

A painting of a study desk with a cityscape in the background. The desk is covered with papers, a lamp, a mug, and a vase of flowers. The cityscape is visible through a window in the background, with a large sun or moon in the sky. The painting is done in a style with visible brushstrokes and a rich color palette.

**For
Advanced
Scholars**

THE CRUCIBLE OF CONCISION: MASTERING CRITICAL READING OF THE SHORT NARRATIVE"

**by Olena Bahatska, Andrii Kovalenko,
Hanna Podosynnikova**

Book One of the Duology

**OLENA BAHATSKA, ANDRII KOVALENKO,
HANNA PODOSYNNIKOVA**

**"The Crucible of Concision:
Mastering Critical Reading
of the Short Narrative"**

for the Advanced Literary Scholars

Book One of the Duology

**Міністерство освіти і науки України
Сумський державний педагогічний університет
імені А.С. Макаренка**

**ОЛЕНА БАГАЦЬКА, АНДРІЙ КОВАЛЕНКО,
ГАННА ПОДОСИННІКОВА**

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коротких оповідань**

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD	5
CHAPTER 1. Phenomenology of the Protagonist: Interpreting Characterological Representation in the Short Form	9
Theoretical Basics	
Story 1. Anita Desai GAMES at TWILIGHT	
Story 2. Anita Desai A DEVOTED SON	
Story 3. Kurt Vonnegut 2BR02B	
SEL Focus: Self-Awareness	
CHAPTER 2. Affective Poetics: Interpreting Emotional Resonance in the Short Story	51
Theoretical Basics	
Story 1. Nadine Gordimer THE ULTIMATE SAFARI	
Story 2. Gina Berriault THE STONE BOY	
Story 3. Katherine Mansfield THE GARDEN PARTY	
Story 4. Gaye Jee SERAPHIM	
SEL Focus: Relationship Skills	
CHAPTER 3. Agonistic Narratology: Interpretive Strategies for Conflict Dynamics in the Short Form	117
Theoretical Basics	
Story 1. Amy Tan TWO KINDS	
Story 2. Nadine Gordimer ONCE UPON A TIME	
Story 3. Flannery O'Connor EVERYTHING THAT RISES MUST CONVERGE	
Story 4. Herbert Ernest Bates SAME TIME, SAME PLACE	
SEL Focus: Self-Management	
REFERENCES	173
CRITICAL OVERVIEWS	177
CHRESTOMATHY	258

FOREWORD

The study of short narrative fiction has long occupied a central place in the canon of literary scholarship, offering a rich and multifaceted domain for critical analysis and interpretive exploration. As the literary landscape continues to evolve, the need for a comprehensive and theoretically grounded guide to the critical reading of the short story has become increasingly apparent. It is with great pleasure that we present this volume, "The Crucible of Concision: Mastering Critical Reading of the Short Narrative," which aims to provide students and scholars alike with the necessary tools and frameworks to engage with the complexities and nuances of this beloved literary form.

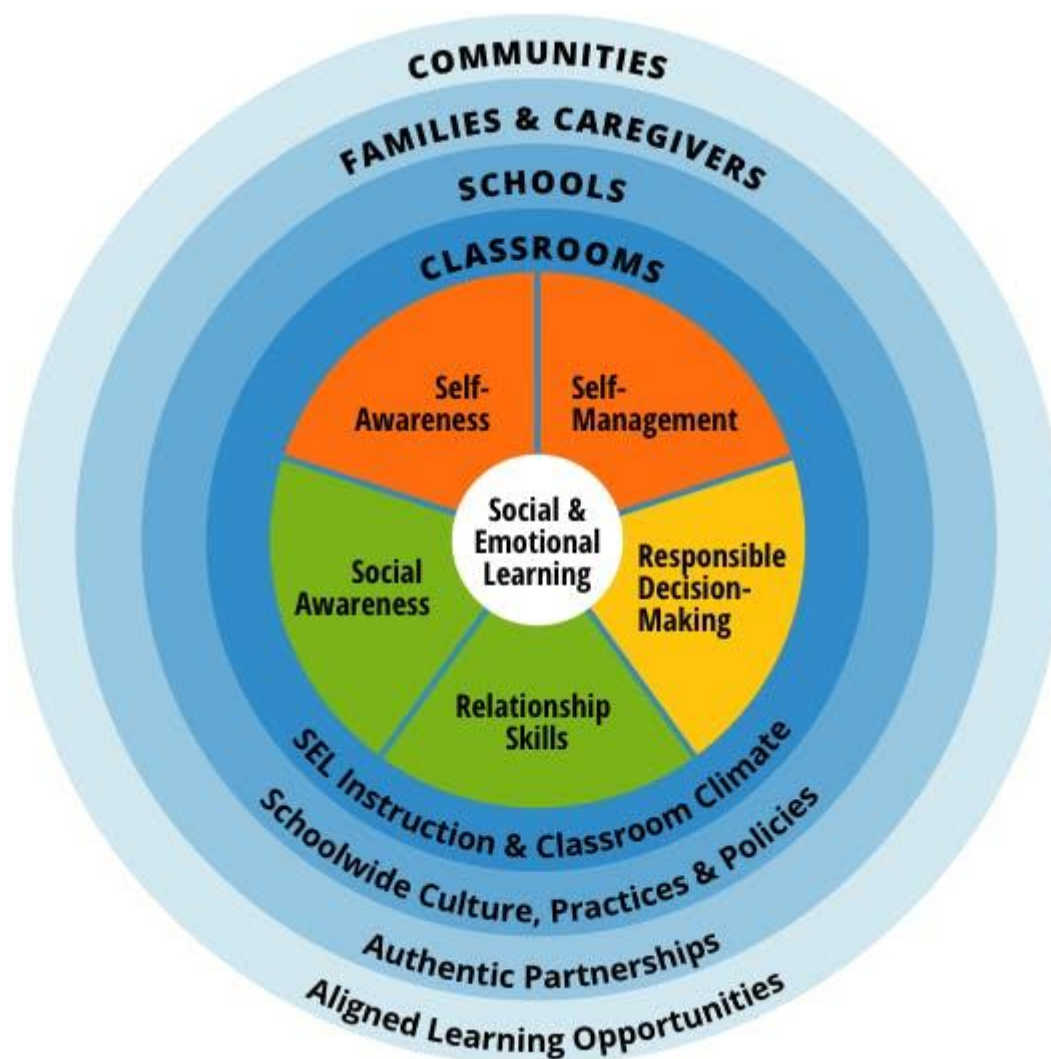
In an era marked by rapid technological advancement and the proliferation of new modes of storytelling, the short narrative remains a vital and enduring medium, one that continues to captivate and challenge readers with its ability to distill universal truths and profound insights into the human condition within the confines of a concise, yet impactful form. This guide seeks to equip the advanced literary scholar with the theoretical and analytical acumen required to unpack the multifaceted layers of meaning embedded within the short story, empowering them to navigate the rich tapestry of literary devices, narrative strategies, and thematic resonances that define this unique genre.

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), **social-emotional learning (SEL)** is "the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions."

Achieving this goal becomes possible through the interaction of teachers with the classroom (SEN instructions, appropriate climate), school administration (SEN culture, practice and policy), families or guardians of students (partnership) and local communities (coordinated educational opportunities) (CASEL, 2023).

The CASEL 5 addresses five broad and interrelated **areas of SEL competence**, three of which will be under thorough analysis in this chapter:

- self-awareness,
- relationship skills,
- self-management,



Short story as a genre of literature can form a rich, communicative and motivational basis for developing analytical and critical reading skills with focus on SEL, as it contains all necessary elements for raising the awareness of: 1) social orientation; 2) integrity of perception; 3) expressiveness and completeness of contents and form.

To **SEL-related competencies in reading and analyzing short stories** the following ones can refer (Korobova, Podosynnikova, 2024).

- Recognition and proper labeling of feelings that are conveyed through dialogue and narration in short stories. If students are not able to accurately recognize feelings and distinguishing between anger,

frustration, annoyance, and disappointment, reading short stories help them become relatively more differentiated regarding their own emotions.

- Developing empathy for characters and being able to take others' perspectives is rooted in emotions' recognition and labeling. When students tend to have difficulty with understanding feelings of a character, his or her actions will seem hard to explain. Just to the contrary, when the emotions are recognized and labeled properly, the flow of stories will take less cognitive work and the plot will be less frustrative to follow.

- Managing strong emotions while reading follows from the students' ability to manage their own feelings. During the course of developing analytical and critical reading skills, frustration, confusion, and annoyance are the expected feelings that students should learn to manage. If they are put off with encountering story lines and character actions that don't seem to make sense or with words they don't understand, it will inevitably determine their long hanging or failing with a reading assignment.

- Relating to others, especially in groups is born while facing challenges of receiving and giving feedback. To gain optimally from discussing short stories in pairs, small groups, or full classrooms, students learn to wait their turn, listen carefully to what others are saying, or focus attention to what and how others are reasoning, that is the desired characteristic of the best pedagogical approaches.

Problem-solving around difficulties happens at micro and macro levels when the process of acquiring reading skill stops in its tracks. The ability to handle these roadblocks and problem-solve around them is a key determinant in making progress. At a micro level, this can be connected with some difficulties within a sentence, multiple sentences, paragraphs, chapters, etc. When students feel puzzled or frustrated by words they don't understand, or descriptions or messages that evoke strong emotions they are not able to manage, reading progress is blocked. Guided analytical and critical reading instruction based on SEL enables students to learn and practise strategies not to let these blocks accumulate and form strong negative anticipations.

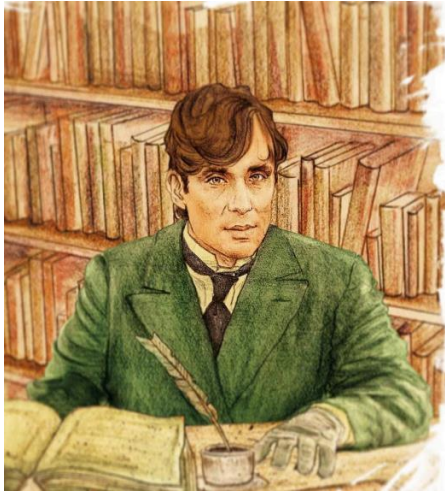
Divided into three comprehensive chapters, this volume explores the phenomenology of the protagonist, the affective poetics of the short form, and the agonistic narratology of conflict dynamics, drawing upon a diverse canon of short stories from renowned authors across the globe. By delving into the theoretical foundations of these critical approaches,

students will gain a deeper understanding of the analytical frameworks that underpin the interpretation of character, emotion, and narrative tension, equipping them with the intellectual dexterity to engage with the short story in all its complexity.

Through a careful selection of illustrative texts, this guide provides the reader with a robust set of case studies, enabling them to put these theoretical concepts into practice and hone their critical reading skills. In doing so, the volume aspires to cultivate a new generation of literary scholars who are not only versed in the scholarly traditions of the past but also poised to push the boundaries of short narrative criticism in the years to come.

It is our sincere hope that this volume will serve as an invaluable resource for students and scholars alike, inspiring a deeper appreciation for the short story and its ability to illuminate the human experience in all its nuance and complexity. May it be a catalyst for further exploration, critical engagement, and the continued advancement of the field of literary studies.

CHAPTER 1. Phenomenology of the Protagonist: Interpreting Characterological Representation in the Short Form



Understanding Literary Characters

Literary characters are complex constructs that have long been a subject of debate and analysis among scholars of literature and literary theory. This comprehensive guide will delve into the various perspectives and approaches that have been developed to understand the nature of literary characters and how they function within the broader context of narrative fiction.

Dwell upon the controversy of the notion of character in contemporary literary studies. Find some alternative approaches to literary character interpretation.

The Controversy of Character

The "Ethical" Approach

The traditional view of literary characters is that they should be treated and analyzed as though they were real persons, with lives and identities that transcend the boundaries of the text. This "ethical" approach privileges the forms of character construction that are specific to the classic European novel and much film and television drama.

The "Structuralist" Approach

In contrast, the "structuralist" approach treats characters as purely textual constructs, without considering the processes of affective engagement by which they acquire a hold on readers. This view fails to account for the ways in which textual characters can act on us as though they were real.

The Inadequacy of Traditional Approaches

According to scholar John Frow, neither the "ethical" nor the "structuralist" approach deals satisfactorily with the theoretical problem of what literary characters actually are. Both tend to conflate or ignore important aspects of their nature.

Study the means the literary character can be conceptualized in a text. Does it add to your understanding of the things? Would you add anything to make the image of the character even more complete?

Conceptualizing the Literary Character

Figure

The literary character is a "figure" - a figural representation, a human shape or form that stands out from the narrative ground. Characters are marked by engraving or impressing, emerging as figures from a narrative mold.

Interest

Literary characters do emotional and representational work, engaging the reader's interest and eliciting a response. They are "as much a reconstruction by the reader as [they are] a textual construct", shaped by the reader's own experiences and projections.

Type

Fictional characters are shaped by "folk taxonomies" - everyday models and categorizations of human types, such as those based on physiognomy, gender roles, or social hierarchies. These typologies provide a readymade model of personhood.

The Mechanisms of Characterization

1

Voice

The concept of "voice" is a shorthand for the processes by which selves are represented in discourse, and how we recognize them. Literary characters are both agents and objects of discourse, occupying the spaces of first-, second-, and third-person pronouns.

2

Name

Names are complex tools for performing social operations, tying bodies to language and making characters recognizable as quasi-persons. Fictional names may carry pre-existing semantic content or be semantically neutral, but they serve as nodal points in the narrative network.

3

Face and Body

The face and body are central to the construction of literary characters, serving as sites of expression, sensation, and embodied identity. Fictional plots are fundamentally "body plots", stories about birth, death, desire, and the materiality of human existence.



Study the way fictional characters do their emotional and representational work. Dwell upon two senses that the notion of identification comprises. What accounts for its dual nature? Provide your examples of how it works.

How the notion of avatar can be related to fictional characters? Interpret avatars as 'a placeholder', an 'interactive, social representation of a user', 'a surrogate for the user', 'a kind of ghostly absent presence'... Have you ever used avatars to represent your SELF? What kind of? Did they do their job well?

Character and the Reader's Imagination

1 Identification and Engagement

Readers engage with literary characters through processes of identification, both "of" a character and "with" a character. This dual act of recognition and response is central to the character's emotional and representational work.

2 Avatars and Virtual Embodiment

The concept of the "avatar" in digital media parallels the way readers project themselves into fictional worlds, using textual representations as interfaces and surrogates for their own imaginative engagement.

3 Desire and Subjectivity

The construction of character is an effect of the reader's own desire, understood not as an individual's desire but as a structure that forms the imaginary unity of subjects and objects within the text.

The Ontological Status of Characters

1

Quasi-Persons

Fictional characters are understood as "quasi-persons", modeled on our prior knowledge of real human beings but operating according to the conventions and constraints of the narrative form.

2

Textual Constructs

At the same time, characters are fundamentally textual constructs, shaped by the author's selective representation and the reader's imaginative reconstruction of the narrative world.

3

Ontological Ambiguity

This ontological ambiguity, between the character as a representation of a person and the character as a textual effect, is central to the unique status of literary figures and their effect on readers.

Make conclusions about the complexity of the image of the character and the peculiarities of its representation in literary texts.

Ethical Implications of Character



Empathy

The ability of literary characters to elicit empathetic responses from readers has important ethical implications, as it allows us to imaginatively inhabit the experiences of others.



Moral Agency

Fictional characters can also be seen as moral agents, their actions and choices prompting readers to reflect on complex ethical questions and dilemmas.



Representation

The types of characters that are constructed and privileged in literature can have significant implications for the representation of diverse human experiences and identities.

Conclusion: The Enduring Fascination of Character

Complexity	The multi-faceted nature of literary characters, with their blend of textual construction and quasi-personal embodiment, continues to captivate and challenge scholars and readers alike.
Versatility	From the flat caricatures of fairy tales to the richly developed protagonists of the novel, literary characters span a wide range of forms and functions within the narrative arts.
Ethical Impact	The capacity of fictional figures to foster empathy, prompt moral reflection, and shape cultural representation underscores the enduring significance of character in the literary experience.

ANITA DESAI



Anita Desai is recognized as one of the foremost contemporary writers from India and a pioneer of Indo-Anglian fiction, which refers to literature written in English by Indian authors. Although Indo-Anglian fiction existed prior to India's independence in 1947, it was during the subsequent decades that female novelists like Desai emerged prominently, reflecting the evolving roles of women in an increasingly modernized society. Her early work, notably *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), played a crucial role in highlighting previously marginalized narratives, particularly the psychological struggles faced by women striving for individual identity.

Over time, Desai expanded her thematic scope to encompass the intricate inner lives of families residing in India's modern urban centers, depicting their challenging adaptations to postcolonial realities. Her contributions to literature have been lauded as transformative, particularly for their exploration of psychological dimensions. Desai commenced her literary career by publishing short stories in various newspapers and journals, culminating in the compilation *Games at Twilight* (1978), which gathers two decades of her work. The themes and techniques found in her short stories resonate with those in her longer narratives, making them an

excellent introduction to her lyrical, symbolic prose and her profound psychological insights into character.

The title story of the collection, "Games at Twilight," as well as her novels, explores themes of alienation, the quest for identity, the fragmentation of urban existence, and the journey towards self-understanding. *Games at Twilight* is available in a Penguin paperback edition (1982).

Study the biographical information about the author. Highlight the major facts which are sure to influence her choices of literary themes, characters, settings, moral implications, etc. Search for extra information about Anita Desai that may interest you as an interpreter of her literary works.

BIOGRAPHY

Anita Desai was born on June 24, 1937, in Mussoorie, near Delhi, to a German mother, Toni Nime, and a Bengali businessman father, D. N. Mazumdar. Growing up in a household with three siblings, she primarily spoke German, though she also acquired proficiency in Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, and English. From the age of seven, Desai engaged in creative writing in English and published her work in children's magazines. She attended Queen Mary's Higher Secondary School in Delhi and later pursued her studies at Miranda House, Delhi University, where she earned a B.A. in English literature in 1957.

In 1958, she married Ashvin Desai, a businessman, and they had four children, including Kiran Desai, who is also a novelist. Following her separation from her husband, Desai traveled extensively and taught in England at Girton College, Cambridge University, and in the United States at Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, and Baruch College of the City University of New York. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and Girton College, and she contributes to the *New York Review of Books*. Since 1993, she has held a professorship in writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Desai began her literary career with short stories, and her first novel, *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), established a new direction for Indian fiction in English through its psychological exploration of character. Subsequent works, including *Voices in the City* (1965), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Games at Twilight* and *Other Stories* (1978), *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *In Custody* (1984),

Baumgartner's *Bombay* (1987), *Journey to Ithaca* (1995), *Fasting, Feasting* (1999), *Diamond Dust and Other Stories* (2000), and *The Zig-Zag Way* (2004), have further developed her style to encompass both social and psychological themes within various postcolonial contexts.

Desai has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize in fiction on three occasions, while her daughter Kiran won the Booker Prize in 2006 for *Inheritance of Loss*. Additionally, Desai received the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize for *The Village by the Sea* (1983), which was adapted into a television series. She is widely regarded as one of the most prominent modern novelists in India. Her poetic prose resonates with the works of her favored authors, including Herman Melville, William Faulkner, Virginia Woolf, and D. H. Lawrence, and she also identifies with other postcolonial writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Milan Kundera, and Gunter Grass.

Read the story GAMES AT TWILIGHT and fulfill the tasks that follow.

PLOTLINE ANALYSIS

Chronological Timeline

Analyze the temporal progression of events in the narrative and construct a detailed timeline that illustrates the chronological development of the plot. In a well-structured essay, discuss how the author strategically manipulates the narrative timeline to create dramatic tension and reveal the protagonist's evolving psychological state.

Drawing on the summary provided, identify the key narrative turning points that mark distinct phases in the plot's unfolding. Trace how the protagonist Ravi's experiences, emotions, and self-conception shift across these phases. Discuss how the author's judicious control of pacing, foreshadowing, and the revelation of information contributes to the reader's engagement and investment in Ravi's journey.

Attend closely to moments where the timeline becomes non-linear, such as flashbacks or anticipations of future events. Analyze how these temporal disruptions function to illuminate Ravi's inner world and the thematic concerns of the story.

Ultimately, construct a coherent argument about how the author's manipulation of the chronological structure is integral to the narrative's

artistic and emotional impact. Support your analysis with detailed references to the text.

The Characters Reconstruction

Analyze the development and embodiment of the three primary characters - Ravi, Mira, and the mother - in the given story. Discuss how each character's actions, thoughts, and interactions with others reveal their distinct personalities, motivations, and inner experiences.

Specifically, dwell upon the following:

- a) Ravi's sense of self-importance, his desire for recognition, and how his experiences during the game of hide-and-seek challenge and reshape his understanding of his place in the world.
- b) Mira's role as the responsible elder sibling who tries to maintain order and organization among the children, and how this reflects her maturity and nurturing nature.
- c) The mother's patience, flexibility, and awareness of her children's needs, as demonstrated through her decision to allow them to play outside despite her initial hesitation.
- d) The ways in which the characters' embodied experiences (physical sensations, emotional responses, etc.) contribute to their development and the overall themes of the story.
- e) The significance of the setting (the suburban Bombay neighborhood, the oppressive heat, the changing light) in shaping the characters' experiences and interactions.

PLOT SUMMARY

The scene is set on a sweltering summer afternoon in a suburban area of Bombay. The intense heat has confined the children indoors, but their restlessness prompts them to beseech their mother for permission to play outside. Although she has already attended to their bathing and afternoon tea, the mother relents, aware that they will likely disregard her instructions to remain on the porch.

As the children joyfully rush outdoors, the mother retires to bathe and dress for the evening. The oppressive heat has even quelled the activity of local wildlife, save for the parrots that are roused from the eucalyptus tree by the children's clamor.

The children's unbridled energy soon leads to squabbling and the tearing of a garment. The elder daughter, Mira, intervenes to organize games, including a counting-out ritual to determine who will be "It" for a round of hide-and-seek. Raghu, chosen as "It," protests the children's dispersal beyond the porch, but they quickly scatter nonetheless. The youngest child, Manu, is promptly caught by Raghu and declared "dead" as he weeps, while Raghu departs to seek the others.

Ravi, hiding behind the garage, contemplates his options for evading Raghu's search, ultimately deciding to conceal himself in a locked shed adjacent to the garage, squeezing through a gap in the hinges.

Though Ravi is normally averse to such a dark and unsettling space, his fear of being caught compels him to take refuge there. He endures the shed's unpleasant rodent odor and imagined threats, eventually settling into an old bathtub as a hiding spot.

Ravi begins to entertain the idea of emerging victorious from the game, a rare experience for the younger child. He resolves to remain hidden, despite hearing the other children's cries as they are discovered.

As evening approaches, Ravi anticipates the parents' arrival in the garden and the children's transition to more celebratory activities. He grows increasingly convinced of his potential triumph, having never before been singled out for such distinction.

However, as darkness falls and Ravi hears the sounds of the garden being watered, he becomes increasingly unsure whether the game is still ongoing or if the other children have moved on. Fearing he may miss his chance to claim victory, he abruptly exits the shed, only to be met with disappointment.

Ravi's dramatic emergence is greeted with scolding from his mother and bewilderment from the other children, who had long since abandoned the game. His dreams of triumph have been shattered, and he is left feeling ashamed and inconsequential.

The other children have moved on to various other activities, leaving Ravi forgotten and excluded. His attempts to assert his supposed victory are met with dismissal and rebuke from his peers.

Heartbroken and trembling, Ravi ultimately recognizes that the world does not revolve around him and his wishes, a realization that deeply wounds his sense of self-importance.

Study the basic information about the main characters of the story. Fill in the scheme that follows.

CHARACTERS

Anu: Anu is the name of one of the children, whose gender is unspecified. This child is not individualized further within the story.

Chauffeur/Driver: The driver is a hairy-chested servant in the family, responsible for the car and garage. He allows the children to assist him in washing the vehicle.

Father: The father is a background presence, being absent during the day at work. However, the family gathers together in the evening in the yard.

Gardener: The gardener becomes irritated when the children supposedly interfere with his watering of the garden. He threatens to inform the parents of the children's perceived misbehavior.

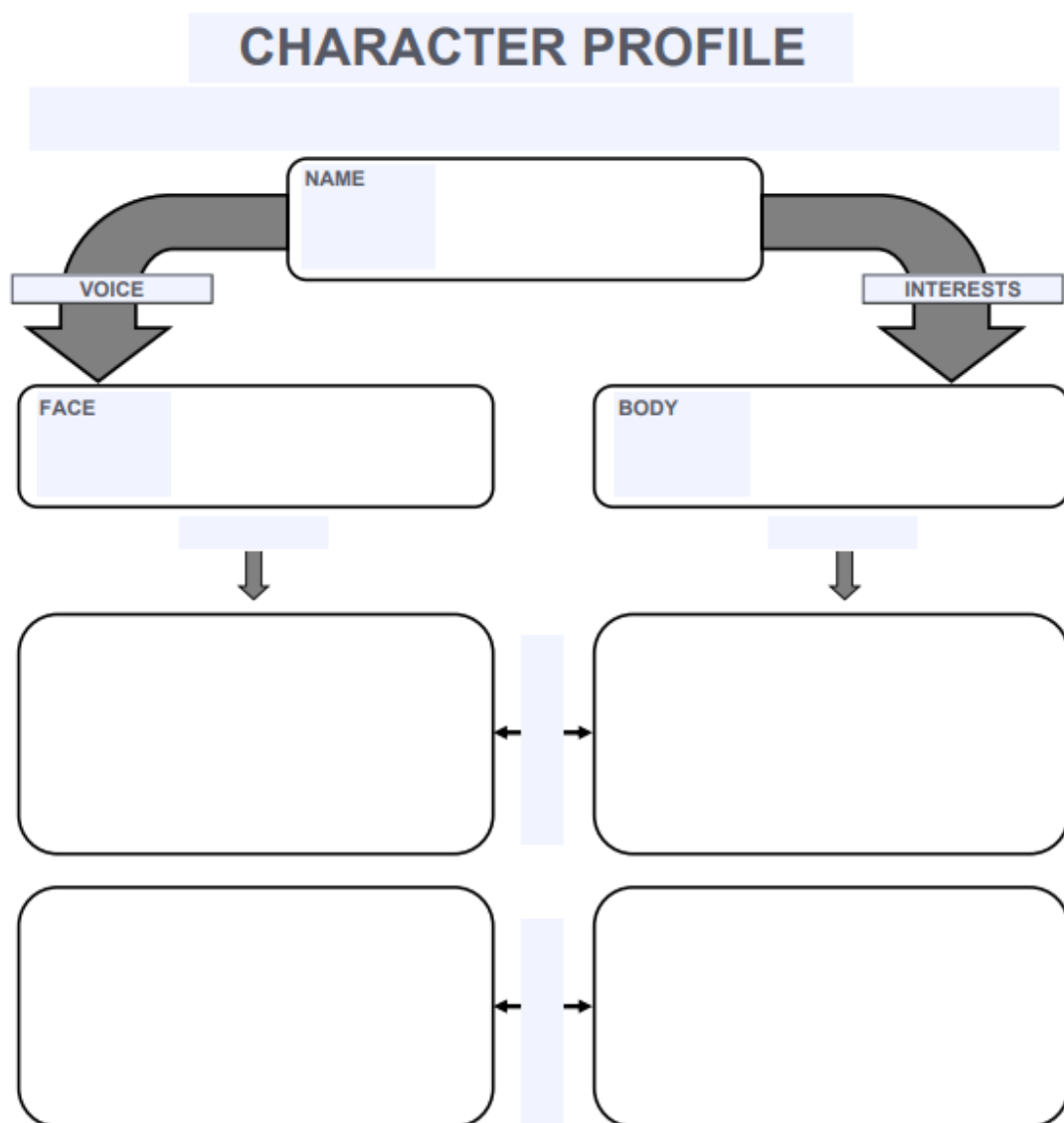
Manu: Manu appears to be the youngest child and is minimally aware of the proper way to play hide-and-seek, failing to hide as quickly or effectively as the other children. When he does attempt to conceal himself, he stumbles, allowing the seeker Raghu to discover him first. Manu is a name with mythological significance in Hinduism.

Mira: Mira is portrayed as a typical Indian elder sister, assuming a maternal role in organizing the children's activities, especially when the boys begin to quarrel. She treats the children collectively rather than as distinct individuals.

Mother: The mother is representative of the generic middle-class Indian housewife, managing a large suburban home with the aid of servants. She attends to the children's basic needs, such as bathing and feeding them, but does not seem attuned to their emotional or psychological requirements, as seen in her dismissive response to Ravi's distress.

Raghu: Raghu is one of the elder boys, selected as the seeker in the game of hide-and-seek. He is described as physically imposing and athletic, playing soccer. Ravi feels a sense of pride in evading this stronger child's pursuit.

Ravi: Ravi is the central character, a sensitive and fearful younger boy. He yearns for recognition and admiration from the older children, hoping to achieve this through success in the game. Ravi's grief at being forgotten after his apparent triumph is not understood by the adults or his siblings.



Study the dominating themes of the story. Which of them do you consider the most acute or close to your sphere of interests or priorities? Are these themes contemporary enough to extrapolate them to the life of today in this country? Draw the necessary parallels.

THEMES

Identity

Anita Desai's fiction deals with the theme of individuals grappling to forge their own sense of identity - a motif that has long held sway in Western fiction, yet represents a relatively novel preoccupation within the Indian literary canon. Traditionally, the family unit and rigid social hierarchies dictated the parameters of personal choice, from educational paths to matrimonial arrangements. However, in an era of increasing globalization, urbanization, and Western influence, the scope for individual autonomy has expanded, albeit at the cost of eroding longstanding societal conventions.

The tension between one's inner psychological landscape and the external demands of the collective is a central concern in Desai's writings, particularly as they pertain to the experiences of women and children - demographics historically afforded little agency within the entrenched patriarchal order. Like Desai's protagonists more broadly, the character of Ravi exhibits a heightened sensitivity, acutely attuned to the nuances of his surroundings and readily wounded or enthralled.

Immersed in the raucous milieu of a large, extended Indian family, Ravi retreats into the solitary confines of a dark shed during a game of hide-and-seek, harboring aspirations of emerging as a triumphant hero. His private dreams and fears, his keen aesthetic sensibilities, and his sense of alienation within the family unit are uniquely his own, known fully only to the reader and to the protagonist himself. It is Ravi's singular vantage point that shapes and structures the narrative, granting him a measure of individuality denied by his oblivious familial circle.

Alienation

Alienation emerges as a recurrent motif within Desai's literary oeuvre. Given that both her short stories and novels are filtered through the perspectives of acutely sensitive protagonists, it is unsurprising that these characters frequently find themselves at odds with their surrounding environments.

The character of Ravi, for instance, exhibits a mismatch between his own heightened expectations and the *modus operandi* of his playmates. While

the other children engage in the boisterous free-for-all of the hide-and-seek game, heedlessly bickering and scuffling before quickly moving on, Ravi cannot so readily dismiss the situation. His youthful ego invests the game with life-or-death significance, and he spends hours sequestered in the dark shed, spinning elaborate fantasies about the possibility of emerging victorious.

Ravi's profound sense of alienation is compounded when he realizes that his grandiose self-conception does not align with the mundane realities unfolding around him. Deeply wounded to discover that his playmates have forgotten his hiding place, Ravi is further humiliated when he is berated by his mother and siblings for his "babyish" behavior. In a desperate bid for recognition, he erupts in a plaintive wail - "I won, I won, I won!" - only to be callously dismissed and shoved aside by the impatient Mira and Raghu.

Rather than conceding defeat, Ravi defiantly refuses to fall in line, further isolating himself in an act of righteous protest against his perceived mistreatment. Ravi's passionate feelings of injustice, coupled with his inability to reconcile his inner world with the external social dynamics, exemplify the profound alienation that pervades Desai's literary explorations of the human condition.

Disillusionment

Short stories often hinge upon a revelatory moment for the central character, and Desai's narrative is no exception, chronicling Ravi's profound disillusionment. The fantastical scenario he constructs in his mind while sequestered in the shed - visions of emerging triumphant from the game of hide-and-seek - proves to be a false conceit, as Ravi fails to grasp the basic requirement of the game: he must emerge from his hiding place and touch the "den" in order to clinch victory.

Yet the deeper disillusionment for Ravi stems from the realization that his absence has gone entirely unnoticed by his oblivious playmates. Consumed by their own petty squabbles and distractions, the other children exhibit no awareness or concern for Ravi's conspicuous disappearance, utterly indifferent to his inner emotional turmoil. This incident, though seemingly innocuous, carries weighty psychological significance, representing a formative moment in which Ravi is compelled

to confront the fundamental truth that the world does not inherently revolve around his individual hopes and dreams.

For some individuals, such a "reality check" can prove a salutary experience, providing a necessary counterbalance to excessive fantasy and self-absorption. Yet for the profoundly sensitive Ravi, the revelation that no one else truly comprehends or empathizes with his subjective experience proves nothing short of devastating. This crushing disappointment portends a pivotal crossroads in Ravi's development, one that seems unlikely to yield a positive outcome given the character's heightened emotional vulnerability and pronounced sense of isolation from his callous peer group.

The Human Condition

Desai's "Games at Twilight" encapsulates another vital thematic thread running through her literary work: the exploration of the human condition. Drawing evident influence from existentialist writers like Albert Camus, Desai's narrative confronts the protagonist Ravi with the startling realization of his own insignificance within the broader scope of the external world.

The existential hero, as exemplified by Ravi, grapples with the profound meaninglessness that undergirds the human experience. Ravi's grandiose fantasies of emerging triumphant from the children's game of hide-and-seek are exposed as mere illusions, trivial in the face of the larger indifferent universe. Extending this existentialist perspective further, one recognizes the absence of any benevolent, guiding order to the cosmos; instead, human beings must construct their own subjective realities in the absence of any intrinsic meaning.

Indeed, if we were to survey the same scene from the divergent vantage points of the various characters, we would bear witness to a multiplicity of disparate narratives - a testament to the essential subjectivity of the human experience. Ravi, in this light, represents the quintessential existential rebel, defiantly rejecting the arbitrary "rules of the game" imposed by the social order, which he rightly perceives as a mere fabrication, akin to the children's playtime rituals.

Ravi's acute awareness of the fundamental unfairness and meaninglessness undergirding human existence aligns him with the essential ethos of existentialist thought, as he confronts the daunting task of forging his own coherent sense of self and purpose in a cosmos that offers no assurances or guarantees. Desai's nuanced portrayal of Ravi's inner turmoil thus serves as a microcosm for the broader existential dilemma facing humankind.

Study the information about Anita Desai's style of writing. List the specific features of it you consider to be the most prominent.

STYLE

Short Story

The modern short story format rose to prominence during the 19th century, championed by the seminal works of writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, and Guy de Maupassant. These pioneering authors helped codify the short narrative into its modern compressed and unified form, each tale striving to achieve a singular, impactful effect. While the typical modern short story tends to be grounded in the everyday, realistic world, it may also leverage complex symbolic motifs to suggest deeper underlying meanings.

The 20th century saw further refinement and philosophical enrichment of the short story genre, with authors like James Joyce, Katherine Mansfield, and Joseph Conrad imbuing the form with increased narrative sophistication, incorporating surprise plot twists and profound existential insights. Frequently, these modernist short stories culminate in a revelatory moment for the central protagonist, a transformative epiphany that shapes their consciousness.

Anita Desai, herself an accomplished practitioner of the short story form, emerged as a prominent voice in the mid-20th century, publishing several acclaimed collections before transitioning to the novel. Yet Desai's short fiction markedly diverges from the tightly plotted, O. Henry-esque model favored by many of her predecessors. Her stories eschew rigid narrative structures, instead favoring a more impressionistic approach centered on character development, moods, and states of mind. Desai's stories often

culminate in an epiphany, whether positive or negative, illuminating deeper truths about the human experience - a tradition that "Games at Twilight" emblematically upholds, as exemplified by Ravi's profound moment of disillusionment.

Indo-Anglian Literature

Contemporary Indian authors have embraced a vibrant multilingual literary landscape, crafting their works in diverse languages, including the national lingua franca of Hindi, as well as regional official languages such as Urdu and Bengali. Distinct from these vernacular traditions, the genre of Indo-Anglian literature refers to poetry and prose penned by Indian writers who have chosen to compose their texts in the English language.

This preference for the English medium can be attributed to several factors. Notably, English has become intrinsically linked to the writings of the Indian diaspora, exemplified by luminaries such as Salman Rushdie, who were born in India but now reside in other nations. Anita Desai herself embodies this translocal literary identity, having produced her early oeuvre within India before relocating to the United States. The use of English also facilitates access to a global readership, transcending national borders.

Additionally, some Indian authors have come to regard the English language as a more suitable vehicle for articulating the modern human condition and its attendant societal challenges, in contrast to the more traditionally-rooted Indian vernacular tongues. Comprising a literary tradition of only around 150 years, Indo-Anglian writing has evolved considerably, transitioning from formal, descriptive portrayals of Indian landscapes to more nuanced, psychologically-oriented explorations of the inner lives of diverse urban Indian subjects, from housewives to artists - a literary approach that has earned Desai comparisons to the iconic Virginia Woolf.

Beyond Desai, the pantheon of prominent Indo-Anglian authors encompasses a vibrant array of voices, including Salman Rushdie, Vikram Chandra, Kiran Desai, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Amit Chaudhuri, Amitav Ghosh, and Vikas Swarup, each contributing to the dynamic evolution of this rich, cross-cultural literary tradition.

Postcolonial Literature

Since India's attainment of independence from Great Britain in 1947, the nation's writers have leveraged the novel and short story forms as artistic mediums to powerfully express the contemporary realities and complexities of their homeland. While India harbors a remarkable linguistic diversity, with myriad native tongues, the English language - the idiom of their former colonial overlords - has emerged as a common secondary language for India's vast populace. This linguistic bridge has enabled fiction authors hailing from diverse regional and cultural backgrounds to effectively share their distinct visions and recollections of the Indian experience.

Salman Rushdie's seminal 1981 publication of "Midnight's Children" heralded the arrival of a bold, new postcolonial literary aesthetic for India - the secular, postcolonial novel. The title of Rushdie's work, referencing the children born in the wake of Indian independence into a transformed sociocultural landscape, has since become emblematic of an entire generational cohort and way of life. Rushdie's innovative use of a hybrid language, blending English with vibrant Indian idioms, proved instrumental in conveying the vast, complex canvas of the Indian nation.

In the ensuing decades, this transnational, postcolonial literary approach has been enthusiastically embraced by numerous acclaimed Indian authors, yielding such acclaimed works as Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things" (1996), Anita Desai's "Baumgartner's Bombay" (1987), and Kiran Desai's "The Inheritance of Loss" (2006). Desai's short stories, in particular, exemplify the postcolonial literary ethos, as they delve into the disorienting coexistence of tradition and modernity that has defined the Indian experience in the wake of British colonization over the course of two and a half centuries.



COMPARE AND CONTRAST

1978: The narrative unfolds in Bombay, a sprawling modern metropolis characterized by its extensive suburbs and a population exceeding six million. As India's financial hub, it also serves as the epicenter of the nation's film industry, Bollywood.

Today: Renamed Mumbai in 1996, the city has evolved into the most populous urban center globally, with approximately fourteen million residents. Including its suburbs, the total population reaches nineteen million, making it the fourth largest metropolitan area in the world. Mumbai has garnered international attention through the film *Slumdog Millionaire* and has been the site of recurrent terrorist attacks.

1978: Middle-class mothers, such as the protagonist in the narrative, often experience boredom yet remain dedicated to overseeing their suburban households, including managing domestic staff and raising children.

Today: Similar to trends observed in Western societies, Indian middle-class women now navigate the dual responsibilities of career and motherhood. These women are increasingly professionals, with those possessing advanced degrees regarded as more desirable marriage partners.

1978: Anita Desai stands as a trailblazer in Indo-Anglian literature; both her works and the broader spectrum of contemporary Indian fiction are relatively obscure in Western contexts.

Today: Anita Desai's literary contributions enjoy widespread acclaim, being read globally and adapted into films and television series. Indian authors frequently attain recognition through prestigious awards such as the Booker Prize, alongside a burgeoning market for novels centered on Indian themes.



Study the historical context of the time Anita Desai created her literary works. Dwell upon the factors you consider to be the crucial to influence her style of writing.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Colonial India

The British East India Company was given permission by a Mughal emperor (Islamic Persian ruler) in 1617 to trade in India. In protecting its trading interests, Britain used more and more military force until it took over large areas of India and its administration, with the cooperation of local rulers. In 1857, after the Indian Rebellion (also called the Sepoy Mutiny or the Revolt of 1857), the British government took over control of the country from the British East India Company, adding India to its empire. The British ruled in India with many trained Indians as part of their administrative staff. The upper classes of India lost their traditional power, and in order to gain advancement in the new system, Indians had to have an English education and training to get positions in the British Raj. Even today, the privileged classes of India are those with an English education. India's Independence Beginning in the 1920s, leaders such as Mohandas Gandhi, sought to rouse the Indians from their colonial bondage. Gandhi taught the people to boycott English products and to make their own cloth and salt. He used the principle of nonviolence to protest the presence of the British and gained a following of millions. He was miraculously able to unify all the religious factions of India, particularly the Hindus and Muslims, who were rivals. Independence was granted in 1947, with the partition of the country into Pakistan (which later became the Islamic Republic of Pakistan) and India. India today is a secular state, and its citizens belong to many different religions, including Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism.

Postcolonial India

Desai's story takes place in the postcolonial nation of contemporary India. "Postcolonial" has a special meaning for the former territories of

European nations, for all of the countries in Africa, Asia, or the Americas that were held by European powers were changed forever by the dominant foreign culture. The postcolonial nations often exhibit symptoms of displacement, shock, and schizophrenic values, amounting to a modern identity crisis. Forced to modernize, they cannot go back to the way things were, yet they cannot forget their cultural heritage. The family in "Games at Twilight" is much like a Western nuclear family, and their suburban life represents the new direction India took after independence. People had to move to the cities where there were jobs, and the old extended families and customs began to break down. Western education brought Western desires and consumerism and secularism. Most of Desai's fiction takes place in large cities like Bombay or Delhi, which Desai describes as ugly and destructive of life, especially to sensitive souls like Ravi.

Women and Children

All this change gave rise to an educated English-speaking middle class in India that is oriented toward Western lifestyles and values. Desai had a German mother and was given a Western education. She became a voice of the modern middleclass Indian woman in her fiction, showing the inner suffering of stifled, sensitive women fighting against traditional roles in *Cry, the Peacock* and *Fire on the Mountain*. Desai champions a freer life for women but shows the cost of postcolonial shock in the families of her characters who confront the fragmentation of city life. The focus in "Games at Twilight," however, is on the child. Anita Desai has written children's books, such as *Village by the Sea* (1982), in which lower-class children have to support their failing family. Several stories in the collection *Games at Twilight* are written from a child's point of view. Since her novels concern psychological portraits of adults, their malaise is often traced back to childhood incidents, such as Ravi's rude awakening. Desai writes of Indian culture from a secular point of view, though she includes India's rich religious and philosophical background in her work. Equally influenced by Western and postcolonial Indian concerns, she writes of both the breakdown of the old order and the search of her characters for a new life. Like Ravi, her characters strive to become themselves in a new and puzzling world.



Further Areas of Inquiry and Scholarly Exploration

📖 Conduct a comprehensive investigation into the diverse range of children's games across various cultures. Present your findings through a multimedia presentation, incorporating visual aids, cinematic excerpts, or audio recordings. Facilitate an interactive demonstration of selected games within the academic setting. Analyze the commonalities and distinctive features of games across different nations. Explore the potential educational or developmental purposes underlying these recreational activities, beyond mere entertainment. Examine the role of oral traditions, such as chants or songs, that frequently accompany these games.

📖 Undertake a comparative analysis of suburban lifestyles in India, the United States, and Ukraine. Investigate the primary cultural distinctions and consider the potential homogenizing effects of modern technological advancements on these differences. Deliver a scholarly presentation utilizing visual aids such as digital slides or relevant cinematic material (e.g., contrasting Bollywood and Hollywood productions). Incorporate data from reputable academic and governmental sources to support your analysis.

📖 Compose a poem or short prose piece centered on a pivotal moment of childhood insight, drawing inspiration from the narrative of Ravi. Employ rich, evocative imagery to convey the sensory and emotional nuances of the experience, mirroring Desai's descriptive prowess. Consider elements such as the interplay of light and shadow, atmospheric conditions, and the transition between diurnal phases. Volunteer to present your literary work to peers for constructive feedback and discussion.

📖 Facilitate a group discourse on the socioeconomic indicators present in Desai's story, set in a middle-class family in Mumbai (formerly Bombay). Examine the portrayal of domestic staff and hypothesize about their lived experiences. Consider how the narrative might differ if presented from their perspective. To inform the discussion, assign research tasks on the

socioeconomic conditions of India's working class, as well as comparative studies on class distinctions in the United States and Ukraine. Synthesize these findings to draw conclusions about the nature and impact of class differences across these diverse societies.

📖 Conduct a psychological analysis of Ravi's character through the lens of established theories of human development. Compose a concise academic paper, incorporating relevant quotations and examples from the text to substantiate your arguments and conclusions.



Anita Desai's "A Devoted Son," first published in her collection *Games at Twilight and Other Stories* (1978), stands as one of her most notable short stories. Much like her broader oeuvre, "A Devoted Son" is situated in her native India and centers on domestic and familial themes. By prioritizing character development and linguistic nuance over plot, Desai delves into the evolving dynamics between a father and his son over time.

In "A Devoted Son," an illiterate laborer named Varma makes significant sacrifices to ensure that his son, Rakesh, receives an education. Despite Rakesh's achievements—becoming a doctor and furthering his studies in the United States—he continues to treat his parents with profound respect and reverence. Upon his return home, Rakesh marries a woman chosen by his mother, attains wealth, and establishes his own clinic, maintaining his role as the ideal son.

However, Varma's circumstances deteriorate following his retirement; he loses his wife and grapples with various illnesses, both tangible and imagined. While Rakesh remains dutiful, Varma begins to harbor

resentment towards him for imposing strict dietary restrictions and administering medications that prolong his life, despite Varma's desire for release from it. This tension culminates in Varma's dramatic assertion of his will near the story's conclusion.

Through "A Devoted Son," Desai not only examines the intricate nature of familial relationships but also addresses the challenges of communication, the complexities of the human condition, and the existential tension between life and death. The theme of respect is also pivotal within the narrative. Critics and scholars have responded favorably to "A Devoted Son," commending its complexity and subtle undertones. While Desai is primarily celebrated for her novels, works such as "A Devoted Son" reveal her often underrated talent for crafting compelling short fiction.

Read the story A DEVOTED SON and fulfill the tasks that follow.

PLOTLINE ANALYSIS

Chronological Timeline

Read the provided summary of the story carefully.

Construct a timeline that outlines the major events in chronological order, starting from Rakesh's academic achievements through the end-of-life tensions with his father, Varma.

For each significant event on the timeline, provide a brief analysis (2-3 sentences) that addresses the following:

- a) How does this event contribute to the development of the plot?
- b) How does this event shape the characterization of Rakesh and/or Varma?
- c) Identify any shifts or turning points in the relationship between Rakesh and Varma as depicted by the event.

Conclude your analysis by discussing the overall thematic significance of the narrative's exploration of filial piety, generational tensions, and differing perspectives on end-of-life care.

The timeline and analytical responses should be presented in a well-organized, coherent essay format. Use appropriate transitions and

supporting evidence from the summary to substantiate your observations and interpretations.

The Characters Reconstruction

Analyze the development and embodiment of the three primary characters - Rakesh, Varma, and the family/community dynamics - in the given story. Discuss how each character's actions, thoughts, and relationships with others reveal their distinct personalities, motivations, and the broader sociocultural context.

Specifically, dwell upon the following:

- a) Rakesh's journey from a humble background to becoming a highly accomplished and respected physician. Explore how his academic and professional success shape his identity, his sense of filial piety, and his approach to caring for his aging father.
- b) Varma's character arc, from a proud patriarch to a declining elder whose wishes for a peaceful end-of-life are increasingly disregarded by his son Rakesh. Analyze how Varma's perspective and struggle for autonomy are portrayed.
- c) The evolving family dynamics and the community's changing treatment of Rakesh, from celebrating his exceptional status to normalizing it over time. Discuss how these sociocultural factors influence the father-son relationship and the conflicting approaches to Varma's end-of-life care.
- d) The significance of cultural values, such as filial piety and the role of the family in end-of-life decision-making, and how they shape the characters' actions and the narrative's exploration of these complex issues.
- e) The ways in which the characters' embodied experiences (physical decline, emotional distress, etc.) contribute to their development and the overall themes of the story, such as the tension between individual autonomy and familial obligation.

PLOT SUMMARY

Rakesh, from a humble background, excels academically and scores exceptionally high on medical school entrance exams, becoming a top performer in India. His family and community celebrate his academic triumph.

Rakesh goes on to earn a distinguished medical degree, secure a scholarship to study in the U.S., and return home as a highly accomplished physician. He opens his own successful private clinic, becoming the most prominent doctor in the community.

Rakesh demonstrates strong filial piety, repeatedly honoring his father Varma by bowing and touching his feet. He dutifully cares for his mother until her death.

Over time, Rakesh's exceptional status becomes normalized within his social circle. Varma's health declines after becoming a widower, causing disruptions in the family.

Varma's apparent feigning of death at a family gathering drastically alters the family's treatment of him, with his eldest son Rakesh taking a more assertive caregiving role. Rakesh closely regulates Varma's diet, eliminating foods Varma enjoys in an effort to manage his health conditions.

This leads to conflict, as Varma secretly procures forbidden foods and complains to his neighbor Bhatia about his son's perceived mistreatment. As Varma's health declines, Rakesh increases medical interventions, against Varma's wishes to be allowed to die.

Despite Varma's pleas, Rakesh persists in sustaining his father's life, which Varma sees as a cruel imposition. The narrative depicts the complex family dynamics and tensions that arise from differing perspectives on end-of-life care.

Study the basic information about the main characters of the story. Fill in the scheme that follows.

CHARACTERS

Bhatia: Bhatia is Varma's elderly next-door neighbor. Though advanced in years, Bhatia retains a degree of mobility uncommon among Varma's other aging neighbors. Bhatia visits Varma and empathetically listens to his complaints regarding Rakesh's treatment of him. Bhatia is horrified that Rakesh denies his father nourishment, finding such behavior deeply disrespectful.

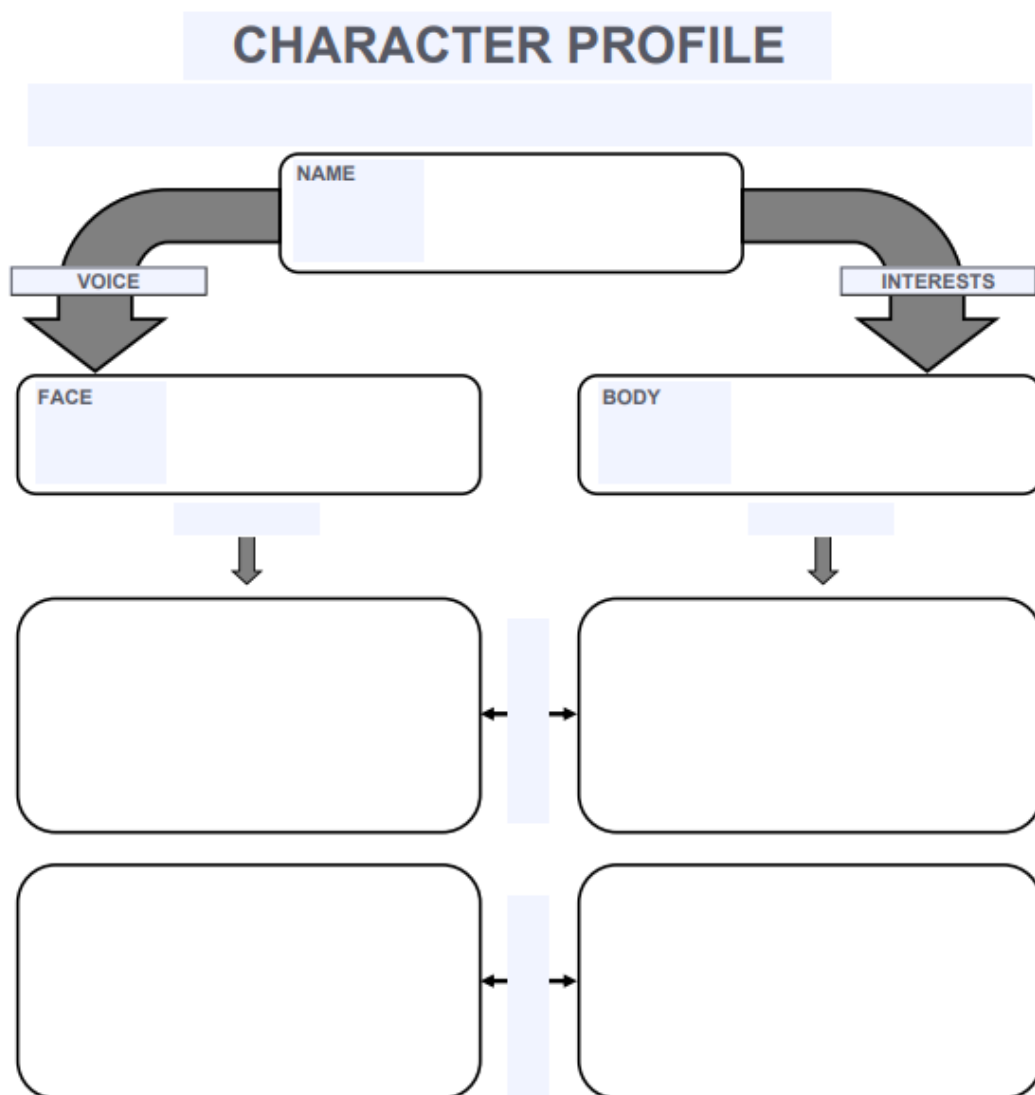
Rakesh: Rakesh is the dutiful, educated son of Varma and his wife. Though his parents are illiterate, they make immense sacrifices to fund Rakesh's schooling, enabling him to become a doctor. Rakesh's academic excellence earns him a prestigious scholarship to study in the United States. Returning home, Rakesh establishes himself as a respected, gifted physician, eventually opening his own clinic and rising to a position of prominence and wealth. Throughout, Rakesh maintains an image of the ideal, respectful son. However, as Varma reaches the end of his working life and falls ill, Rakesh's care for his father takes on a more controlling tone. While continuing outward displays of filial piety, such as reading the newspaper to Varma each morning, Rakesh severely restricts his father's diet, denying him the foods he enjoys in favor of an austere regimen of vitamins, tonics and medications. Varma finds this treatment deeply disrespectful, becoming seriously ill and voicing a desire to die. Yet Rakesh remains oblivious to his father's true wishes, convinced that he is providing the care Varma requires.

Varma: Varma is the uneducated father of Rakesh and the father-in-law of Veena. Hailing from a family of vegetable sellers, the illiterate Varma toiled for decades at a kerosene depot, driven by a belief in the transformative power of education. Varma and his wife made great sacrifices to fund Rakesh's schooling, swelling with pride as their son excelled academically and earned a prestigious scholarship to study in the United States. In the early years of Rakesh's return, Varma was gratified to see his son maintain displays of filial respect. However, after Varma's wife passes away and he retires, his health rapidly declines. Varma spends his days bedridden, feigning illness and death to elicit attention, though his family largely ignores these theatrics. As Varma's actual health worsens, he grows to resent Rakesh's stringent dietary restrictions and perceived disrespect, confiding his concerns to the sympathetic Bhatia. Varma merely wishes to be left in peace to die, but Rakesh remains steadfast in his conviction that he is providing the proper care, dismissing his father's pleas.

Varma's Wife: Varma's wife is the illiterate but devoted mother of Rakesh. She toils tirelessly in domestic duties, supporting her husband's sacrifices to fund their son's education. She is immensely proud when Rakesh succeeds in his studies and secures a scholarship abroad, and is

particularly pleased that he defers to her to select his future wife, Veena. Varma's wife passes away around the time of her husband's retirement, with Rakesh caring for her in her final moments through the ultimate gesture of filial piety - pressing her feet. Varma's subsequent emotional unraveling coincides with the loss of his wife.

Veena: Veena is the wife of Rakesh, selected by his mother as a childhood friend from their shared village. Though uneducated and described as "plump and old-fashioned," Veena seamlessly integrates into the household, dutifully cooking and caring for the family. When Varma falls ill in his retirement, Veena assists in tending to him, though Varma comes to resent her perceived disrespect, seeing her as silently mocking him when Rakesh restricts his diet.



Study the dominating themes of the story. Which of them do you consider the most acute or close to your sphere of interests or priorities? Are these themes contemporary enough to extrapolate them to the life of today in this country? Draw the necessary parallels.

THEMES

Respect and Devotion

The short story "A Devoted Son" by Anita Desai delves into the complex dynamics of traditional Indian family relationships. The narrative explores how the concept of filial piety, which is highly valued in Indian culture, can evolve and become strained over time.

Varma and his wife make significant sacrifices to ensure their son Rakesh receives a good education, which he leverages to become a successful and respected doctor. Rakesh's initial devotion to his parents is exemplified by gestures like bowing and touching their feet, demonstrating the reverence he has for them. He even allows his mother to choose his wife, further solidifying his adherence to cultural traditions.

However, as Varma's health declines in his later years, the nature of Rakesh's devotion begins to change. Varma's fabricated illnesses and disruptive behavior strain the family dynamics, and the respect and care Rakesh provides increasingly appear to be more out of duty than genuine concern. Rakesh assumes control over Varma's diet and lifestyle, effectively becoming his "tormentor" rather than honoring his father's wishes.

Desai's story seems to suggest that the intricate web of respect, devotion, and filial piety within traditional Indian families does not necessarily guarantee happiness or fulfillment for all involved. The author appears to be questioning whether the outward displays of reverence truly reflect the inner experiences and emotional well-being of the characters.

The Indignities of Old Age

Anita Desai's "A Devoted Son" explores the complex emotional journey of Varma, whose life is marked by both high points and the profound struggle to come to terms with his mortality and diminishing autonomy in old age.

The narrative opens with Varma at the pinnacle of his adult life, having diligently provided for his family through his role at a kerosene depot.

His pride and joy stems from the success of his son Rakesh, who becomes a wealthy, respected doctor, upholding the family's honor through his academic and professional achievements, as well as his filial devotion.

However, as Varma approaches the end of his working years, he finds himself increasingly frustrated by the erosion of his personal freedoms and pleasures. His wife's passing, coupled with his declining health, result in Varma becoming dependent on the care provided by Rakesh and his family. This transition proves challenging, as Varma feels increasingly helpless and constrained by the restrictions Rakesh imposes on his diet and medication.

Desai poignantly depicts Varma's inner turmoil, as he grapples with a profound sense of loss of control over his own life. The once-proud patriarch now feels "dead inside," unable to reconcile the devotion and reverence accorded to him by his son with the reality of his diminishing autonomy. Varma's desperate attempts to assert his will, even in small ways, underscore the profound struggle many face in navigating the complexities of aging and the shifting family dynamics that accompany it.

Through Varma's experience, Desai invites the reader to reflect on the nuanced, sometimes contradictory, emotions that can arise within traditional Indian family structures as individuals navigate the challenges of growing old with dignity and purpose.

Communication

Anita Desai's "A Devoted Son" explores the theme of communication, often mediated by perception and pride, as a central dynamic between the protagonist Varma and his son Rakesh.

Despite their apparent dialogue, true communication seems elusive, particularly as Varma reaches the twilight of his life. Varma earnestly attempts to convey his deep sense of unease and longing for the end of his suffering, but Rakesh remains largely dismissive, treating his father in a manner he deems appropriate for a respected elder.

Rakesh's pride as the dutiful son overshadows his ability to truly listen to Varma's spoken desires, such as his wish to die. Varma's feeble attempts to articulate his anguish are met with patronizing responses from Rakesh, who cannot comprehend the depths of his father's misery.

As Varma's health declines, the communication breakdown escalates, with Varma's words reduced to "incoherent croak[s]" and "expressive

grunts and cries." Yet, in the story's final moments, Varma finds a novel way to convey his message, subtly rebuffing Rakesh's gesture of respectful touch, an act that finally seems to pierce Rakesh's self-imposed blindness.

Ultimately, the story highlights the tragic irony of Rakesh's inability to truly hear his father's pleas, instead prioritizing his own preconceptions of filial duty over the need to understand and empathize with Varma's profound existential distress. The chasm between their ostensible communication and their genuine connection underscores the complex challenges that can arise within traditional family structures, where pride and perception can create barriers to true understanding.

Study the information about Anita Desai's style of writing. List the specific features of it you consider to be the most prominent.

STYLE

Climax

In Anita Desai's "A Devoted Son," the narrative reaches its climactic moment in the powerful exchange between the protagonist Varma and his son Rakesh, where the underlying conflict between their perspectives comes to a head.

Throughout the story, the tension has steadily built as Varma's health declines and his desire for autonomy and a peaceful death is repeatedly dismissed by the dutiful but uncomprehending Rakesh. This conflict comes to a crescendo when Varma is placed on the veranda, increasingly unhappy and fearful as his son's servants fuss over him.

The climax is found in the final confrontation, where Varma once again pleads with Rakesh to allow him to die, only to be met with his son's continued refusal to acknowledge his father's suffering. However, in a poignant moment, Varma takes decisive action, sweeping the bottle of tonic from Rakesh's hand, forcefully communicating his unwavering desire to be released from his torment.

This climactic exchange, where Varma asserts his autonomy in the face of Rakesh's paternalistic care, marks the turning point in the narrative. The subsequent falling action and conclusion depict Varma finding a measure of peace, as he is allowed to lie flat on his bed and once more express his longing for death.

Through this pivotal scene, Desai masterfully captures the intensity of the conflict between Varma's yearning for a dignified end and Rakesh's

inability to truly empathize with his father's existential anguish. The climax serves as the emotional centerpiece of the story, underscoring the profound communication breakdown and the tragically irreconcilable differences between the two characters.

Antagonist

In Anita Desai's "A Devoted Son," an intriguing case can be made that the character of Rakesh, despite his outward displays of filial devotion, functions as an antagonist in relation to the protagonist, Varma.

While Rakesh ostensibly fulfills the role of the dedicated son, caring for his aging father, his actions are often at odds with Varma's own needs and desires. Rakesh's behaviors, such as excelling academically, marrying the wife chosen by his mother, and dutifully administering medical care, stem more from a sense of propriety and cultural expectations than a genuine understanding of his father's wishes.

The conflict between Rakesh and Varma comes to a head when Rakesh refuses to allow his father to eat the foods he craves, setting off a deeper clash of wills. Rakesh's crowning act of antagonism, however, is his dismissal of Varma's expressed desire to die, a wish he ignores in favor of prolonging his father's life through an ever-increasing regimen of medications that Varma clearly does not want.

In this way, Rakesh's actions, driven by his own notions of filial piety rather than an empathetic engagement with Varma's suffering, place him in direct opposition to the protagonist's profound yearning for a peaceful end. Rakesh's unwillingness to truly listen to and honor his father's wishes casts him in the role of the antagonist, whose well-intentioned but misguided efforts serve to prolong Varma's torment rather than alleviate it.

This complex dynamic between Rakesh and Varma highlights the nuanced nature of the antagonist figure, where the perceived "villain" may not be a traditional malevolent force, but rather a character whose actions, however well-meaning, ultimately work against the protagonist's central desires and struggles.

Protagonist

In Anita Desai's short story "A Devoted Son," the central figure of Varma undoubtedly serves as the story's protagonist, around whom the narrative and its central conflicts revolve.

As the aging patriarch, Varma's life experiences and evolving relationships with his family, particularly his son Rakesh, drive the progression of the plot. Despite the sacrifices he has made to ensure Rakesh's educational and professional success, Varma finds himself dissatisfied upon entering retirement and widowhood.

Varma's declining health only exacerbates the tensions between himself and the antagonistic forces represented by Rakesh and Varma's daughter-in-law Veena. Their imposition of dietary restrictions and uncompromising medical treatment further inflame the protagonist's struggle for autonomy and his yearning for a peaceful end to his suffering.

Ultimately, it is Varma who emerges as the central figure, the one whose perspective and desires shape the narrative. In the climactic confrontation with Rakesh, Varma asserts his agency by defiantly sweeping away the tonic his son had intended to administer. This decisive action underscores Varma's status as the protagonist, the character whose inner turmoil and outward resistance are the driving forces of the story.

Through Varma's experiences, Desai explores the complex dynamics of filial duty, personal autonomy, and the universal human longing for a dignified end to one's life. As the story's central figure, Varma's struggles and ultimate, if temporary, triumph serve as the narrative's emotional core, making him an indelible protagonist in the reader's mind.

Point of View

Anita Desai's short story "A Devoted Son" is crafted from a third-person omniscient narrative perspective, allowing the reader an expansive vantage point on the unfolding events and the inner lives of the characters.

This omniscient point of view grants the reader unrestricted access to the story's developments, untethered by temporal or spatial constraints. Desai's skillful deployment of this narrative technique enables her to provide nuanced insights into the characters' thoughts, emotions, and the intricate dynamics of their relationships.

While the narrative does not necessarily reveal the characters' full thought processes in their entirety, it offers poetic and perceptive glimpses into their subjective experiences. Particularly in the case of the central protagonist, Varma, the omniscient narration allows the reader to intimately engage with his personal struggles, desires, and the complex evolution of his relationship with his son, Rakesh.

Through this omniscient vantage point, Desai is able to deftly navigate the narrative, seamlessly transitioning between the different character perspectives and unfolding the story's central conflicts with depth and complexity. The reader is granted a holistic understanding of the narrative, privy to the multilayered motivations and inner workings of the key figures, especially the story's central protagonist, Varma.

This omniscient narrative approach serves to elevate the emotional resonance of the story, allowing the reader to fully immerse themselves in the protagonist's plight and the profound interpersonal dynamics that drive the narrative forward. Desai's masterful use of the third-person omniscient point of view is integral to the story's ability to richly capture the nuances of the human experience that lie at its core.

Setting

While Anita Desai refrains from explicitly stating the specific temporal and geographic setting of her short story "A Devoted Son," the narrative context and cultural details gradually coalesce to establish a vivid sense of place and time.

Through the unfolding events and character interactions, it becomes evident that the story is set in India, likely within the timeframe of several decades leading up to the late 1970s. The central location is a "shabby little colony at the edge of the city," where the narrative is grounded in the confines of the small yellow house that serves as the familial domain.

This modest domestic setting becomes the primary stage upon which the story's central conflicts and character dynamics unfold. It is within this intimate, yet culturally resonant, environment that Varma raises his family and where his son Rakesh, in turn, establishes his own household and assumes the responsibility of caring for his aging father.

Desai's narrative astutely weaves in the cultural norms and values that permeate the characters' lives, such as the emphasis on filial piety and respect for elders, as well as the practice of arranged marriage that shapes Rakesh's union. These subtly incorporated cultural touchstones serve to ground the story firmly within the societal context of India, imbuing the setting with a deeper sense of authenticity and historical resonance.

While the precise geographic location and calendar dates are left unspecified, Desai's deft handling of the setting and its cultural dimensions constructs a richly immersive narrative world that feels both intimately familiar and broadly representative of the Indian experience.

This grounding in a recognizable yet nuanced setting allows the reader to fully engage with the story's universal themes of family, duty, and the complexities of the human condition.



COMPARE AND CONTRAST

1970s: India's population exceeds 613 million, making it the second most populous country in the world, following China.

Today: India's population has surpassed 1.1 billion, maintaining its status as the second largest country after China.

1970s: The Indian economy operates under a centralized planning model.

Today: India has transitioned to a free market economy.

1970s: The Congress Party holds a dominant monopoly on political power in India, a position it has maintained for several decades.

Today: The political landscape has diversified, with regional parties, the Bharatiya Janata Party, and the Communist Party gaining significant influence, although a Congress Party-led coalition assumed power in 2004.

1970s: Tensions between India and Pakistan escalate into armed conflict at various points during the decade.

Today: Although tensions between India and Pakistan remain elevated, there have been initiatives for peace talks planned in the early twenty-first century.



Study the historical context of the time Anita Desai created her literary works. Dwell upon the factors you consider to be the crucial to influence her style of writing.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Population Trends

The demographic transition in post-independence India exhibits a nuanced and multifaceted trajectory. Despite the country's proclamation as a sovereign republic in 1948 following its liberation from British colonial rule in 1947, certain societal structures and patterns remained relatively entrenched or underwent only incremental modifications by the late 1970s.

A salient feature of the period was the persistence of a predominantly rural populace. The majority of the Indian citizenry continued to reside in rural communities, deriving their livelihoods primarily from agricultural pursuits and inhabiting small villages. This rural-agrarian character of the national landscape remained a defining characteristic.

Concurrently, the urban centers witnessed the emergence of a more substantial middle class, as well as a significant trend of rural-to-urban migration, driven by the pursuit of employment opportunities. This influx of rural migrants into the cities created heightened demand for housing, which at times led to supply shortages and the establishment of new residential colonies, such as the one where the character Varma resides, to accommodate the growing urban population.

However, the persistence of widespread poverty remained a prominent socioeconomic challenge, with a sizable proportion of both the rural and urban populations continuing to subsist below the poverty line. This uneven distribution of economic prosperity and the coexistence of divergent socioeconomic strata within the national landscape underscored the complexity of India's demographic transformation in the decades immediately following its independence.

Family Life

The institution of the family remained a central and defining feature of Indian social fabric in the late 1970s, exhibiting intricate nuances and regional variations. Throughout much of the preceding twentieth century, the practice of arranged marriages continued to be a predominant norm, though a growing number of young adults exercised the autonomy to select their own spouses, a trend that was more prevalent among the higher socioeconomic strata of society.

Upon marriage, the traditional patriarchal structure dictated that the wife would take up residence within the family home of her husband, often cohabiting with multiple generations of the extended family. This multigenerational household arrangement was a common feature, though distinct regional patterns emerged. In northern India, the household typically encompassed several generations of men, their wives, and their offspring, whereas in southern India, the family structure tended to be organized around a matriarchal figure, incorporating the families of a grandmother and her siblings, a mother and her siblings, as well as one's own siblings.

The family dynamics depicted in the short story "A Devoted Son" can be seen as representative of the broader family values and living arrangements prevalent during this period, underscoring the enduring significance of kinship ties and the intergenerational nature of Indian domestic life in the late 1970s.

Education and Literacy

The Indian education system in the late 20th century bore a lasting imprint of the country's colonial legacy under British rule. Following its independence, India enacted legislation mandating the provision of free and compulsory education for children between the ages of six and fourteen. This policy initiative aimed to universalize primary education, and indeed, the majority of Indian children, even in rural areas, attended at least a few years of primary schooling.

However, the quality of state-run primary schools was often hindered by inadequate funding and resources. Furthermore, a significant number of children, particularly in certain regions, were withdrawn from primary education around the age of ten to assist with agricultural labor or domestic responsibilities within the family. As a result, considerably fewer students proceeded to secondary education, and the pursuit of

higher education at the collegiate level remained the privilege of an even smaller segment of the population, predominantly male.

The British colonial administration had established a network of colleges and universities, primarily to cultivate an educated upper-middle class and groom a cadre of bureaucrats and officials to aid in the governance of the country. Within this higher education landscape, science-oriented disciplines were generally viewed as more prestigious, if not necessarily more practical, than other fields of study.

Despite concerted efforts by the independent Indian state to enhance literacy rates through the expansion of schooling infrastructure, teacher training, and the production of relevant textbooks, illiteracy persisted as a significant challenge well into the 21st century. This disparity was particularly pronounced in the case of Indian women, who lagged behind their male counterparts in attaining literacy.

The depiction of education in the short story "A Devoted Son" can be seen as emblematic of these broader trends, particularly in its emphasis on the character Rakesh's pursuit of a science-focused education, reflecting the societal value placed on such fields of study during this period.



Further Areas of Inquiry and Scholarly Exploration

📖 Conduct a thorough investigation into the evolution and current state of India's educational system, utilizing both digital resources and academic literature available in your institution's library. Examine the historical trajectory of educational reforms, assess the accessibility of education for economically disadvantaged individuals such as Rakesh, and evaluate the degree of parental involvement in children's academic pursuits. Compose a scholarly essay synthesizing your findings, incorporating relevant parallels and insights from the narrative "A Devoted Son" to contextualize your analysis.

📖 Engage in a structured academic debate with a peer, critically examining the ethical implications of Rakesh's approach to Varma's care as portrayed in "A Devoted Son." One participant should present a cogent argument in defense of Rakesh's medical interventions, despite paternal

objections, while the other should articulate Varma's perspective and concerns. Ensure that both parties address salient issues such as filial respect, appropriate geriatric care practices, and intergenerational communication dynamics. This exercise aims to foster critical thinking and argumentation skills within an academic context.

📖 Undertake a comprehensive study of familial relationships in India, encompassing both contemporary and historical perspectives. Focus your research on key aspects such as family structures, cohabitation patterns, and evolving parental expectations. Synthesize your findings into a scholarly presentation for your peers, drawing connections between your research and the thematic elements present in "A Devoted Son." Additionally, conduct a comparative analysis of these familial dynamics with those observed in contemporary American and Ukrainian societies, highlighting similarities and differences.

📖 Form a small research group (3-5 members) to investigate the cultural and culinary significance of a specific food item mentioned in "A Devoted Son." Conduct thorough research to identify an authentic recipe for the chosen dish. This exercise should aim to explore the intersection of literature, cultural studies, and culinary arts, providing insights into the role of food in Indian society and its representation in literature.

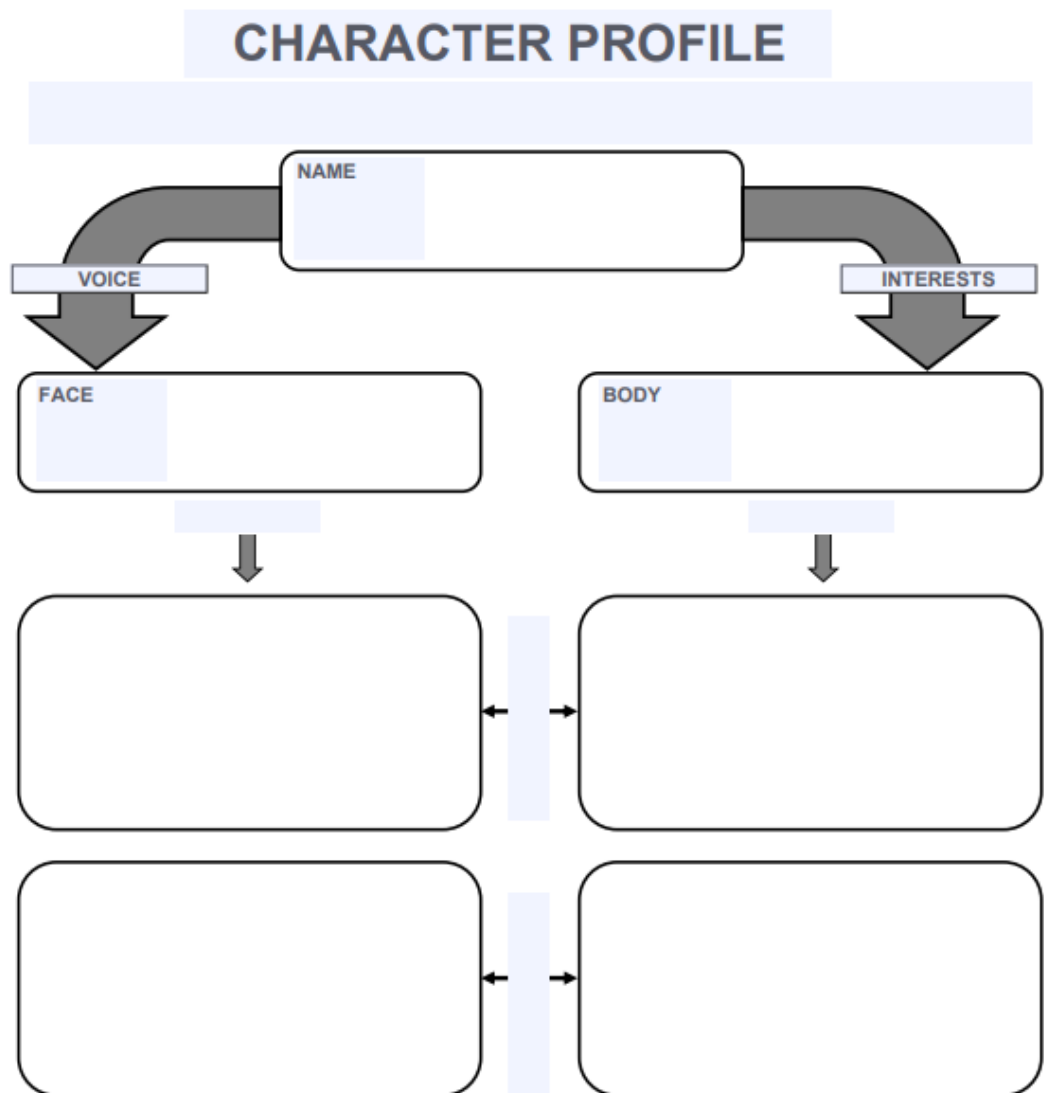


FOR INDEPENDENT LITERARY INQUIRY

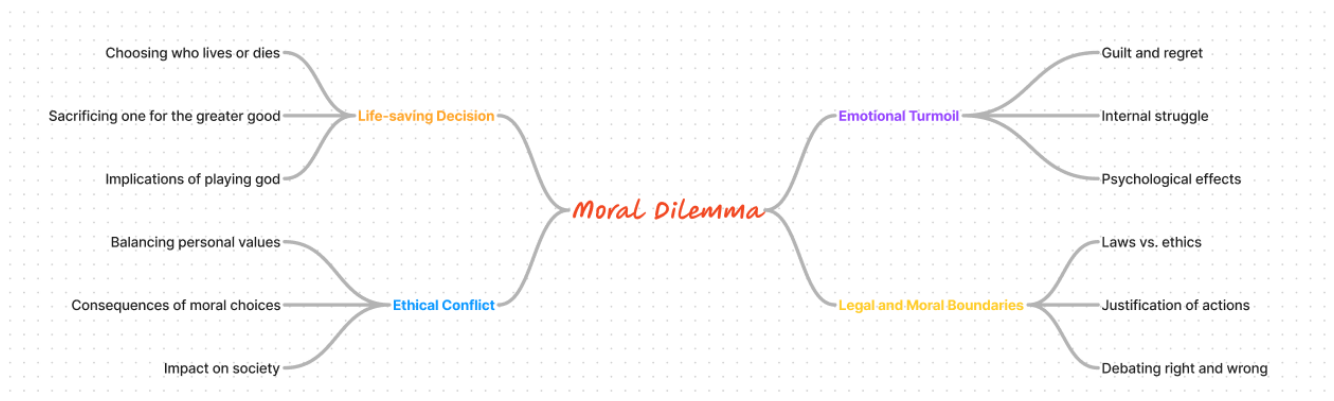


Read the story 2BR02B by KURT VONNEGUT and fulfill the tasks:

1. Study the biographical information about the author.
2. Fulfill the PLOTLINE ANALYSIS.
3. Write a concise PLOT SUMMARY of the story.
4. Provide the basic information about the main characters of the story. Fill in the scheme that follows.



5. Study the dominating themes of the story. Which of them do you consider the most acute or close to your sphere of interests or priorities? Are these themes contemporary enough to extrapolate them to the life of today in this country? Draw the necessary parallels.
6. Study the information about the author's style of writing. List the specific features of it you consider to be the most prominent.
7. Study the historical context of the time the author created literary works. Dwell upon the factors you consider to be the crucial to influence the style of writing.
8. Dwell upon the moral dilemmas the main character faces and write a short essay "Would I like to live in such an "ideal" world? Why?"



Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in Language Teaching Perspectives: Self-Awareness

SELF-AWARENESS is the ability to be aware of one's inner life – thoughts, emotions, values, behaviors, preferences, goals, challenges, strengths, mindsets, attitudes, and how these elements influence a person's behavior and choices across contexts (SEL for Students: Self-Awareness and Self-Management, 2024).

Self-awareness skills include:

- Understanding the relationship between one's emotions, thoughts, values, and behaviors
- Identifying and analyzing one's emotions, and how they affect others
- Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets
- Integrating personal and social identities
- Demonstrating honesty and integrity
- Experiencing self-efficacy
- Examining biases and prejudices
- Developing a sense of purpose and interests
- Having a growth mindset

To develop self-awareness in a foreign language classroom the following strategies can be helpful.

- Building on emotional intelligence
- Identifying and building on strengths
- Understanding stress and stressors
- Exploring identities
- Exploring personality and learning styles (SEL for Students: Self-Awareness and Self-Management, 2024).

Why are self-awareness skills important? In pairs or micro groups discuss the following in the perspective of the problems raised in this chapter's stories.

- Cross-group friendships among students can make the world a better place.

- Students with friends from different racial groups may reduce prejudice, both immediately and in the long-term.
- Positive interactions between students that have diverse social and cultural background may reduce anxiety and increase the willingness to empathize with each other.

Study the effective SEL practice and suggest some other possible ones in relations to the issues considered in the chapter.

Loving-Kindness for Adults

Send good wishes, warmth, and kindness to others by silently repeating key phrases.

Level: College, Adult

When You Might Use This Practice

Any time during the year

Before the school day begins, at a time when you are feeling emotional distress, or before you work with a challenging student or colleague.

Duration: 15 minutes

Learning Objective

Practice sending loving wishes to people you know and don't know

SEL Competencies

Social Awareness

Self-Awareness

Self-Management

Relationship Skills

The source: Loving-Kindness for Adults. (2024). Retrieved from: <https://ggie.berkeley.edu/practice/loving-kindness-for-adults/>

CHAPTER 2. Affective Poetics: Interpreting Emotional Resonance in the Short Story

The Emotional Power of Literary Stories

Stories have a profound impact on our emotions, evoking feelings of joy, sorrow, fear, and everything in between. As human beings, we have a deep-seated passion for narratives that both reflect and shape our emotional experiences. This section explores how the emotional structure of stories is interwoven with the very fabric of storytelling itself, shedding light on the complex interplay between authors, characters, and readers.



Study the ways emotions are related to literary stories. Explain the difference between “passion of plots” and “passion from plots”. Provide vivid examples to illustrate it.

Emotion and the Universality of Literary Narratives

1

Cultural Diversity

Literary narratives, with their rich emotional tapestry, resonate across cultural boundaries, allowing readers from diverse backgrounds to connect on a profound level. The universal human experiences of love, loss, triumph, and despair transcend geographic and linguistic divides, fostering a shared understanding of the human condition.

2

Emotional Universality

Underlying the cultural diversity of literary traditions is a remarkable universality in the emotional experiences they evoke. Emotions such as joy, fear, and grief, while expressed and interpreted through culturally-specific lenses, are fundamentally shared by all of humanity. This emotional universality is a key factor in the enduring appeal and cross-cultural relevance of great works of literature.

3

Emotional Translation

The process of translating literary works from one language to another involves not only the transfer of linguistic meaning but also the careful preservation of emotional nuance and cultural context. Skilled translators must navigate the delicate balance between maintaining the emotional power of the original text and adapting it to resonate with readers in the target language and culture.

The "Passion of Plots" and "Passion from Plots"

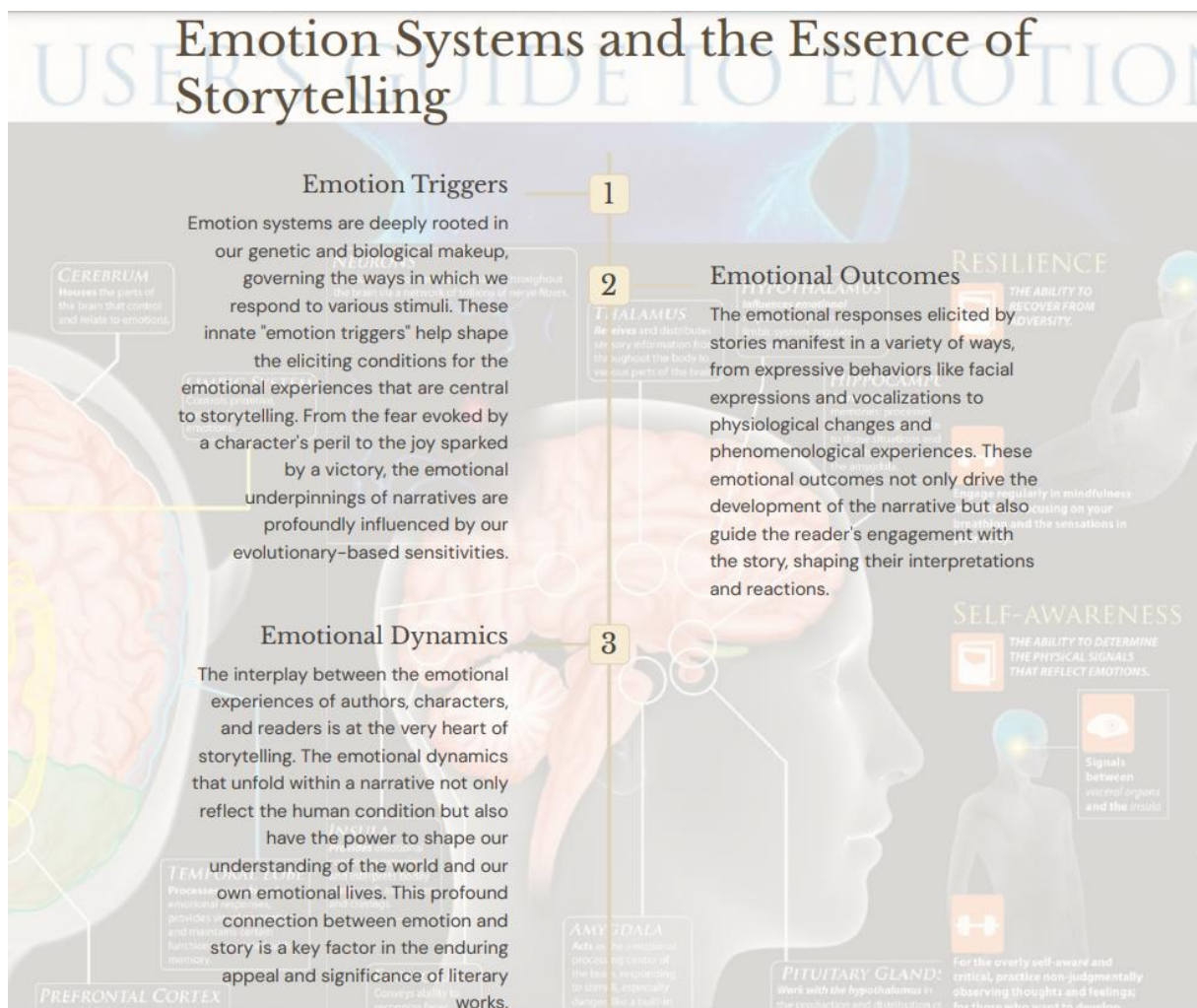
Passion of Plots

The "passion of plots" refers to the ways in which stories manifest the feelings and emotions of authors and characters. Every narrative choice, from the development of the protagonist to the resolution of the central conflict, is imbued with the emotional experiences of those who create the story. The author's own passions and desires are woven into the very fabric of the plot, shaping the emotional landscape that readers navigate.

