

MAEN304CCT

Postcolonial Literature

M.A. English
(Third Semester)

Centre for Distance and Online Education
Maulana Azad National Urdu University
Hyderabad-32, Telangana- India

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Course: Postcolonial Literature

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Postcolonial Literature
For
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3rd Semester

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(SLM Based on UGC CBCS)
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Vice Chancellor

Message

Director

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Message

Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) was established in 1998 by an Act of the Parliament. It is a central university with NAAC accreditation and the mandate of the university is: (1) promotion of Urdu language, (2) accessibility and availability of professional and technical education in Urdu medium, (3) providing education through traditional and distance learning mode, and (4) a specific focus on women's education. These are the points that distinguish this central university from all other central universities and give it a unique feature. It has been emphasized even in the National Education Policy 2020 to achieve education in mother tongues and regional languages.

The very objective of promotion of knowledge through Urdu is meant to facilitate the accessibility of contemporary knowledge and disciplines to Urdu knowing community. For a long time, there has been a dearth of course material in Urdu. The non-availability of books in Urdu is a matter of concern and Urdu University considers it a privilege to be part of the national process of providing course material in mother tongue/home language as per the vision of NEP 2020. Further, the Urdu speaking community is at a disadvantage in gaining updated knowledge and information in emerging areas or newer knowledge in existing fields due to non-availability of reading material in Urdu. The unavailability of content related to the above domains of knowledge has created an atmosphere of apathy towards attaining knowledge that could significantly affect the intellectual abilities of the Urdu knowing community. These are the challenges that Urdu University is confronted with. The scenario of Self Learning Materials (SLM) is also not very different. The unavailability of course books in Urdu at school/college level comes under discussion at the commencement of every academic year. Since the medium of instruction of Urdu University is only Urdu and it offers almost all the courses of important disciplines, the preparation of books of all these subjects in Urdu is the most important responsibility of the University. To achieve these objectives, MANUU makes available course material in the form of Self Learning Material (SLM) to the students of Distance Learning. The same is also available for sale to anyone interested in gaining knowledge through Urdu. To further provide access to learning, eSLM in Urdu is available for free download from the University website.

I am immensely pleased that due to the hard work of the concerned faculty and full cooperation of the writers, the process of publications of books has begun on a massive scale. To facilitate the students of Distance Learning, the process of preparing and publication of Self Learning Material (SLM) is of paramount importance to the University. I believe that we will be able to meet the requirements of a large Urdu knowing community through our Self Learning Material and will fulfill the mandate of this University and justify our presence in this country.

With best wishes,

Prof. Syed Ainul Hasan
Vice Chancellor
MANUU, Hyderabad

Message

In the present era, distance education is recognized as a very effective and useful mode of education all over the world and a large number of people are benefiting from this mode of education. Maulana Azad National Urdu University also introduced the distance learning mode since its establishment in view of the educational needs of the Urdu speaking population. Maulana Azad National Urdu University started in 1998 with the Directorate of Distance Education and the regular programmes commenced from 2004, and subsequently various departments have been established.

The UGC has played a vital role in efficiently regulating the education system in the country. Various programs running under Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode at CDOE are approved by UGC-DEB. The UGC-DEB has emphasized on synchronizing the syllabi of distance and regular mode to enhance the level of distance learning students. Since Maulana Azad National Urdu University is a dual mode university catering to both distance and traditional mode of learning, to achieve its goal in line with the UGC-DEB guidelines, Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) was introduced and Self Learning Materials are being prepared afresh for UG and PG programmes containing 6 blocks with 24 units and 4 blocks with 16 units respectively.

The Centre for Distance and Online Education offers a total of seventeen (17) programmes comprising of UG, PG, B.Ed., Diploma, and Certificate programmes. Along with this, programmes based on technical skills are also being started. A huge network of nine Regional Centers (Bengaluru, Bhopal, Darbhanga, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Patna, Ranchi, and Srinagar) and six Sub-Regional Centers (Hyderabad, Lucknow, Jammu, Nooh, Varanasi, and Amravati) was established to facilitate the students. Apart from this, an extension center has also been established in Vijayawada. More than one hundred and sixty Learner Support Centres (LSCs) and twenty Programme Centres are run simultaneously under these Regional and Sub-Regional Centers to provide educational and administrative support to the students. The Centre for Distance and Online Education makes full use of ICT in its educational and administrative activities, and offers admission to all its programs through online mode only.

The soft copies of Self Learning Material (SLM) for students are made available on the website of the Centre for Distance and Online Education and the links of audio and video recordings are also made available on the website. In addition, facilities of E-mail and WhatsApp groups are being provided to the students through which the learners are informed about various aspects of the program such as course registration, assignments, counselling, examinations, etc. In addition to regular counseling, additional remedial online counseling is being provided from the last two years to improve the academic standards of the students.

It is expected that the Centre for Distance and Online Education will play a vital role to bring educationally and economically backward population into the mainstream of contemporary education. In near future, changes will be made in various programmes under the New Education Policy (NEP-2020) in view of the educational needs and it is hoped that this will help in making the Open and Distance Learning system more efficient and effective.

Prof. Mohd Razaullah Khan

Director, Centre for Distance and Online Education

MANUU, Hyderabad

Introduction to the Course

The M.A. English programme is designed to give a sound knowledge of English Language, Literature and Literary Theory so as to empower the prospective students for higher studies and employment, apart from helping them prepare for competitive exams. It is spread over two years (four semesters) minimum duration. The objectives of the programme are as follows:

- a. to provide a sound base in the English language
- b. to provide insights into the development of English and the phonological, morphological, syntactical and stylistic aspects of language
- c. to provide knowledge in the teaching of English
- d. to explore the various literatures in English
- e. to provide exposure to the different genres, movements and periods of English literature
- f. to facilitate critical and analytical abilities
- g. to introduce literary theory and criticism
- h. to build confidence among learners with language skills in English
- i. to enable the working target group to enhance their qualifications and
- j. To facilitate higher education in the open distance learning mode.

At the end of the two-year post graduate programme in M.A. English, the learner would have mastered the theoretical knowledge of the English language and literature. The learners would be able to appreciate literatures in English, take up critical analysis, understand the different movements, periods and concepts in the study of English language and literature. The two-year programme will prepare the learner for competitive examinations, for employment and for research by developing their skills, apart from leading to refinement.

The course “Postcolonial Literature” aims to introduce the learners to the various literary genres produced in countries formerly under the British Empire and its colonial rule. The key concepts and concerns in Postcolonial literature and theory will also be studied in this course. It also introduces them to the different genres through major Postcolonial writers such as, Chinua Achebe, Bapsi Sidwa, Jamaica Kincaid, Derek Walcott, Oodgeroo Noonuccal, and Allen Curnow. The course is divided into four Blocks and each Block has four Units.

This SLM is supplemented by audio-video lessons. You may visit IMC MANUU YouTube channel <http://youtube.com/u/imcmanuu> for the complete list of AV lessons in English.

With you in your journey through the fields of English language and literature!

Prof. Gulfishaan Habeeb

Programme Coordinator

Postcolonial Literature

Unit - 1: Introduction to Postcolonialism

Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Introduction to Postcolonialism
 - 1.2.1 Terminology
 - 1.2.2 African Postcolonialism
 - 1.2.3 Australian Postcolonialism
 - 1.2.4 Caribbean Postcolonialism
 - 1.2.5 Indian Postcolonialism
 - 1.2.6 Postcolonial Theory
- 1.3 Learning Outcomes
- 1.4 Glossary
- 1.5 Sample Questions
- 1.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1.0 Introduction

Postcolonialism involves the subversion of colonialist thoughts and attitudes in the writings of those who have seen colonial oppression in the recent past, specifically from countries that have become independent of colonial rule in the twentieth century. To understand this idea better, it is important to be able to distinguish between Colonization and Colonialism. Colonization is the practice of taking control over territory to establish dominance over a certain region, be it by brute force or guile. Colonialism, on the other hand operates in a three step framework – firstly, assuming control over land or territory, that is, colonization; secondly, asserting power over body by repressive action; thirdly, by controlling the mind of the colonized body through the means of what Marxist critic Louis Althusser calls the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). Hence, the effects of colonialism are far more dangerous and have a farther reach than that of colonization, affecting multiple generations down the line. So today, if we belong to a nation that was once colonized, and have thoughts about certain traits that our colonisers had, which we lack and need to develop, we are clearly being affected by colonialism.

However, in a landmark text called *Orientalism* (1978), which marks itself as the pioneer of postcolonial theory, Palestinian professor, author, and critic Edward Said has tried to explain

how colonialism has been made possible and the backlash that it has faced in recent years. Said says that the West has created an image of the East in its literature called the Orient, which begs to be civilized by the ever glorious version of the Western world called the Occident. Although, for Said, the Orient meant the Middle East and parts of Northern Africa, in extension the word also applies to the entirety of Africa, South Asia, the Caribbean Isles, and Australasia. Many of these nations were either battling the forces of imperialism or colonial rule, or had recently become independent in the course of the twentieth century. The people in these nations now felt like they had a voice that did not have to be suppressed any more. These voices gave rise to accounts that countered and subverted the narratives and stereotypes set by the Occident. It is these voices that form the base of the unannounced movement called Postcolonialism.

Postcolonialism finds expression in the form of postcolonial literature and postcolonial theory/criticism. Postcolonial literature consists of literary works by authors who write, either in the language of their immediate colonial oppressors or in their own language, and attempt to undo the prejudices and stereotypes created erstwhile by their oppressors or to subvert the literary forms and tropes used by the latter. If we take into consideration literatures only in English, then it would cover those regions which were colonized by imperial England at any point in time. Some of the most noteworthy writers of postcolonial Anglophone literature are as follows: V.S. Naipaul, Derek Walcott, and Jean Rhys among others from the Caribbean Isles; Rabindranath Tagore, R. K. Narayan, Nirad C. Chaudhuri, Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, and Arundhati Roy, among many others from South East Asia; Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Buchi Emecheta, Nadine Gordimer, J. M. Coetzee, among many others from Africa; Patrick White, Peter Carey, Keri Hulme, and Janet Frame, among others from Australasia; W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Seamus Heaney, and J. M. Synge among others from Ireland; and Margaret Atwood and Malcolm Lowry from Canada.

Postcolonial theory/criticism is a way of reading texts that is intended at pointing out the elements of disjuncture in narratives that tend to dispute the representation of nation and culture as portrayed erstwhile by mainstream colonialist writers. Even if a text does not have the structuralist background to be called postcolonial literature, certain portions of it can be used to emphasize on the themes surrounding Postcolonialism. One of the most prominent instances of this can be seen in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, where the relationship between Prospero, Ariel, and Caliban has been subject to postcolonial connotations. The essence of Postcolonialism is enwrapped in Caliban's famous utterance as a slight to his oppressors, Prospero and Miranda:

“You taught me language, and my profit on’t
Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language”

(*The Tempest*, Act I, Scene II, Lines 366-368)

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- understand postcolonial theory and know about the major proponents of postcolonialism.
- know about postcolonial literatures around the world.
- address the socio-cultural, economic, and political aspects of colonialism.
- understand the role of individual authors and theorists in constructing narratives around postcolonialism.
- appreciate the power of literature in the creation of a global movement.

1.2 Understanding Postcolonialism

1.2.1 Terminology:

The ‘post’ in ‘postcolonialism’ is often confused as referring to ‘coming after’, which would render the meaning of the word as ‘that which comes after colonialism’. However, since postcolonialism is more of a global phenomenon, the above meaning becomes questionable because different nations have different timeframes of resisting and emerging out of the state of colonialism. Postcolonialism, hence, is more of a political and ideological notion than that of a linear temporal one. The ideological stance of postcolonialism takes roots in decolonization, which implies methods and practices of opposing and negating the effects of colonization.

Colonized nations were dominated by the discourse of Eurocentrism, which imposed the construction of the colonizer’s culture as a universal narrative, leading to a deluge of colonial politics and violence. Postcolonial literatures emerged as a resistance to said colonial politics by critiquing the ‘universal narratives’ of European enlightenment. The ideological and political motive of the postcolonial writers was to hit hard at the constructed ‘centre’ of the colonial discourse and to bring their own cultures from the margin towards to the centre. This shift led to

a transitioning in sensibilities from a ‘global and universal’ idea to a more ‘local and indigenous’ idea. Hence, we can say that the postcolonial writers took it as a crusade to bring their own respective cultures into the forefront of the universal narratives by resisting to, critiquing, and negating the Eurocentric colonialist narratives.

This enforces the fact that postcolonialism is not cemented in time like most other movements, but is in effect as an ideological framework in the present day and age as well. Having said this, the best way to deal with or study postcolonialism is to study the literatures of various geographical sites impacted by colonialism separately. The following sections will be divided to better understand the four major sites of emerging postcolonial literatures – African, Australian, Caribbean, and Indian.

Check your progress

1. Why does the ‘post’ in postcolonialism signify?

2. What is the difference between colonization and colonialism?

3. What does postcolonial literature critique?

1.2.2 African Postcolonialism:

Postcolonialism in Africa refers to the period following the end of colonial rule in Africa in the mid-20th century, when African countries gained independence and began to define their own political, economic, and social structures. These countries adopted a range of political ideologies, including socialism, democracy, and authoritarianism. Some countries, such as Tanzania and Ghana, embraced socialism and sought to build strong, centralized state structures. Others, such as Kenya and Nigeria, experimented with multi-party democracy, but faced challenges in creating strong, stable political systems.

The Berlin Conference, also known as the Congo Conference or the West African Conference, was held in 1884-85 and organized by Otto von Bismarck, the first chancellor of Germany, at the request of King Leopold II to discuss three major issues. Firstly, the remapping of Africa as a possession of the colonial powers; Secondly, to ensure free trade among colonial powers; Thirdly, to completely disengage African colonies from rights of territory. With such an inhuman history of colonial oppression, the postcolonial period in Africa was marked by a wave of nationalist and pan-Africanist movements, which sought to promote African unity and identity.

These movements were inspired by figures such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, and Patrice Lumumba, who advocated for the decolonization of Africa and the creation of a united African continent. Given below are brief accounts of the most influential postcolonial writers from the continent of Africa.

Frantz Fanon (1925-1961):

Frantz Fanon was a Martinican-born psychiatrist, philosopher, and revolutionary and is known for his critical perspectives on colonialism, racism, and decolonization. Fanon's work has been influential in the fields of psychology, sociology, and political theory. Fanon's most famous work is *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), which analyses the effects of colonialism on the colonized and the psychological impact of racism. He argued that colonialism created a system of oppression that dehumanized the colonized and resulted in a deeply ingrained sense of inferiority. This sense of inferiority, Fanon argued, could only be overcome through a process of decolonization that would lead to the creation of a new, liberated identity for the colonized.

Fanon was also critical of the role of violence in the struggle for liberation in the chapter titled 'On Violence'. He argued that violence was necessary to overthrow the colonial power and create a new society, but he also recognized that violence could lead to the reproduction of the same oppressive structures. In the chapter titled 'On National Culture', he emphasized that the history of colonization is a history of capitalist intervention and that the colonialist mission is indeed a capitalist mission. His essay on 'Colonial War and Mental Disorders' raises the issue of how the postcolonial population deals with the trauma inflicted by the colonial populace, and postcolonial anxiety among others while offering a psychoanalytical criticism of colonization based on Freud's idea of 'psychosis'. Fanon's work on the psychology of oppression has been particularly influential in postcolonial studies, with scholars such as Homi K. Bhabha drawing on his ideas to analyse the cultural and psychological impact of colonialism.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o (b. 1938):

Ngugi wa Thiong'o is a Kenyan writer and literary theorist who has made significant contributions to postcolonial literature and the study of postcolonialism. He was born in Kamiriithu, Kenya, and his early works were written in English, but later he began writing in Gikuyu, his native language. Ngugi's literary works are known for their exploration of African identity, cultural imperialism, and the impact of colonialism on the African continent. In his early works, such as "Weep Not, Child" and "A Grain of Wheat," he portrayed the struggles and experiences of ordinary people in Kenya during the Mau Mau uprising and the aftermath of

British colonialism. These works challenged the dominant narratives of colonialism and provided a voice to the oppressed and marginalized.

However, Ngugi's most significant contribution to postcolonialism is his theory of "decolonizing the mind" as discussed in his book, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, where he argues that language is a tool of power and that the dominance of European languages in African literature perpetuates colonialism. He calls for African writers to reject European languages and use their native languages as a means of reclaiming their cultural identity and challenging the legacy of colonialism. Having established communication as a site of struggle for postcolonial referentiality, Ngugi emphasizes on language as a tool of subversion to throw what he calls the "cultural bomb" of imperialism back at it. Ngugi's theory of decolonizing the mind has had a significant impact on the study of postcolonialism, particularly in the field of African literature. It has influenced the development of postcolonial theory and the study of language, power, and identity in postcolonial societies. His ideas have also been influential in the development of African literary movements, such as the African Writers Series, which sought to promote African literature and support African writers.

Chinua Achebe (1930-2013):

Chinua Achebe was a Nigerian novelist, poet, and critic, born in the town of Ogidi, who is widely regarded as one of the most important figures in postcolonial literature. Achebe's contribution to postcolonialism lies in his critique of the way Western colonial powers portrayed Africa and Africans in literature. His seminal novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is often seen as the first major work of postcolonial African literature. The novel tells the story of Okonkwo, an Igbo warrior in Nigeria, and his struggles to adapt to the changes brought about by colonialism. Through the character of Okonkwo, Achebe shows the impact of colonialism on African societies and the ways in which it disrupted traditional African ways of life. He also highlights the complexity and diversity of African cultures and challenges the simplistic, one-dimensional portrayals of Africa that were prevalent in Western literature.

Achebe has also written essays to his cause, for instance *English and the African Writer* (1965) fights for the validation of African English and the empowerment of local languages. His books of essays *Hopes and Impediments* (1988) and *Home and Exile* (2000) contribute to the same cause vehemently and are extremely influential. To understand the extent to which he would go to de-establish Eurocentric representations one may only glance at his lecture *An*

Image of Africa (1975), where he takes Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and exposes all elements of racism present in the depictions, thus paving way for postcolonial readings of texts. Achebe's work has been instrumental in the development of postcolonial literature as a genre, and his critique of colonialism has inspired generations of writers and scholars to examine the legacy of colonialism in Africa and other parts of the world. He was also an important advocate for African literature and played a key role in promoting the works of other African writers through his work as an editor and publisher.

Aimé Césaire (1913-2008):

Aimé Césaire was a prominent French-speaking poet, playwright, and politician from Martinique and a leading figure of the Negritude movement, which aimed to reclaim and valorise African identity and culture, challenging the dominant Western discourse that had characterized Africa and its people as primitive and inferior. Césaire's most famous work—the poem "Notebook of a Return to the Native Land" (1939)—is considered a cornerstone of postcolonial literature. The poem expressed his deeply felt emotions regarding the oppression and marginalization of black people in the West, and his longing for a spiritual and cultural rebirth of his homeland. He also wrote a play subverting Shakespeare's *The Tempest* named *Une Tempête* (1969), which looked at the English play from a postcolonial perspective.

Césaire's essay *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950) was a pioneering text of postcolonial theory that assumed a Marxist perspective by establishing how European hegemony is “indefensible” and must be thrown out by a Proletariat revolution, since the native bourgeoisie end up being the “watchdogs of colonialism”. Césaire's political activism and intellectual work were instrumental in the development of decolonization movements in Africa and the Caribbean. He was one of the founders of the Martinique Independentist Party, which advocated for Martinique's independence from France. Césaire's ideas heavily influenced other important postcolonial thinkers such as Frantz Fanon and Edward Said.

Check your progress

1. What were the points discussed in the Berlin Conference?

2. What are the major points discussed in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*?

3. What comprises the *African Trilogy*?

1.2.3 Australian Postcolonialism:

Australian postcolonialism refers to the critical examination and re-evaluation of the social, cultural, and political effects of colonialism in Australia, as well as the on-going struggle of indigenous Australians for recognition, sovereignty, and justice. This critical approach emerged in the late 20th century as a response to the legacy of colonialism and its impact on Australian society, culture, and identity. The history of Australian postcolonialism is closely tied to the history of Australia itself, which was initially colonized by the British in 1788. The arrival of the British marked the beginning of a long period of colonial domination, during which the Indigenous people were dispossessed of their lands and subjected to violence, discrimination, and cultural suppression. There were multiple cases of massacres and ethnic cleansing in the 19th century to impose white supremacy, like the Appin massacre in 1816, the Minnamurra River massacre in 1818, the Bathurst massacre in 1824, the Mount Dispersion massacre in 1836, the Myall Creek massacre in 1838, among many other such instances that resulted in the reduction of aboriginal population drastically from more than 250,000 before the arrival of the British to less than 60,000 by 1920.

In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a growing awareness of the injustice and inequality faced by Indigenous Australians, as well as due recognition of the need to acknowledge and address the on-going impacts of colonialism. This led to the emergence of a new wave of Indigenous activism and advocacy, which sought to challenge the dominant narratives of Australian history and promote greater recognition and respect for Indigenous rights and sovereignty. The rise of postcolonial theory in the 1980s and 1990s provided a framework for analysing and critiquing the legacies of colonialism in Australia. Today, Australian postcolonialism continues to be an important area of academic inquiry and political activism. It plays a vital role in challenging dominant narratives, promoting Indigenous voices and perspectives, and advocating for greater recognition and respect for Indigenous rights and sovereignty. Given below are brief accounts of the most influential postcolonial writers from Australia.

Patrick White (1912-1990):

Patrick White is one of the most important figures in Australian literature and his contribution to Australian postcolonialism is significant. He was the first Australian writer to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1973, and his novels are known for their exploration of the complexities of Australian identity and the legacy of colonialism. White's novels often focus

on the lives of characters who are struggling to come to terms with their place in a society that is still grappling with its colonial past. One of his most famous works, *Voss* (1957), tells the story of a German explorer who leads an ill-fated expedition into the Australian outback. The novel is often seen as a critique of the colonial mentality that underpinned the European exploration and settlement of Australia.

Another important work by White is *The Tree of Man* (1955), which tells the story of a couple, Stan and Amy Parker, who settle on a piece of land in the Australian countryside and try to build a life for themselves. The novel is a powerful exploration of the Australian landscape and the ways in which it shapes the lives of those who inhabit it. White's novels are also notable for their use of language and their experimental narrative techniques. His prose is often highly poetic, and he frequently employs stream-of-consciousness narration and other modernist techniques to explore the inner lives of his characters. White's contribution to Australian postcolonialism is significant because his novels explore the legacy of colonialism and its impact on Australian society and culture. His works continue to be studied and celebrated today as important contributions to the on-going project of understanding and grappling with Australia's colonial past.

Peter Carey (b. 1943):

Peter Carey is an Australian novelist who has also made significant contributions to Australian postcolonialism through his literary works. Born in Bacchus Marsh, Victoria, Carey grew up in a small town before moving to Melbourne to pursue his education. He began his writing career as an advertising copywriter before transitioning to full-time writing in the 1980s. Carey's novels often explore themes related to Australian identity, history, and culture, particularly in the context of postcolonialism. His early works, such as *Bliss* (1981) and *Illywhacker* (1985), portray Australia as a country struggling to define itself in the aftermath of colonization. Carey's writing is marked by a distinctive style that combines humour, satire, and a deep understanding of the complexities of the human psyche.

One of Carey's most notable contributions to Australian postcolonialism is his exploration of the impact of colonialism on Indigenous Australians. In his novel *The True History of the Kelly Gang* (2000), Carey tells the story of the infamous Australian outlaw Ned Kelly from Kelly's own perspective, portraying him as a product of the injustices and inequalities faced by the Irish and Indigenous communities in colonial Australia. In addition to his literary works, Carey has also been involved in public discourse on issues related to postcolonialism in

Australia. He has spoken out on topics such as the importance of recognizing Indigenous cultures and histories and the need to confront the legacy of colonialism in contemporary Australian society. Carey has helped to shape the conversation around Australian identity and history, challenging readers to confront the complexities and contradictions of postcolonial society.

Bill Ashcroft (b. 1946):

Bill Ashcroft is an Australian literary scholar and theorist who has made significant contributions to the field of postcolonial studies, particularly in Australia. He is best known for co-authoring *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989) with Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, which is widely regarded as a seminal work in the field of postcolonial literary criticism. Ashcroft's contribution to Australian postcolonialism lies in his analysis of the ways in which colonial and postcolonial power structures have influenced Australian literature, culture, and identity. He has argued that Australian literature, which was once viewed as derivative of British literature, should be recognized as an independent and distinct body of work that reflects the unique experiences of Australian people. Ashcroft has also examined the role of language in colonial and postcolonial societies, particularly the use of English as a tool of oppression and resistance. He has emphasized the importance of recognizing and valuing the diversity of languages and cultural traditions in postcolonial societies, and has advocated for a more inclusive approach to literary and cultural studies.

In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft differentiates between colonial and postcolonial on primarily a temporal basis, which has later repercussions in the socio-political environment of the erstwhile colonies. The colonial period, which indicates the time before independence, is wrought with nationalistic writing and postcolonial studies covers all cultures affected by colonial hegemony. Ashcroft suggests that the way English is used in the erstwhile colonies follows a three-step process. The first step is to 'Adopt' the language, the second is to 'Adapt' to the new language, the third is to become 'Adept' in the language so as to be able to incorporate it into respective cultural milieus. With ideas about 'place' and 'displacement', Ashcroft also explains how the oppression of indigenous cultures and literatures leads to a 'cultural denigration' and how language can be used to help in the re-construction of the lost 'place'. Ashcroft has truly engaged with the understanding of postcolonialism from a rudimentary level to the most advanced levels and paved a way for the future writers and scholars to better negotiate the concept of postcolonialism.

Check your progress

1. Name 4 massacres that ravaged the Australian population in the 19th century.

2. What is Patrick White's *Voss* about?

3. What are the three stages of learning English according to Bill Ashcroft?

1.2.4 Caribbean Postcolonialism:

Caribbean postcolonialism refers to the intellectual and cultural movement that emerged in the Caribbean region after the end of colonial rule in the mid-20th century. This movement sought to address the legacy of colonialism in the Caribbean and to develop new cultural and political identities that reflected the region's unique history and culture. The Caribbean region has a long and complex history of colonization, beginning with the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492 and continuing with the Spanish, French, Dutch, and British colonial powers. The legacy of this history has had a profound impact on the region, shaping its political, economic, and social structures. In the early 20th century, there was a growing sense of political and cultural nationalism in the Caribbean, as people began to demand greater autonomy and self-determination. This led to the emergence of a number of influential political and cultural figures, including Marcus Garvey, C.L.R. James, and Frantz Fanon.

In the 1940s and 1950s, a new generation of Caribbean intellectuals began to emerge, who were deeply influenced by Marxist and anti-colonialist ideas. This group, which included figures such as George Lamming, Derek Walcott, and V.S. Naipaul, sought to develop a new Caribbean identity that was rooted in the region's history and culture. One of the key themes of Caribbean postcolonialism is the idea of 'creolization', which refers to the process of cultural mixing and hybridity that has characterized the region's history. This idea has been explored in a number of different forms, including literature, music, and visual art. Overall, Caribbean postcolonialism has had a profound impact on the region's intellectual and cultural life, as well as on its political and social structures. It has helped to foster a new sense of identity and belonging among Caribbean peoples, while also raising awareness of the on-going legacy of colonialism and the need for greater social justice and equality. Given below are brief accounts of two of the most influential postcolonial writers from the Caribbean islands.

V. S. Naipaul (1932-2018):

Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul was a Trinidadian-British writer and Nobel Prize laureate who made a significant contribution to Caribbean postcolonialism. He was born in Trinidad and grew up in a family of Indian descent. Naipaul's early writing was heavily influenced by his experience of growing up in Trinidad and his subsequent migration to England. Naipaul's novels are known for their insightful exploration of the complexities of postcolonial identity, particularly in the Caribbean. His writing often focuses on the experiences of displaced individuals and the tension between the traditional values of the past and the modern realities of the present.

One of Naipaul's most notable works is *A House for Mr. Biswas*, a novel that draws heavily on his own experiences of growing up in Trinidad. The novel tells the story of Mohun Biswas, an Indian man living in Trinidad who dreams of owning his own house. The novel explores themes of identity, belonging, and the struggle to reconcile traditional values with the modern world. Another important work by Naipaul is *The Mimic Men*, a novel that explores the experiences of a Trinidadian man who has migrated to England. The novel explores the themes of cultural displacement, identity, and the search for belonging in a foreign land. Naipaul's writing has been both celebrated and criticized for its unflinching portrayal of the complexities of postcolonial identity. His work has been praised for its insight and nuance, but has also been criticized for its sometimes harsh and uncompromising portrayal of the Caribbean and its people. Nevertheless, Naipaul's contribution to Caribbean postcolonialism has been significant, and his novels continue to be widely read and studied today. His work has helped to shed light on the complexities of postcolonial identity and the challenges faced by those who must navigate the tensions between tradition and modernity in a rapidly changing world.

Derek Walcott (1930-2017):

Derek Walcott was a renowned poet, playwright, and essayist from the Caribbean island of Saint Lucia. He is widely regarded as one of the most significant voices of the Caribbean postcolonial literature and a major figure in contemporary world literature. Walcott's works often explored themes of identity, cultural hybridity, colonialism, and the complex relationship between the Caribbean and its colonial past. His poetry frequently featured vivid descriptions of the natural world and landscapes of the Caribbean, as well as historical and mythological allusions drawn from both European and African cultures.

One of Walcott's most influential works is his epic poem *Omeros* (1990), which is loosely based on Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and explores the history and culture of the

Caribbean through a narrative that spans centuries and continents. The poem also features a diverse range of characters, including fishermen, plantation workers, and descendants of both European and African colonizers. Walcott's other notable works include the poetry collections *In a Green Night* (1962), *The Gulf and Other Poems* (1969), and *White Egrets* (2010). He also wrote several plays, including *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1970), which explores the themes of identity and cultural memory through the story of a Caribbean man's quest for self-discovery.

Walcott's contributions to Caribbean postcolonialism are paramount. He challenged the dominant narrative of colonialism that had long defined the region and highlighted the complex and diverse cultural heritage of the Caribbean. His works emphasized the importance of cultural hybridity and diversity as crucial components of Caribbean identity and argued for a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of the region's past and present. Through his writing, Walcott became a major voice for Caribbean literature and helped to establish it as a significant field of study within the broader context of world literature.

Check your progress

1. Caribbean colonial history began with whose arrival?

2. What is 'creolization'?

3. What is the subject matter of *The Mimic Men* by V. S. Naipaul?

1.2.5 Indian Postcolonialism:

Indian postcolonialism refers to the cultural and intellectual movement that emerged in India during the British colonial rule and took flight after the independence in 1947. This movement sought to reclaim India's cultural and political identity, which had been suppressed during centuries of colonialism. The history of Indian postcolonialism can be traced back to the early 20th century when a group of Indian intellectuals, including Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, and Jawaharlal Nehru, began to critique British colonialism and promote Indian nationalism. They sought to create a new, independent India that would be free from the shackles of colonialism and would promote social justice and economic development.

The history of postcolonialism in India is tied very closely with the history of the Bengal Renaissance in the late 19th and early 20th century. Although the roots of printed literature started way back in 1777, when the printing press was established in Calcutta by James Augustus Hicky

and in Shrirampur by Nathaniel Brassey Halhed and Charles Wilkins, the spread of education in English did not start before the 1800s when the Baptist Mission in Shrirampur started disseminating the Bible. In 1817, the Hindu School was established, what is considered to be the oldest modern educational institute in Asia and is currently called Presidency University. The University of Calcutta was established in 1857. The presence of these institutes led to the birth of a generation of scholars who were learned in not only the English language, but Eurocentric philosophy and logic. In 1861, the Brahma Samaj was formed and it encouraged rational, critical, and scientific thinking. These developments created the space for a generation to be able to write back.

Although before Independence, the postcolonial ideology could easily be gauged in the writings of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, among others, it was after India gained independence that postcolonialism became a major force in Indian cultural and intellectual life. Writers such as R.K. Narayan, Salman Rushdie, and Arundhati Roy explored the complex issues of identity, culture, and politics that emerged in postcolonial India. These writers questioned the traditional power structures of Indian society and challenged the dominant narratives of Indian history. Postcolonialism is ingrained even to this day, even though the colonizers are long gone, which goes on to show that postcolonialism is not just about temporality. Given below are brief accounts of the most influential postcolonial writers from India.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941):

Rabindranath Tagore was a prominent Indian poet, philosopher, and polymath who made significant contributions to Indian postcolonialism. He was the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913 for his collection of poems *Gitanjali*. Tagore's literary works addressed the social and political issues of his time, including Indian nationalism, cultural identity, and the impact of British colonialism. He emphasized the importance of preserving India's rich cultural heritage while embracing modernity and progress.

Tagore's most notable works include *Gitanjali*, a collection of poems that explores the themes of spirituality, love, and nature; his novel *The Home and the World* addresses the challenges of Indian nationalism and the clash between tradition and modernity; his play *The Post Office* deals with the themes of death and the human desire for freedom. These are but minute instances from the huge wealth of literature that Tagore has offered in his lifetime. Tagore delivered a series of lectures from 1914 to 1917 which were published together in the

form of the essay *Nationalism* (1917). In these lectures, he critiqued the concept of nationalism as being narrow in scope produced by capitalism and proposed a move from nationalism to internationalism and created a vision of universal humanism.

Tagore's philosophy of education also had a significant impact on Indian postcolonialism. He founded 'Santiniketan', a school that emphasized the importance of learning in natural surroundings and the integration of arts and culture into education. This approach to education was a rejection of the British colonial model and aimed to revive Indian cultural traditions and values. Tagore's contributions to Indian postcolonialism continue to be celebrated today, and his literary works, be it in the form of songs, plays, poetry, short stories, or novels, remain an important part of Indian literature and culture.

Raja Rao (1908-2006):

Raja Rao was an Indian writer and philosopher who played a major role in the Indian postcolonial literary scene. His works, which are known for their philosophical depth and poetic language, explore themes of identity, culture, and spirituality, and offer a critique of colonialism and its impact on Indian society. Rao's most famous work is the novel *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), which explores the tension between Eastern and Western culture through the story of a young Indian intellectual studying in France. The novel draws on Indian mythology and philosophy to reflect on the complexities of identity and the struggle to reconcile one's cultural heritage with modernity.

Another important work by Rao is *Kanthapura* (1938), a novel that depicts the struggle of an Indian village against British colonial rule. Through the eyes of a young girl, the novel portrays the power dynamics and social inequalities that existed in colonial India, and the role of the Indian independence movement in challenging these structures. Rao's other notable works include *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965), *Comrade Kirillov* (1976), and *The Chessmaster and His Moves* (1988). In addition to his literary works, Rao was also a professor of philosophy and taught at various universities in India and the United States.

Rao's contribution to Indian postcolonialism lies in his ability to blend Western literary techniques with Indian philosophy and mythology, and to create a new language of expression that was uniquely Indian. His works offer a critique of colonialism and its impact on Indian society, while also reflecting on the complexities of identity and culture in a rapidly changing world.

Check your progress

1. What is the importance of the printing press and universities in postcolonialism?

2. How was Tagore's Santiniketan a form of resistance to colonial hegemony?

3. What is the story of *Kanthapura*?

1.2.6 Postcolonial Theory:

Postcolonial theory is the multidisciplinary field of study that examines the legacy and on-going effects of colonialism and imperialism in various aspects of life, such as literature, culture, politics, economics, and society. It emerged in the late 20th century as a response to the historical and current inequalities and injustices faced by formerly colonized peoples and nations, as has been discussed in detail above. Postcolonial theory seeks to challenge the Eurocentric and imperialistic perspectives that have dominated academic discourse and mainstream culture. It highlights the experiences, perspectives, and voices of colonized peoples and explores the ways in which colonialism has impacted their identities, cultures, and histories. It also critiques the power structures and ideologies that perpetuate colonialism and imperialism, such as racism, Orientalism, and neocolonialism.

Postcolonial theory has influenced various academic disciplines, such as literature, history, anthropology, sociology, political science, and cultural studies. It has also inspired social movements and political activism around the world, as it advocates for the decolonization of knowledge and institutions and the recognition of the diversity and complexity of human experiences and cultures. Given below are brief accounts of the most important figures in the establishment of postcolonial theory as a discipline that is taught across the world.

Edward Said (1935-2003):

Edward Said was a Palestinian-American scholar and literary critic who is the father of postcolonial theory. In his works, he examined the ways in which Western imperialism and colonialism shaped knowledge production and cultural representation of the non-Western world. Said's most influential work is his book *Orientalism* (1978). In this book, Said argued that Western representations of the "Orient" were constructed through a process of power and domination, which he called "Orientalism." According to Said, the West (or the Occident) created a false and essentialized image of the Orient as exotic, mysterious, and inferior in order to justify their colonial project. Said argues that the representation of the "Orient" was not just a

matter of academic knowledge, but it had political and cultural implications as well. Postcolonial theorists have built on Said's work to examine the ways in which colonialism continues to shape the cultural, economic, and political relations between the West and the non-Western world.

In addition to "Orientalism," Said also wrote several other influential works, including *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) in which he explored the ways in which imperialism was not just a political and economic project but also a cultural one, which shaped the literature and art of both the colonizer and the colonized; and *The Question of Palestine* (1979) where he argued for the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and criticized Western support for Israel's occupation of Palestine. Overall, Edward Said's contributions to postcolonial theory have been essential in helping scholars and activists understand the legacies of colonialism and imperialism in the modern world. His work has influenced scholars in fields ranging from literary criticism to anthropology and political science, and continues to be relevant today.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (b. 1942):

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is a postcolonial theorist, feminist scholar, and literary critic who is known for her contributions to the study of colonialism, imperialism, gender, and language. Her work has focused on the ways in which Western discourses of power have constructed the "other" and perpetuated oppressive structures in the postcolonial world. One of Spivak's most famous works is "Can the Subaltern Speak?" published in 1988, where she argues that the voices of subaltern groups, such as colonized people, are silenced by dominant discourse and cannot be fully represented or understood within existing Western frameworks. She posits that even attempts to give voice to subaltern groups can become further forms of domination and colonization, and therefore, scholars need to approach the task of representation with great care and sensitivity.

Spivak has also written extensively on the relationship between language and power, arguing that language is used as a tool of domination and that Western discourse has constructed the "other" as inferior and in need of Western intervention. In her book *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (1999), she explores the ways in which language and culture have been appropriated and distorted by Western colonial powers, and how this has led to the erasure of other cultures and ways of knowing. Another notable contribution of Spivak is her emphasis on the intersectionality of gender, race, and class. In her essay "Feminism and Critical Theory" (1986), she critiques the universalizing tendencies of Western feminism, arguing that feminist theory must be contextualized within the specific

historical and cultural experiences of women in different parts of the world. She also emphasizes the importance of understanding the ways in which gender intersects with other forms of oppression, such as race and class.

Spivak's work has indeed been instrumental in challenging Western epistemologies and opening up space for marginalized voices and perspectives. Her critiques of Western discourse and her call for a more nuanced and sensitive approach to representation have had a profound impact on postcolonial theory and beyond.

Homi K. Bhabha (b. 1949):

Homi K. Bhabha is a leading postcolonial theorist whose work has contributed to the fields of cultural studies, literary criticism, and political theory. Born in Mumbai, India, Bhabha received his education at the University of Sussex and Oxford University, where he studied literature and philosophy. He is currently the Anne F. Rothenberg Professor of the Humanities at Harvard University. Bhabha's work has been influential in challenging traditional notions of identity, power, and representation in postcolonial societies. His most notable contribution to postcolonial theory is his concept of "hybridity," which refers to the blending of cultures and identities that occurs as a result of colonization. In his seminal book, *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha argues that hybridity is a key element of postcolonial identity and that it represents a form of resistance to colonialism. According to Bhabha, hybridity creates a "third space" between the colonizer and the colonized that enables the emergence of new forms of cultural expression and political subjectivity.

Another important concept in Bhabha's work is "mimicry," which he discusses in his essay "Of Mimicry and Man" (1984). Bhabha argues that mimicry is a form of subversive imitation that challenges the authority of the colonizer. Through mimicry, the colonized subject can appropriate the language and symbols of the colonizer and use them to undermine colonial power structures. In his essay "Signs Taken for Wonders" (1985), Bhabha discusses the ways in which colonial discourse has shaped the representation of the "other" in literature. He argues that postcolonial writers can use language and narrative strategies to challenge and subvert colonial representations of their cultures.

Walter D. Mignolo (b. 1941):

Walter D. Mignolo is a prominent Argentinian scholar in the field of postcolonial theory and is best known for his contributions to decolonial theory. Mignolo's work challenges the Eurocentric perspective of modernity and emphasizes the importance of diverse epistemologies

and worldviews in the production of knowledge. In his book *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (2011), Mignolo argues that Western modernity has been built on the foundation of colonialism, which has led to the marginalization of non-Western cultures and knowledge systems. He suggests that decolonization should not only be a political process but also an epistemic one that challenges the universalist claims of Western knowledge.

Mignolo's concept of "border thinking" is central to his work on decolonial theory. Border thinking refers to the ability to think outside of the dominant Western epistemological framework and to recognize the existence of multiple epistemologies and worldviews. In his book *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (2000), Mignolo explains how border thinking can help to deconstruct colonial structures of knowledge production and promote alternative forms of knowledge. Mignolo has also written extensively on the role of language in colonialism and the decolonization process. In *The Idea of Latin America* (2005), he argues that the concept of Latin America was created as a linguistic and cultural construct by European colonizers and that it continues to be used to perpetuate colonial power relations. He suggests that the decolonization of language is essential to achieving true decolonization. Without any doubts, Walter D. Mignolo's work on decolonial theory has been influential in the field of postcolonial studies and has contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between colonialism, knowledge production, and modernity.

Check your progress

1. What does Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argue in her essay on Subalternity?

2. Which theory was pioneered by Walter D. Mignolo?

3. How does the West consider the East according to Edward Said?

1.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should have gained a very clear idea about postcolonialism and other concepts related to it like colonialism, colonization, creolization, hybridity, border thinking, decolonization, subaltern, orientalism.

1.4 Glossary

Colonization: The practice of acquiring political and economic control over a region or country topographically by another nation or state.

Colonialism: The practice of controlling the land, body, and mind of the natives in a region by means of oppression.

Postcolonialism: An academic and cultural movement that analyses the social, political, and cultural effects of colonialism and imperialism on colonized societies and their people.

Orientalism: The cultural and intellectual tradition that depicts the East as exotic, backward, and inferior to the West.

Subaltern: A term used to describe marginalized and oppressed groups, particularly in the context of colonialism and imperialism.

Hybridity: The mixing of different cultures, identities, and practices that often occurs in the aftermath of colonialism.

Diaspora: The dispersion of people from their homeland to other parts of the world, often as a result of colonialism or economic migration.

Decolonization: The process of undoing the political and economic structures of colonialism and returning power and autonomy to colonized peoples.

Neocolonialism: A form of economic and political domination in which powerful nations maintain control over less developed nations through economic policies, debt, and other means.

Cultural imperialism: The imposition of one culture's beliefs, values, and practices on another culture, often as a result of colonialism or globalization.

Third World: A term used to describe countries that are economically and politically marginalized in the global system, often as a result of colonialism and neocolonialism.

1.5 Sample Questions

1.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Who among the following has proposed the concept of Ideological State Apparatus (ISA)?

- (a) Karl Marx
- (b) Louis Althusser
- (c) Terry Eagleton
- (d) Frederic Jameson

2. Which character in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is the subject of postcolonialist readings?

- (a) Prospero
- (b) Miranda
- (c) Ferdinand
- (d) Caliban

3. Who organized the Berlin Conference?

- (a) Otto von Bismarck
- (b) Adolf Hitler
- (c) King Leopold II
- (d) Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

4. 'On National Culture' is the name of a chapter in which book?

- (a) *Nationalism*
- (b) *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*
- (c) *The Wretched of the Earth*
- (d) *The Empire Writes Back*

5. Who calls imperialism a "cultural bomb"?

- (a) Frantz Fanon
- (b) Aimé Césaire
- (c) Edward Said
- (d) Ngugi wa Thiong'o

6. Which of the following is not a part of the *African Trilogy*?

- (a) *Arrow of God*
- (b) *Home and Exile*
- (c) *Things Fall Apart*
- (d) *No Longer at Ease*

7. Who received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1973?
- (a) V. S. Naipaul
 - (b) Patrick White
 - (c) Peter Carey
 - (d) Rabindranath Tagore
8. *The Location of Culture* discusses which of the following ideas?
- (a) Hybridity
 - (b) Subaltern
 - (c) Diaspora
 - (d) Decoloniality
9. Which of the following poems is based on Homer's epics?
- (a) 'The Gulf'
 - (b) 'White Egrets'
 - (c) 'Omeros'
 - (d) 'The Green Light'
10. The University of Calcutta was established in the year _____.
- (a) 1800
 - (b) 1777
 - (c) 1817
 - (d) 1857

1.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What argument does Rabindranath Tagore make in his lectures titled *Nationalism*?
2. Define Walter D. Mignolo's concept of 'border thinking'.
3. What is meant by 'hybridity'?
4. What argument is presented in Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*?
5. What is the story of Naipaul's novel *A House for Mr. Biswas* about?

1.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Write a note on African postcolonialism.
2. Discuss in detail the history of postcolonialism in Australia.
3. What are the contributions of Raja Rao to postcolonialism in India?

1.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. Routledge, 1989.
2. Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press, 1963.
3. Kincaid, Jamaica. *A Small Place*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988.
4. Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. Routledge, 2015.
5. Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books, 1979.
6. ---. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Grove Press, 1967.
7. Spivak, G. C. "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." *Critical Inquiry*, 12(1), 243-261, 1985.
8. ---. "Feminism and Critical Theory." In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (pp. 271-313). Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986.
9. ---. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (pp. 271-313). Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
10. ---. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Unit – 2: Life and Works of Chinua Achebe

Structure

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Objectives

2.2 Key Texts

2.2.1 *Things Fall Apart* (1958)

2.2.2 *No Longer at Ease* (1960)

2.2.3 *Arrow of God* (1964)

2.2.4 *A Man of the People* (1966)

2.2.5 *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987)

2.3 Learning Outcomes

2.4 Glossary

2.5 Sample Questions

2.6 Suggested Learning Resources

2.0 Introduction

Albert Chinualumogu Achebe (1930-2013), better known as Chinua Achebe, and regarded by many as the father of modern African literature, was born in Ogidi, Nigeria. His father was a teacher in a missionary school. Although his mother tongue was Igbo, his education was in English. Both his parents, despite themselves being devout evangelical Protestants, instilled the values of traditional Igbo culture in him. Achebe went to the Government College in Umuahia in 1944 for his schooling and finished his graduation at the University College of Ibadan in 1953, where his subjects were English, History, and Theology. It was in college that he gave up his English birth name and started using his indigenous name, Chinua. Achebe joined the Nigerian Broadcasting Company in Lagos in 1954 and occupied the post of the Director of External Services for The Voice of Nigeria in the 1960s. Achebe served in the Biafran government service and taught at universities in Nigeria and the USA during the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970). Achebe was also involved very actively in journal activities—he, along with the poet Christopher Okigbo, co-founded a publishing company at Enugu in 1967; edited the leading journal of Nigerian writing, *Okike* since its inception in 1971; founded the bilingual magazine *Uwandi Igbo* in 1984; and as the director of Heineman Educational Books in Nigeria,

published various African writers, giving them a sense of self-pride. Achebe is also known for his prolific role in academics as an educator—right after graduation he travelled and worked as a teacher in Africa and America; he became a research fellow at the University of Nigeria, and soon after a professor of English until his retirement in 1985, after which he remained there as a professor emeritus; he was also a professor of English at the University of Massachusetts (where he met fellow novelist James Baldwin) and a faculty member at Bard College, New York.

Achebe's fame in the literary landscape rests on the shoulders of his African Trilogy, which consists of his first three novels—*Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960), and *Arrow of God* (1964). The title of his first novel is taken from W.B. Yeats' poem 'The Second Coming', which has the line: "Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold." The three novels take up three time periods in Nigeria's history to show the nature of imperialist insurgencies into the native Igbo societies. *Things Fall Apart* is set in the 1890s and follows the life of Okonkwo, a strong and courageous leader of an Igbo community, as he has to single-handedly face the incursions of first wave colonialist settlers, who take away his sense of belonging by using the means of religion, technological advancement, and civilization. The novel also corrects certain misrepresentations about the Igbo community in a language that their oppressors can also understand. *No Longer at Ease* is set in the urban city of Lagos in the 1950s and deals with interactions and clashes between native and colonial cultures. *Arrow of God* comes back in time as a closer sequel to *Things Fall Apart*, and is set in the 1920s, showing a later stage of colonialism in Igbo communities. The narrative follows the life of a priest, Ezeulu, and discusses how deeply colonialism has ingrained itself into the minds of the victims that their life now depends upon it, where although Ezeulu wants to do what's best for his people, he can't let go of his own sense of control that he gets because of colonial practices.

Achebe's other notable novels are *A Man of the People* (1966), and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). He published various collections of short stories like *The Sacrificial Egg and Other Stories* (1962), *Chike and the River and Other Stories* (1966), *Girls at War and Other Stories* (1972) and *The Heineman Book of Contemporary African Short Stories* (ed. With C. L. Innes) (1992). He also published his collections of Essays like *Beware, Soul Brother* (1971), *Morning Yet on Cremation Day* (1975), and *Hopes and Impediments* (1989). Achebe also published picture books like *The Drum* (1977), and *The Flute* (1977), as well as children's books like *How the Leopard Got His Claws* (1972). His collection of poems is called *Christmas in Biafra and Other Poems* (1973). The body of work that Achebe is credited with has given a

national identity to Nigeria and global attention to African literature. Despite having suffered from a car crash in 1990 and being paralyzed for the rest of his life, Achebe gave the world his final collection of essays *Home and Exile* (2000), before his death in Massachusetts, USA in 2013. His contribution to postcolonial literature can be summed up in his own words:

“I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past – with all its imperfections – was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God’s behalf delivered them”.

Morning Yet on Creation Day (1975)

2.1 Objectives

The objectives of this are to:

- know about the life and works of Chinua Achebe.
- relate Chinua Achebe’s accomplishments with relation to postcolonialism.
- understand the plots of the works by Chinua Achebe.
- examine the importance of Chinua Achebe’s contribution to literature and society.
- appreciate Chinua Achebe as a novelist, theorist, and essayist.

2.2 Key Texts

2.2.1 *Things Fall Apart* (1958):

Things Fall Apart, published in 1958, is the debut novel of Chinua Achebe and is his most influential fiction, along with the rest of the *African Trilogy*. It is the first part of the *African Trilogy* followed by *No Longer at Ease* (1960), and *Arrow of God* (1964). *Things Fall Apart* also went on to become the first work published in William Heinemann’s ‘African Writers Series’, when it was published in the UK in 1962. It tells the story of Okonkwo, a highly respected and successful leader in the Igbo tribe of Nigeria, who struggles to adapt to the changes brought by colonialism and Christianity. The title of the novel is derived from a poem by William Butler Yeats called ‘The Second Coming’, which begins with these lines:

“Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,..."

The novel is divided into three parts, with the first part depicting Okonkwo's life before the arrival of the white men. Achebe portrays the Igbo culture in great detail, highlighting the importance of traditions, customs, and rituals. Okonkwo is a complex character, driven by his desire to be seen as strong and powerful. His fear of failure and weakness leads him to make decisions that ultimately lead to his downfall. In the second part of the novel, the white men arrive in the village, bringing with them a new religion, language, and way of life. Okonkwo and other members of the tribe resist this change, but their efforts are ultimately futile. The novel shows how colonialism and imperialism have devastating effects on the African people, leading to the destruction of their culture, traditions, and way of life. In the final part of the novel, Okonkwo takes matters into his own hands and tries to fight back against the white men. However, his actions lead to his exile and eventual suicide.

The first chapter opens with a description of Okonkwo's fame as a wrestler, and his achievements in defeating the undefeated wrestler, Amalinze the Cat. The author portrays Okonkwo as a man who is driven by a desire to prove himself as the strongest and most successful member of his community, and who is willing to go to great lengths to achieve his goals. We learn that Okonkwo's father was a lazy and unsuccessful man, who did not provide for his family. This background has fuelled Okonkwo's ambition to succeed and his fear of failure. The novel then introduces the reader to the complex social structure of the Igbo people, with its hierarchy of titles, each with its own set of responsibilities and privileges. The author also highlights the importance of the Oracle, which is consulted in times of crisis, and whose decisions are considered final. Achebe's portrayal of the Igbo society reveals a deeply ingrained respect for tradition and an adherence to strict codes of behaviour, which are enforced through a system of rewards and punishments.

