

Sara's
silly sister
swallowed
her sweets

aliteration and
synecdoche

ANSWER 2020

01.

- (a) This extract is taken from The Glass Menagerie written by Tennessee Williams. These words were spoken by Amanda to her children Tom and Laura, in Scene 1.

The scene starts with the family meal, Amanda complaining about Tom being late as she wants to say grace. Then as the meal is over Amanda does not want Laura to help with the cleaning up as she wants Laura to 'sit pretty' in expectation of gentleman callers. Laura says she is not expecting any, and Amanda holds forth (as usual) about her own gentleman callers. Tom protests as 'he knows what's coming', but Laura deters Tom saying that 'she loves to relate' them.

This is our first introduction to the characters.

This extract presents the character of Amanda. She is in a world of make believe, living in the past, on her own memories. Her style of delivery is pitched a notch higher than the ordinary, her speech, the tone, the descriptions and references are dramatic. ('my bright particular beaux, brilliant, brilliant etc.) She probably construes the story according to her whims and fancies. An occasional discrepancy can be seen. Here Amanda says "she (Mrs. Bates) married him (Bates) on the rebound", and he carried her (Amanda's) photograph! It was Mrs. Bates who had married Bates on the rebound, not Bates. The statement that the widow came into "eight or ten thousand acres, that's all". The expression "that's all", is for effect; it is an understatement; it implies a sense of regret and disappointment as we later learn that her husband whom she selected out of this horde of gentleman callers has abandoned her leaving her nothing.

The extract also gives an insight into the characters of Tom and Laura. Tom is a 'protesting' character, and Laura an accommodating one. Tom asks 'what did he leave his widow?', indicating his irritation and almost disbelief. But Amanda is oblivious, she does not see the taunt. The very first scene also provides an inkling into the plot. It is a conflict between reality and fantasy, between dreams and reality. All the characters have this element of fantasy to a higher or lower degree.

Amanda does not play an acceptable role as a mother. It is not common or acceptable to have a mother who goes on about her love affairs, confiding them with her grown up children. One would expect that if the situation does occur, the mother would point out 'what should or should not have been done or have happened'. But there is no such hind sight in the mother, nor does she encourage it. Thus the theme of 'unreality' of the play is apparent at many levels.

With all that Amanda like the other members of the Wingfield household is not totally reprehensible, the playwright does not expect us to be critical but encourage our empathy and understanding.

- (b) This extract is taken from the tragedy Othello by Shakespeare, Act I scene I. These lines are spoken by Iago to Roderigo in answer to Roderigo's statement that he 'would not follow him (Othello) then'. But Roderigo obsessed with Desdemona and the news of what has happened doesn't seem to be listening, for he is only concerned with 'the full fortune of the thick lips'.

Iago has at first stated how he sent 'three great ones of the city' to speak on his behalf, for him to get the post of lieutenant to Othello. Othello has said he has already 'chosen his man'. Then Iago tells Roderigo why Cassio is unsuitable, but he has nevertheless got the job by 'letter and affection and not by old gradation'. He implies that Cassio has got the job as a 'favour' - (it's corrupt). He is talking of being 'very just and impartial' because he is rejected. He moans the fact that he is appointed 'his Moorship's Ancient'. Iago here is deriding Othello by calling him 'His Moorship', drawing attention to race. The audience unlike Roderigo remembers that Iago has just done the same, sent 'three of the great ones of the city'. This long speech is in response to Roderigo's assertion that if that is how Iago feels (He has no love for Othello) he should not follow him, and that is what he, Roderigo

would do. The passage also throws light on Roderigo's character, a simple man with no complex responses.

In answer to Roderigo's response Iago describes two types of servants, which we recognize. It speaks of Iago's 'practical' attitude; 'there are many like that', the audience identifies, one that really works hard for the master, the other who 'throws shows of service', and profits by them. The words 'trimmed in forms and visages of duty' convey the hypocritical nature of these particular servants as well as the conventions regarding servants' behavior that obtained at the time, and obtains even now. The expression 'lined their coats' means they feather their own nests with other people's bounty, it shows the gullibility of the masters too. Iago identifies himself with this group.

The description of the two types of servants, their behaviour, and response of the masters is very real. It reflects the later relationship between Iago and Othello. Iago very easily manages to flatter and exploit Othello. He does thrive by Othello. This indicates the total immorality of Iago. He knows what is wrong, yet he admires it because of the profit- 'these fellows have some soul'. The word 'soul' is normally associated with the spiritual as against 'the physical, the body'. Iago deliberately confuses the two and finally concludes by saying 'I am not what I am'- which marks one of the themes of the play. This makes it difficult for the audience to respond to Iago. Normally we think well of someone who admits his faults and weaknesses, we associate honesty with such; Iago is often called 'honest', but he is far from it, as seen here, his 'honesty' is diabolical. It is seeming honesty.

- (c) This extract is from Sizwe Bansi is Dead by Athol Fugard. This is an account given by the character Buntu of a man to whose funeral he had gone two weeks back.

He relates the story of Jacob. Jacob had first worked under Baas Van de Walt, being kicked out by his son, gone to Baas Potgeiter, had got kicked out due to trouble between the wives. Then had followed a long period when he had had no steady work due to drought, 'no work' and many reasons. Finally, he had met with his death, when he had got a permanent place. 'You can't move out a Jacob! Jacob typifies all Blacks, and what they have to go through. They have no work in the land of their birth, they have to be searching for work. It is interesting that Fugard had selected the name Jacob to represent the African who has no place in his own 'home'. In the Bible Jacob is a pastoralist, he remained in the village, it was he who gave the name 'Bethlehem'. Fugard creates irony when he gives the name of Jacob to someone who has to wander in search of work. It also implies that the work they do is not one that benefits them in the long run.

There is also the reference to the Boers. The Boers treated the Africans as badly as the Whites. The speaker's tone is one of contempt for the Boers. It indicates the author's criticism, relating to the general theme of racial discrimination.

The fact that Jacob's search for work, sustenance ends only with his death is a comment on the way their affairs are conducted.

The passage confirms the ill treatment of the Blacks by the Whites. Jacob was obviously liked by his first boss Vander Walt. But his son does not feel obliged to keep Jacob for his father's sake, or for the service he had rendered. Even the general norms of behaviour are not adhered to when it is a case of Blacks.

The passage also has the common feature found throughout in the play, that when 'a message' has to be given it is given direct to the audience/the African community. By doing so, the author implies that this is a cause which may not find common ground with 'any and every' reader/audience. These values and concerns are not universal.

- (d) This extract is from the play The Tempest by Shakespeare. This is Act 5, the last Act.

It is Prospero talking, he is wearing his magical robe, and has got everyone to be in a circle 'charmed'. Stefano and Trinculo are wearing their stolen apparel. Alonso cannot quite recognize them. Prospero is introducing them.

The significant point is that they have 'plotted to take his life'. So has his brother Antonio. Therefore, they all fall into the same category. The difference is that Prospero is now able to look at these with equanimity. He is even able to look at the 'demi-devil' as part of himself- 'mine'. Thus, we see that Prospero has 'matured', he is able to renounce his 'power'. The Tempest is a study of power. Prospero's wish to acquire power over knowledge cost

him (power over) his kingdom; he lost his kingdom and was cast out on the sea. The audience sees in Sycorax, 'the witch', what Prospero could have been. She used her magical power for evil, whereas Prospero used his for good; she imprisoned Ariel, Prospero released him. Prospero too, and Ariel through Prospero can 'make flows and ebbs' as the storm that brought this company on to the island.

'The thing of darkness' is Caliban. Prospero and he had had a very symbiotic relationship at the beginning, they supported each other and the benefits were mutual, till Caliban tried to outrage Miranda's modesty. Caliban does not regret it; he wishes he were successful so that the island 'be peopled with little Calibans'.

The reader is left with the ideological problem, 'are there people who will never see right from wrong? Or do people have a different notion of right and wrong?' There seems to be an inevitable repetition of circumstances, a repetition of human desires.

Trinculo and Stephano, and the brother of the duke, Sebastian all desire to acquire power somehow, even at the expense of murdering their own. There is very little to choose between the civilized and the uncivilized, the noblemen and the lowly.

The use of demonstratives is typical of a play. When Prospero says 'mark', 'this', 'these three' 'you must know', he is addressing the other characters as well as the audience. The audience is informed of the events at the same time, which gives the play a sense of immediacy. It is characteristic of the Shakespearean play, for he had no drop curtain or any of the stage props that the modern theatre has.

The extract is taken from The Dumb Waiter by Harold Pinter. Gus and Ben find themselves in this basement room. The reader/audience understands that they are awaiting some instructions from some authority, and that it is on his instructions they find themselves here. Gus clarifies the situation.

Gus is portrayed as a busy body. He talks incessantly, and obviously on topics best left out. For example, he mentions the name of the boss. Ben says the place may be rented, but Gus insists that the place is owned by him-Wilson. Ben probably is more in the know or more intelligent, for it is unimaginable that there would be ownership of a place which would be traceable.

This extract spoken by Gus is a description of how their boss works and the general routine they follow. Gus says 'it's his place all right' partly being critical of the way they are treated. They have the wherewithal to make tea, but no gas, and no shilling between the two to put in the meter.

He details the 'secrecy'; 'there is an address, a key, a teapot with nobody in sight.' Gus is actually questioning the whole procedure. He does not meet the boss, only follows the instructions.

The flat tone of his voice as well as the fact that this produces no response from the other indicates that it is not an aspect he is bothered with.

His query as to getting no complaints, and not seeing anyone else is a prediction of what will happen. The irony of 'just waiting' being part of their job is horrifying, they are awaiting their own end. The statement, 'except the bloke who comes' carries no meaning till the end; the bloke is the victim. The horror of it comes to the audience only at the end. The audience realizes 'the bloke' comes willingly, he is part of the plan.

What happens to Gus will not be too far from Ben, and Ben is brainwashed enough and too committed to see it, or take alternative action. The significance of Gus' revelations comes only at the end. It is a rehearsal; there is the teapot, never a soul in sight, and all they do is wait.

The dramatic intensity is created with the stress on the ordinariness and the insignificance of events. When the audience watches 'the eventless' killing of Gus, the audience experiences with horror that it is something that can happen to anyone, any time, to self too. One experiences a speechless horror at the absolute amorality.

The extract is taken from The Remains of a Day by Kazuo Ishiguro. The book covers four and a half days of real time, where the narrator goes sightseeing. In reality, the narrator is concerned with what had been within the

precincts of Darlington Hall, over a much longer time, covering the post war period. This is Day Two-Morning Salisbury, but he is actually referring to some event in Darlington Hall. The extract carries the narrator's ideas on the marriage of employees.

The passage refers to the time when Miss Kenton as well as the senior Stevens were working at the Hall as House Keeper and Under Valet respectively. Stevens was the Butler. He was, and felt responsible for the running of the Hall. He had had as many as seventeen servants under him. The reference to 'such liaisons' is to the association of two servants, the House Keeper and the under valet who had fallen in love with each other and decided to get married. Stevens' total lack of self-reflection can be seen here. He is particularly harsh on House Keepers they are -'particularly guilty'. He accuses them of not being genuinely interested in the profession, and of going in search of romance.

The narration makes it obvious that Miss Kenton the House keeper, had fallen in love with the narrator, Stevens. Stevens himself was not totally dead/indifferent to her, but he could not bring himself to respond because of the notion he had of himself, and his call for duty. Miss Kenton starts with producing a vase of flowers in order to lighten the atmosphere of Stevens' pantry. He spurns it. However, he admits to the truth of Miss Kenton's observations about his room, his father, his father's work, and her own work. Even his current enterprise, of seeing the countryside is a ruse to cover a visit to Miss Kenton/Mrs.Benn. He hopes to invite Miss Kenton to resume work at the Hall. In addition to his lack of self- reflection bordering on hypocrisy, is the exalted and false notion he has of himself. He considers himself among the 'more senior employees and marriage of those can be disruptive'. He adds in a condescending manner that if two members of staff happen to fall in love and decide to marry, 'it would be churlish to be apportioning blame'. The implication being that one of them -obviously the woman- was responsible! He considers maids and footmen as of a lower order, and therefore liable to fall in love.

The narrative thus has layers of meaning at the conscious and subconscious level. He says that a love relationship among the 'senior' staff, could be 'disruptive'; this statement shows that Stevens always put his 'profession' above all other things. Stevens is a fine study of character which keeps the reader on hook despite its lack of any involvement of the reader. The narrator achieves 'an intimacy' with the reader, which keeps the reader going.

- (b) This extract is from Tess of the D'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy, very early in the story. Tess has just been brought home by Alex who is guilty of violating her. She 'the four months cousin' is probably three months with child. It is a melancholy return home. 'Sad October and her sadder self' seem to be the only existences.

It is in this context she hears the sound of the artisan and gets into conversation with him. It is he who starts the conversation wishing her 'good morning' and commenting that it is too early in the day of Sabbath to be about, and he further informs her of his work on this day which he considers more important than his daily work. What he does is to paint Biblical warnings on hedges and stiles etc.

Hardy's criticism of the way religion is practiced is made through the words and actions of the artisan. The artisan takes joy in writing 'the hottest stuff which will make people wriggle'. His intention is not so much to reform people or lead them on the correct path, but to make them suffer.

Tess' openness and genuine qualities are seen in her spontaneous response to the artisan. Tess asks him a question close to her heart; ('Supposing your sin was not of your own seeking?')- a question that Hardy is concerned with, in his criticism of the opinion of the society. The artisan has no reply he will leave 'the application to the hearts of the people'. Tess' response "I think they are horrible... Crushing! Killing!" is personal as the artisan said, and ironical as the situation portends. The language used by Tess is as emotional as is the language used by the artisan; her's spontaneous, his deliberate and purposive.

The artisan is a representative of those who are responsible for 'educating the society' on morals. He is ignorant of wider issues, or even genuine philosophical ones like the question, Tess raises; one's guilt is concomitant with one's awareness. Little children are innocent, they are not aware of sin, so had Tess been.

Hardy gets the artisan to refer Tess to Mr. Clare of Emminster, Angel's father as one who could explain such things. The reader can see Hardy's reliance on the hand of fate.

- (c) This extract is taken from A Nectar in a Sieve by Kamala Markandaya. The description refers to what Kuti suffered in the period of almost famine. Kuti is the last child conceived by Rukmani on the Deepavali night, however Rukmani seemed to have almost relinquished her responsibility for Kuti, and Ira has taken over.

The passage describes Kuti's suffering as representative of the common suffering of the villagers. Kuti was conceived when Rukmani and Nathan were fairly old, that perhaps accounts for his general debility. In addition, the acute lack of food contributes to his very weak physical state. At first, he was 'strong enough to ask for food and cry' when it was not there. But soon he had no strength 'to ask, or cry'. It means he had little breath in him, little life. In the narrative of Rukmani and Nathan, Kuti plays a very significant role. The childhood of the other children is hardly mentioned. Whatever is mentioned relates to food. There is the mention of Arjun making parcels of food at the wedding having eaten his full. The few conversations between them also mostly relate to food. Arjun is accused by Rukmani of resenting the food given to Ira. There is very little of Kuti- in the Rukmani - Nathan relationship.

The passage also gives a picture of Ira. Ira has been returned by her husband because of alleged infertility. Earlier when Rukmani was pregnant with Kuti, Rukmani had felt some sort of a resentment from Ira. Rukmani herself did not seem to care that much for Kuti. He was left to himself. Soon Ira took over. She took over the role of a mother to Kuti. She resorts to prostitution because she had no other way of feeding Kuti.

One of the themes of Nectar in a Sieve is rural poverty. Rural poverty is exacerbated due to several reasons, ignorance of the rural population, lack of guidance, colonial exploitation and inclement weather. The effect of the extremes of weather is described in detail, the other factors are implied. Here too, Kuti's condition is due to the ignorance and total helplessness of the rural poor.

Markandaya's easy and simple style makes the book readable and the details memorable. Markandaya resorts to clear description as given of Kuti, and does not seek complex literary techniques. Her style is suitable for the simple story she relates, which perhaps contributes to the popularity of the book.

- (d) This extract is taken from July's People by Nadine Gordimer. This is the description of their journey to the Chief -the Smale family, July and Daniel.

The description with emphasis on the 'sameness' is calculated to evoke a feeling of sameness, the activities, dragging and chopping of wood are the same; activities seem to be more important than the people, the back sides bent at washing, squatting etc, with emphasis on the work than the human being. There is the juxtaposition of babies trying to gain mastery over their legs with the old slowly losing it - 'a cycle' that seems to be ever present, going unnoticed but accepted, with no attention paid to it.

The passage serves to highlight the difference of attitudes and experiences between the Blacks and Whites; Blacks live close to life with its unchanging cycle, unlike the Whites as implied.

This seems to be one more difference between the Blacks and Whites which Gordimer wants the reader to notice, the eternal monotony of the life of the Blacks, whereas the Whites seek new things. It is said that one thing the Whites enjoy is in procuring/buying 'new possessions' which is not common with, or possible for the Blacks.

The passage also suggests or foretells the anticlimax they face. This is the first time the Smale family is getting out of their confined space at July's. When the news of the visit comes, Bam imagines that they may be told to go by the Chief, and he is very apprehensive. There is also a sense of misplaced euphoria, they feel they are 'going out'. Bam actually shaves, Maureen repairs her shoes, the children are excited, they feel they are going visiting. Bam even considers the possibility of having brought 'a bottle' to the chief as a gift. With all this the final result is inconclusive by itself. The chief has nothing to say, except ask Bam to give him training in the use of his gun, and inquire whether 'Mwawatha is looking after them well'.

The passage is also 'symbolic' of the final end, that the relationship between the Whites and the Blacks is totally inconclusive. It shows the Blacks being on a better wicket than the Whites. The Blacks did not find the Whites

and their presence surprising, as they were aware of them, the Whites saw them as the same, because they are not alive to the subtle differences, as what happened with the entry of the 'pseudo chief'. The Whites thought that the man was the chief and barely escaped the embarrassment of treating him with the respect due to another. The sameness the Whites see in the Blacks is part of the attitude of seeing 'the other' as different from one, and failing to see the differences that exist among the others. The sameness is from the point of view of the Whites.

(e) The extract is taken from Life of Pi by Jan Martell. The description refers to Pi seeing the Orangutan floating on bananas. Throughout the story Pi shows a particular fondness for the Orangutan. In the revised version, when his first version is rejected by the insurance agents, Pi offers an alternative account in which the Orangutan is his mother. (The Orangutan was the mother of two fine boys, like his own mother).

The contradiction of the emotion expressed in the passage is evocative of his own mood, 'joy and pain...better that you had died...bitterly glad ...bring joy and pain.' Pi is aware of the danger of their situation; he thinks he will not survive for long. This creates the feeling of apprehension in the reader too. The final sentence -the reference to ignorance of the sea, attributed to both Pi and 'you' carry the ambivalence that runs throughout the novel.

