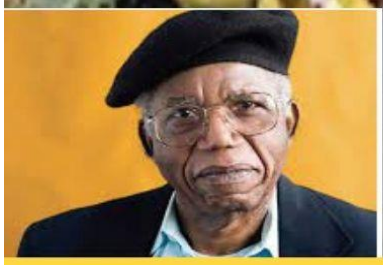
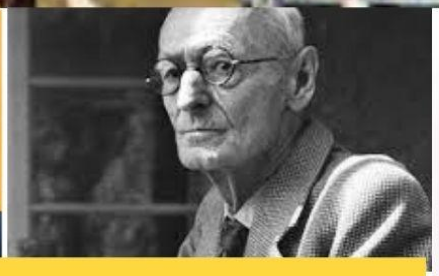
GLIMPSES OF THE WORLD LITERATURE





A
Text book for
The Optional
English Course

Paper Seven

Sixth Semester

Compiled
by
Dr. Udaya Ravi Shastry

E-text book
For private circulation only
For the Students
Of
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Tiptur, Karnataka

Glimpses of the World Literature

Dr. Udaya Ravi Shastry

8050316432

Good Luck.

C O N T E N T S

Paper 7

Section A

Poetry

Section B

Short Stories

Section C

Drama:

Section D

Fiction

Section A
Poetry (Text)

1. *The Divine Comedy* (Inferno, Canto I)

Dante

Midway upon the journey of our life
I found myself within a forest dark,
For the straightforward pathway had been lost.

Ah me! how hard a thing it is to say
What was this forest savage, rough, and stern,
Which in the very thought renews the fear.

So bitter is it, death is little more;
But of the good to treat, which there I found,
Speak will I of the other things I saw there.

I cannot well repeat how there I entered,
So full was I of slumber at the moment
In which I had abandoned the true way.

But after I had reached a mountain's foot,
At that point where the valley terminated,
Which had with consternation pierced my heart,

Upward I looked, and I beheld its shoulders,
Vested already with that planet's rays
Which leadeth others right by every road.

Then was the fear a little quieted
That in my heart's lake had endured throughout
The night, which I had passed so piteously.

And even as he, who, with distressful breath,
Forth issued from the sea upon the shore,
Turns to the water perilous and gazes;

So did my soul, that still was fleeing onward,
Turn itself back to re-behold the pass
Which never yet a living person left.

After my weary body I had rested,
The way resumed I on the desert slope,
So that the firm foot ever was the lower.

And lo! almost where the ascent began,
A panther light and swift exceedingly,
Which with a spotted skin was covered o'er!

And never moved she from before my face,
Nay, rather did impede so much my way,
That many times I to return had turned.

The time was the beginning of the morning,
And up the sun was mounting with those stars
That with him were, what time the Love Divine

At first in motion set those beauteous things;
So were to me occasion of good hope,
The variegated skin of that wild beast,

The hour of time, and the delicious season;
But not so much, that did not give me fear
A lion's aspect which appeared to me.

He seemed as if against me he were coming
With head uplifted, and with ravenous hunger,
So that it seemed the air was afraid of him;

And a she-wolf, that with all hungerings
Seemed to be laden in her meagreness,
And many folk has caused to live forlorn!

She brought upon me so much heaviness,
With the affright that from her aspect came,
That I the hope relinquished of the height.

And as he is who willingly acquires,
And the time comes that causes him to lose,
Who weeps in all his thoughts and is despondent,

E'en such made me that beast withouten peace,
  Which, coming on against me by degrees
  Thrust me back thither where the sun is silent.

While I was rushing downward to the lowland,
  Before mine eyes did one present himself,
  Who seemed from long-continued silence hoarse.

When I beheld him in the desert vast,
  "Have pity on me," unto him I cried,
  "Whiche'er thou art, or shade or real man!"

He answered me: "Not man; man once I was,
  And both my parents were of Lombardy,
  And Mantuans by country both of them.

'Sub Julio' was I born, though it was late,
  And lived at Rome under the good Augustus,
  During the time of false and lying gods.

A poet was I, and I sang that just
  Son of Anchises, who came forth from Troy,
  After that Ilion the superb was burned.

But thou, why goest thou back to such annoyance?
  Why climb'st thou not the Mount Delectable,
  Which is the source and cause of every joy?"

"Now, art thou that Virgilius and that fountain
  Which spreads abroad so wide a river of speech?"
  I made response to him with bashful forehead.

"O, of the other poets honour and light,
  Avail me the long study and great love
  That have impelled me to explore thy volume!

Thou art my master, and my author thou,
  Thou art alone the one from whom I took
  The beautiful style that has done honour to me.

Behold the beast, for which I have turned back;
Do thou protect me from her, famous Sage,
For she doth make my veins and pulses tremble."

"Thee it behoves to take another road,"
Responded he, when he beheld me weeping,
"If from this savage place thou wouldst escape;

Because this beast, at which thou criest out,
Suffers not any one to pass her way,
But so doth harass him, that she destroys him;

And has a nature so malign and ruthless,
That never doth she glut her greedy will,
And after food is hungrier than before.

Many the animals with whom she weds,
And more they shall be still, until the Greyhound
Comes, who shall make her perish in her pain.

He shall not feed on either earth or pelf,
But upon wisdom, and on love and virtue;
'Twixt Feltro and Feltro shall his nation be;

Of that low Italy shall he be the saviour,
On whose account the maid Camilla died,
Euryalus, Turnus, Nisus, of their wounds;

Through every city shall he hunt her down,
Until he shall have driven her back to Hell,
There from whence envy first did let her loose.

Therefore I think and judge it for thy best
Thou follow me, and I will be thy guide,
And lead thee hence through the eternal place,

Where thou shalt hear the desperate lamentations,
Shalt see the ancient spirits disconsolate,
Who cry out each one for the second death;

And thou shalt see those who contented are
Within the fire, because they hope to come,
Whene'er it may be, to the blessed people;

To whom, then, if thou wishest to ascend,
A soul shall be for that than I more worthy;
With her at my departure I will leave thee;

Because that Emperor, who reigns above,
In that I was rebellious to his law,
Wills that through me none come into his city.

He governs everywhere, and there he reigns;
There is his city and his lofty throne;
O happy he whom thereto he elects!"

And I to him: "Poet, I thee entreat,
By that same God whom thou didst never know,
So that I may escape this woe and worse,

Thou wouldst conduct me there where thou hast said,
That I may see the portal of Saint Peter,
And those thou makest so disconsolate."

Then he moved on, and I behind him followed

2. Mending Wall

ROBERT FROST

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
'Stay where you are until our backs are turned!'
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of out-door game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there

Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, ‘Good fences make good neighbors.’

3. “Elements of Composition”

A K Ramanujan

Composed as I am, like others,
of elements on certain well-known lists,
father's seed and mother's egg

gathering earth, air, fire, mostly
water, into a mulberry mass,
moulding calcium,

carbon, even gold, magnesium and such,
into a chattering self tangled
in love and work,

scary dreams, capable of eyes that can see,
only by moving constantly,
the constancy of things

like Stonehenge or cherry trees;

add uncle's eleven fingers
making shadow-plays of rajas
and cats, hissing,

becoming fingers again, the look
of panic on sister's face

an hour before

her wedding, a dated newspaper map,
of a place one has never seen, maybe
no longer there

after the riots, downtown Nairobi,
that a friend carried in his passport
as others would

a woman's picture in their wallets;

add the lepers of Madurai,
male, female, married,
with children,

lion faces, crabs for claws,
clotted on their shadows
under the stone-eyed

goddesses of dance, mere pillars,
moving as nothing on earth
can move --
I pass through them
as they pass through me
taking and leaving

affections, seeds, skeletons,

millennia of fossil records
of insects that do not last
a day,

body-prints of mayflies,
a legend half-heard
in a train

of the half-man searching
for an ever-fleeing
other half

through Muharram tigers,
hyacinths in crocodile waters,
and the sweet

twisted lives of epileptic saints,

and even as I add
I lose, decompose,
into my elements

into other names and forms,
past, and passing, tenses
without time,

caterpillar on a leaf, eating,
being eaten.

4. Kupamanduka

Gopalakrishna Adiga

Where are you now? Once hand in hand with me
You blew the sail, plump and round,
Got clearance at the checkposts, led me to distant lands, far off islands,
And then suddenly slipped out, and escaped.

You flew into the vast blue sky
Deserting me before I could open my eyes;
Halfway through the belching orchard I tripped and fell
On the shore of the lake drunk to the brim.

Burdened by my body, I lie here , an orphan;
Flower and creeper, plant and thicket, tree and bush
Mockingly gaze, turn away their face, and laugh:
Cruel jokes and constant watch.

The jack fruit tree, with yellow leaves, drunk in sun`s rays,

Stands lame, stuck in the ground;
The banana tree with overripened fruits rottens
Sucking life from its own offsprings.

Grain is ripe after the dread of thunder and rain,
Streams from well and lake are choked with moss,
The circling bull with wounded neck pressed to the yoke
Cries this is the end of the race.

Endless labour pain was the reward
For my endless faith in you.
Should I remain a dry well? Touch me,
Wake me up, open the choked springs boiling far beneath.

I go back, I want a magic blanket
to be wrapped around me;
Winding it tight I slide below the valleys,
I leap and run to the call of the sea.

2

I was at the sea shore every morning
Anxiously waiting at the sand`s edge;
The gold ray shovelling the ocean foam
Marched forward the chariot`s pinnacle.

You playfully rowed the toy boat
With the small sail, and then
The boat suddenly hit the shore, you bent,
Stretched your arms, lifted me up up and hugged me.

Riding over the waves of seven seas
We spent the day gasping, lolling and lazing;
Cargo of rainbow, coloured beads and domes
Weighed heavily on the boat, we touched the shore.

In the dark ocean, in a lonely house on an island,
We played naked , diving deep;
We were one, laid the golden eggs,
Egg after egg had your stamp alone.

Every moment was festive; at the ropes of the chariot
Mine were the arms, yours the chant;
The strength of a thousnad voices and arms
Originated from our mating.

Yet you are a rogue, I know:
In the village school, when the teacher was away,
You were the Bhagavata, beating castanets,
I, mighty Bhima, entering the battlefield,

Whilred the ruler like a mace;
Twentyfive toe-leaps and the mudpot was smashed,
The class roared in laughter, welt marks on back
Remind me of the story even today.

We, both the cheats, sat on the sea-saw;
You were slightly lighter, still,
Now and then the keel evened, I did not feel
The heaviness of my body pulling down my end.

3

The time has come when the ripened fruits fall and rot,
The roots of the green is eaten by the termites,
The chariot is slowly devoured by the insects,
The rope is old, it dries and breaks.

Heaviness grows everyday; my end
of the sea-saw rests in mud, your end
Is in the depths of the sky,
I, forty, bespectacled, cannot trace your ways and norms.

Still I hear your voice like a hundred water-falls,
A hundred roots go deep whereever I sit;
The buds wither the moment they sprout
Dissociated from your prime essence.

4

I am an ancient frog; I have drunk the water
Of seven ponds; to hop and keep hopping is my nature;
From ground to the pond below, from pond to the ground above,
I vacillated between the two.

I flopped on the groud, panting and swelling, swelling and panting.
At least now I should get down into the well;
I will hide myself in the womb of the clay,
Until I know myself when the swelling is done.

Then the body, light as air, yellow as gold
Will jig up and down in the water of the lake.
I will lean back on the green grass of the bank and croak;
Then the boat will approach, touch me and console me.

If I eat a fly, does that put the estate in order?
Does life come back to the banana tree?
Is the palmtree sad if I sink, or the jack tree depresed?
I spent much effort realizing this.

The jasmine which flowers your smile,
The mango grove whose shade displays your love,
The mud at the bottom of the pool which shows your affection,
I will play among these-this is my new resolution.

5. Everything

Anna Akhmatova

Everything's looted, betrayed and traded,
black death's wing's overhead.
Everything's eaten by hunger, unsated,
so why does a light shine ahead?

By day, a mysterious wood, near the town,
breathes out cherry, a cherry perfume.
By night, on July's sky, deep, and transparent,
new constellations are thrown.
And something miraculous will come
close to the darkness and ruin,
something no-one, no-one, has known,
though we've longed for it since we were children.

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Section B
Short Stories (Text)

1. The Cop and the Anthem

ON HIS BENCH in Madison Square Soapy moved uneasily. When wild geese honk high of nights, and when women without seal-skin coats grow kind to their husbands, and when Soapy moves uneasily on his bench in the park, you may know that winter is near at hand.
A dead leaf fell in Soapy's lap. That was Jack Frost's card. Jack is kind to the regular denizens of Madison Square, and gives fair warning of his annual call. At the corners of four streets he hands his pasteboard to the North Wind, footman of the mansion of All Outdoors, so that the inhabitants thereof may make ready.

Soapy's mind became cognizant of the fact that the time had come for him to resolve himself into a singular Committee of Ways and Means to provide against the coming rigor. And therefore he moved uneasily on his bench.

The hibernatorial ambitions of Soapy were not of the highest. In them there were no considerations of Mediterranean cruises, of soporific Southern skies drifting in the Vesuvian Bay. Three months on the Island was what his soul craved. Three months of assured board and bed and congenial company, safe from Boreas and bluecoats, seemed to Soapy the essence of things desirable.

For years the hospitable Blackwell's had been his winter quarters. Just as his more fortunate fellow New Yorkers had bought their tickets to Palm Beach and the Riviera each winter, so Soapy had made his humble arrangements for his annual hegira to the Island. And now the time was come. On the previous night three Sabbath newspapers, distributed beneath his coat, about his ankles and over his lap, had failed to repulse the cold as he slept on his bench near the spurting fountain in the ancient square. So the Island loomed big and timely in Soapy's mind. He scorned the provisions made in the name of charity for the city's dependents. In Soapy's opinion the Law was more benign than Philanthropy. There was an endless round of institutions, municipal and eleemosynary, on which he might set out and receive lodging and food accordant with the simple life. But to one of Soapy's proud spirit the gifts of charity are encumbered. If not in coin you must pay in humiliation of spirit for every benefit received at the hands of philanthropy. As Caesar had his Brutus, every bed of charity must have its toll of a bath, every loaf of bread its compensation of a private and personal inquisition. Wherefore it is better to be a guest of the law, which though conducted by rules, does not meddle unduly with a gentleman's private affairs.

Soapy, having decided to go to the Island, at once set about accomplishing his desire. There were many easy ways of doing this. The pleasantest was to dine luxuriously at some expensive restaurant; and then, after declaring insolvency, be handed over quietly and without uproar to a policeman. An accommodating magistrate would do the rest.

Soapy left his bench and strolled out of the square and across the level sea of asphalt, where Broadway and Fifth Avenue flow together. Up Broadway he turned, and halted at a glittering café, where are gathered together nightly the choicest products of the grape, the silkworm and the protoplasm.

Soapy had confidence in himself from the lowest button of his vest upward. He was shaven, and his coat was decent and his neat black, ready-tied four-in-hand had been presented to him by a lady missionary on Thanksgiving Day. If he could reach a table in the restaurant unsuspected success would be his. The portion of him that would show above the table would raise no doubt in the waiter's mind. A roasted mallard duck, thought Soapy, would be about the thing—with a bottle of Chablis, and then Camembert, a demitasse and a cigar. One dollar for the cigar would be enough. The total would not be so high as to call forth any supreme manifestation of revenge from the café management; and yet the meat would leave him filled and happy for the journey to his winter refuge.

But as Soapy set foot inside the restaurant door the head waiter's eye fell upon his frayed trousers and decadent shoes. Strong and ready hands turned him about and conveyed him in silence and haste to the sidewalk and averted the ignoble fate of the menaced mallard.

Soapy turned off Broadway. It seemed that his route to the coveted island was not to be an epicurean one. Some other way of entering limbo must be thought of.
At a corner of Sixth Avenue electric lights and cunningly displayed wares behind plate-glass made a shop window conspicuous. Soapy took a cobblestone and dashed it through the glass. People came running around the corner, a policeman in the lead. Soapy stood still, with his hands in his pockets, and smiled at the sight of brass buttons.

“Where's the man that done that?” inquired the officer excitedly.
“Don't you figure out that I might have had something to do with it?” said Soapy, not without sarcasm, but friendly, as one greets good fortune.
The policeman's mind refused to accept Soapy even as a clue. Men who smash windows do not remain to parley with the law's minions. They take to their heels. The

policeman saw a man half way down the block running to catch a car. With drawn club he joined in the pursuit. Soapy, with disgust in his heart, loafed along, twice unsuccessful.

On the opposite side of the street was a restaurant of no great pretensions. It catered to large appetites and modest purses. Its crockery and atmosphere were thick; its soup and napery thin. Into this place Soapy took his accusive shoes and telltale trousers without challenge. At a table he sat and consumed beefsteak, flapjacks, doughnuts and pie. And then to the waiter he betrayed the fact that the minutest coin and himself were strangers.

“Now, get busy and call a cop,” said Soapy. “And don't keep a gentleman waiting.”
“No cops for youse,” said the waiter, with a voice like butter cakes and an eye like the cherry in a Manhattan cocktail. “Hey, Con!”

Neatly upon his left ear on the callous pavement two waiters pitched Soapy. He arose, joint by joint, as a carpenter's rule opens, and beat the dust from his clothes. Arrest seemed but a rosy dream. The Island seemed very far away. A policeman who stood before a drug store two doors away laughed and walked down the street.

Five blocks Soapy traveled before his courage permitted him to woo capture again. This time the opportunity presented what he fatuously termed to himself a “cinch.” A young woman of a modest and pleasing guise was standing before a show window gazing with sprightly interest at its display of shaving mugs and inkstands, and two yards from the window a large policeman of severe demeanor leaned against a water plug.

It was Soapy's design to assume the role of the despicable and execrated “masher.” The refined and elegant appearance of his victim and the contiguity of the conscientious cop encouraged him to believe that he would soon feel the pleasant official clutch upon his arm that would insure his winter quarters on the right little, tight little isle.

Soapy straightened the lady missionary's ready-made tie, dragged his shrinking cuffs into the open, set his hat at a killing cant and sidled toward the young woman. He made eyes at her, was taken with sudden coughs and “hems,” smiled, smirked and went brazenly through the impudent and contemptible litany of the “masher.” With half an eye Soapy saw that the policeman was watching him fixedly. The young woman moved away a few steps, and again bestowed her absorbed attention upon the shaving mugs. Soapy followed, boldly stepping to her side, raised his hat and said:

“Ah there, Bedelia! Don't you want to come and play in my yard?”

The policeman was still looking. The persecuted young woman had but to beckon a finger and Soapy would be practically en route for his insular haven. Already he imagined he could feel the cozy warmth of the station-house. The young woman faced him and, stretching out a hand, caught Soapy's coat sleeve.

“Sure, Mike,” she said joyfully, “if you'll blow me to a pail of suds. I'd have spoke to you sooner, but the cop was watching.”

With the young woman playing the clinging ivy to his oak Soapy walked past the policeman overcome with gloom. He seemed doomed to liberty.

At the next corner he shook off his companion and ran. He halted in the district where by night are found the lightest streets, hearts, vows and librettos. Women in furs and men in greatcoats moved gaily in the wintry air. A sudden fear seized Soapy that some dreadful enchantment had rendered him immune to arrest. The thought brought a little of panic upon it, and when he came upon another policeman lounging grandly in front of a transplendent theatre he caught at the immediate straw of “disorderly conduct.”

On the sidewalk Soapy began to yell drunken gibberish at the top of his harsh voice. He danced, howled, raved and otherwise disturbed the welkin.

The policeman twirled his club, turned his back to Soapy and remarked to a citizen. “'Tis one of them Yale lads celebratin' the goose egg they give to the Hartford College. Noisy; but no harm. We've instructions to lave them be.”

Disconsolate, Soapy ceased his unavailing racket. Would never a police man lay hands on him? In his fancy the Island seemed an unattainable Arcadia. He buttoned his thin coat against the chilling wind.

In a cigar store he saw a well-dressed man lighting a cigar at a swinging light. His silk umbrella he had set by the door on entering. Soapy stepped inside, secured the umbrella and sauntered off with it slowly. The man at the cigar light followed hastily. “My umbrella,” he said, sternly.

“Oh, is it?” sneered Soapy, adding insult to petit larceny. “Well, why don't you call a policeman? I took it. Your umbrella! Why don't you call a cop? There stands one on the corner.”

The umbrella owner slowed his steps. Soapy did likewise, with a presentiment that luck would again run against him. The policeman looked at the two curiously.
“Of course,” said the umbrella man—“that is—well, you know how these mistakes occur—I—if it's your umbrella I hope you'll excuse me—I picked it up this morning in a restaurant—If you recognize it as yours, why—I hope you'll—”
“Of course it's mine,” said Soapy, viciously.

The ex-umbrella man retreated. The policeman hurried to assist a tall blonde in an opera cloak across the street in front of a street car that was approaching two blocks away.

Soapy walked eastward through a street damaged by improvements. He hurled the umbrella wrathfully into an excavation. He muttered against the men who wear helmets and carry clubs. Because he wanted to fall into their clutches, they seemed to regard him as a king who could do no wrong.

At length Soapy reached one of the avenues to the east where the glitter and turmoil was but faint. He set his face down this toward Madison Square, for the homing instinct survives even when the home is a park bench.

But on an unusually quiet corner Soapy came to a standstill. Here was an old church, quaint and rambling and gabled. Through one violet-stained window a soft light glowed, where, no doubt, the organist loitered over the keys, making sure of his mastery of the coming Sabbath anthem. For there drifted out to Soapy's ears sweet music that caught and held him transfixed against the convolutions of the iron fence.