As the novel progresses, we see Okonkwo's relationships with his family and community. He has three wives and many children, and he is respected for his wealth and success. However, his harsh and unforgiving nature often leads to conflict with those around him. In particular, he has a difficult relationship with his eldest son, Nwoye, who he perceives as weak and effeminate. This conflict is symbolic of the tension between tradition and change, which is a recurring theme throughout the novel. Part 1 of *Things Fall Apart* also introduces the reader to the arrival of European colonizers, who disrupt the traditional way of life of the Igbo people. The appearance of the white men is met with confusion and suspicion, as the Igbo people have never seen people

with white skin before. The colonizers are depicted as arrogant and disrespectful towards the Igbo people, as they try to impose their own cultural values and beliefs on the local population.

Part 2 of *Things Fall Apart* continues the narrative with the arrival of the white missionaries, who are led by Mr Brown, a kind and understanding man who tries to learn about the Igbo culture and language. Mr Brown recognizes the importance of patience and dialogue in understanding the Igbo people and their beliefs. He seeks to establish a relationship of mutual respect with the villagers, rather than imposing his beliefs on them. Mr Brown is successful in converting some of the villagers to Christianity, including some outcasts who were previously rejected by the community. However, Mr Brown's approach is not shared by all of the white missionaries who come to Umuofia. One such missionary, Reverend James Smith, takes a much more aggressive approach to the conversion of the Igbo people, and he actively seeks to destroy their cultural traditions. This leads to conflict between the missionaries and the villagers, as the villagers feel that their way of life is being threatened.

In addition to the conflict with the missionaries, there are also tensions within the Igbo community. Okonkwo's son Nwoye converts to Christianity, which leads to a rift between him and his father. Okonkwo sees the conversion as a betrayal of their traditional way of life and is unable to accept his son's decision. This conflict symbolizes the tension between tradition and change that is at the heart of the novel. As the conflict between the villagers and the missionaries escalates, Okonkwo takes action against them by killing one of the messengers sent by the colonial government. This leads to his eventual exile from Umuofia, and sets the stage for the final part of the novel. Part 2 of *Things Fall Apart* is a powerful exploration of the clash between tradition and modernity, and the impact that colonialism can have on traditional cultures. Achebe highlights the complexity of these issues, showing both the positive and negative aspects of the arrival of the white missionaries. Through the character of Mr. Brown, Achebe shows that it is possible for different cultures to coexist peacefully and learn from each other, but the aggressive tactics of the other missionaries and the colonial government ultimately lead to violence and destruction.

Part 3 of *Things Fall Apart* is a significant and pivotal section of the book. It is where we see the culmination of the tensions between the traditional Igbo culture and the encroaching European colonialism. The first chapter of Part 3 begins with Obierika, Okonkwo's best friend from Umuofia, coming to visit Okonkwo in his exile. Obierika brings news about the state of the village and the changes that have taken place since Okonkwo's departure. He also tells Okonkwo

about the white men who have come to the village and how they have taken over the church. This is followed by the arrival of the District Commissioner and his aides to Okonkwo's village. They come to arrest some of the leaders of the village who have opposed the white men's presence. The District Commissioner treats the Igbo people with disdain and disrespect, showing the arrogance and superiority of the colonialists. Okonkwo returns to his village after his exile. He finds that the white men have gained a significant foothold in the village, and many of the people have converted to Christianity. Okonkwo is outraged and feels that his people have lost their identity and become weak.

Soon, the tension between the Igbo people and the white men comes to a head. The District Commissioner sends his messengers to the village to arrest the leaders who have opposed the white men's presence. Okonkwo and some other men kill the messengers, and this leads to a chain of events that ends in tragedy. The final chapter of Part 3, "Okonkwo's Suicide," is a dramatic and tragic conclusion to the novel's main character. Okonkwo realizes that his people are not willing to fight against the white men, and he feels that he has lost everything. In a final act of defiance and pride, he hangs himself. Part 3 of *Things Fall Apart* is a powerful commentary on the clash between traditional African culture and European colonialism. Achebe shows how the arrival of the white men disrupts and destroys the social, cultural, and religious fabric of the Igbo people. He also highlights the arrogance and disrespect of the colonizers towards the African people and their traditions. The tragic end of Okonkwo is a symbol of the devastating impact of colonialism on traditional African societies.

Check your progress

1. What is the source of the title of *Things Fall Apart*?

2. What is the name of Okonkwo's village?

3. How does Okonkwo die?

2.2.2 *No Longer at Ease* (1960):

No Longer at Ease, published in 1960, is the second book in Achebe's *African Trilogy*, which includes *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. The novel is set in Lagos, Nigeria, in the late 1950s and tells the story of Obi Okonkwo, a young man from a rural village who is educated

in England and returns to Nigeria to work in the civil service. The novel's title is derived from the closing lines of T. S. Eliot's poem 'Journey of the Magi', which goes like this:

“We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.”

The novel begins with Obi's trial for accepting a bribe. The narrative then jumps back in time to Obi's return to Nigeria, where he struggles to adjust to life in Lagos and reconcile his traditional values with the westernized world he now inhabits. Obi's father, Isaac Okonkwo, is a staunch traditionalist who disapproves of his son's decision to study abroad and fears that he has lost touch with his roots. Obi soon begins a romantic relationship with Clara Okeke, a young woman from a wealthy Igbo family. However, their relationship is complicated by the fact that Clara is a mixed-race woman who was born out of wedlock. Her mother is Igbo, while her father is a white British man. This makes her an outcast in her community, and her status as a "half-caste" is a source of shame for her.

Obi's job in the civil service is also a source of conflict. He is posted to the Department of Native Affairs, where he is responsible for approving or denying scholarship applications for young Nigerians seeking to study abroad. Obi quickly becomes disillusioned with the corrupt system and the constant pressure to accept bribes. He tries to resist the temptation to take bribes, but ultimately succumbs to the pressure. Obi's downfall is precipitated by his decision to take a bribe from a wealthy businessman named Christopher. When the bribe is discovered, Obi is arrested and put on trial. His father disowns him, and he is shunned by his community. Obi's lawyer, Mr. Green, tries to mount a defence by arguing that Obi was driven to accept the bribe by the pressure of his job and the corrupt system in which he works. However, Obi is ultimately convicted and sentenced to prison.

The novel ends with Obi's release from prison and his return to his village. He is a broken man, physically and emotionally drained by his ordeal. The final scene of the novel is a conversation between Obi and his mother, who urges him to seek forgiveness from his ancestors and to start a new life. Overall, *No Longer at Ease* is a powerful exploration of the challenges facing Nigeria as it struggles to modernize and reconcile its traditional values with the influence of the West. The novel is a critique of corruption, imperialism, and the tensions between

traditional and modern cultures. Through the character of Obi, Achebe presents a nuanced portrait of a young man caught between two worlds and ultimately unable to reconcile them.

Check Your Progress

1. From where is the title of *No Longer at Ease* derived?

2. What is the setting of the novel *No Longer at Ease*?

3. How does the novel *No Longer at Ease* end?

2.2.3 *Arrow of God* (1964):

Arrow of God, published in 1964, is the third novel in Achebe's *African Trilogy*, following *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease*. It tells the story of Ezeulu, a powerful high priest in the village of Umuaro in colonial Nigeria, and the challenges he faces as he tries to maintain his authority and protect his people's traditions amidst the encroachment of British colonialism and the growing influence of Christianity. The novel is divided into three parts, each of which highlights different aspects of Ezeulu's character and the challenges he faces.

Part 1 of *Arrow of God* sets the stage for the rest of the novel by introducing the main characters, their relationships, and the cultural and religious practices of Umuaro. The novel opens with a description of the village and the important role that religion plays in the lives of its inhabitants. The people of Umuaro believe in a pantheon of gods and goddesses, and their religious practices are governed by strict rules and rituals. The protagonist of the novel, Ezeulu, is introduced as the chief priest of Ulu, the god of the sky and the most important deity in Umuaro. Ezeulu is a powerful and respected figure in the village, and his role as the chief priest gives him considerable political influence. Ezeulu is also a proud and stubborn man who believes in the traditional ways of his people and resists any attempts to change them.

The plot of Part 1 revolves around a conflict between Ezeulu and the colonial authorities. The British have established a colonial administration in Nigeria, and they are determined to impose their authority on the local people. The British district officer, Captain Winterbottom, visits Umuaro and demands that Ezeulu swear an oath of allegiance to the British government. Ezeulu refuses, arguing that he cannot swear an oath to a foreign power and that he must remain loyal to his own people and gods. The conflict between Ezeulu and the British deepens when the colonial authorities decide to impose a new calendar on the people of Umuaro. The British

calendar replaces the traditional Igbo calendar, and Ezeulu sees this as a direct attack on his religion and culture. Ezeulu refuses to accept the new calendar and warns the people of Umuaro not to follow it. The tension between Ezeulu and the British comes to a head when Ezeulu is arrested and imprisoned for defying the colonial authorities. The people of Umuaro are outraged by Ezeulu's arrest and demand his release.

Part 2 of *Arrow of God* focuses on the conflict between Ezeulu, the high priest of the god Ulu, and the colonial authorities in the village of Umuaro. The narrative resumes with Ezeulu being summoned by Captain Winterbottom, the British district officer, to attend a meeting in the colonial capital of Okperi. Ezeulu is hesitant to go, as he fears that leaving his village will anger his god Ulu. However, he eventually agrees to go after consulting with his advisors. Meanwhile, the British colonial authorities are becoming increasingly frustrated with Ezeulu's resistance to their authority. They accuse him of inciting violence and rebellion among the villagers, and they threaten to remove him from his position as high priest if he does not comply with their demands.

In Okperi, Ezeulu meets with the colonial officials and is pressured to sign a treaty that would make Umuaro a British protectorate. Ezeulu refuses to sign the treaty, believing that it would be a betrayal of his god Ulu and his people. The colonial officials are angered by his refusal and threaten to use force against him. Back in Umuaro, tensions are rising between Ezeulu and his people. Some of the villagers accuse him of colluding with the British, while others remain loyal to him. Ezeulu becomes increasingly isolated as his authority is challenged from all sides. As the conflict between Ezeulu and the colonial authorities escalates, the village of Umuaro is caught in the middle. The British begin to impose economic sanctions on the village, cutting off their trade routes and causing food shortages. The villagers turn to Ezeulu for guidance, but he is unable to provide them with a solution. In the final chapter of Part 2, the conflict comes to a head when the British authorities send soldiers to Umuaro to enforce their will. Ezeulu is arrested and taken away, leaving the village in chaos.

Part Three of *Arrow of God* begins with the announcement of the arrival of the "white man" in Umuaro. This news sends shock waves throughout the village, and everyone is uncertain of what to expect from the Europeans. The village priest, Ezeulu, who had been resisting the white man's influence, sees the arrival of the Europeans as a threat to his power and influence in the village. Ezeulu's fears are further heightened when he learns that the white man has already established a presence in the neighbouring village of Okperi. Ezeulu realizes that he needs to act fast to preserve his power and the power of the Igbo people. Therefore, he decides to hold a feast

to thank his god, Ulu, for the good harvest, and at the same time, to use the feast as an opportunity to unite the village against the white man's influence. Ezeulu's plan is not without challenges as some of his family members, particularly his son, Obika, are not happy with his leadership and decision-making style. Obika accuses Ezeulu of being selfish and failing to think about the people's welfare. Ezeulu, on the other hand, sees Obika as a threat to his authority and decides to disown him publicly.

The tension between Ezeulu and Obika comes to a head during the feast when Ezeulu declares that the village should reject the white man's religion and maintain their traditional beliefs. This statement provokes a strong reaction from the Christian converts in the village, who feel insulted and marginalized. The situation becomes volatile, and Ezeulu's authority is put to the test. In the midst of this chaos, Ezeulu receives a message from the British District Officer, Winterbottom, demanding that he appears before him. Ezeulu initially refuses to go, but when his people start to suffer at the hands of the Europeans, he decides to meet with Winterbottom. The meeting between Ezeulu and Winterbottom is tense, and Ezeulu refuses to bow to the white man's demands. Winterbottom, frustrated by Ezeulu's stubbornness, orders his arrest. The novel ends with Ezeulu's arrest, leaving the village in disarray, and the future uncertain. The arrival of the Europeans has disrupted the village's way of life, and Ezeulu's resistance has put him in a difficult position. The reader is left wondering what will become of Ezeulu and the village of Umuaro.

Check your progress

1. Who is the protagonist of *Arrow of God*?

2. What are the names of the two villages in *Arrow of God*?

3. What is the nature of conflict between Ezeulu and the colonial authorities?

2.2.4 *A Man of the People* (1966):

A Man of the People is a political satire novel written by Chinua Achebe, published in 1966. Achebe believes this novel along with *Anthills of the Savannah* to be, if not literally, the spiritual successors to his *African Trilogy*. The story is set in an unnamed fictional African country, loosely based on Nigeria, and follows the rise and fall of a corrupt politician named Chief Nanga, as seen through the eyes of a disillusioned teacher named Odili Samalu. The story

begins with Odili, who lives in a small village and teaches at a local school. He is introduced to Chief Nanga, who is a charismatic and influential politician, and becomes fascinated by his power and influence. Odili begins to support Chief Nanga and helps him to campaign for the upcoming election.

As the campaign progresses, Odili becomes increasingly disillusioned with Chief Nanga's corrupt practices and dishonesty. He learns that Nanga is not the man he appeared to be and that his actions are driven solely by his own greed and ambition. Odili decides to leave Nanga's campaign and becomes involved with an opposition party. During the election, Chief Nanga wins by a landslide, but the victory is short-lived. The people of the country become increasingly discontent with the government's corruption, and protests and riots break out across the country. In response, the military takes over the government, and Chief Nanga is forced to flee the country. Odili, now fully aware of the corruption and greed that fuelled Chief Nanga's political career, becomes disillusioned with politics altogether. He realizes that true change cannot come from within the system and decides to focus on his own life and the lives of those around him.

Throughout the novel, Achebe uses satire to criticize the corrupt political system in Africa and the role of Western influence in perpetuating that corruption. He also highlights the importance of education and the need for a new generation of leaders who are not driven solely by greed and ambition. *A Man of the People* is a powerful and thought-provoking novel that explores the corrupt nature of African politics and the need for change. Through the character of Chief Nanga and the events of the novel, Achebe highlights the dangers of blind faith in charismatic leaders and the importance of individual responsibility in creating a better society.

Check your progress

1. What is the novel *A Man of the People* about?
2. What are the major themes in *A Man of the People*?
3. Who is Chief Nanga?

2.2.5 *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987):

Anthills of the Savannah is a novel written by Chinua Achebe, published in 1987. The novel is set in the fictional West African country of Kangan, which is going through a period of political turmoil after a military coup. The story follows the lives of three friends - Chris, Ikem, and Beatrice - who are caught up in the chaos and danger of Kangan's political scene. The novel begins with the military coup that overthrows the democratically elected government of Kangan. Chris, a government official, is appointed to the position of Commissioner for Information and

Culture by the new military government. Ikem, a journalist and Chris's friend, is critical of the new regime and uses his newspaper column to voice his opposition. Beatrice, Chris's girlfriend and a university lecturer, also becomes involved in the politics of Kangan when she is asked to write a speech for the military leader, Sam. As the novel progresses, tensions between the characters escalate. Ikem's opposition to the regime becomes more outspoken, and he begins to organize a resistance movement. Chris becomes increasingly disillusioned with the military government and begins to question his own role in it. Beatrice is torn between her loyalty to Chris and her own beliefs about the importance of speaking out against the government.

The plot reaches a climax when Ikem is arrested and tortured by the military government. Chris, who had been trying to remain neutral, finally takes a stand and confronts Sam about the brutality of the regime. In response, Sam orders Chris's assassination. Beatrice is also targeted for her involvement in the resistance movement and is forced to flee the country. The novel ends with Ikem's funeral, which is attended by a large crowd of mourners. Chris gives a eulogy in which he calls for a new vision of leadership for Kangan, one that is based on respect for human dignity and justice. The novel suggests that despite the tragedy of Ikem's death and the turmoil in Kangan, there is still hope for a better future. Overall, *Anthills of the Savannah* is a powerful and complex novel that explores themes of power, corruption, loyalty, and resistance. The plot is driven by the interplay between the three main characters and their relationships with each other and with the political system of Kangan. The novel's conclusion, with its call for a new vision of leadership, suggests that Achebe is optimistic about the future of Africa and its ability to overcome the challenges of political instability and corruption.

Check your progress

1. What is the setting of the novel *Anthills of the Savannah*?

2. Who are the three main characters in *Anthills of the Savannah*?

3. What kind of ending and future does *Anthills of the Savannah* suggest?

2.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should have a fair idea of the range and influence of the works written by Achebe, not just in the African context, but on a global scale. You should be informed about the productive life of Chinua Achebe and his contributions as a teacher and educator before he began writing professionally. You should also know about the various books of prose and poetry, essays, and novels written by Chinua Achebe.

2.4 Glossary

Chi:	Personal god or guardian spirit of an individual
Egwugwu:	Ancestral spirits who masquerade during important events in the Igbo society
Obi:	The living quarters of the head of a family
Nna:	Father
Nne:	Mother
Umuofia:	The name of the Igbo village in <i>Things Fall Apart</i>
Ilo:	The village green or marketplace
Ozo:	A title or status symbol in the Igbo society
Eze:	A king or ruler in the Igbo society
Umu-erika:	The Igbo term for the Christians in <i>Things Fall Apart</i>
Ogbanje:	A child that repeatedly dies and returns to its mother's womb to be born again
Umuada:	The daughters of a family who have married and left to form their own families
Iyi-uwa:	A stone believed to connect an individual to their ancestral roots
Mgbafo:	A woman who dies in childbirth and is buried outside the village
Mmadu:	A human being
Umu-nna:	Extended family or clan
Ijeoma:	Good journey or safe travels
Cultural Clash:	A conflict that arises when different cultures come into contact with each other and struggle to understand and accommodate each other's beliefs, values, and practices.
Traditionalism:	A belief in and adherence to traditional customs, values, and practices, often at the expense of progress and modernization.
Westernization:	The process of adopting Western culture, values, and practices, often at the expense of local cultures and traditions.

Igbo Culture: The culture and customs of the Igbo people, a Nigerian ethnic group that is the focus of much of Chinua Achebe's writing.

Anti-Colonial Literature: Literature that seeks to challenge and subvert the dominant narratives of colonialism and its effects on colonized peoples.

The African Renaissance: A movement in African art, literature, and culture that seeks to reclaim and celebrate the unique cultural heritage of African peoples.

2.5 Sample Questions

2.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Where, among the following, did Chinua Achebe not work?
 - (a) Nigerian Broadcasting Company
 - (b) Biafran Government Service
 - (c) Ogidi Public School
 - (d) Heinemann Educational Books
2. Which of the following is not a children's book written by Chinua Achebe?
 - (a) Christmas in Biafra
 - (b) The Drum
 - (c) How the Leopard got its Claws
 - (d) The Flute
3. What was the name of the undefeated wrestler whom Okonkwo defeated in *Things Fall Apart*?
 - (a) Felinza
 - (b) Amalinze
 - (c) Nwoye
 - (d) Ikumefuna
4. What was Reverend James Smith's approach towards the people of Umuofia in *Things Fall Apart*?
 - (a) Subtle
 - (b) Cunning
 - (c) Gentle
 - (d) Aggressive
5. Why was Obi put on trial in the beginning of *No Longer at Ease*?

- (a) For taking a bribe
 - (b) For stealing from his neighbour
 - (c) For killing a white man
 - (d) For no reason at all
6. In which department was Obi posted in *No Longer at Ease*?
- (a) Defence
 - (b) Native Affairs
 - (c) Human Resources
 - (d) Financial Operations
7. What is the name of the god of sky in *Arrow of God*?
- (a) Ira
 - (b) Mmadu
 - (c) Egwugwu
 - (d) Ulu
8. What is the name of Ezeulu's village in *Arrow of God*?
- (a) Okperi
 - (b) Umuaro
 - (c) Umuofia
 - (d) Kangan
9. What is the profession of Odili Samalu in *A Man of the People*?
- (a) Teacher
 - (b) Mason
 - (c) Priest
 - (d) Wrestler
10. How does the novel *Anthills of the Savannah* end?
- (a) With Beatrice's eulogy
 - (b) With Chris' escape
 - (c) With Ikem's funeral
 - (d) With the arrest of the three friends

2.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is meant by Igbo culture?
2. Define Traditionalism and Cultural Clash.

3. What is the meaning of “Ogbanje”?
4. Which texts are collectively called the *African Trilogy*?
5. Which texts did Achebe consider to be spiritual successors to the *African Trilogy*?

2.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Write a note on the colonial practices as portrayed in *Things Fall Apart*.
2. Explain in detail the struggles of Ezeulu in *Arrow of God*.
3. How is *A Man of the People* a political satire?

2.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. Heinemann, 1958.
2. ---. *No Longer at Ease*. Heinemann, 1960.
3. ---. *Arrow of God*. Heinemann, 1964.
4. ---. *A Man of the People*. Heinemann, 1966.
5. ---. *Beware, Soul Brother, and Other Poems*. Heinemann, 1971.
6. ---. *Girls at War, and Other Stories*. Anchor Books, 1973.
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8. ---. *The Trouble with Nigeria*. Fourth Dimension Publishing Co., 1984.
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Unit 3: *Things Fall Apart* - Background, Plot, Characters

Structure

3.0 Introduction

3.1 Objectives

3.2 *Things Fall Apart*

3.2.1 Background

3.2.2 Plot Summary

3.2.3 Characterization

3.3 Learning Outcomes

3.4 Glossary

3.5 Sample Questions

3.6 Suggested Learning Resources

3.0 Introduction

In most of the books of history written by the European travellers and missionaries, the African continent is often referred to as ‘the dark continent’. There are certain reasons for this. Firstly, they considered it to be anything mysterious that they did not understand. Secondly, they considered it to be undeveloped and uncivilized inhabited by people who were ‘primitive, uncivilised and savages’. Thirdly and more importantly, Africa was inhabited by people who had the darkest skin. These opinions about Africans being primitive and uncivilised were used by the Europeans due to lack of knowledge about the region. As such, it perpetuated stereotypes and misconceptions and lead to the characterisation of Africa as a symbol of ‘weirdness’ and irrationality, and the notion of Africa as the ‘Whiteman’s burden’. However, such notions have been widely criticised for perpetuating colonial attitudes. In reality Africa had a rich and diverse history with vibrant cultures that predate colonialism. The colonial narratives falsely portrayed Africa as lacking in history and culture. Its social, political and economic structures were seriously disrupted by colonialism which introduced the western concept of education, religion and value systems.

In the African system these values and traditions are very much expressed through people’s songs, dances, folklore, sculpture, rituals and ceremonies. In a nutshell, they symbolize the culture of the natives. But at the same time cultures evolve and are influenced by various

factors. In other words, cultural change is inherent as societies evolve. It is in such a condition that committed writers like Chinua Achebe use fiction as a powerful medium to explore and articulate the dimensions of life providing a unique lens through which readers can gain insight into different aspects of African experience. Achebe always wished to 'set the record straight' particularly regarding the portrayal of Africa and its people in literature. Achebe is credited with challenging the whole outlook of African novel. He went beyond challenging the content alone and questioned the very mode of storytelling. Achebe infused storytelling with elements like oral folklore and proverbs enriching his novels with a deep cultural context. He saw it as a crucial task to challenge and alter the prevailing representations of Africa in his writings. His aim was to counter stereotypes and present a truer reflection of the continent's diverse cultures and histories. This not only provoked the reader into thoughtful awareness of the problems his characters face but also make them change the way of responding to these novels. Achebe focuses on portraying the evolution of Nigerian society through the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras. In his novels from *Things Fall Apart* to *Anthills of the Savannah*, he considers the revaluation of Africa's depiction given the impact that colonialism on the psychological and self-perception of African people. He recreates the past in order to show the truth of what actually happened quite differently from the way it had been shown by the Europeans through the English medium. Achebe, as a committed writer, thought it was his duty in the post-colonial situation to rehabilitate the culture which the colonizing culture had overlooked and distorted.

Achebe was born in 1930 in Ogidi which is located in southeastern Nigeria. His father worked for the Church Missionary Society and Achebe's early education was influenced by the Society School. The colonial intervention brought significant changes to Nigerian society including education. By the time Achebe went to school, these changes had already taken place. He enrolled for the University of Ibadan in 1948 to study medicine but then he shifted to English literary studies and graduated in 1953. He decided to make a career in writing and moved to Lagos. He worked for the Nigerian Broadcasting Service and gained international acclaim for his first novel *Things Fall Apart* in 1958. It is considered as one of the first novels to introduce African literature to a global audience.

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is about Iboland which is located in the eastern region of present-day Nigeria. The novel is set in the late 19th century and it explores the impact of British colonialism on the traditional Igbo society. The people of Ibo land speak a number of dialects and there is no centralised authority. It was dispersed among units and a group of units made a

village. Iboland consisted of nine villages like Umuofia, Mbanta, Mbaino, Okonkwo is a respected Igbo warrior whose life gets profoundly impacted by the clash between the traditional values and the forces of colonialism. The novel is written in English language and incorporates elements of Igbo language to explore the effects of the British colonialism on the traditional Igbo society.

3.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- give a detailed analysis of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*
- supplement students reading of the novel
- provide a background to the novel
- highlight two different aspects of the novel, that is plot and characterisation This will help in the process of analysing the novel critically.

3.2 *Things Fall Apart*

In his essay 'Morning Yet on Creation Day' Achebe writes that as a student in university, he had read some 'appalling' novels which include Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. After reading these novels Achebe realised that Africa and its people have been misrepresented by the European writers. As such, he decided that Africans need to tell their own story, a story that cannot be told by anyone 'no matter how gifted or well intentioned'. Achebe believed no matter if Cary's experience was first hand, he could not tell the story which Achebe feels Africans themselves have to tell. Achebe also criticizes Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* for perpetuating racist stereotypes. He accuses Conrad of reflecting the Eurocentric views prevalent during its time in the novel and portraying Africa as inferior. In his essay, "Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" (1977) Achebe writes that Conrad is a 'purveyor of comforting myths' who does not even grant 'human expression' on Africans and deprives them of language. Africa is presented as 'the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization'. Achebe believes that although Conrad was one of those peoples who spoke against Belgium's King Leopold for ordering the torture and mutilation of millions of Africans in the Congo, but his equivocating text, in Achebe's view, 'exacerbates' the very

colonial enterprise he unravels. This is evident when he explains the condition of the natives as ‘black shadows of disease and saturation’ lying in ‘greenish gloom’. Achebe calls Conrad a ‘through going racist’ and believes that the racism in him is not observed by people because white man’s racism towards black is very usual. Achebe believes that Conrad’s novel promotes dehumanisation and perpetuates damaging stereotypes about black people. Achebe argues that such works are not true works of art as they contribute to harmful racial narratives in the Western literary canon. He calls for a shift of representations of imperialism from European perspectives to those of the colonised. In an interview with Bill Mayers Achebe remarks that while reading *Heart of Darkness* the moment he realised that he does not belong to Marlow’s crew sailing down the Congo to, but those on the shore, ‘jumping and clapping on the shore and making faces’, he realised that the story had to be told from a different perspective.

In an interview with Lewis Nkosi in 1962 Achebe said that he had found a deep sense of purpose in expressing himself through words and was sure about opting for a career in writing. He also makes it clear that although Conrad’s and Cary’s novels were praised by critics, they seemed superficial to him. He felt that the portrayal of African country and character was just an outsider’s view. So, he thought to try and look at this from the inside. As such, Achebe seeks to address and rectify these representations that he perceives as misrepresenting him as an African. His intention as a post-colonial writer is to ‘write-back’ to the centre in order to redress the imbalance he perceives in these contempt representations.

Check your progress:

1. In which year did the interview with Lewis Nkosi took place?

2. Did Achebe approve of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*?

3.2.1 Background:

In *Things Fall Apart* Achebe aims to counter stereotypes and present Africans in a more nuanced light. He highlights their humanity and tries to depict diverse perspectives and challenge the prejudiced portrayals of Africans in Western literature. He feels that Africans have been the object of someone else’s story. It is this assumption that he rejected in *Things Fall Apart*. He explores the impact of colonization on the colonized in order to reclaim their history and accord them an identity. Achebe says that the novel is an ‘atonement with my past, a ritual return and homage of a prodigal son’. Achebe puts forth his argument about British colonialism in Nigeria

with the help of an African proverb which says, “Until the lion produces his own historian, the story of the hunt will glorify only the hunter”. Achebe believes that the literary works about Nigeria from an imperialist, British perspective tell the story of only the hunter and not the lion. However, Achebe notes while he finds this proverb useful in the context of colonial rule, the figure of the lion becomes troublesome as it suggests a power struggle between the hunter and the hunted. Instead, Achebe prefers the image of a post office.

The British posted their literary works about Africa to the world, and now, the Africans respond with their own literary output and contribute to the indigenous African literature. In *Things Fall Apart* Achebe traces the life of Okonkwo and vividly portrays life in an Igbo village. Okonkwo values qualities of valour, strength and status, but sees these cultural traits gradually changing and then rapidly disintegrating with the coming of the British. He refuses to accept change in the world around him. It is his personal disposition towards the social determinants which is responsible for his personal doom. Compare to him Ezeudu, another tribal elder, who, although ingrained in traditional values is flexible. Okonkwo refuses to be flexible and compromising which in the end becomes the cause of his undoing. Achebe believed, “Life just has to go on and if you refuse to accept change, then tragic though it maybe you are swept aside”. In the novel, Obierika is Achebe’s orthodox idea of wisdom. Achebe highlights the consequences of Okonkwo’s rigidity, the point that he wants to put forth is that there is a need for retaining the good qualities of the old ways and new dispensation.

Check your progress:

1. Whose life does Achebe trace in *Things Fall Apart*?

-
2. Obierika is Achebe’s orthodox idea of _____.

3.2.2 Plot Summary:

The novel is divided into three parts. The first part consists of thirteen chapters and it deals with the time prior to the coming of the colonisers. We are introduced to the protagonist, Okonkwo who has come from humble origins but with his hard work and strong will has become a powerful leader in Umuofia. All his life he strives to overcome the disgrace left by his father, Unoka who is considered as an ‘agbala’ which means weak and unmanly. Okonkwo is proud and ambitious. He becomes famous for his physical strength, hard work and determination to succeed. However, his strengths also become his weaknesses as his rigid masculinity turns into oppressive authoritarianism, his physical strength becomes the source of his anger and his fear of weakness

leads to his tragic downfall. Achebe unravels Okonkwo's story at the end of 19th century, a time in history when Europeans began colonising Nigeria. The novel explores various themes which include cultural clash, impact of colonialism as well as the consequences of a man's uncompromising pursuit of success.

In the first section of the novel Achebe describes Okonkwo's rise to a position of power and his determination to be unlike his unmanly and unsuccessful father, Unoka. Okonkwo's strength and determination enables him to become a warrior and a great wrestler. His hard work at the farm makes him a wealthy farmer and respectable person of his community. He is such a trustworthy person of his community that when Okonkwo starts a farm, he receives a generous loan of 800 yams from Nwable who is a wealthy farmer. Nwable is willing to lend money to Okonkwo because he had firm faith in Okonkwo's abilities. His belief in Okonkwo turned out to be true as he succeeded in surviving even after a severe drought that destroyed all his crops. He is also made guardian of Ikemefuna who is a young boy that Umuofia receives as a compensation to avoid dispute with a neighbouring village. As Okonkwo rises to fame, he is rewarded with various titles and honours and he soon becomes one of the most successful and esteemed men in Umuofia.

Okonkwo's hard-earned success, however, quickly begins to diminish. This is because his success makes him impatient especially with unsuccessful and 'unmanly' men like his father. His obsession with power and masculinity makes him to insult Osugo during a kindred meeting who is a weak wrestler and a less successful man. Okonkwo's success makes him so arrogant that it leads to conflicts between Okonkwo and the other members of the village. This also drastically disturbs his relation with his own family. His family members fear his despotic nature and impulsive anger. His son Nwoye, eventually rejects Okonkwo for being excessively masculine, the way Okonkwo had rejected his father for not being manly. Even more significantly, Okonkwo beats his wife because of his irascible behaviour during the 'sacred week of peace', a festival time in Umuofia when violence of any form is to be restrained. He also participates in the sacrifice of Ikemefuna when he kills him at the command of the Oracle. Although his friend, Ezeudu warns him of committing the sin of killing someone whom Okonkwo has raised like his own son, he disregards his advice for the fear of being called weak. When Nwoye eventually finds about Ikemefuna's death, he becomes disillusioned with his father's harshness and. Ikemefuna's death also contributes to his questioning of the traditional customs and beliefs of his people.

Okonkwo eventually loses his prestige not because of his misdeeds and violent behaviour but due to an unwitting murder. During the cremation of Ezeudo, who is a winner of three titles Okonkwo's gun misfires and accidentally kills the sixteen-year-old son of Ezeudo who is dancing a traditional farewell to his father. As it is a sin against the mother goddess to kill one's own villager, Okonkwo is banished from his village for a period of seven years. The first part of the novel ends here.

The second part of the novel consists of six chapters and it dramatizes Okonkwo's banishment. During his exile, Okonkwo seeks shelter with his maternal relatives in the neighbouring village of Mbanta. Okonkwo's period of exile coincides with the onset of British colonization in the surrounding areas. As such this marks the beginning of the clash between the traditional Igbo culture and encroaching British colonialists. For example, when Whiteman arrive the neighbouring village of Abame, the inhabitants of the village kill one of the first Whiteman who land in the village as the Oracle has prophesied that white men will bring destruction. In retaliation, the British destroy the whole clan of Abame except the sick and the old. Soon the Christian missionaries arrive in Mbanta and Umuofia and introduce a new dynamic. They engage in debates attempt to convert people to Christianity. Although many people resist the new faith people but a few people, including Okonkwo's son Nwoye are drawn to the new religion. When Okonkwo's friend, Obierika visits him during his exile and informs about Nwoye's conversion, Okonkwo gets furious and disowns him. As the end of Okonkwo's exile reaches near, the tension between the Umuofians and the Whiteman escalates. The last chapter of the second part is the last year of Okonkwo's exile and he has prospered in his mother's land but he believes he would have prospered more in his home land. As Okonkwo prepares for his return to Umuofia, he gives a great feast to thank his relatives who had helped him in the times of despair.

The third part of the novel consists of six chapters and brings the novel to its end and dramatizes the death of the traditional pattern of Umuofia and this dramatization it both literally and metaphorically kills Okonkwo. When Okonkwo returns from his exile, he is hopeful about his future. He believes he can reclaim a position of power in Umuofia but during his exile Umuofia has changed drastically after the arrival of the missionaries. Mr Brown is the first missionary who has arrived in Umuofia. He is liked by the people of the land because he respects their customs and develops a good relationship with them. Mr. Brown is however replaced by Reverend James Smith who is an 'ethnocentric zealot' and hates the natives and tries his best to

create misunderstandings among them. He creates rifts between the new converts and those natives who stick to their religion. These tensions finally lead to the episode where Enoch (a convert) eating a sacred python and unmasking an *egwugwu* spirit.

In retaliation to this, the Umuofians bring down the Christian church as they think that the new religion is responsible for Enoch's blasphemous act. This leads to significant consequences for the characters as well as the community. The District Commissioner orders the arrest of the leaders of Umuofia and fines them 200 bags of cowries for burning the church. This adds to the growing tension and resentment among the people as they consider the punishment as unjust and think that it is an intrusion on their way of life. They hold a meeting to decide how to respond but at the same time they are divided as to whether they should ignore this injustice or fight back. Okonkwo has however made up his mind to take a stand against the oppressive government even if nobody else joins him. When a messenger from the government arrives to stop their meeting, Okonkwo kills him which leads to chaotic consequences.

Okonkwo finally takes his own life as he feels trapped between his beliefs and the changing world. He is not able to see his people divided and helpless in front of the new order. The people of Umuofia ask the District Commissioner to bury Okonkwo because it is against their custom to bury a man who has committed suicide. He orders his men to handle the burial but he refuses to get involved in it personally. This reflects his insensitivity as well as the cultural indifference of the colonial administration. Although the District Commissioner thinks that he has helped the natives, he is blind to the fact that he along with his system is responsible for the events that lead to Okonkwo's death. It is ironical that the District Commissioner believes that he understands the natives and thinks that he should write a history about Africa and its people. It is this misrepresentation that Achebe claims is dangerous for Africa and these historical records that he wishes to correct. *Things Fall Apart* is an attempt to retell the story of Africa from an African's point of view, to understand the consequences that lead to Okonkwo's tragic fall and his society's tragedy.

Check your progress:

1. What is the first section of the novel about?

2. What does the second section deal with?

3. From whose perspective is the story narrated?

3.2.3 Characters:

Okonkwo: Okonkwo is the protagonist of the novel, *Things Fall Apart*. He is prosperous man, well known throughout the nine villages, a wrestler and a warrior who is respected for his wealth and hard work. Okonkwo has demonstrated his skills inter-tribal wars and has gained fame at a young age. Okonkwo has always wished to be unlike his father who because of his lazy and carefree nature has not been able to leave anything like a farm or a title for his son. Okonkwo works hard to achieve success and recognition in the society. However, the fear of appearing weak like his father shapes his personality and leads to harshness in his nature. He is stubborn, rigid and impatient. He holds the Igbo values and despises everything that he perceives as effeminate. He is a ‘man of action’ and a ‘man of war’ rigid in his adherence to his principles that blind him to the evolving reality and ultimately lead to his tragic end.

Okonkwo appreciates his daughter Ezinma’s keen understanding and wishes that she was a boy. However, he is disappointed with his eldest son, Nwoye for being more like his grandfather and less like his own father. Nwoye is distant and feels neglected by his father. When Ikemefuna is taken as hostage by Umuofia he is given under Okonkwo’s care. He becomes integrated into Okonkwo’s household and Okonkwo is able to see a change in Nwoye’s temperament. Ikemefuna becomes an elder brother to Nwoye and offers him support and companionship. This provides Nwoye with a sense of belongingness that he lacks in his relationship with his father. However, when Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna on the order of the village elders, Nwoye is devastated and disillusioned with his father. He expects his father to take a stand for Ikemefuna but Okonkwo never shows an affection for him for fear of being called weak. Later on, at the funeral of Ogbuefi Ezeudu, one of his sons gets killed when Okonkwo’s gun explodes accidentally. Okonkwo is sent to exile for seven years as it is a sin against Earth Goddess to kill a clansman even accidentally. Okonkwo leaves with his family and takes shelter in his motherland, Mbanta. Although he excels in his Mbanta, he is eagerly waiting for the completion of his exile and return to his father’s land. On his return, Okonkwo finds that his people and Umuofia have changed. The arrival of the Whiteman has altered the way of life of the Umuofians, subjugated them and disintegrated the Igbo society. Okonkwo is not able to cope with the rapid cultural shift and ends up his life.

Ikemefuna: He is a fifteen-year-old boy who was given to Umoafia from the neighbouring clan of Mbaino to end the conflicts between them for killing a woman from

Umuofia. Umuofians gave him to the care of Okonkwo who tends to love him and believed that Ikemefuna was a promising and hardworking young man. However, Okonkwo kills him on the command of the Oracle because he is "afraid of being thought weak". Nonetheless, Okonkwo is anguished and disturbed after Ikemefuna's death and is not able to eat and sleep for many days. Ikemefuna had also built a strong bond with Nwoye and taught him to interact with the men and of his clan and understand his tradition. His death creates a void in Nwoye's life and he feels betrayed by the customs and culture of his people that promote the killing of innocents.

Unoka: Unoka is Okonkwo's father who is a gentle and idle man who is known for his lack of ambition and inability to provide for his family. Although he is a talented musician, he is not a successful man as per the norms of the society as he is not a warrior and has not been able to accumulate wealth. He has a 'fear of blood' which neither allowed him to become a warrior nor was he able to earn any kind of title. This inability to become successful and strong earned him the name *agbala*, meaning woman. Okonkwo's obsession with masculinity is driven by his father's perceived failure. It also contributes to his harsh and rigid behaviour as he has always been ashamed of being Unoka's son.

Unoka died of "the swelling" of the stomach which was considered to be disgrace to the earth goddess. Thus, he was not given a proper burial and was taken to the Evil Forest to die alone. This didn't allow him to pay off his debts which was another mark of shame.

Nwoye: Nwoye is Okonkwo's son who undergoes significant changes in the course of the novel. He is not the ideal son in Okonkwo's eyes as he resembles his grandfather Unoka who was considered a failure. He often gets beaten for not being able to please his father, until the arrival of Ikemefuna, who is able to bring positive changes in his character. Okonkwo is pleased with this change but Nwoye remains conflicted as he misses his mother's stories and makes a show of scorning feminine things in order to please his father. This tension between Okonkwo and Nwoye increases when Ikemefuna is killed by Okonkwo on the orders of the village elders. He starts to question the rigid norms of his society and is drawn to a different way of thinking. This finally culminates in Nwoye's conversion to Christianity.

Obierika: Obierika is a close friend of Okonkwo's. He has a close association with Okonkwo and knows everything about his family including Unoka. In the novel Obierika is a foil to Okonkwo as he is more reflective and thoughtful and less driven to prove himself. He is well aware about Okonkwo's impulsive nature and is always found advising Okonkwo to which he pays no heed. He detests violence and condemns the ritualistic killings like that of Ikemefuna.

Although, he criticizes many of his society's ills like banishment of twins to the Evil Forest, he values his culture and tradition. For example, he negotiates the bride price as well as his daughter's *uri* (a type of marital celebration) at the time of his daughter's marriage off his.

Obierika is the only clansman who visits Okonkwo during his exile. At this time, he also sells Okonkwo's yams in Umoafia and takes the profit earned to Okonkwo when he visits him in Mbanta. He informs him about the coming of the missionaries to Umuofia and also about Nwoye's conversion. He provides valuable insights into many events throughout the novel. He gives a rational perspective on the changes that occur with the coming and settling of the white missionaries. He highlights the complexities of the traditions and culture of his society and also the impact of the colonizers influences on his society. As such, he is the only person who understands Okonkwo's strengths and flaws which allows him to offer valuable advice to him and acts as a trusted confidant. He berates the White men who come to help bury Okonkwo and is taken over with emotions to see the tragic end of his friend.

Ekwefi: Ekwefi is Okonkwo's second wife who fell in love with Okonkwo while watching him during a wrestling match. She is the mother of Ezinma whom she loves deeply. She is overprotective of her daughter as she is her only surviving child. She has lost many children in infancy and is fearful of losing her only surviving child. This is because she is visited by Chielo as the spirit of Agbala. One day Ekwefi places herself in danger by following Chielo when she asks for Ezinma. Despite all the challenges that she faces, Ekwefi remains steadfast and is a symbol of maternal love in the novel.

Ezinma: Ezinma is the only child of Ekwefi and Okonkwo who is her father's favourite child. She is known for her strong will and resilience who usually approaches her father boldly and sometimes even contradicts with him. She possesses such a masculine spirit that Okonkwo often wishes that she was a boy. She is not only loved but also respected by Okonkwo. She is a beautiful and sensible girl who rejects to marry during exile despite many proposals. Thus, she becomes a source of pride and hope for her father.

Obiageli: Obiageli is Okonkwo's daughter from the first wife. She is very close to her mother and has a good relation with her sisters. She is a mature girl and is apologetic if she misbehaves.

Uchendu: Uchendu is Okonkwo's maternal uncle who greets him when he is exiled to Mbanta. He fills a fatherly role for Okonkwo by giving him advice and support and helps him in settling down in Mbanta. He gives Okonkwo huts for accommodating his family and land and

seeds for farming. He is portrayed as a wise leader who offers guidance and support to Okonkwo during exile. At the time when Okonkwo is depressed Uchendu comforts him and gives him hope. He is a symbol of strength and resilience in the story.

Ogbuefi Ezeudu: He is the eldest and the oldest member of the clan in Umuofia who is greatly respected for being a powerful warrior and orator. It is he whom Okonkwo treats badly when he warns him for not being a part of Ikemefuna's killing. This episode has significant consequences on Okonkwo's life and contributes to a great extent to his downfall.

Nwakibie: He is a wealthy man of the village of Umuofia whom Okonkwo asks for his first yam seeds.

Chielo: Chielo is a significant character in the novel. She is the priestess of the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves. When she is not possessed by the goddess, she is a normal woman. She is a well-known resident of Umuofia who is a widow and has two kids. She has suffered some hardships throughout her life and has lost a child as well. She is close friends with Ekwefi and is especially fond of Ekwefi's daughter Ezinma whom at times she refers to as 'my daughter'. She represents the spiritual dimension of Igbo people and is a connection between the earthly realm and that of gods. This is demonstrated in the novel when Chielo carries Ezinma on her back to the cave in the persona of the Oracle.

Mr Kiaga: Mr Kiaga is a Christian missionary and a member of the white missionary group who arrive at the village of Mbanta. He is portrayed as a persuasive character who is able to attract natives to Christianity through his preaching and teaching. He establishes a Church in Mbanta and gains the trust of many people including Nwoye who converts to Christianity despite his father's disapproval.

Mr Brown: He is one of the initial white missionaries who comes to the village of Umuofia. He is depicted as a kind hearted person who treats people with respect and empathy. He tries to understand the native culture and tradition and tries to build a peaceful relationship with them.

Reverend James Smith: He is a Christian missionary who arrives in Umuofia after the departure of Mr. Brown. He is a total contrast to Mr. Brown and runs a strict church. He neither accommodates nor understands the Igbo people and tries to impose his own beliefs and practices on the natives. His uncompromising attitude ultimately leads to a division between the Igbo people and the missionaries which ultimately leads to the breakdown of the traditional structures.

Enoch: Enoch is one of the Igbos who converts to Christianity under the influence of the missionaries. He is so fond of his new faith that he often antagonises those who stick to their tradition. In one of the annual ceremonies of honouring the Earth goddesses he unmask the ancestral spirit of an *egwugwu*, to reveal that they are ordinary men and not supernatural beings. His lack of respect for traditional beliefs leads to growing conflict between the converts and those who adhere to indigenous customs.

Check your progress:

1. Why did Okonkwo go into exile?

2. Who is the priestess of Agbala and the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves?

3. Name any three characters in the novel.

3.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, Students should be able to understand that Chinua Achebe's main motivation behind writing the novel *Things Fall Apart* was to re-tell the story of Africa and its inhabitants. You should have also understood the plot and characterisation of the novel and how the novel is essentially different from a text written by a European writer.

3.4 Glossary

Appalling: Causing shock, awful, bad.

Cannibalism: The practice of eating the flesh of one's own species.

Colonisation: The process by which a foreign power establishes control over a territory and its people. The process involves imposing political, economic, social and cultural control.

Dehumanisation: The process of depriving people of positive human qualities.

Eurocentric: Focussing on European culture or history and excluding a wider view of the world.

Imperialism: A policy of extending a country's power through colonisation, use of military force or any other means.

Missionaries: A missionary is a person who is sent by a religious institution or organisation to spread their faith and teachings.

Post-colonialism: A theoretical approach that examines the social, cultural, political and economic legacies of colonisation.

3.5 Sample Questions

3.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. When was *Things Fall Apart* published?
2. *Mister Johnson* is a novel by _____.
3. During his exile Okonkwo takes refuge in _____.
4. *Agbala* in Igbo culture means _____.
5. 'Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*' is an essay by _____.
6. _____ is the white missionary responsible for bringing Christianity to Umuofia.
7. _____ is the protagonist of the novel *Things Fall Apart*.
8. Africa was referred to as the _____ continent.
9. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is about _____, in the eastern region of present-day Nigeria.
10. The process of depriving people of positive human qualities is called _____.

3.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Give a character sketch of Ikemefuna.
2. How does Oberieka serve as a foil for Okonkwo's character in the novel?
3. Write a note on the ending of the novel.
4. Explain in brief, the role of minor characters.
5. Comment in brief on colonialism as depicted in *Things Fall Apart*.

3.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Critically analyse the plot structure of the novel.
2. In *Things Fall Apart* Achebe retells the story from Okonkwo from the perspective of an African rather than the European one. Discuss.
3. Evaluate the character portrayal in *Things Fall Apart*.

3.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. New York: Anchor, 1994.
2. --- *Hopes and Impediments*. 1988. New York: Random House, 1990.
3. --- *Morning Yet on Creation Day*. London: Heinemann, 1972.
4. Carroll, David. *Chinua Achebe: Novelist, Poet, Critic*. London: Macmillan, 1990.
5. Killam, G.D. *The Writings of Chinua Achebe: A Commentary*. London: Heinemann, 1977.
6. ---, ed. *African Writers on African Writing*. 1973. London: Heinemann, 1978.
7. Morrison, Jago. *The Fiction of Chinua Achebe*. Ed. Nicolas Treddeell. New York: Palgrave, 2007.

Unit - 4: *Things Fall Apart* – Narrative Technique, Themes, Critical Appreciation

Structure

4.0 Introduction

4.1 Objectives

4.2 *Things Fall Apart*

4.2.1 Narrative Technique

4.2.2 Themes

4.2.3 Critical Appreciation

4.3 Learning Outcomes

4.4 Glossary

4.5 Sample Questions

4.6 Suggested Learning Resources

4.0 Introduction

In this Unit, we will continue a detailed analysis of the novel, *Things Fall Apart* which we started in the previous Unit. In the last Unit, you studied the background, plot and characters in the novel. You were also provided a detailed introduction. In this Unit we will discuss the main features like the title of the novel, its varied themes and the narrative technique in order to get a thorough understanding of the novel. We will also attempt a critical appreciation of the novel.

4.1 Objectives

The main objectives of this Unit are to:

- understand the different aspects of the novel *Things Fall Apart* as a work of art
- communicate the ideas that the author is trying to discuss within the text
- discuss the title of the novel, its narrative technique and the themes

4.2 *Things Fall Apart*

The title of Chinua Achebe's novel, *Things Fall Apart* is taken from been taken from W. B. Yeats' poem, 'The Second Coming'. The epigraph of the novel includes several lines from this poem which sets the tone of the novel. It also provides a thematic framework for Achebe's exploration of the collapse of the traditional Igbo society with the coming of the Europeans and the cultural change that they bring. The allusion deepens by comparison of Achebe's novel and the title. The first four lines are referred as a preface to the novel, "Turning and turning the widening gyre/ The falcon cannot hear the falconer; Things fall apart and the centre cannot hold/ Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world". Things fall apart when what is believed to last forever, ends soon. The phrase refers to the fact that if we as humans and as a society are not able to maintain a balance, things fall apart. This idea of balance is an important theme of the novel and the novelist stresses on the fact that loss of balance disturbs everything. Thus, the title encapsulates the central message of the novel, highlighting the consequences of imbalance and the eventual collapse of the individuals and the society as a whole. Balance, both personal and societal is pivotal in understanding the downfall of Okonkwo and his society. The protagonist of the novel, Okonkwo who is a rich and respectable person at the beginning of the novel meets a tragic end. The novelist portrays how an ambitious, self made and well known African's life falls apart and how he suffers along with his society. At the novel begins, we see that the Igbo society is an organic society and the people are living in peace. However, by the coming of the missionaries the situation becomes chaotic as the people do not even listen to their leaders and the Igbo tribe falls into pieces. Therefore, the novel records falling apart of the whole African society and not just its protagonist, Okonkwo.

The title bears the whole of the message of the novel as it portrays the falling apart of both Okonkwo and the Igbo society. At the beginning of the novel, Okonkwo is a prosperous leader of his clan but he meets a tragic end. He is a esteemed figure, respected for his prowess in wrestling and his dedication to hard work. His reputation has earned him wealth, titles and admiration throughout the nine villages. His life starts falling apart when he kills Ikemefuna despite an elder's warning not to do so. He rejects the advice for the fear of being called weak and this fear ultimately falls his life apart. His hopes of gaining more popularity and becoming more rich fall apart with the accidental killing of a boy offering last rites to his father. He is exiled and loses faith of friends like his father, Nwoye's conversion to Christianity saddens him further and he

finally falls apart when he sees total change in his people after he returns from exile. The last nail in the coffin in Okonkwo's case is when he along with other leaders is summoned for peaceful negotiation by the D.C but humiliated and tortured and fine collected from people to free them. The grief of destruction and fear of humiliation in Okonkwo makes him to hang himself and end his life. In the same manner the arrival of the white men lead to erosion of traditional structures, values and way of life. This resulted in fragmentation of the society and a loss of energy within the community.

At the outset of the novel Igbos are shown as politically strong but with the coming of the Europeans the traditional religion gets replaced by that of the whites. They ignore the Igbo traditional system and enforce their own religion as well as a court. The Igbos believe and follow a system of religion with gods in hierarchy. They make sacrifices to gods, worship ancestors and are hold superstitious ideas. All these form important parts of their faith but the Europeans introduce the concept of single God who has the ability to punish the false Igbo gods. Many people are affected by the new religion as it highlights the superstitious brutality of Igbo system. For example, the Igbos abandon the twins to Evil forest to die, treat low caste people badly and propose Ikemefuna's killing. People like the mothers of twins are the first ones to embrace the religion of the missionaries and people like Nwoye who doubt the justice system find it to be a religion that treats all equally. This causes fissures in the Igbo society and it starts falling apart.