There is also the ambivalence or the confusion in Pi's identification of gods or and deities. The opening 'Blessed great Mother' prepares us for a formal prayer or request for succor except for the warning 'great'. Then he equates the blessed great mother, with 'Pondicherry fertility goddess' identifying a limited space as Pondicherry-and capacity as fertility. There are many fertility goddesses in Hinduism. Parvati, Uma, Gauri, Shakti, Aparna to name some. Lakshmi is Mother goddess of Fertility and Rice. It seems that Pi with his penchant for the worship of multiple gods and religions has incorporated one for Pondicherry. He continues further, detailing the capacities of the goddess; 'provider of milk and love, spreader of comfort'. Then the capacities become diverse and 'all encompassing', terror of ticks (=picker of ticks), picker of crying ones (children.) What would have been an anti-climax fails as the reader is confused with the identification of the orangutan with the mother of Pondicherry, and (the later identification with his own mother).

The style and the narrative are reminiscent of his skirmishes with the 'different churches' and the final episode at the beach where everybody gets together on Pi's declaration that 'he loves god'. His father buys a round of ice cream. Thus, this passage too is typical of Pi's narrative in the mixture of what is light and serious. His racy style keeps the reader going despite such seeming 'inconsistencies or confusions'.

The passage also contributes to the central theme of fact and fiction, for as we read 'of the orangutan floating on bananas', it strikes us as strange- 'bananas floating' (?) but we let it go by and keep on reading. Then at the end, the insurance man raises doubts, and he actually floats a banana to see if it does, which makes the reader too test it, and find that bananas do float. This supports the more serious concern, all facts should be verifiable, which is a different concern from 'fiction being realistic'.

3. This extract is taken from the short story The Thing Around Your Neck by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The extract refers to the narration of Akunna getting close to the Unnamed. The story is developed on the things Akunna is ready to 'share' with him and the things she cannot. Her final decision in going home by herself is related to what she can and cannot share with him.

Akunna selects the things she will tell him and she will not. This extract refers to the things she will not. He does not eat meat because he doesn't like the way the animals are killed, because it releases panic toxins and people consuming the meat get paranoid. His thinking reflects his social and economic status. He does not think like others. He is able to extend his- bounty- vision to encompass the world generally, feel for man and animal alike because he has not known any personal privation.

Akunna on the other hand is not only poor but oppressed with the thought, feeling and experience of being poor and all its attendant privations. The meat pieces are small because they are poor, and her mother cooks with

MSG, because she is ignorant and poor, too poor to get the genuine stuff for its flavour and nutrition. The meat pieces were evocative of that poverty- it was not often they had meat, and the pieces were small. Akunna does not want to admit that to him.

The story is unusual in its exploitation of the theme of 'Blacks and Whites'; there is 'no evidence' of colour discrimination, but it is clear that there are many things that make the gulf between the two unbridgeable- the unbridgeable between him and her. He was so far beyond her, that he could not understand, leave alone respond to her situation.

The adoption of the second person narrative helps to convey the distancing. The use of the second person generally helps to generalize. (The statement "You don't accept a gift with your left hand" would mean one must not do so. It is a generalization, it is telling you how to do it, how not to do it.) However, Akunna is not identifying herself with the reader, nor is the reader identifying herself/himself with Akunna, but looking at the whole thing from a distance, with the use of 'you' providing the reader with details only Akunna is privy to. Thereby in a way, the reader suspends judgment on her actions, and tends to look at her with empathy. Her character is left open for the reader to judge, but the reader will not, cannot really 'judge' her.

4. This extract is from the poem The Cathedral Builders written by John Osmond. The poem is written as one sentence stanzas; this section can be taken as the second sentence or the second movement.

The first sentence draws a picture of the 'exalted and heavenly' work, this section, the mundane. There is the repetition of the word 'every' indicating the monotony of the work. There is no suggestion of pleasure, the wives are 'smelly', the relationship with the children is reduced to 'quarreling and cuffing'. The activities mentioned are common and mundane, nothing noble; they lied and spat, they sang as a matter of course, was 'happy or unhappy'. They took life as it came. (Voice associated with the cathedral will be prayers, hymns, supplications-sonorous voices).

The poet implies that, the work they do has a negative impact on them. Soon they gave up socializing too, and being helpful. The work was tiring and monotonous; although they had the capacity they were 'less inclined' to fix the roof of a neighbour. They were becoming unsociable. They are doing much more sophisticated and hard work than just 'fixing a roof' but they can't be bothered. They had the time too. But they seemed to have lost the zest to live.

The poet seems to look at the work of 'cathedral building' itself from a negative point of view. It has taken more than a year, perhaps years. They have impeded 'the right of way' of swallows. The cathedral is obstructing the routine way of the swallows/nature, which has been going on for all time, therefore it is almost unnatural. The cathedral itself is unnatural, its naves 'sprout' arches, clerestories 'soar'.

The builders show the effect of the 'natural' process on them, they are 'greyer, shakier'; they have got rheumatism and have decided to give it up. 'It' represents the building of the cathedral; it can imply the cathedral too. The poet's sympathy is with the cathedral builders. He highlights the fact that their contribution -if not for which there would have been no cathedral, is undervalued and ignored. (The description of the Pope is humorous and satirical).

The single long sentence broken into phrases dependent solely on 'activity' and perception gives the impression of a continuous activity. The cathedral as well as the builders seem to belong to the past.

The final section carries a criticism of the whole process.

Part B

Drama

Tom/Amanda

- (a) "Memory and past are always intertwined. Memories inhibit freedom and impede one's desire to change and start afresh" Examine the relevance of the above statement, making detailed reference to Tennessee Williams' play *The Glass Menagerie*.

The play *The Glass Menagerie* is identified as a memory play, as almost all the characters carry the burden of 'memory' with them. The play starts with Tom as the story teller, depending on his memory, especially his memories of Laura his sister. He has proved himself 'the bastard son of a bastard father'. He has abandoned his mother and sister who depended on his earnings for their food and shelter. Thus, the role of memory has also to do with duty and responsibility. Tom spends time at the cinema with a determined effort to forget the present, not the past. He writes poetry at the warehouse, loses his job for writing a poem on the cover of a shoe box! Tom keeps remembering Laura and being influenced by that memory despite his attempt to get out of home and the memories.

Much of the play depends on the past. The life size photograph dominating the sitting room is a picture of memory which has different memories. Amanda the wife remembers the husband as a young man, she remembers his smile, she had fallen head over heels in love with that smile. That she had made a wrong choice is a memory she is privy to. However, her memories of the other gentlemen callers are what she lives on, eternally refreshing her memories with constant recitation of their doings. Amanda's propensity to constantly dwell on them prevents her from seeing them as past events, so much so that when Jim is expected as Laura's gentleman caller, Amanda attires herself in the dress she received her seventeen gentlemen callers, carrying the identical bouquet of jonquils! This is a memory that has meaning for her alone. It is obviously lost on the gentleman caller, and if it did carry some understanding to the son and daughter, they make no reference to it. And so, Amanda herself seems to come to terms with what is but a 'memory' and she continues the role of a mother.

Amanda likes to exist on her memories, live in them. She goes to the Rubicam Business College, to follow up on Laura's progress there, and learns the truth. It is no dream, Laura had not gone there for the last so many days, she had been sick, and had not been able to face the others. So, Laura had whiled away her time. Amanda comes home after learning about it, she doesn't go to the DAR meeting (which she could have easily done). When she comes, she lets her bag, book etc drop to the ground, puts the handkerchief to her nose, and works on the memory of what she felt on receiving the news. (Laura had had to be taken to the wash room, Amanda had to be given a glass of water!) What Amanda is concerned with is what she felt and remembered. There is very little positive 'criticism' of Laura for her action. She does not even try to put Laura's action into focus. She goes back to her memory of what a girl's future was in the twenties, and decides on a gentleman caller. Amanda's memories govern her.

Laura too lives on memory, but there is an element of 'reality' in her memories. The audience is not quite sure of the authenticity of Amanda's memories: did she really have seventeen gentleman callers on one day? Did she actually gather so many jonquils and have the entire house filled with them? The audience 'willingly suspends belief', and makes no attempt at judgment.

Laura's dreams are based on what is real. Laura is deeply conscious all the time of her lame condition, whereas Amanda not only overlooks it, but wants others as well to adopt her attitude. Laura remembers why she was called 'blue roses'. She treasures Jim as a memory, where she has had no role. She remembers everything about him, what others thought of him, and she remembers going late to choir when everyone would be alerted by her entry. (She had made no effort to go there early, so that others may not see or hear her deformity). She treasures 'The Torch', follows up Jim's love life, doesn't care for the girl he was engaged to, speculates that he may be married by now. Her self-image is closer to reality. In terms of memory, Amanda seems to depend much on imagination, whereas Laura's is more based on reality.

It is interesting that in terms of symbolism the two kinds of flowers stand for different things, that seem to match the character types of the two. Blue roses embody ultimate desire and lust. Given as a gift they represent the unattainable symbolizing mystery hope and beauty. Jonquils on the other hand stand for desire and domestic bliss as well as friendship. They iterate desire and convey that life just seems to be too much.

The only character who is not burdened by memory is Jim. The Torch is a forgotten memory, it holds no nostalgia for him. At school they had thought that Jim would only stop short of the White House. At school he was the leading debater. But he has no memory of it. He takes lessons in Public Speaking! He has no memory of his debating prowess! He also takes lessons in mundane radio repairs! He remembers blue roses vaguely with no other attendant memories. He is surprised that Laura remembers! Finally, when he finds himself unwittingly trapped in Laura's expectations, he is quick enough to spin the tale of an engagement and an intended sick mother-in-law!

Jim finds himself almost on par with Tom at the same work place- a warehouse for shoes, but unlike Tom, he has no memories of duty and responsibility to keep him worried, he has no memories like Amanda to keep him melancholy and nostalgic, and unlike Amanda he has no memories of what was or what could have been and therefore nothing to inhibit freedom and impede his desire to change and start afresh'.

(b) "Ultimately it is evil, hatred, and deception that triumph over virtue, love and honesty in Shakespeare's play, Othello". Do you agree?

The broad outline of the play seems to justify the above comment. Iago is jealous of Cassio because he has been given the post of lieutenant to Othello while he himself is the Ancient. Othello a Moor is the General of the Venetian army much respected. Desdemona the daughter of a senator falls in love with him, they elope and get married. Almost immediately Othello is called upon to fight the Turks to defend Cypress. Othello, Desdemona, Cassio, Iago, Emilia and Roderigo go to Cypress. From then onwards it is evil, hatred and deception that triumph.

Iago with hatred poisons Othello telling him that Desdemona is in love with Cassio, he instigates Roderigo to anger Cassio, and in the fracas that follows, Cassio hurts Montano, the ruler of Cypress. Iago when called upon to relate what happens, does so with evil deception, he leaves out his part in the matter, and his hatred triumphs when Othello is constrained to sack Cassio. From then these evil forces take over. Iago tells Cassio to seek Desdemona's help to be reinstated, meanwhile making Othello 'convinced' -against his will -that they meet very often. Othello begins to rely only on Iago and Iago has a field day even convincing Othello that he must strangle Desdemona as an act of sacrifice. Iago manages to deceive everyone till the last moment, and when that moment comes, he says he will not 'speak' i.e., confess. Othello does strangle Desdemona only to learn of her innocence and Iago's duplicity from Emilia.

The character Iago is evil. There is no redeeming quality in him. He has absolute hatred of Othello. Desdemona is absolutely virtuous. She has no notion of practical living. She falls an easy target to Iago's machinations. Othello falls a victim to the deception of Iago, so does Roderigo. Even Emilia, wife of Iago is under the same delusion regarding Iago. Desdemona is a casualty in the sense that Iago is not interested in her or what happens to her, he only wants Cassio and Othello ruined, Cassio for his job, and because he is a Florentine; Othello perhaps because he is a Moor, and 'non-suited his suitors'.

But this is not all what Othello is about. Within the Shakespearean concept of a tragedy and the fall of a tragic hero is a study of human emotion and human failure. Thereby the readers' concern is not with Iago, he is only an instrument, the main concern is Othello; it is his fall that the reader/audience is concerned with, gets involved in.

In the very first scene itself, (Act I scene 1) the reader/audience has no sympathy for Iago. Iago is recognized for being a diabolical liar, he first sends 'three of the great ones of the city' to Othello to speak on his behalf and when Othello says 'I have chosen my man', he says that is how jobs are given, on 'letter and affection', the description of the two types of servants and his acknowledged allegiance with the second, does not win our favor. He does not stay with Roderigo (and Brabantio) but runs to Othello because he must 'throw out a flag and sign, which is indeed but sign'. By this time the reader/audience has developed an abhorrence of the man. He tells a blatant lie to Othello, that Roderigo/Brabantio spoke 'such scurvy and provoking terms against your honour', that he wanted to 'yerk him under the ribs'. Othello does not bother he says it is 'better as it is', and follows with a description of himself in such modest and self-effacing terms that we are informed as to what type of a man he is. We are informed that he is a Moor, we learn that he is a General in Venice, much trusted and respected. Soon we see the evidence of the trust the country has in him, just

as we have learned how untrustworthy Iago is. Then follows his response to Brabantio, and his offer to go to prison. He wins our heart even before we hear the story of his 'unvarnished love'.

We also develop some tenderness for Brabantio, bringing up his daughter alone without a wife, fancying romance and adventure in a childlike way, 'oft inviting Othello' to hear his tales of romantic adventure; father and daughter fall in love for the same reason. He displays the same justice and uprightness seen in Othello 'if she confesses that she was half the wooer, destruction on my head if my bad blame light on the man'. Bringing her up very tenderly, and living ensconced in comfort so away from reality, that he thinks only black magic would bring about such a preference, so different from the accepted and expected. He cannot handle it. The magnanimity that 'loved' the black Moor and sought his company fails in the light of the unexpected; his death of a broken heart is presaged with his leaving the court 'I have done, on to the state affairs...what is to become of my despised time'. It is a deeply hurt man who tells Othello that Desdemona 'has deceived him'. He is incapable of understanding a different way of life, he feels himself deceived in life, he has lost his wife, and now his daughter leaves him, not 'unlike the dream he has had'.

Thus, the reader/audience faces the first tragic casualty with immense sympathy and helplessness. Perhaps characteristically Shakespeare shows what tragedy is like; Brabantio is responsible for the suffering he undergoes, first in having invited Othello home, and then lacking in magnanimity to respond to the duke's suggestion of 'accommodating' Desdemona. The tragedy could have been avoided. It is like a forecast of what's to happen in greater proportions, where the love is too obvious, it gets bypassed.

Othello is admired for his qualities; it is not only Desdemona who 'sees Othello's visage in his mind'. The duke tells Brabantio 'your son is law is far more fair than black'. It is obvious that as a Christian Moor, he has won respect, admiration and love too, as is obvious with Cassio. Montano has words of praise, 'the man commands like a soldier'- high praise from one soldier to another.

The fact that we are from the beginning privy to Iago's cunning and treachery, also makes our understanding of and sympathy for Othello spontaneous. Much as we are disgusted with Iago's cunning planning, we can't help seeing 'the logic' of it. Roderigo is the man in love with Desdemona, but he selects Cassio as his instrument, 'he has a person and a smooth dispose to be suspected, framed to make women false'-not so with Roderigo 'the curled darling', he is 'the trash of Venice' - not the personality to attract Desdemona. Then Iago has the devil's own luck, Othello has to ask for 'ocular proof', and there he throws away the handkerchief and says 'let it be' which (it) he meant his headache and which probably Desdemona took for the handkerchief and let 'it' be. Not only is it picked by Emilia and snatched by Iago who has 'a use of it'; it is dropped in Cassio's rooms, and Bianca must throw it at Cassio for Othello to see. The innocuous 'it', does great damage. Shakespeare continues to use the word 'it' without using the word handkerchief throughout, as much as possible, (except by Iago) stressing its insignificance'; 'It' is nothing at all, it only performs a grammatical function

Throughout all this, we sympathize with Othello, we do see his gullibility, and almost echo with Emilia, 'you dolt', but we appreciate the fact that his mind is not one 'where foul things intrude', unlike Iago's. We remember, what he feels for Desdemona, that 'if he did not love the gentle Desdemona, he would not have given up his free life, 'his life upon her faith', his desire to be 'generous to her mind', that when he 'loves her not, chaos is come again' etc. We also remember what Desdemona feels for Othello, that she would not 'be a moth of peace' but take to a life of hardship for his sake. With all this and with their mutual love lessened not one bit, when we witness the cool planning bringing them closer and closer to their inevitable end, we are moved not with just their tragedy, but with a sense of impending disaster for which we too seem to be inexplicably responsible, for sharing in it.

Thus, Iago is left behind, his end does not interest us, we are in the throes of an enormous sense of the power of human emotions, of a disaster unavoidable which we have to witness. Death is the end of ordinary beings like Roderigo, Iago too will be made to face death, but Othello has brought about his own and Desdemona's but they and what they stood for, love, honesty, virtue, will live forever.

- (c) In Shakespeare's play, The Tempest "all the turbulence conflicts in adult social life are resolved by Prospero's wise mildness and his way of wielding power". Comment on this assessment of the play.

The question draws attention to two aspects dealt within the play, The Tempest; they are adult social life and power. Shakespeare seems to imply in The Tempest that in adult 'social life' adults are only concerned with power at different levels. Prospero wanted power over the elements, with knowledge. Caliban says how Prospero is nothing without his power, that the spirits he has within his beck and call all hate him, and obey him out of fear of his power. Ariel has power but does not seem to be concerned with power. He wants to live 'freely'. Antonio too wanted power over other human beings. Perhaps the only two beings not concerned with power are Miranda and Ferdinand; they have the power of love. There is little social life in the play, therefore the question calls for an analysis of power at different levels, as enjoyed by different people.

It is an interesting study of power, for as the play starts, the boatswain has the power through his duty and responsibility in his employment to order the king and the Councilor to their cabins. They are interfering in his work! Gonzalo wants to hang him, but that makes no impact on the boatswain! He must first preserve the ship and their lives. When he is asked to do his best to save the king, he says he does not need any external motivation, he must save himself, and to do so, he must save the ship. Social position has no power, when outside the orbit of 'society'.