The moon was above, lustrous and serene; vehicles and pedestrians were few; sparrows twittered sleepily in the eaves—for a little while the scene might have been a country churchyard. And the anthem that the organist played cemented Soapy to the iron fence, for he had known it well in the days when his life contained such things as mothers and roses and ambitions and friends and immaculate thoughts and collars.

The conjunction of Soapy's receptive state of mind and the influences about the old church wrought a sudden and wonderful change in his soul. He viewed with swift horror the pit into which he had tumbled, the degraded days, unworthy desires, dead hopes, wrecked faculties and base motives that made up his existence.

And also in a moment his heart responded thrillingly to this novel mood. An instantaneous and strong impulse moved him to battle with his desperate fate. He would pull himself out of the mire; he would make a man of himself again; he would

conquer the evil that had taken possession of him. There was time; he was comparatively young yet; he would resurrect his old eager ambitions and pursue them without faltering. Those solemn but sweet organ notes had set up a revolution in him. Tomorrow he would go into the roaring downtown district and find work. A fur importer had once offered him a place as driver. He would find him tomorrow and ask for the position. He would be somebody in the world. He would—
Soapy felt a hand laid on his arm. He looked quickly around into the broad face of a policeman.

“What are you doin' here?” asked the officer.
“Nothin',” said Soapy.
“Then come along,” said the policeman.
“Three months on the Island,” said the Magistrate in the Police Court the next morning.

2. Toba Tek Singh

Sadat Hasan Manto

Two or three years after the 1947 Partition, it occurred to the governments of India and Pakistan to exchange their lunatics in the same manner as they had exchanged their criminals. The Muslim lunatics in India were to be sent over to Pakistan and the Hindu and Sikh lunatics in Pakistani asylums were to be handed over to India.

It was difficult to say whether the proposal made any sense or not. However, the decision had been taken at the topmost level on both sides. After high-level conferences were held a day was fixed for exchange of the lunatics. It was agreed that those Muslims who had families in India would be permitted to stay back while the rest would be escorted to the border. Since almost all the Hindus and Sikhs had migrated from Pakistan, the question of retaining non-Muslim lunatics in Pakistan did not arise. All of them were to be taken to India.

Nobody knew what transpired in India, but so far as Pakistan was concerned this news created quite a stir in the lunatic asylum at Lahore, leading to all sorts of funny developments. A Muslim lunatic, a regular reader of the fiery Urdu daily *Zamindar*, when asked what Pakistan was, reflected for a while and then replied, "Don't you know? A place in India known for manufacturing cut-throat razors." Apparently satisfied, the friend asked no more questions.

Likewise, a Sikh lunatic asked another Sikh, "Sardarji, why are we being deported to India? We don't even know their language." The Sikh gave a knowing smile. "But I know the language of *Hindostoras*" he replied. "These bloody Indians, the way they strut about!"

One day while taking his bath, a Muslim lunatic yelled, "*Pakistan Zindabad!*" with such force that he slipped, fell down on the floor and was knocked unconscious.

Not all the inmates were insane. Quite a few were murderers. To escape the gallows, their relatives had gotten them in by bribing the officials. They had only a vague idea about the division of India or what Pakistan was. They were utterly ignorant of the present situation. Newspapers hardly ever gave the true picture and the asylum warders were illiterates from whose conversation they could not glean anything. All that these inmates knew was that there was a man by the name of Quaid-e-Azam who had set up a separate state for Muslims, called Pakistan. But they had no idea where Pakistan was. That was why they were all at a loss whether they were now in India or in Pakistan. If they were in India, then where was Pakistan? If they were in Pakistan, how come that only a short while ago they were in India? How could they be in India a short while ago and now suddenly in Pakistan?

One of the lunatics got so bewildered with this India-Pakistan-Pakistan-India rigmarole that one day while sweeping the floor he climbed up a tree, and sitting on a branch, harangued the people below for two hours on end about the delicate problems of India and Pakistan. When the guards asked him to come down he climbed up still higher and said, "I don't want to live in India and Pakistan. I'm going to make my home right here on this tree."

All this hubbub affected a radio engineer with an MSc degree, a Muslim, a quiet man who took long walks by himself. One day he stripped off all his clothes, gave them to a guard and ran in the garden stark naked.

Another Muslim inmate from Chiniot, an erstwhile adherent of the Muslim League who bathed fifteen or sixteen times a day, suddenly gave up bathing. As his name was Mohammed Ali, he one day proclaimed that he was none other than Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Taking a cue from him a Sikh announced that he was Master Tara Singh, the leader of the Sikhs. This could have led to open violence. But before any harm could be done the two lunatics were declared dangerous and locked up in separate cells.

Among the inmates of the asylum was a Hindu lawyer from Lahore who had gone mad because of unrequited love. He was deeply pained when he learnt that Amritsar, where the girl lived, would form part of India. He roundly abused all the Hindu and Muslim leaders who had conspired to divide India into two, thus making his beloved an Indian and him a Pakistani. When the talks on the exchange were finalized his mad friends asked him to take heart since now he could go to India. But the young lawyer did not want to leave Lahore, for he feared for his legal practice in Amritsar.

There were two Anglo-Indians in the European ward. When informed the British were leaving, they spent hours together discussing the problems they would be faced with: Would the European ward be abolished? Would they get breakfast? Instead of bread, would they have to make do with measly Indian chapattis?

There was a Sikh who had been admitted into the asylum fifteen years ago. Whenever he spoke it was the same mysterious gibberish: "Uper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the laltain." The guards said that he had not slept a wink in all this time. He would not even lie down to rest. His feet were swollen with constant standing and his calves had puffed out in the middle, but in spite of this agony he never cared to lie down. He listened with rapt attention to all discussions about the exchange of lunatics between India and Pakistan. If someone asked his views on the subject he would reply in a grave tone: "Uper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the Government of Pakistan." But later on he started substituting "the Government of Pakistan" with "Tobak Tek Singh," which was his home town. Now he begun asking where Toba Tek Singh was to go. But nobody seemed to know where it was. Those who tried to explain themselves got bogged down in another enigma: Sialkot, which used to be in India, now was in Pakistan. At this rate, it seemed as if Lahore, which was now in Pakistan, would slide over to India. Perhaps the whole of India might become Pakistan. It was all so confusing! And who could say if both India and Pakistan might not entirely disappear from the face of the earth one day?

The hair on the Sikh lunatic's head had thinned and his beard had matted, making him look wild and ferocious. But he was a harmless creature. In fifteen years he had not even once had a row with anyone. The older employees of the asylum knew that he had been a well-to-do fellow who had owned considerable land in Toba Tek Singh. Then he had suddenly gone mad. His family had brought him to the asylum in chains and left him there. They came to meet him once a month but ever since the communal riots had begun, his relatives had stopped visiting him.

His name was Bishan Singh but everybody called him Toba Tek Singh. He did not

know what day it was, what month it was and how many years he had spent in the asylum. Yet as if by instinct he knew when his relatives were going to visit, and on that day he would take a long bath, scrub his body with soap, put oil in his hair, comb it and put on clean clothes. If his relatives asked him anything he would keep silent or burst out with ì*Uper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the laltain.*"

When he had been brought to the asylum, he had left behind an infant daughter. She was now a comely and striking young girl of fifteen, who Bishan Singh failed to recognize. She would come to visit him, and not be able to hold back her tears.

When the India-Pakistan caboodle started Bishan Singh often asked the other inmates where Toba Tek Singh was. Nobody could tell him. Now even the visitors had stopped coming. Previously his sixth sense would tell him when the visitors were due to come. But not anymore. His inner voice seemed to have stilled. He missed his family, the gifts they used to bring and the concern with which they used to speak to him. He was sure they would have told him whether Toba Tek Singh was in India or Pakistan. He also had the feeling that they came from Toba Tek Singh, his old home.

One of the lunatics had declared himself God. One day Bishan Singh asked him where Toba Tek Singh was. As was his habit the man greeted Bishan Singh's question with a loud laugh and then said, "It's neither in India nor in Pakistan. In fact, it is nowhere because till now I have not taken any decision about its location."

Bishan begged the man who called himself God to pass the necessary orders and solve the problem. But 'God' seemed to be very busy other matters. At last Bishan Singh's patience ran out and he cried out: "*Uper the gur gur the annexe the mung the dal of Guruji da Khalsa and Guruji ki fatehÖjo boley so nihal sat sri akal.*"

What he wanted to say was: "You don't answer my prayers because you a Muslim God. Had you been a Sikh God, you would have surely helped me out."

A few days before the exchange was due to take place, a Muslim from Toba Tek Singh who happened to be a friend of Bishan Singh came to meet him. He had never visited him before. On seeing him, Bishan Singh tried to slink away, but the warder barred his way. "Don't you recognize your friend Fazal Din?" he said. "He has come to meet you." Bishan Singh looked furtively at Fazal Din, then started to mumble something. Fazal Din placed his hand on Bishan Singh's shoulder. "I have been thinking of visiting you for a long time," he said. "But I couldn't get the time. Your family is well and has gone to India safely. I did what I could to help. As for your

daughter, Roop KaurÖ" --he hesitated--'She is safe tooÖin India."

Bishan Singh kept quiet. Fazal Din continued: "Your family wanted me to make sure you were well. Soon you'll be moving to India. Please give my salaam to bhai Balbir Singh and bhai Raghbir Singh and bahain Amrit Kaur. Tell Balbir that Fazal Din is well. The two brown buffaloes he left behind are well too. Both of them gave birth to calves, but, unfortunately, one of them died. Say I think of them often and to write to me if there is anything I can do."

Then he added "Here, I've brought some plums for you."

Bishan Singh took the gift from Fazal Din and handed it to the guard. "Where is Toba Tek Singh?" he asked.
"Where? Why, it is where it has always been."
"In India or Pakistan?î
"In IndiaÖno, in Pakistan."

Without saying another word, Bishan Singh walked away, muttering "*Uper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhyana the mung the dal of the Pakistan and India dur fittey moun.*"

At long last the arrangements for the exchange were complete. The lists of lunatics who were to be sent over from either side were exchanged and the date fixed.

On a cold winter evening truckloads of Hindu and Sikh lunatics from the Lahore asylum were moved out to the Indian border under police escort. Senior officials went with them to ensure a smooth exchange. The two sides met at the Wagah border check-post, signed documents and the transfer got underway.

Getting the lunatics out of the trucks and handing them over to the opposite side proved to be a tough job. Some refused to get down from the trucks. Those who could be persuaded to do so began to run in all directions. Some were stark naked. As soon as they were dressed they tore off their clothes again. They swore, they sang, they fought with each other. Others wept. Female lunatics, who were also being exchanged, were even noisier. It was pure bedlam. Their teeth chattered in the bitter cold.

Most of the inmates appeared to be dead set against the entire operation. They simply could not understand why they were being forcibly removed to a strange place. Slogans of '*Pakistan Zindabad*' and '*Pakistan Murdabad*' were raised, and only timely intervention prevented serious clashes.

When Bishan Singh's turn came to give his personal details to be recorded in the register, he asked the official "Where's Toba Tek Singh? In India or Pakistan?"

The officer laughed loudly, "In Pakistan, of course."

Hearing that Bishan Singh turned and ran back to join his companions. The Pakistani guards caught hold of him and tried to push him across the line to India. Bishan Singh wouldn't move. "This is Toba Tek Singh," he announced. "*Uper the gur gur the annexe the be dyhana mung the dal of Toba Tek Singh and Pakistan.*"

It was explained to him over and over again that Toba Tek Singh was in India, or very soon would be, but all this persuasion had no effect.

They even tried to drag him to the other side, but it was no use. There he stood on his swollen legs as if no power on earth could dislodge him. Soon, since he was a harmless old man, the officials left him alone for the time being and proceeded with the rest of the exchange.

Just before sunrise, Bishan Singh let out a horrible scream. As everybody rushed towards him, the man who had stood erect on his legs for fifteen years, now pitched face-forward on to the ground. On one side, behind barbed wire, stood together the lunatics of India and on the other side, behind more barbed wire, stood the lunatics of Pakistan. In between, on a bit of earth which had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh.

3. Marriage Is a Private Affair

Chinua Achebe

“Have you written to your dad yet?” asked Nene1 one afternoon as she sat with Nnaemeka in her room at 16 Kasanga Street, Lagos.

“ No. I’ve been thinking about it. I think it’s better to tell him when I get home on leave!”

“But why? Your leave is such a long way off yet—six whole weeks. He should be let into our happiness now.”

Nnaemeka was silent for a while, and then began very slowly as if he groped for his words: “I wish I were sure it would be happiness to him.”

“Of course it must,” replied Nene, a little surprised. “Why shouldn’t it?”

“You have lived in Lagos all your life, and you know very little about people in remote parts of the country.”

“That’s what you always say. But I don’t believe anybody will be so unlike other people that they will be unhappy when their sons are engaged to marry.”

“Yes. They are most unhappy if the engagement is not arranged by them. In our case it’s worse—you are not even an Ibo.”

This was said so seriously and so bluntly that Nene could not find speech immediately. In the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the city it had always seemed to her something of a joke that a person’s tribe could determine whom he married.

At last she said, “You don’t really mean that he will object to your marrying me simply on that account? I had always thought you Ibos were kindly disposed to other people.”

“So we are. But when it comes to marriage, well, it’s not quite so simple. And this,” he added, “is not peculiar to the Ibos. If your father were alive and lived in the heart of Ibibio-land he would be exactly like my father.”

“I don’t know. But anyway, as your father is so fond of you, I’m sure he will forgive you soon enough. Come on then, be a good boy and send him a nice lovely letter . . .”

“It would not be wise to break the news to him by writing. A letter will bring it upon him with a shock. I’m quite sure about that.”

“All right, honey, suit yourself. You know your father.”

As Nnaemeka walked home that evening he turned over in his mind different ways of overcoming his father’s opposition, especially now that he had gone and found a girl for him. He had thought of showing his letter to Nene but decided on second thoughts not to, at least for the moment. He read it again when he got home and couldn’t help smiling to himself. He remembered Ugoye quite well, an Amazon of a

girl who used to beat up all the boys, himself included, on the way to the stream, a complete dunce at school.

I have found a girl who will suit you admirably—Ugoye Nweke, the eldest daughter of our neighbor, Jacob Nweke. She has a proper Christian upbringing. When she stopped schooling some years ago her father (a man of sound judgment) sent her to live in the house of a pastor where she has received all the training a wife could need. Her Sunday school teacher has told me that she reads her Bible very fluently. I hope we shall begin negotiations when you come home in December.

On the second evening of his return from Lagos, Nnaemeka sat with his father under a cassia
tree. This was the old man's retreat where he went to read his Bible when the parching December sun had set and a fresh, reviving wind blew on the leaves.

"Father," began Nnaemeka suddenly, "I have come to ask for
forgiveness." "Forgiveness? For what, my son?" he asked in
amazement.
"It's about this marriage
question." "Which
marriage question?"
"I can't—we must—I mean it is impossible for me to marry Nweke's daughter."
"Impossible? Why?" asked his father.
"I don't love her."

"Nobody said you did. Why should you?"
he asked. "Marriage today is different . . ."
"Look here, my son," interrupted his father, "nothing is different. What one looks for in a wife are a good character and a Christian background."

Nnaemeka saw there was no hope along the present line of argument.

"Moreover," he said, "I am engaged to marry another girl who has all of Ugoye's good qualities, and who . . ."

His father did not believe his ears. "What did you say?" he asked slowly and disconcertingly. "She is a good Christian," his son went on, "and a teacher in a girls' school in Lagos."

“Teacher, did you say? If you consider that a qualification for a good wife I should like to point out to you, Emeka, that no Christian woman should teach. St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians says that women should keep silence.” He rose slowly from his seat and paced forward and backward. This was his pet subject, and he condemned vehemently those church leaders who encouraged women to teach in their schools. After he had spent his emotion on a long homily he at last came back to his son’s engagement, in a seemingly milder tone.

“Whose daughter is she,
anyway?” “She is Nene
Atang.”
“What!” All the mildness was gone again. “Did you say Neneataga, what does that mean?”

“Nene Atang from Calabar. She is the only girl I can marry.” This was a very rash reply and Nnaemeka expected the storm to burst. But it did not. His father merely walked away into his room. This was most unexpected and perplexed Nnaemeka. His father’s silence was infinitely more menacing than a flood of threatening speech. That night the old man did not eat.

When he sent for Nnaemeka a day later he applied all possible ways of dissuasion. But the young man’s heart was hardened, and his father eventually gave him up as lost.

“I owe it to you, my son, as a duty to show you what is right and what is wrong. Whoever put
this idea into your head might as well have cut your throat. It is Satan’s work.” He waved his son away.

“You will change your mind, Father, when you know Nene.”

“I shall never see her,” was the reply. From that night the father scarcely spoke to his son. He did not, however, cease hoping that he would realize how serious was the danger he was heading for. Day and night he put him in his prayers.

Nnaemeka, for his own part, was very deeply affected by his father’s grief. But he kept hoping that it would pass away. If it had occurred to him that never in the history of his people had a man married a woman who spoke a different tongue, he might have been less optimistic. “It has never been heard,” was the verdict of an old man speaking a few weeks later. In that short sentence he spoke for all of his

people. This man had come with others to commiserate with Okeke when news went round about his son's behavior. By that time the son had gone back to Lagos.

"It has never been heard," said the old man again with a sad shake of his head.

"What did Our Lord say?" asked another gentleman. "Sons shall rise against their Fathers; it is there in the Holy Book."

"It is the beginning of the end," said another.

The discussion thus tending to become theological, Madubogwu, a highly practical man, brought it down once more to the ordinary level.

"Have you thought of consulting a native doctor about your son?" he asked Nnaemeka's father. "He isn't sick," was the reply.
"What is he then? The boy's mind is diseased and only a good herbalist can bring him back to his right senses. The medicine he requires is *Amalile,* the same that women apply with success to recapture their husbands' straying affection."

"Madubogwu is right," said another gentleman. "This thing calls for medicine."

"I shall not call in a native doctor." Nnaemeka's father was known to be obstinately ahead of his more superstitious neighbors in these matters. "I will not be another Mrs. Ochuba. If my son wants to kill himself let him do it with his own hands. It is not for me to help him."

"But it was her fault," said Madubogwu. "She ought to have gone to an honest herbalist. She was a clever woman, nevertheless."

"She was a wicked murderess," said Jonathan, who rarely argued with his neighbors because, he often said, they were incapable of reasoning. "The medicine was prepared for her husband, it was his name they called in its preparation, and I am sure it would have been perfectly beneficial to him. It was wicked to put it into the herbalist's food, and say you were only trying it out."

Six months later, Nnaemeka was showing his young wife a short letter from his father:

It amazes me that you could be so unfeeling as to send me your wedding picture. I would have sent it back. But on further thought I decided just to cut off your

wife and send it back to you because I have nothing to do with her. How I wish that I had nothing to do with you either.

When Nene read through this letter and looked at the mutilated picture her eyes filled with tears, and she began to sob.

"Don't cry, my darling," said her husband. "He is essentially good-natured and will one day look more kindly on our marriage."

But years passed and that one day did not come.

For eight years, Okeke would have nothing to do with his son, Nnaemeka. Only three times (when Nnaemeka asked to come home and spend his leave) did he write to him.

"I can't have you in my house," he replied on one occasion. "It can be of no interest to me where or how you spend your leave—or your life, for that matter."

The prejudice against Nnaemeka's marriage was not confined to his little village. In Lagos, especially among his people who worked there, it showed itself in a different way. Their women, when they met at their village meeting, were not hostile to Nene. Rather, they paid her such excessive deference as to make her feel she was not one of them. But as time went on, Nene gradually broke through some of this prejudice and even began to make friends among them.

Slowly and grudgingly they began to admit that she kept her home much better than most of them.

The story eventually got to the little village in the heart of the Ibo country that Nnaemeka and his young wife were a most happy couple. But his father was one of the few people in the village who knew nothing about this. He always displayed so much temper whenever his son's name was mentioned that everyone avoided it in his presence. By a tremendous effort of will he had succeeded in pushing his son to the back of his mind. The strain had nearly killed him but he had persevered, and won.

Then one day he received a letter from Nene, and in spite of himself he began to glance through it perfunctorily until all of a sudden the expression on his face changed and he began to read more carefully.

. . . Our two sons, from the day they learnt that they have a grandfather, have insisted on being taken to him. I find it impossible to tell them that you will not see them. I implore you to allow Nnaemeka to bring them home for a short time during his leave next month. I shall remain here in Lagos . . .

The old man at once felt the resolution he had built up over so many years falling in. He was telling himself that he must not give in. He tried to steel his heart against all emotional appeals. It was a reenactment of that other struggle. He leaned against a window and looked out. The sky was overcast with heavy black clouds and a high wind began to blow, filling the air with dust and dry leaves. It was one of those rare occasions when even Nature takes a hand in a human fight. Very soon it began to rain, the first rain in the year. It came down in large sharp drops and was accompanied by the lightning and thunder which mark a change of season. Okeke was trying hard not to think of his two grandsons. But he knew he was now fighting a losing battle. He tried to hum a favorite hymn but the pattering of large raindrops on the roof broke up the tune. His mind immediately returned to the children. How could he shut his door against them? By a curious mental process he imagined them standing, sad and forsaken, under the harsh angry weather—shut out from his house.

That night he hardly slept, from remorse—and a vague fear that he might die without making it up to them.

