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BENGALURU CITY UNIVERSITY

# SCEPTRE – I

## ADDITIONAL ENGLISH TEXTBOOK

**(Under the State Education Policy [SEP] – 2024)**

## SEMESTER – I

**ALL FIRST SEMESTER COURSES**
**COMING UNDER THE FACULTY OF ARTS, COMMERCE AND SCIENCE**
**OF THE**
**BANGALORE CITY UNIVERSITY**


**CHIEF EDITOR**
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**Bengaluru City University (BCU)**
**Bengaluru**

# SCEPTRE – I

Additional English Textbook for all I Semester Courses coming under the faculty of Arts, Commerce and Science of the Bengaluru City University (BCU) is prepared by the Members of the Textbook Committee, Bengaluru City University.



**First Edition 2024**

**Published by:**
**Bengaluru City University Press**
**Bengaluru City University (BCU)**
**Central College Campus**
**Bengaluru – 560 001**

# FOREWORD

Bengaluru City University's primary goal is to provide high-quality education. Providing pupils with interesting and educational reading material is one way to deliver a high-quality, targeted education. For the benefit of the vast intellectual community at the University, we have produced extensive course materials for those seeking undergraduate degrees here.

It is an enormous work that cannot be completed by one person to develop the book, ensure correctness, and prepare it in a way that best meets the demands of the student, both academically and practically. It takes a team effort and many important contributions from many people. The compilers of this book are seasoned academics who are aware of the demands placed on students. It has also been carefully examined to eliminate any mistakes. The BCU-affiliated English Department faculty members have been a great help with editing.

The contents of this book are selected in consonance with the vision of State Education Policy (SEP) 2024, where the University focuses on producing trained human resource which has extensive knowledge, modern skills, diverse abilities, leadership qualities, entrepreneurial skills, and strong cultural and ethical values. Most significantly, the curation of this text offers a nexus between higher education and employment market.

The University is currently in a good position to capitalize on these early years, and we reaffirm our commitment to offering top-notch instruction to students from diverse backgrounds; and fostering an atmosphere that enhances the development of each student's unique personality. As the Vice-Chancellor of Bengaluru City University, I take great pride in welcoming students to pursue virtue and knowledge via interdisciplinary study possibilities, with a focus on developing their whole personality.

I am excited about the new perspectives and enthusiasm you will bring to our school. I commend the Text Book Committee for their enormous work in putting together the content, which covers a range of language components to brilliant literary pieces. My sincere gratitude to the Director of Bengaluru City University Press and to all the staff for releasing the textbook on time and with method. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Chairperson and the Members of the Board for their enjoyable and thorough exploration of numerous subjects and grammatical components. It is my sincere wish that both educators and learners will find great inspiration in the book to utilise it to the fullest and enhance their language and literary comprehension.

**Prof. Lingaraja Gandhi**
**Vice-Chancellor**
**Bengaluru City University**

# PREFACE

*Why study Language?*

Any language study programme should be viewed as a chance to introduce pupils to the sociocultural experiences, traditions, and communication patterns of people from around the globe. Students may use this as a chance to learn more about themselves, their neighbours, and those who live in different countries. One way to help with this is to assign readings to the students, which serve as a record of the history of man and his development over time, both real and imagined.

Naturally, one might wonder why literature is recommended for studying linguistic characteristics of a language. Here, we want to stress that no language training should be designed to be value neutral. Language classes contribute significantly to the intellectual and personal growth of students, acting not only as means of communication but also as development tools. Reading as such will aid the students in their development of mature thought.

It is quite apt to mention the collaborative thinking of Phipps and Gonzales here, where they say, "languages are more than skills; they are the medium through which communities of people engage with, make sense of, and shape the world. Through language they become active agents in creating their environment. This process is what we call 'languaging'. Languaging is a life skill. It is inextricably interwoven with social experience in a living society. And it develops and changes constantly as that experience evolves and changes."

This issue is offered in print and electronic version to ensure maximum accessibility and ongoing relevance. We believe that instructors will find this volume to be a helpful resource and a priceless source of reference.

For this edition, I feel obligated to offer my expertise, analysis, and conclusions. The literary component attempts to make students socially and culturally aware of history and present-day issues, while the language component aims to enhance students' soft skills related to proficient verbal expression and conversation. It is intended that the students would utilise the text to its fullest potential and recognise the value of developing fine language skills while interacting with spoken materials such as literature.

I express my gratitude to Vice-Chancellor and Registrar of Bengaluru City University for their unwavering support. I would like to express my gratitude to the publisher for helping us release the textbook on schedule and to all the committee members for their enormous efforts.

**Dr. T. N. Thandava Gowda**
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## OBJECTIVES OF THE TEXT

The proposed literary pieces are selected based on **geographical elimination of India and Europe**. The purpose of selecting these pieces is to get the students acquainted with non-European and non-Indian writers. The textbook functions as a vehicle to introduce multifarious writers, classic and contemporary, of regions that are still oblivious to a larger reading public. The selected literary pieces aim to provide a historical background of the writer and the land. Through literature, students learn of the social, political and cultural issues of different lands, while travelling along the psyche of different writers.

The grammar part allows the students to reacquaint themselves with basic sentence structures and gradually move up the bar to acquiring various communication skills. The purpose of this grammar content is to focus on 'context-based' learning rather than the traditional 'grammar-translation' method.

**Textbook Committee**

## NOTE TO THE TEACHER

| Course Title – L1 – ADDITIONAL ENGLISH | |
|---|---|
| Teaching Hours: 4 Hours Per Week | Course Credits: 3 |
| Formative Assessment Marks: 20 | Internal Assessment |
| Summative Assessment Marks: 80 | Duration Of Exam: 3 Hours |

The new Additional English syllabus for undergraduate courses of Bengaluru City University broadly aims to develop the literary sensibilities and enhance the intermediate language skills of students across four semesters. The course materials reflect this holistic approach. The I Semester textbook hence has the following components:

a. An anthology with poems, short stories, essays (prose) to develop literary sensibilities.

b. A workbook to comprehend English grammar at intermediate level.

Aspects of modern relevance such as human values, spatiality, discrimination and resistance are addressed in the selected literary texts. They come from translations as well as other literary works. The goal is to help students develop literary sensibility by understanding and responding to the linguistic and cultural intricacies of the texts. The non-canonical nature of the selections allows for a learner-centered approach and provides opportunity for classroom interactions to reveal numerous levels of significance.

## LITERARY COMPONENT

**Pre-reading Activities** accompany each selection to help students understand the context of the subject matter. A range of questions are included in the post-reading portion to help with factual, inferential and evaluative understanding. The main purpose of these instructional questions is to get students talking in class and provide them a platform to voice different viewpoints.

**Glossary** component is included in every selection. This aids the students to develop their vocabulary and comprehension of new words. The component also functions as a significant tool to showcase different forms and the range of possible meanings of words in context.

**Further Reading** section is provided at the end of every selection. The suggestive texts are included to stimulate the interest of students in related reading contexts and provide scope for sustained reading.

## LANGUAGE COMPONENT

With the help of the grammar section, students may brush up on fundamental sentence patterns progressively advance to learning a variety of communication skills. This grammar material aims to shift the emphasis from the conventional 'grammar-translation' technique to 'context-based' learning.

This selection of grammar topics direct at the intermediate language building skills. Therefore, the students are expected to have a reasonable grasp of the fundamental LSWR (listening, speaking, writing and reading) skills; and proceed to comprehend the nuances of language through context-based learning.

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### LITERARY COMPONENT



### LANGUAGE COMPONENT

# LITERARY COMPONENT

# AUSTRALIA

- **A.D. HOPE**

**Pre-reading Activities:**

*1. Discuss the effects of colonisation on the landscape, tradition and culture of the colonised.*

*2. Discuss the impact of British rule on India's economic, political, social and cultural set-up.*

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**Introduction to the Poet:**

Alec Derwent Hope, an Australian poet and essayist, was born on July 21, 1907, in Cooma, New South Wales, Australia. He spent most of his childhood in rural areas in New South Wales and Tasmania. He was also a critic, teacher and academic. He was referred to in an American journal as "the 20th century's greatest 18th-century poet".

In the 1960s, Hope's poetry was widely taught extensively in Australian schools and universities, where it was valued for its craftsmanship and intellectual strength. However, by the 1970s, some emerging poets saw him as an archetypal traditionalist who produced formally rigid, anti-modernist, and backward-looking poetry. He was 'readily represented as conservative, sexist and old-fashioned'.

Hope is also viewed as a satirical poet, as many of his works poke fun at technology, conformity, and the absurdity of modern life. His other poems explore topics such as creativity, nature, music, and the glories of science. Hope's incorporation of myth and legend is viewed as a distinctive characteristic of his poems.

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**About the Poem:**

'Australia' is a critical yet loving depiction of the poet's homeland. The first five stanzas offer a scathing analysis of Australia, portraying it as a barren, dry, and ancient land, inhabited by 'second hand Europeans' who have established a civilisation marked by 'immense stupidity'. He describes how it is both a new and old country – geologically old but politically new, and how it is both a European colony and an autonomous but a parasitical country.

However, the final two stanzas reveal the poet's love and admiration for Australia, as he continues to hope that a prophet would emerge from the land, who would claim freedom and rights for the land, and restore the dignity of its unique spirit, further declaring that he prefers its simplicity over the 'chatter of cultured apes' found in other civilisations.

---

A Nation of trees, drab green and desolate grey
In the field uniform of modern wars,
Darkens her hills, those endless, outstretched paws
Of Sphinx demolished or stone lion worn away.

They call her a young country, but they lie:
She is the last of lands, the emptiest,
A woman beyond her change of life, a breast
Still tender but within the womb is dry.

Without songs, architecture, history:
The emotions and superstitions of younger lands,
Her rivers of water drown among inland sands,
The river of her immense stupidity

Floods her monotonous tribes from Cairns to Perth.
In them at last the ultimate men arrive
Whose boast is not: "we live" but "we survive",
A type who will inhabit the dying earth.

And her five cities, like five teeming sores,
Each drains her: a vast parasite robber-state
Where second hand Europeans pullulate
Timidly on the edge of alien shores.

Yet there are some like me turn gladly home
From the lush jungle of modern thought, to find
The Arabian desert of the human mind,
Hoping, if still from the deserts the prophets come,

Such savage and scarlet as no green hills dare
Springs in that waste, some spirit which escapes
The learned doubt, the chatter of cultured apes
Which is called civilization over there.

---

**Glossary**

1. **desolate**: uninhabited, unpeopled, deserted
2. **outstretched**: stretched or extended outwards
3. **Sphinx**: mythical creature with the body of a lion and head of a human
4. **demolished**: knocked down, reduced to rubble or ruin
5. **superstitions**: religious belief or practice considered to be irrational, unfounded, or based on fear or ignorance
6. **monotonous**: lacking in variety, lifeless, plain or prosaic
7. **inhabit**: to dwell in, occupy as an abode
8. **five cities**: Melbourne, Sydney, Perth, Canberra and Adelaide
9. **teeming sores**: festering wounds; refers to the five major cities that feed on the resources of Australia like parasites

10. **parasite**: an organism that lives on, in, or with an organism of another species, obtaining food, shelter or other benefit; to live on or off a person or group, giving little or nothing in return
11. **second hand Europeans**: English immigrants living in Australia for centuries, yet have no love for the country
12. **pullulate**: multiply rapidly
13. **prophets**: a divinely inspired interpreter or teacher of the will or thought of God
14. **savage**: ferocious, fierce, vicious
15. **scarlet**: a brilliant vivid red colour; associated with passion, power and danger in some cultures
16. **cultured apes**: reference to the Europeans

**Comprehension I: (Short Answer Questions)**

1. A.D. Hope compares the face of Australia with:
   a. Matrix  b. Sphinx  c. Pyramid  d. None of the options
2. Why does the poet disagree with Australia being called a young country?
3. Who are the 'second hand Europeans'?
4. Who are the men that will inhabit the dying earth?
5. What does the poet compare the cities to, and why?

**Comprehension II: (Paragraph Answer Questions)**

1. Why does Hope refer to Australia as both old and new?
2. Annotate:
   "A woman beyond her change of life, a breast
   Still tender but within the womb is dry."
3. What does the speaker attempt to say in the following lines?
   "Yet there are some like me turn gladly home
   From the lush jungle of modern thought,"
4. How does Hope describe the landscape of Australia?

**Comprehension III: (Analytical/Discussion Questions)**

1. What are the major themes in the poem? Discuss.
2. What are the literary devices used in the poem?

**Further Reading:**

1. *To the Others* by Jack Davis
2. *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe
3. *The Gentlemen of the Jungle* by Jomo Kenyatta
4. *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* by Doris Pilkington Garimara

# THE TONGUE

- **NIKHAT HASAN**

**Pre-reading Activities:**

*1. What do you think about a world where no one would talk to each other?*

*2. Do you think there would be lesser problems in the world if people could not talk?*

---

**Introduction to the Writer:**

Nikhat Hasan was born in Buland Shehr, U.P. She studied in the Girls' College of Aligarh Muslim University, St. Joseph College, Karachi, and Karachi University. Her literary career began in the 1960s. She lives in Karachi. *Neither Night Nor Day* (2008) is a collection of 13 stories by women writers from Pakistan. 'The Tongue' is one of the short stories from this collection.

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**About the Text:**

'The Tongue' is a remarkable fable replete in subtle comedy, cleverness and sheer understanding for the collective human consciousness and the antics of its external leaders. It is a dystopic vision of a land where speech is forbidden in order to improve productivity. This short story is a tale about an imaginary kingdom where all citizens have their tongues cut off at birth, to increase efficiency and rid the nation of the curse of idle chatter. Above and beyond all this is, inevitably, the ruling family, the members of which can be distinguished by their nine-yard-long tongues. The story allows us to observe the essential triumph of humanity over authority.

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It was a land of dumb people. Its citizens weren't born dumb, though. Going by the edict of its ruler, the tongue of every newborn baby was severed at the root. In the middle of the city, there was a little mound of severed tongues. This mound was guarded by an old bearded man who wore a garland of severed tongues; his eyes were small and round, and his nose quite flat. One could see all his teeth through his gaping mouth from far away. All day, he sat quietly on a stool while people dumped severed tongues on the mound from large baskets. For a little while, the small red tongues squirmed on the mound, and then turned into lifeless lumps of flesh. No one knew if the guard had a tongue in his mouth since no one had ever heard him talk.

The citizens were doing well. They didn't have that look of despair that mutes generally have. All day long, they worked without speaking, and they worked four times as fast as ordinary people. Their ruler was a young boy. Every morning, he went out to inspect his people as they worked like machines or cattle, and nodded his head in silent approval. On his shoulder, folded into loops, hung his own tongue, nine yards long. This was a family trait. his father had a long tongue and, they said, so had his father's father. The family of long-tongued people had been ruling the country for centuries. Safian, the young ruler, was still a bachelor and had no

intention of getting married in the near future. He wanted to introduce a few important changes in his kingdom. His vision was to revise the outdated administrative structure of the government. The notion of making these changes occurred to him one day when he saw the guard's daughter. This girl, fourteen or fifteen years old, was talking non-stop despite not having a tongue. She came to the mound carrying lunch for her father, and after dumping the box on the ground, started babbling. She was opposed to the established ways of the country and wanted to warn the ruler of the dire consequences of the barbaric rite. It was then that Safian realized that she could not be silenced even though her tongue had been cut off at its root. This girl was speaking even without her tongue, and the sounds she emitted were more dreadful than ordinary sounds. Safian asked the guard about the most recently severed tongues, and in response to the old man's gestures went behind the mound. He found several large baskets filled with severed tongues. Blood was leaching from the baskets and clotting on the ground. For some time, Safian stood quiet, looking at the tongues. Far off in the fields, dumb people were busy at their work. The farmers had broad chests, and their strong muscles rippled under the strain.

Safian wandered for hours in the densely populated areas of his country. He took his tongue from his shoulder and draped it over his arm. Then he coiled it around his neck. He was sick to death of his tongue. Many times he had made up his mind to have it cut, but it was his heritage. Besides, a ruler had to have a long tongue. Safian often advised his subjects about the evils of the tongue. There was a time when everyone had a foot-long tongue which wagged all the time. The endless wagging of these tongues had brought the country bad luck. Crops began to rot before they could be harvested. Sometimes there were famines, sometimes plagues, sometimes the horrors of war. At other times, murders and gushing rivers of blood. In those times, the citizens used nothing but their tongues. They hurled verbal abuses at one another and constantly quarrelled among themselves. Minor differences grew into civil wars. The country was ruled by Safian's ancestor, the long-tongued Khaldoom. He was an experienced ruler with great foresight. He could not bear to see the plight of his country. Whenever he saw human beings fighting like quarrelsome cocks, he brooded. From the fields, he returned even sadder. Frost-bitten crops and dusty fields seemed to be crying out at the ineptitude of man.

'Why don't my citizens work?' he asked himself.

'They are afflicted with the deadly disease of talking. This disease has grown into an epidemic. They will not mend their ways until…' Khaldoom suddenly leapt at the solution. He called his special attendant, who was throwing stones at passers-by. The attendant came in and started to speak incessantly.

'Quiet, quiet!' screamed Khaldoom and in his anger, pulled the attendant's tongue out by the root. A fountain of blood gushed forth from his mouth. Khaldoom was gripped by madness. Completely out of his senses, he ordered that the tongues of all citizens be severed at the root. Hearing this order, all the citizens fled the country, except for a few women. In time, these women gave birth to three children, who were presented to Khaldoom. Seeing the children cry and scream, Khaldoom was gripped by the same madness once again. 'Damn, evil, evil, damn,' he cried and ordered the tongues of the children to be cut off. Soon, the rite became the law in the country. After ridding themselves of the evil of the tongue, the citizens prospered beyond belief. By the time Khaldoom died, the country's population had tripled, and all the

people were dumb, completely free from the evils of the tongue. They did not know how to speak. All day long, worked like machines or cattle.