Initially Prospero loses power because as the Duke of Milan he did not behave like one in his position with responsibility. He was too engrossed with his books and he let his brother rule for him. The audience gets little information about the situation; the emphasis is on the treachery of the brother Antonio, and the loyalty of Gonzalo who made sure that there was not only enough food for survival, but that the books precious to Prospero were also safe with him. Prospero had in reality abdicated his power. It is with his loss of power and especially with his daughter Miranda growing up and her realizing that she has nothing, that he realizes 'the loss of power'. Prospero says how he himself was known as 'the prime Duke without parallel' when he gave over the affairs of the kingdom to his brother. Prospero gives a picture of (worldly) power as enjoyed by his brother Antonio. 'He knew how to grant suits, how to deny them, who to advance, and who to trash for over topping.' Prospero further adds that Antonio 'was loaded with revenue as well as power'. The turbulence and conflict in adult life as presented in The Tempest relates to power.

The play starts with the storm which is a product of Prospero's power. Miranda says that 'had she been any god of power she would have sent the sea within the earth'. Thus, very early in the play the power discussed is not the power generally spoken of, but a power which is beyond the 'general'. Prospero with his power is able to net in not only his brother Antonio whom he wants to 'punish', but also a prospective husband for his daughter, Ferdinand, heir apparent to the kingdom of Naples. It is this power that enables Prospero to bring Ferdinand and Miranda together in a situation where they fall in love with each other. Prospero ensures that it is not only the circumstance of 'being found together' that makes Ferdinand fall in love with Miranda. He puts him to a test of carrying logs, a difficult and menial task for one brought up as a prince, which naturally makes Miranda very sympathetic to him for his suffering-a foundation for love. (?) He performs it in the spirit of the tasks set by wicked fairies in punishment. Prospero also ensures that they do not cross the bounds of virtue.

Prospero had used his power to get the island to himself. Sycorax is no more, her arch enemy Ariel has been released and made to be his obedient 'slave'. Sycorax's son, Caliban who would logically be the owner of the island has been duly subdued with his power that he literally boils in his own steam.

Ariel predicts that the sufferings imposed by Prospero on his kith and kin would make his 'affections become fonder'. In response Prospero says that if Ariel who is 'only air' should feel so, how much more should he feel. It is in the final scene that Prospero's 'wise mildness in yielding power' becomes evident. Recalling what he has suffered, Prospero says, 'that though he is stuck to the quick with their wrongs, the 'rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance', and that 'they being penitent' he will not 'extend even a frown further.'

At the summing up he admits Caliban to be his, requiring Antonio to acknowledge the two villains Trinculo and Stephano to be his. Though not publicly acknowledged, Sebastian must see in the attempt of the duo to kill/oust Prospero, a replay of what they were planning, to kill Alonso and get his kingdom. Prospero wisely makes no open

reference to the incident admitting that that he could get 'his Highness' frown upon them', but he decides to tell no tales. When Alonso states that he should ask forgiveness of his son, presumably for his past actions, Prospero wisely says, 'Let us not burden remembrance with a heaviness that is gone'.

Finally, when Antonio 'gives up his power, the kingdom of Milan', Prospero graciously accepts it. He tells them to be 'cheerful and think of each thing well'. Sebastian is planning to 'buy' them especially Caliban to make money by exhibiting them. Prospero teases Stephano for aspiring to be 'the king of the isle'. Caliban himself repents of his folly; "I'll be wise hereafter... What a thrice -double ass was I to take this drunkard for a god". Values are restored.

Prospero wants to 'retire me to my Milan, where every third thought shall be my grave'. Thus, the conclusion leaves no acrimonious feelings in any one. Prospero concludes philosophically.

"We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep".

- (d) "Suffering especially in the face of endless discrimination and violence can change one's own definition of good and evil" Respond to Athol Fugard's Sizwe Bansi is Dead in the light of the above statement.

The play Sizwe Bansi is Dead is centered on the discrimination of the Africans by the Whites. The play was first performed in 1972, in Cape Town, and the following year at the scene of the play -New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, only for one night. Sizwe Bansi is Dead makes no pretensions about its intention, it is to expose the discrimination and violence that were evident in the society then.

Discrimination entails suffering, a suffering that cannot be vocalized sometimes. Discrimination could sometimes be a matter of perception; one can feel discriminated by an individual or the society. One suffers then. In this case Athol Fugard is dealing with a theme and reality that is historical, well documented, and evident. Discrimination in the contemporary society is associated with human rights. Naturally discrimination is a violation of what is moral, what is good, wholesome in society and one's rights as a citizen, as a human being. When the play Sizwe Bansi is Dead is considered, it is clear that the playwright is dealing with discrimination at all levels.

There are three characters taking part, Styles, Sizwe and Buntu. Styles is the man with 'the mission', he speaks for his fellow men. He had been working at Fords, and had spent some time there before he actually realized that he /they had been exploited all the time. He realizes it with the visit of the White Boss to the factory. In anticipation of the visit of Ford Junior, the factory and the workers are made to undergo a spring change. The factory is made to look what it should have looked like all this time; warnings, notices regarding the floor, the machines, work areas etc. are painted. What is more, these notices are printed in the local African language! All the 'boys' are told to have a bath and given clean overalls.

The rehearsal for the reception of Mr. Ford Junior who 'owns the plant and everything in it' is full of irony. It also shows the hypocrisy of the general foreman Mr. Bradley. He refers to the African workers at Ford's in America as 'monkeys in his own country, those niggers in Harlem who know nothing but strike, strike'. Styles realizes Bradley's attitude to themselves as well as to the Black workers in his own country. Probably irritated and annoyed by this attitude he informs his workers that Bradley says 'South African monkeys are not like the American monkeys, they are better trained'. A fellow worker almost proving the truth of Bradley's judgment shouts against Styles, 'he's talking shit'.

This episode shows the attitude of the Whites, as well as the degree to which they had demoralized the Blacks. The visit of the White man proves it. "...three long black galaxies zoom up...then a tall man six foot six, hefty, full of respect and dignity came. He took three enormous strides one two, three, and out he went".

The episode made Styles realize how he and the others were treated. He said to himself, 'Styles boy, you are a bloody monkey'. That is what made him realize the humiliation they were subjected to, all the time, which had not been realized as they were so used to it. He realized he was 'a bloody circus monkey', with no time for himself, his wife or children, doing what the Whites tell him to, without thinking or demurring. When he tells his father he, wants to be 'a man', the father aghast, tells him he is already one; 'he is circumcised and he already has a wife'. The average African could not think outside the box as it were.

This episode deals with the general discrimination that is accepted, and thus is supported by themselves too. Not having ever questioned the status quo, they don't realize any discrimination.

The episode of 'Bansi's death' deals with the other aspects of discrimination and levels of morality. Bansi is a god-fearing man, he does not want to go against the law. The law stands for what is right and wrong. He is a moral man who respects the dead. When they find the body of Robert Zwelinzima, Bansi's first instinct is to carry the body, perhaps give it a burial. It is Buntu's arguments that make him accept the impossibility of carrying the body. This is no place where death would be treated with dignity and respect. His agreeing to take over the identity of Robert (How do I get used to Robert?) predicates the moral struggle he has. He feels he is telling a lie; he is a robber; he is being an imposter. What can he tell his wife and children? How can he lie to them? These are serious moral concerns. If the situation was different, they would continue to be. But under the given circumstances, where there is so much injustice, discrimination, he begins to see 'the good'-the material good that would accrue as well as that he is not doing any harm. To the Whiteman the African is just a card, he sees no difference between one and another. Probably the Whiteman cannot actually differentiate between one Black and another. It is well known that differences of features between one Black and another is not easily discernible by the Whites, and vice versa. For the Whiteman, all Blacks may be alike even physically.

The words and actions of the foreman Bradley reflect his callous attitude to his workers as well as his hypocrisy. He was in fact cheating his own employer by putting up a farcical show. He is incapable of anything genuine, there is no morality in his behaviour and actions. In comparison, both Styles and Ziswe are moral, they go through an internal struggle to come to terms with the new notion of morality. Finally, it is to do only with themselves.

Thus, it is evident that the changes that come upon Styles, and Sizwe are a result of the endless discrimination and violence they have been accustomed to which ultimately gives them a different definition of good and evil.

- (e) "The Dumb Waiter is nearly ordinary, almost trivial in plot and dialogue. Yet, this very ordinariness and triviality make its final impact all the more disturbing" Do you agree with this analysis of Pinter's play?

The classical plays were about persons of eminent rank. Not only were they eminent socially, but emotionally and morally too; they were persons of high rank. Drama introduces us to the intensity of human emotion. They deal with matters of personal and national importance.

The Dumb Waiter by Harold Pinter has only two characters. They are for the most part lying down or sitting up, and very occasionally standing or walking. Ben reads the newspaper, and keeps commenting on what he finds amusing or unbelievable, Gus keeps recalling some of the things they do, and one thing in particular about a girl. It is Gus' 'conversation' that gives the reader/audience an idea of who they are-killers.

However, the play is not about them. It is about what they do, and how they do, what they do, and more pertinently, where they do-the society in which these things are done or happen. If it were about the characters, we would be very concerned with what happens to Gus, still more, we would be outraged with Ben. But we are not. In Othello we wait anxiously hoping that Emilia would come in sooner, and prevent the tragedy. We wish for Othello to grant Desdemona the request she made 'for half an hour' till she had said 'one prayer'. We know the immense regret Othello will have to face; we wish to prevent it for him. But here we are not moved by the fate of Gus, we are shocked, not because 'his friend and companion' put a bullet through him, but that it could be done so callously, and that it is possible in this society.

The 'incidents' in the play are trivial beyond words. Gus puts on his shoes almost elaborately; he has to walk about to find a flattened match box in his shoe. He has to experience the match box in the other shoe for him to remove it. When he discovers the match box in one shoe it does not occur to him to check the other. His lack of common sense, foresight, or thinking of any sort, makes the reader lose interest in him as a person from whom anything that can be expected. The delayed flush of the lavatory is also associated with Gus. His description of the crockery-tea cups and saucers is also in keeping with his 'display of intelligence'. Ominously (?) the cups and saucers are black, the cup

with a white rim, and the saucer with the white centre which gets hidden when the cup sits in. Gus likes them, says they are 'striped'.

Ben keeps reading the newspaper. One gets the feeling it is a ruse to prevent Gus talking, similar to what happens in ordinary life. Then there is the newspaper story of an eighty-seven-year-old man, caught up in traffic, trying to creep under the lorry to cross the road, and getting killed. The story has several aspects. The old man does the kind of irresponsible mischievous thing that a child would do. But it is feasible. There is so much space under the lorry, one can creep through. His death is a curious death, it does not create the normal sympathy. It only provides an example for the unbelievable that can happen. Legally the lorry driver would not be held responsible for the old man's death; the driver could not see under the lorry. There is no interest in the old man, his end, his body. The interest is only in the unusualness of the event. Then there is the second episode from the paper about the killing of a cat. The paper reports that it was killed by a girl of eight, and was seen by her brother aged eleven. However, the two, Ben and Gus (seasoned killers) are outraged that it is put on a girl, decide that it was done by the brother and put on the sister, which they decide is a very bad thing; they are strongly moved, not by the death of the old man, nor the death of the cat, but the injustice of getting an eight-year-old girl involved. They seem very chivalrous looking at girls as gentle creatures incapable of any harshness. The triviality of it makes it difficult to take the opinions of these two characters seriously. It could also reflect on the society, where girls are no longer gentle creatures.

In conjunction is the question raised by Gus, about a girl whom he calls a mess. He does not refer to the blood but says 'she spread; girls are made of loose stuff unlike men'. Gus has some sympathy for the girl, it is caused by the mess, it was not neat. The girl may have been killed because of her involvements, indicating the deterioration of the society, where crime, blackmail etc. are normal. This 'story' and his insistent attempt to find out 'I've been meaning to ask you', which gets side stepped by Ben all the time, point to a difference between the two. The content of the conversation, does not interest the reader/audience, but the 'unexpectedness' keeps the interest going. The 'conversation' though totally unfocussed, keeps the interest going as to what can happen next.

Throughout in the background is the very ordinary 'business' of making and having a cup of tea. The desire to have a cup of tea 'before it', the effort to make the tea, lack of gas, lack of a shilling between the two of them to put in the meter, wishful thought that Wilson might somehow provide for it, the biscuits that have been brought by Gus which are ultimately sent up the dumb waiter because they have got used to acting unquestioningly on orders, point to the ordinariness and the inevitability of the happenings. No longer is man the agent of his own actions.

Their 'interest' and 'talk' is ordinary and common place, (however) the atmosphere is full of a suspense that is held back. The long and involved discussion about football is very ordinary and common place, both men getting involved in the discussion. The information is vague, Gus remembers it as if they had had watched a match, and seems to remember the winners. Ben contradicts him and says their visits to Birmingham have never coincided with the matches. What is revealing is that they know these cities Birmingham and Tottenham by name, not by any other association. Their life is limited to these 'places' arranged for them.

When Gus says 'I wonder who it will be to night', the reader/audience has no clue. If there was a clue, there will be more reader/audience involvement. Pinter keeps the audience away from the happenings on the stage, the audience is only an onlooker, and the feeling that is aroused is that 'this is the society'. There is no moral judgment of these characters. The feeling of horror is not emotionally felt, but cognitively conceived. Such things can happen in populous cities, there is an under-world of crime, which flourishes unseen.

The Dumb Waiter is only a replay of it. The play leaves the reader/audience feeling that he had witnessed something horrible, which somehow escapes 'explanation'. The summary of the play would be that there were these two men Ben and Gus. They have been together in many killings orchestrated by an external person/force and ultimately one kills the other. The summary does not capture the horror one feels. The horror is a result of our understanding of the state of the society, that the characters in the play are real, and that the incidents are common.

Novel

- (a) "In Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Thomas Hardy is critical of Victorian society's beliefs about fate, morality and repentance". Do you agree?

Tess of the D'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy as the title indicates is the story of Tess-a pure woman. The attitude of the society to the issues raised by Hardy in the book is evident in the way the book was received by the public, with favour and disfavour. Just as Hardy was critical of the society so was the society critical of his work.

Victorian society had opposites. It is most memorably described by another great Victorian writer, Charles Dickens. A Tale of Two Cities (Dickens) is prefaced with the contrasts that obtained in the Victorian times. "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of disbelief...it was the season of Light it was the season of Darkness..." The contrasts relate to the sense of morality, the sense of duty, the sense of responsibility and the sense of religion and family.

Thomas Hardy tells the story of Tess- a pure woman in the novel Tess of D'Urbervilles. Hardy's attitude to fate is tied up with his criticism of the society. The response of characters to 'fate' vary, the impact of 'fate' on characters vary, depending on their own, character. Thus, Tess' father learning of his lineage, that they descend from the ancestral family of D'Urbervilles, has a negative effect which keeps escalating into disaster. First the father wants to lord it over and celebrates at the Public House, which incapacitates him from taking the bee hives. The information certainly does not make him mend his ways. That the Victorian age known as the Age of Enlightenment should entertain 'fate' as inevitable is explored in Tess of the D'Urbervilles; an example is the old thick volume of The Complete Fortune Teller which seems to be much used by the Durberfields, Tess' family.

Parson Tringham is an educated man; he is an antiquarian. It is obvious that he is impressed with the D'Urbervilles ancestry. So is the 'enlightened' man of the modern generation-Angel Clare. When Angel learns of Tess' descent, he is quite pleased. He thinks it will win over his parents. "A D'Urberville hurt the dignity of a Clare!" Angel is aghast. He will get proof from Parson Tringham. Talking about the superiority of the D'Urbervilles, he suggested 'leaving this part of England-perhaps England itself after marriage, and he asks 'what does it matter how people regard us here?' He does not consider this option when he learns of Tess' confession. The reader thus sees that Hardy is critical of the attitude taken by Angel.

After Tess' confession Angel is convinced of the reverse. 'Decrepit families postulate decrepit wills, decrepit conduct'. He calls her "the exhausted seedling of an effete aristocracy". In reply Tess gives a list of her friends whose relations are better off, only to earn the comment, 'so much the worse for the country'. Clare belongs to the middle class, he is educated, unlike Tess who is poor and uneducated.

Later on, Angel accuses Tess of being 'an unapprehending peasant woman, who has never been initiated into the proportions of social things'. Tess admits to being 'a peasant by position and not by nature'. The words and the tone employed by Angel Clare begs the question of his refinement. Hardy leaves it open for the reader, while making his preferences clear through getting the reader involved in the story. Parson Tringham is irresponsible, he lacks insight and caring. He just lets out a bit of information which he thinks significant like a bit of gossip and leaves it at that. He is no shepherd to his flock.

Hardy's criticism is evident in what follows, in both cases; Tringham and Angel. One aspect of the hypocrisy of the society is made clear through Angel in his attitude to the D'Urbervilles, the ancestral family.

Fate touches the life of Tess several times. The element of fate is ever associated with tragedy. There is a minimal margin of 'fate' or accident' that is crucial to the plot. This is different from 'the weakness of character' thrown up by fate or destiny which is open to debate depending on situation and character in a work of tragedy. As seen, the first of these is the revelation by the parson of the D'Urbervilles heritage. The father's celebration which makes it impossible for him to get up to deliver the bee hives, Tess' offer to take the bee hives, falling asleep, the lamp going off, and the cart being hit by the Mail coach, bringing death to Prince are all crucial to the plot and to their lives.

They can be designated to fate, for they were not pre-meditated. That leaves the family worse than before. Tess feels guilty, morally responsible for what has happened, so much so that it even induces her to agree with her mother's plan to send her to D'Urberville. Was everything fated? The decision is partly arrived at by the reader depending on the degree of involvement he /she has with the story.

The mother with certain anticipations sends the daughter Tess to the D'Urbervilles- the pretentious Stokes who have taken over the name. Tess is totally unprepared for an encounter with Alec, which leaves her pregnant. Reluctant to receive any favours from Alec she leaves for home. She gives birth to a son who has a very short life. Later she goes to work at the dairyman Crick's, meets Angel Clare there and they fall in love with each other.

The next important event where fate plays a part is related to Tess' wish to confess. It is a delicate matter. Every time she attempts it, she is put off by Angel who assumes that, what she has to say is something trivial. Then there is the occasion almost just before the marriage, where a man from Tantridge recognizes her, and his comment brings him and Angel to blows. The man decides discretion is the better part of valour (Victorian values?) and withdraws his statement. Frightened and very self-conscious, Tess thinks of writing out the confession, which she does, and puts it under the door of Angel's room, where he is bound to see it. When his reactions are obviously inexplicable under this circumstance, Tess checks the room to find her document under the carpet. It is too late now. She has to go through the marriage.

Is it fate, or is it do with her character? Tess has the morality to want to confess, she says that any of the other maids would have been better than she. She is not happy about herself. She repents her situation though she is not responsible. She has no alternative, the reader too is acutely aware of her situation; her mother however had told her not to tell it, which reveals her character.

Tess had tried hard through out to tell Angel of her 'mishap', but had got no chance.