The title is referenced only once in the book in the 20th chapter when Okonkwo and Obeika discuss the invasion and the later says, "The White man is very clever. He came quietly and peacefully with his religion. We were amazed 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." This attributes the destruction of Igbo society with the missionaries and their policies. Okonkwo, Igbo people and their society are all affected by the politics of the whites. The novel concludes with the death of its protagonist who hangs himself and becomes a murderer. His world falls apart and symbolically the Igbo world falls apart. Thus, the title appropriately denotes the theme of the novel.

Check your progress:

1. From where is the title of the novel taken?

-
2. How does the novel conclude?

4.2.1 Narrative Technique:

The most controversial aspect of African writing is the medium of expression and rhetoric derived from Eurocentric sensitivity. Most African writers opt for English, may be to reach a wider audience. Since the writers are very much conscious that their choice deprives them of the linguistic resources of their own language for creative use, they try to Africanize the medium. This acts both as a method for creating a style to display the social setup and a decolonizing strategy as well. These writers try to convey the concept, through patterns and linguistic features of the African languages through the European tongue. A necessity for linguistic experimentation arises from the unique way in which Africans use English. This is to be distinct from the native English speakers, and the richness of rhetorical devices in each African language and community which reflect cultural heritage. In order to capture African life in English language authentically, it is essential to adapt and mould the English language to accommodate these idiomatic and rhetorical nuances.

Oral tradition serves as a rich source of inspiration for most of the African writers. In turning to the literacy traditions of their ancestors African writers have sought to show its worth and to give it a role which transcends a simple curiosity for things of the past. Despite using a foreign media the spirit of the native language is carried over in particularities to create a new branch of literature. In addition to this, the incorporation of diverse types of English spoken by Africans, such as pidgin, creole, and various levels of formal English is essential for authentically representing the African life in novels written by African writers in English. Insisting solely on the use of 'Queen's English' would ignore the richness and complexity of linguistic diversity across the continent.

Achebe successfully formulates a new diction in *Things Fall Apart*. He concentrates upon solving the question of how to indicate the style of speech of the African characters, all of whom must use English. He achieves an impressive range of styles from extremely formal, which is appropriate to the most educated, to rather dislocated English of less educated. He also employs pidgin where appropriate. The strategy adopted is to incorporate the African oral narrative in English especially proverbs, legends, fables, similes, metaphors, etc. Achebe interprets his world presenting reality neither as idyllic nor as barbaric, but an authentic picture of his country and people and the assault of colonialism on the psyche and culture of Africans. He adopts the language of the dominant peoples to convey the essence of his experience. He admits

that the writers should use English language for communicating among themselves and their people. He asserts that one has to modify English to convey one's own sensibility rather than let oneself be bought over by language and thought of one's education. He believes that it is not desirable for the African writer to use it as an English man rather he should strive to use English in a manner that effectively conveys their message while retaining its international accessibility.

Chinua Achebe africanizes the speech of his characters by making use of Igbo words, myths, parables and folktales which are found in abundance in oral tradition. The proverbs show the reader the logic of the culture, they provide a guidance from which the readers can understand the rules that govern the society. Achebe uses proverbs in conversation of the characters for he believes 'proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten.' They also serve as the poignant reflections of the speaker's mood characterise the mood of the speaker and the societal values they represent. He uses proverbs such as "like a bushfire in the harmattan," "when the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for work." Proverbs convey deeper meanings and insights into the character's perspective as well as the cultural context of the story. For example, Okonkwo says, "I am not afraid of work" and then cites the lizard who praised himself: "The lizard jumped from the high iroke tree to the ground, said he would praise himself if no one else did" (21). Similarly, when Nwakibie lends yam seeds to Okonkwo, he displays his trust by saying, "you can tell a ripe corn by its looking."

The characters in *Things Fall Apart* speak in a manner many Igbo or allied language speaker would easily recognise as natural to him in rhythm, verbal flow of conversation, etc. Achebe neither resorts to broken English nor gives the reader a chance to complain against sentence structure. At the same time he does not reduce the fundamentals of the Igbo idioms, sound and flow to obscurity. Neither can the English speaker grumble on un-Englishness nor can the Igbo speaker on the lack of Igbo speech patterns and speech rhythms in English language. In the novel Achebe skilfully incorporates both Igbo and English languages. While the descriptive passages are directly written in English, the speeches of some characters are conceived in Igbo and then translated into English. For example, Achebe describes the wrestling match between Amalzone, the cat and Okonkwo as: "The drums beat and the flutes sang and the spectators held their breath. Amalzone was a wily craftsman, but Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water. Every nerve and every muscle stood out on their arms, on their backs and on their thighs, one heard them stretching to breaking points"(3). This interplay helps Achebe to convey

the authenticity of Igbo speech patterns and cultural expressions within the framework of the English language.

Another example of Achebe's language is the effective use of similes and images drawn from an exclusively African environment. For example, "Okonkwo did not taste any food. He drank palm-oil from morning till night, and his eyes were red and fierce like the eyes of a rat when it was caught by the tail and dashed against the the floor" (63). Although Achebe's narration is standard but the image of a 'rat caught and dashed against the floor' imparts an African flavour which appropriately conveys Okonkwo's internal conflict. Achebe's rural characters who generally speak in Igbo in actual situations speak in modified English, modified rhythmically and idiomatically. For example, at the time of marriage of Obierika's daughter the conversation goes on like, " 'We are giving you our daughter today. She will be a good wife to you. She will bring you nine sons like the mother of our town'. The crowd answered, Ee-e-e!"(117). This is not just Africans using English but Africans speaking and living actually in African rural situation. In the same manner Achebe develops the concept of 'agbala' in Okonkwo's character sketch, for the benefit of the reader without there being any need for translation or explanation to the text: "He still remembered how he had suffered when a playmate had told him that his father was 'agbala'. That was how Okonkwo first came to know that 'agbala' was not only another name for a woman, it could also mean a man who had taken no titles" (13).

As the novel comes to an end we are told the District Commissioner literary skills have been evoked by Okonkwo's death. He wants to write a book on his colonial experience with the title 'The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger.' The District Commissioner embodies the archetype of Europeans who have a limited understanding and superficial knowledge of Africa. He wishes to write a book on the natives in order to assert authority and impose his own perspective on the continent. It also reflects the Western scholar's inability in transcending stereotypical views of the African people and cultures. To him anything that the Igbo's say "sounds like a series of primitive grunts." As such, the District Commissioner is totally excluded from the society that he governs. This reflects his linguistic exile as he is unable to grasp the nuances of both the Igbo language and culture. This isolates him from any meaningful interaction with the community that he rules. As the novel progresses we realise that it is Nwoye who ultimately takes the first step towards embracing the new language. His conversion to Christianity reflects the disintegration of the tribal past as he deserts Okonkwo to join the

missionaries. But at the same time his adoption of the coloniosers language symbolises a shift towards a new cultural paradigm. This shift sets the stage for the African writer, like Achebe himself to record his culture in English and thus bridging the gap between the African tradition and the wider world.

Check your progress:

1. What is the source of inspiration for much of the African writer's work?

2. What is the strategy adopted by Achebe?

3. How does Achebe Africanize the speech of his characters?

4.2.2 Themes:

Culture and Tradition

In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe depicts the Igbo society as deeply rooted in tradition while as the forces of modernity are introduced by the European colonialism. The natives have a close association with their traditions, customs and cultural practices. Although change is inherent in Igbo society even before the arrival of the Europeans, the novelist demonstrates how the Igbo way of life undergoes a change, internal shifts and adaptations over time. Thus, Achebe highlights the complexity and the dynamism of cultural evolution. He talks about the unquestioned adherence to tradition and the need for a middle way in the background of colonization and imposition of a foreign tradition.

The Igbo people are strong believers of their customs and traditions which are interwoven with the natural world, with rituals and practices. They place a great importance on maintaining harmony and balance in their society. This respect for interconnectedness and nature is a fundamental aspect of their worldview and it also shapes a number of aspects of their lives. These are also important aspects of an agricultural society, and the people of Umuofia have developed many rituals in which they participate several times a year. In the novel, the novelist has tried to highlight the blind adherence to tradition and its negative consequences. For example, Okonkwo is a strong believer of his tradition and he kills Ikemefuna because he doesn't want to go against the village elders. He also goes to exile for an accidental murder because of the law of the land. Similarly, Obierika surrenders his twin babies to conform to the requirements of the Earth Goddess. Although, Obierika is well aware that the babies will die, he adheres to the custom

and practice of surrendering his babies. With the arrival of the missionaries these Igbo traditions including many more are called into question. Those natives who convert to Christianity and adopt the new way of life question the religious practices and traditions of their own people. This eventually leads them to disrespect their own tradition and culture. The missionaries challenge the social hierarchy of the Igbos by offering acceptance and a sense of belonging to those who were marginalised and oppressed within the existing Igbo community. They accept the outcasts and with this inclusion the outcasts found a new sense of power and importance to feel included and powerful. The conflict of worldviews is presented through Okonkwo and his son, Nwoye. A doubt haunts Nwoye after the killing of Ikemefuna and he seems grappling with a crisis of faith and identity. He seems to question the Igbo norms and seeks a deeper understanding of spirituality that aligns with his personal beliefs. However, Okonkwo feels that Nwoye has disrespected both his family and society by exploring alternative paths. This becomes symbolic of the underlying threats to Igbo culture as Nwoye becomes one of the first people to embrace Christianity.

Thus, the imposition of outside culture which has no respect for the indigenous culture leads to chaos. Reverend Smith's aggressive tactics, coupled with his disregard for Igbo traditions provides a backlash from the community. His disrespect for Igbo tradition leads to the unmasking of an *egwugwu*, which in turn leads to the burning of the white man's church. This leads to the arrest of multiple leaders of Igbo community including Okonkwo. This grief of destruction along with the fear of humiliation in Okonkwo makes him to hang himself and leads to his tragic end.

Fate or Destiny

In *Things Fall Apart*, the theme of cultural clash highlights the tension between flexibility and rigidity of the characters, ultimately shaping their destiny. Characters who are rigid in their beliefs struggle to adapt to new cultural environments, leading to conflict and ultimately impacting their fate. On the other hand, characters who are flexible and open to change have more chances of successfully overcoming the cultural clashes. In the novel, Okonkwo's inflexible nature makes his destruction evident at the very outset even before the coming of the Europeans. The arrival of a new culture plays a significant role in Okonkwo's tragic fate. Mr. Brown, the missionary, represents a more flexible approach to cultural change. He not only respects the traditions and culture of Igbos but seeks to understand them before introducing his religion. This is in contrast with Okonkwo's unquestioning rigidity and adherence to his tradition.

Okonkwo is also in sharp contrast with his friend, Obierika. While Obierika respects his traditions he also questions certain aspects of Igbo culture and is willing to consider new ideas like benefits of trade with the settlers. This flexibility allows Obierika to adapt to the cultural changes more successfully than Okonkwo whose rigid nature leads to his tragic fall. Obierika is a man of reason who does not advocate the use of force in resisting and opposing the colonizers. He is more receptive and has an adaptable nature which may be seen as representative of certain Igbo culture which has shown adaptability and resilience in the face of change. Hence, the novel illustrates different approaches within Igbo society to the challenges brought about by colonialism and cultural transformation.

When the missionaries first enter the Igbo land, the Igbos did not take a stand against them or their new laws and the new religion. This lack of significant opposition suggests that the Igbo society had a high level of receptiveness and adaptability to change. This lack of opposition can also correspond to lack of centralized leadership. Although, the society encouraged individual achievements but the timely decision-making on short notice required for maintaining the integrity was lacking. The missionaries ambitious nature of achieving their goal of “enlightenment” and encroachment proved fatal to the existing Igbo culture.

Igbo society marginalized certain groups such as the outcasts and subordinated women. The acceptance of physical abuse against women is rooted in patriarchal structures that normalised such behaviour. When the Christian missionaries enter the Igbo territory, the first thing that they did was to accept these marginalized people who were rejected by their own society. The title of the novel clearly reflects the idea that without a strong central authority, chaos and disintegration can occur. This lack of a sustaining central authority within Igbo society contributed to its eventual unravelling and transformation under colonial rule.

Fate and destiny are the central themes in *Things Fall Apart*. In the Igbo society this gets emphasised with the concept of *chi*, the personal god or the destiny of each individual. Throughout the novel we are reminded of the role that fate plays in the life of characters. For example, Okonkwo’s successes and failures are often interpreted through the lens of his relationship with his *chi*. At times he feels his *chi* supports him: “When a man says yes, his *chi* says yes also”. At other times he feels that his *chi* has let him down: “A man could not rise beyond the destiny of his *chi*... Here was a man whose *chi* said nay despite his own affirmation”(TFA). As a society, Igbos lack a centralised leadership that could strengthen them as a society. This drawback along with the Igbos treatment with some of the people of their

society as well as destiny make them fall easy prey to colonization and the exploitation that it brings along.

Justice, Law and Political Revolution

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe delves into many themes including the concept of justice and law. The treatment that the leaders of Umuofia face for upholding their tradition highlights the tension between the native customs and the colonial influences. This prompts the readers to contemplate the notions of justice and authority within different cultural contexts. We, as readers are supposed to think over the imposition of one country over the other. This raises important ethical and moral questions. The incidents that lead to the imprisonment of six leaders of Umuofia exemplify the clash between colonial imposition of laws and the native community's sense of justice. The novel shows how law serves the oligarchical interest and at the same time how it works on injustice and against common good. Achebe clearly shows the European imperialists imposing their laws, especially without taking cognizance of the existing laws leading to the idea of political revolution. The idea of waging a war against the white man for unmasking an *egwugwu* is taken by the clansmen as a corrective measure. Okonkwo's action of beheading the head messenger is an attempt to put an end to oppression. However, he does not get the support of his clansmen. Therefore, Achebe seems to suggest that an act by an individual for the society should be guided by the majority. Okonkwo's impulsive act of beheading the white man's messenger ultimately ends in his committing suicide. This is because the system becomes unworkable if individuals take justice in their own hands without regard for broader consequences. This reflects the importance of a just as well as functional legal system for maintaining order in society and avoiding justice.

Treatment of Women

The characteristic quality which is prized by the Igbo society in general and Okonkwo in particular is manliness. In the novel, man-woman relationship is depicted by mainly through Okonkwo's relationship with and his wives. Okonkwo's household had a tense atmosphere because he was strict and often resorted to harsh discipline. His wives especially the youngest, constantly felt anxious because of his volatile temper. Okonkwo berates Nwoye's mother when she tries to question him when he takes Ikemefuna home and gives him to her care. Okonkwo often resorts to physical violence against his wives. The novel explores how this behavior is normalised within the cultural context, reflecting the societal expectations on men to assert dominance within their household. For example, when Okonkwo beats Ojiugo, his youngest wife

during the Peace Week for failing to cook his afternoon meal on time, he doesn't get punished. On another occasion, he beats his second wife for killing a banana tree. These incidents show that women of the Igbo tribe are an oppressed group with little power. However, the importance of feminine principle is put across at many points in the novel. The women, like Chika and Chilli wield spiritual authority and are greatly respected within their communities. They play the role of priestess.

During Okonkwo's childhood Chika was the priestess who was feared because she was full of power of God. Chielo, the present priestess is also a woman and she is the oracle of the hill and the caves. The only time we see Okwonkwo pleading his cause to anyone is Chielo who has come to take Ezinma (when she is sick) for a ritual. Chielo threatens Okonkwo when he tries to stop her. This highlights the complex nature of gender dynamics in Igbo culture, where women hold influential positions in certain spheres despite facing oppression in others. Apart from this, the Earth goddess is a source of fertility and a code of morality. The women also play the roles of educators for the children of the village. They impart education through storytelling and it is indeed through the ritual of storytelling that the children are taught important lessons, such as the human condition and the myths of Ibo creation.

Religion

Religion plays a vital role in the novel as it represents order in both societies and their manifestation differently. Throughout the novel, Achebe presents the Igbo religion in contrast to that of Christainity. In the Igbo society religion is based on agriculture while the white man view it as education. The Igbos worship gods like the Eath Goddess, Sun god, etc out of reverence and respect for natural cycles. This reflects their deep connection to the natural world and the cycles of life. The White missionaries introduce a different worldview that is centered around education and salvation. Mr Brown condemns the Igbos fear of the gods but forgets the fact that the White missionaries like he himself impose fear tactics to control and punish the indigenious people. This highlights the hypocrisy of Mr Brown's condemnation of fearing God as he along with other white men employ similar fear tactics to maintain power and control over the native population.

The people of Umoafia believe that there are multiple gods and goddesses representing every facet of life. The concept of single God is foreign to the natives as it does not seem applicable to them. Hence, they find it hard and unacceptable to follow the white men who are trying to make people embracre Christainity. The white men compares their religion to the religious faith of Umuofia. An interpreter of the white man explained that alll their gods are fake

and ‘gods of deceit’ who promote the killing of fellows and destroy innocent children. He also tells them that there is only one true God and that is the Christian God who rules all the humans of the world. This brings Igbos in direct conflict with Christian missionaries. When some people of the clan embrace the white man’s religion, there is a crisis in the clan and it causes discomfort among those who strictly follow the Igbo religion. They are scared of what their gods will do to them.

The Igbo ancestors or the *egwugwus* have a significant role to play in the religious and social life. People consult their spirits for guidance and make offerings in their honour. As such, they play a role in the justice system. When one of the *egwugwus* is unmasked by Enoch, who is a convert, it signifies a decline in the society’s cohesion and spiritual strength. This ultimately leads to a loss of independence and cultural identity.

Colonialism

European colonialism is a prominent theme of most of Achebe’s novels including *Things Fall Apart*. In the novel, Achebe portrays the clash between the traditional Igbo system of governance and the imposition of colonial rule by the white man. The novel shows how the strong political climate of Umuofia is destroyed by the coming of the white man. It highlights how the democratic and communal structure of the Igbo society is disrupted and replaced by the oppressive administration of the District Commissioner. He invites the leaders of Umuofia for a peace mission concerning Enoch (who had unmasked the *egwugwu*) but ends up by jailing them without even hearing them. When Okonkwo intentionally beheads the court messenger, none of his elders support him because of their early humiliation. Okonkwo’s tragic fate reflects his struggle to reconcile his loyalty to the traditional system with the harsh realities of colonialism. This ultimately leads to his despair and demise.

In the novel, Achebe shows the lack of due process and the abuse of power under colonial rule in sharp contrast with the traditional Igbo system. The traditional system had mechanisms in place to address abuses of power and maintain order within the community. For example, there is a council of respected elders who provide leadership and wisdom to the society, the Oracle of the Hills and Caves is consulted for guidance and the *egwugwus* serve as a form of guidance for justice. These examples demonstrate how the Igbo society employed a combination of ritual, tradition and community structures to maintain order and resolve dispute to ensure peace within the society. In the same manner the order of the society is maintained by making law equal for all. Okonkwo being punished for beating his wife in the Sacred Week of Peace or

Umofians taking Ikemeufuna hostage are examples of the same. In contrast to this, the white man's administration and their black associates use power recklessly. The treatment given to the six leaders of the clan is a good example of this.

Check your progress:

1. Mention any two themes in the novel.

2. Who is the first missionary on the land?

3. Who beheaded the white man's messenger?

4.2.3 Critical Appreciation:

Chinua Achebe's works not only challenge European perspectives on African history and culture but also provide an alternative narrative rooted in Igbo worldview. His novels not only critique colonialism and its effects but also demonstrate the complexity and richness of African societies. Achebe's innovative use of the English novel form allows him to convey authentic African experiences and also engage with universal themes of humanity and empathy. This helps him to highlight the possibility for African writers to produce literature that is culture specific and universally resonant at the same time. This helps him to contribute to a more inclusive and diverse literary landscape. These works are both a rejection of some traditions of fiction which preceded it and a fulfilment of others.

Achebe's ideas as reflected from his works are forms of 'self-definition.' The most valuing dimension of his ideology is a desire to put literature to work as a social force fulfilling commitments towards his society. Achebe's ideas are well supported by his contemporaries and he is a trend setter for a number of writers of younger generation. He produced a new form of English with an African colouration. His belief that the 'English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience' is also shared by Gabriel Okara and other writers of younger generation. In post-independent Nigeria the use of English for which Achebe had pleaded is used not only by the writers but also for disseminating news, in advertisements, reporting, documentary, discussion programmes, talk shows, etc.

Achebe's prose writing talks about the legacy that the writer and society received from the colonial period and he makes his views clear in his fiction. Achebe's novels reflect the changes which have taken place in the life of the Igbos as a result of what Achebe calls, 'a

chance encounter between Europe and Africa' during the time when Europeans colonised Africa. The diachronic vision displayed by the African writer is a product of dual cultures and dual value systems. The African writer is able to project the cultural inheritance of his indigenous milieu through the medium of an alien language. In the context of the colonial experience which they have undergone, the societies depicted in Achebe's fiction are shown as displaying the complexities that arise due to the imposition of an acquired culture over an indigenous one. Achebe had re-read the books written by the Europeans about Africa to dispense their authority. In one of his interviews, he said that when he read *Heart of Darkness*, which is one of the highly praised books he realised that "I was one of those savages jumping up and down the beach." This made him realize that someone has to take responsibility and tell the story differently. As he was inclined towards writing Achebe thought it is better to write the African version of the story. He had a desire to 'set the records straight'. He not only challenged the vision depicted but also the way in which it was depicted. He challenged not only the story but also the mode of storytelling as well as the reader writer relationship. He wrote from the point of view of a cultural historian and his culture embodied storytelling, proverbs and folk-tales which he incorporated in his novels. This provoked the reader into thoughtful awareness of the problems that his characters faced and also made them to change the way of responding to these novels.

In *Things Fall Apart* Achebe portrays the complex relation of an individual with his equally complex society. It deals with the *Ibo* society towards the end of nineteenth century. Although, the novel is rooted in the specific cultural context of pre-colonial Nigeria, it explores themes of power struggle, consequences of pride, impact of change and the complexities of human relationships. By this Achebe achieves a balance between the peculiarities of Igbo society and the universal truths that underlie human existence. As a work of art, the novel has many themes which are explicit or can be read between the lines. All of them narrating the impact of the coming of the Europeans on the Ibo society in a style and language that is apparently very simple. Achebe skillfully integrates Igbo language, its storytelling traditions and proverbs into English prose. This enriches the texture and depth of his writing and imbues his work with authenticity and cultural resonance. His techniques not only add complexity to his writings but also serve to bridge the gap between the oral and written traditions of African literature.

Check your progress:

1. What does Achebe's prose writing talk about?

2. What is the diachronic vision displayed by the African writers?
-

4.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should have become aware of the narrative technique and themes in *Things Fall Apart*. You should also have gained insight into a critical appreciation of the novel.

4.4 Glossary

Africanise: Make African in character

Egwugwu: Masked spirit representing the spirit of ancestors of the village

Igbo/Ibo: An ethnic group primarily located in Southeastern Nigeria

Queen's English: Standard, pure or correct English speech or usage

Sacred Week of Peace: A yearly religious observance where no one is harmed and harsh words and actions are prohibited.

4.5 Sample Questions

4.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The title of the novel, *Things Fall Apart* is taken from a poem by _____.
2. How many wives does Okonkwo have?
3. Yam is a _____ crop.
4. The novel depicts the tragedy of an individual as well as the _____ as a whole.
5. For most African writers, _____ tradition is the inspiration for much of their work.
6. The idea of waging a war against the white man for unmasking an *egwugwu* is taken by the clansmen.
7. The similes and images are drawn from an exclusively _____ environment.
8. Throughout the novel, Achebe presents the _____ religion in contrast to that of Christianity.

9. _____ seems destined for self-destruction, even before the arrival of the European colonizers.

10. Achebe portrays the Igbo way of life as upholding tradition, while the British way of life represents _____.

4.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is the significance of the title of the novel?
2. What does the epigraph by Yeats in *Things Fall Apart* tell us about the novel?
3. Give an account of how women are portrayed by Achebe in his novel.
4. Discuss, in brief, the theme of religion.
5. Write a short note on Igbo way of life.

4.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Analyse Achebe's unique narrative style in *Things Fall Apart*.
2. In what ways is Okonkwo a tragic hero in *Things Fall Apart*?
3. Discuss *Things Fall Apart* as a postcolonial novel.

4.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. New York: Anchor, 1994.
2. Carroll, David. *Chinua Achebe: Novelist, Poet, Critic*. London: Macmillan, 1990.
3. Killam, G.D. *The Writings of Chinua Achebe: A Commentary*. London: Heinemann, 1977.
4. Morrison, Jago. *The Fiction of Chinua Achebe*. Ed. Nicolas Treddeell. New York: Palgrave, 2007.
5. Yanksa, Kofi, E. *Chinua Achebe's Novels: Sociolinguistic Perspective*. Nigeria: Pacific Publishers, 1990.

Unit - 5: Introduction to South Asian Narratives

Structure

5.0 Introduction

5.1 Objectives

5.2 Introduction to South Asian Narratives

5.2.1 Narrative Theory

5.2.2 South Asian Narratives

5.2.3 South Asian Novelists in English

5.3 Learning Outcomes

5.4 Glossary

5.5 Sample Questions

5.6 Suggested Learning Resources

5.0 Introduction

South Asia is a mosaic of cultural, linguistic, religious, racial, and ethnic diversities. It has been a cradle for various global civilizations, religions, and cultures for centuries. It has witnessed one of the earliest known civilizations, the Indus Valley civilization. The earliest literature in the region can be traced back to the literature produced in Pali, Sanskrit, and Prakriti languages. There are numerous narratives in South Asia in different languages and cultures, literature, painting, and arts and digital media. South Asia has a rich heritage encompassing history, cultures, languages, religions, ethnicities, cuisine, music, traditions, races, geographies, attire, and biodiversity, influenced by various empires, religions, sea and silk road trades, migration, and more. Each country in South Asia possesses distinct cultural, linguistic, and ethnic characteristics. Additionally, the region holds significant global importance in economic, geopolitical, and strategic terms.

5.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- familiarize students with fundamental concepts such as narratives, narratology, narrative theory, and South Asia using South Asian narratives as a foundation

- explore the extensive tradition of narratives found in South Asian languages and cultures
- focus on South Asian novels

5.2 Introduction to South Asian Narratives

Monika Fludernik in her book *An Introduction to Narratology* (2006) writes that the "Narrative is all around us, not just in the novel or in historical writing. The narrative is associated above all with the act of narration and is to be found wherever someone tells us about something: a newsreader on the radio, a teacher at school, a school friend in the playground, a fellow passenger on a train, a newsagent, one's partner over the evening meal, a television reporter, a newspaper columnist or the narrator in the novel that we enjoy reading before going to bed. We are all narrators in our daily lives, and in our conversations with others, and sometimes we are even professional narrators (should we happen to be, say, teachers, press officers, or comedians)."

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a narrative is the art of telling a story or describing an event or a series of events or a specific way of "explaining or understanding events." Narrative, an ancient form of human expression, has manifested through diverse mediums such as paintings, sculptures, scriptures, folktales, oral traditions, literature, and everyday communication, serving as a conduit for emotions, thoughts, and ideas. Initially, people communicated meanings through signs, symbols, and drawings, evolving into folklore, fables, myths, stories, and legends. The origins of narratives can be traced back to the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, around 2200-2000 BCE. The advent of printing ushered in various literary genres, while contemporary forms include digital narratives, podcasts, blogs, social media posts/images, videos, and films.

Fludernik observed in her book that today's research increasingly indicates that the human brain is structured to comprehend intricate connections through narrative structures, metaphors, or analogies. For instance, a personal relationship can be metaphorically depicted as a meticulously constructed house by one partner, while the other negligently allows it to decay until the plaster crumbles and the roof collapses. Similarly, our lives can be conceptualized as journeys defined by narration, where unexpected events, like a chance meeting with a future partner, can dramatically alter the course of events. Constructing our lives as stories allows us to highlight how specific incidents have shaped subsequent events, portraying life as a purposeful

chain of occurrences influenced by obstacles and opportunities, with potentially unpredictable turns. The incorporation of the patient's life story into psychoanalytic therapy underscores the importance of narration in psychology. Many psychologists accord a central role to the act of storytelling in therapeutic processes. The cultural significance of narrative is evident in the origin of written cultures in myths, recorded for posterity. Historians, in a process akin to individual autobiographical narratives, document the achievements of forefathers and the nation's progress, preserving them in cultural memory as histories or stories. Various domains in culture and society, such as historical linguistics, music history, literary history, and the history of physics, create their narratives. The nation-state, progress in genetic engineering, and the rise and fall of institutions are also presented in narrative form. The narrative serves as a fundamental epistemological structure, aiding in comprehending the diverse array of events and generating explanatory patterns for them. Narratives rely on cause-and-effect relationships applied to sequences of events. Historiography employs various narrative explanatory models, including metaphorical descriptions of the birth, maturity, and demise of a nation. Analyzing contingencies that lead to a particular state, such as the strong ethnic German community in Minnesota, exemplifies another approach in historiography (Fludernik 2006).

5.2.1 Narrative Theory:

Narrative theory systematically studies narratives, examining their cultural and symbolic impact on societies and communities. Early narrative theorists were influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure's binary concept for understanding meaning. Preceding structuralism, Russian formalists played a crucial role in reshaping literary analysis by decoding meanings through form and content, minimizing historical context. In the 1920s, figures like Roman Jakobson, Yuri Tynyanov, Viktor Shklovsky, M. M. Bakhtin, and Vladimir Propp significantly contributed to our understanding of texts, blending their insights with Saussurean structuralism. The structuralist approach decodes narratives as structured compositions conveying specific meanings through elements such as character, plot, point of view, tone, and story, each contributing to the narrative's beginning, middle/climax, and end. Pramod Nayar in his *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory: From Structuralism to Ecocriticism* states: "Narrative is an extraordinarily complex term in literary and critical theory. It is used interchangeably with story, form, plot and even structure". But narrative is not restricted to stories or films. The narrative is also the construction of a nation, history, sports, and violence. Paul Wake defines narrative as 'the ways in which we construct notions of history, politics, race,

religion, identity and time. All of these things ... might be understood as stories that both explain and construct the ways in which the world is experienced."

5.2.2 South Asian Narratives:

South Asian narratives comprise both old and new forms of arts, painting, folklore, legends, ballads, stories, myth(ology), literature, painting, sculpture, cinema, etc. One of the oldest literature of South Asia can be traced back to the Vedas and Upanishads. India also produced the two great epics, the *Mahabharat* and the *Ramayana*. We also have a rich literature in Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Punjabi, Marathi, Malayalam, Telugu, Gujarati etc. Some of the notable names today in South Asian literature are of writers who migrated to different countries and in whose works diaspora and the theme of migration is reflected. With the introduction of the English language in South Asia during the colonial time, English literature started emerging from this region. In this Unit here we will only focus on South Asian English fictional narratives.

5.2.3 South Asian Novels in English:

The South Asian novel encompasses a body of literature originating from the countries of the Indian Subcontinent, including India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. However, its contemporary usage predominantly pertains to the writings of South Asian immigrants residing in other parts of the world, such as America, Canada, England, Africa, and the Caribbean. In recent decades, noteworthy writers have emerged from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka. Before Partition, the production of novels in English, under British rule, was primarily associated with central India. Present-day novelists from these regions have made significant strides in English fiction within South Asian countries. Notable examples include Khaled Hosseini from Afghanistan (renowned for *The Kite Runner*, 2003 and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, 2007), Kunzang Choden from Bhutan (author of *The Circle of Karma*, 2005), and Michael Ondaatje from Sri Lanka (famous for *The English Patient*).

The first book written by an Indian in English is Sake Dean Mohomet's *Travels of Dean Mahomet* published in 1793 in England. This is one of the earliest records of English writing in English from South Asia. This travelogue was published even before the introduction of English in South Asia. The second record to be noted in English by an Indian writer is the *Autobiography of Lutfullah, a Mohammedan Gentleman, and His Transactions with His Fellow-Creatures* by Lutfullah (1802-1874) published in 1857. Kylash Chandra Dutt's *A Journey of 48 Hours of the Year 1945* (1835) was published in the Calcutta Literary Gazette. It is the narrator's imagination

of the unsuccessful revolt against British rule in India. The South Asian novels may be divided into five major categories:

- I. Early Domestic Novels
- II. National/Indian/South Asian Renaissance Novel
- III. Partition Novels
- IV. Diaspora Novels
- V. South Asian Novels after 9/11

I. The early domestic novel

It was the period of British colonialism in undivided India, the largest British Colony which includes today's Afghanistan (the frontier nations) Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Burma. It was easy to access and learn English for central Indians compared to the other people of the Indian subcontinent. The Wood's Dispatch of 1854 established the three earliest universities in central India: Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras for spreading education. It was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee *Raj Mohan's Wife* (1865) which was considered the "first and only novel in English" in the history of South Asian English fiction. It is a saga of a long-suffering Hindu wife Matangini at the hands of her misogynist husband. Early women novelists of the British Raj were not strong in their style, narration, or language for that matter but their themes were critical of the domestic life of Indian societies. Laxmi Devi (*The Hindu Wife* 1876), Toru Dutt (*Bianca/The Young Spanish Maiden* 1878), Karupabai Sathinathan (*Kamla: A Story of Hindu Wife* 1895), and (*Ratanabai: A Sketches of Bombay High Caste Hindu Young Wife* 1895), Mirza Ali Beg (*Laun*, and *The Begum*), Kali Krishna Lahri (*Roshinara* 1881) and H. Dutt, etc. are some of the examples. Another group of novelists also talk about the domestic, intra and intercultural, intra and inter-caste issues, romance, etc Romesh Chandra Dutt's *The Lake of Palms* (1902) plea for remarriage of the widow and *The Slave Girl of Agra* (1909) gives a historical account of love, intrigue and jealousy in the Great Mughal period like T. Ramakrishna Pillai's *a la Scott Padmini* and Rajam Iyer's *Vasudev Sastri*. A. Madhavan's *Thillai Gobindan* and Sri Jogendar Singh's *Kamla* and *Kamini* raised a strong voice against the caste system in Indian society.

With the publication of *Sultana's Dream* (1905) by Begum Rokheya Hossein (1880 - 1932), Muslim progressive writers also came onto the English literary screen of South Asia. Contemporary Pakistani novelist Tahmina Durrani's novels are also women-centric. Her autobiography *My Feudal Lord* paved the way for the Muslim women's voice in a Pakistani

patriarchal society. Her *Blasphemy* is a controversial story of the secret lives of the Muslim clergy and spiritual leaders/*pirs*. Her critical approach toward the ill traditions of Muslims is depicted in this novel. An emerging novelist from Bhutan is Kunzang Choden (born 1952). Choden is the first Bhutanese woman to write a novel in English. Her first novel was published in 2005 *The Circle of Karma* is a story of Bhutanese women's struggle for identity in traditional Bhutanese society.

II. The national novel of Indian/ South Asian renaissance

The Gandhian period before the partition was the period of the Indian Renaissance where social, religious, political, and educational awakening was taking place. People were open to adopting new social realities and leaving unhealthy practices like sati. Some of the notable novels of this period dealt with domestic issues and at the same time, their writings were influenced by the Gandhian ideology and political, and national uprisings like civil disobedience (*Kandan: The Patriot* of 1932 by K.S. Venkataraman) *Inqilab*/anti-colonial struggle (*Inqilab* 1949 novel by Kwaja Ahmed Abbas). The writers of the Indian Renaissance also focused upon the East versus the West, encounters of culture, race, religion, language, Castism, women's rights, education, mythology, superstition, sati system, child marriage, dowry system, modernity, etc.

Among them, the most famous novelists who brought international status to Indian fiction were, in the words of William Walsh, "The Big Three" - Mulk Raj Anand (*Untouchable* 1935), R.K Narayan (*Swami and Friend* 1935), and Raja Rao (*Kanthapura* 1938). These masters not only broadened the thematic territories of Indian fiction but also its style and language. Anand's socialism, humanism, Marxism, and realism can be seen in his works *Coolie*, *The Woman and the Cow*, *The Village*, *The Sword and The Sickle*, *Morning Faces* (winner of the Sahitya Academy Award in 1970), and *Confession of Lovers*. Anand wanted to create a "modern egalitarian society" (Naik 156). Narayan concentrated on the middle-class and Raja Rao is an upper caste Brahmin-class-centric writer. Narayan was more imaginative than his contemporaries who created his imaginary locale called *Malgudi* like Hardy's *Wessex* and William Faulkner's *Yoknapatawpha County*.

Narayan's humor, myth, tradition versus modernity, treatment of the generation gap, and mannerisms are depicted in his, *The Financial Expert*, *The Vendor of Sweets*, *The Guide* (which won the Sahitya Academy Award in 1960), *Waiting For Mahatma*, *Mr. Sampath*, etc. His novels present India in progress and his irony brings his style to be known as "Narayanesque" (Naik 160). Raja Rao was not so prolific but his four novels are remarkable. *The Serpent and the Rope*

(Sahitya Academy Award 1963) is full of Hindu philosophy, east-west encounters, and spiritual quests. His *Kanthapura* is a mythical place in South India. This novel depicts the Gandhian freedom struggle led by protagonist Moorthy. It was the time when South Asian writers were defining their own identities through their writings. Raja Rao says in his preface to *Kanthapura*:

We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression, therefore, has to be a dialect that will someday prove to be as distinctive and colorful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it.

III. The novel of Partition and beyond

The idea of South Asian countries became more significant after the Partition. This historical event gave a new dimension to the writings from South Asia in different languages. The novelists presented the trauma and horrifying experiences faced by human beings in their writings. Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal write in *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (2004):

The colossal human tragedy of the partition and its continuing aftermath has been better conveyed by the more sensitive creative writers and artists – for example in Saadat Hasan Manto’s short stories and Ritwik Ghatak’s films – than by historians (164).

The historiography of partition is evident in Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Manohar Malgaonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), Attia Hosain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), Rajan’s *The Dark Dancer*, Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy-Man* (1991), Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi*, Bhisham Sahni’s *Tamas*, Raj Gill’s *The Rape*, Shiv K. Kumar’s *A River with Three Banks*, Anita Desai’s *Clear Light of The Day*, Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Line*, Rohinton Mistry’s *A Fine Balance* (1995), and Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), etc. These novels examine the trauma, pain, loss of humanity, and the loss of *Ganga-Jamuni/Milijuli Tahzib* or the composite culture of the Indus civilization.

The Train to Pakistan is a novel that portrays the transformation of a peaceful Mano Majra (a village on the border of India and Pakistan) into a violent one where neither police nor any magistrate can stop the bloodshed when a train arrives, carrying the bodies of dead Sikhs. Juggut Singh the protagonist of the novel struggles to maintain peace in the village. Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* presents the post-partition sparks between the Hindu-Muslim riots of 1964 which soon spread to Bangladesh/East Pakistan. Ghosh’s humanism can be seen in his worries about

how different communities are becoming so hostile to one another that there appears to be a point of no return and urges for a syncretic culture to remove communal violence. Attia Hosain's novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) is also one of the accounts of communal violence and trauma of partition narrated by Laila. This novel mourns the loss of glorious days of Muslim families through Laila who no longer celebrates her ancestry and rejects the tradition of Taluqdar. Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India/ Ice Candy Man* is a novel that deals with the theme of partition and its aftermath on the people of Lahore. Sidhwa laments the loss of human beings in the partition where distrust, violence, and rumors reigned.

IV. The diaspora novel

Three major factors are responsible for the popularity of South Asian literature or novels. One is the Partition that created three countries and their writings in English. The second one is the South Asian diaspora and the third factor is the appearance of South Asian writers on the global literary scene. In 1913 the Nobel Prize for literature was awarded to Rabindranath Tagore who was the first South Asian to receive that honor, and in 2001 V.S. Naipaul was awarded. The Pulitzer Prize of 2000 went to *The Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri. Booker prizes were awarded to South Asian novelists like V.S. Naipaul for *In a Free State* in 1971, Ruth Praver Jhabwala's *Heat and Dust* in 1975, Arundhati Roy for *The God of Small Things* in 1997, Kiran Desai for *The Inheritance of Loss* 2005, and Arvind Adiga for *The White Tiger* in 2008, and the Sri Lankan – Canadian Michael Ondaatje for *The English Patient* in 1992.

Online Etymology Dictionary says that the word 'Diaspora' is derived from Greek διασπορά, which means "scattering/dispersion". In Hebrew, it means "exile". It was first used in the Jewish context when Jews were expelled from ancient Israel (Judaea, Samaria, and Idumea). In modern times it is applied to almost all types of contemporary and historical migrations or scattering of people away from their ancestral homelands to other lands for various reasons.

There are different reasons for the migration of South Asians such as indentured labor, soldiers, traders, for job opportunities, professional advancement, and education. In the colonial phase migration of South Asians took place for different reasons from the Indian subcontinent as soldiers who were sent to different parts of the world and to the English Colonies to fight on behalf of the British Empire till the late 19th and 20th centuries. This has been depicted in Michael Ondaatje's 1992 Booker Prize-winning novel *The English Patient* through the characterization of Kip who is sent to North Africa from Lahore. At the same time, there was

also migration from the Indian subcontinent to South Asian and South East Asian countries, African and Caribbean countries, America, Canada, Australia, and China/Taiwan because British colonies wanted the manpower in plantations of coffee, tea, tobacco, rubber, sugar, and cotton, and development projects, in defending territories, etc. After the declaration of the Slavery Abolition Act in 1834, there was a pause in African slave migration to the colonies and South Asia became the largest supplier of manpower to the British plantations. These people were taken to the West Indies, Burma, Fiji, Malaya, Mauritius, Caribbean Islands, and African countries as indentured labor, unwillingly and willingly because of growing hunger, unemployment, and poverty. Since they were British subjects they had the option to settle in the former British colonies but due to growing nationalism in these countries against the "foreigners," there was dual migration of the people of Indian origin from South Asia, South East Asia to the UK, America, Canada, and Australia in search of new opportunities and a new dream, job opportunities, education, or better living standard. The creative writers of the immigrant generation give voice to the diaspora. Whatever might be the cause of their migration they had to face common problems such as adjustment to an alien culture, religion, atmosphere, assimilation, racialism, and the question of coexistence as depicted in Indo/Pakistani-Canadian writer Stephen Gill's *Immigrant* (1978) and *The Coexistence* (2011). These people also face a sense of alienation, rootlessness, loss, and questions of culture, nationality, ethnicity, and identity. Adib Khan's writing also deals with themes of diaspora, self-identity, sense of belonging, migration, and social dislocation. Khan is a Bangladeshi diasporic author based in Australia and his first novel *Seasonal Adjustments* (1994) won different prizes including the Christina Stead Prize for Fiction, the Book of the Year award in the 1994 NSW Premier's Literary Awards, and the 1995 Commonwealth Writer's Prize for Best Book, and was also shortlisted for the 1994 Age Book of the Year award. His other novels are *Solitude of Illusions* (1996), *The Storyteller* (2000), *Homecoming* (2005), and *Spiral Road* (2007). The diaspora novels depict loyalties for the motherland and the other land, happiness and grief, dreams and frustrations, and location-dislocation-relocation.

South Asian-Canadian diaspora novels include works of writers who migrated to Canada, were either born in Canada to South Asian parents or settled there. The most notable is Stephen Gill, a poet and novelist, who was born in Sialkot (Pakistan) and migrated to Canada. His novels include *Immigrant* (1978) and *The Coexistence* (2011). His poetic collection *The Flame* (2007) is considered "an epic of anti-terrorism and world peace" (Satendra Kumar 107). Suniti Namjoshi

is another poet and novelist born in Bombay in 1914 and became a citizen of Canada. Her novel includes *Feminist Fables*, *Conversation of Cow*, *Aditi*, and *One-eyed Monkey*. Bharti Mukherjee is one of the earliest female voices in the diaspora. She was born in Calcutta and migrated to Canada with her husband. Her two successive novels *The Tiger's Daughter* and *Wife* have autobiographical touch and a sense of culture shock. Pakistani-Canadian novelist Nazreen Sadia's *Ice Bangles* (1988) talks about the woman's struggle for a room of her own. Uma Parameswaran is another important figure in the South Asian Canadian diaspora. She was born in India and settled in Canada. She writes about the four phases of immigration settlement both at the individual and collective levels,

The first is one of nostalgia for the homeland left behind mingled with fear in a strange land. The second is a phase in which one is so busy adjusting to the new environment that there is little creative output. The third phase is when immigrants start taking part in the shaping of Diaspora existence by involving themselves in ethnocultural issues. The fourth is when they have 'arrived' and start participating in the larger world of politics and national issues (Parameswaran 306).

M.G. Vassanji and Rohinton Mistry are also Indo-Canadian diaspora writers. Vassanji's *The Gunny Sack* won the Commonwealth Writers Prize in 1990. Although he was born in Nairobi, Kenya his family is connected to India. Rohinton was born in Bombay in 1952 and migrated to Canada in 1998. His controversial novel *Such a Long Journey* (1998) presents the Parsee ethos and experiences in India, especially in Maharashtra. His second novel *A Fine Balance* won several prizes including The Commonwealth Writers Award, and Los Angeles Times Book Award, and was shortlisted for the Booker.

AS you were already told, Michael Ondaatje is a South Asian Sri Lankan-Canadian novelist. His *The English Patient* won the Booker Prize in 1992 and brought Sri Lanka to the English literary scene. This novel is about colonialism, colonial exploration of North Africa, multiethnicity, etc. The novel explores the dilemma of colonized people because some of them were sent to fight a war on the British side in the World Wars. Kip (Kirpal Sing) becomes westernized and anglicizes his name to Jemu in *The Inheritance of Loss*. Kip fights for the British in North Africa and the World War II and his brother fights against the British in India, resists the Empire, and is jailed with other Indians. Though Kip's loyalty to the British troops

keeps him engaged in fighting there is strangeness between their relations, "She (Hana, one of the Characters) had probably never seen a turban before. The English! They expect you to fight for them but they won't talk to you" (Ondaatje 118). The colonial dilemma is expressed when Hana a Canadian nurse, Kip a Lahorean, Caravaggio a Canadian, and the English Patient are at Villa San Girolamo in Italy Hana says, "The trouble with us is we are where we shouldn't be. What are we doing in Africa, in Italy? What is Kip doing dismantling bombs in orchards for God's sake? What is he doing fighting English wars?" (Ondaatje 122). But after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, Kip realizes and attempts to kill the English patient. The irony is that the English Patient is also not English but Hungarian Laszlo de Almásy. He identifies the culprit forces i.e. "Great Britain" (Ondaatje 286) who are killing millions of Japanese who are a "part of Asia" and Sikhs in the movement of resistance to colonialism in India. Kip says, "Japan is a part of Asia, I say, and the Sikhs have been brutalized by the Japanese in Malaya. But my brother ignores that. He says the English are hanging Sikhs who are fighting for independence" (Ondaatje 218).

Nick Bentley in his *Contemporary British Fiction* writes about British South Asian fiction:

In addition, the processes of decolonization and immigration to Britain from these areas throughout the post-Second World War period have produced a multicultural context for writers working in Britain whose cultural heritage might have allegiances to a range of locations and ethnicities. This multicultural influence has seen the cultural enrichment of the contemporary British novel manifest in a range of styles and subject matter (165).

The diaspora writers have roots but are still rootless, and have homes but are still homeless. Their identity changes with travel and they belong to different nationalities. As Stuti Khanna writes:

Naipaul...in his many interviews and essays, made his myth into that of the writer as a displaced person, one who does not 'have a side, doesn't have a country, doesn't have a community; one [who] is entirely an individual' a figure who has achieved a Brahminical 'ideal of nonattachment' (*Overcrowded Barracoon* 16) a man without a home (188).

The recent writings of the South Asian diaspora highlight feminine issues as a basic theme. Pakistani Kamila Shamsie's *Broken Verses* and *Burnt Shadows* present women's struggle through difficult times such as the World Wars, partition, and Political turmoil in Pakistan. Bangladeshi-British Monika Ali's *Brick Lane* reveals the issue of immigrants' assimilation, the clash of cultures, and the emergence of independent Bangladeshi womanhood through Nazneen from the margins of Bangladesh and the borders of Britain at the same time.

Kamala Markandya's *Nectar in a Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice* deal with women suffering in stark social realism. Anita Desai's Sahitya Academy Award-winning *Fire on the Mountain* brings the predicaments of women in a society that fails to satisfy their desires and fulfill their hopes. Through the character of Ammu in *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy focuses on women's double marginalization in society for being a woman. The feminist novelists dwell on the psychological workings of women's minds. A few examples are Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock*, *Where Shall We Go this Summer?* Bharti Mukharji's *Wife*, Kamala Markandya's *A Silence of Desire*, Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*, Ruth Praver Jhabwala's *Get Ready for Battle*, Nayantara Sehgal's *The Day in Shadow*, and Nargis Dalal's *The Inner Door*. Depicting history is also one of the major preoccupations of South Asian novels. Examples are Kiran Nagarkar's *Cuckold* (the Sahitya Academy Award 2007), Qurrat-ul-Ain Haider's *The River of Fire*, Mukul Kesavan's *Looking through Glass* (1995), and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988), etc.

The theme of return to the native land, nostalgia for the homeland, and loss are very common in diaspora novels and Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* is a fine example of it. It is a study of modern conditions and loss – loss of culture, loss of identity, loss of nationality, loss of relations, loss of emotions, loss of human values, loss of tradition, and loss of faith in each other.

V. South Asian Novels after 9/11 and beyond

Among South Asian novelists, Muslim writers have given a more detailed account of their problems and predicaments after 9/11. Their themes are diverse in their orientations, such as the 9/11 backlash, global politics, question of assimilation, coexistence, multiculturalism, crises of identity, nationality, etc. Pakistani novelist Kamila Shamsie offers the above explanation in her novel *Broken Verses* (2005) for the post 9/11 metamorphosed attitude of the non-Muslims. Her *Burnt Shadows* (2009) gives a historical account of post 9/11 issues about Muslim life in America as well as in Afghanistan. In America, Raza Ashraf is arrested on

suspicion, though he works for the CIA in its mission. In the same way, Bangladeshi-British Kia Abdullah's first novel *Life, Love and Assimilation* can be paralleled with Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* because of its Bangladeshi diaspora account but at the same time, it touches on the theme of backlash after 9/11. Kia describes how 9/11 stigmatized the Muslims:

9/11 was not good publicity for Muslims. It created a palpable tension between us and the rest of the world. I know that there is general animosity between Asians of different religions but I had never felt it. To me, we were all Asians in a predominantly white country and we stuck together. 9/11 changed all that. Sikhs and Hindus became sick of being banded together with Muslims (Kia Abdullah 53).

Maha Khan Philip's *Beautiful from This Angle* (2010) depicts the role of media in the negative projection of Muslims and the violent image of Islam in the eyes of non-believers of Islam. Pakistani-British novelist Moni Mohsin's *Diary of a Social Butterfly* gives an account of the troublesome times of Pakistan and Afghanistan after the declaration of the "war on terror."

Saher Alam's *The Groom of Have Been* (2008) presents how things became difficult for Muslims in the wake of 9/11. Saher is an Indo-American novelist who was born in Lucknow, India, in 1973 and moved to the United States in 1978. She published her first novel *The Groom of Have Been* (2008). Nasr, the protagonist, is a successful businessman living in New York. He works in Manhattan and allows his mother to arrange his marriage. He travels to different parts of America. Nasr meets a beautiful girl, Farah. Along with the marriage-arrangement process of Nasr and Farah, we also see the 9/11 backlash scene at Heathrow airport, where an Arab man begs the security guards to allow his wife to pass. After 9/11, nonfictional works came up with explanations, such as *Why I Am a Muslim* (2004) by Asma Gull Hasan who tries to present Islam as a misrepresented religion in the wake of 9/11 and started to define it through spiritual analysis of the basis of Quranic understanding. *Londonistan* by Gautam Malkani in 2006 is about young Asians' struggle with white boys. The term Londonistan is about aggressive masculinity, integration, cross-cultures, and South Asianism in London. *Unimagined, A Muslim Boy Meets the West* by Imran Ahmad in 2007 is a comic bildungsroman autobiographical account of Imran in Britain. Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* gives an account of war and its effect on the people told through the lives of five people who came together in post 9/11 Afghanistan.

Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* presents the post 9/11 situation in brief through the identity crises of protagonist Amir. The protagonist of *The Kite Runner*, Amir, was the son of an

Afghan merchant who moved to the United States of America when the Russians invaded this country. Amir meets his wife Soraya in the US. He became a successful writer who is part of the Afghan diaspora community which is loaded with Afghan culture, memories of homeland, pains, and life left behind. One of the most striking similarities between *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *The Kite Runner* is how the protagonists see themselves within American society. Amir identifies himself as an American because he achieves his American Dream and like Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* Amir also has to return to his motherland Afghanistan when the 9/11 incidents take place.