These days, however, the country was rife with whispering campaigns. Out on his inspections, Safian heard a murmur like the buzzing of flies. Work had slowed down. The old curse was slowly descending again, seeping in little by little. Safian was puzzled. The region still had the same age-old laws. He had considered changes in the old administrative system, but had not yet started implementing them. Then he saw Sarah, the daughter of the guard. Even without a tongue, she was chattering non-stop. Her eyes, nose and ears were expressive beyond belief. Safian was both angry and surprised. He walked behind the mound, where large baskets lay full of freshly severed tongues. Sarah was laughing uncontrollably. Seeing Safian coming towards her, she opened her deep-well mouth and laughed like a mad woman. Safian saw something peeping out of the back of her mouth. When he went closer to see what it was, she scrambled up the mound. Something was still fluttering inside her mouth. Safian walked towards the front of the mound, where the guard sat on a stool, his head bowed. He shouted at the guard in a voice like thunder. The guard trembled with fear but when he opened his mouth to say something, out fell his tongue, which had been stuck to the roof of his mouth. Then, in a quavering voice, the guard begged Safian to order all the citizens to open their mouths.

By evening, as darkness fell over the land, every single citizen in the country stood before Safian to show his gaping mouth, the root of the severed tongue was slowly growing back into the shape of a tongue.

*Translated from Urdu by Baidar Bakht and Kathleen Grant Jaeger*

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**Glossary**

1. **mound**: a large pile of something
2. **notion**: an impulse or desire
3. **babbling**: to utter sounds or words imperfectly, indistinctly or without meaning
4. **dire**: very serious or extreme
5. **barbaric**: extremely cruel and unpleasant
6. **leaching**: a process of extracting a substance from a solid material that is dissolved in a liquid; to initiate blood flow or deplete blood from a localised area of the body
7. **hurled**: utter abuses in a forceful or intense manner
8. **quarrelsome**: having an aggressive or fighting attitude
9. **fluttering**: beating feebly or irregularly
10. **sever**: divide by cutting or slicing, especially suddenly and forcibly
11. **edict**: an official order or proclamation issued by a person in authority
12. **gaping**: to stare in wonder or amazement, especially with the mouth open
13. **ineptitude**: lack of skill or ability
14. **frost-bite**: an injury caused by freezing of the skin and underlying tissues
15. **epidemic**: a widespread occurrence of an infectious disease in a community at a particular time

**Comprehension I: (Short Answer Questions)**

1. Mention the strange ritual followed in the village.
2. What was the responsibility of the ruler?
3. Write about the work nature of the citizens.
4. Mention the responsibility of the ruler. What is the family trait of the ruler?
5. What was opposed by the girl in the story?
6. What seemed dreadful than ordinary sounds?
7. Why didn't Safian get his tongue cut?
8. What brought bad luck to the country according to Khaldoom?
9. Mention the disease, citizens of Khaldoom were afflicted with.
10. Why was Khaldoom driven to madness?
11. What was the law implemented in the story?

**Comprehension II: (Paragraph Answer Questions)**

1. Discuss the important changes the ruler wanted to make in his kingdom.
2. What did the girl want to warn the ruler about and why?
3. Discuss the causes that led to civil wars according to the narration.
4. Describe the plight of Khaldoom's country.
5. Why was Safian angry and surprised?

**Comprehension III: (Analytical/Discussion Questions)**

1. What was the problem faced by Khaldoom? How did he attempt to resolve it?
2. How according to the narration, did the citizens prosper beyond belief?
3. Explain how humanity triumphed over authority in the story.

**Further Reading:**

1. *The Story of a Tongue* by Clara Ng
2. *My Tongue* by Kurt Behle
3. *Anti-slavery Poems: Songs of Labor and Reform* by John Greenleaf Whittier
4. *A Tongue Story* by Guru Mayi
5. *Understanding the Power of the Tongue* by Ayo Akerele

# LETTERS AND OTHER WORLDS

**- MICHAEL ONDAATJE**

**Pre-reading Activities:**

*1. What is your opinion about relationships/bonding?*
*2. Do you understand 'being separated' or 'living separately'? Could you narrate any instances from real life?*
*3. Is divorce a tragic ending of a marriage? How do think a divorce impacts the children's bonding with their parents?*
*4. Whom are you close to between your parents? And why do you think you share that special bond with only one parent and not the other?*

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**Introduction to the Poet:**

Michael Ondaatje was born on 12th September, 1943 in Sri Lanka (formerly known as Ceylon). He studied in England and later moved to Canada in 1962. Before taking up writing, he taught at Glendon College, York University. He has been an inspiration for the development of the neo-surrealist method in poetry of Canada. He is popularly known to have brought about a shifting voice and capricious juxtapositions. His poetic work includes *Dainty Monsters* (1967), *Rat Jelly* (1973), *The Cinnamon Peeler* (1990), and *Handwriting* (1998). Some of his other writings are *The Man with Seven Toes* (1969), *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* (1970), *Coming Through Slaughter* (1979), *Running in the Family* (1982), *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987), *The English Patient* (1992), *Anil's Ghost* (2000), and *The Cat's Table* (2011). He has won the Golden Man Booker Prize for *The English Patient*.

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**About the Poem:**

'Letters and Other Worlds' speaks about the speaker's father's life, an especially tenuous phase of drinking and self-imposed isolation which led to destructive and dismantling of the family. It is also considered to be an elegy by many critics. The speaker juxtaposes two father figures in the given poem – first one (dystopian), the father who is unreasonably orthodox and incomprehensible; second one (utopian), the father who is connected, loving and caring. Albeit, in the poem, the two strikingly diverse images of the father are incoherent and ambiguous. The epigraph is taken from Alfred Jarry's *Descendit ad infernos*.

---

*'for there was no more darkness for him and, no doubt*
*Like Adam before the fall he could see in the dark.'*

My father's body was a globe of fear
His body was a town we never knew
He hid that he had been where we were going
His letters were a room he seldom lived in
In them the logic of his love could grow

My father's body was a town of fear
He was the only witness to its fear dance
He hid where he had been that we might lose him
His letters were a room his body scared

He came to death with his mind drowning.
On the last day he enclosed himself
in a room with two bottles of gin, later
fell the length of his body
so that brain blood moved
to new compartments
that never knew the wash of fluid
and he died in minutes of a new equilibrium.

His early life was a terrifying comedy
and my mother divorced him again and again.
He would rush into tunnels magnetized
by the white eye of trains
and once, gaining instant fame,
managed to stop a Perahara in Ceylon
– the whole procession of elephants dancers
local dignitaries – by falling
dead drunk onto the street.

As a semi-official, and semi-white at that,
the act was seen as a crucial
turning point in the Home Rule Movement
and led to Ceylon's independence in 1948.
(My mother had done her share too –
    her driving so bad
    she was stoned by villagers
    whenever her car was recognized)

For 14 years of marriage
each of them claimed he or she
was the injured party.
Once on the Colombo docks
saying goodbye to a recently married couple
my father, jealous
at my mother's articulate emotion,
dove into the waters of the harbour
and swam after the ship waving farewell.
My mother pretending no affiliation
mingled with the crowd back to the hotel.

Once again he made the papers
though this time my mother
with a note to the editor
corrected the report–saying he was drunk
rather than broken hearted at the parting of friends.
The married couple received both editions
of *The Ceylon Times* when the ship reached Aden.

And then in his last years
he was the silent drinker,
the man who once a week
disappeared into his room with bottles
and stayed there until he was drunk
and until he was sober.

There speeches, head dreams, apologies,
the gentle letters were composed.
With the clarity of architects
he would write of the row of blue flowers
his new wife had planted,
the plans for electricity in the house,
how my half-sister fell near a snake
and it had awakened and not touched her.
Letters in a clear hand of the most complete empathy
his heart widening and widening and widening
to all manner of change in his children and friends
while he himself edged
into the terrible acute hatred
of his own privacy
till he balanced and fell
the length of his body
the blood screaming in
the empty reservoir of bones
the blood searching in his head without metaphor.

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**Glossary**

1. **Adam**: the first man and the progenitor of the human race
2. **seldom**: rarely
3. **equilibrium**: mental balance
4. **magnetized**: the ability to draw or pull, attract
5. **Perahara**: procession

6. **Home Rule Movement**: to secure home rule or dominion status within the framework of the British Empire
7. **stoned**: pelted by stones
8. **sober**: not drunk, not given to excessive drinking of alcohol
9. **half-sister**: a female sibling sharing a single parent
10. **articulate**: to speak clearly and effectively
11. **pretending**: to act as if something is true when in fact one knows it is not
12. **affiliation**: to attach, to unite or to bring or receive into close connection
13. **empathy**: understanding of the thoughts, feelings or emotional state of another person
14. **reservoir**: a place where anything is kept on store

**Comprehension I: (Short Answer Questions)**

1. What aspects of the speaker's father are described repeatedly in the poem?
2. What does the speaker recapitulate in the second stanza of the poem?
3. What does this figurative progression – from globe to town to room – indicate?
4. What was the speaker's father during the Home Rule Movement?
5. How is the last day of the father's life described by the speaker?
6. In the poem, the father's body and letters are compared to _____.

**Comprehension II: (Paragraph Answer Questions)**

1. Explain the 'other world' in which the speaker's father dwells in, during the last years of his life?
2. How does the poem present the married life of the speaker's parents?
3. Describe the nostalgia of the speaker's past life in Ceylon.
4. Explicate the significance of the title of the poem.

**Comprehension III: (Analytical/Discussion Questions)**

1. Comment on the image of the father as depicted in the poem.
2. The poem showcases absurdness and despair. Discuss.
3. Elucidate the filial cord between the speaker and his parents.

**Further Reading:**

1. *Mother of 1084* by Mahaswetha Devi
2. *Running in the Family* by Michael Ondaatje
3. *To a Sad Daughter* by Michael Ondaatje
4. *Family Matters* by Rohinton Mistry

# THE ACCIDENT

- **MURONG XUECUN**

**Pre-reading Activities:**

*1. "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others." What do you think of this saying?*

*2. "The most important human endeavour is the striving for morality in our actions.", says Albert Einstein. What is your take on morals and ethics?*

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**Introduction to the Writer:**

Hao Qun, a writer from China, writes under the pen name Murong Xuecun. He rose to fame with his first book, *Leave Me Alone: A Novel of Chengdun*, which was made available online. Murong made the long list for the Man Asian Literary Prize, on July 22, 2008. Murong's writing mostly addresses societal difficulties in present-day China, delving into topics like business-government interactions, corruption, and a general sense of dissatisfaction with modern life. His writing is renowned for its fatalist, nihilistic, racy and realism styles.

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**About the Text:**

'The Accident' is a Chinese short story written by Murong Xuecun. It is translated by Harvey Thomlinson and was first published in English on April 10, 2022. A well-connected lawyer and farmer get into a traffic accident in which the farmer is badly injured. The story focuses on how the incident is resolved in a way that may not show the strict rule of law China has been speaking of lately. Like most of Murong Xuecun's writings (*Caging a Monster* and novel *Leave Me Alone*), 'The Accident' exposes the darkness hidden in daily life. The story reflects the reality of how the rich and influential are being favoured in the society. The story also reveals how corruption undermines the moral fabric of a society.

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Out of the corner of my eye I saw the motorbike clank over and skid a long way. The rider flew into the air, hitting the ground with a terrible thump and rolling over twice before coming to a halt.

My mind went blank and I stopped the car. The rider lay on the road, not moving. Night was falling and a hubbub surrounded the scene of the accident. I stared blankly at the blood flowing out from beneath his helmet, a gorgeous bright red, like Rugosa roses in full May bloom.

The guy was still flat on the road, motionless. I sat in my car thinking, 'Whatever you do my friend, please don't be dead. Driving after drinking, making an illegal turn. If you are dead then I might as well be too.' After a bit I got out of my car and slowly went up to him. He suddenly turned over, sat up, and inside his helmet started to mutter and swear bewilderedly, 'Fuck you. What kind of driving was that?' Sweet merciful shit – in my thirty-seven years of life, I, Old

Wei, have had a few verbal bouquets tossed in my general direction. None of them were as welcome to my ears as that ‘Fuck you.’ It was like thunder from heaven. I thought, ‘If this guy is still alive enough to swear, then that is just too fucking excellent.

The road was carpeted with celery and radishes – it looked like he was a poor farmer delivering vegetables to the city. Feeling calmer, I tried to help him to walk a couple of steps. That went OK, and he stood up straight. Things were looking good – the only problem I could see was that his mouth was still bloody. I decided that that I shouldn't show him any weakness. If I was nice to him he might take advantage, and I had no idea what he might ask for. He slowly removed his helmet, and then I bellowed at once, 'Show me your driver's license!' No one who'd caused an accident would dare to say this, and I wanted to club him into submission.

He still looked confused. He rubbed the blood on his head, looked at his hand and then shakily asked me, 'What are you doing?' This guy was more than fifty years old, his clothes were oily, he wore a pair of yellow rubber shoes, and his clothes reeked of pesticide. He didn't look too clued-up about life.

I glared fiercely. ‘What business is that of yours? Driver’s licence!’
He groped about for ages and then grinned shyly, ‘Aiya, I forgot to bring it.’
This was advantage to me, and I poked his chest. ‘Exactly. Fuck YOU – no driver’s licence? Riding on my tail? And you still dare to swear at me?’
His head dropped and he tried to defend himself, 'You … you didn't have your lights on, how did I know ...' Just then I noticed a few people slowly coming over, and I figured that even rabbits had been known to bite people when they were nervous, so why didn't I just bung him a bit of cash and be done with it. Best to avoid any fuss. I helped him to stand up his motorbike, and the old guy lowered his head, shakily advanced a couple of steps, and then suddenly collapsed to the ground again.

This time he was out cold. I prodded him violently for ages but he didn’t come round.

The crowd was growing and a lengthy queue of cars had built up behind us. I could hear police sirens in the distance. I didn't like the look of this and quickly rang Hu Caoxing. He was very businesslike and asked me a few questions about where the incident had taken place and the general situation, and then promised to find help.

I'd just hung up when the cops arrived and one of them asked for my documents. I said in a small voice, 'I am friends with your Commissar.'

He stared at me. 'Don't talk rubbish, get your documents out.'

The old farmer was slowly coming round, and breathing heavily. He said 'You weren't …' I was getting more and more worried, but then I heard the cop's radio crackle into life. If this was Hu Caoxing, he was really on his game. The cop listened for a while and then gave me a hard look

before walking away from the crowd to continue the conversation. He came back less than two minutes later with a totally different attitude.

He said nothing to me. Instead he addressed himself directly to the farmer. 'You were on his tail? ID card, driver's licence, passport!' The old guy's face turned pale – it was smeared with blood, his mouth was quivering. For ages he didn't seem to realise what was happening. The cop interrogated him some more and then turned to me and whispered, 'Lawyer Wei, let's get him to the hospital first. He's hurt pretty bad.'

I groaned – what shitty luck. But I never thought that the old guy would turn out to be incredibly stupid. He stood up quite suddenly and leaned shakily on his motorbike. Then he took his vegetable basket and started to scoop up the greens from the road, dripping blood on the leaves. The cop and I exchanged amused glances. The cop said to him, 'There's nothing wrong?'

The old vegetable grower rubbed his chest, 'Hurts.'

The other, weedier cop stepped forward and asked him whether he was willing to settle this, and went on, 'You have no driver's licence, you were on his tail and it looks like you hit his car! You have to admit liability, do you understand?' And then he told me, 'You were at fault too, your lights weren't on!' I meekly admitted I was to blame as well.

The old guy was scared, and he stammered out an apology to me, 'Sorry … sorry.'

I was laughing inside – man was I relieved. This cop really knew how to deal with things. He pointed to the part of my car that had been hit. 'Is the car OK?'

I said, 'It's hard to say before it goes to the repair shop, but the trimmings and the paintwork will need to be done and that's at least three or four thousand.'

The old vegetable farmer's eyes widened and, visibly seized with terror, he produced a pile of wrinkled notes, 2 kuai, 1 kuai, and lots of mao. The whole lot couldn't have added up to more than 100 yuan. He was so distraught that tears were flowing. 'I only have this much, otherwise you can take the motorbike.'

'This old motorbike is only good for scrap,' I said. 'Why would I want it?' The cop had a few words with him in a low voice. The guy shook violently, then opened his jacket and reluctantly produced a square plastic bag. Inside was about 330 yuan: a hundred note, 4 fifties, 3 tens, all folded into a small rectangle. With a faltering hand he gave it to me. His face was running with tears. 'This is to buy fertilizer, it's all I have. I don't have any more money.' I took the 330 and watched as the guy pushed his motorbike away. He tried to start it up a few times, but he couldn't. After that, with one hand carrying the vegetable basket and one propping up the bike, he went off. Blood was still dripping down his face.

The crowd slowly dispersed, and the first cop advised me in a low voice, 'You want to watch the drink, in future.'

'Got it, got it,' I said. 'I owe you dinner.' He didn't reply, just blew his whistle and left. I got back in the car and was just driving around the next bend when I saw the old farmer stopped by a small tree. His face was as pale as rice-paper and his hand was pressed against his stomach as he coughed and coughed. We exchanged glances and then I looked away as if nothing had happened. 'The transport cops have dealt with this,' I thought. 'Why should I go looking for trouble by doing anything for this guy?' I stepped on the gas and continued on to Feng Shan town, thinking that my girlfriend Xiao Li must be worried about me by now.

