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WEEK 3: FAMILY, ENVIRONMENT, SOCIAL HIERARCHY & POLITICS

BBE2082 Literature of the World

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FAMILY & SOCIETAL INFLUENCES IN LITERATURE

How are family and societal influences reflected in literature?



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How do family and
society influence the
way you live and
define yourself?

*What role does family and/or society play in your
life?*



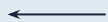


Introduction to Family and Societal Influences in Literature

The Role of Family in Shaping Identity

- Family often serves as the foundation of personal identity, shaping individuals' values, behaviors, and choices.
- Literature reflects the complexity of familial relationships—showing both their nurturing aspects and their constraints.

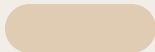




Introduction to Family and Societal Influences in Literature

How Societal Structures Influence Personal Choices

- Societal norms and expectations often dictate roles within a family (e.g., parental duties, gender roles, and generational conflicts).
- Characters in literature frequently navigate tensions between societal pressures and personal desires.




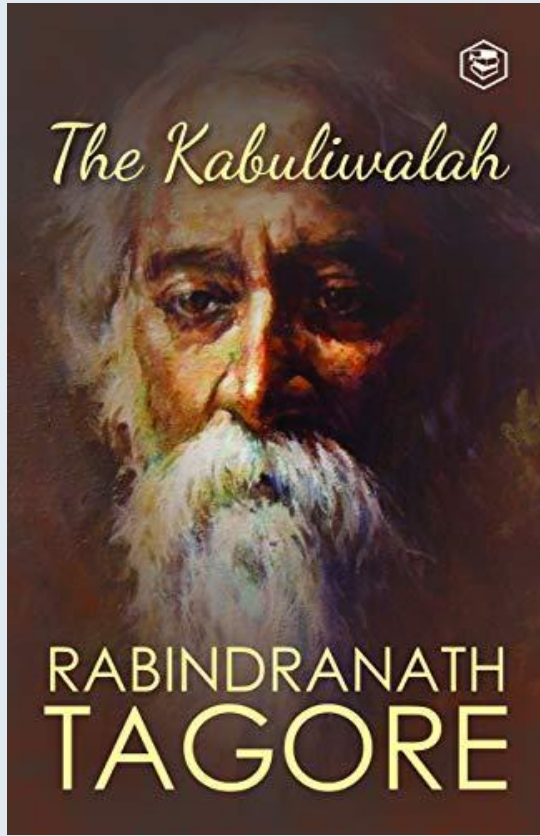


The Role of Literature in Exploring Family and Societal Influences

Literature serves as a **mirror to human experience** , offering nuanced insights into how family and societal structures shape individual lives. Through its narratives, literature allows readers to understand the profound and often complex relationship between personal identity, family dynamics, and societal expectations.

Literature also provides a **rich medium to explore the complexities of family and societal influences** . By delving into the nurturing and constraining aspects of familial relationships and the roles imposed by societal structures, it helps readers understand the intricate interplay between personal identity, family, and the world around them. Through its universal and diverse portrayals, literature fosters empathy, challenges norms, and inspires reflection on the forces that shape human lives.





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02

RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S KABULIWALA

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Written by Rabindranath Tagore, this short story explores themes of parental love, cultural connection, and the passage of time in colonial India. Rahamat, a merchant from Kabul, forms a bond with Mini, a young Bengali girl, reminding him of his daughter back home.

How does it address the theme of familial bond/relationship?





[Universal nature of love and familial bond]

"One morning, while I was in the midst of my seventeenth chapter, I heard an uproar in the street. Looking out of the window, I saw Rahamat being led away, bound between two policemen, followed by a crowd of curious boys. There were bloodstains on his clothes, and one of the policemen carried a knife. I hurried out and stopped them. Rahamat looked downcast and was silent. Mini was standing by my chair when she saw this sight. She cried out, 'Kabuliwala, O Kabuliwala!' and ran to him. The policemen tried to hold her back, but she came and clung to Rahamat's knees."

—Kabuliwala

This moment captures the depth of Mini's innocent affection for Rahamat and his fatherly feelings for her. Even in a moment of crisis, Rahamat's bond with Mini shines through.

Themes: The universal nature of love and the power of human connection, transcending cultural and social divides.



[Separation and transformation through time]

"Rahamat stood for a moment at the corner of the room, staring at the bride. He had made the long journey from Kabul, had passed through all those years of hardship, to see once more the child who had lighted up his exile like a vision. But alas, in her young womanhood, Mini had forgotten the Kabuliwala. She shrank back, abashed. He looked at her wistfully for a moment, then placed his head on the floor and made a profound obeisance, saying, 'May God bless you, my child!'"

