



Literary Giant Leaves Behind a ‘Literacy of the Imagination’

Discussion > Advanced 9



Exercise 1 – Vocabulary

beguiling	Charming and able to trick others.
[adjective]	<i>Ex: The president is well known for his beguiling intellect and powers of persuasion.</i>

grasp	The ability to understand a certain subject.
[noun]	<i>Ex: He has a good grasp of French.</i>

backdrop	The scenery behind something.
[noun]	<i>Ex: The ocean provided a perfect backdrop for the wedding ceremony.</i>

bibliophile	A person who likes books.
[noun]	<i>Ex: Thousands of bibliophiles attended the book fair in Madrid last week.</i>

bequeath	To officially arrange for someone to have something after one's death.
[verb]	<i>Ex: This old watch was bequeathed to me by my grandmother.</i>



Exercise 2 – Reading

Read the text aloud with your tutor and discuss the key points.

Literary Giant Leaves Behind a ‘Literacy of the Imagination’

Sir Wilson Harris, the innovative Guyanese writer who described his work as “quantum fiction”, died on March 8, 2018 at his home in England, at the age of 96.

Widely considered to be a pioneering voice in English literature, with a beguiling intellect and masterful grasp of language, Harris began his career in Guyana, where he grew close to the indigenous people who lived there. The knowledge they shared with him and the majestic backdrop of the Amazon rainforest would go on to feature in many of his novels.

Beginning in the mid 1940s, Harris’ poetry was published in one of the region’s most important publications of the post-World War II era. Harris soon transitioned his metaphorical skill to other literary genres, expanding his writing to include essays and novels.



Harris' best known titles include *Palace of the Peacock* (1960), *The Far Journey of Oudin* (1961), *The Whole Armour* (1962) and *The Secret Ladder* (1963) — landmark post-colonial works that experiment with mythology, time, and space.

As news of his death broke, tributes poured in on social media, with bibliophiles thanking Harris for taking them on journeys of imagination. Many noted that despite the fact that his books could be “difficult” reads, they were well worth it.

Barbadian Annalee Davis noted that “the Caribbean and the UK have lost one of their finest writers.”

Another Facebook user, Louis Chude-Sokei, wrote:

"Very few thinkers have had an influence on me as great as his. He is one of the most innovative and radical writers and thinkers of the last two centuries."

Harris, who once said that “only a dialogue with the past can produce originality”, has left behind a body of work that will no doubt bequeath that legacy onto younger writers.



Exercise 3 – Discussion

Discuss the following questions with your tutor.

1. What are your thoughts on Sir Wilson Harris' legacy? Are you familiar with his work?
2. Do you consider yourself to be a "bibliophile"? Why? Why not?
3. Would you describe any of your favorite books as a "difficult read"? If so, which ones and why?
4. What do you make of the claim that “only a dialogue with the past can produce originality”?
5. Who would you say are some of your country's "finest writers"? Please explain your answer.
6. In your opinion, what defines a great book? Please explain your answer.
7. Do you enjoy reading poetry? If so, who are your favorite poets?
8. Do you prefer to read fiction or non-fiction? Why?