On the wedding night, Angel tells her that he has something to confess. Tess is glad because then she can confess her's. Angel confesses his 48 hours of dissipation but it is obvious that he has no regrets over it. He had come to his senses; he had never repeated it; that is enough for him. Now it is Tess' turn, but her confession has a totally different reception from him. It puts an end to their relationship.

The attitude of the society is gendered. The loss of virginity in the man is not as obvious as in the woman. Besides virginity in woman is associated with purity, and has been a significant factor in the social value system. Hardy is introducing a serious factor regarding morality in exploring this theme. The juxtaposition of the two confessions highlights his attitude.

Hardy's criticism of society can be seen in this episode. Angel rejects Tess for her 'lapse'. He a 'stickler for morals', fails to see the basis of morality, that of understanding. Victorian society was so 'moral' that Tess could grow up without hearing/learning about the birds and the bees. At the same time, Angel could go up to London and plunge into two days of dissipation. Obviously, Angel knew where to go for what he wanted. (He must have paid for his pleasure / dissipation). The word 'dissipation' takes away from his sense of responsibility, it is a neutral term that does not suggest pleasure or indulgence which would be 'immoral'. So, he gets out of it with his choice of words, which borders on hypocrisy. Tess admits her responsibility to herself, and she had not allowed Alec to make amends for what has been, thereby implying that character/morality can neither be bought nor sold. Thus, through Hardy's criticism of the social notions, the double standards, the hypocrisy is evident.

Tess has a profound sense of morality, one that is associated with repentance. Alec does not seem to have a sense of morality or repentance. Alec later on takes to preaching, and becomes a good disciple to Rev. Clare of Emminster. Hardy's criticism of society and his exploration of the subtleties of honesty are seen in comparing the two. Angel was to take orders but his conscience/morality did not permit him to do so. He confesses his inability to his father. A parallel can be drawn between Angel and Alec, as well as Angel and Tess. It is a matter of conscience/morality at different levels. Angel has a sense of morality. Infact to Tess, he declares himself a 'stickler for morality', but the sense of repentance which is integral to morality comes very late to him.

The readers do not ask the question what would have happened if Tess had been able to make her confession before her marriage? Or if the man from Tantridge had told him of the position? Angel reacted to him in the conventional way, that he had insulted Tess. The reader is only concerned with the enormity of reaction, and not with any alternative.

Was it fate? Or was it due to a tragic flaw? The readers' involvement with Tess' life produces a sense of tragedy, and not a criticism. The reader is sympathetic to her wish to confess, and is alive to her difficulties.

The reader recalls with a sense of regret that Angel when he danced with the Marlott girls, did not dance with her, though when he saw her as he was leaving, he regretted it. He had made a more lasting impression on Tess. She had no 'spirit' to dance again; she watched him disappear over the hill, being 'absorbed by the rays of the sun', and there was nothing for her but to get back to her own. This is an event Tess refers to Angel later when she feels and expresses the sentiment that she is not worthy of Angel. She reminds him of this incident which he remembers and asks him why he did not stay and love her when she was sixteen. It is another 'missed opportunity for the confession. Fate?

Once her husband Angel leaves, Tess has a harder time, her family gets into worse times, they don't even have the money to pay for their father's burial. Tess is tempted to accept her seducer's -Alec's -offer for 'maintenance'. He convinces her that Angel will never come back which is what finally persuaded her to take his offer, along with the need to help the family. When she realizes that she had been cheated by him again, and that she cannot now go back to Angel, with Angel looking for her, she kills Alec.

Tess and a thoroughly repentant Angel are seen at the end, they are reconciled, and in love with each other as ever. There are no regrets when she gives herself up to the law, for she has reached a state when she is beyond the law, the chapter aptly titled 'Fulfillment'.

Fate, morality and repentance are inextricably linked in Tess of the D'Urbervilles, and the reader in absolute sympathy with Tess is overawed by life.

- (b) "Regret is a heavy burden to carry, especially if it is the result of dignity and greatness". How well does this describe Ishiguro's novel The Remains of the Day?

Regret is generally taken as being concerned with sorrow, pain or distress due to loss or deprivation regarding material or emotional matters. It is associated with self-reflection, as the subject will be concerned with trying to trace the passage of loss or deprivation. Self-reflection brings a sense of acceptance of what one is, what one has done, what one has meant to do, what has happened.

The question calls for a close look at The Remains of the Day, by Ishiguro. The main character in the novel is the butler, Stevens; he had served his master Lord Darlington with absolute faith and admiration. He enjoyed being the first of the servants as it were, he had had no regrets in having to serve Lord Darlington. He took pleasure in that effort.

In reading The Remains of a Day, one finds it difficult to engage with the protagonist, Stevens. If at all one gets engaged, it is with the antagonist Miss. Kenton. The few times Stevens talks of his regret; the possibility of making amends is over, therefore the reader is already reconciled to what the protagonist has to face. There is no propensity for the reader to anticipate Stevens; and thereby share in it. The best example is the final discussion with Miss Kenton/ Mrs. Benn.

Stevens had had a letter from Miss Kenton. On Faraday asking him to take some time off 'to see the world', in his Ford, the thought comes to his head, that he could ask Miss Kenton to resume work at the Hall. Stevens has taken up work as a butler to the American Faraday. Faraday is very keen to run Darlington Hall like a Lord. So Stevens sends her a note informing her of when he would be coming to visit her.

Chatting with Miss. Kenton on meeting her, Stevens realizes that her marriage is not in 'as parlous a state', as he had imagined. He told her of the staffing problems, but did not mention what he was hoping for. Miss Kenton naturally is interested in the fortunes of her late employer and wants to know about the libel action and Lord Darlington. Stevens does not want to speak of it. All Miss Kenton learns (and the reader too) of it is that Lord Darlington expected justice,

Stevens allows Mr and Mrs. Taylor who put him up free for the night to have a false exalted notion of him. All the visitors are taken up with him. They think that he has been on intimate terms with Prime Ministers and other top politicians of the country. He actually enjoys his false position with no regret. He is so full of himself that not and consequently, became virtually an invalid. Stevens wants Darlington Hall to be remembered as it was in its glory. In discussing Miss Kenton's statement 'my life stretches out like an emptiness before me', to Miss Kenton's question "what does the future hold for you Mr. Stevens, at Darlington Hall?", his reply is that he is 'not awaited by emptiness' but 'work, work and more work'.

That is not the response of a man who has regrets.

There is what could be called the climax that comes at the very last moment. They have met together at the Rose Cottage, and Stevens had driven Mrs. Benn to the bus stand, and now they are at the bus stand, awaiting the bus. It is then that Miss Benn decides to tell Stevens that there are "extremely desolate occasions" when she thinks that she had made a terrible mistake and begin thinking of 'a better life' she might have had with 'you' (Stevens) but each time, she thinks that her rightful place is with her husband and that one can't be forever dwelling on what 'might have been'. It takes Steven a moment or two to 'digest' the implication, and feel 'a certain degree of sorrow within himself'. Then in the same breath with a seeming effort to come to terms with what he has heard, he has a dialogue with himself; 'why should I deny it?' he says his 'heart was breaking'. The words fall flat on the ears of the reader, as the reader had not been exposed to Stevens' heart.

The bus comes, Stevens signals for the bus to stop. Then only he sees the tears in Miss Kenton's eyes. He decides to respond to her confession. He tells her to take care of herself, retirement is the best part of married life, and she must make those years happy for themselves, and tells her to 'take heed of what he is saying'. The reader expects (Does Miss Kenton?) Stevens to say something really telling. But all he can say in response to Miss Kenton's assurance that she will pay heed to what he is saying, is that 'it had been a great pleasure to see her again'.

This final scene can be taken as the climax or the culmination of this narrative. The reader has met with several occasions where Miss Kenton has, tried to, express her emotions to Stevens. Stevens has remained obtuse, purposely, or because he lacks sensitivity. He had what he considered the highest ideal, that of service. So willingly or unknowingly he had let all such opportunities go by. He had expressed much objection to marriages between House Keepers and Butlers; he had as noted earlier considered House Keepers as seekers of romance.

The only sign of regret one can construe is in the break in his journal after meeting Miss. Kenton. There is a break of one- and three-quarter days, nearly two of the six days. Did his life reach an emptiness? Or was he considering problems of staffing at Darlington Hall? Stevens' behaviour and concerns give the reader no right to imagine him full of regret. Mr. Cardinal did ask him a similar question. He informs Stevens that Lord Darlington is out of his depth, the Nazis are treating him like a pawn, he is being made a fool of, and does not Stevens care at all? All Stevens could talk of was service. That was similar to his response to all of Miss Kenton's actions and words. Thus, despite his narrative being only concerned with the fortunes of Darlington and Kenton the reader cannot recall any episode of emotional regret, but of regret at not having 'done the thing'. He waits outside Miss Kenton's room, because he had not expressed his condolences at her aunt's death, but he is more concerned with the nitty gritty of service, he cannot bring himself to step out of service.

Finally, even if it is possible that the days missing imply regret, the reader is justified in coming to the conclusion that Stevens will carry through 'with little regret', concentrating on the service he had to render Faraday, practicing the difficult art of bantering.

Stevens has never been concerned with changing himself to make amends for what causes/has caused regret unlike the average man, instead he had gloried in having come closer to his ideal of service- the likes of Butler Marshall.

....Once did he admit that the ford the car he was driving was not his own but his master's; not even when it was praised as 'an old beauty! Dr. Carlisle who has a Rover calls the ford a handsome vehicle; Stevens allows the impression of his ownership to continue.

The heavy burden of regret he carries is related to the lapses in result of dignity and greatness related to service, and not to any human relationships as generally happens.

- (c) "Gordimer does not fully condone or condemn any of the main characters in July's People, and most importantly, she does not show the best way forward for South Africa".

The main characters in July's People are Bam and Wife, July, the Chief and Daniel. They all contribute to the progress of the plot. July's wife, mother, and Ellen his mistress though throwing light on events and character do not contribute to take the story forward, therefore they are not considered.

The story of July's People is 'revolutionary', therefore one expects a substantial difference, but it is not forthcoming. Bam and Maureen are White liberals. They do not condone the White attitude to the Blacks. They want to, and think that they treat July their man servant with equity. As far as their intentions go, they are laudable, praiseworthy.

The problem arises with perception. What matters is not only how we treat another, but how it is perceived, especially by the person/s concerned. Thus, while Maureen treats July with conscious 'difference', July is not sensitively receptive to it. He sees himself as the Smales' 'boy', a term deprecatingly rejected by the Smales. Employer and employed do not share the notions associated with 'boy'. July glories in being 'boy'; "am I not your boy?" he asks. Any attempt by Maureen to explain that it is not so, is taken as a rejection of himself, by July.

When the riots broke out July says 'we can go to my home'. Whether the offer was a symbolic gesture, or not, with no preparation they leave for July's house. Later husband and wife argue on it, admitting they had had no alternative. The story highlights the difference of motivation and action between husband and wife. Maureen's actions are 'personal', she is in a way courting July, the Blacks. When she gives gifts to July and family, she is conscious of the fact that these are novelties and therefore valuable to them, though they are below par for her, like the pink plastic teacups. (Perhaps July is aware of it) That does not help to cement their relationship. Bam's actions are selfless. He rigs up the water tank, so everyone can have water, when he kills the hogs, he becomes the 'provider of meat' to the community. He is even able to spend an evening with them on his own terms. He does not attempt visiting July's house. He does not attempt to 'interpret' July unlike Maureen. Their relationship does not develop, since they don't understand each other.

July's relationship with the Smales remains at the same level—that of master and servant. When he says he will get the clothes washed, Maureen asks a question 'how they can pay him' for what he does. Maureen meant it on metaphorical terms, they are indebted to him. July's reply is 'I don't know who and who, but you can pay'. He understands only one level of relationship. He keeps his relationship with the children at the same level, favouring Roy, flattering and appeasing Victor, (your father, he clever man) humoring Gina, 'she fussy'. When July appropriates the bakkie, he makes it clear to the Smales there is no alternative. He had already told people that it had been given to him. He does not see his statement as ridiculous. Anyway, the Whites do not know the roads, they do not know how to get fuel, so of what use would the bakkie be to them. When Bam tells him that July could have asked Bam to teach July driving when in town, July only reiterates the absurdity of the proposition. It draws attention to the ill preparedness of the Smales' liberalism.

One gets the feeling that the visit to the Chief was engineered by July, to put the Smales in their place. But the visit is inconclusive. The Chief actually asks them whether July is looking after them well. What is revealed at the interview has no bearing on the Smales themselves but on the Black-White relationship that obtains, of which the Smales have little or no knowledge. The Whites could only observe the superficial imitation by the Blacks of the Whites in clothes and attempt at formality. They observe only the visible. The Chief breaks into English involuntarily in the discussion. He sees no difference between the Black tribes that are against/different from theirs. He would get White help to decimate them. He wants Bam to teach him to shoot. They also learn July's name-Mwawatha. That highlights the superficiality and the meaninglessness of their liberality. They had not cared to find out July's identity. All the time they had been dealing with a Black who had had an assumed personality. He had been totally dependent on them, and they had taken July for granted. (July discusses with his wife how he would take her to Bam's house in town)

On their return from the Chief, husband and wife argue about July. They realize their helplessness. Was July a sell out? Had they fallen into a trap? They have no alternative. Bam is reduced to feeding his children with mealie mealie. Maureen sees no place for her.

The situation gets worse with the loss of the gun. It is deemed that Daniel has taken it. The children seem to be aware of it. They have a sense of loyalty to Daniel because they enjoy his company. Maureen's comment when she realizes that Daniel has taken the gun is, 'Little bastard. He only took what he had a right to'. It is not only the Whites who are exploiting the Blacks, the Blacks are exploiting the Whites too.

The story ends with Maureen running towards the sound of an unidentified helicopter landing across the river. It could be friendly or unfriendly. It indicates the author's attitude to the conflict. It is not clear, there is no end in sight. It is interesting that the author points to a continuation of this uncertain situation in pointing to the next generation. Victor says 'I know one thing. Not all Africans are nice like July. Some of them are horrible. Horrible'.

The author implies that a solution arising out of real understanding is a long way off. Gordimer does not fully condone or condemn any of the main characters in July's People, and most importantly, she does not show the best way forward for South Africa.

- (d) "The women portrayed by Markandaya in Nectar in a Sieve are weak and helpless pawns in the hands of men". Critically examine the novel in the light of this statement.

The story of Nectar in a Sieve is related by Rukmani. She is the main character. Besides her there are her daughter Ira, her friends, Janaki Kali and Old granny to whom she sells her vegetables, (she is the one who puts the marriage through for Ira) and Kunthi. The relationship with Kunthi seems dubious, till it is clarified at the end. Besides these, her mother is mentioned.

The role of the Eastern woman is generally portrayed as being subservient to that of man. The man is generally portrayed as the breadwinner in a family, he is listened to by wife and children, his words carry sway. He is the deciding factor in all matters. Women are 'weak and powerless pawns in the hands of men'.

This picture seems true regarding some women characters but not all. In the case of Rukmani's mother it seems to be true. Rukmani's father can read and write, he holds a significant position being the headman. Rukmani's mother however cannot read or write, nor does she consider them necessary for a woman, it is enough 'her children are clean and well fed'. When she falls ill, it is told that her husband would stop at nothing to see her cured and so brings the doctor, Kenny. Apart from that, there is no any significant interest /love. Her role and position indeed are subservient to the husband's. when they visit Rukmani, they visit Rukmani separately.

The two women Janaki and Kali are distinguishable from each other on a few counts. Kali is a (typical?) garrulous, gossipy woman. She teases Rukmani about having children, saying that Kunthi's husband had not wasted time in giving her a child. Later on, Rukmani almost pulls her up for going visiting and gossiping. Kali is curious about Sacrabani and is almost reprimanded by Selvam. Janaki is married to a shop keeper. They find it difficult to run the business in the face of the Tannery and have to leave the village. Kali's husband is not mentioned. The role they play in the story is negligible.

There is granny, addressed so by all. She is respected enough to be tasked with the business of finding a suitable husband for Ira. She does that successfully. Everybody is pleased. That the marriage is a failure cannot be laid at her door. Later on with old age and the bad weather she dies, destitute, starved. However, it is the one funeral that is described in the novel, indicating general respect and caring. The people's response to her, and her own behaviour do not indicate any gender discrimination. She is poor and helpless, but the people's attitude to her when living as well as when dead, show the social recognition given to her; she is not 'a helpless pawn in the hands of (any) man'.

Then we have Kunthi and Ira. Interestingly they are both depicted as prostitutes. Ira was given in marriage with celebrations; the clothes, food and decorations are mentioned. After five years Ira is returned to her parents because she had not been able to bear a child. This is an instance which proves the discrimination of women. That sterility could relate to either husband or wife was not known to the villagers of the time. Therefore, the wife could be returned to her parents. Nathan's response was that it is justified for 'a man wants children'. Ira thus is a victim of the social norms. There is curiously no bitterness in her husband. When later Rukmani tells him to take back Ira, as there is nothing

wrong with her and that she will bear yet, his reply is that he would have been glad to do so, for he liked her 'she was a comely wife', but he had already taken a wife. Thus, we see one instance of where woman is weak and is a helpless pawn in the hands of man.

However, Ira does not remain so for long. With drought and impending famine, she takes to prostitution to feed her youngest brother Kuti. Her mother Rukmani had conceived Kuti after her return from her husband. At first, Ira had felt a certain resentment, but later it seemed that she adopted Kuti in a sense of sublimation. She would even give her breast to the little child. Her mother beats her, when she sees her, mistaking her for Kunthi. She is hurt and her clothes bloodied had to be washed, a rupee rolls on to the water; ironically, the same sum the Granny gave as a gift, apologizing for the poor match she made!

Consequent to her taking to prostitution, she conceives. She gives birth to an albino. This is a difficult issue for the reader. Rukmani keeps saying that the man/men responsible for Ira are the men from the Tannery. She makes reference to the general degradation that has come upon the village, but the reader meets with no other evidence. (Interestingly, the family celebrates Deepavali with the sons' earnings from the Tannery. A rather excited, overwhelmed Nathan makes love to his wife and she conceives) Apart from Ira's husband, who plays the conventional role of a repentant but helpless husband there is no one guilty of cruelty to Ira. Her brother takes over her defense efficiently when she is beleaguered by curious women. From then on, she is under the care of her brother.