—Kabuliwala

Rahamat's emotional journey culminates in this bittersweet moment. His realization that Mini has grown up and moved on underscores the passage of time and the inevitable changes in relationships.

Themes: Separation and transformation in familial bonds; the acceptance of life's changes.



Themes in Tagore's *Kabuliwala*

Parental Love:

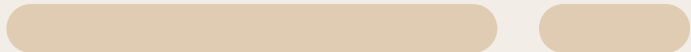
Rahamat's deep affection for Mini reflects his love for his own daughter, emphasizing the universal nature of parenthood.

Cultural Connection and Division:

The bond between Rahamat and Mini transcends cultural boundaries, challenging societal prejudices.

Separation and Change:

The story portrays how time and distance alter relationships, as seen in the transformation of Mini and Rahamat's connection over the years.





Themes in Tagore's *Kabuliwala*

Conclusion:

In *Kabuliwala*, Rahamat's bond with Mini highlights universal parental love, contrasting with societal prejudices that separate them.

Reflection questions:

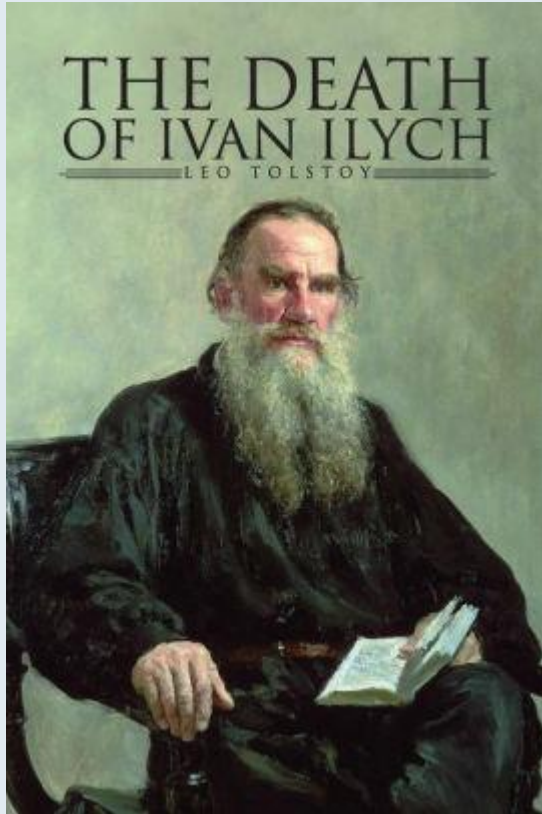
- *What other parts of the story that highlight this?*
- *In your opinion, is it possible for someone to love a non-biologically related parent or sibling?*

Watch: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_rAfvy7Mqok

Also watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WzxRr-JROEA> or

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z9gOrY2Py9s>





“ 03 TOLSTOY'S THE DEATH OF IVAN ILIYICH ”

Written by Leo Tolstoy, this novella critiques the superficiality of middle-class life and the alienation caused by societal expectations. Ivan Ilyich's pursuit of social status leads to emotional isolation and a hollow family life.

What is the meaning of life, and who in our lives influences our definition of it?



[Death and life]”

"Suddenly, some force struck him in the chest and side, making it still harder to breathe, and he fell through the hole and there at the bottom was a light. What had happened to him was what happens to anyone who climbs a mountain and suddenly slips into a crevasse and sees, not death, but life, shining clearly and brightly ahead of him. There was a light ahead of him, and he knew he must go toward it. And as he approached, he found peace."

—*The Death of Ivan Ilyich*

Ivan's realization marks a transformative moment as he shifts from despair over his wasted life to a sense of clarity and acceptance.

Themes: The confrontation with mortality forces a reevaluation of what truly matters, highlighting the emptiness of societal success.



[Death and life]

"He sought his old accustomed fear of death and did not find it. Where was it? What death? There was no fear because there was no death. In place of death there was light. 'So that's what it is!' he suddenly exclaimed aloud. 'What joy!' All this happened in a single instant, and the meaning of that instant did not change. For those present, his agony continued for another two hours. Something rattled in his throat, his emaciated body twitched. Then the gasping and the rattle came at intervals. 'It is finished!' someone said. He heard these words and repeated them in his soul. 'Death is finished,' he said to himself. 'It is no more!'"

—*The Death of Ivan Ilyich*

Ivan's death is portrayed not as an end but as a liberation. His final realization—"Death is finished"—symbolizes his spiritual awakening and release from societal and material constraints.

Themes: Mortality, transcendence, and the rediscovery of authentic selfhood.



