boys in Kabul, winter is the best time of year. The schools close for the icy season, and boys spend this time flying kites. Baba takes Amir and Hassan to buy kites from an old blind man who makes the best in the city. The highlight of the winter is the annual kite-fighting tournament, when boys battle kites by covering the strings in broken glass. When a string is cut, the losing kite flies loose, and boys called kite runners to chase the kite across the city until it falls. The last fallen kite of the tournament is a trophy of honor. Hassan is the best kite runner in Kabul, and seems to know exactly where a kite will land before it comes down.

In the winter of that year, 1975, the tournament is held in Amir's neighborhood. A few days before the tournament, Baba casually tells Amir he may win. An overwhelming desire to win seizes Amir as Amir

thinks this will earn him Baba's approval. On the day of the competition, Amir is doing well. He can see Baba sitting on a rooftop, watching. Eventually all that remain are Amir's kite and one other, a blue kite. They battle and Amir wins, sending the blue kite flying loose. Amir and Hassan cheer and hug, but Amir sees Baba motioning for them to separate. Hassan vows to bring the kite back for Amir and sets off.

Amir reels in his kite and accepts everyone's congratulations, then goes looking for Hassan, asking neighbours if they saw him. One old merchant asks Amir what he is doing looking for a Hazara. Amir replies that the Hazara is the son of his father's servant. He tells Amir he saw the Hazara going south, adding that the boys chasing him have probably caught him by now. Amir searches the neighborhood until he comes to an alleyway. Hassan has the blue kite, and he is surrounded by Assef and the two other boys that are always with him, Kamal and Wali. Amir watches from around the corner. Assef tells Hassan they will let him go only if he hands over the kite. Hassan refuses. He ran the kite fairly, and it belongs to Amir. Assef says Amir would not be as loyal to him, an ugly pet Hazara. Hassan is not shaken. He says he and Amir are friends. Assef and the other boys charge Hassan. Amir almost says something, but ultimately he only watches.

Amir remembers something. He and Hassan fed from the same breast, that of a Hazara woman named Sakina. Then Amir thinks of a dream: he is lost in a snowstorm until a familiar shape appears before him. Suddenly the snow is gone. The sky is blue and filled with kites. Amir looks down the alley where Assef and the others have Hassan pinned to the ground without his pants. Wali says his father believes what they are considering doing to Hassan is sinful, but Assef says he is only a Hazara. The boys refuse, but agree to hold Hassan down. Assef raises Hassan's bare rear end into the air and takes down his own pants. Amir debates doing something, but instead runs away. Fifteen minutes later Amir sees Hassan coming toward him. He pretends he was looking for Hassan, who is crying and bleeding. He hands Amir the kite and neither boy speak about what happened. When they arrive home, Baba hugs Amir, who presses his face into Baba's chest and weeps.

Chapters 8-10

After the rape, Amir and Hassan spend less time together. Baba and Amir take a trip to Jalalabad and stay at the house of Baba's cousin. When they arrive they have a large traditional Afghan dinner. Baba proudly tells everyone about the kite tournament, but Amir does not enjoy it. After dinner, they all lie down to bed in the same room, but Amir cannot sleep. He says aloud that he watched Hassan get raped, but nobody is awake to hear him. He says this is the night he became an insomniac. When Amir and Baba return home, Hassan asks Amir if he wants to walk up the hill with him. They walk in silence, and when Hassan asks if Amir will read to him, Amir changes his mind and wants to go home.

Amir discontinues playing with Hassan. When Hassan asks Amir what he did wrong, Amir tells Hassan to stop harassing him. After that, the boys avoid each other. One day, Amir asks Baba if he would ever get new servants. Baba becomes furious and says that he will never replace Ali and Hassan. With the start of school, Amir spends hours alone in his room. One afternoon he asks Hassan to walk up the hill with him so he can read him a story. They sit under a pomegranate tree, and Amir asks Hassan what he would do if he threw a pomegranate at him. Amir begins pelting Hassan with pomegranates and yells at Hassan to hit

him back. But Hassan won't. He crushes a pomegranate against his own forehead, asks Amir if he is satisfied, and leaves.

That summer of 1976, Amir turns thirteen. Baba invites more than 400 people to the party he plans. At the party Baba makes Amir greet each guest personally. Assef arrives and acts politely as he jokes with Baba. He tells Amir that he chose the gift himself. Amir cannot hide his discomfort, embarrassing Baba and forcing him to apologize.

The next morning Amir opens his presents. He thinks to himself that either he or Hassan must leave. As he is going out later, Ali stops him and gives him his present. It is a new version of "Shahnamah", the book of stories Amir would read to Hassan. The morning after, Amir waits for Hassan and Ali to leave. He takes his birthday money and a watch that Baba gave him and puts them under Hassan's mattress. He tells Baba that Hassan stole them, and when Ali and Hassan return, Baba asks Hassan if he stole the money and the watch. To Amir's surprise, Hassan says he did. Amir realizes Hassan saw him in the alley, and he knew also that Amir was setting him up now. Baba forgives Hassan, but Ali says they must leave. Baba pleads with him to stay, but Ali refuses. It rains when Ali and Hassan leave, and Amir watches from inside as they go.

It is March 1981, Amir and Baba are in the back of a truck with several other Afghans on the way to Pakistan. The ride makes Amir sick, and he worries he is embarrassing Baba. Because they can't trust anyone, they left home in the middle of the night. The rafiqs, or comrades as Amir calls them, have divided society. People turn each other in for money or under threat. The truck driver, Karim, has a business arrangement with the soldiers guarding the road. But when they arrive at the checkpoint, the Russian guard eyes a woman in the truck and says the price of passing is half an hour with her. Baba won't allow it. The Russian threatens to shoot Baba and raises his handgun, but another Russian officer stops him. For a week they stay in a basement with other refugees and then they finally arrive in Pakistan.

Chapters 11-13

The story jumps forward in time. Baba and Amir are in Fremont, California, where they have lived for nearly two years. Baba, who works at a gas station now, has had difficulty adjusting to life in the US, which is quite different from that in Afghanistan. Baba tells Amir that they are in US only for Amir.

On the night of Amir's graduation, Baba takes him out for a big dinner, then to a bar where he buys drinks all night. He also gives Amir an old Ford Grand Torino as a gift. In the days after, Amir tells Baba that he wants to study writing. Baba disapproves and says the degree will be useless, but Amir has made up his mind.

For Amir, America is a place to forget the past. One day, Baba speaks with a man whom he introduces to Amir as General Taheri. Baba tells General Taheri that Amir is going to be a great writer. General Taheri's daughter, Soraya, comes over, and she and Amir make eye contact. On the drive home Amir asks Baba about her. All Baba knows is that she was romantically involved with a man once, but it didn't end well. Amir falls asleep that night thinking of her.

After nearly a year of yearning for Soraya, Amir finally gathers courage to speak to her. For weeks he

talks to Soraya only when General Taheri is away, until one day he is giving her one of his stories when General Taheri arrives. General Taheri throws the story out, and walking Amir away he tells Amir to remember that he is among other Afghans. Amir is disheartened, but he soon becomes focused on Baba, who is ill. Baba is diagnosed with lung cancer but refuses to receive treatment. Amir tells Baba he doesn't know what he's supposed to do. Baba replies that he's been trying to teach Amir precisely this all his life and forbids Amir to tell anyone about his illness.

Baba weakens as the months pass until one day he collapses. The cancer has spread to his brain. Afghans arrive in droves to see Baba in the hospital. At Baba's bedside, Amir asks if he will go to General Taheri to ask Soraya's hand in marriage for Amir. Baba goes happily the next day. General Taheri accepts. Soraya is happy, but she says she must tell Amir about her past because she doesn't want any secrets. When she was eighteen, she ran away with an Afghan man. They lived together for nearly a month before General Taheri found her and took her home. While she was gone, Jamila had a stroke. Amir admits through it bothers him a little, but he still wants to marry her.

The following night, Amir and Baba go to the Taheris' home for the traditional ceremony of "giving word". General Taheri is happy and says they are doing it the right way now. Because Baba is so sick, they plan to have the wedding quickly. Baba rents an Afghan banquet hall for the ceremony, buys the ring, Amir's tuxedo, and other necessities, until he has spent almost all of his \$35,000 in savings. Of the wedding Amir remembers sitting on a sofa with Soraya. They are covered with a veil and look at each other's reflections in a mirror. It is the first time he tells her he loves her, and they are together for the first time that night. Shortly after, Baba dies. Many Afghans whom Baba helped, come to the funeral. As he listens to them paying their respects, Amir realizes how Baba defined who he is.

Because their engagement was so brief, Amir doesn't learn about Soraya's family until after the wedding. General Taheri does not work. He feels it is below him and keeps the family on welfare. He also does not allow Jamila, who was once a great singer, to sing in public. Soraya tells Amir that, on the night her father brought her home after she ran away, he arrived with a gun, and once she was home he made her cut off her hair. Amir is different from every Afghan guy she has met.

In the summer of 1988, Amir finishes his first novel. He gets it published, and then he and Soraya start trying to have a baby. They are unable to conceive, however, and after numerous tests doctors cannot explain why they can't have a child. They talk about adoption, but General Taheri says he doesn't like the idea. Amir agrees, though he doesn't seem certain. Amir's writing career has gone well, in the meantime, and with the advance from his second novel, he and Soraya buy a house in San Francisco. But the inability to have a child still lingers between them.

Chapters 14-17

The period is June 2001, and Amir has just received a call from Rahim Khan, who wants Amir to see him in Pakistan. Rahim Khan, the first grownup Amir ever thought of as a friend, is very ill. While taking a walk to Golden Gate Park, he watches a man play catch with his son and then looking at the kites flying, he

thinks of something Rahim Khan said to him on the phone. He told Amir there is a way for him to be good again. That night, while Amir and Soraya are in bed, Amir thinks of their relationship. They still make love, but both of them feel a kind of futility in the act. They used to lie together and talk about having a child, but now their conversations are about work or other things. Amir drifts off to sleep and dreams of Hassan running through the snow. A week later, Amir leaves for Pakistan.

Amir lands in Peshawar, where Rahim Khan is. The driver of the cab he takes talks incessantly, telling Amir that what has happened to Afghanistan is awful. They reach the neighbourhood known as “Afghan Town” and Amir sees dirty children selling cigarettes, carpet shops, and kabab vendors. Amir remembers the last time he saw Rahim Khan, twenty years earlier in 1981. It was the night he and Baba left Kabul. They had gone to see Rahim Khan, and Baba had cried. Baba and Rahim Khan had kept in touch, but Amir had not spoken with Rahim Khan since just after Baba’s death.

Amir meets Rahim Khan in his apartment. Inside they have tea and talk. Amir tells him he is married now to Soraya Taheri, General Taheri’s daughter, and he talks about Baba and his career as a novelist. Rahim Khan says he never doubted Amir would become a writer. The conversation turns to what Afghanistan has become since the Taliban took over. Amir learns that Rahim Khan had been living in Baba’s house in Kabul since 1981, when Amir and Baba fled. He took care of the place, as Baba expected to eventually return. Meanwhile, Kabul became dangerous as the fighting between Afghan factions vying for control of the city grew worse. Rahim Khan tells Amir that he is dying and does not expect to live through the summer. He asked Amir there because he wanted to see him, but also because he wanted something else. In the years he lived in Baba’s house, he was not alone. Hassan was with him. Before he asks Amir for the favour, he must tell him about Hassan.

Rahim Khan tells Amir the story of how he found Hassan, and the narrative shifts so that Rahim Khan narrates in the first person. In 1986, Rahim Khan went to Hazarajat. He went primarily because he was lonely, but also because as he aged it became difficult for him to care for Baba’s house by himself. He found Hassan’s home, a small mud house, and saw Hassan in the yard. The men greeted each other, and Hassan took Rahim Khan inside to introduce him to his wife, a pregnant Hazara woman named Farzana. As they spoke, Rahim Khan learned that Ali was killed by a land mine. Rahim Khan then explained to Hassan that he wanted Hassan and Farzana to come to Baba’s house with him and help him care for it. Hassan declined, saying that Hazarajat was their home now. Hassan asked several questions about Amir. When he learned Baba was dead, he cried. Rahim Khan stayed the night, and in the morning, Hassan told him that he and Farzana would go back to Kabul.

Out of respect, Hassan and Farzana live in the small servants’ hut on Baba’s property, and Hassan works diligently cleaning and repairing the house. That fall, Farzana gives birth to a stillborn girl, whom they bury in the yard. Farzana becomes pregnant again in 1990, and that same year Sanaubar, Hassan’s mother, appears at the front gate, weak and with her face severely cut up. Hassan and Farzana nurse her back to health, and she and Hassan become close. That winter it is Sanaubar who delivers Hassan’s and Farzana’s son. Sanaubar loves and cares for the boy, who is named Sohrab, after the character from Hassan’s and

Amir's favorite story when they were children. She lives until he is four. By then it is 1995. The Soviets had been pushed out of Kabul, but fighting continues between rival Afghan groups. Hassan, meanwhile, is teaching Sohrab to read and to run kites. In 1996, the Taliban take control of Kabul. Two weeks later they ban kite fighting.

The story shifts back to Amir's perspective. Amir sits with Rahim Khan thinking of everything that happened between him and Hassan. Amir asks if Hassan is still in Baba's house, and Rahim Khan hands him an envelope. It contains a photograph of Hassan and a letter for Amir. In it, Hassan says the Kabul they used to know is gone. One day a man at the market hit Farzana simply because she raised her voice so another man who was half-deaf could hear her. He talks about his love for his son, and says Rahim Khan is very ill. If Amir ever returns, he will find his faithful friend Hassan waiting for him. Rahim Khan says a month after arriving in Pakistan, he received a call from a neighbour in Kabul. The Taliban had gone to Baba's house and found Hassan and his family there. Hassan said he was taking care of the house for a friend, and they called him a liar like all Hazaras. They made him kneel in the street and shot him in the head. When Farzana ran out of the house, they shot her, too.

The Taliban moved into Baba's house, and Sohrab was sent to an orphanage. Rahim Khan knows an American couple in Pakistan that care for Afghan orphans, and they have already agreed to take in Sohrab. Amir says he can't go to Kabul. He can pay someone else to get Sohrab. Rahim Khan says it is not about the money, and that Amir knows why he must go. Rahim Khan says one day Baba told him he was worried that a boy who can't stand up for himself becomes a man who can't stand up to anything. He tells Amir one more thing. Ali was unable to have children. Amir asks who Hassan's father was then, and Rahim Khan says Amir knows who it was. Hassan never knew. They couldn't tell anyone because it was a shameful situation. Amir shouts at Rahim Khan and storms out of the apartment.

Chapters 18-21

Amir walks from Rahim Khan's house to a small teahouse, thinking about how responsible he was for Hassan's death. He also goes over the evidence that Baba was Hassan's father: Baba's paying for the surgery to fix Hassan's lip, and his weeping when Ali and Hassan left. Baba had said that theft was the only sin, and Amir thinks how Baba stole from him a brother, from Hassan his identity, from Ali his honour. Amir realizes he and Baba were more alike than he knew. They had both betrayed their truest friends. What Rahim Khan wanted was for Amir to atone for Baba's sins and his own. On the ride back to Rahim Khan's, Amir recognizes he is not too old to start fighting for himself, and that somewhere in Kabul, a small part of Hassan remains. He finds Rahim Khan praying and tells him he will find Sohrab.

Rahim Khan arranges for an acquaintance named Farid to take Amir to Kabul. Farid and his father had fought against the Soviets. Once in Afghanistan Amir says he feels like a tourist in his own country. Farid asks sarcastically if, after twenty years in America, Amir still thinks of Afghanistan as his country. He guesses that Amir grew up in a large house with servants, that his father drove an American car, and that Amir had never worn a *pakol* before.

Amir explains that he is going to find a Hazara boy, his illegitimate half-brother's son so that he can take him to Peshawar where people will take care of him. Wahid calls Amir a true Afghan and says he is proud to have Amir stay in his home.

That night, Amir dreams of a man shooting Hassan, and realizes he is the man in the dream. He goes outside to think and hears two voices coming from the house, Wahid's and his wife's. They are arguing about dinner. Because they gave Amir their food, the children did not have any dinner. Amir realizes that the boys weren't staring at his watch, they were staring at his food. The next morning, before Amir and Farid leave, Amir stuffs a wad of money under one of their mattresses.

On the way to Kabul, Amir sees signs of the wars, such as broken-down Soviet tanks and destroyed villages. When Amir and Farid reach Kabul, Amir does not recognize it.

Amir and Farid find the orphanage where they think Sohrab is. The orphanage itself was once a storage warehouse for a carpet manufacturer.

Zaman says Sohrab is not there, but he knows where he may be. It might already be too late, however. Amir asks what he means, and Zaman tells him there is a Taliban official who comes every month or two. The official brings cash, and sometimes take a child with him. Farid attacks Zaman for letting this occur, but stops when he notices children in view. Zaman says he can do nothing against the Taliban, and it is the only way to get money to feed the children. He tells Amir and Farid that the official took Sohrab a month ago. If they want to find him, he will be at Ghazi Stadium the next day.

Farid drives Amir to Baba's house. It is falling apart, but recognizable. Amir finds his bedroom window and remembers looking out of it to watch Ali and Hassan the morning they left.

The following day they go to the soccer game at Ghazi Stadium. The field is just dirt, and the crowd is careful not to cheer too loudly. At halftime, Taliban in red pickups drive into the stadium. They unload a blindfolded man from one truck and a blindfolded woman from the other and bury each up to the chest in a hole on the field. The woman is screaming uncontrollably. A cleric on the field recites a prayer from the *Koran* and announces that they are there to carry out God's law. Another man steps out of a pickup, and Farid and Amir see it is the official they are looking for. He is wearing black sunglasses, as Zaman said. Farid tells one of the Taliban nearby that he has personal business with the official, and the official agrees to see them that afternoon.

Chapters 22-25

Amir and Farid arrive at the house where Amir will meet the Taliban official. Farid waits in the car, and two guards lead Amir to the room where he is to wait. Amir thinks to himself it may have been a mistake to stop acting like a coward. The Taliban official enters with some guards. Amir and the official greet each other, then one of the guards tears off Amir's fake beard. The official asks Amir if he enjoyed the show at the stadium. He says it wasn't as good as when they went door-to-door shooting families in their homes. It was liberating. Amir realizes the official is talking about the massacre of Hazaras in Mazar-i-Sharif, which Amir

had read about in newspapers.

The official asks what Amir is doing in America. Amir only answers that he is looking for Sohrab. The official motions to the guards, and Sohrab enters in a blue silk outfit, bells strapped around his ankles and mascara lining his eyes. The guards make Sohrab dance until the Taliban official orders them to leave. While the official rubs Sohrab's stomach, he asks Amir whatever happened to old Babalu, a name Assef used to call Ali, and Amir realizes that the Taliban official is actually Assef. Stunned, Amir says he will pay him for the boy. Assef replies that money is irrelevant and not why he joined the Taliban. Assef says he is on a mission to rid Afghanistan of garbage. Amir calls it ethnic cleansing and says he wants Sohrab. Shoving Sohrab forward, Assef says he and Amir have unfinished business. Assef tells the guards that if Amir exits the room alive, he has earned the right to leave. Then Assef puts on a pair of brass knuckles. Amir remembers little after that. There are flashes of Assef hitting him and swallowing teeth and blood. Amir remembers laughing while Assef beat him, and feeling relief. He had looked forward to that, and felt healed for the first time. Sohrab told Assef to stop and held up his slingshot, and when Assef lunged at him, Sohrab fired, hitting him in the left eye. Sohrab and Amir ran out of the house to where Farid waited with the car. As they drove away, Amir passed out.

A blur of images followed: a woman named Aisha, a man with the moustache, someone he recognizes. Slipping in and out of consciousness, he imagines Baba wrestling the bear. He wakes up and discovers he is in the hospital in Peshawar. The people he saw are doctors, and Farid was the man he recognized. Amir's mouth is wired shut. His upper lip is split, the bone of his left eye socket broken, several of his ribs cracked, and his spleen ruptured. Farid and Sohrab are there, and Amir thanks them both. Farid tells Amir that Rahim Khan has gone, but he left a note.

In his note, Rahim Khan says he knew everything that happened with Hassan. Though what Amir did was wrong, he was too hard on himself. He knows Amir suffered because of how Baba treated him, but there was a reason. Because Baba couldn't love Hassan openly, he felt guilty and took it out on Amir, whom Baba thought of as his socially legitimate half. But real good came from Baba's remorse, Rahim Khan says, the orphanage Baba built, the poor that he fed, were his way of redeeming himself. Rahim Khan also leaves Amir a key to a safe-deposit box with money to cover Amir's expenses. He has little time left, he writes, and Amir should not look for him. The next morning, Amir gives Farid the names of the American couple that runs the orphanage. Amir spends the day playing cards with Sohrab, who barely speaks. Amir decides Peshawar isn't safe. Amir leaves for Islamabad and takes Sohrab with him.

Amir and Sohrab arrive in Islamabad. When Amir wakes from a nap, Sohrab is gone. Amir remembers Sohrab's fascination with a mosque they had passed and finds him in the mosque parking lot. They talk a little about their parents, and Sohrab asks if God will put him in hell for what he did to Assef. Amir says Assef deserved more than he got, and Hassan would have been proud of Sohrab for saving Amir's life. Sohrab is glad his parents cannot see him. The sexual abuse he suffered makes him feel dirty and sinful. Amir says he is neither, and asks Sohrab if he wants to live in America with him. For a week Sohrab doesn't give an answer, but one afternoon he asks what San Francisco is like. He says he is scared that Amir or his wife

will tire of him. He never wants to go back to an orphanage. Amir promises that won't happen, and after Sohrab agrees to go to America, Amir calls Soraya to explain everything.

The next day, Amir goes to the American embassy. The man there tells Amir the adoption will be almost impossible. Without death certificates, there is no way to prove Sohrab is an orphan. Amir should speak to Omar Faisal, an immigration attorney. Amir and Sohrab see Faisal the next day. He says it will be hard, but there are options. Amir can put Sohrab in an orphanage, file a petition, and wait up to two years for the government to approve the adoption. That night, when Amir tells Sohrab he may have to go back to an orphanage, Sohrab screams that they'll hurt him and cries until he falls asleep in Amir's arms. While he sleeps, Amir talks to Soraya, who tells him that Sharif, a family member who works for the U.S. immigration department, or INS, says there are ways to keep Sohrab in the country once he's in. Amir goes to tell Sohrab and finds him bleeding and unconscious in the bathtub.

Sohrab is rushed to the emergency room. In the hospital waiting area, Amir uses a sheet as a prayer rug and prays for the first time in more than fifteen years. Eventually he falls asleep in a chair and dreams of Sohrab in the bloody water and the razor blade he used to cut himself. A doctor wakes Amir and tells him that Sohrab lost a great deal of blood, but he will live. For several days, Amir stays in the hospital while Sohrab sleeps. When Sohrab awakes, Amir asks how he feels, but Sohrab doesn't answer. Amir reads to him, but Sohrab pays no attention. Sohrab tells Amir he is tired of everything. He wants his old life back and says Amir should have left him in the water. Amir says he was coming to explain that they found a way for Sohrab to go to America. But Sohrab stops speaking entirely.

Amir and Sohrab arrive in San Francisco in August 2001. General Taheri and Jamila come over for dinner, and while Soraya and Jamila set the table, Amir tells General Taheri about the Taliban and Kabul. General Taheri tip-toes around the subject of Sohrab at first but finally asks why Amir brought back a Hazara boy. Amir says Baba slept with a servant woman. Their son, Hassan, is now dead. Sohrab is Hassan's son and Amir's nephew. Amir tells General Taheri never to call Sohrab a "Hazara boy" in his presence again. After September 11 and the American bombing of Afghanistan that followed, the names of places in Amir's country were suddenly all over. Amir and Soraya take jobs helping to run and raise money for a hospital on the Afghan-Pakistani border, and General Taheri is summoned to Afghanistan for a ministry position.

One rainy day in March 2002, Amir takes Sohrab, Soraya, and Jamila to a gathering of Afghans at a park. There is a tent where people are cooking. Sohrab, who is still not speaking, stands out in the rain, but eventually the weather clears. Soraya points out kites flying in the sky. Amir finds a kite seller, and with the new kite he walks over to Sohrab. While Amir checks the string, he talks about Hassan. Then, with the kite ready, he asks Sohrab if he wants to fly it. Sohrab doesn't answer, but as Amir runs, sending the kite into the air, Sohrab follows him. When Amir offers again, Sohrab takes the string. A green kite approaches for a battle, and while Amir prepares Sohrab he notices Sohrab looks alert. He shows Sohrab what used to be Hassan's favourite trick, and quickly they have the other kite on the defensive. In one move, Amir and Sohrab sever the other kite's string, cutting it loose. People cheer around them, and a brief smile appears on Sohrab's face. Amir asks if he should run the kite for Sohrab, and Sohrab nods. "For you, a thousand times over," Amir

says and sets off running.

15.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- (i) Who is the narrator?
 - (a) Amir
 - (b) Baba
 - (c) Hassan
 - (d) Ali
- (ii) The setting of the novel is in _____ .
 - (a) Kabul/San Francisco
 - (b) Pakistan/San Francisco
 - (c) Afghanistan/Fremont
 - (d) Kabul/Fremont
- (iii) Who is the author of *The Kite Runner*?
 - (a) Ayn Rand
 - (b) Khaled Hosseini
 - (c) George Orwell
 - (d) Nathaniel Hawthorne
- (iv) What is Hassan's deformity?
 - (a) Half of his face is paralyzed
 - (b) Paraplegic
 - (c) Cleft Lip
 - (d) Quadriplegic
- (v) What does Baba get Amir for his birthday?
 - (a) Toy Truck
 - (b) Dictionary
 - (c) Watch
 - (d) Snow Globe
- (vi) What does Rahim Khan get Amir for his birthday?
 - (a) Flowers
 - (b) Bible
 - (c) Book of Stories
 - (d) Koran

15.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. Discuss how the ever-changing politics of Afghanistan affect each of the characters in the novel.
- Q2. Throughout the story, Baba worries because Amir never stands up for himself. When does this change?
- Q3. Amir and Hassan have a favorite story. Does the story have the same meaning for both men? Why does Hassan name his son after one of the characters in the story?

15.7 ANSWER KEY

- | | | |
|--------|--------|---------|
| (i) a | (ii) a | (iii) b |
| (iv) c | (v) c | (vi) c |

15.8 LET US SUM UP

Khaled Hosseini's novel presents simply and quietly an intimate account of love, honour, guilt, fear and redemption through the story of Amir. The story is a tale of betrayal and redemption that rises above time and place while simultaneously remaining firmly anchored against the tumultuous backdrop of modern Afghanistan.

15.9 SUGGESTED READING

1. Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner: Rejacketed*. Bloomsbury: Great Britain, 2003. Print

ANALYSIS OF THE CHAPTERS OF NOVEL ***THE KITE RUNNER***

- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Objectives
- 16.3 Detailed Analysis
- 16.4 Theme of Betrayal and Redemption
- 16.5 Role of Politics and Religion
- 16.6 Motifs and Symbols
- 16.7 Self-Assessment Questions
- 16.8 Examination Oriented Questions
- 16.9 Answer Key
- 16.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 16.11 Suggested Reading

16.1 INTRODUCTION

In the novel, Khaled Hosseini deals with different themes, including that of betrayal and redemption and diaspora. The plot of *The Kite Runner* revolves around the protagonist's betrayal of his best friend. In a way, this betrayal drives the rest of the book and perhaps everything that precedes it.

16.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to offer learner a comprehensive of the novel. The detailed analysis of the chapters, while drawing inference from the text, reflecting on the underlying thematic concerns.

16.3 DETAILED ANALYSIS

Chapters 1-3

The first three chapters set out the basic facts of the story, including who the major characters are, their backgrounds, and what their relationships with each other are like. The section also establishes a

context for the information: Amir, our narrator, is an adult living in the United States and looking back on his childhood years in Afghanistan. In fact, history is an important theme in the novel, and looking back on the past is a recurring motif. That's because, for Amir, the past is not over. He believes it to be a fundamental part of who he is, and no matter how far he is in time or location from his childhood in Afghanistan, the events of that period are always with him. Though it remains unclear why, he feels a tremendous sense of guilt about those events, and he believes they shaped him into who he is. This guilt, in fact, informs the entire narrative. Appropriately, he opens the novel in the present then quickly jumps back in time.

The boy Amir is sensitive, bookish, sometimes selfish, and a little mischievous. He is eager to please Baba, whom he views as a role model he can never live up to. Yet he feels Baba does not love him for certain reasons. Baba, meanwhile, is gruff, hardworking, a little distant from Amir, and very much an independent thinker. Anytime someone said he would fail, he didn't listen, and he always succeeded. He doesn't always listen to religious authorities either, evidenced by the fact that he disregarded Mullah Fatiullah Khan saying it is a sin to drink alcohol. Ali, meanwhile, is dutiful, modest, and quiet. Lastly there's Hassan, who is a loyal and courageous friend. When Amir is threatened, Hassan intervenes. He has his own vulnerabilities, however, particularly regarding his mother.