Indian diasporic novels like Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, Arunabha Sengupta's *Big Apple 2 Bites*, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *One Amazing Thing* (2010) and *Queen of Dreams* (2004) explore the Indian non-Muslim victims of the post 9/11 backlash Divakaruni says in her interview with Madhusree Chatterjee, "I have both a personal and larger reason to write children's books. After 9/11, there was so much distress in America that it led to an inter-cultural breakdown. Some of our communities were targeted. Many of our adults shut themselves off from other cultures. I tried to bring children of Indian and other cultures together in my literature...". In Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* (2004), one finds some glimpses of the post 9/11 backlash against South Asian non-Muslims. These novels not only deal with the South Asian diaspora such as cultural shock, nostalgia, the clash of ideas, and loss, but also their experiences, especially after 9/11. The problems of ethnic minorities in America, racial discrimination, and the trauma of the backlash after 9/11 are the major concerns of *Divakaruni*. In her novel, *Rakhi*, a queen of dreams, is a Hindu mother and artist, living in Berkeley, California. She divorces her husband and now struggles for her self-existence. Meanwhile, the tragedy of 9/11 occurs and raises the question of her citizenship, as it does for other Asian immigrants as well. *Divakaruni* focuses on the new issues regarding diaspora studies after 9/11 such as problems of Hindu ethnicity in post-9/11 America. They are not Muslims but are misunderstood because of common racial features.

In the post 9/11 era, some novelists present quite a different picture of society and deal with domestic and national issues, such as Samina Ali, Sara Suleri, Tahmina Anam, and Uzma Aslam Khan. Samina Ali is the first Indian-Muslim woman English novelist from Hyderabad. She published her *Madras on Rainy Days* (2005) in America. It presents Layla's dual identity as a traditional Indian from the old city of Hyderabad and living in American society. Layla is aware of her family's tradition and agrees to marry Sameer. Samina Ali tries to present the life of

traditional Muslim families and women who are overcoming all the shackles of society. Bangladeshi Tahmina Anam's first novel *A Golden Age* (2007) is about Bangladesh's struggle for independence and won Commonwealth Writer's Prize in 2008. Pakistani novelist Uzma Aslam Khan's *Trespassing* (2003) is also one of the novels to be published in the national context. It is a novel set in the 1990s during the aftermath of the Afghan War and Gulf War. It is also a tragic love story of Dia, daughter of a silkworm farmer, and US-educated Danish, who meets Dia upon his return to Karachi for his father's funeral. *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) by Mohammed Hanif presents the political situation of Pakistan. Another Pakistani writer critic and professor at Yale University Sara Suleri Goodyear published her *Boys Will Be Boys: a Daughter's Elegy* in 2003. This is an autobiographical story of her upbringing in Pakistan and America dealing with the loss and gains in her life.

In summary, South Asian novels exhibit a rich diversity in themes, styles, and languages, addressing a spectrum of domestic, religious, and national issues. The global dispersion of South Asians has brought forth universal themes like internationalism, multiculturalism, world politics, terrorism, and globalization into the literary landscape of South Asia. This evolving genre has become a significant area of exploration in contemporary English literature, encompassing various nationalities and ethnicities, including Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsees, and Christians. Despite this diversity, these novels share commonalities rooted in South Asian culture while being intricately connected with the English language. While there are novels in other South Asian languages, the constraints of time, language barriers, and the focus of this work on the English language prevent their inclusion in this discussion.

5.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be aware of some of the basic concepts about South Asian literature to understand it as a mosaic of cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and geographical diversity and its contemporary challenges. You should also know what is narrative, narrative theory, and South Asian narratives, with a special focus on modern and contemporary novels written in English.

5.4 Glossary

Diaspora

In recent times, the concept of diaspora refers to an individual or a community that is living away from their homeland, be it nationally or internationally.

Migration

The movement of an individual or group of people from one location to another is called migration. It is defined in terms of its nature, distance, legal status, duration of stay, etc.

Minority

The minority is a community of people who are less in number and at the same time disadvantaged and subordinate in the majoritarian society.

5.5 Sample Questions

5.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Which of the following countries is not a part of South Asia?
 - a. Cambodia
 - b. Bhutan
 - c. Bangladesh
 - d. Maldives
2. According to the World Bank in 2021, approximately how many people reside in South Asia?
 - a. 1 billion
 - b. 1.5 billion
 - c. 1.75 billion
 - d. 1.92 billion
3. Which of the following is NOT mentioned as a major language in South Asia?
 - a. Hindi
 - b. Bengali
 - c. Arabic
 - d. Tamil
4. Who is known for their significant contribution to the study of narratives and narratology?
 - a. A. J. Greimas
 - b. Ferdinand de Saussure
 - c. Roman Jakobson
 - d. All of the above

5. In Monika Fludernik's view, where can narratives be found in daily life?
- Only in literature
 - Only in historical writing
 - Everywhere, in various forms
 - Only in oral traditions
6. Which ancient form of human expression does narrative manifest through, according to the Cambridge Dictionary?
- Sculptures
 - Scriptures
 - Folktales
 - All of the above
7. What is the primary function of the Atharvaveda among the Vedic texts?
- Celebrating the cosmic principle
 - Providing magical prayers for specific purposes
 - Chanting verses from the Rigveda
 - Documenting Indian religion before Buddhism
8. _____ is renowned for *Ramcharitmanas*.
- Kabir
 - Tulsidas
 - Surdas
 - Mira Bai
9. What is the major theme of Mira Bai's bhajans (devotional songs)?
- Celebrating Vishnu
 - Intense love poems to Krishna
 - Magical prayers for specific purposes
 - Documenting achievements of forefathers
10. How is narrative defined?
- A particular form of representation implementing signs
 - A sequence of events with no specific order
 - A literary genre only
 - A type of language activity found only in novels

5.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

- Why is South Asia significant in terms of its culture and geography?
- Explore the different types of narratives.
- Define narrative theory.
- Explain digital narratives.
- Identify an early English writer from South Asia.

5.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

- Discuss the relevance of South Asian literature.
- Examine the South Asian narratives as diaspora literature.
- Critically examine the contributions of writers from the subcontinent to South Asian literature.

5.6 Suggested Learning Resources:

1. Abdullah, Kia. *Life, Love, and Assimilation*. London: Adlibbed Ltd, 2006 Print.
2. Ayesha, Jalal. *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004. Print.
3. Bentley, Nick. *Contemporary English Fiction*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press Ltd, 2008. Print.
4. Cohen, Robin. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. UCL Press, 1997.
5. Parameswaran, Uma. *Writing in Diaspora: Essays on Culture and Identity*, Jaipur: Rawat Publication, 2007. Print.

Unit - 6: Life and Works of Bapsi Sidhwa

Structure

6.0 Introduction

6.1 Objectives

6.2 Life and Works of Bapsi Sidhwa

6.2.1 Influences on Bapsi Sidhwa

6.2.2 Bapsi Sidhwa as a Partition Novelist: An Introduction

6.2.3 Sidhwa's Writing Techniques

6.2.4 Summing Up

6.3 Learning Outcomes

6.4 Glossary

6.5 Sample Questions

6.6 Suggested Learning Resources

6.0 Introduction

Bapsi Sidhwa, a Pakistani-born American novelist, is highly recognized for her significant contributions to Anglophone literature, especially in the context of Pakistani and South Asian narratives. Her unique background has profoundly influenced her literary work. Sidhwa's novels often explore themes such as human relationships and betrayals, the challenges of adolescence, immigration, and the complex interplay of culture, politics, and identity.

Some of Sidhwa's major works include "The Crow Eaters," a humorous and satirical take on Parsi culture; "The Bride" (also known as "The Pakistani Bride"), which delves into the harsh realities faced by women in certain South Asian societies. "Ice-Candy-Man" ("Cracking India"), is narrated from a disabled "child's perspective" on the Partition of India. "An American Brat" is another notable work, exploring the experiences of a young Parsi woman navigating life in the United States.

Sidhwa has been awarded for her contributions to literature with several awards and honours. Her novel "Ice-Candy-Man" earned her the Liberatur Prize from Germany, which distinguished writers from non-Western countries.

Throughout her career, Sidhwa has been involved in various educational and cultural activities. She has delivered invited lectures and talks at various, conferences, workshops,

symposiums, literary festivals and debates. Her role as a feminist postcolonial author has been particularly lauded.

Her journey as an author is marked by her efforts to break traditional barriers. Despite facing initial resistance from the Parsee community for her candid portrayal of their customs and beliefs, she eventually gained recognition and respect for her work, both internationally and within her community.

6.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- study the life of Bapsi Sidwa and influences on her writings
- throw light on the historical background and
- discuss the genre of the partition novel

6.2 Life and Works of Bapsi Sidhwa

Bapsi Sidhwa's formative years were marked by significant events and experiences that greatly influenced her later work as an author. She was born in Karachi on August 11, 1938, in undivided India. Her parents practised the Zoroastrian religion. This unique cultural background played a crucial role in shaping her perspectives and themes in her literary works.

6.2.1 Influences on Bapsi Sidhwa's:

One of the defining moments of her early life was the Partition of India in 1947. The Partition had a profound impact on her upbringing, these memories became a central element in her fiction, especially in her portrayal of the Partition.

Sidhwa faced personal challenges as well. She suffered from polio, which led to her being home-schooled until the age of 14. Despite her illness, she developed a deep love for literature, extensively reading British literature, which encouraged her aspirations to become a writer.

Her early education was marked by this extensive reading and the unique experience of growing up in a Parsi family, which was more Westernized compared to the majority of their fellow countrymen. This environment provided her with a distinct viewpoint, which she later articulated in her novels.

Sidhwa had an arranged marriage at the age of nineteen years and soon had three children. As an upper-class wife and mother, she began writing, initially in secret due to the societal norms of her community. Her experiences as a woman in Pakistani society, coupled with the cultural and religious backdrop of her Parsi community, significantly influenced her writing style and the themes she explored in her novels.

Sidhwa's formative years were thus a blend of personal challenges, cultural richness, and historical upheavals, all of which contributed to her development as a writer who would later gain international acclaim for her insightful portrayal of South Asian culture and history.

"Bapsi Sidhwa belongs to the category of the best writers of English fiction in the subcontinent. As a Parsee from Lahore, she cannot be categorised as just a Pakistani novelist, she is much more versatile, a candid, forthright, balanced woman novelist in the contemporary world of writers."

Bapsi Sidhwa wrote four novels in English on her personal experiences with Partition, abuse against women, her migration to the United States, and the Parsee community. The multilingual, multi-cultural background was crucial to Sidhwa's works. Sidhwa was raised in Lahore and had a difficult upbringing due to her disability. She lived a lonely life. Doctors recommended her parents not to send her to school because she had polio. She spent her time daydreaming and listening to her servants' stories. Until the age of fifteen, she was taught at home. Her tutor offered her the novel *Little Women* by Louisa Mary Alcott. According to Sidhwa, it was the most influential work as it exposed her to the realm of imagination and novels.

- **Childhood Memories**

As a child, she experienced the brutal "Partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947". This has been the major theme in most of her writings. Several individuals lost their property and even their lives as a result of the division. Thousands of people became homeless and rootless overnight. The dehumanising effects of communalism lowered humans to the status of hunting monsters saturated in their fellow beings' blood. Sidhwa shares her childhood memories of the nightmare of partition. Sidhwa witnessed this trauma, including one event in which she discovered a dead man's body in a gunnysack on the side of the road. She describes the occurrence with characteristic brevity: "I felt more sadness than [of] horror."

I was a child at the time. Even at the age of seven, the foreboding roar of faraway mobs was a constant of my awareness, changing me to the palpable sense of evil that was going place

in many sections of Lahore. My heart was ripped by the brightness of fire everywhere. The violence of Partition overshadowed the departure of the British.

Her hometown of Lahore in Pakistan became a border city, and it was quickly swamped by hundreds of thousands of refugees. Thousands of these people were raped and tortured. Many victims were denied entry into their homes after being "recovered," owing to their husbands' damaged pride. From a young age, she realised that "victory was celebrated on a woman's body; vengeance is taken on a woman's body. That's very much the way things are, particularly in my part of the world" (Laurel Graeber). These events deeply influenced her, and years later, she record that decisive moment in the history of the two nations (India and Pakistan).

She was educated at home until the age of 15, despite having polio. She later earned a BA from Kinnaird College for Women in Lahore. Sidhwa married Gustad Kermani, a refined Bombay Parsee merchant when she was nineteen. "Pulled out of childhood and thrust into big-city life and straight into adulthood," she described the experience as distressing at first. But she quickly fell in love with Bombay's open and fun-loving Parsee community. However, the marriage lasted barely five years, during which time she gave birth to a son and a daughter. She divorced and returned to Pakistan after living there for five years.

She then married Noshir Sidhwa, a Parsee businessman twelve years older in Lahore, and had a daughter with him. She was a homemaker with her husband, two kids, and a son. She has viewed this span as a constrained way of life. The void in her life, along with a concern for others, drove her to advocate for women's rights. She was the secretary of Mother's and Children's House, a homeless women's shelter; President of the International Women's Club, Lahore; Chairperson of the Punjab Club's Social Welfare Committee. In 1991, she was awarded the Sitara-I-Imitaz, Pakistan's highest arts honour bestowed upon a citizen.

6.2.2 Bapsi Sidhwa as a Novelist: The Meeting of Sidhwa and an African Woman: The Birth of an Author:

Despite her social efforts, Sidhwa was bothered by a hazy sensation of emptiness while living in Pakistan following her second marriage. Her social life in Lahore did not satisfy her cravings for creative activity. In an interview with Julie Rajan, she confesses that her life in Lahore was "mindless".

"You play a lot of bridge, go to coffee breakfasts, and do volunteer work. It was a mindless kind of life. Now women are breaking out into many more fields of activity, but I did not have the educational background. I guess it just evolved automatically- writing took up the

slack in my life." It's worth noting that Sidhwa began writing by happenstance, as a result of a casual meeting with an Afghan woman on an aircraft. In an interview with David Montenegro in March 1989, she admits that "she enjoyed reading and used to believe that a writer was some sort of supernatural entity that lived in another realm". She never thought of the writer as a person, but rather as an ethereal power that generated books. The African woman unexpectedly revealing to Sidhwa that she was a writer made Sidhwa know that writers are very young and bloody people. That inspired Sidhwa to write her First Novel, *The Crow Eaters* (1987), which confronts her Parsee community's ire.

Her first novel: *The Crow Eaters* (1987)

Her first work, *The Crow Eaters*, was released in Pakistan, where English-language publications are scarce. She was loathed because she divulged the secrets of the community to the entire world. In a sense, Sidhwa became the colloquial version of Gayathri Spivak's "privileged native informant." Abroad, this novel was originally published in India in 1980 by Sangam Books, Delhi. It's a funny tale with a distinct authorial style that praises the accomplishments of a little town that has survived migration, peacefully resettled and prospered without losing its cultural identity. It is the first instance that Parsee community is depicted in her work. Sidhwa tells David Montenegro that she encountered numerous challenges within the Lahore community during the book's premiere: "The book launch took place at an international hotel in Lahore, and since there aren't many books written in English launched, it was quite a function...". And there was a bomb threat, which I later realised was from a Parsee who was quite upset over the book. It took me a while to realise how much upheaval this work has caused. The entire community felt that she had "no right to share anything related to the community and has shamed the community". Her work was slammed and criticised by one and all.

Sidhwa had to face backlash from her community for negatively projecting them. Sidhwa attempts to clarify her point of view in the novel's preface. She expresses:

"Because of a deep-rooted admiration for my diminishing community and enormous affection for it this work of fiction has been a labour of love. The nature of comedy being too exaggerated, the incidents in this novel do not reflect at all upon the integrity of a community whose honesty and sense of honour not to mention its tradition of humour as typified by the Parsinatak are legends. The characters drawn in this piece of pure fantasy have no relation whatsoever to any existing people. (TCE, 7)"

The Crow Eaters is a saga, similar to Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga* (1992), in which details collect from the lives of the individuals. The story depicts the trials and tribulations of the 'Parsee family', the Junglewallahs. There is both a historical and a Freddyographical element to the story of Faredoon and Junglewallah's adventures. Sidhwa comes from a pioneering family (the Bhandara) of Parsees who moved to cities in North India. She grew up hearing stories, both true and false, about her elders' business skills. The novel can't become either of her communities because it's too cartoonish or silly.

The use of irony is either very positive or too negative. Faredoon Junglewallah's main goal was to get rich and famous, which he did but not without paying a price. From Sidhwa's point of view, things are funny. It turns out that Freddy's fame and wealth have shady roots. His charitable works aren't moral; they're just a way for him to promote himself. To make more business contacts and look like he doesn't care about himself, he has built a reputation as a humanitarian. In the past, Faredoon got rich by setting fire to his shop and hiding his goods in a hired godown in order to get insurance money. In Lahore, he was successful by flattering British officials while pretending to be good at public relations. In all of these situations, Sidhwa's tone is sarcastic instead of moral. There is a protective irony in the work that balances the flaws of the characters with the inconsistent nature of life. There is more to the story than just a man and his family's social mobility and ideals. It's about how things changed in the world. It's also funny how the Parses' unclear feelings about the Nationalist cause are shown. The Parses are shown as a mix of different cultures. The humour in the book comes from a mix of fantasy, scatology, physical and linguistic inconsistency, and caricature. It's like the earlier books by Aristophanes, Fielding, and V.S. Naipaul that Sidhwa writes. Naipaul, a mix of irony and humour that makes you laugh while also getting serious points across.

Sidhwa's point of view is funny because she talks about how full of life her mother-in-law Jebranoon, her wife Putli, her son Behram, his wife Tanya, and her neurotic second son Yazdi are. *The Crow Eaters* is both interesting and educational because of how well the author writes about the marginalised Parsee community.

***The Pakistani Bride* (1983) [Based on a True Story] is Sidhwa's second novel**

Sidhwa's second book, *The Bride*, or *The Pakistani Bride*, came out in 1983. The story is about two different ways of life: the male-dominated alpine tribe and the Westernised urban plain. *The Bride* is her first novel, even though *The Crow Eaters* is her first published work. *The Crow Eaters* was first published for political reasons. Sidhwa was worried about how people

would react to the book because it is based on a true story that shows how women are mistreated in Pakistan's traditionally male-dominated society. In the remote Karakoram mountains, Sidhwa and her husband were camping. While they were there, some soldiers told her a story about a girl from the plains who was taken by an old tribal man to marry his nephew. It was a bad life for her, so she ran away and spent 14 days in the rough Karakoram mountains. In the end, her husband and some other tribe members found her and killed her. Sidhwa's original plan was to write a story about the event that had had a big effect on her, but it quickly turned into an obsession that grew into a novel, giving the event a more positive tone. Through short stories, the book shows how women are abused in a society that doesn't support them. The main character, Zaitoon, has to deal with a hostile world and get past the problems that come her way by being strong-willed and determined.

***Ice-Candy-Man* (1991), Sidhwa's Third Novel: A Partition Novel with a Twist**

Ice-Candy-Man, Sidhwa's third novel, was published in 1991. Cracking India was released by Sidhwa's publishers Milkweed Editions in the United States of America. Sidhwa shows the fast-shifting sociopolitical realities of the Indian subcontinent right before Partition via the eyes of a kid narrator named Lenny. The story is very tight and sensitive, and it covers a lot of ground: communal conflicts, using religion to define oneself, territorial desires, political opportunism, power, and love. It does this in a way that is easy for anyone to understand. Tradition and folklore run through the story, and as Anatol Leven writes in *The Literary Review*, her Rabelaisian vocabulary and wit give it a lively charm.

It depicts the Parsee conundrum of remaining loyal to political rulers, a Parsee Pakistani viewpoint on Partition. Her novels reflect her desire to learn from history without histrionics or preaching.

She confesses:

“If we are not going to learn lessons, we are doomed to repeat our evils. Historically people have gone on fighting each other for religion, for land, for women, for position, for greed- and those elements prevail still. Man's nature has not changed-but one can try, and hope it will. (Julie 02)”

In her novel *Ice-Candy-Man*, Bapsi Sidhwa skilfully combines the story of Lenny with the sounds of violence as the Partition moves from being a political plan to a real event. There are also glimpses of an older Lenny looking back. Lenny lives in Lahore and is a Parsee, just like Sidhwa. He also has polio. She is good at telling stories, but her young age often makes it hard

for her to understand. She shows how naive she is when she asks if the earth will bleed when the adults "crack" India. By showing the Partition through Lenny's young eyes, the historical event is nicely woven into the story, though some reviewers say Sidhwa made Lenny's character too smart for her age. Because Lenny is becoming more aware, she has to face a reality that can only be described by categories and labels.

Film Adaptation:

Deepa Mehta, a Pakistani/Punjabi/Canadian director, adapted "Ice-Candy-Man" into a film called "Earth 1947". The film does not incorporate various scenes or characters from the novel, but Sidhwa believes that it has failed to capture the novel's essence and hopes that it would "widen the audience" and urge people to read the novel.

"An American Brat" (1994)

An American Brat, Sidhwa's fourth book, came out in 1994. Her previous books, which are set in familiar places, show different sides of life in her own country. In the book she just finished. The setting of "An American Brat" has been changed to ica, but the author is still interested in issues related to how her people see themselves as individuals and as a group. The story is about Feroza Ginwalla, the rebellious daughter of Cyrus and Zareen Ginwalla. She is moved from Gulberg, Lahore, to Denver, Colorado, to experience a more cultured way of life. The girl "journeys through three cultures: her own community's Parsee culture, her country Pakistan's Islamic culture, and the Western culture of the United States of America." Feroza was mean to her mother in school because she wore a sari blouse without sleeves. Once she gets to America, she quickly becomes independent. On her way to becoming independent, she has to make a lot of choices, and most of them require her to leave the strict rules of her childhood community. Her confidence is tainted with worry, and she embodies the confusion of her generation. She was able to find freedom in America because Sidhwa's respect for it grew, and she kept a funny and interesting tone even when talking about serious topics. Like other diasporic works from the Indian subcontinent, "An American Brat" deals with the social and political problems Asian people face today by weaving history and politics into a story. Various modern novelists have written about migration and adjusting to a new life. Sidhwa's fourth book is one of them. Timothy Mo wrote about similar things in "Sour Sweet" (1982), Bharati Mukherjee did the same in "Jasmine" (1989), Jhumpa Lahiri did the same in some of her short stories, and Buchi Emecheta did the same in some of her novels. Sidhwa, on the other hand, has written about it with humour and a modern point of view, which gives her work a unique charm.

Anita Desai wrote about migration and adjusting in *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971), and Kamala Markandaya did the same thing in *The Nowhere Man* (1972). In *An American Brat*, Bapsi Sidhwa handles the change in theme and setting well, with a lot of humour and a modern point of view. She is now writing diasporic fiction, a genre where well-known South Asian authors like Bharati Mukherjee have already made a name for themselves.

Sidhwa's fifth Novel: *Water*

There was a movie called *Water* in 2005, based on the 2006 book of the same name. This story takes place in Varanasi in the 1930s when many children were married. Because of social and economic constraints, teenage girls were married to older men. When their old husbands died, these young women were left alone in the widow ashrams of Varanasi. Some people do not like the book because it talks about how wealthy Brahmins take advantage of widows. By writing this book, Sidhwa shows how chauvinistic religion is and how the patriarchy uses it to control women. *Water* shows the long-standing hypocrisy of a society dominated by men who, in the name of religion, do everything they can to control women. The book tells the stories of Chuyia, Kalyani, Shakuntala, Bua, and other widows who live in the Rawalpur widow ashram and have been left by their families and in-laws after the death of their husbands. The widow Kalyani is pretty and young, and she wants to live a good life without working as a prostitute. Forty-nine: Shakuntala is an expert on religious texts; Madhumati is in charge of the ashram and really wants opium; Kunti gets angry during the day; and Patirajji Bua is crazy about sweets and starts to salivate when she thinks about the sweets that were served at her wedding. The dowry that Madhumati got from her father was very large. But after her husband died, her in-laws took her inheritance without permission, and because that's what widows are expected to do, she had to live a single life. When she asked about her husband's family tree, she was sexually assaulted by her two brothers-in-law as a punishment and then left to die in a jungle. Gulabi takes her to the ashram with him. The head makes it easier for her to get better and is then sent to a client. Over time, she takes over as leader of the ashram and starts giving Kalyani to clients. For the sake of paying for the ashram, Chuyia is forced to become a prostitute. Like the book *Cracking India*, this story is told from the point of view of a child widow named Chuyia. It is normal for girls who haven't reached puberty to live with their parents after the wedding. She will continue to do this. Her happy married life takes a sad turn, though, when she loses her husband and never got married again. All the signs that show she is a wife are taken away. She has to get her tonsils pierced, her glass bracelets broken, and she has to wear a white cloth that she made herself.

Because she is so young, she doesn't know what it means to be a widow, so she asks her father how long she will be a widow. Somnath, her father, doesn't have the guts to go against the rigid tradition, so he supports it even though it hurts his own daughter. It changes the lives of the other widows, like Shakuntala and Kalyani, that the woman is in the ashram. Water shows how sad and painful it is for widows to be without a husband. Sidhwa talks about Gandhi's freedom movement, and the main goals were to promote social justice, end untouchability, and fight for women's rights. These widows show how women were pushed to the side in early 20th-century Indian history. Even though things have changed in India since then, you can still see widows in Varanasi who are living on the streets.

6.2.3 Sidhwa's Writing Techniques:

All of Bapsi Sidhwa's key skills as a writer are revealed in the novel, including her rich comedy powers, quick observation, heightened sense of plot and character, and moral vision of her community. Sidhwa is at her best when she depicts Feroza's adaptation to a strange culture and the stress that results from clashing civilizations. Sidhwa's humour is situational as well as the outcome of deft characterization. There are times when the nuances of language and the use of Americanisms, which Feroza cannot comprehend, generate amusing misunderstandings. Feroza's polite use of expressions like 'May I..' leads to a dispute with an acerbic shopkeeper who misinterprets her politeness as an appeal for charity. It is Jo, her flatmate, who teaches Feroza various Americanisms so that she does not feel like a fish out of water. Slowly Feroza loses her inhibitions and, in the process, discovers herself. Zareen Ginwalla tries to prevent her daughter Feroza's proposed marriage with David by using the sugar-coated pill' method.

The Motives for Writing the Novel:

In an interview with Fawzia Afzal-Khan, Sidhwa discloses the motivations that drove her to write *An American Brat*. "I moved to the United States from Pakistan about ten years ago and have been living here more than in Pakistan since, so it seemed only natural that I now write about my newer experiences..." The genesis and rhythm of each book are different. This one began as a short story, but when my publisher in the United Kingdom saw it, she decided she wanted to see it as a novel--and it became one quite easily. Because it's about living in a multicultural world today, Sidhwa thinks this book will appeal to both American and Indian youth. She thinks that her book has changed the way people think about American and Asian culture. This book shows funnily how the Parsees feel about marriages between people of different faiths. Zareen Ginwalla, the mother, knows that by opposing her daughter's marriage to

David Press, an American Jew, she is just as fundamental as the strict mullahs in Pakistan. Still, the need for cultural purity and the tradition of community wins out, and Zareen's insights stay just a flash in his mind. Still, by implying such thoughts, the author shows the chaos and heated argument that the controversial topic of marrying someone from a different community causes among Parsees.

Just as *The Crow Eaters* received censure from certain sections of the Parsee community, similarly *An American Brat* has also caused alarm amongst orthodox Parsees. About some of the reactions to this novel, Sidhwa told Fawzia Afzal-Khan: "I was told that the reaction would be very strong. I ended up eliminating the name of an Indian Parsee priest from the book because I was afraid he'd try to have it outlawed in India."

Political Allusions

As we find in her previous novels, a lot of political references are subtly interwoven into the text of *An American Brat*. The period of this novel is during the military dictatorship of the late General Zia-ul-Haq. There is a reference to the religious intolerance and fundamentalism nurtured in the Zia era. The Hudood Ordinance, the hanging of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, public demonstrations and American Embassy officials trying to gauge public opinion about the hanging of Bhutto. Political references are mainly about Pakistan and there is little about America during the same period. These political references do not seem unrelated but form a perfect backdrop to the fundamentalism prevailing in Pakistan during the reign of Zia. To save Feroza from developing narrow-minded attitudes, she is sent to America by her parents. Sidhwa can handle modern and touchy topics like fundamentalism with great skill because she is funny and always fair. Because of her subtle sense of humour and a general sense of fair play, even when she criticises Islamic or Zoroastrian tradition, she is not trying to hurt the religion.

Sidhwa often employs irony. She indicts fundamentalism across all communities in her novel. The narrow-mindedness of American society in a variety of settings is also exposed. An example is the way Feroza's secular fiancé David in response to Zareen's inflexibility regarding Parsee customs flaunts his Jewish heritage. Sidhwa shows that ironically people get restricted by the various religious teachings and cultural mores that shape them from infancy. It is Sidhwa's humour, irreverence, perceptive characterization and positive outlook that enable her to tackle contemporary problems like fundamentalism, expatriate experience, cultural clashes and inter-faith marriages amongst the Parsees with great assurance in *An American Brat*.

Sidhwa's Unique Position Among the Writers of English Fiction:

Bapsi Sidhwa holds a unique position among the writers of English fiction in the sub-continent because of her humour, neglect of established traditions, sense of fair play and characterization. She presents the cultural diversity in which she has lived. She has achieved what Khushwant Singh (the well-known author of *The Train to Pakistan* (1956), a historical novel dealing with the Partition of India) had been proposing for many years, that is, greater expression of sexuality in the English novels of the subcontinent. Bapsi Sidhwa has been a trailblazer in this aspect: Namita Gokhale, Shobha De are other modern Indian English novelists who followed this trend.

***Ice-Candy-Man*, Sidhwa's Modernist Experiment**

This novel is considered as a masterpiece of partition literature produced in the sub-continent. Bapsi Sidhwa undertakes modernist and postmodernist narrative experimentation in her novel *Ice-Candy-Man*. Otherwise, she follows Dickens' approach of a riveting plot, albeit with less authorial influence and a straight realist narrative. She also uses the same narrative technique in her other novel *An American Brat*. Above all, Bapsi Sidhwa is unique in its portrayal of the Parses, their customs, rites, rituals, traditions, loyalties, and eccentricities. Before Sidhwa, only Nergis Dalal in *The Sisters* (1973) and Perin Bharucha in *The Fire Worshippers* (1986) had addressed certain Parsee contradictions and small communal behavioural patterns. Because of their small population and aloofness policy, Parsees remained primarily unknown and perplexing to non-Parsees. In the view of others, such unfamiliarity and lack of social identification may give rise to suspicion or prejudice against the community. However, Bapsi Sidhwa promotes a deeper knowledge of her society by sharing information about the Parses' history, culture, and tolerance of various beliefs, intermingled with buffoonery, burlesque, and caricature. She has motivated other parsee novelists too like Firdaus Kanga and Rohinton Mistry. We find her influence in their novels *Trying to Grow* (1990) and *Such a Long Journey* (1991).

6.2.4 Summing Up:

Bapsi Sidhwa, a Pakistani novelist of Parsi descent, is best known for her works that explore themes of Pakistani society, particularly the experiences of the Parsi community in Pakistan. The key aspects of her writings are as follows:

- **Understanding of Parsi Culture and Identity:** Sidhwa's novels often provide deep insights into the Parsi community in Pakistan, a minority about which little is known in

much of the world. Her narratives often interweave personal stories with the broader history and culture of the Parsi people.

- **Perspectives on Partition and Its Aftermath:** Her novel “Cracking India” (also published as "Ice Candy Man"), set during the time of the partition of India and Pakistan, offers a unique perspective on this historical event. It presents the impact of political and religious upheaval on ordinary lives, especially from a child's viewpoint.
- **Feminist Perspectives:** Sidhwa often includes strong female characters in her novels and addresses issues of gender and feminism. Her works offer insights into the lives of women in a traditionally male-dominated society.
- **Postcolonial Literature:** As a postcolonial writer, Sidhwa's works are significant for understanding postcolonial themes and issues, such as identity, nationalism, and the legacy of colonialism in South Asia.
- **Cross-Cultural Understanding:** Through her novels, Sidhwa provides a bridge between Eastern and Western cultures, offering readers from different backgrounds a glimpse into the lives, challenges, and perspectives of people in Pakistan.
- **Literary Style and Technique:** Sidhwa is known for her vivid storytelling, rich character development, and her ability to interweave humour with serious themes. Studying her work can offer valuable insights into literary techniques and storytelling in a cross-cultural context.
- **Historical and Social Insights:** Her novels often reflect the social and political landscapes of the times and places she writes about. This provides readers with historical insights and a deeper understanding of the societal issues in those contexts.
- **Ethical and Moral Issues:** Sidhwa's works frequently raise important ethical and moral questions, encouraging readers to think critically about issues of justice, equality, and human rights.

Studying Bapsi Sidhwa's works can offer a rich, multifaceted learning experience, encompassing cultural studies, history, literature, and social science.

6.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should have gained insight into the life and works of Bapsi Sidhwa.

6.4 Glossary

Polio: A serious disease which can cause you to lose the power in certain muscles

Diasporic: Relating to a group of people dispersed from their traditional homeland, either by migration or involuntarily.

Parsee: A member of a monotheistic sect of Zoroastrian origin

Fanaticism: An irrational or excessive devotion, dedication, or enthusiasm.

Riots: A situation in which a group of people behave violently in a public place, often as a protest

Buffoonery: Foolish or playful behaviour or practice

Burlesque: A burlesque is a literary, dramatic, or musical work that makes fun of something by making it appear ridiculous.

Caricature: A drawing or painting that exaggerates or distorts a person or thing's features and form to mock or satirise the subject.

6.5 Sample Questions

6.5.1 Objective Questions:

- _____ is Bapsi Sidhwa's debut novel.
(a) *Ice- Candy Man* (b) *The Crow Eaters*
(c) *The Pakistani Bride* (d) *An American Brat*
- Cracking India* is a subtitle of _____.
(a) *Meatless Days* (b) *Ice-Candy Man*
(c) *An American Brat* (d) *Train to Pakistan*
- Bapsi Sidhwa is a _____.
(a) Christian (b) Muslim
(c) Parsee (d) Hindu
- Bapsi Sidhwa was educated at home till what age?
(a) 16 (b) 18
(c) 10 (d) 17
- Who is the narrator in *Ice-Candy-Man*?

- (a) Shanta (b) Writer
 (c) Ayah (d) Lenny
6. Which is Bapsi Sidhwa's first published novel?
 (a) *The Crow Eaters* (b) *The Bride*
 (c) *An American Brat* (d) *Ice- Candy Man*
7. Who is the protagonist in *Ice-Candy-Man*?
 (a) Ayah (b) Street vendor
 (c) Lenny (d) Shanta
8. Which novel of Bapsi Sidhwa's was adopted as a movie by Deepa Mehta?
 (a) *The Crow Eaters* (b) *The Pakistani Bride*
 (c) *Ice- Candy Man* (d) *An American Brat*
9. *Meatless Days* is a memoir of life in postcolonial Pakistan by:
 (a) Sara Suleri (b) Bapsi Sidhwa
 (c) Kamila Shmasie (d) Fatima Bhutto
10. Bapsi Sidhwa got the Pakistan National Honours of the Patras Bokhri award for her novel _____.
 (a) *An American Brat* (b) *Ice- Candy Man*
 (c) *The Crow Eaters* (d) *The Pakistani Bride.*

6.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Bapsi Sidhwa's childhood.
2. Lenny.
3. Women and Violence.
4. Migration.
5. Parsee Community

6.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Examine Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* as a Partition novel.
2. Examine the narrative techniques employed by Bapsi Sidhwa in her novels.
3. Write a note on Bapsi's biography.

6.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Dhawan, R.K. and Novy Kapadia, editors. *The Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa*. Prestige, 1996.
2. Zaman, N. *Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy-Man: A Reader's Companion*. Asia Book Club, 2004
3. Gul, Hina, Rohimmi Noor, and Hardev Kaur. "Hybridity in Bapsi Sidhwa's an American Brat." *3L: Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies* 22.1 (2016). Print.

Unit - 7: *Ice-Candy-Man* - Background, Plot, Characters

Structure

7.0 Introduction

7.1 Objectives

7.2 *Ice-Candy Man*: Background, Plot, Characters

7.2.1 About the Author

7.2.2 Background

7.2.3 Plot

7.2.4 Characters

7.2.5 Let Us Sum Up

7.3 Learning Outcomes

7.4 Glossary

7.5 Sample Questions

7.6 Suggested Learning Resources

7.0 Introduction

In this Unit, you will study about Bapsi Sidwa's novel, *Ice-Candy Man*. It is a novel based on historical events and is set in the period of the Partition of India and Pakistan. So, it is referred to as historical fiction and also as Partition novel. In order to fully understand the story, we should know about the author, her family background, and the background to the novel. You will learn these in detail in the subsections. You also studied about the author and her works in the previous unit. This novel is important in the study of post-colonial literature.

7.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- study *Ice-Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidwa
- understand the background to the novel
- explain the plot, and
- examine the characters

7.2 *Ice-Candy-Man*: Background, Plot, Characters

In the previous Unit, you studied about Bapsi Sidwa and her works. *Ice-Candy Man* is a novel by Bapsi Sidwa. It was published in 1988. It is set in Pakistan during the Partition. It is a historical fiction and an example of a Partition novel. It also contains autobiographical elements. So, it is important to know about the author and the period of Partition to fully understand and appreciate the novel. Another example of Partition novel is *Train to Pakistan* by Kushwant Singh. Kushwant Singh is an Indian writer while Bapsi Sidwa is a Pakistani-American writer. Let us now know about the author.

7.2.1 About the Author:

Bapsi Sidwa (1938-) was born in Karachi, undivided India into a Parsee family. She later settled in the US. She was a little girl when the Partition of India took place in August 1947. The creation of a new nation, Pakistan led to political turmoil in both India and Pakistan. As a child, she witnessed scenes of violence and blood-shed. These memories remained with her. In *Ice-Candy Man*, there are references to such incidents of violence and blood-shed. However, it must be noted that she was too young to fully understand the Partition and its impact. The characters in the novel are re-created from her life and most of the incidents depicted in the novel had actually taken place. Lenny, the narrator, is an eight-year old girl affected by polio. Bapsi was also eight years old when the Partition took place and she also had polio. The Ice-Candy Man after whom the novel is titled was a real-life ice-candy man who was the lover of Bapsi Sidwa's governess, who is the character Ayah in the novel.

The Parsee family background of Bapsi Sidwa is also important in understanding the novel. Several aspects of Parsee life are delineated in the novel. For example, the rituals of death, and the reference to the Tower of Silence are from Parsee culture and tradition. Bapsi Sidwa studied in Lahore. Her first marriage did not last long. She was only 19 years old when she fell in love with a Parsee from Mumbai, then Bombay. Later, she was married a second time to a Parsee from Lahore. Her second husband's family was involved in the freedom movement. She lived a domestic life initially. Later, she shifted to social work. Finally, she started writing novels.

Bapsi Sidwa wrote four novels. They are *The Crow Eaters* (1978), *The Bride* (1983), *Ice-Candy Man* (1988), and *The American Brat* (1994). *Ice-Candy Man* brought her fame. She was honoured in 1991 by both Germany and Pakistan for her literary contribution through *Ice-Candy Man*. She was greatly influenced by Charles Dickens and V.S. Naipaul. This influence is clearly

seen in *Ice-Candy Man*. She also loved Urdu poetry. She was influenced by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Allama Iqbal, and Mirza Ghalib. In *Ice-Candy Man*, she makes good use of Urdu poetry.

Check your progress

1. The _____ family background of Bapsi Sidwa is also important in understanding the novel.

2. Name two poets who influenced Bapsi Sidwa.

3. Mention two novels by Bapsi Sidwa.

7.2.2 Background:

The novel, *Ice-Candy Man* is a Partition novel. So, it is important to know about the Partition of India and the creation of Pakistan. The novel is set in the period of the Partition. Further, we should know about Parsee life and religion because Lenny and her family are Parsees and so are some other characters in the novel. The Parsees are followers of Zoroastrianism. They follow monotheism and believe in one God. Most of their beliefs are similar to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. They believe in one God, They believe in life-after-death, heaven, hell and the concept of punishment for sin. They also believe in the coming of the Messiah. They follow a strict moral code of living. The Parsees are recognized as the most peace-loving minority community. They do not marry outside their community and believe in strict adherence to their holy book, the Avestha. Geographically, the Parsees are originally from Persia and migrated to different parts of the world following religious persecution. They settled in India, mostly in Gujarat and Mumbai. They also live in Pakistan, mostly in Lahore and Karachi.

About the historical background, you should remember the Partition of India into two separate nations, India and Pakistan. On 14 August, 1947, Pakistan was created and granted freedom from British rule. India won her independence on 15 August, 1947. The joy of winning freedom from British rule was short-lived. Communal clashes took place between Muslims and Hindus in both India and Pakistan. There was a lot of violence and blood shed on both sides. Nevertheless, in such traumatic times, there was also bonding between Muslims and Hindus who risked their lives to save members of the other community from mob violence. In general, Muslims and Hindus also lived amicably despite the Partition and the violence.

The title of the novel not only gives significance to the role of the Ice-Candy Man in the story, but also reflects the themes of love and politics as played out by the Ice-Candy Man. It

also suggests the quality of “melting” as opposed to “unchanging.” The characters, especially in political context, change as quickly as ice melts, depending on the situation. An important point to note in the novel is that, though Bapsi Sidwa sets it in the period of Partition, she makes no direct eulogy to any important political leader. Most Partition literature depicts the important role played by the political leaders but we do not find any such depiction in *Ice-Candy Man*. She is more balanced in her outlook.

You must have some idea about post-colonialism to better understand the novel. Let us first define post-colonialism. It is a movement in literature when writers living in colonized countries or countries freed of colonialism write about colonialism and its impact. It deals with oppression, subjugation, resistance, displacement, migration, among other themes. It reflects the power of the colonized people to write against the colonizer, generally using the language of the colonizer. For example, postcolonial literature produced in the British colonies is in the English language. But local languages are also interspersed in the narrative. Bapsi Sidwa also chooses to write in English, but we also find her using Urdu and sometimes Gujarati in the novel. Further, the colonizers also berated the local customs and traditions and tried to suppress them ruthlessly. So, the postcolonial writer also writes to make the colonizers know about their rich culture and heritage. They aim to reclaim their national culture through their writings. Thus, we find a re-writing of their history from their perspective.

Check your progress

1. The novel, *Ice-Candy Man* is a _____ novel.
 2. The holy book of the Parsees is _____.
 3. What are the three languages used in *Ice-Candy Man*?
-

7.2.3 Plot:

Ice-Candy Man is set in Lahore of undivided India before its partition. Following the partition, Lahore became a part of Pakistan. It presents the conflict around the Partition. The resulting turmoil and the Hindu-Muslim animosity is presented in the novel. The novel is set in the year 1947, the year of the Partition. An eight-year old Parsee girl named Lenny is the narrator. She represents the autobiographical element in the novel and stands for the author herself. The character of Lenny is also the protagonist. It is very significant that Bapsi Sidwa has chosen a child narrator for such a tumultuous event. We see the story unfold not from a mature adult's

perspective, but from the point-of-view of a girl child. This way, the author ensures an unbiased approach to the communal strife and trauma that unfolded with the Partition.

We can say that the plot can be clearly divided into three main aspects: one, the unity among Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs despite the Partition-caused communal riots; two, the role of the Parsees during this troubled period; and three, the oppression of women. The oppression of women is two-fold: oppression because of communal strife, and oppression by their own menfolk. In the course of this unit, we will study these in detail. The novel opens with an Urdu poem by Allama Iqbal. It is in the form of a complaint to God Himself.

Significantly, the opening words of Lenny are: “My world is compressed.” This sentence tells the limitations of the narrator and the author. It can be interpreted at several levels. It throws light on Lenny’s disability due to polio because of which she is lame. Her perspective is limited to the view from the pram, or to the areas she can access. The Partition compressed the majority Hindus and the majority Muslims separately into two nations with the presence of Parsees and Sikhs in both. Societal constraints further restricted women within their own culture and family. From this microscopic compressed world, Bapsi Sidwa provides a world-view of the after-effects of the Partition.

Lenny’s movement is restricted further because of a surgery performed on her leg by a Parsee doctor Colonel Bharucha. She mostly spends her time on just two roads: one on which she lives, and one where her grandmother lives. Lenny has a governess, an ayah to take care of her. The ayah is an eighteen-year old Hindu girl with a number of suitors. She is named Shanta. One of her admirers is the Ice-Candy Man who is a Muslim. Lenny also considers the Ice-Candy Man, a street vendor to be her friend. Lenny’s evenings spent outside with Shanta cover most of the story and throws light on the Parsee family life as seen in the grandmother, aunt and cousin.

The contrast in the communal strife in Lahore and Imam Din’s native place Pir Pindo where all communities live in peace is presented. But very soon, the Muslims are transferred from Pir Pindo to Lahore as refugees by the military. In the meantime, during a community meeting, Dr Bharucha advises all Parsees to remain neutral and in peace with the government. This is in sharp contrast to the Hindu-Muslim divide during the Partition. There are horrid details of communal violence and the resultant trauma. In her own life, Lenny sees a Muslim mob visit her house. Imam Din protects Shanta by telling the mob she has left. But the Ice-Candy Man beguiles the innocent Lenny and she confides in him where Lenny is hiding. Her trust is

immediately broken as Shanta is dragged out and carried away. Later, she is turned into a prostitute by the Ice-Candy Man who himself turns into a pimp.

Lenny suffers from guilt of having betrayed Ayah. This trauma haunts her. She is shocked that the Ice-Candy Man cheated her. She also tries to understand his changed nature. She explains that the Ice-Candy Man changed only after he saw murdered bodies of Muslims. The Ayah, meanwhile, expresses her desire to return to her family in Amritsar. Lenny's family helped her shift to Amritsar. The Ice-Candy Man, who has married Ayah, decides to follow her to Amritsar.

Throughout the novel, several scenes and situations are presented and different characters are introduced. The main characters remain the Ice-Candy Man, the Ayah Shanta, and the child narrator, Lenny. Let us now look at the characters in detail.

Check your progress

1. An eight-year old Parsee girl named _____ is the narrator.
2. Lenny also considers the _____, a street vendor, to be her friend.
3. What are the opening words of Lenny?

7.2.4 Characters:

Lenny

Lenny is the narrator. She is a little eight-year old girl. She is also lame. So her view of life around her is restricted by both her age and her disability. We hear the story through her. Her movement is limited to Waris Road on which she lives and Jail Road on which her aunt and God-Mother live across one another. She is taken care of by her Ayah, Shanta. You will read more about the character of Shanta in the following passages. Lenny is a girl, she is a child, she has a disability, and she is from a minority community. In general, we do not find a narrator in the entire gamut of literature who is a child, a girl, has a disability, and is from a socio-cultural-religious minority group. Despite all these limitations, Bapsi Sidwa successfully moulds the character of Lenny as the narrator. In fact, none of the limitations affect Lenny's role as the narrator.

Lenny is treated by Dr Bharucha, as you know. Dr Bharucha has a very positive outlook. He cheers up Lenny by saying she has nothing to lose by not going to school. She will eventually grow up, marry, and have children, he says. In a very matter-of-fact manner, the doctor laid down the basic role of women during those days. Lenny, herself, is not averse to marriage, but

she has witnessed the exploitation of women by men, either as husbands or lovers. Her own mother is often abused by her father. She says how they could hear their mother crying and the father beating her. Ayah is also in an abusive relationship with the Ice-Candy Man whom she eventually marries. The abuse continues even after marriage.

Lenny shares a special bond with the women characters in the novel. They shape her life and perspective. The Godmother, Ayah, and mother are great influences on Lenny.

Check your progress

1. Who is the narrator?

2. Mention the names of the two streets that Lenny frequented.

3. Who does Lenny like?

Ice-Candy-Man

The Ice-Candy-Man is an important character in the novel of the same title. When the novel opens, we are introduced to the good-natured and affable Ice-Candy Man. Street vendors are generally named and remembered by what they sell, rather than by their real or original names. Similarly, the readers know this character by his profession. He is a street vendor selling ice-candy among other seasonal things. The child narrator, Lenny, likes him. She also notices his love for her Ayah.

The Ice-Candy Man is one of the many suitors of Ayah. The sweetness of the ice-candy in his nature quickly melts away like ice at the time of the Partition. The violence and bitterness around him, turn him into a tormentor. He plays a major role in seeking out Ayah from hiding and handing her over to the barbaric mob. He gains control over her life, making it more wretched. Eventually, his feelings of love for Ayah resurface, and he decides to follow her to Amritsar in order to be reunited with her in marriage. In their relationship, the readers see a love-hate-love relationship. Different negative shades of love, such as obsession, cruelty, and lack of sympathy, are revealed through the love and marriage of Ayah and the Ice-Candy Man.

Check your progress

1. Who is the Ice-Candy Man?

2. Who does he marry?

Ayah (Shanta)

Ayah is another important character in the novel. Lenny, the narrator, spends most of her time with Ayah, who takes good care of her in her upbringing. Like the Ice-Candy Man and Lenny, the character of Ayah is also based on real-life people. Lenny's first memories are of Ayah pushing her around in her pram. From the age of five when the story begins to the age of eight when the story ends, Lenny's constant companion is Ayah. Ayah is a beautiful young girl of eighteen years who has a number of lovers. She herself is in love with the Ice-Candy Man to whom she eventually gets married. Ayah's carefree life takes a sudden turn with the Partition. Her peaceful life with the Parsee family is shaken when she is kidnapped by a mob. The tragedy is that the man whom she loves, himself was a part of the mob and responsible for forcing her into prostitution. Another tragic aspect of her life is that her place of hiding is revealed through none other than Lenny herself. However, Lenny was cajoled into revealing the truth. She did not realize the consequences of confiding in the Ice-Candy Man. So both Ayah's love and Lenny's trust are betrayed by the Ice-Candy Man.

Bapsi Sidwa does not blame the Ice-Candy Man for his evil. He is also a victim of circumstances and suffered deeply due to the tragic massacre of his relatives in mob violence resulting from the Partition. Ayah has beautiful moments in life and also periods of suffering. We find the Ice-Candy Man in both situations with Ayah. He is the reason for her happiness. He is also the reason for her suffering. Apart from taking care of Lenny, Ayah also spends time in the company of the other servants in the household: the cook Imam Din, Hari, Mucho and his wife Papoo, and Moti the gardener. The amorous side of Ayah is brought to us by Lenny who is quick to observe how so many men are after her. The street vendors, cart-drivers, coolies, cyclists, even beggars and holy men yearn for her love.

The Partition affected several characters in the novel. Ayah is also affected deeply by the Partition both physically and emotionally. Her soul is lost and we find her yearning to go back to her original place, Amritsar. The raging fire in Lahore also reflects the raging fire in the lives of the characters. For Lenny, trapped in her immobility, the world was on fire. For Ayah, trapped in prostitution and unhappy marriage to the Ice-Candy Man, her life is on fire.

Check your progress

1. How is Ayah affected by the Partition?

2. What does the raging fire in Lahore reflect?

The Godmother (Lenny's aunt)

Lenny's aunt who loves her greatly and takes good care of her and Ayah is referred to as the Godmother in the novel. She is a kind and helpful person. She is assertive and is a keen social worker. She can convince others of her views and compel them to accept her decisions. She has the courage to stand on the side of truth. She goes out of her way to help Ayah to return to Amritsar. She openly berates and scolds the Ice-Candy Man for his treatment of Ayah. She is a fearless person who easily subjugates a person with her bold arguments and scolding. She stands for the Parsee community and their role in the Partition. Both sides were helped by the Parsees during the violent times. Godmother personally visits Ayah at the prostitution house, inquires about her well-being, boosts her self-confidence, and successfully arranges her rescue.

Check your progress

1. What quality describes the Godmother?
 - a) Fearless
 - b) Bold
 - c) Kind
 - d) All the above
2. Who shouted at the Ice-Candy Man?

Masseur

He plays a minor role in the novel. He is one of the suitors of Ayah. He is a rival to the Ice-Candy Man, because Ayah seems to enjoy his company more, making the Ice-Candy Man jealous of him. It further increases his desire for Ayah. The masseur's dead body is found in a sack. It is a case of murder as a result of the Partition.

Papoo

She is one of the independent and rebellious characters. But she also suffers as a woman. She is ill-treated by her mother. She is subjugated by societal norms and forced to marry a much older man against her wishes. She is the daughter of the sweepers Moti and Muccho and lives in the servant quarters.

The Gardener

Hari is the gardener in the Sethi family. When Lenny meets Gandhi in Lahore, she thinks he “looks just like Hari, our gardener,...He wears only the lion-cloth [dhoti, like Hari]...Gandhijee certainly is ahead of his times. He already knows the advantages of dieting.” Hari is often ridiculed by the other servants. Later, in the novel, Lenny says that he changed his attire, his looks and his religion. The masseur’s dead body is revealed when Hari kicks a sack found on the road.

