After You Read Selected Poetry of Thomas Hardy

Literary Lens: Irony

"Ah,Are You Digging on My Grave?" is one of the most famous examples of irony in literature. How does the woman expect the world to react to her death? What is ironic about the answers she receives to her questions? Create a chart like the one below, and record the woman's expectations and what really occurs. Cite the lines from the poem that support both. What point does Hardy make in the final stanza?

Woman's Expectations	Citation from Poem	Actual Reaction	Citation from Poem

Explore Context: Pessimistic Views of the Future

In line ten of "The Darkling Thrush," Hardy refers to the nineteenth century as a "corpse." A product of his times, Hardy often expressed pessimism about the direction life was taking as the nineteenth century came to a close. Do research to find out more about the public's sentiments as the new century approached. Was Hardy's pessimism shared by all? Take notes on your findings, and share them in a class discussion.

Apply and Create: Imagery

Make a list of the images in "The Darkling Thrush." Using as many of the images as you can, try re-creating the setting of the poem in a sketch or painting. Present your artwork to the class, pointing out the various images depicted.

Read Critically

Reread this passage from "The Darkling Thrush" and answer the questions that follow.

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul

Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

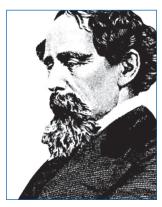
- 1. How does the speaker react to the thrush's sudden appearance?
- 2. What physical traits does the thrush have?
- 3. What do you think the thrush stands for?
- 4. What conclusions can you draw about Hardy's attitude toward the closing of the century?

Exploring the Classics

Great Britain experienced radical change in nearly all facets of society during the Victorian Era. It's no surprise, then, that the era's literature reflects the important shifts and transformations of the times.

Charles Dickens

Calling Charles Dickens "just a writer" would be like calling Princess Diana "just a dignitary." He was a figure of almost mythic proportion, captivating the public imagination for many reasons. As the voice of the poor and disadvantaged, Dickens exposed the harsh realities of the industrial revolution. His novel *Great Expectations* explores the full psychological and moral maturity of an orphan named Pip. Themes of the novel include suffering, social mobility, and the working class as an oppressed group. Dickens



wrote in a style that was both poetic and clever, and his characters are among the most vivid and memorable in literary history. Like many of Dickens' other novels, *Great Expectations* was first published in serial form, or episodes in periodicals and magazines that often included a cliff-hanger to leave the reader in suspense.





Oscar Wilde

Oscar Wilde burst upon the English literary scene near the end of Dickens' life. He became a celebrity in his own right and has been called the first writer to "become famous for being famous." He helped define and popularize the Aesthetic Movement, espousing "art for art's sake." Although he didn't believe in inflicting values upon the reader, his most famous play, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, takes aim at the self-righteousness and hypocrisy of Victorian society in a humorous and entertaining way. This



comedy of manners satirizing the upper class centers around Jack, whose "friend" Ernest (a character he has invented) causes all kinds of confusion while visiting a friend. The Picture of Dorian Gray, Wilde's only novel, is a classic of gothic horror fiction. It tells of the twisted journey a man takes when he wishes his portrait would age while he remains young.

Charlotte Brontë

One of three sisters who became published writers in the Victorian Era, Charlotte Brontë was determined to shatter the image of the Victorian woman with her pen. During this time, women were to be "seen and not heard." They belonged on a man's arm or in the home tending to their children and were valued for their beauty and gentility. Although Brontë rebelled quietly against this view of women in her own life, she rebelled boldly through the main character in her novel Jane Eyre, published under the pen name



Currer Bell. Brontë created a main character who was the opposite of the ideal Victorian woman: a plain woman who was practical, realistic, and determined to stay true to herself. When first published, Jane Eyre was criticized for being radical and for encouraging women to challenge authority and rebel against their roles in the home.



Connecting Eras: Analyze

In this unit you have witnessed the literary transition from romanticism to realism. You've considered how the economic and political changes of the era affected social life. You've explored ways in which these changes, and many others, are reflected in the poetry and prose of the era. You have looked back with the perspective of a twenty-first-century American.

About one hundred years ago, writer Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) also looked back on this period, but from a different perspective. The society in which she grew up was, like the Victorian period, dominated by males in prominent positions and occupations. Thanks in part to women like Woolf, however, today's women in the United States and Great Britain have moved into the highest reaches of politics, the arts, the economy, and many other arenas. In the next unit, you will read more by Virginia Woolf, including several works in which the role of women is the central theme. (See the excerpt from A Room of One's Own on pages 861–869.)

In the selection that follows, Woolf, as a literary critic for *TheTimes Literary Supplement*, reviews a book by Mrs. Ellis Chadwick about the life of Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, Mrs. Gaskell: Haunts, Homes, and Stories. Gaskell is the author of "Christmas Storms and Sunshine" on pages 768–779 as well as several other well-known novels, including North and South and Cranford, both of which have been turned into television miniseries.



Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)

Gaskell also wrote a famous biography of Charlotte Brontë. The following article by Woolf was published on September 29, 1910.

Although the role of women is a theme in this review, a more pronounced theme is the contrasts among various social classes and the upper class perceptions—or misperceptions—of the lower class. Gaskell herself addressed this theme in "Christmas Storms and Sunshine."

As you read, analyze the review to see how Woolf's different points come together to support her central thesis.



"Mrs. Gaskell"
Virginia Woolf

From what one can gather of Mrs. Gaskell's nature, she would not have liked Mrs. Chadwick's book. A cultivated woman, for whom publicity had no glamour, with a keen sense of humour and a quick temper, she would have opened it with a shiver and dropped it with a laugh. It is delightful to see how cleverly she vanishes. There are no letters to be had; no gossip; people remember her, but they seem to have forgotten what she was like. At least, cries Mrs. Chadwick, she must have lived somewhere; houses can

be described. 'There is a long, glass-covered porch, forming a conservatory, which is the main entrance. . . . On the ground-floor, to the right, is a large drawing room. On the left are a billiard room . . . a large kitchen . . . and a scullery ¹ There are ten bed rooms . . . and a kitchen garden sufficiently large to supply vegetables for a large family.' The ghost would feel grateful to the houses; it might give her a twinge to hear that she had 'got into the best literary set of the day', but on the other hand it would please her to read of how Charles Darwin was 'the best-known naturalist'.²

The surprising thing is that there should be a public who wishes to know where Mrs. Gaskell lived. Curiosity about the houses, the coats, and the pens of Shelley,³ Peacock,⁴ Charlotte Brontë, and George Meredith seems lawful. One imagines that these people did everything in a way of their own; and in such cases a trifle will start the imagination when the whole body of their published writings fails to thrill. But Mrs. Gaskell would be the last person to have that peculiarity. One can believe that she prided herself upon doing things as other women did them, only better—that she swept manuscripts off the table lest a visitor should think her odd. She was, we know, the best of housekeepers, 'her standard of comfort', writes Mrs. Chadwick, being 'expensive, but her tastes were always refined'; and she kept a cow in her back garden to remind her of the country.

For a moment it seems surprising that we should still be reading her books. The novels of today are so much terser, intenser, and more scientific. Compare the strike in *North and South*,⁵ for example, with the *Strife* of Mr. Galsworthy.⁶ She seems a sympathetic amateur beside a professional in earnest. But this is partly due to a kind of irritation with the methods of mid-Victorian novelists. Nothing would persuade them to concentrate.

I scullery: small kitchen at the back of a house

² Charles Darwin . . . naturalist: Darwin (1809–1882), natural scientist whose theory of evolution and natural selection changed the world's understanding of science

³ Shelley: Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), English Romantic poet

⁴ Peacock: Thomas Love Peacock (1785–1866), English writer known for his satires

⁵ the strike in North and South: In the novel, the cotton mill workers in the town of Milton strike against a reduction in wages.

⁶ Strife of Mr. Galsworthy: Strife is a 1909 play by John Galsworthy that chronicles the harsh realities of a strike in industrial England.

Able by nature to spin sentence after sentence melodiously, they seem to have left out nothing that they knew how to say. Our ambition, on the other hand, is to put in nothing that need not be there. What we want to be there is the brain and the view of life; the autumnal woods, the history of the whale fishery, and the decline of stage coaching we omit entirely. But by means of comment, dialogues that depart from truth by their wit and not by their pomposity, descriptions fused into a metaphor, we get a world carved out arbitrarily enough by one dominant brain. Every page supplies a little heap of reflections, which, so to speak, we sweep aside from the story and keep to build a philosophy with. There is really nothing to stimulate such industry in the pages of Thackeray, Dickens, Trollope, and Mrs. Gaskell. A further deficiency (in modern eyes) is that they lack 'personality'. Cut out a passage and set it apart and it lies unclaimed, unless a trick of rhythm mark it. Yet it may be a merit that personality, the effect not of depth of thought but of the manner of it, should be absent. The tuft of heather that Charlotte Brontë saw was her tuft; Mrs. Gaskell's world was a large place, but it was everybody's world.

She waited to begin her first novel until she was thirty-four, driven to write by the death of her baby. A mother, a woman who had seen much of life, her instinct in writing was to sympathize with others. Loving men and women, she seems to have done her best, like a wise parent, to keep her own eccentricities in the background. She would devote the whole of her mind to understanding. That is why, when one begins to read her, one is dismayed by the lack of cleverness.

Carriages still roll along the streets, concerts are still crowded by subscribers, the shops for expensive luxuries still find daily customers, while the workman loiters away his unemployed time in watching these things, and thinking of the pale, uncomplaining wife at home, and the wailing children asking in vain for enough of food—of the sinking health, of the dying life of those near and dear to him. The contrast is too great. Why should he alone suffer from bad times? I know that this is not really the case; and I know what is the truth in such matters; but what I wish to express is what the workman feels and thinks.

So she misses the contrast. But by adding detail after detail in this profuse impersonal way she nearly achieves what has not been achieved by all our science. Because they are strange and terrible to us, we always see the poor in stress of some kind, so that the violence of their feeling may break through conventions, and, bringing them rudely into touch with us, do away with the need of subtle understanding. But Mrs. Gaskell knows how the poor enjoy themselves; how they visit and gossip and fry bacon and lend each other bits of finery and show off their sores. This is the more remarkable because she was hampered by a refined upbringing and traditions of culture. Her working men and women, her outspoken and crabbed old family domestics, are generally more vigorous than her ladies and gentlemen, as though a touch of coarseness did her good. How admirable, for instance, is the scene when Mrs. Boucher is told of her husband's death.⁷

'Hoo mun be told because of th' inquest. See! hoo's coming round; shall you or I do it? Or mappen your father would be best?'

'No; you, you,' said Margaret.

They awaited her perfect recovery in silence. Then the neighbor woman sat down on the floor, and took Mrs. Boucher's head and shoulders on her lap.

'Neighbor,' said she, 'your man is dad. Guess yo' how he died?'

'He were drowned,' said Mrs. Boucher feebly, beginning to cry for the first time at this rough probing of her sorrow.

'He were found drowned. He were coming home very hopeless o' aught on earth I'm not saying he did right, and I'm not saying he did wrong. All I say is, may neither me nor mine ever have his sore heart, or we may do like things.'

'He has left me alone wi' a' these children!' moaned the widow, less distressed at the manner of the death than Margaret expected; but it was of a piece with her helpless character to feel his loss as principally affecting herself and her children.

⁷ when Mrs. Boucher is told . . . death: from Gaskell's Cranford

Too great a refinement gives *Cranford* that prettiness which is the weakest thing about it, making it, superficially at least, the favourite copy for gentle writers who have hired rooms over the village post-office.

When she was a girl, Mrs. Gaskell was famous for her ghost stories. A great story-teller she remained to the end, able always in the middle of the thickest book to make us ask 'What happens next?' Keeping a diary to catch the overflow of life, observing clouds and trees, moving about among numbers of very articulate men and women, high-spirited, observant, and free from bitterness and bigotry, it seems as though the art of writing came to her as easily as an instinct. She had only to let her pen run to shape a novel. When we look at her work in the mass we remember her world, not her individuals. In spite of Lady Ritchie,8 who hails Molly Gibson9 'dearest of heroines, a born lady, unconsciously noble and generous in every thought', in spite of the critics' praise of her 'psychological subtlety', her heroes and heroines remain solid rather than interesting. With all her humour she was seldom witty, and the lack of wit in her character-drawing leaves the edges blunt. These pure heroines, having no such foibles as she loved to draw, no coarseness and no violent passions, depress one like an old acquaintance. One will never get to know them; and that is profoundly sad. One reads her most perhaps because one wishes to have the run of her world. Melt them together and her books comprise a large, bright, country town, widely paved, with a great stir of life in the streets and a decorous row of old Georgian houses standing back from the road. 'Leaving behind your husband, children, and civilization, you must come out to barbarism, loneliness, and liberty.' Thus Charlotte Brontë, inviting her to Haworth, compared their lives, and Mrs. Gaskell's comment was 'Poor Miss Brontë'. We who never saw her, with her manner 'gay but definite', her beautiful face, and her 'almost perfect arm', find something of the same delight in her books. What a pleasure it is to read them!

⁸ Lady Ritchie: English poet (1837–1919) and daughter of W. M. Thackeray

⁹ Molly Gibson: heroine of Gaskell's novel Wives and Daughters

Critical Thinking: Analyze

Ask Yourself

- 1. To what extent does Woolf review Chadwick's biography of Mrs. Gaskell? Explain.
- 2. If you were to divide Woolf's essay into parts, what would they be? Give reasons for your answer.
- 3. What elements of Gaskell's life does Woolf address?
- 4. What elements of Gaskell's writing does Woolf address?
- 5. What is Woolf's chief criticism of Gaskell's writing?
- 6. What does Woolf regard as Gaskell's biggest strength?

Examine the Writing

As you read at the beginning of the unit, the most meaningful analyses are those that draw meaning and understanding from the connections between the elements within a topic. One element of Victorian life that many writers represented in their works was capitalism, the economic system that drove the technological and industrial accomplishments of the 19th century and beyond. In a capitalist system, people who own the means of production can make profits and grow wealthy. Those who do not own productive resources, especially laborers, are limited in the money they can acquire.

Choose one of the following topics related to capitalism in Victorian literature. Address the topic by writing a critical essay, by creating a multimedia presentation, or, with your teacher's permission, by developing your own presentation method.

- Analyze the way Mrs. Gaskell relates capitalism to social interactions in "Christmas Storms and Sunshine."
- 2. Analyze the way Trollope relates capitalism to social interactions in "Malachi's Cove."
- Think of a contemporary novel, story, or movie that uses capitalism as a central theme. Analyze the influence of capitalism on social interactions in that work.

Organize Your Thoughts

You can use a chart like the one below to analyze the work. The example in the chart, based on Adam Sandler's 2002 movie, Mr. Deeds, would be the first example in a longer list.

Analysis of Capitalism and Social Interactions				
References to capitalism (places where money, business, income, wealth, working, and other money-related issues are mentioned)	Quality of social interactions (examples of how people relate to one another)			
Longfellow Deeds, a pizzeria owner and would-be poet of greeting card messages, is told that he has inherited \$40 million from a long-lost relative.	Deeds continues to treat everyone in exactly the same way he did before the news.			

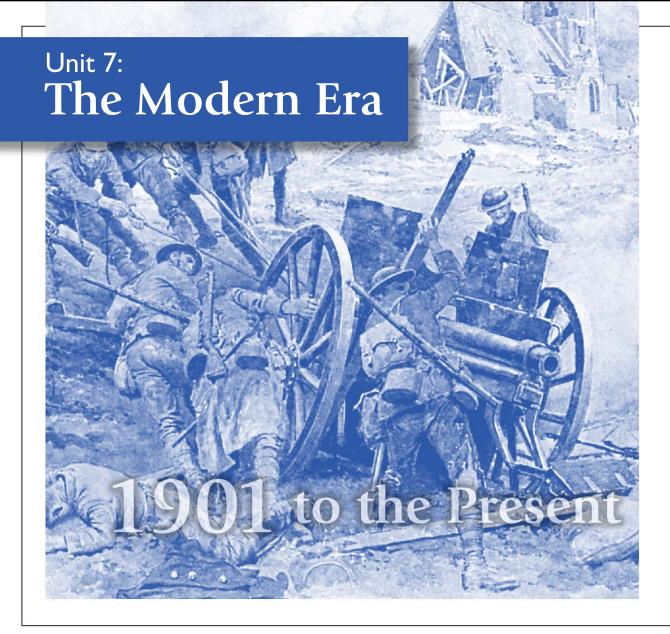
When your analysis chart is complete, use it to look for patterns in the way capitalism affects social interactions in your chosen work. From those patterns, develop a thesis statement or controlling idea for your presentation. The items in your chart will be the support you need to back up your main idea.

Get Active

According to Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Gaskell was famous for thrilling audiences with her ghost stories. Stephenie Meyer's book *Twilight*, about a vampire's relationship with a mortal girl, awakens a similar sense of anticipation—will he confess his love or drain her neck of blood? With your class, analyze how a contemporary story about ghosts or vampires might compare to one written in Victorian England. Then write the opening paragraph to either a contemporary or Victorian story that will have the reader asking, "What happens next!"



In the 2008 film version of Stephenie Meyer's Twilight, Robert Pattinson portrayed Edward Cullen, the vampire attracted to human Bella Swan, portrayed by Kristen Stewart.



Eye on an Erw

1902

Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*, a forerunner of modernist literature, is published.

1910

George V becomes king; during his reign, he issues a proclamation creating the House of Windsor. 1914 (to 1918)

World War I rages across Europe, with Britain and France fighting against Germany.

1901

Queen Victoria dies; her son takes the throne as Edward VII.

VII.

1914

George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* opens at His Majesty's Theatre in London. 1918

British women over thirty achieve the right to vote; a law is passed ten years later allowing women over age twenty-one to vote.

With Queen Victoria's death in 1901, the curtain of the prosperous Victorian Era fell, and a dramatically different era was ushered in.

Britain faced enormous challenges in the twentieth century, including two devastating world wars, economic depression, continued industrialization, and a declining world empire. Literature turned away from the beautiful prose and serene realism of the Victorian era. Experimental modernism explored new avenues of personal identity against the backdrop of a rapidly changing world and an increasingly impersonal society. The many changes of the twentieth century, especially the dissolution of the once-powerful British Empire, left Britons struggling to understand their individual and national identities.

World War I

In the early twentieth century, European countries formed alliances and stockpiled arms as Britain and Germany began to vie for military dominance. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, in 1914 was the spark that ignited the first world war. The major powers of Europe quickly aligned themselves and declared war against one another. Modern warfare included advancements in weaponry tanks, poison gas, aircrafts, and submarines—that led to air raids on civilian populations and U-boat attacks on merchant ships at sea. The war lasted four years, wiping out virtually an entire generation of young British men. At the war's

were defeated, and the map of Europe was totally

redrawn. The 1919 Treaty of Versailles declared Germany responsible for the war and forced that nation to pay 269 billion gold marks in reparations to the Allies. The bitterness Germans felt toward the rest of Europe for these harsh penalties created an environment Adolf Hitler would take advantage of in the coming decades.





Alexander Fleming discovers penicillin.

Edward VIII abdicates the throne to marry American divorcée Wallis Simpson; his younger brother George VI becomes king.



Hitler is declared chancellor of Germany and assumes dictatorial powers: Nazi terror begins.

World War II



Responding to Hitler's lightning attack (blitzkrieg) of Poland in 1939, Britain and France declared war on Germany, ushering in World War II. A massive military struggle that pitted the Allies (primarily Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States) against the Axis powers (primarily Germany, Italy, and Japan), the war cost millions of lives and introduced a new weapon of mass destruction—the atomic bomb. The Nazis relentlessly bombed London for fifty-seven consecutive nights in 1940, annihilating millions of homes and killing thousands of people. Children were evacuated to the countryside. Clothing and food were rationed. By June of that year, France had surrendered. The tide turned in 1941, when the United States and the Soviet Union entered the war. Hitler's regime was finally defeated in 1945, but the effects of the war would be felt for years to come.

Modernism and Postmodernism

After the first world war, disillusionment set in as Britain struggled with economic depression and high unemployment. A new style of writing, modernism, appeared in British literature that explored human psychology, relationships, and vulnerabilities. "The Lost Generation," as writers from this time period are often called, experimented with new structures of drama and poetry, including techniques such as stream of consciousness and nonlinear plots, in an effort to understand their cultural turmoil and feelings of alienation. Following World War II, the modernist style gave way to postmodernism. While the two styles share some characteristics, postmodern writers generally disdain the modernist focus on finding meaning. Instead, they often imply, primarily through irony, that there is no meaning to be found. Postmodern literature often contains dark humor, a combination of genres, and paranoid characters who fruitlessly search for answers. Samuel Beckett's play Waiting for Godot is a classic example of postmodern literature.

Samuel Beckett

d

s
often

modern

1939 (to 1945)

Britain declares war on Germany in response to Hitler's invasion of Poland. During the next six years, World War II will become the deadliest conflict in history. 1945

Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin plan the ultimate defeat of Germany at Yalta. Germany surrenders. Atomic bombs are dropped on Japan. 1949

Republic of Ireland is formed.

1953

James D. Watson and Francis Crick publish their discovery of the structure of DNA.

1940

Hitler invades Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France; Winston Churchill becomes prime minister. -1947

India and Pakistan gain independence from Britain. Five months later, Mahatma Gandhi is assassinated in New Delhi. 1952

Twenty-seven-year-old Elizabeth II succeeds her father, George VI.

Irish Nationalism

Britain and Ireland's often precarious relationship came to a head with the Irish War of Independence, waged from 1919 to 1921 by the Irish Republican Army. The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 split the country in two: the Irish Free State, an autonomous dominion similar to Canada; and Northern Ireland, a dominion that would remain part of the United Kingdom. In the years that followed, nationalism flourished, giving birth to the Irish Literary Renaissance, or Irish Revival, in literature. William Butler Yeats and James Joyce were two Irish writers who led this effort. Finally in 1949, the Irish Free State officially became the Republic of Ireland.

Conflict in Northern Ireland turned inward. Fighting continued from the 1960s to the 1990s between Roman Catholic Nationalists who wanted to join the Republic of Ireland and the Protestant Unionists who preferred to stay under British control. A cease-fire and political agreement was brokered in 1998, and progress continues toward a lasting peace in Northern Ireland.

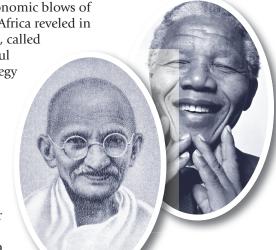




Colonialism and Its Aftermath

While the British Empire was still reeling from the economic blows of World War II, the British colonies of India and South Africa reveled in

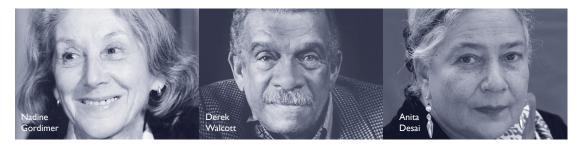
a newfound nationalism. In India, Mohandas Gandhi, called Mahatma, led the independence movement by peaceful means, encouraging mass civil disobedience. His strategy was effective, and India was declared an independent nation in 1947. In South Africa, things were not as peaceful; the National Party's policy of apartheid benefited the white minority while oppressing the black majority. The country left the British Commonwealth in 1961, but the following decades were rife with violence and oppression. South Africa finally became a democracy in the 1990s. Nelson Mandela, who had spent twenty-six years in prison for his involvement as an activist for the African National Congress (ANC), was elected president of South Africa in a fully representative democratic election in 1994.



Mahatma Gandhi

Nelson Mandela

When Britain gave Hong Kong back to China in 1997, the last remaining piece of the British Empire was removed. Yet the influence of British colonial life remained, and many writers from far-reaching outposts of the old empire continue to explore its lingering effects on culture, politics, and everyday life. Writers such as Nadine Gordimer (South Africa), Derek Walcott (West Indies), and Anita Desai (India) give readers insight into the lives of the people the British had controlled and influenced for so many years.

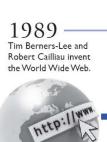




-1979
Conservative Margaret
Thatcher becomes Britain's
first female prime minister,
continuing in office
until 1990.

1982 cession puts three

Economic recession puts three million Britons out of work.



A Teen of the Time

Maninder Singh Bali could not concentrate on Mr. Browne's lecture about World War II. Instead he was drawing an elaborate pattern of intertwining vines and flowers on his paper. He glanced furtively around. He didn't want to explain that it was a design for his family's *rangoli*, a special artwork created to celebrate Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights.

In 1950, Maninder's father had come to London from Punjab, India. He had worked in a factory for a year until he had saved enough money to bring Maninder's mother and older brother over from India. Maninder was proud of his Indian heritage, but at school he thought it best to blend in as much as possible. Walking through the front door to his house was like entering a different world. . . .

In his mind, Maninder could hear the sounds of Bhangra music, the regular beating of the dhol drums wafting from the old record player in the hall. He envisioned his mother and sister chattering in Punjabi while preparing bright yellow tandoori chicken in the kitchen. Both women wore jewel-colored embroidered tunics above full pants gathered at the ankle. On the wall a cupboard of miniature Hindu deities watched over them. . . .

Suddenly a cascade of long blond hair fell across Maninder's paper. The girl in the desk in front of him turned around. "Sorry!" she whispered as she rolled up her hair and stuck her pencil through the bun. Melanie Harper was nice, but Maninder could only imagine what her parents—and his parents—would say if he asked her out. Maninder's brother's marriage to an Indian girl had been arranged by his parents. Maninder's friend John had been stunned when Maninder had told him. "It's 1968, man. That's stuff from the Dark Ages!" John had said.

Maninder tried to focus on copying the dates Mr. Browne was writing on the board. In a few months, seventeen-year-old Maninder would sit his A-level examinations before going on to college. It was important to earn a high score on the exam so he could be accepted into a good school. Maninder would be the first person in his family to attend university.

Maninder looked up from his paper. All the students were gathering their things. His friend John called from across the room, "Hey, Maninder, you want to go to the field and kick the football around?" Maninder smiled. At least there were some things both Brits and Indians had in common.

1994

The fifty-kilometer undersea Channel Tunnel opens, linking England and France by rail.

1997

Britain signs an agreement giving control of Hong Kong to China.

2005

Terrorist suicide bombers kill fifty-two and injure seven hundred London commuters during morning rush hour.

2008

Worldwide financial crisis leaves many wondering what the future will bring.

1997

Diana, Princess of Wales, dies in a car crash in Paris.

2001-

Foot-and-mouth disease results in the deaths of more than ten million sheep and cattle.

2007

Credited with modernizing the Labour Party, Tony Blair resigns after a decade-long term as prime minister amid criticism for his support of the war in Iraq.



Understanding the Modern Era: Evaluate

Evaluation is a systematic determination of the merit, worth, or significance of something, based on a particular set of standards. People make evaluations throughout their lives. When deciding what college to attend, you research each institution and compare it with your standards for education and your life goals. You evaluate your choices based on the curriculum, location, typical class size, cost of tuition, and other factors.

The United Kingdom's Modern Poetry Web site (www.modernpoetry. org.uk) is dedicated to contemporary British avant-garde poetry. To help new readers of avant-garde poetry move beyond personal preference and form judgments about poetry, the Web site outlines its standards for avant-garde poetry, including:

- have a focus or an acute awareness of poetry as a process of personal perception and consciousness put into language;
- enforce awareness of the language of the poem itself to enable the reader to focus on language and process; and
- apply formal creativity and experimentation rather than adherence to traditional forms and patterns.

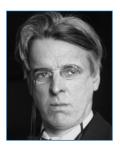
Therefore, to receive a positive evaluation and to qualify as avant-garde poetry, a poem must focus not on imagery but on an awareness of the actual language used. It must draw the reader directly into the experience, and it must also experiment with structure and avoid established forms of poetry.

These suggestions are, of course, subjective. You will develop your own standards by which you evaluate and judge "good" poetry, including that it:

- contain strong images;
- use language that aids understanding of its ideas; and
- appeal to the emotions and/or stimulate the intellect.

As you explore the modern era of British literature, evaluate the themes, the forms of artistic expression, and the historical events and movements that forged the period's early works and paved the way for current literary trends.

Before You Read Selected Poetry of William Butler Yeats



William Butler Yeats (1865–1939), winner of the 1923 Nobel Prize in Literature, is considered one of the greatest poets of the twentieth century. His long career helped secure him as an important voice in modern literature. Born in Dublin, Ireland, Yeats developed an early interest in Irish folktales, legends, and myths. This passion for Irish culture evolved into a strong commitment to everything Irish—the people, the arts, and the politics. In 1899, he helped found the Irish Literary Theatre, precursor to the famed Abbey Theatre in Dublin and an important force in what became known as the Irish Literary Renaissance. Fascinated by mysticism and the supernatural, Yeats

developed a set of beliefs to help explain world events. One belief was that history occurs in two thousand-year cycles; when each cycle, or era, comes to an end, another era quite opposite in nature begins with an event of historic importance. Yeats's poems often reflect this perspective on history.

Literary Lens



SYM BOUSM In literature, a symbol is an object that stands for something beyond itself, such as an idea or feeling. In his poems, Yeats makes extensive use of symbolism, applying these symbols to help convey important ideas about life.

IM AGERY As you learned earlier in this book, the term *imagery* refers to words or phrases that create vivid sensory experiences for the reader. Yeats' images, such as "the falcon cannot hear the falconer," create feelings of foreboding or doom.

Yeats' Language

Though the poems you are about to read are complex in meaning, their style is not. In fact, Yeats said that he sought "to make the language of poetry coincide with that of passionate, normal speech." The concise, straightforward language of Yeats' poetry compels the reader to concentrate fully on the meaning as well as the beauty of his language. Although devices such as rhyme, rhythm, and alliteration are sometimes present in Yeats' work, they take a backseat to the symbols and imagery he employs.

Think Critically

Before you read the poems that follow, use critical thinking to deepen your understanding.

- I. Reread Yeats' biography, which includes information on the poet's unique view of history. What topics do you think he will address in the poems you are about to read?
- 2. The titles of two of the poems you are about to read contain allusions, which are references to historical or fictional people, places, or events. "The Second Coming" refers to an event; "Sailing to Byzantium" refers to a place. What do you think each title alludes to?



Consider that "The Second Coming" was written in 1919. Evaluate how world events might have influenced the poem.

THE SECOND COMING

William Butler Yeats

Turning and turning in the widening ovre1

		running and turning in the widening gyre
		The falcon cannot hear the falconer; ²
		Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
anarchy: absence of		Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
law or order	5	The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
		The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
		The best lack all conviction, while the worst
		Are full of passionate intensity.
revelation: an act		Surely some revelation is at hand;
of revealing or	10	Surely the Second Coming ³ is at hand.
communicating divine truth		The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
		When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi ⁴
		Troubles my sight: somewhere in the sands of the desert
		A shape with lion body and the head of a man, ⁵
	15	A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
		Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
indignant: feeling anger over injustice		Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
		The darkness drops again; but now I know
		That twenty centuries of stony sleep
vexed: irritated;	20	Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle, ⁶
harassed		And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
		Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

- I gyre: circular or spiral motion or form
- 2 falconer: a person who breeds, trains, or hunts with hawks
- 3 Second Coming: Jesus Christ's return as ruler of the earth, predicted in the New Testament to happen after a period of war and chaos
- 4 **Spiritus Mundi:** Latin phrase meaning "Spirit of the World"; Yeats believed this was a collective unconsciousness that holds the memories of the entire human race.
- 5 A shape ... man: the Great Sphinx in Egypt
- 6 rocking cradle: reference to the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem

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Sailing to Byzantium

William Butler Yeats

Ι

That is no country for old men. The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees
—Those dying generations—at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is **begotten**, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unaging intellect.

5

begotten: *sired; procreated*

The Modern Era "Sailing to Byzantium" 815

П

paltry: poor and inadequate

An aged man is but a paltry thing,

A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;

And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.¹

Ш

O sages standing in God's holy fire²
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,³
And be the singing-masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

artifice: an artful stratagem; trick

IV

- Once out of nature I shall never take
 My bodily form from any natural thing,
 But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
 Of hammered gold and gold enameling
 To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;⁴
 Or set upon a golden bough to sing
 To lords and ladies of Byzantium
 Of what is past, or passing, or to come.
- I Byzantium: the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire and the Greek Orthodox Church; in Yeats' poetry, Byzantium symbolizes a world of art and poetry as opposed to the common, mundane world.
- 2 sages...fire: mosaics found in Byzantine churches which portray the stories of Old Testament prophets
- 3 perne ... gyre: turn in a circular motion
- 4 Grecian . . awake: reference to a tree made of precious metals with handmade birds, intended to amuse an emperor

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When You Are Old

William Butler Yeats

When you are old and grey and full of sleep, And nodding by the fire, take down this book, And slowly read, and dream of the soft look Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace, And loved your beauty with love false or true, But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you, And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,

Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled

And paced upon the mountains overhead

And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

The Modern Era "When You Are Old" 817

After You Read Selected Poetry of William Butler Yeats

Literary Lens: Imagery

Review each poem, looking for visual images that are important to the meaning of the poem. What feeling or idea does each image convey? For each poem, record your information on a chart like the one shown below.

Image	Feeling or Idea Conveyed

Explore Context: Irish Literary Renaissance

Yeats and others sought to revive Irish culture and move away from English influences. Called the Irish Literary Renaissance, this effort produced the plays of James Millington Synge and Sean O'Casey and inspired Yeats' poetry. Research an author from the Irish Literary Renaissance. Summarize your findings in a few paragraphs.

Apply and Create: Symbolism

Yeats uses symbols to convey important ideas about life, death, and change. Brainstorm a list of people, places, objects, or actions that might be used to symbolize life, death, or change. Decide which symbol seems the strongest. Then write a poem that makes use of that symbol.

Read Critically

Reread this excerpt from "The Second Coming." Answer the questions that follow.

Turning and turning in the widening gyre

The falcon cannot hear the falconer:

Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

5 The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned;

The ceremony of innocence is arowned,

The best lack all conviction, while the worst

Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;

10 Surely the Second Coming is at hand. . . .

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,

Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?



- I. Explain and evaluate the speaker's concerns.
- Yeats wrote this poem on the heels of the Russian Revolution and World War I. How are these events reflected in the poem?
- 3. Explain examples of religious symbolism found in the poem.

Before You Read "The Rocking-Horse Winner"



D. H. LAWRE NCE (1885–1930), today regarded as one of the most prominent figures in twentieth-century fiction, had difficulty gaining the acclaim he deserved. Though his contemporaries thought him brilliantly creative, he was criticized as being too controversial in his depiction of relationships between men and women and of the darker side of human psychology. Lawrence grew up in a turbulent household in which his father, an uneducated miner, and his mother, a former schoolteacher, were often at odds. Despite the family's poverty, Lawrence's mother insisted that he receive an education. After working as a clerk and an elementary school

teacher, Lawrence decided to follow his passion and try to make his living as a writer. Despite the hardships of censorship, poverty, and constant ill health, Lawrence was a prolific writer, producing an expansive number of short stories, poems, essays, and novels during his relatively short life. He is admired now for his stunning observations of human nature.

Literary Lens



THEM E The underlying message in a work of literature is called its *theme*. Though usually not stated directly, the theme of a short story can often be understood by examining the actions and motivations of the characters.