Section C

DRAMA (Notes)

Frogs by Aristophanes

Introduction

"The Frogs" (Gr: "Batrachoi") is a comedy by the ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes. It won first prize at the Lenaia dramatic festival in 405 BCE, and was so successful that it was staged a second time later that same year at the Dionysia

festival. It tells the story of the god Dionysus (also known to the Greeks as Bacchus) who, despairing of the current state of Athens' tragedians, travels to Hades with his slave Xanthias to bring Euripides back from the dead.

Dramatis Personae

XANTHIAS, servant of Dionysus

DIONYSUS

HERACLES

A CORPSE

CHARON

AEACUS

A MAID SERVANT OF PERSEPHONE

HOSTESS, keeper of cook-shop

PLATHANE, her partner

EURIPIDES

AESCHYLUS

PLUTO

CHORUS OF FROGS

CHORUS OF BLESSED MYSTICS

Synopsis – Aristophanes Frogs Summary

The play opens as Dionysus and Xanthias (technically his slave, but clearly smarter, stronger, more rational, more prudent, and braver than Dionysus) argue over what kind of complaints Xanthias can use to open the play comically.

Depressed by the state of contemporary Athenian tragedy, Dionysus plans to travel to Hades to bring the great tragedic dramatist Euripides back from the dead. Dressed in a Heracles-style lion-hide and carrying a Heracles-style club, he goes to consult with his half-brother Heracles himself (who had visited Hades when he went to retrieve Cerberus) as to the best way to get there. Bemused at the spectacle of the effeminate Dionysus, Heracles can only suggest the options of hanging himself, drinking poison or jumping off a tower. In the end, Dionysus opts for the longer journey across a lake, the same route Heracles himself once took.

They arrive at the Acheron and the ferryman Charon ferries Dionysus across, although Dionysus is obliged to help with the rowing (Xanthias, being a slave, has to walk around). On the crossing, a Chorus of croaking frogs (the frogs of the play's title) joins them, and Dionysus chants along with them. He meets up with Xanthias again at the far shore, and almost immediately they are confronted by Aeacus, one of the judges of the dead, who is still angry over Heracles‘ theft of Cerberus. Mistaking Dionysus for Heracles due to his attire, Aeacus threatens to unleash several monsters on him in revenge, and the cowardly Dionysus quickly trades clothes with Xanthias.

A beautiful maid of Persephone then arrives, happy to see Heracles (actually Xanthius), and she invites him to a feast with virgin dancing girls, in which Xanthias

is more than happy to oblige. Dionysus, though, now wants to trade back the clothes, but as soon as he changes back into the Heracles lion-skin, he encounters more people angry at Heracles, and quickly forces Xanthias to trade a third time. When Aeacus returns once more, Xanthias suggests that he torture Dionysus to obtain the truth, suggesting several brutal options. The terrified Dionysus immediately reveals the truth that he is a god, and is allowed to proceed after a good whipping.

When Dionysus finally finds Euripides (who has only just recently died), he is challenging the great Aeschylus to the seat of "Best Tragic Poet" at the dinner table of Hades, and Dionysus is appointed to judge a contest between them. The two playwrights take turns quoting verses from their plays and making fun of the other. Euripides argues the characters in his plays are better because they are more true to life and logical, whereas Aeschylus believes his idealized characters are better as they are heroic and models for virtue. Aeschylus shows that Euripides ' verse is predictable and formulaic, while Euripides counters by setting Aeschylus' iambic tetrameter lyric verse to flute music.

Finally, in an attempt to end the stalemated debate, a balance is brought in and the two tragedians are told to put a few of their weightiest lines onto it, to see in whose favour the balance will tip. Aeschylus easily wins, but Dionysus is still unable to decide whom he will revive.

He finally decides to take the poet who gives the best advice about how to save the city of Athens. Euripides gives cleverly worded but essentially meaningless answers while Aeschylus provides more practical advice, and Dionysus decides to take Aeschylus back instead of Euripides . Before leaving, Aeschylus proclaims that the recently deceased Sophocles should have his chair at the dinner table while he is gone, not Euripides .

Analysis

The underlying theme of "The Frogs" is essentially "old ways good, new ways bad", and that Athens should turn back to men of known integrity who were brought up in the style of noble and wealthy families, a common refrain in Aristophanes' plays.

In terms of politics, "The Frogs" is not usually considered one of Aristophanes' "peace plays" (several of his earlier plays call for an end to the Peloponnesian War, almost at any cost), and indeed the advice of Aeschylus' character towards the end of the play lays out a plan to win and not a proposition of capitulation. The parabasis to the play also advises returning the rights of citizenship back to those who had participated in the oligarchic revolution in 411 BCE, arguing they were misled by Phrynichos' tricks (Phrynichos was a leader of the oligarchic revolution, assassinated to general satisfaction in 411 BCE), an idea which was actually later put into effect by

the Athenian government. Certain passages in the play also seem to stir memories of the returned Athenian general Alcibiades after his earlier defection.

However, despite Aristophanes‘ concerns for the delicate state of Athenian politics at that time (which do surface from time to time), the play is not strongly political in nature, and its main theme is essentially literary, namely the poor state of contemporary tragedic drama in Athens.

Aristophanes began composing “The Frogs” not long after Euripides ‘ death, around 406 BCE, at which time Sophocles was still alive, which is probably the main reason why Sophocles was not involved in the competition of poets which comprises the agon or main debate of the play. As it happens, however, Sophocles also died during that year, and that may have forced Aristophanes to revise and adjust some details of the play (which was probably already in the late stages of development), and this may well account for the mention of Sophocles late in the surviving version of the work.

Aristophanes does not scruple to attack and mock Dionysus, the guardian god of his own art and in honour of whom the play itself was exhibited, secure in the belief that the gods understood fun as well, if not better, than men. Thus, Dionysus is portrayed as a cowardly, effeminate dilettante, farcically dressed up in a hero’s lion-skin and club, and reduced to rowing himself over the lake to Hades. His half-brother, the hero Heracles, is likewise treated somewhat irreverently, depicted as a boorish brute. Xanthias, Dionysus‘ slave, is depicted as smarter and more reasonable than either of them.

The Frogs Summary

The Frogs is a comedy by the Ancient Greek writer Aristophanes. It was first performed at the Athenian festival Lenaia—one of the Festivals of Dionysus—in 405, where it won first place. It tells the story of the god Dionysus, who believes that Athens’ theater scene is in disrepair and travels to the underworld of Hades to bring back the recently deceased playwright Euripides. Accompanied by his slave Xanthias, who frequently rescues the buffoonish god from his own errors, the play is a satire of both the Athens theater scene and the gods themselves. Exploring themes of identity, ambition, tradition, and the value of poetry, The Frogs is one of the most influential Ancient Greek comedies and has been referenced by modern authors including Aldous Huxley and musical theater writers Gilbert and Sullivan. It was adapted into a musical by Stephen Sondheim and Burt Shevelove, putting playwrights George Bernard Shaw and William Shakespeare into the roles originally assigned to Ancient Greek playwrights.

The Frogs begins as Dionysus decides to travel to Hades to retrieve the late Euripides and Aeschylus, and Sophocles, who died after the play was written but was inserted in with references. He seeks the advice of his half-brother Heracles, who went to Hades to claim the hellhound Cerberus. Dionysus shows up dressed as Heracles in a lion-hide, and this makes Heracles laugh. When Dionysus asks for the quickest way to get to Hades, Heracles advises him to commit suicide, but Dionysus decides to take the longer path, traveling to the underworld via Lake Acheron. There, he meets the ferryman Charon, who allows Dionysus in his boat. However, Xanthias, being a slave, is not allowed to ride in the boat and must help push it. As they travel, the play begins its first choral interlude, sung by the titular chorus of frogs, as they annoy Dionysus with their song and bait him into a debate. On the shore, Dionysus reunites with Xanthias, who teases his cowardly boss by making him think he sees the monster Empusa, a feared shapeshifter. This is when a second choir of dead mystics appear and chronicle their journey as they descend into the underworld.

They next encounter the dead King Aeacus, who mistakes Dionysus for Heracles due to his garb and is enraged over Heracles' theft of Cerebus. He threatens to unleash an army of monsters on Dionysus, and Dionysus trades clothes with Xanthias to fool him. Xanthias is then mistaken for Heracles when a maid appears and wants to honor him with a banquet. Sure enough, Dionysus insists they trade back—and promptly meets more people angry at Heracles. They switch back every time. Aeacus confronts who he thinks is Heracles, but is actually Xanthias, and Xanthias offers up Dionysus (his "slave") as a whipping boy. Dionysus reveals that he's a diety, and Aeacus whips them both until they reveal the truth. They are then brought to the site of the conflict, where the recently deceased Euripides is challenging Aeschylus for the title of "Best Tragic Poet" at the dinner table of Pluto, the lord of the underworld. The winner will be brought back to life. Dionysus is appointed as judge, as the two playwrights take turns quoting their own plays and mocking their rival. Euripides argues his plays are better because they're more logical and true to life, while Aeschylus argues his idealized characters serve as models of heroic virtue. They also mock each others' poetic style, quoting their best verses at each other.

During the contest, Dionysus comes into his own and redeems himself from his earlier role as an incompetent buffoon. As the god of poetry, he is able to fairly judge the contestants' squabbles, keep them focused on the contest, and show a deep understanding of Greek drama. Finally, to end the endless duel, a scale is brought in, and both playwrights are told to speak a few lines into it. Whoever's lines the

enchanted scale determine have more “weight” will tip the balance and win the contest. Euripides produces verses that mention the famous ship Argo, persuasion, and a mace, while Aeschylus speaks verses involving the river Spercheios, death, and a terrible accident involving two crashed chariots. The latter’s verses are deemed to be “heavier” and Aeschylus wins, but Dionysus is unconvinced. He’s not sure who to revive, and decides he will award victory to the poet who gives the best advice about how to save Athens. Euripides’ answers are cleverly worded but hollow, while Aeschylus provides practical advice. Dionysus chooses Aeschylus, and Pluto allows them to leave the afterlife so the playwright can give Athens the help it needs. As they have a farewell round of drinks, Aeschylus ends the play by decreeing that Sophocles should get his chair while he’s gone.

Aristophanes was a comic playwright of Ancient Athens and is considered the father of ancient comedy. Eleven of his forty plays are still intact and can be read today. They serve as the only remaining example of Old Comedy. Many of his plays are still performed and adapted today, and several have inspired novels, music, and radio plays in recent years.

(Another version)

Aristophanes' Frogs Study Guide

Aristophanes, the great comic dramatist of Athens, wrote the Frogs for performance at the Lenaia in late February 405 BC, where it won first prize. The play was written against the backdrop of the final stages of the Peloponnesian War (a long and destructive war between Athens and Sparta). The great tragic playwrights Sophocles and Euripides had died just just a few months earlier; Athens was under blockade by Sparta and her allies, and just six months after the production of Frogs the city was defeated in a major sea battle, and surrendered to Sparta.

Aristophanes' Frogs: the end of an era, by Dr Peter Agócs

First performed at the Athenians' winter festival for Dionysus in 405 BC, the year before democratic Athens' final defeat and collapse in the Peloponnesian War, Frogs is perhaps the most astonishing work of a great comic poet and man of the theatre. Most astonishing and relevant for us, because of its peculiar marriage of the traditional with the modern. It's at once about Dionysus and his festival (reflecting the ideological, socially improving function of tragic performance in Athenian culture from the late sixth century onward) and about reading and what would come, in later

times, to be called criticism - a play that pits poet against poet (Aeschylus, the master of the old tradition of the generation of Marathon; Euripides, the poet of rhetoric, lightness, cleverness and sophistry) in a clash of wits, literary styles and aesthetic standards, foregrounding questions of critical judgement and taste that still matter to us today.

In a very real sense, it's the first surviving (if parodic) document of explicit ancient Greek theorising about literature. It is a play, intended for performance, which enacts a newly literate society's fascination with texts, canons, education and authorship: themes which still ground raging polemic in our own contemporary debates about criticism and cultural politics. Words and lines are pulled apart and refuted, or literally weighed and measured, in an attempt to find a faultless standard of critical judgement; while tragedy's moral purpose is interrogated in a way that belies the cheerful surface vulgarity of Aristophanes' comic style. As the chorus says to the two protagonists of the poets' quarrel, 'lay out your arguments... and if you're afraid of any ignorance in the audience, don't wory about that, because that's no longer how things stand today. They're all experienced! Each has a book and knows the clever points; their natural skills are top-notch, indeed, they're razor-sharp' (1105-16). This is a play for an Athens that has learned to read and thereby lost its innocence regarding myth and the enchantment of language - a city in which even the traditions of dramatic performance itself can be taken apart for the delectation of an audience of all-knowing readers. In this Athens, judging poetry is one strand in a wider net of social, political and cultural judgement: your taste in music and drama betrays who you are as a person. As Richard Hunter has recently shown, this play shows us the complex skein of social and aesthetic issues in which tragedy, as an institution, and the act of judging tragedy, were implicated.

Like Odysseus in the epic which bears his name, or like Orpheus in search of Eurydice, Dionysus as the god of drama must go down to the Underworld, not to meet Tiresias and learn his future, but to meet the now-dead poets of the past. Among other things, Frogs is a love-letter to a poetic tradition that is reaching the end of its creative phase. Both Sophocles and Euripides died in the months preceding the performance. Early in the play (52-4), Dionysus tells Heracles that, reading Euripides' Andromache, he was suddenly seized by an almost erotic desire for the absent author; there is a sense in which Frogs is really about the ways we love, interpret and pass judgement on authorless texts as substitutes for the author's living voice. The underworld, as Aristophanes presents it, is recognisably the Hades of the mythological and religious traditions of Attica: we meet the familiar gods and demons (Charon on his boat; the

chorus of Eleusinian initiates). But it is also, with its innkeepers, lusty chambermaids and testy slaves, a place like the real world: the frog-chorus inhabits not only the river Styx, but the Lenaean marshes: an allusion to the festival at which the play was staged; Aeacus, the implacable mythological judge of dead souls, comes back as the doorman of a shabbily bourgeois Hell, and the poets fight out between themselves the cultural debates raging about poetry and education in the intellectual life of the democratic city. Should drama be about life, or should it idealise reality? What do poets actually teach? Should the language tragic poets use be grand or plain? If we get the answers right, dramatic poetry, it seems, can save the city. Drama and civic life are inextricably connected. The very fact that you could write a comedy about tragedy marks the place that drama, as an institution, occupied in Athenian life. In fact, it's also possible to read Frogs as a critique, by the greatest master of the genre, of the expressive possiblities of comedy.

In the end, Dionysus must decide which of the two warring poets he will take back with him. In the end, the criteria on which he bases his Solomonic judgement (he chooses Aeschylus) are hardly sound. They seem in no way to have the solidity and coherence we should expect from a critic judging poetry. This ambiguity is a key element in the Frogs' illusionless but not disillusioned engagement with criticism and poetry. It's as if, after we've tried all possible 'scientific' methods, examined and weighed every word and taken every prologue and choral strophe to bits, the only proper criterion of judgement that remains is what brings us pleasure. At this point, Aristophanes seems to wink across time at Roland Barthes. Aeschylus wins because he represents a nostalgic vision, un-contaminated by the small-mindedness of daily life, by corrupt and incompetent leadership, and by the losses of war, of a bygone age of Athenian heroism. His return to the upper world not as a book, but in the living flesh, serves as a utopian projection, entirely typical for Aristophanes, of Athens' vision of her own real self at a time when she was in danger of losing her soul. And indeed, a few months later, Lysander's Spartan navy defeated Athens' last fleet at Aegospotamoi: starvation, surrender and tyranny followed. But at the same time it's hard not to read Dionysus' decision as a natural, indeed necessary and inevitable failure of criticism to define what exactly is (or should be) canonical or Classical in poetry.

Study questions

1. What do you make of the portrayal of Dionysus in Frogs?
2. What does Frogs tell us about contemporary attitudes to orality and literacy?

3. What can Frogs tells us about contemporary attitudes to death and the afterlife?
4. Do we need to read the play against its historical background?
5. Does Frogs put forward any coherent vision (or ideal) about poetry?
6. What is the purpose of tragedy according to Aristophanes?

The Frogs Study Guide

Frogs, or *The Frogs*, is one of Aristophanes's greatest comedies and is justly celebrated for its wit and keen commentary on Athenian politics and society. It is the last surviving work of Old Comedy and is thus also notable for its heralding a passing era of literature. While it is a comedy, it is also a trenchant political satire and expresses Aristophanes's views on Athenian democracy, the value of poetry, and the need for a return of traditional values.

Frogs won first place at the Lenaea, an annual Athenian dramatic festival and competition honoring Dionysus, beating Phrynichus's *Muses* and Platon's *Cleophon*. Uncommon for its time, it was awarded a second performance the following week for the strength of its parabasis. According to the ancient *Life of Aristophanes*, the poet was officially commended and given a wreath of sacred olive for the lines about the disenfranchised. He may have changed a few of the lines for the restaging. Philonides, a frequent producer of Aristophanes' plays, produced the play.

A precedent for the play is Eupolis's *Demoi*, which also featured the resurrection of deceased figures such as Solon, Aristides, and Pericles. It was written in a time of turmoil, as Athens was still at war with Sparta. An oligarchic revolution was replaced with democracy in 411 BCE. Two other events bore significance to the play: Alcibiades, the famed military commander, was sentenced to die in 415 BCE but escaped to the Spartan side, was taken back to Athens, and finally exiled in 406 BCE; and the battle of Arginusae in 406 saw the Athenians defeating the Spartans but finding it impossible to retrieve their comrades on ships wrecked by bad weather, and condemning the military commanders as a group to death. The themes of the decline of Athens and the decline of tragedy as a great form of art are thus intertwined.

The scholar Charles Paul Segal notes that the structure of the play is unique because the first half is a journey archetype, and the second half consists of the contest motif. The nature of Dionysus's evolution from a crass, jesting figure to a weighty arbiter of taste and the fate of Athens has also garnered a great deal of attention.

Scholars do their best to imagine what the play would have looked like performed in its own time. There is speculation as to whether or not the audience would have heard

and seen the frogs, or merely heard them off-stage. Charon's boat may have been on wheels, and there may have been a real donkey or a "stick donkey," which would have added to the humorous aspect of Xanthias's complaints about the baggage.
Owing to its entrenched position in the Western canon, it is no wonder that *Frogs* has been referenced in literature, television, music, and other works of the theater. Most interestingly, the frogs' chant of "Brekekekéx-koáx-koáx" is part of Stanford University's rallying call.

The Frogs Summary

Frogs, or *The Frogs*, is one of Aristophanes's greatest comedies and is justly celebrated for its wit and keen commentary on Athenian politics and society. It is the last surviving work of Old Comedy and is thus also notable for heralding a passing era of literature. While it is a comedy, it is also a trenchant political satire and expresses Aristophanes's views on Athenian democracy, the value of poetry The play begins with Dionysus, dressed up as Heracles, and his servant Xanthias, riding a donkey, traveling to Heracles' house. Heracles is amused at Dionysus's costume. Dionysus asks him how they can get to the underworld to fetch the poet Euripides for Athens, and what sort of obstacles they might expect to encounter. Heracles provides them with information, and the travelers depart.

Dionysus is ferried across the lake by Charon, but Xanthias has to travel around because he is a slave. Along this journey, a chorus of frogs bursts out into song, annoying Dionysus. However, the god then joins in their boisterous song.
Dionysus and Xanthias join up on the other side of the lake, but before they can go very far they encounter the monster Empusa. Dionysus is extremely frightened and soils his clothing. The Chorus of Initiates, part of the Eleusinian Mysteries, enters and sings a song to Iacchus, Demeter, and her daughter Persephone.

Arriving at Pluto's house, Dionysus and Xanthias knock on the door. Thinking he is Heracles, the doorman, Aeacus, curses him. Dionysus tells Xanthias to wear his disguise, but asks for it back once a beautiful woman comes outside and invites "Heracles" to a banquet with other ladies. The innkeeper and Plathane come out and lambast the supposed Heracles as well, prompting Dionysus to once more give the costume back to Xanthias.

Aeacus returns and orders the seizure of Heracles for past his bad deeds. Xanthias-as-Heracles says Aeacus ought to torture his slave (Dionysus) to prove his own innocence. Eventually both claim to be gods, and Aeacus tortures both to see if this is

true. Both Xanthias and Dionysus feel pain but pretend not to, as gods normally are not supposed to feel bodily pain. Finally, Aeacus says he will see if Pluto and Persephone will vouch for their divinity.

Inside, Aeacus talks to Xanthias about how Aeschylus and Euripides are fighting over who is the most accomplished tragic poet. Aeschylus already possesses the chair but Euripides is challenging him for it. Pluto calls a contest and Dionysus is made the judge. Both poets criticize each other, and then pray to their respective gods. The competition begins.

In a series of contests, Aeschylus and Euripides discuss who is better at prologues, lyrics, and making their audience better citizens. Euripides claims to have slimmed tragedy down from its ponderousness and made it more accessible to the common person. He also says Aeschylus is verbose. Aeschylus, for his part, criticizes the meter of Euripides' work and claims that his verse is wanton.

Dionysus cannot seem to come to a conclusion, so he orders the two poets' verses to be weighed. Because he refers to lofty things such as death and rivers, Aeschylus wins the weighing.

Finally, the two poets are asked to comment on how the Athenians should deal with the statesman Alcibiades. Dionysus decides Aeschylus is the overall winner, and he, the poet, and Pluto return to Pluto's house for a banquet. Aeschylus tells Pluto to give his chair to Socrates once he departs for the upper world. The chorus praises Aeschylus and proclaims that it hopes he will assist Athens with sound advice.