*Translated from Chinese by Harvey Thomlinson*

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**Glossary**

1. **clank**: a loud, sharp sound of metal
2. **thump**: hit or strike heavily
3. **hubbub**: a chaotic din caused by a crowd of people
4. **rugosa rose**: a widely cultivated SE Asian rose with dark green wrinkled leaves and deep pink flowers
5. **bewilder**: perplexed and confused
6. **celery**: a cultivated plant of the parsley family which is used in a salad
7. **bellowed**: emit a deep loud roar, typically in pain or anger
8. **submission** – the action of accepting or yielding to a superior force
9. **reeked**: smell strongly and unpleasantly
10. **pesticide**: a substance used for destroying insects or other organisms
11. **glare**: stare in an angry way
12. **groped**: search blindly or uncertainly by feeling with the hands
13. **grin**: smile broadly
14. **bang**: a sudden loud, sharp noise
15. **quiver**: tremble or shake with a slight rapid motion

**Comprehension I: (Short Answer Questions)**

1. How did the accident happen?
2. Who do you think was at fault? Why?
3. Whom did the lawyer call over the phone after the accident?
4. How did lawyer Wei manipulate the situation?
5. The farmer wanted to buy _____ with his money.
6. How was the accident settled?

**Comprehension II: (Paragraph Answer Questions)**

1. Why did the farmer not assert his rights and prove his innocence? Discuss.
2. Sketch the character of lawyer Wei.
3. Narrate the situation of how the policemen pressurised the innocent farmer to admit the fault.
4. Lawyer Wei manipulates the situation by using his influence. Elaborate.
5. The story reflects the reality of how the rich and the influential manipulate the situation. Discuss.
6. Comment on the title of the story 'The Accident'.
7. What is the theme of the story?
8. Murong Xuecum has criticised the political system in China, and the corruption associated with it. Comment.

**Comprehension III: (Analytical/Discussion Questions)**

1. 'The Accident' reveals how corruption undermines the moral fabric of a society. Elucidate.
2. 'The Accident' is a dark description of how justice works in China. Discuss.
3. The story is a mirror held to the legal system which denies justice to the poor and vulnerable. Elaborate.

**Further Reading:**

1. *The Curse by A Yi* by Murong Xuecun
2. *School for Misrule: Legal Academia and an Overlawyered America* by Walter Olson
3. *The Angel Highway – A Survivor Story* by Pennie Hunt

# IF I MUST DIE

- **REFAAT ALAREER**

**Pre-reading Activities:**

*1. Have you ever lived in a conflict zone city? Are you aware of the politics that fuel wars between countries?*

*2. Does religion help in the growth of amity between people, or does it divide them? What do you think of religious leaders?*

*3. Do you think we are evolving for a better tomorrow?*

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**Introduction to the Poet:**

Refaat Alareer was born on 23rd September, 1979 in Shuja'iyya, Gaza city, Gaza Strip. He graduated from Islamic University of Gaza with a BA degree in English in 2001. He completed his postgraduation, MA, from University College of London in 2007; and was conferred with doctorate from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) in 2017. He was teaching at Islamic University, Gaza and co-founded the organisation, 'We Are Not Numbers'. The organisation provided opportunities for young writers of Gaza to work with experienced authors, to promote the power of storytelling as a means of Palestinian resistance against the Israeli occupation. He was the editor of two volumes of Palestinian short stories – *Gaza Writes Back* (2014) and *Gaza Unsilenced* (2015). On 6th December, 2023, Alareer was killed by an Israeli airstrike in Northern Gaza, along with his brother, sister, and four of his nephews, during the Israeli invasion of the Gaza Strip.

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**About the Poem:**

In the poem, 'If I Must Die', the speaker speaks of the hope of attaining a war-free land to live in. The poem highlights the devastation and catastrophe which occurs every day in the lives of people during war and after the war. The poem was written in 2011 to express resistance against socio-political climate of dehumanisation. It provides a ray of hope for Palestinians and expresses love for the motherland. Amidst being doomed to death, the poem emphasises on the spirit of resilience.

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If I must die,
you must live
to tell my story
to sell my things
to buy a piece of cloth
and some strings,
(make it white with a long tail)
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza
while looking heaven in the eye

awaiting his dad who left in a blaze–
and bid no one farewell
not even to his flesh
not even to himself–
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up above
and thinks for a moment an angel is there
bringing back love
If I must die
let it bring hope
let it be a tale.

*Translated by Sinan Antoon*

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**Glossary**

1. **Gaza**: a Palestinian city on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea
2. **blaze**: anger
3. **farewell**: departure; the act of leaving

**Comprehension I: (Short Answer Questions)**

1. Why does the speaker want the reader to live?
2. Whom does the speaker refer to as a 'child' in the poem?

**Comprehension II: (Paragraph Answer Questions)**

1. Elaborate on the conclusion of the poem.
2. Describe the gory picture as narrated in the poem.
3. Write a note on the historical conflict that existed in Gaza.
4. Which tale is the poet referring to in the poem?
5. How does the poem convey the spirit of revolution to the future generations?

**Comprehension III: (Analytical/Discussion Questions)**

1. Comment on the indomitable spirit of survival and resistance as depicted in the poem.
2. Compare the present scenario of Gaza and analyse it with your reading of the poem.

**Further Reading:**

1. *If We Must Die* by Claude Mckay
2. *The Nights Keep Winking* by Mongane Wally Serote
3. *A Tough Tale* by Mongane Wally Serote
4. *The Yellow Birds* by Kevin Powers
5. *Gaza Writes Back* by Refaat Alareer
6. *Gaza Unsilenced* by Refaat Alareer

# MY HOME UNDER IMPERIAL FIRE

**- CHINUA ACHEBE**

**Pre-reading Activities:**

*1. Do you think a person can ever really change?*

*2. How does community and culture affect identity?*

*3. What does it mean to be 'civilised'?*

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**Introduction to the Writer:**

Chinua Achebe was born in Nigeria in 1930 and grew up in Ogidi, a village known for being one of the earliest centers of Anglican missionary activity in Eastern Nigeria. He graduated from University College, Ibadan. His career in radio was interrupted in 1966 due to the Nigerian national crisis, which led to the Biafran War. During this period, he served in the Biafran Ministry of Information and held various diplomatic roles representing Biafra. Achebe later became a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and lectured internationally. He spent more than 15 years as a professor at Bard College before joining Brown University as a professor. Achebe authored over 20 books, among them is *Things Fall Apart* (1958), which has been translated into over 50 languages and sold more than 10 million copies worldwide. His other notable works include *Arrow of God* (1964), *Beware, Soul Brother and Other Poems* (1971), *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays* (1988), and *Home and Exile* (2000). Throughout his life, Achebe received numerous honors, including the Honorary Fellowship of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and honorary doctorates from over 30 colleges and universities. He was also bestowed with Nigeria's highest intellectual honor, the Nigerian National Merit Award, and the Man Booker International Prize in 2007. Achebe passed away on March 22, 2013.

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**About the Text:**

The essay 'My Home Under Imperial Fire' explores Chinua Achebe's early encounters with colonial education and the complexities of his identity as a Nigerian writer. Achebe reflects on his upbringing in Nigeria: born in 1930, he returned with his family in 1935 to his father's birthplace and developed a deep affinity for the Igbo culture.

Raised amidst a blend of Igbo and English literature, he identifies common themes that resonate across both traditions. The essay examines the impact of British colonial education, which Achebe metaphorically terms 'imperial fire'. He critiques the Eurocentric curriculum that marginalized African history and culture, emphasizing the imposition of Western values.

Achebe wrestles with the tension between his African heritage and his engagement with English literature, defending the use of English as a medium for African narratives. He argues that writers can reshape the language to authentically convey African experiences, transforming the 'foreign garb' of English into a distinctly African voice. Achebe illustrates his personal journey as representative of the broader challenges confronting African writers.

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One of the earliest memories I can summon from the realm of childhood was a homecoming that was extraordinary even for such recollections. I was returning to my ancestral home for the first time. The paradox of returning for the first time need not detain us now because there are more engaging things at hand. I was five years old and riding in a motor vehicle also for the first time. I had looked forward very much to this experience, but it was not working out right. Sitting in the back of the truck and facing what seemed the wrong way, I could not see where we were going, only where we were coming from. The dust and the smell and the speed and the roadside trees rushing forward as we rushed back finally overcame me with fear and dizziness. I was glad when it all finally came to a halt at my home and my town.

The reason for my frightening journey was that my father, after thirty years in missionary work, founding a new church here and tending a fledgling one there, had earned his rest and a pension of thirty shillings a month and was taking his family to his ancestral home, to a house he had scraped to build in the final years of his evangelism. It was a grand house with an iron roof and whitewashed earth walls, a far cry from the thatch-roofed mission house we had just left.

Of all our family, only my father had ever lived in Ogidi, to which he now brought us, and he had not lived there since he first began teaching for the Anglican Mission in 1904; it was now 1935. My mother, who had served beside him since their marriage five years into his career, had grown up in her own town, twenty-odd miles away.

Soon after our return to Ogidi my father preached a homecoming sermon at St. Philip's Anglican Church, which he had helped to found at the turn of the century. I don't remember the sermon but I do remember one of its consequences. My father had presumably told the congregation something about his missionary journeys that had begun in 1904, and they were so taken with the antiquity of it all that they nicknamed him, there and then, Mister Nineteen-Four, which did not sound to me like an unambiguous encomium. But worse was to come to my siblings and me at school as Nineteen-Four's children. I am not sure why I found the sobriquet as disagreeable as I did. In any event, it helped to fix in my mind the idea that Ogidi people were not very nice and that school was an unfriendly place. My homecoming did not begin too well.

The Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria are more than ten million strong and must be accounted one of the major peoples of Africa. Conventional practice would call them a tribe, but I no longer follow that convention. I call them a nation. “Here we go again!,” you might be thinking. Well, let me explain. My Pocket Oxford Dictionary defines tribe as follows: “group of (esp. primitive) families or communities linked by social, religious or blood ties and usually having a common culture and dialect and a recognized leader.” If we apply the different criteria of this definition to Igbo people we will come up with the following results:

a) Igbo people are not primitive; if we were I would not be offering this distinguished lecture, or would I?;
b) Igbo people are not linked by blood ties, although they may share many cultural traits;

c) Igbo people do not speak one dialect; they speak one language which has scores of major and minor dialects;
d) and as for having one recognized leader, Igbo people would regard the absence of such a recognized leader as the very defining principle of their social and political identity.

Therefore, all in all, Igbo people would score very poorly indeed on the Oxford dictionary test for tribe.

Now, to call them a nation as I now prefer to do is not without problems of its own. (Which reminds me of the little bird that flew off the ground and landed on an anthill, and felt good, not realizing it was still on the ground! I hope my preference of nation over tribe is more substantial than the little bird's illusionary flight.) My little Oxford dictionary defines nation as "a community of people of mainly common descent, history or language, etc., forming a state or inhabiting a territory." This may not be a perfect fit for the Igbo, but it is close. In addition I like it because, unlike the word tribe, which was given to me, nation is not loaded or derogatory, and there is really no good reason to continue answering a derogatory name simply because somebody has given it to you. The subject of naming, especially naming to put down, will come up in a variety of forms in the course of these deliberations.

The Igbo nation in precolonial times was not quite like any nation most people are familiar with. It did not have the apparatus of centralized government but a conglomeration of hundreds of independent towns and villages each of which shared the running of its affairs among its menfolk according to title, age, occupation, etc.; and its womenfolk who had domestic responsibilities, as well as the management of the scores of four-day and eight-day markets that bound the entire region and its neighbours in a network of daily exchange of goods and news, from far and near.

The town of Ogidi to which my family returned in 1935 was just one of these hundreds of towns which were in reality ministates that cherished their individual identity but also, in a generic way, perceived themselves as Igbo people. Their Igboness would remain a vague identity because it was not called too frequently into use. What mattered to them on a daily basis was the sovereign authority they enjoyed in practical matters in their eight hundred or so villages. As was their habit they made a proverb to sanctify their political attitude: nku di na mba na-eghelu mba nni, every community has enough firewood in its own forests for all the cooking it needs to do.

Competition among these communities has remained a strong feature of Igbo life from antiquity through colonial times to the present. At its worst it could lead to conflict. But there were also compelling reasons for peace and cooperation arising from the need to foster vital regional institutions such as the intricate and vibrant network of markets, the rites and obligations of cross-communal marriages and funerals, the dissemination of recreational songs and dances that one village would travel to learn from another and later, in the role of host and mentor, pass on to a third. Most of these songs and dances were ephemeral and lasted through a couple of seasons. But now and again there were outstanding steps and tunes that

stayed a few years. And, once in a long while, perhaps in an entire generation or more, an extraordinary musical sensation would explode through the land. Such an event did occur about the time we returned to Ogidi. It was called Egwu Obi (Song of the Heart) and nicknamed Egwu Tochi (Song of the Torchlight), for Europe was unwrapping her wares of seduction at the threshold. Egwu Obi stayed on for a decade and more while other songs came and went.

Where did they all originate? Rumor had it that they came from a little place called Nzam in the fertile and easygoing flood plain of the Anambra River in the season when the harvests had been gathered in and the floods were back renewing the soil of the farmland. But from whom did the happy people of Nzam learn? Oh, from the birds, of course!

If you should conclude from the emotional quiver in my words that after a rocky start in my hometown I later became rather fond of it, even a little sentimental, you would be entirely right; but I want my reader to remember that my affection did not instantly explode into being at any point I can recall. It began slowly, took its time to grow and develop and ultimately become transformed into a lifelong quest.

In keeping with missionary usage the front room in our house was called the piazza. It was there that my father received his visitors. It was a room with a strange history, as I got to learn later. My father had a younger half-brother whom he had tried in the past, and quite in vain, to convert to Christianity. On account of this failure, perhaps, the relationship between the two tended to be cool. But no matter what, a brother was still a brother, and so when my father had finished building his zinc house his brother had moved in, ostensibly to take care of it for the two or three years my father still had before retirement. But as the Christian owner was far away in the mission field his brother considered it safe to install his heathen shrine of ikenga and other household divinities in the piazza. Perhaps he did not expect my father to be more than mildly disapproving. If so, he was totally mistaken. My father was furious and demanded the immediate removal of the shrine not only from the house but from the compound. Perhaps that was the real cause of the coolness between them. I never did ask my father if he had had the house reconsecrated after my uncle's brief tenancy and desecration, but I seem to recall the vaguest shadow of an indulgent smile on his face as he told the story one more time many years later. Could he have been thinking of the irony of spending his years converting strangers in far-flung parts of Olu and Igbo while Satan in the shape of his half-brother was hard at work in the rear, in the very front room of his own house at home? My father had that kind of gallows humor.

Both my parents were strong and even sometimes uncompromising in their Christian beliefs, but they were not fanatical. Their lives were ruled, I think, as much by reason as by faith; as much by common sense and compassion as by doctrine. My father's half-brother was not the only heathen in our extended family; if anything, he was among a majority. Our home was open to them all, and my father received his peers and relatives – Christian or not – with kola nut and palm-wine in that piazza, just as my mother received her visitors in the parlour. It was from the conversations and disagreements in these rooms, especially the piazza, that I learned much of what I know and have come to value about my history and culture. Many a

time what I heard in those days, just hanging around my father and his peers, only became clear to me years and even decades later.

I heard, for example, that one of Ogidi's neighbouring towns had migrated into its present location a long time ago and made a request to Ogidi to settle there. In those days there was plenty of land to go round and Ogidi people welcomed the newcomers, who then made a second and more surprising request to be shown how to worship the gods of Ogidi. What had they done with their own gods? Ogidi people wondered at first but finally decided that a man who asked you for your god must have a terrible story one should not pry into. So they gave the new people two of Ogidi gods, Udo and Ogwugwu, with one proviso, that the newcomers should not call their newly acquired gods Udo but Udo's son; and not Ogwugwu but Ogwugwu's daughter. Just to avoid any confusion!

For many years this fragment of local lore meant no more to me than one more story of internal migration in Igboland, probably part history and part mythology, the kind of story one might hear invoked or manipulated in a court of law today in boundary litigations between towns. But its profound significance dawned on me later-the reluctance of an Igbo town to foist its religious beliefs and practices on a neighbour across the road, even when it was invited to do so. Surely such a people cannot have had any notion of the psychology of religious imperialism. And that innocence would have placed them at a great disadvantage later when they came to deal with European evangelism. Perhaps the sheer audacity of some stranger wandering thousands of miles from his home to tell them they were worshipping false gods may have left them open-mouthed in amazement – and actually aided their rapid conversion! If so, they were stunned into conversion only, but luckily not all the way to the self-righteousness and zealotry that went with the stranger's audacity. The levelheadedness of my parents would seem to be a result of that good fortune.

It will be useful, I think, to present one or two more examples of the informal education I garnered in my father's front room and other similar settings in my childhood. The first ancestor of Ogidi people was named Ezechuamagha. He was created by Chukwu on the present site of the town. Chukwu then moved a certain distance and planted another primordial man called Ezumaka, father of the neighbouring Nkwele people. For boundary, Chukwu created the Nkisi River to flow between them. Again, just an interesting little piece of folklore. But as I learned more and more about Igbo people, it began to dawn on me that this insistence on separate and individual creations of towns chimed perfectly with their belief that every single human being was a unique creation of chi, Chukwu's agent, assigned exclusively to that individual through his or her life. This chi, this presence of God, in attendance on every human being, is more powerful in the affairs of that person than any local deity or the conspiracy of any number of such deities against that person. I shall return anon to this unprecedented expression of Igbo individuality. But I want us to look first at an analogous proposition about community.

There is a charming little Igbo story which I would have loved to tell you in full but must abbreviate drastically because I have told it elsewhere.