Significantly, both Hassan and Amir have lost their mothers. They have only their fathers and each other. The relationship between fathers and sons, and between the older generation and the new one, is a major theme of the story. Also, in many ways Amir and Hassan act for each other as a kind of substitute parent, looking out for the other and providing companionship. They are closer than regular friends. They are more like brothers who are on occasion reminded that one is Pashtun and one Hazara. Their relationship plays a central role in the book, and it figures in another theme that is introduced in this section: standing up for what is right. The theme is introduced primarily through Baba, who worries that if Amir can't stand up for himself as a young boy, he may not be able to stand up for what is right as an adult. He says this because he sees Hassan standing up for Amir in fights while Amir appears to back down.

Since Khaled Hosseini's main audience for the book is not Afghan, he familiarizes his readers with life in Afghanistan by explaining some basic facts. Using the characters of Baba and Amir on one side and Ali and Hassan on the other he lays out all the divisions—economic, ethnic, and religious—present in the country during the late 1970s. Baba and Amir, for instance, are rich and live in a large mansion, while Ali and Hassan are poor and live in a small hut on Baba's property. Related is the difference in the health of the rich and the poor, who cannot afford proper medicine. Baba and Amir are both healthy, but Ali and Hassan both suffer from problems affecting their faces. Furthermore, Baba and Amir embody the Pashtun population, whereas Ali and Hassan are part of the Hazara minority, a group subjected to relentless racism in Afghanistan. A related divide in religions is also present: like most Pashtuns, Baba and Amir are Sunni Muslim, while Ali and Hassan, like most Hazaras, are Shia Muslim.

One additional divide hinted at in this section is that between Islamic fundamentalists, such as Amir's teacher, Mullah Fatiullah Khan, and more liberal Afghans like Baba. The eventual takeover of Afghanistan by the radical Islamic fundamentalists called the Taliban is foreshadowed early in the novel.

Chapters 4-5

The relationship between ordinary people such as Hassan and Amir, and political events like Daoud Khan's coup become the focus. The fates of Zahir Shah and Baba as well as the fates of those dependent on Baba like Amir, Hassan, and Ali are all bound together in a sense. When Daoud Khan, in a bloodless coup, takes over in Chapter 5, we know that the lives of our characters are about to change, even if we aren't sure how. Amir's and Hassan's encounter with the racist boy Assef is a hint: the change is not going to be for the better. The rules that govern life in Kabul have been stirred up, and power balances have shifted. Bloodshed and violence may be in store. We witness this from the perspective of Amir, a young boy who does not know what it means that Afghanistan has become a republic.

Amir also talks about how prevalent American culture was in the country during this time. The movies Amir and Hassan love most are western starring American actors, notably John Wayne and Charles Bronson. The movies are dubbed into Farsi, and the boys spend their money on Coca Cola, one of America's biggest exports, as well as Afghan snacks like rosewater ice cream and pistachios. Baba even drives a black Ford Mustang. Though Assef, the bully, never speaks of these things specifically, he does talk about Afghanistan's purity. It is not just ethnic purity that Assef and others like him are after, but also cultural purity. The aim is a pure Pashtun people and culture, and the prevalence of American culture in Afghanistan threatens this goal. As a result, the influence of American culture in Afghanistan wiped out almost entirely during the years that Amir calls the end of Afghanistan as they know it.

In fact, the overall theme of the section is change, in politics, in society, and in the personal lives of Amir and Hassan.

Hassan also undergoes a change: his cleft lip is repaired. The deformity is something Hassan has known all his life. It is, in a way, a marker of who he is: a poor servant boy. The surgery removes that marker, and again it is as if a balance is upset. We can expect things to change between the boys, though it is unclear at this point how they will change.

The adult Amir, who is telling the story, recognizes several things about his younger self that he evidently didn't realize while he was still a boy. He sees that he was selfish, for example, that he wanted to be the best at everything, and didn't want Hassan to be as good. The young Amir genuinely felt that Hassan was beneath him because of Hassan's poverty, ethnicity, religion, and deformity. Whenever Hassan does something that earns Baba's love and respect, Amir lashes out at him in his thoughts.

Reinforcing the theme of love and tension between fathers and sons that recurs throughout the story is Amir's and Hassan's favorite story *Rostam and Sohrab*, which is about a father that fatally stabs an opponent not knowing until too late that the opponent is his son. For Amir, the story represents his relationship with Baba. Complicating Amir's feelings toward Baba further is his relationship with Rahim Khan. Rahim Khan read Amir's story when Baba would not, giving Amir the attention and approval he craved, and Amir even wishes at that point that Rahim Khan was his father. The fact is, Amir desperately wants Baba's approval, yet he has no idea how to get it.

Chapters 6-7

Many of the tensions that have been building till now, such as the treatment of Hazaras by Pashtuns, Amir's desperation to please his father, and the question of whether he can stand up for what is right, come together in the events of this section. The central event is Hassan's rape, and it will be the catalyst that propels the rest of the novel forward. This event is the source of the guilt Amir feels as an adult, and it is why the image of the alleyway, the place where Hassan was raped while he stood by and watched, stays with him. Hassan, we are led to infer, is the kite runner of the book's title, and Amir tells us the story both as a confession and an act of penance. He wants to atone for his sins, and in fact atonement will become a major theme. Two other important themes also converge in the single image of Amir struggling with the decision to intervene while Assef, a rich Pashtun boy with a powerful father, rapes Hassan, a poor Hazara. This image conveys the challenge and importance of doing what is right, and the rape of Afghanistan's powerless by those who have power.

In terms of Amir's character growth, his desperation to please his father, which we have witnessed throughout the story, plays a significant part in causing the events of the section. Although Amir feels paralyzed by fear when he sees what is happening, he admits that his main reason for not intervening is selfish. When Baba was a boy, he won the kite-fighting tournament. Though Amir had always done well in the competition, even making it to the final, he had never won. To finally please Baba, Amir feels he must show Baba he is like him by winning the tournament and bringing home the kite of his final opponent. Only then will Baba forgive Amir for killing the woman who was Baba's wife and Amir's mother. Amir does not stop Assef from raping Hassan first and foremost because he wants the kite to bring to Baba, and Hassan is the price he has to pay.

A terrible irony exists in the fact that Amir allows his friend to be raped in exchange for a prize that he believes will earn him Baba's love. Baba's greatest concern regarding Amir is that he will grow up to be a man who can't stand up for what is right, evident in what he said to Rahim Khan earlier in the novel. If Amir had stood up for Hassan but lost the kite in the process, he still could have proved that he has the courage to do the right thing even when it is frightening or dangerous to do so. Perhaps more than he could have by any other action, he would have shown Baba that he is like him. Instead, he runs away because he wants the kite to please Baba, inadvertently doing exactly the opposite of what Baba would want. As the adult Amir narrates his story, he seems to be aware of the irony of his own history, and he even hints at it earlier in the novel, when he describes Rahim Khan telling him that his understanding of irony is clear from his story about the man who cries pearls.

Chapters 8-9

Further ironies stemming from Amir's sacrifice of Hassan come to light in this section. Amir is unable to fully enjoy Baba's attention. He is so consumed by a different guilt—guilt over his inaction during Hassan's rape—that he is constantly miserable. During the trip to Jalalabad, he tries to rid himself of this weight. While everyone is sleeping, he says aloud that he saw Hassan raped, hoping someone will hear him. But no one does, and Amir recognizes that his curse is getting away with it. What's more,

when he asks Baba if he would ever consider new servants, Baba is so upset he tells Amir that he is ashamed of him. A similar event occurs at Amir's birthday party, when Baba is embarrassed by Amir's rudeness toward Assef. In other words, Amir's guilt leads him to do things that result in loss of Baba's approval. Rather than gaining everything he wants, Amir loses the happiness he had.

Amir does not know how to deal with his feelings of guilt and unhappiness after Hassan's rape. At first he tries to keep away from Hassan, who becomes a constant reminder to Amir of his own cowardice and selfishness. He seems to think avoiding Hassan means he won't feel these things any longer. But Hassan is a part of the household, so Amir can never escape him completely. When the two are face-to-face, Amir wishes Hassan would punish him. Hassan, however, will not retaliate, and this becomes the greatest torment for Amir. Hassan proves that his love and loyalty to Amir are unshakable, whereas Amir proves that his love and loyalty are weak. One of Amir's constant fears is realized: Hassan emerges as the stronger, better person. Amir cannot tolerate this truth and engineers a plan to make Ali and Hassan leave. Yet his guilt is only heightened when Hassan admits to stealing the money and watch. Amir recognizes that Hassan is sacrificing himself again, despite knowing that Amir did not do the same for him when he was raped.

There are also more examples in this section of the injustices against Hazaras. When Rahim Khan's father becomes angry because Rahim Khan wants to marry a Hazara woman, he resolves the problem not by moving his own family, but by sending away the Hazara woman and her family. Similarly, to resolve the tension between Hassan and Amir, Ali decides that they will leave. Both the Hazara family from Rahim Khan's story and Ali and Hassan go to Hazarajat, an isolated, mountainous region in central Afghanistan that is principally inhabited by Hazaras. But perhaps the most poignant image of the injustice toward Hazaras is the moment Amir witnesses Hassan serving drinks to Assef and Wali from a silver platter. Hassan cannot do anything about the rape because of his inferior status as a poor Hazara, and Assef, whose family is rich and powerful, knows it. Hassan dutifully serves Assef, the boy who raped him, and Assef expresses no remorse or shame during the encounter. Instead, he grins at Hassan and kneads him in the chest tauntingly with his knuckle.

Chapters 10-11

The first half of the section primarily describes Baba's and Amir's horrific journey, first to Jalalabad and finally into Peshawar, Pakistan. It also gives some detail about how Kabul has changed in the roughly five years that have elapsed since.

To Baba, for whom doing the right thing is so important, the loss of honor and decency in Afghanistan is perhaps the greatest tragedy to befall his country. The atrocities described, including the Russian guard's attempted rape of the woman in the truck and the rape of Kamal that is implied, are examples of how the rule of law had essentially collapsed.

The move to America represents two completely different things to Amir and Baba. In California, Baba feels disconnected from everything he knows. In Kabul, he was wealthy and respected. In California, he earns low wages working at a gas station. Baba is perpetually frustrated. In small ways, he continues trying to reclaim his life in Kabul, like when he buys everyone drinks the night of Amir's graduation.

Amir also feels disconnected from everything he knew in Kabul, but for him this disconnection has a different meaning. He sees it as an opportunity for a new beginning, and he thinks of America as a place where he can literally escape his past. Most significantly, it is a place where he doesn't have to be reminded of Hassan and the rape. The metaphor Amir chooses to describe America is a river. Here, the metaphor has two meanings that are related but separate. First, a river always moves forward. In other words, it is always moving towards the future and never towards the past. Second, the river is a common symbol for washing away sin.

Chapters 12-13

The different events of this section all revolve around one focus: Amir becoming a man. He marries and makes love for the first time. He loses Baba and becomes fully responsible for himself. He also completes and publishes his first novel, establishing his career as a writer. In all of these events, Amir experiences a profound mix of joy and pain. Embracing independence and adulthood also requires him letting go of his childhood dependence on Baba. To Amir, it is clear for the first time why Baba has always treated him the way he has. He was preparing Amir to take care of himself and to know right from wrong. In other words, he was teaching Amir to be a man. In his transition to adulthood, Amir also transits from one family to another. At the beginning of the section he is a boy living in his father's house. At the end, he is a man with a wife and his own home. What Baba does witness of this makes him happy, and he dies proud of Amir. Only one crucial thing remains missing for Amir. He wants to have a child.

Despite Amir's growth into an adult, one part of his childhood he does not let go of. He still feels guilty about Hassan. This guilt, though it is not prominent as it once was, still rises to the surface on occasion. Sometimes Amir simply wonders about him, as when he wonders if Hassan has married. Other times his guilt is more pronounced. When Soraya tells Amir about the time she ran away with another man, Amir actually feels jealous that she is able to speak about the incident. For Soraya, her secret is an event in the past that is done and over with. For Amir, however, his secret is very much still present, and he still cannot talk about it. Amir feels that, until he is able to atone for his treatment of Hassan, it will continue to haunt him.

Another subject of the section is the way the Afghan refugees, Amir and Baba included, preserve their culture in California. In the US, no controversy results from a young man and woman speaking in public without adults present. For Afghans, however, such encounters are not entirely appropriate. Certain customs must be followed. General Taheri feels the need to remind Amir of this fact when he sees Amir speaking with Soraya. He tells Amir he is among Afghan peers. The message is clear: they may be in California, but Afghanistan is still present, and Amir should act accordingly. From that point forward Amir's courtship of Soraya and then the wedding all happens in a more traditional fashion. Baba is the one who proposes the marriage to General Taheri. The wedding takes place in an Afghan banquet hall, and the ceremony follows Afghan customs, such as Amir and Soraya gazing at each other's reflection in a mirror while they are covered with a veil. Traditional Afghan culture is not always positive, however, and the section slips in some comments on the way it treats women.

Chapters 14-15

The call Amir receives from Rahim Khan at the beginning of the section is the same one he refers to in the book's first chapter. The narrative has almost come back to the present, though some important events need to occur before that happens completely. Amir has not spoken to Rahim Khan for twenty years, and hearing from him visibly shakes Amir. He is upset to hear that Rahim Khan is ill, but the call upsets him for another reason, which becomes clear when he takes his walk to Golden Gate Park and watches the kites flying. He realizes that Rahim Khan knows about everything that happened with Hassan, evident in Rahim Khan's comment to Amir that he knows of a way for Amir to be good again. Amir is again reminded of his treatment of Hassan, and despite the life Amir has made for himself in California, he will not be free of this guilt until he finds a way to make up for letting Hassan be raped and then falsely accusing Hassan of stealing from him.

Though Amir does not yet know how to atone for his sins against Hassan, two hints about how he will do it occur in the section. The only things keeping Amir from being completely happy are his guilt and the fact that he and Soraya are unable to have a child. For Amir, these have become linked into one feeling of emptiness. To underscore the way Amir links the two, as he lies in bed with Soraya he thinks first of their inability to have a baby, then dreams of Hassan running in the snow.

Once he arrives in Pakistan, Amir begins to realize the extent of what has happened to the people of Afghanistan and the events that have destroyed Kabul in the time he has been away. When the cab driver takes him through "Afghan Town," for instance, Amir sees children covered in dirt and selling cigarettes along the road, indicating that they are poor. Although they were forced to leave everything behind, Amir and Baba were lucky in the sense that they were able to make it to the United States and to some degree rebuild their lives. Based on Rahim Khan's description, it's evident that the fighting destroyed everything, from the buildings Amir knew to the way of life he remembers in Kabul.

Chapters 16-17

The events of this section, which largely recount what happened to Hassan in the time since Baba and Amir left for Pakistan, deftly tie together several of the book's thematic elements: the pain of guilt, the hatefulness of racial prejudice, the challenge of acting against injustice, the value of loyalty, the love as well as the discord between fathers and sons, and the role history plays in private lives. We do not learn all the details of Hassan's life, but we learn the basics. Most importantly, we now know that he had a son, Sohrab. In many ways, Hassan's relationship with Sohrab acts as indirect proof that Hassan never forgot Amir. Naming the boy after a character in his and Amir's favourite story is one example. Hassan also did with Sohrab all the things he and Amir used to enjoy, such as going to the movies and flying kites. The relationship between Hassan and Sohrab also adds a new dimension to the theme of fathers and sons that runs through the novel. It is perhaps the most loving father-son relationship we see in the book, making it all the more painful when we learn that Hassan is dead.

Hassan's murder is important for many reasons. It plays multiple roles in the section, and in the novel

as a whole. For instance, it brings together two of the story's major themes. His death is presented as a combination of the political strife ravaging Kabul and the entrenched prejudice against Hazaras that has turned up repeatedly in the novel. Two members of the Taliban, who at this point control Kabul without competition, shoot Hassan. Conspicuously, the men are not punished for killing Hassan and Farzana. The suggestion is that, to these men, the lives of Hazaras have no value, or at least not enough value to punish anyone for ending them.

Hassan's death also marks a turning point in Amir's quest for redemption. To Amir, the news of Hassan's murder means not only that he has lost his friend forever, but also that he can never apologize to Hassan for allowing his rape and then lying about him stealing Amir's birthday money. Making up for these actions was part of the reason he traveled to Pakistan in the first place. Initially, the story suggests that Amir will have to live with his guilt permanently, but Rahim Khan says one way remains for him to make amends. Amir can go to Kabul, find Sohrab, and bring him back to Pakistan where he can be taken care of. The request is not Rahim Khan's alone. Hassan said in his letter to Amir that the most important thing for him was to survive so that Sohrab would not become an orphan. With Hassan and Farzana dead and Rahim Khan ill, Amir is perhaps the only person who can make sure Sohrab is not abandoned.

Going to Kabul becomes a test of Amir's honour, loyalty, and manhood. Amir is clearly afraid to go. He knows the city is extremely dangerous, and in returning there he would risk everything he has, including his life and the welfare of his family. Kabul will also undoubtedly recall memories of Hassan and his past that Amir would rather not confront. Rahim Khan recognizes that the decision is a difficult one for Amir. To convince him, he brings up the conversation he once had with Baba, when Baba said he feared that Amir would not be able to stand up to anything as a man if he could not stand up for himself as a boy. Amir concedes that Baba may have been right. Then Rahim Khan reveals that Ali was not Hassan's father, and implies that Hassan was, in fact, Baba's child. Hassan and Amir, then, would be half-brothers, and Sohrab would be Amir's nephew, obligating Amir further to find the boy. The dilemma brings together the tensions Amir has struggled with in the novel. By rescuing Sohrab, Amir can become the man that Baba always wanted him to be, and he can finally atone for the ways he failed for Hassan as a friend.

Chapters 18-19

Another irony appears in this section: Amir realizes he is more like Baba than he thought. However, what they share is betrayal of their best friends. Baba had betrayed Ali, his closest friend since childhood, by sleeping with Sanaubar. As Amir says, having sex with a man's wife was the worst possible way an Afghan man could be dishonored. Amir had similarly betrayed Hassan. But despite all Baba's lies, Amir sees that Baba was correct to say that Amir always let someone else fight his battles for him. Though Amir never says so explicitly, he knows he is doing what Baba would have done in the situation when he resolves to go to Kabul to find Sohrab. The situation presents a further twist of irony in that Amir realizes he can share in Baba's greatest virtue, the courage to do what is right, only after he has recognized that he shares Baba's greatest failing as well. If Amir saves Sohrab, both he and Baba will be pardoned, at least to some degree, for the ways they betrayed their dearest and closest friends.

Amir's guilt over the way he treated Hassan also plays a significant role in his decision to return to Kabul. As Amir leaves Rahim Khan's house, Amir wonders if the chain of events that followed from his coercing Hassan and Ali out of Baba's house eventually led to Ali stepping on a landmine and to Hassan being shot. Had Amir acted differently, Ali and Hassan never would have left for Hazarajat, and both might still be alive now. Through this logic, Amir has made himself responsible for their deaths. He realizes he cannot save them, but a piece of Hassan lives on in Sohrab. By rescuing Sohrab, Amir will figuratively rescue Hassan as well. With this in mind, and the knowledge that he still has time to begin fighting for himself, Amir returns to Rahim Khan's house to tell him he will make the trip back to Afghanistan.

Chapters 20-21

As Amir and Farid look for Sohrab, the reader sees through Amir's eyes more of the devastation of Kabul. The city is now completely unfamiliar to Amir, and he looks at it almost as a tourist, as Farid called Amir in the previous section. His description sounds at times like science fiction. Littered with rubble, populated by beggars, the city has become a post-apocalyptic nightmare. In a scene that vividly represents Afghanistan's desperation, Farid points out to Amir one man trying to sell his prosthetic leg to another man, who haggles with him over the price. There are few real signs of life left, made clear by the fact that not even trees remain, rendering the landscape oddly desolate.

The public stoning that Farid and Amir witness at the stadium is an example of Taliban law. The Taliban claims to enforce Sharia, the law that all Muslims are supposed to follow. Because Islam makes no distinction between religious and non-religious matters, Sharia governs everything from business ethics to criminal justice, which is why a cleric rather than a judge or some other secular official comes out to speak to the crowd before the stoning begins. Many Muslims, however, believe the Taliban used Sharia as a way to oppress women and justify their violent behavior. In fact, most of the Muslims Amir speaks with, including Zaman and Rahim Khan, deplore the society the Taliban has created, underscoring the point that the Islamic state the Taliban established is not supported with all Muslims.

The book hints at the corruption of the Taliban by having a Taliban official taking girls and boys from the orphanage. We do not know at this point why the official is taking the children, but the unspoken implication is that the official is sexually abusing them. Whatever the case, the official is clearly misusing his position of power. As Zaman, the orphanage director, tells Farid after Farid strangles him, he has not been paid in six months and has already spent his life savings on the orphanage. Without the official's money, he is unable to feed the children in his care. Furthermore, if he protests, the official takes ten children instead of one. Much as Hassan was powerless to do anything against Assef, Zaman is now powerless against the Taliban official, and it is Sohrab, Hassan's orphaned son, who is the victim. Again, it is a case of the powerful in Afghanistan taking advantage of the powerless.

Chapters 22-23

The climax of the novel, in which Amir is finally able to atone for his past, occurs in Amir's fight against Assef. In another instance of irony, Amir discovers the Taliban official he must rescue Sohrab from is

the same person that raped Hassan all those years ago. Yet the bizarre coincidence also creates a situation in which Amir is able to confront the same scenario that was the source of his guilt more than twenty years earlier. From the way Assef touches Sohrab and what he says to Amir, Amir has no doubt at this point that Assef has been sexually abusing Sohrab. Because Sohrab represents a living piece of Hassan, Assef continues a figurative rape of Hassan. But Amir is now in a position to stop this. He can do what Baba always hoped he would and stand up for what is right. As Rahim Khan put it, it is his way to be good again.

Representing the idea of an eye for an eye, Assef gets what he deserves. For Amir, the situation means he can now intervene in Hassan's rape, at least symbolically, by saving Sohrab from further sexual abuse. Though Assef brutally beats Amir, Amir's goal isn't to win the fight. The fact that he did not run is what's important, and as Amir says, in a way he welcomes the beating. It is the punishment he deserved for his actions toward Hassan, but which he never received. It is the reason he feels relief and a sense of healing as Assef beats him, and why he begins laughing.

Amir's laughter establishes a significant parallel between Amir and Assef. Before he challenges Amir to a fight, Assef tells a story about the time he was imprisoned. He says he began to laugh as a guard kicked him because it ended the pain he suffered from his kidney stone. Amir's laughing, though stemming from the relief of a different pain, clearly mirrors Assef's. In fact, the novel establishes a few similarities between Amir and Assef. Both Amir and Assef are Pashtuns from wealthy, well-connected families, and they shared similar upbringings. They represent a particular part of Afghan society, namely the ruling powers. In his note to Amir, Rahim Khan even tells Amir that Baba thought of him as the socially legitimate part of his life, the part that inherited wealth and with it a freedom from punishment, which made Baba feel guilty.

Hassan, on the other hand, represented the poor and oppressed part of Afghanistan. He was the illegitimate boy whom Baba wanted to love but could never love publicly. In this context, Amir and Hassan act as the different sides of their country—the rich and poor, Sunni and Shia, Pashtun and Hazara, powerful and powerless—who are nonetheless still children of the same father. In allowing Assef to rape Hassan, Amir became complicit in the domination of the powerless by the powerful. Only by intervening on behalf of Sohrab, essentially sacrificing himself as Hassan once sacrificed himself for him, does Amir redeem himself. He takes a stand against this domination, and in doing so he is left with a split upper lip, recalling Hassan's cleft lip. In Hassan's case, his cleft lip acted as a kind of mark of his position in society. For Amir it is a symbol of his sacrifice, and it signifies the union of Afghanistan's two halves. Through Amir, Khaled Hosseini subtly suggests that if Afghanistan is to atone for its own guilty history of violence and discrimination, it must redeem itself through a similar stand and a similar sacrifice. It is the way for Afghanistan to be good again.

Chapters 24-25

The ending of the book is not exactly a happy one, and not all loose ends are tied up neatly. It is not certain that the characters we have come to know will get what they want. It is quite the opposite, in fact, and for Sohrab in particular there are fresh wounds that will leave permanent scars. The near endless abuse he has suffered is manifest in almost everything he does. Because of the physical and sexual abuse Assef and the Taliban inflicted on him, he flinches every time Amir reaches out to touch him. He also bathes for long

periods because he feels he is literally dirty as a result of his rape. Because of this abuse, as well as the abandonment he experienced when Hassan and Farzana were murdered, he is so terrified of going back to an orphanage, even temporarily, that he tries to kill himself. After he recovers, he says only that he wants his old life back. He stops speaking entirely, instead withdrawing into himself as if into a protective shell, completely unable to trust or open up to another person. In the pink scars on his wrists, he is left with a permanent mark of his trauma. Like everyone in the novel, he may move beyond the past, but he can never undo it.

Amir's redemption is not perfect either. As his feelings of guilt return in the aftermath of Sohrab's attempted suicide, he feels that, because he was going to break the promise he made never to send Sohrab back to an orphanage, it is his fault Sohrab tried to kill himself. As Amir prays in the hospital waiting room, he thinks the sins he committed against Hassan in the past are being revisited on him now. He is responsible now for Sohrab's suicide, for instance, just as he was responsible for the chain of events that led to Hassan's death. Furthermore, because he once pushed Hassan away when Hassan needed him most, God is now taking Sohrab as punishment. Even the relief from his past feelings that he does experience is not uplifting and transformative. He knows, for example, his guilt over his relationship with Baba was gone only because he feels no sting when he thinks Baba may have considered Hassan his true son.

With all this, Khaled Hosseini suggests a general lesson about life: that there are no simple solutions to such emotionally and historically complex problems as those we have seen throughout the novel. In a perfectly just world, Amir would have been able to adopt Sohrab without any difficulty and bring him home to a wonderful new life. For that matter, in a perfectly just world, few of the novel's significant events would have occurred at all. At one point, Amir describes an experience he had at a video store in California. A man was looking at a copy of "The Magnificent Seven," and Amir, who had seen the movie 13 times, gave away the ending. In such movies, the ending reveals the point of the journey. Does the good guy win or does the bad guy? Does the love affair end tragically or happily? Amir isn't sure exactly how his story ends. Life, he says, is not a movie. Of course, it is Khaled Hosseini, the author, putting these thoughts in the head of his fictional creation. But in doing so, he proposes something about the goal of fiction. If fiction wants to be true to life, it cannot provide easy answers to life's intractable problems.

Despite this dose of wary realism, Hosseini ends his often painful novel with hope. Flying the kite with Sohrab, Amir feels like a boy again, and for that time at least, he is innocent. It is also the first real connection he feels to Sohrab since Sohrab stopped speaking. Flying the kite is his link to Sohrab much as it was once his link to Baba. The lifeless, vacant look leaves Sohrab's eyes as he gets ready to battle the other kite, and half a smile peeks out from his face, which is enough to mark the beginning of Sohrab's recovery in Amir's mind. A portent of what's to come, Sohrab's smile implies that the abuses of the past cannot dominate him or anyone forever, and that eventually Amir, Sohrab, and Afghanistan will look to the future and be healed. The novel comes full circle as it ends, with Amir going to run the kite for Sohrab. He says to Sohrab the last words Hassan said to him before Hassan was raped, but despite the fact that those were the circumstances the last time these words appeared in the book, the hopeful tone suggests Amir has paid his penance and found his redemption.

16.4 THEME OF BETRAYAL AND REDEMPTION

Betrayal, which can be considered a form of sin, is enduring and ends up being cyclical in *The Kite Runner*. Amir's quest to redeem himself makes up the heart of the novel. Early on, Amir strives to redeem himself in Baba's eyes, primarily because his mother died giving birth to him, and he feels responsible. To redeem himself to Baba, Amir thinks he must win the kite-tournament and bring Baba the losing kite, both of which are inciting incidents that set the rest of the novel in motion. The more substantial part of Amir's search for redemption, however, stems from his guilt regarding Hassan.

For most of the novel, Amir attempts to deal with his guilt by avoiding it. But doing this clearly does nothing towards redeeming himself, and thus his guilt endures. That is why he still cringes every time Hassan's name is mentioned. When Amir finds out about Baba's betrayal of Ali (and subsequent betrayal of Hassan), he realizes that everything he thought he knew and understood about his father was false. And Amir himself feels betrayed. But Baba has been dead for fifteen years, and there is nothing he can do about the situation.

Neither feelings of betrayal nor punishment are enough to redeem Amir. That guilt drives the climactic events of the story, including Amir's journey to Kabul to find Sohrab and his confrontation with Assef. The moral standard Amir must meet to earn his redemption is set early in the book, when Baba says that a boy who doesn't stand up for himself becomes a man who can't stand up to anything. As a boy, Amir fails to stand up for himself. As an adult, he can only redeem himself by proving he has the courage to stand up for what is right. Rescuing Sohrab from Assef is not enough either. Only when Amir decides to take Sohrab to the United States and provide his nephew a chance at happiness and prosperity that was denied to his half-brother does Amir take the necessary steps toward atonement and redemption.