FORE SHADOWING Writers often use foreshadowing to hint at events or situations that will occur later in a story. Foreshadowing engages the reader in the story's plot by creating suspense and anticipation.

Lawrence's Language

Though Lawrence wrote several well-received novels, some critics think that his short stories represent his most skillful fiction. By definition, a short story must be compact and economical, and Lawrence's writing style encompasses both. In "The Rocking-Horse Winner," there is little room for elaborate description. Instead, Lawrence's bare-bones storytelling moves the plot along with tense immediacy.

Think Critically

Before you read the story that follows, use critical thinking to deepen your understanding.

- Recall what you learned about the modernist writers in the unit introduction.
 Which literary element do you think the story will focus on more—setting or character?
- 2. Think about the title. What might you predict about at least one of the characters in the story?
- 3. "The Rocking-Horse Winner" is said to use devices common in fairy tales. What do you think these devices might be?



ROCKING-HORSE WINNER

D. H. Lawrence

THERE was a woman who was beautiful, who started with all the advantages, yet she had no luck. She married for love, and the love turned to dust. She had bonny children, yet she felt they had been thrust upon her, and she could not love them. They looked at her coldly, as if they were finding fault with her. And hurriedly she felt she must cover up some fault in herself. Yet what it was that she must cover up she never knew. Nevertheless, when her children were present, she always felt the center of her heart go hard. This troubled her, and in her manner she was all the more gentle and anxious for her children, as if she loved them very much. Only she herself knew that at the center of her heart was a hard little place that could not feel love, no, not for anybody. Everybody else said of her: "She is such a good mother. She adores her children." Only she herself, and her children themselves, knew it was not so. They read it in each other's eyes.

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There were a boy and two little girls. They lived in a pleasant house, with a garden, and they had discreet servants, and felt themselves superior to anyone in the neighborhood.

Although they lived in style, they felt always an anxiety in the house. There was never enough money. The mother had a small income, and the father had a small income, but not nearly enough for the social position in which they had to keep up. The father went into town to some office. But though he had good prospects, these prospects never materialized. There was always the grinding sense of the shortage of money, though the style was always kept up.

At last the mother said: "I will see if *I* can't make something." But she did not know where to begin. She racked her brains, and tried this thing and the other, but could not find anything successful. The failure made deep lines come into her face. Her children were growing up, they would have to go to school. There must be more money, there must be more money. The father, who was always very handsome and expensive in his tastes, seemed as if he never *would* be able to do anything worth doing. And the mother, who had a great belief in herself, did not succeed any better, and her tastes were just as expensive.

And so the house came to be haunted by the unspoken phrase: There must be more money! There must be more money! The children could hear it all the time, though nobody said it aloud. They heard it at Christmas, when the expensive and splendid toys filled the nursery. Behind the shining modern rocking-horse, behind the smart doll's-house, a voice would start whispering: "There must be more money! There must be more money!" And the children would stop playing, to listen for a moment. They would look into each other's eyes, to see if they had all heard. And each one saw in the eyes of the other two that they too had heard. "There must be more money!"

It came whispering from the springs of the still-swaying rocking-horse, and even the horse, bending his wooden, champing head, heard it. The big doll, sitting so pink and smirking in her new pram, could hear it quite plainly, and seemed to be smirking all the more

I **pram:** baby carriage

self-consciously because of it. The foolish puppy, too, that took the place of the teddy bear, he was looking so extraordinarily foolish for no other reason but that he heard the secret whisper all over the house: "There *must* be more money!"

Yet nobody ever said it aloud. The whisper was everywhere, and therefore no one spoke it. Just as no one ever says: "We are breathing!" in spite of the fact that breath is coming and going all the time.

"Mother," said the boy Paul one day, "why don't we keep a car of our own? Why do we always use uncle's, or else a taxi?"

"Because we're the poor members of the family," said the mother.

"But why are we, mother?"

"Well—I suppose," she said slowly and bitterly, "it's because your father has no luck."

The boy was silent for some time.

"Is luck money, mother?" he asked, rather timidly.

"No, Paul. Not quite. It's what causes you to have money."

"Oh!" said Paul vaguely. "I thought when Uncle Oscar said *filthy lucker*, it meant money."

"Filthy lucre² does mean money," said the mother. "But it's lucre, not luck."

"Oh!" said the boy. "Then what is luck, mother?"

"It's what causes you to have money. If you're lucky you have money. That's why it's better to be born lucky than rich. If you're rich, you may lose your money. But if you're lucky, you will always get more money."

"Oh! Will you? And is father not lucky?"

"Very unlucky, I should say," she said bitterly.

The boy watched her with unsure eyes.

"Why?" he asked.

"I don't know. Nobody ever knows why one person is lucky and another unlucky."

"Don't they? Nobody at all? Does nobody know?"

"Perhaps God. But He never tells."

"He ought to, then. And aren't you lucky either, mother?"

"I can't be, if I married an unlucky husband."

"But by yourself, aren't you?"

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² filthy lucre: money, especially when gained in an unlawful or dishonest way

"I used to think I was, before I married. Now I think I am very unlucky indeed."

"Why?"

"Well—never mind! Perhaps I'm not really," she said.

The child looked at her, to see if she meant it. But he saw, by the lines of her mouth, that she was only trying to hide something from him.

"Well, anyhow," he said stoutly, "I'm a lucky person."

"Why?" said his mother, with a sudden laugh.

He stared at her. He didn't even know why he had said it.

"God told me," he asserted, **brazening** it out.

"I hope He did, dear!" she said, again with a laugh, but rather bitter.

"He did, mother!"

"Excellent!" said the mother, using one of her husband's exclamations.

The boy saw she did not believe him; or rather, that she paid no attention to his assertion. This angered him somewhat, and made him want to compel her attention.

He went off by himself, vaguely, in a childish way, seeking for the clue to "luck." Absorbed, taking no heed of other people, he went about with a sort of stealth, seeking inwardly for luck. He wanted luck, he wanted it, he wanted it. When the two girls were playing dolls in the nursery, he would sit on his big rocking-horse, charging madly into space, with a frenzy that made the little girls peer at him uneasily. Wildly the horse **careered**, the waving dark hair of the boy tossed, his eyes had a strange glare in them. The little girls dared not speak to him.

When he had ridden to the end of his mad little journey, he climbed down and stood in front of his rocking-horse, staring fixedly into its lowered face. Its red mouth was slightly open, its big eye was wide and glassy-bright.

"Now!" he would silently command the snorting steed. "Now, take me to where there is luck! Now take me!"

And he would slash the horse on the neck with the little whip he had asked Uncle Oscar for. He *knew* the horse could take him to where there was luck, if only he forced it. So he would mount again, and start on his furious ride, hoping at last to get there. He knew he could get there.

brazening: facing with boldness

careered: rushed wildly

"You'll break your horse, Paul!" said the nurse.

"He's always riding like that! I wish he'd leave off!" said his elder sister Joan.

But he only glared down on them in silence. Nurse gave him up. She could make nothing of him. Anyhow he was growing beyond her.

One day his mother and his Uncle Oscar came in when he was on one of his furious rides. He did not speak to them.

"Hallo, you young jockey! Riding a winner?" said his uncle.

"Aren't you growing too big for a rocking-horse? You're not a very little boy any longer, you know," said his mother.

But Paul only gave a blue glare from his big, rather close-set eyes. He would speak to nobody when he was in full tilt. His mother watched him with an anxious expression on her face.

At last he suddenly stopped forcing his horse into the mechanical gallop, and slid down.

"Well, I got there!" he announced fiercely, his blue eyes still flaring, and his sturdy long legs straddling apart.

"Where did you get to?" asked his mother.

"Where I wanted to go," he flared back at her.

"That's right, son!" said Uncle Oscar. "Don't you stop till you get there. What's the horse's name?"

"He doesn't have a name," said the boy.

"Gets on without all right?" asked the uncle.

"Well, he has different names. He was called Sansovino last week."

"Sansovino, eh? Won the Ascot.3 How did you know his name?"

"He always talks about horse races with Bassett," said Joan.

The uncle was delighted to find that his small nephew was posted with all the racing news. Bassett, the young gardener, who had been wounded in the left foot in the war and had got his present job through Oscar Cresswell, whose batman⁴ he had been, was a perfect blade of the "turf." He lived in the racing events, and the small boy lived with him.

Oscar Cresswell got it all from Bassett.

"Master Paul comes and asks me, so I can't do more than tell him,

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³ Ascot: major English horse race

⁴ **batman:** a British military officer's personal servant

⁵ blade ... "turf": horse-racing fan

sir," said Bassett, his face terribly serious, as if he were speaking of religious matters.

"And does he ever put anything on a horse he fancies?"

"Well—I don't want to give him away—he's a young sport, a fine sport, sir. Would you mind asking him himself? He sort of takes a pleasure in it, and perhaps he'd feel I was giving him away, sir, if you don't mind."

Bassett was serious as a church.

The uncle went back to his nephew and took him off for a ride in the car.

"Say, Paul, old man, do you ever put anything on a horse?" the uncle asked.

The boy watched the handsome man closely.

"Why, do you think I oughtn't to?" he parried.

"Not a bit of it! I thought perhaps you might give me a tip for the Lincoln."

The car sped on into the country, going down to Uncle Oscar's place in Hampshire.

"Honor bright?" said the nephew.

"Honor bright, son!" said the uncle.

"Well, then, Daffodil."

"Daffodil! I doubt it, sonny. What about Mirza?"

"I only know the winner," said the boy. "That's Daffodil."

"Daffodil, eh?"

There was a pause. Daffodil was an obscure horse comparatively.

"Uncle!"

"Yes, son?"

"You won't let it go any further, will you? I promised Bassett."

"Bassett be damned, old man! What's he got to do with it?"

"We're partners. We've been partners from the first. Uncle, he lent me my first five shillings,⁶ which I lost. I promised him, honor bright, it was only between me and him; only you gave me that ten-shilling note I started winning with, so I thought you were lucky. You won't let it go any further, will you?"

The boy gazed at his uncle from those big, hot, blue eyes, set rather close together. The uncle stirred and laughed uneasily.

"Right you are, son! I'll keep your tip private. Daffodil, eh? How

⁶ shillings: old British coins worth one-twentieth of a pound

much are you putting on him?"

"All except twenty pounds," said the boy. "I keep that in reserve."

The uncle thought it a good joke.

"You keep twenty pounds in reserve, do you, you young romancer? What are you betting, then?"

"I'm betting three hundred," said the boy gravely. "But it's between you and me, Uncle Oscar! Honor bright?"

The uncle burst into a roar of laughter.

"It's between you and me all right, you young Nat Gould," he said, laughing. "But where's your three hundred?"

"Bassett keeps it for me. We're partners."

"You are, are you! And what is Bassett putting on Daffodil?"

"He won't go quite as high as I do, I expect. Perhaps he'll go a hundred and fifty."

"What, pennies?" laughed the uncle.

"Pounds," said the child, with a surprised look at his uncle. "Bassett keeps a bigger reserve than I do."

Between wonder and amusement Uncle Oscar was silent. He pursued the matter no further, but he determined to take his nephew with him to the Lincoln races.

"Now, son," he said, "I'm putting twenty on Mirza, and I'll put five on for you on any horse you fancy. What's your pick?"

"Daffodil, uncle."

"No, not the fiver on Daffodil!"

"I should if it was my own fiver," said the child.

"Good! Good! Right you are! A fiver for me and a fiver for you on Daffodil."

The child had never been to a race meeting before, and his eyes were blue fire. He pursed his mouth tight, and watched. A Frenchman just in front had put his money on Lancelot. Wild with excitement, he flayed his arms up and down, yelling "Lancelot! Lancelot!" in his French accent.

Daffodil came in first, Lancelot second, Mirza third. The child, flushed and with eyes blazing, was curiously serene. His uncle brought him four five-pound notes, four to one.

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⁷ **twenty pounds:** equivalent to about a thousand dollars today

⁸ Nat Gould: British horse-racing authority and writer

"What am I to do with these?" he cried, waving them before the boy's eyes.

"I suppose we'll talk to Bassett," said the boy. "I expect I have fifteen hundred now; and twenty in reserve; and this twenty."

His uncle studied him for some moments.

"Look here, son!" he said. "You're not serious about Bassett and that fifteen hundred, are you?"

"Yes, I am. But it's between you and me, uncle. Honor bright?"

"Honor bright all right, son! But I must talk to Bassett."

"If you'd like to be a partner, uncle, with Bassett and me, we could all be partners. Only, you'd have to promise, honor bright, uncle, not to let it go beyond us three. Bassett and I are lucky, and you must be lucky, because it was your ten shillings I started winning with . . ."

Uncle Oscar took both Bassett and Paul into Richmond Park for an afternoon, and there they talked.

"It's like this, you see, sir," Bassett said. "Master Paul would get me talking about racing events, spinning yarns, you know, sir. And he was always keen on knowing if I'd made or if I'd lost. It's about a year since, now, that I put five shillings on Blush of Dawn for him—and we lost. Then the luck turned, with that ten shillings he had from you, that we put on Singhalese. And since that time, it's been pretty steady, all things considering. What do you say, Master Paul?"

"We're all right when we're sure," said Paul. "It's when we're not quite sure that we go down."

"Oh, but we're careful then," said Bassett.

"But when are you sure?" smiled Uncle Oscar.

"It's Master Paul, sir," said Bassett in a secret, religious voice. "It's as if he had it from heaven. Like Daffodil, now, for the Lincoln. That was as sure as eggs."9

"Did you put anything on Daffodil?" asked Oscar Cresswell.

"Yes, sir, I made my bit."

"And my nephew?"

Bassett was **obstinately** silent, looking at Paul.

"I made twelve hundred, didn't I, Bassett? I told uncle I was putting three hundred on Daffodil."

"That's right," said Bassett, nodding.

"But where's the money?" asked the uncle.

obstinately: determinedly; stubbornly

⁹ as sure as eggs: expression meaning "absolutely positive"

"I keep it safe locked up, sir. Master Paul he can have it any minute he likes to ask for it."

"What, fifteen hundred pounds?"

"And twenty! and *forty*, that is, with the twenty he made on the course."

"It's amazing!" said the uncle.

"If Master Paul offers you to be partners, sir, I would, if I were you; if you'll excuse me," said Bassett.

Oscar Cresswell thought about it.

"I'll see the money," he said.

They drove home again, and sure enough, Bassett came round to the garden-house with fifteen hundred pounds in notes. The twenty pounds reserve was left with Joe Glee, in the Turf Commission deposit.¹⁰

"You see, it's all right, uncle, when I'm *sure*! Then we go strong, for all we're worth. Don't we, Bassett?"

"We do that, Master Paul."

"And when are you sure?" said the uncle, laughing.

"Oh, well, sometimes I'm *absolutely* sure, like about Daffodil," said the boy; "and sometimes I have an idea; and sometimes I haven't even an idea, have I, Bassett? Then we're careful, because we mostly go down."

"You do, do you! And when you're sure, like about Daffodil, what makes you sure, sonny?"

"Oh, well, I don't know," said the boy uneasily. "I'm sure, you know, uncle; that's all."

"It's as if he had it from heaven, sir," Bassett reiterated.

"I should say so!" said the uncle.

But he became a partner. And when the Leger was coming on, Paul was "sure" about Lively Spark, which was a quite **inconsiderable** horse. The boy insisted on putting a thousand on the horse, Bassett went for five hundred, and Oscar Cresswell two hundred. Lively Spark came in first, and the betting had been ten to one against him. Paul had made ten thousand.

"You see," he said. "I was absolutely sure of him."

Even Oscar Cresswell had cleared two thousand.

"Look here, son," he said, "this sort of thing makes me nervous."

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inconsiderable: unimportant

¹⁰ **Turf Commission deposit:** bank where bettors keep money reserved for future wagers

"It needn't, uncle! Perhaps I shan't be sure again for a long time."

"But what are you going to do with your money?" asked the uncle.

"Of course," said the boy, "I started it for mother. She said she had no luck, because father is unlucky, so I thought if I was lucky, it might stop whispering."

"What might stop whispering?"

"Our house. I hate our house for whispering."

"What does it whisper?"

"Why—why"—the boy fidgeted—"why, I don't know. But it's always short of money, you know, uncle."

"I know it, son, I know it."

"You know people send mother writs, 11 don't you, uncle?"

"I'm afraid I do," said the uncle.

"And then the house whispers, like people laughing at you behind your back. It's awful, that is! I thought if I was lucky . . ."

"You might stop it," added the uncle.

The boy watched him with big blue eyes that had an uncanny cold fire in them, and he said never a word.

"Well, then!" said the uncle. "What are we doing?"

"I shouldn't like mother to know I was lucky," said the boy.

"Why not, son?"

"She'd stop me."

"I don't think she would."

"Oh!"—and the boy writhed in an odd way—"I *don't* want her to know, uncle."

"All right, son! We'll manage it without her knowing."

They managed it very easily. Paul, at the other's suggestion, handed over five thousand pounds to his uncle, who deposited it with the family lawyer, who was then to inform Paul's mother that a relative had put five thousand pounds into his hands, which sum was to be paid out a thousand pounds at a time, on the mother's birthday, for the next five years.

"So she'll have a birthday present of a thousand pounds for five successive years," said Uncle Oscar. "I hope it won't make it all the harder for her later."

II writs: formal documents demanding payment of debts

Paul's mother had her birthday in November. The house had been "whispering" worse than ever lately, and, even in spite of his luck, Paul could not bear up against it. He was very anxious to see the effect of the birthday letter, telling his mother about the thousand pounds.

When there were no visitors, Paul now took his meals with his parents, as he was beyond the nursery control. His mother went into town nearly every day. She had discovered that she had an odd knack of sketching furs and dress materials, so she worked secretly in the studio of a friend who was the chief "artist" for the leading drapers. She drew the figures of ladies in furs and ladies in silk and sequins for the newspaper advertisements. This young woman artist earned several thousand pounds a year, but Paul's mother only made several hundreds, and she was again dissatisfied. She so wanted to be first in something, and she did not succeed, even in making sketches for drapery advertisements.

She was down to breakfast on the morning of her birthday. Paul watched her face as she read her letters. He knew the lawyer's letter. As his mother read it, her face hardened and became more expressionless. Then a cold, determined look came on her mouth. She hid the letter under the pile of others, and said not a word about it.

"Didn't you have anything nice in the post for your birthday, mother?" said Paul.

"Quite moderately nice," she said, her voice cold and absent.

She went away to town without saying more.

But in the afternoon Uncle Oscar appeared. He said Paul's mother had had a long interview with the lawyer, asking if the whole five thousand could be advanced at once, as she was in debt.

"What do you think, uncle?" said the boy.

"I leave it to you, son."

"Oh, let her have it, then! We can get some more with the other," said the boy.

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, laddie!" said Uncle Oscar.

"But I'm sure to *know* for the Grand National; or the Lincolnshire; or else the Derby. 12 I'm sure to know for *one* of them," said Paul.

So Uncle Oscar signed the agreement, and Paul's mother touched

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¹² Grand National ... Lincolnshire ... Derby: major English horse races

the whole five thousand. Then something very curious happened. The voices in the house suddenly went mad, like a chorus of frogs on a spring evening. There were certain new furnishings, and Paul had a tutor. He was *really* going to Eton, ¹³ his father's school, in the following autumn. There were flowers in the winter, and a blossoming of the luxury Paul's mother had been used to. And yet the voices in the house, behind the sprays of mimosa and almond blossom, and from under the piles of **iridescent** cushions, simply trilled and screamed in a sort of ecstasy: "There must be more money! Oh-h-h, there *must* be more money. Oh, now, now-w! Now-w-w—there *must* be more money—more than ever! More than ever!"

It frightened Paul terribly. He studied away at his Latin and Greek. But his intense hours were spent with Bassett. The Grand National had gone by: he had not "known," and had lost a hundred pounds. Summer was at hand. He was in agony for the Lincoln. But even for the Lincoln he didn't "know" and he lost fifty pounds. He became wild-eyed and strange, as if something were going to explode in him.

"Let it alone, son! Don't you bother about it!" urged Uncle Oscar. But it was as if the boy couldn't really hear what his uncle was saying.

"I've got to know for the Derby! I've got to know for the Derby!" the child reiterated, his big blue eyes blazing with a sort of madness.

His mother noticed how **overwrought** he was.

"You'd better go to the seaside. Wouldn't you like to go now to the seaside, instead of waiting? I think you'd better," she said, looking down at him anxiously, her heart curiously heavy because of him.

But the child lifted his uncanny blue eyes.

"I couldn't possibly go before the Derby, mother!" he said. "I couldn't possibly!"

"Why not?" she said, her voice becoming heavy when she was opposed. "Why not? You can still go from the seaside to see the Derby with your Uncle Oscar, if that's what you wish. No need for you to wait here. Besides, I think you care too much about these races. It's a bad sign. My family has been a gambling family, and you won't know till you grow up how much damage it has done. But it has done damage. I shall have to send Bassett away, and ask Uncle

iridescent:displaying a
rainbow-like array

of colors

overwrought: excited to the point of agitation

¹³ Eton: prestigious English boarding school

Oscar not to talk racing to you, unless you promise to be reasonable about it; go away to the seaside and forget it. You're all nerves!"

"I'll do what you like, mother, so long as you don't send me away till after the Derby," the boy said.

"Send you away from where? Just from this house?"

"Yes," he said, gazing at her.

"Why, you curious child, what makes you care about this house so much, suddenly? I never knew you loved it."

He gazed at her without speaking. He had a secret within a secret, something he had not divulged, even to Bassett or to his Uncle Oscar.

But his mother, after standing undecided and a little bit sullen for some moments, said:

"Very well, then! Don't go to the seaside till after the Derby, if you don't wish it. But promise me you won't let your nerves go to pieces. Promise you won't think so much about horse racing and *events*, as you call them!"

"Oh, no," said the boy casually. "I won't think much about them, mother. You needn't worry. I wouldn't worry, mother, if I were you."

"If you were me and I were you," said his mother, "I wonder what we should do!"

"But you know you needn't worry, mother, don't you?" the boy repeated.

"I should be awfully glad to know it," she said wearily.

"Oh, well, you *can*, you know. I mean, you *ought* to know you needn't worry," he insisted.

"Ought I? Then I'll see about it," she said.

Paul's secret of secrets was his wooden horse, that which had no name. Since he was emancipated from a nurse and a nurserygoverness, he had had his rocking-horse removed to his own bedroom at the top of the house.

"Surely, you're too big for a rocking-horse!" his mother had **remonstrated**.

"Well, you see, mother, till I can have a *real* horse, I like to have *some* sort of animal about," had been his quaint answer.

"Do you feel he keeps you company?" she laughed.

"Oh yes! He's very good, he always keeps me company, when I'm there," said Paul.

remonstrated: pleaded in protest

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So the horse, rather shabby, stood in an arrested prance in the boy's bedroom.

The Derby was drawing near, and the boy grew more and more tense. He hardly heard what was spoken to him, he was very frail, and his eyes were really uncanny. His mother had sudden seizures of uneasiness about him. Sometimes, for half-an-hour, she would feel a sudden anxiety about him that was almost anguish. She wanted to rush to him at once, and know he was safe.

Two nights before the Derby, she was at a big party in town, when one of her rushes of anxiety about her boy, her first-born, gripped her heart till she could hardly speak. She fought with the feeling, might and main, ¹⁴ for she believed in common sense. But it was too strong. She had to leave the dance and go downstairs to telephone to the country. The children's nursery-governess was terribly surprised and startled at being rung up in the night.

"Are the children all right, Miss Wilmot?"

"Oh, yes, they are quite all right."

"Master Paul? Is he all right?"

"He went to bed as right as a trivet. Shall I run up and look at him?"

"No," said Paul's mother reluctantly. "No! Don't trouble. It's all right. Don't sit up. We shall be home fairly soon." She did not want her son's privacy intruded upon.

"Very good," said the governess.

It was about one o'clock when Paul's mother and father drove up to their house. All was still. Paul's mother went to her room and slipped off her white fur coat. She had told her maid not to wait up for her. She heard her husband downstairs, mixing a whiskyand-soda.

And then, because of the strange anxiety at her heart, she stole upstairs to her son's room. Noiselessly she went along the upper corridor. Was there a faint noise? What was it?

She stood, with arrested muscles, outside his door, listening. There was a strange, heavy, and yet not loud noise. Her heart stood still. It was a soundless noise, yet rushing and powerful. Something huge, in violent, hushed motion. What was it? What in God's name was it? She ought to know. She felt that she knew the noise. She knew what it was.

¹⁴ might and main: with all her strength

Yet she could not place it. She couldn't say what it was. And on and on it went, like a madness.

Softly, frozen with anxiety and fear, she turned the door handle.

The room was dark. Yet in the space near the window, she heard and saw something plunging to and fro. She gazed in fear and amazement.

Then suddenly she switched on the light, and saw her son, in his green pajamas, madly surging on the rocking-horse. The blaze of light suddenly lit him up, as he urged the wooden horse, and lit her up, as she stood, blonde, in her dress of pale green and crystal, in the doorway.

"Paul!" she cried. "Whatever are you doing?"

"It's Malabar!" he screamed in a powerful, strange voice. "It's Malabar!"

His eyes blazed at her for one strange and senseless second, as he ceased urging his wooden horse. Then he fell with a crash to the ground, and she, all her tormented motherhood flooding upon her, rushed to gather him up.

But he was unconscious, and unconscious he remained, with some brain-fever. He talked and tossed, and his mother sat stonily by his side.

"Malabar! It's Malabar! Bassett, Bassett, I know! It's Malabar!"

So the child cried, trying to get up and urge the rocking-horse that gave him his inspiration.

"What does he mean by Malabar?" asked the heart-frozen mother.

"I don't know," said the father stonily.

"What does he mean by Malabar?" she asked her brother Oscar.

"It's one of the horses running for the Derby," was the answer.

And, in spite of himself, Oscar Cresswell spoke to Bassett, and himself put a thousand on Malabar: at fourteen to one.

The third day of the illness was critical: they were waiting for a change. The boy, with his rather long, curly hair, was tossing ceaselessly on the pillow. He neither slept nor regained consciousness, and his eyes were like blue stones. His mother sat, feeling her heart had gone, turned actually into a stone.

In the evening Oscar Cresswell did not come, but Bassett sent a message, saying could he come up for one moment, just one

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moment? Paul's mother was very angry at the intrusion, but on second thought she agreed. The boy was the same. Perhaps Bassett might bring him to consciousness.

The gardener, a shortish fellow with a little brown moustache and sharp little brown eyes, tiptoed into the room, touched his imaginary cap to Paul's mother, and stole to the bedside, staring with glittering, smallish eyes at the tossing, dying child.

"Master Paul!" he whispered. "Master Paul! Malabar come in first all right, a clean win. I did as you told me. You've made over seventy thousand pounds, you have; you've got over eighty thousand. 15 Malabar came in all right, Master Paul."

"Malabar! Malabar! Did I say Malabar, mother? Did I say Malabar? Do you think I'm lucky, mother? I knew Malabar, didn't I? Over eighty thousand pounds! I call that lucky, don't you, mother? Over eighty thousand pounds! I knew, didn't I know I knew? Malabar came in all right. If I ride my horse till I'm sure, then I tell you, Bassett, you can go as high as you like. Did you go for all you were worth, Bassett?"

"I went a thousand on it, Master Paul."

"I never told you, mother, that if I can ride my horse, and *get there*, then I'm absolutely sure—oh, absolutely! Mother, did I ever tell you? I *am* lucky!"

"No, you never did," said his mother.

But the boy died in the night.

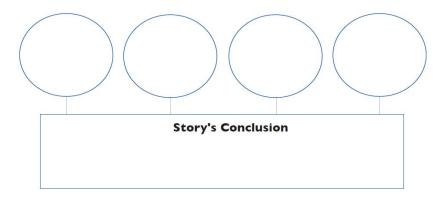
And even as he lay dead, his mother heard her brother's voice saying to her: "My God, Hester, you're eighty-odd thousand to the good and a poor devil of a son to the bad. But, poor devil, poor devil, he's best gone out of a life where he rides his rocking-horse to find a winner."

¹⁵ eighty thousand: When adjusted for inflation, this is about four million dollars today.

After You Read "The Rocking-Horse Winner"

Literary Lens: Foreshadowing

Draw a diagram like the one shown below to record examples of foreshadowing that hint at the story's conclusion.



Explore Context: Modern Psychology

Like many of his fellow modernists, Lawrence was fascinated by human psychology—the inner workings of the mind and the forces that control people's behavior. Write a paragraph discussing how this is reflected in "The Rocking-Horse Winner." Then, conduct research and write two more paragraphs about the development of psychology as a scientific field during the early decades of the twentieth century.

Apply and Create: Collage

"The Rocking-Horse Winner" demonstrates what can happen when money and materialism control people's lives. Many people still equate money with happiness. Create a collage with magazine and newspaper images that in your opinion make a strong connection between wealth and happiness. Add quotes from Lawrence's story to your collage. Finally, write a paragraph explaining the connections between your artwork and the story.

Read Critically

Reread this passage from the end of the story and answer the questions that follow.

"Malabar! Malabar! Did I say Malabar, mother? Did I say Malabar? Do you think I'm lucky, mother? I knew Malabar, didn't I? Over eighty thousand pounds! I call that lucky, don't you, mother? Over eighty thousand pounds! I knew, didn't I know I knew? Malabar came in all right. If I ride my horse till I'm sure, then I tell you, Bassett, you can go as high as you like. Did you go for all you were worth, Bassett?"

"I went a thousand on it, Master Paul."

"I never told you, mother, that if I can ride my horse, and *get there*, then I'm absolutely sure—oh, absolutely! Mother, did I ever tell you? I *am* lucky!"

"No, you never did," said his mother.

But the boy died in the night.

And even as he lay dead, his mother heard her brother's voice saying to her: "My God, Hester, you're eighty-odd thousand to the good and a poor devil of a son to the bad. But, poor devil, poor devil, he's best gone out of a life where he rides his rocking-horse to find a winner."

1. What does this climactic scene reveal about the characters of Paul, his mother, and his uncle?



- 2. Evaluate the relationship between Paul and his mother.
- 3. In what way is Paul's question, "Do you think I'm lucky, mother?" ironic?

Before You Read "Araby"



JAM ES JOYCE (1882–1941) is noted for his experimental style of writing and his tremendous influence on other fiction writers. In fact, some critics think that Joyce redefined the entire nature of narrative prose. Born in Dublin, Ireland, Joyce learned firsthand about the lives of the working poor. His own education was almost cut short because of his parents' inability to pay for tuition. Despite these struggles, Joyce did attend college where he began writing seriously. "Araby" was first published in 1914 in a volume of short stories called *Dubliners*, based to a large degree on Joyce's own experiences growing up. Over the next eight years Joyce produced two novels,

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916) and Ulysses (1922), an experiment with a technique called "stream-of-consciousness" in which thoughts and reactions are depicted in a continuous flow. In spite of serious problems with his vision and his constant financial troubles, Joyce produced an admirable body of literature.

Literary Lens



EPIPHANY Traditionally, an epiphany has meant the appearance of something divine or supernatural. James Joyce secularized the meaning of the word when he first used it to describe a dramatic and sudden moment in the life of a character that obtains a heightened sense of importance and becomes almost mystical. At the moment of epiphany, the character experiences a revelation of his authentic inner self.

SETTING As you know, setting refers to the time and place in which a story's action takes place. Setting plays an important role in Joyce's story, helping to paint a vivid portrait of the culture to which the narrator belongs.

Joyce's Language

James Joyce's style broke with the conventions of fiction writing familiar to most readers of his day. Today, when we read stories like "Araby," this style may not seem that remarkably innovative. But when he first published his work, readers were shocked by how deeply he delved into the minds of his characters. Suddenly, plot focused less on events and more on the emotional development of the characters. Many writers since Joyce have adopted his approach, devoting much attention to dynamic characters with emotional depth.

Think Critically

Before you read the story that follows, use critical thinking to deepen your understanding.

- Reread the biography on this page and think about the fact that Joyce based "Araby" on his own childhood experiences. What kind of setting do you expect the story to have?
- 2. Recall what you've learned so far about Joyce's innovations in writing. What stylistic qualities do you expect to find in "Araby"?





North Richmond Street, being blind, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers' School set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two stories stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbors in a square ground. The other houses on the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown **imperturbable** faces.

The former tenant of our house, a priest, had died in the back drawing room. Air, musty from having been long enclosed, hung in

imperturbable: calm; not easily upset

The Modern Era "Araby" **839**

l blind: a dead end

all the rooms, and the waste room behind the kitchen was littered with old useless papers. Among these I found a few paper-covered books, the pages of which were curled and damp: *The Abbot*, by Walter Scott, *The Devout Communicant* and *The Memoirs of Vidocq*. I liked the last best because its leaves were yellow. The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple-tree and a few straggling bushes under one of which I found the late tenant's rusty bicycle-pump. He had been a very charitable priest; in his will he had left all his money to institutions and the furniture of his house to his sister.

When the short days of winter came dusk fell before we had well eaten our dinners. When we met in the street the houses had grown somber. The space of sky above us was the color of ever-changing violet and towards it the lamps of the street lifted their feeble lanterns. The cold air stung us and we played till our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. The career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes behind the houses where we ran the gantlet of the rough tribes from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odor arose from the ashpits, to the dark odorous stables where a coachman smoothed and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness. When we returned to the street, light from the kitchen windows had filled the areas. If my uncle was seen turning the corner we hid in the shadow until we had seen him safely housed. Or if Mangan's sister came out on the doorstep to call her brother in to his tea we watched her from our shadow peer up and down the street. We waited to see whether she would remain or go in and, if she remained, we left our shadow and walked up to Mangan's steps resignedly. She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door. Her brother always teased her before he obeyed and I stood by the railings looking at her. Her dress swung as she moved her body and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side.

Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlor watching her door. The blind was pulled down to within an inch of the sash so that I could not be seen. When she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped. I ran to the hall, seized my books and followed her. I kept her brown figure always in my eye and, when we came near the point at which our ways diverged, I quickened my pace and passed her. This

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happened morning after morning. I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood.

Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance. On Saturday evenings when my aunt went marketing I had to go to carry some of the parcels. We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of laborers, the shrill **litanies** of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs' cheeks, the nasal chanting of street-singers, who sang a come-all-you about O'Donovan Rossa,2 or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice³ safely through a throng of foes. Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom. I thought little of the future. I did not know whether I would ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires.

One evening I went into the back drawing room in which the priest had died. It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house. Through one of the broken panes I heard the rain **impinge** upon the earth, the fine **incessant** needles of water playing in the sodden beds. Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me. I was thankful that I could see so little. All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves and, feeling that I was about to slip from them, I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: O *love!* O *love!* many times.

At last she spoke to me. When she addressed the first words to me I was so confused that I did not know what to answer. She asked me was I going to *Araby*. I forget whether I answered yes or no. It would be a splendid bazaar, she said; she would love to go.

—And why can't you? I asked.