Passion from Plots

The "passion from plots" encompasses the emotional responses that stories evoke in readers and listeners. As we engage with narratives, we become invested in the characters' journeys, empathizing with their joys and sorrows. The structure and development of the plot, combined with the skillful use of language, can elicit a wide range of emotions, from laughter and wonder to tears and fear.

How do emotion systems define the standard features of fictional stories?



Name and dwell upon the most basic elements of an emotional experience that is incorporated in literary stories.

Define the nature of our emotional response to emotional expressions.

Study the ways critical reading adds to training sensibility.



The Long-Term Impact of Emotional Engagement

1 Mood and Outlook

The emotional responses evoked by stories can have lasting effects on an individual's mood and overall outlook on life. A poignant tale of triumph over adversity may instill a sense of optimism and resilience, while a heart-wrenching tragedy can linger in the reader's mind, influencing their perspectives and decision-making long after the book has been closed.

2 Empathy and Social Awareness

By fostering empathetic responses to the experiences of fictional characters, literature can broaden readers' understanding of diverse perspectives and social realities. This expanded empathy can translate into more compassionate and ethical decision-making in the real world, as readers apply the lessons learned from stories to their own lives and relationships.

3 Personal Growth and Transformation

The deep emotional engagement with literary narratives can catalyze personal growth and transformation. As readers immerse themselves in the emotional journeys of characters, they may gain insights into their own lives, challenge long-held assumptions, and even undergo profound changes in their beliefs, values, and behaviors.

Ponder upon long-term consequences of emotional response to literary stories that are significant for our lives more generally or for society? Provide vivid examples to illustrate it.

Explain the ways in which our emotional responses—including our empathic responses—may be attenuated or enhanced. Prove using examples of your own that empathy is a key part of our emotional response to literary stories.

Study the classification of the whole scope of emotional content and single out the criteria it is based on.

The Emotional Classification of Literary Experiences

Positive Emotions

The emotional experiences associated with literary stories can be broadly categorized into positive and negative emotions. Positive emotions, such as joy, happiness, and delight, are often linked to moments of triumph, discovery, and the fulfillment of desires. These uplifting emotional responses can leave readers feeling inspired, energized, and hopeful.

Negative Emotions

On the other hand, literary narratives can also evoke a range of negative emotions, including sadness, fear, anger, and despair. These emotional responses are often triggered by experiences of loss, danger, injustice, and the thwarting of goals. While unpleasant, these negative emotions can deepen our understanding of the human condition and foster empathy and emotional resilience.

Ambiguous Emotions

Some literary experiences may elicit more complex, ambiguous emotional responses that defy simple categorization. Emotions like nostalgia, bittersweet longing, and a sense of the sublime can evoke a bittersweet blend of joy and melancholy, highlighting the nuanced and multifaceted nature of our emotional engagement with stories.

Emotional Diversity

The rich emotional tapestry of literary narratives reflects the incredible diversity and complexity of human experience. By exploring this emotional range, scholars and readers can gain deeper insights into the ways in which stories shape and reflect our inner lives, ultimately enhancing our understanding of the human condition.

English Vocabulary

LIST OF EMOTIONS

ANGER

Annoyed

Raging

Livid

Fed up

Irritated

Mad

Critical

Agitated

Resentful

Disgusted

Outraged

Furious

Bitter

POSITIVE

Positive Emotional Expressions

The rich emotional vocabulary of literary texts includes a diverse array of positive expressions, such as joy, happiness, delight, pleasure, and euphoria. These words capture the spectrum of uplifting emotional experiences that can be evoked by stories, reflecting the triumphs, discoveries, and moments of fulfillment that resonate with readers on a deep level.

NEGATIVE

Negative Emotional Expressions

Alongside the positive emotional vocabulary, literary works often employ a nuanced lexicon of negative emotions, including sadness, fear, anger, despair, and grief. These words capture the pain, loss, and struggles that are integral to the human experience, allowing readers to empathize with the emotional journeys of fictional characters and gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of life.

AMBIGUOUS

Ambiguous Emotional Expressions

The emotional language of literature also encompasses more ambiguous and complex expressions, such as nostalgia, melancholy, awe, and a sense of the sublime. These emotional states capture the bittersweet, transfixing, and transformative experiences that can arise from engaging with great works of fiction and poetry, highlighting the multifaceted nature of human emotion.

ENERGIZED

Healthy

Motivated

Refreshed

Strengthened

Inspired

Determined

Creative

Renewed

Vibrant

Focused

Invigorated

Make conclusions about the importance of the emotive content in the process of literary text interpretation.

Emotion and the Interpretation of Literary Texts

Emotional Attunement

The process of critical reading involves more than just intellectual analysis; it also requires a deep emotional attunement to the text. By cultivating empathy and sensitivity, readers can better understand the emotional experiences of characters, as well as the emotional intentions and investments of the author. This emotional engagement can lead to richer interpretations and more nuanced understandings of literary works.

Emotional Resonance

The emotional resonance created by a literary text can profoundly shape the reader's interpretation and response. The ways in which a story evokes feelings of joy, sorrow, fear, or wonder can influence the meaning that the reader ultimately derives from the work. By acknowledging the emotional dimensions of literary interpretation, scholars can gain deeper insights into the complexities of human experience as reflected in the written word.

Emotional Transformation

The transformative power of literature lies not only in its ability to reflect the emotional experiences of the human condition but also in its potential to alter the reader's own emotional landscape. By engaging with stories that challenge their assumptions, readers may undergo personal growth and emotional transformation, leading to a more nuanced and empathetic understanding of themselves and the world around them.

Emotion and the Future of Literary Studies



Interdisciplinary Collaboration

The study of emotion in literature is a fertile ground for interdisciplinary collaboration, drawing insights from fields such as psychology, neuroscience, and anthropology. By integrating these diverse perspectives, scholars can deepen their understanding of the complex emotional dynamics that underpin the human experience as reflected in literary texts.



Digital Humanities

The emergence of digital humanities has opened up new avenues for the exploration of emotion in literature. Digital tools and technologies, such as text analysis and data visualization, can enable scholars to uncover patterns and trends in the emotional landscapes of literary works, providing valuable insights into the ways in which stories shape and reflect human emotion.



Pedagogical Innovations

The incorporation of emotion-focused approaches into literary education can foster a deeper engagement with texts and a more nuanced understanding of the human experience. By emphasizing the emotional dimensions of literary analysis, educators can inspire students to become more empathetic, reflective, and emotionally attuned readers, preparing them for the challenges and complexities of the modern world.

NADINE GORDIMER



Study the biographical information about the author. Highlight the major facts which are sure to influence her choices of literary themes, characters, settings, moral implications, etc. Search for extra information about Nadine Gordimer that may interest you as an interpreter of her literary works.

BIOGRAPHY

Nadine Gordimer was born on November 20, 1923, in Springs, South Africa, to Isidore Gordimer, an immigrant Jewish watchmaker, and Nan Myers, who had emigrated from Great Britain to South Africa as a young child. As the younger of two daughters, Gordimer experienced a solitary childhood, a circumstance exacerbated by a diagnosis of heart problems at the age of ten. In response to her condition, her mother curtailed her daughter's physical activities, including dance lessons, withdrew her from the convent school she had been attending, and engaged a private tutor for three hours each day. From the ages of eleven to sixteen, Gordimer had minimal interaction with peers, spending most of her time either with her parents or in solitude. Although she later articulated the profound loneliness of those years, she utilized this time to read and write extensively; by the age of thirteen, she had published her first short story in the Johannesburg Sunday Express.

By the time she turned sixteen, Gordimer concluded her tutoring and, aside from a year of general studies at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg in 1945, she did not pursue further formal education. In 1949, the year following the election of South Africa's National Party, which would institutionalize the system of racial segregation known as apartheid, Gordimer released her first collection of short stories, *Face to Face*. This was followed by her first novel, *The Lying Days*, published in 1953. In 1949, she married Gerald Gavron (also known as Gavronsky), and their daughter, Oriane, was born in 1950. However, Gordimer and Gavron divorced in 1952. In 1954, she wed the German art dealer Reinhold Cassirer, with whom she had a son, Hugo. Their marriage lasted until Cassirer's death in 2001.

Over the fifty years following the publication of her first book, Gordimer authored more than thirty novels, short story collections, and essay compilations, receiving numerous accolades for her work. Her 1960 collection, *Friday's Footprint and Other Stories*, won the W. H. Smith Literary Award, while her 1970 novel, *A Guest of Honor*, was awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize. *The Conservationist* received Great Britain's prestigious Booker-McConnell Prize in 1974, along with South Africa's CNA Literary Prize. In 1991, Gordimer was honored with the Nobel Prize for Literature. That same year, she published *Jump and Other Stories*, which includes the notable piece "The Ultimate Safari."

Recognized as one of South Africa's foremost political activists and intellectuals, Gordimer faced the banning of many of her works within her own country upon their release due to her opposition to the apartheid regime. All of her writings, including the collection *Loot and Other Stories* (2003)—published nearly a decade after the official end of apartheid—engage with themes related to apartheid and its enduring effects.

Read the story THE ULTIMATE SAFARI and fulfill the tasks that follow.

PLOTLINE ANALYSIS

Chronological Timeline

Review the summary carefully and identify the major events that occur in the narrative, noting the sequence and timing of these events.

Create a timeline that visually represents the chronology of the story, including the following elements:

- a) Specific dates or time periods when events occur (e.g., "Night mother disappeared," "Family begins trek through Kruger Park," "Grandfather lost and abandoned," "Family arrives at refugee camp," etc.).
- b) Duration of significant events or time periods (e.g., "Family's trek through Kruger Park lasted X days/weeks," "Family lived in refugee camp for nearly X years," etc.).
- c) Connections between events, such as causal relationships or transitions from one event to the next.

Annotate your timeline with brief explanations or analyses of the significance of each event in the overall development of the plot.

Identify any ambiguities or gaps in the chronology presented in the summary and speculate on how these might affect the reader's understanding of the narrative's timeline.

Discuss how the chronology of events contributes to the narrative's themes, tone, and overall impact.

Your timeline should be presented in a clear and visually appealing format, with appropriate use of headings, labels, and other formatting elements to enhance its readability and effectiveness. Be prepared to discuss your analysis and timeline with the class.

Emotional Resonance Analysis

Analyze the ways in which the narrative evokes emotional resonance in the reader, particularly in relation to the characters' experiences and the broader sociopolitical context. Discuss how the author's stylistic choices, narrative structure, and thematic elements contribute to the emotional impact of the story.

Be sure to dwell upon the following:

- a) The opening line and its establishment of a somber, ominous tone that foreshadows the tragedy to come. Examine how this sets the emotional foundation for the reader's engagement with the narrative.

- b) The portrayal of the narrator's family, particularly the grandparents and siblings, and the way their vulnerability, suffering, and resilience elicit empathy and compassion from the reader.
- c) The depiction of the family's harrowing journey through Kruger Park, including the heartbreaking abandonment of the grandfather. Analyze how these scenes evoke a sense of desperation, grief, and the fragility of human life.
- d) The contrast between the family's dire circumstances and the affluent tourists enjoying the "ultimate African safari" experience. Discuss how this juxtaposition heightens the reader's emotional response to the family's plight.
- e) The significance of the unnamed status of the narrator and her family members, and how this universal approach contributes to the story's emotional resonance by inviting the reader to project their own experiences and emotions onto the characters.
- f) The broader sociopolitical context of Mozambique's civil war, the role of the South African government, and the resulting refugee crisis. Examine how this backdrop adds depth and urgency to the emotional impact of the narrative.

Analyze how this information enhances the reader's understanding and emotional response to the characters' struggles.

PLOT SUMMARY

The narrative opens with the narrator, a young Mozambican girl, making a cryptic and ominous declaration that establishes the somber tone: "That night our mother went to the shop and she didn't come back. Ever." The narrator never ascertains the fate of her mother or her absent father, implying their presumed demise.

The implication is that the narrator's parents have perished by the time the story unfolds; their village has been plagued by the depredations of so-called "bandits," leaving the villagers destitute and terrified. All evidence suggests these "bandits" are responsible for the disappearance of the narrator's parents.

The girl's account describes a deceptively simple journey: after losing everything to the repeatedly raiding bandits and fearing for their lives, the narrator's family - her grandmother, grandfather, and elder and

younger brothers - embark on a grueling trek through Kruger Park, the renowned national reserve in northeastern South Africa bordering Mozambique that has long attracted affluent foreign tourists seeking the "ultimate African safari" experience.

During the arduous trek, the weakened grandfather, reduced to "little noises" and rocking "from side to side," wanders off and is tragically lost in the tall grasses, necessitating his abandonment. The girl poignantly recounts her family's struggle with hunger, despite the tantalizing aromas of tourists' campfires, noting even the vultures have more sustenance than the refugees.

Eventually, the remaining family members, who remain unnamed throughout, are led by the grandmother to a refugee camp where they are allotted space in a tent. There, the grandmother laboriously earns a living transporting bricks while the girl attends school.

At the narrative's conclusion, basic facts about the girl and her family are revealed for the first time when "some white people" arrive at the camp to film it and interview the grandmother. We learn definitively that the girl and her family are black Mozambicans, and that the events transpire over nearly three years during the 1980s, when Mozambique was governed by a black Marxist regime while South Africa remained under the control of its white minority population.

The "bandits" alluded to by the narrator are members of Renamo, the rebel group supported by the white South African government to destabilize Mozambique through village raids and civil unrest. This incursion led to a massive exodus of impoverished Mozambicans into refugee camps along the border, where many languished for years as South Africa maintained its military and economic dominance of the region. The civil war fueled by Renamo is estimated to have claimed a million lives in Mozambique alone, until the abolition of apartheid in 1992 and the subsequent cessation of these destabilizing efforts, though the region continues to grapple with the legacy of that instability.

Study the basic information about the main characters of the story. Classify and describe the emotions that dominate in their psychological profiles and in the whole story. Dwell upon the factors that account for them.

CHARACTERS

The Bandits: Though never explicitly named, these paramilitary forces, described by the government as "bandits," serve as the primary antagonists, repeatedly raiding the narrator's village and forcing her family into a perilous exodus. While their specific identity remains ambiguous, they are presumed to be one of the Mozambican rebel factions backed by the South African government, engaged in an effort to destabilize the region.

The Daughter: The young narrator, a girl of nine or ten at the story's outset, is the central lens through which the reader experiences the family's arduous journey. Despite her limited understanding of the larger political context, her astute observations and vivid descriptions convey the tone and emotional resonance of the narrative. Though she reveals little about herself directly, her narration becomes the conduit through which the reader witnesses the unfolding events and the impact of the war on her family.

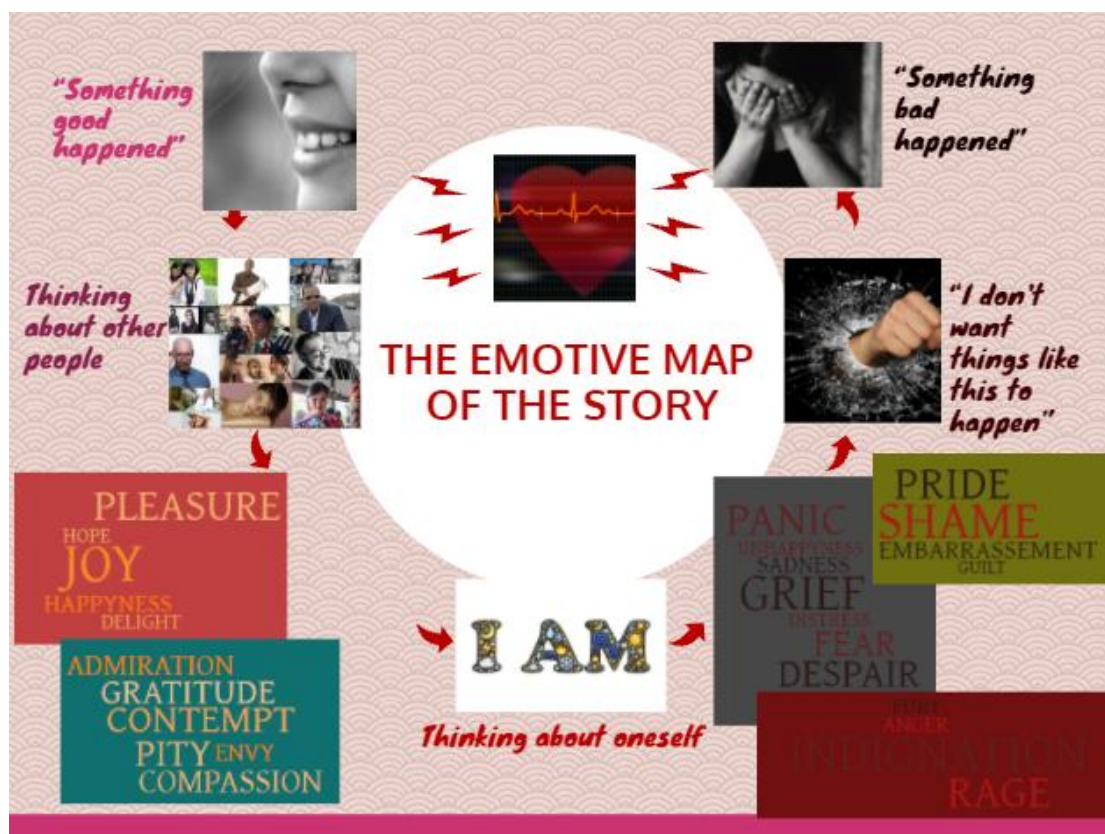
The Father: Though never physically present in the story, the father's absence and presumed death in the war serve as a significant narrative undercurrent, shaping the tone of the family's plight and the burden they must bear in his absence.

The Grandfather: Once a prosperous landowner, the grandfather now exhibits symptoms of dementia or psychological distress, reduced to rocking back and forth and making inconsolable noises. His eventual wandering and separation from the family during their trek through Kruger Park further underscores the family's vulnerability and the harsh realities they must confront.

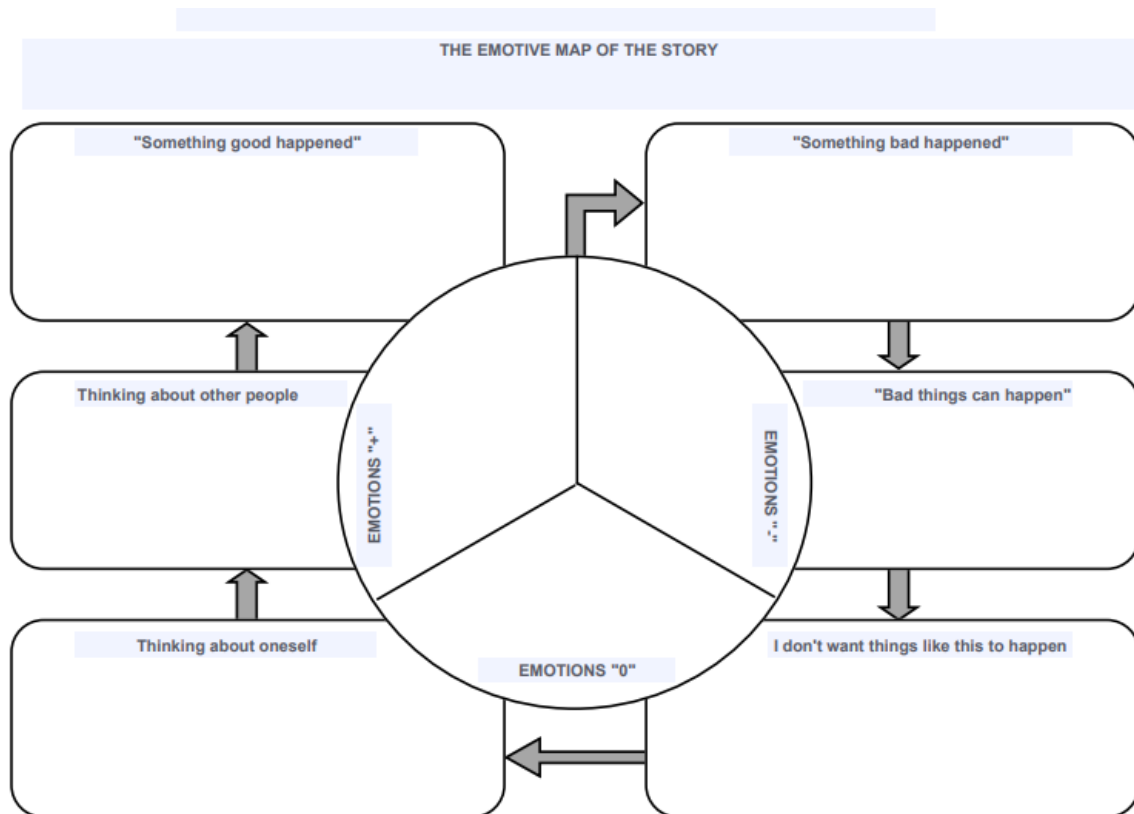
The Grandmother: As the family's matriarch, the grandmother emerges as the story's pillar of resilience and leadership. It is through her vision and determination that the family is able to escape the rebel threat and make the perilous journey to the refugee camp across the border. Once

there, she secures work and oversees her grandchildren's education, embodying the strength and resourcefulness necessary for their survival.

The Little Brother: Barely a year old when the family's exodus begins, the youngest sibling suffers deeply from malnutrition, his development impaired by the privations of the journey. His limited speech and diminished vitality poignantly reflect the devastating toll of the war on the most vulnerable members of the family.



Now, search the story for language means to denote the emotions above, relating them to the characters of the story.



Study the dominating themes of the story. Which of them do you consider the most acute or close to your sphere of interests or priorities? Are these themes contemporary enough to extrapolate them to the life of today in this country? Draw the necessary parallels.

THEMES

Apartheid

The Republic of South Africa, between 1948 and 1992, operated under an institutionalized system of racial segregation known as "apartheid" – an Afrikaner term meaning "separateness." This policy effectively stripped South African blacks, coloureds, and Indians of their citizenship rights, enabling the white minority to maintain a firm grip on power in the predominantly black nation.

As countries across Africa regained their independence from European colonial rule, the South African government, fearful of the liberating influence these newly liberated nations could have on its own black populace, resorted to a desperate measure. It provided financial and military support to rebel groups seeking to destabilize the governments of

its neighboring countries. This strategy, aimed at protecting the apartheid system and the white stranglehold on South Africa's economic and political structures, resulted in the long-term displacement and deaths of millions of people across southern Africa over the years.

Nadine Gordimer's literary oeuvre, in one form or another, consistently grapples with the profound effects that the apartheid regime had on both the white and black communities within South Africa. Her work serves as a powerful testament to the far-reaching and devastating consequences of this institutionalized system of racial oppression and segregation.

Family

Before the events depicted in the narrative, the narrator had endured the tragic loss of both her father and mother amidst the ongoing conflict. With her grandparents now assuming the role of primary caregivers, the family's already precarious circumstances were further exacerbated when the grandfather's sole means of livelihood was seized by the marauding bandits. This devastating blow seemingly triggered a mental breakdown in the grandfather, leaving the steadfast grandmother to shoulder the full burden of raising the family.

It was through the unwavering determination and resilience of the grandmother that the narrator and her siblings were able to undertake the arduous trek spanning hundreds of miles across the untamed wilderness of Kruger Park, ultimately reaching the relative safety and refuge of the camp established for displaced persons. The grandmother's resolute commitment to keeping her family together served as the driving force that allowed them to survive the harrowing ordeal and find sanctuary amidst the chaos of the conflict.

Homelessness

The institutionalized policy of apartheid enacted in South Africa had a profoundly disruptive effect, leading to the displacement of millions of Black individuals across the region. Within South Africa itself, the apartheid regime's stringent control over the residential rights of the Black population forced countless impoverished families to live illegally in makeshift shanty towns on the fringes of urban centers, where they sought

meager employment opportunities, effectively existing as homeless persons in rudimentary corrugated iron shacks and temporary dwellings.

Beyond South Africa's borders, the South African government's financial and military support for destabilizing incursions into neighboring countries compelled many poor villagers in the broader southern African region to abandon their homes and seek refuge in camps, where they endured desperate living conditions for years on end.

At the story's conclusion, when a white reporter inquires whether the grandmother harbors any desire to return home, the young protagonist yearns for the day she might be reunited with her mother and grandfather in their ancestral village. However, the grandmother's poignant response underscores the harsh reality that, for so many displaced individuals, there is no longer a meaningful concept of "home" to which they can return.

Lawlessness

Even as nations across the globe, particularly throughout the African continent, have successfully liberated themselves from the yoke of European colonial rule, many remain economically and militarily vulnerable to external forces. In the southern African region surrounding South Africa, the repeated incursions of quasi-military groups – funded and supported by the South African government – have effectively reduced numerous border areas to a state of anarchy and lawlessness.

While some of these military factions may have been driven by legitimate political grievances, the majority were little more than roving bands of vigilantes, whose sole objective was to sow destabilization through the application of brutal force – including raids, pillaging, and violent attacks. It was this pervasive atmosphere of lawlessness that ultimately compelled the narrator and her family, along with other refugee groups, to undertake the arduous trek across the Kruger Park wilderness, seeking the relative safety of the refugee camps within South Africa.

This troubling dynamic underscores the lasting impact of colonial legacies, as newly independent nations in Africa continue to grapple with the destabilizing influences of external actors, even in the wake of their hard-fought liberation struggles.

Oppression

A key objective of the apartheid system in South Africa was to enable the white minority, comprising less than 20% of the total population, to maintain absolute control over the country's economic and military apparatus. The consequences of this policy were the widespread subjugation and oppression of the Black majority within South Africa, as well as the repression of otherwise innocent Black populations in the neighboring countries.

The apartheid government's efforts to preserve white supremacy and consolidate their grip on power came at a devastating cost to the lives and livelihoods of millions of Black Africans, both within the borders of South Africa and beyond. This institutionalized system of racial discrimination and marginalization exemplified the depths of injustice and human rights abuses perpetuated under the guise of maintaining white minority rule.

Racial Conflict

The apartheid system in South Africa effectively consolidated complete economic and political control by the white minority over the non-white majority population, both within the country and in surrounding regions. This was achieved through the institutionalization of rigid, race-based classification schemes and discriminatory laws. Apartheid policies exacerbated racist tendencies among the white populace, ultimately leading to the dehumanization of Black Africans in their eyes.

While the narrative of "The Ultimate Safari" does not directly depict overt racial conflict, the widespread racial tensions that had plagued the region for years contributed to the environment that forced entire families and communities into desperate living situations as refugees. Without these longstanding racial divisions and conflicts, it would have been more difficult for the white-minority government to justify the widespread refugee crisis, potentially creating greater impetus for more humane and peaceful resolutions to the challenges South Africa claimed it was facing.

The apartheid regime's systematic subjugation and marginalization of the non-white population was a central factor in generating the conditions that compelled the narrator's family and countless others to undertake the perilous journey, seeking refuge from the social and political upheaval that engulfed the region.

Rites of Passage

The family's arduous trek through the untamed wilderness of Kruger Park can be interpreted as an allegorical rite of passage for the young narrator protagonist. Throughout this grueling journey, the girl is forced to confront the devastating loss of yet another family member – her beloved grandfather. Additionally, she must assume the role of caregiver, physically supporting and guiding her younger sibling.

Despite being only 11 years old by the story's conclusion, and still clinging to the naive hope of returning to a familial home where her grandfather and mother await, the narrator has nevertheless embarked upon a critical developmental process. This treacherous passage through the unforgiving landscape represents the first steps in the narrator's journey towards the threshold of womanhood, as she is compelled to grapple with the harsh realities of displacement, grief, and the need to cultivate resilience in the face of adversity.

This allegorical rite of passage serves to underscore the narrator's emerging maturity and the ways in which the trauma and upheaval of her circumstances have accelerated her transition from childhood to a more complex, adult understanding of the world around her.

Role of Women

In a social landscape dominated by the devastation of war, the women of the villages were compelled to assume the full burden of parental responsibilities, becoming both the domestic caretakers and the primary breadwinners for their families. This dynamic is vividly portrayed in "The Ultimate Safari," where the grandmother character must shoulder the dual responsibilities of guiding her grandchildren to safety while also tending to the needs of her own husband, whose declining mental faculties have rendered him incapable of self-care.

To a lesser, yet no less poignant degree, the young narrator herself is forced to take on parental duties, physically carrying and caring for her infant brother as he grows increasingly weakened by malnutrition during their perilous trek. This accelerated maturation, thrust upon the female characters by the exigencies of their circumstances, underscores the profound resilience and adaptability required to survive in a world upended by conflict.

The women's assumption of these overlapping domestic and economic roles, born out of necessity amidst the chaos of war, represents a profound shift in the traditional social order. This transition underscores the ways in which the ravages of war compel marginalized populations, particularly women, to transcend prescribed gender norms in order to safeguard the welfare of their families and communities.

Warfare

In the context of Gordimer's narrative, the villages endure a form of warfare characterized as "guerrilla" in nature. The Renamo rebel forces, seeking to overthrow the governing authority, employ tactics that sow instability and disruption within the outlying regions, without ever directly engaging the government's military might.

Guerrilla warfare serves as an effective strategic approach for groups with limited resources, as it requires fewer soldiers to inflict significant damage. Moreover, the psychological impact on the civilian population is often more pronounced than the effects of conventional military engagements. By avoiding direct confrontation with the superior forces of the government, the Renamo rebels are able to maximize the disruptive and destabilizing effects of their insurgency.

Study the information about Nadine Gordimer's style of writing. List the specific features of it you consider to be the most prominent.

STYLE

Diction

Throughout the narrative, the storytelling voice of the young narrator in "The Ultimate Safari" is characterized by a deceptively simple, colloquial diction. The sentences are sparse, stripped of ornamental flourishes, contributing to a style that may initially surprise readers upon learning that the narrator is, in fact, a Black Mozambican refugee.

While the experiences recounted are consistent with the harrowing journey of a displaced person, the narrator's manner of expression does not overtly signal her ethnic or national origins. There is an absence of

idiomatic expressions, slang, or syntactical structures that would typically denote the narrator as being Black or Mozambican.

This stylistic choice on the part of the author, Nadine Gordimer, serves to break down the potential barrier between the non-African, predominantly white readership and the narrator's perspective. By imbuing the girl's voice with a diction that feels more akin to that of her Western audience, Gordimer has succeeded in crafting a more universally relatable and sympathetic protagonist than might have otherwise been the case.

Dialogue

Throughout the narrative, the young narrator primarily conveys the story through summarized accounts of conversations she overhears or participates in, rather than rendering them verbatim. This stylistic choice offers a more authentic representation of how a child of the narrator's age would likely recall and recount such exchanges.

Moreover, the absence of direct dialogue until the story's climactic final scene imbues the narrative with a dreamlike, almost mythic quality. By withholding the immediacy of conversational exchanges, the narrator effectively retains the entirety of the story within the confines of her own recollection, presenting it to the reader as a filtered memory.

Even when the dialogue does finally emerge in the concluding moments, as the grandmother is interviewed by a filmmaker, Gordimer strategically eschews the use of quotation marks. This continued formal choice further enhances the story's lingering sense of a liminal, ethereal quality, as if the reader is privy to a half-remembered, impressionistic rendering of events.

This narrative technique, rooted in the limited perspective and mnemonic capacities of the young narrator, serves to immerse the reader more deeply in her subjective experience. By resisting the more conventional modes of direct dialogue, Gordimer invites the audience to engage with the story on a more imaginative, allegorical level, attuned to the emotional resonance of the protagonist's harrowing journey.

Imagery

Nadine Gordimer's masterful use of stark, visceral imagery serves to establish the grim, perilous tone that permeates the narrative. From

the outset, the narrator's vivid recollection of a villager who had fallen victim to crocodiles foreshadows the ever-present dangers that loom before the family on their treacherous journey.

Once within the confines of Kruger Park, the narrator's descriptions paint a harrowing picture of the relentless struggle for survival. She poignantly conveys the family's desperation in the face of the ever-watchful, predatory animals that surround them, while they themselves are deprived of sustenance. As the narrator observes, "We had passed [the vultures] often where they were feeding on the bones of dead animals, nothing was ever left there for us to eat."

These stark, unsentimental depictions of violence and deprivation serve to immerse the reader in the bleak realities confronting the displaced family. Gordimer's strategic use of visceral imagery not only establishes the ominous atmosphere of the story but also underscores the profound vulnerability and hardship experienced by the narrator and her loved ones.

By grounding the narrative in such a raw, uncompromising visual language, the author invites the reader to fully engage with the grim circumstances that the refugees must navigate, fostering a deeper empathetic connection with their plight.

Irony

Through the strategic titling and epigraphic framing of "The Ultimate Safari," Nadine Gordimer deftly employs irony to underscore the profound disparities between the wealthy, foreign white tourists and the impoverished, displaced Black refugees who populate the story's landscape.

For many from the narrator's village, forcibly uprooted and compelled to traverse the perilous confines of Kruger Park en route to the refugee camps, this harrowing journey would indeed represent the "ultimate safari" - a final, harrowing venture fraught with mortal peril. Tragically, some, like the narrator's own grandfather, would perish within the park itself, while others would succumb to the deprivations of the refugee camps, never to return to their ancestral homes.

In stark contrast to the affluent European visitors who pay exorbitant sums to indulge in the spectacle of Africa's natural wonders, the displaced family trudges through the very same game reserve, their hunger pangs intensifying as the aroma of the tourists' roasting meats wafts by. While the privileged observers satiate their appetites, the refugee children grow increasingly famished, with even the vultures afforded more sustenance than they.

Through this layered interplay of title, epigraph, and vivid juxtapositions, Gordimer deftly lays bare the glaring inequities and profound human costs that underlie the romanticized tropes of the "safari" experience. Her strategic use of irony serves to expose the stark realities confronting the marginalized, displaced masses whose plight is so often obscured by the veneer of Western colonial escapism.

Point of View

Through the strategic deployment of a first-person narrative voice, with a young Black refugee girl serving as the story's central protagonist, Gordimer deftly invites the reader to imaginatively inhabit the perspective of "the other." By eschewing the vantage point of an omniscient third-person observer, the author personalizes the harrowing experience of displacement and flight, granting the audience intimate access to the emotions and subjective realities confronting the girl.

This narrative choice imbues the tale with a visceral, embodied quality, allowing the reader to not merely apprehend the factual details of the refugees' arduous journey, but to engage empathetically with the girl's own interior world. Gordimer's skillful crafting of this limited yet compelling perspective cultivates a deeper, more empathetic understanding of the human dimensions underlying the broader, systemic crises of forced migration.

By centering the voice and lived experience of the marginalized protagonist, the author invites the reader to transcend the boundaries of their own social location and imaginatively inhabit the vantage point of "the other." This narrative strategy serves to foster a more nuanced, humanized reckoning with the plight of the displaced, resonating with the reader on both an intellectual and affective level.

Tone

Gordimer's exceptional mastery of tone is immediately evident in the opening lines of the story: "That night our mother went to the shop and she didn't come back. Ever." Conveyed in a quiet, dispassionate, almost distant register, devoid of overt sentiment or pity, the narrator matter-of-factly reports the presumed demise of her mother. This understated, almost clinical delivery sets the stage for the remainder of the narrative, which unfolds in a similarly stoic, unflinching manner.

Throughout the tale, the girl's voice maintains this profound sense of acceptance and fatalism, even as her circumstances grow increasingly desperate. The terse, economical phrasing intimates a resilience born of necessity, a refusal to succumb to the encroaching sense of loss and menace that permeates her world. Gordimer's strategic choice to eschew florid description or emotive analysis in favor of this restrained, almost detached tone serves to underscore the girl's unwavering spirit of optimism.

Even amidst the bleak realities that surround her - the relentless hunger, the ever-present threat of violence, the irreversible rupturing of her family - the narrator clings steadfastly to the dream of one day being reunited with her loved ones in the sanctity of her home. This quiet, unshakable hope, juxtaposed against the grim circumstances she navigates, lends the narrative a poignant, transcendent quality, testifying to the indomitable resilience of the human spirit.

By crafting a storytelling voice that is simultaneously dispassionate and resolute, Gordimer masterfully cultivates an atmosphere of austere solemnity, one that invites the reader to confront the harsh realities of displacement and loss with clear-eyed empathy. The girl's unwavering, almost stoic bearing serves to underscore the profound dignity that persists even in the face of unimaginable adversity.



COMPARE AND CONTRAST

1980s: Apartheid laws remain in force in South Africa, significantly restricting the majority population's ability to vote and move freely.

Today: Apartheid has been dismantled, granting Black citizens the right to participate in local and national elections.

1980s: Numerous significant literary works, including those by Nadine Gordimer, are prohibited in South Africa.

Today: With the exception of occasional censorship calls from certain school districts, South Africans can engage in reading and writing without the threat of official state-sanctioned censorship.

1980s: Villagers in Mozambique and Zimbabwe residing near the South African border frequently face displacement due to guerrilla warfare supported by the South African government.

Today: South Africa has ceased its military incursions into neighboring countries, and villagers are no longer subjected to displacement from guerrilla raids.

1980s: The African National Congress, of which Gordimer is a long-time member, is deemed illegal by the government, and its members are classified as outlaws.

Today: The African National Congress, which continues to receive Gordimer's support, is the ruling political party in South Africa.



Study the historical context of the time Nadine Gordimer created her literary works. Dwell upon the factors you consider to be the crucial to influence her style of writing.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

South African Apartheid

The system of racial segregation known as apartheid, which prevailed in South Africa from 1948 to 1992, is a crucial context for understanding the fiction of Nadine Gordimer. Gordimer's literary output is inextricably linked to her lifelong opposition to the apartheid regime, making her work, perhaps more than that of any other South African writer, including fellow white authors André Brink and J.M. Coetzee, a direct reflection of her political views.

Apartheid was a collection of laws enacted by the South African government to control the movements and lives of the majority non-white population. These laws dictated where black, Indian, and "colored" individuals could live and work, as well as their permitted marital unions. The purpose of this system was to consolidate political power and control in the hands of the white minority, which comprised less than 20% of the total population.

As liberation movements swept across Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, forcing colonial powers to cede control to Black-led governments, South Africa remained the lone holdout. Until the late 1980s, when civil unrest began to undermine the government's control over the Black population, the apartheid regime continued to exert its grip on the country.

As a defensive measure, South Africa financially and militarily supported rebel groups in the border regions of neighboring Mozambique and Zimbabwe, where the rural populations suffered the devastating effects of guerrilla warfare. Entire villages were uprooted, and refugee camps were established along the South African borders as civilians fled the conflict.

It is against this political and military backdrop that Gordimer's short story "The Ultimate Safari" must be understood. The narrator's family, presented as nonpolitical rural peasants, are forced into the upheaval of the war, with the father presumed killed in combat and the mother's fate left ambiguous, but presumably also a victim of the rebel forces. Ultimately, the narrator's family, along with other members of their village, are compelled to undertake the arduous journey through Kruger Park to one of the South African refugee camps.

Gordimer's fiction, including "The Ultimate Safari," serves as a powerful literary lens through which the devastating sociopolitical realities of apartheid can be examined and understood.

Censorship and the Works of Nadine Gordimer

The South African government's efforts to maintain control over its Black population during much of Nadine Gordimer's writing career involved the strict regulation and censorship of news and information dissemination. The press was either state-run or state-controlled, and severe measures were taken to restrict the flow of information both into and out of the country.

As a vocal critic of censorship, Gordimer faced significant challenges in publishing her work. Several of her novels, including the acclaimed *Burger's Daughter*, were banned upon publication due to the government's reactionary response to events such as the Soweto uprisings. This publishing climate necessitated that many of Gordimer's novels and short stories, including "The Ultimate Safari" and other works from the collection *Jump and Other Stories*, were first published in Great Britain and the United States before being made available in her native South Africa.

Ironically, even after the demise of apartheid in 1992, Gordimer's work continued to face censorship and controversy. Her 1981 novel *July's People* was banned in a South African school district for being "deeply racist, superior and patronising" – a decision that also affected other notable works, including Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. This ban was eventually lifted after a global outcry from hundreds of writers, but not before Gordimer herself publicly drew parallels between the school board's actions and the censorship tactics of the former apartheid regime.

Gordimer's literary output, indelibly shaped by the repressive political climate of South Africa during her lifetime, stands as a testament to the power of the written word to challenge and subvert authoritarian control over information and expression. Her novels and short stories, including "The Ultimate Safari," represent a vital literary chronicle of the struggle against apartheid and the lingering impact of that system's legacy.



Further Areas of Inquiry and Scholarly Exploration

📖 Conduct a comprehensive analysis of South Africa's foreign policy concerns regarding the emergence of liberation and Marxist movements in neighboring countries during the apartheid era. Investigate the geopolitical motivations behind South Africa's apprehensions, identifying specific nations of primary concern. Examine the strategic policies implemented by the South African government to contain these movements, considering their effectiveness and international repercussions.

📖 Undertake a diachronic study of the African National Congress during the apartheid period. Analyze its political ideology, objectives, and strategies. Evaluate any shifts in the ANC's mission following the abolition of apartheid. Critically assess the ANC's contemporary role in South African politics and governance, considering its transition from a liberation movement to a ruling party.

📖 Investigate the multifaceted role of censorship in apartheid-era South Africa, with particular focus on its impact on literary production and dissemination. Examine temporal variations in the enforcement of censorship regulations, analyzing the sociopolitical factors influencing these fluctuations. Consider the case of Nadine Gordimer as a paradigmatic example of how censorship affected South African authors and their international reception.

📖 Conduct a comparative study of female recipients of the Nobel Prize in Literature, including Nadine Gordimer. Examine potential

commonalities in their literary styles, thematic preoccupations, and sociopolitical engagements. Analyze the role of politics in their oeuvres and assess the impact of their gender on their literary contributions and recognition within the global literary canon.

📖 Perform a critical comparison between Nadine Gordimer's "The Ultimate Safari" and William Styron's "The Confessions of Nat Turner," focusing on the authors' adoption of narrative perspectives outside their racial identities. Research the critical reception of Styron's work, particularly the controversies surrounding his portrayal of Turner. Evaluate the applicability of these criticisms to Gordimer's work, considering issues of cultural appropriation, authenticity, and the ethics of representation in literature. This analysis should be situated within broader debates on authorial voice and the politics of representation in postcolonial and multicultural literary contexts.



GINA BERRIAULT



Study the biographical information about the author. Highlight the major facts which are sure to influence her choices of literary themes, characters, settings, moral implications, etc. Search for extra information about Gina Berriault that may interest you as an interpreter of her literary works.

BIOGRAPHY

Berriault was born on January 1, 1926, in Long Beach, California, to a couple of Russian Jewish immigrants. Her father initially worked as a marble cutter before becoming a writer, but he struggled to secure stable employment, resulting in the family living under uncertain financial conditions. During Berriault's teenage years, her mother lost her sight, a significant event that she later acknowledged as having a profound influence on her writing.

Berriault spent much of her life in California, which serves as the backdrop for many of her fictional works. As a child, she was an enthusiastic reader and described herself as a "restless spirit," feeling "confined in a classroom and yearning to roam, either in the landscape or in her own imagination." This desire for exploration found expression through reading, and she

began composing original stories on her father's old typewriter while still in elementary school. She was also drawn to drama and art.

Despite receiving an offer from one of her high school teachers to attend drama school free of charge, Berriault chose to forgo further education following her father's death in order to support her family. She worked various jobs as a clerk, waitress, and reporter, all the while continuing to write in her spare time. Berriault first garnered critical attention in 1958 with the publication of *Short Story*, a collection of seven of her works. Subsequently, she won a writer's fellowship from the Centro Mexicano de Escritores in Mexico City, where she relocated in 1963. Three years later, she was appointed as a scholar at the Radcliffe Institute for Independent Study.

Throughout the 1960s, Berriault sustained herself through these academic positions as well as by contributing articles to *Esquire* magazine. Over her career, she has produced three collections of short stories, four novels, and a screenplay adapted from "The Stone Boy." Despite her lengthy and successful career, Berriault has maintained a notably private life, stating that she does not engage with critics, is not affiliated with any writing societies, and refrains from sharing personal anecdotes. Nonetheless, her work has brought her into the public eye, particularly after her 1996 collection *Women in Their Beds* won the Book Critics Circle Award for fiction and the PEN/Faulkner Award the following year.

Read the story THE STONE BOY and fulfill the tasks that follow.

PLOTLINE ANALYSIS

Chronological Timeline

Construct a detailed timeline of the key events depicted in the summary, organizing them in strict chronological order. For each event, provide a brief 1-2 sentence description highlighting the essential details. Be prepared to explain how the ordering of these events contributes to the overall narrative structure and development of the story.

Review the summary carefully and identify the major events that occur in chronological sequence.

For each event, compose a concise description capturing the who, what, when, and where details.

Arrange the events in strict chronological order, numbering them sequentially.

Be prepared to discuss how the chronological arrangement of events shapes the story's narrative arc and impacts the reader's understanding of the protagonist's experience.

By structuring the events in strict chronological order, the timeline highlights the narrative arc of the story, beginning with the initial incident of the brothers' morning routine and culminating in Arnold's internalization of the sheriff's assessment of his character. This chronological organization allows the reader to clearly trace the unfolding of the tragedy and its impact on the protagonist, fostering a deeper understanding of Arnold's emotional journey and the complex dynamics within the family.

Emotional Resonance Analysis

Examine the ways in which the story evokes emotional resonance in the reader, particularly in relation to the protagonist Arnold's experiences and the broader social context. Discuss how the author's narrative techniques, character development, and thematic elements contribute to the emotional impact of the story.

Be sure to dwell upon:

- a) The opening scene where Arnold wakes up early with the intention of harvesting peas alongside his brother Eugie. Analyze how this seemingly mundane yet intimate moment sets the stage for the impending tragedy and establishes an underlying sense of vulnerability and foreboding.
- b) The unexpected accident at the fence and Eugie's subsequent injury. Examine how the sudden, shocking nature of this event evokes a sense of visceral discomfort and dread in the reader, even as the full extent of the tragedy remains unclear.
- c) Arnold's reaction to Eugie's death, particularly his lack of overt grief and his retreat to the barn. Discuss how this atypical emotional response challenges the reader's expectations and compels them to delve deeper into Arnold's psyche.

- d) The sheriff's questioning of Arnold and the subsequent characterization of him as "unintelligent or callously indifferent." Explore how this stigmatization of Arnold's emotional detachment amplifies the reader's unease and sympathy for the protagonist.
- e) The scene where Arnold seeks maternal comfort but is rebuffed, leaving him feeling ashamed of his "nakedness" and the sheriff's judgment. Analyze how this moment of profound isolation and vulnerability heightens the reader's empathetic response to Arnold's emotional turmoil.

Examine how the final scene encapsulates the emotional complexities of the story and leaves the reader with a sense of uncertainty and lingering discomfort.

PLOT SUMMARY

One morning, the nine-year-old protagonist, Arnold, wakes up early with the intention of harvesting peas in the garden alongside his older brother, Eugie. Despite the alarm clock's chime, Eugie remains asleep, leaving Arnold in a position of unexpected superiority. Arnold rouses his brother, and the two depart the household, with Arnold intending to engage in duck hunting.

At the fence demarcating the fields from the lake, Eugie precedes Arnold through the wires. As Arnold attempts to pass through, his firearm becomes entangled, discharging unexpectedly. Anticipating his brother's ridicule, Arnold instead finds Eugie lying wounded on the ground, a spot of blood visible at the nape of his neck.

Failing to revive Eugie, Arnold proceeds with the pea harvest. Upon returning home, he informs the family of Eugie's demise, initially met with disbelief until the body is discovered. While the household and undertaker attend to the situation, Arnold retreats to the barn.

Accompanying his father and uncle to the sheriff's office, Arnold is questioned regarding the brothers' relationship and his delay in reporting the incident. The sheriff concludes that Arnold is either unintelligent or callously indifferent to his sibling's fate, expressing belief in the latter assessment.

Returned home, Arnold overhears the sheriff's characterization of him echoed by his uncle and the visiting neighbors, who discuss the tragedy as if the boy were absent. Arnold experiences no grief, merely a desire to avoid drawing attention to himself.

That night, Arnold's attempt to seek maternal comfort is rebuffed, leaving him feeling ashamed of his nakedness and the sheriff's judgment of his emotional detachment.

The following morning, Arnold's sister initially ignores him, until their father intervenes. Arnold, having internalized the sheriff's assessment, provides a laconic response when his mother inquires about the previous night, then departs to address another task, deeply unsettled by his own words.

Study the basic information about the main characters of the story. Classify and describe the emotions that dominate in their psychological profiles and in the whole story. Dwell upon the factors that account for them.

CHARACTERS

Andy, the mother's brother, holds a particular fondness for Eugie, seeing the boy as a reflection of himself. After Eugie's tragic death, Andy swiftly aligns himself with the sheriff's interpretation of Arnold - that the younger boy is inherently cold and cruel, caring little for his brother. It is Andy who actively propagates this damning assessment to the family's neighbors, lending it an air of unassailable fact that gradually takes root in Arnold's own self-perception.

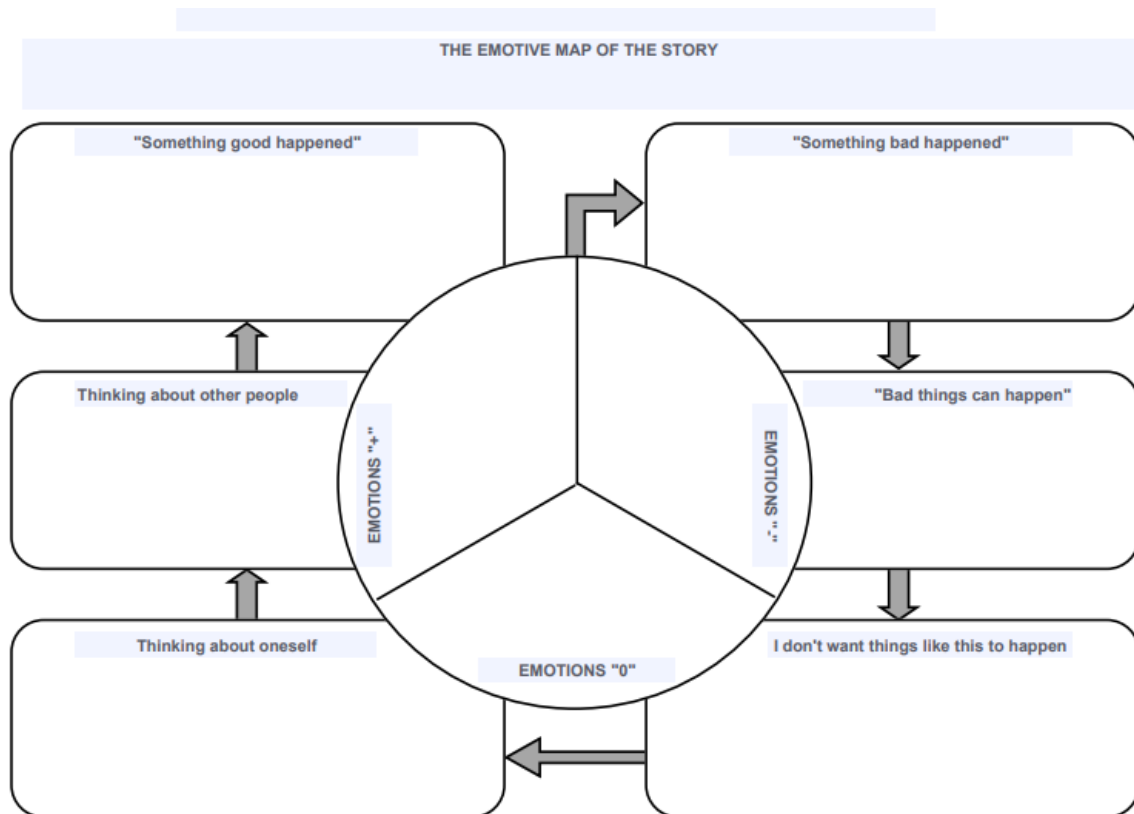
Arnold, nine-year-old, the story's young protagonist, navigates a complex relationship with his older brother Eugie. Simultaneously admiring and resenting Eugie's apparent superiority, Arnold's sense of self is inextricably tied to his sibling. When Arnold inadvertently causes Eugie's death, he is left unmoored, with no clear sense of his own identity. Unable to contend with the gravity of his actions, Arnold passively allows the sheriff and his uncle to define him as a "reasonable" yet detached killer, a portrait he resignedly accepts by the narrative's conclusion.

Eugie, the 15-year-old elder brother, occupies an almost mythic status in Arnold's eyes - a paragon of beauty, strength and self-assurance. While Eugie's condescending treatment of the younger Arnold hints at a normal sibling dynamic, there are also moments where the older boy demonstrates genuine care and protectiveness. Eugie's tragic demise at Arnold's hand serves as the central catalyst for the story's unfolding emotional and psychological reverberations.

The boys' taciturn **father** offers little in the way of defense or advocacy for Arnold, passively acquiescing as the sheriff's and Andy's damning assessments take hold. Similarly, the mother, initially overwhelmed by grief at Eugie's death, ultimately retreats inward, rebuffing Arnold's attempts to find solace and understanding. Only Nora, the middle child, maintains an active disregard for Arnold in the aftermath, her behavior underscoring the family's collective rejection of the youngest son.

Sheriff, embodying the broader societal judgment, reduces Arnold's actions to a binary - either the boy is "stupid" or "heartless" - while also ominously forecasting a future marked by further violence. This unforgiving view, amplified by the uncle's vocal endorsement, gradually supplants Arnold's own tenuous sense of self, leading him to resign himself to the role of "reasonable killer" ascribed by these external forces.

Now, search the story for language means to denote the emotions above, relating them the characters of the story.



Study the dominating themes of the story. Which of them do you consider the most acute or close to your sphere of interests or priorities? Are these themes contemporary enough to extrapolate them to the life of today in this country? Draw the necessary parallels.

THEMES

Death

The theme of death permeates the narrative of "The Stone Boy" on both literal and metaphorical levels. Eugie's accidental demise serves as the central tragic catalyst, but this physical loss also represents a profound psychological rupture for his younger brother Arnold.

For Arnold, Eugie's death not only signifies the harrowing end of his sibling, but also the erasure of the idealized male figure upon whom he had modeled his own identity and development. Bereft of this guiding exemplar, Arnold finds himself unmoored, the death of Eugie effectively foreclosing the path of the young man Arnold might have become.

As the family's collective response to the tragedy unfolds, Arnold undergoes a metaphorical death of his own. Bereft of his family's faith and

compassion, the boy withdraws not merely from his immediate relations, but from the very fabric of humanity itself. By the narrative's conclusion, Arnold has been stripped of his core sense of self, his "soul" extinguished by the unforgiving judgment of those closest to him.

This theme of multifaceted death also manifests in the disintegration of the family unit as a whole. Rather than rallying together in the wake of their devastating loss, each member retreats into their own private grief and condemnation, the once cohesive family irrevocably fractured and rendered inert. Thus, the profound finality of death casts its long shadow not only over the individuals, but also the very foundations of their familial bonds.

Failure

Berriault's fiction often explores the profound ways in which human beings disappoint and fail one another. As one critic aptly observed, the character flaws of Berriault's protagonists seem inextricably "linked" to the shortcomings of those around them, creating a dense web of moral culpability within the narrative.

In the case of "The Stone Boy," this dynamic of mutual failure is strikingly apparent. From Arnold's perspective, his family has betrayed him by refusing to forgive his perceived transgressive response to Eugie's accidental death, even if their reaction stems from their own discomfort and grief. This breach is most keenly felt when Arnold's mother rebuffs him in his moment of deepest need, abandoning her crucial parental duties as nurturer and guide.

Conversely, the family views Arnold's emotional withdrawal as a profound failure on his part to grieve in a manner they deem appropriate. This inability of the family to collectively process their shared trauma only perpetuates the cycles of miscommunication and alienation that threaten to tear them asunder.

Moreover, the broader community is not absolved of culpability in this tragedy. By uncritically accepting the sheriff's interpretation of Arnold's actions, the neighboring farmers solidify the boy's isolation and foreclose any possibility of the family supporting one another through their collective grief. Thus, the web of human failing extends beyond

the familial unit, implicating the very social fabric that ostensibly should have provided a buffer against such shattering loss.

Berriault's fiction, "The Stone Boy" included, unflinchingly illuminates the myriad ways in which we so often fail to meet the demands of our shared humanity, even (or perhaps especially) in our most trying moments of anguish and vulnerability.

Identity

The theme of identity undergoes profound transformations in the narrative of "The Stone Boy." Arnold's sense of self is inextricably tied to the perceptions and judgments of the people around him, leading to a drastic recalibration of his own self-conception.

At the outset, Arnold exhibits a distinct unease with any notion of superiority over his brother Eugie, even in the most mundane of matters. This discomfort stems from Arnold's deep-seated belief that he falls short of the idealized masculinity embodied by the tall, athletic Eugie. Arnold sees himself in constant comparison to this fraternal paragon, wondering if he will ever measure up.

As the story progresses, this fragile self-image is further imperiled by the family's and community's harsh condemnation of Arnold's ostensibly callous reaction to Eugie's accidental death. No longer merely compared to his brother, Arnold now finds himself transformed in the eyes of others into the titular "stone boy" - a being bereft of emotion and moral fiber.

Crucially, this new identity is not self-imposed, but rather thrust upon Arnold by the perceptions of those around him. While he accepts this label, he does not embrace it, in fact fearing the very identity that has been foisted upon him. Yet, so thoroughly conditioned is Arnold to see himself through the lens of others' judgments, he makes no concerted effort to forge a new, more authentic sense of self.

Thus, the narrative poignantly illustrates how one's identity can become so inextricably tethered to the projections of others that the individual loses the capacity, or perhaps even the will, to chart their own course of self-definition. Arnold's journey is one of a young psyche profoundly shaped - and ultimately constrained - by the shifting tides of external perception.

Violence

In "The Stone Boy," Gina Berriault's rendering of the brutal accidental death at the heart of the narrative is decidedly muted and understated. The author likens Eugie's final throes to a man climbing, and the only truly unsettling detail is Arnold's chilling comparison of the dripping blood to a parasitic creature.

Despite this relatively restrained depiction, the specter of violence nevertheless looms ominously over the entire story. Some reviewers even went so far as to believe that Arnold had willfully murdered his brother, aligning themselves with the sheriff's damning assessment rather than Arnold's own account.

However, it is the mere threat of violence, rather than its graphic manifestation, that proves the most disquieting and pervasive motif. As the sheriff pronounces judgment on Arnold, branding him a cold-blooded, merciless monster, the chill of his words palpably reverberates through all present.

Moreover, the sheriff's subsequent cryptic pronouncement - that he may not wish to keep Arnold in custody "now," but perhaps "in a few years" - ominously prophesies a grim future of continued violent acts perpetrated by the young boy. Through this subtle yet unsettling verbal intimation, the narrative intimates a trajectory of escalating brutality and social deviance for Arnold, one that the community seems all too willing to preemptively accept.

Thus, while Berriault's prose eschews graphic depictions of violence, the mere specter of such acts - as articulated through the ominous judgments of authority figures and the community at large - instills a profound sense of unease and foreboding within the reader. The violence in "The Stone Boy," for all its lack of explicit rendering, casts a long and deeply unsettling shadow over the entire narrative.

Study the information about Gina Berriault style of writing. List the specific features of it you consider to be the most prominent.

STYLE

Point of View

Gina Berriault's "The Stone Boy" is told through a third-person, limited point of view that restricts the reader's access exclusively to Arnold's subjective experience and inner world. While we can infer the feelings of other characters only through their words and actions, we are granted intimate insight into the nuances of Arnold's own psyche.

Early in the narrative, this singular perspective illuminates Arnold's complex, ambivalent relationship with his brother Eugie. Though Arnold is evidently in awe of his sibling, the author's deployment of terms like "stupidly" and "mocking" to describe Eugie's behavior underscores the younger brother's conflicted emotions.

However, after Eugie's tragic death, Arnold becomes so profoundly dissociated from his own affective experience that the reader is afforded limited access to his innermost thoughts and feelings surrounding the event. It is not until the latter stages of the story that Arnold briefly reveals the sense of sheer terror he felt in kneeling beside his fallen brother, as well as the profound fear underlying his newly self-imposed alienation from his parents.

Thus, Berriault's strategic use of the third-person, limited point of view serves to immerse the reader deeply within Arnold's subjective and increasingly insular psychological landscape. While we are denied insight into the perspectives of other characters, this narrative technique grants us an intimate, if at times frustratingly circumscribed, window into the turmoil of Arnold's own interior life - a life that becomes increasingly isolated and impenetrable in the wake of the devastating accident.

Setting

While Gina Berriault's "The Stone Boy" does not specify the precise geographic location of its setting, the rural, agricultural milieu exerts a profound influence on the unfolding narrative drama. Arnold's family operates within a tightly-knit farming community, one characterized by both physical isolation and a deep interdependence among its members.

This sense of isolation is underscored by the farm's remote positioning from neighboring homesteads. The considerable distance Arnold and

Eugie must traverse - traversing a slope, navigating a wheat field, and crossing a marshy pasture - to reach the nearby lake mirrors the emotional and psychological gulf that will ultimately separate Arnold from his family by the story's conclusion.

Moreover, the county seat of Corinth, situated some nine miles from the farm, functions as a central gathering place for the community and the locus of the narrative's pivotal events. It is in Corinth that Arnold receives the community's judgment on his actions, and where he first begins to internalize this harsh pronouncement.

Through these spatial dimensions, Berriault's narrative subtly yet powerfully reflects the ways in which the farm's physical remoteness and the community's insularity serve to amplify Arnold's growing isolation and alienation from his loved ones in the wake of the tragic accident. The rural setting thus becomes an inextricable component of the story's emotional and thematic landscape, shaping both the contours of the unfolding drama and the psychological trajectories of its central characters.

Imagery and Metaphor

One of the most arresting images in Gina Berriault's "The Stone Boy" is that of the young protagonist, Arnold, surreptitiously creeping through the family's home in a state of undress. The story opens with Arnold pulling on a sweater and overalls, his naked body a state of natural, unself-conscious being at that point.

However, on the fateful night following Eugie's tragic death, Arnold ventures downstairs to his parents' bedroom, again unclothed. When his mother turns him away, Arnold suddenly becomes acutely aware of his exposed, vulnerable state - a metaphorical representation of his shame at both desiring his mother's comfort and being rejected by her. In that moment, Arnold internalizes this sense of shame, realizing the need to shield himself from his parents' gaze.

From this point forward, Arnold metaphorically "clothes" himself, no longer willing to permit anyone to witness his bare, emotionally unguarded self - the self that craves solace and connection. By the story's conclusion, Arnold has, in a sense, transformed into a veritable "stone

boy," an inhuman, impenetrable figure devoid of overt feeling or emotional expression. The potent metaphor implicit in the narrative's title thus encapsulates Arnold's psychological journey toward a self-protective emotional detachment and insularity.

Through this arresting motif of Arnold's naked body, Berriault deftly explores themes of shame, vulnerability, and the psychic armoring that can occur in the face of traumatic loss and social stigmatization. The image of the young boy, stripped of his physical and emotional defenses, serves as a poignant symbolic expression of the personal costs of such self-protective measures.

Style

The narrative style of Gina Berriault's "The Stone Boy" is marked by a distinct sense of directness and realism, eschewing extraneous descriptive flourishes or verbosity in its rendering of both scenes and actions. Moreover, the characters themselves adopt a similarly matter-of-fact demeanor throughout the story.

Arnold, for instance, proceeds in a straightforward manner to complete the task he has set out to accomplish - namely, the harvesting of peas. Likewise, the family unquestioningly accepts the sheriff's assessment that there is something fundamentally flawed or aberrant about Arnold's character. In turn, Arnold himself internalizes, without protest, both the sheriff's and his family's harsh judgment regarding his culpability and emotional deficiencies.

This unyielding, unsentimental approach to both narrative and character development serves to heighten the sense of emotional detachment and psychological insularity that permeates the story. By stripping away ornate language or histrionic displays of emotion, Berriault's prose mirrors the very psychological defenses that Arnold, in the wake of the tragic accident, erects around himself. The sparse, understated style thus becomes a reflection of the protagonist's own emotional withdrawal and growing isolation from his loved ones.

In this manner, Berriault's technical approach - with its unwavering realism and lack of rhetorical flourish - becomes an integral component of the story's thematic tapestry, amplifying the disquieting portrait of a young boy's psychic retreat into a self-protective, "stone-like" state of being.



COMPARE AND CONTRAST

1960: The United States was home to nearly 4 million farms, encompassing approximately 990 million acres. The average farm possessed assets valued at nearly \$53,000 and generated an annual income of just under \$10,000. Approximately 15.5 million Americans resided on farms.

1990: The number of operational farms in the United States declined to just over 2 million, while the total acreage remained around 990 million. The average farm's assets increased to approximately \$460,000, with annual earnings exceeding \$91,000. Fewer than 5 million Americans lived on farms.

1960: In the United States, 1,200 accidental shooting fatalities occurred in residential settings. Just over 51 percent of surveyed Americans reported having a firearm in their home.

1990s: In 1995, there were 800 accidental shooting deaths in American homes. By 1991, 46 percent of respondents indicated they had a gun in their household. Among households with firearms, 40 percent had children living there.

1950: It was estimated that there were 54 million rifles, shotguns, and handguns in the United States, with approximately 2,399,000 firearms available for sale.

1990: The estimated number of firearms in the United States rose to 201 million, with around 5,122,000 available for purchase.

1965: Fewer than five individuals aged 15 per 100,000 committed murders.

1992: The rate of murder among 15-year-olds increased to ten per 100,000. Studies indicated that a significant number of high school students had either carried illegal firearms or could easily obtain them, with as many as 1 in 20 students reporting having brought a firearm to school.



Study the historical context of the time Gina Berriault created her literary works. Dwell upon the factors you consider to be the crucial to influence her style of writing.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Decline of the American Farm Family

In the early history of the United States, farming served as the primary economic activity for the majority of Americans. The typical farm in this era was a self-sufficient unit, owned and operated by a single family who resided on the land. In 1900, the average family farm was situated approximately half a mile away from its nearest neighbor, contributing to a sense of isolation for these rural communities. However, farm families were able to forge strong communal ties through the exchange of labor, shared religious practices, and the education of their children in local schools.

This longstanding agrarian way of life began to undergo a profound transformation in the 1920s, as the number of farms in the United States started to dwindle. By 1930, a little over 30 million Americans were living on farms, a figure that shrank to around 23 million by 1950 and further declined to only 15.6 million by 1960, the year in which Berriault's "The Stone Boy" was written. This steady decrease in the farm population can be attributed to a confluence of economic and technological changes that reshaped the agricultural sector during this period.

One significant factor was the reduction in government subsidies to farms, as exemplified by President Dwight Eisenhower's policy decisions in 1953. Additionally, the widespread introduction of automation and mechanization on farms throughout the 1950s and 1960s increased productivity but concomitantly reduced the need for human labor, contributing to the decline in farm employment opportunities.

Concurrent with these changes within the agricultural industry, a broader societal shift was taking place, as growing numbers of Americans opted

to relocate from rural areas to the emerging suburbs and planned communities. By 1960, one-third of the total U.S. population, amounting to 100 million people, had taken up residence in the suburbs. This demographic trend particularly affected the Midwest, the traditional heartland of American farming, where population growth lagged behind other regions of the country.

The decline of the farm family way of life had profound social and economic implications. By 1957, approximately half of the nation's impoverished population resided in rural areas, suffering from poor access to adequate nutrition and healthcare. Thus, by the dawn of the 1960s, the American farm family had become an increasingly anomalous and marginalized segment of the broader societal landscape.

Social Conformity and Rebellion

The 1950s in the United States witnessed a pronounced emphasis on the value of social conformity, particularly among the burgeoning suburban middle class. Americans of this era often found themselves inhabiting remarkably similar homes, driving comparable automobiles, engaging in parallel leisure activities, and even aspiring to analogous life goals. This culture of conformity permeated various segments of society, including the teenage demographic.

Many contemporary observers described middle-class youth of the 1950s as the "silent generation," as they largely refrained from challenging the prevailing societal demands and expectations. However, this narrative of widespread compliance obscures the presence of a counterculture of teenage rebellion that was emerging during this period.

One prominent manifestation of this youth rebellion was the rise of rock 'n' roll music, which became the anthem for many adolescents. This musical genre was viewed with considerable disdain by many parents, who believed it to be a contributing factor to juvenile delinquency and moral decay.

Cinematic portrayals of disaffected youth also reflected the tensions between conformity and rebellion in 1950s America. Films such as "Rebel Without a Cause" and "The Wild One" showcased young protagonists who expressed a generalized sense of frustration with the prevailing social

order, rather than targeting specific individuals or institutions. These movie heroes often acted out their antisocial tendencies through acts of truancy or petty criminality, flirting with the boundaries of violence and danger in a social landscape that many adults perceived as orderly and well-regulated.

The coexistence of these competing social forces – the pressure for conformity and the stirrings of teenage rebellion – highlighted the complex and sometimes conflicting dynamics that characterized the American cultural landscape of the 1950s. This tension between social compliance and youth dissent foreshadowed the more widespread and overt youth-led movements for social and political change that would emerge in the subsequent decade.

The Beatniks

In the mid-1950s, a distinct artistic movement emerged in the United States, characterized by a profound rejection of the prevailing culture of social conformity. This counterculture, known as the "Beatniks" or "Beats," consisted of a small but influential group of writers who sought to challenge the middle-class conventions that had come to dominate American society.

The Beatniks placed little emphasis on the acquisition of material goods, instead directing their focus towards the pursuit of a heightened state of consciousness. In their literary works, these non-conformist authors railed against the stifling constraints of mainstream middle-class values and traditions. Beatnik writers embraced a radically unconventional approach to their craft, eschewing the formal structures, plot conventions, and meticulous planning that had traditionally defined literary production.

One of the most renowned examples of Beatnik literature is Jack Kerouac's "On the Road," published in 1957 – the same year that Gina Berriault's "The Stone Boy" was written. Kerouac's novel follows the journeys of its protagonists as they traverse the United States, seeking to uncover authentic experiences and values that lie beyond the boundaries of conventional society. At its core, "On the Road" celebrates the Beatniks' quest for individual identity and self-expression, in direct opposition to the homogenizing forces of mid-20th century American culture.

The Beatniks represented a significant departure from the prevailing social norms of their era, which prized conformity, material accumulation, and the maintenance of a carefully curated public persona. By eschewing these societal expectations and embracing a radically unconventional lifestyle and artistic approach, the Beatniks carved out a space for themselves as non-conformist cultural dissidents, presaging the more overt youth-driven counterculture movements that would emerge in the subsequent decades.



Further Areas of Inquiry and Scholarly Exploration

📖 Critically examine the sheriff's binary interpretation of Arnold's post-fratricidal conduct. Explore alternative psychological explanations for Arnold's behavior, considering a spectrum of potential cognitive or emotional factors. Evaluate the possibility of Arnold's actions being indicative of a specific psychological disorder, employing contemporary diagnostic criteria and theories of abnormal psychology.

📖 Conduct a comprehensive longitudinal analysis of adolescent violence in the United States from the 1950s to the present. Assess whether there has been a significant escalation in teen violence and, if so, identify and analyze the contributing societal, cultural, and psychological factors. Consider the methodological challenges in measuring violence across different historical periods and the potential impact of changing societal norms and reporting practices on perceptions of youth violence.

📖 Undertake an in-depth investigation into the clinical and behavioral characteristics of sociopathy, drawing on current psychological and neurobiological research. Apply this theoretical framework to a detailed analysis of Arnold's character and actions as portrayed in the narrative. Evaluate the extent to which Arnold's behavior aligns with diagnostic criteria for sociopathy, considering both supporting and contradicting evidence from the text.

📖 Analyze the potential reception of "The Killers" by its contemporary readership in the 1950s and 1960s. Consider the prevailing social norms, cultural values, and literary expectations of the era. Examine how the story's themes and characters might have challenged or reinforced dominant narratives of the period, particularly regarding family dynamics, rural life, and youth behavior. Incorporate relevant literary criticism and historical context to support your analysis.

📖 Conduct a comprehensive investigation into the multifaceted factors contributing to the decline of family-owned agricultural enterprises in the United States throughout the 20th century. Examine the economic, technological, and policy-related drivers of this trend. Assess the socioeconomic impact of this decline on rural communities and farming families, considering aspects such as demographic shifts, changes in rural economies, and alterations in social structures. Analyze potential correlations between this agricultural transformation and broader societal changes, including urbanization and industrialization.



KATHERINE MANSFIELD



Study the biographical information about the author. Highlight the major facts which are sure to influence her choices of literary themes, characters, settings, moral implications, etc. Search for extra information about Katherine Mansfield that may interest you as an interpreter of her literary works.

BIOGRAPHY

Katherine Mansfield, born Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp on October 14, 1888, in Wellington, New Zealand, hailed from a wealthy family. She received her education in London, where she determined early in her life to pursue a career as a writer. During her studies, she engaged with music, contributed to the school newspaper, and explored the works of Oscar Wilde and other early twentieth-century English authors. After three years in London, she returned to New Zealand, where her parents anticipated she would find a suitable husband and adopt the lifestyle of a well-bred woman. However, Mansfield was rebellious and adventurous, drawn more to the artistic community than to the conventions of polite society.

In 1907, Mansfield began publishing stories in Australian magazines and soon returned to London. Following a brief affair that resulted in pregnancy, she agreed to marry George Bowden, a man she had known

for only three weeks and who was not the father of her child. Dressed in black for the wedding, she left Bowden before the night concluded. Upon learning of the scandal, and influenced by rumors regarding her daughter's relationships with women, Mansfield's mother traveled to London and placed her in a spa in Germany, far from the Bohemian artists of London. During her time in Germany, Mansfield suffered a miscarriage and faced disinheritance.

Upon returning to London, Mansfield continued to write and engage in various romantic relationships. In 1911, she published her first collection of stories, *In a German Pension*, most of which had been written during her stay at the spa. That same year, she met John Middleton Murry, the editor of a literary magazine. Although they lived together intermittently for many years, Mansfield continued her other affairs. Together, they published a small journal, *The Blue Review*, which ceased publication after three issues. Nevertheless, this venture facilitated her connections with contemporary literary figures, including D. H. Lawrence and Frieda von Richthofen.

In 1918, Mansfield was granted a divorce from Bowden, and she married Murry. Stricken with tuberculosis in 1917, her health deteriorated, yet she persisted in her writing, publishing *Bliss and Other Stories* and *The Garden Party and Other Stories* in 1920 and 1922, respectively. The latter collection features both "The Garden Party" and "Miss Brill." These works received critical acclaim, and Mansfield continued to write even after her health necessitated a move to Fontainebleau, France. Although she and Murry experienced prolonged separations toward the end of her life, he played a crucial role in establishing her literary reputation by publishing her final stories and collections of letters following her death from a massive pulmonary hemorrhage in January 1923, at the age of thirty-four.

Widely anthologized, "The Garden Party" is regarded as Katherine Mansfield's most distinguished short story. Modernist authors, including Virginia Woolf, were significantly influenced by Mansfield's stream-of-consciousness and symbolic narrative style. "The Garden Party" is a remarkably rich and innovative work that encapsulates Mansfield's defining themes: New Zealand, childhood, adulthood, social class, class conflict, innocence, and experience. Set against the backdrop of an

afternoon garden party in New Zealand, the story resonates with Mansfield's own childhood and adolescence in that locale.

The protagonist, Laura, is an idealistic young girl who contemplates canceling the gathering upon learning of the death of a working-class laborer residing nearby. The narrative explores Laura's oscillation between resistance and conformity to her mother's perceptions of class relations. Like Laura, Mansfield was the daughter of a prosperous businessman, Harold Beauchamp, and his wife, Annie Burnell Dyer Beauchamp. The Beauchamp family, much like the Sheridans in "The Garden Party," enjoyed a luxurious lifestyle in grand homes around Wellington.

First published in 1922 within the collection *The Garden Party and Other Stories*, "The Garden Party" quickly became a classic example of the short story form. In a 1957 essay, Warren S. Walker noted, "The most frequently anthologized of Katherine Mansfield's works, 'The Garden Party' has long enjoyed a reputation for near-perfection in the art of the short story." During her lifetime, Mansfield was recognized as one of the foremost innovators of the short story genre. Following her death, Virginia Woolf remarked in her diary, "I was jealous of her writing—the only writing I have ever been jealous of." Despite its esteemed reputation, both critics and readers have expressed perplexity over what they perceive as an unsatisfactory ending—an ending that, as Walker observes, "leaves readers with a feeling of dissatisfaction, a vague sense that the story somehow does not realize its potential."

Read the story THE GARDEN PARTY and fulfill the tasks that follow.

PLOTLINE ANALYSIS

Chronological Timeline

Drawing on the provided summary, compose a well-structured analytical essay that examines the chronological progression of key events and their significance in shaping the narrative's thematic development. Your essay should address the following critical questions:

- a) Trace the key turning points that mark the shifts in Laura's evolving perspective throughout the story. How do these pivotal moments contribute to the overall arc of her character development?

- b) Analyze the role played by the Sheridan family's interactions and reactions in driving the progression of the plot. How do these exchanges between Laura and her relatives illuminate the broader social and class-based tensions at the heart of the narrative?
- c) Discuss the significance of the contrasting settings - the Sheridan estate and the neighboring cottages - and how the transitions between these spaces impact the development of the story's central themes.

In the concluding section, explore how the final encounter between Laura and her brother Laurie serves to synthesize the story's thematic concerns and provide a sense of resolution, while also hinting at the possibility of transcendence.

Your 3-page essay should be with well-developed paragraphs, clear and sophisticated language, and strong textual evidence from the summary to support your analysis. Be sure to organize your ideas coherently and construct a persuasive, insightful argument that demonstrates a nuanced understanding of the chronological structure and thematic implications of the narrative.

Emotional Resonance Analysis

Analyze the ways in which Mansfield's story "The Garden Party" evokes emotional resonance in the reader, particularly in relation to the protagonist Laura's experiences and the broader thematic exploration of class divides. Discuss how the author's narrative techniques, character development, and symbolic elements contribute to the emotional impact of the story.

Be sure to dwell upon:

- a) The opening scene that establishes the atmosphere of the family estate and the impending garden party. Examine how Mansfield sets the stage for the narrative's central tensions and the juxtaposition between the Sheridans' privileged existence and the neighboring working-class community.
- b) Laura's initial reaction upon learning about the death of the local laborer, and her proposal to cancel the garden party. Analyze how this moment of empathy and moral questioning on Laura's part

generates a sense of unease and discomfort in the reader, as it challenges the family's status quo.

- c) The interactions between Laura, her sister Jose, and her mother Mrs. Sheridan, which reveal the family's profound indifference towards the working class. Discuss how these exchanges evoke a sense of frustration and even revulsion in the reader, as the Sheridans' callousness becomes increasingly apparent.
- d) The significance of Mrs. Sheridan's gesture of providing Laura with a stylish black hat, and how it underscores the family's attempts to distract and reintegrate her into their world of social privilege. Explore how this moment heightens the reader's sense of Laura's internal conflict and the pull of her own vanity.
- e) The brief depiction of the garden party itself, conveying a sense of superficial merriment, and Laura's growing centrality within the proceedings. Analyze how this scene amplifies the reader's awareness of the underlying tension and Laura's growing discomfort.
- f) Laura's journey to the impoverished cottages and her confrontation with the grief-stricken widow and the peaceful body of the deceased laborer. Discuss how this pivotal moment of illumination elicits a profound emotional response in the reader, as the stark contrast between Laura's privileged existence and the realities of working-class life and death becomes painfully clear.
- g) The final scene where Laura's brother Laurie intuitively grasps the transformative impact of her experience, and the suggestion of a transcendent realm existing beyond the bounds of class divides and social conventions. Examine how this conclusion leaves the reader with a sense of hopefulness and the possibility of empathetic understanding.

Make ample use of textual evidence, and demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the ways in which Mansfield crafts an emotionally resonant story.

PLOT SUMMARY

Katharine Mansfield's "The Garden Party" centers around the idealistic young protagonist Laura, who is juxtaposed against her more conventional and class-conscious Sheridan family. As the narrative opens,

the family estate is abuzz with preparations for an afternoon garden party. However, this atmosphere of genteel detachment is shattered when Laura learns of the death of a neighboring laborer. Struck by the seeming impropriety of hosting a lavish social event in the wake of a local tragedy, Laura proposes that the party be canceled.

Laura's attempts to persuade her sister Jose and mother Mrs. Sheridan reveal the family's general indifference, if not outright hostility, towards their lower-class counterparts. Jose dismisses Laura's "sentimental" concerns, while Mrs. Sheridan's sole preoccupation is whether the death occurred on the family's property. These interactions underscore the Sheridans' profound disconnection from the struggles of the working class they ostensibly neighbor.

As Laura's familial obligations compel her to continue with the garden party, she becomes increasingly conflicted. Mrs. Sheridan's gesture of providing Laura with a stylish black hat underscores the family's attempts to distract her from the tragedy and reintegrate her into their world of social privilege. Though initially resisting, Laura ultimately succumbs to the allure of her own vanity and the comforts of the garden party.

The party itself is only briefly depicted, conveying a sense of superficial merriment and Laura's growing centrality within the proceedings. However, the specter of the deceased laborer continues to haunt Laura's consciousness. When Mr. Sheridan raises the topic of the "beastly accident," Mrs. Sheridan further complicates matters by insisting that Laura deliver leftover food to the laborer's widow.

Laura's journey to the impoverished cottages functions as a descent into a starkly contrasting anti-world, characterized by darkness, squalor, and human suffering. Confronted by the grief-stricken widow and the peaceful body of the young man, Laura is overwhelmed by the gulf separating her privileged existence from the realities of working-class life and death. This profound moment of illumination elicits an emotional outpouring, as Laura recognizes the profound insignificance of her own concerns in the face of such profound loss.

In the final scene, Laura's brother Laurie intuitively grasps the transformative impact of her experience. Their shared, unspoken understanding suggests the possibility of a transcendent realm existing beyond the bounds of class divides and social conventions.

Study the basic information about the main characters of the story. Classify and describe the emotions that dominate in their psychological profiles and in the whole story. Dwell upon the factors that account for them.

CHARACTERS

The Cook - A nurturing figure, the Sheridan family's cook allows Laura and one of her sisters to indulge in rich cream puffs that have been delivered for the upcoming garden party, shortly after the girls have finished their breakfast.

Jose Sheridan - Laura's class-conscious older sister, Jose takes a dim view of Laura's wish to cancel the garden party, bluntly telling her that she "won't bring a drunken workman back to life by being sentimental."

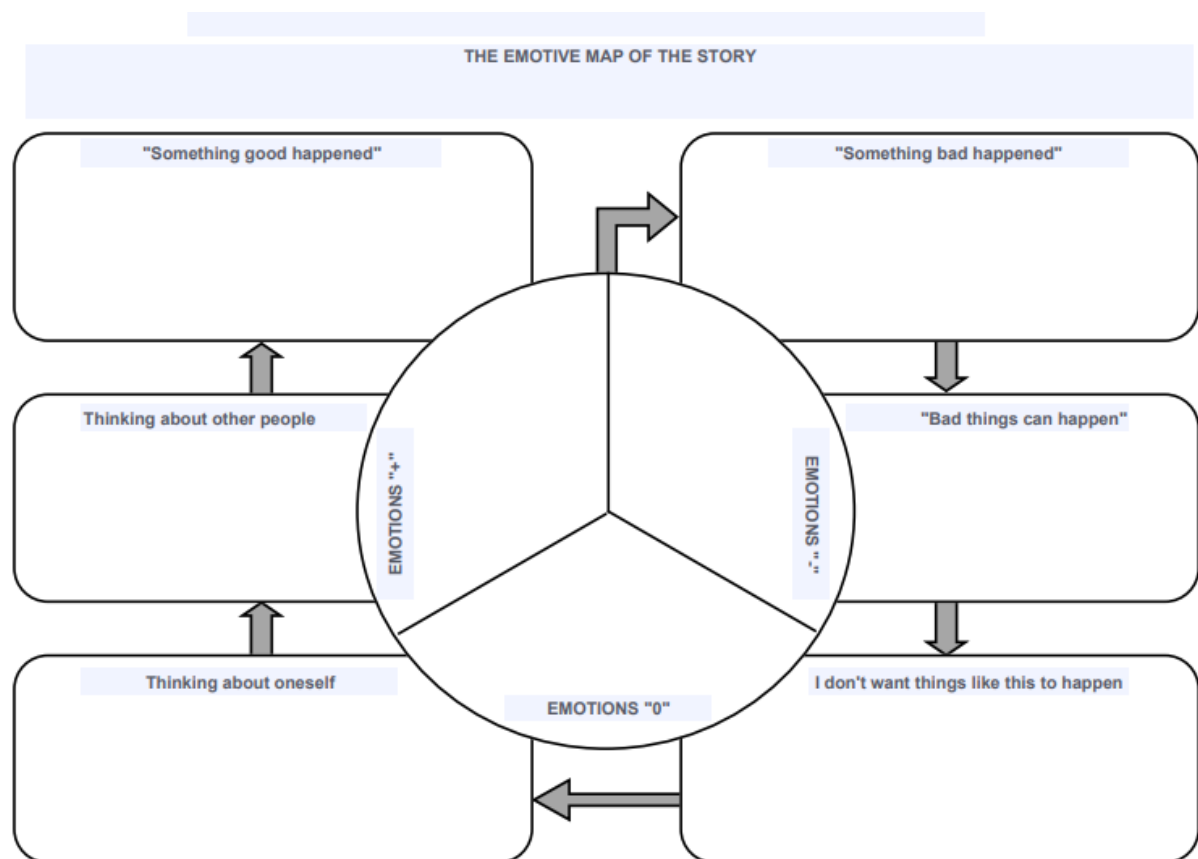
Laura Sheridan - An idealistic and impressionable young woman, Laura grapples with her own and her family's perceptions of class difference. Distressed to learn of a working-class neighbor's accidental death, Laura unsuccessfully attempts to convince her mother to cancel the planned garden party that afternoon. Though initially overwhelmed by empathy for the dead laborer, Laura's resolve wavers as her mother distracts her with the gift of a new hat, and the sight of herself in the hat causes her to relent on pressing for the party's cancellation. By the story's conclusion, however, Laura makes a tentative effort to relate to the lives of her family's working-class neighbors, though the ambiguous ending leaves uncertain whether she has truly learned or evolved from the experience.