The Frogs Character List

Dionysus
The god of both wine and ecstatic mystical religion, Dionysus is the protagonist of the play, first seeking to travel to Hades to bring back a poet of wise counsel to help Athens, and then judging the poetic contest between Euripides and Aeschylus. He is cocky but cowardly, self-seeking and crass.

Xanthias
The keen-witted and ambitious slave of Dionysus, Xanthias likes to complain about and compete with his master.

Heracles

The famous son of Zeus who completed the Twelve Labors. Heracles in this play provides Dionysus with advice on traveling to the underworld. Heracles's past deeds there are vilified by Aeacus and the innkeepers.

Charon
The ferryman on the river Styx; in the play he takes Dionysus across the lake to Hades.

Aeacus
The doorman of Pluto's house in Hades; he hates Heracles for stealing Cerberus and thus tries to torture Dionysus and Xanthias when they are disguised as Heracles.

Maid of Persephone
Thinking Heracles has arrived at Pluto's house, she invites him in for Persephone's meal and dancing girls.

Innkeeper
The woman who runs the inn in Hades; he dislikes Heracles for his behavior on his visit there.

Plathane
Another female innkeeper in Hades who dislikes Heracles for his bad behavior when he traveled there.

Slave of Pluto
Speaks with Xanthias about how he criticizes his master behind his back, and gives information about the upcoming contest between Aeschylus and Euripides.

Pluto
The god of the underworld and husband of Persephone, Pluto calls the contest between poets and allows the winner to return to Athens.

Euripides
The recently deceased poet whom Dionysus originally intends to bring back from the underworld. Euripides was a tragic poet who often wrote of the common people. Aeschylus criticizes him for wanton verse and witty but decadent intellectualism.

Aeschylus
The renowned tragic poet who engages in a contest with Euripides to see who holds the chair of honor next to Pluto. While Euripides mocks him as stentorian and

verbose, Dionysus finds his verse more traditional, sagacious, and necessary to help Athens in their time of need, and thus brings him back to the world above.

Chorus of Frogs
Sings for Dionysus while he takes Charon's boat across the Styx, jesting and teasing with their rambunctious croaking and singing.

Chorus of Initiates
Part of the Eleusinian Mysteries, the Initiates help Dionysus and Xanthias on their path and also sing of the rites and members of the Mysteries, the glories of Demeter and Iacchus; they also poke fun at notable politicians and poets.

Persephone
The daughter of Demeter and the wife of Pluto.

The Frogs : Themes

The value of poetry
Poetry does not exist simply to entertain; rather, according to Aristophanes, it can impart a moral message and instruct its listeners to be better citizens and human beings. The works of the great tragic poets live on (dramatized in the play by Aeschylus being brought back to life) and can shape the characters of Athenians. In their contest, Euripides and Aeschylus boast of their own verse and what it can do: Euripides claims he teaches people to think critically and rationally, and Aeschylus taught them to be bold and yearn to defeat their enemies. Furthermore, as Aeschylus narrates, the noble poets "revealed mystic rites to us", "gave us oracles and cures for diseases" and "good instruction / in tactics, virtues, and weaponry of men" (80). Poetry thus offers life lessons, and is not merely an art form.

The decline of Athens

Aristophanes wrote *Frogs* during a period of Athens's decline, and his play reflects such tensions. Athens was in the midst of the Peleponnesian War with Sparta, and faced a myriad of troubles with politicians and demagogues. The democracy faced internal and external troubles, and *Frogs* asserts Aristophanes's view that one of the ways to save it was to bring the poet Euripides (later Aeschylus) back from Hades to counsel the Athenians. Throughout the text Aristophanes attacks those who seek to harm Athens, those who put the wrong people in charge, those who are self-interested, and those who do not help morale. His anxiety for his city-state is apparent even amidst his keen lampooning of officials.

Identity

Identity is a major concern of the first part of the play, with a focus on costumes, disguise, misidentification, and concomitant confusion. It is used for humorous purposes and also offers insights into character and the play itself. Dionysus travels in the guise of Heracles, allowing him to ignore any associations with himself and to hopefully attain the same success as Heracles in his underworld tasks. He is keen to slough off the costume, though, and give it to Xanthias when it serves him. Dionysus's identity would have been quite obvious to contemporary viewers, but his attempt to don different disguises and flit between such disguises and his own identity serves to further the assertion that Dionysus has not yet come into his own in the first part of the play, and is on a journey to attain real authority. Aristophanes's focus on identity also allows the audience to grasp the nature of theater itself, as it is self-reflecting device.

Ambition

Several of the prominent figures in the play display a heightened sense of ambition. Dionysus and Xanthias butt heads as each tries to assert their dominance: Xanthias is trying to resist insubordination by his master, and Dionysus is trying to keep his slave in his place. The balance of power shifts frequently, destabilizing their identities. Aeschlyus and Euripides also seek to exercise their ambitions to be considered the foremost tragic poet, and engage in a lengthy and vitriolic contest. Their literary and political perspectives are put to the mettle, and the result of their clashing ambitions is a clear message regarding what Athens needs to regain its former glory: Aeschylus and his wise counsel. Ambition is thus not always negative, and can be illuminating.

Tradition and morality

While Dionysus originally intended to bring Euripides back with him from the underworld, he realizes that it would be far better for the city of Athens to have Aeschylus, whose works embody tradition and morality. The play espouses the idea that, while Euripides's works might be amusing or technically accomplished or clever, they will not suffice to retain order, good behavior, and procure stability in the demos. Aeschylus, on the other hand, offers intelligence and wisdom, and, as the Chorus says, can "grant fine idea that will bring fine blessings" (107). It is part of Dionysus's

journey (both literal and intellectual) that he realizes that tradition and morality are virtues, particularly in a time of unrest.

Dionysus' evolution

Dionysus, unsurprisingly as the god of wine and mystical ecstasy, is a wild, energetic, and pleasure-seeking character. He is also crass, boastful, self-indulgent, and cowardly. Although he is wise enough to venture down into Hades for a poet, he does not yet know whom he needs. Along his journey he reveals his flaws and limitations, and is tested. He is chosen to judge the poets' contest and is thus given his own test: can he wisely arbitrate between Euripides and Aeschylus, and choose the one whose verse will help Athens out the most? Thankfully for Athens, Dionysus evolves and matures throughout this contest as he is forced to think deeply about Athens's needs. He chooses the poet that will be best for Athens, thus indicating that while he will no doubt always be a little uncouth and fanciful, he can also be perspicacious and wise.

The value of comedy

Aristophanes was a paragon of Old Comedic literature, keen-witted, clever, insightful, and masterful in his construction of humorous themes. In *Frogs* he makes a case for bringing back a great tragic poet to assist Athens, but, significantly, he does so through the lens of comedy. In this crass, sometimes silly, play, weighty themes are dealt with in a very effective manner. Aristophanes makes the case that comedy can also be a vehicle for truth and moral messages, that is does not have to simply be lighthearted entertainment.

The Frogs Quotes and Analysis

I need a talented poet, / 'for some are gone, and those that live are bad.'

Dionysus, 27

In this statement Dionysus encapsulates one of the major archetypes of the text -- the journey -- and one of its major themes -- Athens's need for a real poet to help them regain their former glory and power. Dionysus believes that a poet of Euripides's stature (he, of course, changes to Aeschylus, but the idea is the same) will help Athens, but that he must descend into Hades to find such a poet since everyone living today is, in Dionysus's damning words, "cast-offs and merely empty chatter, / choirs of swallows, wreckers of their art, / who maybe get a chorus and are soon forgotten, / after having a single piss upon Tragedy" (28). This is the bold and provocative Aristophanes speaking through his protagonist, identifying his peers as insipid and fame-hungry, aware that there are no "potent" poets left whose verse can inspire and

instruct. The overall point of *Frogs* is that Aeschylus's words should be turned to in this time of need, as they offer wise counsel.

An ancient mariner will ferry you across / in a skiff no bigger than this, *for a fare of two obols.*

Heracles, 31

In Dionysus's journey, he has to cross over from one realm to the next, where he will encounter numerous obstacles and creatures both helpful and harmful. His passage in the rowboat with Charon, and his paying his fee, is his entry into the liminal space of the river Styx that takes him to Hades. Charon is a figure commonly known to students of Greek mythology, especially those who know of Heracles's journeys. Charon's job, according to the myths, was to ferry newly deceased souls across Styx and Acheron to Hades. He is often depicted as an old man, usually haggard, brusque and irritable in demeanor. His name means "of keen gaze," which is possibly a synonym for death. *Frogs* is filled with allusions to Greek mythology and the writing of the Greek comedians and tragedians; while it might take a modern reader a great deal of sifting through footnotes to illuminate all of the references, the contemporary viewer of the play would be conversant in all of the allusions.

Exalted Iacchus, inventor of most enjoyable / festive song, come and march along with us / to the goddess...

Chorus, 47

This quote is found in the part of the text that contains the Eleusinan Mysteries (see Additional Content). Here the chorus moves in their procession, carrying out their sacred rites and worshipping the goddess Demeter. They also evoke Iacchus, which is another name for Dionysus, and ask him to come with them to the goddess. In some Greek mythology, Dionysus was the son of Zeus and Demeter. He was commonly seen as the torchbearer in the procession from Eleusis. While this association was well known, in *Frogs* Dionysus's summoning by the Chorus of Initiates has almost a temptation-like quality to it. He needs to proceed along his way to procure Aeschylus, not dally in the fields with the revelers. He is attracted by their dance but continues to Pluto's door. This encounter between hero-journeyman and ethereal, mystical creatures of another world is a common motif in the journey archetype.

You're the very worst coward on heaven and earth!

Xanthias, 51

Dionysus is, without a doubt, a prideful, self-confident, and arrogant figure. He is a god, of course, but possesses all of the trappings of a self-centered human being

afflicted with hubris and shortsightedness. He does anything that will bring him pleasure and avoids anything that is harmful, difficult, or dull. As with any hero (if one might call Dionysus that), he does indeed possess a large flaw: his cowardice. Xanthias comes right out here and says it, identifying his master's shortcoming for the audience. This comes after a particularly crass and humorous instance where Dionysus shits himself due to his fear of the Empusa. Dionysus has always been far from being a noble protagonist, but this is his nadir. It will take his arbitration in the contest between poets and his eventual wise choice to redeem him from his weak, cowardly nature.

And I'll make you a gentlemanly offer: / take my slave here and torture him, and if you catch me / in any wrongdoing, then take me and put me to death.

Xanthias, 58

This is a passage that might seem curious to modern readers, but it was a reality of ancient Greek life that would not have seemed strange at all to the audience of *Frogs*. Under Athenian law, slaves could not be witnesses in the courts unless the owner gave consent and the testimony was obtained under duress. The owner and the adversary would have previously agreed upon the conditions. The courts were not often apt to accept such offers by an owner and challenges by an adversary. And, as may be expected, citizens could not be tortured but as slaves were not citizens, they were fair game. What makes this scene amusing is the identity game played between Dionysus and Xanthias, and the subsequent torture in all of its buffoonery. Torture was rendered acceptable through the guise of comedy.

First, we think that all / the citizens should be made equal, and their fears removed...Next I say that no one in the city should be disenfranchised.

Chorus Leader, 62

In 'parabasis', the Chorus steps away from the main action of the play and offers commentary on the political situation in Athens. It is very clear about what it wants to happen. In the first point, they say that all citizens should be equal and any fears of being prosecuted for any offenses they committed under the oligarchy of 411 should be removed (even though there was an amnesty in 410). It also does not want to see anyone lose their voice in the democracy, as well as a few other concerns. The parabasis is an important component of the text, for it articulates the concerns Aristophanes is dealing with thematically. Athens has and is experiencing a great deal of instability, politically and in terms of foreign policy. There are internal and external threats to the democracy, that sacred institution. It is unequivocally important that Athenian citizens do not see any erosion of their rights. Through poetry, Aristophanes is making a potent political statement.

Why, it's like nirvana / whenever I curse my master behind his back!

Slave to Pluto, 65

In this amusing interlude, Xanthias speaks with the slave of Pluto. The slave, gregarious and voluble, speaks of all the ways he tries to subvert his master's authority. He talks behind his back, mutters when he is beaten, meddles in his master's affairs, and eavesdrops and blabs about his findings to outsiders. The audience of *Frogs* would have recognized these acts of subversion problematic, but they certainly rang true. Xanthias spends his time acting in a similar fashion, revealing Aristophanes's keen understanding of the tense dynamic between masters and servants. Slavery was seen as natural in ancient Greece, and there were many levels of enslavement, but that did not preclude animosity or hostility on the part of both master and slave. Xanthias is a keen voice for the issues inherent in this practice.

But the poet has a special duty to conceal / what's wicked, / not to stage it or teach it.

Aeschylus, 82

Aeschylus and Euripides spend time discussing the value of poetry, and both have good points. Euripides explains that his verse helped people think rationally and organize their houses better, and that poetry "[turns] people into better / members of their communities" (79). Aeschylus muses on all the noble poets' ideas and contributions, especially those found in his own work. He says that a poet should make sure that what they are writing has a benefit to the people listening to it, for poetry is profoundly powerful and impactful, not merely entertainment. What is deleterious about Euripides's work is that he "taught people to chitchat and gab" (83) and featured women behaving badly. By contrast, Aeschylus's work is dignified and didactic, and that is why he is ultimately the winner of the contest.

I've had enough too; what I'd like to do is take him to the scales, / which is the only true test of our poetry; / the weight of our utterances will be the decisive proof.

Aeschylus, 97

Dionysus cannot seem to choose whose verses are better, so the poets turn to a weighing. This scene was no doubt modeled on Aeschylus's play, *Weighing of Souls,* where Zeus weighed the souls of Achilles and Memnon. This *pyschostasia* is also found in Homer and Egyptian mythology. Indeed, Aeschylus and Euripides both have their fates in the balance -who will win the Chair of Tragedy, and who will accompany Dionysus back to the living world? Aeschylus wins this contest because he speaks of weightier things, such as the river, Death, chariots, and corpses, while

Euripides spoke of lighter topics. This is a commentary on the type of poetry that Aristophanes believed was necessary to help Athens regain its position of prominence -no mere cleverness or fluff or beguilement, but morality and tradition and seriousness.

It was my tongue that swore: I'm choosing Aeschylus.

Dionysus, 104

Dionysus initially descended to Hades to bring back Euripides, a poet he admired greatly. He even described his desire for Euripides as a "passion" and a "longing" (26). However, after a long series of contests, Dionysus chooses Aeschylus, the older and more traditional poet. He does this because he realizes that Athens does not need the clever wit and "slippery character" (27) of Euripides; rather, Athens needs a poet of wise counsel and intractable morality. Dionysus chooses Aeschylus because he has evolved and come to understand the true nature of tragic poetry and its capabilities. By Aristophanes having his protagonist make this choice, he is making a statement about what his city-state needs. It is unambiguous, and establishes Aristophanes as a rather conservative figure himself. His concern for Athens is also linked to his concern for the decline of tragedy; by pointing to Aeschylus as the winner, Aistophanes also suggests that poetry like Aeschylus's should be returned to.

The Frogs Summary and Analysis of Scene I

Scene I

Dionysus and Xanthias enter. Dionysus is disguised as Hercules and Xanthias rides a donkey with the baggage. Xanthias suggests Dionysus say something amusing to make the audience laugh, and they joke about Xanthias shifting the baggage so he can relieve himself. Xanthias complains that he wants to do what others, like the playwrights Lycis and Ameipsias and Phrynichus can do –hump the baggage. Dionysus scolds Xanthias for complaining, and they banter about whether the donkey or Xanthias is truly bearing the load of the baggage.

They arrive at the door. Dionysus tells Xanthias to dismount, and knocks. Heracles opens it, wondering who is banging so loudly. He sees Dionysus and begins to laugh, amused at the lion skin getup Dionysus is wearing. He asks Dionysus where he has been, and the latter says he was serving topside with Cleisthenes (the latter often teased for homosexuality). He says he then got a longing. Heracles teases him about this, but Dionysus tells him not to jest.

He says his longing is for Euripides, even though he is dead, and states that "Nobody on earth can persuade me not / to go after him." He plans to go down to Hades because he needs a talented poet; there is no one living that is good. He rejects Iophen because he is unsure, and Sophocles is too mild. Agathon, Xenocles, and Pythangelus are also inadequate.
In the meantime, Xanthias complains further about his shoulder. Heracles asks if there are other poets here that might suffice, but Dionysus rejects them as "cast-offs and merely empty chatter" (28). There are no "potent" poets left (28).

After some gentle ribbing, Dionysus tells Heracles he has come to figure out how to find the friends of his that time he went after Cerberus, and all the places to stay along the way. Despite Heracles's objections to his plan, Dionysus persists. Heracles begins to suggest options for death, offering up hanging and poison and jumping off a building. Dionysus rejects all these and says he plans to go the same way Heracles went.

Heracles tells him how to do it. First, he will come to a large lake and will be ferried across by a mariner. He will then see innumerable frightful beasts, then a river of flowing excrement, then people guilty of all manner of terrible things. Then he will hear pipes and see sunshine, and men and women will be there. They are the Initiates and will tell him everything he needs to know.

Pleased, Dionysus tells Xanthias to get the baggage again and prepare to go. Pallbearers and a corpse enter. Dionysus asks if they want to haul bags to Hades, and one asks how much they will be paid. They cannot agree on a sum, and Dionysus curses him.

Charon rows his boat over and he and Dionysus greet each other. Charon asks where they are going, and Dionysus replies, "To the buzzards!" (34). Charon refuses to take Xanthias because he is a slave, so he takes an alternate route and plans to meet Dionysus at the Withering Stone.
Charon tells Dionysus to help row, and informs him that they will soon hear the songs of the Frog Swans.

Contest with Frogs

A chorus of frogs enters, and leaps around the boat, singing nonsense words like croaks. This was a song they once sung for Dionysus, or Nysean son of Zeus. Dionysus, still disguised as Heracles, mocks them. They respond that the Muses, Pan, and Apollo cherish them. Dionysus says his butt hurts and he wants them to stop singing, but they sing louder about hopping and swimming.

Dionysus finally bellows along with them in the spirit of competition. When the frogs depart, he yells that they will never beat him at the "koax" (the croaking word) and he will vanquish them.

Analysis

So begins *Frogs*, one of Aristophanes's greatest comedies and an exemplar of Old Attic Comedy. In this first scene some of the themes of the work are already present – the value of poetry and the ineffectiveness, in Aristophanes's opinion, of the current poets; the journey archetype; the jesting but competitive relationship between Xanthias and Dionysus. However, it would be a mistake to interpret the play in modern terms –i.e., character development, recognizable dramatic elements, etc. – because it is a work of ancient poetry and is thus a product of a time very different from our own. Furthermore, what playwrights intended, what audiences expected, and shared cultural and historical contemporary realities were also quite different and have caused scholars much labor as they try to identify them and translate the language for modern audiences. Part of the critical body of work, and this study guide, on *Frogs* is looking at the conventions of Greek drama and how the play may have been inspired, staged, and reviewed.

Aristophanes was a keen observer and commentator on the events of his day, which necessitates unpacking some of the references to people and events in *Frogs*. First, the play was written and is set during the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta; the theme of Athens's problems and decline is present throughout the play. The battle of Arginusae occurred in 413 and although it was technically a victory for the Athenians, it came at a huge cost. Slaves were promised their freedom if they would step in a row the ships after all other manpower was exhausted, but it did not prevent Athens from losing twenty-five ships and five thousand men. The eight commanders were sentenced to death, but Athenians soon transferred their guilt onto the two men who ordered the sentences, Theramenes and Thrasybulus. In this first scene, Xanthias references the battle by bemoaning, "Blast my luck, why wasn't I in the sea battle? / Then I'd be telling *you* to go to hell!" (24).

Two other men associated with Athens's situation are mentioned throughout the play and bear a longer identification. Alcibiades was the naval leader during the war since 411, but went into voluntary exile in 407; the discussion of his recall is important in the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides at the end of the play. The other man, Cleophon, was a demagogue who persuaded the Athenians to reject Sparta's peace offering. The Chorus denigrates his actions.

Aristophanes also references works of famous tragedians and comedians, such as Euripides, Agathon (a playwright successful in his debut who recently left Athens with his lover), Xenocles (the son of the tragic poet Carcinus, whose dramatic work defeated Euripides in 415), and Morsimus (son of the tragic poet Philocles and lambasted for being a bad poet). Charon, not to mention Dionysus and Heracles, is no doubt familiar to students of Virgil's work and the overall pantheon of the Greek gods and goddesses and their accompanying body of myths and stories.

The tumultuous military situation was clearly dire, but, as scholars point out, so was the status of great tragedy. Jeffrey Henderson writes, "Aristophanes considered the situation on the tragic stage to be comparable to the military situation," as Euripides had recently died and Aeschylus had died some forty years past. Aristophanes's belief that Athens needed a poet is manifested in Dionysus's lines (in which he quotes Euripides's *Oeneus*), "I need a talented poet, / 'for some are gone, and those that lie are bad'" (27) and "But if you look for a potent poet, one who could utter / a lordly phrase, you won't find any left...potent, as in one / who can give voice to something adventuresome" (28). This desire for a poet, initially Euripides, then Aeschylus, links the two parts of the play, the journey to Hades and the contest, together.
The contest with the frogs is celebrated in literature (see "About 'Frogs'"). Questions remain about its staging; some critics suggest there were people dressed up as frogs onstage, while others believe only their voices were heard. Another suggestion is that, in order to mimic actual frogs' antiphonal croaking, one group sang "brekekekex" and the other sang "koax koax" in return. The frogs provide humor in a scene characterized by farce. The play grows more serious as it continues, but the early scenes are paragons of comedy.