One morning all the animals were going to a meeting to which the town crier had summoned them the night before. Surprisingly the chicken was headed not to the public square like the rest, but away from it. When his neighbours and friends asked him if by any chance he had not heard the summons to the meeting, he said he had indeed heard but, unfortunately, must attend to a very important personal matter that just cropped up. He asked them to convey his good wishes to the assembly and, for good measure, added his declaration to support and abide by its resolutions. The emergency before the animals, as it happened, was the rampant harassment that man had begun to cause them since he learned to offer blood sacrifice to his gods. After a long and heated debate the animals accepted, and passed unanimously, a resolution to offer the chicken to man as his primary sacrificial animal. And it has remained so to this day.

In the worldview of the Igbo the individual is unique; the town is unique. How do they bring the competing claims of these two into some kind of resolution? Their answer is a popular assembly that is small enough for everybody who wishes to be present to do so and to "speak his own mouth," as they like to phrase it.

A people who would make and treasure that fable of the negligent chicken and the assembly of his fellows must be serious democrats. In all probability they would not wish to live under the rule of kings. The Igbo did not wish to, and made no secret of their disinclination. Sometimes one of them would, believe it or not, actually name his son Ezebuilo: A king is an enemy. I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, to contemplate a society wherein a man might raise his voice in his compound of an afternoon and call out to his son: “A-King-Is-An-Enemy, get me some cold water to drink, will you!”

To assert the worth of the individual by making him not the product of some ongoing, generic creativity but rather of a particular once-and-for-all divine activity is about as far as human imagination can go on the road of uniqueness. To then put this already unprecedented artifact on a piece of land chosen, surveyed and demarcated by God for him may seem like taking matters a trifle far. But we must always remember that the extravagant attire which Metaphor wears to catch our eye is merely a ploy to engage our hearts and minds. It seems to me that the Igbo people, recognizing the primary necessity for individual freedom, as well as the virtual impossibility of its practical realization in society, went out of their way to give the individual a cosmological head start in their creation stories. In this way man might have something approaching a sporting chance in the game of life – an ability to hold his head up and declare, as the Igbo are wont to do, that no man should enter his house through another man's gate.

Similarly, those hundreds of autonomous Igbo villages and towns, so deeply suspicious of political amalgamation, would be stretched to the limit should they ever face an enemy able to wield the resources of a centralized military power, acting directly or through local surrogates. They would need every fortification to be found in their histories and creation myths. The threat of anarchy, always attendant on the Igbo choice of political organization, crept closer and closer to realization as the devastation of the Atlantic slave trade reached further and further into their heartland.

The Igbo have always lived in a world of continual struggle, motion and change – a feature conspicuous in the tautness, overreach and torsion of their art; it is like a tightrope walk, a hairbreadth brush with the boundaries of anarchy. This world does not produce easygoing people. Those who visit the Igbo in their home or run into them abroad or in literature are not always prepared for their tense and cocky temperament. The British called them argumentative.

### *Mister Johnson's Countryman*

When my first novel appeared in 1958 with the allusive title *Things Fall Apart*, an offended and highly critical English reviewer in a London Sunday paper titled her piece – cleverly, I must admit – Hurray to Mere Anarchy! But in spite of the cleverness, she could not have known the cosmological fear of anarchy that burdened the characters in my novel, and which W. B. Yeats somehow knew intuitively. In her brightly sarcastic mind, Anarchy, pronounced tongue-in-cheek, could only stand for British imperial rule under attack in some backward corner of the empire by an ungrateful upstart of a native; she did not hear, blending into it, the resonance of an immemorial anxiety. She did not know now that metaphor's extravagant attire was donned for good and sober reason.

I have been attempting – with incomplete success I fear – to convey to the reader the quiet education my hometown came slowly to embody for me. I have deliberately left out of account so far the louder, formal education I was receiving simultaneously at school, at Sunday school and in church. As it happened, it was only these foreign aspects of my upbringing that we dignified with the title of education. For us that word was not about Igbo things; it was about faraway places and peoples; and its acquisition was generally painful. Igbo things did not vanish from our lives; they were present but taken for granted, unacknowledged. The atmosphere of the schoolroom was always tense, and you were lucky if a day passed and you did not receive a stroke or two of the teacher's cane. Those who were not very good in schoolwork were, of course, the greatest sufferers. But even I, considered pretty good, still had carried home one day a painful swelling on my head from my albino teacher, which caused my father to walk me right back to school to remonstrate with the teacher, to my alarm and embarrassment.

As the years passed and I got better adjusted to the ways of school, I began to enjoy aspects of its offering, especially reading and English composition. This interest led me in my early teenage, boarding school years to such treasures as *Treasure Island*, *Mutiny on the Bounty*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Ivanhoe*, *School for Scandal*. My school had a wonderful library and a regulation that forced us to use it. I was not one of those who grumbled about that particular imposition! I was entranced by the faraway and long-ago worlds of the stories, so different from the stories of my home and childhood.

I took a false step at the university; I enrolled to study medicine. But after one academic year of great sadness I switched to the Faculty of Arts. There are half-a-dozen reasons I can give for

that episode but I prefer the most patently superstitious. I was abandoning the realm of stories and they would not let me go.

The University College, Ibadan, which had opened its doors in November 1948, was a new experiment in higher education in the closing years of British colonial rule in West Africa. Its syllabus and degrees were closely modelled on, and supervised by, London University. My professors in English were all Europeans from various British and European universities. With one or two exceptions the authors they taught us would have been the same ones they would teach at home: Shakespeare, Milton, Defoe, Swift, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Tennyson, Housman, Eliot, Frost, Joyce, Hemingway, Conrad. To this already progressive list they added the Anglo-Irishman, Joyce Cary, whose recent "Nigerian" novel, *Mister Johnson*, had received much critical acclaim in England. America was not to be outdone; *Time* magazine of October 20, 1952, did a cover story on Cary and described *Mister Johnson* as "the best novel ever written about Africa."

The intention of my English professors to introduce us to such an outstanding novel written about a place and people we would be familiar with and therefore easily able to appreciate, was quite unexceptional. But things did not turn out the way they should have. One of my classmates stood up and told an astounded teacher point-blank that the only moment he had enjoyed in the entire book was when the Nigerian hero, Johnson, was shot to death by his British master, Mr. Rudbeck. The rest of us, now astounded too, offered a medley of noises in reaction.

My own judgment was that our colleague, and the rest of us perhaps, still had a lot to learn on how to express adverse literary opinion; but beyond that we all shared our colleague's exasperation at this bumbling idiot of a character whom Joyce Cary and our teacher were so assiduously passing off as a poet when he was nothing but an embarrassing nitwit! Now, this incident, as I came to recognize later, was more than just an interesting episode in a colonial classroom. It was a landmark rebellion. Here was a whole class of young Nigerian students, among the brightest of their generation, united in their view of a book of English fiction in complete opposition to their English teacher, who was moreover backed by the authority of metropolitan critical judgment. The issue was not so much who was right as why there was that absolute divide. For it was not my experience that Nigerians, young or old, were much inclined to be unanimous on anything, not even on the greatest issue of the day-the timing of their independence from British rule.

My problem with Joyce Cary's book was not simply his infuriating principal character, Johnson. More importantly, there is a certain undertow of uncharitableness just below the surface on which his narrative moves and from where, at the slightest chance, a contagion of distaste, hatred and mockery breaks through to poison his tale. Here is a short excerpt from his description of a fairly innocent party given by Johnson to his friends: "the demonic appearance of the naked dancers, grinning, shrieking, scowling, or with faces which seemed entirely dislocated, senseless and unhuman, like twisted bags of lard, or burst bladders." Haven't I

encountered this crowd before? Perhaps, in *Heart of Darkness*, in the Congo. But Cary is writing about my home, Nigeria, isn't he?

In the end I began to understand. There is such a thing as absolute power over narrative. Those who secure this privilege for themselves can arrange stories about others pretty much where, and as, they like. Just as in corrupt, totalitarian regimes, those who exercise power over others can do anything. They can bring out crowds of demonstrators whenever they need them. In Nigeria it is called renting a crowd. Has Joyce Cary rented Joseph Conrad's crowd? Never mind. What matters is that Cary has a very strong aversion to the people he is presenting to us. And to the towns and villages where these people live, where the action of his novel takes place:

> Fada is the ordinary native town of the Western Sudan. It has no beauty, convenience or health. It is a dwelling-place at one stage from the rabbit warren or the badger burrow; and not so cleanly kept as the latter. It is a pioneer settlement five or six hundred years old, built on its own rubbish heaps, without charm even of antiquity. Its squalor and its stinks are all new. Its oldest compounds, except the Emir's mud box, is not twenty years old. The sun and the rain destroy all its antiquity, even of smell. But neither has it the freshness of the new. All its mud walls are eaten as if by smallpox; half of the mats in any compound are always rotten. Poverty and ignorance, the absolute government of jealous savages, conservative as only the savage can be, have kept it at the first frontier of civilization. Its people would not know the change if time jumped back fifty thousand years. They live like mice or rats in a palace floor; all the magnificence and variety of the arts, the ideas, the learning and the battles of civilization go on over their heads and they do not even imagine them.

As everyone knows, sensational writing about Africa and Africans by European travellers and others has a long history. Conrad's yelling crowds were not even his, but a hand-me-down from earlier times.

Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow have published a study of British writing about sub-Saharan Africa over a four-hundred-year period, from the sixteenth century to the twentieth. They read and analyzed no less than five hundred volumes of fiction and nonfiction. Their book, titled *The Africa That Never Was*, shows how a body of fantasy and myth about Africa developed into a tradition with a vast storehouse of lurid images to which writers went again and again through the centuries to draw “material” for their books.

An account of the voyage to West Africa in 1561 by the English ship captain John Lok gives us a taste of this writing at the early stages of the tradition. This is what it says about Negroes:

> a people of beastly living, without a God, lawe, religion... whose women are common for they contract no matrimonie, neither have respect to chastitie... whose inhabitants dwell in caves and dennes: for these are their houses, and the flesh of serpents their meat as writeth Plinie and Diodorus Siculus. They have

> no speach, but rather a grinning and chattering. There are also people without heads, having their eyes and mouths in their breasts.

Why did this kind of writing, and variations on it, catch the European imagination and hold it through the centuries into our own day? I could not pursue that question in these lectures without being diverted from my purpose. I will merely say that a tradition does not begin and thrive, as the tradition of British writing about Africa did, unless it serves a certain need. From the moment in the 1560s when the English captain John Hawkins sailed to West Africa and "got into his possession, partly by the sword and partly by other means, to the number of three hundred Negroes," the European trade in slaves was destined by its very profitability to displace trade in commodities with West Africa. As early as the 1700s British trade in Africa had shifted entirely to slaves. Basil Davidson makes the point that by this time "men in Europe were accustomed to seeing Africans only as men in chains, captives without power, and they transferred their impressions to Africa and the states from which these slaves had come. The belief in African inferiority was already in full bloom."

But the eighteenth century did more than habituate Europeans to the spectacle of Africans "as men in chains," it also presented an abundance of literature tailored to explain or justify that spectacle. Hammond and Jablow have indicated how and where British authors adjusted their writing to suit the times.

> Continuity with earlier writing was maintained... but there was a marked change in the tenor of the literature. Its content shifted from almost indifferent and matter-of-fact reports of what the voyagers had seen to judgmental evaluation of the Africans.... African behavior, institutions and character were not merely disparraged but presented as the negation of all human decencies.... A vested interest in the slave trade produced a literature of devaluation, and since the slave trade was under attack, the most derogatory writing about Africans came from its literary defenders. Dalzel, for instance, prefaced his work with an apologia for slavery: "Whatever evils the slave trade may be attended with... it is mercy... to poor wretches, who... would otherwise suffer from the butcher's knife."

And there, at last, we have it in plain language. The enslavement and expatriation of Africans was a blessing; and not even a blessing in disguise, but a blessing that is clearly recognizable! A blessing that delivered the poor wretches from a worse fate in their homeland!

The content, style and timing of this literature leave us in no doubt that its production was largely an ancillary service to the slave trade. But on account, no doubt, of its enormous popularity as both sensational entertainment and a salve for the conscience, it also generated a life of its own, so that it did not simply expire when the slave trade was abolished at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but reshaped itself with the tools of trendy scholarly fantasies and pseudo-sciences. In its updated form it stood ready to serve the new historical era of European exploration of Africa and, hot on the heels of that endeavor, colonial occupation

itself. Which brings us to the Anglo-Irishman Joyce Cary, who, in the years immediately following the First World War, was serving the British Empire, reluctantly it seems, in a small corner of the territory Britain had recently annexed and named Nigeria and, from some accounts, quite hating the job and, consequently – who knows? – avenging himself by writing a book about it (so devious are the ways of the human psyche!). And at the end of that long and tortuous road (and sentence) we find a class of Nigerian university students in 1952 having to study that book for their Bachelor of Arts degree of London University, and for the first time in their lives having to disagree rather strongly with an English teacher over an English book!

I think I can speak for my classmates if I say that none of us in 1952 knew the heavy historical antecedents of that book. In my secondary school where I had the good fortune of the fine library I have already paid tribute to I did indeed read, on my own, a few "African" novels by such writers as Rider Haggard and John Buchan. But I did not connect the Africa in those riveting adventure stories among savages even remotely with myself or my homeland. Perhaps I was too young. Perhaps I was yet to appropriate Africa from the remote, no man's land of the mind where my first English primer had placed it for me: Once there was a wizard. He lived in Africa. He went to China to get a lamp. Whatever the reason, 1952 was going to be different. And the fact that *Mister Johnson* was not set in some nebulous Africa but claimed to be right there in Nigeria must have helped. My classmates and I could handle the concept of Nigeria with some familiarity and confidence. The time also was right. Just five years down the road, in 1957, our sister colony of the Gold Coast would become the independent state of Ghana and inaugurate the whirlwind decolonization of Africa. So the excitement of change was already in the air in 1952 and, with it, the confidence of heirs to victory over imperial rule. Any white person who did not believe in self-rule for us and there were quite a number of such people around was simply called an imperialist. I don't remember us spending sleepless nights analysing such people's motives; they were simply in the nature of things. There was at least one senior professor at Ibadan who had left India at independence in 1947 and fled to us. Such people, facing prospects of a second dethronement, were particularly unamused.

I make this digression merely to point out that eager though we were to get rid of white rule, we did not find it necessary to demonise white people at least not at that stage. And the reason, I think, is that we were ignorant of the hundreds of years of sustained denigration we and our home had been subjected to in order to make our colonization possible and excusable. If anyone had asked me in 1952 what I thought of Joyce Cary I probably would have been quite satisfied to call him the generic pet name, imperialist!

What his book *Mister Johnson* did for me though was to call into question my childhood assumption of the innocence of stories. It began to dawn on me that although fiction was undoubtedly fictitious it could also be true or false, not with the truth or falsehood of a news item but as to its disinterestedness, its intention, its integrity. Needless to say I did not grasp all of this at one bound but slowly over time through the experience of life and reading. And reading came to mean reading with greater scrutiny and sometimes rereading with adult eyes what I had first read in the innocence of my literary infancy and adolescence.

Saying this the way I have said it may well leave my reader with the impression that I became a sad and disillusioned old man (or "older man" as Americans prefer to say) whose joy in reading has been battered and bruised by the recognition that cruelty can be paraded in many disguises through the avenues of literature by all manner of dubious practitioners. I am glad to reassure everyone about my abiding faith in the profession of literature, and further to suggest that the kind of careful and even cautious mode of reading that I am impliedly advocating does not signal despair; rather it is the strongest vote of confidence we can give our writers and their work – to put them on notice that we will go to their offering for wholesome pleasure and insight, and not for a rehash of old stereotypes which gained currency long ago in the slave trade and poisoned, perhaps forever, the well-springs of our common humanity. As a writer, I am all for such challenge and such expectations from my readers.