While she spoke, she turned a silver bracelet round and round

The Modern Era "Araby" **84 I**

litanies: resonant or repetitive chants; also responsive prayers repeated by a congregation

impinge: to strike with sharp collision

incessant: unstopping; continual

² come-all-you. . . Rossa: a ballad about an Irish nationalist of the 1800s

³ chalice: a goblet; in the stories of King Arthur, a knight goes in search of a chalice called the Holy Grail, believed to have been used by Jesus at the Last Supper.

her wrist. She could not go, she said, because there would be a retreat that week in her convent.⁴ Her brother and two other boys were fighting for their caps and I was alone at the railings. She held one of the spikes, bowing her head towards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease.

- —It's well for you, she said.
- —If I go, I said, I will bring you something.

What **innumerable** follies laid waste my waking and sleeping thoughts after that evening! I wished to annihilate the tedious intervening days. I **chafed** against the work of school. At night in my bedroom and by day in the classroom her image came between me and the page I strove to read. The syllables of the word *Araby* were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me. I asked for leave to go to the bazaar on Saturday night. My aunt was surprised and hoped it was not some Freemason⁵ affair. I answered few questions in class. I watched my master's face pass from amiability to sternness; he hoped I was not beginning to idle. I could not call my wandering thoughts together. I had hardly any patience with the serious work of life which, now that it stood between me and my desire, seemed to me child's play, ugly monotonous child's play.

On Saturday morning, I reminded my uncle that I wished to go to the bazaar in the evening. He was fussing at the hallstand, looking for the hatbrush, and answered me **curtly**:

—Yes, boy, I know.

As he was in the hall I could not go into the front parlor and lie at the window. I left the house in bad humor and walked slowly towards the school. The air was pitilessly raw and already my heart misgave me.

When I came home to dinner my uncle had not yet been home. Still it was early. I sat staring at the clock for some time and, when its ticking began to irritate me, I left the room. I mounted the staircase and gained the upper part of the house. The high cold empty gloomy

innumerable: too many to be numbered; many chafed: felt irritation and

impatience

curtly: in a brusque or rude manner

misgave: suggested doubt or fear

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⁴ retreat . . . convent: a period of seclusion to pray and meditate in a community run by nuns

⁵ Freemason: the Free and Accepted Masons, an international secret society

rooms liberated me and I went from room to room singing. From the front window I saw my companions playing below in the street. Their cries reached me weakened and indistinct and, leaning my forehead against the cool glass, I looked over at the dark house where she lived. I may have stood there for an hour, seeing nothing but the brown-clad figure cast by my imagination, touched discreetly by the lamplight at the curved neck, at the hand upon the railings and at the border below the dress.

When I came downstairs again I found Mrs. Mercer sitting at the fire. She was an old **garrulous** woman, a pawn-broker's widow, who collected used stamps for some pious purpose. I had to endure the gossip of the tea-table. The meal was prolonged by an hour and still my uncle did not come. Mrs. Mercer stood up to go: she was sorry she couldn't wait any longer, but it was after eight o'clock and she did not like to be out late, as the night air was bad for her. When she had gone I began to walk up and down the room, clenching my fists. My aunt said:

—I'm afraid you may put off your bazaar for this night of Our Lord.

At nine o'clock I heard my uncle's latchkey in the hall door. I heard him talking to himself and heard the hallstand rocking when it had received the weight of his overcoat. I could interpret these signs. When he was midway through his dinner I asked him to give me the money to go to the bazaar. He had forgotten.

—The people are in bed and after their first sleep now, he said.

I did not smile. My aunt said to him energetically:

—Can't you give him the money and let him go? You've kept him late enough as it is.

My uncle said he was very sorry he had forgotten. He said he believed in the old saying: *All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.* He asked me where I was going and when I had told him a second time he asked me did I know *The Arab's Farewell to His Steed.* When I left the kitchen he was about to recite the opening lines of the piece to my aunt.

I held a florin tightly in my hand as I strode down Buckingham Street towards the station. The sight of the streets thronged with buyers and glaring with gas recalled to me the purpose of my journey. I took my seat in a third-class carriage of a deserted train. garrulous: talkative

The Modern Era "Araby" **843**

After an intolerable delay the train moved out of the station slowly. It crept onward among ruinous houses and over the twinkling river. At Westland Row Station a crowd of people pressed to the carriage doors; but the porters moved them back, saying that it was a special train for the bazaar. I remained alone in the bare carriage. In a few minutes the train drew up beside an improvised wooden platform. I passed out on to the road and saw by the lighted dial of a clock that it was ten minutes to ten. In front of me was a large building which displayed the magical name.

I could not find any sixpenny entrance and, fearing that the bazaar would be closed, I passed in quickly through a turnstile, handing a shilling to a weary-looking man. I found myself in a big hall girdled at half its height by a gallery. Nearly all the stalls were closed and the greater part of the hall was in darkness. I recognized a silence like that which pervades a church after a service. I walked into the center of the bazaar timidly. A few people were gathered about the stalls which were still open. Before a curtain, over which the words *Café Chantant*⁶ were written in colored lamps, two men were counting money on a salver. I listened to the fall of the coins.

Remembering with difficulty why I had come I went over to one of the stalls and examined porcelain vases and flowered tea-sets. At the door of the stall a young lady was talking and laughing with two gentlemen. I remarked their English accents and listened vaguely to their conversation.

- —O, I never said such a thing!
- —O, but you did!
- —O, but I didn't!
- —Didn't she say that?
- —Yes, I heard her.
- —O, there's a . . . fib!

Observing me the young lady came over and asked me did I wish to buy anything. The tone of her voice was not encouraging; she seemed to have spoken to me out of a sense of duty. I looked humbly at the great jars that stood like eastern guards at either side of the dark entrance to the stall and murmured:

—No, thank you.

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⁶ Café Chantant: a café that provides musical entertainment

⁷ salver: a tray, usually used for serving food and beverages

The young lady changed the position of one of the vases and went back to the two young men. They began to talk of the same subject. Once or twice the young lady glanced at me over her shoulder.

I lingered before her stall, though I knew my stay was useless, to make my interest in her wares seem the more real. Then I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket. I heard a voice call from one end of the gallery that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark.

Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and **derided** by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.

derided: made fun of

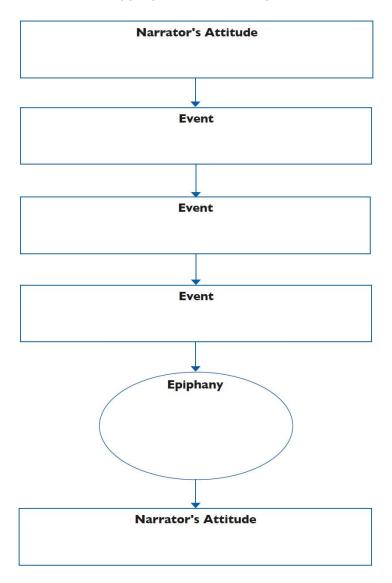


The Modern Era "Araby" **845**

After You Read "Araby"

Literary Lens: Epiphany

In "Araby," the young narrator describes an event in his life in which infatuation turns to disillusionment. Use the chart below to analyze the development of the main character and the events that lead him to an epiphany at the end of the story.



Explore Context: Life in Dublin

Although Joyce moved away from Ireland as an adult, his birth country never left his mind. In fact, all of his short stories and novels are set in Dublin. Joyce succeeded not only in embracing his homeland's culture but also in re-creating that culture in stories to which the entire world could relate. Go back through the story and find at least three details about life in Dublin at the turn of the twentieth century. Then do research to find out more about Dublin's housing, jobs, educational system, and overall class structure at this time. Share your findings in a short essay.

Apply and Create: Visual Epiphany

Read another of Joyce's short stories and describe the epiphany in a few short sentences. Use your creative and imaginative talents to create a visual work of art representing this epiphany.

Read Critically

Reread this passage from the story and answer the questions that follow.

Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance. On Saturday evenings when my aunt went marketing I had to go to carry some of the parcels. We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of laborers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs' cheeks, the nasal chanting of street-singers, who sang a come-all-you about O'Donovan Rossa, or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes. Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom. I thought little of the future. I did not know whether I would ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires.

 Evaluate the narrator's description in this passage. Do his emotions seem realistic? Explain your answer.



- 2. Recall that similes are figures of speech in which two things are compared using the words *like* or *as*. Identify the two similes in the last sentence. What do they reveal about the relationship between the boy and Mangan's sister?
- 3. Joyce uses religious references throughout this passage. Why do you think he chose to do this, and how do they relate to his use of epiphany?

Before You Read "A Cup of Tea"



KATHERINE MANSFIELD (1888–1923) is considered one of the best short story writers of the modern era. Like other writers of her time, she was intrigued by human psychology and set about to portray the mixed bag of motivations behind human actions. Born in New Zealand, she showed early talent, publishing her first story at the age of nine. At college in London, she became acquainted with other modernist writers of the day, including D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf. She collaborated on various literary journals with critic John Middleton Murry, eventually marrying him. Suffering from tuberculosis for many years, Mansfield sought various treatments throughout Europe, always persisting with her writing. Though she

died at the early age of thirty-four her output was prodigious. Murry published two volumes of Mansfield's short stories, a book of her poems, and a collection of her critical essays after her death.

Literary Lens

PLOT The plot, or order of events in a work, usually contains the following stages:

Exposition—Setting, characters, and conflicts are introduced.

Rising Action—Conflicts become more intense.

Climax—Often called the turning point, this is when events reach their peak of intensity.

Falling Action—Events after the climax lead toward a resolution.

Resolution—Conflicts are resolved or left unresolved.

THIRD-PERSON UM ITED POINT OF VIEW Mansfield wrote "A Cup of Tea" in the third-person limited point of view. The narrator is an outside persona who sees into the mind of the main character, revealing her deepest feelings and motivations. All plot events are described in relation to that one character's perspective.

Mansfield's Language

Mansfield was influenced by Russian author Anton Chekhov, who portrayed his characters with an equally compassionate and critical tone. Mansfield developed a similar approach by using what is often called the "slice of life" stylistic technique. Her stories often capture only a few hours in the lives of her characters, during which a minor event occurs that reveals the essential personality traits of the story's protagonist, or central character. Mansfield was particularly adept at portraying the inner lives of women and children.

Think Critically

Before you read the story that follows, use critical thinking to deepen your understanding.

- 1. Think about the title of the story. What do you already know about the British habit of teatime that might help you understand this "slice of life" story?
- 2. Skim the pages of the story, and notice Mansfield's frequent use of ellipses (...) and dashes. What purpose might they serve?



A Cup of Tea

Katherine Mansfield

Rosemary Fell was not exactly beautiful. No, you couldn't have called her beautiful. Pretty? Well, if you took her to pieces . . . But why be so cruel as to take anyone to pieces? She was young, brilliant, extremely modern, exquisitely well dressed, amazingly well read in the newest of the new books, and her parties were the most delicious mixture of the really important people and . . . artists—quaint creatures, discoveries of hers, some of them too terrifying for words, but others quite presentable and amusing.

Rosemary had been married two years. She had a duck¹ of a boy. No, not Peter—Michael. And her husband absolutely adored her. They were rich, really rich, not just comfortably well off, which is **odious** and stuffy and sounds like one's grandparents. But if Rosemary wanted to shop she would go to Paris as you and I would go to Bond Street.² If she wanted to buy flowers, the car pulled up at that perfect shop in Regent Street, and Rosemary inside the shop just gazed in her dazzled, rather exotic way, and said: "I want those and those and those. Give me four bunches of those. And that iar of roses. Yes, I'll have all the roses in the jar. No, no lilac. I hate lilac. It's got no shape." The attendant bowed and put the lilac out of sight, as though this was only too true; lilac was dreadfully shapeless. "Give me those stumpy little tulips. Those red and white ones." And she was followed to the car by a thin shopgirl staggering under an immense white paper armful that looked like a baby in long clothes. . . .

odious: hateful

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I duck: British expression meaning a darling person or thing

² Bond Street: famous street in London with many fashionable shops

One winter afternoon she had been buying something in a little antique shop in Curzon Street. It was a shop she liked. For one thing, one usually had it to oneself. And then the man who kept it was ridiculously fond of serving her. He beamed whenever she came in. He clasped his hands; he was so gratified he could scarcely speak. Flattery, of course. All the same, there was something . . .

"You see, madam," he would explain in his low respectful tones, "I love my things. I would rather not part with them than sell them to someone who does not appreciate them, who has not that fine feeling which is so rare. . . . " And, breathing deeply, he unrolled a tiny square of blue velvet and pressed it on the glass counter with his pale fingertips.

Today it was a little box. He had been keeping it for her. He had shown it to nobody as yet. An exquisite little enamel box with a glaze so fine it looked as though it had been baked in cream. On the lid a **minute** creature stood under a flowery tree, and a more minute creature still had her arms round his neck. Her hat, really no bigger than a geranium petal, hung from a branch; it had green ribbons. And there was a pink cloud like a watchful cherub floating above their heads. Rosemary took her hands out of her long gloves. She always took off her gloves to examine such things. Yes, she liked it very much. She loved it; it was a great duck. She must have it. And, turning the creamy box, opening and shutting it, she couldn't help noticing how charming her hands were against the blue velvet. The shopman, in some dim cavern of his mind, may have dared to think so too. For he took a pencil, leant over the counter, and his pale bloodless fingers crept timidly towards those rosy, flashing ones, as he murmured gently: "If I may venture to point out to madam, the flowers on the little lady's bodice."3

"Charming!" Rosemary admired the flowers. But what was the price? For a moment the shopman did not seem to hear. Then a murmur reached her. "Twenty-eight guineas, madame."

"Twenty-eight guineas." Rosemary gave no sign. She laid the little box down; she buttoned her gloves again. Twenty-eight guineas. Even if one is rich . . . She looked vague. She stared at a plump teakettle like a plump hen above the shopman's head, and her voice was dreamy as she answered: "Well, keep it for me—will you? I'll . . ."

exquisite: very fine and beautiful

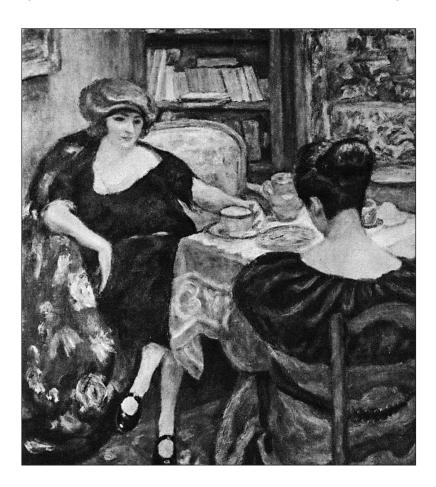
minute: very small

3 **bodice:** part of a woman's dress above the waist

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But the shopman had already bowed as though keeping it for her was all any human being could ask. He would be willing, of course, to keep it for her forever.

The discreet door shut with a click. She was outside on the step, gazing at the winter afternoon. Rain was falling, and with the rain it seemed the dark came too, spinning down like ashes. There was a cold bitter taste in the air, and the new-lighted lamps looked sad. Sad were the lights in the houses opposite. Dimly they burned as if regretting something. And people hurried by, hidden under their hateful umbrellas. Rosemary felt a strange pang. She pressed her muff against her breast; she wished she had the little box, too, to cling to.



The Modern Era "A Cup of Tea" **85 I**

Of course the car was there. She'd only to cross the pavement. But still she waited. There are moments, horrible moments in life, when one emerges from shelter and looks out, and it's awful. One oughtn't to give way to them. One ought to go home and have an extra-special tea. But at the very instant of thinking that, a young girl, thin, dark, shadowy—where had she come from?—was standing at Rosemary's elbow and a voice like a sigh, almost like a sob, breathed: "Madame, may I speak to you a moment?"

"Speak to me?" Rosemary turned. She saw a little battered creature with enormous eyes, someone quite young, no older than herself, who clutched at her coat-collar with reddened hands, and shivered as though she had just come out of the water.

"M-madam," stammered the voice. "Would you let me have the price of a cup of tea?"

"A cup of tea?" There was something simple, sincere in that voice; it wasn't in the least the voice of a beggar. "Then have you no money at all?" asked Rosemary.

"None, madam," came the answer.

"How extraordinary!" Rosemary peered through the dusk, and the girl gazed back at her. How more than extraordinary! And suddenly it seemed to Rosemary such an adventure. It was like something out of a novel by Dostoevsky,⁴ this meeting in the dusk. Supposing she took the girl home? Supposing she did do one of those things she was always reading about or seeing on the stage, what would happen? It would be thrilling. And she heard herself saying afterwards to the amazement of her friends: "I simply took her home with me," as she stepped forward and said to that dim person beside her: "Come home to tea with me."

The girl drew back startled. She even stopped shivering for a moment. Rosemary put out a hand and touched her arm. "I mean it," she said, smiling. And she felt how simple and kind her smile was. "Why won't you? Do. Come home with me now in my car and have tea."

"You—you don't mean it, madam," said the girl, and there was pain in her voice.

"But I do," cried Rosemary. "I want you to. To please me. Come along."

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⁴ **Dostoevsky:** Russian author whose stories show sympathy for the poor

The girl put her fingers to her lips and her eyes devoured Rosemary. "You're—you're not taking me to the police station?" she stammered.

"The police station!" Rosemary laughed out. "Why should I be so cruel? No, I only want to make you warm and to hear—anything you care to tell me."

Hungry people are easily led. The footman held the door of the car open, and a moment later they were skimming through the dusk.

"There!" said Rosemary. She had a feeling of triumph as she slipped her hand through the velvet strap. She could have said, "Now I've got you," as she gazed at the little captive she had netted. But of course she meant it kindly. Oh, more than kindly. She was going to prove to this girl that—wonderful things did happen in life, that—fairy godmothers were real, that—rich people had hearts, and that women were sisters. She turned **impulsively**, saying: "Don't be frightened. After all, why shouldn't you come back with me? We're both women. If I'm the more fortunate, you ought to expect . . ."

impulsively: without thought; spontaneously

But happily at that moment, for she didn't know how the sentence was going to end, the car stopped. The bell was rung, the door opened, and with a charming, protecting, almost embracing movement, Rosemary drew the other into the hall. Warmth, softness, light, a sweet scent, all those things so familiar to her she never even thought about them, she watched that other receive. It was fascinating. She was like the rich little girl in her nursery with all the cupboards to open, all the boxes to unpack.

"Come, come upstairs," said Rosemary, longing to begin to be generous. "Come up to my room." And, besides, she wanted to spare this poor little thing from being stared at by the servants; she decided as they mounted the stairs she would not even ring to Jeanne, but take off her things by herself. The great things were to be natural!

And "There!" cried Rosemary again, as they reached her beautiful big bedroom with the curtains drawn, the fire leaping on her wonderful lacquer furniture, her gold cushions and the primrose and blue rugs.

The girl stood just inside the door; she seemed dazed. But Rosemary didn't mind that.

"Come and sit down," she cried, dragging her big chair up to the fire, "in this comfy chair. Come and get warm. You look so dreadfully cold."

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"I daren't, madam," said the girl, and she edged backwards.

"Oh, please,"—Rosemary ran forward—"you mustn't be frightened, you mustn't, really. Sit down, and when I've taken off my things we shall go into the next room and have tea and be cozy. Why are you afraid?" And gently she half pushed the thin figure into its deep cradle.

But there was no answer. The girl stayed just as she had been put, with her hands by her sides and her mouth slightly open. To be quite sincere, she looked rather stupid. But Rosemary wouldn't acknowledge it. She leant over her, saying: "Won't you take off your hat? Your pretty hair is all wet. And one is so much more comfortable without a hat, isn't one?"

There was a whisper that sounded like "Very good, madam," and the crushed hat was taken off.

"Let me help you off with your coat, too," said Rosemary.

The girl stood up. But she held on to the chair with one hand and let Rosemary pull. It was quite an effort. The other scarcely helped her at all. She seemed to stagger like a child, and the thought came and went through Rosemary's mind, that if people wanted helping they must respond a little, just a little, otherwise it became very difficult indeed. And what was she to do with the coat now? She left it on the floor, and the hat too. She was just going to take a cigarette off the mantelpiece when the girl said quickly, but so lightly and strangely: "I'm very sorry, madam, but I'm going to faint. I shall go off, madam, if I don't have something."

"Good heavens, how thoughtless I am!" Rosemary rushed to the bell.

"Tea! Tea at once! And some brandy immediately!"

The maid was gone again, but the girl almost cried out. "No, I don't want no brandy. I never drink brandy. It's a cup of tea I want, madam." And she burst into tears.

It was a terrible and fascinating moment. Rosemary knelt beside her chair.

"Don't cry, poor little thing," she said. "Don't cry." And she gave the other her lace handkerchief. She really was touched beyond words. She put her arm round those thin, birdlike shoulders.

Now at last the other forgot to be shy, forgot everything except that they were both women, and gasped out: "I can't go on no longer

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like this. I can't bear it. I shall do away with myself. I can't bear no more."

"You shan't have to. I'll look after you. Don't cry any more. Don't you see what a good thing it was that you met me? We'll have tea and you'll tell me everything. And I shall arrange something. I promise. *Do* stop crying. It's so exhausting. Please!"

The other did stop just in time for Rosemary to get up before the tea came. She had the table placed between them. She **plied** the poor little creature with everything, all the sandwiches, all the bread and butter, and every time her cup was empty she filled it with tea, cream and sugar. People always said sugar was so nourishing. As for herself she didn't eat; she smoked and looked away tactfully so that the other should not be shy.

And really the effect of that slight meal was marvelous. When the tea-table was carried away a new being, a light, frail creature with tangled hair, dark lips, deep, lighted eyes, lay back in the big chair in a kind of sweet languor, looking at the blaze. Rosemary lit a fresh cigarette; it was time to begin.

"And when did you have your last meal?" she asked softly.

But at that moment the door-handle turned.

"Rosemary, may I come in?" It was Philip.

"Of course."

He came in. "Oh, I'm so sorry," he said, and stopped and stared.

"It's quite all right," said Rosemary, smiling. "This is my friend, Miss—"

"Smith, madam," said the languid figure, who was strangely still and unafraid.

"Smith," said Rosemary. "We are going to have a little talk."

"Oh, yes," said Philip. "Quite," and his eye caught sight of the coat and hat on the floor. He came over to the fire and turned his back to it. "It's a **beastly** afternoon," he said curiously, still looking at that **listless** figure, looking at its hands and boots, and then at Rosemary again.

"Yes, isn't it?" said Rosemary enthusiastically. "Vile."

Philip smiled his charming smile. "As a matter of fact," said he, "I wanted you to come into the library for a moment. Would you? Will Miss Smith excuse us?"

The big eyes were raised to him, but Rosemary answered for her:

plied: kept furnishing or supplying

beastly: awful; unpleasant listless: having a lack of energy or spirit

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"Of course she will." And they went out of the room together.

"I say," said Philip, when they were alone. "Explain. Who is she? What does it all mean?"

Rosemary, laughing, leaned against the door and said: "I picked her up in Curzon Street. Really. She's a real pick-up. She asked me for the price of a cup of tea, and I brought her home with me. "

"But what on earth are you going to do with her?" cried Philip.

"Be nice to her," said Rosemary quickly. "Be frightfully nice to her. Look after her. I don't know how. We haven't talked yet. But show her—treat her—make her feel—"

"My darling girl," said Philip, "you're quite mad, you know. It simply can't be done."

"I knew you'd say that," retorted Rosemary. "Why not? I want to. Isn't that a reason? And besides, one's always reading about these things. I decided—"

"But," said Philip slowly, and he cut the end of a cigar, "she's so astonishingly pretty."

"Pretty?" Rosemary was so surprised that she blushed. "Do you think so? I—I hadn't thought about it."

"Good Lord!" Philip struck a match. "She's absolutely lovely. Look again, my child. I was bowled over when I came into your room just now. However . . . I think you're making a ghastly mistake. Sorry, darling, if I'm crude and all that. But let me know if Miss Smith is going to dine with us in time for me to look up *The Milliner's Gazette*." ⁵

"You absurd creature!" said Rosemary, and she went out of the library, but not back to her bedroom. She went to her writing-room and sat down at her desk. Pretty! Absolutely lovely! Bowled over! Her heart beat like a heavy bell. Pretty! Lovely! She drew her checkbook towards her. But no, checks would be no use, of course. She opened a drawer and took out five pound notes, looked at them, put two back, and holding the three squeezed in her hand, she went back to her bedroom.

Half an hour later Philip was still in the library, when Rosemary came in.

"I only wanted to tell you," said she, and she leaned against the

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⁵ The Milliner's Gazette: a newspaper for milliners, or hat-makers, a common occupation for working-class women

door again and looked at him with her dazzled exotic gaze, "Miss Smith won't dine with us tonight."

Philip put down the paper. "Oh, what's happened? Previous engagement?"

Rosemary came over and sat down on his knee. "She insisted on going," said she, "so I gave the poor little thing a present of money. I couldn't keep her against her will, could I?" she added softly.

Rosemary had just done her hair, darkened her eyes a little and put on her pearls. She put up her hands and touched Philip's cheeks.

"Do you like me?" said she, and her tone, sweet, husky, troubled him.

"I like you awfully," he said, and he held her tighter. "Kiss me." There was a pause.

Then Rosemary said dreamily: "I saw a fascinating little box today. It cost twenty-eight guineas. May I have it?"

Philip jumped her on his knee. "You may, little wasteful one," said he.

But that was not really what Rosemary wanted to say.

"Philip," she whispered, and she pressed his head against her bosom, "am I pretty?"

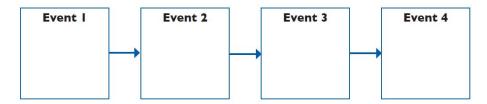


The Modern Era "A Cup of Tea" **857**

After You Read "A Cup of Tea"

Literary Lens: Structure

Record the plot sequence in a diagram similar to the one below, adding as many squares as are needed. In your opinion, which event acts as the climax, or turning point, of the story?



Explore Context: Class Consciousness

Many modernist writers were critical of the class distinctions that still dominated life in England during the early decades of the twentieth century. How is this revealed in "A Cup of Tea"? How do you think Mansfield wants the reader to feel about Rosemary? Write a brief essay responding to these questions.

Apply and Create: Story in Third-Person Limited Point of View

Although the narrator of "A Cup of Tea" is an unidentified voice outside the story, her opinions are quite apparent. Try your hand at writing a short story with a third-person limited point of view. Follow Mansfield's "slice of life" approach by focusing on a short period of time in the life of your main character. Using a contemporary setting, be sure to reveal through observation and commentary how the narrator feels about the main character and the events that occur.

Read Critically

Reread the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

"I only wanted to tell you," said she, and she leaned against the door again and looked at him with her dazzled exotic gaze, "Miss Smith won't dine with us tonight."

Philip put down the paper. "Oh, what's happened? Previous engagement?"

Rosemary came over and sat down on his knee. "She insisted on going," said she, "so I gave the poor little thing a present of money. I couldn't keep her against her will, could I?" she added softly.

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There was a pause.

Then Rosemary said dreamily: "I saw a fascinating little box today. It cost twenty-eight guineas. May I have it?"

Philip jumped her on his knee. "You may, little wasteful one," said he. But that was not really what Rosemary wanted to say.

"Philip," she whispered, and she pressed his head against her bosom, "am I pretty?"

- 1. Why do you think Mansfield leaves out the final scene between Rosemary and Miss Smith? Make an inference as to whether Miss Smith really insisted on leaving.
- 2. Based on this dialogue, evaluate the relationship between Rosemary and Philip. Cite details to support your response.
- 3. Using three to four adjectives, describe the character of Rosemary as revealed in her dialogue. Explain your choices.

Before You Read A Room of One's Own



VIRGINIA WOOLF (1882–1941) was a novelist and essayist whose writings made her name synonymous with modernism and feminism in the early twentieth century. As the daughter of cultured, upper middle-class parents, she had access to her father's vast library and was exposed to great artists and intellectuals who were friends of her parents. After her mother died, Virginia's father held fast to Victorian beliefs and sent only her brothers to school, which caused a great rift in their relationship. Despite this injustice, she became a well-read young woman. Woolf was a key member of the Bloomsbury group, a collection of writers, philosophers, and artists

who wanted to break from the ideas and practices of Victorian society. In her fiction, Woolf experimented freely with the conventions of storytelling, exploring the thoughts, memories, and sensations of her characters' minds through stream-of-consciousness style in the novels Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse. Woolf battled depression most of her life. She committed suicide by drowning in 1941.

Literary Lens



Essay An essay is a brief work of nonfiction that presents an opinion on a particular subject. An essay can have various purposes: to inform, to persuade, to entertain, and to express ideas and feelings. This essay was originally delivered as part of a series of lectures given by Woolf in 1928 at Newnham and Girton Colleges for women and was later published in the book, *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf's main purpose is to persuade her readers to share her views on the status of women writers in the history of literature.

Amsion An allusion is a reference to a person, place, event, or literary work with which the author assumes the reader is familiar. Though Woolf uses many allusions in this essay, the most prominent is that of William Shakespeare. Woolf uses our knowledge of Shakespeare's genius to advance the question: If Shakespeare had a sister with literary gifts equal to his, would she have become equally celebrated?

Woolf's Language

Unlike a formal essay, which examines a topic in a highly organized, serious manner, Woolf's essay is more informal. Though she argues quite vigorously about the plight of women writers through the ages, her language reveals her own personality, wit, and imagination.

Think Critically

Before you read the essay that follows, use critical thinking to deepen your understanding.

- 1. Predict the tone, or attitude, that Woolf will express toward her topic.
- 2. What situation in Woolf's own life might have contributed to her concerns about females and their ability to become writers?
- 3. Notice that the essay was written in 1928. Reread the events on the timeline for this era. In what ways might Woolf's essay reflect the era in which it was written?

from A Room of One's Own

Virginia Woolf

What I find deplorable, I continued, looking about the bookshelves again, is that nothing is known about women before the eighteenth century. I have no model in my mind to turn about this way and that. Here am I asking why women did not write poetry in the Elizabethan age, and I am not sure how they were educated; whether they were taught to write; whether they had sitting-rooms to themselves; how many women had children before they were twenty-one; what, in short, they did from eight in the morning till eight at night. They had no money evidently; according to Professor Trevelyan1 they were married whether they liked it or not before they were out of the nursery, at fifteen or sixteen very likely. It would have been extremely odd, even upon this showing, had one of them suddenly written the plays of Shakespeare, I concluded, and I thought of that old gentleman, who is dead now, but was a bishop, I think, who declared that it was impossible for any woman, past, present, or to come, to have the genius of Shakespeare. He wrote to the papers about it. He also told a lady who applied to him for information that cats do not as a matter of fact go to heaven, though they have, he added, souls of a sort. How much thinking those old gentlemen used to save one! How the borders of ignorance shrank back at their approach! Cats do not go to heaven. Women cannot write the plays of Shakespeare.

I Trevelyan: G. M. Trevelyan was a historian and author of History of England (1926).

Be that as it may, I could not help thinking, as I looked at the works of Shakespeare on the shelf, that the bishop was right at least in this; it would have been impossible, completely and entirely, for any woman to have written the plays of Shakespeare in the age of Shakespeare. Let me imagine, since facts are so hard to come by, what would have happened had Shakespeare had a wonderfully gifted sister, called Judith, let us say. Shakespeare himself went, very probably—his mother was an heiress—to the grammar school, where he may have learnt Latin—Ovid, Virgil and Horace²—and the elements of grammar and logic. He was, it is well known, a wild boy who **poached** rabbits, perhaps shot a deer, and had, rather sooner than he should have done, to marry a woman in the neighborhood,

poached: took game or fish illegally



2 Ovid, Virgil and Horace: classical Roman poets

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who bore him a child rather quicker than was right. That escapade sent him to seek his fortune in London. He had, it seemed, a taste for the theatre; he began by holding horses at the stage door. Very soon he got work in the theatre, became a successful actor, and lived at the hub of the universe, meeting everybody, knowing everybody, practicing his art on the boards, exercising his wits in the streets, and even getting access to the palace of the queen. Meanwhile his extraordinarily gifted sister, let us suppose, remained at home. She was as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world as he was. But she was not sent to school. She had no chance of learning grammar and logic, let alone of reading Horace and Virgil. She picked up a book now and then, one of her brother's perhaps, and read a few pages. But then her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers. They would have spoken sharply but kindly, for they were substantial people who knew the conditions of life for a woman and loved their daughter—indeed, more likely than not she was the apple of her father's eye. Perhaps she scribbled some pages up in an apple loft on the sly, but was careful to hide them or set fire to them. Soon, however, before she was out of her teens, she was to be betrothed to the son of a neighboring wool-stapler. She cried out that marriage was hateful to her, and for that she was severely beaten by her father. Then he ceased to scold her. He begged her instead not to hurt him, not to shame him in this matter of her marriage. He would give her a chain of beads or a fine petticoat, he said; and there were tears in his eyes. How could she disobey him? How could she break his heart? The force of her own gift alone drove her to it. She made up a small parcel of her belongings, let herself down by a rope one summer's night and took the road to London. She was not seventeen. The birds that sang in the hedge were not more musical than she was. She had the quickest fancy, a gift like her brother's, for the tune of words. Like him, she had a taste for the theatre. She stood at the stage door; she wanted to act, she said. Men laughed in her face. The manager—a fat, loose-lipped man-guffawed. He bellowed something about poodles dancing and women acting-no woman, he said, could possibly be an actress. He hinted—you can imagine what. She could get no training in her craft. Could she even seek her dinner in a tavern or roam the streets at midnight? Yet her genius was for fiction

agog: full of interest; eager

guffawed: laughed loudly or boisterously

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and lusted to feed abundantly upon the lives of men and women and the study of their ways. At last—for she was very young, oddly like Shakespeare the poet in her face, with the same grey eyes and rounded brows—at last Nick Greene the actor-manager took pity on her; she found herself with child by that gentleman and so-who shall measure the heat and violence of the poet's heart when caught and tangled in a woman's body?—killed herself one winter's night and lies buried at some cross-roads where the omnibuses now stop outside the Elephant and Castle.3

That, more or less, is how the story would run, I think, if a woman in Shakespeare's day had had Shakespeare's genius. But for my part, I agree with the deceased bishop, if such he was—it is unthinkable that any woman in Shakespeare's day should have had Shakespeare's genius. For genius like Shakespeare's is not born among laboring, uneducated, servile people. It was not born in England among the

Saxons and the Britons. It is not born today among the working

classes. How, then, could it have been born among women whose work began, according to Professor Trevelyan, almost before they

servile: befitting a servant or menial position

beguiling: diverting or whiling away

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were out of the nursery, who were forced to it by their parents and held to it by all the power of law and custom? Yet genius of a sort must have existed among women as it must have existed among the working classes. Now and again an Emily Brontë or a Robert Burns blazes out and proves its presence. But certainly it never got itself on to paper. When, however, one reads of a witch being ducked, of a woman possessed by devils, of a wise woman selling herbs, or even of a very remarkable man who had a mother, then I think we are on the track of a lost novelist, a suppressed poet, of some mute and inglorious Jane Austen, some Emily Brontë who dashed her brains out on the moor or mopped and mowed about the highways crazed with the torture that her gift had put her to. Indeed, I would venture to guess that Anon,4 who wrote so many poems without signing them, was often a woman. It was a woman Edward Fitzgerald, I think, suggested who made the ballads and the folk-songs, crooning them to her children, beguiling her spinning with them, or the length of the winter's night.