There is the curious case of Kunthi. It is implied that she has taken to prostitution. 'People' gossip about her, but there are no particulars. Biswas implies it. They deride her husband for allowing her to behave so. They imply that he is a nincompoop. She gets into a quarrel with Rukmani, and in the quarrel her saree comes loose and she is discovered not wearing an underskirt. However, there is no evidence of an actual incident involving Kunthi and any other man. From the beginning a certain aura of mystery had been built around her. First at the initial bathing scene, then at her labour where Kunthi had consistently rejected any support from Rukmani. Rukmani attacked her own daughter, mistaking her for Kunthi, because she was dressed like her- a prostitute. The final show down comes with the loss of the rice. Nathan admits that he had taken the rice to give Kunthi, because her children are his. Her children by now are fairly mature older to Nathan's own chlidren ! He tries to 'defend' himself implying that she is a temptress! Apart from the fact that Nathan cuts a sorry figure, the revelation has no impact on the story. Neither Kunthi nor Rukmani comes as weak and helpless here. Kunthi has the power to make Nathan do what she wants, and Rukmani has the power to forgive him!

Nathan is the only man who has a significant role in the novel. Of all his sons, it is only Selvam who is left to carry on as he pleases, doing his duty by his sister and mother. Two of his sons have left the country, two have died, one has absconded leaving his wife and children to fend for themselves. It is not an impressive record for the men.

In his domestic dealings too, Nathan does not display any strength and persistence. Although he initially asks Rukmani whether she would not like to buy a house like her father's, nothing follows, obviously. He cannot plan/think/work to get out of his tenant 'farmership'. At crucial places it is Rukmani who makes the right decisions. She gets advice from Kenny on her sterility. She grows vegetables and supplements the income. She had saved much for Ira's wedding. She saves the seed paddy without selling it. She is a better negotiator with Biswas with her sarees. Once they go to town, it is Rukmani who takes over. She works fifty -fifty with Nathan at the quarry. She writes 'letters' and earns money. She adopts Puli. She plans to return, calculating how much they should save. When Nathan dies, she is not shattered, but comes home with Puli.

One other woman character Ammu also provides evidence against the notion of being 'weak and helpless'. Her husband, Murugan whom the parents came to see anticipating succor has abandoned wife and family for 'women and drink'. Markandaya probably wants to show the negative effect of the town. However, Ammu has found a job for herself and is looking after the children. She is honest enough and independent to volunteer the information that the 'last' is not Rukmani's grand- child.

Thus, it can be seen that though the writer intimates a picture of the subservient Eastern woman, the women portrayed by Markandaya are not 'weak and helpless pawns in the hands of men'.

- (e) "Yang Martel discusses how survival and resilience in the face of danger and hunger allows Pi to explore the unexplored, both physically and spiritually in Life of Pi" Is this a valid assessment of the novel and its central focus?

Life of Pi by Yan Martell is the story of the survival of a sixteen year old boy in the sea for almost eight months with a fully grown tiger. Pi's father is a zoo keeper. The first part of the novel deals with matters to do with writing a work of fiction, the initiative for writing the particular book, followed by the narrator's childhood, and the decision to leave the land of their birth for Canada with some select animals of the zoo. On the fourth day the ship sank. From then onwards it is danger from dehydration, starvation, attacks of the animals in the ship including the tiger, from sharks, storms, and carnivorous trees. One can appreciate the perseverance and foresight of Pi; he is only sixteen, is by himself, and has no experience for what he is to face.

Pi actually gets thrown into a lifeboat, about which he at first feels relieved, only to find himself with some dangerous animals. How that had happened is not explained, as the story is from Pi's point of view. Inadvertently he gets Richard Parker on board. The zebra and the hyena are on board. Then comes the orangutan floating on bananas and climbs onto the life boat. Pi goes through the horrific attack on the Zebra by the hyena, and the boat being hit by the sharks searching for the source of blood. Going through all this Pi had not had a thought for himself. Yet it seems it gave him an idea of the dangers he may have to go through. It is days after that he thinks of sustenance and that he had not had a drop of water. When he realizes the cause of his enervation Pi gets strength. Comparing himself to a champion losing at a tennis match because he had not gauged the strength of his opponent, Pi now takes stock of the situation. He feels he wins over the hyena by psychological intimidation. Pi calls him, 'you, ugly foul creature', the hyena sees Pi as 'super alpha'.

The psychological battle Pi has with Richard Parker is tense reading. Luckily a rat comes to the rescue. The rat in fear of Richard Parker climbs onto Pi's head. Pi throws the rat towards Richard Parker who catches it and is appeased with 'the offering'. Soon Pi realizes that the only way to handle Richard Parker is to establish the hierarchy. 'Fear can destroy life' says he. Pi's experience of being at the zoo and his innate intelligence help him. He correctly interprets Richard Parker's 'Prusten', and with diligence and alertness is able to establish a 'safe relationship' – with the tiger. Pi's achievement in 'taming' the tiger can be appreciated when the fact that Pi had not had a hand at looking after the tiger is taken into consideration. Richard Parker possibly has memories of the zoo attendants, but not of Pi. Therefore, it is solely due to Pi's own initiative, perseverance and foresight that he manages to do what he does. Pi is moved by the need for survival, to do so he has to be ever on the alert. Pi thanks the tiger for giving him a reason to live, for just as Richard Parker was a threat, he was also a motive for living. Pi had to be ever vigilant, alert to providing food for the tiger, water for the tiger and clean his area, Richard Parker kept Pi both physically and mentally alive.

Pi's wish for survival can be seen in the food he partook and the ways and means by which it was obtained. He was a vegetarian; his initial response to the biscuits in the locker was to notice 'the animal fat' in the biscuits. Pi's first attempt at killing the flying fish can be considered to appreciate the change that came over him with his desire to live. He wrapped the flying fish in a blanket, yet the 'idea of beating a soft living head with a hammer' was too much for him. Later, he ate everything, turtle, dorado, shark, and even faeces! He had no compunction in killing anything.

Pi also learns many, (unusual) life-saving skills. His first attempt at opening the bottle of water was strenuous, he had to use the tarpaulin hooks. Then he actually makes 'a lifebuoy' with oars and life jackets, reads the instructions and produces fresh water out of the sea water, catches fish, kills, cleans and dries fish, works out a routine with exercise and reflection.

Pi says that his own life being saved is a miracle, now he has to turn 'miracle into routine!' Thereby he takes up every task with the spirit of performing a miracle.

The experience Pi underwent is absolutely unusual. It is often contrasted with the 'general' such as the circumstances of the duration, the experiences, the carnivorous island, or (the common) the spectacle of another ship. Pi spies the Cargo ship and thinks he will be saved like in any other story. But the ship does not notice the life

boat being so low on the horizon. Pi realizes the reason, he does not despair. He has the will to live. Somewhere he probably thinks he (they) are 'saved' miraculously, so he thanks all the gods. However, he does not leave it in the hands of the gods. He takes his destiny in hand.

Thus, it can be said that, 'Yang Martell discusses how survival and resilience in the face of danger and hunger allows (or makes) Pi to explore the unexplored both physically and spiritually in Life of PI' is a valid assessment of the novel and its central focus'.

Short Story

- (a) **Discuss the importance of conversation in three short stories in your syllabus, focusing specifically on how they move the plot forward and how they are used as a narrative technique.**

Conversation generally means consorting together, expressing and exchanging ideas, engaging in small talk generally in an informal situation. The choice of stories that have 'conversation moving the plot forward' in the prescribed stories is limited. The Thing Around Your Neck does not have conversation as such, the conversation is implied. The conversation in Eveline is limited to two statements uttered by Miss Gavan, three single statements uttered by Eveline's father on three separate occasions, one wish uttered by her mother, and the entreaty of Frank 'come' repeated and 'Eveline, Evy'. That leaves the other three.

There is little conversation in Cat in the rain. There is the 'conversation' between the padrone and the American wife, the statements by the maid, and the 'conversation' between the husband and wife. Short though these 'conversations' are they are significant as they contribute to the movement of the plot, the story line. The statements made by the padrone, though trivial serve to bring about a change in the American wife. She goes 'liking him', and her feelings are reinforced by his actions of sending the maid with the umbrella and later with the cat. The maid's statement, that they must go inside is triggered by her anti-feeling towards the American wife aroused by her ridiculous (?) interest in a cat in the rain. The maid probably thought that she was looking for something else. Her final statement too is very formal. She does not want to establish a relationship.

The conversation between the husband and wife contributes to the plot in highlighting the relationship between them, which seemingly is typical of modern life. Couples can live as they please in modern life, without being tied to a house and what it pertains. Women do not need to be taking different/especial care of themselves, unisex is the fashion; it 'looks darned good'. Recreation, entertaining/occupying one's self is routine, you go sight-seeing to a place where most others go to, you read a book. Thus, you occupy yourself. Conversation is perfunctory, there is no real involvement, no engagement of opinion. The use of minimal conversation in the iceberg technique can thus be appreciated.

The story Action and Reaction has much potential but limited success, perhaps because it does not exploit conversation. It was seen how Hemingway exploited the scant conversation there was, by aligning them with the central theme or focus. Chitra Fernando misses the opportunity. The title of the story Action and Reaction associated with the Buddhist concept of *kamma* and *kamma vipaka*, seems to be the theme of the story; events and conversations are not consciously related to the theme.

Mahinda is the narrator. He is caught smoking. The reactions of Punchi naenda, father, and Lokunaenda are more related to an affirmation of the reliance the family has on Lokunaenda's verdict. Called upon to deliver her verdict, she announces that 'his *kamma* will decide it for him'. It is hardly a telling advice to give a 16 year old smoking on the sly, that many years later he may get cancer. The author wants to show it as an example of Lokunaenda's preoccupation with the *kammic* law. It comes out as pointing out a weakness in Lokunaenda, her obsession- rather than an affirmation. At the initial discussion regarding Kusuma, father is almost astounded by the realization of Kusuma's merit (*kamma*) getting to live in Lokunaenada's house with which mother agrees. This comes as a very superficial unenlightened remark. The author too does not tie this up with the main theme. Even the major contribution to the theme, the sermon on Niragada, which should have been an effective discourse between the Bodhisatva and the Sakra, makes no effect as it is not tied with the central theme, action and reaction. but a subsidiary *dana paramitha*.

The conversation among the visitors Mrs. Welikala et al does not contribute to the development of the theme. It shows still another (?) interest in the author- showing up the superficiality of women.

The author seems to attempt sometimes to push forward 'conversation to plot', but because of the flimsy 'plot' in the narrative it does not get off the ground. For example, Punchi naenda when Kusuma is first introduced is concerned with the potential in Kusuma's looks, and the possibility of Kusuma being greedy and stealing. Later on, when Kusuma is found 'greedy and stealing' (*kevum*) nobody, not even the reader remembers this statement made by Punchinaenda. The author does not exploit the possibility. Nor does the author explore Punchinaenda's jealousy of Kusuma, apparent here as well as later, when they discuss Payadasa's offer of marriage. The spinsterhood of the two sisters which would have been a significant fact in the village community is bypassed by the writer giving rise to a lot of aimless chatter, i.e. Punchinaenda's observations. One reason why the reader is wary of LokuNaenda's offer of a marriage proposal for Kusuma in the future is that she herself is a spinster.

The conversations in the story are not exploited by the author as the story is focused on the title Action and Reaction in the effort to bring out the wrong practices in Buddhism.

Nangi's 'conversations' are spontaneous, she wants to know whether Kusuma will be beaten, almost joying in the prospect. Her conversation regarding the books she takes to Kusuma as well as her proposed trip to Colombo is entertaining with its innocence and spontaneity, but it is short lived. The comments on Kusuma and Piyadasa made by nangi and endorsed by the narrator Mahinda are ignored. Nangi goes out of the scene, so her contribution to the story line is negligible. The story can almost do without nangi.

Mahinda has a brief conversation with Lokunaenda before he leaves for London, where he queries about what Kusuma is doing with her money. At that moment Lokunaenda is appreciative of Kusuma's actions.

A few years later when Mahinda returns action and reaction seems to have gone full circle. Lokunaenda is found under the thumb of Kusuma, and Kusuma herself is doing a lot of meritorious deeds in the hope of winning rewards in the births to come. At the conclusion too Lokunaenda seems happy or reconciled to Kusuma's actions.

Lokunaenda's last words are that she 'will die in the wheel chair. It is my *kamma*...I am lucky to have Kusuma. She is like my daughter. It is my *karma*'. These words do not explain, nor do they throw light on the story or the main character Lokunaenda.

Thus, it can be seen that the author does not build cohesion across these conversations; most of the time they are limited to expressions of opinion, rather than to an exchange of opinion which is the spirit of conversation. There by the author does not achieve anything out of those conversations.

The third story discussed is *Interpreter of Maladies*. As the title indicates the reader can expect more of conversation here with the author Jampa Lahiri concerned with interpretation.

The progress of this story depends very much on conversation. To start with Mr Kapasi who can be called the protagonist is a teacher who has given up his teaching to work as 'interpreter' at a doctor's clinic. The doctor cannot speak in Gujarati, Kapasi can. So, he comes in to 'interpret' the patients. The husband and wife are very impressed by his forte, they get him to describe his role in detail.

Mrs. Das is so captivated by Kapasi's ability, and Kapasi himself reciprocates dreaming of long communications between the two. The argument between husband and wife on not getting a car with air conditioning does not indicate a loving and caring husband. Mrs. Das thinks that Kapasi's job is 'so romantic'. Thus, in this story snippets of conversation build character as well as work towards the climax of the story. Mr. Das is interested in perusing his tour book, so 'a private conversation' between Mrs. Das and Kapasi for the next half hour becomes a reality. In his enthusiasm for pictures Mr. Das gets his wife to be closer to Kapasi-for the sake of the picture! 'What's your address?' asks Mrs. Das. "You would like my address?" The author makes use of conversation to convey excitement and interest here. It would have been lost if told in indirect speech.

There is the contrast in the information read out by Mr. Das from his guide book, and Kapasi's description of the Astachalasurya the setting sun. He relates it as an experience, a fact. Mrs. Das responds 'neat'. Once again, the author's use of dialogue/conversation can be seen as an effective technique.

The climax of the story is marked by Mrs. Das' statement. Kapasi and Mrs. Das watch Bobby passing a stick to a monkey. 'A brave little boy' comments Mr. Kapasi. Obviously, that is not what he means. The response he gets from Mrs. Das is curious. 'It's not surprising' said Mrs. Das. Kapasi's rejoinder 'No?' where he probably expected a reference to some daring deed of Bobby, is pushed aside by Mrs. Das's next words: 'He's not his'. In shock, unbelievably, that it is so, that it has been uttered so by the wife, Kapasi breaks into a polite request for a repetition. Quite nonchalantly, Mrs. Das' identified the second pronoun and said, 'He's not Raj's son'. The effect of the words is clearly evident here. The story moves in leaps and bounds. For the next page or so, Mrs. Das in her self-deception/confidence, goes on describing chronologically the events in their life, college days, courting times, early married days, late married life, and how Bobby was conceived. 'in the afternoon, on a sofa littered with rubber teething toys, ... by the Punjabi friend whom she had met once but did not remember. She made no protest... he touched the small of her back ...pulled her against his crisp navy suit, and made love to her swiftly in silence, with an expertise she had never known', 'unlike Raj'. His response is to ask her why she had told him this story, and her reply is 'it's because of his talents.'

The reader is very alive to the effect of the conversation. The analysis shows how the author makes characters use 'specific' conversation which reveals not only their character, but also relates to the plot.

There follows a conversation between the two of them, where Mrs. Das tries to explain why she told Kapasi of this event. Conversation now proves futile, as Kapasi fails to understand her motive, and Mrs. Das fails to understand his reaction. So, conversation does not bring them together, but keeps them apart.

In the scene that follows, almost in a weird turn of events Bobby is seen being beaten by the monkey. (Is it a kind of justice or a random event?) Mrs. Das has to appeal to Mr. Kapasi again; 'Mr. Kapasi for heaven's sake do something'. When Kapasi brings Bobby in his arms, the father assures, 'he's fine, but a little scared'. Mrs. Das says 'Poor Bobby', and calls him. 'Come here Bobby, let Mommy fix your hair'. The words of the parents indicate their superficiality and their lack of emotional depth. Kapasi almost feels like whispering something in the boy's ears, but refrains.

Thus, the discussion highlights the importance of conversation (or the lack) of it in stories focusing specifically on how they move the plot forward and how they are used as a narrative technique.

(b) Explore how love is used as a theme in two short stories by male writers. Discuss the importance of this theme to the development of the plot and the characters in the selected short stories.

There are only two male writers in this collection, James Joyce and William Faulkner, the stories are Eveline by Joyce and Cat in the Rain by Faulkner.

The two writers look at 'love' differently, in one it is romantic love, in the other it is a love that is perhaps taken for granted- love between a seasoned husband and a wife.

Eveline is romantically interested in Frank, her father recognizes the emotion as such. There is an interesting parallel with Evelynne falling for Frank, and Desdemona falling in love with Othello. They both lead secluded lives. They are both enamored by the tales of adventure related by the man. Eveline was told of the names of ships and areas he had travelled and of 'the terrible Patagonians'. Desdemona was told of 'the Cannibals that each other eat, the Anthropophagi whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders'. Thus, Eveline was lured by the romantic, besides the man was 'awfully fond of music', and sang 'of the lass who loved a sailor' (not the other way about!) He took her to see the 'Bohemian Girl', they sat in an unaccustomed part of the theatre, and thus Eveline enjoyed a one-to-one relationship away from the family, and the store.

Joyce presents this relationship as something 'special' for Eveline; her father responds in the conventional way, objecting to it. Those at the Stores would talk, she had made a terrible mistake, and her place will be filled by advertisement, showing how uncaring society has grown, and what little value society has for individuals. What of the male counterpart in this tale of love? How does Joyce represent the man? He does not supply any information about himself other than that he has a house in Buenos Aires. He maintains his 'individuality'. What he relates of himself does not reveal him. It is a love which carries no responsibility, unlike Eveline's home. There, we see a different atmosphere. It

is full of love. There is the father concerned for his children 'playing with other people's children', wearing the mother's bonnet to make the children laugh. The dying mother getting the eldest to promise she will look after the little ones. The brother (Harry) sends what money he can spare for the family, the daughter works and spends her earnings on the family. The father 'who had never gone for her... because she was a girl' is now 'fairly bad on a Saturday night'. It is a home where there is a lot of love.

The home in Eveline is intact, there is a strong bond of love that keeps the family together. In Faulkner, we do not see such a family. There is only a couple, with the author's curious identification of the wife as 'the American wife'. The wife is obviously 'loving', she 'feels' for the cat in the rain. The husband is not 'uncaring', he is undemonstrative, unlike the padrone. The Padrone stands up, wishes her, and follows her up with umbrella and cat. Husband offers to look for the cat, and when she relates that it wasn't there 'wonders where it could have got to'. When the wife goes through a whole spell of wishes, starting with long hair, (at which point the husband says he likes her as she is 'darned nice') going on to wishing for her own silver, candles, Spring, new clothes and a kitty, the husband says "Oh shut up and get yourself a book to read". The admonition is not lovingly delivered, but it is a just admonition. The inexperienced readers-teenagers- are outraged at this admonition and go so far as to depict the husband as cruel. He has not given her a child, that is why she wants a kitty, she is deprived of love.