Laurie Sheridan - Laura's older brother and closest family member, Laurie comforts Laura after she views the body of the deceased laborer prior to the garden party. The story's conclusion leaves the emotional states of both Laurie and Laura unclear.

Meg Sheridan - Possessing a manner and attitude akin to those of her sister Jose and her mother, Mrs. Sheridan, Meg is first encountered coming down to breakfast with her freshly washed hair wrapped in a green turban, a "dark wet curl stamped on each cheek." Refusing to supervise the workmen assembling the party tent due to her wet hair, Meg leaves that responsibility to the more obliging Laura.

Mrs. Sheridan - Laura's mother, Mrs. Sheridan aligns with her elder daughter Jose in refusing to consider canceling the garden party in light of the laborer's death. However, she does suggest that Laura take the party's leftovers to the widow of the dead man, in a gesture of appeasement. Though declaring she will leave the party preparations entirely to her daughters, Mrs. Sheridan proves to be closely monitoring and managing every step of the process.

Now, search the story for language means to denote the emotions above, relating them the characters of the story.



Study the dominating themes of the story. Which of them do you consider the most acute or close to your sphere of interests or priorities? Are these themes contemporary enough to extrapolate them to the life of today in this country? Draw the necessary parallels.

THEMES

Innocence and Experience

The Garden Party chronicles the psychological and moral evolution of the character Laura Sheridan. The narrative presents her adolescent confusion regarding the social values espoused by her family, and her gradual awakening to a more mature perception of reality after encountering poverty and death at the nearby carter's cottage.

Laura's self-consciousness about her own youth and inexperience is evident whenever she interacts with members of the working class. When tasked with overseeing the workers assembling the party tent, she regards them as "impressive" for their work ethic and physical labor, and attempts to emulate her mother's authoritative adult demeanor. However, Laura soon loses her composure, blushing and trying unconvincingly to appear severe and aloof as she greets the workmen, ashamed of her affected tone. This lack of self-assurance manifests at various junctures, particularly when Laura is called upon to respond maturely to events beyond the confines of her sheltered upbringing.

Laura's initial idealization of the workmen's camaraderie gives way to feelings of unease and discomfort upon witnessing the realities of their impoverished, cramped living conditions. When she learns of the accidental death of a local laborer and wishes to cancel the garden party as a gesture of propriety, Laura is momentarily swayed by the allure of the privileged world symbolized by the new hat her mother presents her. The sophistication and casual acceptance of their privileged lifestyle exhibited by Laura's more assured sisters and mother stand in sharp contrast to her own awkward attempts to do the ethical thing.

Though Laura's responses are often childlike, there are significant moments of growth in her character. She remains acutely conscious of the limitations inherent in her class-conscious worldview, and is open to alternative experiences even when she struggles to respond to them maturely. Her genuine concern for the carter's widow, and her desire to cancel the party to spare the woman the sounds of revelry during her grief, demonstrate a nascent empathy and consideration that signal Laura's budding moral development.

Journey

The motif of the journey is employed in this narrative to illustrate Laura's rite of passage from childish naivety to a state of greater maturity. As the story progresses, Laura transitions from the interior confines of the Sheridan household, replete with domestic minutiae, to the sunlit garden, and ultimately beyond this insular, protective sphere of her primary identity.

This figurative journey commences amidst gathering darkness as Laura crosses the road, traversing the "smoky and dark" lane. She enters the carter's cottage, moving down a "narrow, dark passage" into the claustrophobic kitchen, passing the grief-stricken widow with her "swollen eyes and swollen lips," before finally beholding the serene countenance of the deceased carter – the culmination of this traversal.

At the end of this transformative passage, Laura gains an insightful, illuminating vision of the duality of life and death. This physical journey through the increasingly confined and gloomy spaces of the working-class dwelling mirrors Laura's internal progression from a state of sheltered innocence towards a more mature, nuanced understanding of the human condition.

Dream and Reality

The interplay between illusion and reality emerges as a central theme in "The Garden Party." The world of the Sheridan family is consistently depicted as an insulated realm of dream-like escapism that suppresses and excludes the realities of the working-class sphere. The sorrows and hardships of the real world beyond the Sheridan estate are present only in the fleeting, pretty song that Jose sings prior to the garden party festivities.

Laura, to a degree, becomes enthralled by these upper-class pretensions. When she endorses the rituals and trappings of the garden party, the harsh realities outside its confines appear illusory to her: "She had a glimpse of that poor woman and those little children, and the body being carried into the house. But it all seemed blurred, unreal, like a picture in the newspaper." Even as Laura ventures beyond the confines of the Sheridan garden, the dream-like enchantment seems to persist, as she carries the sensations of the party within her – "It seemed to her that kisses, voices, tinkling spoons, laughter, the smell of crushed grass were somehow inside her."

This juxtaposition of the Sheridan family's gilded, insulated world against the tangible hardships of the working-class community underscores the central tension between illusion and reality that permeates the narrative. Laura's gradual awakening to the realities beyond her sheltered upbringing represents a crucial component of her broader psychological and moral evolution over the course of the story.

Study the information about Catherine Mansfield's style of writing. List the specific features of it you consider to be the most prominent.

STYLE

Style

Katherine Mansfield's short story "The Garden Party" exhibits a distinctly modernist style, marked by the use of impressionistic details and a stream-of-consciousness narrative method – techniques that also characterize the works of Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, and other innovative writers of the 1920s and 1930s.

The narrative commences in medias res, plunging the reader directly into the action. The narrative voice describes the scene in a casual, immediate manner, establishing an intimate rapport with the audience – "And after all the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for the garden party if they had ordered it." This almost confidential presentation of objective facts positions the narrative voice as the central consciousness of the story – one that perceives, interprets, and, for the majority of the tale, aligns with the character of Laura.

As the reader gains access to the authorial confidences and interpretations, an appeal is made to identify with Laura's and the narrator's shared perspective. The transition between the third-person narrative voice and Laura's own perceptions often occurs within a single sentence, without overt markers – "Away Laura flew, still holding her piece of bread and butter. It's so delicious to have an excuse for eating out of doors, and besides she loved having to arrange things," or "His smile was so easy, so friendly, that Laura recovered. What nice eyes he had, small, but such a dark blue!"

This technique of centering on the thoughts of a primary consciousness is known as the stream-of-consciousness method. Employed by modernist

writers to achieve a more authentic portrayal of reality, this approach conceives of reality not as something independent of one's perceptions, but rather as constituted by the individual's unique subjective impressions. In "The Garden Party," for instance, Laura's perceptions frequently overwhelm the few objective realities that reach the reader through means other than the central character. As she embarks on her journey down to Saunders Lane, her mind is filled with memories of the party – "the kisses, voices, tinkling spoons, laughter, and the smell of crushed grass" – initially obscuring the actual details of her journey.

Appropriately, the linear narrative of the events surrounding the Sheridan garden party culminates in the climactic conflict of Laura's consciousness. At this pivotal moment, her perceptions are articulated by the narrative voice, which almost speaks on her behalf, transitioning from a third- to a first-person point of view: "There lay a young man fast asleep – sleeping so soundly, so deeply, that he was far far away from them both. Oh so remote, so peaceful... . What did garden parties and baskets and lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all of those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane."

Through these modernist stylistic techniques, Mansfield crafts a richly subjective and psychologically attuned exploration of her protagonist's inner world, reflecting the innovative literary trends of the early 20th century.

Symbolism and Imagery

Mansfield's descriptive language in "The Garden Party" presents a richly textured, suggestive world, where colors, shapes, and textures become a medium through which the scenes of the story acquire deeper significance.

The narrative opens with an impressionistic portrayal of the interiors and gardens of the Sheridan home. The garden itself is depicted as a space aglow with vibrant hues and suffused with the warmth of roses, yellow karake fruits, and lilies. These vibrant florae symbolize the mood of ethereal beauty that permeates the Sheridan estate. This sense of luminous calm is perhaps most poignantly captured in the following image: "And the perfect afternoon, slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed."

As Laura departs the brilliant garden to venture down the hill towards the worker's cottages, this scene of light and air visibly darkens. The somber mood and lack of hope for the villagers is evoked through the deepening shadows as Laura nears Saunders Lane. Similarly, the soft rustling breezes of the garden and the comfortable domestic chatter of the Sheridan house are supplanted by silence and an ominous hum that Laura discerns as she approaches the laborer's neighborhood - "How quiet it seemed after the afternoon.... A low hum came from the mean little cottages. In some of them there was a flicker of light, and a shadow, crablike, moved across the window."

The shadows deepen further as Laura approaches the carter's cottage and is led through a "gloomy passage" by a "woman in black." Within the obscured interior of the cottage, Laura is confronted with death in the form of the young laborer, and the epiphany she experiences upon gazing upon the serene beauty of the deceased's face suggests a radiant revelation within this final, darkened setting.

Through this nuanced, atmospheric descriptive language, Mansfield fashions a richly textured, symbolically charged world, where the shifts in light, color, and sound powerfully mirror the protagonist's evolving psychological and emotional states.



COMPARE AND CONTRAST

1920s: The emergence of the modernist movement prompted writers, artists, and musicians to grapple with their sense of alienation from Western culture.

1990s: Cultural commentators continue to derive inspiration from the perceived disconnection between their values and mainstream popular culture. The term "Generation X" has been introduced to characterize an entire generation believed to experience feelings of alienation from broader society.



Study the historical context of the time Catherine Mansfield created her literary works. Dwell upon the factors you consider to be the crucial to influence her style of writing.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Katherine Mansfield's celebrated short story "The Garden Party," published in 1922, must be understood within the broader socio-political and cultural context of its creation. The interwar period between the two World Wars was marked by profound political and social upheaval throughout Europe, with seismic shifts occurring on the global stage.

In the newly-established Soviet Union, the Marxist revolution was nearing its culmination, while in other parts of Europe, the nascent philosophy of fascism, with its emphasis on authoritarian governance, was beginning to gain traction. These dramatic geopolitical transformations alarmed many and prompted widespread public discourse surrounding the prevailing class systems and social stratifications.

The devastating impact of World War I and the subsequent political and social upheavals had a tangible effect on the artistic and literary landscape of the era. Mansfield, like many of her contemporaries in England and beyond, felt the profound psychological and cultural reverberations of the war, particularly in the wake of the tragic death of her beloved brother.

Other prominent writers of the period, such as T.S. Eliot, grappled with a profound sense of individual alienation and cultural uncertainty in the face of these seismic shifts. In his seminal 1922 poem "The Waste Land," Eliot's poetic persona laments the fragmentation of Western cultural and humanist traditions, alluding to the need to "shore" these fragments "against [one's] ruins" in the face of a rapidly-changing social landscape.

Likewise, the German historian Oswald Spengler, in his influential work "The Decline of the West," predicted the imminent dissolution of the hegemony of Western humanist values and cultural norms. In this context, "The Garden Party" may be understood as Mansfield's literary exploration

of the end of the "caste-ridden 'garden party' civilization" – the carefree gentility of pre-World War I Europe – as embodied in the protagonist Laura Sheridan's struggle to reconcile the worlds of her privileged upbringing and her working-class neighbors.

Mansfield's narrative, therefore, can be viewed as a nuanced and insightful reflection of the broader cultural and historical currents that were reshaping the sociopolitical landscape of the interwar period, as the old order gave way to the emergence of new ideological and societal paradigms.



Further Areas of Inquiry and Scholarly Exploration

📖 Conduct an extensive investigation into the Modernist literary movement of the 1920s, utilizing seminal works such as Hugh Kenner's "A Homemade World: The American Modernist Writers" (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989) and William R. Everdell's "The First Moderns: Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth-Century Thought" (University of Chicago Press, 1997) as primary references. Evaluate Katherine Mansfield's specific contributions to the literary avant-garde of the period. Extend your analysis to encompass modernist innovations across various artistic disciplines, including poetry, visual arts, and music. This multi-disciplinary approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of the cultural and artistic zeitgeist of the era.

📖 Undertake a rigorous examination of one of the following significant historical phenomena of the 1920s and preceding years: World War I, the ascension of fascist ideologies, the proliferation of Marxist thought, British imperial expansion, fluctuations in European and American financial markets, the development of labor unions, the evolution of feminist movements, or the societal position of homosexual communities. Analyze the differential impact of these events on various socioeconomic strata, with particular attention to the disparate effects on affluent and impoverished segments of society. Consider both immediate consequences and long-term societal transformations precipitated by these historical developments.

📖 Engage in a thorough examination of Katherine Mansfield's personal correspondence and journal entries. Conduct a comparative analysis between the thematic concerns expressed in these personal documents and those manifested in her fictional works, with particular emphasis on "The Garden Party." Explore potential correlations between Mansfield's personal experiences, sociopolitical views, and the narrative elements, character development, and thematic content of her literary output. This intertextual approach will provide insights into the interplay between the author's lived experiences and her creative process, offering a nuanced understanding of Mansfield's artistic vision and its contextual influences.

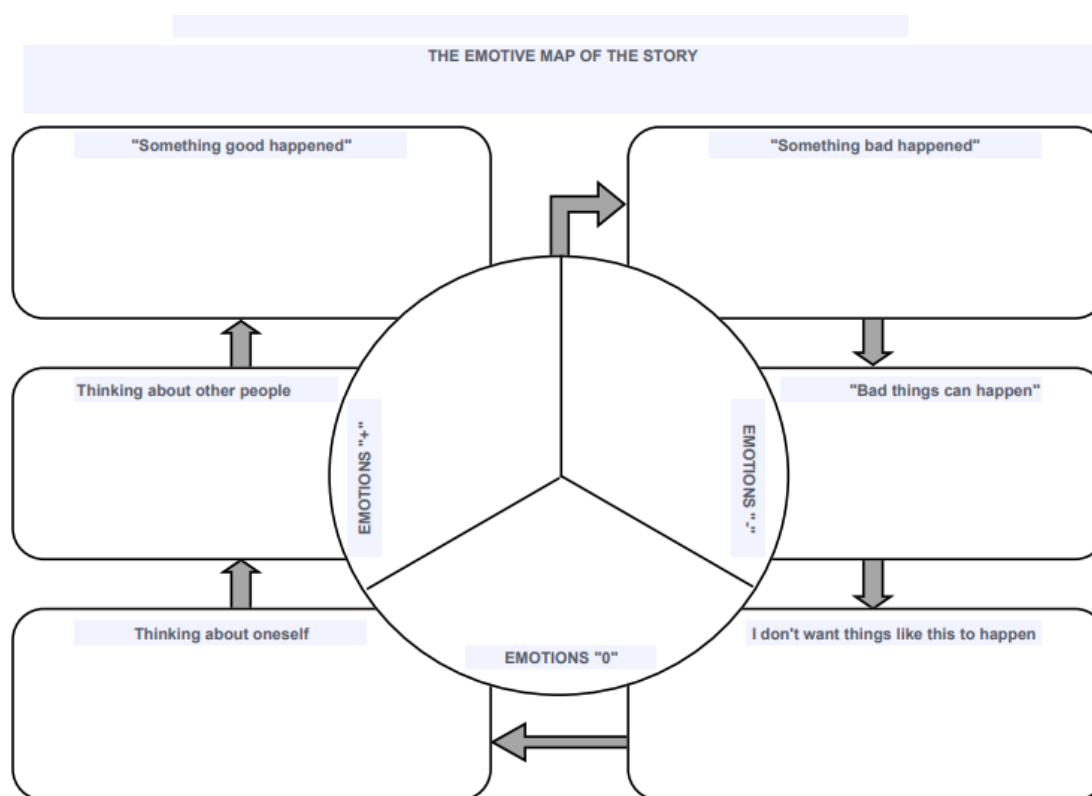


FOR INDEPENDENT LITERARY INQUIRY



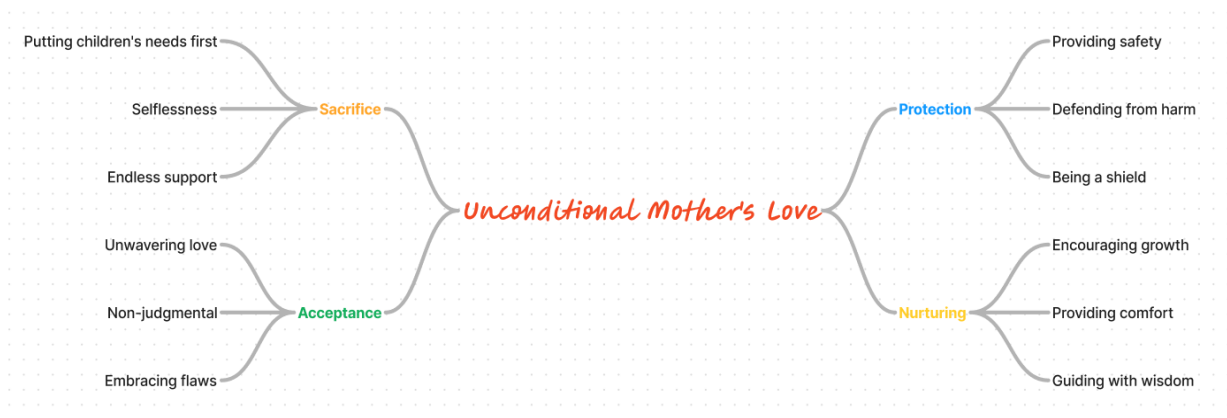
Read the story SERAPHIM by GAYE JEE and fulfill the tasks:

1. Study the biographical information about the author.
2. Fulfill the PLOTLINE ANALYSIS.
3. Write a concise PLOT SUMMARY of the story.
4. Design the emotive map of the story. Fill in the scheme that follows.



5. Study the dominating themes of the story. Which of them do you consider the most acute or close to your sphere of interests or priorities? Are these themes contemporary enough to extrapolate them to the life of today in this country? Draw the necessary parallels.

6. Study the information about the author's style of writing. List the specific features of it you consider to be the most prominent.
7. Study the historical context of the time the author created literary works. Dwell upon the factors you consider to be the crucial to influence the style of writing.
8. Dwell upon the concept of unconditional mother's love revealed in the story and write a short essay "What does unconditional love mean to me?"



Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in Language Teaching Perspectives: Relationship Skills

RELATIONSHIPS SKILLS relate to the ability to build positive relationships, especially with diverse individuals and groups, using a variety of methods such as active listening, and communication and conflict resolution skills. These skills also include the ability to resist pressure and to seek out and offer help (SEL for Students: Social Awareness and Relationship Skills, 2024).

Relationship skills include:

- Initiating contact with others and cultivating friendship
- Developing positive relationships
- Sharing one's thoughts and feelings (appropriately)
- Demonstrating cultural humility
- Resisting stereotypes
- Practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving
- Communicating effectively
- Resolving conflicts constructively
- Resisting negative social pressure
- Approaching relationships with positive presuppositions
- Showing leadership in groups
- Standing up for the rights of others
- Seeking or offering support and help when needed

Social awareness and relationship skills are closely linked. For example, when students attempt to resolve a conflict between themselves (relationship skills), the process is made easier when both are able to empathize with each other (social awareness) (SEL for Students: Social Awareness and Relationship Skills, 2024).

Why are relationship skills important? In pairs or micro groups discuss the following in the perspective of the problems raised in this chapter's stories.

Cooperative learning stimulates building health and strong relationships and achieving practical goals.

- Students who participate in cooperative learning exercises are more likely than their peers to say they like working together with other students; whereas, students who report that they enjoy competing are significantly more likely to act aggressively toward their peers and tend to abusive behaviour.
- Students who are more frequently engaged in group project learning are more likely to report performing prosocial (kind, helpful) behavior toward their classmates.

Study the effective SEL practice and suggest some other possible one in relations to the issues considered in the chapter.

Feeling Connected for Students

Students write about a time when they felt connected to someone and consider why they experienced that sense of closeness.

Level: Middle School, High School, College

Duration: 15 minutes

When You Might Use This Practice

Any time during the year, but especially at the beginning of the school year to cultivate a sense of belonging at school

When students are feeling stressed and overwhelmed

Time Required: 10 minutes

Learning Objectives

Students will:

Remember a time when they felt a strong connection with someone, write about what happened, and consider what made them feel close to that person

SEL Competencies

Social Awareness

Self-Awareness

Self-Management

The source: Feeling Connected for Students (2024). Retrieved from: <https://ggie.berkeley.edu/practice/feeling-connected-for-students/>

CHAPTER 3. Agonistic Narratology: Interpretive Strategies for Conflict Dynamics in the Short Form

Conflicts in Literature

Conflicts are a fundamental part of literature, driving the action and development of fictional characters. This section explores the nature of conflicts in fictional works, examining how authors manipulate and modify real-world elements to convey their messages.



Study the information about the nature of actions.

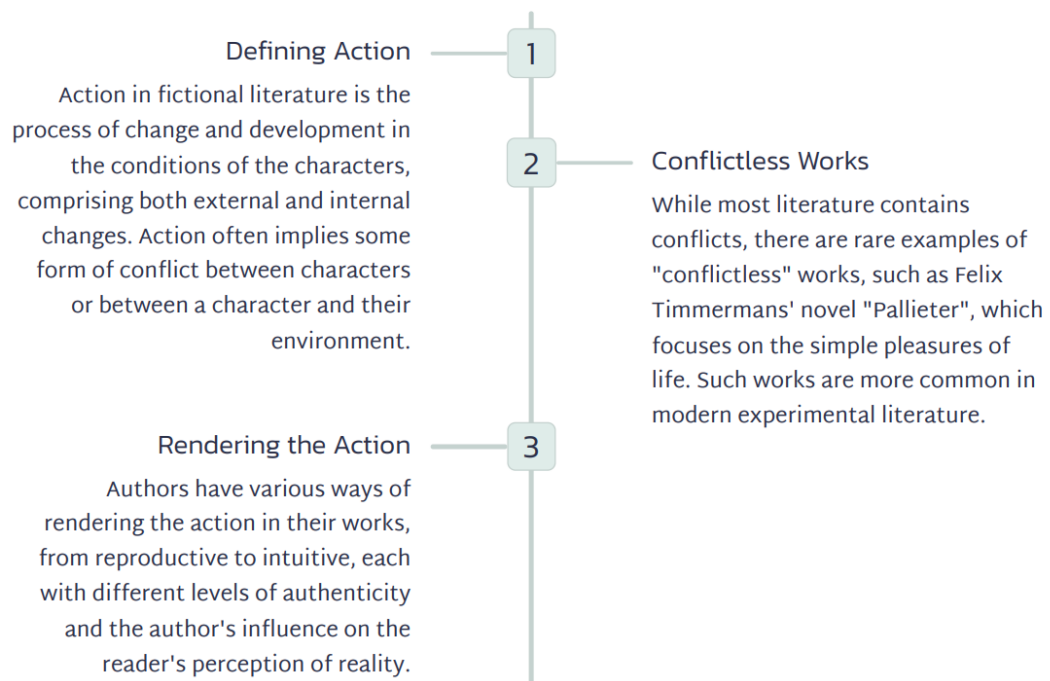
Define the notion of action and ponder upon its relation to conflicts.

Do you like the idea of *conflictless* literary works? Why are they referred mainly to experimental literature?

Comment on the statement: “All fictional action is based on ingredients from the existing world, but its freedom from referential constraints gives the writer license to manipulate and modify the material he takes from this world”. Provide the examples of your own to illustrate how it works.

Dwell upon different ways of rendering the material the author borrows from the existing world to convey some cognitive content and explain the difference between them.

The Nature of Action and Conflict



Describe the levels conflict arises in different contexts and provide examples of your own.

Conflict and Character Development



Incompatible Goals

Conflicts often arise when characters have incompatible goals or desires that they cannot satisfy without interfering with someone else's needs.



Conflicting Emotions

Conflicts can also stem from characters experiencing conflicting emotions, such as love and hate, or fear and courage.



Clashing Identities

Differences in personal or social identities can lead to conflicts as characters struggle to assert their sense of self in relation to others.



Environmental Conflicts

Conflicts can also arise between characters and their physical or social environment, as they navigate the challenges posed by their surroundings.

Levels of Conflict

Intrapersonal

Conflicts can arise within an individual, as they grapple with incompatible goals, emotions, or self-identities.

Interpersonal

Conflicts can occur between individuals, as they compete for resources, power, or have differing values and goals.

Intergroup

Conflicts can also arise between groups, such as between minority and majority populations, or advantaged and disadvantaged groups.

Dwell upon the role of identity in conflicts and explain the crucial difference between social identity and self-identity.

The Role of Identity in Conflicts

1

Personal Identity

An individual's sense of self as a unique person, separate from others.

2

Social Identity

The facets of one's self-image that derive from salient group memberships, such as ethnicity, religion, or nationality.

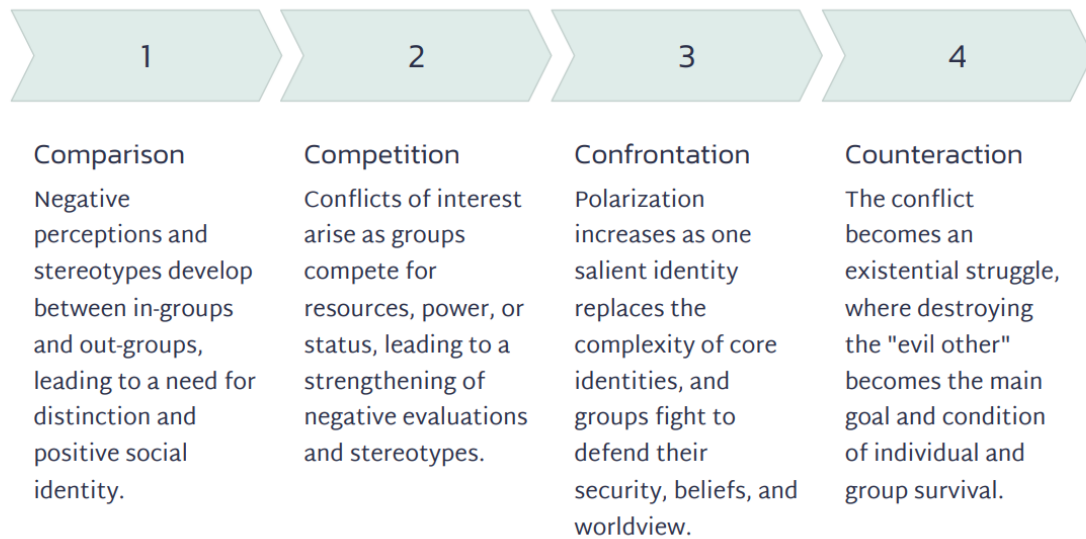
3

Identity Salience

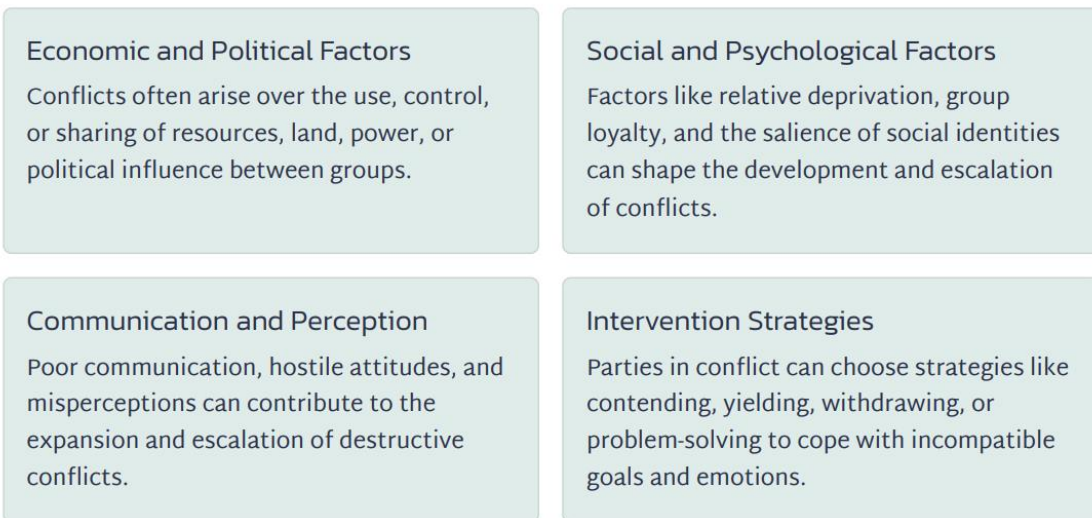
The concept that individuals can inhabit multiple identities, and certain identities become more meaningful in particular contexts.

Interpret the 4-C model of the dynamic of identity conflicts and provide example of your own.

The 4-C Model of Identity Conflicts



Factors Influencing Conflict Dynamics



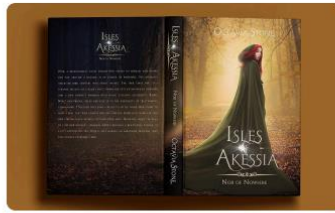
Relate the model studied to the typology of conflicts offered below.

Conflicts in Literature



Realistic Conflicts

Many literary works depict conflicts that closely mirror real-world situations, drawing from the author's observations and experiences.



Imagined Conflicts

Other works, such as fantasy or science fiction, present conflicts that are more imaginative and less constrained by the realities of the physical world.



Symbolic Conflicts

Allegorical and symbolic literature can use conflicts as a means to convey deeper messages about human nature and society.

Make conclusions about the core role of conflicts in literary works.

The Significance of Conflicts in Literature

Drives the Action	Conflicts are the primary driver of the plot, propelling the story forward and shaping the development of the characters.
Reveals Character	How characters respond to and navigate conflicts reveals important aspects of their personality, values, and motivations.
Conveys Themes	Conflicts in literature often serve as a vehicle for the author to explore deeper themes and issues related to the human condition.
Mirrors Reality	Many literary conflicts reflect real-world struggles, allowing readers to better understand the complexities of human interaction.

AMY TAN



Study the biographical information about the author. Highlight the major facts which are sure to influence her choices of literary themes, characters, settings, moral implications, etc. Search for extra information about Amy Tan that may interest you as an interpreter of her literary works.

BIOGRAPHY

Amy Tan was born in 1952 in Oakland, California, to Daisy and John Tan. Her Chinese name, An-mei, translates to "Blessing from America," and she is the only daughter in her family. The experiences of her immigrant parents profoundly influenced her literary work. The deaths of her father and older brother from brain tumors within an eight-month span marked a significant turning point in Tan's life. Following this tragedy, her mother reverted to her traditional Chinese beliefs and religious practices, becoming convinced that the family's home in Santa Clara was cursed. As a result, she took her remaining children on an extensive journey along the East Coast and through Europe before eventually settling in Montreux, where Amy completed her high school education.

As a rebellious teenager, Tan resisted her mother's insistence on attending a conservative Baptist college in Oregon, subsequently transferring to

San Jose City College and later to San Jose State University. She further disappointed her mother by shifting her major from pre-med to English and linguistics. At this time, she was married to a tax attorney and was on the path toward a doctoral degree when she chose to explore alternative interests. After a series of false starts, she achieved considerable success as a freelance business writer. Following a period of introspection and a newfound interest in her mother's life and stories from China, Tan began to write fiction. She received support from a writer's group in San Francisco and secured an agent after publishing just one story.

Her first book, *The Joy Luck Club*, which includes the story "Two Kinds," was an extraordinary success and is often credited with igniting public interest in Asian American literature. Since then, she has authored two additional novels, two children's books, and several essays. Tan resides and works in San Francisco, where she continues to meet regularly with her writing group.

"Two Kinds" serves as the concluding story in the second of four sections of *The Joy Luck Club*. Although Tan intended the book to be read as a loosely connected collection of interrelated stories, it is frequently classified as a novel. Several of these stories were published individually in periodicals, many appearing in *Atlantic Monthly*, which acquired the serial rights prior to the book's release. "Two Kinds" was first published in *Atlantic Monthly* in February 1989, one month ahead of the book's publication.

Like the other stories in the collection, "Two Kinds" explores the intricate relationships between mothers and daughters. Specifically, Tan addresses the generational divide between mothers who were born in China before the communist revolution—having been separated from their native culture for decades—and their American-born daughters, who navigate the dual pressures of their Chinese heritage and American expectations for success. In this narrative, the protagonist, Jing-mei, resists her mother's intense desire to mold her into a musical prodigy to compete with the daughter of a family friend. Jing-mei reflects on these experiences more than twenty years later, grappling with an understanding of her mother's motivations.

"Two Kinds" exemplifies the elements that garnered Tan critical acclaim for her debut work. It showcases her acute sensitivity to the fractured English of the older generation (a skill honed through her training as a linguist) and her meticulous attention to detail in depicting the domestic lives of mothers and daughters, particularly through her vivid descriptions of food and clothing.

Read the story TWO KINDS and fulfill the tasks that follow.

PLOTLINE ANALYSIS

Chronological Timeline

Construct a detailed timeline that maps the key events and turning points in the narrative's chronological progression. For each significant plot point, provide a concise analysis that explains its role in driving the central conflict and character development. Additionally, identify any instances of temporal shifts, such as flashbacks or flash-forwards, and discuss how these narrative techniques contribute to the overall structure and thematic exploration of the story.

Your timeline should be organized as follows:

Initial Setup: Introduce the central characters and establish the foundational tension between the first-generation Chinese American daughter and her immigrant mother.

Inciting Incident: Describe the mother's decision to enroll her daughter in piano lessons, highlighting the motivations and influences that shape this pivotal moment.

Rising Action: Trace the escalating struggle between the mother's ambitions and the daughter's resistance, detailing the specific events and turning points that drive this protracted conflict.

Climax: Analyze the pivotal moment when the daughter's scathing rejection of her mother's efforts leads to the termination of the piano lessons.

Falling Action and Resolution: Examine the final scene in which the mother offers the piano to her adult daughter, and discuss how this gesture reflects the resolution (or lack thereof) of the central tension.

Throughout your analysis, be sure to draw connections between the chronological development of the plot and the story's broader themes, such as identity, cultural assimilation, and the complex parent-child dynamic. Additionally, identify any instances where the narrative departs from a linear chronology and discuss how these temporal shifts contribute to the overall structure and meaning of the work.

Conflicts

Analyze the various conflicts that arise in Amy Tan's short story "Two Kinds" and explore how these conflicts are represented and transformed throughout the narrative. Discuss the ways in which the central conflict between the narrator, Jing-mei, and her mother shapes the story's emotional landscape and thematic development.

Be sure to dwell upon:

- a) The fundamental tension in the mother-daughter relationship, rooted in the mother's desire to mold Jing-mei into a musical prodigy and the narrator's own sense of self. Examine how this conflict is introduced and manifests through the mother's consumption of popular media and her attempts to shape Jing-mei's identity.
- b) The performance aspect of the mother-daughter dynamic, as they engage in an elaborate ritual of styling Jing-mei's hair and immersing themselves in inspirational stories of precocious youths. Analyze how this performative aspect reflects the mother's attempts to conform Jing-mei to an idealized vision, and Jing-mei's own struggle to resist this imposition.
- c) The specific conflict that arises when the mother, spurred by witnessing a Chinese piano virtuoso on television, enlists the services of a retired piano teacher. Discuss how this escalation of the mother's ambition for her daughter's prodigious achievement leads to a protracted struggle between the two, and the ways in which Jing-mei's strategy of feigned compliance and poor performance further exacerbates the tension.
- d) The emotional and psychological dimensions of the conflict, as Jing-mei navigates her mother's ego-driven aspirations and her own desire to assert her individual identity. Explore how the story's language, imagery, and character development convey the depth of this internal struggle within Jing-mei.

- e) The eventual resolution of the conflict, marked by Jing-mei's scathing rejection of her mother's ambitions, and the mother's subsequent gesture of offering the piano to her adult daughter. Analyze how this transformation in the mother-daughter dynamic suggests a newfound acceptance, even if the deeper motivations behind the mother's actions remain opaque to the narrator.
- f) The broader thematic implications of the conflicts portrayed in the story, particularly in relation to the complexities of the immigrant experience, the generational divide, and the tension between individual aspiration and familial expectations. Discuss how the story's exploration of these themes is enhanced by the representation and transformation of the central conflicts.

PLOT SUMMARY

The narrative centers around the conflicted relationship between a first-generation Chinese American daughter and her immigrant mother, who is driven by the belief that the boundless opportunities of America allow one to transform oneself into anything.

This fundamental tension manifests through the mother's attempt to mold the narrator, Jing-mei, into a musical prodigy, spurred by a desire to vicariously achieve the kind of success represented by her friend Lindo Jong's daughter, a chess prodigy. The impetus for these piano lessons derives from the mother's consumption of popular media, such as television and magazines, which propagate idealized narratives of remarkable children.

In pursuit of this ambition, the mother and daughter engage in an elaborate performance, styling Jing-mei's hair to emulate the iconic child star Shirley Temple and immersing themselves in inspirational stories of precocious youths featured in the magazines the mother brings home from her cleaning jobs.

This maternal drive crystallizes when the pair witness a Chinese piano virtuoso on the Ed Sullivan Show, promptly leading the mother to enlist the services of a retired piano teacher. What ensues is a protracted struggle between the mother's ego-driven aspirations for her daughter's prodigious achievement and the narrator's quiet yet steadfast resistance to being molded into a persona that does not align with her own sense of self.

Jing-mei's strategy involves a feigned compliance, deceiving her mother about the extent of her practice and performing poorly at her recital. However, the mother remains undeterred, persisting in her efforts to transform her daughter until Jing-mei's scathing rejection catalyzes the termination of the piano lessons.

Years later, the mother's gesture of offering the piano to her adult daughter is interpreted as a tacit acknowledgment and acceptance of their irreconcilable differences, though the deeper motivations underlying this act remain opaque to the narrator.

Study the basic information about the main characters of the story. Identify and classify the conflicts the plotline develops round by. Dwell upon the factors that account for them.

CHARACTERS

Mr. Chong, also referred to as "Old Chong," serves as Jing-mei's piano teacher. Despite his physical limitations, including deafness and partial blindness, he remains delighted by Jing-mei's musical abilities, even enthusiastically cheering her on during her disastrous recital performance.

The narrator's **father** makes a brief, peripheral appearance, attending Jing-mei's recital but remaining emotionally detached, with his true reaction – whether one of horror or quiet amusement – left ambiguous to the reader.

Jing-mei, the story's central protagonist, is a rebellious child caught between the pull of her Chinese heritage, embodied by her mother's strict discipline, and the allure of the American culture she encounters outside the home. She resists her mother's relentless push for high achievement, which she recognizes as stemming from her mother's desire to compete with her friend Lindo. Jing-mei is determined to forge her own path, even going so far as to express a wish for her mother's death, a remark she later comes to regret.

Lindo Jong, also known as "Auntie Lindo," is married to Uncle Tin and is the mother of Waverly, Jing-mei's lifelong rival. Lindo goads Jing-mei's mother into boasting about her daughter's musical talents, further intensifying the rivalry between the two families.

Waverly Jong, the "Chinatown's Littlest Chinese Chess Champion," represents Jing-mei's long-standing competitor, as the two girls have grown up together in close proximity.

At the heart of the story, however, is **Jing-mei's mother**, a Chinese immigrant who strives to provide her daughter with the best of both Chinese tradition and American opportunity. However, her tendency to try to mold Jing-mei into her own image, rather than allowing her daughter to develop independently, creates significant tension between the two. The mother's hopes for Jing-mei's future are deeply shaped by her own tragic past, having been forced to abandon her three children when fleeing an abusive marriage in China. By the story's conclusion, Jing-mei gains a deeper understanding and empathy for her mother's sacrifices and motivations.

Study the dominating themes of the story. Which of them do you consider the most acute or close to your sphere of interests or priorities? Are these themes contemporary enough to extrapolate them to the life of today in this country? Draw the necessary parallels.

THEMES

American Dream

Anthropological and scholarly examinations of the immigrant experience in the United States have long acknowledged the potent influence that the notion of the "American Dream" exerts upon new arrivals to the country. These studies have also illuminated the disproportionate burden that this dream often places upon the shoulders of American-born children of immigrants. Typically, immigrant parents are willing to sacrifice nearly everything – careers, family ties, material possessions – in pursuit of new lives in America. Cognizant that they may ultimately fall short of achieving the American Dream of material success and social acceptance, these parents tend to transfer their unfulfilled ambitions onto their offspring.

The narrator's mother in "Two Kinds" exemplifies this phenomenon, as she unequivocally declares to her daughter, "you could be anything you wanted to be in America." She proceeds to enumerate the myriad

possibilities available, from opening a restaurant to securing a lucrative government job with a comfortable retirement. Such intense pressures placed upon the second generation of immigrant families are not unique to any single ethnic group, but the mother in "Two Kinds" and her contemporaries among Chinese American women were particularly invested in their daughters' success.

These women, having been raised in the rigidly patriarchal society of China, were expected to be subservient and reticent, even upon arriving in America. While they harbored anxieties about the liberalizing effects of American culture on their daughters, they also sought to live vicariously through their children's achievements – achievements that they themselves had been denied. As critic E.D. Huntley astutely observes, these "mothers have borne daughters, and invested in them all of the hopes and dreams that have propelled the older generation across an ocean to America. To give those daughters the best that the New World can offer, the mothers have sacrificed their youth and their homeland."

The inherent tension arises, however, when the daughters aspire to make choices that diverge from their mothers' aspirations. As Huntley further elaborates, "the daughters see in their mothers not nurturing angels, only stern disciplinarians, domineering and possessive women who refuse to relinquish any maternal control." This clash between the mothers' vicarious dreams and the daughters' autonomous desires lies at the heart of the narrative's exploration of the American Dream in the context of the immigrant experience.

Identity

When Jing-mei's mother declares to her daughter in the opening paragraph, "you could be anything you wanted to be in America," she is in fact asserting her own vision of her daughter's identity, rather than empowering Jing-mei's autonomous self-determination. The cultural and generational chasm separating Jing-mei from her mother (and the other mother-daughter dyads in *The Joy Luck Club*) is centrally defined by their divergent conceptions of identity.

For Jing-mei's mother, identity is a fixed and unproblematic construct; even in the context of her relocation to California, she steadfastly maintains her self-identification as a Chinese wife and mother. She strives

to uphold Chinese traditions and beliefs within the new cultural milieu, while her engagement with American culture remains transient and superficial, requiring no substantial reconfiguration of her core identity. As her primary exposure to American society is mediated through popular media such as magazines and television, she is able to adopt a passive and uncritical stance as a receptor of novel ideas.

The situation is markedly more complex for Jing-mei, who must navigate intersecting cultural boundaries and obstacles that her mother fails to comprehend. As scholar Walter Shear observes in his analysis of generational differences in *The Joy Luck Club*, each narrative "focuses either on a mother who figures out her world, or on the daughters, who seem caught in a sophisticated cultural trap, knowing possibilities rather than answers, puzzling over the realities that seem to be surrounding them and trying to find their place in an ambivalent world."

The mother-daughter struggle over identity in "Two Kinds" is thus less concerned with Jing-mei's ultimate self-actualization as a prodigy or otherwise, and more centered on their divergent beliefs regarding the nature and mechanisms of identity itself. Jing-mei's mother, for whom destiny and biology are synonymous with identity, holds the fierce but naive conviction that she can single-handedly construct her daughter's identity. In contrast, Jing-mei conceives of identity as an essential and individualized phenomenon, rather than something that can be fabricated or imposed.

This fundamental opposition in their understandings of identity and individuality inevitably fuels the inevitable conflicts between mother and daughter. As the narrator poignantly articulates later in the story, "Unlike my mother, I did not believe I could be anything I wanted to be. I could only be me."

Study the information about Amy Tan's style of writing. List the specific features of it you consider to be the most prominent.

STYLE

Narrative Perspective and Memory

Tan's narrative technique in "Two Kinds" oscillates between the perspectives of the adult narrator and the child protagonist, Jing-mei.

This allows the story to be conveyed through the innocent lens of the child's experience as well as the reflective gaze of the adult, inviting readers to make their own interpretations of the mother-daughter dynamic. This literary device also encourages readers to contemplate the way memory functions, as the narrator's recollections of the past shape and are shaped by the present narrative.

As literary critic Ben Xu observes, memory is not merely a passive recall of events, but an active "experiential relation between the past and the present, projecting a future as well." The narrative structure of "Two Kinds" reflects this bidirectional nature of memory, where the story both constructs and is constructed by the narrator's sense of self and her lived experiences.

Narrative Strategies and Oral Tradition

Tan's incorporation of the Chinese storytelling tradition of "talk story" into the narrative voice of the Chinese American mothers in *The Joy Luck Club*, including Jing-mei's mother, is a significant stylistic choice. As scholar E.D. Huntley explains, this narrative strategy allows these characters to "draw on traditional oral forms to shape their stories and to disguise the urgency and seriousness with which they are attempting to transmit to their daughters the remnants of a culture that is fading even from their own lives."

Through the use of "talk story," Tan gives voice to the Chinese American mothers, who have been "socialized into silence for most of their lives," enabling them to "reconfigure the events of these lives into acceptable public utterances." Painful experiences are recast in the language of folktale, and real life is imbued with the contours of myth, reflecting the mothers' struggle to bridge the cultural divide with their American-born daughters.



Study the historical context of the time Amy Tan created her literary works. Dwell upon the factors you consider to be the crucial to influence her style of writing.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Chinese Immigration to America

San Francisco has long been home to one of the largest and most vibrant Chinese American communities in the United States. When immigrant groups settle in a specific geographic area and establish extensive social and economic structures, these regions are referred to as "enclaves." By the time the mothers in Amy Tan's "The Joy Luck Club" (as well as Tan's own parents) arrived in California, a thriving Chinese American enclave had already taken root.

The first significant wave of Chinese immigration to the United States occurred during the latter half of the 19th century. Until the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which was designed to limit the number of Chinese entering the country and prevented those already present from obtaining citizenship, as many as 30,000 individuals per year arrived in the United States from mainland China. These early immigrants were overwhelmingly male, and as social historian Thomas Sowell notes, "only the hardest, dirtiest, most menial jobs were open to them." They were instrumental in the construction of the transcontinental railroad across the Sierra Nevada mountains and often took on the perilous role of strikebreakers in the mining industry. Despite these challenges, the Chinese immigrants maintained strong social ties and were able to establish crucial economic structures, such as mutual aid societies and credit unions.

When the Chinese Exclusion Act was finally repealed in 1943, more women began arriving from China, which helped to address the gender imbalance and improve the often-seedy reputation of Chinatowns. The overall population of Chinese Americans subsequently experienced a resurgence, surpassing its earlier peak in 1890 by 1950.

The children of these later Chinese immigrants, like Jing-mei in "Two Kinds," were often expected to make significant strides up the American social and economic ladder. While they escaped the anti-Chinese laws and overt prejudice faced by earlier generations, they still encountered a range of difficulties associated with biculturalism, as articulated by scholar E. D. Huntley: "cultural dislocation; the problems and challenges of integrating two cultures; intergenerational struggles within immigrant

families; the conflict between acculturation and adherence to an ancestral tradition, and between assimilation and parochialism."

This nuanced exploration of the Chinese immigrant experience in the United States, from the initial wave of predominantly male laborers to the later influx of families, highlights the complex social, economic, and cultural dynamics that shaped the lives of these communities and their descendants.

Asian American Literature

A recurring motif in Asian American literary works is the exploration of the conflicts and tensions inherent in the bicultural experience. Amy Tan's unique contribution to this genre lies in her articulation of the Chinese American woman's voice and perspective. Critics and social historians have observed that Chinese women have traditionally been acculturated to a culture of silence, with limited opportunities to publicly share their private experiences and narratives.

As scholar E.D. Huntley notes, "Chinese American women writers have been largely but inadvertently responsible for the new and sudden popularity of Asian American writing, a development made even more startling because Chinese women were an almost invisible minority in American society until the early 1950s." Following the lead of Maxine Hong Kingston, Tan has developed literary and narrative techniques, such as the use of the "talk story," that allow the individual experiences of the older generation of Chinese American women to be expressed in mythic and symbolic terms.

Another major contribution of Tan's work to the Asian American literary canon is the employment of multiple narrators within a single text, a device that Huntley states was previously introduced by Kingston in "The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts." Despite her identification with other Asian American writers and the thematic focus of her work, Tan is reluctant to be pigeonholed as solely an "ethnic American" author. In an interview with the online magazine Salon, Tan explained her position, stating, "Placing on writers the responsibility to represent a culture is an onerous burden. Someone who writes fiction is not necessarily writing a depiction of any generalized group, they're writing a very specific story."

Nevertheless, the commercial and critical success of Tan's work is often credited with sparking a renewed interest among publishers and readers in Asian American literature, highlighting the unique perspectives and narrative innovations that this body of work brings to the broader literary landscape.



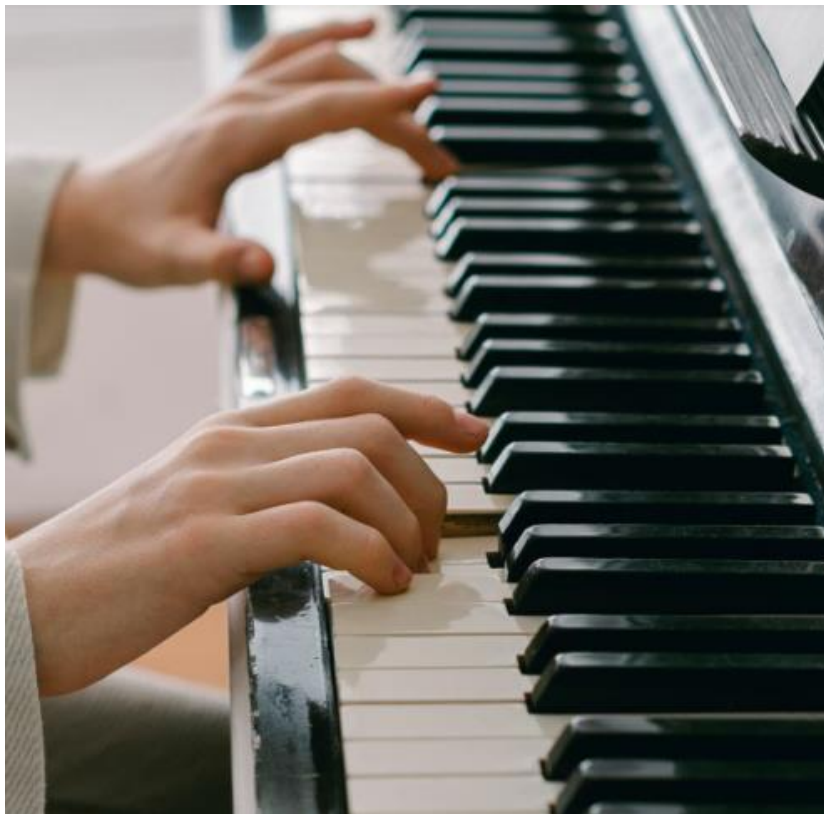
Further Areas of Inquiry and Scholarly Exploration

📖 Conduct a critical examination of Jing-mei's anticipated outcomes for the recital in juxtaposition with her actual performance. Analyze the cognitive and emotional factors influencing her expectations and the subsequent divergence between her intentions and actions. Consider the psychological implications of performance anxiety, parental pressure, and self-perception in shaping Jing-mei's behavior and decision-making processes.

📖 Investigate the multifaceted motivations underlying the narrator's mother's fixation on cultivating prodigious talent in her daughter. While acknowledging the interpersonal rivalry with Lindo Jong, expand the analysis to encompass broader sociocultural forces that may influence this parental mindset. Consider factors such as immigrant experiences, cultural values regarding education and success, intergenerational expectations, and the socioeconomic pressures faced by immigrant families in the pursuit of the "American Dream."

📖 Engage in a nuanced analysis of the metaphorical significance of the musical pieces "Pleading Child" and "Contented Child" as they relate to the narrative arc. Explore how these complementary compositions serve as an allegorical representation of the protagonist's journey, personal growth, and the complex dynamics of the mother-daughter relationship. Consider how this musical duality reflects themes of struggle, acceptance, and the reconciliation of conflicting identities within the broader context of immigrant experiences and intergenerational relationships.

📖 Undertake a genealogical investigation of your family history, employing oral history methodologies and archival research where applicable. Analyze the challenges encountered by your ancestors during their process of cultural assimilation. Identify and evaluate the cultural traditions that have persisted through generations, despite the pressures of acculturation. Contextualize your findings within the broader framework of immigration studies and cultural adaptation theories, drawing parallels and contrasts with the experiences depicted in Tan's work. This analysis should consider factors such as temporal and geographical variations in immigration patterns, socioeconomic status, and the specific cultural backgrounds involved in the assimilation process.



NADINE GORDIMER



Study the biographical information about the author. Highlight the major facts which are sure to influence her choices of literary themes, characters, settings, moral implications, etc. Search for extra information about Nadine Gordimer that may interest you as an interpreter of her literary works.

BIOGRAPHY

Nadine Gordimer's "Once Upon a Time" is set in a white suburb in her native South Africa. The narrative is divided into two distinct parts: the first presents a first-person account by a writer who hears a disturbing sound in the night, while the second comprises a bedtime story she tells herself as she lies awake. This bedtime story, a parody of a fairy tale, depicts a husband and wife who, despite their "happily ever after," confront their fears by increasingly fortifying their home. Their security measures culminate in a high wall topped with razor wire, yet these very precautions introduce their own perils.

The narrative portrays white individuals who harbor fears of the black population they have historically oppressed, but its overarching theme — that fear can render one "a victim already" — is universally applicable.

As with much of Gordimer's oeuvre, the implicit critique of apartheid, or government-sanctioned racial segregation, in "Once Upon a Time" has resulted in its being more widely read outside South Africa than within it. The story was initially published in a shorter format in the South African alternative newspaper *Weekly Mail*, in the issue spanning December 23, 1988, to January 12, 1989, under the title "Once Upon a Time: A Fairy Tale of Suburban Life." Its current form appeared in the Winter 1989 issue of the American journal *Salmagundi*, and subsequently in Gordimer's fifteenth collection of short stories, *Jump and Other Stories* (1991).

Read the story ONCE UPON THE TIME and fulfill the tasks that follow.

PLOTLINE ANALYSIS

Chronological Timeline

Construct a detailed timeline that charts the key narrative events in "Once Upon a Time" in chronological order. Your timeline should include the following elements:

- a) Identify and briefly summarize the two distinct narrative sections that comprise the overall story structure. Explain how these two sections are connected and how the transition between them is achieved.
- b) For each of the two narrative sections, create a chronological sequence of the major plot points, indicating the specific order in which they unfold. Be sure to include details about the central characters, their actions and motivations, as well as any significant shifts or turning points in the development of the story.
- c) Analyze how the chronology of events in the second, embedded narrative section relates to and builds upon the chronology established in the first section. Discuss any instances where the timeline becomes complicated or nonlinear, and explain the narrative purpose behind these structural choices.
- d) Considering the complete chronology of the story, identify the key moments that propel the plot forward and create a rising sense of tension and foreboding. Explain how these pivotal events contribute to the overall thematic and emotional arc of the work.
- e) Finally, reflect on how the layered chronology and structure of "Once Upon a Time" shapes the reader's experience and

understanding of the story. Discuss the effects created by the interplay between the two narrative strands and how this influences the story's ultimate impact and meaning.

In your response, be sure to support your observations and analyses with specific details and evidence from the text. Use clear, formal academic language and structure your timeline and discussion in a well-organized, coherent manner.

Conflicts

Examine how the story depicts and develops various types of conflicts, and how these conflicts are transformed throughout the narrative.

Identify the key conflicts present in the story, and classify them into the following categories:

- a) Individual/Psychological Conflict
- b) Interpersonal Conflict
- c) Societal/Systemic Conflict

For each type of conflict, provide a detailed analysis of how it is introduced, evolves, and ultimately transforms (or remains unresolved) by the story's conclusion. Support your analysis with specific textual evidence.

Discuss how the shifting nature of these conflicts reflects broader themes or messages in the story. Consider how the conflicts relate to the story's structure, symbolism, and the author's wider social and political commentary.

Analyze the role of the narrative perspective (the first-person narrator and the embedded fairy tale) in shaping the reader's understanding of the different conflicts. How does the dual narrative structure contribute to the representation and transformation of these conflicts?

Drawing on your analysis, write a cohesive essay that demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the story's complex treatment of various conflicts. Your essay should make an insightful argument about how the conflicts in "Once Upon a Time" reflect and comment on broader societal issues.

PLOT SUMMARY

Nadine Gordimer's short story "Once Upon a Time" is structured in two parts, the first of which features a first-person narrator who may be interpreted as a representation of the author herself. In this introductory section, the narrator recounts declining an editor's request to contribute a work of children's fiction for an anthology, firmly stating, "I don't write children's stories."

As the narrator continues, she describes being roused from sleep by a disruptive noise, prompting her to vigilantly analyze every sound and shadow, consumed by the suspicion of an intruder's presence. Despite the absence of security measures, the narrator acknowledges her heightened state of fear, citing local reports of violent crime, and concludes that she has already been psychologically "a victim."

The narrator eventually deduces that the unsettling noises were merely byproducts of her home's structural settlement above an underground gold mine, whose periodic rock fractures send tremors through the earth. Unable to return to sleep, the narrator resolves to "tell myself a story; a bedtime story."

This embedded narrative begins in a fairy tale-esque manner, introducing a nameless suburban couple with a stereotypical middle-class lifestyle. They belong to a local Neighborhood Watch and have fortified their property with a brick wall and ominous warning sign.

The couple's principal source of trepidation emerges as the "people of another colour" residing beyond their insular enclave, who are only permitted entry as domestic staff. Seeking to bolster their sense of security, the husband installs electronic gates, underscoring the couple's profound fear of potential incursions by these perceived outsiders.

The couple's child and his friends playfully incorporate the home's electronic gate into their imaginative "cops and robbers" games. However, following a neighbor's burglary, the family's domestic worker pleads with the husband to heighten security further, leading him to install burglar alarms and window bars at his wife's insistence. As the surrounding residents adopt similar measures, the frequent activation of these alarms

becomes a normalized nocturnal occurrence, paradoxically facilitating undetected break-ins and amplifying the community's climate of fear.

As unemployment rises, an increasing number of the "people of another colour" begin congregating in the suburb, prompting the wife's sympathetic provision of tea and bread, which in turn arouses the husband's suspicion that these individuals will return to burglarize their home. The couple's anxieties, however, are not wholly unfounded, as the narrative intermittently gestures towards genuine incidents of violence and criminality that have precipitated the family's escalating security measures.

The husband's elderly mother, referred to as a "wise old witch," gifts the family funds to elevate their perimeter wall, while presenting the young son with a Space Man costume and a storybook. During evening walks with their dog, the couple now preoccupies itself with comparing the varying defensive fortifications adopted by their neighbors, rather than appreciating their gardens.

Alarmed by the cat's capacity to scale the wall, the couple decides to crown it with coils of razor wire from a company called "DRAGON'S TEETH," ostensibly ensuring the family's complete security within this shining, circular barricade. Once more, the narrative's concluding line reiterates their state of ostensible "happily ever after."

As the mother reads the son a bedtime fairy tale, the boy, mimicking the role of "Prince Charming rescuing Sleeping Beauty," becomes fatally ensnared in the razor wire, his struggles only serving to exacerbate his injuries until the adults extract his lifeless "bleeding mass."

Study the basic information about the main characters of the story. Identify and classify the conflicts the plotline develops round by. Dwell upon the factors that account for them.

CHARACTERS

The Unnamed Boy: The young protagonist of the story is never named, described, or given a voice, serving instead as an anonymous, faceless, and silent representative of countless children in similar circumstances. Little is known about him beyond the narrator's brief observations - that he is

"little", loves his pet cat and dog, and possesses the imaginative capacity common to young children, evidenced by his pretend play and enjoyment of fairy tale stories read to him by his mother. His inability to comprehend the fears that motivate his parents' increased home security measures further emphasizes his innocence and vulnerability.

The Gardener: Introduced as an "itinerant gardener" who has been "highly recommended by the neighbors", the gardener is a black South African tending the gardens of white suburbanites. The subtle implication is that, in the minds of the white residents, the trustworthiness of black workers is a subject of doubt and suspicion. Nevertheless, the gardener and his colleagues appear to perform their duties well, as the family is able to admire the visual fruits of their labor prior to the heightened security measures. When the boy becomes trapped in the razor wire, the gardener is the first to respond, cutting his hands in a desperate but ultimately futile attempt at rescue, his distress conveyed through the narrator's description of him as "weeping".

The Housemaid: Similarly, a black South African employee in the white suburban household, the housemaid is consistently described using the qualifier "trusted", implying a higher degree of confidence in her reliability compared to the more transient gardener. However, she too falls prey to the pervasive fears that grip the family, urging the installation of security measures and discouraging the wife's attempts to provide aid to the unemployed congregating outside. When the tragedy occurs, the housemaid, described as "hysterical", joins the gardener in the frantic effort to free the boy from the razor wire.

The Husband: A middle-class white South African living in a racially segregated suburb, the husband is employed in an unspecified occupation that provides a comfortable standard of living for his family. He exhibits a somewhat more pragmatic and less fearful perspective than his wife, attempting to reassure her about the perceived threats, but ultimately capitulating to her demands for increased home security. Though deeply affected by the loss of his son, the husband's emotional response is less pronounced than that of the servants who discover the tragic outcome.

The Wife: The middle-class white homemaker embodies the anxieties and prejudices typical of her social and historical context. Unfamiliar with

the black population beyond her "trusted" domestic staff, she harbors irrational fears of being overrun by "such people", and is the driving force behind the escalating security measures enacted by the household. Despite her tenderness towards her son, she displays a relatively muted emotional reaction to his death, in contrast with the overt distress of the gardener and housemaid.

The Narrator: Introduced as a writer who has refused to contribute a children's story, the first-person narrator frames the narrative as a bedtime tale told to herself after being roused by unsettling noises in her own home. Through this meta-narrative device, the narrator serves as a detached observer, offering commentary on the psychological dynamics and social tensions underlying the suburban family's tragic circumstances.

The Wise Old Witch: The husband's mother, the "wise old witch" character introduces an element of folkloric symbolism into the story. Her role is to foreshadow danger through her warnings about the trustworthiness of the domestic staff, and to provide the young boy with ostensibly innocent gifts - a space suit costume and a fairy tale book - that inadvertently contribute to the tragic outcome. Her position as the patriarch's mother evokes the archetype of the malevolent crone found in many traditional tales.

Study the dominating themes of the story. Which of them do you consider the most acute or close to your sphere of interests or priorities? Are these themes contemporary enough to extrapolate them to the life of today in this country? Draw the necessary parallels.

THEMES

Apartheid

Gordimer's narrative deliberately refrains from explicitly naming the geographic locale or identifying the racial demographics of the characters, yet astute readers familiar with the author's oeuvre will readily recognize the setting as South Africa under the oppressive system of apartheid. This strategic omission of specific details serves to imbue the story with a sense of universality, while simultaneously underscoring the pervasive and deeply entrenched nature of the racial segregation that pervades the social fabric.

Through her nuanced handling of this thematic undercurrent, Gordimer exposes the multifaceted nature of the damage wrought by apartheid, implicating both the oppressed and the ostensibly privileged segments of the population. The plight of the marginalized Black characters, excluded from certain residential areas and subjected to state-sanctioned violence, is conveyed with a matter-of-fact matter-of-factness, as if their oppression has become a normalized part of the narrative's backdrop.

Yet Gordimer's deeper insight lies in the way she illustrates the corrosive effect of apartheid on the white characters, who, despite their apparent material advantages, are depicted as constantly on edge, their sense of security perpetually undermined by an atmosphere of fear and mistrust. The tragic demise of the young boy serves as a symbolic manifestation of a more profound societal malaise, one in which the white characters, despite their "happily ever after" façade, are ultimately deprived of the very human connections and empathy that would render them fully realized individuals.

In this manner, Gordimer subverts the traditional binary of oppressor and oppressed, instead presenting a nuanced portrait of a society fractured and dehumanized by the insidious impact of institutionalized racism. Her story stands as a thought-provoking exploration of the far-reaching consequences of apartheid, a system that not only marginalizes and deprives the subjugated, but also ultimately corrodes the very foundations of the dominant group's own humanity.

Fear

At the core of Gordimer's "Once Upon a Time" lies the pervasive and debilitating presence of fear. This central motif serves to unify the narrative's two distinct sections, as the husband, the wife, and the trusted housemaid each grapple with their own anxieties and the resulting impulse to erect metaphorical and literal barriers against perceived threats.

Ironically, the characters' escalating attempts to fortify themselves against danger ultimately undermine their sense of security, culminating in the tragic death of the young boy. The story suggests that the genesis of this fear does not stem from direct awareness or understanding of tangible

risks, but rather from an insidious process of indoctrination and socialization.

The husband and wife are conditioned by the "wise" advice of the husband's mother to view with suspicion those "of another colour" seeking employment, while the housemaid is implicitly characterized as "untrustworthy" by virtue of her occupation. Even in the absence of immediate danger, the characters' fears are perpetuated and amplified through a feedback loop of gossip, media narratives, and a competitive "arms race" of security measures among the neighbors.

As the characters' world contracts inward, their fear drives them to ever more extreme measures of isolation and exclusion. What began as rules to keep the "wrong people" out of the suburb ultimately culminates in a wall around the family's home and yard, and a refusal to even leave a child's tricycle unattended.

The narrator, while not immune to these same anxieties, recognizes the insidious and self-destructive nature of unchecked fear. Unlike the husband and wife, she does not shield herself behind bars and alarms, yet she remains acutely aware of the ways in which her own fear renders her a "victim already." Her bedtime story, then, serves as a cautionary tale, a means of confronting and grappling with the profound societal implications of this pervasive and debilitating emotion.

Through this thematic exploration, Gordimer invites the reader to consider the complex interplay between individual psychology, social conditioning, and the erosion of community in the face of unrelenting fear. The story's nuanced treatment of this theme underscores the author's keen insight into the corrosive effects of unchecked anxiety on the fabric of human relationships and the collective pursuit of security and belonging.

Imagination

Gordimer's "Once Upon a Time" presents a nuanced and complex perspective on the function of imagination. The narrative situates imagination at the heart of the creative process, as both Gordimer herself and the story's narrator, a writer, harness the power of imagination to craft their respective tales. Through the act of storytelling, both the author and

the narrator are able to access and convey profound truths that may remain obscured in the realm of nonfiction.

However, the story also illuminates the potential dangers inherent in the exercise of imagination. For the characters within the narrative, imagination serves as a double-edged sword, fueling anxieties and fears that are not necessarily grounded in tangible reality. The narrator, roused from her sleep by an unidentified sound, immediately succumbs to imaginative speculation, conjuring the worst-case scenarios. Similarly, the husband and wife, despite the absence of any actual threats to their safety or property, allow their imaginations to run rampant, conjuring visions of "unemployed loiterers" and intrusions by unwelcome outsiders.

Ironically, as the characters' imaginations expand, their physical world contracts, as they resort to increasingly elaborate security measures to insulate themselves from perceived threats. This dynamics highlights the profound disconnect between the white characters and the broader social fabric, a separation that allows for the proliferation of unfounded imaginative projections in the absence of genuine understanding and engagement.

Even the young boy's imaginative play, traditionally a symbol of childhood innocence, becomes permeated with the anxieties of the adult world. His pretense of being a "prince" confronting the razor-wire "DRAGON'S TEETH" ultimately leads to his tragic demise, underscoring the ways in which the distorted, fear-driven imaginations of the adults have irreparably corrupted the playful, exploratory nature of the child's own imaginative capacities.

Through this multifaceted exploration of the role of imagination, Gordimer challenges the reader to consider the complex interplay between creative expression, psychological projection, and the socio-political realities that shape individual and collective experiences. The story's nuanced treatment of this theme illuminates the author's sophisticated understanding of the power and peril inherent in the human capacity for imaginative thought.

Study the information about Nadine Gordimer's style of writing. List the specific features of it you consider to be the most prominent.

STYLE

Verisimilitude

Gordimer's literary works frequently exhibit a strong sense of verisimilitude, wherein readers are compelled to treat the narrative as factual, suspending disbelief even in the face of fantastical elements. This immersive quality encourages readers to empathize with fictional characters and accept the plausibility of the events described. However, in the short story "Once Upon a Time," Gordimer subverts this conventional literary device.

The story's two-part structure serves to destabilize the reader's expectations of verisimilitude. The opening section presents a straightforward, realistic account narrated by a writer, suggesting an authentic, unembellished depiction of events. In contrast, the subsequent section is explicitly framed as a "bedtime story," invoking the stylistic conventions of folk tales and fairy tales. The narrator's use of artificial, formulaic language, such as the repetition of "living happily ever after," and her reference to characters by their archetypal roles rather than individual names, further reinforces the sense of fabrication.

Folktale

By drawing on the tropes of folktales, Gordimer creates an atmosphere of artificiality, distancing the reader from the narrative and preventing them from becoming fully immersed in the characters' experiences. This strategic disruption of verisimilitude allows Gordimer to deliver a thematic warning about the dangers of fear and victimization, as the reader is encouraged to approach the story with a more detached, analytical perspective.

The abrupt, unsettling conclusion of the "bedtime story" within "Once Upon a Time," in which the seemingly protective "DRAGON'S TEETH" security measures result in the tragic death of the child, exemplifies Gordimer's exploration of the genre of the "jump story." This sudden, violent twist creates a sense of unease and fear, but the story's

exaggerated, fable-like qualities provide a safe platform for the reader to engage with these unsettling themes.

Through her innovative use of literary devices and genre conventions, Gordimer challenges the reader's assumptions about the nature of fiction and the relationship between the narrative and reality, ultimately using the story as a vehicle to confront deeper social and psychological concerns.



COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Late 1980s: In the final years of the state-sponsored system of segregation known as apartheid, South Africa witnessed strikes, boycotts, and riots that resulted in hundreds of fatalities.

Today: Despite being a democracy, South Africa faces significant challenges such as high unemployment and escalating poverty, leading to numerous protest demonstrations and instances of violence.

Late 1980s: Frederik Willem (F. W.) de Klerk is elected as the South African president and, in his inaugural address, calls for negotiations aimed at establishing a non-racial South Africa. Like his predecessors since the country's independence in 1931, de Klerk is white and was elected solely by white voters.

Today: On May 9, 2009, Jacob Zuma, a Black member of the African National Congress, is elected president of South Africa. He is the fourth president—and the fourth Black president—since Black South Africans were granted the right to vote in 1994.

Late 1980s: The metropolitan area of Johannesburg, South Africa's largest city, encompasses Soweto, a designated area for Black South Africans who were forcibly removed from regions allocated for whites, as well as Lenasia, a district established during apartheid to accommodate Asian residents.

Today: Legally, South Africa's four primary ethnic groups—whites, blacks, Asians or Indians, and “colored” individuals (mixed-race)—are

permitted to reside anywhere they choose. However, in practice, the majority of the nation's impoverished citizens are Black, and they predominantly inhabit slum areas that remain racially segregated.

Late 1980s: The South African mining industry, particularly focused on gold, diamonds, and coal, has one of the poorest safety records among industrialized nations, with more than 500 miners dying in an average year.

Today: Due to the implementation of new safety regulations and the closure of several unsafe mines, a South African mine workers' union reports that 2008 witnessed the lowest number of mining fatalities since record-keeping began in 1904.



Study the historical context of the time Nadine Gordimer created her literary works. Dwell upon the factors you consider to be the crucial to influence her style of writing.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Apartheid

Gordimer's writing career spanned the greater part of the 20th century, with her first published story appearing in 1937 and her final novel being released in 2012, the year of her death. However, the most formative and influential period for her literary style and thematic preoccupations was the era of apartheid in her native South Africa.

Apartheid, the institutionalized system of racial segregation and discrimination that was officially implemented in 1948 and endured until the early 1990s, cast a long shadow over Gordimer's artistic development and the content of her work. As a white South African writer who came of age under the oppressive regime, Gordimer was inextricably shaped by the social, political, and moral upheaval of her time.

The relentless dehumanization and systematic repression of the country's Black majority population profoundly informed Gordimer's literary

sensibilities. Her intimate familiarity with the pervasive injustices, the daily indignities, and the devastating human toll of apartheid manifested in her unflinching, documentary-like style of storytelling. Gordimer's writing frequently incorporated a keen sociological gaze, scrutinizing the complex power dynamics, the psychological undercurrents, and the moral quandaries that permeated South African society.

Moreover, Gordimer's position as a member of the privileged white minority class imbued her work with a strong sense of moral and political engagement. Refusing to be a passive bystander, she used her literary platform to amplify the voices of the oppressed, to expose the complicity and cognitive dissonance of the white elite, and to grapple with the moral compromises inherent in her own position of relative comfort and security.

Gordimer's writing style, characterized by a sparse, understated prose and a resistance to easy moralizing, can be seen as a reflection of her deep-seated commitment to nuance and her unwillingness to provide simplistic solutions to the multifaceted challenges of apartheid. Her narratives often eschewed dramatic climaxes or tidy resolutions, instead privileging ambiguity, moral ambivalence, and the exploration of the gray areas between absolutes.

Ultimately, the historical context of apartheid South Africa, with its attendant issues of systemic racism, political repression, and the conflicting interests of different social groups, was the crucible that forged Gordimer's distinctive literary voice. Her writing seamlessly integrated the personal and the political, the local and the universal, in a manner that continues to resonate with readers and scholars alike.



Further Areas of Inquiry and Scholarly Exploration

📖 Conduct a comprehensive examination of witch characters in classic fairy tales, focusing on collections by Hans Christian Andersen and the Brothers Grimm. Produce a scholarly paper comparing and contrasting

the role of the "wise old witch" in "Once Upon a Time" with the portrayal of witches in these traditional narratives. Analyze the symbolic functions, moral implications, and narrative significance of these characters within their respective cultural and literary contexts.

📖 Undertake a comparative analysis of paternal roles in Nadine Gordimer's "Once Upon a Time" and S. A. Bodeen's "The Compound" (2008). Craft an academic paper exploring the motivations, actions, and consequences of the fathers' decisions in both narratives. Consider themes of protection, control, and the unintended repercussions of paternal authority within dystopian settings.

📖 Investigate the sociopolitical climate of 1933 America, contextualizing Franklin D. Roosevelt's inaugural address. Conduct a diachronic analysis comparing the fears prevalent in 1933 with those addressed in Gordimer's narrative. Produce a scholarly paper examining the evolution of societal anxieties, their cultural manifestations, and their impact on political rhetoric and social behavior.

📖 Compose an original short story exploring the theme of technological advancement leading to unintended negative consequences. Incorporate elements from established science fiction tropes, potentially drawing inspiration from works like James Cameron's Terminator franchise. Consider employing narrative techniques from fairy tales, graphic novels, or other relevant genres to enhance the story's impact and relevance.

📖 Conduct a rigorous examination of contemporary advertisements for home security systems across various media platforms. Develop a multimedia presentation showcasing selected advertisements and providing a critical analysis of their rhetorical strategies. Evaluate the ethical implications of fear-based marketing techniques and their potential societal impacts. Consider the balance between reasonable representation of risk and the exploitation of consumer anxieties.

📖 Research the technical and social aspects of gold mining in the Western Deep Level mines of Johannesburg, South Africa. Prepare a comprehensive presentation elucidating the unique challenges and considerations of extreme depth mining. Include detailed explanations of mine structure, focusing on "stopes and passages." Analyze the narrator's emphasis on potential accidents in "Once Upon a Time" within the context of real-world mining risks and socioeconomic factors influencing the industry.



FLANNERY O'CONNOR



Study the biographical information about the author. Highlight the major facts which are sure to influence her choices of literary themes, characters, settings, moral implications, etc. Search for extra information about Flannery O'Connor that may interest you as an interpreter of her literary works.

BIOGRAPHY

Born on March 25, 1925, in Savannah, Georgia, Mary Flannery O'Connor was the only child of Edwin Francis and Regina Cline O'Connor. She grew up in a devout Roman Catholic family, a distinct minority in the American South. At the age of thirteen, O'Connor's father was diagnosed with disseminated lupus, a hereditary condition. Subsequently, the family relocated to Milledgeville, Georgia, her mother's hometown, where they lived in her ancestral home at the town's center. Edwin O'Connor passed away two years later.

O'Connor attended parochial school in Savannah before graduating from public high school in Milledgeville. She then enrolled at the Georgia State College for Women, where she studied social sciences and developed a keen interest in cartooning. After graduation, she was resolute in her desire to pursue writing, ultimately earning a master's degree from the esteemed University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. While still a student, she dropped "Mary" from her name and published her first short story, "The Geranium."

After completing her studies, O'Connor undertook a residency at the Yaddo writer's colony in Saratoga Springs, New York. In 1949, she moved to New York City, later residing for a time with the literary couple Robert and Sally Fitzgerald while working on her first novel, *Wise Blood*. However, she fell ill with lupus in 1950, prompting her return to Milledgeville permanently. Accompanied by her mother, she settled on a dairy farm named Andalusia on the outskirts of town, where she divided her time between convalescing, raising peacocks, and writing.

In 1952, *Wise Blood* was published, followed by her acclaimed short story collection *A Good Man Is Hard to Find* in 1955 and her novel *The Violent Bear It Away* in 1960. O'Connor received numerous fellowships and was a two-time winner of the prestigious O. Henry Award for short fiction. Her devout Catholicism informed her resilient attitude in the face of a debilitating illness. The treatments she underwent caused painful side effects, and, coupled with the lupus, weakened the bones in her hips, necessitating the use of crutches. When her health permitted, she gave readings and lectures, despite enduring constant discomfort.

O'Connor passed away from kidney failure resulting from lupus complications in 1964. Her final work, *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, was published posthumously the following year. Just one year before her death, in 1963, O'Connor won her second O. Henry Award for "Everything That Rises Must Converge," which powerfully depicts a troubled mother-son relationship. In 1965, the story was included in her respected collection *Everything That Rises Must Converge*.

Critics widely regard "Everything That Rises Must Converge" as a prime example of O'Connor's literary and moral brilliance. The narrative exemplifies her capacity to expose human frailty and delve into significant moral questions through ordinary situations. Considered a classic of the short story genre, "Everything That Rises Must Converge" has been frequently anthologized. The story recounts a fateful bus trip taken by an arrogant young man and his bigoted mother, who insists on her son's company due to her discomfort with the recently integrated bus system.

The tensions in their relationship escalate when a black mother and son board the same bus. O'Connor employs biting irony to illuminate the ignorance and blindness of her characters. The story's title alludes to

an underlying religious message central to her work: her aim to reveal the sinful nature of humanity that often goes unrecognized in the modern, secular world.

Read the story EVERYTHING THAT RISES MUST CONVERGE and fulfill the tasks that follow.

PLOTLINE ANALYSIS

Chronological Timeline

Carefully review the provided plot summary of O'Connor's story. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, construct a detailed timeline that accurately reflects the chronological order of significant occurrences throughout the plot. For each major event, provide a concise description and note the specific paragraph or section where it takes place in the original text.

Additionally, analyze how the chronology of events contributes to the development of central themes and the overall narrative structure. In a well-organized paragraph, discuss the significance of the timeline in shaping the reader's experience and interpretation of the story.

Be sure in:

- a) Correct sequencing of plot events.
- b) Insightful descriptions capturing the essence of each key moment.
- c) Precise citation of textual evidence.
- d) Sophisticated analysis of how chronology influences theme and structure.
- e) Cohesive, academic-level writing style.

Conflicts

Analyze the various types of conflicts present in the narrative and examine how they evolve and reshape the central characters and their relationships over the course of the story.

- a) Identify and discuss the key internal and external conflicts experienced by the protagonist, Julian, and his mother. How do these conflicts stem from their differing worldviews, values, and lived experiences as members of the same family?
- b) Examine the racial and socio-economic tensions that simmer beneath the surface of the narrative. How do these broader societal

conflicts manifest in the interactions between Julian, his mother, and the other passengers on the bus? Analyze how these conflicts are both reflected and challenged through the symbolic gestures and confrontations that take place.

- c) Trace the transformation of the conflict between Julian and his mother, from his initial feelings of embarrassment and superiority, to the final, heartbreaking realization of her vulnerability. Discuss how this evolving conflict reveals the complex and nuanced nature of their relationship.
- d) Consider the role of class, privilege, and the legacy of the antebellum South in shaping the characters' perspectives and actions. Discuss how the historical and cultural context of the story informs the representation of these conflicts.
- e) Analyze the significance of the repeated motif of the flamboyant hat. How does this symbolic object serve to highlight the intersections of race, class, and gender within the narrative's exploration of conflict?
- f) In conclusion, reflect on how the author's artistic choices in depicting these various conflicts contribute to the overall themes and meaning of the story. Discuss how the resolution of the central conflicts leaves the reader with a sense of the characters' humanity and the larger societal challenges they face.

PLOT SUMMARY

The narrative is set in the American South during the early 1960s and centers around the protagonist, a young aspiring writer named Julian, who reluctantly accompanies his mother to her weekly weight-loss group meetings. Julian's mother attends these sessions due to her high blood pressure, which she considers one of her limited remaining pleasures. However, since the bus system became racially integrated, Julian's mother has steadfastly refused to utilize public transportation unaccompanied, a habit which Julian dreads perpetuating despite feeling duty-bound to acquiesce to his mother's wishes.

On the particular evening depicted, Julian's mother exhibits indecision regarding the donning of a flamboyant new hat, ultimately deciding to wear the accessory and rationalizing its exorbitant cost by contending that no others will possess an identical item. As they walk to the bus stop, Julian's mother reflects upon her family's distinguished legacy, which has

instilled within her a robust sense of self-identity. She implies that her current impoverished state is inconsequential, as she hails from a renowned and formerly prosperous plantation-owning family of the pre-Civil War South.

Reminiscing about her family's antebellum plantation, Julian's mother makes references to the institution of slavery. While Julian secretly harbors a yearning for the family mansion, he finds his mother's condescending and racist recollections regarding her former family nurse, described as an "old darky," to be wholly intolerable.

Upon boarding the public conveyance, Julian's mother proudly discusses her son's literary ambitions with their fellow white passengers, much to Julian's acute embarrassment. In this moment, Julian detaches himself from the interaction, contemplating his mother's sacrifices while simultaneously feeling a sense of superiority towards her outdated and prejudiced worldviews, including her fervent pride in the South's contentious past.

As a black male passenger boards the bus, Julian purposefully relocates to sit adjacent to him, cognizant that this action will provoke his mother's discomfort. Wishing to appear sympathetic, Julian attempts to engage the disinterested man in conversation. Nevertheless, Julian covertly takes pleasure in his mother's disquietude, beginning to fantasize about potentially introducing black companions or even a mixed-race romantic partner into the family dynamic.

At the subsequent stop, a black woman and her young son board the public conveyance. Coincidentally, the female passenger is adorned in the same flamboyant hat as Julian's mother. Occupying the only available seats, the woman and child sit adjacent to Julian and his mother respectively. Julian is amused by the symmetry of the identical headpieces and the notion that, according to their seating arrangement, his mother and the black woman have effectively "swapped" sons.

Julian's mother regains her composure and proceeds to engage the young boy seated beside her in conversation. The child's mother reprimands her son and, when an empty seat becomes available, relocates him to sit next to her. Nevertheless, Julian's mother persists in jocular interaction with the boy.

As the four individuals disembark the bus at the shared destination, Julian attempts to prevent his mother from bestowing a penny upon the young boy, but she endeavors to do so regardless. Enraged by this condescending gesture, the child's mother physically strikes Julian's mother to the ground. Julian callously informs his prone parent that she has received her just desserts.

Initially, Julian's mother appears bewildered and declines his offer of assistance in rising. She regards him with an unfamiliar gaze and proceeds in the direction of their shared domicile. Julian then taunts his mother, declaring that the flamboyant hat suited the black woman more appropriately and that "the old world is gone" - intimating that her antiquated gentility and manners are now rendered worthless.

Laboring to breathe, Julian's mother inquires after her grandfather and childhood nurse, Caroline. Only then does Julian recognize that she is experiencing a debilitating stroke. He rushes to her side, weeping and employing endearing terms such as "darling," "sweetheart," and "Mama" as her facial features distort and her eyes close. Julian hurries to procure aid, though he realizes that his mother's condition has become irrecoverable.

Study the basic information about the main characters of the story. Identify and classify the conflicts the plotline develops round by. Dwell upon the factors that account for them.

CHARACTERS

Caroline - Caroline was the childhood nurse of Julian's mother, referred to by the mother in a condescending manner as an "old darky," despite acknowledging Caroline's exceptional care and devotion. Caroline's close relationship with the mother in her youth suggests a complex, intimate dynamic that persists even in the mother's later life.

Carver - Carver is a young African American boy who boards the bus with his mother. The mother's gentle, playful interaction with Carver, in contrast to her suspicion of adult black individuals, reveals a nuanced perspective on race relations - one of paternalistic condescension rather than outright bigotry.

The African American Woman - This woman, boarding the bus with her young son, represents a symbolic "rise" of the African American community in the segregated South. Her direct, unapologetic demeanor stands in stark contrast to the genteel mannerisms of Julian's mother, leading to a confrontation that underscores the tensions of a society in transition.