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**Glossary**

1. **paradox**: a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that when investigated or explained may prove to be well founded or true
2. **detain**: keep (someone) from proceeding, hold back
3. **fledgling**: a young bird developing wing feathers that are large enough for flight
4. **shillings**: a former British coin and monetary unit equal to one-twentieth of a pound or twelve pence
5. **evangelism**: the spreading of the Christian gospel by public preaching or personal witness
6. **sermon**: a talk on a religious or moral subject, especially one given during a church service and based on a passage from the Bible
7. **congregation**: a group of people assembled for religious worship
8. **encomium**: a piece of writing, speech, etc. that praises someone or something
9. **sobriquet**: a name given to someone or something that is not their or its real or official name
10. **Igbo**: a member of a people of south-eastern Nigeria
11. **substantial**: of considerable importance, size or worth
12. **derogatory**: showing a critical or disrespectful attitude
13. **deliberations**: long and careful consideration or discussion
14. **conglomeration**: a number of different things, parts or items that are grouped together; collection
15. **sovereign**: a supreme ruler, especially a monarch
16. **dissemination**: the action or fact of spreading something, especially information
17. **ephemeral**: lasting for a very short time
18. **threshold**: a point of entry or beginning
19. **quiver**: a slight trembling movement or sound, especially one caused by a sudden strong emotion
20. **ostensibly**: apparently or purportedly, but perhaps not actually
21. **reconsecrated**: make or declare (something, typically a church) sacred; dedicate formally to a religious or divine purpose
22. **gallows**: a structure, typically of two uprights and a crosspiece, for the hanging of criminals
23. **fanatical**: filled with excessive and single-minded zeal

24. **doctrine**: a belief or set of beliefs held and taught by a Church, political party, or other group
25. **proviso**: a condition attached to an agreement
26. **self-righteousness**: having or characterised by a certainty, especially an unfounded one, that one is totally correct or morally superior
27. **zealotry**: fanatical and uncompromising pursuit of religious, political or other ideals
28. **primordial**: existing at or from the beginning of time; primeval
29. **unprecedented**: never done or known before
30. **abbreviate**: shorten a word, phrase, or text
31. **rampant**: something unwelcome or unpleasant flourishing or spreading unchecked
32. **negligent**: failing to take proper care in doing something
33. **generic**: characteristic of or relating to a class or group of things
34. **artifact**: an object made by a human being, typically an item of cultural or historical interest
35. **extravagant**: lacking restraint in spending money or using resources
36. **metaphor**: a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable
37. **fortification**: a defensive wall or other reinforcement built to strengthen a place against attack
38. **conspicuous**: standing out so as to be clearly visible
39. **tautness**: stretched or pulled tight
40. **torsion**: the action of twisting or the state of being twisted, especially of one end of an object relative to the other
41. **anarchy**: a state of disorder due to absence or nonrecognition of authority or other controlling systems
42. **allusive**: working by suggestion rather than explicit mention
43. **intuitively**: using or based on what one feels to be true even without conscious reasoning
44. **remonstrate**: make a forcefully reproachful protest
45. **embarrassment**: a feeling of self-consciousness, shame, or awkwardness
46. **patently**: clearly; without doubt
47. **superstitious**: believe in things that are not real or possible, for example magic
48. **astounded**: shock or greatly surprise
49. **medley**: a varied mixture of people or things
50. **exasperation**: a feeling of intense irritation or annoyance
51. **assiduously**: showing great care and perseverance
52. **nitwit**: a silly or foolish person
53. **rebellion**: a conflict in which one faction tries to wrest control from another
54. **metropolitan**: relating to or denoting a metropolis, often inclusive of its surrounding areas: especially in culture, sophistication, or in accepting and combining a wide variety of people, ideas
55. **undertow**: a current of water below the surface and moving in a different direction from any surface current
56. **totalitarian**: relating to a system of government that is centralized and dictatorial and requires complete subservience to the state
57. **warren**: a network of interconnecting rabbit burrows

58. **pioneer**: a person who is among the first to explore or settle a new country or area
59. **antiquity**: the ancient past, especially the period before the Middle Ages
60. **conservative**: averse to change or innovation and holding traditional values
61. **disparaged**: regard or represent as being of little worth
62. **apologia**: a formal written defense of one's opinions or conduct
63. **wretches**: an unfortunate or unhappy person
64. **expatriation**: the use of force or law to remove someone from their own country
65. **ancillary**: providing necessary support to the primary activities or operation of an organisation, institution, industry or system
66. **abolished**: formally put an end to a system, practice or institution
67. **pseudo-sciences**: consists of statements, beliefs, or practices that claim to be both scientific and factual but are incompatible with the scientific method
68. **devious**: showing a skillful use of underhanded tactics to achieve goals
69. **psyche**: the human soul, mind, or spirit
70. **antecedents**: a thing or event that existed before or logically precedes another
71. **decolonization**: the action or process of a state withdrawing from a former colony, leaving it independent
72. **dethronement**: to remove from a throne or place of power of prominence
73. **denigration**: the action of unfairly criticizing someone or something
74. **imperialist**: a policy of extending a country's power and influence through diplomacy or military force
75. **dubious**: not to be relied upon
76. **advocation**: a person who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy
77. **rehash**: put old ideas or material into a new form without significant change or improvement
78. **stereotype**: a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing

**Comprehension I: (Short Answer Questions)**

1. What was the significance of the narrator's first motor vehicle ride to their ancestral home?
2. How did the local community react to the narrator's father's return and sermon at St. Philip's Anglican Church?
3. Why does the narrator prefer to refer to the Igbo people as a 'nation' rather than a 'tribe'?
4. What role did markets play in Igbo society according to the essay?
5. How did music, specifically Egwu Obi, contribute to Igbo cultural identity during the narrator's childhood?
6. What significance did the story of the migration of a neighbouring town hold for the narrator?
7. How did the narrator's father react to the presence of his half-brother's shrine in their home?
8. How were Christianity and traditional beliefs accommodated in the narrator's family home?
9. Why did the Igbo people generally reject the rule of kings?
10. What challenges did Igbo villages face in terms of defence against centralized military powers?
11. Why were the Igbo considered 'argumentative' by the British colonialists?

**Comprehension II: (Paragraph Answer Questions)**

1. Explore the role of tradition and heritage in 'My Home Under Imperial Fire' and its conflict with the imperial forces.
2. Describe the house the narrator's family moved into upon returning to Ogidi.
3. Discuss the historical antecedents of negative European portrayals of Africa in literature, as explained by Achebe. How did these stereotypes influence colonial attitudes?
4. How did the transatlantic slave trade contribute to the negative stereotypes about Africans in European literature, as discussed by Achebe?
5. In what ways did Achebe's educational journey, particularly at University College, Ibadan, challenge his understanding of African identity and colonial history?
6. Discuss Achebe's belief in the transformative power of literature.
7. How did European evangelism impact Igbo religious practices and beliefs?

**Comprehension III: (Analytical/Discussion Questions)**

1. Discuss the theme of cultural clash and its impact as portrayed in the essay.
2. How does Chinua Achebe use language and narrative style to convey the psychological impact of imperialism?
3. How did Achebe's exposure to literature from both Nigerian and Western traditions influence his own identity as a writer and his literary aspirations?
4. Analyze the incident where Nigerian students strongly disagreed with their English teacher over Joyce Cary's novel *Mister Johnson*. What does this incident reveal about colonial education and literary critique?
5. Explain the concept of *The Africa That Never Was* as discussed by Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow. How does it relate to Achebe's critique of Western literary portrayals of Africa?
6. Describe Achebe's evolution from viewing stories as innocent fiction to recognizing their potential to perpetuate harmful stereotypes. How did this realization impact his approach to writing?

**Further Reading:**

1. *The Danger of a Single Story* – Speech delivered by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
2. *The Empire Fights Back* by Chinua Achebe
3. *To My One Love* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
4. *Today, The Balance of Stories* by Chinua Achebe
5. *Decolonising the Mind* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o

# TO LEAVE THIS CITY

- **ORHAN VELI KANIK**

**Pre-reading Activities:**

*1. What do you think of your hometown?*
*2. If you are living in a new city now, then do you miss your hometown?*
*3. What about your hometown would you miss the most?*
*4. Do you feel nostalgic when you visit your hometown after a long time?*

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**Introduction to the Poet:**

Orhan Veli Kanik was born as Ahmet Orhan on April 13, 1914, in a village situated along the Bosphorus in Istanbul. His father, Mehmet Veli, was a clarinettist who taught at the Istanbul Conservatory and served as a tonmeister for Istanbul Radio. Kanik initially attended Galatasaray School in 1921. After completing fourth grade, his family relocated to Ankara, where his father had started working. He then attended Gazi Elementary School. The following year, he enrolled at Ankara Boys' High School, which was a boarding school. As a free spirit, Kanik was already writing poems and had a strong enthusiasm for theatre. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar, his literature teacher at Ankara Boys' High School, influenced him significantly with his critiques and advice on his poetry. It was during high school that he also met Oktay Rifat Horozccu and Melih Cevdet Anday. Together, the trio would go on to bring about a radical change in Turkish poetry in the late 1930s.

Kanik, Horozccu and Cevdet are considered the First Wave poets (1940s and 1950s) in Turkish literature. They are collectively remembered for the first poetry collection they published together, titled – *Garip*. *Garip* is a collaborative poetry collection which includes a foreword that expresses their vision of new poetry in contrast to traditional rhetoric. These writers revolutionised modern Turkish poetry by embracing the language of the streets, celebrating its wit, and rejecting the formal conventions of official language. Their poetry echoed a rejection of the oppressive authoritarian world around them.

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**About the Poem:**

Orhan Veli expresses a speaker's internal conflict between the allure of a city and the yearning for a different life. The poem's brevity and clear language leave a lasting impression. Despite its simplicity, it captures the complexities of human emotion and the bittersweet nature of leaving behind a familiar place for uncharted territory. This poem differs from Kalik's other works in its introspective tone and lack of political themes. While his other poems often reflect on the social and political climate of Turkey, 'To Leave this City' focuses on personal emotions and experiences. The poem also stands apart from its time period, which was marked by rapid modernization and urbanization. Rather than celebrate the progress and excitement of the city, Kanik's poem expresses a longing for the past and a desire for escape.

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This is the city to walk around in the rain
Staring at the barges in the harbor
And to hum songs through the night.
The city has countless streets
Bustling with people running around…
The waitress who brings me my tea every evening
And whom I like a lot although she's a White Russian
Is in this city.

The old pianist who turns around
To look at me
When he sneaks in pieces by Schumann and Brahms
While playing waltzes and foxtrot
Is also in this city.

The ferry boats that carry passengers
To the village where I was born are in this city.
So are my memories,
All those I love,
And the graves of my loved ones.

This is the city where I have a job,
Where I earn my bread money.
And yet, in spite of all this,
This is the same city I'm leaving
Because of a woman
In another city.

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**Glossary**

1. **barges**: a long flat-bottomed boat for carrying freight on canals and rivers
2. **harbour**: a place on the coast where ships may moor in shelter, especially one protected from rough water by piers, jetties and other artificial structures
3. **ferry**: a boat or ship for conveying passengers and goods, especially over a relatively short distance and as a regular service
4. **Clara Schumann**: a composer and one of the legendary pianists in the world
5. **Robert Schumann**: German composer and pianist and a music critic of the early Romantic era
6. **Johannes Brahms**: German composer and pianist
7. **waltzes**: a dance in which two people dance together to a regular rhythm
8. **foxtrot**: a formal dance for two people together, with both small fast steps and longer slow ones
9. **White Russian**: the Russians who fought against the Reds in the Civil War of 1918-20

**Comprehension I: (Short Answer Questions)**

1. Why is the speaker leaving his city?
2. Whom does the speaker express likeness towards?
3. What is the old Pianist playing?
4. What connects village to the city in the poem?
5. Which place are the speaker's memories associated with?
6. What is the tone of the poem?

**Comprehension II: (Paragraph Answer Questions)**

1. Write a note on the central idea of the poem.
2. Describe the features of the city as expressed by the poet.
3. Explain the kind of attachment the speaker has developed for the city.
4. How is 'sentimentality for the past' expressed by the speaker?
5. Discuss the relevance of the poem to the present times.

**Comprehension III: (Analytical/Discussion Questions)**

1. The poem expresses a longing for the past and a desire for escape. Elaborate.
2. Discuss the speaker's internal conflict between the allure of a city and the yearning for a different life.
3. 'To Leave this City' captures the complexities of human emotions and experiences. Comment.
4. Place identity comes from beliefs, meanings, emotions, ideas and attitudes assigned to it. Substantiate.

**Further Reading:**

1. *Rooms by the Sea* by Sujata Bhatt
2. *Time's Fool* by Ruth Pitter
3. *Sea Glass* by Greta Ahlefeld
4. *Blooming through Two Cities* by Shoilee Mandal
5. *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

# BEING A DAUGHTER

- **KUNZANG CHODEN**

**Pre-reading Activities:**

*1. Are you the eldest child of your house? If yes, have you ever experienced the pressure of people having high expectations from you? What happens when you are the oldest 'daughter' in the house?*

*2. Look and observe certain rituals that are performed in your home or in your community. Do you think they hold a certain amount of significance and that they are necessary for human beings to live at peace?*

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**Introduction to the Writer:**

Writer Kunzang Choden hails from Bhutan. She is the first woman from Bhutan to write an English-language novel. Choden was born in Bumthang District, and her parents were feudal landlords. Her father sent her to an English-language school in India when she was nine years old. She graduated with honours from Indraprastha College in Delhi with a BA in Psychology and from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a BA in Sociology. She has experience working in Bhutan for the United Nations Development Programme. She resides in Thimphu with her Swiss spouse now.

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**About the Text:**

'Being a Daughter' describes a young girl's growth as the oldest daughter in the "*mai chedpo*" (the big house). It narrates the tale of Tsomo who is enmeshed in the routine of household life. The narration also elaborates on Tsomo's attachment towards her mother. Set in a village in Bhutan, Tsomo describes everything that happens in the village in detail. The contexts of practicing certain rituals aids the text in becoming philosophical in tone. Tsomo narrating how certain practices are carried out and her constant questioning about the significance of these actions brings out the innocence and curious nature of a young girl.

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Tsomo is in the house alone with Mother. They are seldom on their own; this is a rare moment. They are in the kitchen arranging pots and pans on the shelves. The late afternoon wind hisses through the bare trees and beats against the bamboo mats, rattling them noisily under the roof. It's a warm wind and Tsomo knows that spring will come soon. She has seen the buds on the willow trees ready to burst forth in blossom.

It won't be long before the house fills. The adults will return from the fields, tired and hungry. The children will come home exhausted and dirty. Mother looks out through the west window. The sun is about two arm spans away from the mountain top. She will start the fire for their evening meal as soon as the sun sets. There is a quiet unhurried atmosphere as Mother continues to talk to Tsomo while she places the last utensils on the shelves. She always said that Tsomo was such a small and weak baby she was surprised that she has indicated, 'You

were this small, just a mass of wrinkles and you could barely open your eyes. I was so afraid that I would lose you.'

Tsomo is the third child and the first daughter among the twelve children that Mother has borne. Tsomo cannot imagine herself as a small baby, a mass of wrinkles. She was born in the year of the Monkey. Tsomo loves hearing Mother talk about her as a baby, she finds it endearing and comforting.

'Monkey year is not considered a good year to be born in. So I was anxious and attentive when your horoscope was charted by the astrologer. Your wheel of birth mark, *kye tag khorlo*, is located on your knee.'

'What does that mean?' Tsomo asks, curious.

'That's exactly what I asked the astrologer. It means you will be restless, always wanting to travel, that's what the astrologer explained to me. He was surprised that I had asked. He said everybody knew that.'

At that time Mother had thought, where can a girl, even a restless one, travel to? Not everything in the horoscope is necessarily true, but she kept her thoughts to herself and listened as the astrologer went on to say that if the baby lived past her third and fourteenth days, she would live to a ripe old age.

'Where is the furthest I can travel to Mother?' Tsomo asks her mother dreamily.

'Where? I don't know. Where can a girl travel to?' Her old thoughts are stirred by the childish question. Then, gently, teasing, 'Perhaps as far north as Tibet and as far south as India.' Mother laughs at the irony of this prediction. Where can girls travel?

She then explains that each new life is given by a specific *khandro* or dakini. Tsomo was given by Pema Khandro, so her horoscope name was to be Pema Tsomo. But as her older brother was called Pema Namgyel, she was simply called Tsomo and this was the name most people knew her by. It was written in her horoscope that she had not accumulated many virtues in her previous lifetimes. Tsomo does not understand what accumulated virtues are but she smiles to herself: what if her brother and she were called male and female Pema, like the couple living near the big peach tree? The husband and wife were both called Pema and people described them as male Pema and female Pema.

'You poor girl, you will not have riches. Your horoscope said material prosperity would elude you but if you practise religion you will be reborn as a man in your next life.' What mother did not tell her was that it was also written that she would suffer anxiety and grief throughout her life. Tsomo's share of grief came early. By the time she was fifteen, they were only seven siblings. Five of her brothers and sisters had died in infancy and the last one died with Mother before it was born. Although many of them died while she was still too young to mourn their deaths in the same way as her parents did, she was old enough to feel some of the grief foretold in her horoscope.

Tsomo's house is massive. It is the biggest house in the village, an imposing structure made of rammed earth walls and wood. It has three storeys. The ground floor, made entirely of rammed earth, has only tiny slits for windows so it is always dark inside. The animals were kept here and the people lived on the first and second floors. In the stillness of the night Tsomo could hear the ruminating cows. Sometimes, she would wake suddenly with the noise of a thud as one of the animals butted another. Even now, whenever she wakes up in the night she immediately thinks that she is in her old house and waits to hear the cows. Although their house

is big, it can't be seen from a distance, especially in summer, because it is surrounded by trees. The peach, pear and walnut trees are gigantic and very old. Spring has touched all of them. The pink of the peach blossoms is visible through the outer skin of the dark green buds. The buds on the walnut are swollen and dark. Tsomo loves spring. She enjoys rambling in the fields and picking flowers but most of all she loves not having to sit cramped near the hearth, competing for the best spots where she can keep warm.

It makes Mother beam with pride to tell her children that her great-grandfather built the house himself. 'Look at those huge beams. He carried them all by himself. He was so strong. The elders say he could even fight a bull and win. But he had a gentle side too. He loved trees and flowers and he planted all those trees.' Mother became nostalgic. Generations ago their ancestors had been known as the 'Wangleng *chukpo*' or the wealthy of Wangleng. When Tsomo first heard this, she had innocently asked 'Why can't we still be called Wangleng chukpo?' As far as Tsomo could recall they were simply known as 'Wangleng *mai chedpo*' or the big house of Wangleng. But as she grew older she realized that the name was appropriate for all they now had was the big house. Most of the rooms were empty. Much of the wealth had been lost or squandered over the years.

There are eight other houses, built closely together in a cluster. Tsomo learned very early in life that all the villagers were related in one way or another. When they were on good terms, everybody referred to, 'Our ancient tie of a common ancestor,' but when they were not on very good terms, one family was accused of being of a lower social group than the other. Aunt Dechen was the expert when it came to expounding the genealogies of each family. She would pull her lower lip in a contemptuous pout and say, 'Those people from Choden Lhamo's house behave like real serfs because they cannot shake off the serf traits'. Tsomo once made the mistake of asking her what serf traits were. Aunt Dechen had looked at her in genuine shock. 'You don't know? You don't know? Are you such a stupid girl? You should know, everybody knows.'