That would be a simplistic interpretation of love, an insult to Hemingway. What Hemingway depicts is a society which has no room for conventional expressions of love, where there is less time for 'irrelevancies' like cats in the rain. One has to be doing 'something', something the society accepts and expects like 'reading a book'.

The two stories do not seem to deal with love as a theme, in the conventional sense. Love in Joyce is contrasted with the father's attitude to love, and in Faulkner it is contrasted with the padrone's responses to a favored guest.

- (c) Identify the short story that in your view provides the best analysis of resistance to oppression, and write a short introduction to the story highlighting this aspect. Note that you first need to justify your selection through a brief comparison with the other stories in your syllabus.

Oppression relates to a feeling of an external force that makes a person feel inferior emotionally, physically or culturally. The important thing to note is that it is a perception experienced by an individual, or a group.

In justifying the selection of a story to explore resistance to oppression one has to take into account the interactions between individuals and groups.

Kusuma in Action and Reaction, seems 'oppressed' to the reader, but neither Kusuma nor her oppressor Lokunaenda feels oppressed or that the other is oppressing. Kusuma runs the household as she wants, and Lokunaenda says Kusuma is like her own daughter. Both Eveline and Akunna though sensitive to what they have to undergo, are able to take independent decisions. Therefore, the two stories Eveline and The Thing Around Your Neck do not qualify for oppression. (Akunna gets rid of the thing around her neck-oppression) None of the characters in Interpreter of Maladies is oppressed; they are self-centered, self-confident people. In the short story Everyday Use Dee and her mother show themselves to be characters that can have their own way. That leaves us with The Cat in the Rain.

The Cat in the Rain has two main characters, George and his American wife. The story centers on the desires of the wife which are not ostensibly realized.

There is the phrase 'American wife', which gives a nebulous identity to the wife. She has no other identity. Her name is not known. Is she an 'American wife' because she is married to an American? Or is George non-American and his wife American? This nebulous state is oppressive to the reader, being unable to make a clear identification, surely it must oppress the woman?

The woman's actions show a lack of confidence and support. She wishes to give protection to a cat in the rain. Apparently, she identifies herself with the cat. The husband 'offers' to get the cat, but he does not move. The encounter with the padrone makes her feel free. She responds spontaneously. She likes him. He goes out of his way, sending the maid and the umbrella. The cat was not there, naturally she feels defeated, even in a small matter like that.

Her conversation with George her husband, increases her frustration and oppression. She wants to change her hair style; she is tired of looking like a boy. Obviously, she cannot. Her husband considers it 'darned nice'. Neither can she have any other wish, short term or long term, cheap or expensive. Her irrational wish for Spring indicates a mood of frustration that can be associated with oppression. The husband's reaction implies that it is not the first time, that the 'wife' had made this kind of evocation. The husband admonishes her to 'take a book and read' which from his point of view could be taken as a reasonable suggestion, and from hers as an act of oppression.

At the same time, the reader gets the notion that she, though the 'American wife' has no independence in the simpler matters such as cutting her hair the way she wants, or the money to buy new clothes. Other wishes such as having her own China and her own candles, imply her desire to 'possess' things, of which she is obviously deprived. Her 'conversation' is about her wants; "I want...I want" she iterates, obviously indicating that she is deprived of these. Deprivation is just one step away from oppression. She could also be oppressed by George's matter of fact attitude to life.

Just as the reader is not able to 'fix' their nationalities, despite the reference to the only 'two American's in the hotel and the reference to the 'American wife', the reader is not able to decide on the relationship between the two, apart from what is stated. Apart from the fact that they are husband and wife, the reader is not privy to any other dimension. That they are Americans could also be the perception of the hotel staff, just as that the padrone as 'the hotel owner' was the American wife's perception. There is almost a withholding of information, which prevents the reader identifying himself/herself with the matters of either. The husband is seen as one who is self-confident, and lacking in emotional response unlike the wife who seems emotional and lacking in self-confidence, being oppressed by the situation that obtains.

Oppression relates to a feeling of an external force that makes a person feel inferior emotionally, physically or culturally. The words and behaviour of the American Wife point to a perception that she is not able to respond spontaneously to persons and events. Thus, the analysis justifies the delineation of the character of the American Wife as an example of oppression.

Poetry

- (a) Write a brief critical analysis of any three poems in your syllabus paying special attention to the theme of duty and/or responsibility as explored by the poets.

Chimney Sweeper, Death in the Trenches and Cathedral Builders can be taken as three poems exploring the theme of responsibility/ duty. Work implies application of effort; responsibility implies an engagement to 'deliver a service'. Both terms 'duty' and 'responsibility' imply a certain amount of manual work or an engagement that takes a certain period of time. Work implies application of effort, responsibility implies 'an engagement' to deliver a service. Thus, the chimney sweepers have to sweep the chimneys, the soldiers who go to war have to fight and kill, the cathedral builders have to build the cathedral. All these involve hard work, difficult conditions despite which the services have to be rendered, therein lies one level of responsibility.

The travails of the chimney sweepers were a popular theme in the 19th century. It has the background of the Industrial revolution along with child labour, harsh working conditions and exploitation of the poor. Blake draws the reader's attention to the total helplessness and innocence of the little children. The children are made to climb the chimneys, because they are small and can go through the chimneys. The soot covers them and due to lack of facilities, hot water and the like, the soot never leaves them. So, they dream of being 'naked and white', reminiscent of cherubs. They are hardly able to speak; they are so little that they cannot pronounce the initial 's' easily, so they say 'weep' instead of 'sweep' in calling out their trade. There is much irony here. The child's hair has to be cut. Little children normally object to their hair being cut. Tom has pretty hair, curly, blond. He loves his hair. He agrees to have his cut when he hears the reason, when his hair is cut, it won't get dirty in the chimneys. The innocence of the speaker and the listener is heart breaking. The little chimney sweepers do their duty, because an Angel had told him that 'if he'd be a good boy, He'd have God for his Father and never want joy'. His own father had sold him. The chimney sweepers do their

duty with a sense of responsibility. Blake shows that there is nobody responsible for them. Whatever mishap happens to the little chimney sweepers is nobody's business. There is a strongly implied social criticism for this lack of social responsibility.

Suicide in the Trenches by Siegfried Sassoon explores the theme of duty and responsibility very actively. 'The simple soldier boy' was happy go lucky to start with. He didn't ask much of life; he 'grinned' he got up early (with enthusiasm) and sang like a lark, joyfully. Then he goes to war as the poet implies, lured by the tales of war told by the society. At war he loses his personality completely, he is terrorized into submissiveness, 'cowed', he lacks company and is 'glum' the conditions there, so different from when he was just poor, overwhelm him, and he puts a bullet through his head. Sassoon himself has taken part in the war, and is very critical of the conditions of war as well as the general attitude to war—that of glorification. Therefore, he lashes out at the society, for its lack of responsibility. Lack of responsibility has partly to do with the lack of awareness and sensitivity. The poet draws a picture of a totally irresponsible society, they are 'smug faced', content with themselves lacking in insight and sensitivity. Their eyes are bright 'kindling' encouraging the soldier boys by look and voice-cheering. The poet shames them into prayers and obscurity, for not doing their responsibility, or their duty.

The cathedral builders are engaged in the work of building a cathedral. John Ormond draws attention to the relationship between work and recompense, spiritual and material. They are well aware of the enormity of the work they are doing. At first, they are taken in by this 'enormity'. A cathedral's not just any old building. It is the house of God. The poet by hinting at the impending disappointment in the cathedral builders implies the lack of social responsibility. The conditions of work are hard, recompense for the work is implied as meagre. This comes out in the contrast between their work and 'leisure'. Their wives are 'smelly', they don't have the wherewithal to make themselves otherwise. The day-to-day trivia makes them quarrel and punish the children—perhaps without inquiring into their needs. The romance of being cathedral builders wears off, they lose the sense of neighbourliness: they are too tired to be 'helpful'. They have neither the energy nor the desire to fix the neighbour's roof, despite having the time to do so. Then Ormond follows with the concept of work and show. Putting up clerestories is hard work; the ladders have to be as high as heaven. The glazing comes on the windows that are already put up. The cathedral, the churches get known for the glazed windows and not the rest of the work. Thus, the cathedral builders get forgotten, they are ignored. Finally comes 'the fat bishop in his warm boots'. He had done no work, but he will get 'ownership and responsibility'. Ormond gets the cathedral builders to use the word 'darn' so close to damn in relation to the cathedral in his scathing criticism of the system that takes no responsibility for the work done. There is a close relationship between work and responsibility. When work is allocated, there is a responsibility on the part of the one who allocates work to see that the worker has conducive conditions and is compensated adequately.

Thus, duty and responsibility are seen in different ways. In Chimney Sweeper it is duty unquestioned as per Victorian values, in Suicide in the Trenches, it is duty imposed upon and responsibility unclaimed. In The Cathedral Builders, it is a duty done with responsibility at an individual level, which is unacknowledged at the social level.

(b) Examine how poets use death as a theme to explore social and political issues, providing detailed examples from at least three poems.

The three poems, To the memory of Mr. Oldham, by John Dryden Remember by Christina Rosetti and A Fisherman mourned by his Wife by Patrick Fernando provide three different attitudes to death. The three poems belong to three different periods historically: the first to the second half of the 17th century, the second to the last quarter of the 19th century and the third to the mid twentieth century. Socially too it could be easily identified as upper class, middle class and the working poor, in that order.

Dryden is known for his satirical poetry, within the heroic couplet which is the medium of his poetic expression, he finds ample space for his satirical wit. However, To the Memory of Mr. Oldham is an elegy, a tribute to a poet who has used the heroic couplet. He was many years Dryden's junior and died at the age of thirty. Dryden died at the age of sixty-nine. The society depicted in the poem is select, the indulgences of the characters mentioned relate to writing poetry, the narrator and the narrator's friend, Oldham. It is interesting that the poet calls his friend Mr. Oldham, formally, and not by a Christian name. In fact, there is no reference to a Christian name at all. Thereby we can assume

that the relationship between the two had been formal. The association between the two relates to the 'poetic mould' they shared. Their likes and dislikes were similar; they both stuck 'a common note', and both disliked 'knaves and fools'. The events in Dryden's poem are referred to in classical terms, referring to himself as older Nisus, and the young one as Euryalus -Oldham. The loss of Oldham is on a social plane, Dryden's association is short enough to say 'welcome and farewell'; the poet's feeling of loss is general, it is related to the loss for the country. It's the death of a talented poet. Dryden is easily consoled when he reflects on the success of Oldham. There's nothing that 'abundant age could have added to Oldham's life. He is amply rewarded with the 'ivy and laurels'.

The poem Remembrance is totally different. Unlike Dryden's poem, this is essentially personal. The narrator is the wife, facing imaginary death, bidding farewell to her husband. The poem is written in the Petrarchan tradition of an octet and a sextet. In the Octet the wife facing imaginary death bids farewell to the husband. She does not refer to death directly, but only euphemistically, to 'going away'; it is 'a silent land'. Once she is dead, the husband is going to miss 'holding her hand, having a listener and a sharer of plans, no opportunity to give advice, to counsel or to pray'. Thus, the reader can see the romanticized, comfortable, care free, stress free, life the couple has led-is leading. It reflects the comfortable economics of the nineteenth century. The family unit was contributory to a stress-free society. The sextet deals with a reversal. She is dead and the husband has forgotten her. But she is magnanimous. He will remember her 'afterwards', not quite forget her. She would rather he did not suffer remembering her. She does not want him to 'remember her and be sad'. But not quite. He is going to remember her 'afterwards'. Then she wants him to remember her for what she was. The poem thus reflects a totally private experience. Even if the reader does see the plausibility of the sorrow of the husband's (or one of a pair) the expression does not cost the reader a pang. The poem remains altogether a rendering of a private relationship, that does not rise above the purely personal.

The Fisherman mourned by his wife as the title indicates is a mourning. It is a poem set in coastland Sri Lanka written in the mid twentieth century. Fishermen belong to the poor, they lead a life of hardship, going to sea with no safety precautions or financial insurance. The poem unlike the other two is intensely personal. The dead body of the husband-the fisherman is brought home. The children are there responding as according to their own perceptions and maturity. 'The little one thinks the father is asleep, the others cry.' There is no mention of sorrow or any manifestation of suffering. Instead, the wife goes through a series of memories, very personal and very dear, in farewell to her husband. Her evocation is very intense, it does not even allow for sharing or even open expression, unlike in the other two poems dealt with, Dryden's and Rosetti's. Her recollections are a parting private eulogy on her husband. Her memories have not got mellowed with time, whether it be their first night together, or any later situations. The intensity of her feelings sometimes reaches a sophistication that seems to overcome social disparities. The economic and social poverty of the fisherman comes out clearly. Before the rains they must 'finish the funeral'. The others are as poor as the fisherman (and wife), there is no space for formal expressions of sorrow and the social intercourse one sees at funerals. Nature alone is the constant ally, 'when gulls returned new plumed and wild, when in our wind torn flamboyant new buds broke (I) she was with child. Now her husband's body is laid out; 'Once more the flamboyant is torn, and the sky cracks like a shell again', but there are no new buds. She will have to continue by herself. She has no relief in the romanticism of Rosetti or the confidence of Dryden. The poet Patrick Fernando is non-existent in this poem. The socio-political background is the fisherman's, his, and the other fishermen's.

The three poems thus portray how death affects individuals according to their social and cultural background. Mr. Oldham's death will be felt not so much by any individual or individuals, but by the society at large, it is the death of someone who contributes to the society. His loss will be felt in the literary sphere. The death or loss of the wife will be recorded in the social circles, spoken of on anniversaries and perhaps birthdays of those concerned. It is felt at a 'private' level. The death of the fisherman will not be felt or registered in the society at all, but it will be an irreparable loss to that family, and an eternal sorrow to the wife.

(c) Critically analyze one of the following.

(i) The issues and concerns of childhood and youth in at least three prescribed poems

The three poems selected to discuss issues and concerns of childhood and youth are Spring and Fall by Gerard Manley Hopkins, An Unknown Girl, by Moniza Alwi, and Introduction by Kamala Das. These three poems have been selected on the assumption that the issues of childhood and youth are issues of coming to terms with one's self, one's identity, coming to terms with the society one lives in, and concerns with reaching maturity, understanding one's society, and the societal norms and values.

In Spring and Fall the protagonist is a little girl, Margaret, innocent enough to cry over the falling of the beautiful autumn leaves. The poem is written by the narrator (poet) who observes Margaret's reactions to the falling leaves. He sees it as symbolic of the sensitivity to nature/sorrows of the world. The poem culminates with the narrator observing the 'hardness' that will inevitably follow upon this innocence; the trials and tribulations of life that will harden Margaret so much so that later she will have no tears, no time -for falling leaves. Then it is that the narrator/poet feels for Margaret, 'it is Margaret you mourn for'. The readers along with the narrator mourn for Margaret, her loss of innocence, the sorrows and hardships she may have to face in life, along with the feeling that without that process of maturation Margaret will be nothing. The reader too derives a certain degree of maturation, undergoing (almost) the same experience as Margaret, realizing what life is. The reader is humbled in the presence of this insurmountable nature of life.

Moniza Alwi draws a picture of an unknown girl. The unknown girl is representative of the many girls who do some little thing to earn a living. In that activity they are able to forget themselves, being absorbed in the work they do. That is typical of youth and children. They can get absorbed to the exclusion of everything else. It is obvious here that the unknown girl is not 'doing a job', though it gives her a few rupees only. While the poem does indicate the poverty of the girl, it also draws attention to her youthfulness; she has the beauty of youth, the commitment to an idealism she hardly understands; it is just the enthusiasm of youth, of childhood. Children and youth are basically moral. They have little of the problems of adults. Thus, the girl despite her difference to the woman who has her hand extended, belongs to life. She gives life 'a peacock spreads its lines across my palm'. The poem catches the nuances of youth, the creativity and the joy of life. The unknown girl is also representative of the country. She is the youth of the future of the country. Finally, she attains a kind of symbolism when the poet says 'I will lean across a country with my hands outstretched longing for the unknown girl in the neon bazaar.'

An Introduction by Kamala Das is the story of growing up. The narrator starts off with the problem of 'self-expression' Her relations and associates object to her using English. The narrator represents the rebellious youth, she does not subscribe to the views and attitudes of the elders. 'Leave me alone' says she, a plea or demand made by many a youth. She wants to be herself, the 'distortions, the queernesses all mine, mine alone' says the narrator, determined to stand by her own identity. She was not prepared for 'common maturation'. She found the 'swelling of her limbs, the sprouting of hair', coming upon her as a surprise. Unable to cope with the changes, being not prepared for them, feeling neglected she asks for 'love'. One asks for what one does not have, what one needs. It is obvious then, that the narrator has not, or does not, get love- at least the way she wants it. It is another common feature of 'youth'; the desire for love and attention is another aspect of youth. Youth crave for recognition and affection. As a response to her request for 'love', the young narrator gets the version of love in the adult world-sex. But she is not emotionally or physically prepared for it. Her response is rejection and protest. She seeks another identity, an identity which will free her of the norms of the society she belongs to. Society wants her to conform one way or the other, either Amy representing the Westernized society, or Kamala the modernized society, or Madhawakutty, the indigenous society. Her ways and habits get criticized. Then she meets with genuine participation in society. She realizes that there is not much difference between one individual and another; at the beginning she stood for what is unique, fancying herself especial. But with maturation she realizes the commonality among men and women. She no longer seeks identification as she feels herself secure in her maturity. Her confidence is such she does not seek identification; 'Call him not by any name, he is every man who wants a woman, just as I am every woman who seeks love'.

Thus, it can be seen that these three poems dealing differently with the problems of youth, see 'maturation' as the basic common characteristic of youth.

(ii) A comparison of two poems, one written by a woman and the other by a man, on the theme of marriage and family, so as to demonstrate the difference in their perspectives.

The two poems written by a man and woman that can be selected as dealing with marriage and family even remotely are The Fisherman mourned by his wife, written by Patrick Fernando, and Remember written by Christina Rosetti. Patrick Fernando is a Sri Lankan poet belonging to the twentieth century, and Christina Rosetti a late 19th century (London poet) born of Italian parents.