Julian - The protagonist, a young white man grappling with his mother's outdated racist views. While professing liberal, progressive ideals, Julian's attempts to confront his mother's prejudices are revealed to be motivated more by a desire to antagonize her than a genuine commitment to racial justice. His complex relationship with his mother, and his ultimate failure to enact meaningful change, highlight the nuances and challenges of navigating social and ideological divides.

Julian's Mother - An aging Southern matriarch, descended from a once-wealthy family, who now clings to her notions of gentility and racial superiority. Her conflicted relationship with her son Julian, as well as her final, poignant request for her childhood nurse Caroline, suggest a deep-seated psychological and emotional complexity beneath her outward adherence to outdated social norms.

The African American Man - This character, with whom Julian attempts to engage in conversation, serves as a foil to Julian's performative liberalism. The man's disinterest in interacting with Julian underscores the limitations of Julian's attempts to assert his progressive views without genuine understanding or empathy.

Study the dominating themes of the story. Which of them do you consider the most acute or close to your sphere of interests or priorities? Are these themes contemporary enough to extrapolate them to the life of today in this country? Draw the necessary parallels.

THEMES

Social Class

Julian's mother clings steadfastly to the vestiges of her family's former wealth and social standing, a marker of identity that she believes confers inherent worth and superiority. The family's once "respected" name and

the now-dilapidated former mansion serve as touchstones of her diminished social status, a source of both pride and lament. Her insistence on maintaining the outward trappings of gentility, even as she struggles financially, reflects a deep-seated need to preserve her perceived social standing.

Conversely, Julian's rejection of his mother's obsession with class and lineage represents a repudiation of the very values she holds dear. Yet, paradoxically, Julian too harbors a covert longing for the aristocratic heritage his mother extols, suggesting an unresolved psychological attachment to the very class system he publicly disdains. His mother's financial support has enabled his own social mobility, creating an uneasy dependency that Julian seeks to overcome through an antagonistic confrontation of her racist views.

The collision of these divergent attitudes toward social class becomes a locus of tension and conflict between mother and son. Julian's mother's clinging to outdated social mores, and Julian's performative progressivism, both stem from a shared, if unacknowledged, need to assert their perceived social worth in the face of economic and cultural upheaval. The story's denouement, with the mother's final, poignant invocation of her childhood nurse Caroline, further underscores the deep-rooted complexities and unresolved issues of class and identity that haunt both characters.

Morals and Morality

The story presents a clash between the contrasting moral frameworks embodied by Julian and his mother, highlighting the complexities and contradictions inherent in their respective ethical worldviews.

Julian's mother grounds her moral perspective in the customs and traditions of her family's social standing, believing that one's conduct and identity are inextricably linked. She considers herself morally superior by virtue of her family's historical status, and this sense of innate worth extends to her condemnation of those she deems socially inferior, particularly African Americans. Her moral code is rooted in a rigid adherence to politeness and the preservation of her family's reputation, which she views as the ultimate measure of goodness.

In stark contrast, Julian rejects his mother's moral framework as outdated and oppressive, dismissing her notions of propriety as mere relics of a bygone social order. He fancies himself a progressive thinker, believing that by flouting social conventions and deliberately antagonizing his mother, he is imparting a valuable moral lesson. However, the narrative reveals Julian's moral position to be driven by self-centeredness, arrogance, and a resentment that ultimately undermines any genuine ethical foundation.

The story's denouement, with the tragic consequences of Julian's actions, underscores the moral complexity inherent in the characters' divergent perspectives. As Robert D. Denham observes, Julian's desperate cries for help at the story's close suggest "his desperate awareness of the dark state of his own soul," a profound recognition of the moral failings that have led to the calamitous events.

Through this clash of moral sensibilities, O'Connor presents a nuanced exploration of the multifaceted nature of morality, challenging the reader to grapple with the ethical quandaries that arise from the characters' competing worldviews. The story's moral ambiguity resists simplistic judgments, inviting a deeper contemplation of the complexities that underlie the characters' actions and the consequences that flow from their moral choices.

Knowledge and Ignorance

The story presents a nuanced exploration of the characters' relationship to truth and self-understanding, challenging the reader to grapple with the interplay between perceived intellectual superiority and profound self-deception.

Julian, the story's protagonist, considers himself a paragon of enlightenment, believing that he possesses a detached, objective understanding of reality that sets him apart from the "general idiocy of his fellows." However, the narrative's ironic framing reveals Julian to be the most self-deceiving character, his seething resentment towards his mother and his performative liberalism masking a deeper emotional involvement and a lack of genuine self-awareness.

While Julian looks down on his mother for living "according to the laws of her own fantasy world," the story suggests that it is he who is mired in a delusional fantasy of his own moral and intellectual superiority. His condescending views on race relations and his grandiose fantasies of punishing his mother serve as a means of self-aggrandizement, rather than a genuine engagement with the complexities of social and ethical issues.

The final, pivotal scene, in which Julian's mother collapses and he experiences a newfound intimacy with her, represents a moment of profound reckoning. It is only in the face of his mother's mortality that Julian glimpses the harsh reality of his own cruelty and selfishness, a recognition that the narrative suggests may open the possibility for true self-knowledge and moral growth.

Through this interplay between Julian's perceived intellectual mastery and his profound ignorance of his own psychological and moral landscape, O'Connor crafts a nuanced exploration of the human condition. The story's denouement underscores the fragility of certainty and the necessity of confronting one's own blindness to the complexities of the self and the world, inviting the reader to engage in a similar process of self-examination.

Study the information about Flannery O'Connor's style of writing. List the specific features of it you consider to be the most prominent.

STYLE

Ironic Narration

The narrative is presented from a third-person perspective, granting the reader access to the protagonist Julian's innermost thoughts, private motivations, and fantastical imaginings. However, this omniscient vantage point does not necessarily align the reader's sympathies with Julian's own self-perception.

The narrator's perspective gradually diverges from Julian's, exposing the stark contrast between his professed objectivity and the emotionally charged nature of his relationship with his mother. As the story progresses, the reader is positioned to scrutinize Julian's lack of self-

awareness and distance from a state of grace, even as the narrator maintains access to his subjective experience.

O'Connor's strategic use of irony is central to this narrative technique. Irony, defined as the discrepancy between the surface meaning of the words and their underlying effects, allows the author to underscore Julian's profound self-deception. The irony manifests in the disjunction between Julian's intentions and the actual consequences of his actions. Throughout the story, Julian harbors a desire to "punish" his mother and "teach her a lesson" through his performative liberalism, yet the climactic event of his mother's stroke ultimately leads to his own recognition of his cruelty and selfishness, rather than revealing her perceived flaws.

This ironic reversal is essential to O'Connor's exploration of the theme of redemption. The story's denouement suggests that it is only through the confrontation with one's own moral failings and the shattering of one's illusions of superiority that the possibility of true self-knowledge and spiritual transformation can emerge.

By employing this complex and multifaceted narrative strategy, O'Connor challenges the reader to engage in a critical examination of the characters' motivations, biases, and the nature of truth itself. The ironic narration serves as a powerful literary device that imbues the story with a profound sense of moral and psychological depth, inviting the reader to grapple with the nuances of the human condition.

Satire

Satire, defined as the use of ridicule, humor, and wit to critique human nature and societal flaws, is a hallmark of O'Connor's artistic vision.

In this particular story, O'Connor's characters are presented as caricatures or "grotesques" - distorted embodiments of human nature that amplify and emphasize moral and psychological deformities. Julian's mother, for instance, is described as "holding herself very erect under the preposterous hat, wearing it like a banner of her imaginary dignity," a vivid portrayal that underscores her inflated sense of self-importance. Similarly, the narrator's depiction of Julian "waiting like Saint Sebastian for the arrows to start piercing him" invokes a sense of exaggerated self-pity and victimhood.

O'Connor's satirical approach stems from her firmly rooted Catholic worldview, which led her to perceive human nature as inherently flawed and prone to sin. As literary scholar Walter Sullivan observed, O'Connor believed that for the "morally blind," the message of redemption must be "writ large" through the creative distortion of her characters. Her unflinching, at times heavy-handed, portrayals of depravity and weakness serve as a means of illuminating the need for spiritual transformation and divine grace.

While some critics have found O'Connor's satire to be overly harsh or didactic, others have argued that it must be understood in the context of her broader narrative strategies. The satire is often juxtaposed with more subtle forms of irony and glimpses of potential redemption, creating a complex and multifaceted artistic tapestry.

Ultimately, O'Connor's use of satirical techniques in "Everything That Rises Must Converge" reflects her deeply held theological convictions and her determination to confront the human condition with bold, uncompromising strokes. This distinctive stylistic approach serves to amplify the story's moral and spiritual resonance, challenging the reader to grapple with the author's unyielding vision of the human predicament.

Symbolism

Flannery O'Connor's employment of symbolism in "Everything That Rises Must Converge" is a distinctive feature of her literary style, reflecting her keen visual sensibilities and her desire to imbue her narratives with layers of metaphorical significance.

O'Connor's background in cartooning is often cited as a formative influence on her subsequent development as a fiction writer, and this predilection for the visual is manifested in her use of potent symbolic imagery throughout her stories. In the case of "Everything That Rises Must Converge," the central symbolic motif is the "hideous" and "atrocious" green and purple hat worn by Julian's mother.

The hat, which Julian's mother insists on purchasing despite its exorbitant cost, serves as a tangible representation of her preoccupation with social status and her delusional belief in her own refinement. When she remarks that she will "never meet [herself] coming and going," the phrase suggests

a deep identification between the hat and her sense of self-identity. This irony is further compounded when she encounters an African American woman on the bus wearing an identical hat, leading to a symbolic "meeting" of the two women that reflects the story's thematic exploration of racial and class divisions.

The symbolic mirroring is further amplified by the spatial arrangement of the characters on the bus, with Julian sitting next to the African American woman while her young son sits next to Julian's mother. This visual echoing serves to underscore the connection between the two women, even as it highlights the stark socioeconomic disparities that separate them.

The fact that the African American woman is able to acquire the same hat that Julian's mother had to "scrimp" to purchase is a powerful symbolic testament to the changing social landscape of post-segregation America. It illustrates how the "rise" of African Americans has led to a "convergence" with the previously dominant white social order, though not in the transcendent, redemptive sense suggested by the story's title.

Through these rich symbolic layers, O'Connor crafts a nuanced exploration of the complexities of race, class, and identity, utilizing the visual potency of her imagery to amplify the narrative's thematic resonance. The hat, as a synecdoche for the broader social and psychological dynamics at play, serves as a touchstone for O'Connor's distinctive artistic vision, underscoring her mastery of symbolic storytelling.



COMPARE AND CONTRAST

1960s: The Civil Rights Movement emerges as a significant and influential force. Following the enactment of a series of laws mandating the desegregation of schools, interstate transportation, and various public accommodations, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 effectively desegregates all public facilities.

Today: Affirmative action, which facilitated greater integration in educational institutions and workplaces during the 1970s and 1980s, faces legal challenges in numerous court cases, with critics arguing that it constitutes a form of reverse discrimination.

1960s: In 1966, the Supreme Court invalidates a Virginia law that prohibited interracial marriage; Virginia was one of sixteen states that still banned such unions. In 1967, Secretary of State Dean Rusk's daughter, a white woman, attracts media attention by marrying a Black man. Although Rusk offers to resign, President Lyndon Johnson declines to accept his resignation.

Today: Interracial marriage no longer garners significant media attention, and several prominent interracial couples are visible in public life. The incidence of interracial marriages has tripled since 1967, resulting in over a million biracial families.

1960s: The eldest members of the post-war "baby boomer" generation enter adolescence and young adulthood. Many individuals from this generation diverge from their parents by seeking to express their individuality and challenge prevailing social norms and assumptions, thus creating a generation gap characterized by divergent attitudes on significant issues.

Today: "Baby boomers" have reached middle age, raising their children in a society that is perceived to be less conflicted and more tolerant.

1960s: Established by affluent philanthropists in 1906, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) has diminished from its former status as a vital charitable organization and community center, primarily functioning as a low-cost gymnasium and hotel. In 1960, its cafeteria becomes the first public dining facility in Atlanta to desegregate, and by this time, the organization has transitioned into a secular institution.

Today: There are still 326 YMCAs, with at least one located in every American state. The organization's objectives now encompass social justice and services for women, as well as promoting physical fitness, with no reference to religion included in the YWCA mission statement.



Study the historical context of the time Flannery O'Connor created her literary works. Dwell upon the factors you consider to be the crucial to influence her style of writing.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Southern Race Relations

The conflict between Julian and his mother in Flannery O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge" is emblematic of the generational divide over the pressing issue of race relations in the early 1960s American South. At the turn of the twentieth century, a series of "Jim Crow" laws had been instituted throughout the region, enforcing the systemic segregation of public spaces and facilities.

For the first half of the century, African Americans and white Americans were relegated to the use of separate parks, restaurants, clubs, restrooms, and modes of transportation. However, this long-entrenched system of racial segregation began to be dismantled in the aftermath of the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which deemed school segregation inherently unequal.

In the wake of this ruling, African Americans in various Southern cities won the right to share public transportation with their white counterparts. Furthermore, the rise of "sit-in" protests at segregated lunch counters in 1960 became a popular tactic employed by the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement, which would go on to catalyze significant social and legislative changes over the following decade.

Yet, Julian's mother, representative of the older generation, remains stubbornly resistant to the idea of sharing a bus with African Americans, implying that such an act would either compromise her safety or her sense of dignity. This intergenerational tension reflects the evolving, often contentious, landscape of race relations in the Jim Crow-era South, as the younger generation championed greater integration and equality, while the older cohort clung to the entrenched systems of racial segregation.

Catholic Theology

Flannery O'Connor, a devout Roman Catholic, differed significantly from many of her literary contemporaries in her distinctive approach to fiction, which was profoundly informed by her Christian orthodoxy. As she herself asserted, "I see from the standpoint of Christian orthodoxy. This means that for me the meaning of life is centered on Redemption by Christ and what I see in the world I see in its relationship to that."

While religious issues are not overtly explicit in the short story "Everything That Rises Must Converge," O'Connor's vision of the inherently sinful nature of the human condition nevertheless dominates the narrative. As the author herself contends, "The novelist with Christian concerns will find in modern life distortions which are repugnant to him, and his problem will be to make these appear as distortions to an audience which is used to seeing them as natural."

The title of the story itself is a direct reference to the ideas of the Jesuit theologian and scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), whose work, *The Phenomenon of Man*, attempted to reconcile the scientific theory of evolution with a Christian worldview. Teilhard theorized that after the rise of homo sapiens, evolution continued on a spiritual level, driven by a thrust toward a state of pure consciousness and unity with the divine, which he termed "Being."

While some critics have argued that O'Connor's invocation of Teilhard must be ironic, given the lack of evidence of any true "convergence" within the story, others suggest that Julian's moment of revelation at the close of the narrative can be seen as a crucial first step toward the higher consciousness that represents union with God. Ultimately, Julian's character is negatively shaped by his own pride, arrogance, and anger, yet his recognition of the evil he has committed upon his mother's death opens the possibility for a "rising toward Being" – a transformation that, while inevitably painful, nevertheless emphasizes the tension between the evolutionary thrust toward spiritual unity and the human propensity for the "warp" of original sin, which O'Connor saw as central to the human condition.



Further Areas of Inquiry and Scholarly Exploration

📖 Do you believe that O'Connor exhibits excessive unsympathy toward her characters? Do they appear to you as grotesque distortions of humanity, or do they resemble ordinary individuals you have encountered? Support your perspective with specific excerpts from the text.

📖 Many critics regard O'Connor's use of irony as essential to her moral perspective. Analyze her deployment of irony in relation to one of the moral questions posed in the narrative.

📖 O'Connor wrote from a Roman Catholic viewpoint. Do you think that an understanding of Catholicism is necessary to fully grasp "Everything That Rises Must Converge"? In what ways do your own religious or spiritual beliefs (or absence thereof) shape your interpretation of the story?

📖 Julian's mother derives many of her beliefs from her heritage as a member of the slave-holding aristocracy of the antebellum South. Conduct research on the conventions and belief systems regarding interactions between black and white individuals in the Old South. How does this context enhance your comprehension of the interactions among the characters in the story?

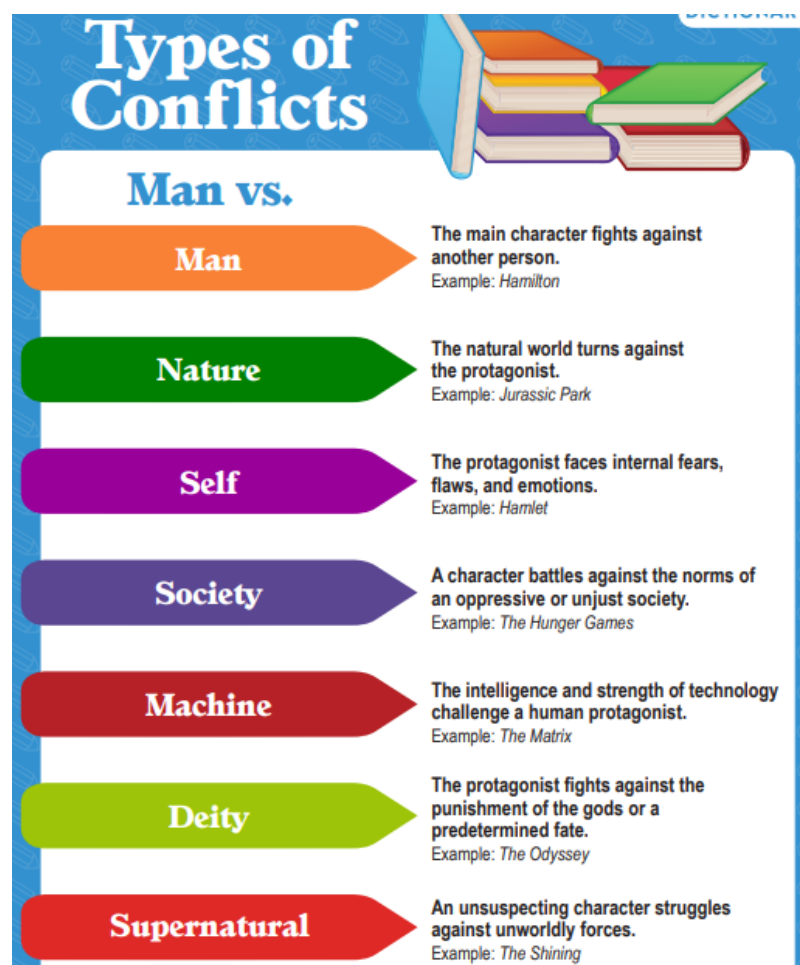


FOR INDEPENDENT LITERARY INQUIRY



Read the story **Same Time, Same Place** by **HERBERT ERNEST BATES** and fulfill the tasks:

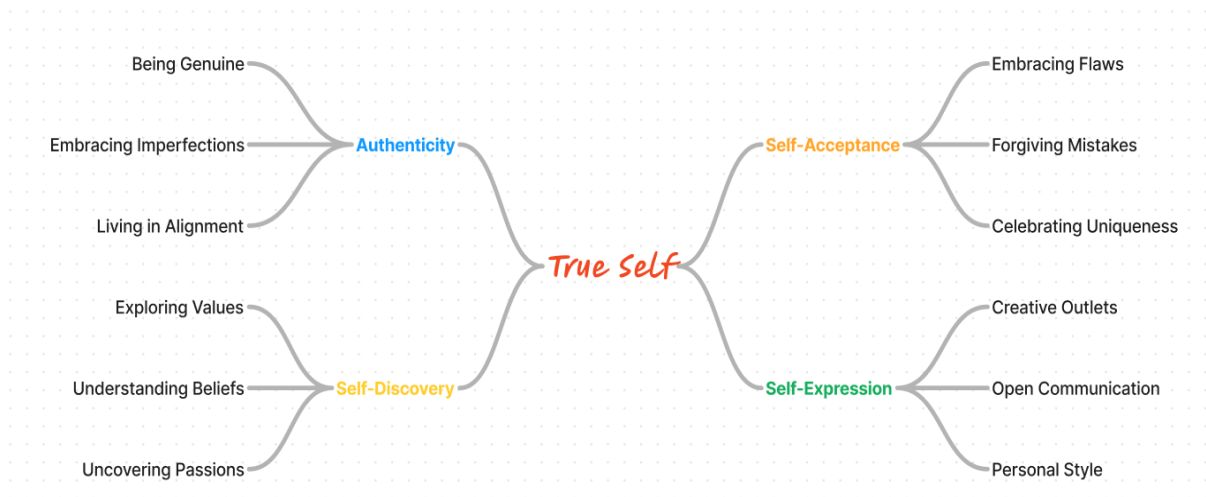
1. Study the biographical information about the author.
2. Fulfill the PLOTLINE ANALYSIS.
3. Write a concise PLOT SUMMARY of the story.
4. Provide the basic information about the main characters of the story. Identify and classify the conflicts the plotline develops round by. Dwell upon the factors that account for them.



5. Study the dominating themes of the story. Which of them do you consider the most acute or close to your sphere of

interests or priorities? Are these themes contemporary enough to extrapolate them to the life of today in this country? Draw the necessary parallels.

6. Study the information about the author's style of writing. List the specific features of it you consider to be the most prominent.
7. Study the historical context of the time the author created literary works. Dwell upon the factors you consider to be the crucial to influence the style of writing.
8. Dwell upon the concept of true Self revealed in the story and write a short essay "What is my True Self and how I express it?"



Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in Language Teaching Perspectives: Self-Management

SELF-MANAGEMENT is the ability to navigate and shift in a healthy way one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in order to make decisions and reach goals that benefit oneself and others (SEL for Students: Self-Awareness and Self-Management, 2024).

Self-management skills include the following.

- Regulating and expressing one's emotions thoughtfully
- Sustaining healthy boundaries
- Demonstrating perseverance and resilience to overcome obstacles
- Setting personal and collective goals
- Identifying and using stress management strategies
- Using planning and organizational skills
- Demonstrating personal and collective agency
- Showing the courage to take initiative
- Maintaining attention
- Using feedback constructively
- Promote perseverance
- Promote a growth mindset
- Facilitate emotion regulation
- Practicing self-compassion
- Facilitate goal setting
- Nurture motivation to learn
- Integrate mindfulness practices (SEL for Students: Self-Awareness and Self-Management, 2024).

Why are self-management skills important? In pairs or micro groups discuss the following in the perspective of the problems raised in this chapter's stories.

SEL practices help students to resolve their own conflicts.

A review of the research found that conflict resolution and peer mediation programs may lead to fewer office referrals, decreased violence, and lower drop-out and suspension rates. Students who engage in these programs show greater academic achievement, a more positive

perception of the school climate, increased social support, self-esteem, and well-being, and decreased victimization, anxiety, and depression.

Study the effective SEL practice and suggest some other possible ones in relations to the issues considered in the chapter.

Crumpled Reminder

Students write down a recent mistake and their feelings about it, and then crumple up the paper. Then they reflect on how their mistakes help them to learn.

Level: PreK/Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, Middle School, High School, College, Adult

Duration: 15 minutes

When You Might Use This Practice

At the start of the school year to introduce a growth mindset about mistakes

During a unit in which students are wrestling with challenging material

As an activity for professional development

Anytime during the school year

Learning Objectives

Students will:

Normalize the experience of making mistakes

Reinterpret the meaning of mistakes with a growth mindset—recognizing that mistakes are important for learning

Understand that mistakes lead to greater synaptic activity in the brain

SEL Competencies

Self-Management

Self-Awareness

Social Awareness

The source: Crumpled Reminder. (2024). Retrieved from:
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CRITICAL OVERVIEWS

I

Study the critical overview of Anita Desai's work *GAMES AT TWILIGHT*. List the positive and negative features literary critics have identified in her literary style. What is your personal vision of the things?

American critic Evelyn Damashek Varady asserts in a 1984 essay in *Perspectives on Anita Desai* that, although Desai is a major novelist in India, her work is virtually unknown in the United States except for *Fire on the Mountain*. She notes that *Games at Twilight* and *Other Stories* (1978) had received four reviews in England and none in America. Summarizing the British response, she quotes all four reviewers as praising Desai's literary style. Victoria Glendinning in "Mood Indigo," in the *London Times Literary Supplement*, speaks of Desai's "lucid English which puts many English writers to shame" (quoted in Varady). Hermione Lee in "Philosophical Guerillas" in the *Observer*, agrees that Desai's stories are "absolutely first-rate" (quoted in Varady). Ian Stewart in "Recent Fiction," in the *Illustrated London News*, praises the "distilled clarity" of Desai's prose (quoted in Varady). Mary Hope, in the *Spectator*, says that the "delicately composed stories" reveal "the tension between convention and exploration, family solidarity and individualism ..." (quoted in Varady). Varady goes on to speculate as to why Indian authors are so seldom read in the West. She assumes it has to do with a lack of intercultural understanding. She herself finds that Desai "skillfully conveys the sensory qualities of street scenes and pastoral vistas" of India, but criticizes the speech of her American characters who, she says, speak as if they were British. Nevertheless, Varady finds "Games at Twilight" one of the more powerful short stories, except for the fact that the tone of Ravi's thoughts seems too sophisticated for a small boy. In the same volume of criticism, Desai's countryman Shiv K. Kumar is less forgiving. He claims that in *Games at Twilight* Desai "fails to engage the reader's interest" because of her "overzealous concern with the medium of communication." In other words, her style is "overwrought." In 1981, R. S. Sharma in the *Indian Writers Series Anita Desai* finds "Games at Twilight" "symbolic of an adult reality" in which the children's games display the "primal drives" of humans. He feels Desai "has a deep perception of the brutality of life" and sees the whole volume of short stories as a satire on the hollowness of Indian middle-class life. In 2002, Parvati Bhatnagar in "The Short Stories of Anita Desai: A Study of 'Games at Twilight' and 'Diamond Dust'" appreciates Desai's unconventional and suggestive short-story style that becomes a word painting instead of a tightly structured form. In "Introduction: The Fiction of Anita Desai," Suman Bala and D. K. Pabby in 2002 sum up Desai's major achievements as a fiction writer over the last forty years, citing her blend of Western psychological analysis and Indian sensibility to focus on the status of women and the family in postcolonial India. Desai's reputation has become international in the twenty-first century as one of the great fiction writers of India.

CRITICISM

Susan K. Andersen

Andersen holds a Ph.D. in English literature, and after teaching for many years, is now a professional writer. In this essay, she considers Desai's westernization of the theme of self-realization in "Games at Twilight." Most criticism of Anita Desai stresses the influence of Western writers such as Virginia Woolf, Albert Camus, or D. H. Lawrence on her work. Desai makes use of her rich Indian tradition in her stories, however, not only as locale or social background, but in terms of ideas from Indian philosophical classics such as the Bhagavad Gita. Desai's characters often quote the Bhagavad Gita in times of crisis. The theme of that book is liberation or self-realization through surrender of the self to God. In "Games at Twilight," as in much of her work, East meets West in the theme of self-realization, as Desai changes the meaning of that term to reflect the Western quest for authentic individuality. With the colonial disruption of India's quieter civilization, the tradition of contemplative withdrawal to find self-realization was replaced by bustling mega-cities and commerce, and Indians found themselves living in the same fragmented universe described by Albert Camus and the existential philosophers. Desai's characters have borrowed the Western anxiety and search for a meaningful postcolonial identity. They delve into their own psyches as a modern analogy to the saintly pilgrimages of the past to find wisdom.

Some critics have disliked Desai's focus on the psychological life of her characters at the expense of the exploration of social and feminist themes.

Minoli Salgado, in "Anita Desai" in *A Reader's Companion to the Short Story in English*, remarks that Desai's earlier fiction avoided political issues, except indirectly with her psychological portraits of Indian women re-evaluating their roles. Her later fiction from the 1980s does address social problems more graphically. *Games at Twilight* is "a transitional work," according to Salgado, that finds "fundamental links between the personal, spiritual, and aesthetic and the social, historical, and material [aspects of life]." Ravi's story seems like a simple childhood incident, but the layers of meaning reveal the interconnectedness of different dimensions of Indian life. Ravi's quest for individuality and the possibility of finding it reflect on the crisis of the modern Indian soul itself. Desai began writing at the age of seven and was probably a sensitive and aware childlike Ravi. The story is largely filtered through his point of view. His registering of the summer twilight with its smell of water on dry earth, the "long purple shadows," the white walls of the house, the color draining from the bougainvillea, and the chanting of the children at their games while he listens from his dark hiding place in the shed, is a concrete portrait of the artistic mind absorbing its surroundings. Ravi is also socially sensitive to the human landscape, wanting to find his place with the other children and to get recognition from the parents who preside over the children's games. Seema Jena, in *Voice and Vision of Anita Desai*, points out that in Indian life, "The individual to a very large extent is subordinated to the group" and that this is difficult both for the person who wants more freedom and

for the Indian writer. Indian literature before Desai was more concerned with character types. Her fiction has broken ground by depicting individual personalities and their struggles. Ravi is dissatisfied with being one of the anonymous children. They are rough with one another, pushing, shouting, running, fighting. Ravi seems afraid of the opinion and treatment of his older brother Raghu, who is a "hoarse-voiced football champion." Raghu only sees Ravi as an opponent in the game, not as a sensitive individual. Even the motherly Mira just wants to keep order and does not think of the little boy's feelings. Robin Jared Lewis asserts that "Desai's vision of urban India reflects a culture in which intimacy has become a form of suffocation." Ravi cherishes memories of being special when an uncle took him out by himself for chocolate, or when the soda-man let him ride in his cart. Thus, he spins fantasies while hiding in the shed of being a hero to be distinguished from the others: "to be the winner in a circle of older, bigger, luckier children – that would be thrilling beyond imagination." Jasbir Jain, in *Stairs to the Attic: The Novels of Anita Desai*, mentions that Desai's characters typically "are ... engaged in trying to find out their hidden selves." In order to do this, they initiate a pattern of "withdrawal before it [the subjective mind] can re-establish a connection" with the world. This not only accurately describes her female characters but the boy Ravi as well. He withdraws from the game, longer than anyone would do for hide-and-seek. In the dark shed, Ravi faces both his fears and his hopes in a dip into the subconscious mind. The reader gets a glimpse of his whole life in this inner snapshot. The withdrawal makes him forget the time, and even the rules of the game. He is exploring himself and his desires. This is how he knows himself as separate from the others. He wants to be the equal of the other children, to be taken seriously in his family.

M. Sivaramkrishna, in his article "From Alienation to Mythic Acceptance: The Ordeal of Consciousness in Anita Desai's Fiction" in *Perspectives on Anita Desai*, describes an "ordeal of consciousness" in which there is a movement that is "not always successful" in the central character from "existential alienation and despair to a transcendence of these through the quest for a unifying myth." He means that the hero tries to find the way to unify personality, to be whole and at home in the universe. This pattern of a withdrawal from the action to find oneself is also the central pattern of the Bhagavad Gita. In the middle of a battle, full of despair at killing his own kinsmen on the other side, the warrior prince, Arjuna, withdraws to contemplate the meaning of it all, and Krishna, who is an embodiment of God, enlightens him, so that he can return to battle to finish his duty with wisdom. Though she does not refer to the Bhagavad Gita here, Desai does so elsewhere in her fiction, if only to point out how far modern life is from such a vision. Yet, like Arjuna, her characters still search, engaging in a pattern of withdrawal in which they consider their lives. This withdrawal-search is a common pattern in her stories. Sometimes her characters experience a breakthrough, as Arjuna does, and sometimes they fail, as Ravi does. In either case, they rebel against living a meaningless life and stifling their individuality. Win or lose, they assert themselves after the withdrawal. The dark shed is a perfect symbol of the dark of the subconscious mind. First, Ravi is full of fear and

horror at what might be in the shed: "Ravi had never cared to enter such a dark and depressing mortuary of defunct household goods seething with such unspeakable and alarming animal life." To go beyond ordinary and sanctioned social reality, one has to let go and experience what may teem beneath the surface. This life may be frightening and primitive, or it may be full of depressing memories. The shed contains the family furniture that is broken, another symbol for the family history. Desai's adult characters often find memories of trauma or a lost childhood in such moments of reflection on the past. Ravi feels both fear and delight at his bravery: "Ravi shook, then shivered with delight, with self-congratulation." His adventure represents multiple layers of reality. Hiding in the shed requires physical bravery. There are spiders, rodents, and snakes there. It is an act of psychological courage as he confronts his fears and wishes. It is also a metaphysical act of rebellion, as we see at the end of the story, where Ravi becomes conscious of the world as alien and himself as insignificant. S. Indira, in *Anita Desai as an Artist*, speaks of Desai's use of symbol and psychological landscape to explore her tragic vision of life. Like T. S. Eliot, one of her influences, she recreates a state of mind by linking mood to concrete objects and landscapes. Twilight, for instance, as Peter Alcock suggests in "Rope, Serpent, Fire: Recent Fiction of Anita Desai," in *Language and Literature in Multicultural Contexts*, represents the space between two worlds, neither day nor night, inner nor outer, past nor future. It can suggest the twilight of Indian civilization, between the old and new or, psychologically, it suggests a time for reverie and an altered state of awareness where one may have an insight. Thus, the scene in the story depicts children playing hide-and-seek at twilight, but such a simple scene is able to call up the depth of the individual psyche and also suggest something about the modern Indian psyche as a whole with what Salgado calls its "subjectivity, formal fragmentation, temporal dislocation, and a quest for meaning." Desai uses the Joycean "epiphany," or moment of insight, to structure much of her fiction. All the inner work of the character leads to, if not wisdom, at least clarification. This short story and the others in the volume *Games at Twilight* build to an insight for the character, either positive or negative. If Ravi's is negative, the insight of the boy Suno in "Studies in the Park," another story in the volume, is positive. He has a vision of beauty and love that turns his life around. Ravi's is the insight of the existentialist who finds life to be quicksand beneath his feet. Perhaps there is an overall thrust of tragedy to Desai's work, but it seems that at least she understands the depth of the tragic vision. As in Greek tragedy, the importance is not always the happy ending, but the moment of recognition of the truth about oneself. In a 1979 interview quoted in Jain's book, Desai mentions that "solitary and introspective people are always very aware of living on the brink" and those are the ones she is interested in writing about, because they are the ones who "are more aware than others are of what lies on the other side." Desai's characters are interesting because they insist on pushing through to the other side of chaos to some kind of meaning. The author suggests the human condition through Ravi.

Usha Bande, in *The Novels of Anita Desai*, points out that "Anita Desai creates a world in which the inner and the outer selves aspire for a harmony." With this challenge,

the characters either rise to achieve the harmony or they fail, but at least they make the effort to be conscious. All Desai's work records the quest of the individual for a wholeness that seems to have been lost along the way.

Brad Coltrane In the following excerpt, Coltrane debates whether high-school students should read world literature as well as American literature, using "Games at Twilight" as an example. Within the literature we teach, English teachers today must look to meet the needs and interests of diverse student populations, while covering the major works of our common national literature. Many argue that American high school students should read world literature to learn about other cultures and literary traditions. At the same time, it stands to reason that American high school students should read American literature to learn about their own heritage. Which of these positions is valid? Hopefully, both are. Unfortunately, they represent two prevailing and often opposing notions that limit teachers and students to an either/or approach to studying literature. In a curriculum already crowded with required texts, diversity in literature is often an afterthought at best, leaving much world literature out of our classrooms. Most English teachers feel a duty to teach the best-known texts of American literature; with so many American writers to cover, reading anything else seems practically impossible. Even the anthologies we select are usually classified as either American or world literature, but rarely are they both. These apparently conflicting ideas bring up several important questions: Can we have it both ways? Is it possible to blend a curriculum that includes both world and American literature? Is it possible to develop a literary curriculum that begins to erase that line of "us" and "them" altogether, replacing it with a wide and ever-expanding circle encompassing all that is good literature, regardless of its cultural, national, or linguistic origin? Can we teach both American and world literature effectively, without marginalizing one or the other? My answer to these questions is a hopeful "yes." Now comes a much more difficult question: how? How can teachers maintain a balance so that no literature is marginalized? How can we select texts of cultural diversity and literary merit? How can we blend world literature into our American literature courses? My means of reaching this end is to pair works by American writers with works from other cultures that share a common thematic link or central issue. To put this into practice, I pair texts, that illustrate some of the potential for a blended curriculum of both American and non-Western writers. Students can read the texts simultaneously (one in class, one independently) or back-to-back, or they can study one of the paired works after having read the other over the summer. While the following examples are related thematically, I also seek works that challenge our notions of both American and world literature. ... In pairing any two works, I hope to enable students to identify with the ideas found in works by international writers, just as they find familiarity in works from their own culture. This process creates a conversation between the voices familiar to us and those that are not—or at least not yet. I started this process by looking at the literature that I already knew and building from there. I find that the more I read of world literature, the more I discover how much I have yet to read. At times this can seem discouraging, but I am always reminded of the seemingly

unlimited potential for blending American literature with world literature; there is so much good reading out there, and so many connections for students to make. Such a process will hopefully lead us to question other sacred terms, including American literature and world literature, and I believe this process to be a healthy one. In the big scheme of things, I hope students will learn to identify with all good literature, regardless of its cultural, national, or linguistic origin. ... After reading *A Separate Peace*, students may make interesting comparisons to Desai's "Games at Twilight," a widely anthologized short story. Both works deal with central characters on the cusp of maturity, unsure of their changing roles in the larger world. Both authors also develop the motif of children's games as metaphors for more complicated adult relationships, and both address the underlying theme of death.

Minoli Salgado In the following analysis, Salgado discusses how Desai uses epiphany as an underlying structural principle versus using it as a thematic concern in short stories. Epiphany is a central concept in short story criticism. Defined by James Joyce as a "sudden spiritual manifestation," the idea of epiphany seems to be implicitly accepted by a range of critics as one of the key elements structuring the short story. Mary Pratt, for example, claims that "the moment of truth stands as the model for the short story, the way of life stands as a model for the novel," suggesting that the revelatory nature of epiphany is somehow supported by the short story form and that it serves as a principle of composition for the writer. This view is qualified by Nadine Gordimer, who argues that "a discrete moment of truth is aimed at—not the moment of truth, because the short story doesn't deal in cumulatives." Yet we may question whether the short story is indeed the vehicle of epiphanic moments or if it might instead be the instrument for its subversion. Clare Hanson's argument that the short story is "a form which hugs the unknown to itself" suggests that the answer might lie somewhere between these extremes: the short story, while promoting the desire for spiritual insight, might at the same time work implicitly towards denying the possibility of religious certitudes. This subtle negotiation is evident in the work of Anita Desai. Her short stories bring into sharp relief the difference between epiphany as an underlying structural principle in the short story—provided for by what Hanson has called the "elisions and gaps" in the short story—and epiphany as a thematic concern. For while the stories in *Games at Twilight* show a common thematic concern with a moment of truth or insight, their textual construction works towards questioning the value of these insights. Therefore, in order to analyze the way in which Desai interrogates epiphany—a moment of spontaneous, sudden, and transforming spiritual insight—it is necessary to analyze her treatment of spiritual awareness as a whole. Indeed, only two of her stories, "Studies in the Park" and "Surface Textures," describe epiphanies. Desai's subversion of these epiphanies draws upon a broader subversion—one that questions the value of all insights—evident in nearly all of the stories in the collection. In the process, beyond the thematic and structural discontinuities in her work, Desai locates and, I would suggest, localizes epiphany, giving this socially transcendent and universalizing experience a culturally specific bearing. Illumination is the key theme of Anita Desai's short stories. Its real

and metaphorical manifestations not only structure individual stories, but also serve to provide the collection's overall pattern— that element of fiction which Desai has claimed is of most concern to her. The stories move between the "light" of insight, however fleeting, and the "dark" of indifference, between a development towards a moment of truth and an acknowledgement of the elusiveness of individual vision. But, as the very title of the collection, *Games at Twilight*, suggests, the stories describe potential and partial illumination. Desai conveys this sense of partial illumination by yoking a character's renewed awareness to the twilight hours. Twilight is the time when Raghu learns about the ignominy of defeat in the title story; it is the hour of release for Basu as he finally gains some peace in "Pigeons at Dawn"; it is the best time for revision and reflection, as Suno discovers in "Studies in the Park"; it is the hour of conviviality both forced and genuine in "The Farewell Party." In all of these stories the conjunction between time and renewed awareness is used to affirm a dream time, a time when the imagination is released, a time when Scheherazade can begin her work of storytelling. It is, in other words, a time for the suspension of belief. This is significant, for it allows Desai to throw into doubt the value if not the validity of the insights gained by her characters. Desai creates ambiguity in her depiction of spiritual insight by combining disruptions of form with implicit social commentary. Thus, she successfully uses various methods to convey a twilight quality: the tense changes in the first-person narratives of "Studies in the Park" and "The Accompanist" emphasize developments in the state of mind of the central character, and the restless shift of focus from one character to another in "Games at Twilight," "The Farewell Party," and "Scholar and Gypsy" draws attention to the temporality and transience of a suspended state of consciousness. This fluid form destabilizes the potential for a unified focus or moral center to the texts. Yet Desai does not stop here. She highlights the divergence between twilight and daylight awareness, exploring the spiritual and emotional conflicts generated by the urge for the fulfillment of self-reflection and the need to meet social obligations and material demands. This conflict is explored in the story of Mr. Bose, who continues to provide private tuition despite finding it "intolerable, all of it—except... for the seventy-five rupees paid at the end of the month." He discovers that "the two halves of the difficult world he had been holding so carefully together, sealing them with reams of poetry, reams of Sanskrit, had split apart into dissonance." The fragile harmony at the end of "Private Tuition by Mr. Bose" is conveyed in suitably aesthetic terms— literature and music providing the idiom for an uneasy reconciliation and acceptance: ... the grammar re-arranged itself according to rule, corrected itself. The composition into quiet made quite clear the exhaustion of the child, asleep or nearly so. The sounds of dinner being prepared were calm, decorative even. Once more the radio was tuned to music sympathetically sad. The harmony created between Mr. Bose and his environment is quite clearly an aesthetic construct—his newly acquired tranquility described as a fabrication, a "composition into quiet," and it is this overt aestheticism that draws attention to the author's presence. It is as if Desai has stepped out from the shadows to reveal that Bose's state of mind is constructed from an awareness that lies outside his own.

The passage provides a gloss of unity and harmony, delineating an aesthetic resolution of material conflict. Yet this exposure of the artifice that goes into the construction of a character's awareness not only draws attention to the external presence of the writer—thereby disrupting a hitherto seamless narrative—but also emphasizes the very exteriority of this moment of reflection, calling into question its authenticity and value. This technique for destabilizing individual insight through self-conscious aestheticism is carried over into Desai's treatment of epiphany. In "Studies in the Park," Suno, a stressed student, tries to concentrate on reviewing for his exams in a provincial park. There he sees something that, in his words, "burnt the surfaces of my eyes so that they watered." The exact import of his insight is, significantly, left unclear; what dominates is the form which his vision takes. It is a vision of a young woman whom he believes to be dying. The sight of her makes him feel as if he "were gazing at a painting or a sculpture, some work of art." Suno compares the woman's face to "a flower, wax-white and composed, like a Persian lily or a tobacco flower at night" and sees in it "a beauty I had never come across even in a dream;" he assumes that her paleness indicates that she is dying and even attempts a diagnosis—"she was very ill, with anaemia, perhaps, or t.b."—and wonders if the old man accompanying her is "her husband, her father, her lover?" interpreting the intimacy between them as "inhuman" and "divine." Upon this brief glimpse of strangers in the park rests an undefined insight that liberates Suno from his social responsibilities, leading him to abandon his forthcoming exams and his familial commitments. There is clearly an ironic distance here between the immanent author and the central character—a disjunction allowed for by the use of a first-person narrative rich in hyperbole and melodrama. Although the epiphany is undoubtedly a genuine experience for the central character, Desai's depiction invites the reader to make judgments about it. She not only shows the epiphany to be based upon a vast number of suppositions, but the overtly romantic rendition of her character's experience suggests that it is shaped by an aesthetic idealism that renders it immature and vacuous—the product of a highly romantic, self-serving imagination. What is more, his vision of death in life so closely corresponds to Suno's own sense of futility over his exams that it suggests that his epiphany draws upon a desire to escape from exam pressures. This depiction of epiphany as an escape from social pressures is supported by Desai's treatment of spiritual awareness in general. In "Scholar and Gypsy," Desai wryly juxtaposes an American woman's self-discovery and newly awakened religious awareness with the rationalist perspective of her unimaginative husband. Pat, the American woman, describes her experience in typically extravagant terms as an "escape from India," an escape from "all those Hindu horrors" and all "the greasy Indian masses, whining and cajoling and sneering." This escape involves a reductive, childlike impression of the mountain folk whose harsh life is idealized under Pat's new visionary awareness: "all they have is a black old kettle and a pack of wood on their backs, rope sandals and a few sheep, but they laugh and sing and go striding up the mountains like—like lords." Yet again Desai has developed a storyline that upholds the importance of individual insight while simultaneously creating a formal dissonance that questions

the value of this insight. Destabilization is furthered by the context within which spiritual experience occurs: if the only option for a spiritually transformed person such as Suno is to opt out of society altogether (a pattern also found in the epiphanic story "Surface Textures,") it implicitly calls into question the viability of the spiritual experience to penetrate the real contradictions of existence. In "Studies in the Park," it is as if Desai self-consciously locates Suno's epiphany in a tangibly godless world, exposing the experience as a self-indulgent fabrication and thereby subverting its transcendental potential to break the boundaries between spiritual and material worlds. These boundaries form the subject of over half of the Twilight stories, in which Desai repeatedly draws attention to a character's failure to find a link between spiritual and material worlds, exposing the fragmentation of experience that is the very antithesis of epiphanic awareness. Art and artifice, she suggests, can provide a means of overcoming this fragmentation. Yet even in stories such as "The Accompanist" and "Sale," in which Desai explores the liberating potential of an artist's awareness, she simultaneously reveals its limitations. In "Sale," for example, an artist who paints imaginary birds and flowers is shown to be hopelessly misunderstood by a couple of prospective clients. They withdraw with embarrassment upon interpreting his enthusiasm for personal anecdote as a sign of pressure to buy his paintings. In crossing the boundary between solitary genius and ordinary man, the painter's work, too, is called into question by these devotees of High Art who wish to maintain their romantic view of the artist as gifted genius despite the ample evidence of the symbiotic relationship between material and spiritual need. Art has been created out of the "rags and grime" of the city studio and is less an "inspired act of creation" (as the prospective clients believe) than a habitual way of seeing, a way of surviving both physically and emotionally in the filthy city. The underlying logic of "Sale" is that the truth of imaginative insight, the path toward epiphany, must be publicly denied in order for the artist to achieve material success. The depiction of spiritual awareness in Desai's short stories, then, is destabilized through a combination of plot—focusing on the failed attempts of an individual to permeate the boundaries between material and spiritual worlds—and disruptive formal techniques. This combination works to take the reader out of the text and dissipates the potential for creating the single, reunifying effect of epiphany. It is as if the compression imposed upon the short story form invites not the integrative vision of epiphany but the dissipation of partial insights. This is substantiated by Desai's disavowal of epiphany in "Surface Textures," in which she brings together several of the techniques found in her treatment of spiritual awareness in a ruthless interrogation of the value of the sudden, spiritual revelation. "Surface Textures" centers on Harish, a civil servant who is permanently transformed when he observes the contours of a melon that his wife has brought for lunch: "from the start [he] regarded it with eyes that seemed newly opened. One would have thought he had never seen a melon before." From that moment on, he is captivated by the sight and shape of everyday objects, paying no attention to anything else. His eyes "slide about" over the surfaces of things, "taking in things normally considered nondescript and unimportant [such as] the paving stones on which ... feet momentarily pressed,

the length of wire in a railing at the side of the road, a pattern of grime on the windowpane of a disused printing press.” This trance-like state and aestheticized awareness is clearly induced by an epiphany. Yet it leads him not merely to lose his concentration – so that “the people in the queue outside went for another day without rice and sugar and kerosene for their lamps and Janta cookers” – but also to lose his job, his wife, his family, and his home. Harish’s epiphany dislocates him socially and psychologically. His worship of surface textures induces a trance-like state that leads him, in turn, to be the object of devotion. He, therefore, comes to be socially relocated as a Swami. But we may question whether Harish is mad or simply a mystic. Desai’s ironic detachment leaves us little room for doubt. Harish’s exclusive contemplation of external reality, including the objects of devotion brought to him, and the contentment of his devotees to interpret his silent form as a manifestation of divinity, reveal that both worshippers and worshipped are deluded by appearances. For Harish and his devotees, spiritual awareness is founded upon exteriority. By creating a disjunction between truth and the absolution of spiritual insight, between meaning and its individual interpretation, Desai seems to contend that all truths, including those that are founded upon epiphanic experience, are partial, personal, and plural. In “Surface Textures,” Desai has not only made epiphany relative by exploring the difference between objective reality and subjective experience and creating an ironic dissonance between the two; she has provided it with a context as well. In doing so, she has come to interrogate the cultural value placed upon manifestations of divine insight. Seeing may literally be believing for the characters of Anita Desai, but the textual disruptions in her short stories question the possibility for lasting, meaningful insight. Indeed, her work seems to promote what Dominic Head has described in his analysis of Joyce as the multi-dimensional “nonepiphany,” one in which epiphany becomes “a nexus of a variety of forces rather than a single effect.” Such a plural and disruptive form of epiphany may well be imposed upon the short story by the exigencies of the form. Not only does the very length of the short story enforce omission and exclusion, liberating the text from the imposition of authorial commentary, but the very open-endedness – what Clare Hanson has described as the “tangentiality” of the short story – seems to invite, and simultaneously to undermine, the possible rendition of a single-effect, unifying epiphany. What is more, unlike the unifying, transcendent epiphanies that conclude her novels *Clear Light of Day* and *In Custody*, the relative epiphanies of Desai’s short stories invite the reader to question their meaning and worth. This interrogatory procedure transforms the epiphanies from a passive principle – one that extols the value of passive awareness in the character and passive acceptance in the reader – to an active force that invites the reader to inquire into the very possibility of finding true value. Desai’s consistent suggestion that the path to spiritual insight is at odds with social commitments – commitments whose power can seem overwhelming even to those who are familiar with the Indian social context – is revisionary. Through it she promotes the individual’s right to determine the course of his or her life. This right is no mere platitude. It gains real urgency and force when set within the Indian social context, in which Desai has gone so far as to

claim that the concept of the individual does not exist. Whether this revisionary impact is the result of a conscious effort by the author is debatable. Desai has repeatedly drawn attention to the need to “compromise with life” and social reality. More importantly perhaps, she has suggested that art, the act of writing, is itself a compromise between the experience of epiphany and its articulation: A writer who wishes to capture the spirit of place requires not the power of observation so much as a burning intensity of vision. If his vision has such intensity, his gaze will become powerful as the magnifying glass that is held between the sun and a sheet of paper, compressing and generating enough heat to burn a ring through the paper. In the end, this is what a book is: the blackened remains of a fire lit by the writer. Source: Minoli Salgado, “When Seeing Is Not Believing: Epiphany in Anita Desai’s ‘Games at Twilight,’” in *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Summer 1996, p. 103.

Nancy L. Paxton In the following review, Paxton points out that Bande’s analysis of Desai’s novels is directed toward western reader Usha Bande provides an excellent and provocative introduction to the fiction of Anita Desai, one of India’s most compelling contemporary writers in English. Bande surveys Desai’s major fiction beginning with *Cry, the Peacock* (1963) and ending with *In Custody* (1984). American readers of Bande’s study will find helpful her documentation of the critical response to Desai’s work in India. Arguing that Desai’s “real concern is with exploration of the human psyche,” Bande applies concepts from Third Force psychology, as articulated by Karen Horney and Abraham Maslow, in her close readings of Desai’s texts. Directed by Desai’s claim that she is “interested in characters who are not average but have retreated, or been driven into despair and so turned against or made to stand against the general current,” Bande uses Third Force psychology as a means to understand the often-mysterious behavior of Desai’s characters. Her analyses of Maya, from *Cry, the Peacock*; Monisha and Amla, from *Voices in the City*; and Bim, from *Clear Light of Day* are most convincing. In identifying what moves these protagonists toward self-actualization, Bande eloquently describes how their aesthetic sensibilities contribute to their growth, a theme neglected by many of Desai’s critics. Bande’s analysis of Desai’s novels is clearly directed toward Western readers, and her text is peppered with often digressive references to English and American writers and critics. Although she often refers to Indian cultural traditions in explaining the behavior and motives of Desai’s characters, Bande does not address the problem of how—or whether—concepts from Western psychology can be accurately used to analyze the subjectivity of Indian characters. Bande uncritically labels many of Desai’s characters as either “normal” or “abnormal” without apparently investigating the cultural biases imported by these categories. Her analysis of *Fire on the Mountain*, in particular, is diminished because she labels Nanda Kaul as “abnormal” because she cannot connect with her psychotic great-granddaughter. Jungian critic Bettina Knapp, whose analysis of this novel Bande apparently did not consult, argues, by contrast, that Kaul’s behavior reflects her commitment to her own spiritual growth and her efforts to recognize and heal the damage that traditional gender roles have created in her life. Bande’s reading of this novel shows how her reliance on Third Force psychology has

unnecessarily limited her theoretical perspective. Desai's treatment of women characters and her comments about them also indicate that feminist analyses of gender, sexuality, subjectivity, and colonialism could amplify Bande's analysis. Although Bande applies Karen Horney's model of female development, she dismisses, as irrelevant, the insights of other unnamed feminist critics, and her bibliography omits any reference to the extensive feminist scholarship on these topics. Finally, Bande's analysis was apparently very poorly copyedited; the frequent transposed letters, missing articles, grammatical errors, and stylistic infelicities diminish the power of this otherwise original and important study of the novels of Anita Desai.

Source: Nancy L. Paxton, "The Novels of Anita Desai: A Study in Character and Conflict," in *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2, Summer 1990. Florence Libert

II

Study the critical overview of Anita Desai's work *A DEVOTED SON*. List the positive and negative features literary critics have identified in her literary style. What is your personal vision of the things?

CRITICAL OVERVIEW

Critics have praised Desai for her ability to explore generational differences and family life while employing poetic language and a sophisticated use of imagery and symbolism. Her descriptive skill is also regularly lauded, as most critics embrace her elegant, detailed stories which often value character and setting over plot development. Thus, most critics respond positively to "A Devoted Son," and the other stories in *Games at Twilight and Other Stories*. While many see the stories in *Games* carefully, if not elegantly, put together, a few believe she places too much emphasis on communication overall. In a review of the collection, Victoria Glendinning writes in the *Times Literary Supplement*, "Anita Desai has the gift of being able to transfer an image that catches her own imagination to the imagination of her reader, and making it seem important." Commenting specifically on "A Devoted Son," Parvati Bhatnagar in *The Fiction of Anita Desai* notes "Anita Desai surely can delve deep into human emotions and express them in her masterly style." Some scholarly attention has been paid to "A Devoted Son" as well, with academics exploring the short story through the lens of food and issues of aging, for example. In the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Ira Raja looks at "A Devoted Son," as "using the ageing body as a site for articulating national anxieties." Raja argues that the story "shows modern systems of knowledge and power as far from being automatically and uniformly liberating for the aged."

CRITICISM

A. Petruso

Petruso has a B.A. in history from the University of Michigan and an M.A. in screenwriting from the University of Texas at Austin. In this essay, she looks at the theme of respect as it pertains to the relationship between Varma and Rakesh in "A Devoted Son." In a review of Anita Desai's short story collection *Diamond Dust and Other Stories* and novel *Fasting, Feasting*, Edward Hower comments, "In Anita Desai's fiction, home is both a prison and a refuge. Those who escape face isolation from their families and society, but those who stay risk suffocation. Family tensions make her characters' attempts to transcend domestic lives into personal triumphs or tragedies." Much of what Hower says can be applied to "A Devoted Son." The story focuses on the relationship between Varma and his son Rakesh, and is set primarily in Varma's home. With the support of his father, Rakesh becomes an overwhelmingly successful doctor and in Varma's old age, takes over control of the household. While Rakesh remains respectful of his father at all times, the home, indeed life, becomes a prison for Varma, who is suffocated by his son's attention. Varma's personal life essentially becomes a tragedy. One way to examine the situation between Varma and Rakesh is through the filter of respect. In this context, respect means to be obedient (acting to please parents), regard highly, and hold and act in admiration. Rakesh repeatedly offers gestures of respect to his father that are quite meaningful in Indian society. While there is no doubt that Rakesh respects his father (and his mother, for that matter), he nearly respects Varma to death in his father's old age – and the nature of the respect is quite suspect. In fact, it is unclear if Rakesh really respects Varma or puts on the facade of respect as required by his society. The elderly Varma does not feel respected because his wishes for his life are ignored, not always respectfully, by the son who uses his medical knowledge to keep him alive. Throughout "A Devoted Son," Desai repeatedly refers to respect and gestures of respect as she sets up this heartbreaking situation. The first paragraph of the story has Rakesh looking at the rankings of test results in the newspaper, then finding his father on the veranda where he "sat sipping his morning tea." Before saying anything, Rakesh "bowed down to touch his feet." This gesture of respect establishes the fact that Rakesh is an obedient son who appreciates all the sacrifices his illiterate parents have made to give him an education which includes medical school. Rakesh works hard and receives top test scores as well, bringing more honor to himself and his family. The importance of Rakesh's gesture is emphasized during the celebration that follows. Varma responds to all visitors who say that his son "has brought you glory," by telling them, "Yes, and do you know what is the first thing he did when he saw the results this morning? He came and touched my feet." Desai then reports that both women and men were deeply affected by what Rakesh did, so much so that women cried and the men "shook their heads in wonder and approval of such exemplary filial behaviour." Rakesh's rise continues as does his respectful behavior towards his parents. When he returns from his educational experiences in the United States, "the first thing he did on entering the house was to . . . bow down and touch his father's feet." Rakesh also does not take a wife in the United States as most Indian men who travel abroad for their education do. "Instead, he agreed, almost without argument, to marry a girl [his mother] had

picked out for him in her own village." Over time, Rakesh becomes a local bigwig. He first works as a doctor at a hospital in the city, then he moves through the ranks to become a top administrator and director, before finally opening his own clinic. All the while, he, his wife Veena and their children follow tradition and live with his parents in "that small yellow house in the once-new but increasingly shabby colony." When his mother is on her death bed, Rakesh cares for her "in her last illness" and "sat pressing her feet at the last moment – such a son as few women had borne." Through these events, Desai makes clear that "Rakesh was not only a devoted son and a miraculously good-natured man who contrived somehow to obey his parents and humor his wife and show concern equally for his children and his patients." She also acknowledges his intelligence, "good manners," "kind nature," and skills as both a host and a doctor. Yet over time, Desai adds, "It came to pass that the most admiring of eyes eventually faded and no longer blinked at his glory." With that statement, Desai shows a crack in the sheen that has covered Rakesh for the whole of his adult life. It is a clue that perhaps Rakesh has been living for adulation and hides his true feelings behind his respectful behavior. After this point in "A Devoted Son," the relationship between Varma and Rakesh starts to change. Shortly before the death of Varma's wife, Varma retires from the kerosene dealer's depot where he had been employed for four decades. He soon falls apart and spends most of his days in bed. Desai explains, "He developed so many complaints and fell ill so frequently and with such mysterious diseases that even his son could no longer make out when it was something of significance and when it was merely a peevish whim." Varma also begins to essentially fake his death, then rapidly sit up and spit betel juice. The act brings the attention of his family every time until he does it during a birthday party at the house. Varma ruins the party as well as his daughter-in-law's new sari, causing everyone in the family except Rakesh to ignore such behaviors from that point forward. Varma's actions can be seen as a precursor to his desire to die, which becomes a major issue by the end of the story. However, Rakesh continues to be the respectful son. No matter what Varma does, Rakesh brings him tea in the vessel preferred by Varma, reads the morning newspaper to him, and compels him to spend his evenings outside on the veranda. Desai writes of Rakesh, "It made no difference to him that his father made no response apart from spitting." Yet there is no evidence that Rakesh tries to understand what is wrong with his father. Varma is faking his death over and over again – perhaps to get attention but perhaps because he is miserable or for some other reason that is unclear – but the doctor does not use his training to find out the source of his father's misery. Rakesh merely uses his skills to keep his father alive. While this is a gesture of respect, it is also fraught with a lack of real interest in his patient, if not the desire for control. When Rakesh begins to control what Varma eats, their relationship is forever transformed. After Varma eats soojie halwa with cream, "Rakesh marched into the room, not with his usual respectful step but with the confident and rather contemptuous stride of the famous doctor." With this statement, Desai makes clear that Rakesh no longer really respects Varma nor cares about what his father wants. Rakesh seems like he respects his father because he does all he can to keep his father alive – a gesture of respect to many. But he does not listen to Varma, instead acting like he must keep his father alive to prove his abilities as a doctor and to seem like a dutiful son. Varma is startled by Rakesh's first dietary

restriction as “he stared at his son with disbelief that darkened quickly to reproach.” Refusing his father the food he likes is disrespectful, even if the food is harming him in some way. Varma is the father and Rakesh is his son, and Varma believes, with tradition on his side, his word should rule. Instead, nearly every food Varma likes is removed from his diet and replaced by limited portions of bland fare. Varma misses his wife’s cooking, and his attempts to bribe his grandchildren to get him sweets from the local bazaar only leads to more rebukes from Rakesh. The son admonishes him for sending his children to a part of the city where there are diseases and having them lie to their parents. Rakesh also reminds him that the sweets are not good for him. Rakesh is only deferential in that he keeps up a respectful appearance to his father and keeps him alive; Varma, however, sees only contempt. Varma’s opinion of Rakesh is supported by his elderly neighbor Bhatia. Though Bhatia is initially jealous that Varma has unlimited access to medical care through Rakesh, Varma sets him straight. Bhatia is appalled at Rakesh’s dietary restrictions as well. Underscoring the key to the conflict between father and son, Desai notes: the son’s sterling personality and character now underwent a curious sea change. Outwardly all might be the same but the interpretation had altered: his masterly efficiency was nothing but cold heartlessness, his authority was only tyranny in disguise. Respect seems like only a superficial emotion for Rakesh by this point. This situation grows worse as Varma becomes ill and weak. Rakesh treats him with various medicines, tonics, vitamins, and powders. Such items “became a regular part of his diet – became his diet, complained Varma, supplanting the natural foods he craved.” Varma tells Rakesh he wants to be left alone and to die but Rakesh dismisses such feelings with the statement “I have my duty to you, Papa.” That is the key point to the problem in Varma and Rakesh’s relationship. Rakesh is outwardly dutiful to his father. In Rakesh’s eyes, Varma has everything an elderly man could want: a caring family, food, shelter, and more. But Rakesh continues to treat Varma without regard of his feelings. Varma even overhears Rakesh mocking his complaints about the way he has to live. Rakesh does not want to understand Varma or the misery he feels at being kept alive, in effect, artificially. For his part, Varma does not want to be kept alive by Rakesh’s medicine and supplements, but that is exactly the effect they have. Varma is also pained by being carried outside by the servants to take the night air, with Desai noting that Varma expresses his “agonized complaints” to them. In the last scene of “A Devoted Son,” Varma tries to get Veena to understand his pain but she insists that he be propped up by pillows on the veranda despite his protestations. His grandsons play cricket nearby though he might be hit by the ball since he cannot dodge it with his limited mobility. Varma lives in fear now, a fear his son has refused to see or understand. When Rakesh arrives home that night, he continues to be the attentive son that he believes himself to be. Ignoring his wife and children, “he went first to the corner where his father sat gazing, stricken.” Rakesh also made a gesture of “reaching out to press his feet.” By this point, Varma sees the emptiness of gestures of respect as well as questions about how he is feeling. Rakesh, Varma has concluded, is not really a devoted son but an arrogant doctor who does not really care about him. Rakesh may have “smiled at him, lovingly” as they talk, but Varma does not buy it anymore. Thus, Varma’s final gestures are empowering for him. He knocks the bottle of tonic out of Rakesh’s hand and is able to push the pillows away so he can lie down more comfortably on his back. Rakesh

knows that Varma will die at some point, but Varma has finally taken a few steps to ensure it will be soon—he will no longer be kept alive by his son's medicine. Rakesh's respect and devotion are completely meaningless and will perhaps now be compromised. The irony of Varma's sacrifice is obvious by the end of "A Devoted Son." If he had not given everything so his son could be the first in the family to be educated, would Rakesh have treated him the same way in his old age or would he have really been respectful?

Source: A. Petruso, Critical Essay on "A Devoted Son," in *Short Stories for Students*, Gale, Cengage Learning, 2010.

Fritz Lanham

In this article, Lanham discusses the intertwining careers of Anita Desai and her daughter Kiran. They take literary trophies seriously in India. Consider the case of New Delhi-born novelist Kiran Desai. No sooner did she swipe the Man Booker Prize—Britain's top literary award—than an Indian newsmagazine anointed her one the country's "most eligible" singles. The author chortles in reporting this news. She also seems flattered. Her mother, Anita Desai, beams. Mother and daughter—the long-famous Anita and the newly famous Kiran—made a rare joint appearance recently to read at the Wortham Theater Center as part of the Inprint Brown Reading Series. When Inprint booked the pair, Anita, author of more than 15 novels and a four-decade-long career, was expected to have top billing. Then came the award fest for Kiran—she also won the National Book Critics Circle Award for "Inheritance of Loss," her tale of immigration, class divisions and alienation set in India and New York. For many in the audience she was the face to see and voice to hear. I met them for a pre-reading interview in the lobby of the Lancaster Hotel, a somewhat ironic venue given its clubby English decor and the tangled relations between West and East that animate the Desai's' fiction. The two are a study in similarities and differences. Both speak softly, their accents a medley of linguistic influences—Indian, British, American, and in Anita's case perhaps a trace of German. Physically they're a contrast. Kiran is slim and the bubblier of the two; she seems younger than her 35 years. Anita, at 69, is a more imposing figure, self-contained, the embodiment of benign dignity. Kiran lives in Brooklyn, Anita in upstate New York. Both visit India regularly, although Anita says she's lived too long away from her native country to feel at home there. "I've become a stranger wherever I go," she said wistfully. Both agree that neither Kiran nor her three siblings grew up wanting to be writers. The kids were used to seeing their disciplined mother disappear to her desk every morning, and it seemed like an awfully boring way of life. Plus, there was the meager payoff. Anita Desai's first novel, published in England in 1963, garnered only one foreign-rights offer, from a Romanian house willing to fork out 10 pounds. Kiran planned to study biology. Her turnaround came when she took a creative-writing course with Phillip Lopate at Bennington College in Vermont. "After that it became crazy to think I'd tried to do something else," she says. "I very quickly fell into the rhythm and knew instinctively this is how you live a writing life. It felt very familiar." Her mother began her own writing life at a younger age. Anita Mazumdar was born in Mussoorie, a hill town north of Delhi, the daughter of a Bengali businessman father and a German mother. She grew up speaking German and Hindi at home, English at school. As a kid she read

voraciously — “the house was full of books,” she said. She published her first story at age 9. At 12 she read the Brontë sisters and remembers telling herself, if writers can deploy language with such power, I want to be a writer. After convent school she earned a bachelor’s degree in English in 1957 from Delhi University. A year later she married businessman Ashvin Desai. Kiran is the youngest of their four children. Anita finished her first novel while still in her 20s. “Indian publishers weren’t interested at all,” she said. “They liked to reprint books from the West or print textbooks. They certainly didn’t want to publish an unknown young Indian writer.” So, she sent the manuscript to British houses, copying their addresses off the backs of their books. Peter Owen, a publisher who likes Commonwealth authors, took a chance and brought out *“Cry, the Peacock.”* After that the books came at a steady clip, generally a new one every two to four years. Three have been nominated for a Booker Prize, including 1984’s *“In Custody,”* about an Urdu poet in decline. Considered by some her best novel, it was made into a Merchant-Ivory movie in 1993. In 1988 Desai tapped into her German heritage for *“Baumgartner’s Bombay,”* about a German who flees to Calcutta to escape the Nazis. Her most recent novel, *“The Zig Zag Way”* (2004), is set in Mexico, which she visits frequently — favorite towns include San Miguel de Allende and Oaxaca. She chose to write about Mexico because India resembles that country in many ways, she said. “The same colonial powers — Spanish on the one hand, British on the other. The same centuries of history lying all around one, obliging one to sort it out. At the same time, it is utterly foreign, which makes it intriguing. You have to go deep into it and explore to find out what it’s all about.” When pressed about what themes tie her novels together, Anita finally decides it’s “the outsider’s experience, the outsider’s perspective. It may have had something to do with my mother having been a foreigner in India.” Desai was in her mid-40s when she moved from India, first to England for a visiting fellowship and a year later to the United States, dragging in tow her youngest, 14-year-old Kiran. Anita taught creative writing at Mount Holyoke College and Smith College, then at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, from which she’s now retired. Asked about her current marital status, she simply says, “I’ve long lived alone.” After Bennington and the lightning bolt that changed her life, Kiran enrolled in writing programs, first at Hollins University in Virginia, then at New York’s Columbia University. She took two years off from Columbia to finish her first novel, *“Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard,”* published in 1999. A newspaper story about an Indian hermit who lived in a tree provided the seed. In Kiran’s version a fired postal worker who has disgraced his family takes up residence in a guava tree and eventually persuades villagers he’s a holy man. With its warm heart and touches of magical realism, *“Hullabaloo”* got a thumbs up from reviewers, including the notoriously hard-to-please Michiko Kakutani of *The New York Times*, who called it a “meticulously crafted piece of gently comic satire.” “When I started writing it, I had no idea what the story would be,” Kiran told one interviewer. “I had no idea of the plot. It sort of gathered momentum and drew me along. It was an incredibly messy process, and I don’t know if it was the smartest way to go about it, because this was my first book. So, I had to teach myself how to write as I was writing it.” *“The Inheritance of Loss,”* Kiran’s second book, took her eight years to write, for the same reason she wrestled with *“Hullabaloo.”* “It took a long time for me to even realize what I was writing about,” she said, laughing. “There’s no plot, in fact.” During

its gestation, Anita interjected, “even the family was saying, why doesn’t she go get a job?” The ensemble-cast novel grew out of Kiran’s own experience of coming to the United States and living “between countries.” But she found that to understand the present—the novel is set in the mid-1980s—she needed to go back to immigrant experiences of her parents’ and grandparents’ generations. The first character that emerged in her mind was Jemumbai, an embittered, emotionally crippled retired judge who lives in a decaying pile in the northern Indian city of Kalimpong. As a young man Jemumbai had studied law in England, enduring the contempt and condescension of the British. He returned to India only to discover that his embrace of Western ways and values cut him off from his own people. The experiences of Kiran’s grandfather, who left India to study in England, informs the character of the judge. Next came the judge’s long-suffering cook. One rich, the other poor, they have in common the hopes and humiliations attendant in journeying from India to the wealthy, powerful West. The cook experiences these vicariously through the life of his son Biju, who has scraped together enough money to fly to New York and overstay his visa. In the Big Apple he joins an army of fellow undocumented immigrants working in cheap restaurants for low wages while trying to stay below the radar of everybody in authority. The novel moves back and forth between New York, where Biju bounces from job to job, and India. Kalimpong, lying just below the border with Nepal, is full of Nepalese immigrants doing what immigrants everywhere do—looking for work and a better life. Among them is Gyan, a recent college graduate whom the judge hires to tutor his 16-year-old orphaned granddaughter Sai, who has come to live with him. Romance blossoms even as an incipiently violent Nepalese civil-rights movement hits the streets. Ethnic conflict, class divisions, globalization, migration—grand themes weave together the lives of the characters. “I could not have written about Kalimpong without having left India,” she said. Living as an immigrant in the West allowed her to understand for the first time the Nepalese and what it meant to be an immigrant in India. Debates familiar to anyone in this country roil the politics there: Should a foreigner’s language be taught in the schools? Are you still a foreigner if your family has been in the country three or four generations? Unlike the dirt-poor Biju, Kiran arrived in the United States speaking English, the product of a privileged upbringing and good education. Pondering the differences between herself and other immigrants made her acutely aware of class divides. “The same people who are poor in India are poor here,” she said. “It would have been hard to write this book without including that side of the picture—the bigger side of the picture.” As the title of the book suggests, those who migrate give up things. “Your language has to change, your clothes change, you have to adapt yourself to your surroundings,” Kiran said. “There’s always a gain, I don’t think one wants to undo it. But there’s also shame and loss.” When I suggest that for all its charm and humor “*The Inheritance of Loss*” is a pretty bleak book, Kiran doesn’t entirely disagree. Sai and Gyan have a falling out and in the end seem unlikely to get back together. Biju returns to India, where he is robbed of literally everything he owns, arriving back in Kalimpong in a borrowed woman’s dress and nothing to show for his years in New York. An impoverished couple steal and sell the judge’s dog Mutt, the only thing he loves. “People wanted me to write at the end of the book, ‘And then the dog came home,’” Kiran said, laughing. “But in reality, the dogs don’t usually come home.” But she does insist “there are little bits of hope.”

Sai grows up over the course of the book, “coming to a more complicated idea of happiness, a less selfish idea of what her possibilities might be. And Biju returns home—which to me is quite hopeful—against everything the world is telling him, realizing that what he really needs is his father and what his father really needs is him.” At times during the birthing pangs of “The Inheritance of Loss” the Desai’s worked in the same house, in the same room. But with both her novels Kiran waited until she’d finished a draft before showing it to her mother. Kiran has read her mother’s books but doesn’t seem to have felt the elder’s shadow looming over her. She neither modeled herself on her mother nor rebelled against her example. In retrospect she can see some common threads between their work. “When I think of ‘Baumgartner’s Bombay’ or ‘Clear Light of Day,’ I see similarities in terms of subject and character—solitude or exile or not fitting in,” she said. “But in terms of style, I wrote in the only way I could.”

Source: Fritz Lanham, “Trailing Mama: Pen in Hands . . .,” in *The Houston Chronicle*, April 8, 2007, p. 16

III

Study the critical overview of Nadine Gordimer’s work THE ULTIMATE SAFARI. List the positive and negative features literary critics have identified in her literary style. What is your personal vision of the things?

Because it was released shortly before Gordimer was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, *Jump and Other Stories*, the collection in which “The Ultimate Safari” was published, is not considered to be one of Gordimer’s major works. Nonetheless, the book received widespread reviews in the major media of the day, and several reviewers remarked specifically on the story itself. John Banville, writing in the *New York Review of Books*, wrote that the story, one of the “three fine stories” in the collection, “fairly quivers with angry polemic, yet achieves an almost biblical force through the simplicity and specificity of the narrative voice.” Writing in *America*, Jerome Donnelly writes that the collection as a whole achieves a “unity” that is “remarkable” considering the multiplicity of voices Gordimer uses, and the “simple, controlled narrative of wonderment filtered through a mind too unknowing to be terrified generates powerful understatement,” and that the story moves on “without indulging the temptation to sentimentalize the moment.” The *Spectator* critic Hilary Mantel described Gordimer’s new stories as having “complexity and resonance, sometimes grandeur,” and that they are all “worth reading and re-reading.” She describes the new work “as trenchant and committed as her novels,” and the sentences of “The Ultimate Safari” as “stripped down, simplified. . . .” Dan Cryer, on the other hand, in a review for *Newsday*, suggested that while much of Gordimer’s

work had made her “Nobel Prize-worthy,” it was important to separate Gordimer’s “superb novels” such as *A Sport of Nature* and *The Conservationist* from works such as *Jump and Other Stories*. “The majority of these stories,” Cryer writes in reference to several of the collections stories, including “The Ultimate Safari,” “achieve the limited objective of bringing the headlines to vivid life.” Critic Jeanne Colleran, in an essay included in the collection *The Later Fiction of Nadine Gordimer*, discusses Gordimer’s views that a short story collection, in many ways, is more able to convey the multiple truths of South Africa than a novel due to its ability to represent “the even greater multiplicity of voices, attitudes, and constituencies that comprise South African society. . . .” While much of the collection, with the “obsessive image of recent South African history, the dead . . . children [that] haunt the collection,” portrays the dire legacy of apartheid, “The Ultimate Safari,” written through the eyes of a young black southern African girl, offers some hope for the future. The girl, despite her refugee status, fully plans to return home where she believes her missing mother and grandfather are waiting. In a major critical review in the *Journal of Southern African Studies* titled “Jump and Other Stories: Gordimer’s Leap into the 1990s: Gender and Politics in Her Latest Short Fiction,” University of the Witwatersrand professor Karen Lazar contextualizes the collection with respect to South Africa’s political climate at the time, as well as Gordimer’s previous work. In particular, Lazar is interested in exploring the trajectory of Gordimer’s political thought, particularly the evolution of her views of women. While Lazar believes that the collection shows that Gordimer’s political thinking has continued to evolve, Lazar finds her continued representation of women as tending more to the “uni-dimensional” relative to her treatment of men, and that “various aspects of South African womanhood [in *Jump and Other Stories*] are split off, dichotomised and assigned to individual figures, such that the representations of women tend to be truncated, reduced and static, giving women a marginal and decentered status relative to the more lively and layered status of men.” While in many respects Gordimer “jumps” into the 1990s with this collection, according to Lazar, Gordimer’s sometimes “static” and “truncated” representations of women continue to be a concern.

CRITICISM

Mark White

White is the publisher of the Seattle-based literary press, Scala House Press. In this essay, White argues that Gordimer’s decision not to reveal the race of the narrator in “The Ultimate Safari” resulted in the creation of a more empathetic character with whom her white American and British readers could identify. The art of “writing in voice,” or “writing in character,” is a common literary technique that has been used by countless writers over the years. In one of literature’s most famous examples, Herman Melville adopts the persona of Ishmael, an itinerant seaman, in *Moby Dick*, and in two of the more popular examples from the late twentieth century, Alice Walker, in *The Color Purple*, adopts the voice of Celie, an uneducated, abused southern girl, and Arthur Golden writes from the perspective of a Japanese geisha in

Memoirs of a Geisha. While it is not at all uncommon for a writer to take on the character of someone outside his or her own economic and social status, as Walker did, what is far less common is for a writer to adopt the character of a different ethnic background or race, as was the case with Golden. And least common of all – perhaps because of the highly contentious and politically charged nature of black-white relationships – is when a white writer adopts the voice of a black character, as Nadine Gordimer does in her short story “The Ultimate Safari.” In “The Ultimate Safari,” Gordimer, a white South African writer well into her sixties when the story was published, takes on the voice of a young nameless black refugee girl from Mozambique. While Gordimer had written from a black perspective several times throughout her career, what sets this particular story apart is the fact that through most of its telling, the reader is not made fully aware of the narrator’s race. While the few details of the story’s setting and the narrator’s circumstances that are offered from the outset hint strongly that she is black, it is not until the story’s final scenes that the girl’s nationality and race are confirmed. Gordimer’s conscious manipulation of these facts is one of the techniques she uses that ultimately gives this story its poignancy. By keeping the reader uncertain about the girl’s background, Gordimer effectively holds out the possibility in the reader’s mind, on some level, that the narrator could be “the girl next door” and not simply another distant and nameless African refugee. While this may seem insignificant to the overall meaning of the story itself, in light of the fact that the vast majority of the story’s readers at the time of its publication were not only white, but also non-South African, this technique effectively helped Gordimer to maximize the empathy the story’s readers felt for the character and effectively contributed to her agenda of enlightening the world to the dehumanizing effects of her country’s system of apartheid. Throughout most of her fifty-year career, Gordimer has used her writing to explore, expose, and oppose South Africa’s long-standing system of racial segregation known as apartheid. With the major exception of her early autobiographical work, *The Lying Days*, nearly all of Gordimer’s fiction in some way addresses apartheid, so much so that fellow writer and the Vice-President of International PEN Per Wästberg, writing on the official Nobel Prize web site, calls Gordimer “the Geiger counter of apartheid.” Officially struck down in 1992 after nearly 50 years as the government’s official policy of racial segregation, apartheid – the Afrikaner word meaning “separateness” – was a system of laws that effectively stripped all South African blacks of their citizenship rights and was instrumental in maintaining white control over the majority black population. However, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, as countries across Africa regained their independence from Europeans, the South African government, fearing that their recently liberated neighbors such as Zimbabwe and Mozambique would encourage liberation movements in its own country, responded by financially and militarily supporting the efforts of rebel groups to destabilize those countries. These desperate measures to protect the apartheid system, which often took the form of military raids into the rural border areas, resulted in the long-term displacement and deaths of millions of southern Africans over the years, with an estimated million deaths accounted for in

the Mozambique civil war that was fueled by South Africa. Fleeing from their war-ravaged homes, many villagers who survived the war in Mozambique ended up as refugees in any number of the South African refugee camps. A related piece of historical information that should also be kept in mind when reading "The Ultimate Safari" is that, because of her public opposition to the government, coupled with the overtly political themes of her work, many of Gordimer's stories and novels were banned in her own country at the time of their publication; as a result, the first readers to most of Gordimer's work were usually not South African but rather British and North American. "The Ultimate Safari," in fact, was first published in the British literary journal, *Granta* before being published in book form by American publisher Farrar, Straus, and Giroux in the collection *Jump and Other Stories*. It is with these facts in mind that the techniques Gordimer uses in "The Ultimate Safari" can be best understood. "The Ultimate Safari" is written in a deceptively simple style. The story's first two sentences – "That night our mother went to the shop and she didn't come back. Ever." – not only set the mysterious and foreboding tone of the story that is about to be told, but they effectively announce Gordimer's style as well. The sentence structure and diction are simple, yet not so simple as to indicate that the narrator is a person of lesser intelligence or capabilities. The narrator speaks in plain, everyday English; there is nothing remarkable in terms of vocabulary, syntax, or dialect that would indicate her to be anything but an English speaker of ordinary intelligence and sensibilities. She does not speak in dialect; she could be from any number of English-speaking locations. And Gordimer leaves few idiosyncratic clues that give her racial, cultural, or ethnic identity away. Aside from knowing that the story's author is South African, there is little to indicate at the outset of the story that the narrator herself is from the region. She tells us immediately of "the war" and of "the bandits," and she references her "village" and the "bush" – both of which would hint at an African setting of some kind – but because the overall tenor of the narrative voice is anything but African, it is easy to overlook these clues at first reading. As the story progresses, the girl gives us further clues as to the setting with her description of the "dried mealies" her grandmother boils for her and, most importantly, her family's journey through Kruger Park, one of South Africa's popular game parks. Within a few pages, then, we have come to understand that she is in fact from southern Africa, but the overriding sense, as indicated by her narrative voice, is that she is a proper English-speaking girl, and the reader can't help but wonder, on some level, what this girl is doing wandering as a homeless refugee in South Africa. Of course, since Gordimer writes in English, and her audience mostly comprises English readers, her stories must also be written in English. It would make no sense whatsoever were "The Ultimate Safari" to be written in the girl's native tongue. But when taking on the voice of a character, especially when that voice's "true" voice is non-English, the writer usually provides the reader with early clues as to the narrator's background – whether explicitly through a remark by the narrator or implicitly through his or her choice of diction. In the case of *Moby Dick*, for instance, the book's very first sentence – "Call me Ishmael." – announces the identity of the narrator, and very shortly

thereafter Ishmael describes his background and the reasons for his pending journey. In *The Color Purple*, Celie speaks in a southern black idiom that leaves no question as to her racial or regional identity. In Gordimer's story, until the final scenes in the refugee camp, the narrator provides few clues as to her race or ethnicity. It is in the refugee camp that the narrator finally confirms that she is of African descent, even if the details as to which tribe she belongs are left out. "The people in the village have let us join their school," the narrator says, "I was surprised to find they speak our language; our grandmother told me, that's why they allow us to stay on their land. Long ago, in the time of our fathers, there was no fence that kills you, there was no Kruger Park between them and us, we were the same people under our own king, right from our village we left to this place we've come to." Yet even here, when she references "our language," the possibility still exists that she is referring to English, and that perhaps this narrative is taking place in a world turned upside down, in a mythical future where the (white) English-speaking families are forced to wander the continent as refugees, and where their land has been carved into artificial political boundaries that separate people of the same tribe and ethnic backgrounds from one another. This possibility is eliminated, however, in the story's final scene when the narrator describes the "white people" who have come to film the refugee camp (implying, of course, that the refugees are not white), and we are told with certainty what her nationality is when a reporter asks of her grandmother, "Do you want to go back to Mozambique— to your own country?" While Gordimer has always been committed to her writing as a form of art, and not simply as a tool to advance her politics, she has also always been unapologetically committed to using her writing to advance her antiapartheid stance. With her readership being made up of mostly, though not exclusively, British and American whites, and by giving the narrator many of the qualities that a typical young white English or American girl would have—she is observant, articulate, intelligent, selfless, and emotionally even-keeled—Gordimer created a character with whom readers could empathize, but not necessarily pity. Ultimately it is not pity that Gordimer wants to elicit from her readers, but rather she wants her readers to come to a profound understanding of the human toll of apartheid. Holding off until the last possible moment before revealing the girl's race has the effect of giving her white audience every possible reason to feel for the girl as "one of us," rather than reasons to feel sorry for the miserable conditions of yet another poor anonymous black African. In other words, by effectively creating a character who closely resembles her readers, or who at least resembles people with whom her readers were familiar, Gordimer gave her audience the vicarious experience of what it was like to be, or know, a refugee, even if for a brief amount of time. It should also be noted that, in order for the story to pass as a work of art, and not merely political propaganda or journalism, its narrator must remain true to her character. The fact is that most ten-year-old girls, regardless of their backgrounds, would not necessarily consider their race or ethnicity to be important in the telling of their Race, nationality, and ethnicity are adult constructs that children become aware of to varying degrees over time, so Gordimer's decision not to have her narrator discuss those issues was as much

a decision to create a believable character as it was to create an empathetic one. However, the effect of that decision, regardless of its design, was to create an empathetic narrator. In one of her more famous essays, "Living in the Interregnum," Gordimer paraphrases Mongane Wally Serote, a black South African poet: "Blacks must learn to talk; whites must learn to listen." By taking on the voice of a young black refugee girl, and by offering her readers the possibility that her voice was not simply "black" but also "universal," Gordimer not only created a black voice that whites could more readily listen to, but she also opened a window for her readers into one of the ugly rooms of apartheid.