16.5 ROLE OF POLITICS AND RELIGION

The major events of the novel, while framed in the context of Amir's life, follow Afghanistan's transitions as well. In Amir's recollections of his childhood, we see the calm state of Kabul during the monarchy, the founding of the republic, and then watch as the Soviet invasion and infighting between rival Afghan groups ruin the country. These events have a hand in dictating the novel's plot and have significant effects on the lives of the characters involved. The establishment of the republic gives Assef an opportunity to harass Amir, simply because Assef's father knows the new president. Later, Kabul's destruction forces Baba and Amir to flee to California. When the Taliban took over after that, they murdered Hassan and even gave Assef a position that let him indulge his sadism and sexual urges without repercussions. Both of these events factor into Amir's mission to save Sohrab and his redemption by confronting Assef, subtly implying that Afghanistan will similarly have its own redemption one day.

Though it is rarely the main focus, religion is nearly always present in Amir's narrative. It is part of the culture of Afghanistan, and it is accordingly a fixture of the everyday life Amir describes. Amir creates a complex portrait of both the positive and negative traits of religion, with the negative always stemming from fundamentalists who use their beliefs as an excuse to carry out violence against others and to limit people's

freedom. From what we learn of Baba's feelings toward religion, this is not surprising. The first significant episode in the book involving religion, for instance, occurs when Amir, who is still a child, tells Baba that the mullah at school called drinking alcohol a sin as Baba pours a glass of whiskey. Immediately, the scene establishes a contrast between Baba and the mullah. Baba calls the mullah and men like him bearded idiots and explains to Amir that theft, in its many variations, is the only true sin. Baba obviously does not respect the beliefs of the mullah, yet he still has his own moral code. Amir consequently grows up with a strong sense of morality, though it is entirely separate from Islam.

Yet religion also has a major role in determining the direction that Afghanistan takes in the years after Baba and Amir flee to the United States. Although Amir's narrative does not give a clear step-by-step account of the political events in Afghanistan, the reader does know that fighting continued in the country even after the departure of the Russians, called the Shorawi. Ultimately, the Taliban emerged with control, and from Amir's narrative we learn that many of the Afghans who left their country think the Islamist government the group has created is simply a means for them to justify their violence and authoritarian rule. The character that most represents this image of the Taliban is Assef, who tells Amir that he felt liberated while massacring Hazaras in their homes because he knew God was on his side. Ultimately, however, Assef's violence becomes his downfall when Sohrab shoots his eye out, and later, when Sohrab has tried to kill himself, Amir has something of a religious conversion when Sohrab survives after Amir prays for God's help. Amir becomes an observant Muslim after that, but not a fundamentalist, making the case that religion is as good as the person practicing it.

16.6 MOTIFS AND SYMBOLS

Rape: Rape recurs throughout the novel. The most significant instances of rape are Assef's rape of Hassan and his later rape of Sohrab. Hassan's rape is the source of Amir's guilt, which motivates his search for redemption, while stopping Sohrab's rape becomes Amir's way of redeeming himself. In each case, rape is a critical element in the novel's plot. Other instances of rape include Baba stopping the rape of the woman in the truck with them as they flee Kabul, and the rape of Kamal that Kamal's father implies. As a motif, rape is important for multiple reasons. It is not just physically violent, but it is also an attack on the victim's emotions and dignity. Rape in this sense represents complete physical and mental domination of those who don't have power by those who do, and the victims of rape that we see in the novel, most notably Hassan and Sohrab, always suffer lasting emotional trauma.

Irony: The adult Amir clearly recognizes the ironies in his own story. The novel's greatest irony centers on Amir's choice not to stop Hassan's rape. Amir doesn't intervene because he wants Baba's approval, which he knows he can earn by bringing home the kite and proving that he, like Baba, is a winner. But by not stopping Assef and the others, Amir becomes exactly the sort of coward Baba worried Amir would become, and unwittingly allows Baba's son—and his own brother—to be raped, as he does not yet know that Baba is Hassan's father. Amir ultimately wants to be happy, but instead he earns himself an overwhelming sense of guilt. There is a further irony in the fact that Amir only realizes how much he resembles Baba when he discovers that Baba conceived Hassan with Sanaubar, Ali's wife. Amir wants to share the best of Baba's

traits, but instead what they share is the betrayal of their best friends. Another significant irony is the fact that Assef, who raped Hassan and caused Amir's guilt, becomes the way for Amir to atone. Amir is emotionally healed by taking the beating Assef gives him. In each instance, the irony stems from Amir recognizing the unintended consequences of his actions or desires.

Regressing in Time: Amir does not exactly have flashbacks which will suddenly put him back in the midst of an earlier event. Instead he repeatedly moves the story back in time to give a history of what he is talking about. The novel begins with him living in San Francisco, for instance, then immediately jumps back to his childhood in Kabul. Shortly after that, he jumps back yet again, this time to Baba's and Ali's childhood. When he meets Rahim Khan in Pakistan, Rahim Khan starts his own story by going back in time and telling Amir what Hassan's life has been like. Amir tells his story to a reader who has no knowledge of any of this beforehand, and his choice to regress in time and give the back story of each character does two things: it provides critical information about the character's history, and it also reinforces the thematic idea that the past defines the present.

The Cleft Lip: Hassan's cleft lip is one of his most representative features as a child, and it is one of the features Amir refers to most in describing him. The split in Hassan's lip acts as a mark of Hassan's status in society. It signifies his poverty, which is one of the things that separate him from Amir, simply because a cleft lip indicates that he and his family do not have the money to fix the deformity. Baba, who is Hassan's biological father, chooses to pay a surgeon to repair Hassan's lip as a birthday gift, signifying his secret fatherly love for Hassan. Later, Assef splits Amir's lip as he beats him, leaving Amir with a permanent scar much like Hassan's. In a sense, Amir's identity becomes merged with Hassan's. He learns to stand up for those he cares about, as Hassan once did for him, and he becomes a father figure to Sohrab. Because of this, it also serves as a sign of Amir's redemption.

Kites: The kite serves as a symbol of Amir's happiness as well as his guilt. Flying kites is what he enjoys most as a child, not least because it is the only way that he connects fully with Baba, who was once a champion kite fighter. But the kite takes on a different significance when Amir allows Hassan to be raped because he wants to bring the blue kite back to Baba. His recollections after that portray the kite as a sign of his betrayal of Hassan. Amir does not fly a kite again until he does so with Sohrab at the end of the novel. Because Amir has already redeemed himself by that point, the kite is no longer a symbol of his guilt. Instead, it acts as a reminder of his childhood, and it also becomes the way that he is finally able to connect with Sohrab, mirroring the kite's role in Amir's relationship with Baba.

The Lamb: In Islam, as in Christianity, the lamb signifies the sacrifice of an innocent. Amir describes both Hassan and Sohrab as looking like lambs waiting to be slaughtered. Amir says this during Hassan's rape, noting that Hassan resembled the lamb they kill during the Muslim celebration of Eid Al-Adha, which honors Abraham's near sacrifice of his son for God. Similarly, he describes Sohrab as looking like a slaughter sheep when he first sees Sohrab with Assef. Assef and the others had put mascara on Sohrab's eyes, just as Amir says the mullah used to do to the sheep before slitting its throat. Both Hassan and Sohrab are innocents who are figuratively sacrificed by being raped, but these sacrifices have very different meanings. In Hassan's

case, Amir sacrifices him for the blue kite. But in Sohrab's case, Amir is the one who stops his sexual abuse. In this context, sacrifice is portrayed as the exploitation of an innocent.

16.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- Q 1. According to Amir, what are the things that most connect him to his father?
- (a) Kites
 - (b) Music
 - (c) Poetry
 - (d) Short stories
- Q 2. As Assef sodomizes Hassan, Amir compares the look he sees on Hassan's face to what?
- (a) A cat's face
 - (b) A resistant goat
 - (c) A sacrificial lamb
 - (d) A sterile bull
- Q 3. From what does Baba die?
- (a) A heart attack
 - (b) A land mine
 - (c) Cancer
 - (d) Old age
- Q4. From what does Ali die?
- (a) A heart attack
 - (b) A land mine
 - (c) Cancer
 - (d) Old age
- Q5. In the end, what does Amir ultimately do surrounding Hassan's being sodomized?
- (a) He fights Assef
 - (b) He runs
 - (c) He tells an old man in the bazaar
 - (d) He yells at Assef to stop
- Q6. In which Afghanistan city do Amir and Hassan grow up?
- (a) Heart
 - (b) Kabul
 - (c) Kandahar
 - (d) Kunduz

16.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. Baba never tells Amir he fathered Hassan. Amir never tells Baba he left Hassan in the alleyway, or that he put the watch and money under Hassan's mattress. What role does silence play in the novel?
- Q2. What role does religion play in the lives of Baba, Amir, and Assef, and in the novel as a whole?
- Q3. How does the author, Khaled Hosseini, use irony in the novel?
- Q4. What is the significance of rape in the novel?
- Q5. How do Amir and Hassan represent the divisions in Afghan society, and how do these divisions affect the courses their lives take?

16.9 ANSWER KEY

- | | |
|---------|--------|
| (i) a | (ii) c |
| (iii) c | (iv) b |
| (v) b | (vi) b |

16.10 LET US SUM UP

There are two major relationships in *The Kite Runner*. One is between the protagonist and his father. The other is between the protagonist and his best friend. Because the protagonist's best friend is also his servant, though, and a member of the discriminated against ethnic minority, the novel presents a relationship that is fairly complex. Furthermore, religion and political changes also play a role in drawing the course of people's lives.

16.11 SUGGESTED READING

1. *A Study Guide for Khaled Hosseini's "The Kite Runner."* Gale and Cengage Learning: Farmington Hills, 2015. Print.

MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN - PART I**STRUCTURE**

- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Objectives
- 17.3 *Midnight's Children*, Part I
- 17.4 The Kashmir Chapters
- 17.5 The Birth of Saleem
- 17.6 The Childhood of Saleem
- 17.7 Midnight's Children
- 17.8 Saleem and Hybridity
- 17.9 Let Us Sum up
- 17.10 Examination Oriented Questions
- 17.11 Suggested Reading

17.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of the lesson is to introduce the learner to the background of the novel *Midnight's Children* and its detailed analysis.

17.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of the lesson is to familiarize the learners with the first part of the story of the *Midnight's Children* while bringing out the postcolonial leanings of the author Salman Rushdie. This lesson brings out how the history of the nation is linked with the history of the narrator and how the postcolonial context results in a sense of hybridity in his identity.

17.3 *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN*-PART I

In the *Midnight's Children* we follow the life of the narrator and protagonist, Saleem Sinai. Saleem is born in Bombay on the stroke of midnight on 15th of August, 1947- that is exactly at the moment of independence of India from the British colonial rule. The creation of this link between the protagonist and this historic juncture enables Rushdie to comment upon the formation of identity of people in the newly independent nation, by presenting the life of one character. This connection is an intentional and explicit literary device. Therefore, we should read the novel as symbolic of the formation of Indian identity in the aftermath of British colonialism in India. By presenting the lives and characters of Saleem and his family at such a period of history Rushdie is able to address the issues pertaining to the formation of identity in post-colonial context. Saleem's sense of self in relation to this historic juncture is how he relates to his heritage of colonialism.

The novel can be divided into three parts. The first, which covers Saleem's birth and early life in Bombay, introduces the protagonist's historical heritage and his current experience of the burden of history. In the second part of the novel, which is set in Pakistan and in the Sundarbans, Saleem experiences the loss of all ties to both family and history. In the third part of the novel, Saleem is back in Bombay, trying to confront his past. The whole story of Saleem is told retrospectively and is framed by the narrator's tale in the present.

17.4 THE KASHMIR CHAPTERS

Starting at the very beginning Rushdie in the opening chapters of the novel introduces the reader to Saleem's paternal grandfather, Aadam Aziz, somewhat in the manner of Tristram Shandy. Aadam has returned to his native home in Kashmir after studying medicine for five years in Germany. However, his return to Kashmir does not bring him the happiness that one feels at homecoming. In Germany, he had made new friends and had come in contact with ways of life other than the customs of his native land. Though, this experience broadened his horizon, it also shook his earlier confidence and sense of self. The attitude of his fellow German students that he faces during his sojourn abroad is typical of the colonizers. Though they are his friends, he is still the 'other' to them, an oddity, an aberration. Whereas they see themselves as modern, intellectual, and reasonable people, Aadam stands before them as the negation of these ideals. He seems to embody the ideals contrary to the ideals of modern Europe. They project all their fears and prejudices in him, in the 'other'. Ania Loomba also points to the essential predicament here: "One of the most striking contradictions about colonialism is that it both needs to 'civilise' its others and to fix them into perpetual 'otherness'." Moreover, they have a stereotypical image of the orient and they see Aadam according to that image refusing to see him as the individual that he is. What irks Aadam the most is that for his friends he is in some sense an invention of their grandparents.

Heidelberg, in which, along with medicine and politics, he learned that India- like radium- had been 'discovered' by the Europeans; even Oskar was filled with admiration for Vasco da Gama, and this

was finally what separated Aadam Aziz from his friends, this belief of theirs that he was somehow the invention of their ancestors.

Aadam has come back to his homeland with these experiences, a changed perception, with his spectacles and his doctor's bag. The experiences and the changed perception alienate him from his own land and his bag becomes a symbol of oppression and treason to Aadam's childhood friend, the boatman Tai which furthers his sense of estrangement. He sees everything with changed eyes. The same valley which appeared like a far away paradise now appears isolated and conservative to him. He feels that the country resents his western-educated appearance, and, in an attempt to resume some of his old self he tries to follow his old custom of praying to Allah. The attempt is doomed to fail as the change in him is irreversible and as he tries to ignore this fact and bends down to pray, the ground literally strikes back at him as a reminder of the futility of his attempt. Aadam hits his nose on a curve in the ground and bleeds three drops of blood, that turn into rubies. After this experience, Aadam renounces God altogether. He swears never to kiss the ground for any man or God again. However, this again is an illusion on his part. If he cannot go back to his earlier self he also cannot acquire an artificial self of his friends because he is not them. Thus even after his resolve of not believing Aadam is not able to follow his secular, German friends and is unable to fully disbelieve in the God of his childhood. Consequently this decision leaves a "hole in his stomach" or an emptiness which proves to be his lifelong albatross and finally drives him towards his death.

In the chapters dealing with Aadam's life Rushdie brings out how his exposure to the west has left him adrift between two worlds, and he is unable to fully belong to either of the two. To the west, Aadam is unreason, a colonised subject, who for all his education in the west can never actually become one of them and will always be perceived by them as the 'other'. Infact his education in the west makes him nothing more than a counterfeit westerner, at best a poor imitation of them and this instead of acting as a bridge only emphasizes the differences between them. Thus in his case Bhabhian mimicry becomes mockery. Instead of building a bridge between the perceived differences, his education only makes them clearer. On one hand Aadam finds it impossible to belong to the western world and on the other hand, his western education causes Aadam to see his homeland with new eyes. This new perspective alienates him from his old home as well. In Kashmir, represented by the view of Tai, Aadam has stepped over to the enemy's side. He has lost his purity. So now Aadam is left without a sense of belonging to either of the worlds.

It seems that there is no possible position that involves belonging to both camps, and Aadam is left in-between. This sense of in-betweenness is often described as typical of the experience of being colonised. Both Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha have written extensively about the colonised subject's experience of being trapped between two cultures. What is demonstrated in the first part of the novel therefore is an idea of cultural purity. Aadam's exposure to the western world has left him impure and his loss of purity has made him unacceptable in either camp. Aadam's sense of hybridity and in-betweenness is not directly related to the experience of being colonised by the British. However, the most important message of the Kashmiri chapters is that they demonstrate a tendency towards dividing the world into 'us' and 'them', a tradition of distrust towards other peoples and cultures and stereotypical views of the Oriental in the west.

In other words, the them-and-us dichotomy between British and Indians is recreated within India.

Aadam's sense of in-betweenness and hybridity is said to be passed on to his grandson, Saleem. But Saleem does not feel these impulses as a part of his inheritance alone. Infact he develops a sense of hybrid identity based on his own experiences when he is drawn in opposing directions by the mixed and conflicting impulses of Indian tradition and the heritage of British colonial culture.

Most modern theories about identity seem to regard identity as being composed of different aspects rather than to assume that one can detect and describe a whole and unified essence of a person based on a few given factors such as nationality, gender, class etc. Moreover, the issue of fragmentation is also a central issue within both post-modern and post-colonial theory. In *Midnight's Children*, we come across the issue of fragmented identity with regard to both Aadam and Saleem.

The experience of fragmentation is described as being passed down from grandfather to grandson. In the case of Aadam Sinai, the experience is linked to his first encounters with the woman he will eventually marry. The chapter is titled 'Perforated Sheet'. The young doctor newly come from Germany is also an eligible bachelor and Ghani, the blind landowner views him as such. With this ulterior motive he instructs the young doctor to cure his daughter of her illness while limiting his contact with her to that which can be accomplished through a hole in a sheet. Thus Aadam sees his future bride in bits and pieces everyday trying to construct the whole from the fragments. As a result of this act, Aadam develops a tendency towards seeing the world in fragments, a tendency which has its effects also upon Saleem. This is yet another example of Rushdie's symbolic portrayal of Indian, post-colonial identity. The incident is to be understood as symbolic of the experience of a colonised people.

These Kashmir chapters demonstrate how identity is formed when people and cultures meet that too in unequal power relations. This gives rise to the tendency of regarding other people and cultures as backwards and inferior. This is a bad habit and demonstration of one's own mental limitations. As several critics have pointed out, the perceptions of other people and the power of these descriptions was crucial to the project of colonialism. The description, and thereby also the construction of the 'other' helped prepare for and legitimise European colonialism abroad. They could legitimize their plunder and loot of other lands by projecting it as a mission of civilizing the 'uncivilised other'. They were not greedy colonizers but people with a noble mission of bearing the white man's burden. Furthermore, these beginnings play an important role in the formation of Saleem's identity.

17.5 THE BIRTH OF SALEEM

By giving birth to a son at the precise instant of India's independence, Saleem's mother, Amina Sinai, wins The Times of India competition. Saleem gets a full-page picture in the newspaper and a letter from the Prime Minister saying that his life will be a mirror of the life of the nation. This becomes the defining event of Saleem's life. He views himself and everything in his life in relation to his time of birth. He

regards himself as the reflection of his nation, his status as incomparable and his self as destined for very big things in life. Saleem identifies completely with the prize and status granted to him, or to be brutally honest, to his mother. Saleem seems to think of himself as the prize made flesh, as a personified statue of liberty, whose life is inevitably connected to that of the country. As we will see, this becomes a heavy burden for the young boy. At the age of nine, he is already troubled by the question of meaning. As he expresses it: “It was a very early age at which to be perplexed by meaning”. Saleem yearns for his life to be meaningful, for his genius to make itself known, for his parents to have their money’s worth, so to speak. We will see how his quest to satisfy this yearning is to haunt the boy for the rest of his life.

The experience of colonialism seems to be of vital importance to the building up of Saleem’s sense of self, although he himself is born after colonialism. The heritage of his grandfather and the time of his birth are darkening his young life. This again suggests that although colonialism has formally ended, something remains.

The symbolic relevance of Saleem’s longing for meaning is descriptive of all Indian citizens after the end of formal colonialism. The goal of independence that everyone was striving for had been achieved. But that did not satisfy the people. Along with the onset of freedom followed an inflated expectation of meaning and significance. Saleem will eventually have to confront these expectations, as must the people of India. We can see that the presentation of Saleem’s identity is not only closely linked to his relationship with the nation, it symbolises the development of identity in India after colonialism. This is precisely what Rushdie seeks to accomplish by associating his protagonist’s time of birth with the time of birth of the nation.

The timing of Saleem’s birth is the defining moment of his self-image. However, what was at first a boon for the young boy soon becomes a bane and almost destroys him. At the age of ten, Saleem’s self-image is grotesque and unacceptable to him. This is the reason why he tries to escape his destiny defined by the time of his birth by creating a secret identity for himself. When he denies his true self and acquires a secret and changed identity he is in a way trying to distance himself from his symbolic statements which is his status as a symbol of liberation. We can recognise here already the tendencies described by both Fanon and Bhabha about the colonised subject’s sense of hybridity due to conflicting and unbridgeable claims of the traditional and colonising cultures and demands. Although Saleem cannot be considered a colonised subject in the true sense of the word nevertheless his sense of uneasiness about his belonging and loyalties seems to be the same as was that of his grandfather. This is evident from the way he describes his position as being “handcuffed to history” when he says “thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly linked to those of my country.”

17.6 THE CHILDHOOD OF SALEEM

In the novel it is evident from the very beginning that the protagonist is feeling ‘handcuffed’ to history and his feelings seem to be more of a prisoners than of someone who is enjoying the bond and it will become

his quest and mission in life to free himself from these ties. This can be seen in the episode where as a young boy Saleem is teased by the other children on the school bus who chant and call him Pinocchio. We know from the Disney version of the character of Pinocchio that his main characteristic is that he has no strings to hold him down. Saleem, on the other hand, is tied down by all kinds of ties, by family and history. Later in the novel the children's chant comes true. Saleem is suddenly freed from all ties.

Two aspects of Saleem's childhood that deserves some attention are his appearance and his upbringing. The way Rushdie describes him we gather that he has blue eyes and very light skin and looks almost white like a British. Furthermore, due to his father's love of the English and his conviction about the superiority of their culture he is dressed like a little English milord. Whereas the other inhabitants of the Methwold Estate only reluctantly agree to the coloniser's demand that they must keep up the appearance of a British lifestyle, Ahmed is only too eager to please whom he thinks is his newfound friend, William Methwold, and is generally convinced of the benefits of doing so. He states: "All the best people are white under the skin; I have merely given up pretending". That this is true not only of Ahmed can be supported by the presentation of Indian economy in the first decade after independence:

It seems that the gargantuan (even heroic) efforts involved in taking over from the British and becoming masters of their own destinies had drained the colour from their cheeks...in which case, perhaps my father was a late victim of a widespread, though generally unremarked phenomenon. The businessmen of India were turning white.

Saleem's connection with the history of his country is strengthened throughout the novel. At the time of his birth, Saleem's connection to the history of the nation is merely a date. The connection is soon strengthened by the letter from the Prime Minister and the picture in the paper. At school Saleem is taught the values of the coloniser by the reading of the English canon of literature.

Colonialism was not only descriptions and representations. It was also aided by a conscious policy of education in which English values and ideal were dominant. We see here that not only non-institutional aspects of colonialism remained after 1947, but also institutions such as the canon of literature that was taught in schools. We understand that the ties that are holding Saleem handcuffed to history are not only something vague and surreptitious, but also inherited power structures and institutionalised practices that are very palpable and visible. We can see therefore that Saleem's connection with India as a national symbol of liberation is challenged by his father's adoration for the British.

17.7 MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN

Although the novel is titled *Midnight's Children*, the midnight's children are not introduced until late in the novel. The importance of the children's relation to Saleem's quest for meaning is immense. There are a thousand and one children who are born on this hour. At a later instant, Saleem expresses the view that 1001 is the largest number that can be meaningful to people. Any number larger than that he argues, becomes statistics. We are therefore to understand the number as symbolic, as representing the first generation after independence.

Only two children are born on the exact moment of midnight: Saleem and Shiva. Shiva represents the other whole of the social scale and serves as the opposite or rival of the protagonist, Saleem. We notice that the difference in them is the irony of the destiny. The love and the prosperity that Saleem gets is infact Shiva's birth right and Shiva's life is infact the actual inheritance of Saleem. However the switch of the two babies at the hospital changes their life completely. Throughout the story of Saleem, Shiva is lurking in the back as a constant threat to his quest for meaning, to the love of a family and to the heritage of a wealthy family. Whereas the midnight's children obviously represent the various demographical groups of the Indian nation, the tension between Saleem and Shiva not only stresses the diversity in terms of affluence, but is at the same time a comment upon the arbitrary status of the various demographical groups. Rushdie here aims at demonstrating that no aspect of one's identity is natural. As Ten Kortenaar says "... identity does not reside in the blood; it is the claim and its recognition by the one claimed that matter". This is also true of one's material comfort level. Although this might seem a rather obvious remark, one should remember that newly independent India inherited a sharply defined caste system in which wealth was seen to depend upon a person's past lives. It is obvious that the ideal of equal rights and democratic values does not easily harmonize with such a tradition. One can argue about the literary quality of the baby-switching as metaphor, but it allows Rushdie to address and criticise an important issue of Indian society.

Saleem's sense of being a leader and at the centre of the things increases as he realizes his role as the person who makes the Midnight's Children's Conference (MCC) possible at all and as he explores the existence and the nature of the midnight's children he begins to make plans for the future. However, Shiva contests the position. Whereas the other midnight's children all have suggestion for how they can employ their midnight-given abilities, the main battle is between Saleem's quest for meaning and Shiva's total denunciation of it. For the time being, Saleem wins. His contention is that the children's existence and status as the children of independence must be meaningful. The MCC is therefore a philosophical debate about what the new Indian nation shall be. However, the Midnight's Children's Conference eventually fails. After their initial rejoicing in each other's company, they gradually become infected by the prejudices of their parents. As Saleem says:

Children, however magical, are not immune to their parents; and as the prejudices and world-views of adults began to take over their minds, I found children from Maharashtra loathing Gujaraties, and fair-skinned northerners reviling Dravidian 'blackies'; there were religious rivalries; and class entered our councils.

According to Saleem ; the children were a thousand and one opportunities and a thousand and one traps. He however asserts that inspite of having special abilities and extra ordinary powers, they were also just normal children. Thus what Saleem wants to convey is that beneath their special abilities, Midnight's Children were just normal children and this is what made them vulnerable to the atrocities of the widow Indira Gandhi. However, their quest for meaning, their existence, their potential was due to their special powers and when the widow drains them of these powers, she finishes them off. Saleem and Midnight's Children remain no more than victims of a quest for meaning. Midnight's Children were the first generation of independent India and if given the opportunity they would have not only helped in the building of the

newly independent nation but taken it to great height by their immense potential. However, the whole generation and its potential is destroyed by the very Prime Minister of the country. The newly independent country coming to the term with its existence and meaning is not able to do justice to its first generation. Thus Saleem's tale is a tale of loss and lament. He is telling his story to his son retrospectively. And if there is any sense of optimism and possibility left in Saleem's tale, it resides in the chance of the next generation, his son Aadam's generation.

17.8 SALEEM AND HYBRIDITY

In many ways, therefore, Saleem's quest in life becomes to determine the relation between himself and his history, family and heritage. These relations are what define him and how he visualizes himself will depend on them. From a celebrated and happy arrival into the world, Saleem is now beginning to feel the pressures and challenges from the outside world. A number of trials will force him to decide what he shall be: a product of the free nation, or the opposite, free of all connections with the nation.

As stated earlier, Saleem's grandfather, Aadam developed a sense of hybridity after his encounter with the west. This was also passed on to his grandson, Saleem, as his family's heritage. However, this was not a passive transferral or a genetic transfer, but a result of Saleem's cultural heritage and continued presence of colonial structures. As a young boy Saleem is unaware of the contrary influences being exerted on him. On the one hand, he is granted a status as a symbol of freedom after the end of colonialism. He gets a letter from the Prime Minister himself and gets a photo in the newspaper: and on the other hand, his upbringing keeps on informing him of the superiority of the British over the Indian. His father's anglophilia somewhere effects him as well. That these childhood influences have indeed seeped deep into him can be seen in the thirty-one-year old Saleem's sense of fragmentation and cracks in his skin.

This sense of hybridity is often referred to when analysing the psychological effect of colonialism upon the colonised people. Although formal colonisation has ended, the influence upon aspects of society that were linked to issues such as status and education during colonialism remains. These mental elements of colonisation are not that can be easily subtracted from people's consciousnesses. Loomba comments upon the issue of race relations that were defined by colonialism but which remain long after independence: "The race relations that are put into place during colonialism survive long after many of the economic structures underlying them have changed".

It is clear, therefore, that Saleem's present feeling of his cracking skin is a result of conflicting impulses from the past. These conflicting impulses are not to be confused with the plurality of Bombay, which Saleem cherishes so much, but contradictory and confusing systems of values. Saleem's hybridity is therefore best understood in the terms of Fanon, whose theories stress the impossibility of identifying with the coloniser. When applied to the theories of Homi K. Bhabha, one can recognise the anti-colonial political potential of this sense of psychological split. Bhabha argues that the colonised subject's sense of failure in mimicking the coloniser is potentially disruptive to the colonising power, since it demonstrates that the colonial project is doomed to fail. However, in Saleem's case, colonialism has already ended, and his enemy is a much more elusive - one of values and remnant power structures. Saleem's quest therefore, is

not to fight the rule and presence of the coloniser, but to fight the mental legacy of imperialism, the ghost of colonialism so to speak.

Ahmed Sinai's anglophilia infects Saleem as well and he is brought up to love the west. This has led to the young boy's sense of hybridity. As mentioned earlier he is torn between the national pride of being liberated and his father's love for the West. That under the influence of his father Saleem is also in love with the west, which is represented by his love of Evie (Evelyn) Burns. Although she is American and not English, the narrator claims that this amounts to the same thing. However, Evie brutally refuses Saleem's expressions of love. This can be read as symbolic of the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. On the one hand, the coloniser seeks to transform the colonised into resembling themselves. However, the result is inevitably a caricature of the coloniser, and therefore works to challenge rather than unite the two sides of the colonial equation. Saleem's love for the west is denied. He is crushed by Evie's refusal, but he will have his revenge. His sister, the Brass Monkey, takes a brutal revenge by beating up Evie. The Empire Strikes Back, quite literally, and Saleem is forever cured of flirting with the west. This can be read as a mental liberation from the coloniser.