The Frogs Summary and Analysis of Scene II

Scene II

The boat arrives at its destination and Dionysus pays Charon. Charon departs. Xanthias meets with Dionysus again, and the latter asks about his trip around the lake. Xanthias suggests moving as to avoid the fearsome beasts, but Dionysus scoffs that Heracles was just trying to frighten him. In fact, he would welcome an encounter with a beast like that to have a story to boast about.

Xanthias cries out that he sees one, and Dionysus, panicked, orders him to get between himself and the creature. Xanthias says it is a shape-shifter, changing from a

cow to a mule and a woman, and then a bitch. Dionysus says it must be Empusa (a female bogey), and Xanthias proceeds to describe her appearance.

Xanthias cries out, "Lord Heracles, we're done for!" (42) and Dionysus chides him not to use his name. When Xanthias uses "Dionysus" instead, his master is even more annoyed. Xanthias says the woman is gone, and even swears this when Dionysus asks him to.

Dionysus is shaken by this encounter, and wonders aloud why he is beset by these woes and which gods he should blame for his undoing. Suddenly the two men hear the sound of pipes, and offstage the Chorus of Initiates calls the name of "Iacchus" (the Eleusinian cult name of Dionysus). Dionysus and Xanthias decide to listen off to the side, doing nothing until they feel comfortable.

Parodos of the Chorus

The Chorus sings about Iacchus in his abode, singing with his revelers and dancing, full of "fun-loving worship" in a dance that is "pure and holy to pious Initiates" (44). They continue, singing of old men throwing off their cares and how they desire Dionysus to carry a torch and lead them to the "blooming meadowland" (45).

The Chorus Leader chants a list of all those who should not partake in their dances: those with impure attitudes, those who know nothing of these things, those uninitiated into the Bacchic rites, those who jest or enjoy jests delivered at the wrong times, those who do nothing to stop factionalism or do not act peaceably toward their fellow citizens, officials who sell out their own cities, collectors of high taxes, traitors, those who do not respect offerings made to Hecate, and politicians who do not respect the poets.

The Chorus sings of moving on now that they have breakfasted, and exalting the Savior Goddess (Athena) with their voices. The Chorus Leader calls for a song for Demeter. In this song they call for Iacchus to come with them to the goddess, for he once "found a way for us / to frolic and dance without charge" (47). They end their verses by saying they saw a pretty girl with a breast popping out of her dress.

Dionysus is excited by this and says he wants to play with her as he dances.

The Chorus suggests getting together to mock Archedemus, Cleisthenes's son, and Callias. Dionysus finally approaches and asks if they know where Pluto dwells, as they are strangers to this place.
The Chorus says he is at the door. It then commands him to go in to Demeter's "sacred circle" (49) while they will "go with the girls and the women, / to carry the sacred flame where they revel all night for the / goddess" (49).

Analysis

Before analyzing the content of the scene, it bears identifying more of the figures Aristophanes mentions in the play. Empusa is a term for a female bogey that was a part of the Eleusinian Mysteries (see Additional Content). Empusa as an individual was a demigoddess, the daughter of Hecate who seduced young men and feasted on their blood. Her name was later given to these female bogeys, which guarded roadways and ambushed travelers. Iacchus, mentioned by the Chorus of Initiates, refers to the Eleusinian cult name of Dionysus. The hymn of Diagoras refers to a lyric poem by the noted atheist, which criticized the Mysteries. Cratinus was the superlative comic poet the generation before Aristophanes. Demeter, of course, was the goddess of the earth and the mother of Persephone, married to Hades (Pluto in the play). Archedemus was one of the prosecutors of the Arginusae commanders. There is no known son of Cleisthenes, as scholar Jeffrey Henderson points out.

One of the elements of the play that may surprise modern readers is its crassness. There are slang terms for genitals, references to homosexuality, and jokes and instances pertaining to bodily functions. This was not at all uncommon for works of Greek comedy, which were known for their ease of restrictions regarding language or themes. The plays were commonly rendered in colloquial language, although they often parodied other forms of art, such as tragic poetry. During the period of Old Comedy, which began in 486 BCE and ended in 388 BCE, many of the works, such as *Frogs*, were political comedies. Other favored subjects included domestic scenes and burlesque mythological stories.

The crassness and humor seen in comedies was a reflection of the complete freedom of speech Athenians enjoyed during this period. The only thing, ironically, that Athenians could not say was anything negative about the demos' rule or anything that would harm the democracy or the state. Slander laws were not about protecting individuals; instead, they protected the state. Scholar Jeffrey Henderson notes, "if the criticism and abuse we find in Old Comedy often sees outrageous by our standards, it is because we differ from the fifth-century Athenians in our definition of outrageous, not because comic poets were held to no standards."

In Scene II the amusing and competitive relationship between Dionysus and Xanthias continues. Dionysus proves himself a boastful and bombastic figure, but one also afraid of monsters and prone to soiling himself in fear. This was no doubt hilarious to audiences in ancient Greece. Xanthias's boldness of speech is a precursor to the wisecracking slave figure ubiquitous in New Comedy.

Following Scene II is the parodos of the chorus. The term ‘parodos’ refers to the entrance for the chorus to either the stage or the orchestra. It also refers to the chorus's first song sung as they enter from the side. In the parodos of *Frogs*, the chorus is comprised of the Initiates, part of the Eleusinian Mysteries. They celebrate Iacchus and Demeter, and sing of those who shall not be allowed to participate in their rituals and rites. Also befitting the theme of the play, they criticize Athenians who behave badly and dishonor the state. John E. Thorburn Jr. writes, "Aristophanes shows no sympathy for people who make their living by exploiting certain situations or taking advantage of other people...[such as] those who profit from the war with Sparta, people who manipulate religion or poplar superstition for their own benefit, and professional informants."

The Frogs Summary and Analysis of Scene III

Scene III

Dionysus and Xanthias are at the door of Pluto's palace. Aeacus's voice asks who is there, and when Dionysus says it is Heracles, Aeacus spews out vile curses at him. His voice fades.

Dionysus has shit himself in fear and Xanthias mocks him for being a coward. Xanthias says he was not afraid of the rants and threats, so Dionysus says that he ought to take the club and lion skin and impersonate him. Xanthias agrees and dons the disguise.

A maid comes outside, full of sweetness and charm for Heracles. Xanthias is hesitant to enter until he hears that there are dancing girls inside. He orders Dionysus to grab the luggage.

Dionysus is annoyed and asks if Xanthias really thought he, a slave, could be the son of Alcmene and Zeus. He takes back the disguise.

The Chorus enters and speaks lines about a man with sense who realizes the ship is rollicking and goes to the soft side to ride it out; this makes him like Theramenes.

A female innkeeper and her maid appear. The innkeeper calls for Plathane, who arrives with her maid. They excoriate Dionysus-as-Heracles for his past visits and greedy behavior. Xanthias enjoys this and adds his own commentary.
The innkeeper calls for her patron Cleon to come, and Plathane calls for hers, Hyperbolus, as well. Both women speak of the terrible things they want to do to Heracles, and exit.

Dionysus begs Xanthias to be Heracles again, and promises that if he asks for the disguise back he will "die a sorry death and be eradicated, / and my wife and kids" (56). Xanthias accepts this and dons the disguise again.

The Chorus warns Xanthias to be careful, and to regain his formidable demeanor. Xanthias tells them he knows Dionysus might ask for the disguise back.

Aeacus and two slaves burst out, and Aeacus orders Xanthias-as-Heracles to be bound. After a scuffle, he is subdued. Xanthias tells them to take his slave and torture him, and he will do no wrong. Aeacus asks how to torture him, and Xanthias provides a few options.

Aeacus plans to torture Dionysus in front of Xanthias, but Dionysus proclaims that he is immortal because he is a god, the son of Zeus, and Xanthias is a slave. As both claim they are gods now, Aeacus decides to torture both and see who can feel pain, which means he is a human.

Aeacus tortures both, and they utter a few noises and groans but attribute them to other causes, such as reciting a line of poetry or smelling onions. Finally, Aeacus says he cannot decide who is a god, and says that he will take them inside to Pherrephatta, who will recognize the true god. Dionysus says it is a good plan, but wishes it were thought of before the torture.

Parabasis of the Chorus
The Chorus asks the Muse to inspire joy in their song.

The Chorus Leader says it is good for the Chorus to give advice to the city. The advice includes: all citizens should be equal and any fears of being prosecuted for attacks they made under the oligarchy of 411 be erased; no one in the city should be disenfranchised; that those who participated in the sea battle of Arginusae be pardoned their misadventure; that all people embrace those who fought aboard their ships and not be too proud.

The Chorus marvels at how the city treats its citizens the same way it treats new and old coinage. Both of the coinages are unalloyed, but the city does not use the fine, new coins, but instead uses the old, low-quality ones. This is the same with the citizens, because they acknowledge the heroic and upstanding ones but treat them poorly. The Chorus cautions them to "change your ways and once again choose the good / people" (64).

Analysis

In this scene Dionysus and Xanthias continue their journey, arriving at the door to Hades and experiencing the aftermath of Heracles's own journey there in the past. There are amusing cases of assumed and mistaken identities, jesting between master and servant, and, following the scene, the parabasis of the chorus, which provides insightful commentary on the status of Athenian democracy.

As usual, some background information is helpful to understand the scene. Heracles had journeyed to Hades as one of his twelve labors; he was instructed to take Cerberus from Pluto, thus garnering the ire of Pluto and Aeacus (Aeacus explodes at Dionysus dressed as Hercules, "You're the one who rustled our dog Cerberus, / grabbed him by the throat, darted off, and got clean away, / the dog that I was in charge of!" (50). The Chorus refers to Theramines, who was a politician nicknamed "Buskin" (for a boot that fits either foot); he had helped to form and then bring about the downfall of the Four Hundred, and also put the blame on his colleagues for Arginusae. Cleon was a prominent politician of the 420s (BCE, as are subsequent dates), known for his support of ordinary citizens. Hyperbolus was his successor, and a butt of comedic poets' jokes. Hipponax was a celebrated 6th century poet. Cleophon was a popular and influential politician after democracy was restored in 410, and he was executed in 404 on false charges brought about by anti-democratic factions. When the Chorus talks about citizenship, they are referring to refugees of the Spartan massacre at Platea in 479 receiving Athenian citizenship.

One of the notable themes of the play is identity, which is unsurprising given the fact that mistaken and switched identity was a popular element of Greek theater. It is not only amusing but can propel the plot forward, provide insight into characters' motivations, and act as a mode of conveying the poet's satiric intent. Dionysus wears the Heracles costume from the very beginning, causing the actual Heracles no end of amusement. The Greek audience would no doubt have appreciated all of the hilarity and confusion that stems from the disguise. Xanthias and Dionysus trade the costume several times as they journey into Hades, and, as Thomas K. Hubbard writes, "identity swaps function to punctuate their negotiation of the journey through its constitutive encounters."

Dionysus uses the switches of costume to bring about his desires, such as avoiding pain and procuring pleasure. Hubbard notes that he is self-serving, as his costuming is done to make his journey as easy as possible. His naiveté, cowardice, and self-interest are revealed through his readiness to wear the costume of another, or to take it off at a moment's notice when it no longer serves him. Hubbard also sees the "assuming and discarding of identity" as a "self-reflecting device, contributing to the overall effect by which the play indicates it is conscious of itself as a text and a performance."

Following Scene III is the parabasis of the chorus. A ‘parabasis’ comes when the dramatic actors leave the stage and only the chorus is there to speak to the audience. It discourses on something occasionally not directly related to the events of the play. It usually features three songs. The parabasis died out after the Old Comedy period after the chorus waned in popularity. The main point of the parabasis in *Frogs* is to discuss contemporary affairs. The Chorus asks the people of Athens to restore the rights of citizenship to those whom the oligarchic rulers disenfranchised; in particular, Cleophon is denigrated. They also excoriate Athenians for letting the wrong men do important tasks. The parabasis offers Aristophanes's most potent commentary on the state of Athens.

The Frogs Summary and Analysis of Scene IV

Scene IV

Pluto's slave and Xanthias talk together. The slave marvels at how Dionysus did not beat Xanthias when he pretended to be the master, and then shares how he loves to talk about his own master behind his back. He also loves meddling, complaining, and eavesdropping.

Impressed, Xanthias asks to share kisses on the hand. He then wonders about all the noise coming from inside the palace. The slave explains a big event is starting. In the event, which is a custom, there is contest where the best professional is entitled to the Prytaneum and privileged seating next to Pluto. Aeschylus holds the Chair of Tragedy, but recently Euripides came down and starting reciting verses to the ne'er-do-wells and became very popular. The public wanted a trial to decide who is best, and Pluto agreed.

Xanthias asks why Sophocles did not bid for the chair, and the slave replies he was content to sit it out to curry favor with Aeschylus. Now, the slave explains, "poetic art will be weighed up in a balance" (68).

Xanthias inquires who the judge will be, and, as there is a "shortage of competent people" (68), the slave explains, Dionysus was chosen for his familiarity with poetry. The two men go inside.

The Chorus speaks of rivals in art, and how one artist is like a raging elephant, who has a "formidable brow frowning" and "with a roar he will hurl / utterances bolted together, tearing off timbers / with his gigantic blast" (69).

Analysis

This short scene is a transition between the first part of the play, Dionysus's journey to the underworld, and the second part of the play, Dionysus's judging of the poetic contrast between Euripides and Aeschylus. It links these otherwise seemingly unrelated plot points, and offers an amusing insight into how slaves thought and acted, at least in Aristophanes' mind. Pluto's slave revels in his criticisms of his master and his subversive behavior, boasting, "Why it's like nirvana / whenever I curse my master behind his back!" (65). Such statements would no doubt have entertained the citizens of Athens. The slave is not merely a humorous device; rather, he provides the necessary exposition for the coming contest, explaining that Euripides is challenging Aeschylus for the Chair of Tragedy and that the denizens of the underworld desire a match between the poets. The slave also informs Xanthias that his own master was chosen to be the judge, indicating how slaves seem to be privy to all of the goings-on of their masters.

The play is commonly discussed in terms of the rite of passage motif. Richard F. Moorton, Jr. explains how Dionysus traveling to the underworld embodies this. Dionysus leaves his own, profane realm and journeys into another, sacred realm; at that point, the sacred and profane switch places and his former home becomes sacred. Dionysus is a novice, untutored in the ways of Hades and thus seeks counsel from Heracles, a wiser figure as he had already traveled there. Dionysus experiences his mock, comic, and symbolic death, which is enacted, ritual-like, through his rowing himself across the Styx. He crosses through this neutral zone between realms and encounters the frogs, which belong to neither zone. Moorton comments that the frogs are "both witnesses of Dionysus's rite of passage and participants in it: by virtue of their rhythmical singing they are supposedly facilitators, actually comic obstructers, of his rowing."

Once in Hades, before he gets to Pluto's door, Dionysus must survive a monster –the Empusa –resist the temptation to revel with the Initiates. Having completed those tasks, he experiences an identity crisis of sorts as he confronts the various individuals who answer Pluto's door. He learns that he will not be able to simply kidnap Euripides or perform some action of "larcenous chicanery", as Moorton calls it, but instead has a different role to embody. This is the role of judge, of arbiter. He is now in Hades as a friend of Pluto, and has been given this task in order to help stabilize the realm, which is suffering due to the rivalry between poets. Dionysus accepts his role and in the process of the contest, learns more about the nature of tragedy and what kind of tragic poet can help Athens in her hour of need. It is no longer Euripides, whom he actually came down to procure, but Aeschylus instead.

The entire point of a rite of passage journey is regeneration, and while that happens for Dionysus, who returns to the world above, it is suggested that it happens for Athens as a whole, now that Aeschylus is returning to guide and counsel the city-state back to its preeminence and power.

Finally, many critics have also wondered about the atypical structure of the play in terms of comedy and tragedy, for in *Frogs* the major agony comes after the parabasis, and the funny scenes come before. However, Thomas K. Hubbard explains, "Aristophanes may have structured the play as he did precisely to make a point about the relation of the comic and the serious...and the necessity of approaching the serious through the comic." In that case, Aristophanes can be lauded even more for his “meta” approach to his plays –understanding that they are not simply a series of events and obvious morals, but because they can, within the structure of the play itself, offer profound insight into the way the world does, and should, work.

The Frogs Summary and Analysis of Contests

Contest: Preliminaries

Three chairs are onstage. Pluto sits in the center chair, Dionysus on his left and Aeschylus on his right. Euripides touches Aeschylus's chair and says he will not let go because he is better than the other poet. Euripides continues, calling him a "creator of savages, a boorish loudmouth, / with an unbridled, unruly, ungated mouth" (70). Outraged, Aeschylus says Euripides is a "babble collector, / you creator of beggars, you stitcher of old rags" (70).

Dionysus mediates between them, giving them both warnings. Aeschylus sniffs that this is not a contest of equal terms because "my poetry hasn't died with me, / while his is as dead as he is" (72).

Contest: Opening Rituals

Dionysus proclaims that he will judge this contest with integrity, and calls for the Chorus to sing to the Muses. Each poet prays -- Aeschylus to Demeter and Euripides to Sky, Smarts, and Pivot of Tongue.

Contest: General Issues

The Chorus says it is ready to hear the wild tongues of the poets, with their sharp arguments and bold spirits. Euripides plans to expose his rival as "the charlatan and quack he was" (74). He mocks Aeschylus's having silent characters, rattling off four suites of choral lyric in a row, and his obnoxious use of big words. He also lampoons his "huge craggy utterances" (75) and his writing about a rooster in a tragedy.

Aeschylus asks what Euripides wrote about, and the latter explains that when he inherited the pompous, inflated art from Aeschylus, he put it on a diet. He also never wrote the first thing that just popped into his head. He never left characters idle, and taught the spectators how to talk. His poetry is rooted in the everyday, and he "never distracted their mind with bombastic bluster" (77). He also claims to teach people how to think because his art is rational and critical; thus, people know how to order their affairs because of him.

The Chorus quotes a line of Aeschylus' at him, and warns him not to be too angry in return.

Aeschylus replies that he is enraged and annoyed to even have to debate Euripides, but he proceeds to ask him what qualities a poet should be admired for. When Euripides responds, "skill and good counsel" because they make people better, Aeschylus tells him that he has actually ruined people. He believes his own work is an achievement on par with the noble poets of the past. He boasts that he has never created a whorish woman. It is his belief that a poet "has a special duty to conceal / what's wicked / not stage it or teach it " (82).

Euripides criticizes Aeschylus's high language, but the latter replies that "great thoughts / and ideas force us to produce expressions that are equal to them" (82). He scoffs at Euripides's poetry and its making people more prone to chitchat, and women behaving poorly. His work is full of "assistant secretaries / and clownish monkeys of politicians / forever lying to the people" (84).

Dionysus laughs at the memory of a crass work of Euripides, having been mocking, teasing, and riling up the two poets throughout their war of words.

Contest: Prologues

The Chorus sings of this great war, and prepares itself for more parries and thrusts. It exalts the spectators, who are clever enough to understand what is going on.

Euripides begins by examining one of Aeschylus's prologues –a line from the *Oresteia*. He has numerous criticisms of the lines, even though they are very short. In the lines of "Underworld Hermes, who watch over the paternal domain, / be now, I

pray, my ally and my savior, / for I've come back to this land and now return" (85), Euripides finds mistakes in Hermes's role as well as the repetition of ideas. Aeschylus believes his wording is excellent.
Euripides recites some of his own lines about Oedipus, which Aeschylus picks apart as well.

Aeschylus says he can take the simple phrase "oil bottle" and tack it on to any of Euripides's prologues, which he does so to the great amusement of Dionysus; one example is Euripides reciting "Once Oeneus from his land reaped a bounteous harvest, / and while sacrificing his first fruits –" (92) and Aeschylus throwing in "lost his oil bottle" (92) at the end. Finally, Dionysus asks the attention to be turned to lyrics. Euripides smugly says Aeschylus has nothing new here.

Contest: Lyrics
Euripides begins by saying all of Aeschylus's lyrics have the same pattern; he gives a few examples from the *Myrmidons* and *Ghost Riders*. He gives a few more, and Dionysus says he feels sore from all these strikes levied. He asks Aeschylus where he collected these "rope-winders' songs" (94). Aeschylus replies that they were from a reputable source for a good reason, unlike Euripides, who borrows willy-nilly from everywhere.
The Muse of Euripides enters. Both poets continue to criticize each other's lyrics, with Aeschylus ending by looking at the meter of Euripides's arias.

Contest: Weighing of the Verses
Dionysus calls for the verses to stop –it is time to weigh them. He compares it selling cheese, but has the poets come to the scales anyway. Each speaks a line, and Aeschylus's goes lower, as he spoke of the river and haunts. The second time they speak, and Aeschylus's still goes lower, as he spoke of Death. Euripides, who evoked Persuasion, is annoyed.

In the final weighing, Aeschylus is victorious again with his lines of "Chariot upon chariot, and corpse upon corpse" (99). Aeschylus laughs that Euripides could put his whole family and books in, and he would still lose.

Contest: Politics
Dionysus still finds it difficult to choose which poet he prefers. Pluto tells him he may take the one he chooses back with him, so he asks the two poets how they feel about Alcibiades. Euripides says he abhors the citizen who is slow to help his country but harms her instead. Aeschylus contributes a pithy statement about how a city should not rear a lion cub, but if it does, it must cater to it.

Dionysus then asks how they would save the city. Euripides laughingly suggests spraying vinegar in the eyes of their enemies, then adds that he suggests letting other people who currently are not in charge try their hand at ruling. Aeschylus, for his part, says that the bad people and good people are not doing much for their city.