Elephant and Castle: Originally a London pub, by 1928 it was a stop for double-decker buses. Suicide victims were usually buried at crossroads.

Anon: abbreviation for Anonymous

This may be true or it may be false—who can say?—but what is true in it, so it seemed to me, reviewing the story of Shakespeare's sister as I had made it, is that any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked at. For it needs little skill in psychology to be sure that a highly gifted girl who had tried to use her gift for poetry would have been so thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts, that she must have lost her health and sanity to a certainty. No girl could have walked to London and stood at a stage door and forced her way into the presence of actor-managers without doing herself a violence and suffering an anguish which may have been irrational—for chastity may be a **fetish** invented by certain societies for unknown reasons—but were none the less inevitable. Chastity had then, it has even now, a religious importance in a woman's life, and has so wrapped itself round with nerves and instincts that to cut it free and bring it to the light of day demands courage of the rarest. To have lived a free life in London in the sixteenth century would have meant for a woman who was poet and playwright a nervous stress and dilemma which might well have killed her. Had she survived, whatever she had written would have been twisted and deformed, issuing from a strained and morbid imagination. And undoubtedly, I thought, looking at the shelf where there are no plays by women, her work would have gone unsigned. That refuge she would have sought certainly. It was the relic of the sense of chastity that dictated anonymity to women even so late as the nineteenth century. Currer Bell, George Eliot, George Sand,5 all the victims of inner strife as their writings prove, sought ineffectively to veil themselves by using the name of a man. Thus they did homage to the convention, which if not implanted by the other sex was liberally encouraged by them (the chief glory of a woman is not to be talked of, said Pericles, 6 himself a much-talked-of man), that publicity in women is detestable. Anonymity runs in their blood. The desire to be veiled still possesses them. They are not even now as concerned about the health of their fame as men are, and, speaking generally, will pass a

asunder: into parts

fetish: unhealthy fixation or attachment to something

homage: paid respect or honor to

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⁵ Currer Bell, George Eliot, George Sand: pen names for authors Charlotte Brontë, Mary Anne Evans, and Aurore Dupin

⁶ **Pericles:** influencial Greek statesman who led Athens from 461–429 B.C.

tombstone or a signpost without feeling an irresistible desire to cut their names on it, as Alf, Bert or Chas. must do in obedience to their instinct, which murmurs if it sees a fine woman go by, or even a dog, *Ce chien est à moi*. And, of course, it may not be a dog, I thought, remembering Parliament Square, the Sieges Allee⁸ and other avenues; it may be a piece of land or a man with curly black hair. It is one of the great advantages of being a woman that one can pass even a very fine negress without wishing to make an Englishwoman of her.

propitious: advantageous

That woman, then, who was born with a gift of poetry in the sixteenth century, was an unhappy woman, a woman at strife against herself. All the conditions of her life, all her own instincts, were hostile to the state of mind which is needed to set free whatever is in the brain. But what is the state of mind that is most **propitious** to the act of creation, I asked. Can one come by any notion of the state that furthers and makes possible that strange activity? Here I opened the volume containing the Tragedies of Shakespeare. What was Shakespeare's state of mind, for instance, when he wrote Lear and Antony and Cleopatra? It was certainly the state of mind most favorable to poetry that there has ever existed. But Shakespeare himself said nothing about it. We only know casually and by chance that he "never blotted a line." Nothing indeed was ever said by the artist himself about his state of mind until the eighteenth century perhaps. Rousseau perhaps began it. At any rate, by the nineteenth century self-consciousness had developed so far that it was the habit for men of letters to describe their minds in confessions and autobiographies. Their lives also were written, and their letters were printed after their deaths. Thus, though we do not know what Shakespeare went through when he wrote Lear, we do know what Carlyle went through when he wrote The French Revolution; what Flaubert went through when he wrote Madame Bovary; what Keats was going through when he tried to write poetry against the coming of death and the indifference of the world.

And one gathers from this enormous modern literature of confession and self-analysis that to write a work of genius is almost always a feat of prodigious difficulty. Everything is against the likelihood that it will come from the writer's mind whole and entire.

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⁷ Ce...moi: French for "this dog belongs to me"

⁸ Parliament Square, the Sieges Allee: parks in London and Berlin with statues of famous kings and statesmen

Generally material circumstances are against it. Dogs will bark; people will interrupt; money must be made; health will break down. Further, **accentuating** all these difficulties and making them harder to bear is the world's notorious indifference. It does not ask people to write poems and novels and histories; it does not need them. It does not care whether Flaubert finds the right word or whether Carlyle scrupulously verifies this or that fact. Naturally, it will not pay for what it does not want. And so the writer, Keats, Flaubert, Carlyle, suffers, especially in the creative years of youth, every form of distraction and discouragement. A curse, a cry of agony, rises from those books of analysis and confession. "Mighty poets in their misery dead"9—that is the burden of their song. If anything comes through in spite of all this, it is a miracle, and probably no book is born entire and uncrippled as it was conceived.

But for women, I thought, looking at the empty shelves, these difficulties were infinitely more formidable. In the first place, to have a room of her own, let alone a quiet room or a sound-proof room, was out of the question, unless her parents were exceptionally rich or very noble, even up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Since her pin money,10 which depended on the goodwill of her father, was only enough to keep her clothed, she was debarred from such alleviations as came even to Keats or Tennyson or Carlyle, all poor men, from a walking tour, a little journey to France, from the separate lodging which, even if it were miserable enough, sheltered them from the claims and tyrannies of their families. Such material difficulties were formidable; but much worse were the immaterial. The indifference of the world which Keats and Flaubert and other men of genius have found so hard to bear was in her case not indifference but hostility. The world did not say to her as it said to them, Write if you choose; it makes no difference to me. The world said with a guffaw, Write? What's the good of your writing? Here the psychologists of Newnham and Girton might come to our help, I thought, looking again at the blank spaces on the shelves. For surely it is time that the effect of discouragement upon the mind of the artist should be measured.

formidable: discouraging due to difficulties

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accentuating: emphasizing

^{9 &}quot;Mighty . . . dead": line from William Wordsworth's poem "Resolution and Independence"

¹⁰ pin money: small allowance given to a woman by her father or husband, originally used to buy pins or other incidental items

as I have seen a dairy company measure the effect of ordinary milk and Grade A milk upon the body of the rat. They set two rats in cages side by side, and of the two one was furtive, timid and small, and the other was glossy, bold and big. Now what food do we feed women as artists upon? I asked, remembering, I suppose, that dinner of prunes and custard. To answer that question I had only to open the evening paper and to read that Lord Birkenhead¹¹ is of opinion—

But really I am not going to trouble to copy out Lord Birkenhead's opinion upon the writing of women. What Dean Inge¹² says I will leave in peace. The Harley Street¹³ specialist may be allowed to rouse the echoes of Harley Street with his vociferations without raising a hair on my head. I will quote, however, Mr. Oscar Browning, 14 because Mr. Oscar Browning was a great figure in Cambridge at one time, and used to examine the students at Girton and Newnham. Mr. Oscar Browning was wont to declare "that the impression left on his mind, after looking over any set of examination papers, was that, irrespective of the marks he might give, the best woman was intellectually the inferior of the worst man." After saying that Mr. Browning went back to his rooms—and it is this sequel that endears him and makes him a human figure of some bulk and majesty—he went back to his rooms and found a stable-boy lying on the sofa—"a mere skeleton, his cheeks were cavernous and sallow, his teeth were black, and he did not appear to have the full use of his limbs. . . . 'That's Arthur' [said Mr. Browning]. 'He's a dear boy really and most high-minded." "The two pictures always seem to me to complete each other. And happily in this age of biography the two pictures often do complete each other, so that we are able to interpret the opinions of great men not only by what they say, but by what they do.

But though this is possible now, such opinions coming from the lips of important people must have been formidable enough even fifty years ago. Let us suppose that a father from the highest motives did not wish his daughter to leave home and become writer, painter or scholar. "See what Mr. Oscar Browning says," he would say; and there was not only Mr. Oscar Browning; there was the *Saturday Review*;

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¹¹ Lord Birkenhead: lord chancellor from 1919 to 1922

¹² Dean Inge: dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, London

¹³ Harley Street: street upon which many highly regarded medical practices were located

¹⁴ Mr. Oscar Browning: history lecturer at King's College, Cambridge

there was Mr. Greg¹⁵—the "essentials of a woman's being," said Mr. Greg emphatically, "are that they are supported by, and they minister to, men"—there was an enormous body of masculine opinion to the effect that nothing could be expected of women intellectually. Even if her father did not read out loud these opinions, any girl could read them for herself; and the reading, even in the nineteenth century, must have lowered her vitality, and told profoundly upon her work. There would always have been that assertion—you cannot do this, you are incapable of doing that—to protest against, to overcome. Probably for a novelist this germ is no longer of much effect; for there have been women novelists of merit. But for painters it must still have some sting in it; and for musicians, I imagine, is even now active and poisonous in the extreme. The woman composer stands where the actress stood in the time of Shakespeare. Nick Greene, I thought, remembering the story I had made about Shakespeare's sister, said that a woman acting put him in mind of a dog dancing. Johnson repeated the phrase two hundred years later of women preaching. And here, I said, opening a book about music, we have the very words used again in this year of grace, 1928, of women who try to write music. "Of Mlle. Germaine Tailleferre16 one can only repeat Dr. Johnson's dictum concerning a woman preacher, transposed into terms of music. 'Sir, a woman's composing is like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all.' " So accurately does history repeat itself. . .

¹⁵ Mr. Greg: W. H. Greg, a well-known journalist of the time

¹⁶ Mile. Germaine Tailleferre: prolific female composer in the 1920s whose work is virtually unknown

After You Read A Room of One's Own

Literary Lens: Allusion

In addition to her extended allusion to Shakespeare, Woolf alludes to many other writers and famous people of her day. Conduct research to learn more about the names shown below. Based on your findings, why do you think Woolf chose to include these particular allusions? Record your findings in a chart.

Allusion	Why Chosen by Woolf
Professor Trevelyan	
Ovid, Virgil, and Horace	
Edward Fitzgerald	
Currer Bell, George Eliot, George Sand	
Pericles	
Carlyle, Flaubert, Keats	

Explore Context: The Hogarth Press

In 1917, Woolf, along with her husband, Leonard, founded the Hogarth Press, a publishing company that they ran from their home. They published modernist works by Katherine Mansfield, T. S. Eliot, and Woolf herself. They also published the first edition of Sigmund Freud's work in English. Find out more about the Hogarth Press—its mission, how its publications were received by the public, and its role in shaping the future of English literature. Summarize your findings in a one-page essay.

Apply and Create: Essay on Women Writers

What would Woolf think of the current status of women writers? Write an informal essay in which you answer this question. Cite examples from contemporary culture to help support your position.

Read Critically

Reread the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

She was as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world as he was. But she was not sent to school. She had no chance of learning grammar and logic, let alone of reading Horace and Virgil. She picked up a book now and then, one of her brother's perhaps, and read a few pages. But then her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers. . . . Perhaps she scribbled some pages up in an apple loft on the sly, but was careful to hide them or set fire to them. Soon, however, before she was out of her teens, she was to be betrothed to the son of a neighboring wool-stapler. She cried out that marriage was hateful to her, and for that she was severely beaten by her

father. Then he ceased to scold her. He begged her instead not to hurt him, not to shame him in this matter of her marriage. . . . She made up a small parcel of her belongings, let herself down by a rope one summer's night and took the road to London. She was not seventeen. The birds that sang in the hedge were not more musical than she was. She had the quickest fancy, a gift like her brother's, for the tune of words. Like him, she had a taste for the theatre. She stood at the stage door; she wanted to act, she said. Men laughed in her face. . . . At last—for she was very young, oddly like Shakespeare the poet in her face, with the same grey eyes and rounded brows—at last Nick Greene the actor-manager took pity on her; she found herself with child by that gentleman and so—who shall measure the heat and violence of the poet's heart when caught and tangled in a woman's body?—killed herself one winter's night . . .

1. Based on this depiction, what basic facts about Shakespeare's sister's early life would have made it almost impossible for her to realize her creative ambitions?



2. What parallels do you see between Shakespeare's sister and Woolf's own life?

3. In your opinion, is Woolf's invention of Shakespeare's sister effective in proving her theory as to why there were so few women writers in the past?

Before You Read Selected Poetry of T. S. Eliot



T. S. Euot (1888–1965) was an American-born poet and critic who in many ways defined the poetry of the mid-twentieth century. As a graduate student at Oxford University, he found himself unable to return to the United States because of World War I. He married a British woman and, with the encouragement of fellow ex-patriot Ezra Pound, settled permanently in England, eventually becoming a British citizen. To support his family, Eliot worked as a teacher, a bank clerk, and then an editor, writing diligently all the while. His groundbreaking poetry collection, *Prufrock and Other Observations*, portrayed modern life as a corrupting and numbing force, one in which spiritual values

were often laid to waste. Admired by critics and poets alike, the book included the poem "Preludes," which gave rise to a new era in poetry. In his later years, Eliot moved away from his earlier focus on disillusionment and desolation and turned to more religious themes. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1948.

Literary Lens



FREE VERSE To focus the reader's attention on meaning rather than the sounds of words, Eliot uses free verse, a style that does not contain regular patterns of rhyme or rhythm. Many twentieth-century poets wrote in free verse.

Mood Recall that the term *mood* refers to the feeling or atmosphere that a writer creates for the reader. Imagery often plays a major role in establishing the mood of a poem. Often, the setting can also contribute to the mood of the piece.

Eliot's Language

In style as well as subject matter, Eliot broke away from the poetic conventions inherited from the Romantics and Victorians; he felt that they did nothing to capture the experience of modern life. Instead of elevated language, he used idioms, or natural expressions and rhythms of everyday speech. Instead of expressing concrete thoughts and feelings, he combined symbols, images, and allusions to echo the fragmented, alienated world of postwar Europe.

Think Critically

Before you read the poems that follow, use critical thinking to deepen your understanding.

1. Think about the titles of the two poems you are about to read: "Preludes" and "The Hollow Men." What images and associations come to mind? How might these ideas and associations play out in the poems themselves?



- 2. Based on what you have read about Eliot, what opinion might he have had about the poetry of Alfred, Lord Tennyson or Robert Browning? Would he have felt the same about the later Victorian poetry of Thomas Hardy?
- 3. Because of its complex combination of symbols, images, and allusions, Eliot's poetry can be challenging to read. What steps might you take to help interpret his work?



Preludes

T. S. Eliot

I

The winter evening settles down With smell of steaks in passageways. Six o'clock.

The burnt-out ends of smoky days. And now a gusty shower wraps
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about your feet And newspapers from vacant lots;

5

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The showers beat

On broken blinds and chimney-pots,
And at the corner of the street
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.
And then the lighting of the lamps.

П

The morning comes to consciousness

Of faint stale smells of beer
From the sawdust-trampled street
With all its muddy feet that press
To early coffee-stands.

masquerades: an action or appearance that is mere disguise or show

20

With the other **masquerades**That time resumes,
One thinks of all the hands
That are raising dingy shades
In a thousand furnished rooms.

Ш

sordid: vile; base

You tossed a blanket from the bed
You lay upon your back, and waited;
You dozed, and watched the night revealing
The thousand **sordid** images
Of which your soul was constituted;
They flickered against the ceiling.

And when all the world came back
And the light crept up between the shutters
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,
You had such a vision of the street
As the street hardly understands;

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35 Sitting along the bed's edge, where You curled the papers from your hair,¹ Or clasped the yellow soles of feet In the palms of both soiled hands.

IV

His soul stretched tight across the skies

That fade behind a city block,
Or trampled by insistent feet
At four and five and six o'clock;
And short square fingers stuffing pipes,
And evening newspapers, and eyes

Assured of certain certainties,
The conscience of a blackened street
Impatient to assume the world.

I am moved by fancies that are curled Around these images, and cling:
The notion of some infinitely gentle Infinitely suffering thing.

50

Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh; The worlds revolve like ancient women Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

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¹ curled ... hair: Women used to curl their hair by wrapping wet hair in strips of paper before going to bed.

Hollow Men

T. S. Eliot

Mistah Kurtz¹—he dead. A penny for the Old Guy²

I

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!

- Our dried voices, when
 We whisper together
 Are quiet and meaningless
 As wind in dry grass
 Or rats' feet over broken glass
- 10 In our dry cellar

Shape without form, shade without color, Paralyzed force, gesture without motion;

Those who have crossed
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom³

15 Remember us—if at all—not as lost
Violent souls, but only
As the hollow men
The stuffed men.

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I Mistah Kurtz: character from Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness who is corrupted by a desire for power over African natives

² A...Old Guy: greeting used by children to beg for money on Guy Fawkes Day; on the night of November 5, the British commemorate the capture of traitor Guy Fawkes with bonfires and fireworks and by burning a stuffed dummy representing Fawkes.

³ Those . . . Kingdom: allusion to Dante's Paradiso in which the main character describes being overcome when he directs his eyes toward God in heaven

II

Eyes I dare not meet in dreams
In death's dream kingdom
These do not appear:
There, the eyes are
Sunlight on a broken column
There, is a tree swinging

And voices areIn the wind's singingMore distant and more solemnThan a fading star.

Let me be no nearer

In death's dream kingdom

Let me also wear

Such deliberate disguises

Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves
In a field⁴

Behaving as the wind behaves

Not that final meeting In the twilight kingdom

No nearer—

Ш

This is the dead land

This is cactus land

Here the stone images

Are raised, here they receive

The **supplication** of a dead man's hand

Under the twinkle of a fading star.

supplication: prayer; asking God for something

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⁴ crossed ... field: scarecrows

Is it like this

In death's other kingdom
Waking alone
At the hour when we are
Trembling with tenderness

Lips that would kiss

From prayers to broken stone.

IV

The eyes are not here
There are no eyes here
In this valley of dying stars
In this hollow valley
This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms

In this last of meeting places
We grope together
And avoid speech
Gathered on this beach of the **tumid** river⁵

Sightless, unless
The eyes reappear
As the perpetual star
Multifoliate rose⁶
Of death's twilight kingdom
The hope only
Of empty men.



Here we go round the prickly pear Prickly pear prickly pear Here we go round the prickly pear At five o'clock in the morning.⁷

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tumid: swollen

55

60

70

⁵ river: In Dante's Inferno the dead are transported across the river Acheron to hell.

⁶ Multifoliate rose: rose with many leaves, a symbol of the Virgin Mary used by Dante in Paradiso

⁷ Here . . . morning: common British nursery rhyme; a prickly pear is a cactus.

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow

For Thine is the Kingdom⁸

Between the conception
And the creation

Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the Shadow

Life is very long

Between the desire

And the spasm
Between the **potency**And the existence
Between the essence
And the descent

Falls the Shadow

potency: power or force

For Thine is the Kingdom

For Thine is Life is For Thine is the

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.

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⁸ For ... Kingdom: last line of the Lord's Prayer

After You Read Selected Poetry of T. S. Eliot

Literary Lens: Mood

Create a chart like the one below to record particularly strong images from each poem. What overall mood is conveyed in each poem?

	"Preludes"		"The Hollow Men"	
Images		Images		
Mood		Mood		

Explore Context: Modernists and Symbolists

Several modernist poets were influenced by the French symbolists, a group of nineteenth-century poets who also broke with the traditions of their time and embraced emotional expression through the use of symbols and images. Conduct research to find out who the symbolists were and how their work influenced T. S. Eliot.

Apply and Create: Free Verse

As a proponent of free verse, Eliot influenced many poets who came after him. Working in a group, locate at least five examples of free verse poetry written after 1930. Consider how the free verse form supports the theme and the mood of each of the poems. As a group, compose a free verse poem with a theme you feel is relevant to your generation.

Read Critically

Reread the passage below from "Preludes" and answer the questions that follow.

The morning comes to consciousness

15 Of faint stale smells of beer
From the sawdust-trampled street
With all its muddy feet that press
To early coffee-stands.

With the other masquerades

- That time resumes,One thinks of all the handsThat are raising dingy shadesIn a thousand furnished rooms.
 - 1. Make inferences about the setting of the poem.
 - 2. Locate and explain two examples of personification Eliot uses in the poem. Why do you think Eliot chose to employ this technique?
 - 3. What images from the poem support the modernistic belief that people have become objects rather than individuals?

Before You Read "Musée des Beaux Arts"



W. H. AUDEN (1907–1973) was a prolific poet with the ability to write a classical ballad or a free verse poem with equal finesse. Wystan Hugh Auden was born in England but lived most of his adult life in the United States. The child of a doctor and a music lover, Auden intended to pursue a career in engineering. These plans changed when, as a fifteen-year-old, he began writing poetry. Auden continued to write while attending Oxford University. In 1930, T. S. Eliot published a collection of Auden's work, titled *Poems*, that established Auden as the voice of a new generation. Auden's early work reflects his Socialist views and an interest in Freudian

psychoanalysis. In 1939, Auden moved to the United States, where he taught and lectured at many colleges, including Harvard, Swarthmore, and the University of Michigan. Auden eventually became an American citizen. His later works reflect his reconfirmation of Christian theology. An avid traveler, much of Auden's poetry describes personal journeys or quests. He continues to be one of the most highly regarded poets of the twentieth century.

Literary Lens



SITUATIONAL IRONY In a literary work, situational irony is a contrast between what the reader expects to happen and what actually does happen. Auden often made use of situational irony to reveal the complex nature of life.

THEM E IN POETRY The theme of a work of literature is its central message or controlling idea. Because poetry typically suggests ideas rather than stating them, discovering the theme of a poem often requires the reader to "read between the lines," using imagery and tone as clues to a deeper meaning. As you read Auden's poetry, look for repeated images or extended metaphors to gain an understanding of his themes.

Auden's Language

Like T. S. Eliot, Auden often used free verse to echo the sound of everyday speech. Unlike Eliot, however, Auden's goal was to write in a simpler style that was more accessible to his readers. He avoided abstract symbolism and figurative language, instead allowing everyday emotions and experiences to reveal his ideas about life, love, politics, and the human condition. Perhaps because of his accessible style, Auden's poetry continues to have broad appeal with today's readers.

Think Critically

Before you read the poem that follows, use critical thinking to deepen your understanding.

 "Musée des Beaux Arts" was written in 1938 after Auden visited an art museum in Belgium. Considering what you just read about Auden's writing, make some predictions about the poem's subject, setting, and theme.



2. Although Auden was an admirer of T. S. Eliot's work, he was nineteen years younger than Eliot. Evaluate how each poet's age may have influenced his writing style?

Musée des Beaux Arts

W. H. Auden

About suffering they were never wrong, The Old Masters:² how well they understood Its human position; how it takes place

walking dully along;

torturer's horse

Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

reverently: with 5

martyrdom: suffering 10

Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating On a pond at the edge of the wood:
They never forgot
That even the dreadful **martyrdom** must run its course Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the

While someone else is eating or opening a window or just

How, when the aged are **reverently**, passionately waiting

For the miraculous birth, there always must be

oppression or death for a cause or one's religion

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I Musée des Beaux Arts: Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels that contains Brueghel's painting of Icarus

² Old Masters: famous European artists of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries

- In Brueghel's *Icarus*,³ for instance: how everything turns away

 Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
 Have heard the splash, the **forsaken** cry,
 But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
 As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
 Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen

 Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
 Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.
- **forsaken:** having been renounced or turned away from



Pieter Brueghel's Landscape with the Fall of Icarus (c. 1558)

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³ Brueghel's Icarus: reference to Pieter Brueghel's painting Landscape with the Fall of Icarus; in Greek mythology, Icarus flies too close to the sun, causing his wax wings to melt, and he falls into the sea.

After You Read "Musée des Beaux Arts"

Literary Lens: Situational Irony

Review the poem, looking for lines or phrases that make use of situational irony. Record them in a chart like the one below. Next to each quotation, explain what the reader expects and then what actually occurs in the example.

Situational Irony	Explanation

Explore Context: Modernism

Auden and other writers of his generation came of age during the 1930s, when the Great Depression, the Spanish Civil War, and Hitler's rise to power threatened the entire world order. In what way might this historical context be reflected in "Musée des Beaux Arts"? Write a paragraph in which you analyze the connection.

Apply and Create: An Interpretation of Theme

In this poem, what idea is Auden expressing about human nature? In groups of three or four, share your interpretations of the theme. Then create an electronic presentation in which the group reveals its opinion of whether the poem's theme still has relevance today. Include the painting Auden refers to in the poem in your presentation.

Read Critically

Reread the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

- In Brueghel's *Icarus*, for instance: how everything turns away
- 15 Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
 - Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
 - But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
 - As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
 - Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
- 20 Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky, Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.
 - Does the narrator seem sad or agitated, or neither? Describe the tone of this
 passage.
 - 2. In your opinion, is Auden's description of the painting an effective way to convey the idea of suffering and indifference? Support your opinion with clear reasons.
 - In describing Auden's style, a critic once said that reading his poetry was like "listening to the poet thinking aloud." Do you agree? Use details from the passage to support or refute this observation.

Before You Read Selected Poetry of Dylan Thomas



DYLAN THOM AS (1914–1953) was a Welsh poet whose work was based in the rich tradition of his country's language, landscape, and culture. He grew up in the industrial town of Swansea but spent his summers at his aunt's farm, which inspired him to eventually write his poem "Fern Hill." After dropping out of school at age sixteen, he became a newspaper reporter. A gifted young poet, his first volume of poems was published at age twenty. In the mid-1930s, Thomas moved to London to look for writing jobs. Often in debt, he performed dramatic readings in both Great Britain and America to support his family. Audiences were captivated by his beautiful speaking voice and

his charming stage presence. Despite his popularity, Dylan struggled with alcohol addiction. At the age of thirty-nine, while touring in the United States, he died of alcohol poisoning. Today, critics note that Thomas's work breaks with the style of other modernistic poetry. Its lyrical style and highly charged emotion is reminiscent of romantic poetry.

Literary Lens



HALFRHYM E (SLANTRHYM E) AND INTERNAL RHYM E Rhyme doesn't always rhyme perfectly, as in the case of a half rhyme, also called *slant rhyme*, in which the final consonants of stressed syllables agree but the vowel sounds do not match (curse/bless). Internal rhyme occurs within a line, as in "I should hear him fly with the high fields."

VILLANE UE "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" is a fine example of a villanelle, an intricate verse form consisting of five tercets, or three lines of verse, followed by a quatrain, or four lines of verse. The opening line also ends the second and fourth tercets. Originally from the French, the villanelle is admired for its simplicity and beauty.

Thomas's Language

An author's purpose is to inform, to persuade, or to entertain his readers. A poet tries to accomplish these purposes by using the barest necessity of well-chosen words. Dylan Thomas was a lyric poet who knew the value of a few powerful words. His poems are often very personal and emotion-packed, and his rich, musical language adds further dimension to them. "I wanted to write poetry . . . because I had fallen in love with words," Thomas once said. "What the words stood for, symbolized, or meant, was of very secondary importance. What mattered was the sound of them." Like the nineteenth-century poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, Thomas often experimented with language, inventing new words and combining images in unique ways.

Think Critically

Before you read the poems that follow, use critical thinking to deepen your understanding.

- I. Given that poets often use metaphors in their writing, what might Thomas mean by the word *night* in the title "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night"?
- Predict who the speaker in "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" might be addressing.



3. "Fern Hill" describes Thomas's aunt's farm in rural Wales, where he spent time as a boy. Think about a place you remember from your childhood. Evaluate the feelings this place evokes.

Do Not Go Gentle That Good Night

Dylan Thomas

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

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,

Because their words had forked no lightning they

Do not go gentle into that good night.

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

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

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

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

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15



Fern Hill Dylan Thomas

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs About the **lilting** house and happy as the grass was green, The night above the dingle¹ starry, Time let me hail and climb Golden in the heydays of his eyes, And honored among wagons I was prince of the apple towns And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves Trail with daisies and barley Down the rivers of the windfall light.

lilting: light and cheerful

I dingle: wooded valley

5

The Modern Era 887 "Fern Hill"

And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns
About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home,
In the sun that is young once only,
Time let me play and be
Golden in the mercy of his means,

And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and cold,

And the **sabbath** rang slowly In the pebbles of the holy streams.

sabbath: a day of rest observed by Jews and Christians 1.5

20

30

35

All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay
Fields high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was air
And playing, lovely and watery
And fire green as grass.

And nightly under the simple stars

As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away,

All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the nightjars² Flying with the ricks,³ and the horses Flashing into the dark.

And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white With the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder: it was all Shining, it was Adam and maiden,⁴

The sky gathered again

And the sun grew round that very day.

So it must have been after the birth of the simple light In the first, spinning place, the spellbound horses walking warm

Out of the whinnying green stable
On to the fields of praise.

2 **nightjars:** nocturnal birds with a shrill call

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³ ricks: haystacks

⁴ Adam and maiden: reference to the biblical story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden

And honored among foxes and pheasants by the gay house Under the new made clouds and happy as the heart was long, In the sun born over and over,

I ran my **heedless** ways,

My wishes raced through the house high hay

And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows

In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs

Before the children green and golden

Follow him out of **grace**.⁵

heedless: without thought or consideration

grace: state of sinless perfection

Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,

In the moon that is always rising, Nor that riding to sleep

I should hear him fly with the high fields

40

45

And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land. Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,

Time held me green and dying Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

The Modern Era "Fern Hill" 889

⁵ Follow ... grace: reference to Adam and Eve's sin and subsequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden

After You Read Selected Poetry of Dylan Thomas

Literary Lens: Half Rhyme and Internal Rhyme

Review the two poems, and then record examples of half, or slant, rhyme and internal rhyme on a chart like the one below. How does the sound of the poem communicate the mood and the meaning?

Examples of Half Rhyme (Slant Rhyme)	Effect on Sound and Meaning	ExamplesofInternal Rhyme	Effect on Sound and Meaning

Explore Context: The New Modernism

By the 1940s, modernism was no longer cutting-edge. Poets like Thomas felt less obliged to express their disillusionment with the world and instead focused on personal emotions. Create an imaginary dialogue between Thomas and T. S. Eliot in which they share their opinions of each other's work from different ends of the modernist spectrum.

Apply and Create: Villanelle

Write a villanelle using "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" as a model. Use the same number of lines and stanzas that Thomas uses, and follow the same rhyme scheme. Decide on a first and third line that will be repeated in the same pattern found in Thomas's poem. Perform your poem for the class.

Read Critically

Reread this excerpt from "Fern Hill" below and answer the questions that follow.

Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,

In the moon that is always rising,

Nor that riding to sleep

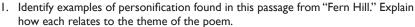
50 I should hear him fly with the high fields

And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.

Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,

Time held me green and dying

Though I sang in my chains like the sea.





2. Evaluate Thomas's attitude toward childhood based upon your own experiences.

Before You Read "A Shocking Accident"



GRAHAM GREENE (1904–1991) was born around the time modernism was first emerging. He was the fourth child in a family of six children. Like many writers, he revealed early talent, publishing a story in a local newspaper. After attending Oxford, Greene worked as an editor for *The Times* in London until his first novel was published. Lacking the praise—and the salary—he desired, he almost abandoned writing after his first few novels. However, in the 1930s he began to write what he called "entertainments": suspense novels such as *Orient Express* that appealed to a larger audience. The success of these works allowed him to write novels with deeper themes, such as *The*

Power and the Glory and The Heart of the Matter, which investigate human suffering and the search for salvation. In addition to novels and short stories, Greene wrote plays, screenplays, travel books, children's books, and two autobiographical works.

Literary Lens



Hum or In "A Shocking Accident," Greene presents a serious situation with undertones of humor. In literature, there are three basic types of humor: humor of situation, which involves exaggerated or absurd events; humor of character, which stems from the personalities of characters who often lack the ability to recognize their own flaws; and humor of language, which utilizes puns and other forms of wordplay.

PATHOS In literature, the term *pathos* refers to the quality of evoking sympathy, tenderness, pity, or sorrow in the reader. In "A Shocking Accident," Greene creates a delicate balance between humor and pathos.

Greene's Language

Graham benefited from the modernist writers' ability to focus on the psychological dimensions of characters. Even in a story like "A Shocking Accident," written in an uncomplicated, straightforward style, Greene exposes his main character's thoughts and internal conflicts through the use of an insightful third-person narrator.

Think Critically

Before you read the story that follows, use critical thinking to deepen your understanding.

I. Point out examples of the three types of humor in works you have encountered previously, such as The Canterbury Tales, Macbeth, The Rape of the Lock, and The Life of Samuel Johnson.



 Graham Greene's writing has sometimes been compared to D. H. Lawrence's. After skimming the first paragraphs, what similarities do you see between "A Shocking Accident" and "The Rocking-Horse Winner" (pages 820–835)?



A Shocking Accident Graham Greene

I

Jerome was called into his housemaster's room in the break between the second and the third class on a Thursday morning. He had no fear of trouble, for he was a warden—the name that the proprietor and headmaster of a rather expensive preparatory school had chosen to give to approved, reliable boys in the lower forms (from a warden one became a guardian and finally before leaving, it was hoped for Marlborough or Rugby, a crusader). The housemaster, Mr. Wordsworth, sat behind his desk with an appearance of **perplexity** and **apprehension**. Jerome had the odd impression when he entered that he was a cause of fear.

"Sit down, Jerome," Mr. Wordsworth said. "All going well with the trigonometry?"

perplexity: state of being puzzled or uncertain

apprehension: state of foreboding; dread

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"Yes, sir."
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"I've had a telephone call, Jerome. From your aunt. I'm afraid I have bad news for you."

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"Yes, sir?"
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"Your father has had an accident."

"Oh "

Mr. Wordsworth looked at him with some surprise. "A serious accident."

"Yes, sir?"

Jerome worshipped his father: the verb is exact. As man re-creates God, so Jerome re-created his father—from a restless widowed author into a mysterious adventurer who travelled in far places—Nice, Beirut, Majorca, even the Canaries.¹ The time had arrived about his eighth birthday when Jerome believed that his father either "ran gun" or was a member of the British Secret Service. Now it occurred to him that his father might have been wounded in "a hail of machine-gun bullets."

Mr. Wordsworth played with the ruler on his desk. He seemed at a loss how to continue. He said, "You knew your father was in Naples?"

```
"Yes, sir."
```

"Your aunt heard from the hospital today."

"Oh."

Mr. Wordsworth said with desperation, "It was a street accident."

"Yes, sir?" It seemed quite likely to Jerome that they would call it a street accident. The police, of course, had fired first; his father would not take human life except as a last resort.

"I'm afraid your father was very seriously hurt indeed."

"Oh."

"In fact, Jerome, he died yesterday. Quite without pain."

"Did they shoot him through the heart?"

"I beg your pardon. What did you say, Jerome?"

"Did they shoot him through the heart?"

"Nobody shot him, Jerome. A pig fell on him." An **inexplicable** convulsion took place in the nerves of Mr. Wordsworth's face; it really

inexplicable: unexplainable

The Modern Era "A Shocking Accident" **893**

I Canaries: islands located between the coasts of Spain and Africa

looked for a moment as though he were going to laugh. He closed his eyes, composed his features, and said rapidly, as though it were necessary to expel the story as rapidly as possible, "Your father was walking along a street in Naples when a pig fell on him. A shocking accident. Apparently in the poorer quarters of Naples they keep pigs on their balconies. This one was on the fifth floor. It had grown too fat. The balcony broke. The pig fell on your father."