Saleem's liberation from his love for the west does not liberate him from the burden of meaning that his birth has laid on him. The event that will suddenly and unexpectedly relieve Saleem from the burden of meaning is a school dance. In a fight with two other boys, Saleem loses a part of his finger. At the hospital, then, Saleem's blood type reveals to the unknowing family that Saleem cannot be the biological offspring of his parents. The young Saleem has fought hard to liberate himself from the connection with history and the spell is suddenly broken. Saleem is unexpectedly freed of all ties to both family and history. The school time chant of pinnocchio has suddenly come true as he finds all strings broken.

It is a pivotal moment in his search for meaning and the process of identity formation. Saleem had always defined himself in terms of his status as the nation's first born child. Apart from causing Saleem's first exile and loss of parents, Saleem also loses his status as the nation's first-born child. From this moment on, Shiva becomes the face of fear for Saleem as Saleem realizes that he is nothing but a usurper of Shiva's position. That the letter from the Prime Minister was not written to him, but to Shiva, and that the picture in the paper should have portrayed him. Shiva becomes more than a rival. He becomes a threat to Saleem's former birthright. At first this is a devastating realisation for Saleem. However, gradually he begins to detect the liberating possibilities of the fact and not only acknowledges it, but continues the process of separation deliberately and consciously. When the family leaves for Pakistan, Saleem buries the globe containing letter and newspaper in the garden.

It seems that Rushdie has used Saleem's loss of his biological parents as a device in order to comment upon the process of identity formation. By freeing Saleem from his ties, he allows us to contemplate what the opposite situation would be. Saleem is tied down by the burden of the past. Is it possible, the author seems to ask, to be free of all ties of the past? When again this also raises the question that can a nation ever overthrow its past, its history of colonialism and define itself entirely in the present? Interpreting this phase of Saleem's life in terms of a national allegory, the loss of biological parents would suggest the

loss of traditions and a supposedly true connection to the country.

Here onwards Saleem enters a new phase of development. This is also a very important aspect of the protagonist's struggle for self-definition. The loss of biological parents causes Saleem to go through an existential crisis, in which all his previous notions and beliefs about himself and his place in the history of his country must be revised. In order to define one's identity after colonialism, one needs not only to turn to the past and traditions that came before the British and which thus are somehow purer and unspoilt, but to put these under scrutiny and decide how one wants to relate to them. In other words one has to both find and fight one's past and modify it according to one's present.

Joel Kuortii identifies Saleem's contradictory attempts to find and fight ancestry. Saleem's measure of his worth in the world is related to his ability to identify with the history of his nation. By claiming ancestors, real and imaginary, he is in fact trying to prove himself as the true son of nation. In other words his invention of fictional ancestors is related to Saleem's claim for meaning which is an essential part of his identity formation. However, the real truth about Saleem's biological father is never revealed to him. Saleem is in fact the son of the departing coloniser, William Methwold. When Saleem sees himself as the 'true son of Methwold estate', he does not know how accurate his description really is. As we know, it is William Methwold, the departing coloniser who is the biological father of Saleem. The blood of the coloniser is therefore still running in his veins. At a later stage, he expresses that he has eaten a whole world. We can see therefore that in a manner similar to Moraes's situation in *Moor's Last Sigh*, ancestry is a complex and shifting idea. One cannot possibly know the true and real roots of one's existence, but is forced to choose one's identity and belonging. Identity is thus not something that can be found in a pre-colonial past, but must be created anew.

17.9 LET US SUM UP

To sum up in the first part of the novel Rushdie well establishes the postcolonial context of the story. He begins with Aadam Aziz to bring in the pre independence history of India to circumscribe the story of the newly -independent nation. In the first part of the novel Rushdie establishes a firm relation between the protagonist and the nation so that the story of Saleem becomes the story of India. The post-colonialism can be most poignantly discerned in the resultant sense of hybridity in both Saleem and his grandfather. Thus the novel in the first part traces the history of the subcontinent from pre-independence to the partition of India.

17.10 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. Discuss the importance of the 'Kashmir Chapters' in *Midnight's Children*.
- Q2. How does the MCC become representative of the Indians at large?
- Q3. The issue of 'hybridity' is central to the postcolonial discourse. How does this manifest in the characters of Saleem Sinai and his grandfather?
- Q4. The issue of ancestry has always been problematic in Rushdie's oeuvre. Discuss with reference to

the character of Saleem Sinai.

Q5. Interpret the title of the novel in the light of its theme.

17.11 SUGGESTED READING

- M.D. Fletcher (ed.), *Reading Rushdie, Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*, (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1994)
- Uma Parameswaran, *The Perforated Sheet: Essays in Salman Rushdie's Art* (New Delhi, Affiliated East-West, 1988)
- James Harrison, *Salman Rushdie*, Twayne's English Authors Series, (New York, Twayne, 1992)
- Catherine Cundy, *Salman Rushdie*, (Manchester, Manchester UP, 1996)

MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN - PART II & III**STRUCTURE**

- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Objectives
- 18.3 The Move to Pakistan
- 18.4 The Sunderbans Phase
- 18.5 Return to India
- 18.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 18.7 Examination Oriented Questions
- 18.8 Suggested Reading

18.1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the previous lesson, with the truth of his biological parentage out the process of separation from being a national symbol of liberation in India has begun for Saleem. He also loses his special ability of contacting the midnight's children and the ability to convene the conference. He is literally drained of his medium which is his running nose. He thus loses all contact with the midnight's children along with the loss of his position as the special child of the hour. However, his loss of telepathic abilities is replaced with a new feature, namely an exaggerated sense of smell. Saleem in Pakistan is able to smell feelings and emotions alike.

18.2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this lesson is to familiarize the learners with the remaining part of the novel. After having established the link between Saleem and India the writer uses the rest of the story to comment upon the rest of the subcontinent. This lesson attempts to enable the learner to trace the connection of the history and the individual in the remaining journey of Saleem Sinai.

18.3 THE MOVE TO PAKISTAN

With the family's move to Pakistan begins a new phase in everyone's life. The first thing to change is

their status. From the position of a well-to-do and respected family in Bombay, they are relegated to the position of poor relatives of General Zulfikar. Further coming from a pluralistic and unorthodox city like Bombay, they are unable to feel at home in their newly adopted theocratic nation. With the result, they experience the same feeling of in-betweenness which Saleem felt. Though for the family this transaction is difficult it is worse for Saleem.

Born and brought up in cosmopolitan Bombay, Saleem has deeply absorbed the pluralistic, liberal atmosphere of the city. All his childhood he has learnt the values of tolerance and respect for other people's religions and cultures. Coming from such a liberal and liberated atmosphere, he is struck badly by the closed conservative society of his newly adopted home, Pakistan. He cannot identify with the country where even the younger generation demonstrates in the streets, demanding a more strict society with more rules. This is a state in which the nation predicts what the truth shall be. At first Saleem is opposed to this society and fights to avoid being assimilated into it. However, he eventually surrenders and he too becomes a submissive citizen of Pakistan, the land of the pure. As we can see, this might increase Saleem's sense of belonging, but it is a false sense as it does so at the expense of his own values and morals.

Saleem's sense of hybridity in Pakistan is not the same as in India. Whereas his former sense of in-betweenness was caused by the conflicting values of Indian traditions and the legacy of the colonising culture, he now experiences a personal struggle between the plurality of Bombay and the religious indoctrination of Pakistan. Moreover, Saleem is not only in a position of in-betweenness and submission in Pakistan, he is also displaced in his family. Whereas he was previously the favoured child of the family, at least in his own eyes, it is now his younger sister, the Brass Monkey, who acquires a position as celebrated national symbol. In Pakistan, the Brass Monkey is transformed into "Jamila the Singer", a symbol of purity and chastity. The transformation of the Brass Monkey into Jamila the Singer is a further example of how identity can be constructed. However, one must be cautious of Rushdie's use of the term constructed identity because though he does stress the constructed nature of identity especially in the personage of Jamila the Singer, it is not a completely postmodern view where identity is seen as something that can be decided completely freely. The writer tries to convey through Saleem's experiences in the Sundarbans that identity is and must be rooted in history and society somehow.

It is perhaps a reaction to his loss of status, his sense of being doubly displaced and his feeling of unease in his new surroundings that Saleem almost deliberately seeks to oppose his new position. In the land of the pure, he develops impure thoughts. He falls in love with his own sister. He tries to justify his feelings by telling himself that Jamila is not his biological sister, but his guilt due to his feeling of forbidden lust, causes him to seek the company of prostitutes. Saleem is rebelling against his new status of displacement and submission by embracing the forbidden. In the land of the pure he goes to prostitutes. We can hear the echoes of Homi Bhabha's theories of political opposition here. Saleem is in a system that he is not able to belong to, that makes him feel like an outsider in fact almost an outcast and this causes him to rebel against it. Though technically it is not incest as they are not biologically related, it is nothing other than incest as all his life Saleem has looked to Jamila as his sister. Moreover it seems he has these feelings precisely because they are incestuous. Infact the use of incest as a symbol of unhealthy relationship between the state and its people can

be seen in Rushdie's other novels as well. In *Moor's Last Sigh*, there are hints of an incestuous relationship between Moraes and his mother and sisters. Here again the unnatural code of conduct is symbolic of the unhealthy socio-political system. This works within the frame of national allegories, where the different characters can be seen to represent the country and its people.

To continue the theme of impurity, drained of his telepathic powers and endowed with the exaggerated power of smelling, Saleem's ability to smell emotions, enables him to smell the degree of purity and order in people's thoughts. It is perhaps not surprising that Saleem seems to favour the impure smells over the purer. This is a moral decision in opposition of indoctrination. Saleem's distrust of purity is at the same time a fight for tolerance and plurality.

Thus we can see that in the process of identity formation Saleem has been put through the distressing experiences of being displaced, of being an outcast, and a burden for society. He has been subjected to religious indoctrination and made into a submissive citizen of Pakistan. On the other hand, he has, perhaps unconsciously, began a process of opposition by refusing to accept purity as a higher goal. Although these experiences cannot be directly related to the experience of British colonialism in India, they are nevertheless post-colonial in the temporal sense of the term. The partition of the sub-continent was the departing gift of the colonizers and its consequences were clearly related to the colonial experience. With the departure of the external enemy, internal conflicts of religion became clearer. Furthermore, the focus on national identity is perhaps likely to become central in a country where one's national identity has been repressed and subdued for so long. This is very evident from the various incidents of nationalism in Rushdie's novels.

When the secret of his parentage was out, Saleem suddenly found all ties broken. However, he was still not completely free. His total freedom from family, history and his own self comes at the end of his experiences in Pakistan when his entire family (except Jamila the Singer) dies in the Indo Pakistani war and he is hit on the head by the spittoon resulting in complete memory loss.

18.4 THE SUNDERBANS PHASE

The Pakistani chapter in Saleem's life ends with the loss of his family, loss of his memory and he is forced to join the Pakistani army and participate in the war against Bangladesh. As readers we know that this is not his decision, but Jamila's revenge for Saleem's declarations of his love for her. Saleem is therefore a man with no connections to history or family who goes into the jungle of East Pakistan. Due to Saleem's exaggerated sense of smell, he is designated as a man-dog for the CUTIA division, a Pakistani intelligence unit. He is in charge of three young soldiers, who follow his lead. Saleem achieves the nickname the Buddha or the man-dog. Whereas the latter describes his nasal facility, the former refers both to God and to a man who has the appearance of old age. In the Sundarbans, Saleem, or the man-dog is used to trace down political opponents so that the rest of the unit can kill them.

After being hit on the head by the spittoon, Saleem has no memory. Furthermore, he refuses to try to remember. His amnesia seems almost deliberate, since it fulfils his former wish to be free of all ties with history and the nation. Saleem now refuses to be defined by history: "Don't fill my head with all that history,

... I am what I am and that's all there is". But what is he? And who is he ? It seems Saleem's sense of hybridity is incapable of being healed.

In the way that Saleem's acceptance of the religious doctrines of Pakistan didn't really heal him so his loss of ties with history is incapable of healing him. This is emphasised by Saleem as a narrator in present time. He consequently refuses to identify with this version of Saleem. He refers to Saleem in the Sundarbans as "him" or as "Saleem." He even states directly that Saleem in the Sundarbans is "not-Saleem".

At this point the author is presenting the protagonist in such terms that his development and identity has now become completely detached from any connection to family, history or nation. However, the author does not offer this as a feasible solution. Though the philosophical dictum of losing one's self in order to find oneself appears to be very spiritual and attractive, in real life a person cannot claim any identity in isolation with the world. This is why, Rushdie presents memory-less Saleem as a sub-human, man-dog devoid of all feeling and humanity. The terrible atrocities that are committed by his division of Pakistani soldiers in the east wing of Pakistan fail to have any effect on him. He has become not just an animal, a man-dog, but a machine.

When Saleem and his division of soldiers get lost in the jungle, the author subjects them to a phantasmagoric atmosphere. The hardships and the mysteries of the jungle further reduce them to sub-human level. Infact, this time they become transparent and invisible. It seems that in his search for meaning and identity, Saleem first lost his self and will now lose his entire being or existence itself. However, the turning point in the development of Saleem's identity comes after he and his fellow soldiers have been carried out of the jungle on a tidal wave.

In the Chapter called "Snakes and Ladders", Saleem comments upon the game of Snakes and Ladders: "but I found, very early in my life, that the game lacked one crucial dimension, that of ambiguity – because as events are about to show, it is also possible to slither down a ladder and climb to triumph on the venom of a snake." Snake-venom has been always panacea for Saleem. Even as an infant when he fell terribly ill and beyond all hope, he was cured by the venom of the snake. Now again it helps him return to humanity. Just when he had begun to become invisible as a human being, the snake bite proves to be the antidote and saves him. Biblically, a snake bite is associated with Adam's expulsion from the paradise. But as is typical with Rushdie, here he subverts the meaning of this literary, cultural and religious allusion. By doing so he not only draws attention to the constructed status of such conventions but also highlights his own argument. Thus in a manner completely opposite to the biblical interpretation, Saleem is expelled from hell and not from any Garden of Eden by the snake bite.

The ambiguous nature of the snakes is used by the author also to comment on the relative nature of concepts. Identity is one such relative concept, and all ideas of true, stable and natural concepts should be broken down and analysed with respect to their multiple components. Rushdie's view on identity as a relative concept is thus very analogous to post-modern ideas on the topic.

After being cast out from the jungle, Saleem is a transformed person. His change has almost a spiritual hint in it as he begins the process of regaining memory by a means of confession. What resembles the cleansing given by confession, he tells his tale to his fellow soldiers in all its detail with absolute honesty. He remembers everything but his name. Thus though the transformation has begun and he is returning to humanity, something is still missing in the completion of the process. His return to humanity can also be seen by the fact that he is beginning to wake up and recognize the violence and atrocities committed by the Pakistani soldiers for what they are. This is the most important turning point in the story of Saleem. He makes a moral decision and deserts the army

With this the Bangladeshi chapter closes in Saleem's life. However this has been the most crucial time in his search for a meaning which would give him an identity. Saleem had for a long time felt burdened by the time of his birth and wished to be free of all ties. In Bangladesh he is granted his wish. He loses his memory and is free of any and every bond. This freedom however is more limiting than all the previous bonds. He has gained wholeness at the expense of humanity. We can therefore assume the protagonist's careful return to society and healing. This is also the appearance of the subsequent story, with Saleem's happy reunion with Parvati the Witch and his return to his beloved India.

18.5 RETURN TO INDIA

In the basket of Parvati the Witch, Saleem is brought back to India. This is the final step. It is Parvati who finally gives Saleem back his name thus completing his return journey to humanity. In her basket, Saleem experiences complete invisibility, and his firm grip on the spittoon is his only link to reality. This invisibility, however, is very different from the one he experienced in the jungle. The latter was a move towards obliterating his very being. This invisibility is like oblivion before birth. Saleem is therefore in a sense reborn in India.

But the Saleem who is reborn is not the same that had left India. The Saleem who had left India was no more than a boy in search of meaning and identity, defined by the time of his birth. However, he is a changed man who returns from the war in East Pakistan. Saleem has taken a moral position and gained new perspectives. In the course of his quest to free himself from the burden of history, he has undergone great changes. Saleem is no longer defined by the time of his birth. The pride he felt in the letter and the picture is no longer there. Saleem's process of distancing himself from the quest of his childhood had begun when he had buried the letter and the picture before leaving for Pakistan. He furthers the process by carefully examining the burden that was laid upon his young shoulders. On returning from Pakistan, Saleem has discovered injustice. And it is injustice that comes to mind when he is attempting to come to terms with the burden of meaning that defined his childhood in India. Injustice turns into anger, and Saleem ends up accusing his parents of putting him in the position of being the sole provider of meaning for the new nation.

Saleem's moral return continues, as does his separation from this earlier position of iconhood. He refuses to carry the burden alone and insists that the rest of India's five hundred million people carry it with him. Furthermore, he will not allow the history of the country to define what and who he shall be. After being rejected by his remaining family in Bombay, who will not accept him due to his lack of blood-ties, of

pedigree so to speak, he renounces family as an 'overrated idea'. This is in a sense a continuation of the aforementioned aspect about the uncertainty of ancestry. Saleem decides that from now on, he will choose and decide what his identity shall be. He asks: "Why, alone of all the more-than-five-hundred-million, should I have to bear the burden of history?" And he continues: "anger made me determined ... from that moment forth to choose my own, undestined future".

It may seem, therefore, that the experience of being completely without ties, being lost in limbo, was not the solution after all. However, rather than assuming that Saleem must then return to his old life of being tied down by history, we should recognise that he has discovered that he is free to choose and decide what he shall be and where he shall belong. This can perhaps be described as a post-modern approach to identity. Rather than to assume that there is a true essence to which one can return for answers and truths, one must create one's identity as one goes along. However, Rushdie's version of freedom and relativism is not completely post-modern, in as much as he still stresses the importance and relevance of history. History is an important part of one's identity, but history as such must be treated as a narrative to which new narratives can be included. There is no true essence of identity that can be found in the past.

I have described here Saleem's developing identity after his return to India from Pakistan. It is clear that the protagonist has come home a changed man and makes moral decisions for himself. In a sense, therefore, Saleem seems to have freed himself from the burden of meaning.

From here onwards Saleem's life takes a new turn and to complete the process of Saleem's identity formation a final confrontation with Shiva is required. When Saleem first became aware of the fact that his family was not his family and hence his birthright was not his birthright, he reacted with terror and decided to exclude Shiva from the MCC in order to protect his secret. As it turns out, when Saleem returns to India, they have switched places after all. Shiva fought on the side of the Indian army in the war against Pakistan, and is now a decorated war hero who enjoys life in the upper social classes. Saleem on the other hand, has gone from being the beloved child of a wealthy family to becoming an illegal immigrant in the same country. It is without any means, papers or education that he enters India, and eventually winds up in the magicians ghetto. It seems therefore that some form of ironic justice has taken place. However, the way Rushdie has presented both the characters our sympathies are always with Saleem. Moreover, if we study both the characters we see that Rushdie is presenting another aspect of his view on identity. Shiva and Saleem in a lot of ways resemble each other (e.g both fit the prophecy of Ram Ram Seth). But they are two very different individuals. Even when their circumstances change or rather switch, Saleem remains Saleem, though poor and Shiva is Shiva even in the higher echelons of society. It seems that Rushdie is subtly hinting that there are certain intrinsic qualities in a person which do not change with change in external circumstances.

In the magicians ghetto Saleem adapts himself to the life of poverty. He is now looking at the world from the other end of the social scale. One anticipates that after being disowned by his family, breaking the bonds that tied him down and beginning his life a fresh, Saleem might be able to heal and settle down. However, as he becomes involved with Picture Singh's communist campaigns, we again see him in a position where he is unable to belong to his surroundings. Saleem discovers that his pleasant childhood memories of

life among the wealthy make it impossible for him to hate the rich. Again, Saleem finds that he is left somewhere in-between, unable to belong to either camp.

Furthermore, whereas Saleem might have been released from the former chains of historical weight, he seems determined to take on a new quest for meaning. Having freed himself from his love for Jamila the Singer, he now declares India to be his true twin sister, and decides to save her from the grip of the Widow, the Prime Minister. This implies that his quest for meaning was not related solely to his bond with the nation and history. Now free of both, he still takes on a quest for meaning which it seems is essential for him, for his identity.

Shiva is no longer a threat to his existence, as the Widow is. So he takes it upon himself to defeat her designs. He actually tries to enlist his Uncle Mustafa's help in trying to achieve his purpose but fails. In fact it is the Widow who eventually finishes him off along with the other midnight's children during emergency.

Saleem tells his story retrospectively to his son Aadam. Now thirty one years old and left impotent, both physically and metaphorically, he feels the cracks in his skin widening and his being slowly crumbling. He knows that soon he will join the other midnight's children who are all dead. Their death is the death of the hopes of a generation-the first generation of independent India. However, all is not lost. Though the opportunities presented by the special abilities of the midnight's children were not fulfilled, there is some sense of hope left in the form of the second generation represented by Aadam.

Now at the fag end of life, Saleem's quest for significance and worth has acquired a new meaning. He now searches for the meaning of his life in the narration of his story to his son, in the preservation of his tale. As Taylor also says "In articulating it, I am also defining myself." Saleem Sinai says in the very beginning, "I must work fast, faster than Scheherazade, if I am to end up meaning-yes, meaning-something". Thus now Saleem feels that he can end up meaning only if he is able to 'pickle' the past thirty one years of his life. So now the meaning of his life is in his being able to narrated to his son, the next generation which still presents some sense of optimism and future for the country in the hope that the lessons of his tale would prove to be useful for them. However, though he begins his tale with a sense of surety and confidence like a master story teller in full control of his craft, as he proceeds he seems to lose his ground. He begins to constantly question his own story and his own memory. This is perhaps an expression of the fact that the Indian, post-colonial identity is yet to be determined. The confidence and the surety are yet to come. We understand therefore that Rushdie does not endorse the possibility of a completely post-modern identity, with no regard to history or cultural tradition. Identity is therefore presented as a changeable, yet not entirely post-modern feature. Identity must be rooted in reality somehow, but it need not be limited to what family and history decree. Rushdie also addresses the predicament of cultural and religious diversity in the modern, Indian nation. He dismisses all ideas about a natural citizen of India as a mere phantasm, and strenuously argues for an acceptance of multiculturalism in India. As commented by Saleem: "There are as many versions of India as there are Indians." In order to create 'a new myth of India' one needs to discard old truths.

18.6 LET US SUM UP

In conclusion, if we look at Saleem's tale, the very first question that comes to mind is that was his sense of self importance which dictated his process of identity formation for most of his life, fictional and exaggerated imaginings of a boy's mind or was he justified in feeling so. If we look at Saleem's birth we feel that his feelings were not unjustified. His birth was an eagerly awaited event. When he was born his birth was widely celebrated. In fact a guru moved into their family garden to await the miracles of the child of the hour. He gets his picture in the newspaper and a personal letter from the Prime Minister. Thus the burden of history and meaning felt by him is related to the moment of his birth. That he has a strong connection with the newly liberated nation is amply borne out by the later event of his life. It is therefore clear that Saleem's life was symbolic of the expectations of the hopes for the future after independence from colonialism. The failure of the Midnight's Children's Conference and Saleem's present time feeling of weakness, fragmentation and impotence is an image of the loss of those hopes after a few years had passed by.

Thus we see that Rushdie uses Saleem's tale to comment upon the nature of identity and identity formation. Rushdie seems to question the somewhat mechanic assumptions of identity formation along the lines of maturity from infancy to adulthood. Instead he suggests a more random process of going back and forth. It is not so that one at a stage of one's life acquires maturity and reason, which will aid one's decisions for the rest of one's life. Rather, one can always expect to be confronted by conflicting impulses and ideas and be forced to revise one's position and values. By refusing a final solution and completion in which the protagonist arrives at a state of healed and content selfhood, Rushdie presents us with the idea that this is either not possible or otherwise not desirable. There is perhaps no position in which a character can become a whole and true version of himself. Perhaps identity is bound to be complex and consisting of multiple parts. This might also be desirable in the sense that there is always room for new versions and change. Rushdie always presents ideas of truth and essence as suspicious and dangerous. This is clearly also so regarding his view on identity.

Rushdie presents identity as a problematic concept in *Midnight's Children*. Rushdie presents identities at a position of in-betweenness, of hybridity. Moreover, the story of Saleem is symbolically linked to the fate of the Indian nation after independence. By presenting the challenges of Saleem, Rushdie is therefore able to comment upon the formation of identity in post-colonial India as a whole.

18.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. How does the move to Pakistan affect Saleem's sense of hybridity?
- Q2. How does Rushdie represent the dehumanization of war through the character of Saleem in Bangladesh?
- Q3. What does Saleem's return to India represent?
- Q4. Discuss *Midnight's Children* as a post-colonial novel.

Q5. Shiva is claimed by critics as an alter ego of Saleem. In the light of this statement compare and contrast the characters of Shiva and Saleem.

18.8 SUGGESTED READING

- D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, *Salman Rushdie*, (New York, St. Martin's, 1998)
- Roger Y. Clark, *Stranger Gods: Salman Rushdie's Other worlds*, (Montreal, Ithaca (N.Y), McGill Queen's University Press, 2001)
- Rajeshwar Mittapali and Joel Kuortti (ed.), *Salman Rushdie: New Critical Insights*, (New Delhi, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2003)

ASPECTS OF *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN***STRUCTURE**

- 19.1 Introduction
- 19.2 Objectives
- 19.3 *Midnight's Children* as historiographic metafiction
- 19.4 Role of Padma
- 19.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 19.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 19.7 Suggested Reading

19.1 INTRODUCTION

The nexus of history and fiction is well known and can be traced through the ages up to the post modern and post colonial period. The relationship between history and fiction forms the basis of various histories that are represented in the novels of post colonial novelists in nineteen eighties like Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor etc. The representation of politics in literature, political figures and events, are aesthetic representation of facts in fiction. The post colonial writers of nineteen eighties give view of the historical accounts and the post colonial interpretation of colonial power in all their works. History is fused, interspersed and even sometimes entangled with the fictional life of the narrator and the life of the narrator in turn, related with the author's life. So, the life of the narrator is related to the life of the author and also to the history of the nation. The relationship between history and literature is well known and among all the relations of various literary forms, the relation and connection of the novel with history is the most widely accepted. History and fiction share social, cultural, ideological context as well as formal techniques. As a result, most of our modern day critics have chosen to study the history-novel/fact-fiction relation within the theoretical frames of post modernism and post colonialism.

The novelist's visualization of himself as a historian makes his or her literary work/fiction as historiographic metafiction. Historiographic metafiction is "novels that are inversely self reflective but that also both reintroduce historical contact into metafiction and problematize the entire question of historical

knowledge.” Historiographic metafiction bridges the gap between historical and fictional works by recombining the two genres. “Historiographic metafiction plays upon truth and lies of the historical record, certain known history details are deliberately falsified in order to foreground the possible mnemonic failures of recorded history and constant potential for deliberate and inadvertent error”.

The novel in India came into existence under the impact of the novel in the west, particularly of Britain. The ‘historical novel’ had a major influence on the novelists in India. It had its strongest impact on those who wrote in regional languages and later on those who wrote in English. A good number of novelists in English as well as in regional languages opted for the past history of the nation as a suitable form of expression in their literary work. The first ever attempt was done by Bengali novelist ‘Bankim Chander Chatterjee’, who paved the path for his successors with his fictional works by adhering to the Indian tradition of writing.

The 1980’s is the period of emergence of New Indian fiction in English announcing the beginning of a new era of change in the ‘tone tenor and content.’ This new group of writers deals with the subjects widely varied and in a language of irreverence, marked with skeptical rigour. These novelists include Salman Rushdie [*Midnight’s Children* (1981), *Shame* (1983), *The Moor’s last sigh* (1995)], Amitav Ghosh [*The Circle of Reason* (1986), *The Shadow Lines* (1998), *In an Antique Land* (1992)], Shashi Tharoor (*The Great Indian Novel* (1989), *Gita Mehta Raj*, (1989) and Rohinton Mistry [*Such a Long Journey* (1981), *A Fine Balance* (1996)] etc. Majority of these writers are students of history. The writers like Shashi Deshpande, Bharti Mukherjee, and Nina Sibal etc. also made important experiment in fictional form and captured the realities of their time.

19.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to acquaint the learners with the different critical aspects of the novel. The novel has been hailed by the critics as a postmodernist text and one of its most discussed aspects has been historiographic metafiction. This lesson introduces the concept of Historiographic Metafiction and traces its infusion in the novel. Moreover, Padma has been often claimed as indispensable to the story and hence in this lesson the role of Padma is outlined in detail.

19.3 MIDNIGHT’S CHILDREN AS HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION

Midnight’s Children, the magnum opus of Salman Rushdie is mainly concerned with a man’s search for his identity in relation to the past of his life. The history of the nation is shown in such a way that it is compared to the life history of the protagonist. As Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of the novel, points out, “to understand just one life, you have to swallow the world”. Salman Rushdie in *The Midnight’s Children* gives a brief account of the events like Indian Independence, the partition of India and Pakistan and the aftermaths of the partition and communal riots. The Indian movement for freedom was “not merely a political struggle but an all pervasive experience that became a part of almost all the sensitive and Enlightened.” The Indians struggled for their independence from the British Rule and all these struggles and movements constitute the glorious history of India.