Source: Mark White, Critical Essay on "The Ultimate Safari," in *Short Stories for Students*, Gale, 2004.

IV

Study the critical overview of Gina Berriault's work THE STONE BOY. List the positive and negative features literary critics have identified in her literary style. What is your personal vision of the things?

Although Berriault's career had spanned almost four decades and led to the creation of short stories as well as novels, Berriault's work has never received a great deal of critical attention. Nonetheless, her fiction is generally recognized as powerful, realistic, and unsentimental, often focusing on a crisis situation in which characters are unable to break free from their loneliness and despair. Julia B. Boken, writing in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, compares Berriault's fiction to that of Russian writers Leo Tolstoy, Fyodyor Dostoyevsky, and Anton Chekov because of her "probing [of] the human psyche." "The Stone Boy" is one of Berriault's better known and frequently anthologized pieces of short fiction. It first appeared in *Mademoiselle* in 1957, and eight years later it was included in Berriault's first collection of short stories, *The Mistress, and Other Stories*. It was also included in Berriault's next published collection, *The Infinite Passion of Expectations: Twenty-Five Stories*, which appeared in 1982. Andre Dubus, himself a noted American short story writer, called this collection "the best book of short stories by a living American author." Berriault chose to preface *The Mistress, and Other Stories* with a quote from the writer Jose Ortega y Gasset: "Every life is more or less a ruin among whose debris we have to discover what the person ought to have been." The stories in the book echo this sense of desolation. As Dorrie Pagones described Berriault's characters in the *Saturday Review*: "No one behaves as he should, and even supposing anyone did, it is quite clear, as the title of one story puts it, that 'All Attempts Will End in Failure.'" In discussing young Arnold, his killing of his brother, and his family's reaction to these unfortunate events, many reviewers have evaluated the culpability of the characters, that is, whose life has been ruined and who has failed whom. Pagones saw the parents as having failed their

child, and she compares this story to Berriault's "The Bystander," in which the child instead fails the parents. New York Times writer Charles Poore, however, saw Arnold's actions as akin to homicide. In his words, "Murder, Miss Berriault shows us, has many form and devices. It is seemingly explicit in "The Stone Boy," where a life ends in a shooting accident. How much of an accident was it? we are left to ask. At that point, the explicit and the implicit merge in shadows." Other reviewers did not see the incident as so ambiguous and chose instead to focus on other aspects of the story. For instance, Richard Kostelanetz, in the New York Times Book Review, remarked that Arnold expressed no feelings of remorse about the death of his brother but feels "considerable embarrassment at being caught naked." Several years after this first round of reviews and criticism, Edith Milton revisited "The Stone Boy" when she discussed *The Infinite Passion of Expectation* for the New York Times Book Review. She followed up on Kostelanetz's theme, noting that many of Berriault's characters experience such emotional ambiguity that they find themselves paralyzed, as does Arnold, who becomes numbed. Overall discussion of Berriault's stories tends to focus on her evaluation and understanding of the human psyche, particularly on the psychological and emotional pain and distance that her characters experience. Some critics, however, have asserted that while Berriault is adept at presenting complex feelings, her writing style sometimes disappoints. They charge that her writing can be too pessimistic, precise, and intellectual. Kostelanetz believed that her "prosaic" and "clumsy" style detracted from her impressive knowledge of human emotions and motivations. For the majority of critics, however, her range of characters, convincing characterization, and understanding of humanity outweighs any stylistic difficulties with her writing. As Boken noted, Berriault's "themes usually focus on the pain that comes from inevitable loss, . . . Through her keen insight, imaginative art, and finely honed craft, Berriault creates a world of flawed people." Berriault's most recent book of short stories, *Women in Their Beds*, won the 1997 Book Critics Circle Award for fiction and the PEN/Faulkner Award that same year. These awards as well as genuine admiration for Berriault's work have led some contemporary critics to believe that Berriault's short fiction will become increasingly appreciated and influential. As Gary Amdahl stated, Berriault, ' 'having written so beautifully and so consistently for nearly forty years, ought to be as familiar to us as Toni Morrison and John Updike."

CRITICISM

Cynthia Bily

Bily teaches English at Adrian College in Adrian, Michigan. In the following essay, she discusses experiences of grief in "The Stone Boy." When nine-year-old Arnold realizes that he has accidentally shot his brother Eugene to death in "The Stone Boy," his response seems strange: rather than running back home for help, he continues on to the garden as the brothers had intended to do together, and picks half a tub of peas — his share of the job. Only when he has finished the picking does he return home, and only when his father speaks to him does he tell his parents the awful truth: "Eugie's

dead." For the rest of the story, as the people around Arnold try to come to terms with what has happened, the fact of Eugie's death seems less troublesome to them than Arnold's first response. They might come to forgive him for killing his brother — after all, it was an accident — but they cannot forgive him for not appearing sorrier about it. Arnold realizes, when his father and Uncle Andy ask him about the accident, that it is his own response that is so troubling to the adults. "When they had asked him why he hadn't run back to the house to tell his parents, he had had no answer — all he could say was that he had gone down into the garden to pick the peas. His father had stared at him in a pale, puzzled way, and it was then he had felt his father and the others set their cold, turbulent silence against him." That night, when the neighbors come to comfort the family and share memories of Eugie, Arnold sits silently among them, and the men notice and taunt him. "Not a tear in his eye." "He don't give a hoot, is that how it goes?" ' 'If your brother is shot dead, he's shot dead. What's the use of gettin' emotional about it? The thing to do is go down to the garden and pick peas. Am I right?" Their reaction to Arnold's reaction causes him to question it himself. When he tells the story to the sheriff, this time ' 'it seemed odd now that he had not run back to the house and wakened his father, but he could not remember why he had not." With a child's trust in the adults around him, he accepts their judgment about him.' 'Andy and his father and the sheriff had discovered what made him go down into the garden. It was because he was cruel, the sheriff said, and didn't care about his brother." But surely the adults, confused by their grief, are wrong about Arnold. Arnold, after all, is only a young boy. The narrator emphasizes his youth in the story's beginning, revealing in the third sentence that "he was nine, six years younger than Eugie," and presenting a striking, peculiar image soon thereafter: as Arnold tries to wake Eugie and the boys wrestle, ' 'all in an instant, he was lying on his back under the covers with only his face showing, like a baby." The age comparisons and the baby image serve to reinforce the boys comparative positions. Arnold is younger, "it was he who was subordinate," and Eugie is older, in command, and literally "on top." As child psychologists and pediatricians have pointed out in recent decades, children manage grief in their own predictable ways. Penelope Leach, for example, in *Your Growing Child*, explains that "children's grief does not always show itself in ways adults approve or can even recognize. Tears, loss of appetite, and disturbed sleep, almost universal in mourning adults, may be almost or completely absent in a grief-stricken child whose distress may show up in ... a stalwart refusal to admit to feeling anything at all." Arnold demonstrates this clearly, particularly when he goes to bed that first night in the room he previously shared with his brother.' 'He felt nothing, not any grief. There was only the same immense silence and crawling inside of him, the way the house and fields must feel under a merciless sun." The mistake the adults make is in forgetting that Arnold is a child. Uncle Andy, who doted on Eugie, taunts Arnold by pointing out to the other men, "If we d've shot our brother, we d've come runnin' back to the house, cryin' like a baby." But as Leach points out, that kind of response to grief is more typical of adults than of children. Andy is a grown man, and what he would have done does not help explain what a child should have done. The sheriff

points out to Arnold's father, "It's come to my notice that the most reasonable guys are mean ones. They don't feel nothing." But Arnold is not one of the 'guys' the sheriff has come across in his duties. He is not a hardened criminal, but a little boy. Arnold's behavior rings true to anyone who spends time observing children, or who can remember what it was like to be a child. When Arnold realizes what he has done, his first action is to pick the half a tub of peas he was sent for. Isn't it typical for a child to try to make up for a bad deed by making a display of doing his chores? After he has told his parents that Eugie is dead, he runs out to the barn to hide in the loft – again, very typical behavior. (In the often-told family legend about the time I kicked in the screen door, I hide out in the attic until my parents come home and find me.) Andy may be right about how he would respond to a terrible accident, but he shows no understanding of Arnold's predictable behavior. The neighbors seem to want Arnold to feel guilty, and to see him punished. Orion, who is older than Eugie and married, almost brags when he claims, "If I'd of done what he done, Pa would've hung my pelt by the side of that big coyote's in the barn." The question of Arnold's guilt and feelings of guilt has drawn the attention of reviewers, some of whom believe that Arnold – consciously or subconsciously – killed Eugie on purpose because he was jealous of his older brother's power and status. The sheriff raises the issue when he asks whether Arnold and Eugie were 'good friends,' and whether they ever quarreled. I cannot find any hint of Arnold intending to cause harm in the description of the accident, but Leach explains that guilt feelings are to be expected in Arnold whether he intended harm or not: 'Most children will feel guilt over any death which is significant to them Most children find it difficult to sort out feelings from actions and may believe, or half-believe, that the anger they felt on the morning of the death actually caused or contributed to it. Brothers and sisters often wish each other dead – and then find themselves apparently monstrously all-powerful.' Through all of the neighbors' and relatives' sly accusing, Arnold's parents remain silent. They do not say anything against Arnold, but neither do they speak up for him. Most importantly, they do not speak to him. On the ride to the sheriff's office, Arnold sits between his father and his uncle. "No one spoke." Arnold avoids his family for the rest of the day, but joins them again at dinner time. Again, "no one spoke at supper, and his mother, who sat next to him, leaned her head in her hand all through the meal, curving her fingers over her eyes so as not to see him." In the story's most heartbreaking scene, when Arnold goes downstairs to see his mother, "hoping to dig his head into her blankets and tell her about the terror he had felt when he had knelt beside his brother," she will not even let him enter her room. She rejects him, sends him back to bed, and he is left only with an insistent silence: 'silently, he left the door and for a stricken moment stood by the rocker. Outside everything was still. The fences, the shocks of wheat seen through the window before him were so still it was as if they moved and breathed in the daytime and had fallen silent with the lateness of the hour.' The image of the nine-year-old boy standing in the dark, utterly alone and "unpardonable," is painful. Arnold's reaching for his mother, his wish to "clasp her in his arms and pommel her breasts with his head, grieving with her for Eugene," is instinctive, and her rejection

seems cruel. But psychology points out that her response, too, is natural and predictable. Leach cautions parents that "it is easy to be so lost in personal grief that the child's is underestimated. This is especially liable to happen when it is a brother or sister who dies. Parents feel themselves the principal mourners and those around them do too. The grief of brothers and sisters is often underestimated; sometimes they are openly pushed out of the way." Arnold's mother fails him, but she is not cruel – at least not intentionally. Like Arnold, she is doing her best to bear an unbearable grief. Although "The Stone Boy" depicts characters who have failed themselves and each other, Berriault does not condemn them for their failures. She presents a clear and unfaltering narration of painful events, and challenges the reader to confront the images directly, but she does not judge. This is a story, she seems to say, of a terrible grief and the damage it does to a family. There are no villains, and no heroes – just ordinary people struggling with an extraordinary circumstance. As she explains in a Literary Review interview with Bonnie Lyons and Bill Oliver, "If there is a recurring theme" in her work, "it's an attempt at compassionate understanding. Judgment is the prevalent theme in our society, but it's from fiction we learn compassion and comprehension."

Source: Cynthia Bily, for *Short Stories for Students*, The Gale Group, 2000.

Liz Brent

Brent has a Ph.D. in American Culture, with a specialization in cinema studies, from the University of Michigan. She is a freelance writer and teaches courses in American cinema. In the following essay, she discusses the imagery of light and darkness in terms of judgment and redemption in "The Stone Boy." The main character in Gina Berriault's "The Stone Boy" is a nine-year old boy who, having accidentally shot and killed his older brother with a .22 caliber rifle, suffers from such extreme shock that he is unable to express even the slightest signs of grief. However, although Arnold shows no outward signs of sadness or remorse, his fear of judgment and his yearning for forgiveness are expressed through the story's imagery. Arnold's feelings of guilt and fear of judgment are expressed through references to light, which are suggestive of a godlike presence, both accusatory and redemptive. The stares and looks of the members of his family and community also indicate themes of judgment and guilt, as associated with vision and light. Finally, imagery suggestive of the mother-child relationship implies the possibility of redemption and mercy through the spiritual properties of maternal love and forgiveness. Arnold's awareness of the properties of light, after he accidentally shoots his brother Eugie, evoke a Christian iconography suggestive of a godlike presence. After accidentally shooting Eugie in the face and killing him in the early hours of the morning, Arnold goes to the garden to pick peas, as he and his brother had originally planned. In a state of shock at this horrible event, Arnold automatically behaves as he normally would. Yet, while Arnold at this point seems to have no consciousness that his brother has been killed, his awareness that the sun has risen is described in language which implies the hand of God upon his back: 'It was a warmth on his back, like a large hand laid firmly there, that made him raise

his head." At this point, the large warm hand evokes imagery of a forgiving God, who has placed a "warm," comforting or guiding hand on the back of the boy. Later in the story, however, Arnold, associating vision with light, comes to associate light through the gaze of others with the negative judgment of those around him. Arnold's perception of condemnation in people's gaze is reinforced by his perception of the condemnation implied by silence. When Arnold can only tell the sheriff that his reason for not immediately informing the family of his brother's death was that he had gone to pick peas, Arnold perceives that he has been deemed a guilty man: " 'it was then he had felt his father and the others set their cold, turbulent silence against him.' And it is his father's eyes in particular which seem to condemn him: ' 'Arnold shifted on the bench, his only feeling a small one of compunction imposed by his father's eyes.' The sheriff's judgment of Arnold takes on religious implications when he sends Arnold and his father home after questioning: "Then the sheriff lifted his hand like a man taking an oath." From Arnold's perspective, the sheriff's judgment upon him comes in the form of a "oath" before God, proclaiming him guilty. The judgment represented by the sheriff's hand contrasts markedly with the judgment represented by the warmth of the sun as the hand of God. After leaving the sheriff's office, Arnold, his father and his uncle return to their car. It is at this point that Arnold becomes increasingly aware of the eyes of others bearing down upon him: "Arnold saw that his uncle's eyes had absorbed the knowingness from the sheriff's eyes. Andy and his father and the sheriff had discovered what made him go down into the garden. It was because he was cruel, the sheriff had said, and didn't care about his brother." Because Arnold experiences the gaze of others as a judgment upon him, an affirmation of his guilt, he responds by deferentially avoiding their eyes: "Arnold lowered his eyelids meekly against his uncle's stare." In the light of the accusatory stares of those around him, Arnold attempts to make himself as inconspicuous as possible. When relatives and neighbors stop by his family's house that evening, Arnold is almost paralyzed by the fear of calling attention to himself, " 'He knew that although they were talking only about Eugie they were thinking of him, and if he got up, if he moved even his foot, they would all be alerted.'" Getting ready for bed that night, Arnold fears both the darkness and the light. Fear of darkness is sometimes associated with fear of one's own conscience, or fear of death. Contrary to his usual habits, Arnold waits until the last minute to blow out the light after going to bed that night: " 'In his room he undressed by lamp light, although he and Eugie had always undressed in the dark, and not until he was lying in his bed did he blow out the flame.'" But, once in bed, Arnold again associates light with the godlike judgment of a "merciless sun": "He felt nothing, not any grief. There was only the same immense silence and crawling inside of him, the way the house and fields must feel under a merciless sun." When he awakens in the middle of the night and approaches his parents' bedroom, in hopes of expressing to his mother his grief over his brother's death, Arnold is met with an implied condemnation by his mother; she responds to his knock by replying: "Go back! Is night when you get afraid?" His mother's reply harshly implies that Arnold is afraid of the night because he is afraid of his own guilty conscience. With this condemnation,

she turns him away from the possibility of redemption he seeks in her arms. Upon being condemned and turned away by his mother, Arnold again fears the light, which is associated with his father's judgment upon him. He sees his father outside in the yard, 'his lantern casting a circle of light by his feet.' In association with his father's arrival back in the house, "the lantern still lighting his way," Arnold suddenly becomes aware that he is naked. This sudden awareness of his nakedness is associated with the light which his father's lantern is soon to cast upon him. Arnold's nakedness is symbolic of the nakedness of his soul, as if his father's judgment, upon seeing Arnold, would be utterly unforgiving, since: 'his nakedness had become unpardonable.' Arnold thus wishes to escape the light of his father's judgment: "At once he went back upstairs, fleeing from his father's lantern." While Arnold fears the light of judgment in the eyes of his father, he conceptualizes forgiveness and redemption in association with that which is maternal: his mother's breast, the pitcher of milk at the breakfast table, the cow with the newborn calf. In knocking at his mother's door at night, Arnold had imagined a scene of confession or begging of forgiveness at his mother's breast, in hopes of a kind of redemption through maternal love: "He had expected her to realize that he wanted to go down on his knees by her bed and tell her that Eugie was dead. She did not know it yet, nobody knew it, and yet she was sitting up in bed, waiting to be told. He had expected her to tell him to come in and allow him to dig his head into her blankets and tell her about the terror he had felt when he had knelt beside his brother. He had come to clasp her in his arms and pommel her breasts with his head, grieving with her for Eugene." Turned away from this possibility of forgiveness at his mother's breast in the night, Arnold the next morning vows never to ask his parents for anything again. He lowers his eyes deferentially, fearing their accusatory stares: "At breakfast, he kept his eyelids lowered to deny the night." But when his father reminds his sister to pass him the pitcher of milk at breakfast, Arnold is given some hope that he may be welcomed back into the bosom of his family: "Relief rained over his shoulders at the thought that his parents recognized him again." The pitcher of milk is suggestive of the nurturing powers of maternal love and forgiveness, for which Arnold longs. This maternal imagery as a sign of redemption is echoed in Arnold's father's mention of the cow which has gone up the mountain to have its calf. Arnold immediately sets out to retrieve the cow and newborn calf, to "switch the cow down the mountain slowly, and the calf would run at its mother's side." The image of the calf running at its mother's side is evocative of Arnold's desire to be back in his mother's good graces, to regain her maternal affection and nurturing love. But, while the image of the cow and calf express a sense of hope that Arnold may be granted his mother's forgiveness, the closing lines of the story leave the reader in doubt as to whether or not Arnold will be capable of asking this of his mother, and whether or not his mother will be capable of granting it. At the point when his mother asks what he had wanted from her the night before, Arnold is incapable of telling her: "'I don't want nothing,' he said flatly." The final line of the story leaves the reader with a chilling doubt as to whether or not Arnold and his mother will ever be able to restore

the mother-child bond represented by the cow and calf: 'Then he went out the door and down the back steps, frightened by his answer.'

Source: Liz Brent, for Short Stories for Students, The Gale Group, 2000

Rena Korb

Korb has a master's degree in English literature and creative writing and has written for a wide variety of educational publications. In the following essay, Korb discusses several of the questions raised by 'The Stone Boy' and poses possible answers. In 1975, in one of her rare public statements, Gina Berriault commented on the *Weltanschauung*, or "world view," of her writing. She told World Authors: "My work is an investigation of reality which is, simply, so full of ambiguity and of answers that beget further questions that to pursue it is an impossible task and a completely absorbing necessity. It appears to me that all the terrors are countered by a perceptible degree by the attempts of some writers to make us known to one another and thus to impart or revive a reverence for life." Berriault's statement certainly applies to her well-known short story which invites analysis and inquiry but provides no absolute answers. The Stone Boy first appeared in *Mademoiselle* magazine in 1957, but it drew the attention of reviewers when it was included in Berriault's collection, *The Mistress, and Other Stories*, eight years later. The Stone Boy is immediately riveting in its subject matter. Nine-year-old Arnold, while passing through a wire fence, catches his gun. It discharges, and a bullet lodges in the neck of his older brother, Eugie. Eugie dies. However, this tragic incident is only the departure point for Berriault's story of alienation and failed relationships. For Arnold does not immediately return to his family and tell them what happened; instead, he continues with the task he set out to do that morning: picking peas. His family is horror stricken, both by the news of Eugie's death and by Arnold's reaction to it. They do not know how to view Arnold so they cling to the sheriff's assessment of Arnold. According to the sheriff, Arnold is such a cold person that he didn't bother to change his schedule because there was nothing that could alter the fact of Eugie's death. The sheriff labels Arnold a "monster," but in essence, he defines Arnold as a sociopath. By the next day, Arnold, too, comes to accept this opinion of himself, and in one heartfelt moment, transforms himself into such a being. While *The Stone Boy* does not employ intricate narrative devices, it nevertheless presents a full, compelling story. This story invites even the casual reader to speculate as to its whys and wherefores. Ambiguity, a central theme in much of Berriault's work and to her perception of her writing, emerges foremost in the story, almost from the opening lines. Although the casual reader may be tempted to think this story will be a coming-of-age or a rite-of-passage story, Berriault dispels that notion quickly and efficiently, with Eugie's sudden death. At this point, the story truly begins to invite the readers' careful analysis, as Berriault would want it to. Although Charles Poore wrote in *The New York Times* that Arnold's "murder" of Eugie is "explicit," whether Eugie's death was an accident emerges as just one of Berriault's many ambiguities. A solid determination of any intention to kill Eugie cannot be found in Arnold's reaction to this horrible event. Later in the story it

is revealed that Arnold felt "terror" at what had occurred; at the moment it happens, however, Arnold only feels "discomfort." In the immediate seconds following Eugie's death, Arnold views his dead brother as an object causing displeasure bordering on disgust. He notes that Eugie's blood "had an obnoxious movement, like that of a parasite." Arnold is loath to approach or touch his brother; to determine whether or not Eugie is able to get up, Arnold only nudges him with a foot. When Eugie does not get up, Arnold commences picking peas. The description of this task seems straightforward, with Arnold's physical reaction mirroring his mental reaction: "Arnold set his rifle on the ground and stood up. He picked up the tub and, dragging it behind him, walked along by the willows to the garden fence and climbed through. He went down on his knees among the tangled vines." However, Arnold is metaphorically repeating the actions that led to Eugie's death; climbing through the garden fence is like climbing through the wire fence into the pasture; even the tangled vines echo the enmeshment of the barbed wire. Note is also made that Arnold's "hands were strange to him." While Arnold determines that this is caused by the cold weather, which numbs his hands, in reality, they have turned into something foreign—the hands of a killer. The numbing of Arnold's hands foreshadows the numbing of his very soul. Indeed, the story provides substantiation for both a reading of Arnold as murderer and Arnold as accidental killer. The opening scene clearly sets up Arnold's animosity toward his brother, as he laughs "derisively" when Eugie is having trouble getting out of bed. In the kitchen, Arnold recognizes Eugie's vanity—his older brother "offer[s] silent praise unto himself. "Also in the kitchen, Arnold notes that Eugie's "brown curls grew thick and matted, close around his ears and down his neck, tapering there to a small whorl." To Arnold's perceptive eye, Eugie's hair forms the very bullseye that Arnold's bullet will strike just a short time later. At the same time, however, Arnold cares for and idealizes his brother. Arnold's father, too, has noted the affection that Arnold seems to have for his older brother. Indeed, Arnold's conflicted feelings for Eugie are best expressed by one sentence: "Eugie had had a way of looking at him, slyly and mockingly and yet confidentially, that had summed up how they both felt about being brothers." Based on this evidence, answering the question as to whether or not Arnold intended or even wanted to kill his brother is not possible. Another question posed by the story is why Arnold and his family so readily accept the sheriff's judgment that the boy's actions demonstrate that he has no feelings. For some undisclosed reason, the sheriff offers no other explanation. With little thought as to why Arnold would continue to pick peas, and with no explanation forthcoming from Arnold himself, the family's authority figures—Arnold's father and Uncle Andy—decide to accept the sheriff's point of view; they willfully believe Arnold to be that merciless, unfeeling person. Arnold internalizes these opinions, particularly because the criticism comes from Uncle Andy, whose power over Arnold derives from his close resemblance to Eugie. Uncle Andy's disapproval is further reinforced by the neighbors' reactions. While Arnold hopes for their understanding, remaining in the parlor despite his discomfort so "they would see that he was only Arnold and not the person the sheriff thought he was," Andy's vocal assessment of the situation

prevails. By the end of the evening, Arnold is almost completely undone. Lying alone in bed that night, "[H]e felt nothing, not any grief." However, Arnold still retains a spark of humanity. When he wakes suddenly in the night, he only wants his mother to comfort him while he "tell[s] her about the terror he had felt when he knelt beside Eugie." This is the first time the reader has heard about Arnold's true reaction to Eugie's death, but the reader hears little else about it, for Arnold's mother not only rejects him but reminds him of how his community now views him. Her words, "Is night when you get afraid?" tell him that she believes that her son is indeed the kind of monster who can commit any sort of atrocity in the light of day. While returning to his room, Arnold realizes that he is naked, viewing it as an "unpardonable" offense. His state of undress symbolizes his feeling that his family and his community have seen through his skin, into the hidden recesses of his heart. Ironically, that terror actually resided in his heart at Eugie's death, not malice, has no bearing anymore. Without anyone willing to see the "real" boy, Arnold becomes what they choose to see. The next morning, however, Arnold almost grasps a chance at rehabilitation. His father forces his sister to acknowledge Arnold's presence at the breakfast table. Although "relief rained over his shoulders at the thought that his parents recognized him again," Arnold almost immediately "called upon his pride to protect him from them." This final scene begs the question of why Arnold refuses to accept their peace offerings. Many possible answers can be posed, but as with other questions the story raises, perhaps no answer seems satisfactory. Arnold may have come to accept his new role in the course of one night, or he may be so angry at his parents for allowing him to be unfairly cast that he wants to punish them by withholding himself. Perhaps the most likely answer stems from Eugie's and Arnold's relationship. Arnold has always modeled himself after Eugie, 'enthralled' by his older brother. Because Eugie valued his place as the eldest child, so did Arnold. Now Arnold has become the eldest boy, and he feels he must fulfill the tasks that thus befall him. This explanation may help clarify why Arnold picked peas while Eugie lay dead – because that was the task, he and Eugie had set out to fulfill. Now, at the breakfast table, as Arnold seems ready to accept his parents' tacit apology, his father announces that a cow and her calf are up in the mountains. "That had been Eugie's job, Arnold thought." This short exchange reminds Arnold of what Eugie's loss will mean to the family, that he is to blame for it, and that his family had excluded him in his time of need. When Arnold volunteers to get the calf himself, he is attempting to step into Eugie's shoes, but he knows that he will never be able to truly do so. Although so much of *The Stone Boy* is ambiguous and cannot be fully understood, what is clear is that by the end of the story, Arnold has undergone a complete transformation. When he tells his mother that he doesn't want anything, his legs are "trembling from the fright his answer gave him." Arnold does not embrace his new identity but feels he has little choice but to take it on. The reader is left with little doubt that the sheriff's dreadful prophecy of seeing Arnold again in the future is likely to come true.

Source: Rena Korb, for *Short Stories for Students*, The Gale Group, 2000.

V

Study the critical overview of Catherine Mansfield's work THE GARDEN PARTY. List the positive and negative features literary critics have identified in her literary style. What is your personal vision of the things?

Critical attempts to interpret the story's conclusion have led to many analyses of its overall structure. In his article "Crashing the Garden Party, I: A Dream – A Wakening," Donald S. Taylor perceives the story as a narrative of Laura Sheridan's awakening from the comfortable but shallow existence that she has been living. Taylor thus views the lyrics of Jose's song as a foreshadowing of Laura's eventual awakening. Taylor attributes much of the responsibility for this dream-world to Mrs. Sheridan, who, he writes, 'keeps the daughters in the dream by giving her daughters the illusion of maturity' in planning the garden party. In the critical analyses that examine the story structurally – as a representation and negotiation of two worlds – Laura Sheridan is given much of the responsibility for her own growth or her own awakening. In this sense, "The Garden Party" is much like a bildungsroman – a story of individual growth and maturity. In his article "Crashing the Garden Party: The Garden Party of Proserpina," Daniel A. Weiss likens Laura's journey of self-awakening to Proserpina's journey to the underworld. In his reading, Saunders Lane is the underworld of death that Laura must journey to and return from as part of her initiation into life's ultimate mystery – death – and away from the dream world of her family. In mapping out the mythic and autobiographical aspects of "The Garden Party," Anders Iversen compares Mansfield's story to a story written by Danish author I. P. Jacobsen. He sees the similarities between the two stories as structural; both deal with the contrasting worlds of rich and poor. These two worlds, Iversen argues, not only signify wealth and poverty but also life and death. While in Jacobsen's story there is no mediation between the two worlds, ' "The Garden Party" allows what Iversen calls a "moment of contact" between the world of life – the Sheridans – and the world of death – Saunders Lane. This moment of contact is made by Laura Sheridan, who alone ventures forth from what Iversen has characterized as her personal "garden of Eden" to what is beyond the garden – the world of the Scotts. Iversen understands this journey as a "rite of passage," one of the fundamental ingredients of the bildungsroman. Rather than analyzing "The Garden Party" through the lens of mythic archetype, feminist critics such as Kate Fulbrook take a more psychological and political view of the story and of the character of Laura Sheridan in particular. In her essay Fulbrook presents Laura's struggle with the class values of her parents as a struggle with her own identity. She views Laura as caught between a sense of herself as an outsider within her own family and her vanity – particularly after she has seen herself in her black hat, when she thinks it impossible to cancel the garden party. Interestingly, Fulbrook interprets Mansfield's representation of Laura's moral confusion as an indictment of "the inadequacy of education of 'the daughters of

educated men" — an indictment, which, as Fulbrook notes, is "deepened by the story's account of the suffering taking place below the Sheridan's privileged hill."

CRITICISM

Jennifer Rich

Rich is an instructor of literature, composition, and gender issues at Marymount Manhattan College. In the following essay, she examines ways in which "The Garden Party" uses contrasts between social classes to illustrate how the classes define each other. Most criticism of Katherine Mansfield's short story "The Garden Party" concentrates on the story as a truncated bildungsroman—a story of the growth and maturity of a young idealistic character. Critics such as Daniel S. Taylor in "Crashing the Garden Party: A Dream, A Wakening," for example, see Laura's initiation as a passage from the "dream world of her parents and social class to the real world of the Sheridan's neighboring working-class." As Taylor notes, describing the symbolic significance of the garden party, "The garden party epitomizes the dream world of the Sheridan women, a world whose underlying principle is the editing and rearranging of reality for the comfort and pleasure of its inhabitants. Its war is with the real world, whose central and final truth is death." Similarly, Clare Hansen and Andrew Gurr, in "The Stories: Sierre and Paris," discuss Laura's evolution into adulthood as taking place in the context of a gulf between rich and poor—a gulf that is indicated by the Mansfield's oppositional descriptions of the world of the Sheridans and the world of their less fortunate neighbors: Words such as "perfect," "delicious," "beautiful," "splendor," "radiant," "exquisite," "brilliant," "rapturous," "charming," "delightful," "stunning," convey the outward beauty of the Sheridan's life ... In striking contrast are words describing the working people and Saunders lane: "haggard," "mean," "poverty-stricken," "revolting," "disgusting," "sordid," "crablike," "wretched." Given that "The Garden Party" was written in 1922 at the height of Marxist movements across Europe and Russia—which, among other things, attempted to understand class structure and identity—it is necessary to explore the way in which "The Garden Party" presents a picture of class interdependence. Specifically, "The Garden Party" is interesting to investigate for the way it portrays families like the Sheridans as being dependent for their class—identity on their always nearby working—class neighbors. Thus, rather than conceptualizing the worlds of the Sheridans and the worlds of the Scotts as diametric opposites whose paths seldom cross, this essay will explore the way in which "The Garden Party" presents the two worlds as always meeting and clashing—defining one and the other through their continual juxtaposition. "The Garden Party" is structured around the preparations for an early afternoon garden party. The sense of the Sheridans as inhabiting a dreamlike world is set out in the very first lines when the narrator comments on the ideal weather conditions for the garden party. "And after all the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day if they had ordered it. Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud." The family, and particularly its female members, seem to derive their life-force from the carefree atmosphere in which they live. In the story's first scene, Meg, one of

Laura's sisters, is seen sipping coffee, hair washed, wrapped in a green turban. Jose, another sister, is simply described as a butterfly who always 'came down in a silk petticoat and a kimono jacket.' Mansfield, however, does not allow this sense of early morning luxuriance to go uninterrupted. Immediately, those upon whom the Sheridan sisters' luxury depends burst in upon this scene of lazy breakfast-taking. Their entrance is signaled by a break in the narrator's description of the garden and weather: "Breakfast was not yet over before the men came to put up the marquee." The now down-to-earth tone of this sentence connotes linguistically a clash between the lives of the Sheridan sisters and the men who must come at dawn to put up the marquee for the party. This interruption is further signaled when Laura, the main character who throughout the story attempts to bridge personally these two ever-present worlds, runs out to meet the workmen with breakfast – the signifier of her "Sheridan" life – in hand. Significantly, Laura feels embarrassed still holding the bread and butter when she comes to meet the workmen: "Laura wished now that she had not got the bread-and-butter, but there was nowhere to put it and she couldn't possibly throw it away." The reason for this awkwardness is precisely that the bread and butter, the piece of Sheridan life which she has taken with her, defines her to the workmen as not one of them but as opposite from them, and upper class. Laura attempts to mediate that duality by playing both roles – taking a big workman-like bite from her slice of refined Sheridan life while thinking of the "absurdity of class distinctions." While Laura is exulting in her camaraderie with the workmen, one of them catches her attention. He seems somewhat apart from his compatriot—he does not share the general frivolity, and functions to once again remind Laura of their difference. Discussing the placement of the marquee, Laura remarks that there will be a band playing at the party. To this the workman replies, 'H'm, going to have a band, are you?' After this remark, Laura notices that this workman "was pale," and with a "haggard look as his dark eyes scanned the tennis court." At this very moment, however, of a sense of mutual alienation, the workman picks and smells a sprig of lavender from the garden. Witnessing this, Laura feels their differences evaporate and "wonder(s) at him for caring for things like that—caring for the smell of lavender." Once again, then, a moment of antimony, of unmediated difference of "two worlds," is mediated by an action, this time on the part of one of the workmen rather than Laura. This sense of similar class identities is short-lived, however, as the narrative continues with the continued clashing and jarring of the two worlds. In fact, during the rest of the story there is never a moment where Saunders Lane is forgotten. Even at the dreamiest point in the Sheridan world, Saunders Lane is suggested in some way or another. For example, after Laura has met the workmen, she settles down for a moment and listens to the sound of the house. As she listens she finds that the house is an airy delight, 'every door seemed open... And the house was alive with soft, quick steps and running voices." Even this momentary enjoyment of the house's heavenly comfort is interrupted by Saunders Lane. The interruption comes in the form of "a long chuckling absurd sound. It was the heavy A more humorous (if not satirical) moment of potential mediation between the two worlds of the story is Jose's absurd song with which she

tests her voice. Jose has been earlier described as a "butterfly" — a girl of cream-puffs and linen dresses, and of course garden parties. Yet, the song that she sings is decidedly not of this type. Rather than the expected moment of unity between the Sheridan house and Saunders Lane, the absurd pairing of an emotionally calloused character like Jose with a song of sorrow and desperation serves instead to remind the reader that it is precisely the weariness of others that makes possible Jose's butterfly-like existence. This antithesis of expression and experience is punctuated by Jose's actions at the close of the song, but at the word "goodbye", and although the piano sounded more desperate than ever, her face broke into a brilliant, dreadfully unsympathetic smile, 'Aren't I in good voice, Mummy?' This mismatch of expression and character is underscored by the fact that this song is preceded by Jose giving orders to the servant, Hans, to rearrange the tables and to sweep the rug. The garden party is itself not fully described in the story. We are only privy to certain snatches of conversation—and these tell us that it has been a success, with Laura the center of much attention because of her black hat. Before the garden party, Laura's mother, Mrs. Sheridan, had distracted Laura from thinking about the dead laborer and her wish to cancel the garden party by enticing her with a black hat. Laura had at first resisted this appeal to her vanity, but once she leaves her mother's bedroom, she catches a glimpse of herself in the hat in her bedroom mirror. What she sees startles her, and serves to obliterate the image of the dead laborer. There, quite by chance, the first thing she saw was this charming girl in the mirror, in her black hat trimmed with gold daisies, and a long velvet black ribbon. Never had she imaged she could look like that.... Just for a moment she had another glimpse of that poor woman and those little children, and the body being carried into the house. But it all seemed so blurred, unreal, like a picture in the newspaper. The hat thus functions at this moment to reinforce more than ever the division between the world of the Sheridans and the world of the Scotts. Suffused with vanity as a result of the hat's charm, Laura forgets the tragedy down the hill, and more than ever desires to continue with the garden party. Even when confronted with her brother, Laurie— the family member with whom she is most emotionally intimate—Laura decides not to tell him of Scott once he has complemented her on her hat. Ironically, the hat—after the garden party—is a catalyst for a moment of understanding/connection between Laura's world and the world of the Scotts. After the party, Laura's mother suggests that Laura take a basket of party scraps down to Scott's widow. At first, Laura questions the appropriateness of this gesture, but is soon convinced. Mrs. Sheridan also insists that Laura "run down just as [she is]"-in party dress and hat. Arriving at Saunders Lane, Laura soon feels awkward because of the way in which she is dressed. This awkwardness, I would argue, signals a moment of insight for Laura into the lives of the workers who live on this lane. She is disturbed because of the brightness of her frock and the extravagance of the famous hat: 'how her frock shone! And the big hat with the velvet streamer — if only it was another hat!' Noting the difference between her dress and that of the laborers—tweed capped men and shawled women—Laura realizes the life absent of carefree happiness that the inhabitants of Saunders Lane must endure. A bright

frock and an extravagant hat have no home here. Like the bread-and-butter episode, this piece of Sheridan life reveals to her the almost unsurmountable disjuncture between her life and the lives of these workers. The hat also functions to create another moment of insight for Laura when she is alone with the body of the laborer. When Laura enters the Scott home, she is immediately confronted with the sorrow-ravaged face of the laborer's widow. Although Laura tries to escape as soon as it is possible, the widow's sister insists that she view the now-peaceful body of Mr. Scott. Laura is soon overwhelmed by the peacefulness of the expression on the laborer's face; particularly she is overcome by the remoteness of his appearance. "He was given up to his dream. What did garden-parties and baskets and lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane." Laura feels that she cannot leave Scott without saying something that would indicate the affect that he has had on her— "She gave out a loud, childish sob ... 'Forgive my hat,' she said." Although her plea is undoubtedly comical and absurd, it also carries within it a significant moment of understanding. As we have seen, the hat has heretofore functioned as a prime signifier of the division between the two worlds—earlier, the hat had caused Laura to forget the tragedy just down the hill. By apologizing for her hat, Laura is also apologizing for what it represents—class snobbery, selfishness, and the almost unsurmountable psychological and social division between the world of the laborers and the world of the Sheridans. The hat, then, here facilitates a moment of connection—of class similarity—through its very significance as a symbol of division and antimony. The story concludes with Laura meeting her brother, Laurie, in Saunders Lane. Her demeanor with him indicates that she has been touched by the universality of death and life—both know neither class borders nor garden parties.

Source: Jennifer Rich, "Overview of 'The Garden Party,'" in *Short Stories for Students*, The Gale Group, 2000.

Ben Satterfield

In the following essay, Satterfield discusses the importance of irony in 'The Garden Party.' All of the writing on Katherine Mansfield's most anthologized story recognizes or implies that 'The Garden Party' is a fable of initiation. The general interpretation argues that Laura goes from her Edenic world to one in which death exists, and that archetypically she loses her innocence, thereby acquiring knowledge and reaching a point of initiation. Laura has a great discovery, true; but because of her inability to make any kind of statement about it that would serve to clarify its meaning, critics disagree on whether she will go on to learn more about life and death or whether she will retreat into the sanctuary of the garden world. Much of the disagreement can be resolved, I believe, by a close examination of the irony—which has been largely ignored—and the function and effect of that irony upon the events of the story. Also, 'The Garden Party' contains two types of initiation, a fact mostly overlooked, and the initiations are not compatible, as the details of the story make evident. Irony is

the keynote. The central character of "The Garden Party," Laura Sheridan, is protected from the exigencies of life and is unable to view reality (even death) except through the rose-tinted glasses provided by a delicate and insulated existence. Laura's world is a world of parties and flowers, a pristine world of radiant, bright canna lilies and roses, a precious and exclusive world. Laura's sister, Jose, is early described as a butterfly – and what creature is more delicate than a butterfly? That Jose chooses to sing a song about a weary life, obviously something she is unacquainted with, has to be ironic: in the Sheridan family, weariness and sorrow are merely lyrics to be mocked. Mansfield's exquisite use of imagery is as telling as her irony. For example, the flower imagery throughout the story serves to keep the reader reminded of the delicacy of Laura's world. The flowers are splendid, beautiful, and – what is not stated – short-lived. Laura, too, is beautiful, radiant, flower-like. But even the afternoon is likened to a flower: ' 'And the perfect afternoon slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed.' Laura, her vision attuned to the superficial, can see only the beauty and not the dying of the flower, and she cannot see that, in many ways, she is very much like a flower herself. The symbolism of Laura's hat as well as her name (from laurel, the victory crown) is apparent. Marvin Magalaner adroitly sums up the significance of both: "When the mother thus presents her daughter with her own party hat in typical coronation fashion, she is symbolically transferring to Laura the Sheridan heritage of snobbery, restricted social views, narrowness of vision – the garden party syndrome." Surely this is the case, although Laura may not be aware of it. Hence here is an initiation that is true and subtle. But the strong irony of this story results from the contrast between the way Laura sees herself and the way the reader is led to see her. Laura has very little – if any – insight, a fact made manifest throughout "The Garden Party." Her dealings with the workmen illustrate her lack of awareness: she sees them as "extraordinarily nice," apparently not realizing that their "niceness" is more than likely due to their roles as subordinates, mere hirelings. Laura does not even seem to realize that what to her is a delightful party is simply toil to the workmen. Self-absorbed and narcissistic, she takes the superficial at face value because both she and her perceptions lack depth. "She felt just like a work-girl" is stinging irony because the reader knows that Laura has absolutely no concept of the life of a work-girl, just as she has no idea of what lies behind the friendly veneer of the workmen. For her to imagine that she would "get on much better with men like these" rather than the "silly boys" who come to her parties is an indication of how little general comprehension and self-understanding she possesses. The other obvious contrast in the story is between the gaiety on the top of the hill and the sorrow below. The death of a man intrudes upon Laura's affected sensibilities and she discusses the possibility of canceling the party, but, as we suspected, her conscience is easily assuaged (and by the symbolic hat, a distraction that serves to fix Laura permanently in her world). Nothing, positively nothing, is permitted to spoil the party; even the weather is described as "ideal" – a "perfect day for a garden-party." In the Sheridan world, suffering and misery cannot take precedence over well-ordered but mundane social functions, and will not be allowed to interfere. Consequently, Laura, with uncommon

self-centeredness, blots out the death of a common man until a more convenient time:' Til remember it again after the party's over, she decided." But even then, for her to realize that she is actually going to the house of the dead man is difficult because "kisses, voices, tinkling spoons, laughter, the smell of crushed grass were somehow inside her. She had no room for anything else." Unmistakably she has room for little else than parties, and the closer she comes to the house of the dead man the more she realizes her mistake, for here is a reality she does not want to face: it is so much easier to commiserate from the top of the hill – and then to go on with one's fun. When she actually views the dead man, she can see him only as she sees death, as something remote, far, far away. (In addition, she has no more understanding of why she is there than does the dead man's wife.) Death is so removed from Laura's insular life that it is unreal; it cannot really be experienced, much less coped with, so she sees it as she sees everything else, as something marvelous and beautiful. Just as Laura is unable to pierce the facade of the workmen, she is equally unable to see beyond the face of death, the stark reality of which is transformed into dream, and she sees the dead man as sleeping, happy, content. Any initiation into the mystery of life and death is incomplete, whereas the installation of Laura into the Sheridan tradition is certain. That Katherine Mansfield could present two types of initiation, one profound and the other shallow, is a tribute to her consummate skill: the fact that the protagonist opts for the shallow in no way detracts from her art but serves to increase the poignancy of her tale and to mark its realism. Laura is not without sensitivity, but her sensitivity is subordinated to the comforts and trappings of the Sheridan way of life. She is young and inexperienced, and she has been shielded from the harsher aspects of existence. Even after facing the reality of death, however, she is unable to view it realistically and transforms it into a dream, into something wonderful and happy, something that will fit into the tableau of her resplendent world. The ironic tone has been too clearly established for the reader to take Laura's encounter as profoundly affecting. In this regard, "The Garden Party" asserts itself as not just another story of the loss of innocence, but an alteration of a mythic pattern. The intimations of mortality are only vaguely perceived, and the story closes on a final note of irony: Laura apparently thinks that she has discovered something new about life, not an awesome truth, but something deep and ineffable, something she attempts to explain to her brother, but cannot. Unlike the emperor Augustus, who would sometimes say to his Senate, 'Words fail me, my Lords; nothing I can utter could possibly indicate the depth of my feelings,' Laura seems more confused than moved, and her inability to articulate her feelings to her brother is a result of her failure to understand, her inability to grasp the full significance of what she has witnessed. "No matter. He quite understood." That is, he understood as much as Laura. They both will in all likelihood remain in the refuge of their bright house on the hill and continue giving expensive, gay parties and toying with the surface of things until the petals of their own lives are closed.

Source: Ben Satterfield, "Irony in 'The Garden Party,'" in Ball State University Forum, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, Winter, 1982, pp. 68-70.

Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr

In the following excerpt, Hanson and Gurr explore issues of class conflict in "The Garden Party." Into her narrative, Katherine Mansfield weaves a series of contrasts and parallels which unobtrusively carry forward her theme at the same time as they unify the different elements of the story. "The Garden Party" is a great story and a complex one because in it . we are presented simultaneously with several distinct yet interlocking levels of meaning. There is the social meaning provided by the real-life framework; the emotional and psychological overtones of the events in which Laura plays a central part; and the broader, philosophical significance of the total experience Katherine Mansfield lays before us. The fact that the rich can avoid (or attempt to avoid) the unpleasant realities of human existence, even summon up beauty and elegance at will, is conveyed in the very first paragraph of the story. This opening paragraph is redolent of the fullness and richness of life, indeed of birth, since the rose bushes are bowed down as if "visited by archangels" in the night. At the same time, there is an unreal, artificial quality to this beauty which the personification of the roses underlines. And so, the scene is set for the contrast which is integral to the patterning of the narrative: the contrast between the essentially artificial, almost unreal world of the Sheridans and the quite different but real world of the Scotts. While the Sheridans' money brings them life in its fullness, the Scotts' lack of money confers on them only hardship and death. The world of the Scotts dominates the ending of the story, the world of the Sheridans the first part. Rich and poor alike have their social rituals, and the ritual being celebrated by the Sheridans is the garden party, which at once allows them to display their wealth and fulfill the obligations of hospitality. Convention governs the attitudes, the behaviour and even the voices of the Sheridan women. Laura's conscious attempt to copy her mother's voice, followed by her realisation that she sounds "so fearfully affected," indicates the artificiality of the Sheridan manner of talking. Laura, who despises "stupid conventions," cannot act a role; but her mother and sisters do. Jose, for example, delights in the artificial. She loves ' 'giving orders to the servants" and making them feel that "they were taking part in some drama." Emotion is something she simulates but does not feel. Practising her song, "This Life is Wee-ary, I Hope comes to Die," Jose sings of a tragic feeling only to break into a "brilliant, dreadfully unsympathetic smile." Behaviour is learned, not something spontaneous, in this sheltered world of wealth; and the Sheridan reaction to events taking place outside the family circle is dictated by what is expected. Thus, Laura's instinctive feeling that the garden party should be cancelled because a death is being mourned nearby is rejected by her mother and sister in virtually identical words. Jose tells Laura, ' 'nobody expects us to," and this is echoed by Mrs. Sheridan: "People like that don't expect sacrifices from us." It is principally through Laura's perceptions that we glimpse the quite different world of the workmen. The distinguishing characteristic of these ordinary people is their naturalness and spontaneity. Whereas feelings are assumed, disguised, or restrained by the Sheridan women, they are expressed freely by the working class. Instinctively, Laura is attracted to the warmth and friendliness of the working men who come to erect the marquee;

and the sensitivity shown by the man who smells a sprig of lavender makes her compare these men and the boys of her own social class. 'How many men that she knew would have done such a thing,' she thinks. "Why couldn't she have workmen for friends rather than the silly boys she danced with and who came to Sunday night supper?" Laura is searching for an identity of her own when she inwardly voices her dislike of the "absurd class distinctions" and 'stupid conventions' which pervade the Sheridan world and prevent her from having friendships with such men. She tries to legitimise her attraction to the workmen by pretending to be "just like a work girl." But the class barriers cannot be broken down, and it is with her brother, Laurie, that she shares her own warmth. "Suddenly she couldn't stop herself. She ran at Laurie and gave him a small, quick squeeze." Responding in a "warm, boyish voice," Laurie echoes the warm voices of the workmen. Tension in the story is generated by the underlying conflict between Laura, who cannot fully accept the artificial Sheridan conventions, and her mother. Because she is close to the natural world, the girl empathises with the feelings of the working people who are themselves part of that world. With Laurie, Laura had explored the forbidden territory where "washerwomen lived in the lane.... It was disgusting and sordid.... But still, one must go everywhere; one must see everything." If Laura is something of a rebel, out of tune with her mother and sisters because she needs to include knowledge of the real, outside world in her perception of life, she is also set apart because she is "the artistic one." So long as her imagination functions usefully in the context of the Sheridan life-style, all is well. But when she imaginatively experiences the horror of the working man's death and, forgetting the distinctions between the different social worlds, wants to stop the garden party, she is condemned as "extravagant." Laura's inner division is central to the working out of "The Garden Party" On the one hand her naturalness draws her to find out about life as it is lived outside the confines of the Sheridan household; on the other her artistic temperament causes her not only to respond to beauty but to cast over it a special imaginative colouring. The world of illusion is as precious to her, although for different reasons, as it is to her mother and sisters. It seems to be Laura who feels that roses "understood that [they] are the only flowers that impress people at garden-parties," who registers the noise of the piano being moved as a "long, chuckling, absurd sound," who imagines that "little faint winds were playing chase" and that "two tiny spots of sun ... [were] playing too." Knowingly, Mrs. Sheridan appeals to the imaginative side of her daughter's personality when she cleverly distracts the girl by placing her own hat on her head. 'I have never seen you look such a picture,' she says admiringly. As Laura gazes at her own beauty in the mirror and decides to forget the death until after the party, the attractions of illusion triumph over the demands of reality. And for the duration of the party, illusion holds sway. But the magical perfection of the garden party, indeed the whole story, is enclosed within a philosophic framework which reminds us that everything has its opposite. There is a hint of birth in the opening paragraph; in the final section death asserts its presence. In contrast to the frivolous party given by the Sheridans, the gathering at the Scotts' is for the funeral rite of death. Instead of the artificial drama enjoyed by Jose, a real-life drama must be

endured in Saunders Lane. And, while sadness and deeply-felt emotion are kept at bay by the Sheridan women, the dead man's wife mourns, her face 'puffed up, red, with swollen eyes and swollen lips.' Emphasising the gulf between the rich and the poor is the descriptive language of the story. Words such as "perfect," "delicious," "beautiful," "splendour," "radiant," "exquisite," "brilliant," "rapturous," "charming," "delightful," "stunning," convey the outward beauty of the Sheridans' life – and its artificiality. In striking contrast are words describing the working people and Saunders Lane: "haggard," "mean," "poverty-stricken," "revolting," "disgusting," "sordid," "crablike," "wretched." In the domain of the Sheridans, mutability can be warded off so long as the outwardly beautiful appearance of things is preserved. This unattainable ideal of permanence, or stasis, is symbolised by the word "picture." In their ordered perfection, the garden, the roses and the canna lilies resemble pictures. When Mrs. Sheridan places her hat on Laura's head and says, "I have never seen you look such a picture," she is in effect framing the young girl's beauty, giving it the semblance of permanence. There is a different kind of picture which Laura briefly visualises: that of the poor woman in the lane and her dead husband. 'But it all seemed blurred, unreal, like a picture in the newspaper.' Laura is the central character in 'The Garden Party' from whose point of view the story is essentially told; and it is she who bridges the contrasting worlds of the Sheridans and the Scotts. Her personal dilemma is that she must reconcile a sympathetic understanding of the poor, and an awareness of reality, with an imaginative attachment to the almost unreal, magical beauty which sweetens the lives of the rich. Her ordeal comes at the end of the story when she must physically cross the boundaries between her house and Saunders Lane, and in doing so face up to that other, "blurred, unreal" picture. When she enters the cottage of the dead man, the story comes full circle. Just as she had done previously, the girl empathises emotionally with the working people and echoes their grief with a sob. Earlier in the day, her emotional identification with the workmen had been deflected towards her brother: again, it is Laurie who 'put his arm round her shoulder. "Don't cry", he said in his warm, loving voice." Laurie, whose warmth links him with the workmen, helps his sister emotionally to transcend the barriers between the classes. The unchanging love of brother and sister, moreover, makes bearable the cruelty of life, the heartlessness of human beings, the "Love that Changes" of Jose's song, and the knowledge of mutability"; of the inevitable ending of a "perfect afternoon," and the ending of life. But the crucial philosophical problem in "The Garden Party," the problem that Laura shares with all sensitive human beings, is how to encounter ugliness and death yet retain a personal vision of beauty and hope. In this closing scene, Katherine Mansfield contrives an answer. She brings together the contrasting pictures of beauty and ugliness in a picture whose beauty appears truly permanent, "a marvel." The sister-in-law of the dead man tells Laura that "he looks a picture"; and Laura, the artistic one, agrees that he is indeed "wonderful, beautiful." Imaginatively, she is able to forget the suffering inflicted by his death and think only that, "while they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane. In her writing, Katherine Mansfield, too, has come full circle. Nothing,

in her youthful stories, tempered a young girl's initiation into the harshness of adult life. At the ending of "The Garden Party" she allows Laura to retain her illusions. If we are left with the uneasy feeling that she has let her character off too lightly, we nevertheless accept the emotional Tightness of the ending. For there is a sense in which Katherine Mansfield has granted us, too, a reprieve; has assuaged both our guilt about social inequalities and our haunting anxiety about death.

Source: Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr, "The Stories 1921- 22: Sierre and Paris," in Katherine Mansfield, St. Martin's Press, 1981, pp. 95-139.

VI

Study the critical overview of Amy Tan works. List the positive and negative features literary critics have identified in her literary style. What is your personal vision of the things?

Early reviews of Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, often mistakenly called a novel, were generally positive. Writing for the *New York Times Book Review*, Orville Schell praises Tan's grasp of the Chinese American experience and says that Tan "has a wonderful eye for what is telling, a fine ear for dialog, a deep empathy for her subject matter and a guilelessly straightforward way of writing." The stories, he claims, "sing with a rare fidelity and beauty." In a review in *Time* magazine, John Skow maintains that "the author writes with both inside and outside knowing, and her novel rings clearly, like a fine porcelain bowl." Some reviewers were less impressed with Tan's narrative structure, however. Writing in *New York* magazine, Rhoda Koenig finds the book "lively and bright but not terribly deep," and notes that "some of the stories resolve themselves too neatly and cozily." She concedes, however, that "one cannot help being charmed ... by the sharpness of the observation." Similarly, Carole Angler in *New Statesman and Society* asserts that the book is "over-schematic," that 'in the end it gives you indigestion, as if you've eaten too any Chinese fortune cookies, or read too many American Mother's Day cards." In the decade since its publication, Tan's collection of stories has remained a critical and commercial success. Its popular success has helped open the doors of the publishing industry to other Asian American authors. Though it remains too soon to tell how literary history will assess the stories in *The Joy Luck Club*, the book has already received a great deal of attention in critical journals and has been the subject of numerous master's theses and doctoral dissertations in recent years. E. D. Huntley contends that the "proliferation of scholarly examinations .. . points to the literary and cultural value of Tan's work." She goes on to assert that 'Tan has already earned herself a berth in the canon of contemporary American literature," and that "Tan's novels have proven both their literary staying power as well as their broad appeal to a wide readership."

CRITICISM

Elisabeth Piedmont-Marion

Elisabeth Piedmont-Marion teaches American literature and writing classes at Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, and she writes frequently about the modern short story. In this essay she discusses power, patriarchy, and domestic space in "Two Kinds." When Jing-mei's mother shouts at her daughter and demands her complete obedience toward the end of Tan's short story, "Two Kinds," she is defending her power over the only territory to which she can lay claim, the domestic sphere. Cut off from her native China by distance and political upheaval, yet distanced from surrounding American culture by language and other cultural barriers, the mother in the story makes a fortress of her home and uses it as a base of operations for deploying her patriarchal power over the life and destiny of her child. Because her daughter has absorbed American ideas about individuality and self-determination, she has different expectations about gender and domestic space. In short, she is more likely to expect the household to be the site of nurturing instead of coercion, a place where her singularity is celebrated rather than bent to external standards of conformity. The rise of the women's novel in nineteenth century American literature was accompanied by the idea of women's sphere. Though some used the notion of a specified female territory—both literal and figurative—as an argument for excluding woman from public life, many readers of popular women's literature eagerly embraced a world view that celebrated their domestic lives. Domestic fiction did more than depict the lives of housewives, however, as feminist critics have pointed out; in fact, it helped carve out an autonomous realm where women could exert influence on their lives and on the lives of their loved ones. Generally speaking, the form this influence took was the opposite of the means of influence that prevailed in the masculine sphere. Women's sphere was characterized by moderation, moral certainty, piety, and above all, nurturing. It was the duty of every woman to keep the pressures and vulgarities of the outside (masculine) world from crossing the threshold into the haven of the home. This is the tradition of women's literature within and against which Tan places her stories of mothers and daughters. In "Two Kinds" the domestic space is most certainly in the mother's control. Her dominance over the space is so complete, in fact, that the narrator barely mentions that her father also lives there. Unlike traditional domestic space in American literature, Jing-mei's mother uses her realm not as a refuge from the machinations of the larger world, but as a kind of home base from which to interpret that world and launch her attacks on it. She gathers information assiduously, collecting magazines from other people's homes and studying them diligently, "searching for stories about remarkable children." She also learns from television, and becomes fixated on the image of the little Chinese girl performing on the Ed Sullivan Show. The narrator describes how her mother "seemed entranced by the music, a frenzied little piano piece with a mesmerizing quality, which alternated between quick, playful passages and teasing, lilting ones." In this image, Jing-mei's mother has found the ideal model for her daughter: exceptional but not unattainably remarkable.

"Just like you," she says to her daughter, "Not the best." The difference between the girl on television and the girl in the living room watching television is merely effort. Jing-mei could be the girl on television if only she would try. The mother exercises matriarchal power in the domestic space that she controls. But unlike traditional uses of domestic space in the American women's novel, the mother is not interested in excluding influences from the outside or public world. Unfortunately, since she lacks cultural fluency in American ways, she does not have the critical apparatus to evaluate or interpret the messages she receives. As a consequence, she accepts with neither skepticism nor cynicism that "you could be anything you wanted to be in America." According to Jing-mei, her mother has a whole litany of things "you" could become in America. The "you," of course, refers to her daughter; the mother has no faith or interest in exploring new public identities for herself. Obsessed with infinite possibilities of improvement, the mother (and her reluctant daughter) "watch Shirley's [Temple] old movies on TV as though they were training films." Jing-mei confesses that in the beginning she was 'just as excited' as her mother at the prospect of becoming a prodigy. Yet soon the atmosphere in the domestic sphere becomes less nurturing and more coercive. The mother would "present tests" on multiplication, world capitals, and Bible passages. These kinds of objective measurements of a child's worth do not typically belong in women's sphere, where cooperation and sacrifice are privileged over competition and mastery. Thus, the mother has wielded the only power she has, matriarchal authority largely derived from Chinese culture, in the only space she controls, the household. The problem is that in America the child cannot be contained in the household, the matriarchal authority is not absolute. Jing-mei soon begins to resist. Because her mother's power within the domestic space is impossible to challenge directly, Jingmei discovers that passive resistance, or negative power, will thwart her mother's plans. After too many evenings trying to meet the challenges, she says: "[something] inside of me began to die. I hated the tests, the raised hopes and failed expectations." Failure brings a new revelation as well, that she has the power to resist. She looks in the mirror and sees 'what seemed to be the prodigy side of [her].'" She is surprised to discover that "the girl looking back at [her] was angry, powerful." In an instant, Jing-mei devises a rudimentary strategy against her mother's coercive practices: "I had new thoughts, willful thoughts – or rather, thoughts filled with lots of won'ts. I won't let her change me, I promised myself. I won't be who I'm not." For a while, the narrator thinks that her desultory and distracted performances on the tests have made her mother give up hope on making her into a prodigy. But then they see the Chinese girl playing piano on the Ed Sullivan Show. The mother forms a new plan and the daughter redoubles her efforts to resist it. The mother's plan is to make her daughter into a musical prodigy so that she herself can compete with other women in her social world, specifically with Lindo Jong, whose daughter Waverly is "Chinatown's Littlest Chinese Chess Champion." Meanwhile, Jing-mei vows "not to be anybody different" and daydreams about "being somewhere else, about being someone else." The mother's objective has less to do with securing her daughter's future than it does with her own desire for status within a matriarchal and domestic

social structure of Chinese American women. Jing-mei is well aware of her mother's self-interested motives and is 'determined to put an end to her foolish pride.' Jing-mei's performance at the talent show certainly does end her mother's boasting about her superior musical abilities, but it also humiliates Jing-mei herself. Suddenly aware that the struggle over piano virtuosity had larger stakes than just thwarting her mother's wishes, Jing-mei feels like the "whole world" is watching as she embarrasses herself and her family. After the show she is "devastated" by the look on her mother's face, "a quiet, blank look that said she had lost everything." Certainly, the mother has lost her bid to compete with Lindo Jong and her attempt to raise her status in her world, but she is not ready to surrender all her authority yet. Just three days after the "talent-show fiasco" the mother tries to command Jing-mei to resume her piano practice. Emboldened by her ability to exercise negative power, the daughter refuses. She reasons to herself: 'I didn't have to do what my mother said anymore. I wasn't her slave. This wasn't China.' But the mother persists, asserting her will upon her daughter's body by dragging her to the piano bench. As if her physical dominance were not enough to prove her authority over the domestic space, the mother makes a move toward appropriating the daughter's identity. By demanding total obedience, she erases her daughter's sense of self. For the Americanized Jing-mei, identity is not something destined or something achieved. It's not a thing at all. Jing-mei "did not believe I could be anything I wanted to be; I could only be me." In other words, identity is synonymous with individuality—it's part of a person's singular essence. So, when her mother tries to assert her power over her daughter's sense of self, the daughter has only one defensive strategy left to her: to reject her matrilineal heritage altogether and to destabilize her mother's source of power by saying that she wishes she were not her daughter and by reminding her mother of the two children she abandoned in China years before. The narrator reveals more than twenty years later that this incident did permanently alter the relationship between her and her mother. They 'never talked about the disaster at the piano bench or [her] terrible declarations afterward.' Yet the mother's power over domestic space, though diminished, is never completely overthrown. The mother's offer to give Jing-mei the piano for her thirtieth birthday is a gesture of forgiveness certainly, but it can also be seen as a colonizing gesture, a way of exporting her influence into her daughter's domestic space. As an adult, and after her mother's death, Jing-mei seems more open to her mother's influence and respectful of her matriarchal authority. By packing up her mother's Chinese silk dresses and hand-knit sweaters in bright colors and deciding to take them home with her, she assents to her mother's ongoing presence in her life and stakes a claim on the domestic space in her own world by letting her mother share it.

Source: Elisabeth Piedmont-Marlon, for *Short Stories for Students*, The Gale Group, 2000.

Liz Brent

Brent has a Ph.D. in American Culture with a specialization in American cinema from The University of Michigan. She is a freelance writer/editor and film critic and teaches

courses in American cinema. In the following essay, she discusses the mother-daughter relationship in "Two Kinds." The central struggle in Amy Tan's story "Two Kinds" is a battle of wills between the narrator, a young Chinese American girl, and her mother, a Chinese immigrant. "Two Kinds" is a coming-of-age story, in which the narrator, Jing-mei, struggles to forge her own sense of identity in the face of her strong-willed mother's dream that she become a "prodigy." Jing-mei is caught between her Chinese mother's traditional ideas about how to raise a daughter, and her own development as a Chinese American girl straddling two cultures. Like many immigrants to the United States, Jing-mei's mother has created idealized visions of her adopted country as a land of opportunity where all dreams may be realized. The first line of the story introduces this central idea: "My mother believed you could be anything you wanted to be in America." This vision of America as a place where the streets are paved with gold is further described in the opening paragraph: You could open a restaurant. You could work for the government and get good retirement. You could buy a house with almost no money down. You could become rich. You could become instantly famous. The tone of this opening paragraph introduces an element of irony in the narrator's attitude toward her mother's vision of America as a place where "you could become anything you wanted to be." Everything sounds too simple and too easily achieved. Yet the narrator does not paint a picture of her mother as ignorant or silly. The story indicates that America is a symbol of hope and optimism in the life of a woman who has suffered numerous tragedies in the form of great personal and financial loss, and yet refuses to give up her dreams: America was where all my mother's hopes lay. She had come here in 1949 after losing everything in China: her mother and father, her family home, her first husband, and two daughters, twin baby girls. But she never looked back with regret. There were so many ways for things to get better. Her mother's American dreams, then, function as a symbol of hope for a brighter future for her daughter. Having absorbed idealized visions of the "American Dream" from television and other forms of mass media, Jing-mei's mother manages to fabricate a seemingly endless supply of success fantasies for her daughter. Each new inspiration about the nature of her daughter's destiny to become a "prodigy" is sparked by what she sees on television, reads in women's magazines or reads about in such mass-market publications as Ripley's Believe-it-or-Not. Her first attempt to turn Jing-mei into a "prodigy" is derived from television movies. "My mother thought I could be a Chinese Shirley Temple," explains the narrator. "We'd watch Shirley's old movies on TV as though they were training films." Later, her mother's determination to make her daughter a musical prodigy is inspired by a Chinese girl she sees performing on the Ed Sullivan Show. Through this process, Jing-mei's mother demands that she "try on" a variety of identities: from "Chinese Shirley Temple," to child genius, to piano virtuoso. Jing-mei at first absorbs her mother's dreams in which one may simply decide to be a prodigy, and then pick and choose which type of prodigy to be as if it were as easy as trying on clothes in a store or changing the TV channel. Yet Jing-mei soon finds that her mother's determination that she becomes a prodigy threatens to stifle her own sense of who she

is. Ironically, it is out of defiance against her mother that she ultimately does forge her own sense of personal identity. Jing-mei's sense of failure to embody her mother's hopes and dreams is at first distressful to her: "I hated the tests, the raised hopes and failed expectations." When she looks in the mirror one night, she sees only her mother's vision of her as a failure and a disappointment: I looked in the mirror above the bathroom sink and when I saw only my face staring back – and that it would always be this ordinary face – I began to cry. Such a sad, ugly girl! The face Jing-mei first sees in the mirror is the face of who she is in her mother's eyes. "Trying to scratch out the face in the mirror" symbolizes her attempt to erase or obliterate her mother's image of her as a failure. Through this acknowledgment to herself that she is not the person her mother wants her to be, she begins to glimpse an image of her own definition of herself emerging from the mirror. And then I saw what seemed to be the prodigy side of me – because I had never seen that face before. I looked at my reflection, blinking so I could see more clearly. The girl staring back at me was angry, powerful. This girl and I were the same. I had new thoughts, willful thoughts, or rather thoughts filled with lots of won'ts. Through this insight, Jing-mei for the first time articulates her determination to live by her own self-definition, rather than those ill-fitting "selves" her mother continues to impose upon her: "I won't let her change me, I promised myself. I won't be what I'm not." As the story progresses, Jing-mei becomes more and more openly defiant against her mother's wishes. One night, she bursts out at her mother: "Why don't you like me the way I am? I'm not a genius! I can't play the piano. And even if I could, I wouldn't go on TV for a million dollars!" I cried. Later, when her mother insists that she continue to attend piano lessons, after she has made it clear that the piano is not her calling, Jing-mei further strengthens her resolve not to conform to her mother's wishes. This is also an important moment in the development of Jing-mei's cultural identity. For the first time, she articulates her resistance to her mother in terms of the cultural gap between her mother's traditional Chinese ideas about daughters being obedient and her own perspective as a strong-willed Chinese American girl. And then I decided. I didn't have to do what my mother said anymore. I wasn't her slave. This wasn't China. I had listened to her before and look what happened. She was the stupid one. When her mother continues to insist that she attend her piano lesson, Jing-mei becomes openly defiant. Through this assertion of her own will against her mother's, Jing-mei strengthens her sense of personal identity in opposition to her mother. Jing-mei begins to sense the emergence of her true, inner self. "No!" I said, and I now felt stronger, as if my true self had finally emerged. So, this was what had been inside me all along. With this moment of self-assertion, Jing-mei releases a floodgate of protest against her mother's attempts to mold her in the shape of her own hopes and dreams. Along with this, Jing-mei protests against the unwritten message her mother has given that she is not all right the way she is. "You want me to be someone I'm not!" I sobbed. "I'll never be the kind of daughter you want me to be!" Her mother's response is expressive of her traditional Chinese ideas about mother-daughter relationships. "Only two kinds of daughters," she shouted in Chinese. "Those who are obedient and those who follow their own mind! Only one kind of daughter can live in this house.

Obedient daughter!" She says this in Chinese, emphasizing that it is a perspective that comes from her Chinese background, and marking the cultural gap between Chinese immigrant mother and Chinese American daughter. For Jing-mei, defining herself in relationship with her mother is also a way of expressing her attitude as a child raised in America, a Chinese American daughter who follows her "own mind," not the "obedient" Chinese daughter her mother wants her to be. "Then I wish I wasn't your daughter! I wish you weren't my mother," I shouted. Jing-mei describes this release of anger toward her mother as a cathartic experience, in which she is relieved of the burden of her unexpressed anger toward her mother and her own negative feelings about herself. It felt like worms and toads and slimy things crawling out of my chest, but it also felt good, as if this awful side of me had surfaced, at last. The "worms and toads and slimy things" crawling out from Jing-mei's chest symbolize the anger and other dark, negative feelings that have been penned up deep inside her until this moment. Although this incident of confrontation between mother and daughter is never again mentioned directly, the older Jing-mei is able to reconcile these dichotomies in her sense of self when, twenty years later, after her mother's death, she is sorting through her mother's belongings. Jing-mei first comes across items that she remembers in a negative light—symbolic of her mother's relentless habit of imposing upon her things she didn't like. "The sweaters she had knitted in yellow, pink, bright orange—all the colors I hated—I put those in moth-proof boxes." However, Jing-mei stumbles upon some items from her mother's past in China that she ultimately values enough to keep. Her mother's old Chinese silk dresses come to symbolize a positive element of Jing-mei's Chinese heritage. I found some old Chinese silk dresses, the kind with little slits up the sides. I rubbed the old silk against my skin, then wrapped them in tissue and decided to take them home with me. In choosing to keep these items, Jing-mei symbolically chooses to maintain and preserve certain elements of her Chinese heritage, handed down through her mother. In sorting through her mother's things, Jing-mei symbolically maintains her individual identity as she continues to reject certain things her mother tried to impose upon her (the sweaters), while seeing other items with new eyes (the silk dresses). Jing-mei next comes upon the piano sheet music she had once refused to learn. As a child, she had failed to learn a song called 'Pleading Child.' This song title symbolically refers to her own position as a child, silently "pleading" with her mother not to force her into an identity not of her own choosing. Yet, when she rediscovers this sheet music still on her mother's piano, she finds another title: "Perfectly Contented." This title suggests a sense of stability and happiness. Through playing both "Pleading Child" and "Perfectly Contented" again as an adult, Jing-mei reaches a sort of epiphany, or moment of insight and personal revelation. In the closing line of the story, she finds that she "realized they were two halves of the same song." The idea of her negative associations with being a "pleading child" in youth are reconciled with the positive associations of being at least closer to a state of being 'perfectly contented,' refers to Jing-mei's adult perspective that her childhood self and her grown-up self represent "two halves" of the same person, and 'two halves' of the same identity—the Chinese and the American.

Likewise, the story's title, "Two Kinds," refers to the story's central concern with the mother and daughter as two different kinds of people, yet members of the same family, and the same cultural heritage.

Source: Liz Brent, for *Short Stories for Students*, The Gale Group, 2000.

Kate Bernheimer

Kate Bernheimer received her M.F.A. in fiction writing from the University of Arizona and is the author of *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: Women Writers Explore Their Favorite Fairy Tales* (Anchor Books, 1998). In this essay she discusses the mother-daughter bond and how it hinges on notions of abandonment and identity. "I wish I were dead," the protagonist and narrator of Amy Tan's "Two Kinds," the young Jing-mei, yells at her mother, watching her blow away in response like a leaf, "thin, brittle, lifeless." In this moment Jing-mei's empty battle for self has been won, though the victory is also a death, symbolized by her mother's disappearance from the scene. The crisis between Jing-mei and her mother in Amy Tan's "Two Kinds" is grave and of a classic type of interest to psychoanalytic theorists: the peculiar love/hate entwinement between mother and daughter which hinges on ideas of identity and abandonment. In this story, the tug of war over Jing-mei's identity is essentially tragic; for either one to give in will mean a loss for both. Should Jing-mei bend to the fierce will of her mother and become something she feels she is not (prodigy), she must abandon her sense of her own unique identity, which is itself inchoate and unstable. Likewise, for Jing-mei's mother to give up on Jing-mei's potential, she believes she will enact abandonment, as she feels it her duty as a newly Americanized mother to mold Jing-mei to perfection, or leave Jing-mei for naught. This maternal drama is intensified since Jing-mei's mother herself harbors enormous guilt about abandonment, having lost two daughters already. By telling her mother she wishes she were dead like her sisters, Jing-mei defines herself as separate from her mother; she claims her identity, but she abandons her mother to the horrors of her past. In "Two Kinds" the psychic struggle of a daughter's separation from the mother in order to define herself is played out in a series of threats and losses. Exploring the crisis in a daughter's identity, Tan offers Jing-mei, the stubborn yet insecure daughter of a peculiarly strong-willed mother. Defined largely by what she is not rather than by what is for her mother, Jing-mei remains nearly paralyzed for much of the story, incapable of acting in any direction at all. Trapped between her mother's trance of Jing-mei as the emerging, perfected American daughter, and her own muted and flawed sense of identity, Jing-mei can only sabotage herself and her mother's desires for her. The plot of the story, in which Jing-mei fails to acquire musical ability, serves to dramatize the story's real drama: many kinds of abandonment, the result of Jing-mei's shaky identity. In her failure to achieve, Jing-mei abandons both herself and her mother. In refusing to become, she empties herself of all hope, she obliterates the hope of her strong-armed mother, and she forces her mother to abandon her as well. Abandonment is not only a symbol for a mother-daughter crisis, however, in Tan's work. It has real historical value. Jing-mei's mother had two other daughters whom she had to abandon in Kweilin, China,

during the Chinese Revolution. Set against that event, the mother-daughter tangle that comprises "Two Kinds" is intensified. The constant threat of abandonment remains intrinsic to the mother daughter bond. According to prevailing psychoanalytic views, a daughter's growing sense of identity, of difference from the mother, hinges on that exact threat. Neither Jing-mei nor her mother can get over such actual losses. Tan also presents this story as a reminder that the bond between mother and daughter transcends time, has a forever meaning. The identification of both characters with each other via the concept of abandonment further fuses them together, making their imminent separation even more harsh. "Abandonment represents the insuperable trauma inflicted by the discovery – doubtless a precocious one and for that very reason impossible to work out – of the existence of a not-I," French psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva writes, in an essay exploring the tenuous nature of the mother-daughter bond. "Two Kinds" finds Jing-mei at exactly this precocious juncture in her life, in which abandonment is not only represented by the existence of an other, but personified by it in the form of her two abandoned sisters. Both mother and daughter remain acutely aware of these phantom girls. This has an effect on Jing-mei's ability to have a sense of identity separate from her mother and her presumed-dead sisters. First, Jing-mei knows that her mother "lost everything in China." Yet if her mother lost 'everything,' that must make Jing-mei nothing. In fact, she frequently tells herself she is nothing, will be nothing, nothing will become of her. On the other hand, sensitized to her mother's loss, Jing-mei is nevertheless too young to know that her mother will not similarly abandon her. That her mother 'never looked back' does not bode well for a daughter who seems never to please a mother enough. Earlier in the cycle of stories in which "Two Kinds" appears, Jing-mei states "I was not one of those babies" and, imagining her mother going to retrieve them, laments "now my mother's left me forever." Here one sees how intricately entwined Jing-mei's sense of identity is to her mother being present, loving her as much as the other daughters whom she lost, whom Jing-mei will never be. For Jing-mei, the two sisters in China are like a phantom limb, constantly reminding her of Kristeva's "not I." This lack of identity is further fueled by an intense, almost primitive fear of her mother's potential abandonment. This fear echoes throughout the story and is expressed in Jing-mei's visceral response to her mother's attempts to sculpt her into something she is not. If she could become perfect, she muses, "my mother would adore me." If she is adored for something she is not – perfect – she will not be abandoned. However, this insecure child suffers from peculiar self-hatred. Knowing she is not perfect, and in fact thinking herself 'ugly,' she is fated to be left. For Jing-mei, a failure to be a beautiful prodigy will surely result in the loss of her mother's love. She designs exactly this occurrence, in fact. The plot of the story, which follows Jing-mei's despondent incapability to please her mother, is a vehicle through which Tan represents Jing-mei's insecure notion of self, the story's true tragedy. A feeling of security, let alone perfection, continuously eludes Jing-mei largely because of her own refusal to try. Influenced by – but misunderstanding through exaggeration – the American notion of individualism Jing-mei believes she can only be herself. This concept, however, is of little use to this child of little identity,

a girl who lives in fear of losing and who believes herself a failure from the start. As she only has a limited, and even negative sense of self, her self-image is a very unhappy one. At first, she tries, but upon doing poorly at one of their early prodigy sessions, Jing-mei sees her "mother's disappointed face again," and states "something inside of me began to die." Her sense of identity is so fragile that it cannot survive even this small abandonment of hope from her mother. "Maybe I never really gave myself a fair chance," she admits, but she is not so sure that is the case. She appears to believe that she can only deserve love for what she is; however, she defines herself only for what she is not. Therefore, she will get no loves at all, she will lose the mother's affection. She is not the little Chinese girl on the television, she is not Shirley Temple (only resembles ' 'Negro Chinese' her mother exclaims at a failed perm), she is not her chess-maniac cousin. Though Jing-mei's mother is indeed disappointed, she remains full of hope and desire. It is rather Jing-mei's disappointment in herself, her perception of the failure of identity, that Tan foregrounds most distinctly. The question that haunts Jing-mei most throughout the years is not why her mother was disappointed, but rather ' 'Why had she given up hope?' It is Jing-mei's fragile identity, her fears, that this story is about. Tan offers Jing-mei one small attempt at feeling better. Early in the story, at the start of the shortlived mother-daughter conspiracy to sculpt Jing-mei's identity, Jing-mei looks in the mirror and at first sees a "sad, ugly girl." This enrages her. She proceeds to rage against the image, trying to "scratch out the face in the mirror." But after a moment something better shines through. Recognizing the power of a daughter's anger, Tan allows Jing-mei a moment of clarity that foreshadows the story's calming end. "This girl and I are the same," she thinks calmly. Here, Jing-mei expresses a nascent sense of identity, one full of power and rage, which separates her from her mother. Her mother, one scene earlier, had nearly lost hope. But here Jing-mei recognizes that though she fears abandonment by her mother, she also desires such separation, because it frees her to be herself. Yet this strength and serenity cannot last. It is not strong enough to compete with the anxieties Jing-mei feels in the face of her mother's constantly dissipating pleasure in her daughter. "Why can't you like me the way I am," she soon plaintively asks. Finally, disavowing any hope of happy union in herself or with her mother, Jing-mei enacts a symbolic suicide of sorts: she stops trying to achieve. This represents that she stops trying to become. Jing-mei gives up hope of being loved by her mother, of having an identity they both can embrace. For her this is the equivalent of being dead. This harrowing, precocious childhood realization has grave consequences for Jing-mei only alluded to in this story. Jing mei remarks that she eventually drops out of college, among other failures. Yet the story's true tragedy is contained within its obsession with the mother-daughter identity bind. In fact it is a double bind: the child Jing-mei cannot be what her mother wants and therefore, she decides, she must not be wanted. Likewise, as the child Jing-mei believes she can only be herself, and does not yet know who she is, she must therefore be nothing. This thwarts her development into a proactive, self-defined adult. Projecting her anxieties onto her mother in youth, she ends up essentially blaming her mother all the way through early adulthood for her trauma (she states

near the end of the story ' 'I never found a way to ask her how she had hoped for something so large that failure was inevitable" [emphasis added]). Tan's fragile Jing-mei floats a long time, identity-less, abandoned to her worries. Kristeva describes this as "the [girl] child's unstable identity," which when faced by the mother, gets "frozen within the drive of intensities that disturb it." Only in her thirties, at story's conclusion, does Jing-mei realize that perhaps, the war over her self-definition was one contained largely within herself, that perhaps her mother had not in fact truly abandoned her. Receiving as a gift the piano on which she failed to prove her genius, Jing-mei finds the musical score for a piece she performed quite poorly at a recital. This horrible recital had been one of the nails in the coffin of her mother's desires for her greatness. The piece as she remembers it was called "Pleading Child." This is the child she remembers being—pleading with her mother to let her be herself, to leave her alone without abandoning her truly. Yet, turning the page, Jing-mei realizes the song has a second part, "Contented Child." She finds a sense of calm while playing it. The story ends with an eerie note of stability, Jing-mei finding melancholy pleasure in the recognition of "Two halves of the same song," or the song of herself. "I am large, I contain multitudes," the great American poet Walt Whitman wrote in his seminal tribute to American individualism, "Song of Myself." The piano is a gift from her mother, who has not left her after all. In playing the song, Jing-mei is embracing the two sides of herself. She finally leaves behind that selfish dread of losing her mother's love, which had kept her from being. "Identity," Kristeva writes, "emerges only at the end of this process when narcissistic shimmering draws to a close," that is, when one is able to recognize that "firm identity remains a fiction." In the end, Tan does not abandon Jing-mei to her daughterly fears.

Source: Kate Bernheimer, for *Short Stories for Students*, The Gale Group, 2000

VII

Study the critical overview of Nadine Gordimer's work *ONCE UPON THE TIME*. List the positive and negative features literary critics have identified in her literary style. What is your personal vision of the things?

Although Gordimer herself has said many times that she favors the short story form for its ability to capture a wider variety of voices and themes, her hundreds of short stories have received much less attention from critics than her novels have, as is true for most writers of both genres. Short stories are favored in the classroom, and "Once Upon a Time" is among Gordimer's stories that have been widely anthologized in high school and college textbooks. Students undoubtedly know Gordimer more for her short fiction than for her novels. But only a few critics have discussed "Once Upon a Time" at any length. The most important analysis is Michael Shurgot's "Imagery and Structure in Nadine Gordimer's 'Once Upon a Time,'" published in *Journal of Literary*

Studies in 2008. Drawing on Gordimer's earlier fiction and her commentary about the approaching end of white dominance in South Africa, Shurgot finds in the story a "terrifying depiction" of an essential "dichotomy: the death of the white order imaged in the mangled child, and the violent birth of a new political order." Vera P. Froelich and Jennifer Halle, analyzing the story in a 1998 article in the *Explicator*, also find a warning about the "impending self-destruction" of "her racist society." Most critics who have dealt with "Once Upon a Time" have discussed it only briefly and in terms of its role in the well-received collection *Jump and Other Stories*. Karen Lazar's 1992 analysis of gender and *Jump and Other Stories*, for example, mentions "Once Upon a Time" as offering one example among many of the collection's "sheltered, shallow white suburban wives." A 1993 article by Jeanne Colleran, "Archive of Apartheid: Nadine Gordimer's Short Fiction at the End of the Interregnum," briefly mentions the story as depicting one of the "dead children" who "haunt the collection." In 2001, Johan U. Jacobs described "Once Upon a Time" as metafiction, a way for the author to comment on the collection as a whole in "Finding a Safe House of Fiction in Nadine Gordimer's *Jump and Other Stories*," while in the same year Judie Newman revealed the hidden meaning in the collection's title, describing "Once Upon a Time" as a "jump" story in "Jump Starts: Nadine Gordimer after Apartheid."