Contest: Verdict
Dionysus proclaims that he is choosing Aeschylus. Euripides is furious, and curses Dionysus. Dionysus uses his own lines back at him, and Euripides exits.

Bon Voyage to Aeschylus
Pluto offers a banquet to Dionysus and Aeschylus before the latter sets sail. The Chorus praises the poet, a man of intelligence, clear sight, and good sense who is now going back to his people.

Pluto says goodbye to Aeschylus and encourages him to save the city with his sage advice and educate the witless. He lists a few men and encourages Aeschylus to tell them to hurry down to him.

Aeschylus instructs Pluto to hand his chair over to Socrates to look after it, "for I rank him / second to me in the art" (106). He warns him not to let Euripides anywhere near the chair.

The Chorus sings for Aeschylus to have a good voyage above to the sunlight that that "we may have an end of great griefs / and painful encounters in arms" (107).

Analysis
Dionysus' journey to the underworld ends with him bringing back a poet to help Athens, but interestingly enough, it is not the poet he intended. This last section of contests helps Dionysus mature and come to a better understanding of what his city-state needs, and also advances several significant critiques of tragedy and the poet's role in society and politics. Aristophanes' views on what kind of poetry would best serve Athens could not be clearer by the end of *Frogs*.
Euripides and Aeschylus are two names no doubt familiar to most students of history and/or literature. Euripides was known for his 92 plays (only 19 are extant), which included *The Trojan Women*, *The Bacchae*, and *Medea*. His characters were often passionate and flawed, and were usually members of the common folk. Aeschylus was a more traditional poet, whose 80+ plays (7 are extant) include the *Oresteia* trilogy and *Prometheus Bound*. He was known for his moral themes and advice for his audience to conduct themselves in an upright fashion befitting citizens of the great Athenian demos.

Aristophanes was quite familiar with the work of both of these poets, and the critiques hurled from one to the other reflect generally established truisms regarding their respective work. Euripides claims Aeschylus is a "creator of savages, a boorish loudmouth" (70) who was prone to "come out with a dozen words as big as an ox" (74) and "huge craggy utterances / that weren't easy to decipher" (75). He says he put Aeschylus's weight prose on a diet and did not "write whatever humbug entered my head" (76). He believes that because he wrote about everyday scenes and real people that he was the better poet; there is no reason to distract the readers with "bombastic bluster" (77). He encouraged people to think critically and rationally, he also claims. Aeschylus places himself within the tradition of noble poets, believing his work to be grander and moral. His works, full of great thoughts and ideas, inspire the audience, while Euripides writes of wanton women and is beloved by quacks and the simpleminded.

Dionysus cannot decide between the two of them, and thus has the poets weigh their verses. As Aeschylus recites deeper and more profound verse, he bests Euripides. The final point of debate is about Alcibiades, and Aeschylus's views win the day. As the Chorus extols, he is a "man who has / keen intelligence" and "eminent good sense" (105) and who will now return to Athens to help guide the floundering city. His poetry will teach, as it has done, people to be courageous in battle, and loyal more generally.

Aristophanes' choice reflects, of course, his views on what Athens needs. Scholar James Redfield writes, "The conflict between Aeschylus and Euripides is a poetic expression of the conflict between old and new politics, and the victory of Aeschylus is a rejection of the new life-style, a return to the old moral center." There is not a current need for Euripides's cleverness or originality, or his neutrality in politics as well as the art of tragedy. Because for Euripides "there is no order either in community or in the world", he is not a good choice to *restore* the order that Aristophanes and Athens crave.

Section A

Poetry (Notes)

1. Mending Wall

Written in 1914, Mending Wall is a poem that involves two rural neighbors who one spring day meet to walk along the wall that separates their properties and repair it where needed.The speaker in the poem is a progressive individual who starts to question the need for such a wall in the first place. The neighbor beyond the hill is a traditionalist and has, it seems, little time for such nonsense. 'Good fences make good neighbors,' is all he will say.The speaker wants to put a notion into the head of his neighbor, to ask him to explain why is it good walls make good neighbors, but in the end says nothing.A wall may seem useful in the countryside as it could help keep livestock safe and secure and mark a definite boundary. But a wall that separates village from village, city from city, country from country, people from people, family from family - that's a completely different scenario.Robert Frost's poem can help pinpoint such issues and bring them out into the open.

. The poem begins in an arresting dramatic way, taking the reader to the nature of things. The narrator says that there is something in nature that doesn't love a wall. In this cold, rural setting common sense shows us that swollen ground upsets the stone formation; Nature herself knows no boundaries. Tree roots, hunters and dogs, even Elves, may be responsible for other gaps in the wall.The speaker taunts and teases but it's more an internal mind game - there is no real, open dialogue or debate about the necessity of a wall. But there is the feeling that the speaker could well exist without a wall, whilst the entrenched neighbor relies on ancestral/patriarchal ties to maintain the solid barrier of stoneAll man-made walls get destroyed, either by nature or by the work of hunters. So when the spring season comes, he informs his neighbor and they begin to mend the wall that separates their properties.

During this mending, the narrator thinks of the utter foolishness of this activity. In fact there is no need of a wall between them. He has only apple trees and his neighbor has pine. His apple trees would never cross the border and eat up the pine cones. Moreover, they do not have cows. So there is no possibility of causing offence to the other.The narrator wants to put this notion to his neighbor's head. But like a stone-headed savage, he only repeats his father's saying, "Good fences make good neighbors."

Frost employs a kind of deliberate playfulness in this poem. The narrator speaks of

mending the wall as ‘just another kind of outdoor game.’ It is true because they are playing the grown up version of building blocks with loaves and balls. But, with the same playfulness he catapults the reader to the land of doubt regarding the meaning of the poem. For instance, whose side is the narrator in this game? Is he playing for himself, or is he on his neighbor’s side?

The speaker seems to make fun of the foolish obstinacy of the neighbor. But again, the irony is that the ‘wall’ in the title of the poem becomes a ‘fence’ in the words of the neighbor. Differences in perception and a lack of understanding are central themes in this poem. The narrator wonders whether he can put a notion in the neighbor’s head. But from the neighbor’s point of view, the narrator may seem obstinate as well, because he always misinterprets a fence as a wall. What one person thinks of as a wall may be just a fence to the other person. Perhaps there should be a wall to demarcate where the fence ends and the wall begins so that one may know his limits in human relationships.

In the end, it seems that the ultimate paradox lies between ‘something there is that doesn’t love a wall’ and ‘good fences make good neighbors’ – both contrasting, both true. As human beings we all want to stay connected. At the same time we need our own worlds, detached from others. Disputes occur because one man’s food is another man’s poison and one man’s fence is another man’s wall. Let’s only hope for a day when the walls of nationality, race, and religion will fall down, leaving humanity in peace for ever. At least we may be able to reduce these walls to mere fences through which constructive communication is possible.

Mending Wall opens with a delightful New England rural experience in the spring season. But irony is at the core of this experience just as the wall which is meant to separate brings the two neighbors together. The title itself suggests what the poem is all about. On the one hand it is about the experience of mending the wall. But on the other, it is also about ‘the mending wall’ – a wall that mends human relationships. Throughout the poem, the wall functions as a metaphor, indicating the need for simultaneous connection and separation between human beings.

2. Canto 1 of The Inferno

Regarded as one of the finest poets that Italy has ever produced, Dante Alighieri is also celebrated as a major influence in Western culture. His masterpiece, the epic poem *Commedia (The Divine Comedy)*, is universally known as one of the great poems of world literature. Divided into three sections—*Inferno, Purgatorio,* and

Paradiso—The Divine Comedy presents an encyclopedic overview of the mores, attitudes, beliefs, philosophies, aspirations, and material aspects of the medieval worldThis opening canto acts as an introduction to the entire *Divine Comedy—Inferno, Purgatorio,* and *Paradiso*. It introduces the characters Virgil andDante who travel together through the first two books of the *Comedy*. It mentions "a soul more worthy" than Virgil who will be Dante's guide for the final part of his journey. The scope and structure of the *Comedy* are sketched out: Dante must travel "another path" to escape from the dark wood because the more direct route—up the hill—is blocked. The structure of the plot, therefore, will be a journey—a typical plot structure for an epic poem.

The Divine Comedy is an allegory of human life presented as a visionary trip through the Christian afterlife, written as a warning to a corrupt society to steer itself to the path of righteousness: "to remove those living in this life from the state of misery, and lead them to the state of felicity." The poem is written in the first person (from the poet's perspective) and follows Dante's journey through the three Christian realms of the dead: hell, purgatory, and finally heaven. The Roman poet Virgil guides Dante through hell (*Inferno*) and purgatory (*Purgatorio*), while Beatrice guides him through heaven (*Paradiso*). The journey lasts from the night before Good Friday to the Wednesday after Easter in the spring of 1300 (placing it before Dante's factual exile from Florence, which looms throughout the *Inferno* and serves as an undercurrent to the poet's journey).

Dante recounts that in the middle of his life, he found himself lost in a dark forest, having lost the right path while half asleep. Worried and frightened, he was comforted by the sight of a hill, the top of which was sunlit. However, when he tried to climb the hill to reach the brighter regions, he found his way blocked by three savage animals: first a leopard, then a lion, then a she-wolf. Dante was too frightened to continue, and retreated back to the forest, where fortunately he met the shade of Virgil, his literary hero. Virgil informed him that the three beasts were impassible: the she-wolf would reign until the greyhound came and slew her, and restored peace to Italy. In the meantime, Virgil would lead Dante to salvation, but first they must pass through Hell. Virgil would not be able to take Dante all the way to Paradise, since as a Pagan he had no right to enter there instead a more worthy soul would take him the final part of the way. Dante gladly accepted his offer.

The dark forest is a metaphor for everything that Dante thought was wrong in 1300. This could include inner confusion and sin, the necessary imperfection of the world (as opposed to Paradise and God), political corruption, the absence of true authority, the bad behavior of the Pope, etc. Redemption is associated with struggle, in this case

the struggle uphill, which is made impossibly difficult by the continual temptations of sin. The leopard is thought to symbolize lust, the lion pride, and the she-wolf avarice. The identity of the greyhound has been widely disputed: Christ, Dante himself or the Holy Roman Emperor.

The Inferno is an opaque poem, which lends itself particularly well to complicated interpretation, and no doubt was intended as such. Metaphors and symbolism are found in every line, and to give a complete description of all the interpretations that have been made would be a huge undertaking. However, in order to fathom the sheer richness of

the poem, it is necessary to have an understanding of the more widely accepted interpretations. Dante wrote *Inferno* as a parody of the Catholic Church and its beliefs. Dante harbored a considerable amount of bitterness towards the church due to his exile from Florence by Pope Boniface VIII after a political faction led by the Pope seized control of the city in 1302. The main themes of the poem are sin, salvation, punishment, and dark humor.

3.Everything

Anna Akhmatova

Everything by Anna Akhmatova is a poem that is about the humanity that keeps-charity, love, hope. The poet says- Everything's looted, betrayed and traded, Black Death's wing's overhead. However, there are new constellations and then declaring the miraculous will soon inhabit their town torn by civil war. In real terms, things only got worse.

The title of the poem and its opening images speak of the agonies of living in a world spoiled by war. Like an immense vulture grown fat upon corpses, Death hovers over the earth, blocking out the sun. The war is a bloated beast with an insatiable appetite for more death and destruction – "Everything's eaten" – and it seems as if the fighting and pain will never end.

And yet – the poem whispers that all is not lost forever. Without reason, beyond rationality, a light shines ahead. In the mystery of a wood, where leafy trees somehow have continued to live and blossom, a delicate cherry scent perfumes the air. And in the darkness of the night, "deep and transparent," entire new worlds of stars are thrown into being, as if from the hand of God. Recalling the incarnational mystery of the dirty stable of Bethlehem, the poem looks past "darkness and ruin" and affirms

that "something miraculous" will come. For what have the children been waiting? What is the miracle that is anticipated? Peace is the simple answer, but it seems unlikely that children thought of it or desired it in the distant days of childhood before the war ever began. The longed for miracle is the joyful sense of belonging to the wonders of the world, of participating in everyday miracles, of simply coming to value the miracle and gift of life.

The land helps a people with its graces. By day, from the surrounding woods, cherries blow summer into town. It holds a particular grace by not being everything, by being one vantage point. At night the deep transparent skies glitter with new galaxies. Akhmatova makes it sound like the land naturally forms a people and thus performs the natural function of a poet, the oldest sort of poet. “Cherries blow summer into town” stands exquisite — fleshy cherries with their fresh smell become the summer that settles on one’s skin, one’s sight. Divinity is not merely sensual, though. She ends, singing a nation. And the miraculous comes so close to the ruined, dirty houses. The object of belief is not here yet — it is something not known to anyone at all — but we hope, depending on each other to demonstrate faith. A people unbreakable gives an individual strength. This is a natural assumption, a power wild in our breast for centuries.

4. Elements of Composition

“Elements of Composition” is a poem that skims through the life of the poet in small events that are placed according to the timeline that his life follows. It is an ode to the life that we all live; of how we all are just composed of elements that give rise to our birth and later, on our demise, become one with those same elements that spouted our existence. The poet touches upon different components of memories, from nostalgia, to affection and later of an overall experience, all revolving around the concept of the “Tree of Life”, which believes humanity to be closely interlinked with nature.

Ramanujan’s poem revolves around the theme of the “Tree of Life” and is also an ode to the process of life and evolution itself. Ramanujan talks about the vital nature of change in the journey of life and goes on to describe instances in his lifetime that transformed through time. He begins his poem with his creation through the elements around him and ends with his statement of diminishing his existence with his reunion with those same elements, thus watering the hypothetical “Tree of Life”.

The poet describes his firm belief in the circle that life follows, illustrates these views beautifully through events and situations from his life that support his conception. He involves the reader into his world of amalgamation where nothing is constant. He provides insights through instances in his life that makes this poem an honest review and thus brings the reader up-close and personal to his thinking. The poem describes emotions and memories as lessons and simple joys that life has to offer and truly asks of the reader to treat life like the God given gift that it is believed to be.

This poem is an ode to the concept of the "Tree of Life" and how life begins with the death of another. The poet talks about events from his life that kept changing, much like his belief about life "only by moving constantly" lies the "constancy of things". He believes that he himself, like every other individual and organism, is made up of the elements that surround him and will later decompose only to become one with it.

The poem begins with Ramanujan describing his creation as a "self-tangled" amalgamation of not only the 5 elements that Hindu mythology believes in but also the elements listed down in the periodic tables used by scientists. He further narrates about the ever changing nature of life and how only if we ourselves keeping moving and changing with it, do we see the "constancy of things". He then goes on to describe events from his life, like the changed expressions of his sister when she realises moments before her wedding about how her life will change forever and of how the riots in Nairobi has changed the way the residents live there. He later says that he passes through these events as they pass through them and on his demise, he shall decompose and become one with the same elements that once created him.

The poem is about the elements of composition and talks about the Hindu ideas of the five elements (pancha bhuta),the earth, the fire , the wind, the water and the sky ,which is one such list , the other list being the 100-odd elements that the chemistry books talk about. The poem begins with talking about composition and ends with decomposition (the caterpillars, eating and being eaten) .All the elements like gold, magnesium, calcium etc. are gathered into a chattering self, tangled in love and work.

"Capable of eyes that can
see, only by moving
constantly,
the constancy of things"

A beautiful thought. The eyes can see, only by moving them constantly, the constancy of things, like the Stonehenge or the cherry tree. The physical eyes can see the beauty of nature or a great work of art only by moving them constantly. One should watch

things which are in a continuous state of flux over a period of time to grasp the inherent beauty of nature and a great work of art.

add uncle's eleven
fingers making shadow-
plays of rajas and cats,
hissing,
becoming fingers again"

A lovely reminiscence of the poet about his uncle's dexterity in shadow-play using his eleven fingers to create fascinating images of kings ,cats etc and sounds like hissing and the transformation of the shadows to fingers again ! His sister's fear of an impending tragedy just before her wedding :

" the look
of panic on sister's
face an hour before
her wedding, a dated newspaper
map, of a place one has never
seen, maybe no longer there"

The horrific existence of the mutilated lepers of Madurai against the exquisitely ornate stone sculptures of goddesses of dance in the majestic Meenakshi temple:

"add the lepers of
Madurai, male,
female, married, with
children,
lion faces, crabs for
claws, clotted on
their shadows under
the stone-eyed

goddesses of dance, mere
pillars, moving as nothing
on earth
can move —"

All these are the very elements of which he and they are composed . They pass through him as he passes through them :

"I pass through
them as they pass
through me
taking and leaving
affections, seeds,
skeletons, millennia of
fossil records
of insects that do
not last a day,
body-prints of
mayflies, a
legend half-heard
in a train"

The whole poem is about what we are composed of , the different forms in which the elements combine , the impact of time on the composition ,the process of the decomposition (the Madurai lepers) and finally death and destruction (eating and being eaten).

Thus, *Elements of Composition* is a poem by Ramanujan that celebrates God's art of composing organisms and the concept of the "Circle of Life" to show how beautiful and naturally connected the components around us can be. The phenomenon of old life decomposing to give rise to new life is illustrated perfectly with vivid experiences that also portray change as an equally important component of life. Ramanujan has crafted this poem skilfully to show the beauty of life along with the connection of an organism with its surrounding elements to play a major role in not just birth and death but also the entire purpose of evolution.

Section D
Fiction

Siddhartha

Plot Overview

Summary Plot Overview
Siddhartha, the handsome and respected son of a Brahmin, lives with his father in ancient India. Everyone in the village expects Siddhartha to be a successful Brahmin like his father. Siddhartha enjoys a near-idyllic existence with his best friend, Govinda, but he is secretly dissatisfied. He performs all the rituals of religion, and he does what religion says should bring him happiness and peace. Nonetheless, he feels something is missing. His father and the other elders have still not achieved enlightenment, and he feels that staying with them will not settle the questions he has about the nature of his existence. Siddhartha believes his father has already passed on all the wisdom their community has to offer, but he longs for something more.

One day, a group of wandering ascetics called Samanas passes through town. They are starved and almost naked and have come to beg for food. They believe enlightenment can be reached through asceticism, a rejection of the body and physical desire. The path the Samanas preach is quite different from the one Siddhartha has been taught, and he believes it may provide some of the answers he is looking for. He decides to follow this new path. Siddhartha's father does not want him to join the Samanas, but he cannot dissuade Siddhartha. Govinda also wants to find a path to enlightenment, and he joins Siddhartha in this new life.

Siddhartha adjusts quickly to the ways of the Samanas because of the patience and discipline he learned in the Brahmin tradition. He learns how to free himself from the traditional trappings of life, and so loses his desire for property, clothing, sexuality, and all sustenance except that required to live. His goal is to find enlightenment by eliminating his Self, and he successfully renounces the pleasures of the world.

Sunburned and half-starved, Siddhartha soon ceases to resemble the boy he used to be. Govinda is quick to praise the Samanas and notes the considerable moral and spiritual improvements they both have achieved since joining. Siddhartha, however, is still dissatisfied. The path of self-denial does not provide a permanent solution for him. He points out that the oldest Samanas have lived the life for many years but have yet to

attain true spiritual enlightenment. The Samanas have been as unsuccessful as the Brahmins Siddhartha and Govinda left behind. At this time, Siddhartha and the other Samanas begin to hear about a new holy man named Gotama the Buddha who has attained the total spiritual enlightenment called Nirvana. Govinda convinces Siddhartha they both should leave the Samanas and seek out Gotama. Siddhartha and Govinda inform the leader of the Samanas of their decision to leave. The leader is clearly displeased, but Siddhartha silences him with an almost magical, hypnotizing gaze.

Siddhartha and Govinda find Gotama's camp of followers and are taken in. Siddhartha is initially pleased with Gotama, and he and Govinda are instructed in the Eightfold Path, the four main points, and other aspects of Buddhism. However, while Govinda is convinced to join Gotama and his followers, Siddhartha still has doubts. He has noticed a contradiction in Gotama's teachings: Siddhartha questions how one can embrace the unity of all things, as the Buddha asks, if they are also being told to overcome the physical world. Siddhartha realizes Buddhism will not give him the answers he needs. Sadly, he leaves Govinda behind and begins a search for the meaning of life, the achievement of which he feels will not be dependent on religious instruction.

Siddhartha decides to embark on a life free from meditation and the spiritual quests he has been pursuing, and to instead learn from the pleasures of the body and the material world. In his new wanderings, Siddhartha meets a friendly ferryman, fully content with his simple life. Siddhartha crosses the ferryman's river and comes to a city. Here, a beautiful courtesan named Kamala entrances him. He knows she would be the best one to teach him about the world of love, but Kamala will not have him unless he proves he can fit into the material world. She convinces him to take up the path of the merchant. With her help, Siddhartha soon finds employment with a merchant named Kamaswami and begins to learn the trade. While Siddhartha learns the wisdom of the business world and begins to master the skills Kamaswami teaches him, Kamala becomes his lover and teaches him what she knows about love.

Years pass, and Siddhartha's business acumen increases. Soon, he is a rich man and enjoys the benefits of an affluent life. He gambles, drinks, and dances, and anything that can be bought in the material world is his for the taking. Siddhartha is detached from this life, however, and he can never see it as more than a game. He doesn't care if he wins or loses this game because it doesn't touch his spirit in any lasting way. The more he obtains in the material world, the less it satisfies him, and he is soon caught in a cycle of unhappiness that he tries to escape by engaging in even more gambling, drinking, and sex. When he is at his most disillusioned, he dreams that Kamala's rare

songbird is dead in its cage. He understands that the material world is slowly killing him without providing him with the enlightenment for which he has been searching. One night, he resolves to leave it all behind and departs without notifying either Kamala or Kamaswami.