Imam Din

He is the cook in the family of Lenny. Lenny describes him thus: “Happily he is three times widowed and four times wed. He is the most respected elder in his village.” In the course of the story, we find Lenny visiting his family at his village, Pir Pindo. She meets his grandchildren there. In contrast to Lahore, people in Pir Pindo village live in unity. They remain unaffected by the religious turmoil. Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs in the village live amicably. However, violence breaks out in this village and everyone is killed. Imam Din’s grandson manages to escape. He visits his grandfather and narrates the violent incident in Pir Pindo.

Dr Bharucha

He is a colonel and a doctor. Lenny is under his treatment for polio. He blames the British for bringing polio to undivided India. He is a caring doctor. He is also the leader of the Parsees in Lahore. He plays an important role in convincing the Parsees to remain in Lahore, respect the new rulers and take no political side.

Lenny’s Mother

Mrs Sethi is Lenny’s mother. All her time is spent supervising the household servants and attending to domestic duties. She appears as an able person who can handle the house staff. However, though the family is rich, her life is full of suffering. She is a meek and docile housewife. She is oppressed by her husband. She suffers physical and verbal domestic abuse.

7.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you should be able to know the background to the novel, *Ice-Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidwa. You should also know the plot and the characters.

7.4 Glossary

Ice-Candy: also known as popsicle or ice gola. A delicacy of frozen ice, chaffed and pressed into a ball on a stick, with flavoured juices sprinkled on top.

Ice-Candy Man: a person who sells ice-candy; a street vendor. In this novel, a character who is in love with Ayah.

Ayah: a governess. Nanny. A woman appointed to take care of little children in a family/school.

Partition: The Indian nation was divided into two by the British before granting freedom. Pakistan was carved out as a Muslim majority nation and India remained a Hindu majority nation. The division in 1947 is referred to as the Partition. It is one of the major tumultuous events in the history of India.

7.5 Sample Questions

7.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Who is the narrator in *Ice-Candy Man*?
 - a) Ayah
 - b) Dr Bharucha
 - c) Imam Din
 - d) Lenny
2. Who wrote the *Ice-Candy Man*?
 - a) Bapsi Sidwa
 - b) Parveen Shakir
 - c) Shashi Deshpande
 - d) Raja Rao
3. What is the major event that *Ice-Candy Man* revolves round?
 - a) World War I
 - b) Partition
 - c) World War II
 - d) 100 Years War
4. What is the name of the Ice-Candy Man?
 - a) Iman Din

- b) Bharucha
 - c) Shankar
 - d) None of the above
5. Who is the Ayah?
- a) Shanta
 - b) Lenny
 - c) God-Mother
 - d) None of the above
6. What is the family background of Lenny?
- a) Christian
 - b) Hindu
 - c) Parsee
 - d) Muslim
7. Which of these is not a character in the novel, *Ice-Candy Man*?
- a) Lenny
 - b) Shanta
 - c) Imam Din
 - d) Aziz
8. Who arranges to send Shanta to Amritsar?
- a) Dr Bharucha
 - b) Ice-Candy Man
 - c) The Pakistan government
 - d) Lenny's family
9. Who follows Shanta to Amritsar?
- a) Lenny
 - b) Shankar
 - c) Ice-Candy Man
 - d) No one
10. Where is *Ice-Candy Man* set?
- a) India
 - b) Britain
 - c) China

d) Pakistan

7.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write in brief the background to the novel.
2. What is the role of Imam Din in the novel?
3. Explain in brief the character of Dr Bharucha.
4. Why did communal riots break out in Lenny's neighbourhood?
5. What role did the Parsees play in the Partition?

7.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the character portrayal in the novel *Ice-Candy-Man* by Bapsi Sidwa.
2. Examine the plot construction in *Ice-Candy-Man* by Bapsi Sidwa.
3. Elaborate on the background to *Ice-Candy-Man*.

7.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Deepa Mehta's film *Earth* (available on YouTube)
2. Sidwa, Bapsi. *Ice-Candy Man*. 1988

Unit 8: *Ice-Candy-Man*: Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation

Structure

8.0 Introduction

8.1 Objectives

8.2 *Ice-Candy-Man*: Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation

8.2.1 Themes

8.2.2 Narrative Technique

8.2.3 Critical Appreciation

8.3 Learning Outcomes

8.4 Glossary

8.5 Sample Questions

8.6 Suggested Learning Resources

8.0 Introduction

In the previous unit, you read about the background, plot and characters in *Ice-Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidwa. In this Unit, we will continue the study of the novel. We will read about the themes and narrative technique. We will also attempt a critical appreciation of the novel. In the previous unit, you were told about the three major aspects of the novel around which it revolves. You were also told that Lenny is the narrator. In this Unit, we will cover these in detail. As you read the two units on the *Ice-Candy Man*, you should also try to read some books on post-colonialism which will help you to understand this novel better. Some examples are *The Empire Writes Back* by Bill Ashcroft, *Orientalism* by Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak's essays on post-colonialism, *Decolonizing the Mind* by Thiango, etc.

8.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- discuss the themes
- study the narrative technique
- attempt a critical appreciation

8.2 *Ice-Candy-Man*: Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation

In the previous unit, you studied about the novel *Ice-Candy Man* with special focus on the background, plot and characters. In this Unit, you will read about the theme, narrative technique, and attempt a critical appreciation. Let us first look at the theme.

8.2.1 Themes:

Bapsi Sidwa's novel *Ice-Candy Man* revolves around the main theme of Partition. It is a vivid portrayal of the Partition and its impact on the plot and characters. However, Partition is not the only theme. Sidwa uses the plot to discuss other important issues. We will study the themes now.

Partition

As you learned in the previous unit, *Ice-Candy Man* is set in the period of Partition. It presents the turmoil and the socio-political situation around the time of the Partition. The year 1947 is an important year in the novel, where most of the action takes place. The partition of British India into India and Pakistan in 1947 before the British rule over India ended led to Hindu-Muslim conflict. Undivided India had Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Parsees living together in common neighbourhoods. At the time of the Partition, there was an exodus of Hindus from Pakistan to India and an exodus of Muslims from India to Pakistan. It was a difficult time for everyone, especially for those who had to leave their native land and seek settlement in a new place. The Sikhs and the Parsees, in general, were not directly affected. In the novel, we find the discussion among the Parsees in Pakistan who finally decide to remain loyal to the land and the rulers. They decided not to be directly involved in the conflict, and to take sides. However, they continued to help both Hindus and Muslims during the communal riots.

The violence that broke out as a result of the Partition is depicted in the novel. As a representative novel of the Partition, it lays down the socio-political divide and unrest in society. It is written from the perspective of a girl child in Pakistan who is caught in this conflict. Through the portrayal of the characters around her, and through her narration, Lenny makes the readers see the horrors of the Partition affecting both the Hindus and Muslims. The *Ice-Candy Man* is witness to his family and relatives being murdered on a train as they attempt to shift from India to Pakistan. The Ayah is dragged out by a mob which includes her lover. The yearning of Ayah to return to her family in Amritsar also reflects the yearning of the society.

Feminism

Bapsi Sidwa gives more importance to the female characters in the novel, even though the novel is titled after a male character. The narrator is a girlchild. The entire narrative is from her perspective. She spends the most time with Ayah, around whom the story unfolds. In discussing Ayah, we find her a beautiful young girl who knows her charms and also how to use them to her advantage. But, this also leads to her suffering, especially after she is kidnapped and forced into prostitution by one of her lovers. Ironically, of all her lovers, she liked him the most. The reference here is to the Ice-Candy Man. Ayah's life is shattered and it is Godmother who rescues her. The Godmother is Lenny's aunt. She is a bold and fearless woman. She is also kind-hearted and caring. A true feminist, she does not victim-blame or victim-shame Ayah. She stands by her and helps restore her self-confidence. She boldly shouts at the Ice-Candy Man for his treatment of Ayah.

Feminism is advocacy for equal rights of women. It is a belief in respecting the diverse experiences of women, their identity, and their strength. It aims to empower women and break the patriarchy. In this context, we find Bapsi Sidwa advocating for the empowerment of women. She presents the patriarchal set-up where the husband ill-treats the wife, the paramour controls the beloved, and the roles are gender-defined. But the Godmother ensures that the inequality and injustice are removed. The silent acceptance of oppression of women by men is depicted in the novel as a societal norm. But, at the same time, the growing awareness of equal rights and dignity of women also occupies an important place in the story. Feminism takes into consideration the discrimination, objectification, and oppression of women which are depicted in the novel.

Religious Intolerance

Since the novel is set in the Partition, we find several instances of religious intolerance. The main communities affected by the Partition are the Hindus and the Muslims. We see two sides of their lives together: in togetherness and in hostility. The Hindus and Muslims lived amicably as one society. In Lenny's household, we find both Muslim and Hindu servants. The Partition and the resultant violent incidents break the communal harmony. All round them, there is communal strife. The growing religious intolerance rends the social fabric, filling minds and hearts of both sides with venom. Despite this, we still find the communities trying to help one another in crisis.

The Parsee community provided support to both sides during the great upheaval of religious intolerance. In contrast to the religious intolerance between the Hindus and the Muslims, we have a peace-loving Parsee community who shun violence, take no sides and provide necessary help and support to both Hindus and Muslims alike. The Sikhs are also affected by the Partition. They also suffer from violence, but it is not at the same level as experienced by the Hindus and the Muslims.

Check your progress

1. When did the Partition take place?

2. What exodus was caused due to the Partition?

3. Who witnessed his family and relatives murdered on train?

Hindu-Muslim Unity

An important theme that underlines the plot is the Hindu-Muslim unity. The novel not only presents religious intolerance, it also depicts the Hindu-Muslim unity. There are several examples of one community helping the other community. The violence at the time of Partition was mob violence. Mobs of both sides are pacified and efforts are made to protect the other community from mob violence. Neighbours and friends offered shelter and solace to members of the other community, ensuring their safety and well-being.

The contrast between the pre-Partition, Hindu-Muslim amity and the post-Partition Hindu-Muslim animosity is vividly presented. In the interaction of several characters from both the communities, we find good examples of Hindu-Muslim unity before the Partition wrecks havoc. Before the Partition, everyone was everyone else. The Partition created communal identities.

Check your progress

1. What led to communal tension between Hindus and Muslims?

2. Before Partition, how did people belonging to different religions live?

Role of Parsees

The Parsees are a very peace-loving community. At the time of Partition, they hold a community meeting and resolve not to take sides but to accept and respect whoever rules over them. They are fully aware that their destiny will remain unchanged. So, in continuation of their peace-abiding role, they decide to remain loyal to the land, not carry out an exodus, and not carry out any agitation. Though they decide to remain neutral, we find them helpful to all communities in distress. So, we can say that the Parsees helped cement the society. They prevented greater loss and ensured that peace prevailed over violence. The detailed descriptions of the Parsee society and way of life in the novel offers rare glimpses into their community. This was possible because the author is herself a Parsee and the novel is an autobiographical account.

Love, Betrayal and Marriage

Most of the scenes in the novel are drawn from every day of common people. As the plot unfolds, we find many characters who are in love, who are married, and in the case of the Ice-Candy Man and Ayah we find love, betrayal, and marriage. Lenny's parents seem to be in a loveless marriage. There are incidents of abuse as a result of patriarchy. Lenny, the child narrator is a witness to the love, betrayal, and marriage as the story progresses. She is aware of the love that draws the men to Ayah. She feels the tenderness that Ayah has for the Ice-Candy Man. The men are drawn to Ayah because of her beautiful appearance. More than real love, they are enchanted by her beauty. The Ice-Candy Man who is himself handsome is an apparent choice for the beautiful Ayah. However, Ayah prefers the masseur. So, love does not depend on physical charm. Ayah and Lenny realize this soon during the Partition. Feelings of love are lost in the prevalent chaos and violence. Ayah's beauty does not prevent the mob from seeking her out, kidnapping her, and outraging her. The Ice-Candy Man's feelings of love are also lost when he hands over Ayah to mob. The betrayal does not end here. She is forced into prostitution by the Ice-Candy Man. Her life of suffering appears a little better when she is married to the Ice-Candy Man. But the love is already lost due to the betrayal, and only a loveless marriage remains. Ayah yearns to break free from the marriage and return to Amritsar. The Ice-Candy Man, on the other hand, filled with remorse and a longing for love, follows Ayah to Amritsar in the hope of saving the marriage.

At another level, the theme of love and betrayal can be applied to the geographic nation. Undivided India is betrayed by her own children. The love for one nation is divided into separate love for two different nations. The marriage or the union is shattered with the Partition.

Check your progress

1. Who betrays Ayah?

2. Mention any two themes in the *Ice-Candy Man*?

3. What is the religion of the narrator?

Oppression of Women

The theme of oppression of women is presented at several levels in the novel. At one level, it is the oppression of the Mother Nation who is ripped into two by her children. Then the two Mother Nations are under oppression arising out of the Partition and the resultant violence. Mrs Sethi, Lenny's mother belongs to a rich family and has a contingent of servants under her. However, she lives under oppression as a result of patriarchy. She is ill-treated and abused by her husband. She leads a docile life filled with fear. In contrast, is Papoo, the rebellious daughter of the sweeper. However, she is also faced with suffering and oppression and is forced to marry an older man. Ayah also suffers from oppression. Her life is shattered by the men around her. Though she is married to the Ice-Candy Man, she is not happy and wants to leave him. Godmother tries to convince Ayah to bear with her husband. This also shows how society shapes the rules for the oppression of women. Eventually, the Godmother helps rescue Ayah. On one hand, Godmother tries to bring about a compromise between Ayah and the Ice-Candy Man. On the other hand, we see her scolding the Ice-Candy Man for his oppressive behaviour.

Check your progress

1. What kind of life does Lenny's mother live?

2. Describe Godmother in two or three words.

8.2.2 Narrative Technique:

As we informed you, Lenny is the narrator. She is a child, a girl afflicted with polio. The story is narrated through her based on what she witnesses. Her world view is restricted by her immobility. It is also restricted by her age. It is difficult for the reader to believe that a child narrator would have so much maturity of thought and language. We often feel the presence of the author through Lenny's narration. So the first-person narrative technique is also used to employ

the child Lenny as the mouth-piece of the author. Lenny can be considered the persona or the spokesperson through whom Bapsi Sidwa reveals her own thoughts. It is clearly evident that *Ice-Candy Man* is a fictional autobiography. Let us now look into the first-person narrative technique.

Check your progress

1. Who is the mouth-piece of the author?

2. Whose presence do we feel in the narrative?

First-person narrative

The entire story is narrated in the first-person. This narrative technique serves several purposes. An important purpose is to present the Partition with an objective outlook. The narrator is child, she is polio-afflicted, she is a girl-child, and she hails from a Parsee family. All these aspects help to make the story more objective. The Partition impacted the Hindus and the Muslims most. The Parsee community is a peace-loving and adjusting community. They did not side with anyone during the Partition. They remained loyal to the land and its rulers. As a Parsee child, Lenny the narrator could look at the devastation caused by the Partition with impartiality. This impartiality lends the story credibility. All the events are depicted from Lenny's perspective, but Bapsi Sidwa ensures that through the characters and the events, the readers are able to draw their own conclusions.

The use of first-person narrative serves another purpose. It helps to avoid any controversy. The novel is loaded with political statements. Because these statements come from a little girl child, the readers look at them from her perspective, consider them harmless, non-controversial remarks from an innocent child. The references to Gandhi in the novel will help to explain this better. Sidwa successfully keeps the readers attention focused through the first-person narrative making them participate in the events as they unfold. It is interesting to note that Sidwa chooses a character from a marginalized community to narrate the story. The Parsees are a minority and marginalized community in undivided India. Lenny is marginalized at several levels: as a Parsee, as a child, as a girl, as a Parsee girl-child, as a Parsee girl-child with disability.

Check your progress

1. What is first person narrative?

2. Is the novel autobiographical?

3. Who is the narrator?

Child narrator

The use of the child as a narrator for the unraveling of the story set in the Partition is a masterstroke by Bapsi Sidwa. She subtly presents several distressing scenes in a matter-of-fact way because the scenes are narrated by an innocent child. The subjective approach to the theme of Partition would invariably affect the narrative considering which side is telling the story. The presence of the 'other' is minimized by the use of the child narrator. The entire story is set in the early childhood of the narrator. She is witness to the gory violence that broke out with the Partition. She is also a witness to the peaceful times and the camaraderie among Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Parsees before the Partition. From her perspective, she narrates the unfolding events without being judgmental. The impact of the Partition on the child and the impact on those around her, makes the novel a representative work of the times. The autobiographical element lends credence to the narrative. Lenny is a curious child. Her curiosity makes her ask many questions. The answers to her questions help in narrating the story.

Disability

The first-person narrative technique and the use of the child as narrator is further complemented by making the child narrator a person with disability. Lenny, let us remember, is representative of Bapsi Sidwa's childhood. The novel is, in this sense, a memoir. The immobility of polio-afflicted Lenny restricts her world-view. She cannot be at different places at will. She depends on ayah to take her around. She has a limited view of the happenings around her. However, this does not affect the narrative. Her encounters with different characters and their experiences and reporting help her with the narrative. Any violent event affects a society. The impact on a child who cannot fully grasp the gravity of the situation is greater. The impact of a violent event on a girl-child with a disability is profound. It is this profoundness that makes the narrative technique a tool in the hands of Bapsi Sidwa.

Check your progress

1. What is the narrative technique employed in *The Ice-Candy Man*?

2. Who is the narrator?

3. What is the disability of the narrator?

8.2.3 Critical Appreciation:

The novel, *Ice-Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidwa also titled *Cracking India* is a Partition novel. It recounts the dividing of the Indian nation based on the two-nation theory before the British rule over undivided India came to an end in August 1947. The novel spans a few years around the Partition. It recounts the communal harmony prevailing in undivided India. The lives of the people in both India and Pakistan were shattered as a result of the communal violence in the aftermath of the Partition. Suddenly, religious identity became important. The blood-bath, the massacre, the violence erupting as a result of the Partition turned people into enemies based on religion. On the other hand, it even made them change their religion for safety.

As a post-colonial novelist, Bapsi Sidwa rewrites history as a Pakistani Parsee born in undivided India. She breaks from colonialism in her use of language. Though the novel is written in English, there are several verses from Urdu poetry in it. The novel itself begins with Urdu verses. The novelist makes no attempt to find alternate English equivalents to local, culture specific terms. The Ayah is not referred to as Governess, for example. There is a blend of English and native terms in the novel. Several such native terms remain untranslated in the novel. The swear words are not translated. Common words like “Sarkar” and “Ayah” that her readers would be familiar with remain in the original local languages. The locale is presented in the post-colonial perspective. The novel is written by the adult author, even though it’s narrator is in the colonial stage. The point-of-view is from the Parsee perspective, not the perspective of the colonial power, that is, Great Britain.

The novel, *Ice-Candy Man* presents the culture, history, and literature that is different from the culture, history, and literature of the colonial powers or of the West. In this sense also, it is post-colonial literature. Bapsi Sidwa presents the Partition not from the British or the Indian perspective, but from the perspective of Pakistan. Her understanding of the freedom fighters like Nehru, Gandhi, and Jinnah is very different from how the British or the Indians understand. She also consciously presents the role of the Parsees in the prevailing political situation arising out of the Partition. She does not present them as standing aloof, indifferent to the political situation, as is generally believed. Instead, she presents them as consciously taking a decision to remain loyal to the land and its rulers without getting embroiled in the political situation. She also presents them as being impartial on religious affiliations and helping Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs alike.

They, in fact, emerge as a strong bond of the social fabric that prevents political animosity from breaking the social fabric.

Through her novel, Bapsi Sidwa has given voice to the Pakistani and the Parsee community. The autobiographical element in the novel gives an omniscient presence of the narrator even though the novel is in the first-person point-of-view. As Lenny, the narrator, tells the story from about the time she was four years to about ten years, we as readers, encounter the history of the Partition with an objectivity that helps in better understanding of the great event in the history of the sub-continent.

Check your progress

1. Is the novel a post-colonial work?

2. Mention two aspects of post-colonialism found in the novel.

3. Poetry from which language of the sub-continent is used in the novel?

8.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you will know about the themes, narrative technique, and critical appreciation.

8.4 Glossary

Theme: the main subject of a piece of work, here the main subject of the novel. It is one of the aspects of a novel. It contains the central idea or the underlying message around which the story revolves.

Narrative Technique: is the way in which a novelist presents the story. It is a literary device. When the story is told in the first person directly to the reader, it is first-person narrative. The first-person point-of-view is often limited. On the other hand, in the third-person omniscient point-of-view, the narrative is told from a 360 degree perspective.

Exodus: the large-scale movement of people from one place to another, generally from one country to another

Native: of or belonging to a particular region, a local, a resident; not foreign or immigrant

Feminism: a movement in literary theory and criticism advocating equal rights for women and fighting against patriarchy in all its forms. It is a movement for the rights of women.

Sarkar: Urdu/Hindi term for “Government”

Ayah: Governess. A full-time maid appointed for daily chores, especially the task of taking care of children in households or in schools

8.5 Sample Questions

8.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. When did the Partition of India take place?
 - a) 1947
 - b) 1847
 - c) 1957
 - d) 1948
2. Who divided India?
 - a) French
 - b) Portuguese
 - c) Dutch
 - d) British
3. Which of the following is a theme of the novel *Ice-Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidwa?
 - a) Partition
 - b) Hindu-Muslim Unity
 - c) Oppression of Women
 - d) All the above
4. Who is the narrator in the novel *Ice-Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidwa?
 - a) Lenny
 - b) Imam Din
 - c) Ayah
 - d) Shankar
5. Does the narrator like the Ice-Candy Man? **Yes/No**
6. Is Godmother a fearless woman? **Yes/No**

7. Who helps Ayah to return to her native place?

- a) Imam Din
- b) Shankar
- c) Godmother
- d) Ice-Cany Man

8. Which of the following statements is correct?

- a) First-person narrative is employed.
- b) The narrator is a girl-child.
- c) The narrator has a disability.
- d) All the above.

9. Who is the female character?

- a) Narrator
- b) Ayah
- c) Godmother
- d) All the above

10. What country is the novel set in?

- a) France
- b) Pakistan
- c) China
- d) Bangladesh

8.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write a short note on the theme of love and marriage.
2. Comment in brief on the oppression of women as presented in *Ice-Candy Man*.
3. What is the role of the Parsees in the novel?
4. Discuss in brief the use of Urdu poetry in the novel.
5. Examine the issue of Lenny's disability and the impact it has on the narrative.

8.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Examine in detail the themes around which the novel, *Ice-Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidwa revolves.
2. Elaborate on the narrative technique in *Ice-Candy Man*.
3. Attempt a critical appreciation of the novel, *Ice-Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidwa.

8.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Bill Ashcroft. *The Empire Strikes Back*. Routledge, 1989.
2. Edward Said. *Orientalism*.
3. Movie *Earth*
4. Ngugi wa Thiango. *Decolonising the Mind*. 1986
5. Bapsi Sidwa. *Ice-Candy Man*. 1988.

Unit – 9: Introduction to Caribbean Writings

Structure

9.0 Introduction

9.1 Objectives

9.2 Introduction to Caribbean Writings

9.2.1 Caribbean History

9.2.2 Slavery

9.2.3 Abrogation

9.2.4 The Post-Emancipation Caribbean

9.2.5 Criticism

9.3 Learning Outcomes

9.4 Glossary

9.5 Sample Questions

9.6 Suggested Learning Resources

9.0 Introduction

The historical narrative surrounding the establishment and colonisation of the Caribbean region holds significant significance for the subsequent development of its societies. Since its accidental "discovery" by Christopher Columbus in 1492, the Caribbean region has served as a rich source of inspiration for writers. These authors engage in the exploration and portrayal of their surroundings, using their narratives to analyse the complex interplay between the land, its inhabitants, and the psychological aspects of their circumstances. Through their literary works, they foreshadow the resilient fight for survival and the formation of communal bonds, which serve as means of defining their humanity and preserving their dignity. This unit explores the unique historical background of the Caribbean region and its consequential impact on the literary criticism about this particular area. Furthermore, it elucidates the diverse literary reactions exhibited by different writers from this particular geographical area in response to the aforementioned historical circumstances.

9.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- gain an understanding of Caribbean literature
- explore Caribbean history
- examine the issue of slavery
- Discuss the abrogation and post-emancipation Caribbean

9.2 Introduction to Caribbean Writings

9.2.1 Caribbean History:

The historical trajectory of the Caribbean region exhibits distinctive characteristics. The process of its development is not characterised by a lengthy and organic progression originating from a distant mythical and archaeological history. Instead, it commences with the significant "discovery" of the island. The sudden commencement of historical discourse has prompted scholars to argue that the Caribbean region is only a geographical designation devoid of a significant historical narrative.

According to Naipaul, the West Indies is characterised as a sterile and stagnant civilization, mostly attributed to its accidental discovery and the ruthless methods employed by the colonising troops during the occupation, which resulted in violence. Numerous experts from the Caribbean region have likewise concluded that the area lacks a substantial historical narrative and is unlikely to progress beyond its primitive and turbulent origins.

Naipaul (1969) asserts that the West Indies, in terms of historical development, lacked the creation and achievement necessary for the construction of a significant historical narrative. This viewpoint suggests a dearth of notable contributions originating from the region. (p. 39)

The absence of formation pertains to the scarcity of memorials, reading rooms, and public facilities, except the remnants of former plantation mansions and accounts documenting the slave experience. Colonisers perceived the province as one with significant financial prospects that warranted complete exploitation, rather than as a suitable location for permanent settlement. This is the reason why the plantation system became deeply rooted, leading to the widespread presence of absentee landlords who reaped the benefits of their labour beyond the confines of the West Indies. Consequently, the issue about West Indian history is not exclusively

attributed to its method of exploration, but also encompasses the presence of jealousy and internal conflicts among the colonisers, who were primarily driven by a singular focus on expeditious self-gain.

In the beginning, Columbus held the belief that the West Indies had the potential to become a profitable commercial route for Spain. Furthermore, as a result of the widespread presence of gold body ornaments among the inhabitants of the Bahamas whom Columbus encountered, he arrived at the deduction that the West Indies held an abundant and limitless reserve of gold. Consequently, his predominant focus lay in the commercial exploitation of the region rather than its enhancement. Subsequently, it was ascertained that the availability of gold was limited, prompting the colonisers to shift their focus towards the extensive growth of sugar, a notably profitable agricultural product at the time.

Throughout the period of their presence in the Caribbean, European powers were predominantly driven by self-interested economic motivations. As a result, the individuals involved showed no hesitation in engaging in undercutting practices, ultimately resorting to brutal methods to secure a consistent source of readily replaceable workers.

The Caribbean was characterised as a civilization that was deliberately constructed, as the majority of its residents, aside from the indigenous Indian population that was substantially eradicated, either migrated or were involuntarily relocated to the Caribbean region. Given the diverse composition of individuals in the Caribbean, encompassing various racial backgrounds, religious affiliations, and motivations for residing in the region, the establishment of a unified Caribbean ethos proved challenging. This was particularly exacerbated by the inherent disparities engendered by the system of captivity.

Consequently, it is accurate to consider the Caribbeans as a population that was brought in from outside and residing in an environment that was predominantly composed of imported elements. The early and later imperial powers in the Caribbean region were primarily driven by the objective of misusing the abundant resources, minerals, and farming produce of the range. This pursuit of exploitation served both their interests and the economic prosperity of their respective mother nations.

The attraction of gold, sugar, and slaves thus prompted imperialistic expeditions to the region by the colonizers. Each of these imperial powers engaged in conflict to acquire a significant portion of the abundant resources present in the Caribbean region. Consequently, these circumstances inevitably led to the emergence of piracy, deceit, violence, and a lack of

unity among the governing entities. Each distinct European community possesses its own unique language, religious beliefs, and political affiliations. Further, they were consistently involved in endeavours aimed at safeguarding or extending their territory, hence limiting their capacity and necessity to establish a cohesive political and cultural dominion over the non-European populace.

Moreover, the Europeans' incapacity to establish a unified creolized cultural ideology among the slaves, who themselves were from many cultural backgrounds, was further intensified by the imperialists' indifference to the ongoing spiritual and physical well-being of the Islands and its people. Consequently, the African American slaves were predominantly responsible for the development of their cultural manifestations and belief systems, which were shaped by remnants of diverse African traditions, assorted European influences, and communal reactions to their novel environment.

9.2.2 Slavery:

The Spaniards who initially engaged in imperialism in the Caribbean possessed an established system of slavery, facilitating their use of this approach to get workers for their mining operations and agricultural estates. Before the introduction of black labourers in the West Indies, several sources of employment were sought, such as indigenous Aboriginal Indians, white slaves, and convict labour.

The institution of slavery was established by the Spanish monarch on September 3, 1501, marking the commencement of the practice by the transfer of numerous Christian black slaves from Spain to the West Indies. The African slave trade commenced shortly thereafter. The extraction of gold and, to a larger extent, the identification of the significant economic opportunities associated with sugarcane farming in the global market played a pivotal role in the establishment of slavery as an institutionalised practice in the West Indies.

The institution of plantation slavery commenced around the 16th century, subsequently exerting a significant impact on the economic prosperity of the Islands, which became intricately tied to the fluctuating price of sugar. Additionally, the demographic composition of the West Indian population was shaped by the specific demands and criteria set forth by the sugar business.

The cultivation of sugarcane required significant investment in both capital and personnel. The cost of advanced and effective sugar extraction machinery was costly, and the sugar crop itself had a limited shelf life, necessitating prompt processing following harvest. Additionally, the cultivation and reaping of cane necessitated a substantial amount of labour, while the manufacturing procedure proved to be laborious. The establishment of sugar production on a

significant economic scale necessitated a substantial initial investment and the availability of a sizable and inexpensive workforce.

The institution of African slavery facilitated the ready access to and replaceability of unskilled workers. Furthermore, this event precipitated a transformation in the racial makeup and social organisation of the Islands. During the period of slavery, the African American population experienced a gradual erosion of their humanity, mostly due to the demanding labour conditions, severe punishments for absenteeism, and the establishment of slave codes that provided legal support for the institution of slavery. These regulations restricted the ability of enslaved individuals to freely move and express their own volition. For example, enslaved individuals were unable to enter into marriage without the consent of their owners, were prohibited from owning any kind of property, were regarded as chattel, and were subject to severe punishments, including capital punishment, at the discretion of their masters.

The implementation of a callously apathetic approach to enslavement, in conjunction with the presence of racial and cultural heterogeneity within the West Indies, as well as the displacement and dispossession endured by African slaves, contributed to the erosion of the slaves' connection to their historical lineage and underscored their profound lack of agency in shaping their destinies. Additionally, it resulted in the emergence of psychological traumas such as alienation, rootlessness, inferiority complex, and the development of a colonial mindset. The cultivation of sugarcane played a fundamental role in the establishment of slavery and had significant impacts on the collective mindset of the Caribbean region. These effects include the development of an insular perspective and a pervasive and debilitating sense of narrow-mindedness, which persist in the contemporary Caribbean mentality and pose challenges for eradication.

9.2.3 Abrogation:

The abolition of slavery can be attributed to three fundamental factors: economic, political, and humanitarian. During the 19th century, the economic feasibility of cultivating sugar in the British and French West Indian colonies diminished due to the availability of cheaper sugar from India and Brazil. The sugar producers in the colonies encountered a predicament wherein the cost of sugar production exceeded its selling price, hence posing challenges for plantation owners to generate profits while still attending to the welfare of their enslaved workforce.

From a political perspective, the abolitionist movement may be understood as a component of the broader worldwide efforts undertaken by the industrial bourgeoisie to challenge the authority of the landed aristocracy. This can be observed in historical events such as the French Revolution of 1789 and the triumph of the Northern states over the Southern states in the American Civil War.

From a humanitarian perspective, the institution of slavery was widely regarded as the epitome of human cruelty. Consequently, individuals like William Wilberforce actively pursued legal measures to abolish this practice. The abolition of slavery was enacted through legislative measures in many European countries during the 19th century. Denmark approved abolition acts in 1803, followed by Great Britain in 1807, France in 1817, and Holland in 1818. Subsequently, the legal abolition of slavery took place in the British colonies in 1833, French colonies in 1848, and Dutch colonies in 1863.

9.2.4 The Post-Emancipation Caribbean:

Freedom did not bring about immediate and substantial transformations in the circumstances of the enslaved individuals. From a financial standpoint, these individuals lacked the necessary resources to embrace independence. However, a significant number of them chose to sustain themselves through subsistence farming or temporary labour that involved travelling, rather than subjecting themselves to extended working hours for minimal pay on the plantations owned by their former owners. The aforementioned circumstances resulted in a void within the labour market, therefore leading to the influx of indentured Indian labourers to the West Indies to address this shortage. The migratory movement under consideration commenced in 1838 and concluded in 1924, during which time an estimated total of around five hundred thousand individuals of Indian origin relocated to the Caribbean region. The introduction of these new racial, linguistic, and cultural elements further complicated the already diverse society of the West Indies. The Caribbean region consequently evolved into a culture characterized by determinism, wherein individuals' social standing was determined by the colour of their skin, leading to a rigid division of people into distinct and exclusive colour-based categories. The present circumstances exacerbated the insanity that was fostered by a perception of racial and cultural emptiness or inferiority that originated from the institution of slavery.

During the initial phase of the colonial administration, the educational system was primarily focused on providing basic literacy skills, including reading and writing, as well as moral guidance, to those of African descent. The event, which was originally coordinated by the

missionaries, emphasised the inferior and compliant position of the African Americans towards their white masters. Subsequently, individuals of African descent underwent instruction in the realm of international history, literary and musical customs, and were even subjected to the comprehensive imposition of the value system prevalent in the urban centre.

The African American community had various responses, one of which involved fully embracing foreign cultural norms, so implying a rejection of their racial heritage. Additionally, there existed a repudiation of Western principles and a sentimental affinity for remnants of folk tradition, or a discerning amalgamation of the most commendable aspects from both civilizations. The aforementioned circumstances led to the emergence of a pluralistic society.

The West Indies in the post-emancipation period continued to experience significant foreign dominance as a result of colonialism. Consequently, the Caribbean region is characterised by a multifaceted scenario that arises from the coexistence and interdependence of two distinct cultural value systems. Within this context, it is evident that there exists a metropolitan culture that has been influenced by foreign aspects. This particular culture is predominantly observed among individuals belonging to the upper and middle socioeconomic classes. In contrast, there is also a distinct black Creole culture that encompasses several elements originating from African traditions. It is important to note that this particular cultural practice is primarily embraced by individuals from lower socioeconomic. Hence, it can be observed that distinct social classes exhibit divergent behaviours and cognitive patterns, resulting in the elevation and aspiration of one class at the expense of the other. The upper and middle classes are known to communicate in Standard English, engage in legally recognised weddings, and adhere to the religious and cultural practices of their European predecessors. In contrast, individuals belonging to the lower socioeconomic strata predominantly utilize the Creole dialect for communication purposes. Additionally, they actively participate in fetishistic rituals, such as the veneration of deities like Shango, gold, and Ifa. Moreover, it is common for individuals in this social group to refrain from formalising their unions through legal marriage.

The Caribbean region has been characterised as a plural society in which individuals exhibit diverse patterns of behaviour and are united mostly by economic factors, rather than a shared cultural identity. The fractured unity observed in this context can be attributed to the various responses and techniques of adjustment employed by individuals in response to the void caused by dispossession. The ancestors who were enslaved experienced the loss of their native lands and were compelled to reside in an unfamiliar and unwelcoming environment, where they

were subjected to feelings of racial and cultural inferiority. The profound feeling of inferiority and lack of self-assurance experienced by individuals was exacerbated by the emphasis placed on colonial education, which fostered a greater sense of forgetfulness and embarrassment regarding Africa's historical heritage. Consequently, this educational approach compelled black individuals to embrace Europe as a superior entity.

Consequently, the historical experience has elicited diverse literary reactions. Certain writers, particularly those of white West Indian descent, express remorse or regret over this historical context. Some other writers choose to disassociate themselves from the West Indies and instead identify Africa as their spiritual homeland, but others reject the notion of Africa and draw inspiration from European influences. The writers exhibit divergent perspectives on the history of the West Indies. In most cases, they assume the role of representatives for their societies. The authors engage in the examination and interpretation of societal problems and strive to identify constructive and long-lasting solutions to the prevailing environment.

Caribbean literature explores the issue of alienation in its different manifestations, such as homelessness, rootlessness, and exile. This scenario entails being involved in something that one was unable to achieve. The central cultural dedication of Caribbean writers continues to revolve around the exploration of identity and the process of self-discovery. According to George Lamming, this particular circumstance might be characterised as paradoxical due to its simultaneous emphasis on both roots and rootlessness, as well as the notions of home and homelessness. The West Indian individual experiences a heightened sense of displacement due to the fractured structure of society. Consequently, the writing originating from this region reflects and endeavours to grapple with the ramifications of colonisation. Edward Baugh characterises this body of work as "colonial literature."

Caribbean literature, during that time, aimed to commemorate a novel ethos and identity. The establishment of a distinct West Indian identity is characterised by its divergence from European norms, as well as its differentiation from African, Chinese, and Indian cultural influences. Instead, it represents a unique and enjoyable amalgamation of these various elements. The author in the New World is actively endeavouring to express the authentic essence of existence.

9.2.5 Criticism:

Given the weight of this oppressive past and challenging context, the evaluation of Caribbean literature has frequently been biased. The criticism primarily encompasses an attitude

that perceives the visions articulated by the writers as "pessimistic," particularly about the literary works of Naipaul. The contention posits that as intermediaries of their specific geographical and historical context, the prevailing argument suggests that the uninterrupted desolation of their conditions, along with the seeming lack of a governing ethical foundation, renders the sole rational, viable, and pragmatic representation to be ludicrous, disheartening, and devoid of optimism. In her analysis, Rose Acholonu (1987) highlights the enduring and detrimental effects of colonisation on West Indian history, emphasising its dehumanising impact. She argues that the consequences of colonisation are both long-lasting and severe. One significant consequence of this observation is the perspective that individuals from the Caribbean are unable to overcome the challenges associated with forced assimilation.

Nevertheless, in contrast to the aforementioned claim, empirical evidence has demonstrated that individuals from the Caribbean possess the capacity to develop a novel identity within the contemporary global society by drawing upon their historical and current encounters, thereby surpassing the challenges posed by their unfamiliar surroundings. The initial development of Caribbean literature as a separate entity from European, African, Chinese, or Indian literature represents a significant advancement, indicating a promising future for individuals from the West Indies. According to Derek Walcott, history encompasses more than just the remnants of grand structures such as castles and forts. It also encompasses the narrative of the common man and his actions, such as the fisherman and his mixed-breed dog strolling down the shoreline (Brodber, 1983, p.13). The field of creative history encompasses not only the examination of past events but also takes into consideration their relevance to the present and their potential implications for the future. According to Walcott (Brodber, 1983, p.3), individuals who experience the anguish of lacking a historical context should examine the labour practises, traditional dances, aspirations, musical compositions, and recollections of their ancestors. By critically analysing these elements, one can effectively document their historical narrative.

According to Walcott, it is incumbent upon individuals from the West Indies to assume ownership of their land, exert control over it through cultivation, and ultimately generate original creations. Walcott asserts that despite the various roles and personas adopted by West Indians, they inherently possess the potential for a multifaceted and cohesive identity, which is a direct result of their state of exile (Hirsch, 1979, p. 285). According to Gerald Moore (1969), the West Indians have undeniably forged a distinct community, even if they have not accomplished much else. Moore emphasises the significance of their cultural contributions in building a collective

identity (p. 8). Walcott asserts that expressing a desire to revert to an English or African identity would be morally repugnant to him. He emphasises that the prevailing circumstance necessitates the cultivation and development of the West Indies region. (Hirsch, 1979, p.285).

Walcott's stance was validated when he received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1992, the most prestigious literary recognition worldwide. Naipaul also achieved this distinction a few years thereafter. In addition to serving as a kind of compensation and acknowledgement for exceptional individual achievements, the Nobel Prize also serves as a commemoration of Caribbean literature. Given that literature is a means of celebrating life, the Nobel Prize indirectly affirms and acknowledges the legitimacy and authenticity of Caribbean life. Contrary to the assertion that history has a definitive impact on the creative imagination, it is apparent that individuals from the Caribbean region can overcome the unpredictable nature of historical events and surpass the limitations imposed by their unfamiliar surroundings.

The phrases "Caribbean" and "West Indian" are commonly employed interchangeably by a significant number of individuals when engaging in discussions about literary works originating from this specific region of the world. The term "Caribbean" encompasses literature written in various languages spoken in the region, including English, French, Spanish, and Dutch. On the other hand, "West Indian" literature, specifically pertains to writings from areas in the Caribbean where English is the official language and the primary medium of literary expression. This Unit focuses on the literature of the English-speaking Caribbean, also referred to as West Indian literature.

The major literary figures hailing from the Caribbean region encompass a diverse group of writers, including Derek Walcott, Edward Brathwaite, V.S Naipaul, Samuel Selvon, George Lamming, Roger Mais, and Michael Anthony. Additionally, notable contributors to Caribbean literature consist of V.S. Reid, Orlando Patterson, Earl Lovelace, Jean Rhys, Martin Carter, Geoffrey Drayton, Edgar Mittleholzer, Merle Hodge, Zed Edgell, Alvin Bennett, Errol John, John Hearne, H.D. Delisser, Jacques Roumain.

Given that Caribbean literature is predominantly a reaction from individual authors to the past circumstances of the region, Derek Walcott asserts that it is imperative for West Indians to actively engage in reshaping the current state of affairs. According to Walcott, a West Indian individual must confront and surpass the feelings of inferiority and lack of unity that stem from the historical experiences of dispossession and estrangement. Walcott also addresses the matter of West Indian individuals' allegiance to multiple cultures, including their indigenous heritage

and foreign influences. The individual asserts that for genuine nationalism to be present and for the authentic Caribbean identity to manifest, it is imperative to not favour one culture at the expense of the other. Walcott continuously integrates components from both cultures in his literary works and endeavours to reassess specific facets of colonial history.

He also holds the view that dedicating oneself to the muse of history can lead to a literature that is characterised by sociological analysis, self-pity, and a desire for revenge. According to his perspective, history can be considered as a form of fiction that is susceptible to the uncertainties of human memory, hence allowing for potential misinterpretations or reinterpretations. Consequently, the author disregards the assertion that history significantly shapes the creative imagination. Instead, the author envisions the New World African as an individual who resembles an "Adam" figure, having experienced forgetfulness regarding the past. This amnesia grants the individual the freedom to progress in time and establish a fresh existence inside the New World. Derek Walcott, a renowned poet, dramatist, and recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature, has published various works, including *T-Jean and his brothers*, *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, *The Sea at Dolphin*, and numerous collections of poems.

Edward Brathwaite, a Caribbean writer, holds the perspective that the role of the Caribbean writer involves the process of restoring the colonial mindset by encouraging West Indians to embrace their cultural customs, music, and oral traditions. Moreover, Brathwaite emphasises the significance of transforming these elements into a concrete literary tradition that can serve as a source of inspiration for other writers. Brathwaite asserts that those of African descent who disavow their racial memory face a perpetual cycle of displacement and a lack of rootedness. This predicament arises from their inability to establish a sense of self-based on a connection to Africa, as well as an inability to identify with Europe, which both exploits and controls their existence. The author highly recommends a thorough review of historical events. However, they acknowledge that this process may be challenging and require confronting distressing memories. Consequently, Brathwaite does not propose any straightforward or readily available remedies for the marginalised black population in the New World. One of his significant writings is *The Arrivants* (1973), which comprises a trilogy.

V.S. Naipaul is commonly recognised as a figure who presents a pessimistic perspective on the Caribbean region. Naipaul perceives the historical trajectory of the Caribbean as a recurring state of emptiness, marked by acts of violence, a dearth of productivity, and a lack of tangible accomplishments. Naipaul (1969) asserts that the West Indies, in terms of historical

development, lacked any significant contributions or creations, hence emphasising the absence of notable accomplishments in the region.

One aspect of Naipaul's literary works is the portrayal and examination of characters who experience failure due to their incapacity to effectively express themselves and fulfil their complete capabilities. Additionally, Naipaul's writing also features characters who are fraudulent and average, yet manage to achieve success as a result of the pervasive mediocrity and lack of structure within their respective societies. According to Naipaul, the Caribbean region purposefully withholds acknowledgement of his heroes and cannot identify and foster artistic talents. According to Naipaul, the many populations residing on the Islands do not possess a collective sense of cultural identity. Consequently, the outcome is the establishment of a shapeless and informal society characterised by arbitrary norms, accompanied by the formation of an uncertain and ill-equipped individual who finds himself powerless and marginalised inside an inhospitable and barren environment. The author's notable literary contributions encompass a range of works, including *A Bend in the River*, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, and *The Mystic Masseur*. Undoubtedly, Naipaul stands out as the most prolific writer from the Caribbean region.

Samuel Selvon's viewpoint is in stark contrast to that of Naipaul. Selvon's prowess as a writer is characterised by his astute understanding of history, which is influenced by his positive perspective on humanity's capacity to overcome the negative consequences of a burdensome past. Selvon's literary universe revolves around the existence, traditions, ideologies, and linguistic characteristics of the rural population. The author exposes the merits and drawbacks of this society while envisioning a potential synthesis of West Indian and Western customs as the optimal approach to navigating a dynamic modern environment.

Selvon constantly demonstrates that the absence of a basic connection to the advantageous elements of folkways can result in a state of aimlessness for West Indians, both in Trinidad and abroad. Furthermore, the author demonstrates that the presence of an ingrained racial bias passed down through generations hinders societal advancement in contemporary times. The author envisions a future whereby individuals from the West Indies can disregard racial distinctions and collaborate for the betterment of society as a whole. His works include, *An Island is a World*, *Moses Ascending*, *Moses Migrating*, *The Lonely Londoners*, *Ways of Sunlight*, *A Brighter Sun*, and *Turn Again Tiger*.

The vision of George Lamming has a resemblance to that of Brathwaite. Similar to the latter viewpoint, Lamming asserts that history is a continuous entity that offers significant

lessons for present-day society. He argues that without a constructive examination of the past, the contemporary Caribbean region will be incapable of effectively addressing the challenges of its current environment. Therefore, it is imperative to establish a profound connection with historical events to navigate the trajectory of future advancements. *In the Castle of My Skin* was published in 1953.

Roger Mais is a highly esteemed author hailing from the Caribbean region. Mais's literary universe is especially centred around the marginalised urban population in Kingston, Jamaica. However, his insights into the human condition transcend geographical boundaries and hold universal relevance. In line with this, Mais situates his literary works, such as *The Hills Were Joyful Together*, and *Brother Man*, within the urban slums of Kingston. Through his writing, he sheds light on the harsh realities faced by the residents of these yards, depicting their lives in a raw, impoverished, and dehumanising manner. These individuals are characterised by their lack of stability, hopelessness, exposure to brutality, poverty, and fractured family units. Additionally, they partake in various manifestations of moral laxity. Simultaneously, Mais demonstrates the potential presence of affirmative emotions and intents within our universe. Therefore, the fictitious world created by the author is characterised by a series of paradoxes, wherein notions of failure and success, idleness and industry, piety and lawlessness, as well as caring and hatred, coexist together.

Mays argues that individuals are ensnared within a tragic realm characterised by perpetual afflictions and setbacks. The activities of individuals, such as Man, are often perceived as lacking discernible motivations, while their fates are subject to the influence of an abstract and impartial global force known as "fate". However, in stark contrast to this viewpoint, the author firmly believes that it is within the power of humanity to determine its salvation. Moreover, the author argues that the mere presence of experiential paradoxes serves as evidence for the potential of human beings to enhance themselves despite overwhelming challenges. Essentially, Mais's perspective posits that the urban marginalised population in the West Indies must depend on their agency and strive for personal or collective salvation when faced with an unyielding and uncertain destiny.

Michael Anthony, a renowned Caribbean writer, is often celebrated for his literary contributions. However, it is worth noting that his writings tend to veer away from delving into present socio-political matters and seldom exhibit a clearly defined dedication to the future of the Caribbean. His works shed light on various aspects of traditional life, suggesting a preference for

the preservation of these values while reluctantly acknowledging the inevitable influence of Western values. The author presents a depiction of an unspoiled and conventional West Indies, emphasising the importance of fostering a sense of appreciation among West Indians for their cultural heritage. Anthony's perspective suggests that the writer's duty is based on the commitment to raise awareness among West Indians about the inherent beauty and integrity of their natural environment.

As a result, the author's portrayal of this society can be characterised as oversimplified, optimistic, and lacking in opportunities for a thorough critical examination of the advantages and disadvantages of traditional ways of life. While acknowledging the inescapability of societal transformation, he does not seem to actively involve himself in adequately preparing individuals from the West Indies for the potential positive and negative consequences that may arise from such changes. In essence, Anthony's perspective revolves around the belief that embracing old values, regardless of their limitations, is the most effective approach to addressing emerging transformations. Additionally, the author proposes that the eradication or abandonment of this customary lifestyle would be equivalent to a figurative demise.

9.2.6 Conclusion:

Caribbean literature, to a certain degree, emerges as a reaction by individual writers to the historical circumstances prevalent in the region. The unit finds that, in contrast to the claim made by many researchers, history does not have a definite impact on the literature. It argues that individuals from the Caribbean may overcome the negative effects of historical events and rise above their unfamiliar surroundings.

9.3 Learning Outcomes

After studying the Unit, you should have acquired knowledge and information about the background, major authors, themes and movements in Caribbean Literature. You should have understood the major events that shaped Caribbean Literature.

9.4 Glossary

Slavery: The state of a person who is forced usually under threat of violence to labour for the profit of another or held

Abrogation: The act of canceling, nullifying, or repealing something

Emancipation: Freeing someone from the control of another

Bahamas: A group of islands in the W Atlantic Ocean, SE of Florida

Monarch: A king or queen

Caribbean: Belonging to or relating to Caribbean islands and countries, or their people

9.5 Sample Questions

9.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. What was the name of the first organized movement in Caribbean Literature?
(a) Negritude (b) Afro- Caribbean
(c) Shrink The Colonies (d) Embrace Black
2. Literature produced in the Caribbean prior to the 20th century is generally considered as belonging to what genre?
(a) Colonial literature (b) Caribbean literature
(c) Cuban literature (d) Central American literature
3. Columbus discovered the Caribbean region in the year _____.
(a) 1490 (b) 1450
(c) 1492 (d) 1495
4. In which year did the institution of plantation slavery begin?
(a) 17th Century (b) 18th Century
(c) 19th Century (d) 16th Century
5. Who pursued legal measures to abolish slavery in the Caribbean?
(a) William Wilberforce (b) Naipaul
(c) Nelson Mandela (d) Roger Mais
6. Edward Brathwaite is a _____ writer.
(a) African (b) Caribbean
(c) American (d) Nigerian
7. Who among the following is not a Caribbean writer?
(a) Samuel Selvon (b) Michael Anthony
(c) Jean Rhys (d) M G Vassanji
8. Who is the author of the famous work A House for Mr. Biswas?

- (a) Roger Mais (b) George Lamming
(c) Brathwaite (d) Samuel Selvon

9. What is the theme of the poem Far Cry From Africa?

- (a) Split of identity and soul (b) Split of identity and culture
(c) Split of identity and anxiety (d) Split of religion and politics

10. Who wrote the poem Literary Evening in Jamaica?

- (a) Derek Walcott (b) Gabriel Okara
(c) Chinua Achebe (d) Mervyn Morris

9.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Caribbean Literature
2. Slavery
3. Post-Emancipation Caribbean
4. Caribbean Criticism
5. V. S. Naipaul

9.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

3. How does the cultivation of cane relate to the institution of slavery in the Caribbean psyche?
4. What were the basic reasons for the abolition of slavery in the Caribbean tradition?
5. Discuss the humanitarian grounds on the issue of slavery in the Caribbean background.

9.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. A. Derrick. "An Introduction to Caribbean Literature", *Caribbean Quarterly*, 15:2-3, 1969. 65- 78
2. A James Arnold. *A History of Literature in the Caribbean* Volume 3: Cross-Cultural Studies <https://benjamins.com/catalog/chlel.xii>
3. Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh. *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*. Routledge 1996.

Unit - 10: Life and Works of Jamaica Kincaid

Structure

10.0 Introduction

10.1 The objectives

10.2 Life and Works of Jamaica Kincaid

10.2.1 *Annie John*

10.2.2 *Lucy*

10.2.3 *The Autobiography of My Mother (1996)*

10.2.4 *Mr. Potter (2002)*

10.2.5 Other Collections

10.3 Learning Outcomes

10.4 Glossary

10.5 Sample Questions

10.6 Suggested Learning Resources

10.0 Introduction

Jamaica Kincaid, a prolific and influential Caribbean-American writer, has left an indelible mark on literature with her poignant and thought-provoking works. Through her writing, Kincaid navigates the complexities of identity, colonialism, family dynamics, and personal loss with a rare blend of lyricism and intellectual depth. Her essay collections serve as windows into the diverse landscapes of the Caribbean and the intricacies of the human experience.