Even as children they were keenly aware of the group they came from. Tsomo felt safe and comfortable being who she was, a daughter of tax-paying parents. mother took great pride in the fact that they had always been 'straight taxpayers' or *threl pa nagjang*. They were pure, not like the serfs. The serfs were descendants of the plains people, who were brought as slaves and were considered to be of the lowest class. They lived in houses owned by their masters and they possessed no fields of their own. They had to be given food or rations. The tenant farmers who worked on tenured land were considered to be a little higher up the social ladder. Neither serfs nor tenant farmers paid taxes to the central government. They worked instead for a landed family living further up the valley.

Nerves would be strained and passions inflamed whenever it came to the matter of who was better than whom. When Aum Chomo's son was rejected by his lover's family because they were serfs, she stood in the middle of the village demanding to meet the mother of the girl. Window shutters had opened noisily, heads had poked out of the windows and children had stopped playing to see what was happening. Tsomo had joined her friends in a circle around Aum Chomo and watched. She stood with her thin arms on her narrow hips and yelled, loud and clear for all to hear, 'Where did you come from? If you descended from the heavens of the gods above, show me the ladder you came down on and if you ascended from the underworld of subterranean beings, describe to me the stairs you climbed up. I thought we came together

for work at the whistle of our supervisor and ate from the same pots from which our food was measured and ladled out to us. What makes you better than any of us?'

Tsomo was patiently waiting to hear the description of the ladder from heaven and the stairs from the subterranean world and all she heard was her mother's voice calling her home. She went reluctantly to find Mother a little agitated, 'Why do you waste your time with such spectacles? Now start preparing the vegetables for dinner instead.'

Tsomo stood, uncertain, and Mother immediately said, 'There are turnips in the basket behind the stairs to the attic.'

Tsomo put her hands in the basket and felt around for turnips in the buckwheat straw. She picked out six white turnips rimmed with a band of purplish pink on top. They cook turnip throughout winter because it is one vegetable that keeps well for several months. Tsomo longs for a change. Mustard greens would be the first fresh vegetable for the year. She must remind Mother that they must dig the garden soon. As she sat near the hearth peeling the turnips and Mother busied herself with the dinner, Tsomo wondered how the girl's mother must have described the ladder from heaven and the stairs from the underworld. She would have to ask her friends about it.

Aunt Dechen insisted that one could recognize the serfs by their physical features. Tsomo often tried to see if any of her friends had the 'more pronounced noses, the deep-set eyes and the darker complexion,' but to her all of them looked the same: dark from the soot and smoke from their kitchens. Everybody had a different nose and as for the deeper-set eyes, she didn't really know what that meant. Every time Aunt Dechen pointed out these differences. Tsomo would nod wisely and say, 'Yes, yes, I see the difference' in the most grown-up voice she could manage and her aunt would commend her on her keen observation.

Tsomo knew that Father had come from the next village. He was also from a family of tax payers. He was much older than Mother and had never been married before. Midway through a very successful career as a scholar he suddenly decided he needed a wife and had asked Mother's parents to let him marry her. A little flustered, Mother had simply said, 'If he thinks I am good enough for him, what can I say?'

Her parents understood that to be 'Yes' and they were married. Father was a *gomchen* or a lay monk. Mother had willingly agreed to the marriage because she was a religious person herself and she liked the idea of being the wife of a gomchen. She had secretly admired the gomchen for many years. What she did not realize was that a religious practitioner would be so busy with religious activities that the entire burden of farming would fall on her.

Tsomo never heard Mother complain. She was a big strong and brave woman and she did not complain about anything. Sometimes Tsomo thought she had a strange fixed expression on her face. It was a funny expression, a smile that verged on sadness. When she had this expression she would stare into space as if she missed something and Tsomo thought that she would have complained if she could. Father was right when he said, 'Your mother never complains. She does not know how to complain,' Maybe she really didn't know how to complain. She was tall, broad shouldered and had wavy hair which she always cut very short. She wore silver earrings studded with tiny turquoise. Her old fashioned silver pins, used to fasten her *kiras*, were huge and stood out on her shoulders like banners. They were made of silver and gilded in gold. A thick silver chain was attached to the pins. It hung around her neck

and clanged with the string of assorted beads which she always wore. Tsomo knew each bead on the string.

When Tsomo was little and Mother had some quiet time, she would allow Tsomo to climb into her lap. Indulgent in the warmth and the security of this close contact she would lie back and watch Tsomo's delight as she felt each bead in the string. Tsomo would ask, 'How did this one get here?' In a quiet sing-song voice Mother would take her daughter around her neck. Her large hands would clasp Tsomo's over each bead. 'These two largest corals were given to me by my father. He brought them from Tibet. My grandmother, your great-grandmother gave me the two smaller corals. And this stone is called *zi*. It is very precious. It was given to me by my great-grandmother, your great-great-grandmother, before she died. She was blind and I looked after her until she died. I exchanged a handsome young bull for these two pairs of small turquoise. Look at them. They are so pure, so blue. Feel them, they are so smooth.'

Even now, when Tsomo thinks of them she can see the blue, feel the round smoothness on her fingertips.

'The rest of the beads have been passed on in the family except this one,' and she pointed to a large yellow bead, 'Your father gave me this from among his prayer beads. He got it from his teacher in Tibet. I don't know what it is. It is like an amulet for my good health and luck, for it has been touched and blessed by many high lamas.'

Tsomo loved to hear the sound of the beads clicking against the silver chain. It was a familiar and comforting sound. Even as a little child Tsomo always felt reassured and safe when she heard this sound for she knew that Mother was somewhere close. This was her mother's sound. Tsomo remembers how Mother used to shake her beads and chain to distract crying babies. The clicking and rattling did indeed stop the babies even in the middle of their crying. Actually, there was nothing quiet about Mother, she talked loudly and laughed boisterously with the frivolity of a teenager and she laughed a great deal.

After Tsomo's maternal uncles and aunts married and left, Mother had to do everything herself. That's when Tsomo was called on to help in the house, to do more than she ever had, 'Tsomo do this,' 'Tsomo go there,' 'Tsomo bring this.'

Any failure was met with reprisal. 'You are the oldest girl, you have to learn to take the responsibilities of the household.'

Father rarely asked her to do anything. In fact, he rarely spoke to any of the children. Tsomo seldom saw him even talk to Mother. They slept together in the altar room and sometimes she thought she heard whispered conversations in the night. So they must have talked. Father spent most of his time performing rituals in and around the village and otherwise sitting quietly in the altar room reading numerous manuscripts, or writing. He was a rather large man who was balding. Even in Tsomo's earliest recollections, he had very little hair on his head. His clothes were invariable in shades of red and brown. He wore his gho so that the hem reached mid-calf. He had dark, large, piercing eyes and when he spoke to anyone he looked at the person so intently and directly that many people felt uncomfortable. He seldom spoke but when he did, it was always with a tone of finality. He had a deep rumbling voice that was quite melodious and when he chanted prayers, he sounded like a temple horn being blown at its lowest pitch. Tsomo woke every morning to the sound of his voice praying in the altar room and the last thing she heard before she fell asleep every night was his voice again, saying his

evening prayers. If the sound of Mother working about the house during the day reassured her, the sound of her father praying in the night lulled her to sleep.

Father was there all the time and yet he was out of their lives, detached and aloof, quite oblivious of what the rest of the family was doing. Although they heard his voice in the altar, often they only saw him at mealtimes. Tsomo felt his presence had a disciplining effect wherever he was. He would sit on his mat at the head of the semicircle of family members and Mother always served him first. Father made long and elaborate offerings of food to all the deities and all his lamas, both dead and alive. The family members could start eating only after he had tossed some bit of food into the air as a final gesture of offering. Tsomo had eaten meals with her friends in their homes where the atmosphere was more relaxed, everybody laughed and chatted as they ate. In her home, meals were serious rituals. There was little talking and hardly any laughing. Father treated them as if the family was a group of lay monks in the presence of a senior monk.

Mother was always thoughtful and respectful and fiercely loyal to her husband. 'You must never say anything against your father,' she would say, especially when she detected any signs of rebellion among the children.

'All children must respect their father,' was the indisputable norm that she vigilantly upheld.

As a religious man father had considerable status in the village. Often people referred to Tsomo and her brothers and sister as Lopon gomchen's children and she immediately felt alienated from them in this uncomfortable category. Father's services were much sought after and Tsomo knew he was busy in his own way. He performed all the annual rites and rituals in his own house, and in all the other houses in the village. He specialized in divinations. If any one in the family was sick, he would be at their bedside with his thick book of divinations to find out the cause of the illness. Once this was determined he performed the remedies.

Tsomo remembers that there were many spirits everywhere. Father told them that human beings had to share the world with spirits, that this was the natural order of things, but they must not get in each other's way. The children would huddle together in the dark nights after they had heard a fearsome story of lurking malevolent spirits. At these times, the sound of the wind in the attic, a door creaking on its hinges or a creaking floorboard filled them with fear.

'What happens when we get in each other's way?' Tsomo heard her older brother ask.

'That's when we fall sick. We cannot see, but our actions also hurt the spirits.'

Sometimes the illnesses were caused by spirits who had to be identified and appeased. Tsomo heard it being said, that when a malevolent spirit had visited a house, its presence could be felt. She often sensed their presence. She couldn't describe it. She simply knew it. She would feel a sudden tap on the shoulder or a tug at her toes. She also knew that one must never look back when there was such a presence around. But these were the times she felt the strongest urge to do so. Sometimes after performing an errand in another room or outside at night, she would run into the kitchen as if someone were chasing her. Mother would chastise her. 'Tsomo, stop behaving like a madwoman! Have you no courage at all?'

Every time an angry spirit had to be appeased, Mother would send one of the children to call her sister, Aunt Dechen, to feed harmful spirits and get rid of them. There were so many spirits lurking everywhere. People were terrified of them for they seemed to be always looking

for prey. Some of them were spirits of the dead, others spirits of the living but they were all malevolent wandering spirits who manifested their presence through various symptoms in an ill person. Sometimes they were so bold that they even left deep scratches and fang marks became visible only after the affected parts of the body were rubbed with a juice extracted from a particular creeper.

'Look here! Look at these. They are coming out,' Aunt Dechen used to say, as she vigorously rubbed the juice on the patients' bodies. She proudly pointed out the thin pin scratch lines and the red swollen patches that revealed themselves on the affected bodies. Tsomo's flesh rose up in goosebumps but she felt a compulsion to look at all the marks. Terrified, her eyes followed Aunt Dechen's finger as she pointed to each abrasion and lesion on the skin. 'Those deep ones are fang marks. These needle-tip like marks are scratches.' Tsomo knew the spirits had pointed fingernails with needle-like tips. Aunt Dechen had told her that.

Everyone in the village recognized and respected Aunt Dechen as the best person to deal with spirits for she could immediately establish a natural rapport with them. She was often called upon to help when somebody fell sick in the village. She would cook special food, for each spirit had to be given a specific food and drink and these had to be served in a particular way in special containers and dishes. Then she would lay out the food in the prescribed manner and talk to the invisible spirits as if they were actually there. She wasn't a medium or an oracle, but people said, that although there were other people who could perform the rituals, only Aunt Dechen's food satisfied the hungry spirits immediately. So everybody relied on her.

Tsomo often watched Aunt Dechen and was sometimes actually asked to serve the food. She would put on a serious face, fill the empty cups and pile the cooked meat on the baskets of rice. Tsomo felt a little apprehensive talking to non-existent guests and feeding them, but she was fascinated and always trailed her aunt during these rituals. Aunt Dechen usually greeted the spirits, then apologized, coaxed and cajoled them to go away and leave the sick person alone.

'You have come and we did not know, please forgive us. We have prepared these foods for you. Here is high quality rice from the warm sub-tropics with good yak meat from the high pastures. Here is tea made from the best brick tea from Tibet, and ara which has been freshly distilled for you. Eat, for you must be hungry. Drink, for you must be thirsty. After you have eaten and drunk, please leave quietly.'

Scared as she was of them, Tsomo used to think the spirits were rather stupid because Aunt Dechen was just bluffing. The rice was ordinary, the meat was any old stringy piece and the comfortable seat she invited them to sit on was usually an old wooden block or a discarded piece of clothing or even an old bag. But the spirits often cooperated and the patient got better. Sometimes, though, Aunt Dechen had to scold and threaten them when they refused to leave. 'We've given you your favourite food and drink. Now, please go, and do not embarrass us.'

Sometimes, despite feeding the spirits again and again, if the patient got no relief, she would get very angry and say, 'I know who you are, you Lowly Gray Ones,' a derogatory reference. 'If you don't release my patient, I will come and pour all this food in your water container and shame you. Now begone before I burn pepper and chillies to chase you off in disgrace.' Everyone in the village knew which house each spirit belonged to. So if even this threat did not work, it was assumed that there were several spirits involved, and their identities had got confused. So, in the confusion, if the main spirits got left out of the feeding, there were

problems. When Tsomo's baby brothers and sisters fell ill and Father did all he could and Aunt Dechen fed every known spirit in the vicinity and yet they died, Father said it was their karma or the result of their actions in their previous lives.

The elders put many things down to karma. Father liked to explain every phenomenon in a religious context. Sometimes to convey a message to the children, Father would recount endless religious stories which the children loved to hear. Often these stories illustrated how karma worked. He said that everybody was the way they were because of the way they had lived their previous lives. Aum Choizom who sat on her porch sunning herself day after day because she hoped her racking cough which exhausted her and brought out blood in her spittle would be cured, was suffering her '*lacy ney*' karmic illness. Aum Chomo and her family had barely anything to eat in the house. She went around begging and borrowing, 'We have nothing to eat tonight.' The villagers always gave her something, because she couldn't help her situation. It was her karma. Years later, when her children grew up, everything changed. Their family became prosperous. That was also karma. Tsomo was relieved to know that one's karma did not have to be bad throughout one's life. Things in life could improve like the sudden change in Aum Chomo's life.

Father said that the results of people's actions accumulated and manifested themselves over many lifetimes, but sometimes results could also be seen in the present life. He often quoted the example of Goempola to demonstrate the reality of karma. Goempola was an aging gomchen in the village. He was a professional reader and he spent all his time going from house to house reading the holy texts. Tsomo remembered that he had lost most of his teeth and his diction was rather slurred and incoherent. Nobody could understand what he read. Tsomo had often watched him set a butter lamp on the altar, fill a bowl with rice and stick burning incense into it. Then he would lay out the text on a table in front of him and, chanting endless prayers, he would unwrap the manuscripts from their layers of cloth, and begin to read them. There was a certain charm about the way he went about these activities, something smooth and methodical. It evoked a sense of sacredness and it really did not make a difference to Tsomo whether he pronounced each word carefully or not. She always defended him whenever any of her friends said something critical about his reading. Like the older women in the village, she respected him as a man of religion. It made her feel very grown-up and wise.

She heard it being said that he took advantage of his condition and just mumbled and muttered instead of actually reading the scriptures. But everybody still continued to invite him to read. Tsomo thinks that she was about six or seven years old, it was late autumn and the yellow and brown leaves from the peach trees were fluttering in the cold and persistent wind, when they heard that the reader had died. Soon the stories of how he died were being whispered around the village. For two days before his death, Goempola was moaning and groaning, begging anyone who came near him to lift the heavy scriptures that were crushing, pressing and suffocating him to death. Of course, nobody could see the books except himself, so nobody could help him. He had died crying out in pain and making as if to push the heavy books off his body. He had desecrated the scriptures and cheated the people who had trusted him, who had fed and paid him for reading the texts. Tsomo carried a horrific image in her mind: of the *Kanjur*, Buddhist canons consisting of one hundred and eight volumes, each volume weighing about five kilos, piled up on top of Goempola. Anyone would be crushed to death under such a pile! In times of hardship, the villagers put away their differences and came together,

especially if there was a death in the village. If somebody from Tsomo's family failed to show up at any such event, they were missed immediately and people would say, 'Nobody came from the big house.' Tsomo's family was constantly reminded of the responsibility of being from the big house.

Repeatedly saying, 'Aiee Geompola, he is no more. I wonder where is now?' Mother prepared to fry a whole basketful of *tsog*, a special bread. Tsomo had to help her. As happened when someone died, a gloomy depression had descended upon the village. Even the children's games were subdued. They mainly stayed around their homes, watching the grown-ups as they went about their chores and the rituals of death. Tsomo did not miss her companions or their games at such times. She stayed at home watching or helping Mother. In a huge wooden bowl which Tsomo could hardly lift, Mother mixed the dough. Her sleeves were rolled up to her elbows and she kneaded and pounded the dough to the right consistency. Tsomo rolled out the dough on the wooden board and Mother cut it into strips and then crafted these into intricate patterns. When all sorts of biscuits, twisted and braided, some patterned like wheels, flowers or pineapples, were ready they were fried in oil. Tsomo's favourite ones were those she called bear's paws. She could even make them herself. Mother sat by the stove with a long ladle and turned the sizzling biscuits until they were just right.

'How can you tell when they are just right?' Tsomo wanted to know.

'If they are pale yellow like these they are not usually ready. They should get slightly brown, then they are crisp and delicious.'

Mother distilled a large container of ara. As usual, she poured a small amount of the alcohol into her cup and drank it to test its potency. Tsomo had to laugh loudly when she smacked her lips and nodded approvingly. The ara must have been good. Tsomo carried the basket of biscuits and Mother the alcohol and other foodstuff and they headed towards the house of Goempola. This was the way villagers did *khabsang* or greeted the bereaved family. As Tsomo was the oldest daughter, Mother always wanted her to accompany her on these important occasions. This way, she hoped Tsomo would learn the conventional proprieties. It was customary for one man and one woman from each household to go and help or chant the prayers.