The Fisherman Mourned by his Wife, as the title indicates implies marriage, Remember on the other hand makes no such overt reference, but the reader takes the 'intimacy' implied in the poem to 'you' to refer to the husband. In both poems the narrators are the wives, and they are both referring to death, in the former it is the actual death of the husband, in the latter it is the imaginary death of the narrator, the wife. The first is a long narrative poem of six, 6-8-line stanzas;

The Fisherman Mourned by his Wife is an emotional rendering of the wife's response to the death of her husband. She recalls with a sense of finality, how their marriage came about, their days of early marriage, having children and then his death. Their mutual love and care are implied, not stated. There is no lachrymose dolour as in Remember. The intensity of her emotion for the husband, and her loss is such that the reader, like those visitors, can have no words to even express sympathy. The reader is made deeply aware of the narrator's feelings for the dead man. The continuity of her love-less life is conveyed by nature, echoing its despair, 'the tree is despoiled of leaf, the flamboyant is torn, the sky cracks like a shell', but there will be no new buds.

The family, the children, the older ones, weeping, and the youngest thinking that the father is asleep in his ignorance, intensify the helplessness of the wife. It is practical to have the body buried. The reader feels helpless in the face of such poverty and helplessness, yet such rich intense human emotion. The fisherman may have had a short life, but his life had been meaningful.

Remember on the other hand belongs to a different world. Poverty and distress are unknown to the narrator, the 'melancholy' is as imagined as the imaginary event of death. The narrator has to work herself up to some feeling and thus recall an 'intimate situation' such as when 'he was holding her hand and she had half turned to go, yet turning stayed'. In contrast the reader can only imagine the intensity of the memories of the fisherman's wife; emotion had blurred memory, and it had become private. Remember is an imperative by the narrator in the poem with that title. There is a lot she wants of him, the husband, to remember-holding her hand, talking to her. It's almost a desperate appeal; 'only remember me you understand'. Then perhaps realizing the futility of memory, she consoles him, in case he forgets, that if her memory brings sadness, it is better for him to forget. There is no reference to family, or children.

The contrast perhaps between the two poems is the reality that is put across in one, and the unreality or the imaginary that comes across in the other. The sonnet form has been consciously made use of, the octet giving the situation of memory, and the sestet projecting 'the development' of the efficacy of forgetting. The rime scheme is maintained with precision. In The Fisherman mourned by his wife, the stanzas of unequal length, almost reflect the progress of their lives. The first two stanzas are the longest, of eight lines each, the next two of six lines each, and the last mentioning the hearse has seven lines of very short length, the longest line being only of six words, and the last only, three. The first two had lines of even ten words. This irregular length reflects the intensity and the spontaneity of the emotion, unlike in Remember where the emotion is almost under guard, yet meant for 'expression'. The Fisherman's wife is mourning for herself, by herself.

(iii) Any three poets from three literary periods, who examine the nature and consequences of exploitation and greed.

Three poems that lend to a discussion of exploitation and greed are, Chimney Sweeper by Blake, romantic poet (1757-1827) 18th century, Suicide in the Trenches by Siegfried Sassoon, early 20th century, Cathedral Builders by John Osmond 20th century.

William Blake draws attention to the degree of exploitation by indicating the age of the chimney sweeper, he has not yet got over his lisping! He cannot call out his trade 'sweep' instead he says 'weep'. When the hair is cut to facilitate the work, going up the sooty chimneys, the little sweeps are (made) convinced that it is done for their benefit, to save their hair! Blake draws the picture of conventional religion too as an exploiter. The relief and happiness of the little sweeps is a dream- 'naked and white their bags left behind'. Their bags symbolize the labor they have to do. Finally, they are told that if they'd be good boys', meaning work without complaining and making any requests, they will have 'God for their father and never want joy'. The little sweeps are exploited by the society inclusive of the Church, to work hard without making any demands. Being 'good' means doing as they are told, working hard uncomplainingly. Obviously, the sweeps get almost nothing for their labor.

All this is done for the father's greed: he sold his son at a tender age. The sweep's mother, the man's wife is dead. The father has no love and tenderness for his child, but the desire for the money he can get by selling him. The children are exploited by the society. Blake was very critical of the society of his time.

Suicide in the Trenches is a poem about how an ignorant man is exploited by the social norms. The boy at the beginning was leading a simple, happy life. He enjoyed the simple pleasures of life, work, the pay/compensation for his effort, and leisure. It was sufficient for him. Then he joins the war. The poet does not reveal how the change took place. It is assumed that the lure was money, status, a transferred patriotism. Perhaps the man may have had some greed, which was exploited by the society. However, he finds the conditions at the front unbearable and he 'puts a bullet through his head'. The callousness of the society or the exploiters is shown by the line 'no one spoke of him again'. Their use of him is over.

In The Cathedral Builders, the builders work beyond their capacity at the beginning. It is almost as if they were climbing towards God, they climbed so high, it was precarious, the 'ladders were sketchy'. Exploitation, in the form of lack of appreciation and presumably low pay, was evident in their loss of recreation and good cheer. They lost their sense of comradeship with their neighbors. When their work was over, it is implied, the next set got it easy. 'Naves sprouted arches; clerestories soared' the glaziers had an easy time; the church will be known for the work of the glaziers. People will come to see the windows. But they, the cathedral builders are forgotten, they grew old, got rheumatism and just managed to escape the plague. Neither the employers nor the Church looked for them and on the day of the opening of the Cathedral, they were completely ignored. The society and the Church had both had made use of them and cast them aside.

If there is greed it is perhaps apportioned to the 'fat bishop in his warm boots'.

When we look at the poems from the point of view of exploitation, they make the characteristic of exploitation clear. Exploitation takes place when the exploited is unaware he is being exploited. The current working class cannot be exploited; they are very alert and knowledgeable about their rights. They cannot be exploited. This feature can be traced across the three poems. In The Chimney Sweeper of the 18th century, there is not only ignorance of being exploited, but even acceptance of exploitation. The chimney sweepers are willing to be 'good boys'. In the Suicide in the Trenches of the early 20th century, there is a certain degree of awareness. The 'simple soldier lad' is aware of the circumstances of his employment, he cannot bear it. He will give up and not continue with the suffering. In The Cathedral Builders of the 20th century the cathedral builders are aware that they are being exploited, that the glaziers are having it better, that their lives have not got better although the fruit of their labor, 'the Cathedral' is fine and is to be celebrated. They are aware that if not for them the Cathedral would not be there and are able to 'cock a squint eye aloft and say (almost blasphemously) I darn well did that'. Thus the 20th century worker is 'the exploited' as he is aware of being exploited.

The theme of greed is not explored in these three poems, unless in a remote way, considering the social position of the father of the narrator, he can be found guilty of greedily selling his child for money. In the second 'the simple soldier boy' being greedy is a very remote possibility. In The Cathedral Builders, the cathedral builders, his employers, the Church, the Bishop can all be found 'greedy' in a very general way.

(1) 'The digital era has made libraries unnecessary'

Digitalization has come into the modern world. It is here, and here to stay. Therefore, one needs to know how to handle it and make the most of it.

The foremost impact of digitalization relates to power, the power of knowledge. In the pre digitalized world, knowledge was related to hierarchy. In the home parents knew 'better', for they knew more, in the school, the teachers knew more, in the office the CEO knew more, and perhaps only the director actually knew what anything was about. Thus, as knowledge trickled down, power diminished.

Now knowledge is available to all and sundry because of digitalization. That is why organizations are being overhauled, job titles are being changed, there are no clerical hands in offices, they are all management grades. In schools, teaching is student centered, teachers only facilitate learning. They don't, or shouldn't teach.

In this context are libraries necessary? Libraries are places where there are large numbers of books of different sorts, subjects and sizes. The books are catalogued so that the subject matter is easily accessed. There are many on a library staff, from the Librarian, assistant librarians, library assistants and ancillary staff. An enormous amount of money has to be spent to keep the library going; apart from the staff salaries, there is a lot of money spent on keeping the books safe from insects, leaking roofs, occasional pilferers and vandals.

In view of all this, isn't digitalization a God send? One does not need to keep everything in a bag, phone etc. outside, be filling forms, going through catalogues to get what one wants. One simply types in a keyword related to what one wants, and hey presto, there you are. You have everything practically at your fingertips. You want to read a short story, a poem, the day's news it's all there.

There is however a small hitch. Digitalization does not do the selection for you, you need to know something about what you want, your smart phone will do the search and the selection for you. It is like using a Thesaurus instead of a dictionary. In order to use a dictionary, you need to have some idea of the word you want. You look up the meaning of individual words because you know what you want; if you had no notion at all of what you want, the dictionary is of little use. The dictionary sharpens and extends your knowledge. The Thesaurus supplies you with information. When information enters our schemata of things, when information is fed in, it becomes knowledge. Otherwise, it remains as bits of information, unabsorbed.

Perhaps the twenty second century generation, not having had the experience of libraries, would not miss them. After all the Egyptian (Cairo) tablets that were there 5300 years ago (-3300 to 3200 years) were most probably used in day-to-day affairs. Sometime back a 2000-year-old Egyptian tablet was discovered to be a sample of homework! We know very little of the writing of ancient times in our own country.

So, the world will go on, adjusting itself to the new knowledge as sources of that knowledge, and digitalization may displace libraries.

(2) "The cultural centre of every town should be its theatre". Do you agree?

Culture relates to the way a society behaves, thinks and feels about normal day to day affairs as well as major events that have an impact on the society. Most often culture is not felt and thought of actively or consciously. It is present in the behavior of a community in its overt and covert responses to general things as well as individual matters.

Under these circumstances what does a theatre mean? The theatre provides a platform to a people-a community to give expressions to their thoughts and feelings. Ibsen reflected the social upheavals of his day; Shakespeare gave expression to the political and historical upheavals of the time. But what percentage of a country (city) goes to the

theatre regularly? Could we define or try to describe the 'culture' of a city (or a country) on the numbers or percentage that frequent the theatre? At the best of times, I would think that theatre goers are a small (but powerful) percentage.

The modern city has its cinema hall. I believe each change of show would be bringing enormous benefits. The cinema is perhaps still the most popular entertainment of 'city life'. The tele drama has fast eaten into this area. Then there are the sports events, matches, cricket and football; of these two, cricket seems to be more popular than football. Live shows have become very popular over the last few years.

What the average man thinks of as 'cultural' activities are associated with the New year and religious festivals. The New Year as celebrated in Sri Lanka is unique, in that it has very little 'religiousness.' People have adopted certain religious customs at the New year like going to the temple during the '*nonagathe*', or after the 'oil anointing', but those have nothing to do with religion -Buddhism. They are cultural responses. In fact, some of the non-Buddhists too observe these customs. The festival is identified as 'the Sinhala and Hindu New Year', thus emphasizing its commonality. The festival is observed by the entire country and often by expatriates too.

Under these circumstances it would be interesting to conjecture the role of the theater in the city. If Colombo is taken as an example, Lionel Wendt (Colombo 7) is associated with English plays, and John De Silva (Colombo 10) as the venue for Sinhala theatre. In the last century YMBA Borella, (Colombo 8) and Lumbini (Col 6) were also associated with popular Sinhala theatre. Nelum Pokuna theatre is catching up, but I believe it is more expensive than either of the theatres mentioned. However, despite the numbers that may go to see a particular play, or despite the popularity of a particular theatre, it is doubtful whether the theatre could be considered a powerful means of engaging the minds of the majority. People are happy to see a play, I am sure they read the occasional review of a play.

Apart from Colombo, most other cities have 'theatres' open to any media. Kandy perhaps has more theatre goers, the population being fed on the influence of a university, especially a university associated with big names in the theatre-Sarachchandra, Jubal, and Ludowyk, to name the more prestigious.

Under the circumstances to centre the life of the town on the theatre may sound ambitious, especially in view of the fact that culture is not something that can be forced upon a people. Culture is slow growing; it reflects the civilization of a country over the years. The closest to the 'cultural theatre' we have had, could be traced to the ritual ceremonies of the past-'the bali thovil' that is derided today. Earlier they were associated with fertility rites, and there had been the annual local 'cultural' event; '*kap situveema*' was one such. But these are now almost obsolete. Theatre is, as it is conceived of today with backdrops and footlights etc. Therefore, I do not agree with this statement as I don't see it coming into fruition, the way I understand theatre and culture.

(3) "A global pandemic can transform human values"

A global pandemic means a disease that is there throughout the world. The word pandemic is used for an epidemic that spreads beyond a country's borders. From time to time there have been pandemics of different proportions.

In the latter half of the 20th century the epidemics of influenza, HIV, 2002 SARS, 2009 flu, American cholera were witnessed. The plague of Athens occurred in the 5th BC., and is recorded in history. In the 16th century Small Pox was a deadly pandemic, which had originated in America. Black Death-plague- was experienced in the 30 Years' war. It originated in China, spread along trade routes Westward to the Mediterranean and North Africa and reached Southern England. Small pox, yellow fever, cholera, scarlet fever, typhoid, Diphtheria, had spread to pandemic proportions. The Asian flu, Hong Kong flu, Spanish flu, SARS (2003) reached pandemic proportions. The very latest pandemic is the Covid- 19.

Very many of these pandemics were carried by vectors that could be controlled or exterminated like the rats associated with plague, and mosquitoes associated with malaria. Some of these also had the characteristic that a human being would get affected only once. For example, small pox, measles, and chicken pox were diseases that assailed a human being only once. Naturally vaccination against such proves most effective. But when one is not sure whether one would get the disease a second time, one is at a loss as to what precautions should be taken, as is the case with Covid 19.

When an infectious disease of pandemic proportions is prevalent, the entire community feels that it is in danger of contacting the disease. That produces a complex set of reactions. On the one hand, one is mortally scared of contacting the disease, therefore is apprehensive of any sort of contact with a would-be patient or carrier of the disease. The person may become selfish and anti-social. The patient may be looked upon with anger, fear and even revulsion. The biggest problem about Covid is that the vector is the human being-no possibility of exterminating the vector there! This reminds us of the traditional attitude to epidemics of this type. In the normal scenario specially in the rural areas, when one contracts an infectious disease like small pox, chicken pox or measles the affected family would establish a sign that a member of the family is subject to an infectious disease by tying a young coconut leaf round a coconut tree, or at some prominent place, so that outsiders would recognize it as such. Consequently, the villagers would avoid the infected house, and may also bring suitable food/refreshments and leave it for the family to have them picked up. That would mean that there is some community feeling, a sense of sharing in the difficulties. This happens when the general information about the disease is well known.

In the case of Covid 19, the situation can be considered as slightly different. General information about the disease is scanty. The only way to find out whether one suffers from Covid 19 is through a PCR test. There is nothing to prevent a person getting the disease, immediately after the test, or after being quarantined. There is no known preventive medication, except the recently produced vaccine.

There is also another factor that is evident, that is that a large number of the deaths concluded as due to Covid 19, were also due to other complications in addition to Covid 19. Therefore, it seems sensible to consider that some of the precautions that need to be taken are very much like those that are taken for a common cold. That would mean greater personal isolation, ensuring less contact with others. In addition, the stipulations that were made at the onset of Covid 19 also have contributed to greater self-sufficiency; more people have grown vegetables and the like so that they are not dependent on the super markets. There also have been more efficiency and caring with supplies of goods, medicines etc. which have been a great help to the affected parties.

The large number of deaths that occurred as a result of Covid 19 also has an impact on human values. Death is an occasion when people express their feelings over the dead. The sight of so many dead bodies bundled together has a disturbing effect. The numbers at funerals and weddings have been limited. Social life is heavily controlled. In addition, the last rites have caused political, and emotional strain. Cremation is not a problem for the Buddhists and Hindus. But cremation is a problem for Christians, Catholics and Muslims. They want to bury their dead as they expect 'a meeting' on a future final day. The country being an island fed with numerous sources of water, with an acknowledged high-water table is not conducive to surface burying. As a result, an attempt has been made to find suitable burial places. Protests have risen from certain sections which seem to point out that the objections to cremation are not purely due to religious convictions. The Christians/Catholics have not been making a protest about cremation. No man is an island unto himself, give and take is essential for happiness.

Illnesses works on human values in different ways. In a way it makes one realize that one is subject to illness in the same way it makes one realise that one is subject to death. For most of us death is in the distant future. But illness is immediate; it interferes with our day-to-day plans and relationships. There are certain illnesses which make us feel totally helpless like cancer and similar 'incurable' diseases. It often brings out the best in us, sympathy, caring, generosity and the like. The general response to the more common illnesses is governed by other factors, social and economic. In fact, when it comes to pandemics, most people leave the state to handle it, as the most knowledgeable and the best equipped.

With the new scenario regards Covid 19, changing into other variants like the Delta, the situation has changed beyond imagination. There are more deaths, many more patients, more lock downs, more arrests of people violating health regulations. The situation is still in the making.

People are dependent on state help, states are dependent on inter state help.

(4) Write a story that incorporates the idea "I am most alone when I am with friends".

I must go this evening to our get together. What am I going to do? I do not see how I am going to employ myself. It's the last day of term, we are not going to see each other regularly for a good three weeks. So what? Plans have been made from the last week or so. We have got permission from our parents. They have given permission for us to be out the latest 8'O clock. A good four hours together. We have planned the eats, and drinks. I am not sure that one or two may not smuggle in the prohibited. We can also bring a friend along who is not in our group of six. We have catered for about ten. Amma has made some surprise bites as well. She is so happy to see me wanting to spend time with friends. She does not know that I would rather stay at home, leave the food with them, and come back home!

My dog probably understands me. She's like me. When thattha's friend who runs a fairly lucrative vet clinic told us that there are some strays they have picked up and are looking for suitable homes for them and would we like to have one, amma had said yes. She had thought that maybe I would enjoy myself. I did and do. I love my dog- the little stray who wallop every morsel of food when we brought her home and gave her, her first meal. Patty did not lift her head off the plate, till she had eaten every grain of rice! Now I have to break the biscuit and feed it, bit by bit! You put it down on her plate, she will have nothing to do with it! Amma probably feels guilty that I am an only child. She had had me after about five years of marriage, and had not had another. I don't quite know why. Occasionally when amma says it is sad I have never known the love of a sibling, my father says 'good thing, he doesn't have anyone to quarrel over property!' He quotes from both sides of the family about sisters and brothers quarreling viciously over property. And so there I am, no one to quarrel with, no one to break my heart over. I remember it took a very long time for amma to get over Punchi's death. I wonder whether she has actually got over it yet. You have only to say something that will carry a reference to Punchi, she will say how terrible it is, how the youngest had to go first. Nobody says anything then, for we feel it is something we cannot share.

O yes, my dog. I know what it will do this evening. He will follow me with his eyes, as I take my clothes out, polish my shoes, and put them on. He knows I am going out for a while. I always say 'Bye Patty'. I never forget to say it. Occasionally I have rushed out without saying bye, but I have got off the car-much to the annoyance of my parents, come back, said 'Bye Patty' and stroked his head. He makes a guttural sound. I know Patty is a female, but that is how I talk of 'him'. Then when I am gone most times, he lies under the dining table, under my chair. Amma says he has an instinctive knowledge of when I am coming. He comes out from under the table to the garage. And Oh! the joy of seeing me back.