Mr. Wordsworth left his desk rapidly and went to the window, turning his back on Jerome. He shook a little with emotion.

Jerome said, "What happened to the pig?"

II

callousness: lack of feeling or emotion

This was not **callousness** on the part of Jerome as it was interpreted by Mr. Wordsworth to his colleagues (he even discussed with them whether, perhaps, Jerome was not yet fitted to be a warden). Jerome was only attempting to visualize the strange scene and to get the details right. Nor was Jerome a boy who cried; he was a boy who brooded, and it never occurred to him at his preparatory school that the circumstances of his father's death were comic—they were still part of the mystery of life. It was later in his first term at his public school, when he told the story to his best friend, that he began to realize how it affected others. Naturally, after that disclosure he was known, rather unreasonably, as Pig.

Unfortunately his aunt had no sense of humor. There was an enlarged snapshot of his father on the piano: a large sad man in an unsuitable dark suit posed in Capri with an umbrella (to guard him against sunstroke), the Faraglioni rocks forming the background. By the age of sixteen Jerome was well aware that the portrait looked more like the author of *Sunshine and Shade* and *Rambles in the Balearics* than an agent of the Secret Service. All the same, he loved the memory of his father: he still possessed an album filled with picture-postcards (the stamps had been soaked off long ago for his other collection), and it pained him when his aunt embarked with strangers on the story of his father's death.

"A shocking accident," she would begin, and the stranger would compose his or her features into the correct shape for interest and

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commiseration. Both reactions, of course, were false, but it was terrible for Jerome to see how suddenly, midway in her rambling discourse, the interest would become genuine. "I can't think how such things can be allowed in a civilized country," his aunt would say. "I suppose one has to regard Italy as civilized. One is prepared for all kinds of things abroad, of course, and my brother was a great traveller. He always carried a water-filter with him. It was far less expensive, you know, than buying all those bottles of mineral water. My brother always said that his filter paid for his dinner wine. You can see from that what a careful man he was, but who could possibly have expected when he was walking along the Via Dottore Manuele Panucci on his way to the Hydrographic Museum that a pig would fall on him?" That was the moment when the interest became genuine.

Jerome's father had not been a very distinguished writer, but the time always seems to come, after an author's death, when somebody thinks it worth his while to write a letter to The Times Literary Supplement announcing the preparation of a biography and asking to see any letters or documents or receive anecdotes from friends of the dead man. Most of the biographies, of course, never appear—one wonders whether the whole thing may not be an obscure form of blackmail and whether many a potential writer of a biography or thesis finds the means in this way to finish his education at Kansas or Nottingham. Jerome, however, as a chartered accountant, lived far from the literary world. He did not realize how small the menace really was, nor that the danger period for someone of his father's **obscurity** had long passed. Sometimes he rehearsed the method of recounting his father's death so as to reduce the comic element to its smallest dimensions—it would be of no use to refuse information, for in that case the biographer would undoubtedly visit his aunt, who was living to a great old age with no sign of **flagging**.

It seemed to Jerome that there were two possible methods—the first led gently up to the accident, so well prepared that the death came really as an anticlimax. The chief danger of laughter in such a story was always surprise. When he rehearsed this method Jerome began boringly enough.

"You know Naples and those high tenement buildings? Somebody once told me that the Neapolitan always feels at home in New York just as the man from Turin feels at home in London because the ${\color{red} \textbf{commiseration:}}$

expression of sorrow or sympathy

obscurity: state of being unknown or not famous

flagging: weakening

The Modern Era "A Shocking Accident" **895**

river runs in much the same way in both cities. Where was I? Oh, yes, Naples, of course. You'd be surprised in the poorer quarters what things they keep on the balconies of those skyscraping tenements—not washing, you know, or bedding, but things like livestock, chickens or even pigs. Of course the pigs get no exercise whatever and fatten all the quicker." He could imagine how his hearer's eyes would have glazed by this time. "I've no idea, have you, how heavy a pig can be, but those old buildings are all badly in need of repair. A balcony on the fifth floor gave way under one of those pigs. It struck the third-floor balcony on its way down and sort of **ricocheted** into the street. My father was on the way to the Hydrographic Museum when the pig hit him. Coming from that height and that angle it broke his neck." This was really a masterly attempt to make an **intrinsically** interesting subject boring.

ricocheted: to bounce or skip with glancing rebound

intrinsically:

belonging to the essential nature or constitution of a thing brevity: brief

The other method Jerome rehearsed had the virtue of **brevity**.

"My father was killed by a pig."

"Really? In India?"

"No, in Italy."

"How interesting. I never realized there was pig-sticking² in Italy. Was your father keen on polo?"

In course of time, neither too early nor too late, rather as though, in his capacity as a chartered accountant, Jerome had studied the statistics and taken the average, he became engaged to be married: to a pleasant fresh-faced girl of twenty-five whose father was a doctor in Pinner. Her name was Sally, her favorite author was still Hugh Walpole,³ and she had adored babies ever since she had been given a doll at the age of five which moved its eyes and made water. Their relationship was contented rather than exciting, as became the love affair of a chartered accountant; it would never have done if it had interfered with the figures.

One thought worried Jerome, however. Now that within a year he might himself become a father, his love for the dead man increased; he realized what affection had gone into the picture-postcards. He felt a longing to protect his memory, and uncertain whether this quiet love of his would survive if Sally were so insensitive as to laugh

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² **pig-sticking:** sport of hunting wild boars with spears while riding horseback, usually practiced in Spain

³ Hugh Walpole: popular British novelist during the 1920s and 1930s

when she heard the story of his father's death. Inevitably she would hear it when Jerome brought her to dinner with his aunt. Several times he tried to tell her himself, as she was naturally anxious to know all she could that concerned him.

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"You were very small when your father died?"
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"You'll never drive fast, will you, Jemmy?" (She had begun to call him "Jemmy.") It was too late then to try the second method—the one he thought of as the pig-sticking one.

They were going to marry quietly at a registry-office and have their honeymoon at Torquay. He avoided taking her to see his aunt until a week before the wedding, but then the night came, and he could not have told himself whether his apprehension was more for his father's memory or the security of his own love.

The moment came all too soon. "Is that Jemmy's father?" Sally asked, picking up the portrait of the man with the umbrella.

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"Yes, dear. How did you guess?"
```

"I will give you a set for your wedding. He wrote so tenderly about his travels. My own favorite is *Nooks and Crannies*. He would have had a great future. It made that shocking accident all the worse."

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"Yes?"
```

How Jerome longed to leave the room and not see that loved face crinkle with irresistible amusement.

"I had so many letters from his readers after the pig fell on him." She had never been so abrupt before.

And then the miracle happened. Sally did not laugh. Sally sat with open eyes of horror while his aunt told her the story, and at the end, "How horrible," Sally said. "It makes you think, doesn't it? Happening like that. Out of a clear sky."

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[&]quot;Just nine."

[&]quot;Poor little boy," she said.

[&]quot;I was at school. They broke the news to me."

[&]quot;Did you take it very hard?"

[&]quot;I can't remember."

[&]quot;You never told me how it happened."

[&]quot;It was very sudden. A street accident."

[&]quot;He has Jemmy's eyes and brow, hasn't he?"

[&]quot;Has Jerome lent you his books?"

[&]quot;No."

Jerome's heart sang with joy. It was as though she had appeased his fear forever. In the taxi going home he kissed her with more passion than he had ever shown, and she returned it. There were babies in her pale blue pupils, babies that rolled their eyes and made water.

"A week today," Jerome said, and she squeezed his hand. "Penny for your thoughts, my darling."

"I was wondering," Sally said, "what happened to the poor pig?"

"They almost certainly had it for dinner," Jerome said happily and kissed the dear child again.

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After You Read "A Shocking Accident"

Literary Lens: Humor

Review the story and identify examples of humor of situation, humor of character, and humor of language, using a chart such as the one below. Which example did you find the funniest?

Humor of Situation	Humor of Character	Humor of Language



ExploreContext:Graham Greene and the Movies

With the advent of the film industry in the twentieth century, some fiction writers were skeptical about this new storytelling medium.

Others, like Graham Greene, were fascinated by it. Greene had a strong appreciation for the artistry of film directors and actors. Several of his books were made into movies. Find out more about Greene's work as a film reviewer and his involvement in the making of the film *The Third Man* (1949), starring Orson Welles as Harry Lime (picture left).

Apply and Create: Short Story

In a small group, brainstorm a list of characters from literature who evoke a feeling of pathos, including characters from your studies of British literature. Explain the situation each character faces. Then think of a news story over the past year that evoked a similar feeling. Assess whether this real-life incident would be good material on which to base an emotion-packed short story. Choose an incident and write a story with pathos.

Read Critically

Reread these lines from "A Shocking Accident." Answer the questions and support your answers with details from the passage and the rest of the story.

"I'm afraid your father was very seriously hurt indeed."

"Oh."

"In fact, Jerome, he died yesterday. Quite without pain."

"Did they shoot him through the heart?"

"I beg your pardon. What did you say, Jerome?"

"Did they shoot him through the heart?"

"Nobody shot him, Jerome. A pig fell on him." An inexplicable convulsion took place in the nerves of Mr. Wordsworth's face; it really looked for a moment as though he were going to laugh. He closed his eyes, composed his features, and said rapidly, as though it were necessary to expel the story as rapidly as possible, "Your father was walking along a street in Naples when a pig fell on him. A shocking accident. Apparently in the poorer quarters of Naples they keep pigs on their balconies. This one was on the fifth floor. It had grown too fat. The balcony broke. The pig fell on your father."

Mr. Wordsworth left his desk rapidly and went to the window, turning his back on Jerome. He shook a little with emotion.

Jerome said, "What happened to the pig?"

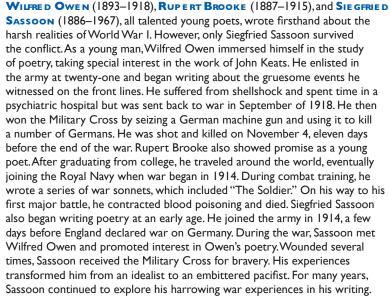


- 1. In your opinion, is the premise of this story believable?
- 2. How would you describe Jerome? Mr. Wordsworth?
- Explain how this passage shows evidence of Greene's balance between humor and pathos.

Before You Read "Dulce et Decorum Est," "The Soldier," and "Dreamers"



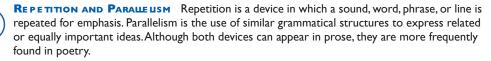






Literary Lens

TONE In a literary work, tone is the writer's attitude toward his or her subject. Sometimes tone is subtle; at other times, it becomes a prominent element in the work's theme.



Owen's, Brooke's, and Sassoon's Language

Owen and Sassoon share a similar style. Inspired to capture the realism of war, they both employ stark imagery that forces the reader to experience war's ravages on an emotional level. Brooke, on the other hand, paints a more idealistic view of a soldier's life. During the war, Brooke's "The Soldier" gained a patriotic following. Over the years, however, all three poets won admiration as eloquent voices of a generation lost to war.

Think Critically

Before you read the three poems that follow, use critical thinking to deepen your understanding.

- Owen showed an interest in the poetry of John Keats (pages 690–701). What does this suggest about the themes of his own poems?
- Based on what you read above and what you read in the unit opener, what attitude toward war might these poems convey?

Dulce et Decorum Est

Wilfred Owen

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks, Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge, Till on the haunting flares¹ we turned our backs And towards our distant rest began to trudge.

- Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
 But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
 Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
 Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines² that dropped behind.
- Gas! Gas! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling,

 Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;

 But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,

 And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime . . .

 Dim, through the misty panes³ and thick green light,

 As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.
- In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

I flares: rockets that were sent up to illuminate men and other targets between the front lines of fighting

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² Five-Nines: 5.9-caliber shells

³ misty panes: the glass in the eyepieces of the gas mask

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.4

obscene: disgusting to the senses; repulsive

zest: keen enjoyment; relish

ardent: impassioned; zealous for a cause



⁴ Dulce et decorum est Pro patria mori: Latin for "It is sweet and right to die for your country."

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The Soldier

Rupert Brooke

If I should die, think only this of me:

That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;

A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

10

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,

A pulse in the Eternal mind, no less

Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given,
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;

And laughter learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.



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Dreamers

Siegfried Sassoon

Soldiers are citizens of death's gray land,
Drawing no **dividend** from time's tomorrows.

In the great hour of **destiny** they stand,
Each with his feuds, and jealousies, and sorrows.

Soldiers are sworn to action; they must win
Some flaming, fatal climax with their lives.

Soldiers are dreamers; when the guns begin
They think of firelit homes, clean beds and wives.

5

10

dividend: a return on an investment destiny: a predetemined course of events often thought to hold power over one's life

I see them in foul dugouts, gnawed by rats,
And in the ruined trenches, lashed with rain,
Dreaming of things they did with balls and bats,
And mocked by hopeless longing to regain
Bank holidays, and picture shows, and spats,
And going to the office in the train.

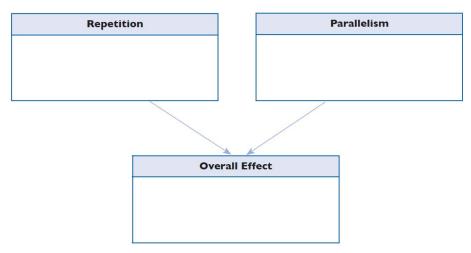
The Modern Era "Dreamers" 905

I spats: accessories that cover the top of the shoe and ankle, once worn for formal occasions

After You Read "Dulce et Decorum Est," "The Soldier," and "Dreamers"

Literary Lens: Repetition and Parallelism

All three poems contain repetition and parallelism. For each poem, create a chart like the one below and record the examples you find. What do repetition and parallelism add to the overall effect of the poems?



Explore Context: World War I

Idealism and nationalism inspired all three poets to enter the war, which most people thought would be over quickly. Instead, the conflict dragged on for four years, with horrific consequences. In your opinion, which poem most successfully captures the situation that the soldiers faced? Write a critique of the three poems in which you defend your choice.

Apply and Create: Images of War

The Web site www.warpoetry.co.uk contains poetry from World War I and from soldiers who fought in contemporary conflicts. Read some of the poetry and consider how the experience of war is both the same and different for the writers. Create an electronic presentation that combines images of war with appropriate lines from the poems you read in this book and on the Web site. Share your presentation with the class.

Read Critically

Reread these lines from "Dulce et Decorum Est." Answer the questions and support your answers with details from the passage and the rest of the poem.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,

His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—

My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.

- 1. How would you describe the tone of this passage? What images help create the tone?
- 2. Why does Owen call the phrase Dulce et decorum est Pro patria mori "the old Lie"?



3. How might you reconcile the theme of this poem and the fact that Owen was a decorated war hero?

Before You Read "Shooting an Elephant"



GEORGE ORWELL (1903–1950) was the pen name of novelist, essayist, and critic Eric Arthur Blair. Born in India where his father worked as a civil servant, he was sent to school in England. Lacking the money to attend college, nineteen-year-old Orwell returned to Southern Asia and joined the Imperial Police in Burma (now Myanmar), a country ruled by Britain at that time. This experience became the subject of a novel and of the essay you're about to read. Orwell's desire to devote himself to writing led him to move back to England, where he held various low-paying jobs that gave him experience as one of the working poor. In 1936, he fought against fascism in the Spanish Civil

War. By the time World War II erupted, Orwell was increasingly concerned about the threat of repressive governments—communist and fascist. Near the end of the war, he finished Animal Farm, a brilliant political allegory. This biting satire tells the story of farm animals who revolt and then find themselves under the hooves of dictatorial pigs. While suffering from tuberculosis in 1949, Orwell completed 1984, a masterwork indicting totalitarian injustice and repression.

Literary Elements

REFLECTIVE ESSAY A reflective essay is nonfiction writing in which the author connects his or her own personal experiences with an idea that has wide-reaching implications. In "Shooting an Elephant," Orwell reflects on his police work in Burma and the effects of British imperialism, the practice of colonizing other countries and using their natural resources as a way of supporting the mother country.



IRONY AND UNDERSTATEM ENT Irony can be defined as a device that shows a difference between appearance and reality. When a writer uses verbal irony, there is a difference between the words used to describe something and the reality of the situation. One form of irony is understatement. In literature, understatement is a way of emphasizing a quality by downplaying it. If you described World War II as "a little scuffle," you would be using verbal irony. Orwell's tone as he describes the situation around the event of shooting an elephant drips with verbal irony. In the end, the story also employs situational irony, or a difference between what the reader expects to happen and what actually occurs.

Orwell's Language

Like most reflective essays, Orwell's essay has a meditative quality that allows the reader to experience the author's thoughts and feelings. His style is informal as he re-creates a strange predicament and the bitter sentiments with which it left him.

Think Critically

Before you read the essay that follows, use critical thinking to deepen your understanding.

- 1. Based on Orwell's political and social views described in his biography, how do you think he will describe his role as a British police officer in Burma?
- 2. Reread the definition of a reflective essay on this page, and then recall Virginia Woolf's informal essay A Room of One's Own (pages 861–869). Predict some contrasts between the two pieces. What will Orwell's essay include that Woolf's essay did not?

Shooting an Elephant

George Orwell

Moulmein, in lower Burma, I was hated by large numbers of people—the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me. I was sub-divisional police officer of the town, and in an aimless, petty kind of way anti-European feeling was very bitter. No one had the guts to raise a riot, but if a European woman went through the bazaars alone somebody would probably spit betel juice¹ over her dress. As a police officer I was an obvious target and was baited whenever it seemed safe to do so.



betel juice: combination of leaves and nuts of the betel tree often chewed in South Asian countries

When a nimble Burman tripped me up on the football field and the referee (another Burman) looked the other way, the crowd yelled with hideous laughter. This happened more than once. In the end the sneering yellow faces of young men that met me everywhere, the insults hooted after me when I was at a safe distance, got badly on my nerves. The young Buddhist priests were the worst of all. There were several thousands of them in the town and none of them seemed to have anything to do except stand on street corners and jeer at Europeans.

cowed: subdued by intimidation

supplant: to take the place of

prostrate: completely overcome and lacking the power to rise

All this was perplexing and upsetting. For at that time I had already made up my mind that imperialism² was an evil thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better. Theoretically—and secretly, of course—I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British. As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear. In a job like that you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters. The wretched prisoners huddling in the stinking cages of the lock-ups, the grey, **cowed** faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been flogged with bamboos—all these oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt. But I could get nothing into perspective. I was young and ill-educated and I had had to think out my problems in the utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman in the East. I did not even know that the British Empire is dying, still less did I know that it is a great deal better than the younger empires that are going to **supplant** it. All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj³ as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, in saecula saeculorum, 4 upon the will of **prostrate** peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts. Feelings like these are the normal by-products of imperialism; ask any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off duty.

One day something happened which in a roundabout way was

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² imperialism: political policy of expanding an empire by colonizing other countries and then using the countries' natural resources to support the mother country; England's imperialism led to the conquests of both India and Burma.

³ Raj: rule

⁴ in saecula saeculorum: Latin for "forever and ever"

enlightening. It was a tiny incident in itself, but it gave me a better glimpse than I had had before of the real nature of imperialism—the real motives for which **despotic** governments act. Early one morning the sub-inspector at a police station the other end of the town rang me up on the phone and said that an elephant was ravaging the bazaar. Would I please come and do something about it? I did not know what I could do, but I wanted to see what was happening and I got on to a pony and started out. I took my rifle, an old 44 Winchester and much too small to kill an elephant, but I thought the noise might be useful in terrorem. Various Burmans stopped me on the way and told me about the elephant's doings. It was not, of course, a wild elephant, but a tame one which had gone "must."6 It had been chained up, as tame elephants always are when their attack of "must" is due, but on the previous night it had broken its chain and escaped. Its mahout, the only person who could manage it when it was in that state, had set out in pursuit, but had taken the wrong direction and was now twelve hours' journey away, and in the morning the elephant had suddenly reappeared in the town. The Burmese population had no weapons and were quite helpless against it. It had already destroyed somebody's bamboo hut, killed a cow and raided some fruit-stalls and devoured the stock; also it had met the municipal rubbish van and, when the driver jumped out and took to his heels, had turned the van over and inflicted violences upon it.

The Burmese sub-inspector and some Indian constables were waiting for me in the quarter where the elephant had been seen. It was a very poor quarter, a **labyrinth** of **squalid** bamboo huts, thatched with palmleaf, winding all over a steep hillside. I remember that it was a cloudy, stuffy morning at the beginning of the rains. We began questioning the people as to where the elephant had gone and, as usual, failed to get any definite information. That is invariably the case in the East; a story always sounds clear enough at a distance, but the nearer you get to the scene of events the vaguer it becomes. Some of the people said that the elephant had gone in one direction, some said that he had gone in another, some professed not even to have heard of any elephant. I had almost made up my mind that the

labyrinth: full of intricate passageways and blind alleys squalid: run-down and dirty due to poverty

The Modern Era "Shooting an Elephant" 911

enlightening: giving knowledge to

despotic: having absolute power or authority

⁵ in terrorem: Latin for "terror"

⁶ must: periodic condition in bull elephants, characterized by aggressive behavior

⁷ mahout: elephant handler

whole story was a pack of lies, when we heard yells a little distance away. There was a loud, scandalized cry of "Go away, child! Go away this instant!" and an old woman with a switch in her hand came round the corner of a hut, violently shooing away a crowd of naked children. Some more women followed, clicking their tongues and exclaiming; evidently there was something that the children ought not to have seen. I rounded the hut and saw a man's dead body sprawling in the mud. He was an Indian, a black Dravidian coolie,8 almost naked, and he could not have been dead many minutes. The people said that the elephant had come suddenly upon him round the corner of the hut, caught him with its trunk, put its foot on his back and ground him into the earth. This was the rainy season and the ground was soft, and his face had scored a trench a foot deep and a couple of yards long. He was lying on his belly with arms crucified and head sharply twisted to one side. His face was coated with mud, the eyes wide open, the teeth bared and grinning with an expression of unendurable agony. (Never tell me, by the way, that the dead look peaceful. Most of the corpses I have seen looked devilish.) The friction of the great beast's foot had stripped the skin from his back as neatly as one skins a rabbit. As soon as I saw the dead man I sent an orderly to a friend's house nearby to borrow an elephant rifle. I had already sent back the pony, not wanting it to go mad with fright and throw me if it smelt the elephant.

The orderly came back in a few minutes with a rifle and five cartridges, and meanwhile some Burmans had arrived and told us that the elephant was in the paddy fields below, only a few hundred yards away. As I started forward practically the whole population of the quarter flocked out of the houses and followed me. They had seen the rifle and were all shouting excitedly that I was going to shoot the elephant. They had not shown much interest in the elephant when he was merely ravaging their homes, but it was different now that he was going to be shot. It was a bit of fun to them, as it would be to an English crowd; besides they wanted the meat. It made me vaguely uneasy. I had no intention of shooting the elephant—I had merely sent for the rifle to defend myself if necessary—and it is always unnerving to have a crowd following you. I marched down the hill, looking and feeling a fool, with the rifle over my shoulder and an

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⁸ Dravidian coolie: unskilled laborer from southern India who speaks Dravidian

ever-growing army of people jostling at my heels. At the bottom, when you got away from the huts, there was a metalled road and beyond that a **miry** waste of paddy fields a thousand yards across, not yet ploughed but soggy from the first rains and dotted with coarse grass. The elephant was standing eight yards from the road, his left side towards us. He took not the slightest notice of the crowd's approach. He was tearing up bunches of grass, beating them against his knees to clean them and stuffing them into his mouth.

miry: wet and spongy

I had halted on the road. As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him. It is a serious matter to shoot a working elephant—it is comparable to destroying a huge and costly piece of machinery—and obviously one ought not to do it if it can possibly be avoided. And at that distance, peacefully eating, the elephant looked no more dangerous than a cow. I thought then and I think now that his attack of "must" was already passing off; in which case he would merely wander harmlessly about until the mahout came back and caught him. Moreover, I did not in the least want to shoot him. I decided that I would watch him for a little while to make sure that he did not turn savage again, and then go home.

garish: excessively vivid

But at that moment I glanced round at the crowd that had followed me. It was an immense crowd, two thousand at the least and growing every minute. It blocked the road for a long distance on either side. I looked at the sea of yellow faces above the **garish** clothes—faces all happy and excited over this bit of fun, all certain that the elephant was going to be shot. They were watching me as they would watch a conjurer about to perform a trick. They did not like me, but with the magical rifle in my hands I was momentarily worth watching. And suddenly I realized that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward, irresistibly. And it was at this moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East. Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd—seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom

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that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalized figure of a sahib. For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the "natives," and so in every crisis he has got to do what the "natives" expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. I had got to shoot the elephant. I had committed myself to doing it when I sent for the rifle. A sahib has got to act like a sahib; he has got to appear resolute, to know his own mind and do definite things. To come all that way, rifle in hand, with two thousand people marching at my heels, and then to trail feebly away, having done nothing—no, that was impossible. The crowd would laugh at me. And my whole life, every white man's life in the East, was one long struggle not to be laughed at.

But I did not want to shoot the elephant. I watched him beating his bunch of grass against his knees, with that preoccupied grandmotherly air that elephants have. It seemed to me that it would be murder to shoot him. At that age I was not squeamish about killing animals, but I had never shot an elephant and never wanted to. (Somehow it always seems worse to kill a large animal.) Besides, there was the beast's owner to be considered. Alive, the elephant was worth at least a hundred pounds; dead, he would only be worth the value of his tusks, five pounds, possibly. But I had got to act quickly. I turned to some experienced-looking Burmans who had been there when we arrived, and asked them how the elephant had been behaving. They all said the same thing: he took no notice of you if you left him alone, but he might charge if you went too close to him.

It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to within, say, twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behavior. If he charged, I could shoot; if he took no notice of me, it would be safe to leave him until the mahout came back. But also I knew that I was going to do no such thing. I was a poor shot with a rifle and the ground was soft mud into which one would sink at every step. If the elephant charged and I missed him, I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steam-roller. But even then I was not thinking particularly of my own skin, only of the watchful yellow faces behind. For at that moment, with the crowd watching me, I was not afraid in the ordinary sense, as I would have been if I had been

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⁹ sahib: Indian word for European gentleman

alone. A white man mustn't be frightened in front of "natives"; and so, in general, he isn't frightened. The sole thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmans would see me pursued, caught, trampled on and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do.

There was only one alternative. I shoved the cartridges into the magazine and lay down on the road to get a better aim. The crowd grew very still, and a deep, low, happy sigh, as of people who see the theatre curtain go up at last, breathed from innumerable throats. They were going to have their bit of fun after all. The rifle was a beautiful German thing with cross-hair sights. I did not then know that in shooting an elephant one would shoot to cut an imaginary bar running from ear-hole to ear-hole. I ought, therefore, as the elephant was sideways on, to have aimed straight at his ear-hole, actually I aimed several inches in front of this, thinking the brain would be further forward.

When I pulled the trigger I did not hear the bang or feel the kick—one never does when a shot goes home—but I heard the devilish roar of glee that went up from the crowd. In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralyzed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time—it might have been five seconds, I dare say—he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not collapse but climbed with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly upright, with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upward like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skyward like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly towards

senility: exhibiting a loss of mental ability, usually associated with old age

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me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay.

I got up. The Burmans were already racing past me across the mud. It was obvious that the elephant would never rise again, but he was not dead. He was breathing very rhythmically with long rattling gasps, his great mound of a side painfully rising and falling. His mouth was wide open—I could see far down into caverns of pale pink throat. I waited a long time for him to die, but his breathing did not weaken. Finally I fired my two remaining shots into the spot where I thought his heart must be. The thick blood welled out of him like red velvet, but still he did not die. His body did not even jerk when the shots hit him, the tortured breathing continued without a pause. He was dying, very slowly and in great agony, but in some world remote from me where not even a bullet could damage him further. I felt that I had got to put an end to that dreadful noise. It seemed dreadful to see the great beast lying there, powerless to move and yet powerless to die, and not even to be able to finish him. I sent back for my small rifle and poured shot after shot into his heart and down his throat. They seemed to make no impression. The tortured gasps continued as steadily as the ticking of a clock.

In the end I could not stand it any longer and went away. I heard later that it took him half an hour to die. Burmans were bringing dahs¹⁰ and baskets even before I left, and I was told they had stripped his body almost to the bones by the afternoon.

Afterwards, of course, there were endless discussions about the shooting of the elephant. The owner was furious, but he was only an Indian and could do nothing. Besides, legally I had done the right thing, for a mad elephant has to be killed, like a mad dog, if its owner fails to control it. Among the Europeans opinion was divided. The older men said I was right, the younger men said it was a damn shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie, because an elephant was worth more than any damn Coringhee¹¹ coolie. And afterwards I was very glad that the coolie had been killed; it put me legally in the right and it gave me a sufficient pretext for shooting the elephant. I often wondered whether any of the others grasped that I had done it solely to avoid looking a fool.

10 dahs: knives

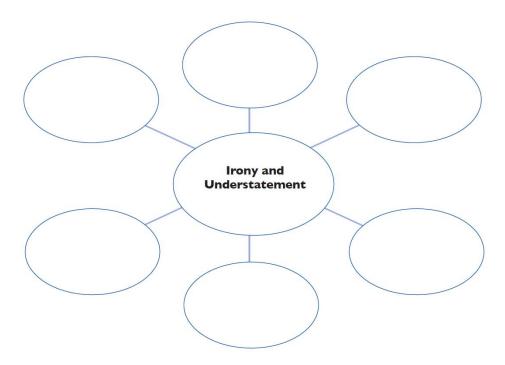
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¹¹ Coringhee: Southern Indian

After You Read "Shooting an Elephant"

Literary Lens: Verbal Irony and Understatement

Create a web diagram like the one below in which you record examples of Orwell's use of verbal irony and understatement. Put a star next to the example that, in your opinion, is the most successful at communicating Orwell's tone and theme. Compare your choice with those of other students.



Explore Context: Colonialism and Its Aftermath

The colonial period in Burma didn't end until 1948, about twenty years after Orwell quit his job there. Conduct research to find out what happened in the intervening decades: the country's independence movement, how it was affected by World War II, and how it was finally granted independence. Summarize your findings in writing.

Apply and Create: Reflective Essay

Write your own reflective essay. Describe a personal experience that had wide-reaching implications on your view of life. Consider describing an event that altered your perspective about love, friendship, truth, or justice. Make sure that your essay reflects your own voice and personal attitude toward the experience.

Read Critically

Reread these lines from "Shooting an Elephant." Answer the questions and support your answers with details from the passage and the rest of the essay.

. . . If the elephant charged and I missed him, I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steam-roller. But even then I was not thinking particularly of my own skin, only of the watchful yellow faces behind. For at that moment, with the crowd watching me, I was not afraid in the ordinary sense, as I would have been if I had been alone. A white man mustn't be frightened in front of "natives"; and so, in general, he isn't frightened. The sole thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmans would see me pursued, caught, trampled on and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do.

There was only one alternative. I shoved the cartridges into the magazine and lay down on the road to get a better aim.



- I. Evaluate Orwell's reasons for shooting the elephant.
- 2. What aspects of human nature do Orwell's reactions to the crowd reveal?
- 3. What aspects of human nature does the crowd's behavior reveal?

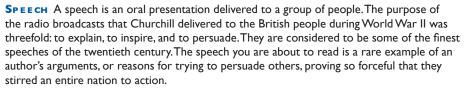
Before You Read "Be Ye Men of Valor" (May 19, 1940)

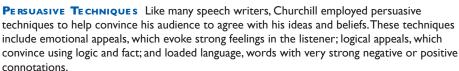


WINSTON CHURCHILL (1874–1965), the prime minister of England during most of World War II, had a long career of service to his country. He joined the army as a young man, serving as both an officer and correspondent. By 1900, he had entered politics, holding a number of government positions over a forty-year period. In 1940, a few days after Churchill was elected prime minister, Hitler's army invaded Holland and Belgium. To Churchill, the threat to England was clear. With boldness and determination, he led the British people through this dark chapter in their history. Today he is admired as one of the great leaders of the twentieth century. In addition to being a

statesman, Churchill produced volumes of historical writing over the course of his career. Among his work is the six-part Second World War and his four-book History of the British-Speaking People. In 1953, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Literary Lens





Churchill's Language

In his national broadcasts, Churchill combined straightforward, no-nonsense information with persuasive techniques that appealed to his audience's sense of patriotism. His speeches are credited with buoying the spirit of the British people to continue fighting and not give up. Though the speeches were intended to be heard, they deliver a powerful message in their written form as well.

Think Critically

Before you read, use critical thinking to deepen your understanding.

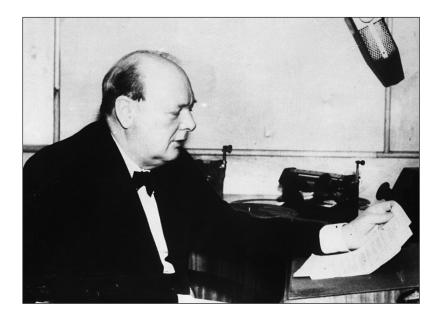
- 1. Churchill had been prime minister for only a few days when he gave this speech. Based on this fact, how might the British public have reacted to his ideas?
- 2. Given the dire situation of his nation during the time of this speech, do you anticipate Churchill's attitude will be compassionate, severe, or reassuring? What other approaches might have been effective?

Be Ye Men of Valor

(May 19, 1940)

Winston Churchill

"I speak to you for the first time as Prime Minister in a solemn hour for the life of our country, of our empire, of our allies, and, above all, of the cause of Freedom. A tremendous battle is raging in France and Flanders.¹ The Germans, by a remarkable combination of air bombing and heavily armored tanks, have broken through the French defenses north of the Maginot Line,² and strong columns of their armored vehicles are ravaging the open country, which for the



- I Flanders: area of northwest France on the North Sea
- 2 Maginot Line: line of fortification between France and Germany

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first day or two was without defenders. They have penetrated deeply and spread alarm and confusion in their track. Behind them there are now appearing infantry in lorries,³ and behind them, again, the large masses are moving forward. The re-groupment of the French armies to make head against, and also to strike at, this intruding wedge has been proceeding for several days, largely assisted by the magnificent efforts of the Royal Air Force.

We must not allow ourselves to be intimidated by the presence of these armored vehicles in unexpected places behind our lines. If they are behind our Front, the French are also at many points fighting actively behind theirs. Both sides are therefore in an extremely dangerous position. And if the French Army, and our own Army, are well handled, as I believe they will be; if the French retain that genius for recovery and counter-attack for which they have so long been famous; and if the British Army shows the **dogged** endurance and solid fighting power of which there have been so many examples in the past—then a sudden transformation of the scene might spring into being.