CRITICISM

Cynthia A. Bily

Bily is a freelance writer and editor. In this essay, she considers how the whites in Gordimer's short story "Once Upon a Time" have more in common with the blacks they fear than they might imagine. At the heart of Gordimer's "Once Upon a Time" are two groups of people: the whites who live "in a suburb, in a city," and the "people of another colour" who live elsewhere. In the story's South Africa during the last years of the racial segregation policy known as apartheid, the differences between the groups are emphasized because it is one difference – the difference in skin color – that determines where one lives, works, and receives medical care and education. As different and isolated as the groups are from each other, the narrator uses small details in the story to draw connections between them. More precisely, the narrator suggests small ways in which the white members of this society are more similar than they might imagine to the blacks they desperately want to see as different. In the first paragraph of the story, the narrator tells that she has been invited to contribute to an anthology, and that the editor has suggested that "every writer ought to write at least one story for children." The narrator imagines herself telling him, "I don't accept that I 'ought' to write anything." Immediately, readers of Gordimer's work are alert to her emphasis on the word "ought," because so much of her work has dealt with apartheid and the questions of whether one has the agency to make choices regarding one's own life. The narrator feels, at this moment, free, but soon her imagery suggests the opposite. First, she describes her subconscious as an "echo-chamber," or an enclosure that distorts. Next, she describes her heart beating furiously "against its body-cage," before turning to an extended description of "the house that surrounds"

her, built on unsteady ground. The sound she heard was “an epicentre of stress” and, she says, “I was in it.” Even the language she uses to describe the sleep that eludes her (“I couldn’t find a position in which my mind would let go of my body – release me to sleep”) suggests entrapment. It is no stretch to see that the husband and wife – and even the pet cat – also become entrapped behind the “prison architecture” and “concentration-camp style” of their security devices; their world becomes smaller and smaller as their walls grow higher. But the narrator emphasizes as well the limitations imposed by apartheid on South Africa’s black population. She compares her heart’s irregular beating to “the last muffled flourishes on one of the wooden xylophones” of the migrant mine workers who might have perished in the geologic event that caused her house to shake. While she is enclosed in her house, these workers could be buried alive in a collapsed mine, “interred there in the most profound of tombs.” When thieves break into a neighbor’s house, it is the housemaid who is “tied up and shut in a cupboard.” The narrator is less interested in demonstrating the horrors of apartheid than she is in showing the similarities between oppressed and oppressor. Clearly, the signs screaming “YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED” look both out and in; the “DRAGON’S TEETH” bite both friend and foe. Though not much is shown of interaction among the family in the story, it is clear that the housemaid and the gardener, like the husband and wife, love the little boy “very much.” The husband and wife show their love by providing pets and toys for the little boy, reading bedtime stories, and erecting a fence around the swimming pool “so that the little boy and his playmates would not fall in and drown.” There are no scenes with the servants and the little boy together until the end, when the housemaid and the gardener are the first to hear the little boy’s screams and the first to reach him. The gardener screams with him and tears his hands trying to free him from the wire. The last image of the story is the four adults – “the man, the wife, the hysterical trusted housemaid and the weeping gardener” – carrying the boy’s body back into the house, united in their terror and grief, the servants showing more emotion than the parents. The most important connection between the whites and the blacks in “Once Upon a Time” is shown through their fear. The narrator experiences it first; it is her fear of the strange sound in the dark that prompts her to tell the bedtime story. She has chosen, she says, not to install bars on the windows, or to keep a gun, but she has “the same fears as people who do take these precautions.” Yet she realizes what the husband and wife do not: her fear makes her “a victim already,” even if nothing worse ever happens to her than being awakened by her house settling. The husband and wife are afraid, of course. It begins with the wise old witch, who warns them “not to take on anyone off the street,” and leads eventually to the electronic gates, and the alarms, and the added bricks, and the razor wire. The narrator focuses on the wife’s fears, but does not lose sight of how frightened black South Africans must also be. The housemaid voices her fears: she is afraid of being locked in a cupboard like her friend, and she discourages the wife from offering food to the “loafers and tsotsis,” or street thugs, because she is afraid, they will rob the house. Though the husband and wife hear the evening news only as it might reflect on their own safety, the narrator points out

that in the black townships there are riots, with “buses... being burned, cars stoned, and schoolchildren shot by the police.” South Africa at the end of apartheid is as unstable as the ground beneath the narrator’s home, and everyone is afraid. In “That Other World That Was the World,” a lecture Gordimer delivered as part of Harvard University’s Charles Eliot Norton Lectures in 1994, the author remembers that when she was young, her mother warned her never to walk past the camp where black miners lived, fearing that she would be unspeakably violated. Many years later, she learned that her friend the black South African writer Es’kia Mphahlele had been warned by his mother never to ride his bicycle past a group of white boys, fearing that he would be beaten. Acknowledging that Mphahlele’s fears were more realistic than her own, Gordimer nevertheless concludes that “the extreme unlikelihood that he or I was in any danger in the manner anticipated was part of the paranoia of separation that prevailed, matched each to the colour of his or her skin.” So, everyone is afraid, and everyone has cause to be. But in showing the connections between white and black in South Africa—in showing that fear strikes them both—Gordimer is not equating their suffering or their moral positions. Later in “That Other World That Was the World” (1995), Gordimer contemplates “The Defeated,” a story she published in 1952. In the story, a struggling working-class white shopkeeper, recently immigrated to South Africa, mistreats the black miners who are his customers. “In keeping with my ignorance at the time,” Gordimer writes, “the story makes too much of an equation between the defeated—the shopkeeper... [and] the black miners. ... For the shopkeeper and the black miner were, in fact, not in the same social pit.” “Once Upon a Time” pointedly refuses to make an equation between the fears felt by the whites and those experienced by the blacks. The whites, for one thing, have much greater control over their lives than the blacks do. The narrator and the husband and wife seem to have enough wealth that they could live somewhere else if they chose to. (Gordimer and her husband considered leaving South Africa, but chose to stay in their homeland.) The husband and wife are “living” in their city, while the “people of another colour” are “quartered” outside it. The housemaid and the gardener are forced to travel into the suburb if they wish to have employment, and the nature of the education system in South Africa means that they—as well as the miners working beneath the narrator’s house—have had many fewer opportunities to choose their professions than the husband and wife have had. More importantly, the husband and wife and narrator have benefited from a system of white privilege all of their lives, and, if they have more to lose, it is simply because they have more. The things stolen from the neighbors’ homes are frivolities: “hi-fi equipment, television sets, cassette players, cameras and radios, jewelry and clothing,” as well as expensive single-malt whisky. The thieves, meanwhile, are often “hungry enough to devour everything in the refrigerator,” and the housemaid fears that she, like another trusted housemaid, will be tied up while protecting her employers’ possessions. A widower known to the narrator has been knifed after refusing to pay a man he had hired to do some chores; the laborer went without pay while the widower had enough extra to collect antique clocks. The narrator’s home is literally built above a gold mine, an important part of

the foundation of the South African economy. That foundation, the narrator points out, is “undermined ground,” a play on words that emphasizes the oppression and moral corruption that have brought “uneasy strain to the balance and counterbalance” that should hold up a society. The phrase “uneasy strain” is also resonant, as the narrator strains uneasily to hear in the darkness, and the husband and wife’s full-fledged fear begins with a sense of unease. The narrator’s house, like the house in which the husband and wife live, is unstable, built on “an epicentre of stress.” Gordimer does not suggest that stealing and murder are acceptable or that a wealthy person who is murdered by a poor burglar deserves what he gets. But she asks her readers to consider where the impulse to commit a crime comes from and what response to the threat of danger is appropriate. What good are possessions if they must be constantly guarded? How should uneducated, unemployed people obtain food? What does it mean to be safe? By making the story abstract and detached, a parody of a fairy tale, she is able to exaggerate both the threat and the response, to emphasize the unsustainability of the society that the whites have created, and to raise complex questions. Apartheid was created and maintained to keep people apart, to protect white power and privilege. By highlighting the connections between people ordinarily kept apart, Gordimer demonstrates that no amount of forcible separation and oppression can protect us from being human. It is obvious that people who have no control over where they live and work, who cannot vote for their leaders, and who receive inferior education and medical care would live in fear. In “Once Upon a Time,” Gordimer shows that the oppressors have created their own reasons to fear. In the end, the husband and wife cannot save themselves. No matter how they reinforce it, their house remains unstable and unsafe. Like the narrator, they are “neither threatened nor spared.”

Source: Cynthia A. Bily, Critical Essay on “Once Upon a Time,” in *Short Stories for Students*, Gale, Cengage Learning, 2010.

Judie Newman

In the following excerpt, Newman offers a thematic analysis of the stories in *Jump* and maintains that Gordimer explores post-apartheid political and social concerns. ... Nadine Gordimer’s collection *Jump* spans the period in which apartheid was dismantled, beginning with stories centered on defensive structures, whether external (the destabilization of neighboring states), or internal (portrayals of the laager). Along the way individual stories cast side glances at the 1986 repeal of the Mixed Marriages Act (“The Moment”), detainees (“Spoils,” “Home”), the underground (“Safe Houses”), township violence (“Keeping Fit”), the growth of “revolutionary tourism” (“What Were You Dreaming?”) until the collection closes with a final tale, “Amnesty” centered on the release of political prisoners, presumably in 1990, when the ANC, PAC, and SACP were unbanned and a general release of prisoners took place. Several stories are based on or allude to news items or real events: the secretion of a terrorist bomb in a pregnant sweetheart’s hand luggage, for example, or the conditions on the Mozambique/South African border which Gordimer reported on for a television documentary. In its reception, the collection tended to be approached by reviewers in

terms of its historicity and representation of the real world, with Gordimer cast firmly in the role of the artist as a political figure dealing with the representational. Although Gordimer was actually on a lecture tour promoting *Jump* when she received news of the award of the Nobel prize for literature, the prize didn't do much for the reviews of the volume. The collection was received as something of a disappointment, more the product perhaps of a "cultural worker" than of a Nobel-winning artist. Reviewers tended to detect an overemphatic tone, an excess of political gesture or humorless parable, and in particular a tendency to unbalance a tale by final sentences which spelled out a moral or added on O. Henry "twist." Firdaus Kanga complained that "Gordimer writes a hectoring sentence, underlines a phrase that unbalances a whole story with its weight." In "The Moment Before the Gun Went Off," for example, the last sentence reveals that the young black accidentally shot by the Afrikaner was not his "boy" but his illicitly-conceived son. James Wood felt that this revelation produced the effect of a sudden bump in the last sentence which grounded and spoiled the story, drawing it into brute statement. "Some Are Born to Sweet Delight" concludes as a terrorist bomb blows a plane, the heroine, and her unborn child to smithereens. "Once Upon a Time" ends as a white child is ripped to shreds on the razor wire designed to safeguard his fairy tale home. Conversely, however, critics noted a reflexive subtext in these apparently too obvious stories—a narrator-as character, candidly admitting to the invented nature of the tale ("Once Upon a Time," "A Journey") or emphasizing the deceptive nature of the facts presented ("My Father Leaves Home"). The presence of the narrator continually reminds the reader that this is story, as she intervenes to annul the action and send it back into the realm of fiction. In several stories ("A Journey," "The Ultimate Safari") Gordimer herself appears as a gray-haired lady, watching on the sidelines. For some readers the multivocal form demonstrated a laudable attempt to end cultural monopoly by a full representation of the Other in a variety of perspectives and narrators, so that the voice of the white bourgeoisie no longer fills up the artistic space of fiction. For others, however, the volume simply failed to cohere. Gordimer's critics, however, had missed a vital dimension of the collection—and one which makes it one of the most interesting of Gordimer's formal experiments—the explicit connection between story and bodily action indicated in its title. Reviewers were less in touch with the genre of the short story than the author herself. In *Jump*, Gordimer plays with one particular genre of the folktale—the "jump story." One example will suffice to indicate the major features of the genre. This one is from Tennessee: A woman went out on the porch of her lonely farmhouse and cried, "Come on my handsome lover." A deep voice answered from the forest, "I'm coming." The woman returned to the house. In a few minutes she went out again and called, "Come on, my handsome lover." The deep voice answered from the pasture, "I'm coming." Again, she went inside. And again, she returned to the porch to call, "Come on, my handsome lover." The deep voice answered from the garden gate, "I'm coming." Finally, the woman made her last call and received her answer. "Come on my handsome lover." "I'm HERE," said the voice—and a big black bear ate her up. The story is designed to make the audience jump, quite literally.

It is worth noting that this is a slightly unusual example, since it has an erotic element. More normally jump stories are scary in their subject matter; they are grotesque or involve the supernatural: a dismembered hairy toe seeking revenge upon the child who severed it from a giant, a ghost slowly climbing the stairs: "I'm at the bottom of the stairs." "I'm at the landing." "I'm outside the door." "I'm at the foot of the bed." This example usefully highlights the elasticity of the folk form, which depends more on performance, structure and audience, than upon static content. The Florida Public Library Youth Program, for example, promoting oral tale-telling as a route to increased literacy, included several jump stories of a traditional nature in its program, but also suggested the incorporation of various types of community involvement: "Have parachutists explain their equipment and talk about their experiences." (In America, airborne firefighters are smoke-jumpers.) The form is not, of course, limited to one social or national group: it figures in the folk traditions of the Arab world, for example, as well as the African American. Folklore scholars will recognize it as a Formula tale: Motif Z13.1 ("Tale-teller frightens listener: yells 'Boo!' at exciting point"). Typically, however, the tale ends abruptly in physical contact with and consequences for the audience, usually as the storyteller tickles, grabs or pounces upon a listener. "Jump stories" tend to be macabre, orally performed by a storyteller, often in a group situation (hence Gordimer foregrounds the storyteller as deceptive performer, and offers the sense of a multivocal group or collective narration). Today they are probably most easily recognized in animal stories told to children (who are a dominant presence in Gordimer's tales). In group narration the teller often pounces upon the child who looks most scared. "Little Foo-Foo," in which a fairy turns a rabbit into a field mouse, is a common playgroup example, told to the under-fives. Why tell jump stories? Firstly, there is an obvious aggressive element here. That "pounce" is reminiscent of the learning experience of the puppy or kitten, a play device which teaches lessons about the hunt. The story usually involves something or someone slowly creeping up on you, stalking before pouncing, and in selecting the most scared person present, picking off the weakest member of the group. We experience being the prey – the pounced upon – but the story also offers a script for predation, and in some stories (that bear, for example) it is the formerly hunted which pounces in its turn. The return of a dead animal or person, reclaiming bodily parts, also suggests links to the hunt, and to the guilty conscience of the hunter, with connections to taboo animals and totems. The story thus emphasizes the interchangeability of predator and prey, with the tables turned as victimizer becomes victim. It may be "only a game," but it nonetheless offers a rehearsal of violence and victimization, in a secure context. That context also calls out for comment. Despite the scariness, it is arguable that there is an element of reassurance in the telling of the tale (as opposed to the content) in that it ends in bodily contact with a safe adult. Imagination leads into physical action in the boldest possible sense – but it is circumscribed within the frame of a secure situation. The story gives us a playful enactment of fear and pain, fright and tickle, say, but it is only play, and the pounce is often also the embrace of the family tale-teller. Above all, then, the jump story is irremediably physical. It involves the body, both in

performance and often in content. "Cadaver Claims its Cannibalized Organs" is a representative Arab example. A Virginian recounts a tale in which a child is asked to retrieve bones from a graveyard, with the bones returning to frightening effect. Indeed, it may not be stretching it too far to see Gordimer's 1974 novel, *The Conservationist*, as an extended jump story, involving the return of a dead body to plague the protagonist, who is actually "jumped" (ambushed) at the close in a hallucinatory moment of horror. Certainly, the submerged or repressed body which comes back to haunt the white imagination is generally recognized as a common motif in Gordimer's work. One of her earliest published stories, "Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?" (1953), in which a black man pounces upon a white girl, is based on "Little Red Riding Hood," itself a jump story, though in this case the black man is arguably more the victim than he is the wolf. The genre, then, offers a demonstration of an artistic creation extending suddenly into the "real" world, with real physical effects produced on the body of the listener. It is therefore a perfect example of a story written with an eye to functioning as a weapon of struggle. It is a form which we might almost expect to have been adopted by the South African writer. It draws on oral tradition so is "of the people" in a way which more rarefied modernist or postmodernist writing is not. (Gordimer cheerfully published one of these stories, "A Journey," in *Playboy*.) The macabre content allows a satiric purpose—the jump story exposes horror—and the structure (evident in the overall arrangement of Gordimer's collection as well as within individual stories) dramatizes the post-apartheid reversal of roles from victimizer to victim as the setting of the tales comes steadily closer to home. It is worth pausing for a moment to establish that the case for seeing the collection as based upon the genre of the jump story depends on more evidence than its title alone. In the tales, the O. Henry twists are often extended into an almost physical pounce, as if the reader were seized and physically inscribed in the action narrated. In this respect it is striking how many of the reviewers speak in terms of a sudden bump or start; of "the moment when the political and the personal connect to deliver a blow to the heart," or of the endings which "strike at the gut." In broad terms the collection emphasizes predation with its repeated images of the hunt ("Spoils," "Teraloyna") or the sexual chase ("A Find"), of children caught, seized or abducted ("Jump," "Once Upon a Time") or vulnerable to wild beasts. In "The Ultimate Safari" children fleeing a Renamo raid across the Kruger Park in almost equal terror of white police, bandits, and prowling beasts, huddling together by night in a squirming mass lest a lion "jump right into the middle of us." Physical activity is thematically important—trekking to safety, parachute jumps, jogging, journeys—as is the suggestion that children's games have suddenly turned to brutal reality—jogging to desperate flight, parachute jumping for fun leading to military activity, a "safari" to a struggle for survival, a child's toy becomes a cache of plastic explosive. By demonstrating how a story can turn into an event Gordimer implicitly thematizes the connection between fiction and action. Hunters and hunted also cross over at several points. In "My Father Leaves Home," the father as a child of thirteen flees pogroms in Europe only to become a member of an oppressive racist regime in South Africa. The narrator, on a pheasant shoot in her

father's original country, recognizes that in his treatment of blacks her Jewish father had turned from prey to predator. Watching the shoot the narrator stands aloof: "only a spectator, only a spectator please" she begs, but the shoot merges with the image of past pogroms, Cossacks on horseback riding down human beings, and her father shouting at his black laborer. As she comments, "I did not know that I would find, here in the wood, the beaters advancing, advancing across the world." So, are these stories essentially propaganda or parable, tales designed to pounce upon the reader to make one point with maximum force? As we might expect, things are a little bit more complicated than that. The dangers of too easy a continuum between fiction and action are dramatized in "Once Upon a Time." The narrator has been asked to contribute to an anthology of stories for children, and refuses, despite the argument made to her that "every writer ought to write at least one story for children." Like Ndebele and Sachs, the unnamed writer declares "I don't accept that I 'ought' to write anything." Awakened in the night by what sound like footsteps stealthily approaching, "moving from room to room, coming up the passage—to my door" the narrator finally recognizes that the sounds are merely the creaking of a house built on undermined ground. Nobody is about to pounce on her. Yet unable to sleep she begins "to tell myself a story; a bedtime story." Satiric in intention, the tale opens with a family "living happily ever after" in an affluent South African suburb, their home surrounded by security devices and razor wire. When the mother reads the young son the tale of Sleeping Beauty, however, the little boy acts it out. He pretends to be the Prince, who braves the thicket of roses, and impales himself upon the shining "razor thorns" of the security fence. The story has impelled the child to action—but with fatal results. The child has been "jumped" not by an outside bogeyman but by the very measures which were designed to protect him. The story which the narrator tells demonstrates the risks of storytelling—as well as its power. In little, the tale dramatizes the central issue of the collection—the extent to which the writer should write certain types of story, the risks of too straightforward a connection between story and action, and conversely the costs of storytelling which is cut off from its social context. It is, of course, the European fairy story of white South Africa which has actually killed the child. ...

Source: Judie Newman, "Jump Starts: Nadine Gordimer After Apartheid," in *Apartheid Narratives*, edited by Nahem Yousaf, Rodopi, 2001, pp. 101–14.

Graham Huggan

In the following excerpt, Huggan contends that Gordimer has used the short-story form, as well as the novel, to articulate the consciousness of contemporary South Africa. Nadine Gordimer's novels have done much toward "articulating the consciousness" of contemporary South Africa. What is not often realized, or not realized often enough, is that her short stories also contribute to this articulation, and that the short story is just as well-equipped as the novel to attempt it. Gordimer has proved herself over time to be one of the foremost exponents in the world of the modern short story. Yet her critics have tended, almost exclusively, to focus on her

novels. Why should this be so? The main reason for the critical imbalance in favor of Gordimer's novels might be brought down, perhaps, to a lowest common denominator: that critics have had and continue to have difficulty with the short story. The lack of theoretical groundwork does not help; for while theories of the novel abound, it has not been until relatively recently that short story theory has awakened academic interest, most noticeably in the United States. Recent theoretically-informed studies such as Susan Lohafer's *Coming to Terms with the Short Story* (1983) and Bill New's *Dreams of Speech and Violence* (1987) act as valuable correctives to those who persist in seeing the short story as a "minor" genre or, still worse, as an incipient or microcosmic form of the novel. Two collections of nineteenth- and twentieth-century views of the short story, Charles E. May's *Short Story Theories* (1976), and its "sequel," Susan Lohafer and Jo Ellyn Clarey's *Short Story Theories at a Crossroads* (1989), are also particularly useful, although it seems significant that most of the views provided in either collection are by short story writers rather than by short story critics. It is in May's collection that Gordimer's most succinct statement on the short story can be found: her essay "The Flash of Fireflies," which first appeared in *The Kenyon Review* in 1968. ... Gordimer outlines her approach toward the short story more clearly in her introduction to the 1975 edition of her selected short stories. The problematic "ultimate reality" to which she refers in her earlier essay, implying that her primary interest is in portraying "universal" aspects of the human condition, is this time more closely identified with her immediate social environment. "A writer is selected by his subject [sic]," claims Gordimer, "his subject being the consciousness of his own era." The short story, in this context, is not political by design but by necessity: "ultimate reality" is indissociable from social reality. This does not mean that Gordimer's short stories need subscribe to the "dreary" social realism she disparages in "The Flash of Fireflies" but rather that, irrespective of their artistic handling, they are the products of a specific set of social and historical conditions. Gordimer suggests further that, since the writer is "selected by his subject," he or she is highly likely to inquire into the mode of production of his/her work, to explore both the social conditions which have given rise to it and the ideological presuppositions on which it is based. It is true of course that in her explicitly political novels (such as *Burger's Daughter*, 1979) and her implicitly political ones (such as *The Conservationist*, 1974) Gordimer does just that, but the most succinct and, in my view, most pertinent expression of the limits of the ideology within and against which she writes is in short stories where an elided sub-text, submerged beneath the body of the presented text, implicitly challenges and undercuts the dominant narrative voice. ... Let me return for a moment to the notion of "submerged consciousness." Gordimer's belief in the heightened manifestations which suddenly illuminate the narratives of short stories to produce "flashes of fearful insight" can be interpreted in this context as an attempt not merely to capture momentarily an "ultimate reality," but to identify this reality with the emergent consciousness of a beleaguered social group (or groups). The two groups I have in mind, of course, are the blacks of South Africa and the women of South Africa and elsewhere.

Source: Graham Huggan, "Echoes from Elsewhere: Gordimer's Short Fiction as Social Critique," in *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 25, No. 1, Spring 1994, pp. 61-73.

Karen Lazar

In the following excerpt, Lazar examines Gordimer's attitude toward feminism, as evidenced in her short-fiction collection. ... Gordimer always chooses the order of the stories within each anthology (she does not leave this to editors), and the title of the anthology. Her habit is to place the titular story at the start of each collection. The first story often sets the tone and establishes the salient questions and scenarios of each anthology. So Gordimer partially dethrones herself, removes herself from the text as the central or authoritative source of knowledge (a position that some of her earlier realism, with its linear, cohesive narratives, permitted her). This dethroning, this enunciating of fictional practice, suggest an endeavour on Gordimer's part to newly acknowledge the difficulties and partialities of representation. In her Nobel Lecture in 1991, which considers the relationship between writing and being, Gordimer comments: ... from what is regarded as old-hat psychological analysis to modernism and postmodernism, structuralism and post-structuralism, all literary studies are aimed at the same end: to pin down a consistency ... to make definitive through methodology the writer's grasp at the forces of being. But life is aleatory in itself, being is constantly pulled and shaped this way and that by circumstances and different levels of consciousness. There is no pure state of being, and it follows that there is no pure text, 'real' text, totally incorporating the aleatory. It surely cannot be reached by any critical methodology, however interesting the attempt. To deconstruct a text is in a way a contradiction, since to deconstruct is to make another construction out of the pieces... So, the literary scholars end up being some kind of storyteller, too. This foregrounding of the "aleatory" and her recognition of the constitutive nature of interpretation, throw light not only upon the nature of literary criticism but also on the process of writing itself. For Gordimer, at least at this point in her thinking, there is no "pure text" (whether she held to such a concept earlier in her career is beyond the scope of this discussion). The stories in *Jump* demonstrate precisely the inevitable limits of seeing and telling with a thoroughness unprecedented in her short fiction. ... If one of Gordimer's current concerns is the ironical and multivalent potential of this historical moment and its discourses, another is the predatoriness still present in South African society. Various critics have pointed to the striking lack of levity or humour in Gordimer's work, its weightiness. Her repeated use of the idea of the hunt in this anthology suggests that moods of rapacity and ugliness in South African society may eclipse lighter moods (at least for this writer), even in the current era of apparent will-to-change. The topos of the hunt functions—sometimes allegorically, sometimes literally—as a way of investigating social relations and ways of being. Gordimer has gone along on several hunting trips over the years, and if her fictional recreations are anything to go by, her response to such trips is uneasy. During the 1960s several of her stories showed a love for the land and a strong awareness of being on the African continent. At this point Gordimer is strongly self-identifying as an African, and her identification has a striking sensory/existential component. In "The Gentle Art" (Friday's Footprint) the narrative descriptions suggest awe at the sheer space, light and colour around her: "The enormous trees of Africa, ant-eaten and ancient, hung still,

over the hut; down on the margin of the river in the sun the black-and-lemon chequered skin of a crocodile made a bladder of air in the water... At night there was nothing – no river, no hut, no crocodile, no trees; only a vast soft moonless darkness” (Selected Stories). This story’s main figure is a crocodile hunter described in very ambivalent terms: killer and profiteer he certainly is, but the reader is struck by his strength, knowledge of the landscape and affection for the creatures he hunts.... In “Once Upon a Time” Gordimer borrows and subverts the genre of the bed-time story, making full use of the hyperbole inbuilt in this genre. In singsong, go-to-sleep-now language, the narrator recounts how a mother and a father spent time choosing how to make their house secure from a catalogue of safety bars, alarms and panic buttons: “Both came out with the conclusion that only one was worth considering. It was the ugliest but the most honest in its suggestion of pure concentration-camp style ... Placed the length of walls, it consisted of a continuous coil of shining and stiff metal serrated into jagged blades”. Gordimer’s fairy tale possesses a particularly ghoulish South African ending: “Next day [the little boy] pretended to be the prince who braves the terrible thicket of thorns to enter the palace ... the shining coiled tunnel was just wide enough for his little body to creep in, and with the first fixing of its razor-teeth in his knees and hands and head he screamed and struggled deeper into its tangle”. If one of the codes of the typical fairy story is to include the nemesis of the damned, in Gordimer’s sardonic code the nemesis for whites comes at the cost of a white child maimed from the inside of the fortress. An obsession with danger breeds more danger. Gordimer has a sharp eye for homegrown semiotics. The barbed wire in this story, the red headbands worn by the violent gang of men in “Keeping Fit”, the “tiger-streaked hair” of the bored, monied housewife in “Safe Houses”, testify to her close observation of the signifiers of South African living. ...

Source: Karen Lazar, “Jump and Other Stories: Gordimer’s Leap into the 1990s: Gender and Politics in Her Latest Short Fiction,” in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4, December 1992, pp. 783–802.

VIII

Study the critical overview of Flannery O’Connor’s works. List the positive and negative features literary critics have identified in her literary style. What is your personal vision of the things?

O'Connor is widely considered one of the most significant writers ever produced by the United States. She was the subject of an unusual amount of critical attention as a young writer, and this fascination has continued over the decades since her death. Less than a decade after O'Connor started writing, scholars began serious critical interpretation of her work. A special issue of the journal *Critique* was devoted entirely to her writing in 1958. Early approaches to her fiction tended to focus on the grotesque

extremes of her characterization and the bleak violence of her plots. As she responded to early interpretations with explicit explanations of her beliefs about art and faith in various lectures and essays (collected in 1969 under the title *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*), the critical focus shifted toward O'Connor's moral framework and her religious vision. The posthumous publication of her last collection of stories, *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, further solidified O'Connor's reputation as one of the strongest and most original American voices of her generation. Granville Hicks described the stories in the collection as "the best things she ever wrote. They are superb, and they are terrible. She took a cold, hard look at human beings, and set down with marvelous precision what she saw." Even Walter Sullivan, writing one of the book's weaker reviews in the *Hollins Critic*, credited these "last fruits of Flannery O'Connor's particular genius" for "work[ing] their own small counter reformation in a faithless world." The main criticism of the volume focused on O'Connor's singular purpose and the constant repetition of her main themes. "She had only a few ideas, but messianic feelings about them," contended the *Nation's* Webster Schott. He praised her for doing what she does superbly: Myopic in her vision, Flannery O'Connor was among those few writers who raise questions worth thinking about after the lights are out and the children are safely in bed. What is reality? What are the possibilities for hope? How much can man endure? Critical attention to her work continues. The way she expressed her Roman Catholic faith remained a subject of fascination and debate for scholars. Her literary influences have been discussed, as well as her place within the Southern Gothic regional tradition. Dorothy Tuck McFarland maintained: While [O'Connor] was an artist of the highest caliber, she thought of herself as a prophet, and her art was the medium for her prophetic message. It was her intention that her stories should shock, that they should bring the reader to encounter a vision he could face with difficulty or outright repugnance. And she wanted her vision not only to be seen for what it was but also to be taken seriously. She was confident enough of her artistic powers to believe this would happen, even if it took fifty or a hundred years. She did not need to wait so long.

CRITICISM

Sarah Madsen Hardy

Madsen Hardy has a doctorate in English literature and is a freelance writer and editor. In following essay, she discusses how O'Connor's religious vision shapes the seemingly secular content of "Everything That Rises Must Converge." Criticism Sarah Madsen Hardy Madsen Hardy has a doctorate in English literature and is a freelance writer and editor. In many essays and public statements, O'Connor identifies herself as a Catholic writer and asserts that her aims as an artist are inextricably tied to her religious faith. She claims that it is her specific goal to offer a glimpse of God's mystery and, thus, to lead readers – whom she sees as, for the most part, spiritually lost in the modern, secular world – back toward the path of redemption. This information may be somewhat bewildering for those first approaching O'Connor's writing through her short story "Everything That Rises Must

Converge." While some of her other fiction focuses on specifically religious themes, this story, involving the generational and ideological conflict between mother and son, seems to be thoroughly secular in nature. Set in the South in the early 1960s, "Everything That Rises Must Converge" is firmly grounded in the social history of that time and place. Julian, the arrogant and alienated son, abhors his mother's racism and resents her attachment to outdated ideas of Southern aristocracy. Their differences come to a head during a ride they take together on a recently integrated city bus. The questions the story raises are obviously moral, but how they relate specifically to Christian theology is not immediately apparent. The story contains a few passing mentions of heaven and sin, but these words are not used in a serious theological sense. (For example, exasperated with his mother's indecisiveness, "Julian raised his eyes to heaven.") There is a single reference comparing Julian to Saint Sebastian, a Christian martyr, but it is used ironically, in order to show Julian's exaggerated self-pity. In another remote reference to religion, Julian's mother attends a weight reduction class at the 'Y' – the Young Women's Christian Association. But at the time O'Connor wrote, the YWCA, which was founded on Christian values, had become a secular institution. It seems that the few references to Christianity are largely emptied of meaning. However, the first bit of research into "Everything That Rises Must Converge," reveals that the title of the story refers to the philosophy of an obscure Jesuit theologian, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Teilhard offers a Catholic version of the science of evolution, theorizing that lower life forms evolved toward greater diversity and complexity, rising to the level of man, who exists at the midpoint between animal life and God. At this point, evolution continues—yet only on a spiritual level. Instead of diversifying biologically, humanity takes a path of convergence—that is, a path toward intersection or union—rising toward the unification of spirit in God. Referring to the Christian concept of revelation, Teilhard posits that at the end of time human spirit will have at last risen to the ultimate point of convergence, where all people are as one in Christ. O'Connor states in her title that everything that rises must converge. This sounds optimistic and affirmative—which faith, by nature, is. What can this theory have to do with the bleak view of human nature that O'Connor presents in the story? It is helpful to remember that Teilhard conceives of humankind as the midpoint between the ultimate unity of offered by God and the chaotic savagery of animal life. O'Connor writes from this midpoint, grounding her fiction in the contemporary secular world, a world she sees as sinful and benighted. "If the Catholic writer hopes to reveal mysteries, he will have to do it by describing truthfully what he sees from where he is," she writes in "The Church and the Fiction Writer." (This and the other writings by O'Connor cited in this essay are collected in *Mysteries and Manners*, edited by Sally and Robert Fitzgerald.) What O'Connor sees when she looks at the world from her Catholic perspective is mostly dark, chaotic, and divisive. "An affirmative vision cannot be demanded of [the Catholic writer] without limiting his freedom to observe what man has done with the things of God," she maintains. Staring into the weaknesses of the human heart, O'Connor finds that what man has done is not good. "[The Catholic writer] may find in the end that instead of reflecting the heart of things, he has only

reflected our broken condition and, through it, the face of the devil we are possessed by," she writes in another essay on the topic, 'Novelist and Believer.' Returning to the events of the story, it is possible to see them now in a theological light. In "The Catholic Novelist in the Protestant South," O'Connor contends, 'The Catholic novel can't be categorized by subject matter, but only by what it assumes about human and divine reality.' She considers it her calling to write about her here and now, which is the South in the 1960s, not heaven. O'Connor portrays the fallen nature of humankind in terms of what she sees from where she is: the arrogance and blindness that divides son from mother, as well as white from black. She portrays the pain and folly that are "our broken condition," the recognition of which is the only means for the human soul to rise toward grace. The textual references to rising in 'Everything That Rises Must Converge' refer literally to problems of race and social class that were reaching a boiling point when O'Connor wrote the story. These issues demonstrate clearly enough the failure of humans to achieve spiritual unity. Julian's mother perceives the rise of African American people as related to her own family's fall from the social and economic heights it enjoyed before the Civil War. She thinks that she knows who she is—meaning she knows where her family belongs in a rigid racial and social hierarchy. The fact that the family is no longer rich means to her that society is out of order—but this does not cause her to doubt her inherent superiority or the validity of the categories that divide people from one another. "I tell you," she says to Julian, meaning to comfort him about his failure to live up to his ambitions or to make any money, 'the bottom rail is on the top.' She attributes their reduced circumstances to the improving rights of African Americans, evidence that "the world is in a mess everywhere." Referring to the social and economic progress of African Americans in the South, the result of the incipient Civil Rights Movement, she says, 'They should rise, yes, but on their own side of the fence.' The conflict in the story originates in part because blacks don't rise 'on their own side of the fence,' but insist on equal rights by means of integration, which can be seen as a kind of social convergence. Like the rising in the story, the convergence that O'Connor portrays reflects the social strife of her times. Julian's mother is uncomfortable with social convergence between blacks and whites on a most literal level. She won't ride the bus without her son, imagining some abstract danger or indignity in simply sharing space with people of a different race. Moreover, she reserves a special condescending pity for people of mixed race, who can be understood as the fullest realization of black-white convergence. 'The ones I feel sorry for ... are the ones that are half white. They're tragic.' However, cultural and political changes have made this kind of convergence inevitable. O'Connor demonstrates this through the symbol of the hat, evidence that Julian's mother has "fallen" and the black woman has "risen" to a point where they "meet themselves" as they sit across from each other on a public bus in identical hats. This convergence has embarrassment as its main effect—a far cry from the transcendent convergence Teilhard envisions of the end of time. Yet this is O'Connor's point: to show, at this point in human history, the unevolved state of the human soul through her characters' weaknesses. If Julian's mother resists convergence by placing her faith in social separation and hierarchy, Julian takes an even more extreme position, attempting to

cut himself off from identification with other people all together, leaving him arguably even further from grace than his mother. Julian's mother doesn't mind living in an apartment in a declining neighborhood or going to the 'Y' with poor women, while Julian fantasizes about making enough money to move into a house where "the nearest neighbor would be three miles away." This represents not only Julian's longing for status, but also the distance at which he holds himself from fellow humans. His feelings of superiority are not explicitly tied to race or class, but they take an even more acute form than those of his mother. While she is naive, believing that she treats people well through her misguided gentility, Julian openly wishes ill on others. "It gave him a certain satisfaction to see injustice in daily operation," the narrator reports as Julian observes a white woman change seats after a black man sits near her on the bus. "It confirmed his view that with a few exceptions there was no one worth knowing within a radius of three hundred miles." O'Connor again characterizes Julian in terms of his desire to resist any kind of human connection when she describes the 'inner compartment of his mind' that is "the only place where he felt free of the general idiocy of his fellows." Julian attributes what he believes is his judgment and insight to his ability to sever bonds—especially that with his mother. "Most miraculous of all, instead of being blinded by love for her as she was for him, he had cut himself emotionally free of her and could see her with complete objectivity." He fiercely resists his mother's hold on him, despite her devoted love. These are some of the ways that O'Connor shows the terribly compromised ways that people "rise" and "converge." Is she so different from Julian, though? For she takes such a dim view of the all-too-human characters she creates. Are they really redeemable? O'Connor would answer with a resounding yes. "[The Catholic novelist] cannot see man as determined; it cannot see him as totally depraved. It will see him as incomplete in himself, as prone to evil, but as redeemable when his own efforts are assisted by grace," she asserts in "The Catholic Novelist in the Protestant South." At the end of the story, both Julian and his mother are offered some opportunity for the kind of true convergence that Teilhard envisions. As she dies, Julian's mother calls out for Caroline, her black nursemaid, showing that this early emotional bond ultimately transcends her self-justifying beliefs about racial superiority. Julian, who until the very end rails against his mother, finally breaks out of his distancing 'inner compartment' and calls out for his mother in child-like terms of affection, "Darling, sweetheart . . . Mamma, Mamma!" These are changes not of the head but of the heart. The sky does not open to reveal God. These changes are earthbound and real. In *The True Country*, his study of the place of Catholic theology in her writing, Carter W. Martin explains that O'Connor's fiction "gives dramatic, concrete form to the humble and often banal insight that enables the individual man to move toward grace by rising only slightly. It is this movement that she means when she speaks of our slow participation in redemption." O'Connor writes about the distance of her characters from a state of grace, but with an abiding faith in the human's ability to—someday, slowly—cross that distance.

Source: Sarah Madsen Hardy, for *Short Stories for Students*, Gale, 2000.

Alice Hall Petry

Petry's discussion in this essay centers on the echoes of Margaret Mitchell's novel *Gone with the Wind* that she perceives in "Everything That Rises Must Converge" and the resonance these echoes add to the reader's understanding of the story. Flannery O'Connor knew only too well that she could not assume her audience brought a solid background in Christianity to their readings of her fiction. It was part of the price she paid for being an insistently Roman Catholic writer in the increasingly secularized United States of the mid-twentieth century. One element which she could count on being familiar to any American reader from any socioeconomic or educational stratum was, however, Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936). That familiarity enabled O'Connor to incorporate into her fiction various echoes of Mitchell's novel, echoes sometimes transparent and sometimes subtle, sometimes parodic and sometimes serious. In "A Late Encounter with the Enemy," for example, the reference to the "premy" of twelve years before indicates that "General" George Poker Sash had attended the world premiere of the novel's movie version in Atlanta in 1939. Sadly, Sash's finest hour had come not during the Civil War, but during the premiere of the movie which, seventy-five years later, had romanticized and popularized the conflict. Likewise, in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" the grandmother tells little John Wesley that the plantation is "Gone with the Wind. Ha. Ha," her pallid joke pointing, once again, to the pervasive acceptance of Mitchell's rendering of the most painful era in southern history. One O'Connor story which has a special kinship with Mitchell's classic story is "Everything That Rises Must Converge." Taken together, these echoes of *Gone with the Wind* — some blatant parallels, some ironic reversals — underscore the story's thesis that Julian's and his mother's responses to life in the South of the civil rights movement are unreasonable and, ultimately, self-destructive precisely because those responses are based upon actions and values popularized by Mitchell's book. Even worse, in several instances, actions and values are pathetic distortions of what Mitchell presents in *Gone with the Wind*. A clear connection between "Everything That Rises Must Converge" and *Gone with the Wind* is the mother's hat. As Patricia Dinneen Maida points out, O'Connor is "highly selective" in her choice of details; John Ower confirms this by arguing the importance of the mother offering little Carver a new Lincoln penny in lieu of a Jefferson nickel. Of course, the ugly hat which the mother has purchased for an outrageous \$7.50, a hat identical to that of the large black woman, will help confirm that they are "doubles" and, thereby, will make a statement about racial equality. But there is more to the hat than this. Note O'Connor's careful description of it, presented twice: "It was a hideous hat. A purple velvet flap came down on one side of it and stood up on the other; the rest of it was green and looked like a cushion with the stuffing out. [Julian] decided it was less comical than jaunty and pathetic." The purple of the hat suggests bruising. Thus, it is very appropriate for a woman whose eyes seem bruised and whose face looks purple as her son torments her, and who will literally be struck to the ground by an overstuffed purse. Less obvious is the irony that her black double has no doubt suffered the bruises of psychological and physical abuse during her life in the South,

bruises which are less apparent to whites who, for generations, had been conditioned to believe that blacks have less sensitivity to blows than whites. In addition, various commentators have pointed out that the color purple has religious associations, most notably Easter redemption and penance. At the same time, the antipodal orientations conveyed by the purple flap – "down on one side . . . up on the other" – graphically depict the twin socioeconomic movements in the South: the downward movement of aristocratic families like the Godhighs and the Chestnys, and the upward movement of "upwardly mobile" blacks who, because of improved economic status, have "as much freedom to pursue absurdity as the whites." In part, then, the hat's purple flap renders semiotically the impact of the civil rights movement on southern society. Less clear, however, is why the rest of the hat is green and looks "like a cushion with the stuffing out" – less clear, that is, unless one remembers *Gone with the Wind*. Overwhelmed by the familial and regional crises engendered by the Civil War, the widowed Scarlett O'Hara is all the more personally dismayed by the attire of Emmie Slattery, a "poor white trash" neighbor who has suddenly stepped up economically by marrying the underhanded Jonas Wilkerson, and who is considering buying Tara: "And what a cunning hat! Bonnets must be out of style, for this hat was only an absurd flat red velvet affair, perched on top of [Emmie's] head like a stiffened pancake." The velvet pancake, however "absurd," does not go unnoticed by Scarlett's creative self, for shortly thereafter the threadbare mistress of Tara, desperate for \$300 more for municipal taxes, resolves to construct a new outfit out of household goods and coerce the sum out of Rhett Butler. With the help of Mammy, Scarlett makes a dazzling dress out of the mansion's "moss-green velvet curtains" and a petticoat out of the satin linings of the parterres; her pantalets are trimmed with pieces of Tara's lace curtains. Even the plantation's rooster surrenders his "gorgeous bronze and green-black tail feathers" to decorate the green velvet hat. Ashley Wilkes is duly moved: "he had never known such gallantry as the gallantry of Scarlett O'Hara going forth to conquer the world in her mother's velvet curtains and the tail feathers of a rooster." As Dorothy Walters points out, the fact that Julian's mother's hat looks like a cushion without its stuffing makes her "instantaneously ridiculous.... Imagery deflates ego. What the character conveys is not what he intends," but if one remembers the Scarlett O'Hara connection, it is clear that the hat suggests the mother's desperate bid for dignity, for a Scarlett O'Hara-type "gallantry," as much as it does a deflation of her ego. True, Julian's mother did not actually make her hat out of a cushion, but it is entirely possible that, at some level, Julian's mother – herself a widow from a good southern family down on her luck – may have been identifying with the plucky Scarlett, using her as a role model of a lady who survives by making do with what she has. Indeed, one could say of Scarlett just as readily as of Julian's mother that she "had struggled fiercely to feed and clothe and put [her child] through school," and Scarlett eventually does attain the economic and social prominence that Julian's mother can only dream of through her son, a would-be writer. Perhaps Scarlett's own makeshift outfit looked as "jaunty and pathetic" as the hat of Julian's mother; but it surely was unique (Scarlett would never "meet [her]self coming and going," and the encounter

with Rhett ultimately led to her successful business career. The redoubtable Scarlett must have been a role model for many women in the same situation as Julian's mother, so the hat—"hideous," "atrocious," "preposterous"—may be seen as her pathetic attempt to emulate not simply a southern belle in dire straits, but the most famous belle of them all. Whether Julian's mother consciously has Scarlett in mind is a moot point. What matters is that she is conducting herself like a romanticized fictional character from a book set a century before. Times, however, have changed. Nothing illustrates these changing times more readily than the issue of ladyhood, an issue which permeates both "Everything That Rises Must Converge" and *Gone with the Wind*. Julian's mother insisted that "ladies did not tell their age or weight"; she was "one of the few members of the Y reducing class who arrived in hat and gloves"; and she entered the bus "with a little smile, as if she were going into a drawing room where everyone had been waiting for her." Julian's mother, in short, regards herself as the consummate lady. It is precisely here that she parts company most glaringly with Scarlett, who herself "found the road to ladyhood hard." Scarlett scorns those well-bred women, financially ruined by the Civil War, who cling desperately to the manners and trappings of the antebellum South. "She knew she should believe devoutly, as they did, that a born lady remained a lady, even if reduced to poverty, but she could not make herself believe it now." For all her self-imagined kinship with archetypal belles like Scarlett, Julian's mother is actually more akin to these pathetic women who cannot give up the past. True, Scarlett creates for herself a magnificent outfit, one befitting a lady; but she does it only because she needs the \$300 from Rhett. If not for this emergency, she would have continued wearing the slippers reinforced with carpeting and the "raggedy," much mended dress which her harsh postwar life on Tara demanded. She is practical and has no illusions about herself or about what she must do to survive. Julian's mother, however, is but a pale copy of Scarlett. She was practical enough to finance Julian's college education, and she realizes that the \$7.50 she paid for the hat should be put towards the gas bill; but she only sent him to a third-rate college, and she capitulates with notable ease to her son's suggestion that she forget the bill and keep the hat. Likewise, she lives in a poor neighborhood only because forty years before it was "fashionable," whereas Scarlett would never fool herself into thinking that past glory had any true bearing on one's current situation. She wants to retain Tara, after all, out of principle and as a matter of family pride, not because it is chic. The situations of Scarlett and Julian's mother are, of course, superficially similar, and one can see why the example of *Gone with the Wind* would appeal to a middle-aged southern woman of "good" family in the early 1960s. Scarlett is trying to survive in a South undergoing social, economic and racial upheavals due to the Civil War, while Julian's mother is trying to survive in a South undergoing similar upheavals caused by the civil rights movement, World War II and the Korean conflict. Julian's mother states repeatedly that "the world is in such a mess," and that "the bottom rail is on the top." This is precisely how Scarlett perceives her own world: "Ellen's [Scarlett's mother's] ordered world was gone and a brutal world had taken its place, a world wherein every standard, every value had changed." Scarlett's immediate

response to this realization is chillingly like Julian's: she blames her mother. Scarlett's Julian-like cynicism and rudeness helped her to forget her own bitterness that everything her mother had told her about life was wrong. Nothing her mother had taught her was of any value whatsoever now and Scarlett's heart was sore and puzzled. It did not occur to her that Ellen could not have foreseen the collapse of the civilization in which she raised her daughters, could not have anticipated the disappearing of the places in society for which she trained them so well. It did not occur to her that Ellen had looked down a vista of placid future years, all like the uneventful years of her own life, when she had taught her to be gentle and gracious, honorable and kind, modest and truthful. Life treated women well when they learned those lessons, said Ellen. Scarlett's resentment towards Ellen O'Hara may help explain Julian's own palpable contempt for his mother. She represents a world, a lifestyle that Julian wants but can never attain, and he bullies her like Scarlett bullies her sisters, wishing he could slap his mother and hoping that some black would help him "to teach her a lesson." But where the resilient Scarlett eventually comes to forgive her mother for the loss of her world, Julian cannot forgive his. He literally torments her to death. For Scarlett, Julian and his mother, the focal point of the world they have lost is the ancestral mansion. Julian's great-grandfather had a plantation and two hundred slaves, and Julian dreams of it "regularly. He would stand on the wide porch, listening to the rustle of oak leaves, then wander through the high-ceilinged hall into the parlor that opened onto it and gaze at the worn rugs and faded draperies." But Julian's memory of it is marred: "The double stairways had rotted and been torn down. Negroes were living in it." The prospect of the family mansion undergoing such a reversal is also what haunts Scarlett. Part of the reason she so fears the purchase of Tara by its former overseer for his wife Emmie (the local "dirty tow-headed slut") is that "these low common creatures [would be] living in this house, bragging to their low common friends how they had turned the proud O'Haras out. Perhaps they'd even bring negroes here to dine and sleep." But, once again, Scarlett differs significantly from Julian and his mother: she is truly adaptable. To save Tara, "she changed swiftly to meet this new world for which she was not prepared," even taking advantage of her status as a "lady" — a status which, as noted, she does not take too seriously — to cheat male customers in her lumber business. Julian and his mother utterly lack Scarlett's imagination and resourcefulness, although they have both deluded themselves into thinking they do possess these qualities. As Sister Kathleen Feeley notes [in Flannery O'Connor: Voice of the Peacock], Julian's mother, "secure in her private stronghold . . . can afford to be 'adaptable' to present conditions, such as associating at the YWCA with women who are not in her social class." However, this is hardly "adaptability" as the enterprising and non-sentimental Scarlett would understand it. Nothing illustrates this inability to adapt more graphically than the death of Julian's mother at the end of the story. The death scene itself echoes *Gone with the Wind*. Ellen, Scarlett's mother, dying of typhoid, had regressed to her childhood: "'she think she a lil gal back in Savannah,'" and called for her long dead sweetheart, Philippe. Likewise, Julian's mother regresses to her secure childhood and calls for her mammy Caroline, a request

which indicates that, 'for all its defects, the older generation had more genuine personal feeling for Negroes than [Julian's] with its heartless liberalism' [according to John R. May in his book *The Pruning Word: The Parables of Flannery O'Connor*]. The death of Julian's mother results from her "loss of illusion" and, concomitantly, her awareness that she can never adapt to the newly-revealed reality: [as Leon V. Driskell and Joan T. Brittain wrote in *The Eternal Crossroads: The Art of Flannery O'Connor*] it is 'more than she can bear, but mercifully her mind breaks' (emphasis added) – a perfect verb to use since, like a brittle stick, Julian's mother responds to the stress of her realization by "breaking" physically and psychologically. Her son, albeit physically alive, is psychically shattered, pathetically calling "Mamma!" as he enters "the world of guilt and sorrow." In sharp contrast, Scarlett is like a reed. She bends under duress, adjusts, survives. What Julian's mother could not accept, and what Julian had only deluded himself into believing that he did accept, is not that everything rises, but that everything that rises must converge. Hence her insistence that it's fine if blacks rise as long as they stay on their side of the fence, and her dismay over mulattoes, those emblems of the process of racial convergence. The fact that the black woman wore an identical hat (O'Connor takes care to describe it twice) is another blatant emblem of convergence, which Julian's mother had tried to deny 'by reducing the other woman to a subhuman level and seeing the implied relationship between them as a comic impossibility' [as Dorothy Tuck McFarland wrote in her book *Flannery O'Connor*] – that is, by responding as if the black woman 'were a monkey that had stolen her hat.' It is reminiscent of Scarlett's shocked reaction to Emmie's dressing like a lady (which she is not). Scarlett's response to the convergence which she sees around her in postwar Georgia is more constructive: she accepts what she must and changes what she can. Scarlett must often swallow her pride, learning the lumber business from scratch and even, in effect, offering herself to Rhett in exchange for negotiable currency. But survive and thrive she does, and "ladylike" behavior be damned. And if it turned out that ladylike behavior could be damned so readily in 1865, what could be more pathetic than trying to retain it in 1960? The superficial similarities in their situations may have led Julian's mother to emulate Scarlett, consciously or otherwise. But as Kathryn Lee Seidel argues [in *The Southern Belle in the American Novel*], Scarlett is 'both conventional and unique,' as is evident from her green eyes. Writes Seidel: "Of all the belles I have studied, she is the only one with green eyes. By assigning Scarlett this eye color, Mitchell both acknowledges and overturns this small detail of the belle stereotype. It is a technique Mitchell uses masterfully throughout the novel; with it, she compliments her audience's knowledge of and affection for the stereotype, but uses it for her own purposes" (emphasis added). O'Connor is using an identical technique in her presentation of Julian's blue-eyed mother, who evidently has extracted selectively for emulation only the most conventional, most romantic aspects of southern womanhood that were popularized by *Gone with the Wind*. Without the "unique" qualities that are so vital in the characterization of Scarlett (her personal toughness, imagination, adaptability), the emulation of those conventional aspects is pathetic – and especially so in a middle-aged woman living a century after the Civil

War. No doubt Julian's mother would be nattered to see the connection between herself and Scarlett O'Hara signified by the cushion-like hat; and no doubt Scarlett herself would find that connection a grim commentary on the self-image of Julian's mother. There is no copy of *Gone with the Wind* in Flannery O'Connor's personal library; but in view of her considerable knowledge of southern literature, it is difficult to believe that she had never read Mitchell's novel. And one can surmise readily which features of it would be of special interest to O'Connor: the Georgia setting; the lovely description of antebellum Tara surrounded by flocks of turkeys and geese, birds being, of course, a life-long love of O'Connor's; the startling scene wherein Scarlett's father — like O'Connor, an Irish Catholic living in Protestant Georgia — is given a Church of England funeral (the ignorant mourners ' 'thought it the Catholic ceremony and immediately rearranged their first opinion that the Catholic services were cold and Popish"); even the references to Milledgeville, O'Connor's hometown (e.g., Scarlett admits to Mammy, "'I know so few Milledgeville folks'"). It is far more to the point, however, that O'Connor could readily assume that other American readers and movie-goers, of whatever faith or region, would be familiar with Mitchell's story and would respond to echoes of it in her writings. As is illustrated by the case of "Everything That Rises Must Converge," those echoes could be used, comically or otherwise, to help guide our responses to the often-enigmatic fiction of Flannery O'Connor.

Source: Alice Hall Petry, "Miss O'Connor and Mrs., Mitchell: The Example of 'Everything That Rises,'" in *The Southern Quarterly*, Vol. XXVII, No. 4, Summer 1989, pp. 5-15.

Alice Hall Petry

O'Connor's use of the YWCA as the destination of Julian's mother is Petry's focus in this article, in which the critic shows how ' 'the Y serves as a gauge of the degeneration of the mother's Old South family and, concomitantly, of the breakdown of old, church-related values in the United States of the mid-twentieth century.'" As Patricia Dinneen Maida has pointed out, Flannery O'Connor "does not flood her work with details; she is highly selective — choosing only those aspects that are most revealing." The justice of this observation in regard to "Everything That Rises Must Converge" was confirmed recently by John Ower, who argues persuasively that Julian's mother's having to offer a penny to the little Black boy in lieu of a nickel illustrates the ascendancy of Lincolnesque racial tolerance over Jeffersonian segregation in the South of the Civil Rights Movement. O'Connor's capacity to utilize detail symbolically in "Everything That Rises" is evident even in the destination of Julian's mother: the local "Y." Mentioned no less than five times in this brief story, the Y serves as a gauge of the degeneration of the mother's Old South family and, concomitantly, of the breakdown of old, church-related values in the United States of the mid-twentieth century. As Julian's mother is wont to point out, she is related to the Godhighs and the Chestnys, prominent families of the Old South whose former status is conveyed nicely by the high-ceilinged, double-staircased mansion which Julian had seen as a child, and of which he still dreams regularly. But with the end of the plantation system,

the mother's glorious ancestry is meaningless: she has had to work to put her son through a third-rate college, she apparently does not own a car (hence the dreaded, fatal ride on the integrated bus), and she lives in a poor neighborhood which had been fashionable forty years earlier. One of the most telling indicators of her loss of socioeconomic status is, however, also one of the most subtle: she participates in a program at the YWCA. As Maida notes, a reducing class at the Y is a "bourgeois event"; but more than this, it suggests how much Julian's mother, and the socioeconomic system she represents, has declined by the early 1960s. The Young Women's Christian Association has been functioning in some form in the United States since 1866; the national organization of the "Young Women's Christian Association of the United States of America" was effected in 1906. From the beginning, it was a group whose local chapters were organized and financed by the very wealthy, including Grace Hoadley Dodge (1856- 1914), the daughter and great-granddaughter of prominent American philanthropists. The civic-minded Miss Dodge managed to supplement her own generous personal contributions by soliciting enormous gifts from captains of industry such as George W. Vanderbilt, and YWCA chapters spread throughout the United States, including the rapidly industrializing post-World War I South. In the late nineteenth-and early twentieth-centuries, then, a woman with the family background of Julian's mother would have been an organizer and financial supporter of the YWCA; but to actually participate in the programs would have been unheard-of, since the Association was intended specifically to benefit "young women of the operative classes" — that is, young women who were either immigrants or poor native-born country girls seeking employment in large cities, and who were 'dependent on their own exertion for support.' That the reducing class Julian's mother attends is for "working girls over fifty" is thus not only a transparent joke on the self-image of a middle-aged woman (i.e., a fifty-plus "girl") but also a sad commentary on Julian's mother having become one of the desperate members of 'the operative classes': with the loss of the Godhigh/Chestny plantation, she is simply another poor, naive country girl trying to survive in a hostile urban environment. And the hat and gloves she pathetically wears to the Y — those emblems of wealth and respectability of women such as Grace Dodge — serve only to underscore her socioeconomic decline. At the same time that it sought to help working girls on a personal level, the YWCA of the United States was a surprisingly important force in national and international affairs. At the turn of the century the YWCA, under the leadership of its 'industrial secretary' Florence Simms, was actively involved in exposing the poor working conditions of women and children and campaigning for legislation to improve those conditions. Through the publication of books, pamphlets, and magazines (such as *Association Monthly*, begun in 1907) and a series of well-publicized national conventions and international conferences, the YWCA called for America's participation in the World Court and the League of Nations; sought the modification of divorce laws, improved Sino-American relations, and world-wide disarmament; advocated sex education as early as 1913; and, through the platform known as the "Social Ideals of the Churches," campaigned vigorously for labor unions — a bold

move at a time (1920) when anything resembling Bolshevism was anathema. In short, in its early years, the YWCA never shrank from controversial social issues and often was a pioneer in facing and correcting social problems. That stance was perhaps best illustrated by the 1915 convention in Louisville, Kentucky, in which Black and white members of the YWCA met to discuss ways to improve race relations in the United States. In fine, had 'Everything That Rises' been written in 1915, that YWCA to which she travels throughout the story might well have been the common meeting-ground of Julian's mother and her "black double"; but only 45 years after the pioneering interracial convention in Louisville, the YWCA had declined to the point where, far from being a center of racial understanding and integration, it was essentially a free health club for poor white women. The Black woman, after all, gets off at the same bus stop as Julian's mother, but there is nothing to suggest that she, too, is headed for the Y. And much as the YWCA had lost its earlier status as a force for racial understanding, it also had lost its status as a source of practical help: although the Y is only four blocks from where his mother collapses, Julian does not go there for help; and, unlike the early days when the YWCA would literally send its members to factories to conduct prayer meetings for the working women, no one from the Y comes to Julian's mother's aid. Where only a few years before the Y would have been the first source of aid for a desperate woman, by the early 1960s, it was as meaningless and impersonal as the gymnasium to which it had been reduced. The startling decline of the once powerful, liberal, and comforting YWCA parallels the decline of the Old South – and the old America – embodied in Julian's mother. As [Leon V.] Driskell and [Joan T.] Brittain observe [in *The Eternal Crossroads: The Art of Flannery O'Connor*] 'the-world around her has changed drastically and no longer represents the values she endorses.' The aspect of the YWCA's decline which would most have disturbed a writer such as O'Connor, however, is its secularization, for she knew only too well that the average American of the twentieth century was out of touch with Christianity. From its inception, the YWCA was regarded as the 'handmaid of the Church'; in the early years, 'The Sunday afternoon 'gospel meeting' was the heart of the whole organization; always there were Bible classes, and mission study extended the interest beyond the local community and out into the world," while the improved working conditions and wages of the working girls were seen not as ends in themselves, but as means of generating "true piety in themselves and others." But as early as World War I, the religious dimension of the Association was losing ground – a phenomenon noted with dismay by YWCA leaders, who nonetheless recognized that it was part of a nation-wide move towards secularization: 'The period extending from the day when Bible study was taken for granted as being all-important to the day when there might be no Bible study in the program of a local Association shows changes, not only in the Association, but in religion in general.' Those changes were reflected in the requirements for admission to membership in the YWCA. To join the nineteenth-century "Ladies' Christian Association," a woman had to prove herself a member "in good standing of an Evangelical church"; by 1926, church membership was no longer a requirement, and the declaration that "I desire to enter the Christian

fellowship of the Association" was deemed adequate for membership. Small wonder that the gymnasium, a standard feature of even the earliest YWCA chapters since bodily health was seen as conducive to spiritual health, became divorced from its Christian context: for many Americans after mid-century, 'the Y' is synonymous with "the gym." Indeed, the secularization of the YWCA is conveyed dramatically by its nicknames. To its earliest members, the Young Women's Christian Association was known informally as "the Association." That emphasis on Christian sisterhood is obscured by the popular abbreviation 'YWCA,' and it is completely lost by the Association's slangy contemporary nickname, "the Y"—a term with an implied emphasis on youth. It is ironically appropriate, then, that a "working girl over fifty" in youth-minded America would go to the Y for a reducing class, apparently oblivious to the Association's tradition of Christian living and racial understanding. For O'Connor, Julian's mother would be painfully typical of most midcentury Americans, who neither understand nor appreciate the meaning and purpose of the original Young Women's Christian Association. As such, Julian's mother's situation—like the degeneration of the YWCA into a gymnasium—is a gauge of the secularization of American life and the loss of the "old" values and standards.

Source: Alice Hall Petry, "O'Connor's 'Everything That Rises Must Converge,'" in *The Explicator*, Vol. 45, No. 3, Spring 1987, pp. 51-54.

John Ower

In the following essay, Ower comments on the significance of the penny that Julian's mother gives the young black boy and the nickel she would ordinarily have given, arguing that 'the designs of these pieces suggest a nexus of meanings relating to the social, racial and religious themes' of the story. In O'Connor's story, the violent climactic 'convergence' of black and white races is precipitated by Julian's mother offering a coin to a little Negro boy. Her customary gift to black children is a nickel, but she has been able to find only a cent in her pocketbook. That the fateful coin is a penny, and that it is newly minted, are both emphasized by O'Connor through being twice mentioned. The author thereby hints the significance with regard to "Everything that Rises ..." of the Lincoln cent and Jefferson nickel (the two coins current in 1961 when O'Connor's story was written). The designs of these pieces suggest a nexus of meanings relating to the social, racial and religious themes of 'Everything that Rises....' The obverse of the Lincoln cent bears the portrait of its namesake, to the left of which is the motto "LIBERTY." The chief feature of the reverse is a representation of the Lincoln Memorial. These three details have an obvious relevance to O'Connor's sympathetic concern with the "rise" of Southern blacks from slavery towards true freedom and socio-economic equality. Thus, the features of the Lincoln cent just mentioned suggest (1) the freeing of Negroes by the "Great Emancipator" and (2), by extension, the activity of the Federal Government in O'Connor's own day to ensure the rights of Southern blacks. Regarding the second, the Supreme Court decision of 1954 and its aftereffects (including the sit-ins of 1960) constitute the immediate historical background for the action of "Everything that Rises" The story suggests

how the crumbling of the "Jim Crow" system was making possible a new "liberty" for Negroes in the South. Blacks have gained both a greater physical freedom in their world and increased opportunities for socioeconomic mobility. This twofold access of "liberty" is exemplified by the well-dressed Negro man with the briefcase who sits with the whites at the front of the bus. The new possibilities for betterment opening to blacks are intimated not only by the abovementioned details of the Lincoln cent but also by its "bright," shiny freshness. Julian's mother is unaware of the ways her "new penny" suggests the historical "rise" of Southern blacks, and would be dismayed if she recognized such implications. She represents the reactionary element among white Southerners who want to reverse history with respect to race relations. Julian's mother would like to return to the days of segregation ("They should rise, yes, but on their own side of the fence") and seemingly even to the era of slavery ("[Blacks] were better off when they were [slaves]"). The retrograde desire of Julian's mother to reduce Negroes to their antebellum servitude stands in ironic contrast to her penny as recalling Lincoln's emancipation of blacks. Furthermore, the date on the obverse of the "new" (presumably 1961) cent is exactly a century after the start of the Civil War, and almost a hundred years after the Emancipation Proclamation (1863). The 1961 date thus underlines just how antiquated are the racial views of Julian's mother. As opposed to the Lincoln cent, the Jefferson nickel in part suggests the conservative and patriian outlook of Julian's mother, the quasi-mythical old South in which she psychologically dwells. In particular, Jefferson's life strikingly parallels that of the aristocratic grandfather whom Julian's mother so reveres. Both men were slaveholding plantation owners, and both were governors of their home states. It is by virtue of such distinguished ancestry that Julian's mother identifies with the antebellum Southern aristocracy, to whom she romantically attributes a lofty preeminence balanced by "graciousness." That combination of qualities is suggested by the palladian architecture of Jefferson's 'stately home' Monticello, depicted on the reverse of the nickel. Monticello further ties in with the God high country mansion as a symbol of the aristocratic heritage and accompanying social pretensions of Julian's mother. Just as the somewhat Olympian Monticello suggests the superior position of the white aristocracy in a class and racially stratified order, so does the plan of the God high house (the owners being elevated above the black cooks who work on the ground floor). It is from such an apparently secure social eminence that Julian's mother looks down on Negroes with a blend of snobbish condescension, "graciousness" and paternalistic benevolence. That set of attitudes is expressed by Julian's mother in bestowing small change upon black children. The Jefferson nickel is especially appropriate as the usual coin for such largesse because it implies the identification with the old Southern aristocracy that largely determines the racial views of Julian's mother. However, the aforementioned connotations of the Jefferson nickel are in contrast with meanings implied by the motto 'LIBERTY' on the obverse of the coin. The slogan brings to mind Jefferson's chief fame as a champion of democratic ideals. In relation to "Everything that Rises ...," Jefferson's advocacy of "liberty" and equality is (1) basically antithetical to the cherished social assumptions and racial views of

Julian's mother and (2) essentially in keeping with the movement towards freedom and equality for blacks implied by the Lincoln cent. Concerning the second point, Jefferson although a slaveholder himself found the South's "peculiar institution" morally repugnant. He accordingly devoted considerable effort to advocating the gradual emancipation of Negroes, and he likewise freed some of his own blacks at his death. Jefferson's enlightened attitudes towards slavery, which anticipate Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, are diametrically opposed to those of Julian's mother. Far from seeing slavery as morally repellant, she believes that blacks were ' 'better off' in servitude, and is proud that an ancestor owned two hundred Negroes. Such sentiments are undercut through the Jefferson nickel by implicit contrast with the views of one of America's foremost political and social thinkers. Another detail of both the Lincoln cent and Jefferson nickel which is relevant to "Everything that Rises..." is the motto ' 'E PLURIBUS UNUM' ("Out of many, one"). While the slogan is intended to refer to the United States as a nation federated out of various states, it also suggests the American ideal of a unified society tolerantly encompassing racial and ethnic diversity. Both possible meanings of ' 'E PLURIBUS UNUM' are germane to the racial situation that existed in the South in 1961. Since the main impetus towards desegregation came from the U.S. Federal Government, the resistance of Southern white reactionaries threatened to create strife not just between the races, but also between Dixie and the rest of the nation. The first of these potential conflicts is suggested in "Everything that Rises ..." when the black woman assaults Julian's mother. The second is implied by the Lincoln cent as recalling the Civil War. In opposition to both possible evils, the motto "E PLURIBUS UNUM" indicates how the South should accept the will of the Federal authorities and help create a society where the races can coexist in harmony. The motto "E PLURIBUS UNUM" also ties in with the theology of Teilhard de Chardin that influenced O'Connor when writing "Everything that Rises .." Teilhard maintains in *The Phenomenon of Man* that an eschatological evolution is moving the human race from ' 'diversity to ultimate unity.' Such a ' 'convergence" will be completed at "Omega point" with the oneness of all men in Christ. In order for convergence to occur, individuals must surrender their "personal or racial egotism" and join with one another in love. Teilhard's convergence of mankind from "diversity to ultimate unity" is of course brought to mind by the motto "E PLURIBUS UNUM." The slogan would thus for O'Connor relate both to God's plan for unifying all men and to U.S. history, suggesting the two are connected. More specifically, O'Connor evidently saw the progress of race relations in the South since the Civil War as part of the convergence of all humanity towards Omega point. The segregationist views of Julian's mother and her like accordingly constitute a sinful resistance to God's redemptive plan for mankind. That opposition is caused in the case of Julian's mother by a "personal. . . [and] racial egotism" arising from her pride of ancestry and class status. Such "egotism" is suggested by the name God high borne by Julian's grandmother. The name stands in neat ironic antithesis to the motto "IN GOD WE TRUST" on the Lincoln cent and Jefferson nickel, a slogan which implies a humble self-surrender to the divine plan moving man towards convergence. In "Everything that

Rises . . . " the penny and the nickel thus relate the racial situation in the South of 1961 to a larger cultural, historical and spiritual context. On the one hand, the Lincoln cent suggests a century of political, social and economic progress elevating blacks towards a final Teihardian convergence with whites. On the other hand, the Jefferson nickel most obviously intimates a conservative, aristocratic mentality contributing to Southern white resistance to integration. The ultimate defeat of such reaction is implied when Julian's mother cannot find a nickel to give the little black boy. O'Connor is suggesting that the old South called to mind by the five-cent piece is gone forever. The "new penny" Julian's mother does discover indicates the time has come for Southern whites to accept social change, abandon their obsolete racial views, and relate to Negroes in a radically different way. Instead, Julian's mother stubbornly clings to a quasi-mythical past and refuses to accept the realities of the present. This wrongheaded strategy is seen when she tries to use the coin suggesting a new order in a way appropriate to the old. The violent rejection of the "condescending" penny by the black woman is for Julian's mother an appropriate, if ultimately tragic, initiation into verities she so willfully denies.

Source: John Ower, "The Penny and the Nickel in 'Everything That Rises Must Converge,'" in *Studies in Short Fiction*, Vol. 23, No. 1, Winter 1986, pp. 107-10.

CHRESTOMATHY

Chapter 1.

Story 1. GAMES AT TWILIGHT by Anita Desai



It was still too hot to play outdoors. They had had their tea, they had been washed and had their hair brushed, and after the long day of confinement in the house that was not cool but at least a protection from the sun, the children strained to get out. Their faces were red and bloated with the effort, but their mother would not open the door, everything was still curtained and shuttered in a way that stifled the children, made them feel that their lungs were stuffed with cotton wool and their noses with dust and if they didn't burst out into the light and see the sun and feel the air, they would choke.

'Please, Ma, please,' they begged. 'We'll play in the veranda and porch - we won't go a step out of the porch.' 'You will, I know you will, and then -'

'No - we won't, we won't,' they wailed so horrendously that she actually let down the bolt of the front door so that they burst out like seeds from a crackling, overripe pod into the veranda, with such wild, maniacal yells that she retreated to her bath and the shower of talcum powder and the fresh sari that were to help her face the summer evening.

They faced the afternoon. It was too hot. Too bright. The white walls of the veranda glared stridently in the sun. The bougainvillea hung about it, purple and magenta, in livid balloons. The garden outside was like a tray made of beaten brass, flattened out on the red gravel and the stony soil in all shades of metal - aluminum, tin, copper and brass. No life stirred at this arid time of day - the birds still drooped, like dead fruit, in the papery tents of the trees; some squirrels lay limp on the wet earth under the garden tap. The outdoor dog lay stretched as if dead on the veranda mat, his paws and ears and tail all reaching out like dying travellers in search of water. He rolled his eyes at the children - two white marbles rolling in the purple sockets, begging for sympathy - and attempted to lift his tail in a wag but could not. It only twitched and lay still.

Then, perhaps roused by the shrieks of the children, a band of parrots suddenly fell out of the eucalyptus tree, tumbled frantically in the still, sizzling air, then sorted themselves out into battle formation and streaked away across the white sky.

The children, too, felt released. They too began tumbling, shoving, pushing against each other, frantic to start. Start what? Start their business. The business of the children's day which is - play.

'Let's play hide-and-seek.'

'Who'll be It?'

‘You be It.’

‘Why should I? You be —’

‘You’re the eldest —’

‘That doesn’t mean —’

The shoves became harder. Some kicked out. The motherly Mira intervened. She pulled the boys roughly apart. There was a tearing sound of cloth but it was lost in the heavy panting and angry grumbling and no one paid attention to the small sleeve hanging loosely off a shoulder.

‘Make a circle, make a circle!’ she shouted, firmly pulling and pushing till a kind of vague circle was formed. ‘Now clap!’ she roared and, clapping, they all chanted in melancholy unison: ‘Dip, dip, dip – my blue ship —’ and every now and then one or the other saw he was safe by the way his hands fell at the crucial moment – palm on palm, or back of hand on palm – and dropped out of the circle with a yell and a jump of relief and jubilation.

Raghu was It. He started to protest, to cry ‘You cheated – Mira cheated – Anu cheated —’ but it was too late, the others had all already streaked away. There was no one to hear when he called out, ‘Only in the veranda – the porch – Ma said – Ma said to stay in the porch!’ No one had stopped to listen, all he saw were their brown legs flashing through the dusty shrubs, scrambling up brick walls, leaping over compost heaps and hedges, and then the porch stood empty in the purple shade of the bougainvillea and the garden was as empty as before; even the limp squirrels had whisked away, leaving everything gleaming, brassy and bare.

Only small Manu suddenly reappeared, as if he had dropped out of an invisible cloud or from a bird’s claws, and stood for a moment in the centre of the yellow lawn, chewing his finger and near to tears as he heard Raghu shouting, with his head pressed against the veranda wall, ‘Eighty-three, eighty-five, eighty-nine, ninety ...’ and then made off in a panic, half of him wanting to fly north, the other half counselling south. Raghu turned just in time to see the flash of his white shorts and the uncertain skittering of his red sandals, and charged after him with such a bloodcurdling yell that Manu stumbled over the hosepipe, fell into its rubber coils and lay there weeping, ‘I won’t be It – you have to find them all – all – all!’

‘I know I have to, idiot,’ Raghu said, superciliously kicking him with his toe. ‘You’re dead,’ he said with satisfaction, licking the beads of perspiration off his upper lip, and then stalked off in search of worthier prey, whistling spiritedly so that the hidiers should hear and tremble.

Ravi heard the whistling and picked his nose in a panic, trying to find comfort by burrowing the finger deep-deep into that soft tunnel. He felt himself too exposed, sitting on an upturned flower pot behind the garage. Where could he burrow? He could run around the garage if he heard Raghu come – around and around and

around – but he hadn't much faith in his short legs when matched against Raghu's long, hefty, hairy footballer legs. Ravi had a frightening glimpse of them as Raghu combed the hedge of crotons and hibiscus, trampling delicate ferns underfoot as he did so. Ravi looked about him desperately, swallowing a small ball of snot in his fear.

The garage was locked with a great heavy lock to which the driver had the key in his room, hanging from a nail on the wall under his work-shirt. Ravi had peeped in and seen him still sprawling on his string-cot in his vest and striped underpants, the hair on his chest and the hair in his nose shaking with the vibrations of his phlegm-obstructed snores. Ravi had wished he were tall enough, big enough to reach the key on the nail, but it was impossible, beyond his reach for years to come. He had sidled away and sat dejectedly on the flower pot. That at least was cut to his own size.

But next to the garage was another shed with a big green door. Also locked. No one even knew who had the key to the lock. That shed wasn't opened more than once a year when Ma turned out all the old broken bits of furniture and rolls of matting and leaking buckets, and the white ant hills were broken and swept away and Flit sprayed into the spider webs and rat holes so that the whole operation was like the looting of a poor, ruined and conquered city. The green leaves of the door sagged. They were nearly off their rusty hinges. The hinges were large and made a small gap between the door and the walls – only just large enough for rats, dogs and, possibly, Ravi to slip through.

Ravi had never cared to enter such a dark and depressing mortuary of defunct household goods seething with such unspeakable and alarming animal life but, as Raghu's whistling grew angrier and sharper and his crashing and storming in the hedge wilder, Ravi suddenly slipped off the flower pot and through the crack and was gone. He chuckled aloud with astonishment at his own temerity so that Raghu came out of the hedge, stood silent with his hands on his hips, listening, and finally shouted 'I heard you! I'm coming! Got you –' and came charging round the garage only to find the upturned flower pot, the yellow dust, the crawling of white ants in a mud-hill against the closed shed door – nothing. Snarling, he bent to pick up a stick and went off, whacking it against the garage and shed walls as if to beat out his prey.

Ravi shook, then shivered with delight, with self-congratulation. Also, with fear. It was dark, spooky in the shed. It had a muffled smell, as of graves. Ravi had once got locked into the linen cupboard and sat there weeping for half an hour before he was rescued. But at least that had been a familiar place, and even smelt pleasantly of starch, laundry and, reassuringly, of his mother. But the shed smelt of rats, ant hills, dust and spider webs. Also, of less definable, less recognizable horrors. And it was dark. Except for the white-hot cracks along the door, there was no light. The roof was very low. Although Ravi was small, he felt as if he could reach up and touch it with his fingertips. But he didn't stretch. He hunched himself into a ball so as not to bump into anything, touch or feel anything. What might there not be to touch him and feel him as he stood there, trying to see in the dark? Something cold, or slimy – like a snake. Snakes!

He leapt up as Raghu whacked the wall with his stick – then, quickly realizing what it was, felt almost relieved to hear Raghu, hear his stick. It made him feel protected.

But Raghu soon moved away. There wasn't a sound once his footsteps had gone around the garage and disappeared. Ravi stood frozen inside the shed. Then he shivered all over. Something had tickled the back of his neck. It took him a while to pick up the courage to lift his hand and explore. It was an insect – perhaps a spider – exploring him. He squashed it and wondered how many more creatures were watching him, waiting to reach out and touch him, the stranger.

There was nothing now. After standing in that position – his hand still on his neck, feeling the wet splodge of the squashed spider gradually dry – for minutes, hours, his legs began to tremble with the effort, the inaction. By now he could see enough in the dark to make out the large solid shapes of old wardrobes, broken buckets and bedsteads piled on top of each other around him. He recognized an old bathtub – patches of enamel glimmered at him and at last he lowered himself onto its edge.

He contemplated slipping out of the shed and into the fray. He wondered if it would not be better to be captured by Raghu and be returned to the milling crowd as long as he could be in the sun, the light, the free spaces of the garden and the familiarity of his brothers, sisters and cousins. It would be evening soon. Their games would become legitimate. The parents would sit out on the lawn on cane basket chairs and watch them as they tore around the garden or gathered in knots to share a loot of mulberries or black, teeth-splitting jamun from the garden trees. The gardener would fix the hosepipe to the water tap and water would fall lavishly through the air to the ground, soaking the dry yellow grass and the red gravel and arousing the sweet, the intoxicating scent of water on dry earth – that loveliest scent in the world. Ravi sniffed for a whiff of it. He half rose from the bathtub, then heard the despairing scream of one of the girls as Raghu bore down upon her. There was the sound of a crash, and of rolling about in the bushes, the shrubs, then screams and accusing sobs of, 'I touched the den' –

'You did not' – 'I did' – 'You liar, you did not' and then a fading away and silence again.

Ravi sat back on the harsh edge of the tub, deciding to hold out a bit longer. What fun if they were all found and caught – he alone left unconquered! He had never known that sensation. Nothing more wonderful had ever happened to him than being taken out by an uncle and bought a whole slab of chocolate all to himself, or being flung into the soda-man's pony cart and driven up to the gate by the friendly driver with the red beard and pointed ears. To defeat Raghu – that hirsute, hoarse-voiced football champion – and to be the winner in a circle of older, bigger, luckier children – that would be thrilling beyond imagination. He hugged his knees together and smiled to himself almost shyly at the thought of so much victory, such laurels.

There he sat smiling, knocking his heels against the bathtub, now and then getting up and going to the door to put his ear to the broad crack and listening for sounds of the game, the pursuer and the pursued, and then returning to his seat with the dogged determination of the true winner, a breaker of records, a champion.

It grew darker in the shed as the light at the door grew softer, fuzzier, turned to a kind of crumbling yellow pollen that turned to yellow fur, blue fur, grey fur. Evening. Twilight. The sound of water gushing, falling. The scent of earth receiving water, slaking its thirst in great gulps and releasing that green scent of freshness, coolness. Through the crack Ravi saw the long purple shadows of the shed and the garage lying still across the yard. Beyond that, the white walls of the house. The bougainvillea had lost its lividity, hung in dark bundles that quaked and twittered and seethed with masses of homing sparrows. The lawn was shut off from his view. Could he hear the children's voices? It seemed to him that he could. It seemed to him that he could hear them chanting, singing, laughing. But what about the game? What had happened? Could it be over? How could it when he was still not found?

It then occurred to him that he could have slipped out long ago, dashed across the yard to the veranda and touched the 'den'. It was necessary to do that to win. He had forgotten. He had only remembered the part of hiding and trying to elude the seeker. He had done that so successfully; his success had occupied him so wholly that he had quite forgotten that success had to be clinched by that final dash to victory and the ringing cry of 'Den!'

With a whimper he burst through the crack, fell on his knees, got up and stumbled on stiff, benumbed legs across the shadowy yard, crying heartily by the time he reached the veranda so that when he flung himself at the white pillar and bawled, 'Den! Den! Den!' his voice broke with rage and pity at the disgrace of it all and he felt himself flooded with tears and misery.

Out on the lawn, the children stopped chanting. They all turned to stare at him in amazement. Their faces were pale and triangular in the dusk. The trees and bushes around them stood inky and sepulchral, spilling long shadows across them. They stared, wondering at his reappearance, his passion, his wild animal howling. Their mother rose from her basket chair and came towards him, worried, annoyed, saying, 'Stop it, stop it, Ravi. Don't be a baby. Have you hurt yourself?' Seeing him attended to, the children went back to clasping their hands and chanting 'The grass is green, the rose is red ...'

But Ravi would not let them. He tore himself out of his mother's grasp and pounded across the lawn into their midst, charging at them with his head lowered so that they scattered in surprise. 'I won, I won, I won,' he bawled, shaking his head so that the big tears flew. 'Raghu didn't find me. I won, I won —'

It took them a minute to grasp what he was saying, even who he was. They had quite forgotten him. Raghu had found all the others long ago. There had been a fight about

who was to be It next. It had been so fierce that their mother had emerged from her bath and made them change to another game. Then they had played another and another. Broken mulberries from the tree and eaten them. Helped the driver wash the car when their father returned from work. Helped the gardener water the beds till he roared at them and swore he would complain to their parents. The parents had come out, taken up their positions on the cane chairs. They had begun to play again, sing and chant. All this time no one had remembered Ravi. Having disappeared from the scene, he had disappeared from their minds. Clean.

‘Don’t be a fool,’ Raghu said roughly, pushing him aside, and even Mira said, ‘Stop howling, Ravi. If you want to play, you can stand at the end of the line,’ and she put him there very firmly.

The game proceeded. Two pairs of arms reached up and met in an arc. The children trooped under it again and again in a lugubrious circle, ducking their heads and intoning:

‘The grass is green,

The rose is red;

Remember me

When I am dead, dead, dead, dead ...’

And the arc of thin arms trembled in the twilight, and the heads were bowed so sadly, and their feet tramped to that melancholy refrain so mournfully, so helplessly, that Ravi could not bear it. He would not follow them, he would not be included in this funereal game. He had wanted victory and triumph – not a funeral. But he had been forgotten, left out and he would not join them now. The ignominy of being forgotten – how could he face it? He felt his heart go heavy and ache inside him unbearably. He lay down full length on the damp grass, crushing his face into it, no longer crying, silenced by a terrible sense of his insignificance.

Story 2. A DEVOTED SON by Anita Desai



When the results appeared in the morning papers, Rakesh scanned them, barefoot and in his pyjamas, at the garden gate, then went up the steps to the veranda where his father sat sipping his morning tea and bowed down to touch his feet.

‘A first division, son?’ his father asked, beaming, reaching for the papers.

‘At the top of the list, Papa,’ Rakesh murmured, as if awed. ‘First in the country.’

Bedlam broke loose then. The family whooped and danced. The whole day long visitors streamed into the small yellow house at the end of the road, to congratulate the parents of this wunderkind, to slap Rakesh on the back and fill the house and garden with the sounds and colours of a festival. There were garlands and halwa, party clothes and gifts (enough fountain pens to last years, even a watch or two), nerves and temper and joy, all in a multicoloured whirl of pride and great shining vistas newly opened: Rakesh was the first son in the family to receive an education, so much had been sacrificed in order to send him to school and then medical college, and at last the fruits of their sacrifice had arrived, golden and glorious.

To everyone who came to him to say, ‘Mubarak, Varmaji, your son has brought you glory,’ the father said, ‘Yes, and do you know what is the first thing he did when he saw the results this morning? He came and touched my feet. He bowed down and touched my feet.’ This moved many of the women in the crowd so much that they were seen to raise the ends of their saris and dab at their tears while the men reached out for the betel leaves and sweetmeats that were offered around on trays and shook their heads in wonder and approval of such exemplary filial behaviour. ‘One does not often see such behaviour in sons any more,’ they all agreed, a little enviously perhaps. Leaving the house, some of the women said, sniffing, ‘At least on such an occasion they might have served pure ghee sweets,’ and some of the men said, ‘Don’t you think old Varma was giving himself airs? He needn’t think we don’t remember that he comes from the vegetable market himself, his father used to sell vegetables, and he has never seen the inside of a school.’ But there was more envy than rancour in their voices and it was, of course, inevitable – not every son in that shabby little colony at the edge of the city was destined to shine as Rakesh shone, and who knew that better than the parents themselves?

And that was only the beginning, the first step in a great, sweeping ascent to the radiant heights of fame and fortune. The thesis he wrote for his MD brought Rakesh still greater glory, if only in select medical circles. He won a scholarship. He went to the USA (that was what his father learnt to call it and taught the whole family to say – not America, which was what the ignorant neighbours called it, but, with a grand familiarity, ‘the USA’) where he pursued his career in the most prestigious of all hospitals and won encomiums from his American colleagues which were relayed to his admiring and glowing family. What was more, he came back,

he actually returned to that small yellow house in the once new but increasingly shabby colony, right at the end of the road where the rubbish vans tipped out their stinking contents for pigs to nose in and rag-pickers to build their shacks on, all steaming and smoking just outside the neat wire fences and well-tended gardens. To this Rakesh returned and the first thing he did on entering the house was to slip out of the embraces of his sisters and brothers and bow down and touch his father's feet.