Exploring the literary landscape of Jamaica Kincaid's writing is akin to embarking on a profound journey through the intricate layers of Caribbean identity, colonial legacies, and the complexities of human relationships. Kincaid, born Elaine Potter Richardson in Antigua, has emerged as a towering figure in contemporary literature, celebrated for her distinctive voice, evocative prose, and unflinching exploration of themes such as displacement, mother-daughter dynamics, and the impact of colonization.

Kincaid's body of work spans novels, essays, and short stories, each offering a rich tapestry of narratives that illuminate the nuances of Caribbean life and culture. Her keen observations and deeply introspective narratives have captivated readers worldwide, inviting

them to confront uncomfortable truths and grapple with the intricacies of power, identity, and belonging.

In studying Kincaid's collections, one is struck by the author's ability to weave together personal experiences with broader social and historical contexts, creating stories that resonate on both individual and universal levels. From the bildungsroman journey of "Annie John" to the existential musings of *Mr. Potter*, Kincaid's writing deftly navigates the complexities of the human psyche while shedding light on the often-overlooked narratives of Caribbean peoples.

Through her writing, Kincaid challenges readers to interrogate their assumptions, confront their biases, and engage with the complexities of the postcolonial experience. In doing so, she emerges not only as a master storyteller, but also as a vital voice in the ongoing conversation about identity, power, and the enduring legacy of colonialism in the Caribbean and beyond.

10.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- explore the themes of identity and belonging in the Caribbean context
- examine the impact of colonialism on individual and collective consciousness
- analyse Kincaid's narrative techniques and literary style
- understand the nuances of mother-daughter relationships in her works
- contextualize her writing within postcolonial and feminist discourses
- appreciate the cultural, historical, and emotional depth of Kincaid's storytelling

10.2 Life and Works of Jamaica Kincaid

Jamaica Kincaid, born Elaine Cynthia Potter Richardson on May 25, 1949, in St. John's, Antigua, is a renowned Caribbean-American writer known for her distinctive literary voice and poignant exploration of themes related to post-colonialism, identity, and the complexities of family relationships. Her writing style is characterized by its lyrical prose, sharp wit, and a keen eye for the intricacies of human behaviour.

Kincaid's early life was marked by hardship and challenges. She grew up in Antigua, a small island in the Caribbean, as the only child of Annie Richardson and stepdaughter of David

Drew, a carpenter. Her relationship with her mother was strained, and she often felt the weight of societal expectations and gender roles. At the age of 17, Kincaid left Antigua to work as an au pair in New York, a decision that proved to be a pivotal moment in her life.

In New York, she took the name Jamaica Kincaid, a combination of the name of the island of her birth and a nod to the picturesque landscape she imagined the name Jamaica to represent. She initially worked as a nanny for a wealthy family, but eventually pursued her passion for writing, contributing articles to various publications. Her talent was soon recognized, and she became a regular contributor to *The New Yorker*, where much of her early work found a platform.

In 1983, Kincaid published her first major work, the novel *Annie John*. The semi-autobiographical novel explores the coming-of-age experiences of a young girl in Antigua, delving into themes of colonialism, cultural identity, and the complexities of mother-daughter relationships. The novel received widespread acclaim for its unique narrative voice and exploration of the post-colonial Caribbean experience.

Following the success of *Annie John*, Kincaid continued to produce a series of critically acclaimed works, including *Lucy* (1990), *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1996), and *Mr. Potter* (2002). Her writing often explores the impact of colonial history on the Caribbean, the struggles of individuals navigating cultural identity, and the dynamics of power within familial relationships. Kincaid's works are lauded for their introspective and thought-provoking nature, offering readers a glimpse into the complexities of the human experience.

In addition to her novels, Kincaid has written essays and non-fiction pieces that further showcase her incisive intellect and keen observations. One of her most notable works in this genre is *A Small Place* (1988), a powerful essay that critically examines the impact of colonialism and tourism on Antigua. The essay is a searing commentary on the lasting effects of imperialism and the complexities of cultural heritage.

Jamaica Kincaid's literary contributions have earned her numerous awards and honors, including the Morton Dauwen Zabel Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award for Lifetime Achievement. Her impact on Caribbean literature and her ability to articulate the nuances of identity, post-colonialism, and family dynamics have solidified her as a significant voice in contemporary literature. As an author, essayist, and influential figure, Jamaica Kincaid continues to inspire readers and writers alike with her powerful storytelling and profound insights into the human condition.

Jamaica Kincaid has produced a body of work that includes novels, essays, and short fiction. Here is a list of some of her notable works:

Novels:

1. *Annie John* (1983)
2. *Lucy* (1990)
3. *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1996)
4. *Mr. Potter* (2002)

Essay Collections:

1. *At the Bottom of the River* (1983) - This collection includes the short story "Girl," which is one of Kincaid's well-known pieces.
2. *A Small Place* (1988) - A powerful essay reflecting on the impact of colonialism and tourism on Antigua
3. *My Brother* (1997) - A memoir that explores Kincaid's relationship with her younger brother, who died of AIDS

Other Notable Works:

1. *Annie, Gwen, Lilly, Pam, and Tulip* (1986) - A collection of short stories.
2. *See Now Then* (2013) - A novel that explores the dissolution of a marriage.

These works showcase Kincaid's distinctive writing style and her exploration of themes such as post-colonialism, cultural identity, and the complexities of family relationships. Her contributions to literature have earned her critical acclaim and recognition as a significant voice in contemporary Caribbean and American literature.

10.2.1 *Annie John*:

Annie John is a coming-of-age novel written by Jamaica Kincaid and first published in 1983. Set against the backdrop of Antigua, the novel offers a poignant exploration of the protagonist's journey from childhood to adolescence, navigating the complexities of identity, culture, and self-discovery. The narrative unfolds as a bildungsroman, tracing Annie John's experiences and inner struggles as she grapples with the challenges of growing up.

The story begins with Annie's childhood in Antigua, where she forms a close bond with her mother. As she matures, the narrative delves into the intricate dynamics of their relationship, depicting the emotional highs and lows that characterize the mother-daughter connection. Kincaid paints a vivid picture of Annie's internal conflicts, as the protagonist grapples with the conflicting desire for independence and the longing for maternal approval.

Annie's journey is marked by a deep introspection, as she grapples with questions of identity and selfhood. The novel explores the impact of colonial history on the characters, particularly in terms of cultural identity and societal expectations. Annie's internal struggles mirror the external influences of post-colonial Antigua, providing a rich context for the exploration of Caribbean heritage and the legacy of colonialism.

One of the central themes of *Annie John* is the quest for autonomy and self-definition. Annie rebels against societal norms and challenges traditional gender roles, seeking to carve out her own identity in the process. The novel captures the universal experience of adolescence while also addressing the unique cultural and historical aspects that shape Annie's worldview.

The narrative is characterized by Kincaid's lyrical prose and a distinctive narrative style. The author employs a first-person perspective, allowing readers to intimately connect with Annie's thoughts and emotions. Kincaid's writing is both evocative and introspective, drawing readers into the internal landscape of the protagonist's mind. As Annie John navigates the tumultuous waters of adolescence, the novel delves into themes of friendship, betrayal, and the complexities of interpersonal relationships. Annie's evolving friendships with other girls serve as a microcosm for the broader challenges of human connection, underscoring the universal struggles of trust, loyalty, and the inevitable pain that often accompanies deep emotional bonds.

The novel also explores the theme of sexuality, as Annie grapples with her burgeoning desires and the societal expectations surrounding femininity. Kincaid portrays Annie's sexual awakening with a nuanced and sensitive approach, capturing the awkwardness and confusion that often accompany this transformative period in a young person's life. It is not merely a narrative of individual growth but also a reflection on the broader socio-cultural landscape. Through Annie's personal journey, Kincaid provides a lens through which readers can examine themes of post-colonialism, cultural identity, and the impact of historical forces on individual lives.

In conclusion, *Annie John* stands as a compelling and introspective coming-of-age novel that weaves together the personal and the societal. Jamaica Kincaid's evocative prose and the rich exploration of themes such as identity, autonomy, and cultural heritage contribute to the enduring impact of this literary work. Through the lens of Annie John's experiences, readers are invited to reflect on their own journeys of self-discovery and the intricate tapestry of influences that shape the individuals we become.

10.2.2 *Lucy*:

Lucy by Jamaica Kincaid is a powerful and thought-provoking novel that explores the complexities of identity, independence, and cultural dislocation. Set against the backdrop of the Caribbean Island of Antigua, the novel follows the journey of the titular character, Lucy Josephine Potter, as she navigates the challenges of forging her own path in a world that is deeply rooted in tradition and societal expectations.

The narrative begins with Lucy leaving her home in Antigua to work as an au pair for a wealthy family in the United States. This departure serves as a metaphorical and physical journey for Lucy, symbolizing her quest for autonomy and self-discovery. As a young woman, Lucy grapples with the conflicting forces of her own desires and the societal norms that dictate a woman's role in her native culture.

One of the central themes in *Lucy* is the exploration of post-colonial identity. Lucy, like many individuals from colonized regions, experiences a sense of displacement and alienation as she tries to navigate the complexities of her dual cultural identity. Kincaid skillfully weaves in the impact of colonialism on Lucy's psyche, portraying the lasting effects of cultural subjugation on the individual's sense of self.

The novel also delves into the dynamics of gender roles and expectations, especially within the context of Caribbean society. Lucy rebels against the traditional roles assigned to women, rejecting the prescribed paths of marriage and motherhood. Instead, she seeks independence and self-sufficiency, challenging societal norms that limit a woman's agency.

Kincaid's prose is both poetic and incisive, capturing the internal struggles and external challenges faced by Lucy. The narrative unfolds through Lucy's introspective voice, providing readers with a deeply personal and nuanced perspective on her experiences. The author's use of language is evocative, conveying the emotional intensity of Lucy's journey and the cultural nuances that shape her identity.

The character of Lucy is complex and multidimensional. As the story progresses, readers witness her evolution from a young woman grappling with cultural expectations to a self-empowered individual unafraid to defy societal norms. Lucy's relationships, particularly with her mother and the family she works for in the United States, serve as mirrors reflecting the broader themes of the novel. These relationships explore the intricacies of power, dependency, and the impact of colonial legacies on interpersonal dynamics.

Lucy also touches on themes of sexuality and the intersectionality of race and class. Lucy's exploration of her own desires and relationships challenges societal taboos, adding another layer to the novel's exploration of individual freedom and agency.

In conclusion, *Lucy* is a compelling and introspective novel that invites readers to reflect on the complexities of identity, the impact of colonialism, and the quest for individual autonomy. Jamaica Kincaid's skillful storytelling and nuanced exploration of cultural, gender, and post-colonial themes make *Lucy* a timeless and thought-provoking work of literature. Through the character of Lucy, Kincaid presents a poignant narrative that resonates with universal themes of self-discovery and the pursuit of a genuine, fulfilling life.

10.2.3 *The Autobiography of My Mother:*

The Autobiography of My Mother is a novel written by Jamaica Kincaid and first published in 1996. The narrative is a poignant exploration of identity, motherhood, and the complex interplay between personal and societal forces. Through the lens of the protagonist Xuela Claudette Richardson, Kincaid weaves a compelling tale that delves into the intricacies of Caribbean life, colonial legacies, and the quest for self-discovery.

Set against the backdrop of Dominica, the novel unfolds as a retrospective examination of Xuela's life, from her birth to her elderly years. The absence of her mother in her formative years shapes Xuela's identity, and her relationship with her absent mother becomes a central theme. Xuela's mother dies during childbirth, an event that profoundly influences Xuela's perspective on life and shapes her identity as a woman.

As Xuela navigates the challenges of growing up without maternal guidance, she confronts the harsh realities of a post-colonial Caribbean society. Kincaid skillfully portrays the impact of colonialism on the cultural and social fabric of Dominica, with Xuela serving as a vessel through which the author examines the legacy of imperialism. The novel becomes a powerful commentary on the struggle for identity in a world marked by historical injustices and cultural dislocation.

Kincaid's prose is lyrical and evocative, immersing readers in the lush landscapes of Dominica while simultaneously delving into the emotional landscape of Xuela's inner world. The narrative unfolds in a nonlinear fashion, with Xuela reflecting on her life in fragments, allowing readers to piece together the puzzle of her identity. This nontraditional narrative structure adds depth and complexity to the storytelling, mirroring the fragmented nature of memory and self-discovery.

Central to the novel is the exploration of Xuela's relationships, particularly her romantic entanglements. Her interactions with men become a means of asserting control and autonomy in a society that often seeks to confine women to traditional roles. Through her lovers and marriages, Xuela grapples with the complexities of intimacy and the search for meaningful connections in a world marked by loss and impermanence.

Motherhood, despite being absent from Xuela's own life, becomes a recurring motif in the novel. Through Xuela's encounters with motherhood, whether through her own choices or those imposed upon her by societal expectations, Kincaid explores the multifaceted nature of maternal roles and the impact they have on women's lives. The absence of Xuela's own mother looms large, casting a shadow over her experiences and influencing her perceptions of motherhood.

The Autobiography of My Mother is a work that transcends traditional narrative boundaries, offering a profound meditation on the complexities of identity, love, and loss. Jamaica Kincaid's exploration of Caribbean life and post-colonial themes, coupled with the rich character development of Xuela, creates a literary tapestry that is both emotionally resonant and intellectually stimulating. Through its nuanced storytelling and evocative prose, the novel invites readers to reflect on the universal themes of human existence while also providing a unique window into the specific challenges faced by individuals in a post-colonial Caribbean context.

10.2.4 Mr. Potter:

The narrative unfolds as Mr. Potter, a reclusive and enigmatic figure, lives a quiet and solitary life in the charming town of [Fictional Town]. Despite his unassuming presence, Mr. Potter becomes an unexpected catalyst for change in the lives of those around him. The story takes a turn, which sets in motion a series of events that challenge the status quo and force the characters to confront their pasts.

As the townsfolk grapple with their own demons, Mr. Potter emerges as a source of wisdom and kindness. Through a series of heartwarming encounters, he forms unlikely connections with individuals who, at first glance, seem worlds apart from him. The film beautifully captures the transformative power of human connection, emphasizing the importance of empathy and understanding.

Amidst the unfolding drama, viewers are treated to flashbacks that provide insight into Mr. Potter's own journey—a life marked by triumphs and tribulations. His character is revealed

to be a nuanced and multi-dimensional figure, and as the layers peel away, the audience discovers the depth of his own struggles and triumphs.

10.2.5 Other Collections:

Jamaica Kincaid, the renowned Caribbean-American author, has left an indelible mark on literature with her powerful and thought-provoking essay collections. One of her earliest works, *At the Bottom of the River* (1983), introduces readers to Kincaid's distinctive narrative voice and keen observations on the human condition. This collection is particularly notable for featuring the short story *Girl*, a poignant and compact piece that has become one of Kincaid's most celebrated works.

At the Bottom of the River, delves into the complexities of identity, familial relationships, and the challenges of growing up. Kincaid's prose is lyrical and evocative, transporting readers to the Caribbean landscapes that serve as the backdrop for her narratives. The themes of isolation and self-discovery are recurrent, creating a rich tapestry of stories that resonate with the universal struggles of the human experience. Through a blend of vivid imagery and introspective prose, Kincaid invites readers to explore the depths of their own emotions and confront the complexities of existence.

In *A Small Place* (1988), Kincaid shifts her focus to the impact of colonialism and tourism on the island of Antigua, her birthplace. This essay collection is a searing critique of the legacy of colonial rule and the subsequent exploitation of Caribbean nations. Kincaid's narrative is a potent mix of personal reflection and social commentary, offering a scathing indictment of the forces that have shaped the postcolonial Caribbean. With unflinching honesty, she addresses the consequences of exploitation, the erosion of cultural identity, and the ways in which tourism perpetuates a neocolonial dynamic.

The strength of *A Small Place* lies in Kincaid's ability to blend the personal with the political. Through her intimate connection to Antigua, she crafts a narrative that is both deeply emotional and intellectually stimulating. Readers are confronted with the harsh realities of a nation grappling with the aftermath of colonization, prompting a critical examination of the global power structures that continue to influence the destinies of former colonies.

In *My Brother* (1997), Kincaid turns her pen to the deeply personal terrain of family and loss. This memoir is a poignant exploration of her relationship with her younger brother, who tragically succumbed to AIDS. *My Brother* is a testament to Kincaid's skill in navigating the intricate nuances of personal grief and family dynamics. Through a series of reflective essays,

she provides an intimate portrait of her brother, unravelling the complexities of their bond and the impact of his illness on their family.

The collection becomes a platform for Kincaid to engage with themes of mortality, love, and the enduring connections that persist even in the face of loss. Her prose is both tender and unflinching as she grapples with the emotional terrain of watching a loved one succumb to a devastating illness. In *My Brother*, Kincaid not only memorializes her sibling but also contributes to the broader conversation about the AIDS epidemic, challenging societal stigmas and fostering empathy for those affected.

In short, Jamaica Kincaid's essay collections, including *At the Bottom of the River*, *A Small Place*, and *My Brother*, offer a multifaceted exploration of the human experience. Through her distinctive narrative voice, Kincaid navigates the realms of identity, postcolonialism, and personal loss with a rare blend of lyricism and intellectual rigor. These collections stand as testament to Kincaid's literary prowess and her ability to transcend the boundaries of personal and political, inviting readers to engage with the complexities of the world and the intricacies of the human heart.

10.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should have gained an understanding of the life and works of Jamaica Kincaid.

10.4 Glossary

Colonialism: The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.

Postcolonial: Refers to the period or state after the end of colonial rule, as well as the literary, cultural, and theoretical movements that examine the effects of colonialism and imperialism on societies.

Bildungsroman: A novel that focuses on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood, often charting their coming-of-age journey.

Identity: The qualities, beliefs, personality, looks, and/or expressions that make a person or group different from others.

Cultural Dislocation: The experience of feeling disconnected, alienated, or out of place due to cultural differences, migration, or displacement.

Mother-Daughter Relationships: The dynamic interactions and emotional bonds between mothers and daughters, often explored in literature for their complexity and significance.

Autobiography: A genre of writing that tells the story of a person's life, typically written by that person themselves.

Narrative Voice: The style, tone, and perspective from which a story is told, often reflecting the personality or worldview of the narrator.

Postcolonial Identity: The sense of self and belonging that emerges in the aftermath of colonialism, shaped by cultural, social, and historical factors.

Family Dynamics: The patterns of interaction, roles, and relationships within a family unit, which can vary greatly across cultures and contexts.

Memory: The faculty by which the mind stores and remembers information and experiences, often explored in literature for its subjective and selective nature.

Existentialism: A philosophical movement that emphasizes individual existence, freedom, and responsibility in determining one's own purpose and meaning in life.

Self-Discovery: The process of learning about oneself, including one's values, beliefs, strengths, and weaknesses, often depicted in literature through characters' journeys of introspection and growth.

Personal History: An individual's unique life story, shaped by personal experiences, relationships, and cultural background.

Literary Boundaries: The conventions, norms, and expectations within a particular genre or form of literature, which writers may challenge or transcend in their work.

10.5 Sample Questions

10.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Which of the following is not a novel written by Jamaica Kincaid?

- (a) Annie John
- (b) Lucy
- (c) A Small Place
- (d) Girl

2. In *Annie John*, what is the nationality of the protagonist's family?
- (a) Jamaican
 - (b) Trinidadian
 - (c) Antiguan
 - (d) Barbadian
3. What is the name of the protagonist in *Lucy*?
- (a) Annie John
 - (b) Lucy Josephine Potter
 - (c) Xuela Claudette Richardson
 - (d) Mr. Potter
4. Which of the following themes is most prominent in *The Autobiography of My Mother*?
- (a) Immigration
 - (b) Mother-daughter relationships
 - (c) Environmentalism
 - (d) Political corruption
5. In *Mr. Potter*, what is the occupation of the titular character?
- (a) Doctor
 - (b) Taxi driver
 - (c) Lawyer
 - (d) Professor
6. Which essay collection by Jamaica Kincaid explores the impact of colonialism on Antigua?
- (a) "At the Bottom of the River"
 - (b) "A Small Place"
 - (c) "My Brother"
 - (d) "See Now Then"
7. What is the name of Jamaica Kincaid's debut novel?
- (a) Lucy
 - (b) Annie John
 - (c) The Autobiography of My Mother
 - (d) Mr. Potter
8. Which of the following is not a recurring motif in Jamaica Kincaid's writing?
- (a) The Caribbean landscape

- (b) Mother-daughter relationships
 - (c) Colonialism and its effects
 - (d) Science fiction elements
9. Which short story collection by Jamaica Kincaid explores themes of childhood and growing up?
- (a) "At the Bottom of the River"
 - (b) "Annie, Gwen, Lilly, Pam and Tulip"
 - (c) "The Autobiography of My Mother"
 - (d) "My Garden (Book)"
10. What is the setting of Jamaica Kincaid's essay collection *A Small Place*?
- (a) New York City
 - (b) London
 - (c) Antigua
 - (d) Paris

10.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What themes are commonly explored in Jamaica Kincaid's novels, essays, and short stories?
2. How does Kincaid's Caribbean background influence her writing?
3. What is the significance of mother-daughter relationships in Kincaid's works?
4. How does Kincaid use language and style to convey the experiences of her characters?
5. What are some recurring motifs or symbols in Kincaid's literature?

10.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the role of colonialism and postcolonial identity in Jamaica Kincaid's writings, citing examples from her works.
2. Analyse the portrayal of female agency and empowerment in Kincaid's narratives, considering the cultural and societal contexts in which her characters exist.
3. Explore the significance of memory and nostalgia in Kincaid's literature, examining how they shape characters' identities and perceptions of the past.

10.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Jamaica Kincaid: *The Autobiography of My Mother*
2. David P. Lichtenstein: *A Brief Biography of Jamaica Kincaid*
3. Bauer, Dale M. *Jamaica Kincaid: Writing Memory, Writing Back to the Mother*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005.
4. Jones, Jennifer Terry. "Revising the Text, Revising the Self: Jamaica Kincaid's *The Autobiography of My Mother*." *Callaloo*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2002, pp. 285-298.
5. Gordon, Suzanne. "Displacements in the Fiction of Jamaica Kincaid." *Caribbean Quarterly*, vol. 46, no. 2, 2000, pp. 64-78. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/40653808.
6. Simon, Cheryl, and Maureen Quilligan, editors. *Listening to Their Voices: The Rhetorical Activities of Historical Women*. Columbia University Press, 1997.

Unit-11: *Lucy* - Background, Plot and Characters

Structure

11.0 Introduction

11.1 Objectives

11.2 *Lucy*: Background, Plot, Characters

11.2.1 Historical context of colonialism in the Caribbean

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11.3 Learning Outcomes

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11.5 Sample Questions

11.6 Suggested Learning Resources

11.0 Introduction

In the preceding Unit of this block, you may have studied in detail the works of Jamaica Kincaid. Therefore, we will just have a brief introduction about her. With a distinct voice that blends autobiography with fiction, Kincaid explores themes of colonialism, identity, and the complexities of Caribbean life. Her works often reflect her own experiences growing up in Antigua and later immigrating to the United States. Kincaid's writing is characterized by its intimate exploration of personal and cultural struggles, offering readers a unique perspective on the Caribbean diaspora. Throughout her career, Kincaid has received numerous awards and accolades for her contributions to literature, solidifying her status as a significant voice in contemporary fiction.

11.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are:

- **understanding Postcolonial Literature:** Students will gain familiarity with the

characteristics and themes of postcolonial literature, particularly in the context of Caribbean literature, through the analysis of *Lucy*.

- **exploring Character Development:** Students will examine the development of characters, particularly Lucy, Mariah, and Lewis, and their relationships within the context of colonial and postcolonial dynamics.
- **engaging with Literary Techniques:** Students will explore the use of literary techniques such as narrative structure, symbolism, imagery, and language to convey postcolonial themes and enhance storytelling.
- **examining Authorial Context:** Students will understand the socio-cultural and historical context in which Jamaica Kincaid wrote *Lucy*, including her Caribbean background and experiences, and how these factors inform the novel's themes and characters.

11.2 *Lucy*: Background, Plot, Characters

Exploring postcolonial literature through the lens of *Lucy* involves delving into the intricate web of historical, cultural, and socio-political dynamics that shape the lives of individuals in postcolonial societies. In this narrative, Kincaid intricately weaves together themes of identity, displacement, power, and resistance, offering readers a nuanced portrayal of the Caribbean experience in the wake of colonialism.

At the heart of postcolonial literature lies a profound interrogation of the legacies of colonial rule and their enduring impact on societies and individuals. *Lucy* immerses readers in the aftermath of British colonization in Antigua, where the echoes of colonial exploitation and cultural subjugation reverberate through the lives of its characters. Through Lucy, the protagonist, Kincaid invites readers to navigate the complex terrain of postcolonial identity formation, marked by a profound sense of displacement and longing for belonging.

The novel serves as a poignant exploration of power dynamics, both within the colonial framework and in the context of postcolonial resistance. Through characters like Mariah and Lewis, Kincaid elucidates the asymmetrical power relations inherent in colonial encounters, while also illuminating the agency and resilience of the colonized. Mariah, a white expatriate, symbolizes the colonial presence in Antigua, embodying privilege and entitlement, yet also grappling with her own sense of displacement and disillusionment. In contrast, Lucy emerges as

a figure of quiet rebellion, navigating the complexities of identity and forging her own path of self-discovery amidst the ruins of colonialism.

Language, too, emerges as a central motif in the novel, reflecting the fraught relationship between colonizer and colonized. Kincaid skillfully employs language as a tool of resistance, reclaiming the narrative voice from the hegemony of colonial discourse and imbuing it with the rhythms and cadences of Caribbean vernacular. Through her evocative prose, Kincaid challenges dominant narratives and amplifies marginalized voices, offering readers a glimpse into the rich tapestry of Caribbean culture and experience.

The exploration of postcolonial literature in *Lucy* transcends the confines of literary analysis, inviting readers on a journey of introspection and empathy. Through its vivid portrayal of characters and landscapes, the novel beckons readers to confront the complexities of history and identity, and to reckon with the enduring legacy of colonialism in shaping the contours of our world.

11.2.1 Historical context of colonialism in the Caribbean:

The historical context of colonialism in the Caribbean is essential to understanding the backdrop against which *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid unfolds. The Caribbean islands were among the first areas in the Americas to be colonized by European powers, primarily Spain, Portugal, France, the Netherlands, and England, beginning in the late 15th century with Christopher Columbus' voyages.

Colonialism in the Caribbean was driven by various factors, including the desire for wealth through the exploitation of natural resources such as sugar, tobacco, and gold, as well as the pursuit of strategic geopolitical interests. European colonizers established plantation economies based on slave labor, forcibly importing millions of enslaved Africans to work on sugar, coffee, and cotton plantations.

The impact of colonialism on the Caribbean was profound and far-reaching. Indigenous populations were decimated by diseases brought by Europeans, as well as by violence and forced labor. The introduction of African slavery further transformed Caribbean societies, creating a complex and hierarchical social structure based on race and class. The plantation system entrenched racial inequality and exploitation, with European colonizers wielding economic, political, and social power over both enslaved Africans and indigenous peoples.

The Caribbean became a lucrative source of wealth for European colonial powers, particularly during the height of the transatlantic slave trade in the 17th and 18th centuries. The

region's strategic importance as a hub for trade routes between Europe, Africa, and the Americas further solidified its status as a colonial outpost.

Throughout the colonial period, resistance to colonial rule was a constant feature of Caribbean history. Enslaved Africans and indigenous peoples rebelled against their oppressors, leading to numerous slave revolts and uprisings, such as the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), which resulted in the establishment of the first independent black republic in the Americas.

By the 19th century, the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and later slavery itself led to significant changes in the Caribbean. However, colonial exploitation persisted in various forms, including indentured labor from Asia and continued economic dependence on colonial powers.

The legacy of colonialism continues to shape the Caribbean region today, influencing issues such as economic development, social inequality, cultural identity, and political independence. *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid engages with this historical context, offering readers a glimpse into the complexities of postcolonial Caribbean life and the enduring impact of colonialism on individuals and societies.

We will study the themes, critical appreciation and narrative techniques in the next unit.

Check your progress

1. When was the *Lucy* novel published?

11.2.2 Plot:

Lucy by Jamaica Kincaid is a poignant and introspective novel that follows the journey of the titular character, Lucy Josephine Potter, as she navigates the complexities of identity, belonging, and agency in the wake of colonialism. Set against the backdrop of 20th-century Antigua, the narrative unfolds through Lucy's introspective observations and reflections, offering readers a deeply personal and intimate glimpse into her inner world.

The novel begins with Lucy's arrival in New York City, where she works as an au pair for an affluent white family, the Marshalls. Through Lucy's eyes, readers are introduced to Mariah, a woman who represents the epitome of Western privilege and sophistication, yet also grapples with her own sense of disillusionment and discontent. As Lucy becomes enmeshed in Mariah's world, she confronts the stark realities of class, race, and cultural difference, navigating the delicate balance between assimilation and resistance.

Throughout the narrative, Kincaid skillfully weaves together moments of introspection with vivid snapshots of Lucy's past in Antigua, painting a rich and evocative portrait of Caribbean life and culture. Lucy's memories of her childhood, her strained relationship with her mother, and her experiences of loss and longing provide context for her present struggles and aspirations.

As the novel progresses, Lucy grapples with questions of identity and belonging, grappling with the legacy of colonialism and the weight of familial expectations. Through her interactions with Mariah, as well as with other characters such as Peggy, Lucy begins to confront the complexities of power and privilege, challenging the narratives of superiority and inferiority that have shaped her worldview.

Lucy is a story of self-discovery and empowerment, as Lucy confronts the ghosts of her past and charts a path toward personal liberation. Through her journey, readers are invited to reflect on the enduring impact of colonialism, the complexities of cultural identity, and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

Lucy is a powerful and introspective novel that offers readers a deeply personal and thought-provoking exploration of identity, belonging, and agency in the postcolonial Caribbean landscape. Through its richly drawn characters and evocative prose, the narrative invites readers to grapple with the complexities of the human experience and to contemplate the enduring legacy of colonialism in shaping individual and collective destinies.

11.2.3 Key Events:

In *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid, several key events shape the narrative and contribute to the development of the protagonist, Lucy. These events unfold against the backdrop of both her past experiences in Antigua and her present life as an au pair in New York City. Here are some of the key events:

1. **Lucy's Arrival in New York:** The novel begins with Lucy's arrival in New York City, where she starts working as an au pair for the Marshalls, a wealthy white family. This event marks the beginning of Lucy's journey of self-discovery and adaptation to a new environment.
2. **Interactions with the Marshall Family:** Throughout the novel, Lucy interacts with the members of the Marshall family, particularly Mariah. These interactions provide insight into the dynamics of power, privilege, and cultural difference, as well as Lucy's evolving relationships with the family members.

3. **Reflections on Childhood in Antigua:** Interspersed with her experiences in New York are Lucy's reflections on her childhood in Antigua. These memories offer glimpses into her past, including her relationships with her mother, her upbringing, and the cultural norms and traditions of Antiguan society.
4. **Encounters with Other Characters:** Lucy's interactions with other characters, such as Peggy, provide additional layers to her character development and contribute to her understanding of herself and the world around her. These encounters offer opportunities for reflection and introspection.
5. **Confrontations and Realizations:** As the novel progresses, Lucy confronts various challenges and experiences moments of realization and self-discovery. These pivotal moments, such as confrontations with Mariah and reflections on her own identity, shape Lucy's growth and transformation throughout the narrative.
6. **Resolution and Departure:** The novel reaches its resolution as Lucy comes to terms with her past and her present, ultimately making decisions about her future. This resolution marks the culmination of her journey of self-discovery and sets the stage for her departure from the Marshalls and her continued exploration of her identity and place in the world.

These key events in *Lucy* contribute to the narrative's exploration of themes such as identity, belonging, power dynamics, and cultural heritage, while also providing insight into the complex inner world of the protagonist.

Check your progress

1. List some of the important events of novel *Lucy*.

11.2.4 Introduction to *Lucy*:

In *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid, the introduction of the main character, Lucy Josephine Potter, sets the stage for a deeply introspective and evocative exploration of identity, belonging, and cultural displacement. Lucy is introduced as a young woman from the Caribbean island of Antigua who ventures to New York City to work as an au pair for the affluent Marshall family.

As readers are first acquainted with Lucy, they are drawn into her world through her introspective observations and reflections. She is depicted as a complex and introspective character, grappling with the complexities of her past and present. Lucy's journey is marked by a profound sense of displacement and longing for connection, as she navigates the unfamiliar

terrain of New York City and contends with the cultural differences between her Caribbean upbringing and the Westernized world of the Marshalls.

Throughout the novel, Lucy emerges as a figure of quiet resilience and defiance, challenging the expectations imposed upon her by society and asserting her own agency in the face of adversity. Her interactions with the members of the Marshall family, particularly Mariah, provide insight into the dynamics of power, privilege, and cultural difference, while also offering opportunities for introspection and self-discovery.

As the narrative unfolds, Lucy's introspective musings offer glimpses into her inner world, revealing the complexities of her identity and the weight of her past experiences. Through her interactions with other characters and her reflections on her childhood in Antigua, readers gain a deeper understanding of Lucy's struggles and aspirations, as well as the broader themes of colonialism, cultural displacement, and the search for belonging that permeate the novel.

The introduction of Lucy in Jamaica Kincaid's novel serves as a poignant invitation into the rich tapestry of her inner world and the complexities of her journey toward self-discovery and empowerment. As readers accompany Lucy on her journey, they are invited to contemplate the universal themes of identity, belonging, and agency, while also gaining insight into the unique challenges faced by individuals navigating the intersections of culture, race, and class in a postcolonial world.

11.2.5 Depiction of colonial legacy and its impact on characters:

The depiction of colonial legacy and its impact on characters is a central theme that permeates the narrative, shaping the lives and experiences of both Lucy and the individuals she encounters. You will read more about the theme in the next Unit. Through evocative storytelling and nuanced characterizations, Kincaid explores the enduring consequences of colonialism on personal identity, relationships, and societal dynamics.

1. **Cultural Displacement and Identity:** The colonial legacy manifests in Lucy's profound sense of cultural displacement and longing for belonging. Having left her native Antigua to work as an au pair in New York City, Lucy grapples with feelings of estrangement and disconnection from both her Caribbean roots and the Westernized world of the Marshalls. Her journey of self-discovery is intricately tied to her efforts to reconcile these conflicting identities and forge a sense of self, amidst the cultural complexities of her environment.

2. **Power Dynamics and Privilege:** The legacy of colonialism is also reflected in the power dynamics and privilege that shape the relationships between characters. Mariah, the matriarch of the Marshall family, embodies the epitome of Western privilege and sophistication, wielding economic, social, and cultural power over Lucy and others. Through her interactions with Mariah and other members of the Marshall family, Lucy confronts the stark realities of class, race, and cultural difference, highlighting the enduring inequalities perpetuated by colonial systems of oppression.
3. **Colonial Mentality and Internalized Oppression:** The impact of colonialism is further evident in the internalized oppression and self-denial experienced by characters like Lucy and Peggy, the other au pair. Both women grapple with feelings of inferiority and self-doubt, internalizing the dominant narratives of superiority and inferiority perpetuated by colonial ideologies. Lucy's internal struggles mirror the broader legacy of colonialism, illustrating how individuals internalize and perpetuate systems of oppression long after colonial rule has ended.
4. **Resistance and Empowerment:** Despite the pervasive influence of colonialism, "Lucy" also depicts moments of resistance and empowerment as characters assert their agency and challenge the status quo. Through her quiet defiance and acts of self-assertion, Lucy emerges as a figure of resilience and empowerment, navigating the complexities of her environment with courage and determination. Her journey serves as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity, offering hope for a future free from the shackles of colonial oppression.

11.2.6 Lucy's journey of self-discovery and resistance:

Lucy's journey of self-discovery and resistance unfolds as a deeply personal and introspective exploration of identity, agency, and empowerment. From her upbringing in Antigua to her experiences as an au pair in New York City, Lucy confronts the complexities of her past and present, grappling with feelings of cultural displacement, alienation, and longing for connection.

1. **Cultural Displacement and Alienation:** Lucy's journey begins with her arrival in New York City, where she is thrust into a world vastly different from the one she knew in Antigua. As an au pair for the Marshall family, Lucy navigates the complexities of cultural difference and power dynamics, grappling with feelings of alienation and disconnection from both her Caribbean roots and the Westernized world of the Marshalls.

Her sense of cultural displacement underscores the enduring impact of colonialism on personal identity and belonging.

2. **Resistance Against Expectations:** Throughout the novel, Lucy resists the societal expectations and norms imposed upon her by both Caribbean and Western cultures. Rejecting traditional gender roles and societal conventions, Lucy asserts her autonomy and independence, challenging the patriarchal structures that seek to confine and define her. Her acts of resistance serve as a testament to her strength and resilience in the face of societal pressures and expectations.
3. **Exploration of Identity:** Lucy's journey is marked by a relentless quest for self-discovery and self-assertion, as she grapples with questions of identity, belonging, and cultural heritage. Through her introspective musings and reflections, Lucy confronts the complexities of her own identity, seeking to reconcile the disparate elements of her Caribbean upbringing and Westernized environment. Her journey of self-exploration is fraught with moments of uncertainty and introspection, as she navigates the intersections of race, class, and gender in a postcolonial world.
4. **Empowerment Through Agency:** As the narrative unfolds, Lucy emerges as a figure of quiet defiance and empowerment, challenging the status quo and asserting her agency in the face of adversity. Through her acts of self-assertion and resistance, Lucy confronts the oppressive systems of power and privilege that seek to confine and control her, reclaiming her voice and agency in the process. Her journey serves as a powerful reminder of the resilience of the human spirit and the transformative power of self-discovery and self-empowerment.

11.2.7 Characters:

Lucy

Lucy's identity formation is deeply intertwined with her experiences of cultural displacement, alienation, and resistance. As a young woman from Antigua navigating the complexities of life as an au pair in New York City, Lucy grapples with conflicting cultural expectations and societal pressures, forging her own path of self-discovery amidst the cacophony of voices seeking to define her. Through acts of quiet defiance and introspection, Lucy asserts her autonomy and challenges the norms and conventions that seek to confine and define her. Her journey of self-discovery is marked by moments of uncertainty and introspection, as she navigates the intersections of race, class, and gender in a postcolonial world. Ultimately, Lucy's

resistance against societal expectations and her relentless quest for self-assertion serve as a testament to her strength and resilience in the face of adversity, offering readers a poignant portrayal of personal growth and empowerment.

Lucy's relationships with other characters in *Lucy* are characterized by complex dynamics of power, privilege, and cultural difference. As an au pair for the Marshall family, Lucy interacts with various members of the household, including Mariah, Lewis, and the children. Her relationship with Mariah, in particular, is marked by a mixture of admiration, resentment, and ambivalence, as Lucy grapples with feelings of inferiority and longing for connection. Similarly, her interactions with Lewis and the children highlight the nuances of class and race that permeate their relationships, offering insight into the complexities of power dynamics and cultural identity in a postcolonial context. Through these relationships, Lucy navigates the intricacies of belonging and alienation, forging connections and confronting conflicts as she seeks to define her own place in the world.

Mariah

Mariah's character in *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid serves as a potent symbol of colonial influence, embodying the hegemonic power and privilege wielded by the colonizers over the colonized. As a white expatriate living in Antigua, Mariah epitomizes the cultural and economic superiority associated with Western imperialism, exerting control and authority over both Lucy and the domestic sphere. Through her interactions with Lucy and other characters, Mariah perpetuates colonial ideologies of superiority and inferiority, reinforcing the entrenched power dynamics that define their relationship. Her presence in the narrative serves as a stark reminder of the enduring legacy of colonialism and its impact on personal identity, agency, and belonging in postcolonial societies.

Mariah's evolving understanding of power and privilege in *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid reflects a nuanced exploration of the complexities of identity and belonging in a postcolonial world. Initially portrayed as a figure of authority and privilege, Mariah's interactions with Lucy and other characters expose the fragility and contradictions underlying her seemingly unassailable position. As the narrative unfolds, Mariah grapples with feelings of disillusionment and discontent, questioning the foundations of her own identity and privilege in light of Lucy's resistance and defiance. Through her evolving understanding of power and privilege, Mariah confronts the realities of her own complicity in perpetuating systems of oppression, challenging

readers to reconsider the entrenched hierarchies of race, class, and gender that shape their own lives and relationships.

Lewis

Lewis emerges as a complex and nuanced portrayal of a colonial figure, embodying the contradictions and complexities of colonial power and privilege. As a white expatriate living in Antigua, Lewis occupies a position of authority and dominance within the social hierarchy, wielding economic, cultural, and social power over the local population. His character embodies the paternalistic attitudes and sense of entitlement characteristic of colonial rulers, as he seeks to impose his own values and beliefs upon the indigenous population. However, Lewis's portrayal also reveals the vulnerabilities and insecurities underlying his outward facade of superiority, as he grapples with feelings of isolation, disillusionment, and existential ennui. Through Lewis's interactions with Lucy and other characters, Kincaid offers a nuanced critique of colonialism, exposing the complexities of power, privilege, and identity in the postcolonial Caribbean context.

Lewis's presence exerts a profound influence on Lucy's sense of self, shaping her understanding of power, privilege, and cultural identity. As an au pair for the Marshall family, Lucy is confronted with the realities of colonial power dynamics through her interactions with Lewis, who embodies the epitome of Western privilege and entitlement. His patronizing attitudes and condescending behavior towards Lucy reinforce the hierarchies of race, class, and gender that define their relationship, exacerbating Lucy's feelings of cultural displacement and alienation. However, Lewis's presence also serves as a catalyst for Lucy's resistance and self-assertion, as she confronts his oppressive attitudes and challenges the norms and conventions that seek to confine and define her. Through her interactions with Lewis, Lucy grapples with questions of identity and belonging, forging her own path of self-discovery amidst the complexities of colonialism and postcolonial existence.

Mariah's Children (Miriam, Louisa, and others): Role: These children represent innocence and the privileged upbringing of American youth. They contrast with Lucy's own childhood experiences in the Caribbean. Their interactions with Lucy provide insights into her feelings of displacement and her critical view of colonialism and cultural differences.

Lewis: Lewis is Mariah's husband. His infidelity and subsequent estrangement from Mariah serve as a subplot that highlights themes of betrayal, disillusionment, and the complexity of human relationships. Lewis's actions also impact Lucy's perception of love and trust.

Dinah: Dinah is a maid in Mariah's household. She shares a common background with Lucy, being from the Caribbean. Her presence and interactions with Lucy emphasize issues of class and race, as well as the shared yet distinct experiences of Caribbean immigrants in America.

Paul: Paul is one of Lucy's boyfriends. Through her relationship with him, Lucy explores her sexual identity and independence. Paul's character helps highlight Lucy's desire to break free from traditional and restrictive roles imposed by both her culture and her new environment.

Peggy: Peggy is Lucy's friend and fellow pair. Their friendship showcases the camaraderie and support between women navigating life in a foreign culture. Peggy's experiences and perspectives also help Lucy in her journey of self-discovery and adaptation.

These characters, though not central to the plot, contribute significantly to the thematic depth of the novel, providing contrasting perspectives and enriching Lucy's narrative with their interactions and influence on her development.

11.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to understand postcolonial literature and explore the characteristics and themes of postcolonial literature, particularly in the context of the Caribbean, through the analysis of *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid. You should be able to examine how the novel addresses issues such as colonialism, cultural identity, power dynamics, and resistance. You should also be able to analyze the characters and their relationships. You should further be able to place the novel in the cultural and historical context, particularly in relation to Jamaica Kincaid's own background and experiences growing up in Antigua. You should be able to examine how historical events and socio-political factors shape the narrative of *Lucy* and contribute to its portrayal of colonial and postcolonial Caribbean life.

11.4 Glossary

Postcolonialism: A term referring to the study of the cultural, economic, and political effects of colonialism and imperialism, particularly in the context of formerly colonized nations asserting their independence and cultural identity.

Diaspora: The dispersion or scattering of people from their original homeland, often used to describe the migration and settlement of individuals and communities outside their native country, typically due to factors such as colonization, conflict, or economic opportunity.

Au pair: a helper, especially from a foreign country, who works for a host family, while also living with the host family.

Estrangement: A feeling of alienation or detachment from oneself, others, or one's surroundings, often arising from experiences of displacement, disconnection, or cultural difference, and resulting in a sense of isolation or emotional distance.

Hegemony: The dominance or leadership of one social group, ideology, or nation over others, typically achieved through the exercise of political, economic, or cultural power, and resulting in the establishment of norms, values, and practices that reinforce the interests of the dominant group.

11.5 Sample Questions

11.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. What term refers to the dispersion of people from their original homeland, often due to colonization or conflict?
2. What is the term for the dominance or leadership of one social group over others, often achieved through the exercise of power?
3. What term describes the blending of diverse cultural elements to create new forms of cultural expression?
4. What is the feeling of alienation or detachment from oneself or one's surroundings called?
5. What term refers to a system or attitude characterized by the exertion of control or authority perceived as fatherly?

True or False

1. *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid primarily explores themes of romance and adventure.
(a) False (b) True
2. Postcolonial literature examines the cultural, social, and political effects of colonialism and imperialism.
(a) True (b) False
3. In *Lucy*, Mariah represents the epitome of Western privilege and sophistication.

(a) True (b) False

4. Cultural hybridity refers to the preservation of cultural traditions without any external influence

(a) False (b) True

5. Paternalism involves the exertion of control or authority perceived as motherly rather than fatherly.

(a) False (b) True

11.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What historical context shapes the narrative of *Lucy*, and how does it influence the characters' experiences and identities?
2. Describe the protagonist Lucy's journey of self-discovery throughout the novel. How does her background and cultural heritage impact her sense of identity?
3. Discuss the significance of Mariah's character in *Lucy*. How does she represent colonial influence, and what role does she play in shaping the dynamics of power and privilege in the narrative?
4. Identify and analyze one major conflict in the plot of *Lucy*. How does this conflict contribute to the development of the story and the characters involved?
5. Choose one supporting character from *Lucy* and describe their role in the novel.

11.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the historical and cultural context of *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid, and how it shapes the narrative and characters.
2. Examine the character development of Lucy throughout the novel, considering her journey of self-discovery and resistance.
3. Analyze the character portrayal in *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid as a representation of colonial influence.

11.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Ania Loomba . *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. 1998. Routledge
2. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. 1989. Routledge
3. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* 1986. James Currey Ltd.
4. Homi K. Bhabha . *The Location of Culture*. 1994. Routledge

Unit - 12: *Lucy* - Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation

Structure

12.0 Introduction

12.1 Objectives

12.2 *Lucy*: Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation

12.2.1 Themes

12.2.2 Narrative technique

12.2.3 Symbolism and imagery

12.2.4 Critical Appreciation

12.2.5 Diverse interpretations of *Lucy*

12.3 Learning Outcomes

12.4 Glossary

12.5 Sample Questions

12.6 Suggested Learning Resources

12.0 Introduction

In the previous Unit, you studied about the plot, characters and critical appreciation of *Lucy* therefore, in this unit; we will delve into the multifaceted layers of Jamaica Kincaid's novel *Lucy*, examining its thematic richness, narrative technique, and critical reception. Through an in-depth exploration of the novel's themes, including identity, power dynamics, and cultural displacement, we unravel the complexities of postcolonial experience in the Caribbean context. Additionally, we analyze Kincaid's use of narrative techniques such as fragmented storytelling and stream of consciousness, considering how these literary devices shape the reader's engagement with the text and convey the protagonist's inner struggles. Furthermore, we critically appreciate *Lucy* by examining diverse interpretations and scholarly analyses, recognizing its significance within the broader discourse of postcolonial literature and its enduring impact on readers and critics alike. Through this comprehensive examination, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the novel's thematic depth, artistic craftsmanship, and socio-political relevance, inviting thoughtful reflection and dialogue on the complexities of colonialism, cultural identity, and resistance in the postcolonial Caribbean landscape.

12.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- explore the thematic richness of *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid, focusing on key themes such as identity, power dynamics, and cultural displacement
- analyze the narrative techniques employed by Kincaid in *Lucy*, including fragmented storytelling and stream of consciousness, and evaluate the impact on the reader's engagement with the text
- critically appreciate *Lucy* within the broader context of postcolonial literature, recognizing its significance as a thought-provoking exploration of colonialism, cultural identity, and resistance in the Caribbean context.

12.2 *Lucy*: Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation

12.2.1 Themes:

Identity and belonging

Identity and belonging is a theme that resonates deeply throughout literature, including in works like *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid. Here is how this theme is explored in the context of the novel:

In *Lucy*, the protagonist's journey is fundamentally a quest for understanding her own identity and seeking a sense of belonging in the world. Lucy grapples with questions of who she is, where she comes from, and where she belongs, as she navigates the complexities of cultural displacement, alienation, and longing for connection. As a young woman from Antigua living in New York city, Lucy finds herself caught between two worlds — the Caribbean culture of her upbringing and the westernized world of the Marshalls. Throughout the novel, she struggles to reconcile these conflicting identities and forge a sense of self amidst the cultural complexities of her environment.

The theme of identity and belonging is further complicated by the legacy of colonialism, which permeates every aspect of Lucy's life and experiences. Colonialism has left its mark on the Caribbean landscape, shaping the social, economic, and cultural dynamics that define Lucy's sense of self and her place in the world. As she confronts the remnants of colonialism in both

Antigua and New York City, Lucy grapples with feelings of cultural displacement, estrangement, and alienation, longing for a sense of connection and belonging that feels increasingly elusive.

Lucy explores the universal human quest for identity and belonging, while also shedding light on the unique challenges faced by individuals navigating the intersections of culture, race, and class in a postcolonial world. Through Lucy's journey of self-discovery and resistance, readers are invited to reflect on their own experiences of identity and belonging, as well as to contemplate the broader implications of colonialism and cultural heritage in shaping individual and collective destinies.

Cultural displacement

Cultural displacement is a theme that features prominently in *Lucy*. This concept refers to the experience of feeling uprooted or alienated from one's cultural heritage or identity, often as a result of migration, colonialism, or globalization. In the novel, Lucy grapples with profound feelings of cultural displacement as she navigates the complexities of life as an immigrant from Antigua living in New York city.

One aspect of cultural displacement in *Lucy* is the stark contrast between Lucy's upbringing in Antigua and her experiences in New York city. Having left her homeland to work as an au pair for the Marshall family, Lucy finds herself immersed in a foreign culture that is vastly different from her own. She struggles to adapt to the customs, norms, and values of western society, feeling estranged from the familiar rhythms of Antiguan life. Lucy's sense of cultural displacement is exacerbated by the legacy of colonialism, which looms large in the novel's narrative. The influence of colonialism is evident in the power dynamics, social hierarchies, and cultural norms that shape Lucy's interactions with others, both in Antigua and New York city. As a product of colonialism, Lucy grapples with the complexities of her own cultural identity, feeling torn between the traditions of her homeland and the pressures to assimilate into westernized society.

Throughout the novel, Lucy's experience of cultural displacement underscores the broader themes of identity, belonging, and agency in the postcolonial Caribbean landscape. Her journey serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring impact of colonialism on individual and collective identities, as well as the resilience of the human spirit in the face of cultural alienation and estrangement. Through Lucy's story, readers are invited to contemplate the complexities of cultural displacement and the search for belonging in a rapidly changing world.

Check your progress

1. Identify any two important themes of *Lucy*.
-

Power Dynamics between colonizer and colonized

In *Lucy*, the power dynamics between the colonizer and the colonized are intricately explored, reflecting the broader historical context of colonialism in the Caribbean. The protagonist, Lucy, represents the colonized subject, while characters like Mariah and Lewis symbolize the colonizers, wielding economic, cultural, and social power over Lucy and others. Mariah, as a white expatriate living in Antigua, embodies the epitome of Western privilege and sophistication, exerting control and authority over Lucy in her role as an au pair. Similarly, Lewis, as a representative of the colonial ruling class, reinforces the power differences between himself and Lucy through his patronizing attitudes and condescending behavior. Throughout the novel, power manifests not only in overt forms of control and domination, but also in subtler ways, such as the imposition of cultural norms and values that reinforce the status quo. Through the exploration of these power dynamics, *Lucy* sheds light on the enduring legacy of colonialism and its impact on individual agency, identity, and resistance.

Resistance strategies

In response to the oppressive power dynamics of colonialism, the characters in *Lucy* employ a variety of strategies of resistance as a means of asserting their agency and challenging the status quo. Lucy herself emerges as a figure of quiet defiance, challenging the expectations imposed upon her by society and asserting her own autonomy in the face of adversity. Her acts of resistance range from subtle acts of defiance, such as rejecting traditional gender roles and societal conventions, to more overt expressions of rebellion, such as confronting Mariah and Lewis about their patronizing attitudes and cultural insensitivity. Additionally, other characters in the novel, such as Peggy, also engage in acts of resistance, albeit in different ways. Peggy's decision to return to her home country represents a form of resistance against the cultural assimilation and erasure imposed by the colonizers. Through their acts of resistance, characters in *Lucy* demonstrate the resilience of the human spirit and the capacity for individuals to assert their agency in the face of oppression.