It would be foolish, however, to disguise the **gravity** of the hour. It would be still more foolish to lose heart and courage or to suppose that well-trained, well-equipped armies numbering three or four millions of men can be overcome in the space of a few weeks, or even months, by a scoop, or raid of mechanized vehicles, however formidable. We may look with confidence to the stabilization of the Front in France, and to the general engagement of the masses, which will enable the qualities of the French and British soldiers to be matched squarely against those of their adversaries. For myself, I have invincible confidence in the French Army and its leaders. Only a very small part of that splendid Army has yet been heavily engaged; and only a very small part of France has yet been invaded. There is a good evidence to show that practically the whole of the specialized and mechanized forces of the enemy have been already thrown into the battle; and we know that very heavy losses have been inflicted upon them. No officer or man, no brigade or division, which **grapples** at close quarters with the enemy, wherever encountered, can fail to make a worthy contribution to the general result. The Armies must cast away the idea of resisting behind concrete lines or

dogged: marked by stubborn determination

gravity: seriousness; importance

grapples: wrestles

³ **Iorries:** British word for trucks

animate: to give life to; to give spirit and support

retaliate: to return like for like

abates: lessens in degree or intensity

natural obstacles, and must realize that mastery can only be regained by furious and unrelenting assault. And this spirit must not only **animate** the High Command, but must inspire every fighting man.

In the air—often at serious odds, often at odds hitherto thought overwhelming—we have been clawing down three or four to one of our enemies; and the relative balance of the British and German Air Forces is now considerably more favorable to us than at the beginning of the battle. In cutting down the German bombers, we are fighting our own battle as well as that of France. My confidence in our ability to fight it out to the finish with the German Air Force has been strengthened by the fierce encounters which have taken place and are taking place. At the same time, our heavy bombers are striking nightly at the tap-root of German mechanized power, and have already inflicted serious damage upon the oil refineries on which the Nazi effort to dominate the world directly depends.

We must expect that as soon as stability is reached on the Western Front, the bulk of that hideous apparatus of aggression which gashed Holland into ruin and slavery in a few days will be turned upon us. I am sure I speak for all when I say we are ready to face it; to endure it; and to **retaliate** against it—to any extent that the unwritten laws of war permit. There will be many men and many women in the Island who when the ordeal comes upon them, as come it will, will feel comfort, and even a pride, that they are sharing the perils of our lads at the Front-soldiers, sailors and airmen, God bless themand are drawing away from them a part at least of the onslaught they have to bear. Is not this the appointed time for all to make the utmost exertions in their power? If the battle is to be won, we must provide our men with ever-increasing quantities of the weapons and ammunition they need. We must have, and have quickly, more airplanes, more tanks, more shells, more guns. There is imperious need for these vital munitions. They increase our strength against the powerfully armed enemy. They replace the wastage of the obstinate struggle; and the knowledge that wastage will speedily be replaced enables us to draw more readily upon our reserves and throw them in now that everything counts so much.

Our task is not only to win the battle but to win the war. After this battle in France **abates** its force, there will come the battle for our Island—for all that Britain is, and all that Britain means. That will

922 Winston Churchill Unit 7

be the struggle. In that supreme emergency, we shall not hesitate to take every step, even the most drastic, to call forth from our people the last ounce and the last inch of effort of which they are capable. The interests of property, the hours of labor, are nothing compared with the struggle of life and honor, for right and freedom, to which we have vowed ourselves.

I have received from the Chiefs of the French Republic, and in particular from its **indomitable** Prime Minister, M. Reynaud, the most sacred pledges that whatever happens they will fight to the end, be it bitter or be it glorious. Nay, if we fight to the end, it can only be glorious.

Having received His Majesty's commission, I have formed an Administration of men and women of every party and of almost every point of view. We have differed and quarreled in the past; but now one bond unites us all—to wage war until victory is won, and never to surrender ourselves to servitude and shame, whatever the cost and the agony may be. This is one of the most awe-striking periods in the long history of France and Britain. It is also beyond doubt the most sublime. Side by side, unaided except by their kith and kin in the great dominions and by the wide empires which rest beneath their shield, side by side, the British and French peoples have advanced to rescue not only Europe but mankind from the foulest and most soul-destroying tyranny which has ever darkened and stained the pages of history. Behind them, behind us—behind the Armies and Fleets of Britain and France—gather a group of shattered states and bludgeoned races: the Czechs, the Poles, the Norwegians, the Danes, the Dutch, the Belgians—upon all of whom the long night of barbarism will descend, unbroken even by a star of hope, unless we

Today is Trinity Sunday. Centuries ago words were written to be a call and a spur to the faithful servants of Truth and Justice: "Arm yourselves, and be ye men of valor, and be in readiness for the conflict; for it is better for us to perish in battle than to look upon the outrage of our nation and our altar. As the Will of God is in Heaven, even so let it be."

conquer, as conquer we must; as conquer we shall.

indomitable: unconquerable

bludgeoned: beaten down

After You Read "Be Ye Men of Valor" (May 19, 1940)

Literary Lens: Persuasive Techniques

Churchill's speech is logical and clear, yet he also appeals to the emotions to win over his audience. Create a chart to record examples of loaded language, the ideas they imply, and the emotions they stir. Which of these examples do you find especially persuasive? Given the circumstances facing Britain, was Churchill justified in using such language?

Loaded Language	Ideas Implied	Emotional Effect

Explore Context: World War II

Create a map of Europe that shows the political status of various countries at the time of Churchill's speech. Consult historical atlases, Web sites, and books for information. Indicate Germany's actions and invasions. Share your maps with the class.

Apply and Create: Oral Presentations

Today, important political speeches are delivered in front of a camera. Thus, speakers must pay close attention to their appearance—facial expressions, clothes, and body language. Practice reading a paragraph from Churchill's speech using appropriate vocal and facial expressions, as well as body language. Work with a partner to videotape each other speaking. Evaluate other classmates on their effectiveness by giving both positive feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Read Critically

Reread these lines from Churchill's speech. Answer the questions and support your answers with details from the passage and the rest of the speech.

We must expect that as soon as stability is reached on the Western Front, the bulk of that hideous apparatus of aggression which gashed Holland into ruin and slavery in a few days will be turned upon us. I am sure I speak for all when I say we are ready to face it; to endure it; and to retaliate against it—to any extent that the unwritten laws of war permit. There will be many men and many women in the Island who when the ordeal comes upon them, as come it will, will feel comfort, and even a pride, that they are sharing the perils of our lads at the Front—soldiers, sailors and airmen, God bless them—and are drawing away from them a part at least of the onslaught they have to bear. Is not this the appointed time for all to make the utmost exertions in their power?

- 1. What is Churchill referring to in the phrase "that hideous apparatus of aggression"?
- 2. Why do you think Churchill ends this passage with a question rather than a statement?
- 3. Based on this passage, how would you evaluate Churchill's abilities as a leader and a communicator?

Before You Read "Digging" and "The Horses"





SEAM US HEANEY (1939–2013) and TED HUGHES (1930–1998) represent the personal, introspective direction of poetry in the postwar years. Heaney grew up on a farm in Ireland. While attending Queen's College in Belfast, he became interested in other poets who shared his background and wrote about nature and rural life. In addition to exploring these topics, Heaney's poetry often deals

with the political climate in Ireland. He held teaching positions at numerous colleges in Great Britain and the United States. Poets and critics alike have praised him as Ireland's best poet since William Butler Yeats. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995.

Hughes, who grew up in the Yorkshire countryside, started writing poetry at age fifteen. After studying at Cambridge, he met and married American poet Sylvia Plath, and they spent two years living in the United States. Plath committed suicide in 1963, and for three years Hughes didn't write any poetry. But when he did begin to write again, he was prolific. He was named Poet Laureate of England in 1984. Like Heaney, Hughes's work often focuses on the natural world, in particular on animal imagery that he connects to human emotion.

Literary Lens



IM AGERY Both Heaney and Hughes use imagery to create sensory experiences for the reader. Imagery can appeal to the sense of sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. By using imagery, poets capture the essential qualities of the experiences they write about.

EXTENDED METAPHOR Like a metaphor, an extended metaphor is a comparison of two unlike things that, despite their differences, have something in common. In an extended metaphor, two things are compared at length and in multiple ways. Heaney makes use of an extended metaphor in "Digging," as does Hughes in "The Horses."

Heaney's and Hughes's Language

Heaney and Hughes belonged to a generation of poets who rejected complex style and instead approached poetry as an understated expression of everyday experiences. Even when emotions hit a peak in their poetry, there remains a quiet, introspective tone as the speaker comes to an important realization.

Think Critically

Before you read the poems that follow, use critical thinking to deepen your understanding.

- I. Heaney was influenced by the poetry of William Wordsworth (pages 632–643) and Gerard Manley Hopkins (pages 740–743). Based on this fact, what qualities might you expect to find in his work?
- 2. How might the titles of these poems, "Digging" and "The Horses," connect to the biographical information on each poet?
- 3. Think deeply about the title of each poem. What do you visualize in your mind's eye?

Digging

Seamus Heaney

Between my finger and thumb The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:

5 My father, digging, I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds Bends low, comes up twenty years away Stooping in rhythm through potato drills¹ Where he was digging.

- The coarse boot nestled on the lug,² the shaft
 Against the inside knee was levered firmly.
 He rooted out tall tops, buried the right edge deep
 To scatter new potatoes that we picked
 Loving their cool hardness in our hands.
- By God, the old man could handle a spade.
 Just like his old man.
 My grandfather cut more turf in a day
 Than any other man on Toner's bog.³
 Once I carried him milk in a bottle
 Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up
- 20 Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up To drink it, then fell to right away
- I drills: furrows for planting seeds
- 2 lug: ledge on the top of a shovel blade to support the foot
- 3 turf...Toner's bog: Turf is partially decayed matter found in wet areas called bogs and burned for fuel in Irish homes.

926 Seamus Heaney Unit 7



Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods Over his shoulder, going down and down For the good turf. Digging

25 The cold smell of potato mold, the squelch and slap Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb

The squat pen rests.

I'll dig with it.

The Modern Era "Digging" 927

The **Horses**

Ted Hughes

I climbed through woods in the hour-before-dawn dark. Evil air, a frost-making stillness,

Not a leaf, not a bird—
A world cast in frost. I came out above the wood

tortuous: twisted 5 Where my breath left tortuous statues in the iron light. or winding: also devious or tricky

Where my breath left tortuous statues in the iron light. But the valleys were draining the darkness

dregs: the last remaining part;

vestige

Till the moorline—blackening **dregs** of the brightening grey—Halved the sky ahead. And I saw the horses:

Huge in the dense grey—ten together—

10 Megalith-still. They breathed, making no move,



I Megalith-still: still as huge stones erected by ancient civilizations, such as at Stonehenge

928 Ted Hughes Unit 7

With draped manes and tilted hind-hooves, Making no sound.

I passed: not one snorted or jerked its head. Grey silent fragments

15 Of a grey silent world.

I listened in emptiness on the moor-ridge. The curlew's² tear turned its edge on the silence.

Slowly detail leafed from the darkness. Then the sun Orange, red, red erupted

20 Silently, and splitting to its core tore and flung cloud, Shook the gulf open, showed blue,

And the big planets hanging—
I turned

Stumbling in the fever of a dream, down towards
The dark woods, from the kindling tops,

And came to the horses.

There, still they stood, But now steaming and glistening under the flow of light,

Their draped stone manes, their tilted hind-hooves Stirring under a thaw while all around them

The frost showed its fires. But still they made no sound. Not one snorted or stamped,

Their hung heads patient as the horizons, High over valleys in the red levelling rays—

In din of crowded streets, going among the years, the faces, May I still meet my memory in so lonely a place

Between the streams and the red clouds, hearing the curlews, Hearing the horizons endure.

30

The Modern Era "The Horses" 929

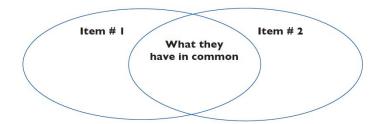
² **curlew:** large brown bird with long legs

After You Read "Digging" and "The Horses"

Literary Lens: Extended Metaphor

Use a Venn diagram like the one below to compare the two things being compared in Heaney's poem "Digging."

The two things compared in "Digging" are



Explore Context: Self and Society

Why do you think Heaney and Hughes focused their attentions on a more personal side of human experience instead of writing about the ills of modern society? Write a short essay on the subject, using examples from the literature in this book to support your ideas.

Apply and Create: Poetry

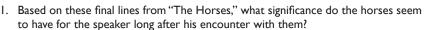
Write an original poem that captures a personal experience. To begin, brainstorm imagery from your chosen experience that appeals to each sense: sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. Incorporate sensory images into your poem, and maintain a consistent tone that reflects your feelings about this experience. Read your poem aloud for the class.

Read Critically

Reread these lines from "The Horses." Answer the questions that follow.

In din of crowded streets, going among the years, the faces, May I still meet my memory in so lonely a place

Between the streams and the red clouds, hearing the curlews, Hearing the horizons endure.





What views of nature does the poem suggest? Would modern environmentalists agree with this view?

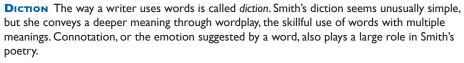
Before You Read "The Frog Prince" and "Not Waving but Drowning"

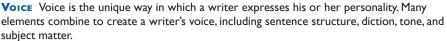


STEVIE SM ITH (1902–1971) was a unique voice in postwar British poetry. At first glance, her work often seems simple and unambiguous. But beyond the surface, there are complex, weighty topics—life, death, and alienation—which she presents with dark, satirical humor. Florence Margaret Smith was born in Yorkshire, England, but when she was three, her father abandoned the family and she and her mother and sister moved in with an aunt in a London suburb. An average student, Smith attended secretarial school and worked in that profession for thirty years, long after her writing began receiving acclaim. Though she found the work dull, it allowed her time for her

writing. She wrote three novels, but she is better known for her biting, ironic verse. "Not Waving but Drowning" is probably her best-known poem. Though not a skilled illustrator, many of her published poems were accompanied by crude drawings that she thought helped people understand her work. In 1969, she was awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry.

Literary Lens





Smith's Language

As a young poet, Smith valued her own voice to such a degree that she avoided reading the poetry of her contemporaries for fear that their work would affect her style too much. Her distinctive style is marked by childlike, sing-song rhyme and simple, straightforward diction. The speaker in Smith's poems often exhibits a disinterested, ironic perspective. Smith is famous for her ability to achieve a balance between humor and seriousness.

Think Critically

Before you read the two poems that follow, use critical thinking to deepen your understanding.



- Many early critics dismissed Smith's work as silly and frivolous. Why might they have felt this way?
- 2. One of the poems you are about to read is titled "The Frog Prince." Recall the events of this fairy tale, and then predict what ideas you might find in Smith's poem based upon what you read about her above.

The Frog Prince Stevie Smith

I am a frog
I live under a spell
I live at the bottom
Of a green well.

- 5 And here I must wait
 Until a maiden places me
 On her royal pillow
 And kisses me
 In her father's palace.
- The story is familiarEverybody knows it wellBut do other enchanted people feel as nervousAs I do? The stories do not tell,
- Ask if they will be happier

 When the changes come
 As already they are fairly happy
 In a frog's doom?



Stevie Smith

I have been a frog now For a hundred years

20 And in all this time I have not shed many tears,

> I am happy, I like the life, Can swim for many a mile (When I have hopped to the river)

25 And am forever agile.

And the quietness, Yes, I like to be quiet I am **habituated** To a quiet life,

habituated: accustomed to

30 But always when I think these thoughts
As I sit in my well
Another thought comes to me and says:
It is part of the spell

To be happy

To work up contentment

To make much of being a frog

To fear disenchantment.

Says, it will be heavenly To be set free,

40 Cries, Heavenly the girl who disenchants And the royal times, heavenly, And I think it will be.

> Come then, royal girl and royal times, Come quickly,

I can be happy until you comeBut I cannot be heavenly,Only disenchanted peopleCan be heavenly.

The Modern Era "The Frog Prince" 933



Not Waving but Drowning

Nobody heard him, the dead man, But still he lay moaning: I was much further out than you thought And not waving but drowning.

larking: engaging in harmless fun or mischief 5

Poor chap, he always loved **larking**And now he's dead
It must have been too cold for him his heart gave way,
They said.

Oh, no no no, it was too cold always

(Still the dead one lay moaning)

I was much too far out all my life

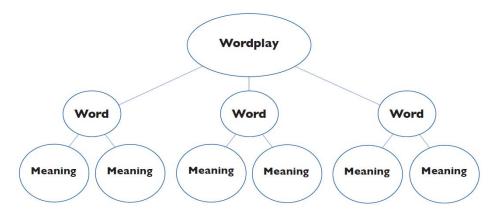
And not waving but drowning.

934 Stevie Smith Unit 7

After You Read "The Frog Prince" and "Not Waving but Drowning"

Literary Lens: Diction

Reread the two poems, looking for examples of wordplay. For each poem, make a web diagram like the one below, recording the examples you found and their multiple meanings. Which examples are most effective in helping Smith convey her message?



Explore Context: An Age of Unrest

Smith once commented that she lived during an age of unrest. Note her birth and death dates, and make a list of important events that occurred in Great Britain and the world between these years. Do you agree with her assessment? In your opinion, was there more unrest in the world during Smith's lifetime than in other periods of history?

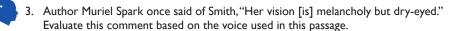
Apply and Create: Song or Poem

Recall that a writer's voice is a combination of sentence structure, diction, tone, and subject matter. Using subject matter similar to one of the two poems you've just read, write a poem or song lyrics in your own voice. Share your work with another student and ask them to evaluate the appropriateness of your voice for your subject matter and theme.

Read Critically

Reread "Not Waving but Drowning." Answer the questions and support your answers with details from the passage and the rest of the poem.

- 1. Identify the different speakers in the poem.
- 2. On the surface, what event is being described? What other meaning is suggested?



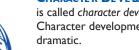
Before You Read "A Sunrise on the Veld"



DORIS LESSING (1919–2013) was an internationally acclaimed author praised for her novels and short stories. Born in Persia (now Iran), she moved with her British parents to a farm in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) when she was five. The farm was located next to a veld, a large grassy area of land filled with wildlife, where young Lessing liked to wander. It is this setting that Lessing draws on for the story you're about to read. Against her parents' wishes, Lessing dropped out of school at fourteen and began a series of jobs. By her mid-twenties she'd produced her first novel. Married and divorced twice, she moved to England in 1949.

The following year, she came onto the literary scene with the publication of her novel The Grass Is Singing. During her long career, Lessing produced a large body of literature. Much of her early work reflects her experiences in Africa; topics of her later work range from politics to science fiction to women's social issues. An outspoken voice against racism, she was banned from South Africa and Rhodesia for many years. In 2007, Lessing was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Literary Lens



CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT The changes a character undergoes over the course of a story is called character development. Important events often serve as catalysts to these changes. Character development may appear as a slow and subtle progression, or it may be quite

SETTING The time and place of the action of a story is called the setting. Sometimes, setting is a major component of a story, providing a cultural, historical, or geographical context in which events occur. The setting is key to understanding the main character and his experiences in the African countryside in "A Sunrise on the Veld."

Lessing's Language

As Lessing describes what the main character sees and feels, she incorporates vivid descriptions and imagery. The young protagonist is fully engaged in his surroundings from the first sentence to the last paragraph in the story. Lessing's writing is a perfect example of kinesthetic imagery, which describes movement or tension. Lessing's rhythms, word patterns, and line length also create a feeling of tension. Through kinesthetic imagery, Lessing captures the full range of the protagonist's experiences, allowing the reader to experience with him all the physical sensations of his day.

Think Critically

Before you read the story that follows, use critical thinking to deepen your understanding.

- 1. Based on information in Lessing's biography and the title of the story, what do you predict the main character is going to do?
- 2. Read the first paragraph of the story. How does the style of writing compare with the style found in James Joyce's story "Araby" (pages 839-845)?
 - 3. Consider the title "A Sunrise on the Veld." What kinds of feelings does a sunrise evoke? How might Lessing use this imagery in her story?



A Sunrise on the Veld

Doris Lessing

Every night that winter he said aloud into the dark of the pillow: Half-past four! Half-past four! till he felt his brain had gripped the words and held them fast. Then he fell asleep at once, as if a shutter had fallen; and lay with his face turned to the clock so that he could see it first thing when he woke.

It was half-past four to the minute, every morning. Triumphantly pressing down the alarm-knob of the clock, which the dark half of his mind had outwitted, remaining **vigilant** all night and counting the hours as he lay relaxed in sleep, he huddled down for a last warm moment under the clothes, playing with the idea of lying abed for this once only. But he played with it for the fun of knowing that

vigilant: alertly watchful



The Modern Era "A Sunrise on the Veld" 937

it was a weakness he could defeat without effort; just as he set the alarm each night for the delight of the moment when he woke and stretched his limbs, feeling the muscles tighten, and thought: Even my brain—even that! I can control every part of myself.

Luxury of warm rested body, with the arms and legs and fingers waiting like soldiers for a word of command! Joy of knowing that the precious hours were given to sleep voluntarily!—for he had once stayed awake three nights running, to prove that he could, and then worked all day, refusing even to admit that he was tired; and now sleep seemed to him a servant to be commanded and refused.

The boy stretched his frame full-length, touching the wall at his head with his hands, and the bedfoot with his toes; then he sprung out, like a fish leaping from water. And it was cold, cold.

He always dressed rapidly, so as to try and conserve his nightwarmth till the sun rose two hours later; but by the time he had on his clothes his hands were numbed and he could scarcely hold his shoes. These he could not put on for fear of waking his parents, who never came to know how early he rose.

As soon as he stepped over the lintel, the flesh of his soles contracted on the chilled earth, and his legs began to ache with cold. It was night: the stars were glittering, the trees standing black and still. He looked for signs of day, for the greying of the edge of a stone, or a lightening in the sky where the sun would rise, but there was nothing yet. Alert as an animal he crept past the dangerous window, standing poised with his hand on the sill for one proudly **fastidious** moment, looking in at the stuffy blackness of the room where his parents lay.

Feeling for the grass-edge of the path with his toes, he reached inside another window further along the wall, where his gun had been set in readiness the night before. The steel was icy, and numbed fingers slipped along it, so that he had to hold it in the crook of his arm for safety. Then he tiptoed to the room where the dogs slept, and was fearful that they might have been tempted to go before him; but they were waiting, their haunches crouched in reluctance at the cold, but ears and swinging tails greeting the gun **ecstatically**. His warning undertone kept them secret and silent till the house was a hundred yards back: then they bolted off into the bush, yelping

fastidious: critical or demanding

ecstatically: with extreme happiness

938 Doris Lessing Unit 7

I lintel: horizontal support above a door

excitedly. The boy imagined his parents turning in their beds and muttering: Those dogs again! before they were dragged back in sleep; and he smiled scornfully. He always looked back over his shoulder at the house before he passed a wall of trees that shut it from sight. It looked so low and small, crouching there under a tall and brilliant sky. Then he turned his back on it, and on the frowsting² sleepers, and forgot them.

He would have to hurry. Before the light grew strong he must be four miles away; and already a tint of green stood in the hollow of a leaf, and the air smelled of morning and the stars were dimming.

He slung the shoes over his shoulder, veld skoen³ that were crinkled and hard with the dews of a hundred mornings. They would be necessary when the ground became too hot to bear. Now he felt the chilled dust push up between his toes, and he let the muscles of his feet spread and settle into the shapes of the earth; and he thought: I could walk a hundred miles on feet like these! I could walk all day, and never tire!

He was walking swiftly through the dark tunnel of foliage that in day-time was a road. The dogs were invisibly ranging the lower travelways of the bush, and he heard them panting. Sometimes he felt a cold muzzle on his leg before they were off again, scouting for a trail to follow. They were not trained, but free-running companions of the hunt, who often tired of the long stalk before the final shots, and went off on their own pleasure. Soon he could see them, small and wild-looking in a wild strange light, now that the bush stood trembling on the verge of color, waiting for the sun to paint earth and grass afresh.

The grass stood to his shoulders; and the trees were showering a faint silvery rain. He was soaked; his whole body was clenched in a steady shiver.

Once he bent to the road that was newly scored with animal trails, and regretfully straightened, reminding himself that the pleasure of tracking must wait till another day.

He began to run along the edge of a field, noting jerkily how it was filmed over with fresh spiderwebs, so that the long reaches of great black clods seemed netted in glistening grey. He was using the

The Modern Era "A Sunrise on the Veld" 939

² frowsting: enjoying a warm, stuffy room

³ veld skoen: traditional South African shoes made of untanned leather sewn together

lope: an easy usually bounding, gait capable of being sustained for a long time

exultation: extreme joyfulness

cultivated: having the soil broken up and prepared for planting

frond: large leaf with many divisions, such as a palm or fern

superfluity: overabundance; excess

steady **lope** he had learned by watching the natives, the run that is a dropping of the weight of the body from one foot to the next in a slow balancing movement that never tires, nor shortens the breath; and he felt the blood pulsing down his legs and along his arms, and the **exultation** and pride of body mounted in him till he was shutting his teeth hard against a violent desire to shout his triumph.

Soon he had left the **cultivated** part of the farm. Behind him the bush was low and black. In front was a long vlei,⁴ acres of long pale grass that sent back a hollowing gleam of light to a satiny sky. Near him thick swathes of grass were bent with the weight of water, and diamond drops sparkled on each **frond**.

The first bird woke at his feet and at once a flock of them sprang into the air calling shrilly that day had come; and suddenly, behind him, the bush woke into song, and he could hear the guinea fowl calling far ahead of him. That meant they would now be sailing down from their trees into thick grass, and it was for them he had come: he was too late. But he did not mind. He forgot he had come to shoot. He set his legs wide, and balanced from foot to foot, and swung his gun up and down in both hands horizontally, in a kind of improvised exercise, and let his head sink back till it was pillowed in his neck muscles, and watched how above him small rosy clouds floated in a lake of gold.

Suddenly it all rose in him: it was unbearable. He leapt up into the air, shouting and yelling wild, unrecognizable noises. Then he began to run, not carefully, as he had before, but madly, like a wild thing. He was clean crazy, yelling mad with the joy of living and a **superfluity** of youth. He rushed down the vlei under a tumult of crimson and gold, while all the birds of the world sang about him. He ran in great leaping strides, and shouted as he ran, feeling his body rise into the crisp rushing air and fall back surely on to sure feet; and thought briefly, not believing that such a thing could happen to him, that he could break his ankle any moment, in this thick tangled grass. He cleared bushes like a duiker,⁵ leapt over rocks; and finally came to a dead stop at a place where the ground fell abruptly away below him to the river. It had been a two-mile-long dash through waist-high growth, and he was breathing hoarsely and could no longer sing.

940 Doris Lessing Unit 7

⁴ $\,$ **viei:** isolated, shallow body of freshwater that typically evaporates completely during dry season

⁵ duiker: small South African antelope

But he poised on a rock and looked down at stretches of water that gleamed through stooping trees, and thought suddenly, I am fifteen! Fifteen! The words came new to him; so that he kept repeating them wonderingly, with swelling excitement; and he felt the years of his life with his hands, as if he were counting marbles, each one hard and separate and compact, each one a wonderful shining thing. That was what he was: fifteen years of this rich soil, and this slow-moving water, and air that smelt like a challenge whether it was warm and **sultry** at noon, or as brisk as cold water, like it was now.

There was nothing he couldn't do, nothing! A vision came to him, as he stood there, like when a child hears the word "eternity" and tries to understand it, and time takes possession of the mind. He felt his life ahead of him as a great and wonderful thing, something that was his; and he said aloud, with the blood rushing to his head: all the great men of the world have been as I am now, and there is nothing I can't become, nothing I can't do; there is no country in the world I cannot make part of myself, if I choose. I contain the world. I can make of it what I want. If I choose, I can change everything that is going to happen: it depends on me, and what I decide now.

The urgency and the truth and the courage of what his voice was saying exulted him so that he began to sing again, at the top of his voice, and the sound went echoing down the river gorge. He stopped for the echo, and sang again: stopped and shouted. That was what he was!—he sang, if he chose; and the world had to answer him.

And for minutes he stood there, shouting and singing and waiting for the lovely **eddying** sound of the echo; so that his own new strong thoughts came back and washed round his head, as if someone were answering him and encouraging him; till the gorge was full of soft voices clashing back and forth from rock to rock over the river. And then it seemed as if there was a new voice. He listened, puzzled, for it was not his own. Soon he was leaning forward, all his nerves alert, quite still: somewhere close to him there was a noise that was no joyful bird, nor tinkle of falling water, nor ponderous movement of cattle.

There it was again. In the deep morning hush that held his future and his past, was a sound of pain, and repeated over and over: it was a kind of shortened scream, as if someone, something, had no breath to scream. He came to himself, looked about him, and called for the dogs. They did not appear; they had gone off on their own

sultry: extremely hot and humid

eddying: moving in a circular direction

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business, and he was alone. Now he was clean sober, all the madness gone. His heart beating fast, because of that frightened screaming, he stepped carefully off the rock and went towards a belt of trees. He was moving cautiously, for not so long ago he had seen a leopard in just this spot.

At the edge of the trees he stopped and peered, holding his gun ready; he advanced, looking steadily about him, his eyes narrowed. Then all at once, in the middle of a step, he faltered, and his face was puzzled. He shook his head impatiently, as if he doubted his own sight.

There, between two trees, against a background of gaunt black rocks, was a figure from a dream, a strange beast that was horned and drunken-legged, but like something he had never even imagined. It seemed to be ragged. It looked like a small buck that had black rugged tufts of fur standing up irregularly all over it, with patches of raw flesh beneath . . . but the patches of rawness were disappearing under moving black and came again elsewhere; and all the time the creature screamed, in small gasping screams, and leaped drunkenly from side to side, as if it were blind.

Then the boy understood: it was a buck. He ran closer, and again stood still, stopped by a new fear. Around him the grass was whispering and alive. He looked wildly about, and then down. The ground was black with ants, great energetic ants that took no notice of him, but hurried and scurried towards the fighting shape, like glistening black water flowing through the grass.

And, as he drew in his breath and pity and terror seized him, the beast fell and the screaming stopped. Now he could hear nothing but one bird singing, and the sound of the rustling, whispering ants.

He peered over at the writhing blackness that jerked **convulsively** with the jerking nerves. It grew quieter. There were small twitches from the mass that still looked vaguely like the shape of a small animal.

It came into his mind that he should shoot it and end its pain; and he raised the gun. Then he lowered it again. The buck could no longer feel; its fighting was a mechanical protest of the nerves. But it was not that which made him put down the gun. It was a swelling feeling of rage and misery and protest that expressed itself in the thought: if I had not come it would have died like this: so why

convulsively: characterized by uncontrolled, jerky movements

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should I interfere? All over the bush things like this happen; they happen all the time; this is how life goes on, by living things dying in anguish. He gripped the gun between his knees and felt in his own limbs the myriad swarming pain of the twitching animal that could no longer feel, and set his teeth, and said over and over again under his breath: I can't stop it. I can't stop it. There is nothing I can do.

He was glad that the buck was unconscious and had gone past suffering so that he did not have to make a decision to kill it even when he was feeling with his whole body: this is what happens, this is how things work.

It was right—that was what he was feeling. It was right and nothing could alter it.

The knowledge of **fatality**, of what has to be, had gripped him and for the first time in his life; and he was left unable to make any movement of brain or body, except to say: "Yes, yes. That is what living is." It had entered his flesh and bones and grown in to the furthest corners of his brain and would never leave him. And at that moment he could not have performed the smallest action of mercy, knowing as he did, having lived on it all his life, the vast unalterable, cruel veld, where at any moment one might stumble over a skull or crush the skeleton of some small creature.

Suffering, sick, and angry, but also grimly satisfied with his new **stoicism**, he stood there leaning on his rifle, and watched the seething black mound grow smaller. At his feet, now, were ants trickling back with pink fragments in their mouths, and there was a fresh acid smell in his nostrils. He sternly controlled the uselessly convulsing muscles of his empty stomach, and reminded himself: the ants must eat too! At the same time he found that the tears were streaming down his face, and his clothes were soaked with the sweat of that other creature's pain.

The shape had grown small. Now it looked like nothing recognizable. He did not know how long it was before he saw the blackness thin, and bits of white showed through, shining in the sun—yes, there was the sun, just up, glowing over the rocks. Why, the whole thing could not have taken longer than a few minutes.

He began to swear, as if the shortness of the time was in itself unbearable, using the words he had heard his father say. He strode forward, crushing ants with each step, and brushing them off his **fatality:** quality of being destined to die

stoicism: indifference to pain or pleasure

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clothes, till he stood above the skeleton, which lay sprawled under a small bush. It was clean-picked. It might have been lying there years, save that on the white bone were pink fragments of gristle. About the bones ants were ebbing away, their pincers full of meat.

The boy looked at them, big black ugly insects. A few were standing and gazing up at him with small glittering eyes.

"Go away!" he said to the ants, very coldly. "I am not for you—not just yet, at any rate. Go away." And he fancied that the ants turned and went away.

He bent over the bones and touched the sockets in the skull; that was where the eyes were, he thought **incredulously**, remembering the liquid dark eyes of a buck. And then he bent the slim foreleg bone, swinging it horizontally in his palm.

That morning, perhaps an hour ago, this small creature had been stepping proud and free through the bush, feeling the chill on its hide even as he himself had done, exhilarated by it all. Proudly stepping the earth, tossing its horns, frisking a pretty white tail, it had sniffed the cold morning air. Walking like kings and conquerors it had moved through this free-held bush, where each blade of grass grew for it alone, and where the river ran pure sparkling water for its **slaking**.

And then—what had happened? Such a swift surefooted thing could surely not be trapped by a swarm of ants?

The boy bent curiously to the skeleton. Then he saw that the back leg that lay uppermost and strained out in the tension of death, was snapped midway in the thigh, so that broken bones jutted over each other uselessly. So that was it! Limping into the ant-masses it could not escape, once it had sensed the danger. Yes, but how had the leg been broken? Had it fallen, perhaps? Impossible, a buck was too light and graceful. Had some jealous rival horned it?

What could possibly have happened? Perhaps some Africans had thrown stones at it, as they do, trying to kill it for meat, and had broken its leg. Yes, that must be it.

Even as he imagined the crowd of running, shouting natives, and the flying stones, and the leaping buck, another picture came into his mind. He saw himself, on any one of these bright ringing mornings, drunk with excitement, taking a snap shot at some half-seen buck. He saw himself with the gun lowered, wondering whether he had

incredulously: with disbelief

slaking: quenching the thirst

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missed or not; and thinking at last that it was late, and he wanted his breakfast, and it was not worth while to track miles after an animal that would very likely get away from him in any case.

For a moment he would not face it. He was a small boy again, kicking sulkily at the skeleton, hanging his head, refusing to accept the responsibility.

Then he straightened up, and looked down at the bones with an odd expression of dismay, all the anger gone out of him. His mind went quite empty; all around him he could see trickles of ants disappearing into the grass. The whispering noise was faint and dry, like the rustling of a cast snakeskin.

At last he picked up his gun and walked homewards. He was telling himself half defiantly that he wanted his breakfast. He was telling himself that it was getting very hot, much too hot to be out roaming the bush.

Really, he was tired. He walked heavily, not looking where he put his feet. When he came within sight of his home he stopped, knitting his brows. There was something he had to think out. The death of that small animal was a thing that concerned him, and he was by no means finished with it. It lay at the back of his mind uncomfortably.