As for his mother, she gloated chiefly over the strange fact that he had not married in America, had not brought home a foreign wife as all her neighbours had warned her, he would, for wasn't that what all Indian boys went abroad for? Instead, he agreed, almost without argument, to marry a girl she had picked out for him in her own village, the daughter of a childhood friend, a plump and uneducated girl, it was true, but so old-fashioned, so placid, so complaisant that she slipped into the household and settled in like a charm, seemingly too lazy and too good-natured to even try and make Rakesh leave home and set up independently, as any other girl might have done. What was more, she was pretty – really pretty, in a plump, pudding way that only gave way to fat – soft, spreading fat, like warm wax – after the birth of their first baby, a son, and then what did it matter?

For some years Rakesh worked in the city hospital, quickly rising to the top of the administrative organization, and was made a director before he left to set up his own clinic. He took his parents in his car – a new, sky-blue Ambassador with a rear window full of stickers and charms revolving on strings – to see the clinic when it was built, and the large sign-board over the door on which his name was printed in letters of red, with a row of degrees and qualifications to follow it like so many little black slaves of the regent. Thereafter his fame seemed to grow just a little dimmer – or maybe it was only that everyone in town had grown accustomed to it at last – but it was also the beginning of his fortune for he now became known not only as the best but also the richest doctor in town.

However, all this was not accomplished in the wink of an eye. Naturally not. It was the achievement of a lifetime and it took up Rakesh's whole life. At the time he set up his clinic his father had grown into an old man and retired from his post at the kerosene dealer's depot at which he had worked for forty years, and his mother died soon after, giving up the ghost with a sigh that sounded positively happy, for it was her own son who ministered to her in her last illness and who sat pressing her feet at the last moment – such a son as few women had borne.

For it had to be admitted – and the most unsuccessful and most rancorous of neighbours eventually did so – that Rakesh was not only a devoted son and a miraculously good-natured man who contrived somehow to obey his parents and humour his wife and show concern equally for his children and his patients, but there was actually a brain inside this beautifully polished and formed body of good manners and kind nature and, in between ministering to his family and playing host to many

friends and coaxing them all into feeling happy and grateful and content, he had actually trained his hands as well and emerged an excellent doctor, a really fine surgeon. How one man – and a man born to illiterate parents, his father having worked for a kerosene dealer and his mother having spent her life in a kitchen – had achieved, combined and conducted such a medley of virtues, no one could fathom, but all acknowledged his talent and skill.

It was a strange fact, however, that talent and skill, if displayed for too long, cease to dazzle. It came to pass that the most admiring of all eyes eventually faded and no longer blinked at his glory. Having retired from work and having lost his wife, the old father very quickly went to pieces, as they say. He developed so many complaints and fell ill so frequently and with such mysterious diseases that even his son could no longer make out when it was something of significance and when it was merely a peevish whim. He sat huddled on his string-bed most of the day and developed an exasperating habit of stretching-out suddenly and lying absolutely still, allowing the whole family to fly around him in a flap, wailing and weeping, and then suddenly sitting up, stiff and gaunt, and spitting out a big gob of betel juice as if to mock their behaviour.

He did this once too often: there had been a big party in the house, a birthday party for the youngest son, and the celebrations had to be suddenly hushed, covered up and hustled out of the way when the daughter-in-law discovered, or thought she discovered, that the old man, stretched out from end to end of his string-bed, had lost his pulse; the party broke up, dissolved, even turned into a band of mourners, when the old man sat up and the distraught daughter-in-law received a gob of red spittle right on the hem of her new organza sari. After that no one much cared if he sat up cross-legged on his bed, hawking and spitting, or lay down flat and turned grey as a corpse. Except, of course, for that pearl amongst pearls, his son Rakesh.

It was Rakesh who brought him his morning tea, not in one of the China cups from which the rest of the family drank, but in the old man's favourite brass tumbler, and sat at the edge of his bed, comfortable and relaxed with the string of his pyjamas dangling out from under his fine lawn night-shirt, and discussed or, rather, read out the morning news to his father. It made no difference to him that his father made no response apart from spitting. It was Rakesh, too, who, on returning from the clinic in the evening, persuaded the old man to come out of his room, as bare and desolate as a cell, and take the evening air out in the garden, beautifully arranging the pillows and bolsters on the divan in the corner of the open veranda. On summer nights he saw to it that the servants carried out the old man's bed onto the lawn and himself helped his father down the steps and onto the bed, soothing him and settling him down for a night under the stars.

All this was very gratifying for the old man. What was not so gratifying was that he even undertook to supervise his father's diet. One day when the father was really sick, having ordered his daughter-in-law to make him a dish of sooji halwa and eaten it

with a saucerful of cream, Rakesh marched into the room, not with his usual respectful step but with the confident and rather contemptuous stride of the famous doctor, and declared, 'No more halwa for you, Papa. We must be sensible, at your age. If you must have something sweet, Veena will cook you a little kheer, that's light, just a little rice and milk. But nothing fried, nothing rich. We can't have this happening again.'

The old man who had been lying stretched out on his bed, weak and feeble after a day's illness, gave a start at the very sound, the tone of these words. He opened his eyes – rather, they fell open with shock – and he stared at his son with disbelief that darkened quickly to reproach. A son who actually refused his father the food he craved? No, it was unheard of, it was incredible. But Rakesh had turned his back to him and was cleaning up the litter of bottles and packets on the medicine shelf and did not notice while Veena slipped silently out of the room with a little smirk that only the old man saw, and hated.

Halwa was only the first item to be crossed off the old man's diet. One delicacy after the other went – everything fried to begin with, then everything sweet, and eventually everything, everything that the old man enjoyed. The meals that arrived for him on the shining stainless-steel tray twice a day were frugal to say the least – dry bread, boiled lentils, boiled vegetables and, if there were a bit of chicken or fish, that was boiled too. If he called for another helping – in a cracked voice that quavered theatrically – Rakesh himself would come to the door, gaze at him sadly and shake his head, saying, 'Now, Papa, we must be careful, we can't risk another illness, you know,' and although the daughter-in-law kept tactfully out of the way, the old man could just see her smirk sliding merrily through the air. He tried to bribe his grandchildren into buying him sweets (and how he missed his wife now, that generous, indulgent and illiterate cook), whispering, 'Here's fifty paise' as he stuffed the coins into a tight, hot fist. 'Run down to the shop at the crossroads and buy me thirty paise worth of jalebis, and you can spend the remaining twenty paise on yourself. Eh? Understand? Will you do that?' He got away with it once or twice but then was found out, the conspirator was scolded by his father and smacked by his mother and Rakesh came storming into the room, almost tearing his hair as he shouted through compressed lips, 'Now Papa, are you trying to turn my little son into a liar? Quite apart from spoiling your own stomach, you are spoiling him as well – you are encouraging him to lie to his own parents. You should have heard the lies he told his mother when she saw him bringing back those jalebis wrapped up in filthy newspaper. I don't allow anyone in my house to buy sweets in the bazaar, Papa, surely you know that. There's cholera in the city, typhoid, gastroenteritis – I see these cases daily in the hospital, how can I allow my own family to run such risks?' The old man sighed and lay down in the corpse position. But that worried no one any longer.

There was only one pleasure left the old man now (his son's early morning visits and readings from the newspaper could no longer be called that) and those were visits from elderly neighbours. These were not frequent as his contemporaries were mostly as decrepit and helpless as he and few could walk the length of the road to visit him

anymore. Old Bhatia, next door, however, who was still spry enough to refuse, adamantly, to bathe in the tiled bathroom indoors and to insist on carrying out his brass mug and towel, in all seasons and usually at impossible hours, into the yard and bathe noisily under the garden tap, would look over the hedge to see if Varma were out on his veranda and would call to him and talk while he wrapped his dhoti about him and dried the sparse hair on his head, shivering with enjoyable exaggeration. Of course, these conversations, bawled across the hedge by two rather deaf old men conscious of having their entire households overhearing them, were not very satisfactory but Bhatia occasionally came out of his yard, walked down the bit of road and came in at Varma's gate to collapse onto the stone plinth built under the temple tree. If Rakesh were at home, he would help his father down the steps into the garden and arrange him on his night bed under the tree and leave the two old men to chew betel leaves and discuss the ills of their individual bodies with combined passion.

'At least you have a doctor in the house to look after you,' sighed Bhatia, having vividly described his martyrdom to piles.

'Look after me?' cried Varma, his voice cracking like an ancient clay jar. 'He – he does not even give me enough to eat.'

'What?' said Bhatia, the white hairs in his ears twitching. 'Doesn't give you enough to eat? Your own son?'

'My own son. If I ask him for one more piece of bread, he says no, Papa, I weighed out the aata myself and I can't allow you to have more than two hundred grammes of cereal a day. He weighs the food he gives me, Bhatia – he has scales to weigh it on. That is what it has come to.'

'Never,' murmured Bhatia in disbelief. 'Is it possible, even in this evil age, for a son to refuse his father food?'

'Let me tell you,' Varma whispered eagerly. 'Today the family was having fried fish – I could smell it. I called to my daughter-in-law to bring me a piece. She came to the door and said 'No ...'

'Said No?' It was Bhatia's voice that cracked. A drongo shot out of the tree and sped away. 'No?'

'No, she said no, Rakesh has ordered her to give me nothing fried. No butter, he says, no oil –'

'No butter? No oil? How does he expect his father to live?'

Old Varma nodded with melancholy triumph. 'That is how he treats me – after I have brought him up, given him an education, made him a great doctor. Great doctor! This is the way great doctors treat their fathers, Bhatia,' for the son's sterling personality and character now underwent a curious sea change. Outwardly all might be the same

but the interpretation had altered: his masterly efficiency was nothing but cold heartlessness, his authority was only tyranny in disguise.

There was cold comfort in complaining to neighbours and, on such a miserable diet, Varma found himself slipping, weakening and soon becoming a genuinely sick man. Powders and pills and mixtures were not only brought in when dealing with a crisis like an upset stomach but became a regular part of his diet – became his diet, complained Varma, supplanting the natural foods he craved. There were pills to regulate his bowel movements, pills to bring down his blood pressure, pills to deal with his arthritis and, eventually, pills to keep his heart beating. In between there were panicky rushes to the hospital, some humiliating experiences with the stomach pump and enema, which left him frightened and helpless. He cried easily, shriveling up on his bed, but if he complained of a pain or even a vague, grey fear in the night, Rakesh would simply open another bottle of pills and force him to take one. ‘I have my duty to you, Papa,’ he said when his father begged to be let off.

‘Let me be,’ Varma begged, turning his face away from the pills on the outstretched hand. ‘Let me die. It would be better. I do not want to live only to eat your medicines.’

‘Papa, be reasonable.’

‘I leave that to you,’ the father cried with sudden spirit. ‘Let me alone, let me die now, I cannot live like this.’

‘Lying all day on his pillows, fed every few hours by his daughter-in-law’s own hands, visited by every member of his family daily – and then he says he does not want to live “like this”,’ Rakesh was heard to say, laughing, to someone outside the door.

‘Deprived of food,’ screamed the old man on the bed, ‘his wishes ignored, taunted by his daughter-in-law, laughed at by his grandchildren – that is how I live.’ But he was very old and weak and all anyone heard was an incoherent croak, some expressive grunts and cries of genuine pain. Only once, when old Bhatia had come to see him and they sat together under the temple tree, they heard him cry, ‘God is calling me – and they won’t let me go.’

The quantities of vitamins and tonics he was made to take were not altogether useless. They kept him alive and even gave him a kind of strength that made him hang on long after he ceased to wish to hang on. It was as though he were straining at a rope, trying to break it, and it would not break, it was still strong. He only hurt himself, trying.

In the evening, that summer, the servants would come into his cell, grip his bed, one at each end, and carry it out to the veranda, there setting it down with a thump that jarred every tooth in his head. In answer to his agonized complaints, they said the Doctor Sahib had told them he must take the evening air and the evening air they would make him take – thump. Then Veena, that smiling, hypocritical pudding in a rustling sari, would appear and pile up the pillows under his head till he was

propped up stiffly into a sitting position that made his head swim and his back ache. 'Let me lie down,' he begged. 'I can't sit up any more.'

'Try, Papa, Rakesh said you can if you try,' she said, and drifted away to the other end of the veranda where her transistor radio vibrated to the lovesick tunes from the cinema that she listened to all day.

So, there he sat, like some stiff corpse, terrified, gazing out on the lawn where his grandsons played cricket, in danger of getting one of their hard-spun balls in his eye, and at the gate that opened onto the dusty and rubbish-heaped lane but still bore, proudly, a newly touched-up signboard that bore his son's name and qualifications, his own name having vanished from the gate long ago.

At last, the sky-blue Ambassador arrived, the cricket game broke up in haste, the car drove in smartly and the doctor, the great doctor, all in white, stepped out. Someone ran up to take his bag from him, others to escort him up the steps. 'Will you have tea?' his wife called, turning down the transistor set, 'or a Coca-Cola? Shall I fry you some samosas?' But he did not reply or even glance in her direction. Ever a devoted son, he went first to the corner where his father sat gazing, stricken, at some undefined spot in the dusty yellow air that swam before him. He did not turn his head to look at his son. But he stopped gobbling air with his uncontrolled lips and set his jaw as hard as a sick and very old man could set it.

'Papa,' his son said, tenderly, sitting down on the edge of the bed and reaching out to press his feet. Old Varma tucked his feet under him, out of the way, and continued to gaze stubbornly into the yellow air of the summer evening. 'Papa, I'm home.'

Varma's hand jerked suddenly, in a sharp, derisive movement, but he did not speak.

'How are you feeling, Papa?'

Then Varma turned and looked at his son. His face was so out of control and all in pieces, that the multitude of expressions that crossed it could not make up a whole and convey to the famous man exactly what his father thought of him, his skill, his art.

'I'm dying,' he croaked. 'Let me die, I tell you.'

'Papa, you're joking,' his son smiled at him, lovingly. 'I've brought you a new tonic to make you feel better. You must take it; it will make you feel stronger again. Here it is. Promise me you will take it regularly, Papa.'

Varma's mouth worked as hard as though he still had a gob of betel in it (his supply of betel had been cut off years ago). Then he spat out some words, as sharp and bitter as poison, into his son's face. 'Keep your tonic – I want none – I want none – I won't take any more of – of your medicines. None. Never,' and he swept the bottle out of his son's hand with a wave of his own, suddenly grand, suddenly effective.

His son jumped, for the bottle was smashed and thick brown syrup had splashed up, staining his white trousers. His wife let out a cry and came running. All around the old man was hubbub once again, noise, attention.

He gave one push to the pillows at his back and dislodged them so he could sink down on his back, quite flat again. He closed his eyes and pointed his chin at the ceiling, like some dire prophet, groaning, 'God is calling me – now let me go.'

Story 3. 2BR02B by Kurt Vonnegut



Everything was perfectly swell.

There were no prisons, no slums, no insane asylums, no cripples, no poverty, no wars.

All diseases were conquered. So was old age.

Death, barring accidents, was an adventure for volunteers.

The population of the United States was stabilized at forty-million souls.

One bright morning in the Chicago Lying-in Hospital, a man named Edward K. Wehling, Jr., waited for his wife to give birth. He was the only man waiting. Not many people were born a day any more.

Wehling was fifty-six, a mere stripling in a population whose average age was one hundred and twenty-nine.

X-rays had revealed that his wife was going to have triplets. The children would be his first.

Young Wehling was hunched in his chair, his head in his hand. He was so rumpled, so still and colorless as to be virtually invisible. His camouflage was perfect, since the waiting room had a disorderly and demoralized air, too. Chairs and ashtrays had been moved away from the walls. The floor was paved with spattered drop cloths.

The room was being redecorated. It was being redecorated as a memorial to a man who had volunteered to die.

A sardonic old man, about two hundred years old, sat on a stepladder, painting a mural he did not like. Back in the days when people aged visibly, his age would have been guessed at thirty-five or so. Aging had touched him that much before the cure for aging was found.

The mural he was working on depicted a very neat garden. Men and women in white, doctors and nurses, turned the soil, planted seedlings, sprayed bugs, spread fertilizer.

Men and women in purple uniforms pulled up weeds, cut down plants that were old and sickly, raked leaves, carried refuse to trash-burners.

Never, never, never — not even in medieval Holland nor old Japan — had a garden been more formal, been better tended. Every plant had all the loam, light, water, air and nourishment it could use.

A hospital orderly came down the corridor, singing under his breath a popular song:

If you don't like my kisses, honey,

Here's what I will do:

I'll go see a girl in purple,

Kiss this sad world toodle-oo.

If you don't want my lovin',
Why should I take up all this space?
I'll get off this old planet,
Let some sweet baby have my place.

The orderly looked in at the mural and the muralist. "Looks so real," he said, "I can practically imagine I'm standing in the middle of it."

"What makes you think you're not in it?" said the painter. He gave a satiric smile. "It's called 'The Happy Garden of Life,' you know."

"That's good of Dr. Hitz," said the orderly.

He was referring to one of the male figures in white, whose head was a portrait of Dr. Benjamin Hitz, the hospital's Chief Obstetrician. Hitz was a blindingly handsome man.

"Lot of faces still to fill in," said the orderly. He meant that the faces of many of the figures in the mural were still blank. All blanks were to be filled with portraits of important people on either the hospital staff or from the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Termination.

"Must be nice to be able to make pictures that look like something," said the orderly.

The painter's face curdled with scorn. "You think I'm proud of this daub?" he said. "You think this is my idea of what life really looks like?"

"What's your idea of what life looks like?" said the orderly.

The painter gestured at a foul drop cloth. "There's a good picture of it," he said. "Frame that, and you'll have a picture a damn sight more honest than this one."

"You're a gloomy old duck, aren't you?" said the orderly.

"Is that a crime?" said the painter.

The orderly shrugged. "If you don't like it here, Grandpa —" he said, and he finished the thought with the trick telephone number that people who didn't want to live any more were supposed to call. The zero in the telephone number he pronounced "naught."

The number was: "2 B R 0 2 B."

It was the telephone number of an institution whose fanciful sobriquets included: "Automat," "Birdland," "Cannery," "Catbox," "De-louser," "Easygo," "Good-by, Mother," "Happy Hooligan," "Kiss-me-quick," "Lucky Pierre," "Sheepdip," "Waring Blendor," "Weep-no-more" and "Why Worry?"

"To be or not to be" was the telephone number of the municipal gas chambers of the Federal Bureau of Termination.

The painter thumbed his nose at the orderly. "When I decide it's time to go," he said, "it won't be at the Sheepdip."

"A do-it-yourselfer, eh?" said the orderly. "Messy business, Grandpa. Why don't you have a little consideration for the people who have to clean up after you?"

The painter expressed with an obscenity his lack of concern for the tribulations of his survivors. "The world could do with a good deal more mess, if you ask me," he said.

The orderly laughed and moved on.

Wehling, the waiting father, mumbled something without raising his head. And then he fell silent again.

A coarse, formidable woman strode into the waiting room on spike heels. Her shoes, stockings, trench coat, bag and overseas cap were all purple, the purple the painter called "the color of grapes on Judgment Day."

The medallion on her purple musette bag was the seal of the Service Division of the Federal Bureau of Termination, an eagle perched on a turnstile.

The woman had a lot of facial hair — an unmistakable mustache, in fact. A curious thing about gas-chamber hostesses was that, no matter how lovely and feminine they were when recruited, they all sprouted mustaches within five years or so.

"Is this where I'm supposed to come?" she said to the painter.

"A lot would depend on what your business was," he said. "You aren't about to have a baby, are you?"

"They told me I was supposed to pose for some picture," she said. "My name's Leora Duncan." She waited.

"And you dunk people," he said.

"What?" she said.

"Skip it," he said.

"That sure is a beautiful picture," she said. "Looks just like heaven or something."

"Or something," said the painter. He took a list of names from his smock pocket. "Duncan, Duncan, Duncan," he said, scanning the list. "Yes—here you are. You're entitled to be immortalized. See any faceless body here you'd like me to stick your head on? We've got a few choice ones left."

She studied the mural bleakly. "Gee," she said, "they're all the same to me. I don't know anything about art."

"A body's a body, eh?" he said. "All righty. As a master of fine art, I recommend this body here." He indicated a faceless figure of a woman who was carrying dried stalks to a trash-burner.

"Well," said Leora Duncan, "that's more the disposal people, isn't it? I mean, I'm in service. I don't do any disposing."

The painter clapped his hands in mock delight. "You say you don't know anything about art, and then you prove in the next breath that you know more about it than I do! Of course, the sheave-carrier is wrong for a hostess! A snipper, a pruner – that's more your line." He pointed to a figure in purple who was sawing a dead branch from an apple tree. "How about her?" he said. "You like her at all?"

"Gosh – " she said, and she blushed and became humble – "that – that puts me right next to Dr. Hitz."

"That upsets you?" he said.

"Good gravy, no!" she said. "It's – it's just such an honor."

"Ah, You... you admire him, eh?" he said.

"Who doesn't admire him?" she said, worshipping the portrait of Hitz. It was the portrait of a tanned, white-haired, omnipotent Zeus, two hundred and forty years old. "Who doesn't admire him?" she said again. "He was responsible for setting up the very first gas chamber in Chicago."

"Nothing would please me more," said the painter, "than to put you next to him for all time. Sawing off a limb – that strikes you as appropriate?"

"That is kind of like what I do," she said. She was demure about what she did. What she did was make people comfortable while she killed them.

And, while Leora Duncan was posing for her portrait, into the waiting room bounded Dr. Hitz himself. He was seven feet tall, and he boomed with importance, accomplishments, and the joy of living.

"Well, Miss Duncan! Miss Duncan!" he said, and he made a joke. "What are you doing here?" he said. "This isn't where the people leave. This is where they come in!"

"We're going to be in the same picture together," she said shyly.

"Good!" said Dr. Hitz heartily. "And, say, isn't that some picture?"

"I sure am honored to be in it with you," she said.

"Let me tell you," he said, "I'm honored to be in it with you. Without women like you, this wonderful world we've got wouldn't be possible."

He saluted her and moved toward the door that led to the delivery rooms. "Guess what was just born," he said.

"I can't," she said.

"Triplets!" he said.

"Triplets!" she said. She was exclaiming over the legal implications of triplets.

The law said that no newborn child could survive unless the parents of the child could find someone who would volunteer to die. Triplets, if they were all to live, called for three volunteers.

"Do the parents have three volunteers?" said Leora Duncan.

"Last I heard," said Dr. Hitz, "they had one, and were trying to scrape another two up."

"I don't think they made it," she said. "Nobody made three appointments with us. Nothing but singles going through today, unless somebody called in after I left. What's the name?"

"Wehling," said the waiting father, sitting up, red-eyed and frowzy. "Edward K. Wehling, Jr., is the name of the happy father-to-be."

He raised his right hand, looked at a spot on the wall, gave a hoarsely wretched chuckle. "Present," he said.

"Oh, Mr. Wehling," said Dr. Hitz, "I didn't see you."

"The invisible man," said Wehling.

"They just phoned me that your triplets have been born," said Dr. Hitz. "They're all fine, and so is the mother. I'm on my way in to see them now."

"Hooray," said Wehling emptily.

"You don't sound very happy," said Dr. Hitz.

"What man in my shoes wouldn't be happy?" said Wehling. He gestured with his hands to symbolize care-free simplicity. "All I have to do is pick out which one of the triplets is going to live, then deliver my maternal grandfather to the Happy Hooligan, and come back here with a receipt."

Dr. Hitz became rather severe with Wehling, towered over him. "You don't believe in population control, Mr. Wehling?" he said.

"I think it's perfectly keen," said Wehling tautly.

"Would you like to go back to the good old days, when the population of the Earth was twenty billion—about to become forty billion, then eighty billion, then one hundred and sixty billion? Do you know what a drupelet is, Mr. Wehling?" said Hitz.

"Nope," said Wehling sulkily.

"A drupelet, Mr. Wehling, is one of the little knobs, one of the little pulpy grains of a blackberry," said Dr. Hitz. "Without population control, human beings would now be packed on this surface of this old planet like drupelets on a blackberry! Think of it!"

Wehling continued to stare at the same spot on the wall.

"In the year 2000," said Dr. Hitz, "before scientists stepped in and laid down the law, there wasn't even enough drinking water to go around, and nothing to eat but seaweed—and still people insisted on their right to reproduce like jackrabbits. And their right, if possible, to live forever."

"I want those kids," said Wehling quietly. "I want all three of them."

"Of course you do," said Dr. Hitz. "That's only human."

"I don't want my grandfather to die, either," said Wehling.

"Nobody's really happy about taking a close relative to the Catbox," said Dr. Hitz gently, sympathetically.

"I wish people wouldn't call it that," said Leora Duncan. "What?" said Dr. Hitz. "I wish people wouldn't call it 'the Catbox,' and things like that," she said. "It gives people the wrong impression."

"You're absolutely right," said Dr. Hitz. "Forgive me." He corrected himself, gave the municipal gas chambers their official title, a title no one ever used in conversation. "I should have said, 'Ethical Suicide Studios,'" he said.

"That sounds so much better," said Leora Duncan.

"This child of yours – whichever one you decide to keep, Mr. Wehling," said Dr. Hitz. "He or she is going to live on a happy, roomy, clean, rich planet, thanks to population control. In a garden like that mural there." He shook his head. "Two centuries ago, when I was a young man, it was a hell that nobody thought could last another twenty years. Now centuries of peace and plenty stretch before us as far as the imagination cares to travel."

He smiled luminously.

The smile faded as he saw that Wehling had just drawn a revolver.

Wehling shot Dr. Hitz dead. "There's room for one – a great big one," he said.

And then he shot Leora Duncan. "It's only death," he said to her as she fell. "There! Room for two."

And then he shot himself, making room for all three of his children.

Nobody came running. Nobody, seemingly, heard the shots.

The painter sat on the top of his stepladder, looking down reflectively on the sorry scene.

The painter pondered the mournful puzzle of life demanding to be born and, once born, demanding to be fruitful ... to multiply and to live as long as possible – to do all that on a very small planet that would have to last forever.

All the answers that the painter could think of were grim. Even grimmer, surely, than a Catbox, a Happy Hooligan, an Easy Go. He thought of war. He thought of plague. He thought of starvation.

He knew that he would never paint again. He let his paintbrush fall to the drop-cloths below. And then he decided he had had about enough of life in the Happy Garden of Life, too, and he came slowly down from the ladder.

He took Wehling's pistol, really intending to shoot himself.

But he didn't have the nerve.

And then he saw the telephone booth in the corner of the room. He went to it, dialed the well-remembered number: "2 B R 0 2 B."

"Federal Bureau of Termination," said the very warm voice of a hostess.

"How soon could I get an appointment?" he asked, speaking very carefully.

"We could probably fit you in late this afternoon, sir," she said. "It might even be earlier, if we get a cancellation."

"All right," said the painter, "fit me in, if you please." And he gave her his name, spelling it out.

"Thank you, sir," said the hostess. "Your city thanks you; your country thanks you; your planet thanks you. But the deepest thanks of all is from future generations."

Chapter 2.

Story 1. THE ULTIMATE SAFARI by Nadine Gordimer



That night our mother went to the shop and she didn't come back. Ever. What happened? I don't know. My father also had gone away one day and never come back; but he was fighting in the war. We were in the war, too, but we were children, we were like our grandmother and grandfather, we didn't have guns. The people my father was fighting—the bandits, they are called by our government—ran all over the place and we ran away from them like chickens chased by dogs. We didn't know where to go. Our mother went to the shop because someone said you could get some oil for cooking. We were happy because we hadn't tasted oil for a long time; perhaps she got the oil and someone knocked her down in the dark and took that oil from her. Perhaps she met the bandits. If you meet them, they will kill you. Twice they came to our village and we ran and hid in the bush and when they'd gone, we came back and found they had taken everything; but the third time they came back there was nothing to take, no oil, no food, so they burned the thatch and the roofs of our houses fell in. My mother found some pieces of tin and we put those up over part of the house. We were waiting there for her that night she never came back.

We were frightened to go out, even to do our business, because the bandits did come. Not into our house—without a roof it must have looked as if there was no one in it, everything gone—but all through the village. We heard people screaming and running. We were afraid even to run, without our mother to tell us where. I am the middle one, the girl, and my little brother clung against my stomach with his arms round my neck and his legs round my waist like a baby monkey to its mother. All night my first-born brother kept in his hand a broken piece of wood from one of our burnt house-poles. It was to save himself if the bandits found him.

We stayed there all day. Waiting for her. I don't know what day it was; there was no school, no church any more in our village, so you didn't know whether it was a Sunday or a Monday.

When the sun was going down, our grandmother and grandfather came. Someone from our village had told them we children were alone, our mother had not come back. I say 'grandmother' before 'grandfather' because it's like that: our grandmother is big and strong, not yet old, and our grandfather is small, you don't know where he is, in his loose trousers, he smiles but he hasn't heard what you're saying, and his hair looks as if he's left it full of soap suds. Our grandmother took us—me, the baby, my first-born brother, our grandfather—back to her house and we were all afraid (except the baby, asleep on our grandmother's back) of meeting the bandits on the way. We waited a long time at our grandmother's place. Perhaps it was a month. We were hungry. Our mother never came. While we were waiting for her to fetch us our grandmother had no food for us, no food for our grandfather and herself. A woman

with milk in her breasts gave us some for my little brother, although at our house he used to eat porridge, same as we did. Our grandmother took us to look for wild spinach but everyone else in her village did the same and there wasn't a leaf left.

Our grandfather, walking a little behind some young men, went to look for our mother but didn't find her. Our grandmother cried with other women and I sang the hymns with them. They brought a little food—some beans—but after two days there was nothing again. Our grandfather used to have three sheep and a cow and a vegetable garden but the bandits had long ago taken the sheep and the cow, because they were hungry, too; and when planting time came our grandfather had no seed to plant.

So, they decided—our grandmother did; our grandfather made little noises and rocked from side to side, but she took no notice—we would go away. We children were pleased. We wanted to go away from where our mother wasn't and where we were hungry. We wanted to go where there were no bandits and there was food. We were glad to think there must be such a place; away.

Our grandmother gave her church clothes to someone in exchange for some dried mealies and she boiled them and tied them in a rag. We took them with us when we went and she thought we would get water from the rivers but we didn't come to any river and we got so thirsty we had to turn back. Not all the way to our grandparents' place but to a village where there was a pump. She opened the basket where she carried some clothes and the mealies and she sold her shoes to buy a big plastic container for water. I said, Gogo, how will you go to church now even without shoes, but she said we had a long journey and too much to carry. At that village we met other people who were also going away. We joined them because they seemed to know where that was better than we did.

To get there we had to go through the Kruger Park. We knew about the Kruger Park. A kind of whole country of animals—elephants, lions, jackals, hyenas, hippos, crocodiles, all kinds of animals. We had some of them in our own country, before the war (our grandfather remembers; we children weren't born yet) but the bandits kill the elephants and sell their tusks, and the bandits and our soldiers have eaten all the buck. There was a man in our village without legs—a crocodile took them off, in our river; but all the same our country is a country of people, not animals. We knew about the Kruger Park because some of our men used to leave home to work there in the places where white people come to stay and look at the animals.

So we started to go away again. There were women and other children like me who had to carry the small ones on their backs when the women got tired. A man led us into the Kruger Park; are we there yet, are we there yet, I kept asking our grandmother. Not yet, the man said, when she asked him for me. He told us we had to take a long way to get round the fence, which he explained would kill you, roast off your skin the moment you touched it, like the wires high up on poles that give electric light in our towns. I've seen that sign of a head without eyes or skin or hair on an iron box at the mission hospital we used to have before it was blown up.

When I asked the next time, they said we'd been walking in the Kruger Park for an hour. But it looked just like the bush we'd been walking through all day, and we hadn't seen any animals except the monkeys and birds which live around us at home, and a tortoise that, of course, couldn't get away from us. My firstborn brother and the other boys brought it to the man so it could be killed and we could cook and eat it. He let it go because he told us we could not make a fire; all the time we were in the Park we must not make a fire because the smoke would show we were there. Police, wardens, would come and send us back where we came from. He said we must move like animals among the animals, away from the roads, away from the white people's camps. And at that moment I heard—I'm sure I was the first to hear—cracking branches and the sound of something parting grasses and I almost squealed because I thought it was the police, wardens—the people he was telling us to look out for—who had found us already. And it was an elephant, and another elephant, and more elephants, big blots of dark moved wherever you looked between the trees. They were curling their trunks round the red leaves of the Mopane trees and stuffing them into their mouths. The babies leant against their mothers. The almost grown-up ones wrestled like my first-born brother with his friends—only they used trunks instead of arms. I was so interested I forgot to be afraid. The man said we should just stand still and be quiet while the elephants passed. They passed very slowly because elephants are too big to need to run from anyone.

The buck ran from us. They jumped so high they seemed to fly. The warthogs stopped dead, when they heard us, and swerved off the way a boy in our village used to zigzag on the bicycle his father had brought back from the mines. We followed the animals to where they drank. When they had gone, we went to their water-holes. We were never thirsty without finding water, but the animals ate, ate all the time. Whenever you saw them, they were eating, grass, trees, roots. And there was nothing for us. The mealies were finished. The only food we could eat was what the baboons ate, dry little figs full of ants that grow along the branches of the trees at the rivers. It was hard to be like the animals.

When it was very hot during the day we would find lions lying asleep. They were the colour of the grass and we didn't see them at first but the man did, and he led us back and a long way round where they slept. I wanted to lie down like the lions. My little brother was getting thin but he was very heavy. When our grandmother looked for me, to put him on my back, I tried not to see. My firstborn brother stopped talking; and when we rested, he had to be shaken to get up again, as if he was just like our grandfather, he couldn't hear. I saw flies crawling on our grandmother's face and she didn't brush them off; I was frightened. I picked a palm leaf and chased them.

We walked at night as well as by day. We could see the fires where the white people were cooking in the camps and we could smell the smoke and the meat. We watched the hyenas with their backs that slope as if they're ashamed, slipping through the bush after the smell. If one turned its head, you saw it had big brown shining eyes like our own, when we looked at each other in the dark. The wind brought voices in our own

language from the compounds where the people who work in the camps live. A woman among us wanted to go to them at night and ask them to help us. They can give us the food from the dustbins, she said, she started wailing and our grandmother had to grab her and put a hand over her mouth. The man who led us had told us that we must keep out of the way of our people who worked at the Kruger Park; if they helped us, they would lose their work. If they saw us, all they could do was pretend we were not there; they had seen only animals.

Sometimes we stopped to sleep for a little while at night. We slept close together. I don't know which night it was – because we were walking, walking, any time, all the time – we heard the lions very near. Not groaning loudly, the way they did far off. Panting, like we do when we run, but it's a different kind of panting: you can hear they're not running, they're waiting, somewhere near. We all rolled closer together, on top of each other, the ones on the edge fighting to get into the middle. I was squashed against a woman who smelled bad because she was afraid but I was glad to hold tight on to her. I prayed to God to make the lions take someone on the edge and go. I shut my eyes not to see the tree from which a lion might jump right into the middle of us, where I was. The man who led us jumped up instead, and beat on the tree with a dead branch. He had taught us never to make a sound but he shouted. He shouted at the lions like a drunk man shouting at nobody, in our village. The lions went away. We heard them groaning, shouting back at him from far off.

We were tired, so tired. My first-born brother and the man had to lift our grandfather from stone to stone where we found places to cross the rivers. Our grandmother is strong but her feet were bleeding. We could not carry the basket on our heads any longer, we couldn't carry anything except my little brother. We left our things under a bush. As long as our bodies get there, our grandmother said. Then we ate some wild fruit we didn't know from home and our stomachs ran. We were in the grass called elephant grass because it is nearly as tall as an elephant, that day we had those pains, and our grandfather couldn't just get down in front of people like my little brother, he went off into the grass to be on his own. We had to keep up, the man who led us always kept telling us, we must catch up, but we asked him to wait for our grandfather.

So, everyone waited for our grandfather to catch up. But he didn't. It was the middle of the day; insects were singing in our ears and we couldn't hear him moving through the grass. We couldn't see him because the grass was so high and he was so small. But he must have been somewhere there inside his loose trousers and his shirt that was torn and our grandmother couldn't sew because she had no cotton. We knew he couldn't have gone far because he was weak and slow. We all went to look for him, but in groups, so we too wouldn't be hidden from each other in that grass. It got into our eyes and noses; we called him softly but the noise of the insects must have filled the little space left for hearing in his ears. We looked and looked but we couldn't find him. We stayed in that long grass all night. In my sleep I found him curled round in a place he had tramped down for himself, like the places we'd seen where the buck hide their babies.

When I woke up, he still wasn't anywhere. So, we looked again, and by now there were paths we'd made by going through the grass many times, it would be easy for him to find us if we couldn't find him. All that day we just sat and waited. Everything is very quiet when the sun is on your head, inside your head, even if you lie, like the animals, under the trees. I lay on my back and saw those ugly birds with hooked beaks and plucked necks flying round and round above us. We had passed them often where they were feeding on the bones of dead animals, nothing was ever left there for us to eat. Round and round, high up and then lower down and then high again. I saw their necks poking to this side and that. Flying round and round. I saw our grandmother, who sat up all the time with my little brother on her lap, was seeing them, too.

In the afternoon the man who led us came to our grandmother and told her the other people must move on. He said, if their children don't eat soon, they will die.

Our grandmother said nothing.

I'll bring you water before we go, he told her.

Our grandmother looked at us, me, my first-born brother, and my little brother on her lap. We watched the other people getting up to leave. I didn't believe the grass would be empty, all around us, where they had been. That we would be alone in this place, the Kruger Park, the police or the animals would find us. Tears came out of my eyes and nose onto my hands but our grandmother took no notice. She got up, with her feet apart the way she puts them when she is going to lift firewood, at home in our village, she swung my little brother onto her back, tied him in her cloth – the top of her dress was torn and her big breasts were showing but there was nothing in them for him. She said, Come.

So, we left the place with the long grass. Left behind. We went with the others and the man who led us. We started to go away, again.

There's a very big tent, bigger than a church or a school, tied down to the ground. I didn't understand that was what it would be, when we got there, away. I saw a thing like that the time our mother took us to the town because she heard our soldiers were there and she wanted to ask them if they knew where our father was. In that tent, people were praying and singing. This one is blue and white like that one but it's not for praying and singing, we live in it with other people who've come from our country. Sister from the clinic says we're two hundred without counting the babies, and we have new babies, some were born on the way through the Kruger Park.

Inside, even when the sun is bright it's dark and there's a kind of whole village in there. Instead of houses each family has a little place closed off with sacks or cardboard from boxes – whatever we can find – to show the other families it's yours and they shouldn't come in even though there's no door and no windows and no thatch, so that if you're standing up and you're not a small child you can see into everybody's house. Some people have even made paint from ground rocks and drawn designs on the sacks.

Of course, there really is a roof – the tent is the roof, far, high up. It's like a sky. It's like a mountain and we're inside it; through the cracks paths of dust lead down, so thick you think you could climb them. The tent keeps off the rain overhead but the water comes in at the sides and in the little streets between our places – you can only move along them one person at a time – the small kids like my little brother play in the mud. You have to step over them. My little brother doesn't play. Our grandmother takes him to the clinic when the doctor comes on Mondays. Sister says there's something wrong with his head, she thinks it's because we didn't have enough food at home. Because of the war. Because our father wasn't there. And then because he was so hungry in the Kruger Park. He likes just to lie about on our grandmother all day, on her lap or against her somewhere, and he looks at us and looks at us. He wants to ask something but you can see he can't. If I tickle him, he may just smile. The clinic gives us special powder to make into porridge for him and perhaps one day he'll be all right.

When we arrived, we were like him – my first-born brother and I. I can hardly remember. The people who live in the village near the tent took us to the clinic, it's where you have to sign that you've come – away, through the Kruger Park. We sat on the grass and everything was muddled. One Sister was pretty with her hair straightened and beautiful high-heeled shoes and she brought us the special powder. She said we must mix it with water and drink it slowly. We tore the packets open with our teeth and licked it all up, it stuck round my mouth and I sucked it from my lips and fingers. Some other children who had walked with us vomited. But I only felt everything in my belly moving, the stuff going down and around like a snake, and hiccups hurt me. Another Sister called us to stand in line on the verandah of the clinic but we couldn't. We sat all over the place there, falling against each other; the Sisters helped each of us up by the arm and then stuck a needle in it. Other needles drew our blood into tiny bottles. This was against sickness, but I didn't understand, every time my eyes dropped closed, I thought I was walking, the grass was long, I saw the elephants, I didn't know we were away.

But our grandmother was still strong, she could still stand up, she knows how to write and she signed for us. Our grandmother got us this place in the tent against one of the sides, it's the best kind of place there because although the rain comes in, we can lift the flap when the weather is good and then the sun shines on us, the smells in the tent go out. Our grandmother knows a woman here who showed her where there is good grass for sleeping mats, and our grandmother made some for us. Once every month the food truck comes to the clinic. Our grandmother takes along one of the cards she signed and when it has been punched, we get a sack of mealie meal. There are wheelbarrows to take it back to the tent; my first-born brother does this for her and then he and the other boys have races, steering the empty wheelbarrows back to the clinic. Sometimes he's lucky and a man who's bought beer in the village gives him money to deliver it – though that's not allowed, you're supposed to take that wheelbarrow straight back to the Sisters. He buys a cold drink and shares it with me

if I catch him. On another day, every month, the church leaves a pile of old clothes in the clinic yard. Our grandmother has another card to get punched, and then we can choose something: I have two dresses, two pants and a jersey, so I can go to school.

The people in the village have let us join their school. I was surprised to find they speak our language; our grandmother told me, that's why they allow us to stay on their land. Long ago, in the time of our fathers, there was no fence that kills you, there was no Kruger Park between them and us, we were the same people under our own king, right from our village we left to this place we've come to.

Now that we've been in the tent so long – I have turned eleven and my little brother is nearly three although he is so small, only his head is big, he's not come right in it yet – some people have dug up the bare ground around the tent and planted beans and mealies and cabbage. The old men weave branches to put up fences round their gardens. No one is allowed to look for work in the towns but some of the women have found work in the village and can buy things. Our grandmother, because she's still strong, finds work where people are building houses – in this village the people build nice houses with bricks and cement, not mud like we used to have at our home. Our grandmother carries bricks for these people and fetches baskets of stones on her head. And so, she has money to buy sugar and tea and milk and soap. The store gave her a calendar she has hung up on our flap of the tent. I am clever at school and she collected advertising paper people throw away outside the store and covered my schoolbooks with it. She makes my firstborn brother and me do our homework every afternoon before it gets dark because there is no room except to lie down, close together, just as we did in the Kruger Park, in our place in the tent, and candles are expensive. Our grandmother hasn't been able to buy herself a pair of shoes for church yet, but she has bought black school shoes and polish to clean them with for my firstborn brother and me. Every morning, when people are getting up in the tent, the babies are crying, people are pushing each other at the taps outside and some children are already pulling the crusts of porridge off the pots we ate from last night, my first-born brother and I clean our shoes. Our grandmother makes us sit on our mats with our legs straight out so she can look carefully at our shoes to make sure we have done it properly. No other children in the tent have real school shoes. When we three look at them it's as if we are in a real house again, with no war, no away.

Some white people came to take photographs of our people living in the tent – they said they were making a film; I've never seen what that is though I know about it. A white woman squeezed into our space and asked our grandmother questions which were told to us in our language by someone who understands the white woman's.

How long have you been living like this?

She means here? our grandmother said. In this tent, two years and one month.

And what do you hope for the future?

Nothing. I'm here.

But for your children?

I want them to learn so that they can get good jobs and money.

Do you hope to go back to Mozambique – to your own country?

I will not go back.

But when the war is over – you won't be allowed to stay here? Don't you want to go home?

I didn't think our grandmother wanted to speak again. I didn't think she was going to answer the white woman. The white woman put her head on one side and smiled at us.

Our grandmother looked away from her and spoke – There is nothing. No home.

Why does our grandmother say that? Why? I'll go back. I'll go back through that Kruger Park. After the war, if there are no bandits any more, our mother may be waiting for us. And maybe when we left our grandfather, he was only left behind, he found his way somehow, slowly, through the Kruger Park, and he'll be there. They'll be home, and I'll remember them.

Story 2. THE STONE BOY by Gina Berriault



ARNOLD drew his overalls and raveling gray sweater over his naked body. In the other narrow bed his brother Eugene went on sleeping, undisturbed by the alarm clock's rusty ring. Arnold, watching his brother sleeping, felt a peculiar dismay; he was nine, six years younger than Eugie, and in their waking hours it was he who was subordinate. To dispel emphatically his uneasy advantage over his sleeping brother, he threw himself on the hump of Eugie's body.

"Get up! Get up!"

Arnold felt his brother twist away and saw the blankets lifted in a great wing, and, all in an instant, he was lying on his back under the covers with only his face showing, like a baby, and Eugie was sprawled on top of him.

"Whasa matter with you?" asked Eugie in sleepy anger, his face hanging close.

"Get up," Arnold repeated. "You said you'd pick peas with me."

Stupidly, Eugie gazed around the room to see if morning had come into it yet. Arnold began to laugh derisively, making soft, snorting noises, and was thrown off the bed. He got up from the floor and went down the stairs, the laughter continuing, like hiccups, against his will. But when he opened the staircase door and entered the parlor, he hunched up his shoulders and was quiet because his parents slept in the bedroom downstairs.

Arnold lifted his .22-caliber rifle from the rack on the kitchen wall. It was an old lever-action that his father had given him because nobody else used it anymore. On their way down to the garden he and Eugie would go by the lake, and if there were any ducks on it he'd take a shot at them. Standing on the stool before the cupboard, he searched on the top shelf in the confusion of medicines and ointments for man and beast and found a small yellow box of .22 cartridges. Then he sat down on the stool and began to load his gun.

It was cold in the kitchen so early, but later in the day, when his mother canned the peas, the heat from the woodstove would be almost unbearable. Yesterday she had finished preserving the huckleberries that the family had picked along the mountain, and before that she had canned all the cherries his father had brought from the warehouse in Corinth.

Eugie came clomping down the stairs and into the kitchen, his head drooping with sleepiness. From his perch on the stool Arnold watched Eugie slip on his green knit cap. Eugie didn't really need a cap; he hadn't had a haircut in a long time and his brown curls grew thick and matted, close around his ears and down his neck, tapering there to a small whorl. Eugie passed his left hand through his hair before he set his cap down with his right. The very way he slipped his cap on was an announcement of his

status; almost everything he did was a reminder that he was eldest — first he, then Nora, then Arnold — and called attention to how tall he was, almost as tall as his father, how long his legs were, how small he was in the hips, and what a neat dip above his buttocks his thick-soled logger's boots gave him. Arnold never tired of watching Eugie offer silent praise unto himself. He wondered, as he sat enthralled, if when he got to be Eugie's age he would still be undersized and his hair still straight.

Eugie eyed the gun. "Don't you know this ain't duck season?" he asked gruffly, as if he were the sheriff.

"No, I don't know," Arnold sniggered.

Eugie picked up the tin washtub for the peas, unbolted the door with his free hand and kicked it open. Then, lifting the tub to his head, he went clomping down the back steps. Arnold followed, closing the door behind him.

The sky was faintly gray, almost white. The mountains behind the farm made the sun climb a long way to show itself. Several miles to the south, where the range opened up, hung an orange mist, but the valley in which the farm lay was still cold and colorless.

Eugie opened the gate to the yard and they passed between the barn and the row of chicken houses, their feet stirring up the carpet of brown feathers dropped by the molting chickens. They paused before going down the slope to the lake. A fluky morning wind ran among the stocks of wheat that covered the slope. It sent a shimmer northward across the lake, gently moving the rushes that formed an island in the center. Killdeer, their white markings flashing, skimmed the water, crying their shrill, sweet cry. And there at the south end of the lake were four wild ducks, swimming out from the willows into open water.

Arnold followed Eugie down the slope, stealing, as his brother did, from one shock of wheat to another. Eugie paused before climbing through the wire fence that divided the wheat field from the marshy pasture around the lake. They were screened from the ducks by the willows along the lake's edge.

"If you hit your duck, you want me to go in after it?" Eugie said.

"If you want," Arnold said.

Eugie lowered his eyelids, leaving slits of mocking blue. "You'd drown 'fore you got to it, them legs of yours are so puny."

He shoved the tub under the fence and, pressing down the center wire, climbed through into the pasture.

Arnold pressed down the bottom wire, thrust a leg through and leaned forward to bring the other leg after. His rifle caught on the wire and he jerked at it. The air was rocked by the sound of the shot. Feeling foolish, he lifted his face, baring it to an expected shower of derision from his brother. But Eugie did not turn around. Instead,

from his crouching position, he fell to his knees and then pitched forward onto his face. The ducks rose up crying from the lake, cleared the mountain background and beat away northward across the pale sky.

Arnold squatted beside his brother. Eugie seemed to be climbing the earth, as if the earth ran up and down, and when he found he couldn't scale it he lay still.

"Eugie?"

Then Arnold saw it, under the tendril of hair at the nape of the neck—a slow rising of bright blood. It had an obnoxious movement, like that of a parasite.

"Hey, Eugie," he said again. He was feeling the same discomfort he had felt when he had watched Eugie sleeping; his brother didn't know that he was lying face down in the pasture.

Again, he said, "Hey, Eugie," an anxious nudge in his voice. But Eugie was as still as the morning around them.

Arnold set his rifle down on the ground and stood up. He picked up the tub and, dragging it behind him, walked along by the willows to the garden fence and climbed through. He went down on his knees among the tangled vines. The pods were cold with the night, but his hands were strange to him, and not until some time had passed did he realize that the pods were numbing his fingers. He picked from the top of the vine first, then lifted the vine to look underneath for pods, and moved on to the next.

It was a warmth on his back, like a large hand laid firmly there, that made him raise his head. Way up the slope the gray farmhouse was struck by the sun. While his head had been bent the land had grown bright around him.

When he got up his legs were so stiff that he had to go down on his knees again to ease the pain. Then, walking sideways, he dragged the tub, half full of peas, up the slope.

THE KITCHEN WAS warm now; a fire was roaring in the stove with a closed-up, rushing sound. His mother was spooning eggs from a pot of boiling water and putting them into a bowl. Her short brown hair was uncombed and fell forward across her eyes as she bent her head. Nora was lifting a frying pan full of trout from the stove, holding the handle with a dish towel. His father had just come in from bringing the cows from the north pasture to the barn, and was sitting on the stool, unbuttoning his red plaid mackinaw.

"Did you boys fill the tub?" his mother asked.

"They ought've by now," his father said. "They went out of the house an hour ago. Eugie woke me up comin' downstairs. I heard you shootin'—did you get a duck?"

"No," Arnold said. They would want to know why Eugie wasn't coming in for breakfast. "Eugie's dead," he told them.

They stared at him. The pitch crackled in the stove.

"You kids playin' a joke?" his father asked.

"Where's Eugene?" his mother asked scoldingly. She wanted, Arnold knew, to see his eyes, and when he glanced at her she put the bowl and spoon down on the stove and walked past him. His father stood up and went out the door after her. Nora followed them with little skipping steps, as if afraid to be left behind.

Arnold went into the barn, down along the foddering passage past the cows waiting to be milked, and climbed into the loft. After a few minutes he heard a terrifying sound coming toward the house. His parents and Nora were returning from the willows, and sounds sharp as knives were rising from his mother's breast and carrying over the sloping fields. In a short while he heard his father go down the back steps, slam the car door and drive away.

Arnold lay still as a fugitive, listening to the cows eating close by. If his parents never called him, he thought, he would stay up in the loft forever, out of the way. In the night he would sneak down for a drink of water from the faucet over the trough and for whatever food they left for him by the barn.

The rattle of his father's car as it turned down the lane recalled him to the present. He heard the voices of his Uncle Andy and Aunt Alice as they and his father went past the barn to the lake. He could feel the morning growing heavier with sun. Someone, probably Nora, had let the chickens out of their coops and they were cackling in the yard.

After a while, a car, followed by another car, turned down the road off the highway. The cars drew to a stop and he heard the voices of strange men. The men also went past the barn and down to the lake. The sheriff's men and the undertakers, whom his father must have phoned from Uncle Andy's house, had arrived from Corinth. Then he heard everybody come back and heard the cars turn around and leave.

"Arnold!" It was his father calling from the yard.

He climbed down the ladder and went out into the sun, picking wisps of hay from his overalls.

CORINTH, NINE MILES away, was the county seat, Arnold sat in the front seat of the old Ford between his father, who was driving, and Uncle Andy. No one spoke. Uncle Andy was his mother's brother, and he had been fond of Eugie because Eugie had resembled him. Andy had taken Eugie hunting and had given him a knife and a lot of things, and now Andy, his eyes narrowed, sat tall and stiff beside Arnold.

Arnold's father parked the car before the courthouse. It was a two-story brick building with a lamp on each side of the bottom step. They went up the wide stone steps, Arnold

and his father going first, and entered the darkly paneled hallway. The shirt-sleeved man in the sheriff's office said that the sheriff was at Carlson's Parlor examining the boy who was shot.

Andy went off to get the sheriff while Arnold and his father waited on a bench in the corridor. Arnold felt his father watching him, and he lifted his eyes with painful casualness to the announcement, on the opposite wall, of the Corinth County Annual Rodeo, and then to the clock with its loudly clucking pendulum. After he had come down from the loft his father and Uncle Andy had stood in the yard with him and asked him to tell them everything, and he had explained to them how the gun had caught on the wire. But when they had asked him why he hadn't run back to the house to tell his parents, he had had no answer – all he could say was that he had gone down into the garden to pick the peas. His father had stared at him in a pale, puzzled way, and it was then he had felt his father and the others set their cold, turbulent silence against him. Arnold shifted on the bench, his only feeling a small one of compunction imposed by his father's eyes.

At a quarter past nine, Andy and the sheriff came in. They all went into the sheriff's private office, and Arnold was sent forward to sit in the chair by the sheriff's desk. His father and Andy sat down on the bench against the wall.

The sheriff slumped down into his swivel chair and swung toward Arnold. He was an old man with white hair like wheat stubble. His restless green eyes made him seem not to be in his office but to be hurrying and bobbing around somewhere else.

"What did you say your name was?" the sheriff asked.

"Arnold," he replied, but he could not remember telling the sheriff his name before.

"What were you doing with a .22, Arnold?"

"It's mine," he said.

"Okay. What were you going to shoot?"

"Some ducks," he replied.

"Out of season?"

He nodded.

"That's bad," said the sheriff. "Were you and your brother good friends?"

What did he mean – good friends? Eugie was his brother. That was different from a friend. A best friend was your own age, but Eugie was almost a man. Eugie had had a way of looking at him, slyly and mockingly and yet confidentially, that had summed up how they both felt about being brothers. Arnold had wanted to be with Eugie more than with anybody else, but he couldn't say they had been good friends.

"Did they ever quarrel?" the sheriff asked his father.

"Not that I know," his father replied. "It seemed to me that Arnold cared a lot for Eugie."

"Did you?" the sheriff asked Arnold.

If it seemed so to his father, then it was so. Arnold nodded.

"Were you mad at him this morning?"

"No."

"How did you happen to shoot him?"

"We was crawlin' through the fence."

"Yes?"

"An' the gun got caught on the wire."

"Seems the hammer must of caught," his father put in.

"All right, that's what happened," said the sheriff. "But what I want you to tell me is this. Why didn't you go back to the house and tell your father right away? Why did you go and pick peas for an hour?"

Arnold gazed over his shoulder at his father, expecting his father to have an answer for this also. But his father's eyes, larger and even lighter blue than usual, were fixed upon him curiously. Arnold picked at a callus in his right palm. It seemed odd now that he had not run back to the house and wakened his father, but he could not remember why he had not. They were all waiting for him to answer.

"I come down to pick peas," he said.

"Didn't you think," asked the sheriff, stepping carefully from word to word, "that it was more important for you to go tell your parents what happened?"

"The sun was gonna come up," Arnold said.

"What's that got to do with it?"

"It's better to pick peas while they're cold."

The sheriff swung away from him and laid both hands flat on his desk. "Well, all I can say is," he said across to Arnold's father and Uncle Andy, "he's either a moron or he's so reasonable that he's way ahead of us." He gave a challenging snort. "It's come to my notice that the most reasonable guys are mean ones. They don't feel nothing."

For a moment the three men sat still. Then the sheriff lifted his hand like a man taking an oath. "Take him home," he said.

"You don't want him?"

Andy asked. "Not now," replied the sheriff. "Maybe in a few years."

Arnold's father stood up. He held his hat against his chest. "The gun ain't his no more," he said wanly.

Arnold went first through the hallway, hearing behind him the heels of his father and Uncle Andy striking the floorboards. He went down the steps ahead of them and climbed into the back seat of the car. Andy paused as he was getting into the front seat and gazed back at Arnold, and Arnold saw that his uncle's eyes had absorbed the knowingness from the sheriff's eyes. Andy and his father and the sheriff had discovered what made him go down into the garden. It was because he was cruel, the sheriff had said, and didn't care about his brother. Arnold lowered his eyelids meekly against his uncle's stare.

THE REST OF the day he did his tasks around the farm, keeping apart from the family. At evening, when he saw his father stomp tiredly into the house, Arnold did not put down his hammer and leave the chicken coop he was repairing. He was afraid that they did not want him to eat supper with them. But in a few minutes another fear that they would go to the trouble of calling him and that he would be made conspicuous by his tardiness made him follow his father into the house. As he went through the kitchen he saw the jars of peas standing in rows on the workbench, a reproach to him.

No one spoke at supper, and his mother, who sat next to him, leaned her head in her hand all through the meal, curving her fingers over her eyes so as not to see him. They were finishing their small, silent supper when the visitors began to arrive, knocking hard on the back door. The men were coming from their farms now that it was growing dark and they could not work anymore.

Old Man Matthews, gray and stocky, came first, with his two sons, Orion, the elder, and Clint, who was Eugie's age. As the callers entered the parlor, Arnold sat down in a rocking chair. Even as he had been undecided before supper whether to remain outside or take his place at the table, he now thought that he should go upstairs, and yet he stayed. If he stayed, he thought, as he always stayed and listened when visitors came, they would see that he was only Arnold and not the person the sheriff thought he was. He sat with his arms crossed and his hands tucked into his armpits and did not lift his eyes.

The Matthews men had hardly settled down around the table, after Arnold's mother and Nora cleared away the dishes, when another car rattled down the road and someone else rapped on the back door. This time it was Sullivan, a spare and sandy man, so nimble of gesture and expression that Arnold had never been able to catch more than a few of his meanings. Sullivan, in dusty jeans, sat down in another rocker, shot out his skinny legs and began to talk in his fast way, recalling everything that Eugene had ever said to him. The other men interrupted to tell of occasions they remembered, and after a time Clint's young voice, hoarse like Eugene's, broke in to tell about the time Eugene had beat him in a wrestling match.

Out in the kitchen the voices of Orion's wife and of Mrs. Sullivan mingled with Nora's voice but not, Arnold noticed, his mother's. Then dry little Mr. Cram came, leaving large Mrs. Cram in the kitchen, and there was no chair left for Mr. Cram to sit in. No one asked Arnold to get up and he was unable to rise. He knew that the story had got around to them during the day about how he had gone and picked peas after he had shot his brother, and he knew that although they were talking only about Eugie they were thinking about him, and if he got up, if he moved even his foot, they would all be alerted. Then Uncle Andy arrived and leaned his tall, lanky body against the doorjamb, and there were two men standing.

Presently Arnold was aware that the talk had stopped. He knew without looking up that the men were watching him.

"Not a tear in his eye," said Andy, and Arnold knew that his uncle had gestured the men to attention.

"He don't give a hoot, is that how it goes?" asked Sullivan.

"He's a reasonable fellow," Andy explained. "That's what the sheriff said. It's us who ain't reasonable. If we'd've shot our brother, we'd've come runnin' back to the house, cryin' like a baby. Well, we'd've been unreasonable. What would of been the use of actin' like that? If your brother is shot dead, he's shot dead. What's the use of gettin' emotional about it? The thing to do is go down to the garden and pick peas. Am I right?"

The men around the room shifted their heavy, satisfying weight of unreasonableness.

Matthews's son Orion said, "If I'd of done what he done, Pa would've hung my pelt by the side of that big coyote's in the barn."

Arnold sat in the rocker until the last man filed out. While his family was out in the kitchen bidding the callers good night and the cars were driving away down the dirt lane to the highway, he picked up one of the kerosene lamps and slipped quickly up the stairs. In his room he undressed by lamplight, although he and Eugie had always undressed in the dark, and not until he was lying in his bed did he blow out the flame. He felt nothing, not any grief. There was only the same immense silence and crawling inside of him, the way the house and fields must feel under a merciless sun.

HE AWOKE SUDDENLY. The sound that had waked him was the step of his father as he got up from the rocker and went down the back steps, and he knew that his father was out in the yard, closing the doors of the chicken houses, and he knew that his mother was awake in their bed.

Throwing off the covers, he rose swiftly and went down the stairs and across the dark parlor to his parents' room. He rapped on the door.

"Mother?"

From the closed room her voice rose to him, a seeking and retreating voice. "Yes?"

"Mother?" he asked insistently. He had expected her to realize that he wanted to go down on his knees by her bed and tell her that Eugie was dead. She did not know it yet, nobody knew it, and yet she was sitting up in bed, waiting to be told. He had expected her to tell him to come in and allow him to dig his head into her blankets and tell her about the terror he had felt when he had knelt beside his brother. He had come to clasp her in his arms and pommel her breasts with his head, grieving with her for Eugene. He put his hand on the knob.

"Go back to bed, Arnold," she called sharply.

But he waited.

"Go back! Is night when you get afraid?"

At first, he did not understand. Then, silently, he left the door and for a stricken moment stood by the rocker. Outside everything was still. The fences, the shocks of wheat seen through the window before him were so still it was as if they moved and breathed in the daytime and had fallen silent with the lateness of the hour. It was a silence that seemed to observe his father, a figure moving alone around the yard, his lantern casting a circle of light by his feet. In a few minutes his father would enter the dark house, the lantern still lighting his way.

Arnold was aware suddenly that he was naked. He had thrown off his blankets and come down the stairs to tell his mother how he felt about Eugie, but she had refused to listen to him and his nakedness had become unpardonable. At once he went back up the stairs, fleeing from his father's lantern.

AT BREAKFAST HE kept his eyelids lowered to deny the night. Nora, sitting at his left, did not pass the pitcher of milk to him and he did not ask for it. He would never again, he vowed, ask them for anything, and he ate his fried eggs and potatoes only because everybody ate meals – the cattle ate, and the dogs and cats. It was natural for everybody to eat.

"Nora, you gonna keep that pitcher for yourself?" his father asked.

Nora lowered her head unsurely.

"Pass it on to Arnold," his father said.

Nora put her hands in her lap.

His father picked up the metal pitcher and set it down at Arnold's plate.

Arnold, pretending to be deaf to the discord, did not glance up, but relief rained over his shoulders at the thought that his parents recognized him again. They must have lain awake after his father had come in from the yard: had they realized together why he had come down the stairs and knocked at their door?

"Bessie's missin' this morning," his father called out to his mother, who had gone into the kitchen. "She went up the mountain last night and had her calf, most likely. Somebody's got to go up and find her 'fore the coyotes get the calf."

That had been Eugie's job, Arnold thought. Eugie would climb the cattle trails in search of a newborn calf and come down the mountain carrying the calf across his back, with the cow running behind him, mooing with alarm.

Arnold ate a few more forkfuls of his breakfast, put his hands on the edge of the table and pushed back his chair. If he went for the calf he'd be away from the farm all morning. He could switch the cow down the mountain slowly, and the calf would run along at its mother's side.

When he passed through the kitchen, his mother was setting a kettle of water on the stove. "Where you going?" she asked awkwardly.

"Up to get the calf," he replied, averting his face.

"Arnold?"

At the door he paused reluctantly, his back to her, knowing that she was seeking him out, as his father was doing.

"Was you knocking at my door last night?"

He looked over his shoulder at her, his eyes narrow.

"What'd you want?" she asked humbly.

"I didn't want nothing," he said flatly.

Then he went out the door and down the back steps, frightened by his answer.

Story 3. THE GARDEN PARTY by Katherine Mansfield



And after all the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden-party if they had ordered it. Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud. Only the blue was veiled with a haze of light gold, as it is sometimes in early summer. The gardener had been up since dawn, mowing the lawns and sweeping them, until the grass and the dark flat rosettes where the daisy plants had been seemed to shine. As for the roses, you could not help feeling they understood that roses are the only flowers that impress people at garden-parties; the only flowers that everybody is certain of knowing. Hundreds, yes, literally hundreds, had come out in a single night; the green bushes bowed down as though they had been visited by archangels.

Breakfast was not yet over before the men came to put up the marquee.

"Where do you want the marquee put, mother?"

"My dear child, it's no use asking me. I'm determined to leave everything to you children this year. Forget I am your mother. Treat me as an honoured guest."

But Meg could not possibly go and supervise the men. She had washed her hair before breakfast, and she sat drinking her coffee in a green turban, with a dark wet curl stamped on each cheek. Jose, the butterfly, always came down in a silk petticoat and a kimono jacket.

"You'll have to go, Laura; you're the artistic one."

Away Laura flew, still holding her piece of bread-and-butter. It's so delicious to have an excuse for eating out of doors, and besides, she loved having to arrange things; she always felt she could do it so much better than anybody else.

Four men in their shirt-sleeves stood grouped together on the garden path. They carried staves covered with rolls of canvas, and they had big tool-bags slung on their backs. They looked impressive. Laura wished now that she had not got the bread-and-butter, but there was nowhere to put it, and she couldn't possibly throw it away. She blushed and tried to look severe and even a little bit short-sighted as she came up to them.

"Good morning," she said, copying her mother's voice. But that sounded so fearfully affected that she was ashamed, and stammered like a little girl, "Oh — er — have you come — is it about the marquee?"

"That's right, miss," said the tallest of the men, a lanky, freckled fellow, and he shifted his tool-bag, knocked back his straw hat and smiled down at her. "That's about it.

"His smile was so easy, so friendly that Laura recovered. What nice eyes he had, small, but such a dark blue! And now she looked at the others, they were smiling too. "Cheer up, we won't bite," their smile seemed to say. How very nice workmen were! And

what a beautiful morning! She mustn't mention the morning; she must be business-like. The marquee.

"Well, what about the lily-lawn? Would that do?"

And she pointed to the lily-lawn with the hand that didn't hold the bread-and butter. They turned; they stared in the direction. A little fat chap thrust out his under-lip, and the tall fellow frowned.

"I don't fancy it," said he. "Not conspicuous enough. You see, with a thing like a marquee," and he turned to Laura in his easy way, "you want to put it somewhere where it'll give you a bang slap in the eye, if you follow me."

Laura's upbringing made her wonder for a moment whether it was quite respectful of a workman to talk to her of bangs slap in the eye. But she did quite follow him.

"A corner of the tennis-court," she suggested. "But the band's going to be in one corner."

"H'm, going to have a band, are you?" said another of the workmen. He was pale. He had a haggard look as his dark eyes scanned the tennis-court. What was he thinking?

"Only a very small band," said Laura gently. Perhaps he wouldn't mind so much if the band was quite small. But the tall fellow interrupted.

"Look here, miss, that's the place. Against those trees. Over there. That'll do fine."

Against the karakas. Then the karaka-trees would be hidden. And they were so lovely, with their broad, gleaming leaves, and their clusters of yellow fruit. They were like trees you imagined growing on a desert island, proud, solitary, lifting their leaves and fruits to the sun in a kind of silent splendour. Must they be hidden by a marquee?

They must. Already the men had shouldered their staves and were making for the place. Only the tall fellow was left. He bent down, pinched a sprig of lavender, put his thumb and forefinger to his nose and snuffed up the smell. When Laura saw that gesture, she forgot all about the karakas in her wonder at him caring for things like that — caring for the smell of lavender. How many men that she knew would have done such a thing? Oh, how extraordinarily nice workmen were, she thought. Why couldn't she have workmen for her friends rather than the silly boys she danced with and who came to Sunday night supper? She would get on much better with men like these.

It's all the fault, she decided, as the tall fellow drew something on the back of an envelope, something that was to be looped up or left to hang, of these absurd class distinctions. Well, for her part, she didn't feel them. Not a bit, not an atom... And now there came the chock-chock of wooden hammers. Someone whistled, someone sang out, "Are you right there, matey?" "Matey!" The friendliness of it, the — the — Just to prove how happy she was, just to show the tall fellow how at home she felt, and how

she despised stupid conventions, Laura took a big bite of her bread-and-butter as she stared at the little drawing. She felt just like a work-girl.

"Laura, Laura, where are you? Telephone, Laura!" a voice cried from the house.

"Coming!" Away she skimmed, over the lawn, up the path, up the steps, across the veranda, and into the porch. In the hall her father and Laurie were brushing their hats ready to go to the office.

"I say, Laura," said Laurie very fast, "you might just give a squiz at my coat before this afternoon. See if it wants pressing."

"I will," said she. Suddenly she couldn't stop herself. She ran at Laurie and gave him a small, quick squeeze. "Oh, I do love parties, don't you?" gasped Laura.

"Ra-ther," said Laurie's warm, boyish voice, and he squeezed his sister too, and gave her a gentle push. "Dash off to the telephone, old girl."

The telephone. "Yes, yes; oh yes. Kitty? Good morning, dear. Come to lunch? Do, dear. Delighted of course. It will only be a very scratch meal — just the sandwich crusts and broken meringue-shells and what's left over. Yes, isn't it a perfect morning? Your white? Oh, I certainly should. One moment — hold the line. Mother's calling." And Laura sat back. "What, mother? Can't hear."

Mrs. Sheridan's voice floated down the stairs. "Tell her to wear that sweet hat she had on last Sunday."

"Mother says you're to wear that sweet hat you had on last Sunday. Good. One o'clock. Bye-bye."

Laura put back the receiver, flung her arms over her head, took a deep breath, stretched and let them fall. "Huh," she sighed, and the moment after the sigh she sat up quickly. She was still, listening. All the doors in the house seemed to be open. The house was alive with soft, quick steps and running voices. The green baize door that led to the kitchen regions swung open and shut with a muffled thud. And now there came a long, chuckling absurd sound. It was the heavy piano being moved on its stiff castors. But the air! If you stopped to notice, was the air always like this? Little faint winds were playing chase, in at the tops of the windows, out at the doors. And there were two tiny spots of sun, one on the inkpot, one on a silver photograph frame, playing too. Darling little spots.

Especially the one on the inkpot lid. It was quite warm. A warm little silver star. She could have kissed it.

The front door bell pealed, and there sounded the rustle of Sadie's print skirt on the stairs. A man's voice murmured; Sadie answered, careless, "I'm sure I don't know. Wait. I'll ask Mrs. Sheridan."

"What is it, Sadie?" Laura came into the hall. "It's the florist, Miss Laura."

It was, indeed. There, just inside the door, stood a wide, shallow tray full of pots of pink lilies. No other kind. Nothing but lilies — canna lilies, big pink flowers, wide open, radiant, almost frighteningly alive on bright crimson stems.

"O-oh, Sadie!" said Laura, and the sound was like a little moan. She crouched down as if to warm herself at that blaze of lilies; she felt they were in her fingers, on her lips, growing in her breast.

"It's some mistake," she said faintly. "Nobody ever ordered so many. Sadie, go and find mother."

But at that moment Mrs. Sheridan joined them.

"It's quite right," she said calmly. "Yes, I ordered them. Aren't they lovely?" She pressed Laura's arm. "I was passing the shop yesterday, and I saw them in the window. And I suddenly thought for once in my life I shall have enough canna lilies. The garden-party will be a good excuse."

"But I thought you said you didn't mean to interfere," said Laura. Sadie had gone. The florist's man was still outside at his van. She put her arm round her mother's neck and gently, very gently, she bit her mother's ear.

"My darling child, you wouldn't like a logical mother, would you? Don't do that. Here's the man."

He carried more lilies still, another whole tray.

"Bank them up, just inside the door, on both sides of the porch, please," said Mrs. Sheridan.

"Don't you agree, Laura?"

"Oh, I do, mother." In the drawing-room Meg, Jose and good little Hans had at last succeeded in moving the piano.

"Now, if we put this chesterfield against the wall and move everything out of the room except the chairs, don't you think?"

"Quite."

"Hans, move these tables into the smoking-room, and bring a sweeper to take these marks off the carpet and — one moment, Hans—" Jose loved giving orders to the servants, and they loved obeying her. She always made them feel they were taking part in some drama. "Tell mother and Miss Laura to come here at once.

"Very good, Miss Jose." She turned to Meg. "I want to hear what the piano sounds like, just in case I'm asked to sing this afternoon. Let's try over 'This life is Weary.'

"Pom! Ta-ta-ta Tee-ta! The piano burst out so passionately that Jose's face changed. She clasped her hands. She looked mournfully and enigmatically at her mother and Laura as they came in.

"This Life is Wee-ary,
A Tear — a Sigh.
A Love that Chan-ges,
This Life is Wee-ary,
A Tear — a Sigh.
A Love that Chan-ges,
And then... Good-bye!"

But at the word "Good-bye," and although the piano sounded more desperate than ever, her face broke into a brilliant, dreadfully unsympathetic smile.

"Aren't I in good voice, mummy?" she beamed.

"This Life is Wee-ary,
Hope comes to Die.
A Dream — a Wa-kening."

But now Sadie interrupted them. "What is it, Sadie?" "If you please, m'm, cook says have you got the flags for the sandwiches?"

"The flags for the sandwiches, Sadie?" echoed Mrs. Sheridan dreamily. And the children knew by her face that she hadn't got them. "Let me see." And she said to Sadie firmly, "Tell cook I'll let her have them in ten minutes."

Sadie went.

"Now, Laura," said her mother quickly, "come with me into the smoking-room. I've got the names somewhere on the back of an envelope. You'll have to write them out for me. Meg, go upstairs this minute and take that wet thing off your head. Jose, run and finish dressing this instant. Do you hear me, children, or shall I have to tell your father when he comes home to-night? And — and, Jose, pacify cook if you do go into the kitchen, will you? I'm terrified of her this morning."

The envelope was found at last behind the dining-room clock, though how it had got there Mrs. Sheridan could not imagine.

"One of you children must have stolen it out of my bag, because I remember vividly — cream cheese and lemon-curd. Have you done that?"

"Yes."

"Egg and —" Mrs. Sheridan held the envelope away from her.

"It looks like mice. It can't be mice, can it?"

"Olive, pet," said Laura, looking over her shoulder.

"Yes, of course, olive. What a horrible combination it sounds. Egg and olive."

They were finished at last, and Laura took them off to the kitchen. She found Jose there pacifying the cook, who did not look at all terrifying.

"I have never seen such exquisite sandwiches," said Jose's rapturous voice.

"How many kinds did you say there were, cook? Fifteen?"

"Fifteen, Miss Jose."

"Well, cook, I congratulate you."

Cook swept up crusts with the long sandwich knife, and smiled broadly.

"Godber's has come," announced Sadie, issuing out of the pantry. She had seen the man pass the window. That meant the cream puffs had come.

Godber's were famous for their cream puffs. Nobody ever thought of making them at home.

"Bring them in and put them on the table, my girl," ordered cook.

Sadie brought them in and went back to the door. Of course, Laura and Jose were far too grown-up to really care about such things. All the same, they couldn't help agreeing that the puffs looked very attractive. Very. Cook began arranging them, shaking off the extra icing sugar.

"Don't they carry one back to all one's parties?" said Laura.

"I suppose they do," said practical Jose, who never liked to be carried back.

"They look beautifully light and feathery, I must say."

"Have one each, my dears," said cook in her comfortable voice.

"Yer ma won't know."

Oh, impossible. Fancy cream puffs so soon after breakfast. The very idea made one shudder. All the same, two minutes later Jose and Laura were licking their fingers with that absorbed inward look that only comes from whipped cream.

"Let's go into the garden, out by the back way," suggested Laura. "I want to see how the men are getting on with the marquee. They're such awfully nice men."

But the back door was blocked by cook, Sadie, Godber's man and Hans.

Something had happened. "Tuk-tuk-tuk," clucked cook like an agitated hen. Sadie had her hand clapped to her cheek as though she had toothache. Hans's face was screwed up in the effort to understand. Only Godber's man seemed to be enjoying himself; it was his story.

"What's the matter? What's happened?"

"There's been a horrible accident," said Cook. "A man killed."

"A man killed! Where? How? When?"

But Godber's man wasn't going to have his story snatched from under his very nose.

"Know those little cottages just below here, miss?" Know them? Of course, she knew them. "Well, there's a young chap living there, name of Scott, a carter. His horse shied at a traction-engine, corner of Hawke Street this morning, and he was thrown out on the back of his head. Killed."

"Dead!" Laura stared at Godber's man.

"Dead when they picked him up," said Godber's man with relish. "They were taking the body home as I come up here." And he said to the cook, "He's left a wife and five little ones."

"Jose, come here." Laura caught hold of her sister's sleeve and dragged her through the kitchen to the other side of the green baize door. There she paused and leaned against it. "Jose!" she said, horrified, "however are we going to stop everything?"

"Stop everything, Laura!" cried Jose in astonishment.

"What do you mean?"

"Stop the garden-party, of course." Why did Jose pretend?

But Jose was still more amazed. "Stop the garden-party? My dear Laura, don't be so absurd. Of course we can't do anything of the kind. Nobody expects us to. Don't be so extravagant."

"But we can't possibly have a garden-party with a man dead just outside the front gate."

That really was extravagant, for the little cottages were in a lane to themselves at the very bottom of a steep rise that led up to the house. A broad road ran between. True, they were far too near. They were the greatest possible eyesore, and they had no right to be in that neighbourhood at all. They were little mean dwellings painted a chocolate brown. In the garden patches there was nothing but cabbage stalks, sick hens and tomato cans. The very smoke coming out of their chimneys was poverty-stricken. Little rags and shreds of smoke, so unlike the great silvery plumes that uncurled from the Sheridans' chimneys. Washerwomen lived in the lane and sweeps and a cobbler, and a man whose house-front was studded all over with minute bird-cages. Children swarmed. When the Sheridans were little, they were forbidden to set foot there because of the revolting language and of what they might catch. But since they were grown up, Laura and Laurie on their prowls sometimes walked through. It was disgusting and sordid. They came out with a shudder. But still, one must go everywhere; one must see everything. So through they went.

"And just think of what the band would sound like to that poor woman," said Laura.

"Oh, Laura!" Jose began to be seriously annoyed. "If you're going to stop a band playing every time someone has an accident, you'll lead a very strenuous life. I'm every bit as sorry about it as you. I feel just as sympathetic." Her eyes hardened. She looked at her sister just as she used to when they were little and fighting together. "You won't bring a drunken workman back to life by being sentimental," she said softly.

"Drunk! Who said he was drunk?" Laura turned furiously on Jose. She said, just as they had used to say on those occasions, "I'm going straight up to tell mother."

"Do, dear," cooed Jose.

"Mother, can I come into your room?" Laura turned the big glass door-knob.

"Of course, child. Why, what's the matter? What's given you such a colour?" And Mrs. Sheridan turned round from her dressing-table. She was trying on a new hat.

"Mother, a man's been killed," began Laura.

"Not in the garden?" interrupted her mother.

"No, no!"

"Oh, what a fright you gave me!" Mrs. Sheridan sighed with relief, and took off the big hat and held it on her knees.

"But listen, mother," said Laura. Breathless, half-choking, she told the dreadful story. "Of course, we can't have our party, can we?" she pleaded. "The band and everybody arriving. They'd hear us, mother; they're nearly neighbours!"

To Laura's astonishment her mother behaved just like Jose; it was harder to bear because she seemed amused. She refused to take Laura seriously.

"But, my dear child, use your common sense. It's only by accident we've heard of it. If someone had died there normally — and I can't understand how they keep alive in those poky little holes — we should still be having our party, shouldn't we?"

Laura had to say "yes" to that, but she felt it was all wrong. She sat down on her mother's sofa and pinched the cushion frill.

"Mother, isn't it terribly heartless of us?" she asked.

"Darling!" Mrs. Sheridan got up and came over to her, carrying the hat. Before Laura could stop her, she had popped it on. "My child!" said her mother, "the hat is yours. It's made for you. It's much too young for me. I have never seen you look such a picture. Look at yourself!" And she held up her hand mirror.

"But, mother," Laura began again. She couldn't look at herself; she turned aside. This time Mrs. Sheridan lost patience just as Jose had done.

"You are being very absurd, Laura," she said coldly. "People like that don't expect sacrifices from us. And it's not very sympathetic to spoil everybody's enjoyment as you're doing now."

"I don't understand," said Laura, and she walked quickly out of the room into her own bedroom. There, quite by chance, the first thing she saw was this charming girl in the mirror, in her black hat trimmed with gold daisies, and a long black velvet ribbon. Never had she imagined she could look like that. Is mother right? she thought. And now she hoped her mother was right. Am I being extravagant? Perhaps it was extravagant. Just for a moment she had another glimpse of that poor woman and those little children, and the body being carried into the house. But it all seemed blurred, unreal, like a picture in the newspaper. I'll remember it again after the party's over, she decided. And somehow that seemed quite the best plan...

Lunch was over by half-past one. By half-past two they were all ready for the fray. The green-coated band had arrived and was established in a corner of the tennis-court.

"My dear!" trilled Kitty Maitland, "aren't they too like frogs for words? You ought to have arranged them round the pond with the conductor in the middle on a leaf."

Laurie arrived and hailed them on his way to dress. At the sight of him Laura remembered the accident again. She wanted to tell him. If Laurie agreed with the others, then it was bound to be all right. And she followed him into the hall.

"Laurie!"

"Hallo!" He was half-way upstairs, but when he turned round and saw Laura, he suddenly puffed out his cheeks and goggled his eyes at her. "My word, Laura! You do look stunning," said Laurie.

"What an absolutely topping hat!" Laura said faintly "Is it?" and smiled up at Laurie, and didn't tell him after all.

Soon after that people began coming in streams. The band struck up; the hired waiters ran from the house to the marquee. Wherever you looked there were couples strolling, bending to the flowers, greeting, moving on over the lawn. They were like bright birds that had alighted in the Sheridans' garden for this one afternoon, on their way to — where? Ah, what happiness it is to be with people who all are happy, to press hands, press cheeks, smile into eyes.

"Darling Laura, how well you look!"

"What a becoming hat, child!"

"Laura, you look quite Spanish. I've never seen you look so striking."

And Laura, glowing, answered softly, "Have you had tea? Won't you have an ice? The passion-fruit ices really are rather special." She ran to her father and begged him. "Daddy darling, can't the band have something to drink?"

And the perfect afternoon slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed.

"Never a more delightful garden-party..." "The greatest success..." "Quite the most..."

Laura helped her mother with the good-byes. They stood side by side in the porch till it was all over.

"All over, all over, thank heaven," said Mrs. Sheridan. "Round up the others, Laura. Let's go and have some fresh coffee. I'm exhausted. Yes, it's been very successful. But oh, these parties, these parties! Why will you children insist on giving parties!" And they all of them sat down in the deserted marquee.

"Have a sandwich, daddy dear. I wrote the flag."

"Thanks." Mr. Sheridan took a bite and the sandwich was gone. He took another. "I suppose you didn't hear of a beastly accident that happened to-day?" he said.

"My dear," said Mrs. Sheridan, holding up her hand, "we did. It nearly ruined the party. Laura insisted we should put it off."

"Oh, mother!" Laura didn't want to be teased about it.

"It was a horrible affair all the same," said Mr. Sheridan. "The chap was married too. Lived just below in the lane, and leaves a wife and half a dozen kiddies, so they say."

An awkward little silence fell. Mrs. Sheridan fidgeted with her cup. Really, it was very tactless of father...

Suddenly she looked up. There on the table were all those sandwiches, cakes, puffs, all uneaten, all going to be wasted. She had one of her brilliant ideas.

"I know," she said. "Let's make up a basket. Let's send that poor creature some of this perfectly good food. At any rate, it will be the greatest treat for the children. Don't you agree? And she's sure to have neighbours calling in and so on. What a point to have it all ready prepared. Laura!" She jumped up. "Get me the big basket out of the stairs cupboard."

"But, mother, do you really think it's a good idea?" said Laura.

Again, how curious, she seemed to be different from them all. To take scraps from their party. Would the poor woman really like that?

"Of course! What's the matter with you to-day? An hour or two ago you were insisting on us being sympathetic, and now —"

Oh well! Laura ran for the basket. It was filled, it was heaped by her mother.

"Take it yourself, darling," said she. "Run down just as you are. No, wait, take the arum lilies too. People of that class are so impressed by arum lilies."

"The stems will ruin her lace frock," said practical Jose.

So, they would. Just in time. "Only the basket, then. And, Laura!" — her mother followed her out of the marquee — "don't on any account —"

"What mother?"

No, better not put such ideas into the child's head! "Nothing! Run along."

It was just growing dusky as Laura shut their garden gates. A big dog ran by like a shadow. The road gleamed white, and down below in the hollow the little cottages were in deep shade. How quiet it seemed after the afternoon. Here she was going down the hill to somewhere where a man lay dead, and she couldn't realize it. Why couldn't she? She stopped a minute. And it seemed to her that kisses, voices, tinkling spoons, laughter, the smell of crushed grass were somehow inside her. She had no room for anything else. How strange! She looked up at the pale sky, and all she thought was, "Yes, it was the most successful party."

Now the broad road was crossed. The lane began, smoky and dark. Women in shawls and men's tweed caps hurried by. Men hung over the palings; the children played in the doorways. A low hum came from the mean little cottages. In some of them there was a flicker of light, and a shadow, crab-like, moved across the window. Laura bent her head and hurried on. She wished now she had put on a coat. How her frock shone! And the big hat with the velvet streamer — if only it was another hat! Were the people looking at her? They must be. It was a mistake to have come; she knew all along it was a mistake. Should she go back even now?

No, too late. This was the house. It must be. A dark knot of people stood outside. Beside the gate an old, old woman with a crutch sat in a chair, watching. She had her feet on a newspaper. The voices stopped as Laura drew near. The group parted. It was as though she was expected, as though they had known she was coming here.

Laura was terribly nervous. Tossing the velvet ribbon over her shoulder, she said to a woman standing by, "Is this Mrs. Scott's house?" and the woman, smiling queerly, said, "It is, my lass."

Oh, to be away from this! She actually said, "Help me, God," as she walked up the tiny path and knocked. To be away from those staring eyes, or to be covered up in anything, one of those women's shawls even. I'll just leave the basket and go, she decided. I shan't even wait for it to be emptied.