Sick at heart, Siddhartha wanders until he finds a river. He considers drowning himself, but he instead falls asleep on the riverbank. While he is sleeping, Govinda, who is now a Buddhist monk, passes by. Not recognizing Siddhartha, he watches over the sleeping man to protect him from snakes. Siddhartha immediately recognizes Govinda when he wakes up, but Govinda notes that Siddhartha has changed significantly from his days with the Samanas and now appears to be a rich man. Siddhartha responds that he is currently neither a Samana nor a rich man. Siddhartha wishes to become someone new. Govinda soon leaves to continue on his journey, and Siddhartha sits by the river and considers where his life has taken him.

Siddhartha seeks out the same content ferryman he met years before. The ferryman, who introduces himself as Vasudeva, radiates an inner peace that Siddhartha wishes to attain. Vasudeva says he himself has attained this sense of peace through many years of studying the river. Siddhartha expresses a desire to likewise learn from the river, and Vasudeva agrees to let Siddhartha live and work beside him. Siddhartha studies the river and begins to take from it a spiritual enlightenment unlike any he has ever known. While sitting by the river, he contemplates the unity of all life, and in the river's voice he hears the word Om.

One day Kamala the courtesan approaches the ferry along with her son on a pilgrimage to visit Gotama, who is said to be dying. Before they can cross, a snake bites Kamala. Siddhartha and Vasudeva tend to Kamala, but the bite kills her. Before she dies, she tells Siddhartha that he is the father of her eleven-year-old son. Siddhartha does his best to console and provide for his son, but the boy is spoiled and cynical. Siddhartha's son dislikes life with the two ferrymen and wishes to return to his familiar city and wealth. Vasudeva believes Siddhartha's son should be allowed to leave if he wants to, but Siddhartha is not ready to let him go. One morning, Siddhartha awakens to find his son has run away and stolen all of his and Vasudeva's money. Siddhartha chases after the boy, but as he reaches the city he realizes the chase is futile. Vasudeva follows Siddhartha and brings him back to their home by the river, instructing him to soothe the pain of losing his son by listening to the river.

Siddhartha studies the river for many years, and Vasudeva teaches Siddhartha how to learn the many secrets the river has to tell. In contemplating the river, Siddhartha has a revelation: Just as the water of the river flows into the ocean and is returned by rain,

all forms of life are interconnected in a cycle without beginning or end. Birth and death are all part of a timeless unity. Life and death, joy and sorrow, good and evil are all parts of the whole and are necessary to understand the meaning of life. By the time Siddhartha has learned all the river's lessons, Vasudeva announces that he is through with his life at the river. He retires into the forest, leaving Siddhartha to be the ferryman.

The novel ends with Govinda returning to the river to seek enlightenment by meeting with a wise man who lives there. When Govinda arrives, he does not recognize that the wise man is Siddhartha himself. Govinda is still a follower of Gotama but has yet to attain the kind of enlightenment that Siddhartha now radiates, and he asks Siddhartha to teach him what he knows. Siddhartha explains that neither he nor anyone can teach the wisdom to Govinda, because verbal explanations are limited and can never communicate the entirety of enlightenment. Instead, he asks Govinda to kiss him on the forehead, and when Govinda does, the vision of unity that Siddhartha has experienced is communicated instantly to Govinda. Govinda and Siddhartha have both finally achieved the enlightenment they set out to find in the days of their youth.

"You will grow tired, Siddhartha."
"I will grow tired."
"You will fall asleep, Siddhartha."
"I will not fall asleep."
"You will die, Siddhartha."
"I will die."
See Important Quotations Explained

Summary: The Brahmin's Son

The novel is set six centuries before the birth of Christ, in ancient India at the time of Gotama the Buddha, whose Eightfold Path guides the faithful toward Nirvana. Siddhartha is a young Brahmin, handsome and learned, with the potential to be a prince among his caste members. Everyone knows he is destined for greatness because he has mastered all the rituals and wisdom of his religion at an early age. His village is idyllic, and Siddhartha seems to live an enviable life. His father is a Brahmin, a religious leader and esteemed member of the community. Siddhartha seems well on his way to following in his father's footsteps.

Though Siddhartha spends his time studying the Hindu wisdom of his elders along with his best friend Govinda, he is dissatisfied. He suspects that his father and the other erudite Brahmins have learned perfectly everything from the holy books, but he

does not believe they have achieved enlightenment. The rituals and mantras they have taught him seem more a matter of custom than a real path that could lead to true enlightenment. To become religious men by the standards of their own community, Siddhartha feels he and Govinda would have to become like sheep in a large herd, following predetermined rituals and patterns without ever questioning those methods or exploring methods beyond the ones they know. Siddhartha is deeply unhappy at this prospect. Though he loves his father and respects the people of his village, he cannot imagine himself existing in this way. Siddhartha has followed his father's example with conviction, but still he longs for something more.

One evening after meditating, Siddhartha announces to Govinda that he will join a group of Samanas, wandering mendicant priests, who have just passed through their city. The Samanas are starved, half-naked, and must beg for food, but only because they believe enlightenment can be reached through asceticism, a rejection of the body and physical desire. The Samanas seem completely different from the religious elders in Siddhartha's own community, and since he has not found the wisdom he has been searching for at home, he decides he should follow the Samanas' path and see what he can learn from them. When Siddhartha informs Govinda that he will join the Samanas, Govinda is frightened. He knows Siddhartha is taking his first step into the world and that Govinda himself must follow.

Siddhartha, a dutiful son, asks his father for permission before leaving with the Samanas. His father is disappointed and says he does not want to hear the question a second time, but Siddhartha does not move. The father cannot sleep and gets up every hour to find Siddhartha standing with crossed arms in the darkness. In the morning, his father reluctantly gives permission. He knows Siddhartha will not change his mind. He asks that Siddhartha return home to teach his father the art of bliss if he finds it elsewhere. As he leaves to join the wandering Samanas, Siddhartha is pleased and surprised to learn that Govinda has decided to join him in this new life outside the village.

Analysis: The Brahmin's Son

Despite his solid spiritual upbringing among the Brahmins, Siddhartha still seeks the meaning of life, and he embarks on a quest to find enlightenment. Brahmins are members of the highest of the four interdependent groups, called castes, that make up Hindu society. Members of the Brahmin caste were originally priests with the primary duty of mediating with and praying to gods, and they were respected for their intellect and their knowledge of the Vedas, the sacred Hindu religious texts. In "The Brahmin's Son," Siddhartha meditates on the syllableOm, which represents perfection and

unity.Om suggests the holy power that animates everything within and around us. This power does not have form or substance, but it is the source of everything that was, is, and will be. For Siddhartha, finding perfect fulfillment on earth requires understandingOm and gaining unity with it. Siddhartha understands whatOm means, but he has not yet merged with it, and has therefore not reached enlightenment. Siddhartha's quest is a quest for true understanding ofOm, and his quest will lead him far from home and through several paths of wisdom before he can reach his spiritual goal.

Hesse modeled Siddhartha on the Buddha, and the lives of the two figures are similar in many ways. Siddhartha's name itself is the first suggestion of the link between Siddhartha and the Buddha, for the historical Buddha, Gotama Sakyamuni, also bore the given name Siddhartha. In *Siddhartha*, Siddhartha's life parallels the little that is known of the Buddha's history. Buddha's life was formed around three seminal events: the departure from his father's house, the wasted and frustrating years torn between the pursuit of worldly desires and a life of extreme asceticism, and, finally, the determination of the Middle Path as the only road to enlightenment. Siddhartha also follows this course throughout the novel. He leaves his father, explores several kinds of spiritual teachings, and eventually achieves enlightenment. In this way, Siddhartha resembles the original Buddha, both seeker and sage.

The divisions of *Siddhartha* correspond to the Buddha's doctrine. The first four chapters evoke the Four Noble Truths, which are the Buddha's basic teachings and concern the necessity of suffering in life, and the next eight chapters evoke the Eightfold Path, which details how to end the suffering described in the Four Noble Truths. Buddha's First Noble Truth, that life means suffering, is revealed to Siddhartha while he is still a son of the Brahmins, living in his father's house. Ritual and formula govern Siddhartha's father's world. Life in this world revolves around sacrifices and offerings made at certain times and the performance of established duties that everyone, even Siddhartha's father, must take part in. The father's world, then, is fixed in the moment and regulated according to certain accepted guidelines. Nothing will change from one day to the next. Siddhartha's father's request at the end of this chapter that Siddhartha return home to teach his father if he is successful is an admission that Siddhartha is right, that the gods are only objects of veneration and not living companions. The people in this world suffer from a way of life that was forced on them, and their strict rituals and schedules stand between them and the reality they seek.

He lost his Self a thousand times and for days on end he dwelt in non-being. But although the paths took him away from Self, in the end they always led back to it.

Summary: With the Samanas

Siddhartha and Govinda begin wandering with the Samanas. They quickly adopt the ways of their new teachers, dressing in rags and taking only the barest sustenance necessary to preserve life. Soon, Siddhartha and Govinda adopt the starved and beaten appearance shared by the other Samanas. The philosophy behind the Samanas' way of life is the belief that true enlightenment comes when the Self is destroyed or completely negated. They direct their ascetic practices towards this central goal. Once Siddhartha has joined the Samanas, his only goal is to become empty of everything, including wishes, dreams, joy, and passion. Siddhartha reasons that after he has destroyed every impulse in his heart, his innermost being will surely awaken.

Siddhartha embraces these new practices and teachings and quickly adjusts to the way of the Samanas because of the patience and discipline he had learned while studying Hinduism with his father. He soon learns how to be free of the traditional trappings of life, losing his desire for property, clothing, sexuality, and all sustenance except that required to live. His goal is to find enlightenment by eliminating his Self, and he is able to successfully renounce the pleasures of the world and the desires of the Self. He becomes a protégé of the eldest Samana, but the deepest secret remains hidden, and Siddhartha eventually realizes that destroying the will is not the answer. While both Siddhartha and Govinda enjoy substantial spiritual advancement during their time with the Samanas, Siddhartha doubts that this way of life will provide him with the ultimate spiritual Nirvana he seeks. The path of self-denial does not provide a permanent solution for him. He shares his misgivings with Govinda, arguing that the eldest of the Samanas is sixty years old and still has not attained enlightenment, and that the Samanas have been no more successful than the Brahmins Siddhartha and Govinda left behind. Govinda disagrees and points out the considerable spiritual progress they have both made. Though Govinda's counterarguments do not sway Siddhartha, they both remain with the Samanas.

After Siddhartha and Govinda have been with the Samanas for three years, a rumor reaches them that an enlightened one, Gotama the Buddha, has appeared, someone who has overcome the suffering of the world and has brought his chain of karma, or rebirth, to an end. Some are skeptical of these reports, including the senior Samanas, but the news excites Siddhartha and Govinda. Govinda yearns to follow this new master, and Siddhartha agrees they should seek him out, although he has lost faith in teachers. Siddhartha uses Gotama as a means of finally extricating Govinda from the

sway of the Samanas. The two friends resolve to find Gotama and follow him. The Samana elder is angry when Siddhartha announces their departure, but Siddhartha hypnotizes the Samana with his gaze, utterly silencing him. The old man silently backs away and blesses him. As Siddhartha and Govinda leave together for Gotama's camp, Govinda observes that Siddhartha's mesmerizing gaze proves he has attained a spirituality higher than that of the highest Samana.

Analysis: With the Samanas

Siddhartha hopes the Samanas' asceticism will help him break free of the cycle of time that was so binding in his father's world, but asceticism succeeds only in revealing the second of Buddha's Four Noble Truths: The cause of suffering is the craving for something that can never be satisfied. The Samanas believe that enlightenment can be found only through the denial of flesh and worldly desires. Siddhartha tries to escape from time, to become a void, and in so doing create an empty space that only the unified power of the universe will be able to fill. Hard as Siddhartha tries to escape from himself and his reality, however, he always returns to a Self that is restricted by time, and he realizes that asceticism will not bring salvation. He cannot escape the problem of time just because he wills himself to. His attempts to escape from suffering lead only to further suffering, and the denial of time roots him even more firmly in the cycle of time. He has learned that timelessness cannot be found apart from the Self, rendering the Samanas' teaching useless for him.

The Samanas' teachings aim to enable the seeker of knowledge to escape the physical world, but Siddhartha discovers that true enlightenment cannot come from ignoring the world around him. He explains to Govinda that what the Samanas do is no different from what a drunkard does: They escape the Self temporarily. Just as the drunkard continues to suffer and does not find enlightenment even though he continually escapes the body, the Samanas are trapped on a path that offers temporary escape from suffering but does not lead to enlightenment. As soon as the Samanas cease their spiritual practices, the real world comes rushing back, and whatever enlightenment has been achieved dissipates. Since Siddhartha is searching for a permanent answer, he cannot follow the Samanas. He understands that true enlightenment can come only when the approach used to reach it takes into account the world itself.

The confrontation between Siddhartha and the elder Samana suggests that enlightenment cannot come from teachers but must be realized within, a fact

Siddhartha will discover repeatedly on his quest. Siddhartha leaves the Hinduism of his father because of its flaws, just as he leaves the teachings of the Samanas because they do not lead him to enlightenment. Siddhartha encounters resistance when he tries to leave both his father and the Samanas, but in both cases he leaves with their blessings, which suggests that these elders are in error and that Siddhartha's path is justified. Teachers may not be able to give Siddhartha enlightenment, but they do, in their own ways, set him on a path that will help him find enlightenment for himself. Although Siddhartha looked to both instructors for knowledge of enlightenment, both fail to give him what he needs, and Siddhartha realizes that these paths will not lead him to the enlightenment he seeks.

Despite the flaws Siddhartha finds with the Samanas' teachings, his interaction with them is essential to his quest for enlightenment, since through them he realizes that enlightenment must not discount the physical world. Siddhartha's Brahmin upbringing led him to search for an enlightenment based purely in spiritual knowledge, specifically the idea of a universal force,Om. With the Samanas, Siddhartha experiences his most purely spiritual existence to date, but his failure to achieve enlightenment suggests to him that enlightenment cannot be a purely spiritual. The material world consistently intrudes, and Siddhartha must take it into account as he continues his search. Though the Samanas' path does not lead to the enlightenment Siddhartha seeks, it does lead to an essential revelation that enables him to eventually find enlightenment. Without the Samanas, Siddhartha may have continued in his purely spiritual pursuits, perpetually removing himself from the physical world and failing to reach his goal. Though the Samanas don't lead him to enlightenment, they help him eliminate the purely spiritual path, thereby leading him closer to finding a path to success.

The mesmerizing gaze Siddhartha gives the Samana elder is never explained in the text, but the fact that Siddhartha apparently has a certain power over the Samana suggests that he is already spiritually superior. Not only did the Samanas not lead Siddhartha to enlightenment, but Siddhartha is closer to it than they are, even if neither he nor the Samanas realize it yet. Siddhartha's gaze renders the Samana speechless, which facilitates Siddhartha's departure. Just as he steadfastly waited in his father's room when he wanted to leave the Brahmins, he gazes steadily here to obtain his goal. This gaze seems magical, but it also suggests something very real and human: Siddhartha's astonishing strength of will and unwavering determination to reach enlightenment.

[T]here is one thing that this clear, worthy instruction does not contain; it does not contain the secret of what the Illustrious One himself experienced—he alone among hundreds of thousands.

Summary: Gotama

Siddhartha and Govinda journey to the camp of Gotama's followers, and the followers welcome them as spiritual pilgrims. Gotama makes a deep impression on Siddhartha and Govinda. He seems to radiate pure enlightenment. His teachings include Buddhism's Eightfold Path, the Fourfold Way, and other aspects of Buddhism, as well as many practices similar to those of the Samanas. Siddhartha and Govinda dedicate themselves to these teachings. Govinda quickly resolves to give himself over completely to the lifestyle Gotama prescribes. However, while Govinda is completely swayed by Gotama and decides to join his followers permanently, Siddhartha has doubts and finds he has trouble completely accepting some of Gotama's teachings.

The next morning, when Siddhartha unexpectedly meets Gotama in the grove, he boldly speaks to him about his doctrine, praising his victory in finding the unbroken chain of being, of cause and effect. For Siddhartha, however, the unity is imperfect. The message cannot contain for Siddhartha, or for others, the secret of what Gotama himself has experienced. Siddhartha also points out a contradiction to Gotama: How can one embrace the unity of all things, as Gotama asks, if they are also told to overcome the physical world?

Gotama responds that his goal is not to give a perfect mathematical understanding of the universe, but to achieve freedom from suffering. Siddhartha responds that while Gotama himself has achieved Nirvana, he did it on his own, without a teacher. Siddhartha implicitly questions the efficacy of the approach prescribed by Gotama to his followers. Gotama admits that Siddhartha may technically have a point but also notes that Siddhartha can put forward no spiritual guidance superior to his own. Gotama asks if, according to Siddhartha's reasoning, his legions of followers would not be better off pursuing a life of pleasure in the city. Siddhartha leaves his meeting with Gotama unconvinced that Gotama's way of life is right for him. Sadly, he also leaves Govinda behind and begins a search for a way to find the meaning of life that is not dependent on religious instruction.

Analysis: Gotama

Although Siddhartha has been looking for someone to show him the path to enlightenment, his meeting with Gotama convinces him that no formula for salvation

or enlightenment can exist. Just as the Hindus and Samanas that Siddhartha left behind preached a specific route to enlightenment, Gotama similarly teaches a set of rules. His rules, like those of the Hindus and Samanas, speak of renunciation as a means of escaping suffering. However, Siddhartha has already realized during his time with the Samanas that he cannot reach enlightenment by rejecting the world of the Self and the world of the body. He cannot believe in Nirvana if it means separation from life's suffering. By leaving Gotama, Siddhartha rejects the prescribed formula for reaching enlightenment that this religion offers. Siddhartha realizes that all religions offer specific formulas for reaching enlightenment, just as all teachers offer knowledge couched in terms of their own experiences, and so he cannot rely on any individual religion or teacher in his search for enlightenment.

Neither Gotama nor any other guide can teach enlightenment because wisdom must be learned through experience, and it cannot be communicated through words. Gotama's lectures communicate knowledge about enlightenment and what causes suffering, but the listener cannot translate this knowledge into actual enlightenment. The knowledge leads to greater understanding, but words themselves cannot substitute for experience, and their meaning depends on usage and interpretation. Though Gotama speaks of enlightenment, his efforts can enable a follower only to realize that the possibility of enlightenment exists—he cannot provide enlightenment itself. The follower must experience the revelation for himself or herself, which in a way renders a teacher useless: the process of reaching enlightenment is internal. Siddhartha knows this already, so he cannot become one of Gotama's followers.

Govinda remains behind in order to follow Gotama, and although Siddhartha is saddened by his departure, he also understands that he must seek enlightenment alone. Because formulas for enlightenment do not exist, and teachers cannot pass enlightenment on to their students, Siddhartha must seek enlightenment by searching his own soul alone. Gotama has followers, but he has already achieved enlightenment and can endure distractions. Siddhartha, however, has not yet achieved enlightenment and is distracted by Govinda's presence. He will be unable to achieve enlightenment as long as Govinda remains with him, so he lets Govinda go. Only when Govinda leaves is Siddhartha free to truly test himself in the manner necessary to bring about enlightenment.

Summary: Awakening

When Siddhartha leaves the grove, he is done with teachers and teaching. He wants to know himself, learn from himself, and understand himself. He feels as though he is seeing the world, puzzling and magical, for the first time. He realizes he is in the

middle of the world and that he is not enlightened, but that he can awaken while learning more about himself. Siddhartha is suddenly infused with a powerful certainty in his own powers of self-realization. He feels he has truly become a man. He believes his path to Nirvana will not come from following another person's prescriptive lifestyle. Instead, Siddhartha feels sure that his path to enlightenment will come from within himself. Thus resolved, his new task will be to discover how to find this enlightenment. His first impulse is to return home to his father, but then he realizes that his home is part of the past. He suddenly knows he is completely alone, and a shudder runs through him.

Analysis: Awakening

In "Awakening," Siddhartha fully understands that discovery and enlightenment must come through the world of the here and now. Siddhartha suddenly sees the world's beauty and realizes that meaning is everywhere. Here, in the midst of what exists within him and around him, Siddhartha must discover who and what he is. He calls this discovery a rebirth, one of several rebirths he will undergo during his quest. This rebirth signifies the death of what he was and his ignorance of what he will become. He knows he cannot return to his father because he will not gain any more wisdom from the past. He is also aware that he does not know where he'll end up. In a way, this moment exists independently of the rest of time: briefly, Siddhartha has no remembered past and no discernible future. This moment in the present marks more than a transition, however, because it offers Siddhartha a glimpse of the sum of all individual instants in time. Although Siddhartha barely realizes it, this supreme awareness brings him close to the unity he seeks.

"Awakening" encapsulates the revelation Siddhartha has learned from his experiences in the preceding chapters: Enlightenment cannot be reached by relying on teachers or by ignoring the world. This chapter marks the end of one phase of Siddhartha's quest. The next part of his quest must take him away from the spiritual world and into the material world. Although Siddhartha had considered the freedoms and limitations of the spiritual and material worlds in earlier chapters, he contemplates them more fully here. Since these thoughts end Part One, and since Siddhartha has an actual moment of enlightenment in the middle of the chapter, we can assume that these considerations prompt Siddhartha's greater understanding of self. "Awakening" gathers the import of the first few chapters, crystallizes them within Siddhartha's mind, and shows how they act as catalyst for revelation, prompting Siddhartha to move forward into the material world. He can no longer ignore the material world. His imminent investigation of the material world, and the knowledge he'll gain from this investigation, will be just as

important as the knowledge he has gained thus far from his association with teachers and religion.