In *Midnight's Children*, Salman Rushdie develops a close connection between history and fiction. If history can be made up of fiction, then fiction, in turn, can be composed of history. The relationship between the historical and fictitious areas is not necessarily a dialectic one, as, legends and myths and history could be identical. According to Rushdie, history is composed of those elements that are authentic and meaningful to the narrator or the story teller and apparently insignificant incident being often valued. The actual meaning of history is built from the memories related to certain fragments of the past. There is mixing of historical events and personal activities, the less important and the more important moments in *Midnight's Children* which weaken the claim or pretensions of history to neutrality and objectivity. Reality is a carnivalesque space; infact, multiple realities, the space being open to various voices; history becomes the space for dialogue, not being controlled by any ultimate authority, the purpose being the dialogue in itself.

History, according to Rushdie, is always ambiguous, chaotic and is full of doubts and uncertainties whereas facts are hard to establish for Rushdie. Reality is made up of our opinions, our knowledge and our capacity of reception and understanding the reality. Reality and history are artificial in their nature and due to their constructed artificial nature, both can be deconstructed easily. The role of artist is to highlight the truth because like reality, truth is comparative, relative and dialogic and not absolute and monologic. As Rushdie mentions in *Imaginary Homelands*, "The truth I can remember is the truth of Memory". Although, history is not logical and objective, it can have a meaning. In fact, it can have more meaning and it is the role of the artist to give the exact and complete hidden meaning of the history. It is the writer or the creator who gives the complete hidden meaning of the reality or history because reality/history always exists in a hidden form and the writer manifests this hidden meaning of history or reality. From this perspective, history represents the combination of an infinite number of ingredients from an almost infinite range of choices. Rushdie in his novels successfully mixes the real with the fictitious. His novel, during the long course of narration, comes closer to fantasies at times, but, there is a layer of reality on which the building of fantasy has been raised. To this reality, which is already present in the very genre of the novel, Rushdie makes episodes and comes across history.

The novel is structured in three sections and has the quality of intertextuality within itself. For instance, the name of Dr. Aziz is used in reference to the Aziz of E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. For Hutcheon, "Such post modern intertextuality is used to put into question the authority of any act of writing by locating the discourses of both history and fiction within an ever-expanding inter-textual network that mocks any notion of either single origin or simple causality."

Midnight's Children is the story of an emerging nation i.e. India. It also relates to the birth and growth of Pakistan and Bangladesh. It also gives detail description about Great Britain. Rushdie in *Midnight's Children* successfully draws a parallel connection between the 'Private destiny of Saleem and the public destiny of India.' The story of the novel covers the three generations of Saleem Sinai's family and the history of the family is related to the glorious history of India.

Table

	Individual/Personal	Historical
Book one (seven chapters)	Background	1919- Jallianwalah Bagh
Book two (Thirteen Chapters)	Birth and Growing up (In India) (In Pakistan)	1947-Independence 1956-Language riots 1958-Coup in Pakistan
Adulthood	1965-Indo-Pak War	Book three
(Eight chapters)	(Amnesia and after)	1971-Bangladesh 1975-Declaration of 1977-Lifting of Emergency
Emergency		
Total 30 Chapters/ Pickle Jars	30 years in the life of the protagonist/narrator	30 years after independence completed.

Saleem, the protagonist of the novel, starts his autobiography focussing on his grand father Dr. Adam Aziz, the representative of the precolonial or pre Independent India, before giving us details of his birth. The Pre-independent India's history is related to the life history of Dr. Adam Aziz. Dr. Aziz was appointed in Kashmir as a doctor. He falls in love with his patient, named Naseem, the daughter of the rich but blind landowner. Naseem in those days suffered from a number of ailments. Dr. Aziz treated her through the perforated sheet on her body and face. He only has the glimpse of this young woman's body through this perforated sheet. There is disturbances, conflicts and tensions within his inner self. Similarly, the nation is also suffering from disintegration, disturbances, conflicts and tension within its territories, states, people etc. due to the World War I. But with the end of World War I, the mutual acquaintance of Dr. Aziz and the patient resulted in the blossoming of the love affair and both get married with the end of World War I. As with the end of World War I, there is peace and cordial relations among people, states, territories of the nation. Similarly, after marrying to Naseem the conflict within the innerself of Aziz is resolved.

The Jallianwalla Bagh Massacre or Amritsar Massacre is also connected to the private history of Sinai's family. The Amritsar Massacre was an extremely ruthless attack on Indians. The brutal attack left Indians horrified. This led to the rising of Indians and made way for Indian freedom. The whole event of Amritsar Massacre is connected to Dr. Aziz and thus it becomes more personal. In this event we witness the brutalities of Gen. Dyer who along with his troops opens fire at the crowd resulting in the death of 4516 people. Here, Adam's nose plays a vital role, as the firing of Dyer and his troops collides with Adam's sneeze which affirms that his nose will play an important role in the future generation of Saleem's family.

The prediction of the historical Jallianwallah Bagh event linked to the etching of Dr. Aziz's nose attracts the reader into 'a willing suspension of disbelief' that something is wrong.

Again we witness an instance of chemical binding between Saleem's family's personal history with India's national history. In an early morning in Kashmir, Adam Aziz receives an injury on his nose while hitting the ground during his prayers, which results in the fall of three drops of blood from his nose. These three drops of blood symbolically represent the setting up of three free nations-India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Saleem Sinai's moment of birth is identical to the moment of birth of the new nation in which he lived and hence a connection is built between public and private history. That is why, he is described as 'handcuffed to history' of the nation. 'Born at midnight on Aug. 15, 1947, the moment of India's Independence, Saleem's story has a representative significance, for his birth and upbringing are meant to parallel that of India'. With him are born other one thousand *Midnight's Children*. All are born in the early hours of India's Independence. Saleem's birth is celebrated by Pandit Nehru, newspapers and many others. At the very beginning of the novel, hints are offered that historical events would be important in the novel and the history of Saleem is linked to the history of nation i.e. India. As Saleem says: "I was born in the city of Bombay..... Once upon a time. No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Dr. Narlikar's Nursing home on August 15, 1947... I had been handcuffed to history, My destinies insolubly chained to those of my country... and there are so many stories to tell, too many, such as excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumours, so deare a comingling of the improbable and the Mundane."

Saleem Sinai's face represents the map of India and the events that take place in India are connected to his life. Rushdie used this as a tool to explore the different aspects of India. Saleem Sinai grows up physically as well as mentally to deal with the maturing of India as an Independent nation. We first see India as an infant through the eyes of a child followed by an adult look at the mature state of India. Sinai was a human map of India and his face resembled distinct areas of India and its neighbours. He described himself stating, "Fair skin curved across my features but birth marks disfigured it; dark stains spread down my western hairline, a dark patch coloured my eastern ear."

Saleem was born exactly one day after the independence of Pakistan. The dark stains down his hairline represented newly formed western Pakistan while the dark patch over his eyes represented eastern Pakistan. The shape of his face including his narrow chin resembled the peninsula of India. His temples described the Himalayan Mountain to the North while his nose was associated with Deccan plateau, a centrally located elevated area on the peninsula.

With the partition between India and Pakistan, Saleem moves with his Muslim family. In the war over the partition, most of his relatives and family members are killed and he loses his memory. As he suffers from Amnesia and emotional numbness as a consequence of the death of his parents, he is enrolled in CUTIA Unit, a she dog unit in place of a tracker dog. We get a clear indication of the depth of human degradation through the facts about the political events in the novel. This is symbolic of cruelty of the 1971 war itself as

it too had a dimension of cruelty and horror. When the war is over, he again moves back to India and finds the doings of politicians cruel like the war. This is clearly highlighted in the novel when “the widow” Indira Gandhi imposes martial law in India. Due to this short but controversial period of Mrs. Gandhi’s emergency rule, the freedom of the midnight’s children is threatened. Another important and note worthy event is the declaration of Justice Jag Mohan Judgments by Allahabad high court setting aside the election of Mrs. Gandhi under the provision of misuse of people’s representative Act. This led to the imposition and declaration of emergency by Indira Gandhi and the eventual birth of Janta Party under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan. This incident of the birth of Janta Party is metaphorically connecting to the Parvati, the witch at the birth of ‘Adam Sinai,’ son of Saleem Sinai, born at Midnight of the day “when Indira Gandhi clamped down Emergency Rule on India”. Parvati’s thirteen day labour is connected with the thirteen days of political violence when Indira Gandhi refused to resign after the verdict of the Allahabad high court. This description is mockingly interesting, it being a family affair connected to a national event:

“..... in the evening of the thirteenth day they screamed Yes Yes She has begun to push, come on Parvati Pushed in the ghetto, J.P. Narayan, Morarji Desai was also goading Indira Gandhi, while triplets yelled push push push the leaders of the Janta Morcha urged the police and Army to disobey the illegal orders of the disqualified P.M. So in a sense they were forcing Mrs. Gandhi to push...

[*Midnight’s Children*, 499].

Midnight’s Children thus occupies a place under the genre of historiographic metafiction. This form challenged the preposition of writing history as unity, continuity and objectivity. This is done through the nervousness of the narrator about his/her ability to understand the past clearly which is, for Linda Hutcheon, “not, a transcending of history but a problematised inscribing of subjectivity into history”.

In historiographic metafiction, a writer like Rushdie himself adopts a self awareness that immediately keeps him away from the historical period he has carefully created, thus highlighting its fictiveness. As Rushdie’s works are concerned mainly with history so he adopts the new form of historiographic metafiction and his works are dubbed with this new form. Historiographic metafiction are “novels that are intensely self reflective but that also both reintroduce historical context into metafiction to problematize the entire question of historical knowledge”. To represent the past of the nation through the past of the protagonist, historiographic metafiction “plays upon the truth and lies of the historical records. Certain known historical details are deliberately falsified in order to foreground the possible Mnemonic failures of recorded history and the constant potential for both deliberate and inadvertent error”. Historiographic Metafiction specifies the ideological implications of historical representations and questions the authenticity of the past as that always plays upon ‘known truth.’ Thus, while redefining ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ historiographic metafiction opens a sort of way which rediscovers the histories of the suppressed people such as women or colonized natives.

The problematize and intricate relationship between real seeming version of past and reality is

closely related to the historiographic metafiction. Through the technique of self-reflexive it motivates us to question our ability of interpreting the history from a particular socio-political context. Historiographic metafiction emphasizes that all past events are potential historical 'facts' but the ones that become facts are those that are chosen to be narrated.

Post modernist modes such as parody and intertextuality critique the assumptions underlying 19th century humanist concepts of author and text. Historiographic metafiction uses "parody not only to restore history and memory in the face of the distortions of the 'history of forgetting,' but also, at the same time, to put into question the authority of any act of writing by locating the discourses of both history and fiction within an ever expanding intertextual network that mocks any notion of either any single origin or simple causality".

According to Linda Hutcheon, "traditional narrative models both historiographical and fictional that are based on European models of continuous chronology and cause-and-effect relations are utterly inadequate to the task of narrating the history of the New World". Rushdie takes into appeal the traditional Indian Epic writing and to the blending of mythical and realistic mode of writing in order to deconstruct the western notion of history and to reject the imperialistic version of Indian history. Moreover, the author deliberately blurs some of the clear chronological outlines during his narrative manner of narrating history. Ambiguity and timelessness is another tool which helps Saleem to free him from the tyranny of cause and effect. Events follow a zig zagging pattern for most of the time and it is difficult for the reader to unfold the scheme of events in proper chronological manner. Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of the novel, compares his own life history and his own birth with the life and history of modern India. He feels that his birth is honoured by the newspaper and other politicians as he is born at the stroke of midnight on 15 August, 1947 at the hour of India's Independence. He considers himself at the centre of the Indian history. He is constantly conscious of the fact that "historical coincidence have littered, perhaps befouled, my family's existence in the world.". However, this 'vengeful irruption into the history' of his age is 'Certainly no trivial affair for him.' At times, he finds history eagerly waiting for his arrival:

"At the end of that January, history had finally, by a series of shores, brought itself to the point at which it was almost ready for me to make my entrance. There were mysteries that could not be cleared up until I stepped on the scene"

[*Midnight's Children*, 103].

Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of the novel, presents the history of the nation with the history of his own life. As he points out "already my very presence is having an effect on history; already baby Saleem is working change on the people around him". He is cutting up history to suit himself, just as he did when he cut up newspapers to compose his earlier text, the anonymous note to Commander Sabarmati. He unites the fragments of events to give in detail the Indian history as whole. This notion of bringing together the fragments to create a unified whole is well explained in detail by the peep show of Lifafa Das, who did not believe in presenting the only pleasant feature of the age to his audiences but to present or displayed some of the

contemporary harsh images like “Stafford Cripps leaving Nehru’s residence; untouchables being touched... of a fire at the Industrial estate”.

Throughout the novel, the protagonist is falling apart. He experiences cracks in his own body and from where history comes out. He questions homogeneity of history by questioning the wholeness of his own self: “because a human being, inside himself, is anything but a whole, anything but homogeneous; all kinds of every which thing are jumbled up inside him, and he is one person one minute and another next.” As, according to R.S. Pathak, “the motif of fragmentation is present throughout the novel. However, in no case it is prominent as it is in the case of Saleem. He is fully aware of his problems and plights, misfortunes and discordances, so typical of a rootless person”. He disappointingly utters in the novel when his body is falling apart as-

“I am tearing myself apart, can’t even agree with myself talking and arguing like a wild fellow, cracking up memory going yes, memory plunging into chasms and being swallowed by the dark, only fragments remain, none of it makes sense any more.”

[*Midnight’s Children*, 503].

In spite of the feeling of alienation and constant fear of disintegration, the protagonist always tries to keep alive his connection with history.

History, in Foucault’s terms, may become ‘Counter-Memory,’ which is “the process of reading history against the grain, of taking an acknowledged active role in the interpretation of history rather than a passive, viewing role”. ‘Counter Memory’ rather than simply give the details of events in a chronological order, is involved in the process of giving historical details in proper systematic order and present those events in such a way that it is comparable to the individual history. Then, in short, the project of the historiographical metafiction is the Foucauldian project of ‘Counter-Memory.’ The question that historiographic metafiction puts is not what the true history is, that rather, who presents what history and who reads and interprets history and what is its purpose.

Midnight’s Children, on the one hand, gives the historical events in detail, including lower class characters, real referents, specific dates and an individual hero who sees himself as an influence on and even cause of important events around him. On the other hand, throughout the novel, it is clear that realism cannot communicate reality on a unified individual subject as prime mover of events. In the same way as history and narrative are thus denied their traditional humanist functions, the male unified writing subject is decentred and splitting. Saleem, the protagonist, suggests the quest for identity with the exclamation as- “If I am to end up meaning-yes, meaning- something... I admit it: above all things; I fear absurdity.” Thus, *Midnight’s Children* as a whole becomes what he terms a “chutnification of history”. Saleem himself points out while linking the process of writing history to pickling:

I reconcile myself to the inevitable distortions of the pickling process. To pickle is to give immortality, after all: fish, vegetables, fruit hang embalmed in spice-and-vinegar, a certain alternation, a slight intensification of taste is a small matter, surely? the art is to change the flavor in degree, but not in kind; and above all to give it shape and form-that is to say meaning.

This above quotation sums up the whole of the novel. Historiography is immortalized but is critically reconsidered and altered. The constructed narrative of the west is shown with supernatural qualities so that it subverts its own tools; thus the novel by and large seems to echo the words of the critic John Berger who said “Never again will a single story be told as if these were only one”.

Thus, there is uniqueness in Rushdie’s representation of history as there lay multiple visions which replace the linear version of official history. Rushdie presents the history of the nation through the history of the narrator. In *Midnight’s Children*, there are numerous historical events and all those events are joined by the thread of memory and imagination. All these historical events serve as a backdrop and connecting link to the individual history. He explains this with the comic inversion that it is not that a single human is contained in the world but the world is contained in the human life. Rushdie’s achievement lies in his blending of historical events with the fictional elements. The novel is not a mere record of historical and political events but an artistic recreation of them.

19.4 ROLE OF PADMA

Padma is vital to Saleem’s story and his narrative. She is Saleem’s loving companion and caretaker, and she will become his fiancée at the end of the novel. She is the audience for Saleem’s narrative. With strong, hairy forearms, a name associated with dung, and a cynical and often impatient ear, Padma represents the antithesis to Saleem’s magical, exuberant, freewheeling narration. She hurries the narrative along, imploring Saleem to get on with the plot rather than indulging in digressions and mixing other stories with the main narration, and often she expresses doubts as to the truth of Saleem’s account. But she also validates many unbelievable aspects of the story as true. As a rhetorical device, Padma allows Rushdie the chance to acknowledge explicitly any doubts or frustrations the reader may feel in response to the novel. Saleem’s frequent interruptions, digressions, and self-obsession are all, to some degree, made possible by Padma’s expressions of doubt and frustration: the two sides work together to create a holistic reading experience. By explicitly taking into account the difficulties of the narrative, Rushdie is able to move beyond them.

In Salman Rushdie’s metafictional *Midnight’s Children*, Saleem Sinai writes the story of his “handcuffed to history” life (3). In order to understand his story Saleem says that we must “swallow the world”, because in order to understand the events of his life we must understand the lives of everyone else. It is for this reason that the story starts not at Saleem’s birth, but with the life of his grandfather Aadam Aziz. One story leads to another, and that to another, and tangential stories arise from these which leads the reader into a very convoluted mess of names and events. The reader is not alone in this frustration, though. Padma, Saleem’s illiterate lover and eventual wife, is listening to Saleem tell his (and everyone else’s) story as he is writing it down, and she proves to be a critical, multidimensional character in this novel.

Padma is hearing the same story that we, the readers, are and therefore expresses the same frustrations. Saleem is not a linear narrator for fear that if the reader does not understand the stories of all the people in his life, and the people that had influence on those people, we will not understand his story. Padma represents a stereotypical human audience when she expresses her impatience towards Saleem's method of storytelling. As Saleem tells about his grandfather's life Padma chimes in, "At this rate you'll be two hundred years old before you manage to tell about your birth", and, "You better get a move on or you'll die before you get yourself born". This persuasion to hasten the pace is important because Saleem continually reminds us that his time is finite, and that he is cracking. If not for Padma, Saleem's story could have gone infinitely on explaining and proving that everyone's story in the entire world is unquestionably crucial to his life. In addition to this, the presence of Padma slows the cracking process taking place in Saleem, or rather, in her absence the "cracks spread all over, radiating like a spider's web". If not prodded to accelerate by Padma's "what-happened-nextism", Saleem's finite amount of time may have run up before the unveiling of his story. Even Padma's body, her "musculature", is a guide for Saleem's story. The "ripples of uninterest", a "tic" in her cheek when she's unconvinced, Saleem even says, "The dance of her musculature helps to keep me on the rails". The motivation behind both telling the intricate details of history and the eventual story of his life is clear when he says, "...above all things, I fear absurdity." In order that Saleem's life, and even his existence as a child of midnight, is recognized by others as legitimate (or non-absurd), he must finish his story, and it is Padma that helps him reach this goal.

As well as aiding the progression of events, Padma's voice expresses that of the readers, and subsequently allows Saleem to speak to the readers by speaking to, or about, Padma. In this manner of usage of this literary device, Rushdie acknowledges the fact that his story is a convoluted labyrinth that may lead to irritation in the reader, and, through Saleem speaking to Padma, he explains why his story is the way it is. An example of this is on page 37, where Saleem explains to Padma why he must recount history rather than simply telling of his own life. "Things-even people-have a way of leaking into each other...like flavors when you cook...the past has dripped into me...so we can't ignore it." In this way Padma acts as a string connecting two cans, thus allowing communication from Rushdie to the reader.

Rushdie also uses Padma as a way to warn the reader of upcoming vexation. When reading a serpentine passage which was not foretold, readers are often disoriented. Especially in a long novel such as Rushdie's, it is easy to give up on the novel if it seems like the entire piece will be a confusing tangle of big words and way-too-long sentences. This is not an inaccurate judgement to make when reading *Midnight's Children*, it truly is a confusing tangle of big words in big sentences. In knowledge of this, Rushdie uses Padma as a way of warning the reader of soon-to-come discontentment, "...she's about to get even more frustrated...", and also to promise reward if the reader perseveres, "Some people are never satisfied; but Padma will be, soon"(114). I would go as far as to say that Padma prevents readers from giving up on reading *Midnight's Children*; she is, without a doubt, a guide that leads both the reader and Saleem along throughout this cleverly disjointed story.

Saleem's entire story is about himself, and his momentous birth on the stroke of midnight, the same second that India became independent, and how because of this his entire life is linked to his country. Padma is a big part of Saleem's life, so if we are to believe Saleem's claims, we must also believe that Padma is symbolic of some aspect of India as well. John Su, in his piece *Midnight's Children*, by Salman Rushdie", says that, "Indeed, the relationship between Saleem and Padma becomes a metaphor for Rushdie's vision of India as a diverse yet tolerant society that benefits from the differences between ethnic, religious, and regional groups". It is clear that Saleem and Padma are very different from each other. Saleem is an educated middle-class citizen whereas Padma is an illiterate factory worker. These stark differences may be symbolic of the two main, polar opposite classes of which India's societal infrastructure is composed. The fact that these two antithetical characters work out their differences and enjoy the other's company supports Su's aforementioned statement when it describes India as a tolerant society. Saleem and Padma interact in a form of symbiotic relationship, each relying on the other with a dependence that is above the underlying friction between them. For Saleem, Padma slows the spreading of his bodily cracks, corrects and reproaches him when he exaggerates or oversteps his boundaries, she nurses him to health when he is sick, and in her absence his "certainties fall apart". Padma also benefits from this relationship because she is in love with Saleem, she receives his companionship, eventually gains his hand in marriage (after much persuasion), and gets Saleem's story. Padma, in the Saleem-Padma relationship, represents the working class of India, taking care, and guiding the steps, of the middle/upper class citizens while existing in an equivocal economic dependence of them.

In light of the roles that Padma plays in *Midnight's Children* it can be surely concluded that Padma is just as important to this story as Saleem is. Since Saleem is "handcuffed to history", and he admits that the lives of everyone else influence the events in his own life, the logical conclusion is that there is nothing truly special about Saleem other than his ability to smell(3). This is true because if we believe all of Saleem's claims we, therefore, believe in two things which contradict each other. Someone cannot be solely responsible for something when the life of someone else impacts that person in a crucial way which consequently effects that "something". Since we have seen that Padma influences Saleem in multiple ways, she, therefore, is of equal importance to the history of India and Saleem's story. So, by Saleem's logic, in order to truly understand his story we must also swallow Padma's entire world.

19.5 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson we read about Historiographic Metafiction and how *Midnight's Children* can be categorized in this mode as well as the role of Padma. Hutcheon coined the term historiographic metafiction to describe those literary texts that assert an interpretation of the past but are also intensely self-reflexive (i.e. critical of their own version of the truth as being partial, biased, incomplete, etc.). Historiographic Metafiction, therefore, allows us to speak constructively about the past in a way that acknowledges the falsity and violence of the "objective" historian's past without leaving us in a totally bewildered and isolated present. This can be clearly seen throughout the novel. Moreover, Padma, the narratee plays an important

role in the novel. A surrogate reader she not only helps to keep the narrator on track but also acts as a device of cohesion for the entire narration.

19.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. Discuss *Midnight's Children* as a piece of Historiographic Metafiction.
- Q2. Saleem and Padma interact in a form of symbiotic relationship. Discuss with reference to the role of Padma in the novel.

19.7 SUGGESTED READING

- Christensen, Inger. 1981. *The Meaning of Metafiction*. Bergen, Oslo, Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget.
- Hutcheon, Linda. 1988. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Fowler, Alastair. 1982. *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*. Oxford: Clarendon.

MAGIC REALISM

STRUCTURE

- 20.1 Objectives
- 20.2 Introduction
- 20.3 Magic Realism in *Midnight's Children*
- 20.4 Elements of Romance
- 20.5 Magic Realist Devices in *Midnight's Children*
- 20.6 Use of Cinema
- 20.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 20.8 Examination Oriented Questions
- 20.9 Suggested Reading

20.1 INTRODUCTION

It is generally agreed that the term magic realism originated with German art critic Franz Roh in his work *Nach-Expressionismus Magischer Realismus Probleme der neusten Europäische Malerei*. The term gradually entered literary studies enjoying a brief and somewhat obscure stint in German/Austrian and Flemish literature (D'Haen: 192) before making a lengthier stop in the field of Latin American literary studies. The 1950s and 1960s in Latin American literature saw the emergence of the so-called 'boom' period. Among the 'boom' writers were Alejo Carpentier, Carlos Fuentes and Gabriel García Márquez. These writers were united in their determination to find a Latin American mode of expression rather than look to Europe for readily available literary influences. Soon there was a flurry of texts labelled 'magical realist' emerging from Latin America. In his chapter on magical realism in his work *Concepts of Realism*, Luc Herman observes: Magic Realism is a literary mode that has received a variety of (overlapping) definitions. Due to the boom of Latin American fiction in the 1960s, for which the formulation was used as a cover term, it has become so popular as a marketing label that it has turned into a problematic or even dangerous critical tool. (Herman: 122)

20.2 OBJECTIVES

Salman Rushdie has been universally acclaimed for his diverse handling of the convention of magic realism. *Midnight's Children* best exemplifies the coruscating virtuosity with which the writer handles this mode and thus it is impossible to claim a knowledge of the novel without an understanding of this mode. The objective of the lesson is to acquaint the learners with the genesis of magic realism and its use in the novel entwined with the elements of supernatural, romance, popular culture and cinema.

20.3 MAGIC REALISM IN *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN*

Critics unanimously have recognised and appreciated Rushdie's use of magic realism in *Midnight's Children*. As mentioned earlier this mode acts as an effective weapon against the colonial forces as it recovers or reclaims, "cultural discourses dominated until now by the centralizing and suppressing impulses of an imperial culture in decline" (Lopez, 210). Thus magic realism serves as an effective way of handling material from the so-called Third World where colonialism was pervasive and resulted in juxtaposition of cultures of different origins. So magic realism can also be termed as the literary expression of cultural hybridity, an issue very close to Rushdie's heart. The *Midnight's Children*, the magnum opus of the author, best exemplifies the coruscating virtuosity with which Rushdie has handled Magic Realism. In this novel, the magic realism can be interpreted in a number of ways. It can be read as a juxtaposition of realist and fantastic or realist and romantic represented by West and East or Literary and Oral.

Roger Clark finds in *Midnight's Children* a 'stereotypical polarity' between Indian spirituality and European worldliness (96). If we read the magic realism in the novel as a juxtaposition of indigenous (magic) and western (realism) (Lopez, 172), we will find ample examples from the text supporting this interpretation. If we take the character of Amina, she has been brought up by a traditional mother and a modern westernized father. In spite of her skepticism for superstition, she finds herself thinking, "this is still India, and people like Ramram Seth know what they know" (115). Her father, Aadam Aziz, the modern westernized man says that, "the hegemony of superstition, mumbo-jumbo and all things magical would never be broken in India" (74). Padma also has, "her down-to-earthery, and her paradoxical superstition" (38). But this element that she provides seems indispensable to Saleem for his narration. As he says, "How to dispense with Padma? How give up her ignorance and superstition, necessary counterweights to my miracle-laden omniscience?" (150)

However, in the discussion of the indigenous versus western, it is easy to distinguish between India and England, but it is difficult to differentiate between India as it is and India as it is seen by the West. In other words, there is no discernible line between where India stops and Orientalism begins. The question that troubles the reader the most is whether the magic and superstition that various characters talk of are really a part and parcel of the Indian culture or an interpretation of the West's notion of India as the land of magic and superstition?

20.4 ELEMENTS OF ROMANCE

Magic realism's displacement of the realist novel can also be interpreted as the return of romance.

Certainly *Midnight's Children*, like Bombay cinema, relies heavily on the motifs of romance as listed by Northrop Frye: 'stories of mysterious birth, oracular prophecies about the future contortions of the plot, foster parents, adventures which involve ... narrow escapes from death, recognition of the true identity of the hero and his eventual marriage with the heroine' (4). Thus what Rushdie represents as a blending of India and England, or of orality and literacy, can be best interpreted as a conflict between romance and realism especially in the context of identity formation.

In *Midnight's Children* one can discern two different strands of narrative: that of a child and that of an adult. The young boy projects into the future a romance of which he is the hero, in which the greatness he carries inside will finally stand revealed and be honoured, but the adult has surrendered such fond dreams and comes to regard his life as a lesson rather than a model (Moretti). If we look at the protagonists of the realist novels by Dickens, Stendhal, Balzac and others, we find the same realization in hindsight, as seen in Saleem, of the futility of the promise of greatness and meaning. As a child Saleem was convinced of his greatness which 'at the appointed hour, would float down around my shoulders like an immaculate, delicately worked pashmina shawl' (185). However, gradually, as if in some secret combined conspiracy, his family, society and his leaders cause the steady decline of his special powers. Other midnight children also suffer the same fate. The dreams of their greatness are mercilessly crushed by the war and the Widow. After all the abuse he himself has suffered – amnesia, the massacre of family and friends, a nightmare journey into madness, the horrors of war, the ravages of emergency, Saleem views his life with a different perspective. He is no longer proud of being linked to his nation, of being able to influence the course of its history in many instances. Infact, he now resents that he has witnessed so much history. This is visible in his narration as he begins from 'I was about to make my presence felt' (97) and 'Those jerks; if they knew who I was they'd get out of my way pretty damn quick!' (279) goes on to 'It should have been me' (324), and finally ends with 'It's not fair' (450) and 'Why me?' (457). Saleem says, 'it was at the house of the wailing women that I learned the answer to the question of purpose which had plagued me all my life' (506): and the answer that he has learnt is that there was no special meaning or purpose of his life. He was not a doer of things; he was the one to whom the things were done.