Then the door opened. A little woman in black showed in the gloom.

Laura said, "Are you Mrs. Scott?" But to her horror the woman answered, "Walk in please, miss," and she was shut in the passage.

"No," said Laura, "I don't want to come in. I only want to leave this basket. Mother sent —"

The little woman in the gloomy passage seemed not to have heard her. "Step this way, please, miss," she said in an oily voice, and Laura followed her.

She found herself in a wretched little low kitchen, lighted by a smoky lamp. There was a woman sitting before the fire.

"Em," said the little creature who had let her in. "Em! It's a young lady." She turned to Laura. She said meaningly, "I'm 'er sister, miss. You'll excuse 'er, won't you?"

"Oh, but of course!" said Laura. "Please, please don't disturb her. I — I only want to leave —"

But at that moment the woman at the fire turned round. Her face, puffed up, red, with swollen eyes and swollen lips, looked terrible. She seemed as though she couldn't understand why Laura was there. What did it mean? Why was this stranger standing in the kitchen with a basket? What was it all about? And the poor face puckered up again.

"All right, my dear," said the other. "I'll thenk the young lady."

And again, she began, "You'll excuse her, miss, I'm sure," and her face, swollen too, tried an oily smile.

Laura only wanted to get out, to get away. She was back in the passage. The door opened. She walked straight through into the bedroom, where the dead man was lying.

"You'd like a look at 'im, wouldn't you?" said Em's sister, and she brushed past Laura over to the bed. "Don't be afraid, my lass," — and now her voice sounded fond and sly, and fondly she drew down the sheet — "'e looks a picture. There's nothing to show. Come along, my dear."

Laura came.

There lay a young man, fast asleep — sleeping so soundly, so deeply, that he was far, far away from them both. Oh, so remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him up again. His head was sunk in the pillow, his eyes were closed; they were blind under the closed eyelids. He was given up to his dream. What did garden-parties and baskets and lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane. Happy... happy... All is well, said that sleeping face. This is just as it should be. I am content.

But all the same you had to cry, and she couldn't go out of the room without saying something to him. Laura gave a loud childish sob.

"Forgive my hat," she said.

And this time she didn't wait for Em's sister. She found her way out of the door, down the path, past all those dark people. At the corner of the lane she met Laurie.

He stepped out of the shadow. "Is that you, Laura?"

"Yes."

"Mother was getting anxious. Was it all right?"

"Yes, quite. Oh, Laurie!" She took his arm; she pressed up against him.

"I say, you're not crying, are you?" asked her brother.

Laura shook her head. She was.

Laurie put his arm round her shoulder. "Don't cry," he said in his warm, loving voice.

"Was it awful?"

"No," sobbed Laura. "It was simply marvellous. But Laurie—" She stopped, she looked at her brother. "Isn't life," she stammered, "isn't life—" But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood.

"Isn't it, darling?" said Laurie.

Story 4. SERAPHIM by Gaye Jee



The street lamps cast pools of light on the wet cobbles, illuminating the heads of the saints as they keep their stony vigils on the walls of Charles Bridge. Fog rising from the river curls its tentacles between the statues, wreathing a head for a few seconds or obscuring entire sections of the ancient walls. The Vltava flows oily and invisible thirty feet below. A bell somewhere in Hradcany strikes three.

The sound of running footsteps batters the muffled air, and then a cry. Jakub, his bare feet filthy and bleeding, almost catches his wife's shoulder as she flees under the gothic archway of the Bridge Tower. But a chipped cobble tears the ball of his foot and he sprawls on the wet stones. By the time he heaves himself upright again, she is poised on the wall between the statues of St Joseph and St Francis Xavier. She briefly turns her face towards him, her features blurred by the fog into a pale moon partially eclipsed by black hair.

"Witch!" he screams, "Whore! Come back here and ..."

Just as he thinks she is about to step into the air, the drifting mist obscures her figure only to part again as he reaches the place where she stood. The wall is empty.

Fifteen-year-old Katerina pulls her coat close round her thin body and slips back out of sight under the Bridge Tower. She runs home through the streets of Prague's Old Town and sits shivering in her bed.

The next day, her grey-faced father says,

"Your mother's gone. Gone like the cheating whore she is."

He glances at Katerina's crushed expression and adds,

"It's no use crying. She's gone for good this time. Off with one of her men."

It's possible this is what's happened. He's heard nothing from his neighbours about a drowning and he could easily have imagined what he thinks he saw. Katerina says nothing. But then, she always says nothing. She hasn't spoken since she was two years old.

With Josefina gone, Jakub has another problem. Although her crystalline voice was untrained, his wife had earned much more than he by singing in the vestries of churches, at private parties or on the bridge, accompanied by her scratchy cassette recorder. When the weather is fine, he earns a few crowns sketching tourists on the bridge, just as he has always done, but it is very little compared to what his wife, with her waist length black hair and wide red mouth, could make. Sometimes she would come back with more money than he could make in a week. Visiting Americans and Japanese were, she told him with her glittering smile, extremely generous.

From her room in the attic, Katerina had often heard her mother's melodious, tinkling laugh when Jakub was away. Creeping down the creaking stairs, she had seen candlelight flickering on the windowsills in her parents' bedroom, the heavy crimson

wrap sliding off her mother's shoulder, the entwined limbs. Later, finding her daughter on the bottom step, Josefina would sit next to her and pull the girl's head onto her shoulder. Katerina would watch as the man dropped bank notes on the bed side table and, his face averted, hurry down to the front door and out onto Kamzikova Street.

"Men ... my darling, you must know how to use them, you know," her mother would say, stroking her daughter's hands and laughing gently. "What are you thinking little one, you who see so much and say nothing?"

She would search her daughter's face with her eyes and then pull the girl to her once more.

"You and I, darling, we have each other. That is what is important. I do what I must do to make money for us. Your father is an idiot, so I must protect you. You must remember that whatever happens, we will be always be together."

We will always be together.

Now Josefina is gone and her father is broken and wordless. She saw him chase her mother into the street that night. He had found her sprawled asleep across the bed, the crimson shoes with their dagger-like heels still on her feet, a lover's note and enough money for a month's rent lying on the floor among the dust. Katerina saw him strike her mother's face with the back of his hand, a scarlet crescent against the white skin.

Three weeks later Jakub is sitting at the wooden table in the hallway. He has enough money left to buy food for the evening meal, or to get drunk. He curses his wife and his silent daughter in her tiny room at the top of the house.

Katerina is standing at the window which looks out over the roofs of the old town. If she leans out and looks to the left, she can see the top of the town hall tower from her window. As she waits, breath drawn in, she hears the astronomical clock striking the hour. She closes her eyes to see the figure of Death pull the rope he holds in his right hand, while inverting the hourglass he holds in the other. Presently she feels warm dry lips against her cheek and turns to embrace her mother. Her room is empty but for her bed, a wooden chair and the closet in which she hangs her clothes. Josefina's voice curls into her mind like smoke; she is singing Gounod's Ave Maria, shivering the high notes like the topmost leaves of a silver birch.

When all is silent in her head once more, Katerina puts her fingertips to her lips. They feel warm and slightly buzzy. When she opens her mouth, the music in her head begins again and she finds herself singing as effortlessly as sunlight pours through an open casement. Jakub raises his face from his hands and takes the steps two at a time, bursting into his daughter's room. He looks about wildly, expecting to see Josefina. But there is only Katerina standing by the window, her eyes startled, her fingertips once more trembling at her lips.

The next day Jakub and Katerina walk to Charles Bridge, his hand gripping her elbow. He finds a place between the stalls selling city scenes, trinket boxes and cheap silver jewelry and places the cassette player between them on the wall. The girl shivers in

the sharp wind and watches the clouds scudding across the face of the pale lemon sun as it rises above the spires and bell towers of the Old Town. A few yards away, an old man in a long, shabby overcoat is setting up a glass harmonica. His face is so thin and white it seems pared to the bone, yet he grins and cracks jokes, calling out to passersby. He pours water into each wine glass, each a little more than the last until he achieves a full three octave instrument.

"Thought by some to be the medium through which the angels can sing directly to us, and used by the great Mesmer himself to condition patients before hypnosis, I give you, ladies and gentlemen ..."

A pause, as he drips more water from a plastic can, and runs his moistened finger round the rim of several adjoining glasses to test the pitch. Each gives up its luminous golden tone like the dying breath of a song thrush.

"... the original of the instrument known as the seraphim, the eumelia, the claviclindre ..."

Jakub presses the button on the cassette player. The opening bars of Dido's lament sough from the machine. He takes his daughter's arm and turns her away from the wall to face the passing tourists. For a few seconds she looks confused, clutching her coat round her thin body. Then she begins to sing, her voice trembling silver above the glass harmonica's spun gold. As her voice grows in power, the small crowd which has gathered round the harmonica, turn to find out where the new sound is coming from. The old man glares irritably at Jakub as his carefully prepared audience drift the twenty feet up the bridge to listen to the shivering girl.

And as his daughter sings, Jakub sees again that night when Josefina broke away from him, the weal on her face flaming red. Whore.

Deep down, he had always known how she got her money. But he became tired of her taunts, the way she mocked his inability to sell his real paintings for money. He'd taken his shoes off at the front door so as not to wake her – and found her lying across the bed saturated by the body of another man. He stood over her, fists clenched, his face rigid with fury and grief. As if she sensed him – or perhaps she thought her lover was still there – she opened her eyes and – she smiled. He dragged her off the bed and out into the hallway where Katerina stood unnoticed at the top of the stairs. Then she mocked him, fanning his anger until he could bear it no longer and slapped her hard across the face. Still, she smiled, laughed, in his face. He twisted her arm up her back until she cried out in pain. He pressed his mouth to her ear.

"I'm going to kill you, do you hear?"

She stepped backwards, grinding her stiletto heel into the toes of his left foot. Gasping with pain and surprise, he released her and she fled down the stairs and through the front door of the apartment.

He chased her through the old town and under the gateway to the bridge. She turned then and called to him,

"I curse you, little man. I'm sick of living like an animal with you."

He was almost close enough to grab her shoulder, but as he reached out his arm, the broken cobble pierced the flesh of his foot.

And Josefina runs to the wall and looks down at the water. She is a strong swimmer. If she can make him believe she has drowned, she can disappear and find somewhere new for her and Katerina to live. One of her lovers will help. She must do this for Katerina. In a few days she will watch for her daughter coming out of the apartment and take her to a new home. Safe, away from the murderous Jakub. She climbs on the wall and glances towards her husband who is getting to his feet. She steps into the air and, her scarlet dress flying around her body like wings, waits for the shock of the icy water.

Katerina is singing a Hungarian folk song, the penultimate song in her mother's repertoire. Jakub rattles the already heavy bag as one by one, the people, as though hypnotised by his daughter's voice, drop into it whatever notes and coins they find in their pockets. She is staring straight ahead, her eyes lifeless and unfocussed, her mouth the only animated part of her body.

The glass harmonica player can bear it no longer. The subtle tones he can tease out of his instrument are completely overwhelmed by the silvery flood of notes issuing from Katerina's mouth. He marches along the bridge and shouts to the people,

"Why are you listening to this silly child? Can't you hear she has the voice of a common music hall singer? My glass harmonica is far more rare. You'll not see another like it in the city!"

A few of the crowd turn their heads, irritated at the interruption, and then turn back again, listening even more intently. The old man is furious at being ignored, his eyes blazing black and furious in his bone-white face. He pushes his way through the crowd, shouldering people aside until he reaches the front of the semicircle which has formed around the girl. She has just begun her final song. Ave, Maria, gratia plena ...

Jakub, moving among the people at the back of the crowd, hears a disturbance, but cannot see what is happening. By the time he has worked his way to the front, the old harmonica player has gone right up to Katerina and is shouting in her face. She seems unaware of his presence. Taking this for insolence, the old man slaps her sharply on the cheek. The people in the crowd gasp, but do nothing, remaining motionless as though they have lost the ability to move. Katerina's eyes, still unfocussed, fill with tears. Her mouth stops forming the words and hangs open slackly, a thin ribbon of drool stumbling down her chin. But the singing continues. Dominus tecum; benedicta tu in mulieribus ... Enraged, the old man picks up the cassette player and throws it into the water.

"See, it wasn't even her singing. It was a ..." The cassette player hits the water. And still the singing continues, rippling out of girl's gaping mouth. People begin to back away. Jakub goes over to his daughter and shakes her by the shoulders. She begins to vomit, but even her retching cannot drown out the singing which continues unabated from her lips. The harmonica player's eyes bulge almost out of his skull. He grabs Jakub by the sleeve.

"She's a witch", he breathes. "A witch!"

Abruptly the singing stops. Katerina turns and walks along the bridge, bumping into people and knocking over tourist stalls. Jakub follows, but is impeded by the street vendors who are trying to collect up their scattered wares. She climbs on the wall of the bridge between the statues of St Joseph and St Francis Xavier and steps out into air, the sunlight blazing a silvery corona round the black core of her descending body.

When the river is dragged, they search for many hours before finding her among the foundations of an old building. She is entangled in the bones of a woman's decaying fish-nibbled corpse which floats upright, anchored by an ankle wedged in the masonry, scarlet dress flowing in tatters like weed in a mill race. The partially exposed bones of the mother's arms form a perfect, protective circle around her daughter's body.

Chapter 3.

Story 1. TWO KINDS by Ami Tan



My mother believed you could be anything you wanted to be in America. You could open a restaurant. You could work for the government and get good retirement. You could buy a house with almost no money down. You could become rich. You could become instantly famous.

"Of course, you can be prodigy, too," my mother told me when I was nine. "You can be best anything. What does Auntie Lindo know? Her daughter, she is only best tricky."

America was where all my mother's hopes lay. She had come here in 1949 after losing everything in China: her mother and father, her family home, her first husband, and two daughters, twin baby girls. But she never looked back with regret. There were so many ways for things to get better.

We didn't immediately pick the right kind of prodigy. At first my mother thought I could be a Chinese Shirley Temple. We'd watch Shirley's old movies on TV as though they were training films. My mother would poke my arm and say, "*Ni kan*" — You watch. And I would see Shirley tapping her feet, or singing a sailor song, or pursing her lips into a very round O while saying, "Oh my goodness."

"*Ni kan*," said my mother as Shirley's eyes flooded with tears. "You already know how. Don't need talent for crying!"

Soon after my mother got this idea about Shirley Temple, she took me to a beauty training school in the Mission district and put me in the hands of a student who could barely hold the scissors without shaking. Instead of getting big fat curls, I emerged with an uneven mass of crinkly black fuzz. My mother dragged me off to the bathroom and tried to wet down my hair.

"You look like Negro Chinese," she lamented, as if I had done this on purpose.

The instructor of the beauty training school had to lop off these soggy clumps to make my hair even again. "Peter Pan is very popular these days," the instructor assured my mother. I now had hair the length of a boy's, with straight-across bangs that hung at a slant two inches above my eyebrows. I liked the haircut and it made me actually look forward to my future fame.

In fact, in the beginning, I was just as excited as my mother, maybe even more so. I pictured this prodigy part of me as many different images, trying each one on for size. I was a dainty ballerina girl standing by the curtains, waiting to hear the right music that would send me floating on my tiptoes. I was like the Christ child lifted out

of the straw manger, crying with holy indignity. I was Cinderella stepping from her pumpkin carriage with sparkly cartoon music filling the air.

In all of my imaginings, I was filled with a sense that I would soon become *perfect*. My mother and father would adore me. I would be beyond reproach. I would never feel the need to sulk for anything.

But sometimes the prodigy in me became impatient. "If you don't hurry up and get me out of here, I'm disappearing for good," it warned. "And then you'll always be nothing."

Every night after dinner, my mother and I would sit at the Formica kitchen table. She would present new tests, taking her examples from stories of amazing children she had read in *Ripley's Believe It or Not*, or *Good Housekeeping*, *Reader's Digest*, and a dozen other magazines she kept in a pile in our bathroom. My mother got these magazines from people whose houses she cleaned. And since she cleaned many houses each week, we had a great assortment. She would look through them all, searching for stories about remarkable children.

The first night she brought out a story about a three-year-old boy who knew the capitals of all the states and even most of the European countries. A teacher was quoted as saying the little boy could also pronounce the names of the foreign cities correctly.

"What's the capital of Finland?" my mother asked me, looking at the magazine story.

All I knew was the capital of California, because Sacramento was the name of the street we lived on in Chinatown. "Nairobi!" I guessed, saying the most foreign word I could think of. She checked to see if that was possibly one way to pronounce "Helsinki" before showing me the answer.

The tests got harder — multiplying numbers in my head, finding the queen of hearts in a deck of cards, trying to stand on my head without using my hands, predicting the daily temperatures in Los Angeles, New York, and London.

One night I had to look at a page from the Bible for three minutes and then report everything I could remember. "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance and . . . that's all I remember, Ma," I said.

And after seeing my mother's disappointed face once again, something inside of me began to die. I hated the tests, the raised hopes and failed expectations. Before going to bed that night, I looked in the mirror above the bathroom sink and when I saw only my face staring back — and that it would always be this ordinary face — I began to cry. Such a sad, ugly girl! I made high-pitched noises like a crazed animal, trying to scratch out the face in the mirror.

And then I saw what seemed to be the prodigy side of me — because I had never seen that face before. I looked at my reflection, blinking so I could see more clearly. The girl staring back at me was angry, powerful. This girl and I were the same. I had new thoughts, willful thoughts, or rather thoughts filled with lots of wants. I won't let her change me, I promised myself. I won't be what I'm not.

So now on nights when my mother presented her tests, I performed listlessly, my head propped on one arm. I pretended to be bored. And I was. I got so bored I started counting the bellows of the foghorns out on the bay while my mother drilled me in other areas. The sound was comforting and reminded me of the cow jumping over the moon. And the next day, I played a game with myself, seeing if my mother would give up on me before eight bellows. After a while I usually counted only one, maybe two bellows at most. At last she was beginning to give up hope.

Two or three months had gone by without any mention of my being a prodigy again. And then one day my mother was watching *The Ed Sullivan Show* on TV. The TV was old and the sound kept shorting out. Every time my mother got halfway up from the sofa to adjust the set, the sound would go back on and Ed would be talking. As soon as she sat down, Ed would go silent again. She got up, the TV broke into loud piano music. She sat down. Silence. Up and down, back and forth, quiet and loud. It was like a stiff embraceless dance between her and the TV set. Finally, she stood by the set with her hand on the sound dial.

She seemed entranced by the music, a little frenzied piano piece with this mesmerizing quality, sort of quick passages and then teasing lilting ones before it returned to the quick playful parts.

"*Ni kan*," my mother said, calling me over with hurried hand gestures. "Look here."

I could see why my mother was fascinated by the music. It was being pounded out by a little Chinese girl, about nine years old, with a Peter Pan haircut. The girl had the sauciness of a Shirley Temple. She was proudly modest like a proper Chinese child. And she also did this fancy sweep of a curtsy, so that the fluffy skirt of her white dress cascaded slowly to the floor like the petals of a large carnation.

In spite of these warning signs, I wasn't worried. Our family had no piano and we couldn't afford to buy one, let alone reams of sheet music and piano lessons. So I could be generous in my comments when my mother bad-mouthed the little girl on TV.

"Play note right, but doesn't sound good! No singing sound," complained my mother.

"What are you picking on her for?" I said carelessly. "She's pretty good. Maybe she's not the best, but she's trying hard." I knew almost immediately I would be sorry I said that.

"Just like you," she said. "Not the best. Because you not trying." She gave a little huff as she let go of the sound dial and sat down on the sofa.

The little Chinese girl sat down also to play an encore of "Anitra's Dance" by Grieg. I remember the song, because later on I had to learn how to play it.

Three days after watching *The Ed Sullivan Show*, my mother told me what my schedule would be for piano lessons and piano practice. She had talked to Mr. Chong, who lived on the first floor of our apartment building. Mr. Chong was a retired piano teacher and my mother had traded housecleaning services for weekly lessons and a piano for me to practice on every day, two hours a day, from four until six.

When my mother told me this, I felt as though I had been sent to hell. I whined and then kicked my foot a little when I couldn't stand it anymore.

"Why don't you like me the way I am? I'm *not* a genius! I can't play the piano. And even if I could, I wouldn't go on TV if you paid me a million dollars!" I cried.

My mother slapped me. "Who ask you be genius?" she shouted. "Only ask you be your best. For you sake. You think I want you be genius? Hnnh! What for! Who ask you!"

"So ungrateful," I heard her mutter in Chinese. "If she had as much talent as she has temper, she would be famous now."

Mr. Chong, whom I secretly nicknamed Old Chong, was very strange, always tapping his fingers to the silent music of an invisible orchestra. He looked ancient in my eyes. He had lost most of the hair on top of his head and he wore thick glasses and had eyes that always looked tired and sleepy. But he must have been younger than I thought, since he lived with his mother and was not yet married.

I met Old Lady Chong once and that was enough. She had this peculiar smell like a baby that had done something in its pants. And her fingers felt like a dead person's, like an old peach I once found in the back of the refrigerator; the skin just slid off the meat when I picked it up.

I soon found out why Old Chong had retired from teaching piano. He was deaf. "Like Beethoven!" he shouted to me. "We're both listening only in our head!" And he would start to conduct his frantic silent sonatas.

Our lessons went like this. He would open the book and point to different things, explaining their purpose: "Key! Treble! Bass! No sharps or flats! So, this is C major! Listen now and play after me!"

And then he would play the C scale a few times, a simple chord, and then, as if inspired by an old, unreachable itch, he gradually added more notes and running trills and a pounding bass until the music was really something quite grand.

I would play after him, the simple scale, the simple chord, and then I just played some nonsense that sounded like a cat running up and down on top of garbage cans.

Old Chong smiled and applauded and then said, "Very good! But now you must learn to keep time!"

So that's how I discovered that Old Chong's eyes were too slow to keep up with the wrong notes I was playing. He went through the motions in half-time. To help me keep rhythm, he stood behind me, pushing down on my right shoulder for every beat. He balanced pennies on top of my wrists so I would keep them still as I slowly played scales and arpeggios. He had me curve my hand around an apple and keep that shape when playing chords. He marched stiffly to show me how to make each finger dance up and down, staccato like an obedient little soldier.

He taught me all these things, and that was how I also learned I could be lazy and get away with mistakes, lots of mistakes. If I hit the wrong notes because I hadn't practiced enough, I never corrected myself. I just kept playing in rhythm. And Old Chong kept conducting his own private reverie.

So maybe I never really gave myself a fair chance. I did pick up the basics pretty quickly, and I might have become a good pianist at that young age. But I was so determined not to try, not to be anybody different that I learned to play only the most ear-splitting preludes, the most discordant hymns.

Over the next year, I practiced like this, dutifully in my own way. And then one day I heard my mother and her friend Lindo Jong both talking in a loud bragging tone of voice so others could hear. It was after church, and I was leaning against the brick wall wearing a dress with stiff white petticoats. Auntie Lindo's daughter, Waverly, who was about my age, was standing farther down the wall about five feet away. We had grown up together and shared all the closeness of two sisters squabbling over crayons and dolls. In other words, for the most part, we hated each other. I thought she was snotty. Waverly Jong had gained a certain amount of fame as "Chinatown's Littlest Chinese Chess Champion."

"She bring home too many trophy," lamented Auntie Lindo that Sunday. "All day she play chess. All day I have no time do nothing but dust off her winnings." She threw a scolding look at Waverly, who pretended not to see her.

"You lucky you don't have this problem," said Auntie Lindo with a sigh to my mother.

And my mother squared her shoulders and bragged: "Our problem worser than yours. If we ask Jing-mei wash dish, she hear nothing but music. It's like you can't stop this natural talent."

And right then, I was determined to put a stop to her foolish pride.

A few weeks later, Old Chong and my mother conspired to have me play in a talent show which would be held in the church hall. By then, my parents had saved up enough to buy me a secondhand piano, a black Wurlitzer spinet with a scarred bench. It was the showpiece of our living room.

For the talent show, I was to play a piece called "Pleading Child" from Schumann's *Scenes from Childhood*. It was a simple, moody piece that sounded more difficult than it was. I was supposed to memorize the whole thing, playing the repeat parts twice to make the piece sound longer. But I dawdled over it, playing a few bars and then cheating, looking up to see what notes followed. I never really listened to what I was playing. I daydreamed about being somewhere else, about being someone else.

The part I liked to practice best was the fancy curtsy: right foot out, touch the rose on the carpet with a pointed foot, sweep to the side, left leg bends, look up and smile.

My parents invited all the couples from the Joy Luck Club to witness my debut. Auntie Lindo and Uncle Tin were there. Waverly and her two older brothers had also come. The first two rows were filled with children both younger and older than I was. The littlest ones got to go first. They recited simple nursery rhymes, squawked out tunes on miniature violins, twirled Hula Hoops, pranced in pink ballet tutus, and when they bowed or curtsied, the audience would sigh in unison, "Awww," and then clap enthusiastically.

When my turn came, I was very confident. I remember my childish excitement. It was as if I knew, without a doubt, that the prodigy side of me really did exist. I had no fear whatsoever, no nervousness. I remember thinking to myself, This is it! This is it! I looked out over the audience, at my mother's blank face, my father's yawn, Auntie Lindo's stiff-lipped smile, Waverly's sulky expression. I had on a white dress layered with sheets of lace, and a pink bow in my Peter Pan haircut. As I sat down I envisioned people jumping to their feet and Ed Sullivan rushing up to introduce me to everyone on TV.

And I started to play. It was so beautiful. I was so caught up in how lovely I looked that at first, I didn't worry how I would sound. So, it was a surprise to me when I hit the first wrong note and I realized something didn't sound quite right. And then I hit another and another followed that. A chill started at the top of my head and began to trickle down. Yet I couldn't stop playing, as though my hands were bewitched. I kept thinking my fingers would adjust themselves back, like a train switching to the right track. I played this strange jumble through two repeats, the sour notes staying with me all the way to the end.

When I stood up, I discovered my legs were shaking. Maybe I had just been nervous and the audience, like Old Chong, had seen me go through the right motions and had not heard anything wrong at all. I swept my right foot out, went down on my knee, looked up and smiled. The room was quiet, except for Old Chong, who was beaming and shouting, "Bravo! Bravo! Well done!" But then I saw my mother's face, her stricken face. The audience clapped weakly, and as I walked back to my chair, with my whole face quivering as I tried not to cry, I heard a little boy whisper loudly to his mother, "That was awful," and the mother whispered back, "Well, she certainly tried."

And now I realized how many people were in the audience, the whole world it seemed. I was aware of eyes burning into my back. I felt the shame of my mother and father as they sat stiffly throughout the rest of the show.

We could have escaped during intermission. Pride and some strange sense of honor must have anchored my parents to their chairs. And so, we watched it all: the eighteen-year-old boy with a fake mustache who did a magic show and juggled flaming hoops while riding a unicycle. The breasted girl with white makeup who sang from *Madama Butterfly* and got honorable mention. And the eleven-year-old boy who won first prize playing a tricky violin song that sounded like a busy bee.

After the show, the Hsus, the Jongs, and the St. Clairs from the Joy Luck Club came up to my mother and father.

"Lots of talented kids," Auntie Lindo said vaguely, smiling broadly.

"That was somethin' else," said my father, and I wondered if he was referring to me in a humorous way, or whether he even remembered what I had done.

Waverly looked at me and shrugged her shoulders. "You aren't a genius like me," she said matter-of-factly. And if I hadn't felt so bad, I would have pulled her braids and punched her stomach.

But my mother's expression was what devastated me: a quiet, blank look that said she had lost everything. I felt the same way, and it seemed as if everybody were now coming up, like gawkers at the scene of an accident, to see what parts were actually missing. When we got on the bus to go home, my father was humming the busy-bee tune and my mother was silent. I kept thinking she wanted to wait until we got home before shouting at me. But when my father unlocked the door to our apartment, my mother walked in and then went to the back, into the bedroom. No accusations. No blame. And in a way, I felt disappointed. I had been waiting for her to start shouting, so I could shout back and cry and blame her for all my misery.

I assumed my talent-show fiasco meant I never had to play the piano again. But two days later, after school, my mother came out of the kitchen and saw me watching TV.

"Four clock," she reminded me as if it were any other day. I was stunned, as though she were asking me to go through the talent-show torture again. I wedged myself more tightly in front of the TV.

"Turn off TV," she called from the kitchen five minutes later.

I didn't budge. And then I decided. I didn't have to do what my mother said anymore. I wasn't her slave. This wasn't China. I had listened to her before and look what happened. She was the stupid one.

She came out from the kitchen and stood in the arched entryway of the living room. "Four clock," she said once again, louder.

"I'm not going to play anymore," I said nonchalantly. "Why should I? I'm not a genius."

She walked over and stood in front of the TV. I saw her chest was heaving up and down in an angry way.

"No!" I said, and I now felt stronger, as if my true self had finally emerged. So, this was what had been inside me all along.

"No! I won't!" I screamed.

She yanked me by the arm, pulled me off the floor, snapped off the TV. She was frighteningly strong, half pulling, half carrying me toward the piano as I kicked the throw rugs under my feet. She lifted me up and onto the hard bench. I was sobbing by now, looking at her bitterly. Her chest was heaving even more and her mouth was open, smiling crazily as if she were pleased I was crying.

"You want me to be someone that I'm not!" I sobbed. "I'll never be the kind of daughter you want me to be!"

"Only two kinds of daughters," she shouted in Chinese. "Those who are obedient and those who follow their own mind! Only one kind of daughter can live in this house. Obedient daughter!"

"Then I wish I wasn't your daughter. I wish you weren't my mother," I shouted. As I said these things I got scared. It felt like worms and toads and slimy things crawling out of *my* chest, but it also felt good, as if this awful side of me had surfaced, at last.

"Too late change this," said my mother shrilly.

And I could sense her anger rising to its breaking point. I wanted to see it spill over. And that's when I remembered the babies she had lost in China, the ones we never talked about. "Then I wish I'd never been born!" I shouted. "I wish I were dead! Like them."

It was as if I had said the magic words. Alakazam! —and her face went blank, her mouth closed, her arms went slack, and she backed out of the room, stunned, as if she were blowing away like a small brown leaf, thin, brittle, lifeless.

It was not the only disappointment my mother felt in me. In the years that followed, I failed her so many times, each time asserting my own will, my right to fall short of expectations. I didn't get straight As. I didn't become class president. I didn't get into Stanford. I dropped out of college.

For unlike my mother, I did not believe I could be anything I wanted to be. I could only be me.

And for all those years, we never talked about the disaster at the recital or my terrible accusations afterward at the piano bench. All that remained unchecked, like a betrayal that was now unspeakable. So, I never found a way to ask her why she had hoped for something so large that failure was inevitable.

And even worse, I never asked her what frightened me the most: Why had she given up hope?

For after our struggle at the piano, she never mentioned my playing again. The lessons stopped. The lid to the piano was closed, shutting out the dust, my misery, and her dreams.

So, she surprised me. A few years ago, she offered to give me the piano, for my thirtieth birthday. I had not played in all those years. I saw the offer as a sign of forgiveness, a tremendous burden removed.

"Are you sure?" I asked shyly. "I mean, won't you and Dad miss it?"

"No, this your piano," she said firmly. "Always your piano. You only one can play."

"Well, I probably can't play anymore," I said. "It's been years."

"You pick up fast," said my mother, as if she knew this was certain. "You have natural talent. You could been genius if you want to."

"No I couldn't."

"You just not trying," said my mother. And she was neither angry nor sad. She said it as if to announce a fact that could never be disproved. "Take it," she said.

But I didn't at first. It was enough that she had offered it to me. And after that, every time I saw it in my parents' living room, standing in front of the bay windows, it made me feel proud, as if it were a shiny trophy I had won back.

Last week I sent a tuner over to my parents' apartment and had the piano reconditioned, for purely sentimental reasons. My mother had died a few months before and I had been getting things in order for my father, a little bit at a time. I put the jewelry in special silk pouches. The sweaters she had knitted in yellow, pink, bright orange—all the colors I hated—I put those in moth-proof boxes. I found some old Chinese silk dresses, the kind with little slits up the sides. I rubbed the old silk against my skin, then wrapped them in tissue and decided to take them home with me.

After I had the piano tuned, I opened the lid and touched the keys. It sounded even richer than I remembered. Really, it was a very good piano. Inside the bench were

the same exercise notes with handwritten scales, the same secondhand music books with their covers held together with yellow tape.

I opened up the Schumann book to the dark little piece I had played at the recital. It was on the left-hand side of the page, "Pleading Child." It looked more difficult than I remembered. I played a few bars, surprised at how easily the notes came back to me.

And for the first time, or so it seemed, I noticed the piece on the right-hand side. It was called "Perfectly Contented." I tried to play this one as well. It had a lighter melody but the same flowing rhythm and turned out to be quite easy. "Pleading Child" was shorter but slower; "Perfectly Contented" was longer, but faster. And after I played them both a few times, I realized they were two halves of the same song.

Story 2. ONCE UPON THE TIME by Nadine Gordimer



Someone has written to ask me to contribute to an anthology of stories for children. I reply that I don't write children's stories; and he writes back that at a recent congress/book fair/seminar a certain novelist said every writer ought to write at least one story for children. I think of sending a postcard saying I don't accept that I 'ought' to write anything.

And then last night I woke up – or rather was wakened without knowing what had roused me.

A voice in the echo-chamber of the subconscious?

A sound.

A creaking of the kind made by the weight carried by one foot after another along a wooden floor. I listened. I felt the apertures of my ears distend with concentration. Again: the creaking. I was waiting for it; waiting to hear if it indicated that feet were moving from room to room, coming up the passage – to my door. I have no burglar bars, no gun under the pillow, but I have the same fears as people who do take these precautions, and my windowpanes are thin as rime, could shatter like a wineglass. A woman was murdered (how do they put it) in broad daylight in a house two blocks away, last year, and the fierce dogs who guarded an old widower and his collection of antique clocks were strangled before he was knifed by a casual labourer he had dismissed without pay.

I was staring at the door, making it out in my mind rather than seeing it, in the dark. I lay quite still – a victim already – but the arrhythmia of my heart was fleeing, knocking this way and that against its body-cage. How finely tuned the senses are, just out of rest, sleep! I could never listen intently as that in the distractions of the day; I was reading every faintest sound, identifying and classifying its possible threat.

But I learned that I was to be neither threatened nor spared. There was no human weight pressing on the boards, the creaking was a buckling, an epicentre of stress. I was in it. The house that surrounds me while I sleep is built on undermined ground; far beneath my bed, the floor, the house's foundations, the stopes and passages of gold mines have hollowed the rock, and when some face trembles, detaches and falls, three thousand feet below, the whole house shifts slightly, bringing uneasy strain to the balance and counterbalance of brick, cement, wood and glass that hold it as a structure around me. The misbeats of my heart tailed off like the last muffled flourishes on one of the wooden xylophones made by the Chopi and Tsonga migrant miners who might have been down there, under me in the earth at that moment. The stope where the fall was could have been disused, dripping water from its ruptured veins; or men might now be interred there in the most profound of tombs.

I couldn't find a position in which my mind would let go of my body – release me to sleep again. So, I began to tell myself a story; a bedtime story.

In a house, in a suburb, in a city, there were a man and his wife who loved each other very much and were living happily ever after. They had a little boy, and they loved him very much. They had a cat and a dog that the little boy loved very much. They had a car and a caravan trailer for holidays, and a swimming pool which was fenced so that the little boy and his playmates would not fall in and drown. They had a housemaid who was absolutely trustworthy and an itinerant gardener who was highly recommended by the neighbours. For when they began to live happily ever after they were warned, by that wise old witch, the husband's mother, not to take on anyone off the street. They were inscribed in a medical benefit society, their pet dog was licensed, they were insured against fire, flood damage and theft, and subscribed to the local Neighbourhood Watch, which supplied them with a plaque for their gates lettered YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED over the silhouette of a would-be intruder. He was masked; it could not be said if he was black or white, and therefore proved the property owner was no racist.

It was not possible to insure the house, the swimming pool or the car against riot damage. There were riots, but these were outside the city, where people of another colour were quartered. These people were not allowed into the suburb except as reliable housemaids and gardeners, so there was nothing to fear, the husband told the wife. Yet she was afraid that someday such people might come up the street and tear off the plaque YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED and open the gates and stream in... Nonsense, my dear, said the husband, there are police and soldiers and tear-gas and guns to keep them away. But to please her—for he loved her very much and buses were being burned, cars stoned, and schoolchildren shot by the police in those quarters out of sight and hearing of the suburb—he had electronically-controlled gates fitted. Anyone who pulled off the sign YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED and tried to open the gates would have to announce his intentions by pressing a button and speaking into a receiver relayed to the house. The little boy was fascinated by the device and used it as a walkie-talkie in cops and robbers play with his small friends.

The riots were suppressed, but there were many burglaries in the suburb and somebody's trusted housemaid was tied up and shut in a cupboard by thieves while she was in charge of her employers' house. The trusted housemaid of the man and wife and little boy was so upset by this misfortune befalling a friend left, as she herself often was, with responsibility for the possessions of the man and his wife and the little boy that she implored her employers to have burglar bars attached to the doors and windows of the house, and an alarm system installed. The wife said, she is right, let us take heed of her advice. So, from every window and door in the house where they were living happily ever after they now saw the trees and sky through bars, and when the little boy's pet cat tried to climb in by the fanlight to keep him company in his little bed at night, as it customarily had done, it set off the alarm keening through the house.

The alarm was often answered—it seemed—by other burglar alarms, in other houses, that had been triggered by pet cats or nibbling mice. The alarms called to one another across the gardens in shrills and bleats and wails that everyone soon became accustomed to, so that the din roused the inhabitants of the suburb no more than

the croak of frogs and musical grating of cicadas' legs. Under cover of the electronic harpies' discourse intruders sawed the iron bars and broke into homes, taking away hi-fi equipment, television sets, cassette players, cameras and radios, jewelry and clothing, and sometimes were hungry enough to devour everything in the refrigerator or paused audaciously to drink the whisky in the cabinets or patio bars. Insurance companies paid no compensation for single malt, a loss made keener by the property owner's knowledge that the thieves wouldn't even have been able to appreciate what it was they were drinking.

Then the time came when many of the people who were not trusted housemaids and gardeners hung about the suburb because they were unemployed. Some importuned for a job: weeding or painting a roof; anything, baas, madam. But the man and his wife remembered the warning about taking on anyone off the street. Some drank liquor and fouled the street with discarded bottles. Some begged, waiting for the man or his wife to drive the car out of the electronically-operated gates. They sat about with their feet in the gutters, under the jacaranda trees that made a green tunnel of the street – for it was a beautiful suburb, spoilt only by their presence – and sometimes they fell asleep lying right before the gates in the midday sun. The wife could never see anyone go hungry. She sent the trusted housemaid out with bread and tea, but the trusted housemaid said these were loafers and tsotsis, who would come and tie her up and shut her in a cupboard. The husband said, She's right. Take heed of her advice. You only encourage them with your bread and tea. They are looking for their chance... And he brought the little boy's tricycle from the garden into the house every night, because if the house was surely secure, once locked and with the alarm set, someone might still be able to climb over the wall or the electronically-closed gates into the garden.

You are right, said the wife, then the wall should be higher. And the wise old witch, the husband's mother, paid for the extra bricks as her Christmas present to her son and his wife – the little boy got a Space Man outfit and a book of fairy tales.

But every week there were more reports of intrusion: in broad daylight and the dead of night, in the early hours of the morning, and even in the lovely summer twilight – a certain family was at dinner while the bedrooms were being ransacked upstairs. The man and his wife, talking of the latest armed robbery in the suburb, were distracted by the sight of the little boy's pet cat effortlessly arriving over the seven-foot wall, descending first with a rapid bracing of extended forepaws down on the sheer vertical surface, and then a graceful launch, landing with swishing tail within the property. The whitewashed wall was marked with the cat's comings and goings; and on the street side of the wall there were larger red-earth smudges that could have been made by the kind of broken running shoes, seen on the feet of unemployed loiterers, that had no innocent destination.

When the man and wife and little boy took the pet dog for its walk round the neighborhood streets, they no longer paused to admire this show of roses or that perfect lawn; these were hidden behind an array of different varieties of security

fences, walls and devices. The man, wife, little boy and dog passed a remarkable choice: there was the low-cost option of pieces of broken glass embedded in cement along the top of walls, there were iron grilles ending in lance-points, there were attempts at reconciling the aesthetics of prison architecture with the Spanish Villa style (spikes painted pink) and with the plaster urns of neoclassical façades (twelve-inch pikes finned like zigzags of lightning and painted pure white). Some walls had a small board affixed, giving the name and telephone number of the firm responsible for the installation of the devices. While the little boy and the pet dog raced ahead, the husband and wife found themselves comparing the possible effectiveness of each style against its appearance; and after several weeks when they paused before this barricade or that without needing to speak, both came out with the conclusion that only one was worth considering. It was the ugliest but the most honest in its suggestion of the pure concentration-camp style, no frills, all evident efficacy. Placed the length of walls, it consisted of a continuous coil of stiff and shining metal serrated into jagged blades, so that there would be no way of climbing over it and no way through its tunnel without getting entangled in its fangs. There would be no way out, only a struggle getting bloodier and bloodier, a deeper and sharper hooking and tearing of flesh. The wife shuddered to look at it. You're right, said the husband, anyone would think twice... And they took heed of the advice on a small board fixed to the wall: Consult DRAGON'S TEETH The People For Total Security.

Next day a gang of workmen came and stretched the razor-bladed coils all-round the walls of the house where the husband and wife and little boy and pet dog and cat were living happily ever after. The sunlight flashed and slashed, off the serrations, the cornice of razor thorns encircled the home, shining. The husband said, Never mind. It will weather. The wife said, You're wrong. They guarantee its rust-proof. And she waited until the little boy had run off to play before she said, I hope the cat will take heed... The husband said, Don't worry, my dear, cats always look before they leap. And it was true that from that day on the cat slept in the little boy's bed and kept to the garden, never risking a try at breaching security.

One evening, the mother read the little boy to sleep with a fairy story from the book the wise old witch had given him at Christmas. Next day he pretended to be the Prince who braves the terrible thicket of thorns to enter the palace and kiss the Sleeping Beauty back to life: he dragged a ladder to the wall, the shining coiled tunnel was just wide enough for his little body to creep in, and with the first fixing of its razor-teeth in his knees and hands and head he screamed and struggled deeper into its tangle. The trusted housemaid and the itinerant gardener, whose 'day' it was, came running, the first to see and to scream with him, and the itinerant gardener tore his hands trying to get at the little boy. Then the man and his wife burst wildly into the garden and for some reason (the cat, probably) the alarm set up wailing against the screams while the bleeding mass of the little boy was hacked out of the security coil with saws, wire-cutters, choppers, and they carried it—the man, the wife, the hysterical trusted housemaid and the weeping gardener—into the house.

Story 3. EVERYTHING THAT RISES MUST CONVERGE

by Flannery O'Connor



HER DOCTOR HAD told Julian's mother that she must lose twenty pounds on account of her blood pressure, so on Wednesday nights Julian had to take her downtown on the bus for a reducing class at the Y. The reducing class was designed for working girls over fifty, who weighed from 165 to 200 pounds. His mother was one of the slimmer ones, but she said ladies did not tell their age or weight. She would not ride on the buses by herself at night since they had been integrated, and because the reducing class was one of her few pleasures, necessary for her health, and free, she said Julian could at least put himself out to take her, considering all she did for him. Julian did not like to consider all she did for him, but every Wednesday night he braced himself and took her.

She was almost ready to go, standing before the hall mirror, putting on her hat, while he, his hands behind him, appeared pinned to the door frame, waiting like Saint Sebastian for the arrows to begin piercing him. The hat was new and had cost her seven dollars and a half. She kept saying, "Maybe I shouldn't have paid that for it. No, I shouldn't have. I'll take it off and return it tomorrow. I shouldn't have bought it."

Julian raised his eyes to heaven. "Yes, you should have bought it," he said. "Put it on and let's go." It was a hideous hat. A purple velvet flap came down on one side of it and stood up on the other; the rest of it was green and looked like a cushion with the stuffing out. He decided it was less comical than jaunty and pathetic. Everything that gave her pleasure was small and depressed him.

She lifted the hat one more time and set it down slowly on top of her head. Two wings of gray hair protruded on either side of her florid face, but her eyes, sky-blue, were as innocent and untouched by experience as they must have been when she was ten. Were it not that she was a widow who had struggled fiercely to feed and clothe and put him through school and who was supporting him still, "until he got on his feet," she might have been a little girl that he had to take to town.

"It's all right, it's all right," he said. "Let's go." He opened the door himself and started down the walk to get her going. The sky was a dying violet and the houses stood out darkly against it, bulbous liver-colored monstrosities of a uniform ugliness though no two were alike. Since this had been a fashionable neighborhood forty years ago, his mother persisted in thinking they did well to have an apartment in it. Each house had a narrow collar of dirt around it in which sat, usually, a grubby child. Julian walked with his hands in his pockets, his head down and thrust forward and his eyes glazed with the determination to make himself completely numb during the time he would be sacrificed to her pleasure.

The door closed and he turned to find the dumpy figure, surmounted by the atrocious hat, coming toward him. "Well," she said, "you only live once and paying a little more for it, I at least won't meet myself coming and going."

"Someday I'll start making money," Julian said gloomily — he knew he never would — "and you can have one of those jokes whenever you take the fit." But first they would move. He visualized a place where the nearest neighbors would be three miles away on either side.

"I think you're doing fine," she said, drawing on her gloves. "You've only been out of school a year. Rome wasn't built in a day."

She was one of the few members of the Y reducing class who arrived in hat and gloves and who had a son who had been to college. "It takes time," she said, "and the world is in such a mess. This hat looked better on me than any of the others, though when she brought it out, I said, 'Take that thing back. I wouldn't have it on my head,' and she said, 'Now wait till you see it on,' and when she put it on me, I said, 'We-ull,' and she said, 'If you ask me, that hat does something for you and you do something for the hat, and besides,' she said, 'with that hat, you won't meet yourself coming and going.'"

Julian thought he could have stood his lot better if she had been selfish, if she had been an old hag who drank and screamed at him. He walked along, saturated in depression, as if in the midst of his martyrdom he had lost his faith. Catching sight of his long, hopeless, irritated face, she stopped suddenly with a grief-stricken look, and pulled back on his arm. "Wait on me," she said. "I'm going back to the house and take this thing off and tomorrow I'm going to return it. I was out of my head. I can pay the gas bill with that seven-fifty."

He caught her arm in a vicious grip. "You are not going to take it back," he said. "I like it." "Well," she said, "I don't think I ought . . ."

"Shut up and enjoy it," he muttered, more depressed than ever.

"With the world in the mess it's in," she said, "it's a wonder we can enjoy anything. I tell you; the bottom rail is on the top."

Julian sighed.

"Of course," she said, "if you know who you are, you can go anywhere." She said this every time he took her to the reducing class. "Most of them in it are not our kind of people," she said, "but I can be gracious to anybody. I know who I am."

"They don't give a damn for your graciousness," Julian said savagely. "Knowing who you are is good for one generation only. You haven't the foggiest idea where you stand now or who you are."

She stopped and allowed her eyes to flash at him. "I most certainly do know who I am," she said, "and if you don't know who you are, I'm ashamed of you."

"Oh hell," Julian said.

"Your great-grandfather was a former governor of this state," she said.

"Your grandfather was a prosperous landowner. Your grandmother was a God high."

"Will you look around you," he said tensely, "and see where you are now?" and he swept his arm jerkily out to indicate the neighborhood, which the growing darkness at least made less dingy.

"You remain what you are," she said. "Your great-grandfather had a plantation and two hundred slaves."

"There are no more slaves," he said irritably.

"They were better off when they were," she said. He groaned to see that she was off on that topic. She rolled onto it every few days like a train on an open track. He knew every stop, every junction, every swamp along the way, and knew the exact point at which her conclusion would roll majestically into the station: "It's ridiculous. It's simply not realistic. They should rise, yes, but on their own side of the fence."

"Let's skip it," Julian said.

"The ones I feel sorry for," she said, "are the ones that are half white. They're tragic."

"Will you skip it?" "Suppose we were half white. We would certainly have mixed feelings."

"I have mixed feelings now," he groaned.

"Well let's talk about something pleasant," she said. "I remember going to Grandpa's when I was a little girl. Then the house had double stairways that went up to what was really the second floor—all the cooking was done on the first. I used to like to stay down in the kitchen on account of the way the walls smelled. I would sit with my nose pressed against the plaster and take deep breaths. Actually, the place belonged to the Godhighs but your grandfather Chestny paid the mortgage and saved it for them. They were in reduced circumstances," she said, "but reduced or not, they never forgot who they were."

"Doubtless that decayed mansion reminded them," Julian muttered. He never spoke of it without contempt or thought of it without longing. He had seen it once when he was a child before it had been sold. The double stairways had rotted and been torn down. Negroes were living in it. But it remained in his mind as his mother had known it. It appeared in his dreams regularly. He would stand on the wide porch, listening to the rustle of oak leaves, then wander through the high-ceilinged hall into the parlor that opened onto it and gaze at the worn rugs and faded draperies. It occurred to him that it was he, not she, who could have appreciated it. He preferred its threadbare elegance to anything he could name and it was because of it that all the neighborhoods

they had lived in had been a torment to him— whereas she had hardly known the difference. She called her insensitivity “being adjustable.”

“And I remember the old darky who was my nurse, Caroline. There was no better person in the world. I’ve always had a great respect for my colored friends,” she said. “I’d do anything in the world for them and they’d . . .”

“Will you for God’s sake get off that subject?” Julian said. When he got on a bus by himself, he made it a point to sit down beside a Negro, in reparation as it were for his mother’s sins.

“You’re mighty touchy tonight,” she said. “Do you feel all right?”

“Yes, I feel all right,” he said. “Now lay off.”

She pursed her lips. “Well, you certainly are in a vile humor,” she observed. “I just won’t speak to you at all.”

They had reached the bus stop. There was no bus in sight and Julian, his hands still jammed in his pockets and his head thrust forward, scowled down the empty street. The frustration of having to wait on the bus as well as ride on it began to creep up his neck like a hot hand. The presence of his mother was borne in upon him as she gave a pained sigh. He looked at her bleakly. She was holding herself very erect under the preposterous hat, wearing it like a banner of her imaginary dignity. There was in him an evil urge to break her spirit. He suddenly unloosened his tie and pulled it off and put it in his pocket.

She stiffened. “Why must you look like that when you take me to town?” she said.

“Why must you deliberately embarrass me?”

“If you’ll never learn where you are,” he said, “you can at least learn where I am.”

“You look like a— thug,” she said.

“Then I must be one,” he murmured.

“I’ll just go home,” she said. “I will not bother you. If you can’t do a little thing like that for me . . .”

Rolling his eyes upward, he put his tie back on. “Restored to my class,” he muttered. He thrust his face toward her and hissed, “True culture is in the mind, the mind,” he said, and tapped his head, “the mind.”

“It’s in the heart,” she said, “and in how you do things and how you do things is because of who you are.”

“Nobody in the damn bus cares who you are.”

“I care who I am,” she said icily.

The lighted bus appeared on top of the next hill and as it approached, they moved out into the street to meet it. He put his hand under her elbow and hoisted her up on the creaking step. She entered with a little smile, as if she were going into a drawing room where everyone had been waiting for her. While he put in the tokens, she sat down on one of the broad front seats for three which faced the aisle. A thin woman with protruding teeth and long yellow hair was sitting on the end of it. His mother moved up beside her and left room for Julian beside herself. He sat down and looked at the floor across the aisle where a pair of thin feet in red and white canvas sandals were planted.

His mother immediately began a general conversation meant to attract anyone who felt like talking. "Can it get any hotter?" she said and removed from her purse a folding fan, black with a Japanese scene on it, which she began to flutter before her.

"I reckon it might could," the woman with the protruding teeth said, "but I know for a fact my apartment couldn't get no hotter."

"It must get the afternoon sun," his mother said. She sat forward and looked up and down the bus. It was half filled. Everybody was white. "I see we have the bus to ourselves," she said. Julian cringed.

"For a change," said the woman across the aisle, the owner of the red and white canvas sandals. "I come on one the other day and they were thick as fleas – up front and all through."

"The world is in a mess everywhere," his mother said. "I don't know how we've let it get in this fix."

"What gets my goat is all those boys from good families stealing automobile tires," the woman with the protruding teeth said. "I told my boy, I said you may not be rich but you been raised right and if I ever catch you in any such mess, they can send you on to the reformatory. Be exactly where you belong."

"Training tells," his mother said. "Is your boy in high school?"

"Ninth grade," the woman said.

"My son just finished college last year. He wants to write but he's selling typewriters until he gets started," his mother said.

The woman leaned forward and peered at Julian. He threw her such a malevolent look that she subsided against the seat. On the floor across the aisle there was an abandoned newspaper. He got up and got it and opened it out in front of him. His mother discreetly continued the conversation in a lower tone but the woman across the aisle said in a loud voice, "Well that's nice. Selling typewriters is close to writing. He can go right from one to the other."

"I tell him," his mother said, "that Rome wasn't built in a day."

Behind the newspaper Julian was withdrawing into the inner compartment of his mind where he spent most of his time. This was a kind of mental bubble in which he established himself when he could not bear to be a part of what was going on around him. From it he could see out and judge but in it he was safe from any kind of penetration from without. It was the only place where he felt free of the general idiocy of his fellows. His mother had never entered it but from it he could see her with absolute clarity.

The old lady was clever enough and he thought that if she had started from any of the right premises, more might have been expected of her. She lived according to the laws of her own fantasy world, outside of which he had never seen her set foot. The law of it was to sacrifice herself for him after she had first created the necessity to do so by making a mess of things. If he had permitted her sacrifices, it was only because her lack of foresight had made them necessary. All of her life had been a struggle to act like a Chestny without the Chestny goods, and to give him everything she thought a Chestny ought to have; but since, said she, it was fun to struggle, why complain? And when you had won, as she had won, what fun to look back on the hard times! He could not forgive her that she had enjoyed the struggle and that she thought she had won.

What she meant when she said she had won was that she had brought him up successfully and had sent him to college and that he had turned out so well – good-looking (her teeth had gone unfilled so that his could be straightened), intelligent (he realized he was too intelligent to be a success), and with a future ahead of him (there was of course no future ahead of him). She excused his gloominess on the grounds that he was still growing up and his radical ideas on his lack of practical experience. She said he didn't yet know a thing about "life," that he hadn't even entered the real world – when already he was as disenchanted with it as a man of fifty.

The further irony of all this was that in spite of her, he had turned out so well. In spite of going to only a third-rate college, he had, on his own initiative, come out with a first-rate education; in spite of growing up dominated by a small mind, he had ended up with a large one; in spite of all her foolish views, he was free of prejudice and unafraid to face facts. Most miraculous of all, instead of being blinded by love for her as she was for him, he had cut himself emotionally free of her and could see her with complete objectivity. He was not dominated by mother.

The bus stopped with a sudden jerk and shook him from his meditation. A woman from the back lurched forward with little steps and barely escaped falling in his newspaper as she righted herself. She got off and a large Negro got on. Julian kept his paper lowered to watch. It gave him a certain satisfaction to see injustice in daily operation. It confirmed his view that with a few exceptions there was no one worth knowing within a radius of three hundred miles. The Negro was well dressed and carried a briefcase. He looked around and then sat down on the other end of the seat where the woman with the red and white canvas sandals was sitting. He immediately

unfolded a newspaper and obscured himself behind it. Julian's mother's elbow at once prodded insistently into his ribs. "Now you see why I won't ride on these buses by myself," she whispered.

The woman with the red and white canvas sandals had risen at the same time the Negro sat down and had gone farther back in the bus and taken the seat of the woman who had got off. His mother leaned forward and cast her an approving look.

Julian rose, crossed the aisle, and sat down in the place of the woman with the canvas sandals. From this position, he looked serenely across at his mother. Her face had turned an angry red. He stared at her, making his eyes the eyes of a stranger. He felt his tension suddenly lift as if he had openly declared war on her.

He would have liked to get in conversation with the Negro and to talk with him about art or politics or any subject that would be above the comprehension of those around them, but the man remained entrenched behind his paper. He was either ignoring the change of seating or had never noticed it. There was no way for Julian to convey his sympathy.

His mother kept her eyes fixed reproachfully on his face. The woman with the protruding teeth was looking at him avidly as if he were a type of monster new to her.

"Do you have a light?" he asked the Negro.

Without looking away from his paper, the man reached in his pocket and handed him a packet of matches. "Thanks," Julian said.

For a moment he held the matches foolishly. A NO SMOKING sign looked down upon him from over the door. This alone would not have deterred him; he had no cigarettes. He had quit smoking some months before because he could not afford it. "Sorry," he muttered and handed back the matches. The Negro lowered the paper and gave him an annoyed look. He took the matches and raised the paper again.

His mother continued to gaze at him but she did not take advantage of his momentary discomfort. Her eyes retained their battered look. Her face seemed to be unnaturally red, as if her blood pressure had risen. Julian allowed no glimmer of sympathy to show on his face. Having got the advantage, he wanted desperately to keep it and carry it through. He would have liked to teach her a lesson that would last her a while, but there seemed no way to continue the point. The Negro refused to come out from behind his paper.

Julian folded his arms and looked stolidly before him, facing her but as if he did not see her, as if he had ceased to recognize her existence. He visualized a scene in which, the bus having reached their stop, he would remain in his seat and when she said, "Aren't you going to get off?" he would look at her as at a stranger who had rashly addressed him. The corner they got off on was usually deserted, but it was well lighted and it would not hurt her to walk by herself the four blocks to the Y. He decided to wait until the time came and then decide whether or not he would let her get off by

herself. He would have to be at the Y at ten to bring her back, but he could leave her wondering if he was going to show up. There was no reason for her to think she could always depend on him.

He retired again into the high-ceilinged room sparsely settled with large pieces of antique furniture. His soul expanded momentarily but then he became aware of his mother across from him and the vision shriveled. He studied her coldly. Her feet in little pumps dangled like a child's and did not quite reach the floor. She was training on him an exaggerated look of reproach. He felt completely detached from her. At that moment he could with pleasure have slapped her as he would have slapped a particularly obnoxious child in his charge.

He began to imagine various unlikely ways by which he could teach her a lesson. He might make friends with some distinguished Negro professor or lawyer and bring him home to spend the evening. He would be entirely justified but her blood pressure would rise to 300. He could not push her to the extent of making her have a stroke, and moreover, he had never been successful at making any Negro friends. He had tried to strike up an acquaintance on the bus with some of the better types, with ones that looked like professors or ministers or lawyers. One morning he had sat down next to a distinguished-looking dark brown man who had answered his questions with a sonorous solemnity but who had turned out to be an undertaker. Another day he had sat down beside a cigar-smoking Negro with a diamond ring on his finger, but after a few stilted pleasantries, the Negro had rung the buzzer and risen, slipping two lottery tickets into Julian's hand as he climbed over him to leave.

He imagined his mother lying desperately ill and his being able to secure only a Negro doctor for her. He toyed with that idea for a few minutes and then dropped it for a momentary vision of himself participating as a sympathizer in a sit-in demonstration. This was possible but he did not linger with it. Instead, he approached the ultimate horror. He brought home a beautiful suspiciously Negroid woman. Prepare yourself, he said. There is nothing you can do about it. This is the woman I've chosen. She's intelligent, dignified, even good, and she's suffered and she hasn't thought it fun. Now persecute us, go ahead and persecute us. Drive her out of here, but remember, you're driving me too. His eyes were narrowed and through the indignation he had generated, he saw his mother across the aisle, purple faced, shrunken to the dwarflike proportions of her moral nature, sitting like a mummy beneath the ridiculous banner of her hat.

He was tilted out of his fantasy again as the bus stopped. The door opened with a sucking hiss and out of the dark a large, gaily dressed, sullen looking colored woman got on with a little boy. The child, who might have been four, had on a short plaid suit and a Tyrolean hat with a blue feather in it. Julian hoped that he would sit down beside him and that the woman would push in beside his mother. He could think of no better arrangement.

As she waited for her tokens, the woman was surveying the seating possibilities – he hoped with the idea of sitting where she was least wanted. There was something familiar-looking about her but Julian could not place what it was. She was a giant of a woman. Her face was set not only to meet opposition but to seek it out. The downward tilt of her large lower lip was like a warning sign: DON'T TAMPER WITH ME. Her bulging figure was encased in a green crepe dress and her feet overflowed in red shoes. She had on a hideous hat. A purple velvet flap came down on one side of it and stood up on the other; the rest of it was green and looked like a cushion with the stuffing out. She carried a mammoth red pocketbook that bulged throughout as if it were stuffed with rocks.

To Julian's disappointment, the little boy climbed up on the empty seat beside his mother. His mother lumped all children, black and white, into the common category "cute," and she thought little Negroes were on the whole cuter than the little white children. She smiled at the little boy as he climbed on the seat.

Meanwhile the woman was bearing down upon the empty seat beside Julian. To his annoyance, she squeezed herself into it. He saw his mother's face change as the woman settled herself next to him and he realized with satisfaction that this was more objectionable to her than it was to him. Her face seemed almost gray and there was a look of dull recognition in her eyes, as if suddenly she had sickened at some awful confrontation. Julian saw that it was because she and the woman had, in a sense, swapped sons. Though his mother would not realize the symbolic significance of this, she would feel it. His amusement showed plainly on his face.

The woman next to him muttered something unintelligible to herself. He was conscious of a kind of bristling next to him, a muted growling like that of an angry cat. He could not see anything but the red pocketbook upright on the bulging green thighs. He visualized the woman as she had stood waiting for her tokens – the ponderous figure, rising from the red shoes upward over the solid hips, the mammoth bosom, haughty face, to the green and purple hat.

His eyes widened.

The vision of the two hats, identical, broke upon him with the radiance of a brilliant sunrise. His face was suddenly lit with joy. He could not believe that Fate had thrust upon his mother such a lesson. He gave a loud chuckle so that she would look at him and see that he saw. She turned her eyes on him slowly. The blue in them seemed to have turned a bruised purple. For a moment he had an uncomfortable sense of her innocence, but it lasted only a second before principle rescued him. Justice entitled him to laugh. His grin hardened until it said to her as plainly as if he were saying aloud: Your punishment exactly fits your pettiness. This should teach you a permanent lesson.

Her eyes shifted to the woman. She seemed unable to bear looking at him and to find the woman preferable. He became conscious again of the bristling presence at his side.

The woman was rumbling like a volcano about to become active. His mother's mouth began to twitch slightly at one corner. With a sinking heart, he saw incipient signs of recovery on her face and realized that this was going to strike her suddenly as funny and was going to be no lesson at all. She kept her eyes on the woman and an amused smile came over her face as if the woman were a monkey that had stolen her hat. The little Negro was looking up at her with large fascinated eyes. He had been trying to attract her attention for some time.

"Carver!" the woman said suddenly. "Come heah!"

When he saw that the spotlight was on him at last, Carver drew his feet up and turned himself toward Julian's mother and giggled.

"Carver!" the woman said. "You heah me? Come heah!"

Carver slid down from the seat but remained squatting with his back against the base of it, his head turned slyly around toward Julian's mother, who was smiling at him. The woman reached a hand across the aisle and snatched him to her. He righted himself and hung backwards on her knees, grinning at Julian's mother. "Isn't he cute?" Julian's mother said to the woman with the protruding teeth.

"I reckon he is," the woman said without conviction. The Negress yanked him upright but he eased out of her grip and shot across the aisle and scrambled, giggling wildly, onto the seat beside his love.

"I think he likes me," Julian's mother said, and smiled at the woman. It was the smile she used when she was being particularly gracious to an inferior. Julian saw everything lost. The lesson had rolled off her like rain on a roof.

The woman stood up and yanked the little boy off the seat as if she were snatching him from contagion. Julian could feel the rage in her at having no weapon like his mother's smile. She gave the child a sharp slap across his leg. He howled once and then thrust his head into her stomach and kicked his feet against her shins. "Be-have," she said vehemently.

The bus stopped and the Negro who had been reading the newspaper got off. The woman moved over and set the little boy down with a thump between herself and Julian. She held him firmly by the knee. In a moment he put his hands in front of his face and peeped at Julian's mother through his fingers.

"I see yoooooooo!" she said and put her hand in front of her face and peeped at him.

The woman slapped his hand down. "Quit yo' foolishness," she said, "before I knock the living Jesus out of you!"

Julian was thankful that the next stop was theirs. He reached up and pulled the cord. The woman reached up and pulled it at the same time. Oh my God, he thought. He had the terrible intuition that when they got off the bus together, his mother would open her purse and give the little boy a nickel. The gesture would be as natural to her

as breathing. The bus stopped and the woman got up and lunged to the front, dragging the child, who wished to stay on, after her. Julian and his mother got up and followed. As they neared the door, Julian tried to relieve her of her pocketbook.

"No," she murmured, "I want to give the little boy a nickel."

"No!" Julian hissed. "No!"

She smiled down at the child and opened her bag. The bus door opened and the woman picked him up by the arm and descended with him, hanging at her hip. Once in the street she set him down and shook him.

Julian's mother had to close her purse while she got down the bus step but as soon as her feet were on the ground, she opened it again and began to rummage inside. "I can't find but a penny," she whispered, "but it looks like a new one."

"Don't do it!" Julian said fiercely between his teeth. There was a streetlight on the corner and she hurried to get under it so that she could better see into her pocketbook. The woman was heading off rapidly down the street with the child still hanging backward on her hand.

"Oh, little boy!" Julian's mother called and took a few quick steps and caught up with them just beyond the lamppost. "Here's a bright new penny for you," and she held out the coin, which shone bronze in the dim light.

The huge woman turned and for a moment stood, her shoulders lifted and her face frozen with frustrated rage, and stared at Julian's mother. Then all at once she seemed to explode like a piece of machinery that had been given one ounce of pressure too much. Julian saw the black fist swing out with the red pocketbook. He shut his eyes and cringed as he heard the woman shout, "He don't take nobody's pennies!" When he opened his eyes, the woman was disappearing down the street with the little boy staring wide-eyed over her shoulder. Julian's mother was sitting on the sidewalk.

"I told you not to do that," Julian said angrily. "I told you not to do that!"

He stood over her for a minute, gritting his teeth. Her legs were stretched out in front of her and her hat was on her lap. He squatted down and looked her in the face. It was totally expressionless. "You got exactly what you deserved," he said. "Now get up."

He picked up her pocketbook and put what had fallen out back in it. He picked the hat up off her lap. The penny caught his eye on the sidewalk and he picked that up and let it drop before her eyes into the purse. Then he stood up and leaned over and held his hand out to pull her up. She remained immobile. He sighed. Rising above them on either side were black apartment buildings, marked with irregular rectangles of light. At the end of the block a man came out of a door and walked off in the opposite direction.

"All right," he said, "suppose somebody happens by and wants to know why you're sitting on the sidewalk?"

She took the hand and, breathing hard, pulled heavily up on it and then stood for a moment, swaying slightly as if the spots of light in the darkness were circling around her. Her eyes, shadowed and confused, finally settled on his face. He did not try to conceal his irritation. "I hope this teaches you a lesson," he said. She leaned forward and her eyes raked his face. She seemed trying to determine his identity. Then, as if she found nothing familiar about him, she started off with a headlong movement in the wrong direction.

"Aren't you going on to the Y?" he asked.

"Home," she muttered.

"Well, are we walking?"

For answer she kept going. Julian followed along, his hands behind him. He saw no reason to let the lesson she had had go without backing it up with an explanation of its meaning. She might as well be made to understand what had happened to her. "Don't think that was just an uppity Negro woman," he said. "That was the whole colored race which will no longer take your condescending pennies. That was your black double. She can wear the same hat as you, and to be sure," he added gratuitously (because he thought it was funny), "it looked better on her than it did on you. What all this means," he said, "is that the old world is gone. The old manners are obsolete and your graciousness is not worth a damn." He thought bitterly of the house that had been lost for him. "You aren't who you think you are," he said.

She continued to plow ahead, paying no attention to him. Her hair had come undone on one side. She dropped her pocketbook and took no notice. He stooped and picked it up and handed it to her but she did not take it.

"You needn't act as if the world has come to an end," he said, "because it hasn't. From now on you've got to live in a new world and face a few realities for a change. Buck up," he said, "it won't kill you."

She was breathing fast.

"Let's wait on the bus," he said.

"Home," she said thickly.

"I hate to see you behave like this," he said. "Just like a child. I should be able to expect more of you." He decided to stop where he was and make her stop and wait for a bus. "I'm not going any farther," he said, stopping. "We're going on the bus."

She continued to go on as if she had not heard him. He took a few steps and caught her arm and stopped her. He looked into her face and caught his breath. He was looking into a face he had never seen before. "Tell Grandpapa to come get me," she said.

He stared, stricken.

"Tell Caroline to come get me," she said. Stunned, he let her go and she lurched forward again, walking as if one leg were shorter than the other. A tide of darkness seemed to be sweeping her from him.

"Mother!" he cried. "Darling, sweetheart, wait!" Crumpling, she fell to the pavement. He dashed forward and fell at her side, crying, "Mamma, Mamma!" He turned her over. Her face was fiercely distorted. One eye, large and staring, moved slightly to the left as if it had become unmoored. The other remained fixed on him, raked his face again, found nothing and closed.

"Wait here, wait here!" he cried and jumped up and began to run for help toward a cluster of lights he saw in the distance ahead of him. "Help, help!" he shouted, but his voice was thin, scarcely a thread of sound. The lights drifted farther away the faster he ran and his feet moved numbly as if they carried him nowhere. The tide of darkness seemed to sweep him back to her, postponing from moment to moment his entry into the world of guilt and sorrow.

Story 4. SAME TIME, SAME PLACE by Herbert Ernest Bates



One had to keep up appearances, Miss Treadwell always told herself. Whatever else happened one simply had to keep up appearances. After all, one had one's pride.

The sepia musquash coat she always wore throughout the winter had not only the advantage of keeping her warm and making her look almost of upper middle class but of also concealing the fact that underneath it she wore a man's woolen cardigan and a brown imitation leather waistcoat picked up for a shilling at a rummage sale*. Underneath these garments her corsets had so far fallen to pieces that every now and then she padded them with folds of newspaper. If these failed to give her buxom but not too ample figure the distinguished and elegant line, she saw so often in advertisements they at least were warm too and cheap and comforting. Above all they helped to keep up appearances.

Miss Treadwell, who was in her late fifties, was apt to refer to her minute bed-sitter, a mere dog kennel seven feet by ten*, as 'my little domain', though if occasion demanded she might enlarge a little on that, calling it 'my apartment'. A divan bed, a chair, a table and a sink left no room whatever for a cooker, though this hardly mattered, since she never cooked except to make toast over a gas-ring. Her diet consisted mostly, except on Sundays, of bread, margarine and tea, though even this, for various reasons, she only had occasionally at home.

Every morning, at about eleven o'clock, she went out and sat on one of the seats in the public gardens. One didn't have to wait long there before someone dropped a newspaper into a litter basket, so that one got the news of the day for nothing besides a new padding for the corsets when necessary. After reading for another half hour Miss Treadwell then went into a small café round the corner and had her lunch. This too consisted of a bread roll, margarine and a pot of tea.

It was most important always to order a pot of tea, since in this way one got a small basin of cube sugar, most of which was easily slipped into a handbag. It was also important to select a table where someone else had recently been eating. In this way one quite often found two or three pennies or even sixpence left under a plate and uncollected by a busy waitress.

After lunch she always went back to the gardens to visit the *Public Ladies**. It was quite extraordinary what one sometimes found in the *Public Ladies*. Frequently someone had forgotten a lipstick, a powder compact, a comb, a box of eye-shadow. Once Miss Treadwell had actually found a small handbag containing, among other things, a bottle of peroxide. With the use of this she suddenly went sensationally and almost youthfully blonde, thus keeping up appearances dramatically.

She had learnt other tricks by experience: for example, that late on Saturday afternoons one could buy, for a few pence, bags of unsold cakes that wouldn't keep in the shops until Monday, or bags of broken biscuits which made a delicious Sunday treat if you put them in a basin and poured a layer of thin hot chocolate over them. There were also flowers: sometimes as you walked through the street market you came across a whole box of them, daffodils or roses or carnations or gladioli, that had dropped from a lorry and nobody had ever bothered to pick up. A few swiftly snatched up stalks turned the kennel-like bed-sitter into a little paradise.

Soon after the incident of the peroxide, that had turned her a light youthful blonde and helped to keep up her appearances so dramatically, she was sitting in the public gardens on an April morning. The day was suddenly and unusually hot; tulips that had been mere half-green buds the day before were now becoming, every moment, more and more like shimmering open wine glasses of pink and scarlet and yellow; an occasional white or yellow butterfly skimmed through the many wide yellow trumpets of daffodils under trembling pink canopies of cherry blossom. All the many seats in the gardens were crowded. It was very much a morning when appearances mattered.

The only place she could find to sit down was next to a gentleman who, because of the sudden April heat, had taken off his black homburg hat and laid it on the seat beside him. As Miss Treadwell approached, he removed the hat and balanced it on his knee. His hair was a smooth iron grey. This alone would not have confirmed him as a gentleman but the homburg hat most certainly did. Men who wore homburg hats were always gentlemen.

After studying his newspaper in concentrated silence for another five minutes he folded it up and laid that too on the seat beside him. Unwilling to appear too eager Miss Treadwell waited some further minutes before saying:

'I hope you won't think me rude but I wonder - could I take a tiny glance at your newspaper? I couldn't get one this morning.'

'Oh! By all means. By all means. Take it, please. I've finished with it anyway.'

'Oh! I didn't mean to take it altogether.'

'Oh! Do. I've finished the cross-word. And once I've finished that I'm not interested. Do you do the cross-word?'

No, Miss Treadwell had to confess, she never did the cross-word. She supposed she wasn't clever enough for that.

'Nor was I, this morning. There was a devil of a clue and the only word that fitted was *poitivene*. Had me stuck for an hour. Do you know what a *poitivene* is?'

Miss Treadwell suddenly felt flattered and very pleased with herself. Yes, she said, as a matter of fact she did.

'And what on earth is it?'

'It's a sort of chrysanthemum.'

'Is it by Jove*? How ever did you know?'

Miss Treadwell said she had seen them on the market flower stalls, named. There was another one called *rayonante*. She always thought they were such pretty names, she said, and the gentleman in the homburg hat gave her a long friendly blue-eyed stare of admiration.

Silence came between them for some few minutes after this, until finally the gentleman in the homburg hat said:

'What a beautiful morning.'

'Lovely. Spring at last.'

'Spring at last.'

Miss Treadwell now opened the paper and pretended to read it without actually seeing a single word. At the same time the gentleman in the homburg hat extended a hand and laid it on the paper and said:

'The cartoon's rather good today. Page five. Allow me.'

As the gentleman in the homburg hat turned the pages of the paper over Miss Treadwell suddenly noticed an extraordinary thing. On the third finger of his left hand, he was wearing a rather large ring. It was in the shape of a turquoise butterfly set in a clear white stone.

With considerable diffidence Miss Treadwell said:

'What a most unusual ring, if you forgive me for saying so.'

'It is rather unusual.'

The gentleman in the homburg hat held out the ring for her to look at more closely. She gazed at it for some seconds and then said:

'It looks sort of Chinese.'

'Indian, I'm told.'

'Is it a sort of charm, a good luck thing or something?'

'Sort of. The butterfly is supposed to represent summer and the white stone winter and ice and all that. I suppose it's a sort of symbol of the resurgence of spring over winter. Well, so I've been told.'

Miss Treadwell could only listen in fervent, silent admiration. The stone flashed in the sun. And was it sort of lucky? she said.

'Supposed to be. But I'm afraid this thing has produced more than its fair share of trouble.'

'Oh! how could that be?'

'It belonged to my eldest sister. She left it to me. Consequently, my other sister - I live with her - has never forgiven her. She gives me hell about it.'

Miss Treadwell fell into a depressive silence, not knowing what to say. The silence lasted several minutes until at last he said:

'Still, I suppose I ought to be thankful she looks after me. Do you live nearby?'

'My apartment is just round the corner.'

'You live alone?'

'Oh! quite.'

'In a way I envy you. At least you've no one to quarrel with. Every day I'm glad when breakfast is over. Then I can be off on my own.'

In silence Miss Treadwell again gazed at the butterfly imprisoned in its ice.

'Do you find it 'difficult to fill in the day?' the man in the homburg hat said.

'Oh! no, no, no. It's terribly, terribly full. By the time I've done my cooking and cleared up the apartment and so on the time simply flies. I do a lot of flower arrangement.'

'I find it hangs like hell.'

They sat for some time longer in the sun, without speaking. Then the man in the homburg hat looked at his pocket watch and said:

'Well, I fear I must be going: we always have lunch at dead on twelve. If I'm not there she starts creating like fury*.'

'I must be going too,' Miss Treadwell said. 'I've my own lunch to get. And then I'm making new curtains for the sitting-room.'

'Ah! you're clever at that sort of thing?'

'Oh! I don't know about clever. As a matter of fact, I don't think I am. I sort of mis-measured the windows and now I need yards and yards more material.'

'I suppose that's the trouble with large windows.'

'Yes. Yes. However, we shall get over it. I know they have plenty more at the shop.'

The man in the homburg hat got up, put on his hat and then took it off again in a courteous gesture.

'Well, goodbye. It's been so nice to meet you. Oh! by the way my name is Thornhill.'

The butterfly imprisoned in its ice flashed in the sun.

'And you, Mr. Thornhill.'

After that they began to meet at more or less the same spot, at more or less the same time, on most weekdays. The weather continued warm, sometimes even hot, and Miss Treadwell discarded the musquash coat and some of the newspaper under it, wearing instead a pale pink jersey dress and a pair of brown imitation crocodile shoes she had picked up for a shilling or two at a rummage sale.

'I'm feeling rather affluent today,' was the first remark with which Mr. Thornhill greeted Miss Treadwell one morning. They had been meeting for nearly a month now.

'Oh? Why is that?'

'I've started to draw my pension*.' He laughed, rather against himself, pleasantly. 'I think it's rather funny. Do you have the pension yet?'

Oh! no, no, dear me no, Miss Treadwell said. She laughed too. Did he mind? She hadn't quite got as far as that yet. *III* in good time.

'Earlier in life one tends to rather despise the thought. And when the time comes it's rather nice. Well, I expect you won't be too proud to take it when it arrives?'

'Well, of course luckily I have private means.' It was a lie, but one had to keep up appearances. Miss Treadwell's means consisted of a small Post Office Savings Account from which she extracted a minute sum every Monday morning. 'I simply couldn't manage the apartment without.'

'Those curtains must have cost you a bit.'

'Oh! the earth. The absolute earth.'

'On the subject of affluence,' he suddenly said, 'I feel in honour bound to buy you a drink this morning. Would you?'

'But it's only half past eleven—'

'By the time we've walked to *The Lansdowne Arms** it'll be twelve o'clock.'

'*The Lansdowne Arms*—'

Miss Treadwell, who couldn't afford to drink anyway, suddenly found herself confronted with impossible visions of grandeur and felt slightly frightened. Walking across the public gardens she kept her hands tightly folded in front of her, in case one or more of the newspapers should slip and fall down.

In the bar of *The Lansdowne Arms* all was wrapped in a red, subdued light. Like scarlet torches a great vase of gladioli flamed on the bar.

'Now name it,' Mr. Thornhill said. 'Anything you like. After all it isn't every day, a man becomes of age. Sherry, port, gin, whisky, beer? - what shall it be?'

Miss Treadwell hesitatingly confessed that she felt ever so slightly tempted towards a small sherry.

'Splendid. I'll have a sherry too. But a dry one. And make them,' he said to the waiting barman, 'large ones.'

Sherry in hand, Miss Treadwell sat bathed in dreams of grandeur that, for all their emergence into reality, were now more impossible than ever. The sherry warmed her throat, crawled snakily through her empty stomach and moistened her eyes. Mr. Thornhill said 'cheers' several times and then suddenly burst out laughing.

'God, I wish my sister could see me now.'

He positively swigged at his sherry while Miss Treadwell gently sipped at hers.

'Hell. Why do the children of the same parents so often hate each other?'

To this question, almost barked out, Miss Treadwell had no answer and simply went on sipping her sherry.

'Some days the atmosphere in that house is poisonous. We hiss at each other like two snakes. One day—'

Miss Treadwell started to think up what seemed at first a presumptuous remark but another sip or two of sherry finally fortified her to make it.

'Perhaps if you gave her the ring it might help things—'

'Good God, what? Can't you just hear her? - "Oh! far be it from me to take the ring from you. If Alice had wished me to have the ring she would have left it to me. But the fact is she didn't, did she? Oh! no it's your ring. Not all the wild dogs in China" - that's one of her favourite maddening expressions, "all the wild dogs in China" -'

Mr. Thornhill savagely drained his sherry glass.

'Have you ever known what it is to want to murder somebody?'

Oh! dear me no, Miss Treadwell said, her voice barely audible. Oh! dear me—

'It's not funny.' Mr. Thornhill said. 'It's not funny. Still, drink up. Second round. This is the day.'

Miss Treadwell started meekly to protest that really one was enough for her, but Mr. Thornhill was already waving an expansive arm in the direction of the bar.

'Well, if you insist,' Miss Treadwell said, 'but only a very small one this time—'

Of course he insisted, Mr. Thornhill said and snapped out the words 'Same again, barman,' only to retract them a second later.

'No, make mine whisky. A double Black-and-White.'

His sister didn't drink either, he went on to say. That made her sub-human for a start. A good drink now and then did a lot to make a person human, didn't Miss Treadwell agree?

The barman having brought the new drinks Mr. Thornhill drank gaspily at his whisky, confessing that sherry really wasn't his tippie. With whisky a man had something. It - what did they say nowadays? - it sent you.

'We must do this more often. Make it an every morning thing.'

Mr. Thornhill, having drunk half his whisky neat, now poured a little water into the rest of it, complaining at the same time that you didn't get much of a measure nowadays. In no time you were ready for another.

'By the way, did you finish your curtains?'

No, Miss Treadwell had to confess, she hadn't yet.

'Well, promise me something. When you do, invite me up to see them. Fair enough? I envy you that apartment of yours. I really envy you. God, it would be nice to live on one's own - Well, promise me?'

Well, it would be some time yet, Miss Treadwell found herself saying. Inwardly she trembled with cold apprehension. There had been some hitch about the material. The stock of the original yellow had run out and she hadn't been able to match it up.

'Well, all in good time. All in good time. But promise me?'

After a third large whisky Mr. Thornhill gave the distinct impression of talking through a muslin bag. The folds of his neck were perceptibly reddened. From time to time, he locked and unlocked the fingers of his two hands and finally, in one of these unsteady gestures, he took off the butterfly ring. To her infinite and tortured astonishment Miss Treadwell suddenly heard the words:

'You said something about giving the ring back to Beryl. Well, blast Beryl. I want to give it to you. Get what I mean?' He held out the bright imprisoned butterfly. 'Go on. Take it. Slip it on.'

'Mr. Thornhill, I don't quite understand —'

'Go on. Third finger, left hand.'

The butterfly imprisoned in its ice sparkled. Miss Treadwell proceeded to lift her glass of sherry, only to find herself trembling so much that she had to set it down again. Mr. Thornhill smacked the palms of his hands together and his voice was over-loud.

'You get what I'm asking you, don't you? It isn't always easy to say these things.'

Half-terrified, Miss Treadwell made yet another attempt to lift her glass of sherry. This time she managed to get it to her lips, spilling much of it down her chin. As she mopped at it with her handkerchief it appeared to Mr. Thornhill that she might have been about to cry. She did in fact feel like crying and sat for some moments biting her lips hard, locked in impotent nervous distress.

'Well,' Mr. Thornhill said. 'What say you? Do you know, I don't even know your Christian name.'

'Doris.'

Mr. Thornhill laughed tipsily.

'Doris, I'm asking you - yes, I know - I expect you're going to say "this is all so sudden" -'

Well, it was, sort of, Miss Treadwell said. A vision of her bed-sitter, the dog-kennel, suddenly rose up to mock her. The loud plop of the gas-ring as she lit it echoed through her mind, extinguishing for a moment every thought. Again, the imprisoned butterfly sparkled. A moment later, unsteadily grabbing at his glass, Mr. Thornhill dropped the ring on the floor.

Picking it up, he was visibly trembling too.

'I thought perhaps we could both manage in your apartment with my pension and your - unless perhaps you'd prefer to be independent —'

Desperately, as never before in her life, Miss Treadwell sought to keep up appearances by taking her powder compact from her bag, looking into its mirror and slowly powdering her nose. The face she saw in the glass, pallid and stiff, seemed not to belong to her and hastily she shut the compact down.

'Well, what do you say?'

'I don't know what - well, anyway not today, Mr. Thornhill. Please, not today.'

'Not Mister Thornhill. Harry. Tomorrow then? Same time, same place, tomorrow. Here.'

'I think I ought to go now, Mr. Thornhill.'

'Harry, Harry please. Go, my foot. I'm going to have another whisky.' Mr Thornhill's command of 'Same again' was so sharp and loud that a wire-haired terrier belonging to a tweeded gentleman at the far end of the bar yapped out a series of loud and agitated barks. In its feverish agitation it might well have been the echo of the voice of Miss Treadwell pleading for some sort of escape or mercy.

'Goodbye,' she said. 'I really must go.' Her voice was in fact barely audible. 'Goodbye - I really must go now--'

'Don't forget.' Mr. Thornhill staggered unsteadily to his feet, eyes watering weakly, the imprisoned butterfly flashing again as he sought to shake her hand. 'Same time, same place--'

After that Miss Treadwell never sat in the public gardens again. She now goes, instead, to a park half a mile away. In the park is a small lake. In the centre of the lake is an island covered with low shrubbery and a number of wooden coops where ornamental water-birds, bright mallards, unusual geese and even moorhens can shelter.

Every morning Miss Treadwell, struggling always, with pride, to keep up appearances, takes with her a small bag of stale cakes or broken biscuits and throws them to the birds and then persuades herself it is sort of fun to watch which ones, greedy and squabbling, grab the biggest pieces first.

'Tomorrow,' she always tells herself. 'Same time, same place.'

She also reads the newspaper.

FOR NOTES

Навчально-методичне видання

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