Themes in Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*

The Emptiness of Societal Expectations:

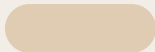
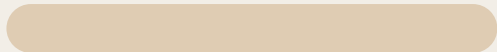
Ivan's adherence to societal norms leaves him disconnected from genuine happiness and fulfillment.

Alienation in Family Relationships:

Ivan's family interactions are marked by emotional distance, a reflection of societal values prioritizing appearances over connection.

Mortality and Self-Reflection:

Confronting death forces Ivan to reevaluate his life, exposing the futility of his choices.





Themes in Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*

Conclusion:

In *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, Tolstoy critiques societal obsession with status, showing its impact on family relationships and personal identity.

Reflection questions:

- *What other societal influences that are present in the story?*
- *In your opinion, how should Ivan Ilyich lived his life, if given another chance?*

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UlgBfGS9SJ8>

Also watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMQTXBbAbgk>





LITERARY TECHNIQUES

Comparative Analysis



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Comparative Analysis in Literature

A comparative analysis in literature involves examining two or more texts to identify their similarities and differences in themes, characters, writing styles, and cultural or historical contexts. The goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the texts by exploring how they handle similar ideas or diverge in their approaches.

How to do it?

1. Understand the Texts

Before comparing, make sure you fully understand each text:

- Read carefully: Pay attention to the plot, characters, themes, and literary techniques.
- Identify key elements: Look for the central themes or issues the texts explore (e.g., family dynamics, societal expectations, cultural heritage).
- Take notes: Highlight important quotes or moments that stand out.






Comparative Analysis in Literature

2. Identify the Basis for Comparison

Decide what aspects of the texts you want to compare. Some common areas include:

- Themes: Are there similar ideas, like identity, love, or survival, in both texts?
- Characters: Do the characters face similar challenges, or do they react differently to similar situations?
- Setting: How does the cultural or historical context influence the story?
- Literary Techniques: Do the authors use similar or different devices, like symbolism, imagery, or tone?

Example: Comparing Kabuliwala and The Death of Ivan Ilyich, you might focus on:

- *Theme: Family relationships and societal expectations.*
 - *Characters: Rahamat (a devoted father) vs. Ivan Ilyich (alienated from his family).*
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Comparative Analysis in Literature

3. Create a Comparative Framework

Organize your comparison with a clear structure. There are two common methods:

Block Method:

- Discuss one text fully before moving on to the other.
- End with a section where you compare and contrast the two.

Example:

- Kabuliwala: Themes, characters, key moments.
- The Death of Ivan Ilyich: Themes, characters, key moments.
- Comparison: Similarities and differences.

Point-by-Point Method:

- Compare specific aspects of the texts side by side.

Example:

- Theme of family: Kabuliwala vs. The Death of Ivan Ilyich.
- Character portrayal: Rahamat vs. Ivan Ilyich.
- Use of symbolism: Dried fruits in Kabuliwala vs. light in The Death of Ivan Ilyich.



Comparative Analysis in Literature

4. Use Evidence from the Texts

Support your analysis with examples and quotes:

- Explain what happens in the text and how it relates to your comparison.
- Use specific quotes to back up your points, and provide an analysis of their meaning.

Example:

- In *Kabuliwala*, Rahamat says, “She is not my little Mini anymore.” This reflects the passage of time and the inevitability of change in family relationships.
- In *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, Ivan’s realization—“What if my whole life has been wrong?”—shows how societal expectations led to emotional detachment within his family.





Comparative Analysis in Literature

5. Analyze the Differences and Similarities

Discuss what the similarities and differences reveal about the texts:

- How do the texts handle similar themes differently?
- What do the differences say about the authors' cultural, historical, or personal contexts?
- Do the texts share any universal truths or insights?

Example:

Both *Kabuliwala* and *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* deal with family, but their treatment differs:

- *Kabuliwala* emphasizes the enduring nature of parental love, even across cultural divides.
- *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* critiques the superficiality of societal roles that alienate families.



Comparative Analysis in Literature

6. Conclude with Insights

Wrap up your analysis by summarizing what you've learned from comparing the texts:

- What do the texts together reveal about the theme or issue you focused on?
- How do they enhance your understanding of literature, culture, or human experience?

Example Conclusion:

- By comparing *Kabuliwala* and *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, we see how family relationships are shaped by cultural and societal influences. While Tagore highlights the universal nature of love, Tolstoy critiques the societal constraints that undermine genuine connection.



Next class:

1. Create a diagram showing a comparative analysis of a chosen basis for the two stories that we discussed in class this week. Example: a Venn diagram showing the comparison between Kabuliwala and Ivan Iliyich in terms of their relationship with character
2. Refer to the [COURSE INFORMATION](#) document.
3. Read the stories assigned for Week 4.