Father was leading the prayers. He would conduct the cremation rights, though everybody had a role: the monks read the texts and performed the religious rituals. The men, women and children helped with the cooking and serving. Tsomo always associated deaths and cremations with all kinds of activity, everyone instructing everyone else about what had to be done. The big pots steaming in the makeshift kitchens, were fragrant with the aromas of slowly-cooking food. They followed her no matter where she was. The chanting of prayers to the accompaniment of the bells, cymbals and horns blown in various tones filled her ears and her heart pounded to the sound of the drums. The pervasive sound of the elders wailing the mantra of *Om Mani Padme Hung* drawing out each sonorous syllable pierced her pounding heart. An older person would lead the prayer and then all the others would join in. This was called sharing the mantra. Ap Lhamola was leading the prayers and everybody joined in the chorus. It was a sad and mournful chorus. Even on such a sad occasion there were some smiles and a few giggles when Pem Lhazom repeatedly sang out of tune and at the wrong time. Tsomo noticed that Pem Lhazom was feeling ashamed and she spent the rest of the prayer time just mouthing the words and not singing. Her face was flushed and she looked around her self-consciously.

The mournful sad sound of the prayer chilled Tsomo for she knew somebody had died, yet she was comforted for she knew that the living were praying for the dead.

Goempola's wife, Tashi Doma was a close friend of Mother's. They were the same age so they had a special connection and they called each other 'my same age'. Tashi Doma was sitting in the corner of the kitchen, griefstricken and hitting her chest weakly in anguish as they walked into the room. Her eyes were red and swollen. Her hair dishevelled and her face unwashed. She was in mourning. As Mother walked in, with Tsomo trailing beside her, Tashi Doma began to cry, repeating, 'He is gone, he is gone.' Mother whispered words of consolation to her friend holding her hands in her own, Tsomo stood at a distance, watching in silence. It felt strange to see grown-ups crying so openly, Mother's sympathy made her friend cry more and Mother's own voice was trembling and her eyes had turned moist.

As Goempola was neither a family member nor a friend of Tsomo's, she was dry eyed and observant. 'Stop crying. Don't you know that your tears will turn into rain and the vapour from your mouth will turn into mist and fog and your dead brother will not be able to travel to his next life?' These had been the words these same grown-ups had used, to make her stop when she had cried for her dead brothers and sisters. Now they were all crying. These grown-ups never followed what they told their children to do. Tsomo thought of all the rain and fog and felt sorry for Goempola. Tsomo asked Mother, 'Why do you cry so much and cause so much fog and rain in Goempola's way?'

All Mother said was, '*Whey* daughter, be quiet!' and looked around quickly to see if anyone had heard.

Later Mother and Tsomo went to offer the customary money to the dead person. The corpse was behind the curtain. Mother held the money to her forehead, eyes closed and lips moving with silent words, and then placed it on the table. Tsomo did the same although she was not sure what she was supposed to say. So she said 'Goempola, go your way. I hope there is not too much fog and rain.'

Standing so close to the corpse, Tsomo couldn't stop the next question. 'How could they tie up the corpse?'

'Why, as usual, like all dead bodies are tied up' Mother whispered under her breath irritably.

'I thought the body was all crushed and broken by the scriptures.' Mother looked at Tsomo for a long time, puzzled. Then her lips twitched and a faint smile began to play about them but she suddenly became stern. A quick and stunning rap on Tsomo's head with Mothers knuckles drew immediate tears from Tsomo's eyes.

'Whey, whey, what kind of a girl are you! Your mouth was born long before you were born!' Mother said and then dismissed Tsomo. 'Go and play with the other children.'

Tsomo's tear-stained face caused the children to stare at her mercilessly until one of the kinder ones, Deki Lhadon, came up to her and put her arms around her and consoled her.

'Don't cry Tsomo. You know what happens to the consciousness of the dead when you cry. If you really liked Ap Goempola so much, you must stop crying now. Do you want your tears to turn into rain and your breath into fog and obstruct his journey to rebirth?'

**Glossary**

1. ***kye tag khorlo***: (Bhutanese) is on foot
2. ***khandro***: (Bhutanese) the wisdom quality in the feminine essence (*dakini* in Sanskrit)
3. **elude**: escape from or avoid
4. **rammed earth walls**: walls constructed by forcibly mixing gravel, sand, silt and a small amount of clay into place between flat panels called framework
5. **ruminating**: think deeply about something
6. **expounding**: to give a detailed explanation of something
7. **genealogies**: a line of descent traced continuously from an ancestor
8. **contemptuous**: expressing deep hatred or disapproval
9. **serfs**: agricultural labourers bound by the feudal system who were tied to working on their lord's estate
10. **subterranean**: secret; concealed
11. **turquoise**: a semi-precious stone; opaque and of a greenish-blue colour
12. ***kira***: (Bhutanese) national dress of a woman in Bhutan
13. ***lama***: (Bhutanese) a spiritual leader
14. **frivolity**: lack of seriousness
15. **boisterously**: noisy and energetic
16. **reprisal**: something that is done to hurt or punish someone who has done something bad
17. ***gho***: (Bhutanese) the traditional dress of men of Bhutan
18. **indisputable**: unable to be challenged or denied
19. **vigilantly**: being very careful to notice things
20. **divinations**: the practice of seeking knowledge of the future or the unknown by supernatural means
21. **malevolent**: causing or wanting to cause harm or evil
22. **appeased**: to pacify or soothe
23. **errand**: a job that one does for somebody that involves going somewhere to take a message, to buy something, or deliver goods
24. **chastise**: rebuke or reprimand severely
25. **coaxed**: gently and persistently persuade someone to do something
26. **cajoled**: persuade
27. **distilled**: purifying something by heating and condensation
28. **stringy**: consisting of fibrous matter
29. **derogatory**: intended to lower the reputation of a person or thing
30. **phenomenon**: occurrence
31. **incoherent**: unclear
32. **diction**: choice of words
33. **desecrated**: disrespecting a sacred thing
34. **potency**: power
35. **bereaved**: suffering the death of a loved one
36. **makeshift**: a temporary substitute
37. **pervasive**: spread throughout
38. **sonorous**: having a deep and pleasant sound
39. **griefstricken**: overcome with deep or intense sorrow

40. **dishevelled**: untidy; unkempt
41. **consolation**: the comfort received by a person after enduring a loss
42. **customary**: commonly practiced
43. **corpse**: a dead body
44. **puzzled**: confused
45. **rebirth**: a new or a second birth

**Comprehension I: (Short Answer Questions)**

1. How many children has Tsomo's mother borne?
2. What did the astrologer have to say about Tsomo's personality based on her horoscope?
3. Why was Tsomo's horoscope name changed?
4. How many of Tsomo's siblings died in infancy?
5. What signs indicated that there were spirits lurking around?
6. Why was Aunt Dechen recognised and respected in the village?
7. What did the father do when Tsomo's baby brothers and sisters fell ill?
8. Who was Goempola?
9. What does crying for the loss of a loved one, in front of their body, signify in Bhutanese culture?

**Comprehension II: (Paragraph Answer Questions)**

1. "If you descended from the heavens of the gods above, show me the ladder you came down on and if you ascended from the underworld of subterranean beings, describe to me the stairs you climbed up." Comment.
2. Elaborate on the context of how Tsomo's parents got married.
3. What were the precious gems that hung around the mother's chain and what was their significance?
4. Describe what Tsomo recollected about her father's interaction at home.
5. How did the villagers treat the mother for her husband being a *gomchen*?
6. How would Aunt Dechen appease the spirits?

**Comprehension III: (Analytical/Discussion Questions)**

1. Elaborate on how Tsomo's reminiscences of her childhood intensify her being a girl and a curious child.
2. How do you think Tsomo, as a young girl, comprehended various rituals and stories that came with them?

**Further Reading:**

1. *The Circle of Karma* by Kunzang Choden
2. *Folktales of Bhutan* by Kunzang Choden
3. *History in a Pebble* by Sonam Choden Dorji
4. *Bhutanese Folktales from the South and the East* by Gopilal Acharya

# LANGUAGE COMPONENT

# BASIC SENTENCE STRUCTURES

**Objectives:**

- To know the components of basic sentence structures.
- To develop the knowledge of organising our ideas and thoughts.
- To enhance the skill of communicating effectively.

Language is made up of words which work together to form sentences, which in turn form paragraphs. We may be able to organise our thoughts, but are we able to express them in an effective manner? Well, proper sentence patterns help us to do just that.

## Parts of a Sentence

A sentence, in the English language, consists of at least a subject and a predicate. In other words, a sentence should have a subject and a verb.

**Subject:** The subject can be a noun or a pronoun that does the action.

Example:

1. **The sun** is shining.
2. **The sky** is clear.
3. **Today** is Wednesday.

**Predicate:** The part of the sentence that contains the verb.

Example:

1. I **love macaroni and cheese**.
2. Merin **has a pet**.
3. Anusha **can draw**.

## Components of a Sentence

Like a sentence has two parts, it has five main components that make up the structure of a sentence, and they are;

☞ Subject ☞ Verb ☞ Object ☞ Complement ☞ Adjunct

Now, let us look at each of these components in detail.

### SUBJECT

| DEFINITION | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|
| A noun that performs the action in a sentence is considered as the subject. It answers the question 'who' or in other words, a subject can be identified by asking the question 'who'. A subject takes the first place in most cases, especially in declarative or assertive sentences. | ➢ **The child** kept crying.<br>➢ **Our school team** won the match.<br>➢ **My son** is in the eighth grade.<br>➢ **Hard work** pays.<br>➢ **No one** came to the wedding. |

## VERB

### DEFINITION

In every sentence the most important word can be said to be the verb. A verb shows action or activity or work done by the subject. Remember that all verbs including main verbs, helping verbs, stative verbs and action verbs come under this category. Most often, verbs appear immediately after the subject.

### EXAMPLES

- Neena **is writing** a letter.
- It **was** too dark.
- I **feel** tired.
- My phone **is not working**.
- Tarun's dog **ran** away.

## OBJECT

### DEFINITION

An object is a noun or pronoun that receives the action done by the subject. Objects are of two types, and they are: (i) Direct Object, and (ii) Indirect Object.

### DIRECT OBJECT

A noun or pronoun that receives the action directly is the direct object in the sentence. It answers the question 'what'. Direct objects mostly appear immediately after the verb and are the primary objects in the sentence.

### EXAMPLES

- Harry bought a new **car**.
- My mom made a **cake**.
- I met **my friend**.
- She knows **all the songs**.
- We watched **a movie**.

### INDIRECT OBJECT

An indirect object is a noun or pronoun that is a secondary object. It can be identified by asking the question 'whom'. When there is an indirect object in a sentence, it is mostly placed after the verb and before the direct object.

### EXAMPLES

- Vandana gave **Keerthana** a cake.
- My mom bought **me** a new dress.
- I gave **him** a chocolate.
- They gave **us** coffee with breakfast.
- He lent **his friend** a pen.

## COMPLEMENT

### DEFINITION

The words required to complete the meaning of a sentence can be referred to as the complement of the sentence. A complement can be an adjective, a name, a position or a profession. Complements are further divided into two types based on which component it speaks about: (i) Subject Complement; and (ii) Object Complement

### EXAMPLES

- It grew **dark**.
- He is a **dentist**.
- That's her dog, **Bruno**.

| SUBJECT COMPLEMENT | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|
| The complement which expresses the quality or identity or condition of the subject is called subject complement. | ➢ She is a **doctor**.<br>➢ I am **Sindhu**.<br>➢ Nandhu is **clever**.<br>➢ The students are very **excited**.<br>➢ My brother is a **teacher**. |
| **OBJECT COMPLEMENT** | **EXAMPLES** |
| The complement which expresses the quality or identity or condition of an object is called object complement. | ➢ They made her **angry**.<br>➢ The students elected Sreya **the class leader**.<br>➢ They named their daughter, **Thara**.<br>➢ Marley met her friend, **Ryan**.<br>➢ Nobody found the movie **interesting**. |

## ADJUNCT

| DEFINITION | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|
| An adjunct is a word or a phrase that gives more information about an action, an event, a quality and so on. In short, it can be said that these words can include adverbs and adverb clauses. Adjuncts can be identified by asking questions 'when', 'where', 'why', 'how', 'how often' and 'to what extent'. When using adjuncts, keep in mind that adjuncts can be used in the beginning, middle or end of the sentence and that there can be more than one adjunct in a sentence. | ➢ **Yesterday**, we met **at the park**.<br>➢ He is **very** tired.<br>➢ **Due to his ill-health**, he could not come home for Christmas.<br>➢ My father reads the newspaper **everyday**.<br>➢ This workout routine is **extremely** exhausting. |

These basic components work together to create endless varieties of sentences.

1. **SUBJECT-VERB**

Examples:

1) The cat purrs.
2) The bird's chirp.
3) I write.
4) You speak.

2.**SUBJECT-VERB-ADJECTIVE**

Examples:

1) She sings beautifully.
2) He runs fast.
3) They seem tired.
4) The movie was amazing.

3. **SUBJECT-VERB-ADVERB**

Examples:

1) The car drives slowly.
2) She danced gracefully.
3) He sings beautifully.
4) The bird flew high.

4. **SUBJECT-VERB-NOUN**

Examples:

1) She is a doctor.
2) He became an engineer.
3) They elected him president.
4) The company hired a new manager.

5. **SUBJECT-VERB-OBJECT**

Examples:

1) She reads books.
2) They play soccer.
3) She bought a new car.
4) He loves pizza.
5) We watched a movie.
6) They built a house.

**A.** Sentences with a Subject, Verb and one Object, can be constructed by following these steps:

1) Put the subject and the adjectives such as 'fat', 'thin', etc. or any words describing the subject at the beginning of the sentence.
2) Put the verb and some adverbs such as 'often', 'usually', etc. after the subject; except when there is a negative auxiliary.
   Example:
   Jack usually eats breakfast in the kitchen.
   Cats **do not** [negative auxiliary] usually sleep at night.
3) Put the object of the verb, the adjectives or other words describing the object and the adverbs describing the verb at the end of the sentence.

**SUBJECT-VERB-OBJECT**

| SUBJECT | VERB | OBJECT |
|---|---|---|
| Rita | gave | a book. |
| Rahul | bought | flowers. |
| My uncle | painted | the fence. |
| The short girl | baked | a cake. |
| That little boy | repaired | the car. |

**B.** Some verbs can be followed by two objects without an 'and' connecting them. One of these objects is called the 'Direct Object' and the other the 'Indirect Object'. Below is a pattern of a sentence containing both direct object and indirect object.

**SUBJECT-VERB-INDIRECT OBJECT-DIRECT OBJECT**

| SUBJECT | VERB | INDIRECT OBJECT | DIRECT OBJECT |
|---|---|---|---|
| I | told | my sister | a story. |
| She | bought | us | flowers. |
| We | made | their children | some cookies. |
| They | showed | the teacher | their new books. |

**C.** Sometimes a preposition is put in front of the indirect object.

**SUBJECT-VERB-DIRECT OBJECT-PREPOSITION-INDIRECT OBJECT**

| SUBJECT | VERB | DIRECT OBJECT | PREPOSITION | INDIRECT OBJECT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| My friend | made | a cake | for | my daughter. |
| The neighbours | handed | the keys | to | the new owner. |

*Note:*

1) *A **Phrase** is a group of connected words, but it is not a complete sentence because it is missing a subject and/or a verb. Phrases are just one component that makes up a complete sentence.*
2) *A **Clause** contains a subject (actor) and a verb (action). There are two types of clauses:*
   *a. An **independent clause** (also known as, **main clause**) is a complete thought. It can stand alone as a complete sentence.*
   *b. A **dependent clause** (also known as, **subordinate clause**) cannot stand alone as a complete sentence (even though it may contain a subject and a verb). It begins with a subordinating conjunction (because, when, while, after, etc.)*

**Task 1: Rearrange the words in the correct order to make complete sentences:**

1) weird / lately / is acting / my dog

   _____

2) is getting / too / cold / it / here

   _____

3) is / blue / the sky

   _____

4) the company / updates / every year / its registry

   _____

5) bought / me / Brittany / a pair of shoes

   _____

6) knows / nobody / the answer

   _____

7) was / the movie / great

   _____

8) home / I / will come / as soon as I finish work

   _____

9) she / in September / to New York / will be travelling

_____

10) is not working / my brother's phone

_____

**Task 2: Rewrite each of the following sentences by placing the word in brackets before the indirect object:**

1) We bought our son a pair of shoes on his birthday. (for)

_____

2) The postman took her a letter yesterday. (to)

_____

3) The students sent their teacher a present. (to)

_____

4) The gardener handed me some flowers. (to)

_____

5) Betty has painted her best friend a beautiful picture. (for)

_____

6) The tailor made the princess a new dress. (for)

_____

# PRÉCIS WRITING

**Objectives:**

- To understand the gist of the passage and write it down more concisely.
- To convey the main theme of the passage.
- To adhere to the core meaning that the passage is trying to convey.
- To summarise the essence of the passage.
- To present the exact message of the passage in a miniature form.

**What is Précis writing?**

Précis writing is a useful skill which is used to convey information concisely and accurately. It involves summarising a longer passage while retaining the essential meaning and important details. This technique is particularly valuable in academic and professional settings where time and attention are limited.

Précis writing is a clear, compact and logical summary of a passage. It preserves only the essential or important ideas of the original. It is the gist of a passage expressed in as few words as possible. A précis should give all the essential points so that anyone reading it will be able to understand the idea expressed in the original passage.

**Features of a good précis:**

- It is marked by clarity and precision.
- It is not just copying of the sentences from the original. It should be written in the précis writer's own words.
- It is a miniature version of the original passage.
- It must have a logical order and should be well-knit and well connected.
- It must have coherence.
- It must have a title.
- It is written in reported speech.
- It must not contain any details not found in the original.