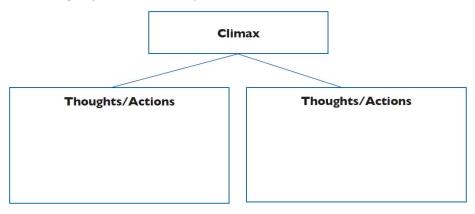
Soon, the very next morning, he would get clear of everybody and go to the bush and think about it.

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After You Read "A Sunrise on the Veld"

Literary Lens: Character Development

Create a diagram like the one below to show the boy's personal development. First, identify the climax of the story. Then, on the left, list the boy's thoughts and feelings leading up to the climax. On the right, list his thoughts and feelings after the climax. Based on this evidence, how has he changed by the end of the story?



Explore Context: Rite of Passage

A type of story popular over the last fifty years is the coming-of-age story, in which a character's experiences result in a passage from childhood to adulthood or from innocence to experience. Compose an essay in which you make the case for "A Sunrise on the Veld" as a good example of a coming-of-age story.

Apply and Create: Scrapbook of Nature

The setting of the story depicts both the beauty and brutality of nature. In a small group, collect images from magazines and the Internet to represent these opposing perspectives. Combine the images in a traditional scrapbook or an electronic presentation. Be sure to consider how your arrangement of the images might have different emotional effects on the viewer. Share your work with the rest of the class.

Read Critically

Reread these lines from "A Sunrise on the Veld." Answer the questions and support your answers with details from the passage and the rest of the story.

There was nothing he couldn't do, nothing! A vision came to him, as he stood there, like when a child hears the word "eternity" and tries to understand it, and time takes possession of the mind. He felt his life ahead of him as a great and wonderful thing, something that was his; and he said aloud, with the blood rising to his head: all the great men of the world have been as I am now, and there is nothing I can't become, nothing I can't do; there is no country in the world I cannot make part of myself, if I choose. I contain the world. I can make of it what I want. If I choose, I can change everything that is going to happen: it depends on me, and what I decide now.

The urgency and the truth and the courage of what his voice was saying exulted him so that he began to sing again, at the top of his voice, and the sound went echoing down the river gorge. He stopped for the echo, and sang again: stopped and shouted. That was what he was!—he sang, if he chose; and the world had to answer him.

And for minutes he stood there, shouting and singing and waiting for the lovely eddying sound of the echo; so that his own new strong thoughts came back and washed round his head, as if someone were answering him and encouraging him; till the gorge was full of soft voices clashing back and forth from rock to rock over the river.

- 1. What accounts for the boy's feelings in this passage? In your opinion, are these feelings justified?
- 2. How does the kinesthetic imagery of this passage contribute to your full understanding of the boy's experience?



Evaluate the effectiveness of the techniques Lessing uses to describe the inner workings of the boy's mind.

Before You Read "The Train from Rhodesia"



NADINE GORDIM ER (born 1923) is admired for her well-crafted fiction that often deals with the complexities and hardships brought on by apartheid, a system of racial separation practiced by the South African government from 1948 to 1991. The daughter of a white middle-class family living in the Transvaal province of South Africa, Gordimer saw how apartheid policies crushed nonwhite Africans, leaving them without hope of good educations, jobs, or housing, and offered them little protection under the law. By 1952, her first collection of stories, *The Soft*

Voice of the Serpent, was published in the United States. As her reputation grew, Gordimer began to write novels. Because of Gordimer's outspoken critique of her country's practices, the South African government banned some of her work. However, readers praised Gordimer for her keen ear for language and her strong moral sense. In 1991, she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Literary Lens



CULTURAL CONFLICT In literature, conflict is the struggle between opposing forces. Conflict moves the plot along. In Gordimer's story, the plot centers on a cultural conflict, a clash between groups of people whose beliefs, values, and standing in society are at odds. Apartheid is both the cause and result of the cultural conflict portrayed in "The Train from Rhodesia."

PERSONIFICATION In this story, Gordimer makes use of personification, a figure of speech in which human qualities are given to objects, animals, and ideas. As you read, notice how she personifies the train.

Gordimer's Language

In "The Train from Rhodesia," there is little action. Instead, Gordimer focuses the reader's attention on a few detailed moments in time, allowing the sensations and interactions among her characters to deliver a striking portrait of life. "I thrust my hand as deep as it will go," Gordimer once said, "deep into the life around me, and I write about what comes up." Some have compared Gordimer's style to that of Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield, whose fiction captures the moment-to-moment details of their characters' lives.

Think Critically

Before you read the story that follows, use critical thinking to deepen your understanding.



- Based on what you know so far about Gordimer, what do you think makes her writing appeal to an international audience?
- Look back at Katherine Mansfield's "A Cup of Tea" (pages 849–857).
 Then use what you've learned about Gordimer's style to compare "The Train from Rhodesia" to "A Cup of Tea."



The **Train from Rhodesia**

Nadine Gordimer

The train came out of the red horizon and bore down toward them over the single straight track.

The stationmaster came out of his little brick station with its pointed chalet roof, feeling the creases in his serge uniform in his legs as well. A stir of preparedness rippled through the squatting native vendors waiting in the dust; the face of a carved wooden animal, eternally surprised, stuck out of a sack. The stationmaster's barefoot children wandered over. From the gray mud huts with the untidy heads that stood within a decorated mud wall, chickens, and dogs with their skin stretched like parchment over their bones, followed the piccanins¹ down to the track. The flushed and perspiring west cast a reflection, faint, without heat, upon the station, upon the tin shed marked "Goods," upon the walled kraal,² upon the gray tin house of

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I piccanins: small black children

² **kraal:** corral for cows or sheep

sky to sky, cast little rhythmical cups of shadow, so that the sand became the sea, and closed over the children's black feet softly and without imprint.

The stationmaster's wife sat behind the mesh of her **veranda**.

The stationmaster's wife sat behind the mesh of her **veranda**. Above her head the hunk of a sheep's carcass moved slightly, dangling in a current of air.

the stationmaster and upon the sand, that lapped all around, from

They waited.

The train called out, along the sky; but there was no answer; and the cry hung on: I'm coming . . . I'm coming . . .

The engine flared out now, big, whisking a dwindling body behind it; the track flared out to let it in.

Creaking, jerking, jostling, gasping, the train filled the station.

Here, let me see that one—the young woman curved her body further out of the corridor window. Missus? smiled the old boy, looking at the creature he held in his hand. From a piece of string on his gray finger hung a tiny woven basket; he lifted it; questioning. No, no, she urged, leaning down toward him across the height of the train, toward the man in the piece of old rug; that one, that one, her hand commanded. It was a lion, carved out of soft dry wood that looked like spongecake; heraldic, black and white, with **impressionistic** detail burnt in. The old man held it up to her still smiling, not from the heart, but at the customer. Between its Vandyke³ teeth, in the mouth opened in an endless roar too terrible to be heard, it had a black tongue. Look, said the young husband, if you don't mind! And round the neck of the thing, a piece of fur (rat? rabbit? meerkat?); a real mane, majestic, telling you somehow that the artist had delight in the lion.

All up and down the length of the train in the dust the artists sprang, walking bent, like performing animals, the better to exhibit the fantasy held toward the faces on the train. Buck, startled and stiff, staring with round black and white eyes. More lions, standing erect, grappling with strange, thin, **elongated** warriors who clutched spears and showed no fear in their slits of eyes. How much, they asked from the train, how much?

Give me penny, said the little ones with nothing to sell. The

impressionistic: style of artwork with vague impressions of shape as opposed to finely crafted details

veranda: roofed, open

porch attached to a

house

elongated: stretched long and thin

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³ Vandyke: V-shaped, like a pointed Vandyke beard, so named because Flemish painter Anthony Van Dyck painted many men with such beards

dogs went and sat, quite still, under the dining car, where the train breathed out the smell of meat cooking with onion.

A man passed beneath the arch of reaching arms meeting gray-black and white in the exchange of money for the staring wooden eyes, the stiff wooden legs sticking up in the air; went along under the voices and the bargaining, interrogating the wheels. Past the dogs; glancing up at the dining car where he could stare at the faces, behind the glass, drinking beer two by two, on either side of a uniform railway vase with its pale dead flower. Right to the end, to the guard's van, where the stationmaster's children had just collected their mother's two loaves of bread; to the engine itself where the stationmaster and the driver stood talking against the steaming complaint of the resting beast.

The man called out to them, something loud and joking. They turned to laugh, in a twirl of steam. The two children careered over the sand, clutching the bread, and burst through the iron gate and up the path through the garden in which nothing grew.

Passengers drew themselves in at the corridor windows and turned into compartments to fetch money, to call someone to look. Those sitting inside looked up: suddenly different, caged faces, boxed in, cut off, after the contact of outside. There was an orange a piccanin would like. . . . What about the chocolate? It wasn't very nice. . . .

A young girl had collected a handful of the hard kind, that no one liked, out of the chocolate box, and was throwing them to the dogs, over at the dining car. But the hens darted in, and swallowed the chocolates, incredibly quick and accurate, before they had even dropped in the dust, and the dogs, a little bewildered, looked up with their brown eyes, not expecting anything.

—No, leave it, said the girl, don't take it. . . .

Too expensive, too much, she shook her head and raised her voice to the old boy, giving up the lion. He held it up where she had handed it to him. No, she said, shaking her head. Three-and-six?⁴ insisted her husband, loudly. Yes baas!⁵ laughed the boy. Three-and-six?—the young man was incredulous. Oh leave it—she said. The young man stopped. Don't you want it? he said, keeping his face closed to the boy. No, never mind, she said, leave it. The old native kept his head

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⁴ Three-and-six: three shillings and sixpence, probably under five dollars at the time

⁵ baas: boss

on one side, looking at them sideways, holding the lion. Three-andsix, he murmured, as old people repeat things to themselves.

The young woman drew her head in. She went into the coupé⁶ and sat down. Out of the window, on the other side, there was nothing; sand and bush; a thorn tree. Back through the open doorway, past the figure of her husband in the corridor, there was the station, the voices, wooden animals waving, running feet. Her eye followed the funny little valance of scrolled wood that outlined the chalet roof of the station; she thought of the lion and smiled. That bit of fur round the neck. But the wooden buck, the hippos, the elephants, the baskets that already bulked out of their brown paper under the seat and on the luggage rack! How will they look at home? Where will you put them? What will they mean away from the places you found them? Away from the unreality of the last few weeks? The man outside. But he is not part of the unreality; he is for good now. Odd . . . somewhere there was an idea that he, that living with him, was part of the holiday, the strange places.

Outside, a bell rang. The stationmaster was leaning against the end of the train, green flag rolled in readiness. A few men who had got down to stretch their legs sprang onto the train, clinging to the observation platforms, or perhaps merely standing on the iron steps, holding the rail; but on the train, safe from the one dusty platform, the one tin house, the empty sand.

There was a grunt. The train jerked. Through the glass the beer drinkers looked out, as if they could not see beyond it. Behind the fly-screen, the stationmaster's wife sat facing back at them beneath the darkening hunk of meat.

There was a shout. The flag drooped out. Joints not yet coordinated, the segmented body of the train heaved and bumped back against itself. It began to move; slowly the scrolled chalet moved past it, the yells of the natives, running alongside, jetted up into the air, fell back at different levels. Staring wooden faces waved drunkenly, there, then, gone, questioning for the last time at the windows. Here, one-and-six baas!—As one automatically opens a hand to catch a thrown ball, a man fumbled wildly down his pocket, brought up the shilling and sixpence and threw them out; the old native, gasping, his skinny toes **splaying** the sand, flung the lion.

splaying: spreading out in an awkward manner

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⁶ coupé: small compartment at the end of a train with seats only on one side

The piccanins were waving, the dogs stood, tails uncertain, watching the train go; past the mud huts, where a woman turned to look, up from the smoke of the fire, her hand pausing on her hip.

The stationmaster went slowly in under the chalet.

The old native stood, breath blowing out the skin between his ribs, feet tense, balanced in the sand, smiling and shaking his head.

In his opened palm, held in the attitude of receiving, was the retrieved shilling and sixpence.

The blind end of the train was being pulled helplessly out of the station.

The young man swung in from the corridor, breathless. He was shaking his head with laughter and triumph. Here! he said. And waggled the lion at her. One-and-six!

What? she said.

He laughed. I was arguing with him for fun, bargaining—when the train pulled out already, he came tearing after. . . . One-and-six baas! So there's your lion.

She was holding it away from her, the head with the open jaws, the pointed teeth, the black tongue, the wonderful ruff of fur facing her. She was looking at it with an expression of not seeing, of seeing something different. Her face was drawn up, **wryly**, like the face of a discomforted child. Her mouth lifted nervously at the corner. Very slowly, cautious, she lifted her finger and touched the mane, where it was joined to the wood.

wryly: in a bent or twisted way

But how could you, she said. He was shocked by the dismay of her face.

Good Lord, he said, what's the matter?

If you wanted the thing, she said, her voice rising and breaking with the shrill **impotence** of anger, why didn't you buy it in the first place? If you wanted it, why didn't you pay for it? Why didn't you take it decently, when he offered it? Why did you have to wait for him to run after the train with it, and give him one-and-six? One-and-six!

impotence: helpless; also lacking in selfrestraint

She was pushing it at him, trying to force him to take it. He stood astonished, his hands hanging at his sides.

But you wanted it! You like it so much?

—It's a beautiful piece of work, she said fiercely, as if to protect it from him.

You liked it so much! You said yourself it was too expensive—

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Oh *you*—she said, hopeless and furious. *You*. . . . She threw the lion onto the seat.

He stood looking at her.

She sat down again in the corner and, her face slumped in her hand, stared out of the window. Everything was turning round inside her. One-and-six. One-and-six. One-and-six for the wood and the carving and the sinews of the legs and the switch of the tail. The mouth open like that and the teeth. The black tongue, rolling, like a wave. The mane round the neck. To give one-and-six for that. The heat of shame mounted through her legs and body and sounded in her ears like the sound of sand pouring. Pouring, pouring. She sat there, sick. A weariness, a tastelessness, the discovery of a void made her hands slacken their grip, **atrophy** emptily, as if the hour was not worth their grasp. She was feeling like this again. She had thought it was something to do with singleness, with being alone and belonging too much to oneself.

atrophy: a loss of strength

She sat there not wanting to move or speak, or to look at anything, even; so that the mood should be associated with nothing, no object, word or sight that might recur and so recall the feeling again. . . . Smuts⁷ blew in grittily, settled on her hands. Her back remained at exactly the same angle, turned against the young man sitting with his hands drooping between his sprawled legs, and the lion, fallen on its side in the corner.

The train had cast⁸ the station like a skin. It called out to the sky, I'm coming, I'm coming; and again, there was no answer.

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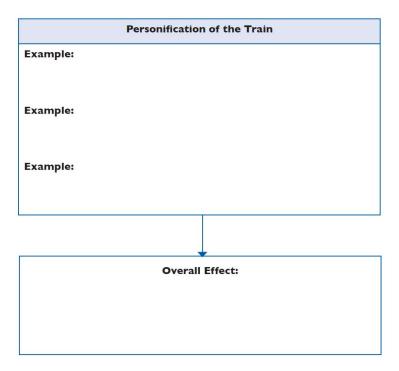
⁷ Smuts: soot

⁸ cast: cast off; left behind

After You Read "The Train from Rhodesia"

Literary Lens: Personification

Make a chart to record examples of the train being personified. Then write an evaluation of the overall effect of giving human attributes to the train.



Explore Context: Colonialism and Its Aftermath

The horrors of apartheid are still alive in the minds of South Africans, no matter what their race. In small groups, conduct research to find out more about South Africa today—attitudes among the races, economic opportunities, political leaders, and so on. Enhance your research by reading other short stories or novels or by viewing movies set in South Africa. Report your findings to the class.

Apply and Create: Short Story Outline

In a group of four, look through newspapers, magazines, and online sources to find information on other political and cultural conflicts that exist in the world today. Choose one, and create an outline for a short story in which one or more characters face a dilemma involving this conflict. Decide on a specific theme you want your story to convey and plan an ending for the story that helps reveal this theme.

Read Critically

Reread this excerpt from "The Train from Rhodesia." Answer the questions and support your answers with details from the story.

The young man swung in from the corridor, breathless. He was shaking his head with laughter and triumph. Here! he said. And waggled the lion at her. One-and-six!

What? she said.

He laughed. I was arguing with him for fun, bargaining—when the train pulled out already, he came tearing after. . . . One-and-six baas! So there's your lion.

She was holding it away from her, the head with the open jaws, the pointed teeth, the black tongue, the wonderful ruff of fur facing her. She was looking at it with an expression of not seeing, of seeing something different. Her face was drawn up, wryly, like the face of a discomforted child. Her mouth lifted nervously at the corner. Very slowly, cautious, she lifted her finger and touched the mane, where it was joined to the wood.

But how could you, she said. He was shocked by the dismay of her face. Good Lord, he said, what's the matter?

If you wanted the thing, she said, her voice rising and breaking with the shrill impotence of anger, why didn't you buy it in the first place? If you wanted it, why didn't you pay for it? Why didn't you take it decently, when he offered it? Why did you have to wait for him to run after the train with it, and give him one-and-six? One-and-six!

- I. Explain the different conflicts in the story. Do all of the conflicts resolve by the end of the story? Why or why not?
- Compare the inner turmoil of the young woman on the train to that of George Orwell in "Shooting an Elephant" (pages 909–916). Write a short analysis of these two characters.
- 3. Compare and contrast the characters of the husband and the wife. Assess their views of the Africans they encounter in the story.

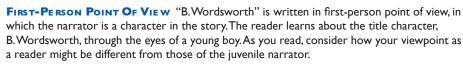
Before You Read "B. Wordsworth"



V. S. NAIP AUL (born 1932), winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2001, is known for perceptive stories that often reflect his own journey through life. Naipaul was born in Trinidad, an island country in the Caribbean, which was then a British colony. His parents were of Indian descent, their ancestors having been shipped as indentured servants to work on the sugar plantations. Naipaul was an excellent student and received scholarships to further his studies. He eventually found his way to Oxford University in England, where he chose to stay and work as a writer. His early fiction often depicts his boyhood years on the island, influenced by both the Caribbean

and Hindu cultures. His more mature works reflect the author's own search for personal and cultural identity. "B. Wordsworth" is part of Naipaul's book Miguel Street, a collection of stories in which the author delves into his early experiences in Trinidad. At the end of the book, the young narrator leaves his island neighbors to continue his education abroad, which in many ways resembles Naipaul's own path.

Literary Lens



DIALOGUE In literature, dialogue refers to spoken conversation between two or more characters. Dialogue often conveys important information about characters' personalities and backgrounds. Naipaul's well-crafted dialogue contains the dialect, or the distinct regional language, of the British colony of Trinidad.

Naipaul's Language

Naipaul has earned praise for his precise use of language. This story contains simple, often short, sentences to help convey the youthful perspective of his narrator. This style also adds a naïve, or inexperienced, quality to the narrator's observations.

Think Critically

Before you read the story that follows, use critical thinking to deepen your understanding.

- Recall the reputation of William Wordsworth, considered by many to be the father
 of the romantic movement in literature. What connection might there be between
 the famous poet and the title of the story?
- James Joyce's story "Araby" (pages 839–845) was also part of a collection of short stories reflecting the author's youthful experiences in his homeland. Assess why an author might be attracted to this subject.



B. Wordsworth

V. S. Naipaul

Three beggars called punctually every day at the hospitable houses in Miguel Street. At about ten an Indian came in his dhoti¹ and white jacket, and we poured a tin of rice into the sack he carried on his back. At twelve an old woman smoking a clay pipe came and she got a cent. At two a blind man led by a boy called for his penny.

Sometimes we had a **rogue**. One day a man called and said he was hungry. We gave him a meal. He asked for a cigarette and wouldn't go until we had lit it for him. That man never came again.

The strangest caller came one afternoon at about four o'clock. I had come back from school and was in my home clothes. The man said to me, "Sonny, may I come inside your yard?"

He was a small man and he was tidily dressed. He wore a hat, a white shirt, and black trousers.

rogue: a vagrant or tramp; scoundrel

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I dhoti: a rectangular piece of cloth, wrapped around the waist and the legs and knotted at the waist; a traditional men's garment in India

I asked, "What do you want?"

He said, "I want to watch your bees."

We had four small gru-gru palm trees and they were full of uninvited bees.

I ran up the steps and shouted, "Ma, I have a man outside here. He say he want to watch the bees."

My mother came out, looked at the man and asked in an unfriendly way, "What you want?"

The man said, "I want to watch your bees."

His English was so good, it didn't sound natural, and I could see my mother was worried.

She said to me, "Stay here and watch him while he watch the bees."

The man said, "Thank you, madam. You have done a good deed today." He spoke very slowly and very correctly as though every word was costing him money.

We watched the bees, this man and I, for about an hour, squatting near the palm trees.

The man said, "I like watching bees. Sonny, do you like watching bees?"

I said, "I ain't have the time."

He shook his head sadly. He said, "That's what I do, I just watch. I can watch ants for days. Have you ever watched ants? And scorpions, and centipedes, and congorees²—have you watched those?"

I shook my head.

I said, "What you does do, mister?"

He got up and said, "I am a poet."

I said, "A good poet?"

He said, "The greatest in the world."

"What your name, mister?"

"B. Wordsworth."

"B for Bill?"

"Black. Black Wordsworth. White Wordsworth was my brother. We share one heart. I can watch a small flower like the morning-glory and crv."

I said, "Why you does cry?"

"Why, boy? Why? You will know when you grow up. You're a poet,

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² **congorees:** congo eels, large eels found in the West Indies

too, you know. And when you're a poet you can cry for everything."

I couldn't laugh.

He said, "You like your mother?"

"When she not beating me."

He pulled out a printed sheet from his hip pocket and said, "On this paper is the greatest poem about mothers and I'm going to sell it to you at a bargain price. For four cents."

I went inside and I said, "Ma, you want to buy a poetry for four cents?"

My mother said, "Tell that blasted man to haul his tail away from my yard, you hear."

I said to B. Wordsworth, "My mother say she ain't have four cents."

B. Wordsworth said, "It is the poet's tragedy."

And he put the paper back in his pocket. He didn't seem to mind.

I said, "Is a funny way to go round selling poetry like that. Only calypsonians³ do that sort of thing. A lot of people does buy?"

He said, "No one has yet bought a single copy."

"But why you does keep on going round, then?"

He said, "In this way I watch many things, and I always hope to meet poets."

I said, "You really think I is a poet?"

"You're as good as me," he said.

And when B. Wordsworth left, I prayed I would see him again.

About a week later, coming back from school one afternoon, I met him at the corner of Miguel Street.

He said, "I have been waiting for you a long time."

I said, "You sell any poetry yet?"

He shook his head.

He said, "In my yard I have the best mango tree in Port of Spain.⁴ And now the mangoes are ripe and red and very sweet and juicy. I have waited here for you to tell you this and to invite you to come and eat some of my mangoes."

He lived in Alberto Street in a one-roomed hut placed right in the center of the lot. The yard seemed all green.

There was the big mango tree. There was a coconut tree and there

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³ calypsonians: street singers who perform calypso songs

⁴ Port of Spain: capital of Trinidad, now Trinidad and Tobago

was a plum tree. The place looked wild, as though it wasn't in the city at all. You couldn't see all the big concrete houses in the street.

He was right. The mangoes were sweet and juicy. I ate about six, and the yellow mango juice ran down my arms to my elbows and down my mouth to my chin and my shirt was stained.

My mother said when I got home, "Where you was? You think you is a man now and could go all over the place? Go cut a whip for me."

She beat me rather badly, and I ran out of the house swearing that I would never come back. I went to B. Wordsworth's house. I was so angry, my nose was bleeding.

B. Wordsworth said, "Stop crying, and we will go for a walk."

I stopped crying, but I was breathing short. We went for a walk. We walked down St. Clair Avenue to the Savannah and we walked to the racecourse.

B. Wordsworth said, "Now, let us lie on the grass and look up at the sky, and I want you to think how far those stars are from us."

I did as he told me, and I saw what he meant. I felt like nothing, and at the same time I had never felt so big and great in all my life. I forgot all my anger and all my tears and all the blows.

When I said I was better, he began telling me the names of the stars, and I particularly remembered the constellation of Orion the Hunter, though I don't really know why. I can spot Orion even today, but I have forgotten the rest.

Then a light was flashed into our faces, and we saw a policeman. We got up from the grass.

The policeman said, "What you doing here?"

B. Wordsworth said, "I have been asking myself the same question for forty years."

We became friends, B. Wordsworth and I. He told me, "You must never tell anybody about me and about the mango tree and the coconut tree and the plum tree. You must keep that a secret. If you tell anybody, I will know, because I am a poet."

I gave him my word and I kept it.

I liked his little room. It had no more furniture than George's front room,⁵ but it looked cleaner and healthier. But it also looked lonely.

One day I asked him, "Mr. Wordsworth, why you does keep all this

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⁵ George's front room: George is a character in one of the companion stories from Miguel Street, the book in which this story appears.

bush in your yard? Ain't it does make the place damp?"

He said, "Listen, and I will tell you a story. Once upon a time a boy and girl met each other and they fell in love. They loved each other so much they got married. They were both poets. He loved words. She loved grass and flowers and trees. They lived happily in a single room, and then one day, the girl poet said to the boy poet, "We are going to have another poet in the family." But this poet was never born, because the girl died, and the young poet died with her, inside her. And the girl's husband was very sad, and he said he would never touch a thing in the girl's garden. And so the garden remained, and grew high and wild."

I looked at B. Wordsworth and as he told me this lovely story, he seemed to grow older. I understood his story.

We went for long walks together. We went to the Botanical Gardens and the Rock Gardens. We climbed Chancellor Hill in the late afternoon and watched the darkness fall on Port of Spain, and watched the lights go on in the city and on the ships in the harbor.

He did everything as though he were doing it for the first time in his life. He did everything as though he were doing some church rite.

He would say to me, "Now, how about having some ice cream?"

And when I said yes, he would grow very serious and say, "Now, which café shall we **patronize**?" As though it were a very important thing. He would think for some time about it, and finally say, "I think I will go and negotiate the purchase with that shop."

The world became a most exciting place.

One day, when I was in his yard, he said to me, "I have a great secret which I am now going to tell you."

I said, "It really secret?"

"At the moment, yes."

I looked at him, and he looked at me. He said, "This is just between you and me, remember. I am writing a poem."

"Oh." I was disappointed.

He said, "But this is a different sort of poem. This is the greatest poem in the world."

I whistled.

He said, "I have been working on it for more than five years now. I will finish it in about twenty-two years from now, that is, if I keep on writing at the present rate."

patronize: to be a customer of a certain store or business

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"You does write a lot, then?"

He said, "Not any more. I just write one line a month. But I make sure it is a good line."

I asked, "What was last month's good line?"

He looked up at the sky, and said, "The past is deep."

I said, "It is a beautiful line."

B. Wordsworth said, "I hope to **distill** the experiences of a whole month into that single line of poetry. So, in twenty-two years, I shall have written a poem that will sing to all humanity."

I was filled with wonder.

Our walks continued. We walked along the seawall at Docksite one day, and I said, "Mr. Wordsworth, if I drop this pin in the water, you think it will float?"

He said, "This is a strange world. Drop your pin, and let us see what will happen."

The pin sank.

I said, "How is the poem this month?"

But he never told me any other line. He merely said, "Oh, it comes, you know. It comes."

Or we would sit on the seawall and watch the liners come into the harbor.

But of the greatest poem in the world I heard no more.

I felt he was growing older.

"How does you live, Mr. Wordsworth?" I asked him one day.

He said, "You mean how I get money?"

When I nodded, he laughed in a crooked way.

He said, "I sing calypso in the calypso season."

"And that last you the rest of the year?"

"It is enough."

"But you will be the richest man in the world when you write the greatest poem?"

He didn't reply.

One day when I went to see him in his little house, I found him lying on his little bed. He looked so old and so weak, that I found myself wanting to cry.

He said, "The poem is not going well."

distill: to obtain the essential part

The Modern Era "B.Wordsworth" **963**

He wasn't looking at me. He was looking through the window at the coconut tree, and he was speaking as though I wasn't there. He said, "When I was twenty I felt the power within myself." Then, almost in front of my eyes, I could see his face growing older and more tired. He said, "But that—that was a long time ago."

And then—I felt it so keenly, it was as though I had been slapped by my mother. I could see it clearly on his face. It was there for everyone to see. Death on the shrinking face.

He looked at me, and saw my tears and sat up.

He said, "Come." I went and sat on his knees.

He looked into my eyes, and he said, "Oh, you can see it, too. I always knew you had the poet's eye."

He didn't even look sad, and that made me burst out crying loudly.

He pulled me to his thin chest, and said, "Do you want me to tell you a funny story?" and he smiled encouragingly at me.

But I couldn't reply.

He said, "When I have finished this story, I want you to promise that you will go away and never come back to see me. Do you promise?"

I nodded.

He said, "Good. Well, listen. That story I told you about the boy poet and the girl poet, do you remember that? That wasn't true. It was something I just made up. All this talk about poetry and the greatest poem in the world, that wasn't true, either. Isn't that the funniest thing you have heard?"

But his voice broke.

I left the house, and ran home crying, like a poet, for everything I saw.

I walked along Alberto Street a year later, but I could find no sign of the poet's house. It hadn't vanished, just like that. It had been pulled down, and a big two-storied building had taken its place. The mango tree and the plum tree and the coconut tree had all been cut down, and there was brick and concrete everywhere.

It was just as though B. Wordsworth had never existed.

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After You Read "B. Wordsworth"

Literary Lens: First-Person Point of View

Locate at least three passages from the story in which the narrator reveals something important about B. Wordsworth. Create a chart to help you organize your information. If the story had been written in third-person point of view, would it be as effective?

Passages About B. Wordsworth	What They Reveal

Explore Context: Colonialism and Its Aftermath

Unfortunately, many former British colonies suffer from high rates of poverty. Compare Naipaul's portrayal of poverty with that of Nadine Gordimer's in "A Train from Rhodesia" (pages 949–954). In which story does poverty play a more significant role?

Apply and Create: Dialogue

Listen carefully to the conversations you encounter in your own life—at school, at home, and in public places. Then write a one-page dialogue between two made-up characters, drawing on the subject matter, words, and phrases you've heard. Make sure the dialogue reveals the personality traits and natural speech of your characters. Share it with the class.

Read Critically

Reread this excerpt from "B. Wordsworth." Answer the questions and support your answers with details from the story.

"What your name, mister?" . . .

"Black. Black Wordsworth. White Wordsworth was my brother. We share one heart. I can watch a small flower like the morning-glory and cry."

I said, "Why you does cry?"

"Why, boy? Why? You will know when you grow up. You're a poet, too, you know. And when you're a poet you can cry for everything."...

He pulled out a printed sheet from his hip pocket and said, "On this paper is the greatest poem about mothers and I'm going to sell it to you at a bargain price. For four cents." . . .

I said to B. Wordsworth, "My mother say she ain't have four cents."

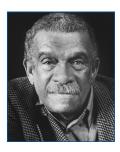
B. Wordsworth said, "It is the poet's tragedy."

- Contrast the way the boy and the old man speak. What does Naipaul reveal through their dialogue?
- 2. What is the author's purpose in giving the old man the name B. Wordsworth?



3. What comment does the author seem to be making about the poet's place in society?

Before You Read Midsummer and "Elegy for the Giant Tortoises"





DEREK WALCOTT (born 1930) and MARGARET ATWOOD (born 1939) both represent important perspectives in the world of contemporary literature. Walcott, who was born on the small Caribbean island of St. Lucia, often writes about the clash between West Indian, American, and European colonial cultures. In this excerpt from his long poem *Midsummer*, he laments the cultural and environmental changes in

the Caribbean islands. In addition to writing, teaching creative writing, and creating visual art, he founded the first professional acting troupe in the West Indies. Walcott was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1992.

Canadian-born Atwood is one of the most talented writers in her country today. Known primarily as a poet and novelist, she has gained worldwide acclaim for her deep insights into human relationships and society at large. Her interest in the natural world began in childhood, when her family spent many months each year living in the sparsely populated areas of northern Quebec and Ontario while her father, a scientist, did research.

Literary Lens



TONE Tone is the attitude that an author projects onto the subject of his or her writing. Tone in poetry is often communicated through word choice. A poet chooses his or her words very carefully, always bearing in mind the connotation, or the positive or negative emotional charge, a word will create in the reader.

Walcott's and Atwood's Language

In the two poems you are about to read, both poets use a style that resembles everyday speech, a popular technique in contemporary poetry. This style is open and inviting, helping to make the message more meaningful and accessible to the reader. In addition, both Walcott and Atwood are masters of diction, or word choice, and imagery. The words they choose and the images evoked add greatly to the impact of their poems.

Think Critically

Before you read the two poems that follow, use critical thinking to deepen your understanding.

- Recall that Walcott is a visual artist in addition to a poet. Based on this fact, what qualities might you expect to find in his poem?
- Analyze Atwood's use of the word elegy in the title of her poem. What can you infer about her subject? Based on other elegies you've read, will her tone be serious or lighthearted?



3. Evaluate the connotation of the title *Midsummer*. Predict images that might be found in the poem.

from MIDSUMMER

Derek Walcott

Certain things here are quietly American that chain-link fence dividing the absent roars of the beach from the empty ball park, its holes muttering the word umpire instead of empire; 5 the gray, metal light where an early pelican coasts, with its engine off, over the pink fire of a sea whose surface is as cold as Maine's. The light warms up the sides of white, eager Cessnas¹ parked at the airstrip under the freckling hills 10 of St. Thomas.² The sheds, the brown, functional hangar, are like those of the Occupation in the last war. The night left a rank smell under the casuarinas,3 the villas have fenced-off beaches where the natives walk, illegal immigrants from unlucky islands 15 who envy the smallest polyp⁴ its right to work.

I **Cessnas:** small, private airplanes used for short flights

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² St. Thomas: island in the Caribbean Sea, part of the United States Virgin Islands

³ casuarinas: trees that have whorls of scalelike leaves and jointed stems resembling horsetails

⁴ polyp: small ocean organism, such as the sea anemone, with a hollow cylindrical body and central mouth surrounded by tentacles

corrugations: a pattern of ridges and grooves

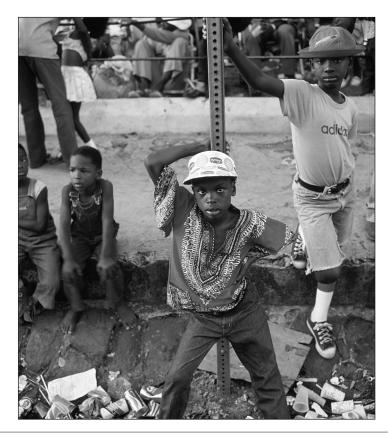
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corpuscles: living cells

migrant: person who moves regularly in order to find work, especially in harvesting crops

fealty: intense allegiance; the fidelity of a vassal to his lord Here the wetback crab and the mollusk are citizens, and the leaves have green cards. Bulldozers jerk and gouge out a hill, but we all know that the dust is industrial and must be suffered. Soon—the sea's **corrugations** are sheets of zinc soldered by the sun's steady acetylene. This drizzle that falls now is American rain, stitching stars in the sand. My own **corpuscles** are changing as fast. I fear what the **migrant** envies: the starry pattern they make—the flag on the post office—the quality of the dirt, the **fealty** changing under my foot.