Why am I thinking of all this, this afternoon when I have to go for a do with friends? I am quite happy with Patty. He does not ask me to talk, or sing, or chatter. He is quite happy to lie somewhere where we can see each other, sometimes feel each other; he will give me a short lick, and I will stroke his face, nose upwards, counting 'one two three... ten, enough' He grunts, he knows that's it.

Human beings lack this kind of deep understanding. They think we are all alike. Hi machang, how 'r u?' (We saw each other at 1.30 when school closed.) 'Hi' I say trying to make it loud and cheerful. Never mind he had not noticed it. Then the others. 'hi, brought the stuff?' 'Ruwan had not told his parents early enough, he'd forgotten, so he had managed to get some dough. Not bad considering we seem to be having plenty of stuff. Ruwan beaming with pleasure-me? Me trying to say that amma had made some bites as extra. Muttering, presenting the bites, opening container, to show. Aditya pouncing on it. 'Jolly good stuff. That's what we were going to spend Ruwan's money on -for some bites.' Aditya calling someone -'Sapumal', whispering something. Loud guffaws of laughter. 'What's happening?' Indika's voice loud and clear, not to be left out. 'Come on, hand out the plates.' 'So early?' Never mind, 'Isuru has brought his friend, he plays the guitar'. The sound of the tring, the twang of strings over the babble of voices. Me holding on to my plate for dear life. 'Come on serve yourselves guys,' so lonely I feel. What is there to share?

(5) Write a review of a film that addresses ethnic or religious divisions in Sri Lanka.

Purahanda Kaluwara is a film produced and directed by Prasanna Vithanage, shot in the North Central province of Sri Lanka. It had been produced in 1997, during the time of the war. I have heard of the war referred to as 'The Thirty Years War', same as the one we study in European history.

The main and central character of the film is Vannihamy, a blind man played by the legendary Joe Abeywickerema.

The narrative line starts with blind Vannihamy collecting water at the depleted reservoir, predicting rain. The sealed coffin of his soldier son is brought to the house on a full moon. The father rejects compensation in his refusal to acknowledge the death of his son. The family thinks differently, as the sum of Rs.100,000/= could mean so much. Closer to three months, two soldiers from the sons' unit bring a donation for the three months' alms giving. Vannihamy seeks 'ocular proof'; unearths the coffin and breaks it open to find/feel some logs and stones. Grama Sewaka says that he will not get any compensation now; but Vannihamy is sure that his son is not dead, these are not his son's remains. We are back at the first scene, Vannihamy is filling his pot from a reservoir that is full, and it is raining.

I understand that the film was not shown locally but internationally, and had won many awards bringing renown to the producer, and (?) fame to the country. I watched the film on video as preparation for sitting the ALs. I was very impressed with the manoeuvre of the first scene and the last, Vannihamy blind, trying to fill his pot in the background of the news of his son's death, eking out an existence trying to handle life and the final scene with Vannihamy at the same spot with the same intent but with a changed mother nature, the reservoir full, the falling rain symbolic of the eternity of the cycle of life.

However, I felt that the significance of Vannihamy had not been exploited well. He is blind. He is blind to the 'social' values of money, fame and pomp. He loves his son; he refuses to see his love for him on monetary terms. He does not understand the modern commercial life of compensation. In a way he represents the ordinary people. They are blind to what is happening in the country. (I have heard that it is the same phenomenon- sealed coffins- that triggered July '83, subject of Animal Crackers). The ordinary Sinhalese of the NCP would have been the most affected by this war.

Let me discuss what in jargon is called 'shots' and effects. There is a shot of a Grama Arakshaka Niladari taking a Buddhist priest on his cycle bar, his gun slung across his back. There is at the beginning the auditory effect of the chanting of *gatha* putting the film firmly in its background of rural Buddhist culture. Then (I think) there is the same Buddhist priest who comes to condone with Vannihamy, over his son's death; he has died a hero's death. He has died to protect the land of his birth. I recalled the tales of the Arantalawa massacre, the episodes at border villages such as Kebithigollewa, where both the Buddhist priests and the disciples-the laity had sacrificed their lives for each other, and often got massacred.

The coffin was one other inscrutable thing. It is unearthed after over two months being under the ground, in rain and sun, but shining bright with its brass fittings. The wood is untouched by mud and earth. I could not understand whether it was just a faux pas on the part of the director (Art Director?) or whether it was meant to reflect the disregard of the higher ups. In fact, after seeing this episode, I did ask an army higher up what is meant by sending sealed coffins with this kind of stuff. He had seen *Pura Sanda Kaluwara*, and remembered the coffin, with according to him, banana trunks. His response was that very often (not always? I didn't ask him), it is done without the knowledge of the higher-ups, and the reason is to provide weight to the coffin! I cannot understand why the Army cannot return whatever belongings the soldier has had, and say how the man had died. It may be tough but this is hypocritical and meaningless.

Perhaps the Director wanted to convey the indifference of the government towards the fighting. Then of course it comes out well; it is a part of the show. The two soldiers who bring the donation too are unconcerned, they have no words to spare for the family, nor do they have any feelings for the dead which they share. The family members too seem to be only concerned with the loss of the money; the Director allows no room for them to express feelings on 'this loss'. The genuine sufferings and concerns are with the likes of Vannihamy and the village Buddhist priest. We can also relate this to the initial bringing of the coffin home. We learn of it through the auditory imagery created in the mind of Vannihamy as he hears unseeing, what is happening. It could be a bit of furniture! The associations of death are completely absent.

The final feeling, I had of the film was that it lacked 'direction', despite the clever shots and the superb acting. The film had nothing central to hold on to. It may read like the anti-war poetry, that we study. On seeing this film, it occurred to me that the anti-war poetry is about people fighting in other lands, for other aims and objectives, not a fight for one's own Motherland.

Purahanda was indeed *kaluwara*, it failed to throw any light on events and people. Perhaps it could mean that for the country, there is no full moon.

(6) Write a report on deforestation in Sri Lanka.

Deforestation – A Report

Deforestation is the act of large-scale clearing of forests, destroying the natural cycle of vegetation. The value of forests is well known, they are central to the overall health of a country, the planet. They ensure a consistent weather pattern and climate. In the absence of forests, there will be droughts, heat waves, and when it rains, there will be floods and landslides.

Sri Lanka is considered as one of the 37 bio-diversity hot spots in the world, and per square area we have the highest biodiversity in Asia. Over 20% of the fauna and flora in the country are endemic to this country. The Sinharaja rain forest covering an extent of over 8500 hectares is considered a world heritage site.

Sri Lanka is in a unique position in that it has a variety of forests depending on their location, dry zone, wet zone, intermediate, upcountry, low country and so forth. A hundred years ago it was estimated that the country had 40% forest cover, but now it is estimated to be less than 20%. The definition of a forest is a land area of 0.5 hectares – a little over an acre- that has a canopy of cover of at least 10% with trees that grow above 5M, or have the potential to do so. Therefore, it is extremely important that we address this issue of deforestation in our country as we are fast losing our forest cover.

Forests are cleared to accommodate the growing population in terms of living quarters, commuting between living areas, and for agricultural purposes. These are factors that come within management, population of all communities need to be controlled, accommodation must be planned, commuting between living areas need to be planned, and all activities related to agriculture, the production and the distribution of food need to be planned, supported and managed.

Deforestation is carried out without planning, without control. In most cases, officials as well as the general public hear of it when *Ukussa* reveals large extents of cleared forests looking red and raw like bleeding sores. Or we are treated to recurrent episodes of havoc created by marauding elephants.

Deforestation seems to take place every day somewhere, be it settlements at Wilpattu, a road across Sinharaja, prawn farms at Puttlam, lorry loads of timber confiscated; every day trees are felled, and land is cleared up. Ironically these are all done for the people! But the people continue to suffer. Their dwellings are open to the attacks of wild animals any better off or their lives are not safe, basically being far away from primary health care and educational facilities. Nor are the animals safe. The elephants have lost their traditional grazing grounds and migration corridors. When their memories take them to the lands they have enjoyed, along roads they have traversed for centuries, they are met with traps, guns and human obstacles. The incidence of elephant -human conflict are aired often almost gloatingly, with not even a suggestion at remedying matters but at providing perverse ‘entertainment’. The situation is doubly sad when the scenes of destitute villagers helping to save these very same elephants fallen into a well, which happens not too rarely, are shown up with the same glee. Obviously, there is no planning or after thought at any level.

It is clear therefore that there should be planning of deforestation if any. Housing should not be left to the whims, fancies, profit and advantages of individuals (politicians or other), but to a planned scheme of the Department, the Ministry and the country. Timber merchants, house developers should all come under the surveillance of this hierarchy. Time was when hotels bordering on reservoirs like Kandalama had to abide by the laws of conservation; now there are hotels flourishing on the very banks of reservoirs. There should be the one ideology governing all levels, an ideology that underscores the need to prevent deforestation as well as ensure the preservation of the ecology.

Housing should be as is now common, ‘rising’, providing central facilities. The already urbanized areas should be explored to their full potential. Elephants considered a national treasure must be given their right of way which they have enjoyed for centuries, their habitats must not be disturbed. Other countries experiment with bee keeping

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to keep elephants confined to their own areas. We have wires. The media treats us to the entertaining spectacle of an elephant bringing logs and putting them across the wires so that they can cross over in safety. After all memory is part of intelligence, and the elephant is known both for his intelligence and memory.

Lands that are part of the migrating paths of elephants must not be tampered with. There must be a stop to these Housing schemes, that 'keep dawning' with every political change. Laws and regulations which we have inherited from the colonial times if inadequate, must be revised, if need be, replaced. It is not enough to be proud of our history, brag of our past, but we must be able to see what it was that made our past so especial. Our ancestors had method and plan. King Parakramabahu had a plan to not let a single drop of water that falls, reach the sea without rendering a service. Thus, there was the chain of the reservoirs unheard of in any other land, taking water to every village. Agriculture could be carried out in the dry zones and the wet zones, with this network of canals and reservoirs. We still have the reservoirs, but the chain of supply has been broken by unplanned building, road networks etc. Perhaps we also lack the vision and the political will to follow up.

We do not need extensive research to realize the value of forests, and the devastation that will be brought about by indiscriminate deforestation. It has been self-evident in the recent past

02. (a) (1) C (2) b (3) a (4) C
(5) d (6) a (7) a (8) b
(9) C (10) b

b.

Human	beings	respond	to	life
differently	as	evidenced	In	the
many	cultures	that	are	very
different	from	each	other.	It
can	be	said	that	cultures
reflect	life	whereas	languages	structure
how	people	look	at	life
in	a	certain	way.	Thus
some	see	the	world	from
a	gendered	point	of	view
male,	female,	neuter,	the	divisions
embracing	both	the	animate	and
the	inanimate.	Colours	too	are
a	good	example	to	show
how	people	of	a	particular
language	see	the	world.	There
is	no	apparent	rationality	for
looking	at	the	world-	thus
gendered	or	coloured.	There	is
as	much	difference	in	languages
as	in	cultures.	Despite	the
great	differences	between	and	among
languages	as	regards	structure	and
the	basic	components	in	a
language	the	languages	manage	to
convey	the	same	fundamental	notions
of	what	is	basically	required
by	human	beings.	It	could
be	said	that	while	cultures
portray	the	diversity	among	humans
language	reflects	the	similarities.	

03. (1) What role does the taiga play in the story? Provide examples to support your answer. (04 marks)

The taiga plays the role of a tempter and a challenger. 'Not one has been hunted', he is 'even greater than God'. No one wants to take the risk of confronting the taiga; the human beings know what is required-'cutting, burning and destroying'-but they fail, the taiga is the winner.

The taiga is also mysterious, it could be man, beast, or Earth. It is a challenge. It is like man, for what is most fearful is the fact that they 'think'; looking at you as if they are thinking hard, and their eyes are glinting' perhaps with

cunning. They are not moved by instinct, unlike other animals. Despite this knowledge of inevitable failure men are tempted to take up the challenge. Is it like facing oneself? -the greatest challenge.

(2) What is the main literary device used to bring out the taiga's fearsome quality?

The main literary device used by the writer is allegory. An allegory requires the reader to interpret and respond to the story in symbolical terms. An allegory is close to a fable but goes beyond that, requiring the reader to understand the story within human experience.

Example one is the note at the bottom of the story which refers to the taiga as 'the largest type of forest on the Earth', but the story makes clear mention of 'bears'. The literary association of bears, especially Russian bears are complex, they are 'close' to human beings. There are Russian folk tales and even literary works (The Bear by Chekov) presenting bears as man-beast of complex character. The narrator builds heavily on suggestion, as well as direct description.

The allegory gives adequate rein to the story teller to draw atmosphere. They are described as 'the most ferocious', 'men who changed into bears and that is why they are so vicious', because they have 'a mixture of the viciousness of men and the cruelty of animals' and so are evil like men.

Example two for the allegory is the metamorphosis that takes place at the end; 'the bears sniffed and encircled them but did no harm as there was no difference between them. The hunters did not recognize each other and thought the bears were other hunters, and the hunters were bears'.

(3) How is the passing of time conveyed in this story? Refer to language as well as imagery in your explanation

The passing of time is conveyed by the changes that are brought upon them, their appearance, clothes and demeanor, ultimately, they could not recognize each other, they had forgotten their means of communication too.

The story starts with 'many many years ago' and proceeds to relate what happened. The mood is of passing time. There is reference to actual time passing; 'days and days', 'weeks went by', 'mist hid the sun' indicating the -change of the seasons.

There is the passing of time reflected in the inevitable natural changes-'their beards were long, and their hair matted'. Time has brought changes upon things; 'their powder had got wet and they had thrown their guns away'.

With all this, the final change is convincing as the reader realizes the change is logical as related to time, it is no sudden transformation.

(4) What does the phrase "But that is only a fable" convey to you? Who says these words?

These words are said by the writer, the omniscient writer.

An allegory is close to a fable which is mainly didactic; in a fable there is a close affinity between recognized characteristics of human beings and characters in a fable. The characters in a fable represent ideas and notions; generally, the characters in a fable are animals. A fable wants to teach a lesson, they generally end up with axioms; all that glitters is not gold', 'look before you leap' etc.

Therefore, I feel that the close of the story 'but that is only a fable' is a suggestion to learn a lesson from this experience; the results of unlimited human desire, they bring about destruction, they are bestial.

There is also the suggestion of going against nature, where one fails to recognize oneself.

(5) At the end of the story, are the bears humans or the humans bears? What would be the difference?

By the end of the story the human beings had willfully taken over the form and nature of bears." they were crawling on all fours, wore the skins of ...animals, had turned wild, stank and were filthy...the hunters did not recognize each other and thought the bears were other hunters and hunters were bears'.

The end shows that the human beings had failed to get what they sought, but had 'found' themselves. The bears were 'human', they sniffed and did not attack 'these'. 'The taiga is even greater' than God, for they could not only 'forgive those that trespass against them', but also accept them into their midst.

At the end of the story thus, the humans have become willfully, the bears, and the bears instinctively humane.

The end also is reminiscent of 'Animal Farm' where the pigs looked from man to pig, and man looked from pig to man and neither could see a difference.

There is also a significant factor as indicated in answer (1) that the taiga itself is indiscernible, it could be 'a type of forest in the Earth, or a being that typifies the Earth --man's primeval instincts.

04. (1) Why is 'every city ours' and 'all (our) kin? Support your answer with close reference to the poem?

'Every city is ours' because the city stands for achievement of man, and 'all are our kin' means that human beings are closely related.

The poet says that there is no difference in men as what they have to go through physically and emotionally are the same. Therefore, there is no room for 'differences' of any sort. The city is a product of 'common' human aspirations, and 'common' labour. It is also an institution for common use. Therefore, it is 'ours'.

'All are kin', naturally because we belong to one family-the human family. We are born alike in the same manner; we grow and die in the same manner. We fall ill or feel emotional pain and pleasure in the same way. Therefore, we are alike, together as members of one family.

(2) What does the poet mean by the following lines?

Good and evil do not come from others

Pain and relief are no different

The poet takes two examples, one relating to the spiritual values, Good and Evil, relating to morality in human behavior.

We are responsible for our moral behaviour. It is not hereditary, or given. We ourselves are the authors of our own deeds. We have to take responsibility for our actions.

The other, 'pain and relief' are related to physical perception, what a human being 'feels physically-the pain and relief from it. These are common, all human beings experience pain, and the sense of relief when that pain is no more.

These two factors stress the commonality among human beings.

(3) According to the poet, what insight has been learnt from preceptive persons?

The word used by the poet to mean 'perceptive' is 'discerning', and he says he has learnt not to rejoice or cry under relevant circumstances as these are nothing new or strange to human beings.

"We do not rejoice when life seems sweet

Nor do we cry it's bitter when troubled

For this we know from the discerning:"

The poet says he does not give way to 'extremes of emotion'-will not 'rejoice', display happiness when 'life is sweet'. Similarly, when there is 'trouble' in life, he will not say it's 'bitter', 'unbearable'.

The lesson is that, the poet is speaking for others as well -'we' - will accept life as it is, and not expect great pleasures or severe sorrow at the upheavals in life. He (they) will face life with equanimity.

(4) In your view, how effective is the central simile of the poem?

The central simile of the poem is expressed in the words

"As frail craft caught in rivers crashing down rocks

Swollen with cold rain pouring

Through skies split by lightning."

The poet compares human life to a frail craft -weak boat; it is 'caught' in waters 'crashing down' making a turbulent journey. In addition, there is a hostile environment, 'cold rain pouring', 'lightning splitting the skies'. The words, 'crash', 'swollen' 'split' indicate a sorry end to this journey especially with a 'frail/ weak craft'.

I feel the equanimity built in the first part of the poem, has been disturbed by this 'central simile'; the simile carries 'life' to the inevitable end, as a result 'to be tossed around by the fates'.

Under the circumstances, the individual's 'understanding of humanity' which enabled him to view the city and all other humans as one is lost.

Therefore, I feel that the poem has lost coherence because of this 'central simile'.

(5) What in your view, is the main idea of the poem?

The main idea of the poem in the first eight lines is that we should accept life for what it is, understand the common factors, and appreciate the joys and woes as common to all human beings. The efforts by human beings should be for the common good of humanity. Accepting life for what it is without thinking selfishly of 'rises and falls' would bring us contentment as learnt from the 'discerning'.

This changes in the seven lines that follow. The central simile takes two lines elaborated by the following four lines. It describes life as being meaningless and hopelessly tossed about.

The final couplet 'not praising the mighty and deriding the lowly', goes back to the beginning, and manages to echo somewhat of the equanimity that was achieved.

Therefore, we can say that the main idea of the poem relates to accepting life, with its trials and tribulations, joys and pleasures, in a collected manner.