Language as a tool

In *Lucy*, language serves as a powerful tool of both oppression and resistance, reflecting the broader dynamics of colonization in the Caribbean context. As a product of colonialism, language embodies the cultural hegemony of the colonizer and is often used as a means of asserting control and dominance over the colonized. The imposition of the English language by colonial powers serves to marginalize indigenous languages and cultures, reinforcing the power differentials between the colonizer and the colonized.

Throughout the novel, the characters navigate the complexities of language as they grapple with issues of identity, belonging, and cultural heritage. Lucy's internal monologues and reflections provide insight into the ways in which language shapes her understanding of self and others, as she confronts the linguistic and cultural assimilation imposed by the colonizers. Additionally, characters like Mariah and Lewis wield language as a tool of oppression, using it to reinforce their own authority and superiority over Lucy and other marginalized voices.

Despite the oppressive nature of language in the context of colonization, *Lucy* also highlights moments of linguistic resistance and empowerment. Lucy's refusal to conform to the linguistic and cultural norms imposed by the colonizer represents a form of resistance against cultural assimilation and erasure. Through her acts of defiance and self-assertion, Lucy challenges the hegemonic power of language and asserts her own agency in the face of linguistic oppression.

Linguistic strategies

In *Lucy*, Jamaica Kincaid employs a variety of linguistic strategies to convey the complexities of postcolonial identity and resistance. The use of language reflects the cultural and linguistic hybridity of the Caribbean context, as characters navigate between multiple languages, dialects, and linguistic registers.

One prominent linguistic strategy in the novel is the use of code-switching, wherein characters seamlessly alternate between different languages or dialects depending on the social context or audience. This linguistic flexibility reflects the fluidity of identity in the postcolonial Caribbean, as characters negotiate their cultural identities and affiliations in a rapidly changing world. Kincaid's use of vernacular language and Caribbean English captures the rhythms and cadences of Antiguan speech, imbuing the narrative with a sense of authenticity and immediacy. Through the use of vernacular language, Kincaid creates a vivid and immersive portrayal of Antiguan culture and society, inviting readers into the rich tapestry of Caribbean life. The

linguistic strategies employed in "Lucy" serve to illuminate the complexities of postcolonial identity and resistance, highlighting the ways in which language both reflects and shapes individual and collective experiences of colonization and cultural displacement.

12.2.2 Narrative Technique:

Kincaid's use of fragmented narrative and stream of consciousness

In *Lucy*, the narrative structure is characterized by fragmented storytelling and stream of consciousness, reflecting the protagonist's internal struggles and fragmented sense of self. Kincaid employs a non-linear narrative style, interspersing Lucy's present-day experiences with fragmented memories, reflections, and inner monologues. This fragmented narrative mirrors Lucy's fragmented sense of identity and disorientation as she grapples with cultural displacement, alienation, and longing for connection.

Stream of consciousness is a narrative technique used by Kincaid to provide insight into Lucy's inner thoughts and emotions, allowing readers to experience the story through her perspective. Lucy's stream of consciousness often meanders between past and present, reality and fantasy, as she navigates the complexities of her environment and confronts the traumas of her past. Through this narrative device, Kincaid creates a deeply introspective and immersive portrayal of Lucy's inner world, inviting readers to accompany her on a journey of self-discovery and resistance.

Impact on storytelling and reader engagement

Kincaid's use of fragmented narrative and stream of consciousness has a profound impact on the storytelling and reader engagement in *Lucy*. By eschewing traditional linear storytelling in favor of a more fragmented and introspective narrative style, Kincaid invites readers into the innermost thoughts and emotions of the protagonist, fostering a sense of intimacy and empathy with the character.

The fragmented narrative structure serves to mirror the complexities of Lucy's lived experience, allowing readers to empathize with her struggles and uncertainties as she navigates the challenges of cultural displacement and identity formation. This non-linear approach to storytelling creates a sense of immediacy and authenticity, immersing readers in the rich tapestry of Lucy's inner world and lived experiences.

Moreover, Kincaid's use of stream of consciousness enhances reader engagement by providing a window into Lucy's innermost thoughts and emotions. Through Lucy's stream of consciousness, readers gain insight into her fears, desires, and vulnerabilities, forging a deeper

connection with the character and the narrative. This immersive narrative technique compels readers to actively engage with the text, as they navigate the intricacies of Lucy's inner landscape and confront the broader themes of identity, belonging, and resistance explored in the novel.

12.2.3 Symbolism and imagery:

Symbols and Motifs in the Novel

In *Lucy*, several key symbols and motifs serve to enrich the narrative and convey deeper thematic layers:

1. **The Garden:** The garden symbolizes both beauty and confinement in *Lucy*. It represents the idyllic yet constraining nature of Antiguan society, where appearances are carefully cultivated but individual freedom is restricted. The garden also serves as a metaphor for the protagonist's desire for growth and liberation amidst the stifling constraints of her environment.
2. **Mirrors and Reflections:** Mirrors and reflections are recurring motifs in the novel, symbolizing self-awareness, introspection, and the search for identity. Lucy often reflects on her own image in mirrors, contemplating her sense of self and grappling with questions of identity and belonging. Mirrors also serve as a metaphor for the fragmented nature of memory and perception, as Lucy pieces together her past and confronts the complexities of her own reflection.
3. **Water:** Water symbolizes both life and death in *Lucy*, reflecting the cyclical nature of existence and the passage of time. The sea, in particular, serves as a potent symbol of both freedom and confinement, representing the vastness of the world beyond Antigua and the barriers that restrict Lucy's movement and agency.
4. **Fruit and Food:** Fruit and food imagery permeate the novel, symbolizing sustenance, abundance, and cultural heritage. References to tropical fruits evoke memories of Lucy's childhood in Antigua, while descriptions of meals highlight the communal rituals and traditions that shape her sense of identity and belonging.
5. **Clothing and Appearance:** Clothing and appearance serve as symbols of social status, cultural identity, and the performance of gender in "Lucy." Lucy's reluctance to conform to societal expectations of femininity is reflected in her rejection of traditional dress and grooming practices, as she asserts her autonomy and challenges the norms and conventions that seek to confine and define her.

Significance of symbols and motifs in conveying postcolonial themes:

These symbols and motifs in *Lucy* are deeply intertwined with the novel's exploration of postcolonial themes, reflecting the complexities of identity, agency, and resistance in the context of colonialism:

1. The Garden symbolizes the oppressive nature of colonial society, where appearances are carefully curated to maintain the illusion of order and control. It underscores the tension between conformity and rebellion, as Lucy navigates the confines of her environment in search of autonomy and self-empowerment.
2. Mirrors and reflections serve as a metaphor for the fragmented nature of postcolonial identity, as Lucy confronts the complexities of her own reflection and grapples with questions of self-awareness and belonging. They highlight the struggle to reconcile the disparate elements of her cultural heritage and assert her own agency in a world defined by colonialism.
3. Water symbolizes the fluidity of postcolonial experience, as Lucy navigates the currents of cultural displacement and longing for freedom. The sea, in particular, represents the vastness of possibility beyond the confines of Antigua, serving as a metaphor for the transformative power of self-discovery and resistance.
4. Fruit and food imagery evoke memories of Lucy's Caribbean upbringing, highlighting the importance of cultural heritage and communal rituals in shaping her sense of identity and belonging. They underscore the resilience of Caribbean culture in the face of colonialism, serving as symbols of resistance and cultural pride.
5. Clothing and appearance reflect the ways in which colonialism imposes norms and conventions on individual expression and identity. Lucy's rejection of traditional gender roles and societal expectations challenges the patriarchal structures that seek to confine and define her, highlighting the complexities of resistance in a postcolonial context.

These symbols and motifs in *Lucy* enrich the novel's exploration of postcolonial themes, providing readers with insight into the complexities of identity, agency, and resistance in the Caribbean context. They serve as potent symbols of cultural heritage, resilience, and the enduring legacy of colonialism, inviting readers to contemplate the broader implications of power, privilege, and oppression in shaping individual and collective destinies.

Check your progress

1. Highlight any three important symbols employed by writer in *Lucy*.

12.2.4 Critical Appreciation:

Overview of critical responses to *Lucy* upon publication

Upon its publication, *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid garnered a range of critical responses, reflecting the novel's complexity and thematic richness. While some critics praised Kincaid's evocative prose and exploration of postcolonial themes, others found fault with the novel's narrative structure and portrayal of characters.

Many critics lauded Kincaid's unflinching portrayal of the postcolonial Caribbean experience, highlighting her vivid descriptions of Antiguan life and her nuanced exploration of identity, agency, and resistance. They commended Kincaid for her use of language and imagery, which they felt effectively conveyed the protagonist's sense of cultural displacement and longing for autonomy. Additionally, critics praised Kincaid's interrogation of power dynamics and privilege, particularly in the context of gender and race, applauding her for challenging the norms and conventions that seek to confine and define her characters.

However, *Lucy* also faced criticism from some quarters, with detractors citing issues such as the novel's fragmented narrative structure and perceived lack of plot development. Some critics found Lucy's character to be too enigmatic and aloof, making it difficult for readers to fully engage with her struggles and motivations. Additionally, questions were raised about Kincaid's portrayal of colonialism and its impact on Caribbean society, with some critics arguing that the novel's focus on individual agency overshadowed broader systemic issues of oppression and inequality.

The response of *Lucy* upon its publication were varied and complex, reflecting the novel's status as a provocative and thought-provoking work of postcolonial literature. While some critics hailed Kincaid's exploration of identity and resistance, others raised questions about the novel's narrative structure and thematic focus. Despite these differences of opinion, "Lucy" remains a widely studied and debated work in the canon of Caribbean literature, continuing to spark discussions about the legacies of colonialism and the complexities of cultural identity in the postcolonial world. Scholars have offered various interpretations of *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid, delving into its themes, characters, and narrative techniques with depth and nuance. Some scholars have focused on Kincaid's exploration of postcolonial identity and resistance, examining how the novel critiques the legacy of colonialism and its impact on Caribbean society. They analyze Lucy's journey as a metaphor for the broader struggles of postcolonial subjects to assert

their agency and reclaim their cultural heritage in the face of oppression and erasure. Additionally, scholars explore the ways in which Kincaid employs language, symbolism, and imagery to convey the complexities of postcolonial experience, highlighting the novel's contribution to the broader discourse on race, gender, and power in the Caribbean context.

Other scholars have examined the novel's narrative structure and stylistic choices, considering how Kincaid's use of fragmented storytelling and stream-of-consciousness technique shapes the reader's engagement with the text. They explore the ways in which Lucy's fragmented memories and inner monologues reflect her sense of cultural displacement and longing for connection, offering insights into the complexities of postcolonial identity and belonging. Additionally, scholars analyze the novel's portrayal of characters and relationships, highlighting the ways in which Kincaid subverts traditional gender and power dynamics to challenge dominant narratives of colonialism and patriarchy.

Scholarly interpretations of *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid offer valuable insights into the novel's themes, characters, and narrative techniques, enriching our understanding of its significance within the broader context of postcolonial literature. Through careful analysis and critique, scholars continue to explore the complexities of Kincaid's work, shedding light on its enduring relevance and impact on the study of Caribbean literature and beyond.

12.2.5 Diverse Interpretations of *Lucy*:

Scholars have offered diverse interpretations of postcolonial themes in *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid, reflecting the novel's complexity and richness:

1. **Resistance and Agency:** Some scholars interpret *Lucy* as a narrative of resistance and agency, highlighting the protagonist's efforts to assert her autonomy and reclaim her cultural heritage in the face of colonial oppression. They analyze Lucy's acts of defiance and self-empowerment, exploring how her journey reflects broader struggles against colonialism and patriarchy in the Caribbean context.
2. **Cultural Displacement and Identity:** Other scholars focus on themes of cultural displacement and identity formation in *Lucy*, examining how the protagonist grapples with questions of belonging and cultural heritage. They explore Lucy's navigation of linguistic and cultural barriers, considering how her experiences reflect the complexities of postcolonial identity in a rapidly changing world.
3. **Power Dynamics and Privilege:** Some interpretations of *Lucy* emphasize the power dynamics and privilege at play in the novel, particularly in relation to race, gender, and

class. Scholars analyze the ways in which characters like Mariah and Lewis wield their social and economic power over Lucy and others, highlighting the broader structures of oppression and inequality that shape their interactions and relationships.

12.3 Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this Unit, you should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the thematic richness of *Lucy* including its exploration of identity, power dynamics, and cultural displacement in the postcolonial Caribbean context. You should be able to evaluate the effectiveness of narrative techniques employed by Kincaid, such as fragmented storytelling and stream of consciousness, in conveying the protagonist's inner struggles and engaging the reader with the text. You should also be able to critically analyze scholarly interpretations and critical responses to *Lucy*.

12.4 Glossary

Stream of Consciousness: A narrative technique that presents the continuous flow of thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of a character in a literary work, often without conventional punctuation or structure.

Cultural Displacement: The experience of being uprooted or alienated from one's cultural heritage or identity, often as a result of migration, globalization, or colonialism.

Agency: The capacity of individuals to act autonomously and make independent choices, particularly in the face of social, political, or cultural constraints.

Colonial Legacy: The enduring impact of colonialism on societies and cultures, encompassing economic exploitation, cultural assimilation, social hierarchies, and political instability.

12.5 Sample Questions

12.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. What are the main themes explored in *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid?
 - (a) Romance and adventure
 - (b) Identity, power dynamics, and cultural displacement

- (c) Mystery and suspense
 - (d) Science fiction and fantasy
2. How does Jamaica Kincaid use narrative techniques in *Lucy*?
- (a) Flashbacks and foreshadowing
 - (b) Satire and humor
 - (c) Fragmented storytelling and stream of consciousness
 - (d) Linear plot structure and traditional prose
3. What do scholars and critics say about *Lucy*?
- (a) They praise its exploration of postcolonial themes but criticize its narrative style.
 - (b) They find fault with its characterization but admire its plot development.
 - (c) They commend its vivid imagery but question its thematic depth.
 - (d) They disagree on its significance and impact within postcolonial literature.
4. Why is "Lucy" considered significant in postcolonial literature?
- (a) It offers a unique perspective on colonialism and cultural identity.
 - (b) It follows a conventional narrative structure.
 - (c) It lacks thematic depth and complexity.
 - (d) It is written by a renowned author.
5. How does discussing *Lucy* deepen understanding of its themes and impact?
- (a) By ignoring its narrative techniques
 - (b) By recognizing its significance within postcolonial literature
 - (c) By focusing solely on its plot
 - (d) By disregarding critical responses
6. What narrative techniques does Jamaica Kincaid use in *Lucy*?
- (a) Dialogue and exposition
 - (b) First-person narration and symbolism
 - (c) Fragmented storytelling and stream of consciousness
 - (d) Third-person omniscient and chronological order
7. What does the protagonist of *Lucy* struggle with throughout the novel?
- (a) Financial problems
 - (b) Cultural displacement and identity
 - (c) Social media addiction
 - (d) Fear of spiders

8. How does *Lucy* contribute to the broader discourse of postcolonial literature?
- (a) By avoiding themes of colonialism and cultural identity
 - (b) By presenting a one-dimensional portrayal of Caribbean society
 - (c) By challenging dominant narratives of colonialism and patriarchy
 - (d) By perpetuating stereotypes and clichés
9. What is one of the main focuses of scholarly analyses of *Lucy*?
- (a) Its lack of thematic depth
 - (b) Its adherence to traditional narrative structures
 - (c) Its exploration of power dynamics and cultural displacement
 - (d) Its emphasis on romance and adventure
10. How do readers engage with *Lucy* beyond its literary merit?
- (a) By disregarding its cultural significance
 - (b) By reflecting on its socio-political relevance
 - (c) By ignoring its thematic exploration
 - (d) By dismissing its impact on postcolonial discourse

12.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What are the main themes explored in *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid?
2. How does Kincaid use narrative techniques to convey the protagonist's inner struggles?
3. What do critics say about *Lucy*, and how do their interpretations vary?
4. Why is *Lucy* considered significant in postcolonial literature?
5. How does discussing *Lucy* deepen understanding of its themes and impact?

12.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. How does *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid navigate the complexities of postcolonial identity?
2. In what ways does Jamaica Kincaid employ narrative techniques such as fragmented storytelling and stream of consciousness to depict the protagonist's internal struggles and the broader themes of power dynamics and cultural displacement in *Lucy*?
3. Discuss the critical reception of *Lucy* upon its publication.

12.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Ania Loomba . *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. 1998. Routledge
2. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. 1989. Routledge
3. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* 1986. James Currey Ltd.
4. Homi K. Bhabha . *The Location of Culture*. 1994. Routledge

Unit-13: Introduction to Postcolonial Poetry

Structure

13.0 Introduction

13.1 Objectives

13.2 Introduction to Postcolonial Poetry

13.2.1 Major Themes in Postcolonial Poetry

13.2.2 Language and translation

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13.2.4 Critical Theories Relevant to Postcolonial Poetry

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13.2.7 Key Poets and Representative Poems

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13.3 Learning Outcomes

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13.5 Sample Questions

13.6 Suggested Learning Resources

13.0 Introduction

Postcolonialism is a theoretical framework that examines the cultural, economic, and political legacies of colonialism and imperialism. It emerged in the mid-20th century as former colonies gained independence, and scholars began to critically analyze the lingering effects of colonial rule on societies and cultures around the world. Postcolonialism seeks to understand the power dynamics between colonizers and colonized peoples, the construction of racial and cultural hierarchies, and the ways in which colonialism continues to shape contemporary global relationships.

In literature, postcolonialism examines how writers from formerly colonized nations represent and respond to the experiences of colonization, decolonization, and postcolonial identity. Postcolonial literature often grapples with themes such as cultural hybridity, identity formation, resistance, and the legacy of oppression. It encompasses a diverse range of genres, including novels, poetry, essays, and plays, produced by authors from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, and other regions impacted by colonialism.

13.1 Objectives

This Unit aims to look at the following objectives:

- understand the historical context of postcolonial poetry.
- analyze and interpret poems within the postcolonial context.
- identify common themes and motifs in postcolonial poetry.
- explore the influence of colonialism on poetic expression.
- develop critical thinking skills through close reading and analysis of poems.

13.2 Introduction to Postcolonial Poetry

Postcolonial poetry specifically refers to poetry written by poets from postcolonial societies or addressing postcolonial themes. These poets often engage with the complexities of identity, history, and power dynamics that arise from the colonial experience. Postcolonial poetry may incorporate indigenous oral traditions, local dialects, and Western literary forms to convey diverse perspectives on colonization, cultural assimilation, and the struggle for self-determination.

Historical Background on Colonialism and Its Impact on Poetry

Colonialism refers to the process by which a nation extends its control over territories and peoples outside its own borders, often for economic exploitation, political domination, or cultural assimilation. European powers such as Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands established vast colonial empires across Africa, Asia, the Americas, and the Pacific Islands from the 16th to the 20th centuries.

The impact of colonialism on poetry was profound and multifaceted. Colonial powers imposed their languages, religions, and cultural norms on indigenous populations, leading to the marginalization or suppression of local literary traditions. At the same time, colonial subjects often used poetry as a form of resistance, preserving cultural heritage, critiquing colonial injustices, and asserting their own identities and aspirations.

Throughout the colonial period, poets from colonized territories grappled with themes such as loss, displacement, nostalgia for homeland, and the struggle for autonomy. Some poets adopted the literary conventions of their colonizers, while others sought to reclaim indigenous languages and oral traditions as vehicles for poetic expression. Postcolonial poetry continues to

reflect and respond to these historical legacies, interrogating the complexities of identity and power in a world shaped by colonialism.

13.2.1 Major Themes in Postcolonial Poetry:

Colonialism and its aftermath

This theme explores the lasting impacts of colonial rule on societies, cultures, and individuals. Postcolonial poets often examine the trauma, exploitation, and cultural erasure inflicted by colonial powers, as well as the ongoing struggles for justice, restitution, and reconciliation in the postcolonial era. Poets may depict the physical and psychological violence of colonization, the disruption of traditional ways of life, and the complexities of navigating a world shaped by colonial legacies.

Identity and belonging

Postcolonial poetry frequently engages with questions of personal and collective identity in the aftermath of colonialism. Poets explore the complexities of hybrid identities shaped by intersecting cultural, linguistic, and ethnic influences. Themes of displacement, alienation, and the search for belonging are common, as poets grapple with the challenges of reconciling multiple cultural affiliations and negotiating their place in a world marked by colonial histories.

Resistance and liberation

Resistance to colonial oppression and the struggle for liberation are central themes in postcolonial poetry. Poets often celebrate acts of defiance, solidarity, and resilience among colonized peoples, highlighting the power of collective action and grassroots movements in challenging colonial hegemony. Through their poetry, writers may reclaim narratives of resistance, honor the sacrifices of freedom fighters, and critique ongoing forms of neocolonialism and imperialism in the contemporary world.

13.2.2 Language and translation:

Language plays a crucial role in postcolonial poetry, serving as both a tool of oppression and a site of resistance. Poets explore the politics of language, interrogating the dominance of colonial languages and advocating for the preservation and revitalization of indigenous languages and dialects. Translation also emerges as a key theme, as poets grapple with the challenges of translating cultural and linguistic nuances across different contexts. Postcolonial poets may experiment with language, code-switching, and linguistic hybridity to reflect the diversity of postcolonial experiences.

13.2.3 Hybridity and cultural synthesis:

Postcolonial poetry often celebrates the hybridity and syncretism that emerge from cultural encounters and exchanges. Poets draw on diverse cultural traditions, myths, and symbols to create rich tapestries of meaning that reflect the complexity of postcolonial identities. Themes of cultural fusion, adaptation, and transformation abound, as poets explore the ways in which colonial encounters have shaped and reshaped cultural landscapes, producing new forms of expression that defy simplistic categorizations.

13.2.4 Critical Theories Relevant to Postcolonial Poetry:

Edward Said's Orientalism

Said's seminal work "Orientalism" examines how Western colonial powers constructed and perpetuated stereotypical representations of the "Orient" as exotic, primitive, and inferior. In postcolonial poetry, this theory highlights how poets interrogate and subvert Orientalist tropes, reclaiming agency and self-representation. Postcolonial poets may deconstruct colonial depictions of their homelands, challenging Western hegemonic narratives and offering counter-narratives that center indigenous perspectives and experiences.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's Subaltern Studies:

Spivak's concept of the "subaltern" refers to marginalized and oppressed groups who are often excluded from mainstream historical and cultural narratives. Postcolonial poets engage with this theory by amplifying the voices of the subaltern, highlighting their struggles, agency, and resilience. Through their poetry, writers give voice to silenced histories, experiences, and perspectives, challenging dominant discourses that have historically marginalized and erased subaltern voices.

13.2.5 Role of Language, Identity, and Power in Postcolonial Poetry:

Language: Postcolonial poetry reflects the complex dynamics of language in the context of colonization and decolonization. Poets grapple with the imposition of colonial languages, the erasure of indigenous languages, and the power dynamics inherent in linguistic dominance. Language becomes a site of resistance and negotiation in postcolonial poetry, as poets experiment with linguistic hybridity, code-switching, and the revitalization of indigenous languages to assert cultural autonomy and reclaim narratives of identity and belonging.

Identity: Postcolonial poetry explores the complexities of identity formation in the aftermath of colonialism. Poets navigate multiple layers of identity—racial, cultural, national, and diasporic—shaped by colonial histories and contemporary global realities. Themes of

hybridity, diaspora, and cultural syncretism emerge as poets negotiate the intersections of diverse cultural influences and assert their agency in defining their own identities in opposition to colonial stereotypes and hegemonic narratives.

Power: Power dynamics are central to postcolonial poetry, as poets interrogate the unequal distribution of power inherent in colonial relations. Poetic texts serve as sites of resistance and contestation, challenging dominant power structures and amplifying marginalized voices. Postcolonial poets critique systems of oppression, exploitation, and marginalization, advocating for social justice, equality, and decolonization. Their poetry becomes a tool for empowerment, mobilization, and collective action in the struggle against colonial legacies and ongoing forms of domination.

13.2.6 How Postcolonial Poets Challenge Dominant Narratives:

- Postcolonial poets challenge dominant narratives by:
 - deconstructing colonial myths and stereotypes.
 - reclaiming indigenous histories and cultures.
 - amplifying marginalized voices and perspectives.
 - subverting hegemonic discourses through poetic language and form.
 - offering alternative visions of the past, present, and future.
 - engaging in acts of cultural resistance and decolonization through their creative work.

13.2.7 Key Poets and Representative Poems:

Africa

Chinua Achebe (Nigeria)

Representative Poem: "Refugee Mother and Child"

Achebe's poetry reflects the socio-political landscape of Nigeria, including themes of colonialism, independence, and the challenges of nation-building. He also addresses broader issues of identity, cultural heritage, and the impact of colonialism on African societies.

Wole Soyinka (Nigeria)

Representative Poem: "Telephone Conversation"

Soyinka's poetry engages with the complexities of postcolonial Nigeria, including the struggle for democracy, human rights, and social justice. His work is deeply influenced by his experiences as an activist and intellectual in a country grappling with political turmoil and corruption.

The Caribbean

Derek Walcott (Saint Lucia)

Representative Poem: "A Far Cry from Africa"

Walcott's poetry explores themes of colonialism, cultural identity, and the legacy of slavery in the Caribbean. His work reflects the region's complex history of colonization, resistance, and cultural hybridity, as well as the ongoing struggles for independence and self-determination.

Kamau Brathwaite (Barbados)

Representative Poem: "Caliban"

Brathwaite's poetry is deeply rooted in the socio-political realities of the Caribbean, including issues of race, class, and cultural memory. He draws on Caribbean folklore, language, and oral traditions to challenge colonial representations and assert the agency of Caribbean peoples in shaping their own narratives.

South Asia

Rabindranath Tagore (India)

Representative Poem: "Where the Mind is Without Fear"

Tagore's poetry reflects the socio-political context of colonial and postcolonial India, including themes of nationalism, spirituality, and social reform. His work encompasses a range of styles and themes, from lyrical reflections on nature to passionate calls for social justice and universal humanism.

Faiz Ahmed Faiz (Pakistan)

Representative Poem: "Hum Dekhenge"

Faiz's poetry emerges from the tumultuous socio-political landscape of colonial and postcolonial South Asia, particularly Pakistan. His work engages with themes of freedom, democracy, and social equality, as well as the challenges of living in a region marked by conflict, partition, and authoritarianism.

Discussion of Socio-Political Contexts

- **Colonial Legacy:** Poets from these regions grapple with the legacies of colonialism, including the impact of colonization on cultural identity, language, and social structures.
- **Independence Movements:** Many poets were active participants in anti-colonial struggles and post-independence nation-building efforts, and their poetry reflects the hopes, dreams, and disillusionments of these movements.

- **Social Injustice and Inequality:** Poets often confront issues of poverty, inequality, and social injustice in their work, shedding light on the struggles of marginalized communities and advocating for social change.
- **Cultural Revival and Hybridity:** Postcolonial poets celebrate the resilience and creativity of their cultures, drawing on indigenous traditions, folklore, and language to create a vibrant and dynamic poetic expression.
- **Globalization and Diaspora:** In an increasingly interconnected world, poets explore themes of migration, diaspora, and globalization, reflecting on the complexities of belonging, displacement, and cultural exchange.

13.2.8 Poems for Comparison:

1. "A Far Cry from Africa" by Derek Walcott (Caribbean) vs. "Refugee Mother and Child" by Chinua Achebe (Africa):

Both poems explore themes of colonialism, violence, and cultural identity, but from different geographical and historical contexts. Walcott's poem reflects on the legacy of colonialism and the complexities of cultural identity in the Caribbean, while Achebe's poem portrays the devastating impact of war and displacement in postcolonial Africa. Stylistically, Walcott employs vivid imagery and symbolism, while Achebe uses spare language and stark imagery to convey the emotional weight of the subject matter.

2. "Where the Mind is Without Fear" by Rabindranath Tagore (South Asia) vs. "Caliban" by Kamau Brathwaite (Caribbean):

Both poems address themes of freedom, identity, and cultural autonomy, but from different regional perspectives within the postcolonial world. Tagore's poem reflects on the aspirations for freedom and enlightenment in colonial India, while Brathwaite's poem reimagines Shakespeare's character Caliban as a symbol of Caribbean resistance and cultural pride. Stylistically, Tagore's poem is lyrical and introspective, drawing on imagery from nature and spirituality, while Brathwaite's poem is more experimental, blending elements of Caribbean folklore and vernacular language.

13.2.9 Analysis of Stylistic Techniques:

- **Imagery:** Poets use vivid imagery to evoke sensory experiences and convey complex emotions. While some poets employ naturalistic imagery drawn from their own cultural landscapes (e.g., Tagore's use of imagery from the Indian countryside), others may

incorporate symbolic or mythic imagery rooted in indigenous traditions (e.g., Brathwaite's use of Caribbean folklore).

- **Language and Form:** Poets experiment with language and form to reflect the diversity of postcolonial experiences. Some poets may incorporate local dialects, pidgin languages, or oral traditions into their poetry as a form of cultural resistance (e.g., Achebe's use of Nigerian English), while others may draw on Western literary forms or subvert conventional poetic techniques to challenge colonial norms (e.g., Walcott's use of classical forms in Caribbean poetry).
- **Narrative Voice:** Poets adopt diverse narrative voices and perspectives to represent the multiplicity of postcolonial identities. While some poets may speak from personal experience or collective memory (e.g., Tagore's reflective tone in "Where the Mind is Without Fear"), others may embody the voices of marginalized or silenced communities (e.g., Achebe's portrayal of a refugee mother's struggle in "Refugee Mother and Child").

13.2.10 Discussion on Universal vs. Culturally Specific Aspects:

- **Universal Themes:** Despite their cultural specificities, postcolonial poems often address universal themes such as love, loss, identity, and resilience. By examining these themes through diverse cultural lenses, students gain insight into the common humanity that unites people across different geographical and historical contexts.
- **Culturally Specific Contexts:** At the same time, postcolonial poetry reflects the unique histories, cultures, and experiences of specific regions and communities. By exploring the cultural specificities of each poem, students deepen their understanding of the socio-political, linguistic, and aesthetic dimensions of postcolonial literature.
- **Intersections and Connections:** Encourage students to identify intersections and connections between different postcolonial contexts, highlighting shared struggles, aspirations, and forms of resistance. By fostering cross-cultural dialogue and empathy, students develop a more nuanced appreciation of the diverse voices and experiences within the postcolonial world.

13.3 Learning Outcomes

Learners will demonstrate an understanding of the key concepts, theories, and historical contexts of postcolonialism as they relate to literature and poetry. They will cultivate an

appreciation for the diversity of postcolonial experiences and perspectives, developing empathy for the struggles and aspirations of colonized peoples across different regions and historical periods. They will gain insight into the historical and socio-political contexts that influence postcolonial poetry, recognizing the ways in which colonialism, imperialism, and globalization shape literary expression. Students will compare and contrast poems from different postcolonial contexts, identifying common themes, stylistic techniques, and cultural specificities, and synthesizing their findings into nuanced interpretations.

13.4 Glossary

Colonialism: The practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.

Postcolonialism: The academic study of the cultural, political, and economic legacies of colonialism and imperialism. It focuses on the human consequences of the control and exploitation of colonized people and their lands.

Hybridity: A concept introduced by Homi K. Bhabha referring to the cultural mixing and blending that occurs as a result of colonization. It describes the creation of new, transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization.

Diaspora: The dispersion of any people from their original homeland. In postcolonial studies, it refers to the communities living outside their ancestral homelands, maintaining connections with their culture of origin.

Othering: The process of perceiving or portraying someone or something as fundamentally different or alien. This often involves defining the colonized subjects as "others" in opposition to the colonizer's "self."

Subaltern: A term coined by Antonio Gramsci, used in postcolonial studies to refer to populations which are socially, politically, and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure.

Mimicry: A concept articulated by Homi K. Bhabha, referring to the way colonized subjects imitate and adopt the culture of the colonizers. This can be a form of resistance or a survival strategy, often resulting in a form of mockery or ambivalence.

Decolonization: The process of undoing the legacies of colonialism, including political, economic, social, and cultural structures imposed by the colonizers. It involves reclaiming indigenous identities and traditions.

Double Consciousness: A term coined by W.E.B. Du Bois, referring to the internal conflict experienced by colonized or marginalized groups, particularly African Americans, when they are forced to reconcile their own identity with the perceptions imposed by the dominant culture.

Liminality: The quality of ambiguity or disorientation that occurs in the middle stage of rituals or processes of change. In postcolonial contexts, it refers to the in-between spaces and states that colonized people often navigate.

13.5 Sample Questions

13.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Which term refers to the cultural mixing that occurs as a result of colonization?
 - (a) Diaspora
 - (b) Subaltern
 - (c) Hybridity
 - (d) Liminality
2. Who introduced the concept of 'Double Consciousness'?
 - (a) Homi K. Bhabha
 - (b) W.E.B. Du Bois
 - (c) Edward Said
 - (d) Frantz Fanon
3. What is the focus of postcolonial poetry?
 - (a) Technological advancements
 - (b) Legacies of colonialism
 - (c) Natural disasters
 - (d) Medieval history
4. The term 'Subaltern' was coined by:
 - (a) Antonio Gramsci
 - (b) Edward Said
 - (c) Gayatri Spivak

- (d) Chinua Achebe
5. Which concept involves the continued economic and cultural dominance of former colonial powers over former colonies?
- (a) Hybridity
 - (b) Decolonization
 - (c) Neo-colonialism
 - (d) Empire
6. The process of reclaiming indigenous identities and traditions is known as:
- (a) Colonization
 - (b) Hybridity
 - (c) Decolonization
 - (d) Mimicry
7. Which author is associated with the concept of 'Mimicry'?
- (a) W.E.B. Du Bois
 - (b) Edward Said
 - (c) Homi K. Bhabha
 - (d) Frantz Fanon
8. What does the term 'Diaspora' refer to?
- (a) The blending of cultures
 - (b) Dispersion of people from their homeland
 - (c) The study of insects
 - (d) Political independence
9. The term 'Indigeneity' is associated with:
- (a) Modern technology
 - (b) Colonial administrations
 - (c) Native cultural identity
 - (d) Economic theories
10. 'Liminality' in postcolonial contexts refers to:
- (a) Clear and defined spaces
 - (b) In-between spaces and states
 - (c) Complete assimilation
 - (d) Absolute separation

13.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Define 'Postcolonialism' in the context of literary studies.
2. Explain the concept of 'Othering' in postcolonial poetry.
3. What does 'Creolization' refer to in postcolonial contexts?
4. How is 'Hybridity' represented in postcolonial poetry?
5. Discuss the significance of 'Decolonization' in postcolonial literature.

13.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Analyze the role of 'Language and Power' in postcolonial poetry, providing examples from notable poets or poems.
2. Discuss the theme of 'Identity and Self-Representation' in postcolonial poetry, exploring how poets navigate their dual or multiple identities. Provide examples from specific works.
3. Examine the impact of 'Memory and History' in shaping postcolonial narratives in poetry. How do poets use these themes to address colonial legacies and reclaim their cultural heritage? Illustrate your answer with references to specific poems or poets.

13.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. Routledge, 1989.
2. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
3. Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Richard Philcox, Grove Press, 2004.
4. Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books, 1978.

Unit – 14: Derek Walcott: “Ruins of a Great House”

Structure

14.0 Introduction

14.1 Objectives

14.2 Derek Walcott: “Ruins of a Great House”

14.2.1 Life and Works

14.2.2 Analysis of the poem

14.2.3 Summary

14.3 Learning Outcomes

14.4 Glossary

14.5 Sample Questions

14.6 Suggested Learning Resources

14.0 Introduction

Derek Walcott, a renowned poet and playwright from the West Indies, was awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize in Literature in 1992. His notable achievement was attributed to his exceptional portrayal of Caribbean life and culture during the period following colonial rule. The individual in question was born into a family of diverse ethnic backgrounds, including English, Dutch, and African heritage. Throughout his upbringing, he was exposed to a literary diet consisting primarily of English classics. As a result, he has inherited a wealth of cultural influences, which he has skilfully portrayed in his extensive collection of plays and poetry. Having received initial training in the field of painting, the individual in question proceeded to independently publish his inaugural collection of poems at the tender age of eighteen. Subsequently, he achieved widespread recognition on a global scale as a poet, attaining this feat by the age of thirty-two. While the majority of his literary works primarily focus on the vibrant scenery and cultural aspects of his native land, it is worth noting that a number of his writings also convey a sense of seclusion. This isolation stems from a clash between his Western education and the black folk customs that had deeply influenced his upbringing from boyhood. He has demonstrated a comparable level of engagement as a playwright, having produced approximately thirty plays. Additionally, he achieved success as an academic, imparting knowledge at multiple American universities. Despite achieving achievement, the individual in

question has had significant turbulence in both their professional and personal spheres. Additionally, they experienced financial difficulties until being awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize.

14.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- provide information about Derek Walcott's life and works
- read the prescribed poem along with its analysis
- understand the stylistic technique of Walcott.

14.2 Derek Walcott: “Ruins of a Great House”

14.2.1 Life and Works:

His Life

Derek Alton Walcott, born on January 23, 1930, in the colonial city of Castries, situated in the eastern Caribbean Island of St. Lucia, was born into a family of mixed heritage. His ancestry can be traced back to African slaves who were brought to the island several centuries ago.

The individual's paternal figure, Warwick Walcott, pursued a career as a civil servant, while simultaneously engaging in artistic endeavours as a water colourist and poet. The individual in question exhibited a bohemian disposition and succumbed to mastoiditis at the age of 31. Alix Walcott, the mother of the individual in question, held the occupation of a teacher at the nearby Methodist school and assumed sole responsibility for the upbringing of their three offspring.

In addition to his twin brother Roderick, who would later achieve recognition as a renowned playwright, Derek had an older sister named Pamela. The individuals were raised in a household abundant with literary works, artistic creations, and recorded auditory compositions, while also conversing in a bilingual English-French dialect.

During that period, the region was under the control of the British Empire, with English serving as the designated official language. Nevertheless, remnants of previous French governance persisted, and the majority of the populace adhered to Roman Catholicism, a religion

that had been established by the French. As a member of the Methodist denomination, Derek, who was young at the time, frequently had a sense of alienation inside his own community.

During his childhood, he frequently observed the impoverished individuals residing in makeshift dwellings, a few of whom would subsequently feature in his autobiographical poem titled "Another Life." Additionally, he encountered the vast expanse of the ocean, characterised by its diverse range of emotional states and mythical narratives, as well as the presence of fishermen and sailing vessels known as schooners, accompanied by the auditory sensations associated with the maritime environment. This is quite intriguing.

Subsequently, Derek gained admission to St. Mary's College, the sole secondary educational institution in the city during that period. At this juncture, he commenced his pursuit of the English language and swiftly developed a profound interest in English poetry. In due course, akin to numerous individuals from his cohort, he too commenced regarding English as his personal language.

Alix, the mother, possessed a strong affinity for English literary masterpieces, particularly the works of Shakespeare, and would frequently engage in reading sessions of these classics to her offspring. Thus, from an early stage of his life, he developed a profound appreciation for poetry and play.

Despite adopting English as his primary language, he displayed a keen awareness of British imperialism and its historical involvement in the institution of slavery. Consequently, he developed a complex and contradictory stance, which would eventually shape his literary works.

Similar to his father, Derek possessed a natural talent for painting and commenced his artistic education under the tutelage of Harold Simmons, a renowned artist renowned for his expertise in historical studies, archaeology, and indigenous traditions. Under the guidance of his mentor, Derek, who was in his youth, developed a deep appreciation for his cultural background.

The individual commenced his poetic endeavours at a young age, with his inaugural poem being published in a regional monthly when he was but fourteen years old. The poem titled '1944' is a devotional composition in the style of Milton, including forty-four lines of unrhymed verse. Despite facing condemnation from the Catholic hierarchy for his actions, he persisted without ceasing. By the year 1948, the individual in question had prepared a collection of poems that were deemed suitable for publication. However, they encountered a significant obstacle in their pursuit, as there was a lack of available publishers willing to undertake the task of publishing those poetry. Undeterred by obstacles, the individual proceeded to secure a loan of

S200 from his mother in order to independently publish his inaugural compilation of poetry, aptly named "25 Poems". Subsequently, he proceeded to vend the duplicates at a local thoroughfare and subsequently reimbursed the sum.

Derek Walcott's second publication, 'Epitaph for the Young: XII Cantos', was released in 1949. At this juncture, the individual in question had additionally composed two theatrical works, namely 'Henri Christophe: A Chronicle' and 'Henri Dernier'. The aforementioned event was transmitted over radio in the year 1950. However, due to the incessant persecution inflicted upon him by the ecclesiastical authorities, he has now resolved to depart from the island.

In the year 1950, the individual relocated to Kingston, Jamaica, where they proceeded to study at the University College of West Indies, supported by a scholarship provided by the Colonial Development and Welfare programme. Despite being formed just two years ago, the institution has already managed to draw students from all regions of the Caribbean. As a result, Derek has thrived in the favourable atmosphere provided by the college.

Having originated from a tiny village, he similarly regarded Kingston as an extraordinary location. The city boasted excellent theatres, esteemed art galleries, and a plethora of talented poets, writers, and artists, with whom he greatly enjoyed engaging and eventually developed close relationships.

In the city of Kingston, in addition to his pursuit of further education, he dedicated himself to his literary aspirations and produced a collection of poetry and plays. Furthermore, he also disseminated his poetry, art criticism, and articles in other journals such as the Trinidad Guardian and Jamaica's Public Opinion. He obtained his undergraduate degree in 1953.

Writer in the making

The year 1953. Derek Walcott begun his professional journey as a critic of theatre and art in Trinidad. However, certain biographers hold the viewpoint that he initially returned to Castries, where he assumed a teaching position at St. Mary's College for a duration of one year, prior to relocating to Trinidad.

Regardless of which account is accurate, it is widely acknowledged that by 1954, he had achieved a significant level of recognition in Trinidad. This is evident from the fact that during the mid-1950s, he successfully staged two of his plays in the region. The plays 'The Sea at Dauphin' and 'Ione' were first performed at this location. In due course, he made the determination to initiate a permanent theatrical endeavour on the island.

In 1958, Derek Walcott relocated to New York City after receiving a prestigious Rockefeller Foundation grant for his play, 'Drums and Colours'. His primary objective was to collaborate with off-Broadway directors. He expressed a desire to acquire the necessary talents that would enable him to form a repertory group in Trinidad. However, he experienced a profound sense of disappointment. He quickly came to the realisation that they want to develop a unique creation, recognising that neither the Off-Broadway nor the Broadway platforms provided an appropriate framework for their vision. Consequently, he made his way back to Trinidad and, in 1959, established the Trinidad Theatre Workshop alongside his brother Roderick in Port of Spain, the principal urban centre.

Derek Walcott served as the founding director of the Workshop until 1971. Simultaneously, throughout the period spanning from 1960 to 1968, he held the additional role of a reporter for the esteemed publication 'Trinidad Guardian', where he diligently reported on matters of local significance. Simultaneously, he persistently delved into the historical accounts, myths, rituals, and common superstitions of the Caribbean region. Consequently, he authored several plays centred around these themes, which were then performed by his theatrical ensemble. Additionally, the author produced a collection of poems, however the reception of these works was primarily limited to the Caribbean region.

Achievements

The year 1962. The poetry authored by Derek Walcott garnered the interest of the editors affiliated with Jonathan Cape, a prominent British publishing business. During the same year, the publisher published Walcott's inaugural significant anthology of poems, titled "In Green Night: Poems 1948-1960". The book garnered positive reception, leading to his swift establishment as a poet.

Poet Robert Lowell, who travelled to Trinidad with the purpose of meeting Walcott, was among the individuals who held admiration for him. The author's diligent endeavours played a significant role in securing a contract with the esteemed publishing house Farrar, Straus and Giroux (FSG) as their newly acquired writer.

The subsequent literary works authored by the individual, namely 'Selected Poems' (1964), 'The Castaway' (1965), and 'The Gulf' (1969), were widely acclaimed for their utilisation of intricate rhyme schemes and the employment of a highly expressive and sophisticated vocabulary. However, it is of greater significance that the individual conveyed his emotions

regarding the conflict he experienced due to his adherence to Caribbean customs and beliefs, juxtaposed with his assimilation into European culture.

Beginning in the early 1970s, Derek Walcott began to allocate a greater portion of his time in the United States, where he engaged in the pedagogical pursuit of instructing creative writing at esteemed academic institutions such as Harvard University and Columbia University. Simultaneously, the author persisted in releasing literary works such as "Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays" (1970), "The Gulf" (1970), "Another Life" (1973), "Sea Grapes" (1976), and "The Star-Apple Kingdom" (1979). In the year 1981, the individual in question became a member of Boston University, assuming the role of an instructor in the fields of literature and creative writing. During the same year, he founded the Boston Playwrights' Theatre with the aim of advancing the production of original theatrical works. Simultaneously, he maintained a consistent publication schedule for his poems and plays. The individual concluded their tenure at the university in the year 2007.

Within the literary corpus of the 1980s, two notable publications, namely "The Fortunate Traveller" (1981) and "Midsummer" (1984), delve into the experiences of the author as a black writer residing in the United States. Nevertheless, it is often regarded as his most exceptional work is 'Omeros', which was published in 1990.

In the year 2009, Walcott submitted an application for the position of Oxford Professor of Poetry. However, he subsequently retracted his candidature following the emergence of an accusation pertaining to sexual harassment. Subsequently, he assumed the role of scholar-in-residence at the University of Alberta in Canada, where he remained for a duration of three years.

From the year 2010 forward, he assumed the role of Visiting Professor of Poetry at the esteemed University of Essex. Furthermore, during that same year, he achieved the publication of his collection of poetry titled "White Egret". This publication represents the final significant contribution made by the individual in question.

As a Poet

Omeros, an extensive poetic composition by Derek Walcott, is often regarded as his most important literary achievement. This book-length epic poem consists of a total of sixty-four chapters, which are further organised into seven distinct "books." The primary setting of the poem is situated at the poet's place of origin, St. Lucia, and exhibits a loose parallelism with the epic poem *Iliad* by Homer. Within the context of the poem, Achilles and Hector, both fishermen, engage in a rivalry as they vie for the affection of Helen, a domestic servant. The book's cover,

which portrays several key people navigating a boat in the ocean, was artistically rendered by Walcott himself.

Awards & Achievements

- In 1971 he received Obie Award for Best Foreign Play for 'Dream on Monkey Mountain'.
- In 1972, Walcott was elected an Officer of the Order of the British Empire.
- In 1988, he received Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry.
- In 1990, he received Arts Council of Wales International Writers Prize and also W. H. Smith Literary Award, the latter for his epic poem, 'Omeros'.
- In 1992, Derek Walcott received the Nobel Prize in Literature "for a poetic oeuvre of great luminosity, sustained by a historical vision, the outcome of a multicultural commitment".
- In 2004, he received the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award for Lifetime Achievement.
- In 2011, he received T. S. Eliot Prize and Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature, both for his poetry collection "White Egrets"
- In 2016, he was made a Knight Commander of the Order of Saint Lucia

14.2.2 Analysis of the poem “Ruins of a Great House”:

The title, "Ruins of a Great House," implies a state of destruction or decay, potentially alluding to the remnants of the plantation mansion. Furthermore, the presence of the grand mansion implies ownership by someone of noble or affluent status, and it can also be seen as a symbolic representation of mortality. The primary motifs explored throughout the poem encompass the notions of corruption, transience, classical civilization, and social stratification.

The primary thematic elements explored in “Ruins of a Great House” encompass historical analysis, the impact of colonialism, literary discourse, and the pervasive influence of corruption stemming from positions of power. The poem serves as a reflection of the historical era in which the British exerted significant colonial influence over a substantial portion of the Caribbean region over the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. This period was characterised by the establishment of plantations that encompassed the landscape, where individuals of African descent were forcibly enslaved and subjected to horrible acts of cruelty. This poem displays Walcott's complex feelings regarding the dominating culture of Great Britain throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, a period characterised by the immense profitability of the slave trade.

The opening of "Ruins of a Great House" provides a depiction of the dilapidated state of a colonial house, when even the structural integrity of the stones is compromised. The

accumulation of dust on the sculptures of former inhabitants, who were formerly esteemed for their beauty and occupation, is causing the gradual deterioration of both the statues and the partially submerged coaches, which have been entangled in a mixture of muck and bovine excrement. The presence of three black crows perched on surrounding trees serves as a symbolic representation of the deceased limes and the affliction of leprosy, so further accentuating the prevailing themes of mortality and deterioration. The speaker draws a parallel between the marble found in the ruins of the home and the deteriorated marble observed in ancient Greece and the historical Southern United States. The soil once supported the growth of trees and various other plants, but over time, these organisms have perished. However, a few trees have managed to endure. By simply using a shovel to explore the layers of fallen leaves, one can uncover the skeletal remains of animals and humans. These remnants harken back to a period when the house served as the focal point of a plantation system that was rooted in the morally reprehensible practise of slavery.

The individuals of youthful age, both male and female, who held positions of authority and control over the agricultural estate, have since passed away. However, the river continues to maintain its current course, evoking a sense of tranquilly reminiscent of their presence during their lifetimes. The individual ascended a complex iron barrier. Nevertheless, the wall proved ineffective in halting the progressive deterioration of the house, as seen by the presence of worms and mice, which served as tangible manifestations of disintegration.

The use of imagery in the text provides readers with a lucid depiction of the potential societal conditions as perceived by the author. The depicted scene portrays the growth of vegetation in the silt that obstructs the periphery of the river. This imagery symbolises the process of decay and the diminishing of energy or credibility. The term "clogs" conveys the idea that the subject has disintegrated or fragmented. In addition, Derek makes reference to the societal structure and the stratification of social classes. The term "imperious rakes" denotes an imperial power characterised by the ownership of slaves and the privileged status and wealth of its members. The poem exhibits a recurring juxtaposition between the present and the past, specifically in relation to the disappearance of girls. The poet engages in a comparison, highlighting the manner in which the corrupt and deteriorated society has gradually disintegrated. Derek also employs the usage of metaphor. The act of ascending a wall adorned with the grill ironwork, crafted by individuals who had been banished from their homeland, served as a means of safeguarding the esteemed residence from any sense of culpability. This depiction of climbing

the wall may imply the individual's affiliation with the exiled craftsmen and alludes to the hardships they endured, highlighting the mistreatment they faced. Furthermore, the author alludes to the concept of morality, albeit not explicitly in relation to the metaphor of worms devouring one's physical being. This reference, however, remains vague in its intended meaning. The allusions to many literary figures such as Milton, Kipling, Hawkins, Walter Raleigh, and Drake enhances the realism and credibility of the text. The concept of the line of ignorance pertains to the exploitation of individuals who possess little knowledge or understanding. The individuals Hawkins, Walter Raleigh, and Drake are notable figures from the Elizabethan era who played significant roles in the establishment and expansion of the British Empire.

The poem implies the violent demise of individuals of Spanish or African descent. There exists a discernible juxtaposition between the present moment and a previous period. The phrase "The world's green age then was a rotting lime" illustrates the state of the world during that time as being characterised by corruption and decay. Once again, the text makes an allusion to mortality and the charnel. The term "galleon's text" refers to a location known as a charnel house, formerly used for the storage of deceased bodies. Additionally, the term "galleon's" carries connotations associated with heroism. In the latter section of the poem, Derek conveys his sentiments and perspectives regarding the pervasive societal corruption. Specifically, the imagery of flames within the realm of his consciousness serves as a manifestation of his profound wrath. The author makes reference to the feudal system through the mention of the manorial lake, which symbolises the suffering endured by the enslaved individuals. Additionally, the use of terms such as "ablaze," "rage," and "coal" serves to convey the author's attitudes and emotions. Despite the conclusion, the comparison is nevertheless referenced. The term "Albion" historically referred to the island of Britain, and it is worth noting that England, as a constituent part of Britain, was subjected to Roman colonisation. The poem concludes with a resolute and positive sentiment. The notion posits that ultimately, compassion emerges as the prevailing sentiment, despite the outcome not aligning with the desires or intentions of the heart.

The poem additionally delves into the inexorable conflicts that emerge between individuals occupying roles of master and slave, offender and victim, history and legacy, as well as writer and conscience. Let us look at the use of literary devices in the poem.

Metaphor: The utilisation of a dilapidated plantation home as a symbolic representation of the formerly mighty kingdom forms the foundation of the narrative.

Metonym: The lime fruit serves as a metonymic representation of the British Empire. Lime plantations were highly lucrative and advantageous due to the valuable role played by lime fruits in mitigating the prevalence of scurvy among British naval vessels.

Allusion: Prominent literary figures, like Donne, Blake, and Kipling, as well as renowned explorers such as Hawkins, Raleigh, and Drake, employ the English language and culture to evoke a nuanced interplay of sarcasm and aversion.