However, as one reads the novel, one feels that the narrator's motivation of writing is not to convey his better understanding of the futility of his hopes and vision of greatness. Infact he is pickling his past life as some sort of heritage to be passed on to his son. As I have mentioned earlier there are two narrators-the child experiencing the events and the adult remembering those experiences. The child is not able to make out the significance of his relation to the nation and his purpose, though his telepathic powers provide a provisional answer. It is the adult narrator who draws parallels between himself and the nation, parallels only available to a reader of newspapers and history texts. This insistence on what Saleem calls his 'metaphorical' relation to the nation (286) accounts for the core of the novel's magic. To the end, Saleem the writer, who has many (but never enough) tokens of his status as Fortune's favourite child, is confident that he is someone with a destiny, without whom the world cannot be understood. Even the death-wish expressed in the apocalyptic vision at the end reflects Saleem's narcissistic desire to contain the world and his refusal to admit it might not end with himself.

The 'structural core' of romance, Northrop Frye explains, 'is the individual's loss or confusion or break in the continuity of identity' (104). Its concern with the preservation, recognition, and restoration of identity and its capacity to assuage anxiety are the attractions of romance for both colonial and postcolonial literature

In romance, identity is a question of merit and recognition, of what one 'deserves' and is 'worthy' of. This can be better understood if we interpret romance in terms of the definition that Rushdie gives of 'song' in *The Ground beneath Her Feet*: 'Our lives are not what we deserve; they are, let us agree, in many ways painfully deficient. Song turns them into something else. Song shows us a world that is worthy of our yearning, it shows us ourselves as they might be, if we were worthy of the world' (19–20). Romance assigns the hero the place that his merit deserves and the proper order of things, 'a world worthy of our yearning' is restored.

The notion of merit presumes distinctions. This can be dangerous as taking difference of merit into account in a social order is acceptable, but asserting that the existing social order reflects distinction in merit is nothing but an instrument of promoting self interest. Thus when Lord Khusro Khusrovand, says it is a lie 'that we are all Born Equal': 'Is a Crook the equal of Saint? of course not!!' (322). It seems nothing more than a propaganda of self interest. Similarly, the Congress party dictum that 'all men are created equal' is proclaimed by a despicable Sanjay Gandhi clone, sounds cruelly false (some people have power and others do not) and parodically true (all are equally in thrall to the ruling family) (475). Saleem's friend Picture Singh gives the lie to the clone's assertion of equality, proving with a display of snake-charming bravado that 'some persons are better, others are less. But it may be nice for you to think otherwise' (475).

Saleem has to avoid this pitfall. He has to convince the reader that the distinctions of merit which he draws, unlike Lord Khusrovand, are not a means of self propaganda and he is able to do so by proving his own merit by abjuring privilege and displaying a clear-sighted awareness of the relative nature of merit.

Rushdie moulds and bends the conventions to his purpose. Thus, though he uses the prime romance motif of body switch in this novel, it is not to assert the concept of identity based on blood, but to illustrate identity as a socially constructed entity. As soon as he is born Saleem is switched with Shiva by Mary Percira who does the deed to prove her love for her communist lover. It seems that her perplexed motive was to assert that 'self' is not innate or genetic but determined by the conditions one is born to.

The story of Shiva and Saleem is seeped in the conservation romantic tradition. The babies are switched at birth so that the one who was the actual inheritor of wealth, privilege and social status is raised in poverty and the one who was destined for lower scale of life enjoys the privileges that are not his birthright. Even when Saleem comes to know of this truth he tries to keep Shiva from knowing it though his writing is a form of confession, his motive is not confession or restoring to Shiva what is rightfully his. However, events take a turn and the wheel of fortune rolls and Shiva, through his heroic deeds during the war, rises as Saleem falls. However, unlike in a romance his rise is only material. He himself feels that he does not truly belong to the high society he's been inducted into. He is easily convinced by Roshanara Shetty that his high-class female patrons are secretly mocking him. Moreover the readers are not anxious to see

Shiva restored to his 'rightful' place, which his character manifestly does not deserve. The sympathy of the reader remains with Saleem and not with Shiva.

The difference between Saleem and Shiva is that, unlike Shiva, Saleem has learnt that he is not the centre of the things. Moreover, he realizes that the switch has changed him and who he is, is a culmination of all his experiences after the switch. Thus the baby that was switched is not the same as Saleem who is narrating the story. So even after the truth is revealed by the blood test he remains a Sinai, because, as he puts it, "they could not imagine me out of the role. Their love was stronger than ugliness, stronger even than blood"(361). This reminds one of the position expressed by Maria Edgeworth: "I hate that woman," said a gentleman, looking at one who had been his nurse, "I hate that woman, for she changed me at birth" (134). The absurdity of the Irish bull arises from the fact that, because the switch has intervened, the 'I' who speaks cannot be the same as the 'me' that was changed. The bull can be read as a figure for the postcolonial dilemma: the postcolonial subject cannot claim that colonialism has misshapen him before birth, for the one who protests does not share an identity with the one who has been changed.

Saleem all his life has been in fear of Shiva, of his coming in possession of the truth and displacing Saleem. Although Saleem is the usurper and Shiva the victim, Saleem tries to engage the sympathies for himself projecting Shiva as the worst of the two. He alludes to the story in Genesis of Jacob and Esau as he refers to Shiva as his "mess-of-pottage-corrupted rival." In Rushdie's parody of romance, we are what we have been made. Esau, the older twin and legitimate heir, is stronger, hairier, and his father's favourite, but he is outsmarted and cheated by the smaller, more effeminate Jacob with the help of his mother. When Esau sells his birthright to Jacob for a mess of pottage, it is not the trickster but the one bribed and tricked who is guilty of corruption and who proves his unworthiness. Thus it is Shiva and not Saleem who is corrupt and unworthy.

Saleem, knows that had Mary not switched them he might have been in Shiva's position. But what he is asserting is that it will not be advantageous to reverse the existing situation. Shiva raises a vital issue when he asks 'For what reason you're rich and I'm poor?' we know how arbitrary this distinction of rich and poor is and how it just might have been that Shiva would have been in Saleem's position. However, his menacing tone puts off the reader who not only do not want to see the reversal but in fact fear it.

Saleem is well aware of the fact that who he is, is not the result of genetic inheritance but of his circumstances. He also acknowledges his own potential to be Shiva. When taunted by schoolmates, 'the image of two irresistible knees' floats into his head and he reacts with violence (280). But Saleem believes there is genuine merit in the social order as it exists, that at the very least it is superior to the risk of social disorder that its overthrow would incur. Realism derives its authority by acknowledging a world of others whose perspective is dependent not on character but on relative position. Elizabeth Ermath writes of the arbitrariness of point of view in realist narration: that arbitrariness suggests a potential equality among viewpoints. Because the realistic medium of experience is neutral, the same everywhere, there is a potential continuity between the vision of the spectator and the vision of all possible spectators in the same horizon. Any position would reveal the 'same' world with as much validity; and any person could take up the position

of the implied spectator. The implied spectator's privilege, that is, depends not upon qualitative distinctions between 'better' and 'worse' points of view, but rather upon quantitative distinctions, between more and less distance. It is a privilege available to anyone who is willing to travel (20–21) .

Mary Pereira's baby switch and later confession, by dividing Saleem into the middle-class boy at the centre of Methwold's Estate and the adult narrator who knows the truth about his inheritance and is therefore in some measure outside the world and able to judge it, function somewhat like the heuristic 'veil of ignorance' that John Rawls argues is necessary to measure a just society. Rawls suggests that we must imagine a society designed according to principles of justice from behind a veil that makes it impossible for anyone 'to design principles to favor his particular condition' because no one can predict what that condition will be: 'Among the essential features of this situation is that no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does anyone know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like' (12). In this way it becomes possible to imagine a society that could win the consent of members before they are actually born into it.

The postcolonial self is so shaped by the colonial experience that it is not the same as the precolonial self. However, the self is always more than its own experience: it is also all the selves it might have been and by whose images it finds itself surrounded and reflected. Thus Saleem who is entirely formed by the life of privilege in the Methwold's Estate cannot, try as he might, abjure Shiva.

The relation between Saleem and Shiva to an extent promote the idea of fixed identity. In the later stage of his life Saleem once again switches place with Shiva, when Shiva moves up on the social scale as a decorated and celebrated war hero and Saleem moves down the social scale and ends up in the magician's ghetto. However, their change of circumstances does not result in the change of their selves. They remain at heart what they were as boys, the violent social outlaw and the mild-mannered schoolboy. It seems it is not genetic parentage that is crucial to character and identity-formation, but the first ten years of life, spent with parents.

Culture (breeding in the sense of upbringing) is an important factor in identity formation of Rushdie's characters. The class-determined identities don't change with change in circumstances. Mary Pereira's song proclaiming that one can be whatever one wants to be is proven wrong by Saleem and Shiva. They are what they were raised to be in their childhood; and the change in their circumstances in later life cannot change them.

The story of the superhero born at midnight presents all the features of romance as listed by Fredric Jameson: a heightened magical world where the scene of the action is more important than those who perform it, a struggle between representatives of good and evil that are magical forces larger than the characters themselves, and 'a salvational historicity' (148). Saleem finds in the world around him signs that secretly confirm his inner greatness: a congratulatory letter from Nehru, the fisherman's pointing finger in a Victorian painting of Raleigh, and the giant Kolynos Kid on a billboard advertising toothpaste. In this romance, all that is not a confirmation of one's greatness becomes a threat to that greatness.

Though the magic of romance, where the anxieties are allayed and desires fulfilled, is enticing, it does not blind one to the fact that the truth of romance is insufficient, an inefficiency that is expressed in realism. A realist protagonist realizes that his position in the world is not central and he shares the world with others. His merit is not only not recognized and given its due, it in fact hinders with his seeing the true colours of the world. Thus he always remains at odds with the society. Like Stendhal's Julien Sorel or Balzac's Lucien de Rubempré, who come into conflict with their society when they try to master it. Similarly, Saleem finds that his way is thwarted except when it leads downward. He learns like the realist protagonists that moving on the social scale does not depend on merit or worth. It is in fact merely a question of Snakes and Ladders, that traditionally comes with small illustrations of virtue and vice being appropriately rewarded but in which progress and decline are actually determined by the role of a dice.

A prominent source in the novel is the character of Mary Pereria. As Kitie Trumpener says that in colonial romance, the key figure is the nurse: "the native nurse is able, through her milk, her love, and her influence, to heal the colony's scars and to effect a lasting rapprochement between the colonizers and the colonized" (230). Mary loves Saleem unconditionally. Moreover, she is under the romantic illusion that the switch was destined and she was merely a tool of destiny. She leaves her job and joins the Sinai family as an ayah so that she can watch over the fortunes of the baby. Though she is haunted by her secret, but her guilt is not for the disposed baby, but for hiding the truth from Saleem. Moreover, she fears the outcome if the secret is known. The name 'Mary' links her both to the mother of Christ, Virgin Mary, and also to the sister of Moses, Miriam. It is Miriam who was responsible for the events which resulted in the adoption of her brother by the Pharaoh household and raised as an Egyptian prince.

Romance provides Saleem with his meaning, but he needs realism for his authority. The novel wants it both ways. My point is that Rushdie's magic realism is best understood not in terms of hybridity, a metaphor from genetics that locates identity in the blood, but in terms of a struggle between meaning and authority. If magic realism is indeed well suited to describing Indian reality, it is not because India is somehow exotic and magical, but because postcolonial identity is a matter of conflicting desires and anxieties.

20.5 MAGIC REALIST DEVICES IN *THE MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN*

Midnight's Children offers a magic realist device emphasising the continued struggle to come to terms with identity within the polarities of the post-colonial. They are, by virtue of their midnight birth, 'children of the times,' as Rushdie has asserted, as much as magical creations (Pattanayak 21). Rushdie, through Saleem, writes that the children can be seen as 'the last throw of everything antiquated and retrogressive in our myth ridden nation [myth perhaps referring to the more negative influence of Western as well as Indian fictions]....or as the true hope of freedom....' (Rushdie 200). This freedom, at the end of the text, is described as being 'now forever extinguished,' and there is a sour irony inherent in Saleem's thoughts that the children 'must not become....the bizarre creation of a rambling, diseased mind' (200). Rushdie implies that Saleem's generation has failed to consolidate the possibilities inherent in independence. The possibility exists in each passing generation of midnight children, who are the children of each successive era. Each generation, as Saleem muses, will erase the presence of a previous generation that has not yet

learnt to define a stable and solid sense identity: ‘Yes, they will trample me underfoot....they will trample my son who is not my son, and his son who is not his....’ (463). The individual voice is swamped by the creeping progression of time and history: nevertheless, the text’s conclusion is open ended. There may be no such thing as a single national identity in the contemporary world, where media and communication link cultures and countries: there is perhaps an interchange of cultures, to varying degrees, between all countries. This delicate ambiguity is emphasised in the final sentence of the text, which links magic with realism, the individual with history, the individual and regional identity and self-assertion with the magnet of the universal: ‘....it is the privilege of midnight’s children to be both masters and victims of their times, to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes, and be unable to live or die in peace’ (463).

Rushdie’s principle use of fantastic in the text involves the telepathic abilities of Saleem and the other thousand and one children born at the stroke of midnight on August 15th 1947 (the date of Indian independence). Stephen Slemon writes that ‘in the language of narration in a magic realist text, a battle between two oppositional systems takes place, each working toward the creation of a fictional world from the other’ (11). If we take this to be the world of fantasy and the world of reality, both factors can be seen to be present and competing for the reader’s attention. The fantastic is easily discerned in *Midnight’s Children*. Through it, the realistic makes its voice heard. The thousand and one children point not only towards the fantasy of the similarly numbered *Arabian Nights*, but also to Rushdie’s calculations of the Indian birth rate. He estimated that ‘a thousand and one children an hour is roughly accurate’ (Durix 18). Furthermore, Rushdie’s comments enable the gift of telepathy to be perceived as a magical signifier of the objective reality of contemporary Indian society which makes its impression on the individual psyche. ‘In a country like India,’ Rushdie continues, ‘you are basically never alone. The idea of solitude is a luxury which only rich people enjoy....it seemed to me that people lived intermingled with each other in a way that perhaps they don’t any more in the West....it was idiotic to try and consider one’s life as being discrete from all other lives’ (Durix 23). As ‘All India Radio,’ Saleem’s ‘telepathy’ becomes a simultaneously magical and realistic device to signify the ‘polyglot frenzy’ consisting of ‘the inner monologues of all the teeming millions’ (Rushdie 168). As Slemon notes, ‘the real social relations of post-colonial cultures appear, through the mediation of the text’s language of narration, in the post-colonial magic realist work’.

20.6 USE OF CINEMA

Magic Realism, as it is used in *Midnight’s Children* by Rushdie, can also be interpreted as a device employed to bind the Indian culture of the past to the multicultural scenario of the present and the technique used by Rushdie is employment of cinematic features. As Saleem muses, ‘Once upon a time there were Radna and Krisna, and Rama and Sita, and Laila and Majnu; also (because we are not affected by the West) Romeo and Juliet, and Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn’ (259).

Indigenous cinema and Western drama are intertwined with the history of postcolonial India to examine the effect of these on the mindset of the people in the newly independent nation. This, as Edward W. Said writes, is on the part of the writer a, “conscious effort to enter into the discourse of Europe and the West, to mix with it, transform it, to make it acknowledge marginalized or suppressed or forgotten histories”.

According to Stephen Slemon magic realist writers, 'tend to display a preoccupation with images of borders and centres, and to work towards destabilizing their fixity'. Rushdie tries to achieve this by using the cinematic and cinema screen to examine how subtly fantasy plays with perception of reality moulded by both Hollywood and the Indian film industry. Scattered references to the cinema continually inform the narrative of *Midnight's Children*. We have a prominent reference in the episode of Rashid the rickshaw boy, who is returning home after watching a film 'Gai-Wallah which is "an Eastern-Western". It seems to be a cross between the Hollywood and Hindu culture as the hero in the western cowboy getup and style defends and protects the cows. Rashid is so influenced by the movie that on his way back he imitates the hero in all his stunts and styles. This episode shows how the postcolonial mentality is being formed by both the indigenous and western influences in the sphere of cinema. 'Bollywood', the word itself echoes Hollywood and Bollywood productions are representative of a popular Indian medium after the independence. According to Mishra the Indian film industry has rapidly grown as is evident from the fact that in 1983, it produced 742 films (122). He notes that the status of the cinema in *Midnight's Children* is that of an industry which "began as a colonial business, and has...never been able to shed its colonial origins" (121).

Cinema captures people by its magical resonance thus moulding the individual by its hybridity. Saleem not only gives direct allusions from this medium but also uses it to give shape to his narrative. He compares events in his life with Hollywood productions: "would this....young father have behaved like, or unlike, Montgomery Clift in I Confess? (Watching it some years ago at the New Empire Cinema, I couldn't decide.)" (105); 'I may have got all this from an old film called Lost Horizon....' (306). The cinema becomes a further device for Rushdie's magic realism. Films transform the perception of others and their perception of themselves. Consider Inspector Vakeel, who 'leaps into action, swinging up his rifle, shooting from the hip like John Wayne' (147). Once more the magical signifies the composite nature of contemporary Indian culture and society.

Said says that *Midnight's Children* is a "work based on the liberating imagination of independence itself, with all its anomalies and contradictions working themselves out" (260). Indian film industry post-independence, becomes a window for the possibility of construction of Indian cultural identity. Before independence, the power of the cinema to act as a promoter of indigenous culture and as a means for self assertion is muted and controlled by the colonizer. "No close-up is necessary" (35) says Saleem as he renders the massacre of the Sikhs by Brigadier Dyer and his men in 1919 as if on a cinema screen.

Though Rushdie presents the influence of cinema on the Indian psyche in a joyous manner, there is nevertheless a skepticism and criticism of such an ardent adherence of the masses to the magical and the fantastic. Rushdie breaks the magic of cinema by the sudden announcement of Gandhi's assassination amidst a love scene.

The desire for fantasy to comfort an infant nation and culture is perhaps best illustrated in the case of Saleem's uncle, who sits 'pounding out scripts which nobody would ever film....' (241). This is because, in the words of Saleem's aunt Pia, "he must write about ordinary people and social problems" (242). This shows that, while this realist style of film making, as exemplified by Satyajit Ray is critically lauded both in

India and internationally, there is no mass demand for realism in a culture whose desire for fantasy marks the nature of its post-colonial identity. This is so because the simple child like fantasy allows one to be oblivious of the harsh political and historical realities. In simple child like fantasy, identities can be constructed easily. Rushdie however, advocates that forgoing the magical and adopting the reality is the only way of attaining a complete Indian identity free from outside influences.

The cinema screen becomes a field in which an examination of the two polarities, 'universalism,' the 'notion of a unitary and homogeneous human nature which marginalises and excludes the distinctive characteristics, the difference, of post-colonial societies,' and difference, which finds 'universalism....disappearing into an endless network of provisional and specific determinations in which even the most apparently "essential" features of human life become provisional and contingent,' (Ashcroft et al. 55) takes place. This is directly implied when Rushdie writes 'Reality [emphasis added] is a question of perspective; the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems - but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible' (165). Describing himself moving closer and closer to a cinema screen, from the back of seats to the front, Saleem considers that '*gradually the stars*' faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions; the illusion dissolves - or rather, it becomes clear that the illusion itself is reality....' (166). Rushdie in writing that 'the illusion itself is reality,' and thereby acknowledging the hypnotic grip of the magic emitted by the cinema, both questions and acknowledges the power of the medium as a component of a hybrid post-colonial Indian culture.

Midnight's Children is post-colonial as the main body of the narrative occurs after India becomes independent. However, as has been discussed, Rushdie's use of the cinema in relation to magic realism raises interesting questions in relation to India's culture which is moulded by indigenous fictions and those of the West. The narrative framework of *Midnight's Children* consists of a tale—comprising his life story—which Saleem Sinai recounts orally to his wife-to-be Padma. This self-referential narrative (within a single paragraph Saleem refers to himself in the first and third person: 'And I, wishing upon myself the curse of Nadir Khan....'; "I tell you," Saleem cried, "it is true....") recalls indigenous Indian culture, particularly the similarly orally recounted *Arabian Nights*. The events in Rushdie's text also parallel the magical nature of the narratives recounted in the *Arabian Nights* (consider the attempt to electrocute Saleem at the latrine, or his journey in the 'basket of invisibility').

20.7 LET US SUM UP

In *Midnight's Children*, the narrative comprises and compresses Indian cultural history. 'Once upon a time,' Saleem muses, 'there were Radha and Krishna, and Rama and Sita, and Laila and Majnu; also (because we are not affected by the West) Romeo and Juliet, and Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn'. Characters from Indian cultural history are chronologically intertwined with characters from Western culture, and the devices that they signify Indian culture, religion and storytelling, Western drama and cinema are presented in Rushdie's text with post-colonial Indian history to examine both the effect of these indigenous and non-indigenous cultures on the Indian mind and in the light of Indian independence. This constitutes the magic and the realism in the novel.

20.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q1. Discuss the mode of magic realism as employed by Rushdie in his magnum opus *Midnight's Children*.
- Q2. Interpret *Midnight's Children* as a romance.
- Q3. Analyse the use of cinema and cinematic screen by Rushdie in this novel.
- Q4. Comment upon the use of magic realist devices in *Midnight's Children* by Rushdie.
- Q5. Discuss the role of Mary Pereria in *Midnight's Children*.

20.9 SUGGESTED READING

- Chanady, Amaryll Beatrice. *Magical Realism and The Fantastic – Resolved Versus Unresolved*. New York and London: Antinomy Garland, 1985.
- Lois Parkinson & Faris, Wendy B. (eds.): *Magical Realism – Theory, History, Community*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995.
- Dell'Aversano, Carmen. "Worlds, Things, Words: Rushdie's Style from *Grimus* to *Midnight's Children*." *Coterminous Worlds: Magical Realism and Contemporary Post-Colonial Literature in English*. Ed. Elsa Linguanti et al. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999.

THE SHADOW LINES – AN OVERVIEW

- 21.1 Introduction
- 21.2 Objectives
- 21.3 *The Shadow Lines* :a book of several perspectives
 - 21.3.1 *The Shadow Lines* :postcolonialism, gender and nationalism
- 21.4 *The Shadow Lines* :the narrator and the narrative technique
 - 21.4.1 *The Shadow Lines* : A historical narrative
 - 21.4.2 *The Shadow Lines* : A novel on partition
- 21.5 *The Shadow Lines*:borderless nations
- 21.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 21.7 Glossary
- 21.8 Short Answer Questions
 - 21.8.1 Multiple Choice Questions
- 21.9 Examination Oriented Questions
- 21.10 Suggested Reading

21.1 INTRODUCTION

The Shadow Lines is a novel written by an award-winning Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh, an Indian writer, was born in 1956, is the author of ten highly acclaimed works of fiction and non-fiction which include the Booker Prize shortlisted *Sea of Poppies* (2008) and (book one of the Ibis Trilogy), *River of Smoke*, and *The Glass Palace*. His first published novel was *The Circle of Reason*, the immediate predecessor to the novel *The Shadow Lines*. Other popular books he has written include *The Hungry Tide*, published in 2004, *River of Smoke*, Ghosh continues to write to this day. He has won numerous prizes, some of which are the Sahitya Akademi Award, the Pushcart Prize and the Grinzane Cavour Prize. He divides his time between New York and India.

The Shadow Lines was published in 1988. The novel, second of a three-part series, was written to capture the thoughts and ideas of many people/ characters, constantly switching views and perspectives. Mainly for this reason, the book is named *The Shadow Lines*. The main idea of the novel is- that different people have different views, but none of those views are capable of being completely understood by another being. The main character of the novel is the narrator, a boy, his uncle is named Tridib. Major events like World War II and the Partition of India, are in the background.

The Shadow Lines is divided into two parts- ‘Going way’ and ‘Coming Home’. The story follows a boy through his life. The boy grows up in Calcutta. Calcutta, or Kolkata, is a megacity of India. It is actually the capital of an Indian state i.e. West Bengal. Later the boy moves to Delhi in India for his education. Delhi is a Union Territory and another cosmopolitan megacity of India. In the end, he moves to London and the author tells the reader about his experiences in London, England.

The boy’s family is actually connected through friendship to the Price family in London. The main character, the young boy, loves to listen to his uncle’s stories. His uncle, Tridib, is an interesting and an attractive person in the eyes of the main character i.e. the young boy. The young boy thinks that his uncle has a lot of knowledge and exhibits interesting perspectives. However, the young boy’s grandmother, Tha’mma, does not agree with him. She thinks Tridib is wasting his connections since he refuses to use the family connections.

The young boy has sentimental feelings for Ila, but he is too scared to tell her. However, one day Ila gets to know the young boy’s feelings for her, even though he did not mean to exhibit his feelings to her. Sadly, Ila quickly leaves the young boy in favor of the Prince family’s son.

Tha’mma wants more than anything to reunite her family. Therefore, she goes to Dhaka to fetch her uncle. Tribid is now in love with Maya and sacrifices his life for her....

21.2 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this lesson are:-

1. To acquaint the learner with an overview to the novel *The Shadow Lines*.
2. To introduce the learner the novel *The Shadow Lines*, as a book of multi-perspectives.
3. To introduce the learner with the role of the narrator and narrative technique in the *The Shadow Lines*.
4. To provide a background reading to *The Shadow Lines*, so that the learner can understand the novel better.
5. To provide the learner with background to major events like World War II and the Partition of India.
6. Written assignments for practice with key so that the learner can do self-evaluation.
7. Suggesting list of books for further reading.

21.3 ***THE SHADOW LINES* :A BOOK OF SEVERAL PERSPECTIVES**

The novel, *The Shadow Lines*, constructs several perspectives of time and events. It is a narrative constructed out of a complicated, constantly criss-crossing network of memories of people, it never pretends to tell a story. It brings people together and at the same time, throws them apart. The novel *The Shadow Lines*, contains episodes that are clearly visible on one perspective and nonexistent on another, incidents that exist in the memory of one, and therefore in another's imagination. In a creative way, the novel invites the reader to invent one, out of the memories of those involved, memories that hold mirrors of differing shades to the same experience.

Out of a complex network of memories, relationships and pictures, Amitav Ghosh builds an extremely vivid, funny and moving story. Exposing the idea of the nation state as an illusion, an arbitrary dissection of people. Ghosh depicts the absurd manner in which a home can suddenly become an enemy.

21.3.1 ***The Shadow Lines* :postcolonialism, gender and nationalism**

Whilst the main focus of this novel is postcolonialism and in particular the fragile and transitory status of boundaries and frontiers, a key concept within postcolonial studies is how gender impacts on this topic. It is particularly interesting how two characters, the narrator's grandmother Tha'mma, and his cousin Ila, impact the theme of the novel, in particular with their attitudes towards nationalism.

Tha'mma epitomises the views of the Nationalist movement and India's nationalist identity. She has a passionate and blind love for her nation, even though she is a migrant from Dhaka and therefore not strictly Indian - of course, this is a key concept in postcolonialism, how the "Imagined Communities" of nations are formed and how belonging is defined.

21.4 ***THE SHADOW LINES* :THE NARRATOR AND THE NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE**

The Shadow Lines is a story told by a nameless child narrator using mnemonic process. It's a nonlinear narrative, fragmentary, episodic and incomplete. This style of writing is both unique and captivating; unfolding ideas together as time and space combine and help the narrator understand his past better and look for a new meaning.

The Shadow Lines has a theme of geographical borders, at the same time describes the borders that divide people who share the same cultural background. Maps and geographical borders play a significant role in enforcing imperialist power. While borders in *The Shadow Lines* appear to be mere shadows because they divide people who share the same regional and cultural identity.

Amitav Ghosh's narrator, a young boy, travels across time through the stories of those around him, crossing over the unreliable contours of memory, unmindful of physical, political and chronological borders. But with time as he ages, he is haunted by a seemingly random act of violence. Bits and pieces of tales, both half-remembered and imagined, come together in his mind until he arrives at an intricate, interconnected picture of the world where borders and boundaries mean nothing, mere shadow lines that we draw dividing people and nations.

The book chronicles one series of events lived differently by different people. The narrator has this unusual fascination for a distant cousin Tridib, the eldest son of an Indian diplomat abroad, Tridib who never “lives” the story, except through memories of others — the narrator’s, brother Robi’s, and lover May’s. He is a link that connects them, a shadow line that never materialises. Beginning with the narrator’s memories of his early interactions with Tridib, who had “given me eyes” to see the world with, the narrative keeps travelling back and forth in time as well as space, moving along with the train of thoughts that shift wildly from Calcutta’s Gole Park to Ballygunge, and farther into London’s Brick Lane of the War, or Lymington Road of today. The outlines of these places are as vivid to the reader as to those who lived in them, or those who didn’t actually live in them, but could nevertheless invent them through memories of those who did.