- green cards: identity card attesting the permanent resident status of an alien in the United States
- 6 acetylene: a colorless, gaseous hydrocarbon used chiefly in organic synthesis and as a fuel (as in welding and soldering)

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Elegy for the Giant Tortoises

Margaret Atwood

Let others pray for the passenger pigeon, the dodo, the whooping crane, the Eskimo: everyone must specialize

I will confine myself to a **meditation** upon the giant tortoises **withering** finally on a remote island.

I concentrate on subway stations, in parks, I can't quite see them, they move to the **peripheries** of my eyes

but on the last day they will be there;already the eventlike a wave traveling shapes vision:

on the road where I stand they will materialize, plodding past me in a straggling line

15 awkward without water

5

their small heads **pondering** from side to side, their useless armor sadder than tanks and history,

in their closed gaze ocean and sunlight paralyzed, lumbering up the steps, under the archways toward the square glass altars

where the brittle gods are kept, the **relics** of what we have destroyed, our holy and **obsolete** symbols. meditation: a

discourse of personal reflections

withering: wasting away

peripheries: the outward edges or limits

pondering: thinking about, reflecting upon

relics: traces of some outmoded custom or belief

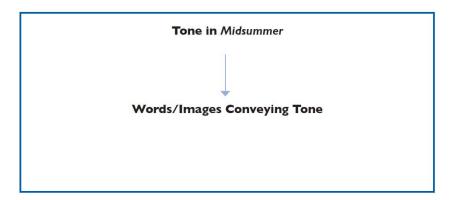
obsolete: no longer in use; out-of-date

20

After You Read Midsummer and "Elegy for the Giant Tortoises"

Literary Lens: Tone

Reread the two poems. Compare the tone of each work. For each poem, make a diagram like the one shown. Record words, phrases, and images that help create the tone in each poem. Write a paragraph comparing the tones of the poems.



Explore Context: Allusions

To understand the imagery in Walcott's poem, *Midsummer*, one must understand the many allusions he makes to things found on the island of St. Thomas. For example, one Web site explains that the casuarina tree referred to in line 12 is not a tree native to St. Thomas. In fact, the casuarina tree "displaces native plant species and destroys habitat for native insects and other wildlife" (www.issg.org/database/species/ecology.asp?si=365&fr=1&sts=&lang=EN). When this fact is understood in light of other imagery in the poem, the readers can fully understand Walcott's message. Compile a list of allusions from the poem and conduct research to understand his references to the people, places, and animals from the island of St. Thomas.

Apply and Create: Letter to the Editor

Each poem in this lesson communicates a theme that expresses both regret and concern about changes in population and in the environment and the losses that come with change. Choose an issue related to immigration or the environment that your own community is facing. Write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper, expressing your concern. Incorporate facts and give reasons why readers should agree with your opinion.

Read Critically

Reread these lines from *Midsummer* and "Elegy for the Giant Tortoises." Answer the questions and support your answers with details from the passages and the rest of the two poems.

from Midsummer

The light warms up the sides of white, eager Cessnas parked at the airstrip under the freckling hills

of St. Thomas. The sheds, the brown, functional hangar, are like those of the Occupation in the last war.

The night left a rank smell under the casuarinas, the villas have fenced-off beaches where the natives walk, illegal immigrants from unlucky islands

who envy the smallest polyp its right to work.

from "Elegy for the Giant Tortoises"

their small heads pondering from side to side, their useless armor sadder than tanks and history,

in their closed gaze ocean and sunlight paralyzed,
lumbering up the steps, under the archways
toward the square glass altars

- 1. What can you infer about the native population of St. Thomas from this passage?
- 2. What is the speaker in Atwood's poem referring to in the phrase "the square glass altars" (line 21)?
- 3. Based upon the message of their poetry, what do Walcott and Atwood value? What do they want to change about modern society?

Before You Read "A Devoted Son"



ANITA DESAI (born 1937) is a novelist and short story writer known for her closely crafted portraits of life in postcolonial India. Born in India to a German mother and an Indian father, young Desai learned to speak German, Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, and English, which was the language used in her school. Because she always considered it "the language of books," she chose to write in English. She published her first short story at the young age of nine. Soon after completing her university studies, her writing career flourished. Like other contemporary writers, Desai taps into the psychology of her characters—their thoughts, emotions,

and sense of identity. She also depicts the frequent tensions between cultures and between generations of family members. Herself a person with a diverse background, she writes with keen insight into the lives of people who at times feel a strong connection to two worlds while at other times feel lost in both. In addition to her writing, Desai has enjoyed a teaching career that has included positions in England and the United States.

Literary Elements



CHARACTER MOTIVATION As in life, fictional characters have motivations, or reasons for behaving the way they do. Sometimes, a character's motivation to act a certain way is obvious; at other times, the writer leaves the reader to infer the reasons for certain behaviors.

IRONY Irony is the contrast between expectation and reality. In this story, Desai uses situational irony to convey an unsettling turn of events that the main character never expected.

Desai's Language

Desai has been praised for the clarity of her prose and for the descriptive details she incorporates into her storytelling. Through the eyes of her omniscient narrator, the characters, events, and setting of the story are richly drawn with the precision of a photograph.

Think Critically





- I. Based on the fact that Desai delves into the psychology of her characters, what other authors in this unit might she have appreciated?
- 2. Skim the first page of the story and evaluate Desai's approach to storytelling. What adjectives would you use to describe her style?

A Devoted Son

Anita Desai

When the results appeared in the morning papers, Rakesh scanned them, barefoot and in his pajamas, at the garden gate, then went up the steps to the veranda, where his father sat sipping his morning tea and bowed down to touch his feet.

"A first division, son?" his father asked, beaming, reaching for the papers.

"At the top of the list, Papa," Rakesh murmured, as if awed. "First in the country."

Bedlam broke loose then. The family whooped and danced. The whole day long visitors streamed into the small yellow house at the end of the road to congratulate the parents of this *Wunderkind*,¹ to slap Rakesh on the back and fill the house and garden with the sounds and colors of a festival. There were garlands and *halwa*,² party clothes and gifts (enough fountain pens to last years, even a watch or two), nerves and temper and joy, all in a multicolored whirl of pride and great shining vistas newly opened: Rakesh was the first son in the family to receive an education, so much had been sacrificed in order to send him to school and then medical college, and at last the fruits of their sacrifice had arrived, golden and glorious.

To everyone who came to him to say, "Mubarak,3 Varmaji, your son has brought you glory," the father said, "Yes, and do you know what is the first thing he did when he saw the results this morning? He came and touched my feet. He bowed down and touched my feet." This moved many of the women in the crowd so much that they were seen to raise the ends of their saris and dab at their tears while the men reached out for the betel-leaves4 and sweetmeats that were offered around on trays and shook their heads in wonder and approval of such **exemplary filial** behavior. "One does not often see such behavior in sons any more," they all agreed, a little enviously perhaps. Leaving the house, some of

exemplary: worthy of example filial: befitting a son or daughter

I Wunderkind: one who achieves success at an early age

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² halwa: South Asian confection made with wheat, honey, dried fruits, and nuts

³ Mubarak: Arabic word meaning "blessings"

⁴ betel-leaves: leaves of the betel palm commonly chewed in Asia to promote digestion

the women said, sniffing, "At least on such an occasion they might have served pure ghee⁵ sweets," and some of the men said, "Don't you think old Varma was giving himself airs? He needn't think we don't remember that he comes from the vegetable market himself, his father used to sell vegetables, and he has never seen the inside of a school." But there was more envy than rancor in their voices and it was, of course, inevitable—not every son in that shabby little colony at the edge of the city was destined to shine as Rakesh shone, and who knew that better than the parents themselves?

ascent: advance in social status

prestigious:

having honor; wellspoken of

encomiums:

formal expressions of praise

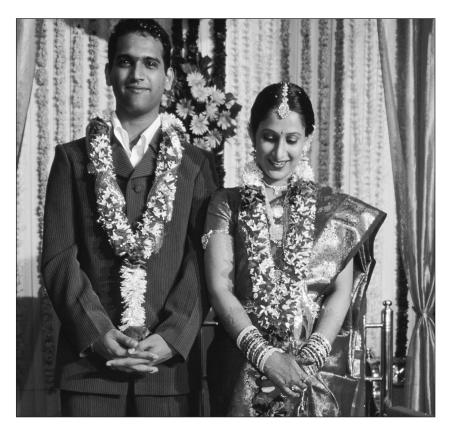
placid:
complaisant;
desiring to please

And that was only the beginning, the first step in a great, sweeping **ascent** to the radiant heights of fame and fortune. The thesis he wrote for his M.D. brought Rakesh still greater glory, if only in select medical circles. He won a scholarship. He went to the USA (that was what his father learnt to call it and taught the whole family to say-not America, which was what the ignorant neighbors called it, but, with a grand familiarity, "the USA") where he pursued his career in the most **prestigious** of all hospitals and won **encomiums** from his American colleagues which were relayed to his admiring and glowing family. What was more, he came *back*, he actually returned to that small yellow house in the once-new but increasingly shabby colony, right at the end of the road where the rubbish vans tipped out their stinking contents for pigs to nose in and rag-pickers to build their shacks on, all steaming and smoking just outside the neat wire fences and well-tended gardens. To this Rakesh returned and the first thing he did on entering the house was to slip out of the embraces of his sisters and brothers and bow down and touch his father's feet.

As for his mother, she gloated chiefly over the strange fact that he had not married in America, had not brought home a foreign wife as all her neighbors had warned her he would, for wasn't that what all Indian boys went abroad for? Instead he agreed, almost without argument, to marry a girl she had picked out for him in her own village, the daughter of a childhood friend, a plump and uneducated girl, it was true, but so old-fashioned, so **placid**, so complaisant that she slipped into the household and settled in like a charm, seemingly too lazy and too good-natured to even try and make Rakesh leave home and set up independently, as any other girl might have done. What was more, she was pretty—really pretty, in a plump, pudding way that only gave way

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⁵ ghee: clarified butter



to fat—soft, spreading fat, like warm wax—after the birth of their first baby, a son, and then what did it matter?

For some years Rakesh worked in the city hospital, quickly rising to the top of the administrative organization, and was made a director before he left to set up his own clinic. He took his parents in his car—a new, sky-blue Ambassador with a rear window full of stickers and charms revolving on strings—to see the clinic when it was built, and the large sign-board over the door on which his name was printed in letters of red, with a row of degrees and qualifications to follow it like so many little black slaves of the regent. Thereafter his fame seemed to grow just a little dimmer—or maybe it was only that everyone in town had grown accustomed to it at last—but it was also the beginning of his fortune for he now became known not only as the best but also the richest doctor in town.

6 regent: ruler or governor

However, all this was not accomplished in the wink of an eye. Naturally not. It was the achievement of a lifetime and it took up Rakesh's whole life. At the time he set up his clinic his father had grown into an old man and retired from his post at the kerosene dealer's depot at which he had worked for forty years, and his mother died soon after, giving up the ghost with a sigh that sounded positively happy, for it was her own son who ministered to her in her last illness and who sat pressing her feet at the last moment—such a son as few women had borne.

For it had to be admitted—and the most unsuccessful and most rancorous of neighbors eventually did so—that Rakesh was not only a devoted son and a miraculously good-natured man who contrived somehow to obey his parents and humor his wife and show concern equally for his children and his patients, but there was actually a brain inside this beautifully polished and formed body of good manners and kind nature and, in between ministering to his family and playing host to many friends and coaxing them all into feeling happy and grateful and content, he had actually trained his hands as well and emerged an excellent doctor, a really fine surgeon. How one man—and a man born to illiterate parents, his father having worked for a kerosene dealer and his mother having spent her life in a kitchen—had achieved, combined and conducted such a medley of virtues, no one could fathom, but all acknowledged his talent and skill.

It was a strange fact, however, that talent and skill, if displayed for too long, cease to dazzle. It came to pass that the most admiring of all eyes eventually faded and no longer blinked at his glory. Having retired from work and having lost his wife, the old father very quickly went to pieces, as they say. He developed so many complaints and fell ill so frequently and with such mysterious diseases that even his son could no longer make out when it was something of significance and when it was merely a **peevish** whim. He sat huddled on his string bed most of the day and developed an exasperating habit of stretching out suddenly and lying absolutely still, allowing the whole family to fly around him in a flap, wailing and weeping, and then suddenly sitting up, stiff and gaunt, and spitting out a big gob of betel-juice as if to mock their behavior.

peevish:ill-tempered;
irritable

He did this once too often: there had been a big party in the house, a birthday party for the youngest son, and the celebrations had to be suddenly hushed, covered up and hustled out of the way when the daughter-in-law discovered, or thought she discovered, that the old man,

stretched out from end to end of his string bed, had lost his pulse; the party broke up, dissolved, even turned into a band of mourners, when the old man sat up and the distraught daughter-in-law received a gob of red spittle right on the hem of her new organza sari. After that no one much cared if he sat up cross-legged on his bed, hawking and spitting, or lay down flat and turned grey as a corpse. Except, of course, for that pearl amongst pearls, his son Rakesh.

It was Rakesh who brought him his morning tea, not in one of the china cups from which the rest of the family drank, but in the old man's favorite brass tumbler, and sat at the edge of his bed, comfortable and relaxed with the string of his pajamas dangling out from under his fine lawn night-shirt, and discussed or, rather, read out the morning news to his father. It made no difference to him that his father made no response apart from spitting. It was Rakesh, too, who, on returning from the clinic in the evening, persuaded the old man to come out of his room, as bare and desolate as a cell, and take the evening air out in the garden, beautifully arranging the pillows and bolsters on the divan in the corner of the open veranda. On summer nights he saw to it that the servants carried out the old man's bed onto the lawn and himself helped his father down the steps and onto the bed, soothing him and settling him down for a night under the stars.

All this was very gratifying for the old man. What was not so gratifying was that he even undertook to supervise his father's diet. One day when the father was really sick, having ordered his daughter-in-law to make him a dish of *soojie halwa* and eaten it with a saucerful of cream, Rakesh marched into the room, not with his usual respectful step but with the confident and rather contemptuous stride of the famous doctor, and declared, "No more *halwa* for you, Papa. We must be sensible, at your age. If you must have something sweet, Veena will cook you a little *kheer*, that's light, just a little rice and milk. But nothing fried, nothing rich. We can't have this happening again."

The old man who had been lying stretched out on his bed, weak and feeble after a day's illness, gave a start at the very sound, the tone of these words. He opened his eyes—rather, they fell open with shock—and he stared at his son with disbelief that darkened quickly to reproach. A son who actually refused his father the food he craved? No, it was

⁷ organza sari: The sari is the traditional dress of Indian women. This one is made of sheer, stiff fabric. Saris are draped around the body and then over one shoulder.

⁸ kheer: rice pudding served as a dessert

unheard of, it was incredible. But Rakesh had turned his back to him and was cleaning up the litter of bottles and packets on the medicine shelf and did not notice while Veena slipped silently out of the room with a little smirk that only the old man saw, and hated.

frugal: small and sparing

Halwa was only the first item to be crossed off the old man's diet. One delicacy after the other went—everything fried to begin with, then everything sweet, and eventually everything, everything that the old man enjoyed. The meals that arrived for him on the shining stainless steel tray twice a day were **frugal** to say the least—dry bread, boiled lentils, boiled vegetables and, if there were a bit of chicken or fish, that was boiled too. If he called for another helping—in a cracked voice that quavered theatrically—Rakesh himself would come to the door, gaze at him sadly and shake his head, saying, "Now, Papa, we must be careful, we can't risk another illness, you know," and although the daughter-in-law kept tactfully out of the way, the old man could just see her smirk sliding merrily through the air. He tried to bribe his grandchildren into buying him sweets (and how he missed his wife now, that generous, indulgent and illiterate cook), whispering, "Here's fifty paise," as he stuffed the coins into a tight, hot fist. "Run down to the shop at the crossroads and buy me thirty paise worth of jalebis, and you can spend the remaining twenty paise on yourself. Eh? Understand? Will you do that?" He got away with it once or twice but then was found out, the conspirator was scolded by his father and smacked by his mother and Rakesh came storming into the room, almost tearing his hair as he shouted through compressed lips, "Now, Papa, are you trying to turn my little son into a liar? Quite apart from spoiling your own stomach, you are spoiling him as well—you are encouraging him to lie to his own parents. You should have heard the lies he told his mother when she saw him bringing back those *jalebis* wrapped up in filthy newspaper. I don't allow anyone in my house to buy sweets in the bazaar, Papa, surely you know that. There's cholera in the city, typhoid, gastroenteritis—I see these cases daily in the hospital, how can I allow my own family to run such risks?" The old man sighed and lay down in the corpse position. But that worried no one any longer.

There was only one pleasure left the old man now (his son's early morning visits and readings from the newspaper could no longer be called that) and those were visits from elderly neighbors. These were

⁹ jalebis: Indian dessert made of coiled, deep-fried batter soaked in syrup

not frequent as his contemporaries were mostly as decrepit and helpless as he and few could walk the length of the road to visit him any more. Old Bhatia, next door, however, who was still spry enough to refuse, adamantly, to bathe in the tiled bathroom indoors and to insist on carrying out his brass mug and towel, in all seasons and usually at impossible hours, into the yard and bathe noisily under the garden tap, would look over the hedge to see if Varma were out on his veranda and would call to him and talk while he wrapped his *dhoti* about him and dried the sparse hair on his head, shivering with enjoyable exaggeration. Of course these conversations, bawled across the hedge by two rather deaf old men conscious of having their entire households overhearing them, were not very satisfactory but Bhatia occasionally came out of his yard, walked down the bit of road and came in at Varma's gate to collapse onto the stone plinth built under the temple tree. If Rakesh were at home he would help his father down the steps into the garden and arrange him on his night bed under the tree and leave the two old men to chew betel-leaves and discuss the ills of their individual bodies with combined passion.

"At least you have a doctor in the house to look after you," sighed Bhatia, having vividly described his martyrdom to piles.¹⁰

"Look after me?" cried Varma, his voice cracking like an ancient clay jar. "He—he does not even give me enough to eat."

"What?" said Bhatia, the white hairs in his ears twitching. "Doesn't give you enough to eat? Your own son?"

"My own son. If I ask him for one more piece of bread, he says no, Papa, I weighed out the *ata* myself and I can't allow you to have more than two hundred grams of cereal a day. He weighs the food he gives me, Bhatia—he has scales to weigh it on. That is what it has come to."

"Never," murmured Bhatia in disbelief. "Is it possible, even in this evil age, for a son to refuse his father food?"

"Let me tell you," Varma whispered eagerly. "Today the family was having fried fish—I could smell it. I called to my daughter-in-law to bring me a piece. She came to the door and said No . . . "

"Said No?" It was Bhatia's voice that cracked. A *drongo*¹¹ shot out of the tree and sped away. "No?"

"No, she said no, Rakesh has ordered her to give me nothing fried. No butter, he says, no oil—"

¹⁰ piles: hemorrhoids

II drongo: black bird with forked tail

"No butter? No oil? How does he expect his father to live?"

Old Varma nodded with melancholy triumph. "That is how he treats me—after I have brought him up, given him an education, made him a great doctor. Great doctor! This is the way great doctors treat their fathers, Bhatia," for the son's sterling personality and character now underwent a curious sea change. Outwardly all might be the same but the interpretation had altered: his masterly efficiency was nothing but cold heartlessness, his authority was only tyranny in disguise.

There was cold comfort in complaining to neighbors and, on such a miserable diet, Varma found himself slipping, weakening and soon becoming a genuinely sick man. Powders and pills and mixtures were not only brought in when dealing with a crisis like an upset stomach but became a regular part of his diet—became his diet, complained Varma, supplanting the natural foods he craved. There were pills to regulate his bowel movements, pills to bring down his blood pressure, pills to deal with his arthritis and, eventually, pills to keep his heart beating. In between there were panicky rushes to the hospital, some humiliating experiences with the stomach pump and enema, which left him frightened and helpless. He cried easily, shriveling up on his bed, but if he complained of a pain or even a vague, gray fear in the night, Rakesh would simply open another bottle of pills and force him to take one. "I have my duty to you, Papa," he said when his father begged to be let off.

"Let me be," Varma begged, turning his face away from the pills on the outstretched hand. "Let me die. It would be better. I do not want to live only to eat your medicines."

"Papa, be reasonable."

"I leave that to you," the father cried with sudden spirit. "Let me alone, let me die now, I cannot live like this."

"Lying all day on his pillows, fed every few hours by his daughterin-law's own hands, visited by every member of his family daily—and then he says he does not want to live 'like this'," Rakesh was heard to say, laughing, to someone outside the door.

"Deprived of food," screamed the old man on the bed, "his wishes ignored, taunted by his daughter-in-law, laughed at by his grandchildren—that is how I live." But he was very old and weak and all anyone heard was an incoherent croak, some expressive grunts and cries of genuine pain. Only once, when old Bhatia had come to see him

and they sat together under the temple tree, they heard him cry, "God is calling me—and they won't let me go."

The quantities of vitamins and tonics he was made to take were not altogether useless. They kept him alive and even gave him a kind of strength that made him hang on long after he ceased to wish to hang on. It was as though he were straining at a rope, trying to break it, and it would not break, it was still strong. He only hurt himself, trying.

In the evening, that summer, the servants would come into his cell, grip his bed, one at each end, and carry it out to the veranda, there setting it down with a thump that jarred every tooth in his head. In answer to his agonized complaints they said the Doctor Sahib had told them he must take the evening air and the evening air they would make him take—thump. Then Veena, that smiling, **hypocritical** pudding in a rustling sari, would appear and pile up the pillows under his head till he was propped up stiffly into a sitting position that made his head swim and his back ache

"Let me lie down," he begged. "I can't sit up any more."

"Try, Papa, Rakesh said you can if you try," she said, and drifted away to the other end of the veranda where her transistor radio vibrated to the lovesick tunes from the cinema that she listened to all day.

So there he sat, like some stiff corpse, terrified, gazing out on the lawn where his grandsons played cricket, in danger of getting one of their hard-spun balls in his eye, and at the gate that opened onto the dusty and rubbish-heaped lane but still bore, proudly, a newly touched-up signboard that bore his son's name and qualifications, his own name having vanished from the gate long ago.

At last the sky-blue Ambassador arrived, the cricket game broke up in haste, the car drove in smartly and the doctor, the great doctor, all in white, stepped out. Someone ran up to take his bag from him, others to escort him up the steps. "Will you have tea?" his wife called, turning down the transistor set, "Or a Coca-Cola? Shall I fry you some samosas?" But he did not reply or even glance in her direction. Ever a devoted son, he went first to the corner where his father sat gazing, stricken, at some undefined spot in the dusty yellow air that swam before him. He did not turn his head to look at his son. But he stopped gobbling air with his uncontrolled lips and set his jaw as hard as a sick and very old man could set it.

hypocritical: pretending to be what one is not

¹² samosas: triangular-shaped pastries filled with meat or vegetables and fried in oil

"Papa," his son said, tenderly, sitting down on the edge of the bed and reaching out to press his feet.

Old Varma tucked his feet under him, out of the way, and continued to gaze stubbornly into the yellow air of the summer evening.

"Papa, I'm home. "Varma's hand jerked suddenly, in a sharp, derisive movement, but he did not speak.

"How are you feeling, Papa?"

Then Varma turned and looked at his son. His face was so out of control and all in pieces, that the multitude of expressions that crossed it could not make up a whole and convey to the famous man exactly what his father thought of him, his skill, his art.

"I'm dying," he croaked. "Let me die, I tell you."

"Papa, you're joking," his son smiled at him, lovingly. "I've brought you a new tonic to make you feel better. You must take it, it will make you feel stronger again. Here it is. Promise me you will take it regularly, Papa."

Varma's mouth worked as hard as though he still had a gob of betel in it (his supply of betel had been cut off years ago). Then he spat out some words, as sharp and bitter as poison, into his son's face. "Keep your tonic—I want none—I won't take any more of—of your medicines. None. Never," and he swept the bottle out of his son's hand with a wave of his own, suddenly grand, suddenly effective.

His son jumped, for the bottle was smashed and thick brown syrup had splashed up, staining his white trousers. His wife let out a cry and came running. All around the old man was hubbub once again, noise, attention.

He gave one push to the pillows at his back and dislodged them so he could sink down on his back, quite flat again. He closed his eyes and pointed his chin at the ceiling, like some **dire** prophet, groaning, "God is calling me—now let me go."

dire: warning of disaster

After You Read "A Devoted Son"

Literary Lens: Character Motivation

Create a chart like the one below. Next to each action, write down the character's motivation. Then evaluate which motivations seem understandable and which seem questionable.

Actions Motivation

Varma providing Rakesh with medical education →

Rakesh's constant devotion to Varma →

Rakesh insisting on a strict diet for Varma →

Varma turning against Rakesh →

Explore Context: Tensions Within Indian Culture

Many modern authors are exploring the conflicts that arise between traditional and contemporary aspects of life for Indians. Read a short story by another contemporary author of Indian descent, such as Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, or Kiran Desai (daughter of Anita Desai). Prepare an oral report that reveals the story's themes and conflicts.

Apply and Create: Personal Essay

Life often presents ironic situations. Write a personal essay in which you describe something ironic that happened to you, a friend, or a relative. Share your writing with a small group of students.

Read Critically

Reread this paragraph from "A Devoted Son." Answer the questions and support your answers with details from the the story.

Old Varma nodded with melancholy triumph. "That is how he treats me—after I have brought him up, given him an education, made him a great doctor. Great doctor! This is the way great doctors treat their fathers, Bhatia," for the son's sterling personality and character now underwent a curious sea change. Outwardly all might be the same but the interpretation had altered: his masterly efficiency was nothing but cold heartlessness, his authority was only tyranny in disguise.

- 1. What is ironic about Varma's attitude toward Rakesh in this passage?
- 2. In your opinion, is Varma justified in feeling the way he does?
- 3. What messages does the author seem to be proposing about parent-child relationships and modernized medicine?



Samuel Beckett: Father of Postmodern Theatre



We are all born mad. Some remain so.

—Waiting for Godot

Theatre of the Absurd was a coin termed to describe the nonsensical plays written after the second world war. Playwright Samuel Beckett's wicked humor, clever wordplay, clichés, and lack of dramatic plot have earned him a place as the supreme absurdist of his time. Born in 1906 in Ireland to a middle-class Protestant family,

Beckett was sent to Portora Royal School in Enniskillen at age fourteen. Later, he studied French and Italian at Trinity College in Dublin. At twenty-two, Beckett moved to Paris where he met James Joyce, who became his mentor. One night he was stabbed by a man and almost killed. Beckett later asked his assailant why he had attacked him. "I don't know," he answered. This same disconnectedness can be found in Beckett's postmodern masterpiece, *Waiting for Godot*, in which the main characters, Vladimir and Estragon, wait while "nothing happens." The play is often performed on a barren set and contains long pauses and puzzling dialogue. It ends with Vladimir asking, "Shall we go?" and Estragon responding, "Yes" while neither moves. Beckett was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1969 for his "writing, which . . . in the destitution of modern man acquires its elevation." He died in Paris in 1989.

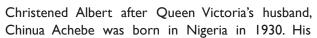
Jean-Jacques Bourgeois in a 1962 performance of *Waiting* for Godot at the Theatre of Odeom in Paris.



Chinua Achebe: Father of Modern African Literature

The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.

—Things Fall Apart





father was a teacher in a missionary school. Achebe learned the values of his Igbo culture while also being raised as a Protestant. In 1944 he attended Government College in Umuahia and later studied English and theology at University College in Ibadan. During that time, Achebe rejected the name Albert and took his indigenous name, Chinua. He joined the Nigerian Broadcasting Company in Lagos in 1954 after traveling in Africa and America. In the 1960s, he was the director of External Services in charge of the Voice of Nigeria. His 1958 novel, Things Fall Apart, derives its title from the first line of William Butler Yeats's poem "The Second Coming." The story is set in the 1890s, a time when British colonial rule and foreign missionaries were exerting influence throughout Nigeria. Initially the story focuses on the ceremonies and rituals of the people and on their leader, Okonkwo, a forceful and respected man. But Okonkwo makes a mistake that upsets the equilibrium, and he is unwilling to try to appease the colonial forces set so powerfully against him. He ends up fighting alone against colonialism and the destructiveness of the missionaries. Achebe has said that this story was "insisting to be told by the owner of the story, not by others, no matter how well meaning or competent." In 1990, a car accident left Achebe paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair. In 2007, he won the Man Booker International Prize. Achebe died in 2013.



Connecting Eras: Evaluate

Literature, like any art form, is to some extent a reflection of its time. In this unit you have explored the modern era of British literature from the beginning of the twentieth century to contemporary times. British poetry and prose in the early twentieth century reflected the evolution of a "tradition of the new," which crowded out the well-worn themes and structures of the Victorian period. Writers of both poetry and prose explored a newfound freedom to experiment with forms that relied on stream of consciousness and individual personality rather than on complex style and rational thought. But the tide of British idealism was dashed upon the rocks of World War I. Literature echoed the disillusionment and hopelessness of the times. Then, on the heels of World War I came the horrors of World War II, and this time not even the icy waters of the Channel could stop the enemy from bombing innocent citizens.

Participating in two world wars took a huge toll on the British economy and contributed to the decline of Britain's colonial empire. As former British colonies gained their independence, their attempts to shed their British skin and find their own identity after decades of British control proved challenging. Bold new writers used poetry as a voice to communicate colonialism's lingering effects on their nations' culture, politics, and lifestyles. One of these postwar, postcolonial poets is John Agard. Born in 1949 in what was then British Guiana (now Guyana), along the northern coast of South America, Agard and his family lived there in 1966 when the nation gained its independence. He later moved to England and worked as a teacher and lecturer. Along the way, he evolved into a multifaceted writer of poetry, short stories, plays, and children's books. In both his teaching and his writing, Agard's mission is to promote understanding of his native Caribbean culture. He has been lauded for



his humanistic, multicultural perspectives and for the rhythms and sensual imagery of his poetry, which he performs in his distinctive calypso dialect all over the world.

The Agard poems you are about to read contain a central message about identity. As you read, evaluate each poem by considering its ability to fulfill the poet's self-proclaimed mission to enlighten, entertain, and educate a broad audience about his native culture. Pay close attention to the rhythms of the language. Read the poems aloud to hear the rhythm of the poetry.

Remember the Ship

John Agard

	As citizen Of the English tongue	25	charting life's tidal rise and fall
5	I say remember the ship in citizenship for language is the baggage we bring— a weight of words to ground	30	as the ship of the sun unloads its light and the ship of night its cargo of stars again I say remember the ship
	and give us wing— as millennial waters beckon wide and love's anchor	35	in citizenship and diversity shall sound its trumpet outside the bigot's wall
15	waiting to be cast will the ghost of race become an albatross we shoot at our cost?	40	and citizenship shall be a call to kinship that knows
20	I'm here to navigate— not flagellate¹ with a whip of the past for is not each member of the human race a ship on two legs	45	no boundary of skin and the heart offer its wide harbors for Europe's new voyage to begin

I flagellate: to whip

Windrush Child

John Agard

	Behind you Windrush ² child palm trees wave goodbye	25	and with one last hug walk good walk good and the sea's wheel carries on spinning
5	above you Windrush child seabirds asking why around you		and from that place England you tell her in a letter of your Windrush adventure
	Windrush child blue water rolling by	30	stepping in a big ship not knowing how long the
10	beside you Windrush child your Windrush mum		journey or that you're stepping into history
	and dad think of storytime yard and mango mornings		bringing your Caribbean eye to another horizon grandmother's words your shining beacon
15	and new beginnings doors closing and opening will things turn out right?	35	learning how to fly the kite of your dreams in an English sky
20	At least the ship will arrive in midsummer light and you Windrush child	40	Windrush child walking good in a mind-opening
20	think of your grandmother telling you don't forget	40	meeting of snow and sun

Windrush: In 1948, the Empire Windrush brought 492 Jamaican immigrants to Great Britain. These passengers were the first wave of Caribbean migrants who profoundly influenced British culture, music, and literature.

Critical Thinking: Evaluate

Ask Yourself

- 1. What do you think was the poet's purpose in writing "Remember the Ship"? In your opinion, how well did he fulfill this purpose?
- 2. How does the poet describe the experience of leaving one's homeland in the poem "Windrush Child"?
- 3. How would you evaluate the imagery in "Remember the Ship"? in "Windrush Child"?
- 4. After reading both poems, which would you say is the more effective work? On what criteria do you base this evaluation?
- 5. As you know, poetry sometimes uses compressed language to convey large ideas and images. How would you evaluate Agard's use of language? Cite examples from the poems to illustrate your response.

Examine the Writing

When you evaluate, you assess the worth or success of something. You evaluate a work of literature both during and after reading. While you read, you evaluate its parts and progression; after you read, you evaluate the work as a whole.

Remember that although evaluation is to some extent subjective, it should be based on a stronger set of criteria than simple whim or personal opinion. For example, criteria for evaluating a poem might take the form of the questions below.

- Does the poem create strong images?
- Is the language formal, informal, or colloquial? Does this type of language help you to understand the main idea of the poem?
- Is the form of the poem appropriate to its subject matter? Why or why not?
- Does the poem's meter or rhythm add to its effectiveness?
- Does the poem touch the emotions?
- · Does it use language creatively and/or cleverly?
- Is it entertaining?
- Did you like the poem? If so, why? If not, why not?

In today's world, cross-cultural understanding and evaluation are perhaps more important than ever before. Evolving technologies allow a constant exchange of ideas and innovations. Some technologies, such as nuclear and chemical weapons, present the world community with an ever-increasing need to maintain peace. As citizens of the world, we must learn to evaluate unfamiliar ideas to better respond to the high stakes of our changing times. Choose one of the following topics related to multicultural perspectives. Address the topic by writing an essay or giving an oral presentation.

- 1. Compare the multicultural perspective in Margaret Atwood's "Elegy for the Giant Tortoises" (page 969) with that of John Agard's "Remember the Ship." What criteria might you use to evaluate the ideas in these two works?
- T. S. Eliot was born in America and later became an English citizen. John Agard left
 his native Guyana to spend more than half his life in England. Search the Internet
 to find out how each poet's immigrant status might have factored into the literary
 works he created.
- 3. Evaluate "Windrush Child" and another poem of your choice from the unit using a rating scale. Then write a short explanation of why you rated each piece as you did.

Organize Your Thoughts

You can use a chart like the one below to evaluate the poems from number 3 above. Circle the number that reflects your evaluation in each category, with 5 being the highest rating and 1 being the lowest.

riteria				Rating	
rong, clear idea	1	2	3	4	5
se of language	1	2	3	4	5
ppeal to emotions	1	2	3	4	5
ntertainment value	1	2	3	4	5
Priginality	1	2	3	4	5
crong purpose	1	2	3	4	5

Get Active

Work first on your own and then with a partner to prepare a presentation of one of John Agard's poems. As you rehearse alone, pay close attention to the images, rhythms, and overall idea of the poem. When you are ready, perform it for your partner. Evaluate each other's work based on criteria such as vocal delivery, posture and body language, and interpretation of the poem's ideas. Give and receive constructive feedback to refine your performances.

Acknowledgments

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