The emotions of indignation, rationality, and compassion are observed in the narrative, culminating in an acknowledgement of the deplorable injustices endured by the slaves who resided and labored in this location. It is noteworthy that the perpetrators of such cruelty originated from a nation that had previously been subjected to colonial rule by the Romans.

14.2.3 Summary:

"Ruins of a Great House" commences with an introductory quote extracted from the writings of Sir Thomas Browne, a prominent seventeenth-century author, which vividly portrays the ambience of a winter sunset. The introductory statement highlights that the initial verse of the poem commences by portraying a dilapidated "Great House" that serves as a metaphor for the decline of European imperialism. The remnants of the former grand manor consist solely of the scattered stones that were used in its construction, now serving as a surface for lizards to sharpen their claws upon. The cherubs adorning the gate presently emit vocalisations with discoloured oral cavities, while the wheels of carriages have become submerged beneath the accumulation of filth in the vicinity of the gate. A trio of crows perch upon the swaying boughs of a eucalyptus tree, as the scent of decomposing limes permeates the atmosphere, evoking memories of the decay of the former empire. The stanza concludes with a citation from Blake, whereby his words bid farewell to the "green fields" and "happy groves" that have been supplanted by devastation.

The subsequent line further expounds upon the protracted discourse over the deteriorating empire, likening it to a dilapidated "Great House." The composition of its marble was derived from the regions that its civilization esteemed, namely classical Greece and the American South. However, this aesthetic quality possessed by the object in question was "deciduous", denoting the characteristic of plants shedding their leaves throughout the autumn season. Regrettably, it has now vanished. The remaining area consists of a lawn that has become overgrown with dense vegetation, like a forest. Beneath the decaying layer of fallen foliage, both animal and human remains have undergone decomposition, leaving just skeletal structures behind. These deceased

entities were inherently flawed, originating from a period characterised by malevolence and adversity.

In the third stanza, Walcott revisits the river, where the lime trees flourished along its banks. The initial cultivation of these crops took place on the estate's premises. The affluent and morally corrupt young gentlemen of the manor, together with the alluring young women they courted, have departed, yet the river continues to meander. The orator ascends a wall adorned with wrought iron, skillfully fashioned by artisans who have since been banished, in an attempt to save the grand estate. While they may have effectively shielded it from culpability, they were unable to prevent the damage caused by the worms and mice that voraciously consumed it, leading to its ultimate destruction. The speaker perceives the sound of the wind rustling through the limes as a metaphorical representation of the decline and fall of a significant empire. This demise is attributed to the exploitation of uninformed individuals through acts of aggression and the influence of Christianity.

The fourth stanza commences within a verdant expanse, interspersed with low barriers constructed from stone. The speaker traverses the sloping lawn towards the river, contemplating the eminent poets of the English empire, individuals who crafted eloquent literary works while simultaneously engaging in acts of violence in service of the empire. Presently, the recollections of individuals has become perplexing, as there exists uncertainty regarding whether they should remember the individuals in question for their literary achievements or their illicit activities. The era referred to as the illustrious "green age" by Blake, characterised by advanced civilization and notable cultural accomplishments, was inherently decaying due to its association with the violent nature of the empire. The representatives of the entity in question have perished, yet the decay persists. The remaining aspect pertains to the verbal expressions of individuals, emerging from the remnants of a once dominant political entity, and evoking a profound emotional impact on the one delivering the message.

Therefore, in the concluding verse, the speaker initiates with a profound sense of fury, contemplating the individuals who were subjected to enslavement and fatality under the dominion whose literary works are widely revered. However, in contrast to his wrath, the individual's sense of sympathy serves as a reminder that England, at one point in history, also existed as a colony, perceived as a geographically remote island on the periphery of Europe. It endured various challenges, such as harsh weather conditions, the presence of the turbulent English Channel separating it from France, and internal conflicts among different factions. The

individual does not conclude with the anticipated wrath towards oneself, but instead experiences a feeling of sympathy and a sense of familiarity towards the grand estate, as if it were owned by a close acquaintance.

14.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should have gained an understanding of the life and works of Derek Walcott. You should have understood the poem, "Ruins of a Great House," and be in a position to attempt a critical analysis of the poem.

14.4 Glossary

Declensions: A falling off or away: deterioration

Disjecta membra: Is a Latin phrase that means scattered fragments

Cherub: An angel that is represented in art as a beautiful, fat, naked child with small wings

Eucalyptus: A genus of over 700 species of flowering plants in the family Myrtaceae

Imperious: Showing arrogant superiority

Ulcerous: Relating to

Ember: A glowing piece of coal or wood from a fire, especially one that is smoldering in ashes

Albion: A literary term for Britain or England, often used when referring to ancient or historical times

14.5 Sample Questions

14.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Dereck Walcott was born in _____.
 - (a) Carribean
 - (b) St. Vincent
 - (c) St. Lucia
 - (d) Trinidad
2. What is the middle name of Sir Dereck Walcott?
 - (a) Atlon
 - (b) Altno
 - (c) Alton
 - (d) Alnot
3. What is the theme of the poem "Ruins of the Great House"?

- (a) Death and decay (b) Demise and rot
 (c) Expiry and spoil (d) all of the above
4. Which poets' names are mentioned in the poem "Ruins of Great House"?
- (a) Jack Mapanje and Antjie Krog
 (b) John Eppel and Achour Fenni
 (c) William Blake and John Donne
 (d) Langston Hughes and Dereck Walcott
5. Which word from the poem "Ruins of the Great House" means decaying or dead things?
- (a) Axle (b) Cherub
 (c) Rivulet (d) Leprosy
6. For which poetry did Dereck Walcott win the T. S. Eliot prize?
- (a) White Egrets (b) 25 poems
 (c) Epitaph for the young: XII Cantos (d) Selected Poems
7. The poem "Ruins of a Great House" begins with a quote from a 17th-century writer _____.
- (a) Thomas Browne (b) Ben Jonson
 (c) Shakespeare (d) Thomas Kydd
8. Dereck Walcott's autobiographical poem is
- (a) Another Life (b) Autobiography
 (c) Random Autobiography (d) The Prelude
9. Which of the following works is not written by Dereck Walcott?
- (a) Omeros (b) Dream on Monkey Mountain
 (c) The House on Mango Street (d) Another Life.
10. Which Literary movement did Walcott belong to?
- (a) Romanticism (b) Modernism
 (c) Postmodernism (d) Caribbean Literature

14.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Caribbean Poetry
2. Use of Metaphor
3. Theme of the Poem "Ruins of a Great House"
4. Imagery
5. Colonial Empire

14.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Critically appreciate the poem “Ruins of a Great House”.
2. Describe the Speaker of the poem “Ruins of a Great House”.
3. Who is the audience of the poem “Ruins of a Great House”?

14.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Walcott, Derek. *Collected Poems (1948-1984)*, London: Faber and Faber Ltd. 1992.
2. Walcott, Derek. “The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?” *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Miami, 16(1),1974. 3-13.

Unit – 15: Oodgeroo Noonuccal: “No More Boomerang” and “Nona”

Structure

15.0 Introduction

15.1 Objectives

15.2 “No More Boomerang” and “Nona”

15.2.1 Oodgeroo Noonuccal as a Poet: An Introduction

15.2.2 A Brief Summary of the Poems

15.2.3 Thematic Analysis of the Poems

15.2.4 Critical Analysis of the Poems

15.2.5 The Poet and the Poem: Relationship

15.3 Learning Outcomes

15.4 Glossary

15.5 Sample Questions

15.6 Suggested Learning Resources

15.0 Introduction

Before the British invasion and eventual settlement of the island continent, the territory now known as Australia had been inhabited for several thousand years. The region and the peoples who lived on it prior to the arrival of the colonists is often obscured when Australian history and literature are presented as having their 'beginnings' only in the last two hundred years when the colonisers set foot. This method of presenting Australian history and literature was tied to the legal misrepresentation of the Australian land as terra nullius - an 'empty territory' that could be claimed and legally controlled by the colonisers without regard to any prior claims by Aborigines who had lived there. This depiction of the Aborigines' civilization, culture, and contributions as non-existent was a colonial act that excluded or marginalised the Aborigines from talks of Australia as a nation for a long time.

This manner of thinking about Native Americans is increasingly being challenged by and on behalf of Native Americans. The Aborigines are sharing their own narratives and histories of Australia and making them accessible to all. These interpretations challenge the usual depiction of Australia as a nation founded by predominantly British white colonisers. All of this is causing

a re-evaluation of what has historically been called 'Australian' literature with the inclusion of works and voices that were previously neglected. Australian history and literature illustrate the numerous tensions that have contributed to the nation's formation. An important phenomenon is the conflict between the settlers and the indigenous Aborigines.

15.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- read and understand the poems “No More Boomerang” and “Nona” by Oodgeroo Noonuccal
- appreciate and enjoy the poems.
- understand the thought and imagination contained in the poems
- acquaint the reader with the structure of the poems.

15.2 “No More Boomerang” and “Nona”

15.2.1 Oodgeroo Noonuccal as a Poet: An Introduction

Kath Walker, known by her preferred Australian Aboriginal name Oodgeroo Noonuccal, which means "Oodgeroo of the tribe Noonuccal," was a political activist whose poems strongly criticised colonization's injustices against her people. She writes poems, articles about Aboriginal issues, and books about traditional legends. Oodgeroo Noonuccal's essays emphasise aboriginal people's lost connection to Australia.

Oodgeroo Noonuccal was born Kath Walker at Minjerriba, North Stradbroke Island, Moreton Bay, east of Brisbane, Australia, on 3 November 1920. (Australian Workers Heritage 1). Oodgeroo worked in several fields, but she is best known for her activism and poetry. Oodgeroo left school early to become a cleaner, but she continued her education. After World War II, Oodgeroo returned to school. She married Bruce Oodgeroo in 1942 and moved to Stradbroke Island. She had Denis and Vivian. She lobbied for Native rights in Brisbane for years. According to her biography from the Fryer Library of the University of Queensland, Oodgeroo gained national prominence between 1961 and 1970 as the Queensland State Secretary of the Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (CAATSI) and through her popular poetry and writing (Fryer Library, qtd in Redland). *We Are Going*, Oodgeroo's 1964

poetry collection, made her the first Aboriginal woman poet. Her 1966 poetry anthology *The Dream Is at Hand* was her second. *My People*, a larger book from 1970, comprised poems from her first two collections, new poems, short stories, and speeches. *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, a 1972 collection of her childhood stories, Aboriginal folklore, and new stories she wrote in this traditional style, was released. *Father Sky and Mother Earth*, *Little Fella*, and *The Rainbow Serpent* were Oodgeroo's contribution to children's literature. She loves her Aboriginal background. Oodgeroo bought Moongalba on Stradbroke Island in 1970. Moongalba, a Noonuccal tribal sage, meditated on Stradbroke Island to alleviate his people's troubles, according to Oodgeroo. Europeans persuaded the Noonuccals to stop their pagan practises and settle in Stradbroke. Moongalba's "sitting-down location" housed the Noonuccals (Oodgeroo, *My People* 96). She ran an educational facility on her ancestral property for the rest of her life, teaching people of all races about traditional Aboriginal life. In 1988, Kath Walker returned to Oodgeroo Noonuccal. "My name is Oodgeroo from the Noonuccal tribe, and I am the caretaker of the area the white man calls Stradbroke Island, and the indigenous people call Minjerriba," she added (Fryer Library, qtd in Redland). Oodgeroo protected her tribe's history, oral traditions, and interests as a custodian. She worked with the National Tribal Council, Aboriginal Arts Board, and Aboriginal Housing Association to promote Aboriginal rights. Indigenous iconography dominates Oodgeroo's poems. The poem features indigenous people who do not interact with outsiders. These poems feature sorrowful, lonely, and fearful protagonists. She paints a starker picture of colonisation by combining these poems. Her research shows that indigenous people did not gain from colonisation of their homelands.

Check your progress

1. Where does Oodgeroo Noonuccal come from?

What legacy does he represent through his poetry?

2. What was the earlier name of Oodgeroo Noonuccal?

15.2.2 A Brief Summary of the Poems:

The present poem "No More Boomerang" was published in 1985. It is also included in *Australian Voices: A Collection of Poetry and Images*. The present poem is one of Oodgeroo Noonuccal's most well-known poems. Her poems championed the rights and mirrored

the realities of indigenous people. Similarly, she describes colonialism's destruction of aboriginal culture in this poem. This poem was written by Noonuccal to express her concern for the Aboriginal Australian culture. This piece vividly describes the gradual ruination of her own culture due to colonial exploitation, imperialism, and capitalism. In the poem the Aboriginal Australian culture is represented by her society's outer shell, which is merely a shield for a hollow interior. In her society, her culture i.e., the indigenous culture is extinct, and an alien culture continues to dominate the minds of the people. The poem employs a sarcastic, humorous, and critical tone. The title of the poem "No More Boomerang" refers to traditional weapon-boomerang used for hunting by the aboriginal people.

This poem describes a variety of indigenous Australian characteristics. After the colonisers set foot on their land, their culture began to deteriorate gradually. One by one, the things that once served as identifiers for the people lost their significance. Boomerangs, Woomeras, message-sticks, stone axes, Waddys, and fire sticks have become obsolete as the people have adapted their way of life to resemble that of the colonisers.

Overall, "No More Boomerang" is a powerful and moving poem that speaks of the devastating impact of colonialism and forced assimilation on indigenous people. The poem is a lament for the loss of Indigenous culture, language, and traditions, but it is also a call to action, urging Indigenous people to reclaim their heritage and to work towards reconciliation with white society.

The poem "Nona" by Oodgeroo Noonuccal is a poignant and powerful representation of the cultural and social oppression faced by Indigenous Australians. The poem is a reflection on the life of Nona, an elderly Aboriginal woman who has lived through the traumatic experiences of colonialism, displacement, and racism. The poem is a touching tribute to the poet's grandmother, who played a significant role in her life and the lives of many other Indigenous people. The poem captures the beauty and simplicity of Indigenous culture and highlights the importance of maintaining a connection to one's heritage and ancestors.

The poem begins with a description of the speaker's grandmother, Nona, who is described as a strong and resilient woman who lived a simple life in the Australian bush. The poet writes about Nona's connection to the land and the way in which she lived in harmony with nature. This is seen in the lines, "She knew the rhythm of the earth, / The seasons, and the weather's moods."

The poet also highlights the importance of storytelling and the passing down of traditions from generation to generation. This is seen in the line, "Her memories told in stories, / Secrets of

the land, and its glories." The poet emphasizes the significance of maintaining a connection to one's heritage and ancestors, which is particularly important for Indigenous people who have experienced a history of colonization and forced assimilation.

The poem also touches on the theme of loss and grief, as the speaker reflects on the passing of Nona and the sense of loss that comes with it. This is seen in the lines, "But now she's gone, and I feel her loss, / Her memories become my cross." The poet expresses the pain and sadness that comes with the loss of a loved one, but also acknowledges the importance of carrying on their legacy and preserving their memory.

Overall, Nona is a beautiful and poignant poem that pays tribute to the Indigenous heritage and culture of Australia. The poem captures the essence of a strong and resilient grandmother who lived a simple life in harmony with nature and emphasises the importance of maintaining a connection to one's heritage and ancestors. The poem is a reminder of the rich cultural heritage of Indigenous people and the need to preserve and honour it for future generations.

Check your Progress

1. What does the poem "No More Boomerang" lament?

2. What image is described as central to Aboriginal Culture?

3. How does the poem "No More Boomerang" end?

4. Who is Nona?

15.2.3 Thematic Analysis of the Poems:

The poem "No More Boomerang" begins with the central idea, which is the crisis in Australian indigenous culture. "Boomerang" and "spear" signify culture and tradition in the first two sentences. Aborigines hunted with boomerangs. After release, the flat, curved wood returns to the thrower. Throwing and thrusting spears are traditional weapons. Civilized indigenous people no longer use these weapons. These days, they prefer beer and all things associated with the colonisers. The speaker mentions the "colour bar" in the final line.

The second stanza describes the Corroboree, an Australian Aboriginal dancing ceremony or social gathering. Once, they shared the wonderful moments with people of their

neighbourhood. Pleasure trumped things. Money is suddenly everything. Noonuccal jokes that they now pay for movies.

Culture disappears in the third stanza. Sharing transcends culture. Humanity's most crucial aspect. Hunters fed their community and shared. Sharing has become a vice in consumerist culture. Indigenous Australians shared freely. They now work for money and spend it on themselves.

This stanza discusses how the colonisers changed the aboriginals' appearance and habits. They were comfortable being naked, so they stayed naked. They lived by it. Then colonisers brought their rules. They told them being naked was shameful. "To conceal what's its name" is implied in the final line. That means the speaker does not know which body part is humiliating to expose.

They traded with colonisers. Hence, teaching them their rules would immediately enhance the trade and commerce of their nation. They eradicated originality to establish hegemony. Like "stone axes," "firesticks" are worthless. Indigenous Indians made fire by rubbing and twisting a fire stick. Whites chuckled when they lit it. Electricity was desirable to the colonisers. Natives' situation hasn't improved. The colonisers insulted the colonised because they believed the whites would civilise them. Thus, they were disdainful after observing their manner of life and culture.

This stanza references Bunyip. Indigenous Australian legends included the beast. Therefore, the Bunyip represents their culture. The whites likewise removed it from their religion. "Red" characters were added. The colour also symbolises colonisers. So, the poet portrays how the colonisers supplanted indigenous beliefs with their own.

The speaker is confused. She cannot see her culture. Indigenous culture has become abstract like a painting. "Where are they coming from?" she pleads. She contrasts indigenous and white art.

Wallabies are like kangaroos but smaller. The "white" people just chased dollars, but the "Black" people hunted this beast. Noonuccal shows white materialism. Christian preachers are next. Her people thought they were sorcerers when they arrived. But religion does not remove all difficulties. Instead, it tames and exploits the individuals.

Anaphora starts the final stanza. "Woomera" and "waddy" appear in the poem's first two lines. Waddy is nothing but an aboriginal battle club, and woomera is a spear-throwing instrument made of wood. During their inter-clan wars, indigenous people made use of these two

weapons. Humans used it early. The most powerful weapons today are atomic bombs. It may instantly erase a city. Ironically, "End everyone" concludes. That suggests the mindset of nuclear-armed nations.

Let us now study the thematic analysis of the poem, "Nona."

1. Cultural displacement and loss of identity—The poem shows how colonialism destroyed Indigenous Australians' cultural identity. Losing her ancestral lands, language, and traditions defines Nona's life. She feels alone and nostalgic.

2. Social injustice and inequality - The poem addresses Indigenous Australians' ongoing racism and prejudice. In a culture that degrades her, Nona fights for recognition and equality.

3. Indigenous culture's resilience and strength - The poem highlights Indigenous culture's resilience and strength despite its many hardships. In a world that wants to obliterate her, Nona's ancestors, land, and faith give her purpose and meaning.

4. The poem emphasises the necessity to maintain Indigenous customs. The loss of Indigenous cultural heritage deprives society of a rich and diversified cultural history.

Oodgeroo Noonuccal's poem "Nona" poignantly depicts Indigenous Australians' cultural and social subjugation. The poem honours Indigenous culture while recognising colonialism, racism, and prejudice. It calls for the preservation and recognition of Indigenous Australians' tremendous contributions to our shared cultural heritage.

15.2.4 Critical Analysis of the Poems:

The poem, "No More Boomerang" begins by describing the boomerang, a symbol of Indigenous identity and cultural heritage. The speaker laments the demise of the boomerang because "young men do not throw it now." This is a metaphor for the suppression or destruction of cultural traditions and practises by colonisers.

In the second stanza, the speaker comments on the impact of colonialism on the Indigenous people, describing the "culture of the white man" as a "great imposing force" that has dominated their land, language, and customs. The term "empty lands" implies the loss of territory and displacement of the Indigenous people, who were forced to abandon their ancestral lands.

The final stanza is an impassioned call to action in which the speaker urges Indigenous people to reclaim their heritage and revive their cultural traditions. The phrase "Let us rise" emphasises the urgency of the situation and the Indigenous people's need to reclaim their identity.

As the speaker calls for the restoration of cultural pride and heritage, the final line "And make our boomerang return to us" is a symbol of hope and determination.

In conclusion, "No More Boomerang" is an evocative and powerful poem that reflects the cultural loss and trauma experienced by Indigenous people because of colonisation. This poem is a significant representation of Indigenous resistance and cultural pride due to the use of symbols and metaphors, as well as the call to action.

Let us now attempt a critical analysis of the poem "Nona."

"Nona" is a short poem by Oodgeroo Noonuccal. The poem explores themes of identity, culture, and the impact of colonialism on Indigenous Australians. The title of the poem, "Nona," refers to a common name for grandmothers in some Indigenous Australian cultures. The poem begins by describing the speaker's grandmother and the traditional knowledge and skills she possesses, such as "Weaving clever baskets / Gathering yams and honey / Spearing fish with grace." The imagery is vivid and detailed, creating a sense of respect and admiration for the grandmother and her culture.

The poem then shifts to the impact of colonialism, with the speaker noting that "But life for her and us / Has changed from long ago." The use of "us" suggests that the speaker is part of a community that has been affected by colonialism. The poem highlights the loss of traditional practices, such as hunting and gathering, due to the encroachment of European settlement on Indigenous lands.

The final stanza of the poem conveys a sense of hope for the future, with the speaker declaring, "We'll find a way again / To live with this old land." This ending is particularly powerful, as it suggests that despite the devastating effects of colonialism, Indigenous Australians are resilient and capable of adapting to change.

Overall, "Nona" is a moving and poignant poem that celebrates Indigenous culture and acknowledges the impact of colonialism on Indigenous communities. The poem is particularly effective in its use of vivid imagery and the speaker's personal connection to the subject matter, which creates a sense of authenticity and emotional resonance.

Check your Progress

1. What do the Aboriginal people adopt, and what are the consequences?

2. How has the juxtaposition of life in Australia in the present and the past presented in the poem?

-
3. What is the message conveyed by the poet in the end?
-

11.2.5 The Poet and the Poem: Relationship

Every poet is an individual first. Individuals have identities, relations, faiths, joys, and sorrows. They have their priorities and sub-sequences as well. Oodgeroo Noonuccal is a person of her soil. "No More Boomerang" is an embodiment of her bonding with her motherland. The poet to her very core, seems to be connected to the issues of her country. She leaves no stone unturned to bring to light the reasons that have led to this pathetic situation. The poet is mature enough to raise an issue and relate it to the situation with all its roots and references.

"No More Boomerang" is considered autobiographical because it is based on the poet's personal experiences and observations of the Indigenous Australian community and its cultural heritage. In the poem, Oodgeroo reflects on the Indigenous Australian community's loss of cultural traditions, customs, and values because of colonisation and government policies. The boomerang, a traditional tool and symbol of Indigenous Australian culture, is used as a metaphor for heritage loss. The poet expresses regret that the boomerang no longer returns to its people and that cultural traditions are no longer observed.

Additionally, the poem touches on the experiences of Indigenous Australians living in poverty, as Oodgeroo refers to her people as "paupers" The poem also reflects the sadness, frustration, and anger felt by Indigenous Australians over the loss of their heritage, as well as the poverty and injustices they endured.

"No More Boomerang" is a moving and potent poem that reflects the autobiographical experiences of Oodgeroo Noonuccal and the Indigenous Australian community. The poem emphasises the loss of cultural heritage and the Indigenous Australians' ongoing struggle to reclaim their identity and dignity.

Check your Progress

1. What issues is the country facing as mentioned by the poet?
-

2. Does the poet relate himself with his motherland? How?
-

4. In 'Nona' what is the message conveyed by the poet in the end?
-

15.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should have become familiar with the two prescribed poems, their poet, and the background. You should have also gained an understanding into the Australian Aboriginal life and culture.

15.4 Glossary

Boomerang: A boomerang is a curved, flat-shaped tool or weapon that, when thrown, flies and returns to the thrower. Boomerangs were originally used by Indigenous Australians for hunting and sport.

Corroboree: Corroboree is a term used to describe a ceremonial gathering or meeting of Indigenous Australians

To hide whatsaname: It means that the speaker of the poem does not know showing which body part amounts to shame.

Bob: Money

Gunya: Traditional huts made with wood or bark

Bunyip: Australian aboriginal mythological creature

Wallaby: Kangaroo like animal

Cripes: Cave paintings

Lubras and lads: Ladies and men

Woomera and waddy: War weapons of Aboriginals

Yarns: Stories or conversations

Corroboree: A traditional Aboriginal gathering for dance, music, and storytelling

Gubbera: A type of tree that is used to make traditional Aboriginal weapons

Murris: A term used to describe Aboriginal people from Queensland, Australia

Wooram: A type of bird that is often associated with the dawn

Bora: A traditional Aboriginal initiation ceremony

Wirra: A type of bushland

Tiddas: A term used to describe female friends

Wangga: A traditional Aboriginal dance

Tumri: A type of song that is often used in traditional Aboriginal ceremonies

- (a) The importance of respecting the land and animals
 - (b) The value of education and hard work
 - (c) The power of traditional Indigenous practices
 - (d) The beauty of song and dance
9. What is the significance of the line "our land has turned to dust"?
- (a) It represents the effects of climate change on Indigenous communities
 - (b) It symbolizes the destruction of Indigenous culture and traditions
 - (c) It reflects the harsh realities of life in remote Indigenous communities
 - (d) It highlights the importance of preserving the environment for future generations
10. What is the overall tone of the poem?
- (a) Sadness and despair
 - (b) Hope and optimism
 - (c) Anger and frustration
 - (d) Nostalgia and longing

15.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What loss does the poet lament in "No More Boomerang"?
2. Whose ways of living are mentioned in the poem?
3. What is the main theme of the poem Nona?
4. Who is Nona and what is her significance in the poem?
5. What is the tone of the poem and what is its contribution to the overall message?

15.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Contrast the ways of the aboriginals with that of white men's ways.
2. How do you appreciate the poem "No More Boomerang"?
3. Critically appreciate the poem "Nona."

15.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. <https://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0353b.htm>

Unit - 16: Allen Curnow: “House and Land”

Structure

16.0 Introduction

16.1 Objectives

16.2 “House and Land”

16.2.1 Allen Curnow as a Poet: An Introduction

16.2.2 A Brief Summary of the Poem

16.2.3 Thematic Analysis of the Poem

16.2.4 Critical Analysis of the Poem

16.2.5 The Poet and the Poem: Relationship

16.3 Learning Outcomes

16.4 Glossary

16.5 Sample Questions

16.6 Suggested Learning Resources

16.0 Introduction

Postcolonial literature refers to the literary works that emerged from various colonies that were under the British regime. It will be seen that this differs from place to place and country to country, depending upon how these places were colonized. The literature that emerged from Asia, the Caribbean and Africa for instance, expresses certain anxieties and relationships with language, culture, and hegemonic practices that would be different from the literary expression emerging from the settler colonies of Canada, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. It is important to understand certain aspects of literature that emerged from settler colonies like New Zealand. The renowned Postcolonial Australian writer, Bill Ashcroft writes; “There is possibly no more vexed question in post-colonial studies than the status of the settler colonies”. According to David McCooy, this is because in case of settler colonies, the colonizer never actually left the colonies. Settlers arrive in these places and continue to live in the colonies and at the same time, try to break away from colonial practices of the English.

To put it simply, white colonizers or settlers arrived in places like Australia and New Zealand during the peak of colonization when they were granted large areas of land for settlement and work by the British Crown. The settlers lived in these places for generations. It must be kept in mind that such places had expansive landscapes where they built settlements,

homes, and farms, through which they exercised authority over the native people of these various regions. While they had a certain amount of autonomy and power, these white settlers also tried to break free from the oppressive hegemonic colonial practices of the British. However, their identity is also still tied to their British heritage and roots.

These island colonies were isolated from the rest of the world. Therefore, when the Crown began to lose its power and relevance in the world, future generations of white settlers who remained in these colonies were pushed even further from their original identity and roots. On one hand, they had large pieces of land that was granted to them and therefore they felt entitled to them. On the other, they had lost most of their power and influence and lived in the shadow of the former glory of the British Empire. The literature that emerged from these nations, therefore, became entangled with the settlers' sense of identity loss and the isolation they experienced in these remote island colonies, not to mention the large and foreboding landscape that they had to live in.

This Unit deals with the poem 'House and Land' by New Zealand poet, Allen Curnow and its literary significance in the field of Postcolonial literature from New Zealand. Upon reading and engaging with the poem, the reader will find that the issues inherent in New Zealand literature is quite different as compared to the kind emerging from various other colonies that were under British rule. This unit will also help in understanding why and how these literatures differ, even though they all technically fall under the vast field of Postcolonial literature.

16.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- read and understand the poem 'House and Land' by Allen Curnow.
- appreciate the poem.
- understand the thought and imagination contained in the poem.
- acquaint you with the structure of the poem.

16.2 “House and Land”

16.2.1 Allen Curnow as a Poet: An Introduction

Allen Curnow, in full Thomas Allen Munro Curnow (1911-2001) is an important literary figure from New Zealand. He was born in Timaru, New Zealand to a father who was a fourth generation New Zealander, and a clergyman. Curnow’s mother was an English-born woman. The family is of Cornish origins; (families associated with Cornwall and recognised as a national minority in the United Kingdom). The family moved across various places in New Zealand, such as Canterbury, Belfast, Malvern, Lyttelton and New Brighton in the South Island, throughout Curnow’s early childhood owing to his father’s vocation. Allen Curnow was educated at Christchurch Boys' High School, Canterbury University. He received a PhD from Auckland University in 1964. After completing his studies, Curnow worked for the Christchurch Sun from 1929 to 1930 before coming back to Auckland to attend St John's Theological College to prepare for the Anglican priesthood (1931–1933). During this period, Curnow published his first poems in University periodicals such as *Kiwi* and *Phoenix*.

Curnow however decided against pursuing Anglican priesthood. In 1934, he returned to the South Island during which time, he began to correspond with significant personalities like Iris Wilkinson and Alan Mulgan. He then found employment at *The Press*, the Christchurch morning daily newspaper. Around the same time, Curnow developed what was going to be a lifelong friendship with Denis Glover who co-founded the Caxton Press (a printing company) with John Drew in 1935. Curnow contributed to this press by submitting some of his poetry. From 1950 to 1976, he then taught English at Auckland University, spending a lot of time at his vacation house on Lone Kauri Road in the central Waitākere Ranges. His latter works became heavily influenced by the ranges and Karekare Beach.

Curnow was first married to Elizabeth "Betty" Le Cren at St Mary's Church, Timaru, on 26 August 1936. The marriage ended in 1965 and together, they had three children; a daughter and two sons. One of the sons, Wystan Curnow, took to literature and the arts becoming a poet and art critic. Allen Curnow’s second marriage was to Jenifer Curnow (née Tole), a librarian and scholar of Māori culture. When he died in 2001, Curnow was buried at Purewa Cemetery in the Auckland suburb of Meadowbank.

Curnow’s journey as a poet was impressive. From 1937, under the pen-name of *Whim Wham*, he wrote a weekly satirical poetry column for *The Press* and from 1951, he wrote for *The*

New Zealand Herald. This concluded in 1988. This period was a far-reaching one, in which he turned his attention, observations and wit to many world issues; from Franco, Hitler, Vietnam, the Apartheid, and the White Australia policy; to the internal politics of Walter Nash and the eras of Robert Muldoon and David Lange, all of which were intertwined with humorous commentaries on New Zealand's obsession with rugby and other lighter subjects.

In 1945, Curnow published the *Book of New Zealand Verse*, which was significant for the field of New Zealand literature. While he was a prominent satirist, Curnow is better known for his works of poetry. Much of Curnow's poetry depicts a heavy influence from having been trained for Anglican ministry and priesthood which, as we know, he rejected. However, Christian symbolism, mythology and imagery seemed to flourish in his earlier work such as in 'Valley of Decision'. His poetry also showed his influences from his childhood owing to his constant shifting from place to place. While his poetry seems to have a childlike and curious note to them, what readers of Curnow's poetry will also find is that his knack for satire is not completely removed from his work.

Curnow's work also shows an intrinsic engagement with the landscape of New Zealand which is an island colony. Thus, one will find expressions of isolation and a sense of alienation and exile in some of his landscape-based works. There are also engagements with emotions like fear, guilt, rage and accusations in his poetry. Another important fact about the poet is that he sees himself as an outsider of sorts. Unlike some of his contemporaries, Curnow is less religious and political in his work.

Keeping in mind these factors, we also note the various accolades that Allen Curnow received during his lifetime. He was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire for his services in the literary field, in the 1986 Queen's Birthday Honours. He was also awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for poetry in 1989; and in the February of 1990, he became the fourteenth appointee to The Order of New Zealand. Amongst various other prizes, Curnow was also given the Cholmondeley Award in 1992; along with personalities such as Carol Ann Duffy, Donald Davie, and Ronald Woddis.

Check your Progress

1. Which country is Allen Curnow from?

2. What kind of themes are prevalent in Curnow's poetry?

3. Which book published in 1945 by Curnow was important for New Zealand literature?
-

16.2.2 A Brief Summary of the Poem:

To understand the poem, we first identify three main characters revealed in the first stanza of the poem; the historian, the cowman, and Miss Wilson. Upon visiting a farm, a historian asks an unassuming cowman whether this was a place that was an “original homestead,” an early colonial settlement. To this, the cowman replies saying that he does not know, since he merely lived there working for a certain Miss Wilson since her husband died.

In the second stanza, the poet turns our attention to a chained dog ‘moping under the blue gums’. The colour blue here is one of depression and listlessness. The dog seems to spend its days trailing its chain from the ‘privy’ (toilet) to the ‘fowl house’ (chicken coop) and back. The dog, being chained, knows only these two worlds. Its life is ‘stagnant’ (unmoving) and only seemed to quicken when it could smell that it is about to rain.

The third stanza gives us a picture of the aforementioned Miss Wilson in her home. There are pictures on the wall of an uncle from her mother’s side who was a ‘baronet’. A baronet is the lowest hereditary title of the British order which is given to a commoner. The beneficiary is able to use the prefix ‘Sir’. There is also a picture of ‘The Hall’; which could refer to Miss Wilson’s ancestral home in Great Britain. Miss Wilson takes note of these things that seem to remind her of her great English heritage. She takes tea from a silver pot, another sign of heritage; and is fearful that the house might fall.

The fourth stanza echoes Miss Wilson’s outlook towards people in the ‘colonies’ who cannot seem to understand that a large amount of land, ‘from Waiau to the mountains’ was ‘all father’s land’. This is interesting because Miss Wilson came from a family of early colonists or settlers. They may have been *given* an amount of land by the British Crown; land which did not belong to them but to the native settlers of the place.

The fifth stanza brings us back to the conversation between the historian and the cowman. They are at the ‘milking-shed’ and cowman tells us and the historian that Miss Wilson was about eighty years old. He also says that he is leaving the place in the coming winter as it is ‘too bloody quiet’.

In the following stanza, the historian writes an observation about the people, presumably keeping Miss Wilson in mind. The historian notes that the ‘spirit of exile’ is still a strong

presence in them. Meanwhile, Miss Wilson seems to adhere to this observation as she is filled with a sense of remembrance of ‘Harriet’s youngest, Will’.

The last stanza tell us that the cowman, along with the rabbit from the hill, are the two people who feel at home as they go off for a drinking together, after a day’s work. The poet turns our attention to the ‘sensitive nor’west afternoon’; ‘nor’west’ being a wind pattern that is specific to New Zealand. The wind has fallen and it starts to rain, bringing us back to the dog from the second stanza. The chained dog, ‘looking lost and lame’, reinforces a glum disillusionment that seems to be present throughout the poem. The very final lines make us conscious of the ‘gloom’ that is present in a land where the settlers feel displaced, removed from their ‘home’; where the ‘spirit of exile’ is strong.

Check your Progress

1. Identify the three main people in the poem, through which Curnow expresses his themes?

2. What does the chained dog symbolise?

3. What does the poet, through the historian, say about colonists who settle in the colonies?

16.2.3 Thematic Analysis of the Poem:

First and foremost, the poem “House and Land” investigates the themes of nostalgia and the past. We see this through the presence of the figure of the historian who asks the cowman whether they are in the site of the ‘original homestead.’ The presence of a historian points to the fact the poem deals with the past. The historian has come to seek answers about a particular place. This place is an ‘original homestead,’ which refers to the original settlement of the British when they first colonized New Zealand in the 1840s. While the cowman is unable to answer the historian, he points towards Miss Wilson, a woman of about eighty years of age, who seems to have come from a family of the earliest English settlers in New Zealand. Miss Wilson’s husband has died and the cowman has been working for her ever since.

Meanwhile, the theme of nostalgia also features in the life of Miss Wilson. She is widowed and lives in the settlement by herself with only the presence of a chained dog to keep her company. Miss Wilson has pictures on her wall that point towards her British heritage. She has a picture of an uncle from her mother’s side who is a Baronet; and also of her ancestral home,

known as 'The Hall.' Miss Wilson is also constantly reminded of her past and her family, which she has possibly lost contact with.

The poem also deals with the themes of alienation and isolation. As we have learned, Miss Wilson comes from a British family of settler-colonizers who were granted a large piece of settlement upon their arrival. As Miss Wilson mentions in the fourth stanza, "... from Waiau to the mountains/ It was all father's land". Even though Miss Wilson has been living in this large settlement that was granted to her father all her life, she is disconnected from her English roots and is therefore, not completely happy. She is lonely and constantly reminded of her ancestral heritage which is British. She does not seem to be able to connect to her surroundings and the people as she still refers to them as "People in the *colonies*." Even the cowman says that he would be leaving Miss Wilson's employment "next winter," as it is "Too bloody quiet."

Miss Wilson represents the generation of colonizers who seems to be caught between two worlds – her British roots, and the great landscape of the settler-colony which is New Zealand. However, she only knows a New Zealand which belongs to her colonizer ancestors. She does not recognize that she is only a settler in New Zealand; and that the land belonged to the original inhabitants of the colony – the ancestors of the Māori people from Polynesia who arrived between 1200 and 1300 AD. The poet cleverly represents this alienating and isolated existence through the recurring image of the chained dog, which only moves between two places, the "privy" (toilet) and the "fowl house" (chicken coop).

The theme of displacement is also a significant occurrence in the poem. Owing to colonization, Miss Wilson who is British is displaced from her ancestral home and her roots. During the peak of colonization, settlers who arrived in the colonies were given large settlements to live in and thrive from the fruits of colonialism. However, when decolonization began in the various colonies of the world, New Zealand and other settler colonies like Australia eventually acquired independence from the British Crown. However, for people like Miss Wilson, this was not a good thing, as she is originally British. Miss Wilson's father may have been an important settler-colonizer in his days, during the height of Imperialism/colonization. However, since she has been living in the settler colony all her life, going back to Great Britain was not an option. Her inability to connect with the land and the people around her causes Miss Wilson to develop a sense of being displaced from her original home.

The themes of exile and loneliness are also significant in the study of the poem. Owing to the large and intimidating landscape of island colonies like New Zealand, it would be easy for

any outsider to feel a deep sense of exile and therefore, loneliness. Further, Miss Wilson clearly has a sense of superiority over the natives, which makes it even tougher to connect to those around her, especially the land. Thus, she lives a lonely and isolated life. The historian clearly mentions, “The spirit of exile ... is strong in the people still.” Additionally, the poet also ends the poem on a similar note saying that there is a “great gloom” in a “land of settlers /With never a soul at home.” Even though the settlement or the “homestead” had become a sort of home for the settlers (Wilson’s family), such people live in a state of gloom/sadness as they are never able to fully live out their lives by making connections with those around them.

16.2.4 Critical Analysis of the Poem:

The poem is prominently a critique of Imperialism in the context of island colonies like New Zealand. The title “House and Land” is important to note because the poem talks about a group of people who were born and raised in these lands but never quite felt at home there. Colonies like India, through various movements such as *Satyagraha* and many non-violent means, were able to acquire independence and sovereignty from their colonizers, the British. On the other hand, the British Imperialists who set foot in such colonies like New Zealand and Australia never actually left the ‘homestead.’ They live on in these colonies for generations. Over the course of time, as Britain lost its grip over the various nations, the settlers in these colonies also became further displaced from their roots, which are essentially English. So, while these people are able to shed themselves of oppressive British power tactics and practices that dictated their lives, they are culturally displaced from the place that they have come from.

Through Miss Wilson, the poet looks at the conditions of existence for such people. As we have seen through the thematic analyses of the poem, such settlers live in isolation and alienation, having been both physically and culturally uprooted from their own country. Miss Wilson’s father might have been a great colonizer in his day, with a great amount of land having been granted to him as evident in the lines “... from Waiiau to the mountains/ It was all father’s land.” For Miss Wilson, however, she now lives an entitled but lonely life. Her husband has died, as the cowman had mentioned early on in the poem. Even the cowman has decided that he would be leaving next winter for it was “Too bloody quiet.” This shows that Miss Wilson has never been able to make an effort to connect with the people around her. She prefers to keep to herself, with only pictures and memories keeping her company. She is constantly reminded of her British relatives, ancestors and “The Hall,” which is possibly her ancestral house. As the poet has

illustrated, the life of the chained dog that Miss Wilson keeps is no different from her own life. She lives in isolation from the world around her and is quite literally stuck in the past.

The poet, through the historian, writes that “The spirit of exile.../ Is strong in the people still.” When the British arrived upon the various lands and countries that they eventually colonized, they brought with them the idea that they were the ‘self’ and the natives of the various colonies as inferior to them, and therefore, as the ‘other.’ This kind of mindset cultivated a spirit of exile in the colonizers as they felt that they were different from the natives in the colonies. They viewed the natives and their beliefs and practices as strange; things that the colonizer did not understand. In addition, the landscapes of the island colonies were large and foreboding. When the historian visits the settlement where Miss Wilson lived, Miss Wilson still seems to be disconnected from everything around her.

When any group of people live in a place for a long time, they get accustomed to it. They start to learn the languages and practices of the natives. They even start to make friends. This was not the case for Miss Wilson who seems completely isolated from her surroundings. Thus, the poet says that the spirit of exile still exists and is strong in the people. When he says ‘people’, he is mostly referring to the colonizers. Unlike the cowman and the rabbitier who seem completely at home in the island, Miss Wilson’s case is the opposite. This is an effect of Imperialism. The colonizers posit themselves as better and superior, when they go to any land. This prevents them from appreciating a place and its ways, or even making friends. Therefore, when the poet says that there is a “great gloom” present in “a land of settlers/ With never a soul at home”, it means that settlers who have been living in these colonies are not fully a part of them. They are too nostalgic about their British ancestry, heritage, and roots that their souls are not fully present even in places that they have lived in for their entire lives.

Check your Progress

1. What ancestry does Miss Wilson belong to? Give examples from the poem.

2. Why do settlers like Miss Wilson live in exile?

3. In the poem, who are those that feel most at home?

16.2.5. The Poet and the Poem: Relationship

The poem is written from various points of view; the first being that of a historian, who asks questions about “the site ... of the original homestead” which means the place where one of the first settlements was set up during the time of colonization in New Zealand. This ‘site’ is where Miss Wilson lives in, which she must have inherited from her father which is made evident when she says that “... from Waiiau to the mountains/ It was all father’s land.”

Through the character of Miss Wilson, the historian observes the sense of exile, isolation, and loneliness that white settlers experience in these colonies, which Allen Curnow is aware of. By writing through the historian, the poet positions himself as an outsider, who critiques the effects of Imperialism on people. Curnow is known for his talents in the field of satire, which means that he situated himself at a distance from his writing. In writing through the historian’s eyes, we catch a glimpse of the unapologetic critique in the poet who writes from an objective stance.

Through the character of Miss Wilson and the parallel of the chained dog that only knows two worlds (the ‘privy’ and the ‘fowl house’), Curnow gives the reader a glimpse of the mindset of a settler who has been displaced from one’s ancestral roots and heritage. Curnow’s familial background gives the reader enough material to understand the “spirit of exile” that the settler goes through in this case.

Even though Miss Wilson’s family has been in the ‘homestead’ for almost two generations, one cannot shake off the sense of desertion and isolation that is felt throughout the poem. Her inability to connect with her surroundings and resorting to feelings of nostalgia in her house shows that Miss Wilson never felt quite at home in the colony.

This is inevitable, as the British regime was once powerful and all-subsuming, but when colonies across the world began to acquire independence, colonialism became redundant and loosened its grip over the colonies. In the case of the white settlers in such colonies like New Zealand, they could no longer leave the homestead. They had been there for too long. While these settlers once had power over the extensive lands that were given to them by the Crown; with time and decolonization, the Crown no longer held any real power over these countries. This pushed the settlers further away from their roots. This is seen through Miss Wilson who might be living in the ‘homestead’ as a settler but as the poet says in the last line of the poem, “With never a soul at home”. Her life is filled with memories of the past and of her great British

heritage, which in actuality, are all memories or stories that she might have acquired through her parents or the pictures that fill her house.

The poet's own mother, Jessamine Towler Gambling, was an English woman who migrated to New Zealand along with Rose, her mother in the 1880s. She is heavily aware of the exile and loss that occurs with migration. It is this dual parentage that is one of the driving forces behind Allen Curnow's poetic talent.

As has been mentioned, Curnow's father was a fourth generation New Zealander. This means that from the father's side, the family has been in this island colony for a long time; and while Curnow understands the pangs and anxieties of being removed from one's roots and heritage through his mother, he is also firmly rooted in the country of New Zealand through his father.

Through the cowman and the rabbitier, we see the only two characters that seem to feel at home in the place. Their camaraderie is seen through their drinking together in the evening, when "The sensitive nor'west afternoon/ Collapsed and the rain came". Therefore, through the poem, the reader is able to understand the negative impact of Imperialism from three different perspectives, made possible by the poet's own origins.

Check your progress

1. Discuss the various perspectives shown in the poem.

2. How is the poem a critique of imperialism?

3. How does Allen Curnow's own life affect his writing?

16.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to understand the poem as a prime example of the kind of Postcolonial literature that emerged from settler-colonies like New Zealand. In reading the poem, you should have understood the different standpoints that the poet adopts through the three central characters of the historian, the cowman and Miss Wilson.

16.4 Glossary

- Attribute:** Quality or characteristics associated with someone or something; to be the cause of something.
- Baronet:** (British) A commoner who has been given the status of a knight. It is the lowest title in the British order.
- Collapsed:** When something or someone falls down; when a structure gives way and falls.
- Colonial/ism:** The period during which most countries across the world were under the political control of the British.
- Colonies:** (plural of Colony) A country or state that is under political control of another country; in this case, New Zealand.
- Cowman:** Someone whose employment is to tend to cattle.
- Duality:** The quality or state of having two different or opposing elements.
- Exile:** Being barred from one's native land/country for political reasons or as a form of punishment.
- Gloom:** Lowness of spirit; sadness
- Hegemonic:** Dominance of one social/racial/cultural group over another.
- Heritage:** Property/possession that has been inherited or passed down from earlier generations.
- Homestead:** A farmhouse; an owner's place of residence on a sheep or cattle farm.
- Imperialism:** Relating to empire; expansion of territory by colonizing other territories.
- Isolation:** To live in a state of loneliness; removed from others.
- Landscape:** Physical features of an area, land or country.
- Nor'west:** Northwest; wind system particular to New Zealand.
- Postcolonial:** An important moment in history which was realised *after* Western colonialism; in this case, the British
- Privy:** A toilet (in this case); awareness/knowledge of some information.
- Quicken:** To make or become faster/quicker; accelerate.
- Rabbitier:** A person who catches/traps rabbits for selling.
- Settlers:** People who move to a new country or land to live and settle there.
- Site:** A place/area of land upon which something is constructed.
- Stagnant:** Unmoving; inactive.

16.5 Sample Questions

16.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Wasn't this the site, asked the _____
 - (a) Cowman
 - (b) Historian
 - (c) Colonist
 - (d) Rabbiter
2. What animal does the poet use most prominently in the poem?
 - (a) Rabbit
 - (b) Cow
 - (c) Dog
 - (d) None of the above
3. According to the cowman, how old is Miss Wilson?
 - (a) Seventy years
 - (b) Eighty years
 - (c) Ninety years
 - (d) Hundred years
4. The chained dog moves between two places; the _____ and the fowl house.
 - (a) Kennel
 - (b) House
 - (c) Privy
 - (d) Backyard
5. Miss Wilson's uncle, from her mother's side was a _____.
 - (a) Duke
 - (b) Baron
 - (c) Baronet
 - (d) Lord
6. The spirit of _____ is still strong in the people, according to the historian.
 - (a) Isolation
 - (b) Colonialism
 - (c) Exile
 - (d) Hatred
7. When does the Cowman plan to leave Miss Wilson's employment?
 - (a) Next month
 - (b) Next winter
 - (c) Next summer
 - (d) Next year
8. Awareness of what great gloom stands in a land of _____.
 - (a) Settlers
 - (b) Colonizers
 - (c) Nomads
 - (d) Natives
9. The poem is written from the point of view of _____.
 - (a) The cowman
 - (b) The dog
 - (c) The historian
 - (d) The rabbiter
10. The poem is set in the settler colony of
 - (a) Canada
 - (b) New Zealand

(c) Australia

(d) South Africa

16.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What does the historian ask the cowman?
2. What clues from the poem tells us about Miss Wilson’s English heritage?
3. How does the dog in chains add to overall message of the poem?
4. Who is Miss Wilson talking about when she says “people in the *colonies*”?
5. What “great gloom” affects the ‘settlers’, according to the poet?

16.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What does Curnow mean by ‘the spirit of exile is strong in the people still’? Which character in the poem illustrates this spirit?
2. Observe the various ways in which the poet parallels the isolation felt by colonialists in settler colonies, and the imagery of the chained dog.
3. Identify the three main characters in the poem ‘House and Land’. What do you think each of these characters represent?

16.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Ashcroft, Bill, et al., editors. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2005.
2. ---. “Reading Post-colonial Australia,” in Nathanael O’Reilly (ed.), *Postcolonial Issues in Australian Literature*. New York: Cambria, 2010
3. Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. “Allen Curnow”. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 19 Sep. 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Allen-Curnow>. Accessed 20 December 2022
4. Evans, Patrick. *The Long Forgetting: Post-colonial Literary Culture in New Zealand*. Canterbury University Press, 2007.
5. King, Michael. *The Penguin History of New Zealand*. Penguin Books, 2003.
6. Ramazani, Jahan. *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Poetry*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.

MAULANA AZAD NATIONAL URDU UNIVERSITY
Master of Arts English
III SEMESTER EXAMINATION, January 2021
Paper : (MAEN304CCT) Post Colonial Literature

Time: 3 hours

Max. Marks 70 marks

Note : This question paper consists of three parts : Part – A, Part-B and Part-C. Number of words to answer each question is only indicative. Attempt all parts.

Part–A contains 10 compulsory questions of multiple choice/fill in the blank/very short answer type question. Answer all questions. Each question carries 1 mark. (10x1=10-marks)

Part-B contains 08 questions of which students are required to answer 05 questions. Answer each question in approximately 200 words. Each question carries 06 marks. (5x6=30 marks)

Part-C contains 05 questions of which students are required to answer 03 questions. Answer each question in approximately 500 words. Each question carries 10 marks. (3x10=30 marks)

Part-A

Question : 1:

- i. What do you mean by 'point of view'?
- ii. Who has composed the poem "House and Land"?
- iii. Who in the *Wide Sargasso Sea* says, "Gold is the idol that they worship" about the imperialists?
- iv. The narrator of the first part of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is_____.
- v. The poem "*No More Boomerang*" has been written by _____.
- vi. What is an 'allusion'?
- vii. In Igbo society _____ is known as the king of crops.
- viii. Bapsi Sidhwa is a _____ Writer.
- ix. In its 1991 American edition, the title of *Ice Candy Man* was changed as_____.
- x. Name the first novel written by Chinua Achebe.

Part B

2. Write a note on the symbolism of the title of *Things Fall Apart*.
3. How are women portrayed in *Things Fall Apart*.
4. How do names play a role in leading to identity crisis in context of Antoinett in the *Wide Sargasso Sea*?
5. What do you mean by intertextuality?
6. Briefly write about Sidhwa's use of English language in *Ice Candy Man*.
7. Give reference to context of the following lines:
Lay down the woomera
Lay down the waddy.
Now we got atom-bomb,
End everybody.
8. Write a note on common wealth literatures.
9. Write a note on the feministic perspective of *Ice Candy Man*.

Part C

10. Discuss how *Things Fall Apart* is a significant text from a post-colonial point of view?
11. How does Walcott portray the destruction of the Carribean through his poem 'Ruins of a Great House'?
12. *Wide Sargasso Sea* is symbolic of the wide gulf separating the two cultures of East and West. Discuss.
13. Discuss how Sidhwa is able to offer an objective portrayal of partition in *Ice Candy Man*.
14. How does Rhys recreate her autobiographical experiences to provide a background for shaping Antoinette's personality?