21.4.1 *The Shadow Lines* : A historical narrative

Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* is a historical narrative which deals mainly with the national borders and geographical boundaries that separate people. The novel also records violence that followed the riots of Calcutta and Dhaka in 1964. The title, “*The Shadow Lines*” has many connotations; it does not only refer to borders between countries. Ghosh chooses his title to suggest that the borders which separate people are mere “shadows”, and nothing more than artificial lines created by politicians. Building upon this, Ghosh stresses the arbitrariness of such cartographic demarcations. He illustrates this point through Tha’mma, the narrator’s grandmother. When she travels to Calcutta with her family in the plane, she naively asks “whether she would be able to see the border between India and East Pakistan from the plane” (Ghosh, 1988: 167). Tha’mma does not imagine any line in between the borders; she is actually looking for visible indication of demarcation. She says:

“But if there aren’t any trenches or anything, how are people to know? I mean, where’s the difference then? And if there’s no difference both sides will be the same; it’ll be just like it used to be before, when we used to catch a train in Dhaka and get off in Calcutta the next day without anybody stopping us”. (Ghosh, 1988: 167)

Tha’mma reveals the meaningless of the borders. When she asks her son how she can know if she is entering a new nation, it becomes difficult for her to comprehend the idea that the border is not on the frontier, but rather inside the airport. She cannot believe that there are no external marks or trenches to identify the borders between Calcutta and Dhaka. She is also disturbed that she has to go through many procedures to pass between these two countries.

21.4.2 *The Shadow Lines* : A novel on partition

In *The Shadow Lines*, Ghosh metaphorically presents the story of the partition of Tha’mma’s ancestral house in Dhaka. The story of this house and partition started when Tha’mma was still young. The house has been divided with wooden partition wall going through doorways. The two parts of the family accepted this partition of the house to stop the continuous quarrels between them. Ironically, they could not find the peace they were searching for; instead, this partition of the house created

bitterness between the two families. Ghosh uses this allegory of the house partition to represent the political partition of the nation.

21.5 *THE SHADOW LINES: BORDERLESS NATIONS*

The narrator argues that if the politicians draw the border lines on the political maps, this does not mean that they actually divide the nation into two nations. Another important issue in Ghosh's discussion is maps and cartography. The whole narrative is woven around the historical incidents of violence resulting from border divisions, maps, and cartography. Political maps have a great power in imperialism; they can be considered as a way in which colonizers exert superiority over the colonized. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said describes imperialism as "an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted and finally brought under control" (Said, 1993 :14). Through these maps, the colonizer oppresses, and the colonized is submitted under control. For Said maps are "weapons of imperialism" which are used in colonial promotion. As Ghosh highlights the shadowiness of the borders and boundaries, he also emphasizes the uselessness of maps. When the narrator returns from London, fifteen years after Tridib's death, he finds Tridib's old Atlas. The narrator starts to draw an imaginary circle on the map and discovers that a place like Chang-Mai in Thailand is much nearer to Calcutta than Delhi is and Chengdu in China is nearer than Srinagar is. This also explains the idea that the borders drawn between the countries and the circles the narrator draws on the map are both imaginary and mere shadow.

Ghosh also reveals this theme of border's absurdity through Tridib, the narrator's uncle, who believes that the borders drawn by politicians do not really perform as anything more than being shadows. These borders will never be able to separate people who share the same history and culture. For him, it is the riots and the factors leading to them that separate people. One might imagine that these border lines would divide people, but ironically, they bring them closer together because their memories remain undivided.

Ghosh's approach toward borders and geographical demarcations is that they are arbitrary and invent divisions between people and nations. This point is clearly revealed by Tha'mma's uncle, Jethamoshai when Tha'mma persuades him to return to Calcutta to accompany his extended family, he told her: "I don't believe in this India-Shindia . . . Suppose when you get there they decide to draw another line somewhere? What will you do then? No one will have you anywhere. As for me, I was born here, and I'll die here" (Ghosh, 1988: 237).

The futility of the border lines is evident in Jethamoshai's speech as he believes in the rootedness of identities and nations. He questions the ability of these lines between nations to divide people because he realizes that once a man starts to move, there would be no end to that. The narrator also realizes the futility of the constant line drawing by the politicians as it does not separate anything or anyone but only provokes acts of violence on both sides of the border. He expresses his own opinion about the uselessness of these border lines which separate countries on the geographical maps, when he says:

"They had drawn their borders, believing in that pattern, in the enchantment of the lines, hoping perhaps that once they had etched their borders upon the map, the two bits of land would sail away from each

other like the shifting tectonic plates . . . The simple fact that there had never been a moment in the four-thousand-year-old history of that map, when the places we know as Dhaka and Calcutta were more closely bound to each other than after they had drawn their lines- so closely that I, in Calcutta, had only to look into the mirror to be in Dhaka; a moment when each city was the inverted image of the other” (Ghosh, 1988: 257).

He finds himself locked into the “symmetry” which binds him to Dhaka even more closely than when Dhaka and Calcutta were joined in the British India. He uses the image of “looking-glass” to suggest that Dhaka and Calcutta are connected to each other as images in a mirror; one reflects the other.

21.6 LET US SUM UP

The Shadow Lines is a novel written by an award-winning Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh, an Indian writer, was born in 1956, is the author of ten highly acclaimed works of fiction and non-fiction. *The Shadow Lines* was published in 1988. The main idea of the novel is- that different people have different views, but none of those views are capable of being completely understood by another being. The main character of the novel is a boy, who is seen growing up throughout the novel. Major events like World War II and the Partition of India, are in the background. *The Shadow Lines* is divided into two parts- ‘Going Away’ and ‘Coming Home’. The story follows a boy through his life. The boy grows up in Calcutta. Calcutta, or Kolkata, is a megacity of India. It is actually the capital of an Indian state i.e. West Bengal. Later the boy moves to Delhi in India for his education. Delhi is a Union Territory and another cosmopolitan megacity of India. In the end, he moves to London and the author tells the reader about his experiences in London, England. The boy’s family is actually connected through friendship to the Price family in London. The main character, the young boy, loves to listen to his uncle’s stories. His uncle, Tridib, is an interesting and an attractive person in the eyes of the main character i.e. the young boy. The book *The Shadow Lines*, constructs several perspectives of time and events. Out of a complex network of memories, relationships and pictures, Amitav Ghosh builds an extremely vivid, funny and moving story. Exposing the idea of the nation state as an illusion, an arbitrary dissection of people, Ghosh depicts the absurd manner in which a home can suddenly become an enemy.

Whilst the main focus of this novel is postcolonialism and in particular the fragile and transitory status of boundaries and frontiers, a key concept within postcolonial studies is how gender impacts on this topic. *The Shadow Lines* has a theme of geographical borders, at the same time describes the borders that divide people who share the same cultural background. Maps and geographical borders play a significant role in enforcing imperialist power. While borders in *The Shadow Lines* appear to be mere shadows because they divide people who share the same regional and cultural identity. In *The Shadow Lines*, Ghosh metaphorically presents the story of the partition of Tha’mma’s ancestral house in Dhaka. The story of this house and partition started when Tha’mma was still young.

21.7 GLOSSARY

1. non-fiction—prose writing that is informative or factual rather than fictional
2. World War –II – a global war that lasted from 1939 to 1945

3. Partition – Partition of India in 1947 was the division of British India into two independent dominion states
4. West Bengal – A state of eastern India, west of Bangladesh
5. Union Territory – A type of administrative division in India which is ruled directly by the Union government (central Govt. hence it got the name Union territory)
6. Cosmopolitan- influenced by the culture of other countries
7. Mnemonic – also known as a memory aid, a tool that helps remember an idea or phrase with a pattern of relatable associations
8. Perspective – opinion or attitude towards something
9. Sentimental – connected with emotions
10. Postcolonial – occurring or existing after the end of colonial rule
11. Gender – the fact of being male or female
12. Nationalism- a feeling of love or pride for your own country
13. Transitory – existing for a short time
14. Epitomize–to be a typical of something
15. Passionate – showing or caused by a very strong feeling
16. Narrative technique – methods that writers use to give certain artistic and emotional effects to a story
17. Imperialist – someone who supports imperialism, imperialism is a system in which a country rules other countries
18. Chronological – arranged in the order in which events happened
19. Historical narrative – writing history in a story based form
20. Cartographic – science or art of making or drawing maps
21. Allegory – a story etc. in which each character or event is a symbol representing an idea or a quality such as truth, evil, death etc.
22. Arbitrary- not seeming to be based on any reason or plan and sometimes seeming unfair

21.8 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Q.1) Who is the writer of *The Shadow Lines* ?

Q.2) What do you know about Amitav Ghosh?

Q.3) When was *The Shadow Lines* published?

Q.4) What do you know about the narrator of *The Shadow Lines*?

Q.5) Which major historical events are in the background of *The Shadow Lines*?

Q.6) In how many parts is *The Shadow Lines* divided ?

Q.7) Name the two parts in which *The Shadow Lines* is divided ?

Q.8) Name the two women characters of *The Shadow Lines* who are related to the narrator?

Q.9) Name the four places where the narrative keeps travelling back and forth in time as well as space in *The Shadow Lines*?

Q.10) Which parts of Eastern India and Bangladesh are depicted in *The Shadow Lines* showing violence and riots, also specify the time?

Q.11) In *The Shadow Lines*, what does Ghosh metaphorically present along with the story of the partition.

Q.12) Which allegory Ghosh uses in *The Shadow Lines*, to represent the political partition of the nation?

Q.13) What do you know about Tridib?

Possible Answers

A-1) *The Shadow Lines* is a novel written by an award-winning Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh.

A-2) Amitav Ghosh, an Indian writer, was born in 1956, is the author of ten highly acclaimed works of fiction and non-fiction.

A-3) *The Shadow Lines* was published in 1988.

A-4) The narrator is the main character of the novel, who is seen growing up throughout the novel.

A-5) Major events like World War II and partition are in the background of *The Shadow Lines*.

A-6) *The Shadow Lines* is divided into two parts.

A-7) *The Shadow Lines* is divided into two parts- 'Going Away' and 'Coming Home'.

A-8) The two characters, related to the narrator are his grandmother Tha'mma, and cousin Ila.

A-9) The narrative keeps travelling back and forth in time as well as space, moving along with the train of thoughts that shift wildly from Calcutta's Gole Park to Ballygunge, and farther into London's Brick Lane of the War, or Lymington Road of today.

A-10) The novel *The Shadow Lines*, records the violence that followed the riots of Calcutta and Dhaka in 1964.

A-11) In *The Shadow Lines*, Ghosh metaphorically presents the story of the partition of Tha'mma's ancestral house in Dhaka.

A-12) Ghosh uses this allegory of the house partition to represent the political partition of the nation.

A-13) Tridib is the narrator's uncle.

21.8.1 Multiple Choice Questions

Q-1) In which year Amitav Ghosh, was born _____ ?

- (a) 1971
- (b) 1973
- (c) 1956
- (d) 1976

Q-2) Amitav Ghosh is the author ofhighly acclaimed works of fiction and non-fiction.

- (a) 10
- (b) 11
- (c) 12
- (d) 13

Q.3) Amitav Ghosh's, Booker Prize shortlisted work is

- (a) *River of Smoke*
- (b) *The Glass Palace*
- (c) *The Shadow Lines*
- (d) *Sea of Poppies*

Q.4) Amitav Ghosh's, first published novel was

- (a) *River of Smoke*
- (b) *The Circle of Reason*
- (c) *The Shadow Lines*
- (d) *Sea of Poppies*

Q.5) Amitav Ghosh's, *The Circle of Reason*, was the immediate predecessor to the novel

- (a) *River of Smoke*
- (b) *The Circle of Reason*
- (c) *The Shadow Lines*
- (d) *Sea of Poppies*

Q.6) Amitav Ghosh's,was published in 2004

- (a) *The Hungry Tide*

(b) *The Circle of Reason*

(c) *The Shadow Lines*

(d) *Sea of Poppies*

Q.7) In which year *The Shadow Lines* was published ?

(a) 1971

(b) 1973

(c) 1988

(d) 1989

Q.8) The narrator's family is connected through friendship to the Price family in _____ .

(a) Ballygunge

(b) Calcutta's Gole Park

(c) Lymington Road

(d) London

Q.9) The narrator has sentimental feelings for

(a) Jethamoshai

(b) Ila

(c) Maya

(d) Tha'mma

Q.10) Tribid is now in love with

(a) Jethamoshai

(b) Ila

(c) Maya

(d) Tha'mma

Q-11)epitomises the views of the Nationalist movement and India's nationalist identity.

(a) Jethamoshai

(b) Ila

(c) Maya

(d) Tha'mma

Q.12) Tha'mma's uncle is

- (a) Jethamoshai
- (b) Ila
- (c) Maya
- (d) Tha'mma

Answers

- 1) (c) 1956
- 2) (a) 10
- 3) (d) *Sea of Poppies*
- 4) (b) *The Circle of Reason*
- 5) (c) *The Shadow Lines*
- 6) (a) *The Hungry Tide*
- 7) (c) 1988
- 8) (d) London
- 9) (b) Ila
- 10) (c) Maya
- 11) (d) Tha'mma
- 12) (a) Jethamoshai

21.9 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1) How does class politics play in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* ?
- Q.2) What is the significance of 'Going Away' and 'Coming Home' in *The Shadow Lines* ?
- Q.3) Discuss about the role of the narrator in *The Shadow Lines*.
- Q.4) Discuss *The Shadow Lines* as a historical novel.
- Q.5) 'Borders are imaginary lines', discuss in the context of *The Shadow Lines*.
- Q.6) Discuss the narrative technique in *The Shadow Lines*.
- Q.7) Discuss *The Shadow Lines* as a novel on Partition.
- Q.8) Discuss *The Shadow Lines* as a postcolonial work.
- Q.10) Discuss *The Shadow Lines* as a novel on multi-perspectives.

21.10 SUGGESTED READING

1. Amaral, I. (1994) New Reflections on the Theme of International Boundaries , in C. Schofield (ed). *Global Boundaries: World Boundaries, Volume* ,New York: Routledge. Pp. 16-22.
2. Bhatt, Indira Nittayandam. *The Fiction of Amitav Ghosh*. New Delhi. Creative Fictions: 2001.
3. Khair, Tabish. *Amitav Ghosh: A Critical Companion*. Delhi. Permanent Block: 2003, 183.
4. Mondal, Anshuman. *Amitav Ghosh*. Manchester and New York. Manchester University Press: 2007.
5. Roy, Rituparna. *South Asian Partition Fiction in English: From Khushwant Singh to Amitav Ghosh*. Amsterdam. Amsterdam University Press: 2010.
6. Ghosh, Amitav. (1988) *The Shadow Lines*, Delhi: Ravi Dayal Publisher.
7. Said, Edward. (1993) *Culture and Imperialism*, London: Chatto & Windus.
8. Google, Wikipedia and e resources available on google search engine

THE SHADOW LINES – AN OVERVIEW

22.1 Introduction

22.2 Objectives

22.3: *The Shadow Lines* : Reminiscences of a youth

22.3.1 *The Shadow Lines*: personality and identity in childhood

22.3.2 *The Shadow Lines*: delicate world of girl child

22.4 *The Shadow Lines* : Memories of many characters

22.4.1 *The Shadow Lines* :Divided Nations But Undivided Memories

22.4.2 *The Shadow Lines* : Migration

22.5 *The Shadow Lines* : Nationalism

22.5.1 *The Shadow Lines* : Borders and Communal Riots

22.5.2 *The Shadow Lines* :India’s Struggle for Independence

22.6 Let Us Sum Up

22.7 Glossary

22.8 Short Answer Questions

22.8.1 Multiple Choice Questions

22.9 Examination Oriented Questions

22.10 Suggested Reading

22.1 INTRODUCTION

Amitav Ghosh’s fiction depicts strong themes of humanism, cosmopolitanism, communalism, colonial power and history. His themes involve emigration, exile, cultural displacement and uprooting. He illuminates the human ironies, deep-seated ambiguities and existential dilemmas of human condition. Amitav Ghosh, in an interview, said, “Nobody has the choice of stepping away from history” and “For me, the value of the

novel, as a form, is that it is able to incorporate elements of every aspect of life-history, natural history, rhetoric, politics, beliefs, religion, family, love, sexuality”.

The Shadow Lines (1988) was published four years after 84 anti-Sikh communal riots that shook New Delhi in the aftermath of the assassination of Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Ghosh vividly portrays violence in Calcutta and Dhaka which is valid even today. The novel travels through almost seventy years touching the memories of people, which the narrator recollects and narrates with a dual point of view as an adult and as a child. Though the novel primarily focuses on Calcutta, Dhaka and London, it seems to echo the sentiments of whole South-east Asia, with lucid overtones of Independence and the pangs of Partition.

Beyond doubt, *The Shadow Lines* is a realistic novel with innovations and complexities. A major theme in the novel is the theme of partition. The novel pictures the post-partition scenario of India and the following violence. Set against the backdrop of the Second World War and the communal riots of 1964 in some parts of India and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The aftermaths of 1939 War fictionalizes the man-made divisions. It clearly presents to the readers that the partition that resulted in the division of a nation into two parts could not actually divide the memories of the people who were forced to migrate to the either side.

The Shadow Lines weaves fact and fiction in a very gripping narrative of the lives of the people living in the post-partition time. The narrative mirrors lives across nations and spans almost half a century of recent Indian history. The story is a fine blend of cultural differences and social norms. Tabish Khair in his book *Amitav Ghosh: A Critical Companion* presents the idea of the novel, *Shadow Lines* romanticizes the imaginations as a whole. (183)

22.2 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this lesson are:-

1. To acquaint the learner with an introduction to the novel *The Shadow Lines*.
2. To introduce the learner with variegated themes of the novel *The Shadow Lines*.
3. To introduce the learner with detailed analysis of major themes in *The Shadow Lines*.
4. Written assignments for practice with key so that the learner can do self evaluation.
5. Suggesting list of books for further reading.

22.3 THE SHADOW LINES : REMINISCENCES OF A YOUTH

The novel is constructed on the memories and experiences of a young boy growing in Calcutta and later on in Delhi and London. The narrator acts as an observer of the whole situation. His character takes shape gradually from his interaction with other characters of the novel. The novel narrates the story of three generations spread over Calcutta, London and Dhaka. Characters from different religions, culture and nationalities have been woven together in a tangible world. The narrator's family is settled in Calcutta where his grandmother is a head mistress of a school. Family of Mayadebi, on the other hand, is a globe trotter with Tridib being an exception. He lives in his ancestral house and frequently visits Gol Park with his

acquaintances. These two families are friends with an English family the Tresawsens. The friendship began when Lionel Tresawsen was in India and developed interest in spiritualism. He started attending meetings of the Theosophical Society in Calcutta. He met Mr. Justice Chandrasekhar Dutta Chowdhary, Tridib's grandfather, at such a séance conducted by a Russian Lady. They developed friendship thereafter. And this friendship was strengthened by their successors. So, their memories connect even though their nationalities differ. The lines drawn between different countries have the least impact on the emotions and feelings of the people. The question that Amitav Ghosh puts forth is whether cultures can be contained within the boundaries made by a few politicians.

2.3.1 *The Shadow Lines*: personality and identity in childhood

At the psychological plane, the book roots personality and identity in childhood. The narrator stands out as an adult rooted in his childhood experiences. Whenever he experiences life, his reaction to it stems out of his childhood impressions. How does he take cities like London, Calcutta or Dhaka or people like his cousin Ila, or acquaintances like May or Nick -everything springs from his childhood perceptions. It seems so natural. It seems the only honest way of taking life and its experiences. So, if I may take the conventional critical term, childhood is a major theme of this book. The treatment of the subject is simply overwhelming. Tridib is the narrator's older cousin. His impact on the narrator's life is immense. Tridib and the narrator-child have a special bond. They have in a way, conspired to look at the world with their own eyes or rather Tridib's eccentric, rational, detached eyes. When Tridib tells the narrator about his childhood at London, the child-narrator tries to imagine Tridib as a small child. He tries hard but cannot imagine Tridib as a small boy and finally 'I had decided he had looked like me' (3). So while listening stories of London, Cairo, and other exotic places, the narrator travels, identifying himself completely with the bigger, (almost perfect to his child's eyes) role model. The narrator's identification with his hero i.e., Tridib is so intense that when asked for a response, the narrator says 'I was nervous now: I could see that he (Tridib) was waiting to hear what I'd have to say and I didn't want to disappoint him' (28). Thus, begins his training at looking at things by Tridib's standards.

22.3.2 *The Shadow Lines*: delicate world of girl child

Another subtle aspect of childhood is specific world of the girl child. It is lovely. Girls and their eternal longing for beauty and home are delicately picturized. Girls equate beauty with desirability and acceptance. Ila tells her own sad experience at school in London where Nick does not come to help her. She narrates it through her doll's name, Magda. Ila and the narrator are playing house-house and Magda is their child. Magda, their little kid, has gone to school and everyone is struck by Magda's beauty. We may easily read Ila in place of Magda because it is her own failure to get Nick's attention that she is actually narrating, 'You couldn't blame them for staring: they'd never seen anyone as beautiful as Magda.' And her very next sentence links beauty in a girl to her popularity and likeability, 'And they liked her too: they all wanted to be friends with her-girls, boys, and teachers, all of them' (73). It is the eternal feminine datum that beauty gets you everything, just everything. This

game also tells about the urge of children to grow up, be adults, play Mamma and Papa and for once be in the controlling, guiding position.

When we see the world through the eyes of the narrator child, we come to realize their worries as well. Nothing frightens kids more than anxiety and agitation in adults; adults are expected to hold their world together. When May is expected at Railway station, Tridib gets nervous. 'Tridib was less sanguine now; he was beginning to bite his fingernails. I (narrator-child) was close to tears' (104).

Another rare peep into child-psychology comes when the child-narrator gets to know that Tridib had died. Tridib was very close to him, his friend, philosopher and guide. His influence on the narrator as a child was completely absolute. Yet when he listens of his death, 'I felt nothing-no shock, no grief. I did not understand that I would never see him again; my mind was not large enough to accommodate so complete an absence' (239). In our lives also, when children for the first time ask, 'what is dying' or 'why Dadaji or Naniji is lying like that' or 'why are you crying,' we do not know what to say. We do not realize that children do not know what is meant by death. The mention of Tridib's death brings us to him.

22.4 THE SHADOW LINES : MEMORIES OF MANY CHARACTERS

The narrator of *The Shadow Lines* is endlessly fascinated by the relationship between memories as they exist in people's minds and memories that are transformed into stories and passed on through the spoken word. As a child, he lives for the stories his uncle Tridib tells him of living in England, as well as other stories about the Price family, which is the family that Tridib and his parents stayed with. *The Shadow Lines* has been constructed on the memories and experiences of various characters, most important being the narrator. The memories of the narrator are related to Tridib, his family and acquaintances. The memories that have nothing to do with the boundaries demarcated in the maps. These memories are spread across time and place. Memory and imagination work in accord in *The Shadow Lines*. The narrator's concrete imagination dwells heavily upon Tridib's memories and experiences. The narrator goes to London for his doctorate work but he feels that he is not new to the place. It is a place which is already known to him. He has seen London through the eyes of his mentor and inspiration Tridib. Tridib's vivid account of London and the narrator's extraordinary imagination makes him feel that he has already visited the place before. The narrator stays in London for about a year but his life is most affected by Dhaka that he never personally visits in his life. The narrator has seen Dhaka through the eyes of his grandmother only. And it is the tragedy that takes place in Dhaka which changes his life forever. He loses his mentor Tridib on the roads of Dhaka when he is killed by a rioting mob along with Tha'mma's uncle.

22.4.1 The Shadow Lines: Divided Nations But Undivided Memories

The title '*The Shadow Lines*' is very significant as it shows the shadow lines between nations that can be surpassed only through emotional bonding. And this transcendence is clearly shown through the characters of Dutta-Chowdhary and Tresawsens and later Prices also. The past, the present and the future gel so inextricably that all the lines of demarcation are completely wiped out. The nameless

narrator of the novel is highly in awe of his uncle Tridib and is trying to come to terms with the past and the present. He is very keen to find out about the death of Tridib who has been his mentor whole life. Tridib is the person who gave him “worlds to travel in” and “eyes to see them with”. It is Tridib who has taught him how to use his imagination with precision.

22.4.2 *The Shadow Lines* : Migration

The nations were divided on the pretext of religions and millions of people migrated from one part to the other. During this migration thousands of people lost their lives and millions were rendered homeless. But the memories of the people could not be divided. People who migrated to the either side always had the memories of their place of birth. They always had in their minds the picture of their nation where they were born and brought up; the nation where they grew up playing in the mud and running in the streets with friends. The line that was drawn by the politicians to divide one nation into two could never divide the sentiments and memories of the people. Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* very interestingly presents this fact to the readers through different characters, Tha'mma being the most obvious one.

22.5 THE SHADOW LINES : NATIONALISM

Amitav Ghosh presents different opinions of different people on nations and the notion of nationalism. Tha'mma clearly has a very high notion of nationalism. On the other hand, Ila, narrator's cousin, has an entirely different view of nationalism. She is more concerned with her personal freedom as opposed to Tha'mma's nationalist freedom. Ila's view point seems to be modern and post-independent. She presents an antithesis to Tha'mma. This is why she is so abhorred by her lover's grandmother. The narrator is secretly in love with the modern and open minded Ila but this love is never reciprocated. Ila is more concerned about western nationalism than the Indian nationalism. Ila says to her cousin, “nothing really important ever happens where you are” representing total western disregard of the calamities faced by third world countries. For her anti-fascist wars are more important than the famines and rioting that India suffers from. It's more significant for her what is happening in the western world. She has almost no regard for the sufferings of the people of India or other third world countries. This view point of hers makes her completely unlikable to Tha'mma.

The lines drawn between different nations do not really affect the opinions and feelings of the people living there. Tha'mma was born in Dhaka but her heart is completely Indian. On the contrary, Ila was born in India but the problems in India are not her concern. She is more towards the western nationalism. Again we see that lines that divide nations cannot really divide the minds of the people and their memories Tha'mma epitomizes nationalist movements of India and has been an inspiration for the narrator. He uses his grandmother's eyes to see her life in Dhaka as a young girl, her uncle and cousins, the other side of the big house where everything was upside down. Tha'mma represents India's national identity in the Nationalist Movement. She is a migrant from Dhaka but her ardent love of India cannot be questioned. She goes back to Dhaka after about 20 years to bring her nonagenarian uncle to Calcutta since there is a revolution going on in Dhaka. In Dhaka she realizes how alien she has become to the place where she was born. She feels as if she is a foreigner. Tridib at this point makes it more vivid when he says, “But you are a foreigner now, you're as

foreigner here as May – much more than May, for look at her, she doesn't need a visa to come here" (195). The remark of Tridib shocks the readers.

22.5.1 *The Shadow Lines* : Borders and Communal Riots

Tha'mma's visit to Dhaka gives us a peep into her psyche and raises a lot of questions about the lines drawn between nations. While filling in a form in Dhaka, Tha'mma swiftly fills in her nationality as 'Indian' without any hesitation but she starts pondering while filling in her birth place as Dhaka (Bangladesh). There are a series of questions that arise in her mind. Does birth in a country give you the right to nationality? How does your nationality change if the nation is demarcated? Do the lines that divide nations also divide memories? And like wise. The author does give a very plausible answer to these questions through the character of Jethamoshai, Tha'mma's uncle. And eventually he becomes the victim of the communal rioting in Dhaka. Narrator's mentor and inspiration Tridib also dies in the incident. The death of Ukil Babu, Tha'mma's uncle clearly throws forward another question i.e. Are people safe even in their country? Ukil Babu boasts about his country and says he will die where he was born but did he ever expect to die like this?

22.5.2 *The Shadow Lines* : India's Struggle for Independence

Tha'mma, though born in Dhaka in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan), is a true Indian at heart. She used to dream when she was in college to be a part of the militant groups which were fighting for India's freedom. She was fascinated by the acts of dare-devilry performed by the freedom fighters against the British imperialists. She didn't know much about the freedom struggle but she was so ardent a lover of nationalism that she was ready to even wash utensils, cook food and wash clothes if she could become a part of the freedom movement. One of her classmates was arrested by the police one day as he was a member of such a group and was assigned the task to kill an English magistrate. At that time, Tha'mma felt remorse because she had missed an opportunity to take part in the freedom movement.

22.6 LET US SUM UP

The Shadow Lines (1988), published four years after 84 anti-Sikh communal riots that shook New Delhi in the aftermath of the assassination of Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi. *The Shadow Lines* weaves fact and fiction in a very gripping narrative of the lives of the people living in the post-partition time. The narrative mirrors lives across nations and spans almost half a century of recent Indian history. The novel is constructed on the memories and experiences of a young boy growing in Calcutta and later on in Delhi and London. The narrator acts as an observer of the whole situation. His character takes shape gradually from his interaction with other characters of the novel.