The length of the précis should be one-third of the original passage. A well-written précis should be substitute for the original work. The goal of a précis is to preserve the core essence of the work in a manner that is both clear and concise.

**Sample 1:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Original Passage** | Coffee is traditionally grown in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu in India. It is predominantly an export-oriented commodity and 65% to 70% of coffee produced in the country is exported, while the rest is consumed within the country. In the international market, Indian Robusta is highly preferred for its good blending quality. Arabica coffee from India is also well received in the international market. Coffee is an export product with low import intensity and high employment content. This is evident from the fact that more than six |

| | |
|---|---|
| | lakh persons are directly employed and an equal number of individuals get indirect employment from this sector. Arabica is mild coffee, but the beans being more aromatic; it has higher market value compared to Robusta beans. On the other hand, Robusta has more strength and is therefore used in making various blends. Arabica is grown in higher altitudes than Robusta. The cool and equable temperature, ranging between 15°C and 25°C, is suitable for Arabica, while for Robusta, hot and humid climate with temperature ranging from 20°C to 30°C is suitable. Arabica requires more care and nurture and is more suitable for large holdings, whereas Robusta is suitable irrespective of the size of the farm. Arabica is susceptible to pests and diseases such as White Stem Borer, leaf rust, and requires more shade than Robusta. The harvest of Arabica takes place between November and January, while for Robusta, it is from December to February.<br>**[Number of Words: 240]** |
| **Précis** | Title: **Coffee in India**<br>India grows coffee as an export commodity in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Coffee production employs six lakh persons directly in India. Arabica and Robusta are the two varieties grown in the Indian market and the former has more market value as it is more aromatic than Robusta. Arabica requires more nurturing as it is prone to pests and diseases. It is harvested between November and January, while Robusta is harvested between December and February.<br>**[Number of Words: 75]** |

**Sample 2:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Original Passage** | Teaching is one of the noblest of professions. A teacher performs the sacred duty of making his students responsible, compassionate, and disciplined. Apart from developing their intellect, a teacher is also responsible for inculcating the qualities of good citizenship, cleanliness, politeness, and etiquette. These virtues are not easy to be imbibed. Only a person who himself leads a quality life of characterised by simplicity, purity and rigid discipline can successfully cultivate these habits in his pupils. A teacher always remains young at heart, although he may grow old in age. Perpetual contact with budding youngsters keeps him hale and hearty. There are moments when domestic worries weigh heavily on his mind, but the delightful company of innocent children makes him overcome his transient moods of despair.<br>**[Number of Words: 126]** |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Précis** | Title: **Being a Teacher**<br>A teacher is not only responsible for disciplining students but also moulding their character. A teacher inculcates good habits in students, as he himself leads a simple and a disciplined life. A teacher may age physically, but the company of his students always keeps him young.<br>**[Number of Words: 46]** |

**Sample 3:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Original Passage** | It is observed that in schools offering co-education, there is often a power struggle between boys and girls. Even teachers become a part of this when they compare the two and pass gender-biased judgements. Such a treatment is harmful for the overall wellbeing of the students, as their self-esteem is damaged on receiving undue criticism from teachers. According to research, boys are often neglected in co-ed schools. Right from their childhood, they are expected to be tougher, stronger and better than the girls. This is a disadvantage for both the genders. When girls are not challenged enough, it makes them repressed and dependent. On the other hand, boys are challenged to such an extent that their childhood and innocence is lost.<br>**[Number of Words: 121]** |
| **Précis** | Title: **The Challenges in a Co-Education System**<br>Co-education schools often show a power struggle between boys and girls. Boys are constantly pushed beyond their limits and girls are repressed. Their childhood and innocence is lost in this struggle, as the negativity and stereotyping from the teachers crushes their self-esteem.<br>**[Number of Words: 42]** |

**Write a précis for the following passages:**

**Task 1:**

Effective leadership is an essential component of any successful organization. Leaders must be able to inspire and motivate their team members, communicate effectively with stakeholders, and make strategic decisions that align with the organization's goals. Additionally, good leaders possess strong interpersonal skills, such as the ability to listen actively and build trust with others. By cultivating these qualities, leaders can create a positive and productive work environment that supports the success of the organization as a whole. **(77 words)**

**Task 2:**

The role of technology in education is becoming increasingly important. Digital tools and resources can help educators create more engaging and interactive learning experiences for students, as well as provide access to educational materials from anywhere at any time. Additionally, technology can help to personalize learning experiences for individual students based on their interests and learning styles. However, it is important to ensure that technology is used in a responsible and effective manner, with a focus on achieving meaningful educational outcomes. **(81 words)**

**Task 3:**

Social media has had a significant impact on how people communicate and interact with each other. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram allow individuals to share information and connect with others across the globe. While social media has many benefits, such as promoting social causes and facilitating communication between friends and family, it also has drawbacks, including the spread of misinformation and the potential for online harassment. It is important for users to be aware of these risks and to use social media responsibly. **(84 words)**

**Task 4:**

Physical exercise is essential for maintaining good health. Regular exercise helps to strengthen muscles, reduce the risk of chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease, and improve mental health. Exercise can also help to promote weight loss and increase energy levels. However, it is important to approach exercise in a safe and responsible manner, with proper warm-ups and cool-downs, and to consult a healthcare provider before beginning a new exercise program. **(71 words)**

**Task 5:**

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming many industries, including healthcare, finance, and transportation. AI can help to improve efficiency and accuracy in these industries, leading to better outcomes for businesses and consumers. However, there are also concerns about the impact of AI on the job market and the potential for AI to be used in ways that are harmful or unethical. It is important for policymakers and industry leaders to consider these issues and work together to ensure that the benefits of AI are realized while minimizing the risks. **(89 words)**

# EXPANSION OF PROVERBS

**Objectives:**

- To expand one's vocabulary and become more proficient in the language.
- To help develop cultural awareness.
- To learn how to provide words of wisdom in a condensed statement.
- To learn how to communicate a specific message in a quick and effective manner.

**What is a Proverb?**

A proverb is a brief popular saying that gives advice, a well-known saying that contains a wise thought. Cambridge dictionary defines it as: a short sentence, etc., usually known by many people, stating something commonly experienced or giving advice.

Proverbs have meaning that applies to various stages of life, they reflect the ways of the world and always contain words of wisdom.

**Examples:**

1. **Too many cooks spoil the broth.** – It means that too many people involved in a task or activity could ruin it.
2. **Necessity is the mother of invention.** – It means that when the need for something becomes essential, one will be forced to find a way of achieving it.
3. **Look before you leap.** – It means that we must consider the possible risks and effects before we decide to do something.

In this unit, you will be required to write a short composition explaining the idea embodied in each proverb. Expansion of a proverb involves understanding its meaning and significance, what it implies and how it relates to the present time.

Think of one or two examples from real life, or from books you have read or from films you have watched; and articulate your thoughts in a logical manner using simple language. You could also mention other proverbs which express a similar meaning. Remember to make the opening and conclusion interesting and impressive.

**Steps to follow:**

Step 1: Understand the Symbolism

Most proverbs are symbolic. The name of place or animal or thing or person stands as a symbol of some quality. Try to understand the symbolic meaning in the context of the proverb.

Examples:

**Rome was not built in a day.** – Here, the noun "Rome" is the name of a place, a great city. So, what does Rome stand for? It stands for 'Greatness' or 'Success'.

**All that glitters is not gold.** – The noun "gold" is a precious metal. So, gold is symbolic of something precious or of great value.

Step 2: Substitute the Meaning in the Proverb

Take the two previous examples – "Rome was not built in a day." and "All that glitters is not gold." – now, substitute the symbols we found out earlier in the sentences. We can understand that the first proverb implies achieving greatness or success does not happen overnight, it does take a lot of time and effort; and the second proverb implies that all that glitters is not precious.

Step 3: Look for a Story/Anecdote/Illustration

Now that you have understood what the proverbs stand for, you should start looking for a suitable story to illustrate it. These stories could be fables, stories you have read growing up. *Aesop's Fables* and *Panchatantra* are great sources. Or, you could look for examples from real life.

Example:

For the proverb – "Rome was not built in a day." – you could talk about the former President of India, (late) Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, saying that in order to achieve greatness, it took many years of dedication and perseverance, and it did not happen overnight.

For the proverb – "All that glitters is not gold." – you could think of an instance when you were deceived by a friend. You probably believed in his/her sweet words and thought he/she was trustworthy, but you were wrong; not everything that is shiny and attractive is valuable.

Step 4: Quote Similar Proverbs

"Without labour, nothing prospers." by Sophocles is similar to "Rome was not built in a day."

"Appearances are deceptive." is similar to "All that glitters is not gold."

Step 5: Sum up the Paragraph

Conclude the paragraph by reiterating the idea behind the proverb. You could use the linking words/phrases such as: 'thus' or 'so' or 'The proverb advises that…" and let the readers know that you are signing off.

**Sample 1**

**The proof of the pudding is in the eating.**

- In the culinary world, no amount of description or presentation can tell you what a dish actually tastes like, you are required to eat it. Hence, this age-old proverb means that you only know what something is like after you have tried it, it emphasises the importance of practical experience and tangible results.
- You can never judge the quality or value of something unless you have seen or experienced the final result.
- For example, if you say, "I don't think I would like running a marathon. I may not have the stamina for it." Well, you won't know unless you have given it a try.
- A phrase similar to this proverb is: "Experience is the best teacher."

**Sample 2**

**As you sow, so shall you reap.**

- ☞ It is a proverb that encapsulates the concept of *karma* or the law of cause and effect. Its origin can be traced back to ancient times and is found in various religious and philosophical texts.
- ☞ It means that you have to accept the consequences of your actions, especially when they result in an undesirable situation or outcome. It implies that once you have made a decision or taken a course of action, you are obligated to deal with the results, whether they are good or bad.
- ☞ For example, if you did not heed to your parents' instructions and neglected your studies, it is no surprise that you failed in your examinations. In essence, it is about taking responsibility for your choices and facing the circumstances that follow from them, even if they are challenging or unpleasant.
- ☞ Similar proverbs:
  "If you play with fire, you will get burned."
  "You made your bed, now you have to lie in it."

**Sample 3**

**Birds of a feather flock together.**

- ☞ Birds of the same species will often be together, the same way people who have similar characteristics, and similar interests, often associate with each other.
- ☞ People with similar interests, values, or even personalities tend to relate and bond together, just as birds of the same feather would.
- ☞ For example, if you are a music lover, you would definitely find the company of other music lovers enjoyable. You would love to listen to music, play instruments or even just discuss music with them. It also means that you can be judged based on the kind of companions you have.
- ☞ Similar proverbs:
  "You are the company you keep."
  "Like attracts like."

**Task – Expand the following proverbs:**

1. Grasp all, lose all.

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_____
_____
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2. Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

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3. The early bird catches the worm.

4. You can’t have your cake and eat it too.

5. The squeaky wheel gets the grease.

# LIFE ACTIVITIES AND SOCIAL SKILLS

**Objectives:**

- To make students comprehend the significance of planning out strategies and setting goals.
- To instill critical and creative thinking, rationality and self-awareness.

**What is Critical Thinking?**

Critical thinking is an ability to analyse and construe information in a logical manner. In other words, it is vivid, coherent, logical, and independent thinking. It is a process of ameliorating oneself by gauging, analysing, evaluating the way we think. It is thinking on purpose – mindful communication, problem-solving, creative and liberated from prejudice or egocentric predisposition. We can implement critical thinking to any kind of subject, problem, or situation. It is an important factor, highly responsible for influencing and recognising behaviour which may be used to lead a well-balanced life.

Another important aspect involved is creativity. Creative thinking is a novel way of perceiving or doing things. It is an amalgamation of four components: (i) **fluency** (flow of language); (ii) **flexibility** (easy shift of perspective); (iii) **originality** (inventing or uniqueness); and (iv) **elaboration** (progression). These four components help us to make decisions in a constructive manner. They aid us in making decisions about any actions in the context of a healthy assessment of diverse opportunities or alternatives, and make us aware of the results of the decisions we take. Critical and creative thinking is an integral part of communication and problem-solving aspects of our lives.

**Task 1: What are the steps to be followed before giving a presentation?**

Hints: the kind or type of presentation, topic, arrangements, maintain the order of points to be followed.

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**Task 2: Frame the questions that would help you decide on selecting a higher education course.**

A minimum of 5 questions are to be framed.

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**Task 3: List any ten different ways/activities/courses of utilising time after your college hours which will be helpful for you to build your resume. It must be productive, career-oriented and skill building.**

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**Task 4: Make a list of the arrangements to be made for hosting your parents' 25th Wedding Anniversary. Emphasise on prioritisation of the things to be done keeping two weeks' time frame in mind.**

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**Task 5: What can we do individually and collectively to act responsibly towards preserving our natural resources and conserving our environment? List any five things:**

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_____
_____
_____
_____

# QUESTION PAPER PATTERN

## ADDITIONAL ENGLISH
## I SEMESTER

**Time: 3 hours** **Max. Marks: 80**

***Instructions:***
***a. Answer all the questions.***
***b. Write the question numbers correctly.***

### SECTION – A
### [Literary Component – 60 Marks]
### Essay/Poetry/Short Story

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I. | Answer in two or three sentences each.<br>[any 5 out of 7 questions] | 5x2=10 |
| II. | Answer in about a page each.<br>[any 6 out of 8 questions] | 6x5=30 |
| III. | Answer in about two pages each.<br>[any 2 out of 4 questions] | 2x10=20 |

### SECTION – B
### [Grammar Component – 20 Marks]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| IV. | Basic Sentence Structures | 5x1=5 |
| V. | Précis Writing | 1x5=5 |
| VI. | Expansion of Proverbs | 1x5=5 |
| VII. | Life Activities and Social Skills | 1x5=5 |

# MODEL QUESTION PAPER
## ADDITIONAL ENGLISH
## I SEMESTER

**Time: 3 hours** **Max. Marks: 80**

***Instructions:***
***a. Answer all the questions.***
***b. Write the question numbers correctly.***

### SECTION – A
### [Literary Component – 60 Marks]
### Essay/Poetry/Short Story

**I. Answer any FIVE questions in two or three sentences each. 5x2=10**

1. What does A.D. Hope compare Australia to in the poem?
2. Why were the citizens' tongue cut off at birth, in the imaginary kingdom?
3. In the poem 'Letters and Other Worlds', why does the speaker say his father's early life was a terrifying comedy?
4. In the story 'The Accident', what were the narrator's thoughts when he saw the guy lying motionless on the road?
5. Why does the speaker want the reader to buy a string, in the poem 'If I Must Die'?
6. How did the author's father come to be nicknamed 'Mister Nineteen-Four', in the essay 'My Home Under Imperial Fire'?
7. What did the birth mark on Tsomo's knee mean, according to the astrologer in the excerpt 'Being a Daughter'?

**II. Answer any SIX questions in about a page each. 6x5=30**

1. How does A.D. Hope bring about the complexities of Australian history, in the poem 'Australia'?
2. What changes did Sufian want to introduce in his kingdom, in the story 'The Tongue'?
3. Comment on the dilemma of the speaker in the poem 'To Leave this City'.
4. Write a note on the significance of the title 'Letters and Other Worlds'.
5. Did the farmer get justice in the story 'The Accident'? Discuss.
6. Explain the theme of the poem 'If I Must Die'?
7. What does the story of the chicken and the assembly of animals illustrate about Igbo values and society, in the essay 'My Home Under Imperial Fire'?
8. Write a character sketch of Tsomo from your reading of the excerpt 'Being a Daughter'.

**III. Answer any TWO of the following in about two pages each.** **2x10=20**

1. Analyse the father's state of mind, as shown in the poem 'Letters and Other Worlds'.
2. 'The Accident' is a dark description of how the legal system favours the rich and influential. Elaborate.
3. Examine the impact of British colonial education on the author's identity and understanding of his cultural heritage in the essay 'My Home Under Imperial Fire'?
4. What are some of the rituals and beliefs of the Bhutanese culture as depicted in the excerpt 'Being a Daughter'? And comment on Tsomo's understanding of them.

## SECTION – B
## [Grammar Component – 20 Marks]

**IV. Basic Sentence Structures** **5x1=5**

**Rearrange the words in the correct order to make complete sentences:**

1. should / you / have / coming / seen / this
2. to / the / company / goods / Vietnam / exports
3. join / college / decided to / at the / I / thirty-five / age of
4. Shakespeare / greater / all the / poets / than / is / other
5. book / read / night / a / last / I

**V. Précis Writing** **1x5=5**

**Write a Précis for the following:**

When we survey our lives and efforts, we soon observe that almost the whole of our actions and desires are bound up with the existence of other human beings. We notice that whole nature resembles that of the social animals. We eat food that others have produced, wear clothes that others have made, live in houses that others have built. The greater part of our knowledge and beliefs has been passed on to us by other people though the medium of a language which others have created. Without language and mental capacities, we would have been poor indeed comparable to higher animals. We have, therefore, to admit that we owe our principal knowledge over the least to the fact of living in human society. The individual if left alone from birth would remain primitive and beast like in his thoughts and feelings to a degree that we can hardly imagine. The individual is what he is and has the significance that he has, not much in virtue of the individuality, but rather as a member of a great human community, which directs his material and spiritual existence from the cradle to grave.

**(192 words)**

**VI. Expansion of Proverbs** **1x5=5**

**Expand and interpret any ONE of the following proverbs:**

1. Don't bite the hand that feeds you.
2. It's no use crying over spilt milk.

**VII. Life Activities and Social Skills** **1x5=5**

**Answer any ONE of the following:**

1. Write five attributes of a person whom you consider as your role model.
2. You are planning for your higher studies abroad. Explain the phases of preparation.

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