At the psychological plane, the book roots personality and identity in childhood. The narrator stands out as an adult rooted in his childhood experiences. Whenever he experiences life, his reaction to it stems out of his childhood impressions. Another subtle aspect of childhood is specific world of the girl child. It is lovely. Girls and their eternal longing for beauty and home are delicately picturized. Girls equate beauty

with desirability and acceptance. Ila tells her own sad experience at school in London where Nick does not come to help her. She narrates it through her doll's name, Magda. Ila and the narrator are playing house-house and Magda is their child. The narrator of *The Shadow Lines* is endlessly fascinated by the relationship between memories as they exist in people's minds and memories that are transformed into stories and passed on through the spoken word. The title '*The Shadow Lines*' is very significant as it shows the shadow lines between nations that can be surpassed only through emotional bonding. And this transcendence is clearly shown through the characters of Dutta-Chowdhary and Tresawsens and later Prices also. The nations were divided on the pretext of religions and millions of people migrated from one part to the other. During this migration thousands of people lost their lives and millions were rendered homeless. Amitav Ghosh presents different opinions of different people on nations and the notion of nationalism. Tha'mma clearly has a very high notion of nationalism. On the other hand, Ila, narrator's cousin, has an entirely different view of nationalism. Tha'mma, though born in Dhaka in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan), is a true Indian at heart. She used to dream when she was in college to be a part of the militant groups which were fighting for India's freedom.

22.7 GLOSSARY

1. Humanism - a rationalist outlook or system of thought attaching prime importance to human rather than divine or supernatural matters.
2. Cosmopolitanism - Cosmopolitanism is the ideology that all human beings belong to a single community, based on a shared morality. A person who adheres to the idea of cosmopolitanism in any of its forms is called a cosmopolitan or cosmopolite.
3. Communalism - Communalism usually refers to a system that integrates communal ownership
4. Colonial power - The policy or practice of a wealthy or powerful nation's maintaining or extending its control over other countries, especially in establishing settlements or exploiting resources
5. exile - the state of being barred from one's native country, typically for political or punitive reasons.
6. Emigration – act of leaving one's country to live in another
7. Uprooting - move (someone) from their home or a familiar location.
8. irony - the use of words to express something other than and especially the opposite of the literal *meaning*, a usually humorous or sardonic literary style or form characterized by *irony*.
9. ambiguities - the possibility of being understood in more than one way
10. existential dilemmas- to exist or not to exist and some fantastic in-between possibilities
11. rhetoric – a way of writing or speaking that is intended to impress or influence people but is not always sincere.
12. Sexuality - A person's sexuality is their sexual feelings
13. communal riots - a form of violence that is perpetrated across ethnic or communal lines

14. aftermath - the period that follows an unpleasant event or accident, and the effects that it causes
15. spiritualism- relating to deep feelings and beliefs, especially religious beliefs
16. Theosophical Society - an organization formed in the United States in 1875 by Helena Blavatsky to advance Theosophy
17. datum - something given or admitted especially as a basis for reasoning or inference.
18. Transcendence - quality of being able to go beyond normal limits or boundaries
19. Nonagenarian - a person who is between 90 and 99 years old
20. dare-devilry - daring, adventure, boldness, recklessness, temerity
21. identity - who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others

22.8 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- Q.1) What are the strong themes in Amitav Ghosh's fiction ?
- Q.2) What are the themes in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*?
- Q.3) What is the connection between *The Shadow Lines* and anti-Sikh communal riots ?
- Q.4) How many years in time does the novel, *The Shadow Lines* travel ?
- Q5.) Where is the narrator's family settled? What is his grandmother?
- Q.6) How friendship began between Lionel Tresawsen and Tridib's family?
- Q.7) What is Ila's childhood doll's name?
- Q.8) Discuss the role of Tridib in the narrator's life ?
- Q.9) Which woman character has been an inspiration for the narrator? What does she epitomize?
- Q.10) What did Tha'mma dream when she was in college?

Possible Answers

- A. 1) Amitav Ghosh's fiction depicts strong themes of humanism, cosmopolitanism, communalism, colonial power and history.
- A. 2) Some of the themes in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* are emigration, exile, cultural displacement and uprooting.
- A. 3) *The Shadow Lines* (1988), was published four years after 84 anti-Sikh communal riots that shook New Delhi in the aftermath of the assassination of Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi.
- A.4) The novel travels through almost seventy years touching the memories of people, which the narrator recollects and narrates with a dual point of view as an adult and as a child.

- A.5) The narrator's family is settled in Calcutta where his grandmother is a head mistress of a school.
- A.6) The friendship began when Lionel Tresawsen was in India and developed interest in spiritualism. He started attending meetings of the Theosophical Society in Calcutta. He met Mr. Justice Chandrasekhar Dutta Chowdhary, Tridib's grandfather, at such a séance conducted by a Russian Lady. They developed friendship thereafter.
- A.7) Ila's childhood doll's name was, Magda.
- A.8) Tridib is the person who gave the narrator "worlds to travel in" and "eyes to see them with". It is Tridib who has taught him how to use his imagination with precision.
- A.9) Tha'mma epitomizes nationalist movements of India and has been an inspiration for the narrator.
- A.10) Tha'mma, used to dream when she was in college to be a part of the militant groups which were fighting for India's freedom.

22.8.1 Multiple Choice Questions

Q.1) *The Shadow Lines* (1988), published four years after 84 anti-Sikh communal riots that shook New Delhi in the aftermath of the assassination of Prime Minister,———.

- (a) Sh. V.P.Singh
- (b) Sh. Jagjivan Ram
- (c) Mrs. Indira Gandhi
- (d) Sh. Rajeev Gandhi

Q.2) ———-in his book *Amitav Ghosh: A Critical Companion* presents the idea of the novel says that the novel *Shadow Lines* romanticizes the imaginations as a whole.

- (a) Tabish Khair
- (b) Anshuman Mondal
- (c) Bhatt Indira Nittayandam Bhatt
- (d) Rituparna Roy

Q.3) As a child, he lives for the stories his uncle Tridib tells him of living in England, as well as other stories about the———.

- (a) Tha'mma family
- (b) Tresawsen
- (c) Mayadebi family
- (d) Price family

- Q.4) Ila is more concerned about _____ than the Indian nationalism.
- (a) orientalism
 - (b) Marxism
 - (c) western nationalism
 - (d) patriotism
- Q.5) Tha'mma represents India's national identity in the _____ Movement.
- (a) Nationalist
 - (b) home
 - (c) independence
 - (d) family
- Q.6) Tha'mma goes back to Dhaka after about _____ years?
- (a) 10
 - (b) 20
 - (c) 30
 - (d) 40
- Q.7) Tha'mma goes to Dhaka to bring her nonagenarian uncle to Calcutta since there is a revolution going on in _____.
- (a) London
 - (b) Calcutta
 - (c) Dhaka
 - (d) England
- Q.8) While filling in a form in Dhaka, Tha'mma swiftly fills in her nationality as _____ without any hesitation but she starts pondering while filling in her birth place as Dhaka .
- (a) British
 - (b) Bengali
 - (c) Indian
 - (d) Bangladeshi

Answers

- A.1) (c) Mrs. Indira Gandhi
- A.2) (a) Tabish Khair
- A.3) (d) Price family
- A.4) (c) western nationalism
- A.5) (a) Nationalist
- A.6) (b) 20
- A.7) (c) Dhaka
- A.8) (c) Indian

22.9 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1) Discuss *The Shadow Lines* as a novel of reminiscences of the youth.
- Q.2) Discuss *The Shadow Lines* as a novel representing personality and identity in childhood.
- Q.3) Discuss *The Shadow Lines* as a novel representing borders and communal riots.
- Q.4) Discuss *The Shadow Lines* as a novel of India's Struggle for Independence.
- Q.5) Elaborate on *The Shadow Lines* portraying the delicate world of girl child.
- Q.6) Discuss *The Shadow Lines* as a work of memories of many characters.
- Q.7) Discuss *The Shadow Lines* as a novel of divided nations but undivided memories.
- Q.8) Discuss the themes of Migration and Nationalism in *The Shadow Lines*.

22.10 SUGGESTED READING

- 1. Bhatt, Indira Nittayandam. *The Fiction of Amitav Ghosh*. New Delhi. Creative Fictions: 2001.
- 2. Mondal, Anshuman. *Amitav Ghosh*. Manchester and New York. Manchester University Press: 2007.
- 3. Roy, Rituparna. *South Asian Partition Fiction in English: From Khushwant Singh to Amitav Ghosh*. Amsterdam. Amsterdam University Press: 2010.
- 4. Prasad, Murari. "Transcending the Postcolonial: Amitav Ghosh's *In An Antique Land*." *The Literary Criterion* XL^{22.2} (2007): pp.51-61.
- 5. Kaul, Suvir. "Separation Anxiety: Growing Up Inter/National in *The Shadow Lines*." *The Shadow Lines*. Educational Edition. Delhi: Oxford UP, 1995. pp.268-286.
- 6. Mee, Jon. "'The Burthen of Mystery': Imagination and Difference in *The Shadow Lines*."

THE SHADOW LINES - CHARACTERS

- 23.1 Introduction
- 23.2 Objectives
- 23.3 Characters definition
 - 23.3.1: Some Important Characters in a Nutshell
- 23.4 Detailed analysis of major characters
 - 23.4.1: Tridib
 - 23.4.2: Tha'mma's
 - 23.4.3 Narrator
- 23.5 Important Quotes in The Shadow Lines
- 23.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 23.7 Glossary
- 23.8 Short Answer Questions
 - 23.8.1 Multiple Choice Questions
- 23.9 Examination Oriented Questions
- 23.10 References
- 23.11 Suggested Reading

23.1 INTRODUCTION

Amitav Ghosh expertises in the representation of the characters in *The Shadow Lines*, which was preceded by *The Circle of Reason* and followed by *The Calcutta Chromosomes*. Characters from different religions, culture and nationalities have been woven together in a tangible world. His central figures are travellers and diasporic exiles. It is a story of a middle class Indian family based in Calcutta. The boy narrator presents the views of the members of his immediate and extended family, thus, giving each a well-defined character. The novel narrates the story of three generations spread over Calcutta, London and Dhaka.

The narrator's family is settled in Calcutta where his grandmother is a head mistress of a school. The narrator acts as an observer of the whole situation. His character takes shape gradually from his interaction with other characters of the novel.

However, Tha'mma, narrator's grandmother is the memorable character in the novel, giving a distinct idea of militant nationalism and the enthusiasm with which the people worked towards nation building just after independence. Tha'mma's character is very much close to the Indian society. She hates Ila to such an extent that she puts her grandson's career in jeopardy to humiliate Ila when she writes a letter to the principal of the narrator's school saying that the narrator visits prostitutes. It is chiefly through her character that Ghosh delivers the most significant message of the novel; the vainness of creating nation states, the absurdity of drawing lines which arbitrarily divide people when their memories remain undivided. All the characters are meticulously sketched.

In Tridib, the narrator's uncle, Ghosh draws one of the most fascinating characters of our times. Narrator's fascination with him is understandable. It is Tridib who gives him "worlds to travel in and eyes to see them with" (S.L. 20). Ghosh subtly tries to undo the myth that boundaries demarcate as there are no barriers in imagination. Ila is central to the narrator's coming of age. Her portrayal is crucial to showcase the pragmatic cosmopolitanism of the people who live aloof from their native place.

23.2 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this lesson are:-

1. To acquaint the learner with an overview to the novel *The Shadow Lines*.
2. To introduce the learner with various nuances and background of a "character".
3. To introduce the learner with detailed analysis of major and minor characters in *The Shadow Lines*.
4. Written assignments for practice with key so that the learner can do self evaluation.
5. Suggesting list of books for further reading.

2.3 CHARACTER DEFINITION

Importance of a character cannot be denied. Characters create the story and are important to the development and progress of the story. A character is a person, animal, being, creature, or thing in a story. Writers use characters to perform the actions and speak dialogue, moving the story along a plot line. A story can have only one character (protagonist) and still be a complete story. This character's conflict may be an inner one (within him/herself), or a conflict with something natural, such as climbing a mountain. Most stories have multiple characters interacting, with one of them as the antagonist, causing a conflict for the protagonist.

Major characters are important figures at the centre of the story or theme. The major character is sometimes called a protagonist (main character, around which the whole story revolves) whose conflict with an antagonist (this character, or group of characters, causes the conflict for the protagonist) may spark

the story's conflict. Additionally, the antagonist could be a part of nature, such as an animal, the weather, a mountain or lake etc. Minor characters are often static or unchanging, they remain the same from the beginning of a work to the end. There are minor characters in a story. Their actions help drive the story forward. They may impact the decisions the protagonist or antagonist make, either helping or interfering with the conflict.

2.3.1: Some Important Characters in a Nutshell

- **Tridib** - The protagonist is a middle class boy who grows up in a middle-class family; he is the narrator's uncle. He is in love with May.
- **Tha'mma** (the narrator's grandmother) - She was the headmistress of a girls' school in Calcutta. She is a very strict, disciplined, hard-working, mentally strong and patient lady. She is the one who wants to bring her uncle, Jethamoshai, to India to live with her, eventually leading to his and Tridib's deaths by a mob in Dhaka.
- **Ila** - She is the narrator's cousin who lives in Stockwell, London. The narrator is in love with her, but she marries Nick.
- **May** - She is the Price family's daughter. She is in love with Tridib and blames herself for his death.
- **Nick** - He is the Price family's son, distinguishable by his long blond hair. He wants to work in the 'futures industry'. He marries Ila during the course of the novel, but it is later found that he is allegedly having an affair. He worked in Kuwait for a brief period of time but quit his job (it is implied that he may have been fired for embezzlement).
- **Mayadebi** - She is the narrator's grandmother's younger sister and Tridib's mother.

23.4 DETAILED ANALYSIS OF MAJOR CHARACTERS

2.4.1: Tridib

is the narrator's uncle. He's about twenty years older and is a very skilled storyteller. He often tells the narrator stories about the year he lived in London with the Prices. Tridib is such a unique character that again it is difficult to limit him with adjectives. He is a good student. He is eccentric. He is tricky. He is a loafer. He is sincere. He is all these and much more. But above everything else he is the man who gave the narrator the keen ability to perceive things, to go for 1

It is not that Tridib is trying to bulldoze his presence on the narrator. In the area where the narrator lives, Gariahat and Gole Park in Calcutta, Tridib is very well known on the streets. All pan shop owners, sweet shop owners, boys on the street know Tridib because the place is his favourite 'adda' or 'haunt', we may say in English. The narrator is enveloped in the protective presence of Tridib, 'I was grateful for the small privileges his presence secured for me on those streets: For the odd sweet given to me by a shopkeeper of his acquaintance; For being rescued from a fight in the park by some young fellow who knew him' (SL,8). The narrator has a pure child-like love for Tridib. As a child he bursts with pride at Tridib's show of intellect and superior knowledge on those roadside

haunts. The narrator's sense of pride expands when Tridib treats him like an equal, like an adult and shares secrets with him. He fiercely defends Tridib when people ridicule him on his back for all his made-up or real wonder stories. The child in the narrator is so dominant that when years later May, Tridib's beloved, spots him in London in the crowd after her performance in an orchestra, 'suddenly she smiled, rose on tiptoe, pulled my head down and kissed me on my cheeks' (SL,15). He is an adult here, treated as a child.

2.4.2: Tha'mma's character is very much close to the Indian society. She hates Ila to such an extent that she puts her grandson's career in jeopardy to humiliate Ila when she writes a letter to the principal of the narrator's school saying that the narrator visits prostitutes. But we can't say that the perception is completely wrong though it definitely is opposed to the Indian nationalism. Ila acquires such an opinion because of the treatment she gets as a woman in India. There are a lot of restrictions put on her while she is in India. She is once forced out of a cabaret bar in the Grand Hotel in Calcutta by her uncle Robi. This clearly shows how restricted and constrained the lives of women are in India. And these restrictions and constraints force Ila to form a biased opinion towards the third world countries like India.

Tha'mma is the narrator's grandmother. As a young woman in British India, she desperately wanted to be a part of the terrorist groups that fought for India's independence from Britain. When Partition happened in 1947, however, Tha'mma was too busy raising the narrator's father as a single parent to think much of it. When her husband died, Tha'mma became fiercely independent and refused help from everyone, including her younger sister, Mayadebi. Eventually, Tha'mma told herself that her relatives actually refused to help her, so she actively distanced herself from much of her family. Throughout the novel, she's cautious about family relationships, given that as a child, she saw her father and uncle feud and finally build a wall through their house to resolve it. She's also a stickler about using one's time wisely, as a result of having to support herself and put her son through school alone. Because of this, she dislikes Tridib, who she believes to be a gossip. After she retires, Tha'mma withdraws and cedes control of the household to the narrator's mother. In a sudden shift in character, Tha'mma decides in her early sixties that it's her duty to bring her elderly uncle Jethamoshai home to India, given to the rising tensions between India and Pakistan. The prospect of returning to Dhaka is a difficult one for her: she doesn't understand what Partition was for if the border itself isn't even visible, and she struggles to cope with the sudden realization that her birth in Dhaka means that she was born in East Pakistan. After Jethamoshai and Tridib die in the riot, Tha'mma sells her favorite gold chain to fund the war effort with Pakistan. She becomes nasty to the narrator when she deteriorates while he's in college, and calls Ila a whore.

23.4.3 Narrator

The narrator was born in Calcutta, India in 1953, where he lives with his parents and his grandmother, Tha'mma. He spends his entire childhood in Calcutta and spends a lot of it with his favorite uncle, Tridib. Tridib tells him stories, pointing out faraway cities in his atlas and telling him often about

living in London as a child. The narrator idolizes Tridib's way of living and looking at the world, which is a problem when the narrator is around his cousin Ila. Though the narrator loves Ila romantically, he struggles regularly to try to make her see the importance of Tridib's stories. He and Tridib decide that because Ila traveled so much as a child, she didn't need to rely on stories like the narrator did, since he never left Calcutta. Though the narrator is often self-centered and unaware of the scope of the world, he is also very tuned into the inner workings of his family. He understands, for example, that Tha'mma has a deep sense of pride, and he uses his knowledge to his advantage. After Ila tells the narrator about an English boy named Nick Price, the narrator understands that Nick is his rival for Ila's affection. Eventually, Ila and Nick get married, which is heartbreaking for the narrator. He feels trapped by his unwavering love for Ila, as he knows she'll never love him back. Over the next several years in London, the narrator reconnects with Ila; Nick's sister, May; and Robi in London. He has a brief sexual encounter with May, who used to be romantically linked to Tridib. May enlightens the narrator as to the real cause of Tridib's death in Dhaka, and the narrator realizes that the terrifying riot he experienced in Calcutta in 1964 was just like the one that killed Tridib in Dhaka.

2.5 IMPORTANT QUOTES IN THE SHADOW LINES

1. ***Tha'mma's Quotes in The Shadow Lines:*** *The Shadow Lines* quotes below are all either spoken by Tha'mma or refer to Tha'mma.
 - "She becomes nasty to the narrator when she deteriorates while he's in college, and calls Ila a whore".
 - "I would have been frightened, she said. But I would have prayed for strength, and God willing, yes, I would have killed him. It was for our freedom: I would have done anything to be free".
 - "But I knew I had made a mistake the moment I said it; I should have known that she would have nothing but contempt for a freedom that could be bought for the price of an air ticket. For she too had once wanted to be free; she had dreamt of killing for her freedom".
 - "But you know, the strange thing was that as we grew older even I almost came to believe in our story".
 - "The price she had paid for that pride was that it had come to be transformed in her imagination into a barrage of slights and snubs; an imaginary barrier that she believed her gloating relatives had erected to compound her humiliation".
 - "But if there aren't any trenches or anything, how are people to know? I mean, where's the difference then? And if there's no difference, both sides will be the same [...] What was it all for then-Partition and all the killing and everything-if there isn't something in between?"
 - "Everyone lives in a story, he says, my grandmother, my father, his father, Lenin, Einstein, and lots of other names I hadn't heard of; they all lived in stories, because stories are all there are to live in, it

was just a question of which one you choose [...]"

2. Narrator's Quotes in *The Shadow Lines*: quotes below are all either spoken by The Narrator or refer to the Narrator.

- "I tried to tell her, but neither then nor later, though we talked about it often, did I ever succeed in explaining to her that I could not forget because Tridib had given me worlds to travel in and he had given me eyes to see them with; she, who had been travelling around the world since she was a child, could never understand what those hours in Tridib's room had meant to me [...]"
- "I felt a constriction in my throat, for suddenly it seemed to me that perhaps she was not so alien, after all, to my own small, puritanical world, in which children were sent to school to learn how to cling to their gentility by proving themselves in the examination hall".
- "For Ila the current was real: it was as though she lived in a present which was like an airlock in a canal, shut away from the tidewaters of the past and the future by steel floodgates".
- "I could guess at a little of what it had cost her then to refuse her rich sister's help and of the wealth of pride it had earned her, and I knew intuitively that all that had kept her from agreeing at once was her fear of accepting anything from anyone that she could not return in exact measure".
- "She had given me away, she had made public, then and for ever, the inequality of our needs; she had given Ila the knowledge of her power and she had left me defenceless, naked in the face of that unthinkable, adult truth: that need is not transitive, that one may need without oneself being needed".

23.6 LET US SUM UP

In *The Shadow Lines*, characters from different religions, culture and nationalities have been woven together in a tangible world. The narrator, Tridib and Tha'mma are some of the major characters of the novel. It is a story of a middle class Indian family based in Calcutta. The boy narrator presents the views of the members of his immediate and extended family, thus, giving each a well-defined character. *Tha'mma*, narrator's grandmother is the memorable character in the novel, giving a distinct idea of militant nationalism and the enthusiasm with which the people worked towards nation building just after independence. *Tha'mma's* character is very much close to the Indian society. In Tridib, the narrator's uncle, Ghosh draws one of the most fascinating characters of our times. Narrator's fascination with him is understandable. Ila, May, Nick, and Mayadebi are some other important characters.

23.7 GLOSSARY

1. Tangible - real and not imaginary; able to be shown, touched, or experienced
2. Diasporic - any group that has been dispersed outside its traditional homeland, especially involuntarily, as Africans during the trans-Atlantic slave trade.
3. exiles - the condition of someone being sent or kept away from their own country, village
4. militant - engaged in warfare or combat

5. nationalism - an ideology and movement that promotes the interests of a particular nation
6. jeopardy - in danger of being damaged or destroyed
7. vainness - egotistical, unimportant
8. Fascination - Fascination is the state of being greatly interested in or delighted by something.
9. Pragmatic - A pragmatic way of dealing with something is based on practical considerations
10. cosmopolitanism - the ideology that all human beings belong to a single community, based on a shared morality
11. eccentric- unconventional and slightly strange
12. loafer - a person who avoids work and spends his/her time idly
13. marvari - a native or inhabitant of Rajasthan in India
14. mundane - dull
15. haunts - a place frequented by a specified person
16. currency - the fact or quality of being generally accepted or in use
17. archaeologist - someone who studies the buildings, graves, tools, and other objects of people who lived in the past
18. bulldoze - to destroy buildings and make an area flat with a bulldozer
19. orchestra - a group of performers on various musical instruments
20. feud - an argument that has existed for a long time between two people or groups
21. stickler - one who insists on exactness or completeness in the observance of something
22. cedes - to allow someone else to have or own something
23. barrage - the action of continuously firing large guns to protect soldiers advancing on an enemy

23.8 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Q.1) Describe *The Shadow Lines* briefly with special reference to its characters.

Q.2) How many generations spread over which places in *The Shadow Lines* are portrayed?

Q.3) Where is the narrator's family and what is his grandmother ?

Q.4) What does the narrator's grandmother do to keep him away from Ila ?

Q.5) Define character and why the writers need a character ?

Q.6) Differentiate between antagonist and protagonist?

Q.7) Who is Ila?

Q-8) Who is May?

Q.9) Who is Mayadebi?

Q.10) Who is Tridip?

Q.11) Use four adjectives to describe Tridib .

Q.12) Where do Jethamoshai and Tridib die?

Q.13) What does Tha'mma sell to fund the war effort with Pakistan?

Q.14) When and where was the narrator born?

Q.15) What is heartbreaking for the narrator?

Possible Answers: -

- A-1) *The Shadow Lines* is a story of a middle class Indian family based in Calcutta. Its central figures are travellers and diasporic exiles.
- A-2) The novel narrates the story of three generations spread over Calcutta, London and Dhaka.
- A-3) The narrator's family is settled in Calcutta where his grandmother is a head mistress of a school.
- A-4) Narrator's grandmother hates Ila to such an extent that she puts her grandson's career in jeopardy to humiliate Ila when she writes a letter to the principal of the narrator's school saying that the narrator visits prostitutes.
- A-5) A character is a person, animal, being, creature, or thing in a story. Writers use characters to perform the actions and speak dialogue, moving the story along a plot line.
- A-6) Protagonist is the main character, around which the whole story revolves. An antagonist is a character, or group of characters, causing the conflict for the protagonist. Additionally, the antagonist could be a part of nature, such as an animal, the weather, a mountain or lake etc.
- A-7) Ila is the narrator's cousin who lives in Stockwell, London. The narrator is in love with her, but she marries Nick.
- A-8) May was the Price family's daughter. She is in love with Tridib and blames herself for his death.
- A-9) Mayadebi was the narrator's grandmother's younger sister and Tridib's mother.
- A-10) Tridib was the narrator's uncle. He is in love with May.

- A-11) Tridib is such a unique character that again it is difficult to limit him with adjectives. He is a good student. He is eccentric. He is tricky. He is a loafer. He is sincere.
- A-12) Jethamoshai and Tridib die in the riot .
- A-13) Tha'mma sells her favorite gold chain to fund the war effort with Pakistan.
- A-14) The narrator was born in Calcutta, India in 1953.
- A-15) Ila and Nick get married, which is heartbreaking for the narrator .

23.8.1 Multiple Choice Questions

Q-1) *The Shadow Lines*, which was preceded by-----?

- (a) *The Hungry Tide*
- (b) **Sea of Poppies**
- (c) *The Circle of Reason*
- (d) *Calcutta Chromosomes*

Q-2) *The Shadow Lines*, was followed by _____

- (a) *The Hungry Tide*
- (b) *The Circle of Reason*
- (c) *The Calcutta Chromosomes*
- (d) *Sea of Poppies*

Q-3) The novel narrates the story of three generations spread over Calcutta, London and -----

- (a) Ballygunge
- (b) Calcutta's Gole Park
- (c) Dhaka
- (d) London

Q-4) Tha'mma's character is very much close to the -----society .

- (a) Ballygunge
- (b) Calcutta's Gole Park
- (c) Dhaka
- (d) Indian

Q-5) Tha'mma hates

- (a) Jethamoshai
- (b) Ila
- (c) Maya
- (d) Thamma

Q-6) Tha'mma writes a letter to the principal of the narrator's school saying that the narrator visits -----

- (a) farmers
- (b) black market
- (c) underworld
- (d) prostitutes

Q-7) A story can have only one character ----- and still be a complete story.

- (a) hero
- (b) protagonist
- (c) villain
- (d) antagonist

Q-8) The major character is sometimes called a protagonist (main character, around which the whole story revolves) who conflicts with an ----- (this character, or group of characters, causes the conflict for the protagonist)

- (a) hero
- (b) protagonist
- (c) villain
- (d) antagonist

Q-9) ----- is the narrator's grandmother's younger sister and Tridib's mother.

- (a) Jethamoshai
- (b) Ila
- (c) Maya
- (d) Mayadebi

Q-10) ----- is the Price family's son, distinguishable by his long blond hair.

- (a) Jethamoshai
- (b) Ila
- (c) Nick
- (d) Price

Q-11) ----- worked in Kuwait for a brief period of time but quit his job (it is implied that he may have been fired for embezzlement).

- (a) Jethamoshai
- (b) Ila
- (c) Nick
- (d) Price

Q-12) ----- is the Price family's daughter. She is in love with Tridib and blames herself for his death.

- (a) May
- (b) Ila
- (c) Maya
- (d) Mayadebi

Q-13) Ila is the narrator's cousin who lives in-----.

- (a) Ballygunge
- (b) Calcutta's Gole Park
- (c) Dhaka
- (d) Stockwell, London

Q-14) Ila marries -----

- (a) Jethamoshai
- (b) Ila
- (c) Nick
- (d) Price

Q-15) Tha'mma was the headmistress of a girls' school in -----

- (a) Ballygunge

- (b) Calcutta
- (c) Dhaka
- (d) Stockwell, London

Q-16) Tha'mma is the one who wants to bring her uncle, -----to India to live with her, eventually leading to his and Tridib's deaths by a mob in Dhaka.

- (a) Jethamoshai
- (b) Ila
- (c) Nick
- (d) Price

Answers

- 1) (c) *The Circle of Reason*
- 2) (c) *The Calcutta Chromosomes*
- 3) (c) Dhaka
- 4) (d) Indian
- 5) (b) Ila
- 6) (d) prostitutes
- 7) (b) protagonist
- 8) (d) antagonist
- 9) (d) Mayadebi
- 10) (c) Nick
- 11) (c) Nick
- 12) (a) May
- 13) (d) Stockwell, London
- 14) (c) Nick
- 15) (b) Calcutta
- 16) (a) Jethamoshai

23.9 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q-1) Define and discuss "character" and types of character.

- Q-2) Comment on the role of women characters in *The Shadow Lines*.
- Q-3) Who is the narrator in *The Shadow Lines*. Elaborate his role .
- Q-4) Give a character sketch of Tridip and his influence on the narrator.
- Q-5) Draw a pen picture of male characters in *The Shadow Lines*.
- Q-6) Amitav Ghosh is a master in the art of creating characters. Justify.
- Q-7) Discuss the importance of minor characters in *The Shadow Lines*.

23.10 REFERENCES

1. Ghosh, Amitav. (1988) *The Shadow Lines*, Delhi: Ravi Dayal Publisher.

23.11 SUGGESTED READING

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