The conclusion to “Awakening” suggests that Siddhartha’s upcoming investigation into the material world is a continuation of a correct path toward enlightenment. Siddhartha knows what he seeks and is aware of when he moves toward it or remains static in one stage of development. Although he feels a moment of despair about his solitude, he continues with renewed vigor. The lessons he has learned are clear in his mind, he sees the world in its beauty, and he is energized to move forward. Although he does not have a clear sense of how he’ll achieve his enlightenment, he is confident that he will find his way through his own direction. The heightened moment of lyricism in the middle of the chapter seemingly bolsters Siddhartha’s confidence. Through this lyrical writing, Hesse conveys to the reader that Siddhartha’s optimism is correct, and that the next steps will bring him closer to his goal.

Summary: Kamala

For a time Siddhartha wanders aimlessly. He sees the physical world with fresh eyes, noticing the animals that frolic around him and the beautiful plants along his path. For the first time he truly feels a part of the present and notices the world as it is, rather than ignoring it in favor of more spiritual, abstract contemplations. He spends the first night of his new life in a ferryman’s hut and dreams of Govinda. In the dream, Govinda, imitating Christ, asks, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” Then Govinda changes into a woman, and Siddhartha suckles at her breast.

The next day Siddhartha asks the ferryman to take him across the river. The ferryman tells Siddhartha he has learned much from the river, and Siddhartha finds comfort in the ferryman’s words. When they reach the other bank, Siddhartha regrets not being able to pay the ferryman, but the ferryman does not seem to mind. He prophesies that Siddhartha will return to the river in the future, and that Siddhartha will give him a gift at that time.

At the edge of a village, a young woman appears and attempts to seduce Siddhartha. Though she tempts him, his inner voice tells him to resist. However, the next woman Siddhartha sees as he enters the city offers a temptation he can’t resist. She is Kamala, a beautiful, elegant courtesan. As her sedan chair is carried past Siddhartha, she returns his smile. His first worldly goal is clear.

After a bath in the river and a haircut and shave from a friendly barber, Siddhartha returns to Kamala. She is amused that a Samana should come out of the forest and ask to be taught the art of love. Even though she is willing to exchange a kiss for a poem,

he will learn no more until he can return wearing fine clothes and bearing gifts. Despite her apparent amusement, she recommends Siddhartha to her friend Kamaswami, a wealthy businessman, but insists that Siddhartha become his equal, not his servant.

Analysis: Kamala

The title of this chapter, "Kamala," and those of the two chapters that follow suggest that Siddhartha will seek meaning in the world of the senses, a radical departure from his exploration of the spiritual world. The root word of Kamala, *kama*, signifies the Hindu god of love and desire. Siddhartha's immersion in this world will awaken these aspects of himself, which he has long kept quiet. His transformation begins even before he meets Kamala or Kamaswami. His increased awareness of the sensory world, apparent from the beginning of this chapter, demonstrates that he is allowing the world to influence him. In the past, he trained himself to deny the senses and find the truth by ignoring the world and time, which he took to be illusory. This idea of the world as illusion, or *Maya*, is common to Hindu and Buddhist philosophy and suggests that the material world is a distraction from the divine, essential truth. By trying to see the world with clarity, rather than ignoring it as Maya, Siddhartha has made a clear break from his previous spiritual understanding.

Siddhartha's dream of Govinda turning into a woman marks a transitional moment in Siddhartha's life, as he moves away from his previous ascetic life that he shared with Govinda toward a new life of desire, which he'll share with Kamala. Initially, this shift concerns mainly Siddhartha's senses and imagination, but his encounter with the washerwoman at the edge of the village makes him consider if and when he will enter the world of desire. He rejects her, despite desiring her, which indicates an awareness of the difference between obeying one's inner voice and succumbing to impulse. When Siddhartha becomes Kamala's lover, he makes a conscious choice to enter the world of desire, and he becomes attached to it.

Siddhartha's encounters with the two women suggest that physical desire and sex are essential aspects of the material world he must explore. When the first woman wordlessly invites Siddhartha to engage in a sexual act, Siddhartha refuses her, but his curiosity about sex remains. When he sees the beautiful courtesan Kamala, his lust finds a focal point. When Siddhartha decides to make sex his new project, he immerses himself with an intensity usually reserved for his religious apprenticeship. Although he has rejected spiritual teachers, he will accept a teacher of desire, and he consciously decides to follow her teachings. Siddhartha is not an innocent, and neither is he willing to passively accept whatever sexual experience falls into his lap. He is, to

some extent, calculating and ambitious. He asks around about Kamala, and when he speaks with her, his deep commitment to change himself to obtain her love becomes apparent to both of them. Siddhartha completes the break from the spiritual world when he shaves and has his hair trimmed, for he has finally taken into account his own physical body, transforming himself in order to fit into the material world.

Summary: Amongst the People

Kamaswami agrees to receive Siddhartha in his home, but he is suspicious about what Siddhartha can do for him. Siddhartha follows Kamala's advice and does not beg for work but, instead, acts in a manner that requires Kamaswami to treat him respectfully. Kamaswami quizzes Siddhartha about his desire to become a businessman, not expecting much. When Siddhartha answers honestly, and shows that he can read and write, Kamaswami is impressed and offers to take Siddhartha as a protégé. Siddhartha lives in Kamaswami's house and works with him as a merchant. Siddhartha handles the business world with relative ease, but he does not emotionally attach himself to the results of his ventures, laughing off failure as easily as he laughs at his success. Disturbed by this flippant attitude, Kamaswami tries to motivate Siddhartha by giving him a small percentage of the gains from each transaction. Yet business remains only a game for Siddhartha, and nothing Kamaswami does can make him take business affairs more seriously. Kamaswami suggests that he try giving himself over to the pleasures wealth can bring, but still Siddhartha does not change his perspective. His life as a Samana showed him that many people live in a childish, animalistic way, suffering over things that have little real meaning, such as money, pleasure, and honor. Siddhartha rejects this sort of suffering.

Kamala, on the other hand, opens Siddhartha to the world of love, which excites him far more than the merchant life Kamaswami offers. Siddhartha works hard with Kamaswami in order to afford the gifts and clothes necessary to court Kamala, but he feels he learns far more important lessons from her than from Kamaswami. He learns much about the physical act of love, but also about patience and self-respect. He notes that she understands him better than do Govinda or Kamaswami, because she, unlike Kamaswami, can always retreat from the material world and be herself. Her life seems to have purpose and meaning and in this way seems similar to the life of Gotama himself.

Though they share great intimacy and a feeling of connection, Siddhartha and Kamala are not in love. For Kamala, sex is a part of her work as a courtesan, and her instruction of Siddhartha is undertaken primarily for financial gain. Similarly, Siddhartha is interested in his relationship with Kamala only because it provides him deeper insights into the world of love that might better enable him to achieve

enlightenment. Though Siddhartha is the best lover Kamala has ever had, Kamala and Siddhartha realize that people like themselves cannot truly love.

Analysis: Amongst the People

Siddhartha's decision to exploit the senses, instead of denying them, draws him into the world of time and average people. This world is linked to the Hindu god *Kama*, the god of desires, who is represented in the names of those closest to him during this period: Kamala and Kamaswami. From these worldly people, Siddhartha learns much that is useful in the world of time, including how to live happily in the moment and induce it to yield its fruits, as well as how to use the present to produce a desired consequence in the future. Yet at the same time, and almost without his knowing it, Siddhartha's life in the world of Kama brings him the first of those virtues appropriate to a seeker of enlightenment. From Kamala he learns part of the Eightfold Path considered "right attitude," which indicates that the correct way to approach an experience is to completely surrender the Self while keeping the purpose steadily in mind. In addition, from Kamaswami he learns the concept of "right aspiration," which indicates that working for an immediate gain yields no real profit. Kamaswami actually exemplifies the opposite of this concept, and his failure enables Siddhartha to realize that only a voluntary investment can give a worthwhile return.

An encounter between an innocent pilgrim and the modern world is one of Hesse's favorite literary devices. When Siddhartha meets Kamaswami, Siddhartha's innocence highlights the hypocrisy and spiritual poverty of his new world, which involves materialism and commerce, two aspects of modernity. During Siddhartha's initial job interview with Kamaswami, Siddhartha's answers to the questions are both honest and backhanded. When Kamaswami asks Siddhartha how he managed to live with so few possessions, Siddhartha says he has never really thought about what he lacked or how he should live. This response is a slap in Kamaswami's face, since Siddhartha is actually pointing out the poverty in Kamaswami's value system. Kamaswami initially intends to criticize Siddhartha by pointing out his lack of practical experience, but Siddhartha responds by calling into question the very criteria that determine whether some experiences are more practical than others. Siddhartha's lack of desire for material possessions is not the weakness Kamaswami might think. Instead, Siddhartha shows it as an asset in the business world. If one does not fear success or failure, one can act more aggressively.

Kamala is a master instructor of the truths of the material world, just as Gotama was a master instructor of the truths of the spiritual world. Kamala has an ability to find "stillness and sanctuary" within herself. She can steel herself against the outward flow

of the world by retreating into this stillness. This ability is rare, and Siddhartha notices that the people immersed in the material world are trapped within it and cannot see beyond the small triumphs and tribulations of their lives. Similarly, Gotama can transcend the spiritual world he discusses. Just as Kamala can teach the truths of the world of love yet maintain enough distance from these truths to avoid being controlled by them, Gotama understands that the truths he communicates are not the entirety of knowledge. By contrast, the Brahmins and Samanas are able to see things only in terms of the spiritual knowledge they preach. Alternative approaches to knowledge threaten them, and they reject the alternatives without truly considering them. Just as Gotama is able to see past the words he speaks and to see the connection between moments in the world, Kamala is able to sense a unique spiritual dimension in the realm of love. In this way, Kamala, though not enlightened, is as important an instructor of knowledge for Siddhartha as Gotama was.

Summary: Samsara

In Kamaswami's employ, Siddhartha becomes wealthy and enjoys Kamala's intimate company. He lives this way for many years, becoming more and more successful at business. At first, while business is all a game, he feels superior to those who pursue worldly pleasures and riches. Gradually, however, he, too, falls under the spell of possessions. He looks and acts like a wealthy merchant, wearing the finest clothes, eating rich food, entertaining dancers, and gambling, but he finds that the spiritual voice within him has died. Even his continued relationship with Kamala brings him little peace.

Some twenty years after his arrival, he notices that Kamala's face has wrinkles and his own hair has traces of gray. Siddhartha begins to have dreams that suggest the time may have come to move on. In one dream, he recalls a conversation with Kamala in which she expresses interest in Gotama, but Siddhartha dissuades her from seeking him out. In another dream, he finds the rare songbird Kamala keeps in a cage has died. He throws it out into the street, as though he discards all that is good and of value in his life. When he wakes up, he feels death in his heart. The inner voice that had prompted him to become a Samana, to turn away from the Buddha, and to face the unknown has been silent for a long time.

Distraught over these dreams, Siddhartha retreats to a pleasure garden to meditate. He considers his life in the city. The life he has made by apprenticing himself to Kamaswami seems only a diversion from his path to enlightenment. His nights of drinking, dancing, and eating have yielded a pleasant oblivion but have produced nothing. His relationship with Kamala has given him pleasure and taught him much about love, but it cannot continue forever if he aims to achieve enlightenment. He

realizes that he has been playing at the game of *Samsara*, the cyclical path of normal life in which one lives, suffers, and dies. While it is important for him to have played this game, he does not need to keep playing it forever. He leaves the city in despair, without informing anyone of his departure. When Kamala learns of his disappearance, she frees her songbird from its golden cage. From this day on, Kamala accepts no more lovers, and she discovers she is pregnant with Siddhartha's child.

Analysis: Samsara

Siddhartha has learned that asceticism is a dead end in his search for enlightenment, and he now learns that the same holds true for sensory indulgence—neither path, alone, leads to enlightenment, and the mastery of either asceticism or sensuality inevitably results in enslavement. Siddhartha has mastered almost everything he has attempted to do: He was a model son of the Brahmins and a skilled ascetic among the Samanas, and he is now mastering the art of love and desire. However, perfection leaves little room for variety or spontaneity, and Siddhartha discovers that he has become a slave to the very thing he has mastered, with no possible relief from the cycle of predictable events. Even his experiences with Kamala fit into this unending pattern. He is devoted to Kamala, but he is also bored. He must seek pleasure over and over again to keep boredom from returning, which leads only to more boredom. As the years accumulate, Siddhartha understands that the cycle of the senses revolves slowly but inevitably around the fixed point of death. Siddhartha had to immerse himself in the material world to learn all that it offered, but this sort of immersion ultimately traps most people, preventing them from ever achieving enlightenment. Siddhartha has to leave this world to escape the same fate.

Kamala rightly observes that Siddhartha initially sees the city with the eyes of a Samana, but Siddhartha's loss of spiritual detachment is inevitable. Siddhartha himself observes that his superior, distant feelings eventually disappear as he spends more time in the city. Such feelings can continue to exist only if he can maintain his distance from the material world and act as an impartial observer, but the more Siddhartha masters the material world, the more he becomes a part of it. He becomes almost equal to Kamaswami in business, and he becomes the greatest lover Kamala has ever had. In both cases, he becomes as good as his teachers, effectively becoming just like his teachers, which anchors him in the material world. He is no longer a thin, naked Samana but a wealthy, well-clothed, and well-fed merchant. The only aspects of his spiritual roots that remain are those isolated within his mind. As he gains material power, his spiritual power declines, until Siddhartha can no longer hear his inner voice. His spiritual roots are now a memory. Love and the material world have dragged Siddhartha away from the spiritual enlightenment he seeks.

Siddhartha's dream about the dead songbird suggests what could happen if Siddhartha continues on his current path, and it helps Siddhartha decide to leave the city. Kamala's actual release of the songbird upon Siddhartha's departure suggests that Siddhartha has experienced an awakening. When Siddhartha disappears, Kamaswami searches for him, thinking bandits have captured him, but Kamala shows no surprise—she has expected Siddhartha to leave. She releases the songbird as soon as she hears the news, clearly linking Siddhartha and the bird. The bird dies in Siddhartha's dream, and its death brings Siddhartha a feeling of complete spiritual emptiness. In the real world, the bird is freed, which suggests that Siddhartha has avoided the spiritual death foretold in the dream and has awakened from his slumber in the material world. Kamala is also on the verge of an awakening: after she releases the bird, she decides to take no more lovers. She changes her life in the wake of Siddhartha's departure, and her pregnancy indicates a radical change that parallels the change Siddhartha will undergo next.

Summary: By the River

Siddhartha leaves the city and wanders back into the countryside, feeling miserable and contemplating suicide. He ponders the paths he has taken in search of enlightenment. With the Samanas, he abstained from all physical indulgence, and in the city he satiated every physical desire, but neither of these approaches brought him closer to enlightenment. Siddhartha wanders aimlessly back to the river he had crossed with the ferryman. As he is about to let himself slip into the water and end his useless life, the sacred wordOm reverberates within him, and his slumbering spirit awakens. He recognizes the folly of his contemplated suicide, lies down in the grass, and falls asleep.
Siddhartha wakes up to find that a meditating Buddhist monk has joined him. He realizes it is Govinda, but Govinda does not recognize him. Siddhartha introduces himself, and Govinda tells him that he is still a follower of Gotama. Govinda remains convinced that his role as a spiritual pilgrim is still correct. Siddhartha replies that he too is a spiritual pilgrim, but his old friend is skeptical. After all, Govinda points out, Siddhartha is well fed and looks like a rich merchant. Siddhartha tells Govinda an abbreviated version of what has happened in his life since they parted, and repeats that he too is still a pilgrim in search of enlightenment. Govinda remains skeptical, but he bows respectfully to Siddhartha and goes on his way.

Siddhartha feels he can learn nothing more by joining again with the Samanas or the followers of Gotama. Eventually, Siddhartha reasons that his overthinking compromised his previous attempts at enlightenment. His zealous attempts to attach himself to religious movements or ways of being that appeared to offer enlightenment

have been in error. He has, in a sense, been trying too hard to find what he seeks. Siddhartha stares down into the river and begins to feel a strong affection for it. He resolves to not leave its side.

Analysis: By the River

When Siddhartha encounters the river, he realizes that the past is essential to life but does not determine the future. This certainty prepares him to move forward with his search for enlightenment. At the river, Siddhartha falls asleep, and when he wakes up, he knows he is a new man—he has been reborn. This rebirth differs from that of "Awakening," when Siddhartha tried to consciously deny the past to make way for the future. The present rebirth confronts the past more directly and relates it to life in the present. The past reveals itself through memory and exists now as a bridge between the past and the future. Siddhartha sees his mistake in trying to control the direction of his life, for he could do this only by submission to the repetitive cycle of time. He considers that a long lifetime of experience and wandering has brought him nowhere at all. However, the river now grants him self-knowledge and sets him on a new course. Siddhartha has learned the Buddhist lesson of "right conduct": he must take the way that comes naturally, heeding only his own voice, without trying to arrange the course of discovery in advance.

The appearance ofOm signals the return of Siddhartha's spiritual self and the beginning of the final path that will lead him to enlightenment.Om conveys the very essence of life, and each time it appears in *Siddhartha* it brings Siddhartha back in touch with his pure and primal self. When Siddhartha rejects his suicidal impulse,Om awakens him to a higher self, reminding him of the knowledge and divinity he has experienced throughout his search. The knowledge learned reappears because it is essential to what is to come. On the first page of *Siddhartha*,Om appears as a central, foundational teaching of the Brahmins. In this appearance it saves Siddhartha's life and leads to awakening. It will reappear in the voice of the river as Siddhartha finally succeeds in attaining an enlightened state. Siddhartha's deep sleep and his awakening after hearingOm bring understanding. Now, having failed to reach enlightenment through the extremes of self-denial and self-gratification, Siddhartha prepares to find a balance between the two.

Govinda cannot recognize Siddhartha when he encounters Siddhartha by the river, nor can Govinda recognize the truth about his own search for enlightenment. Govinda stays true to the Buddhist path even though he has not achieved the wisdom he seeks, and he cannot see that the path has failed him. Siddhartha, on the other hand, is able to glean truths from the Brahmin, Samana, and Buddhist worlds, but he is also able to

recognize that none of these traditions will give him the enlightenment he seeks. Siddhartha, unlike Govinda, can see the flaws in potential paths to enlightenment, and he has the courage to abandon failed paths for other, more promising options. Though Govinda eventually does reach enlightenment, he does so only because Siddhartha, with his superior spiritual powers, is there to help him. Hesse doesn't make clear whether the enlightenment Siddhartha transmits to Govinda is temporary or lasting. If Siddhartha gives Govinda only a fleeting glimpse of it, chances are good that Govinda will continue to search for his own enlightenment.

Summary: The Ferryman

Having resolved to live a new life by the river, Siddhartha soon meets the ferryman, the same one who had helped Siddhartha cross the river years before. The ferryman, named Vasudeva, remembers Siddhartha as the Samana who had slept in his hut years ago, and he invites Siddhartha to share it once more. Siddhartha says that though he looks like a merchant, he wants to live with Vasudeva beside the river. When Siddhartha tells Vasudeva his story, Vasudeva knows the river has spoken to Siddhartha and grants his request to be his assistant.

Siddhartha works, eats, and sleeps alongside Vasudeva, while Vasudeva instructs Siddhartha in the practical aspects of being a ferryman. During this period, Siddhartha gently plies Vasudeva about the connection between his seeming enlightened detachment and his life at the river. Vasudeva replies that the river has many secrets to tell and lessons to offer, and that he will help Siddhartha learn these secrets and lessons. The first lesson Siddhartha learns from the river is that time does not exist. When he asks Vasudeva if he has learned this secret as well, Vasudeva smiles broadly and says yes. Siddhartha is excited with the discovery and realizes that all suffering, self-torment, anxieties, difficulties, and hostilities are anchored in time, and all will disappear when people overcome the idea of time. Some time later Vasudeva smiles even more broadly when Siddhartha notices that the river has many voices, that it sounds like all things and all people, and that when the voices are all heard in unison the sound Om appears.

News that the Buddha is dying sweeps through the land, and pilgrims by the hundreds begin flocking to pay him homage. Among them are Kamala and her son, an unwilling traveler who longs for the comforts of his home. A short distance from the river, she stops to rest, and a poisonous snake bites her. Vasudeva hears the son's cry for help, carries Kamala to the ferry, and brings her across the river to their hut. Siddhartha

immediately recognizes her, and he thinks her son looks familiar. Then he realizes that the boy must be his son. Kamala lives long enough to speak to Siddhartha. In this last conversation, she knows she need not see the Buddha to fulfill her wish of seeing an enlightened one—Siddhartha is no different from the Buddha. Siddhartha himself feels blessed, for now he has a son.

Analysis: The Ferryman

Siddhartha has spent many years pursuing enlightenment, and his experiences have shown him that enlightenment can't be taught. However, in Vasudeva, Siddhartha finds the ideal teacher—in a sense, a teacher who does not teach. Vasudeva himself admits he is not a teacher: "If I could talk and teach, I would perhaps be a teacher, but as it is I am only a ferryman," he says. Vasudeva listens to Siddhartha and encourages him to listen to the river. Siddhartha surrenders to Vasudeva his entire self, even his clothes, in order to follow his example in leading a life of calm fulfillment and wisdom. Vasudeva gives Siddhartha food and shelter, but he does not impose on him his own wisdom and experiences. Siddhartha follows Vasudeva's example but reaches enlightenment on his own. Vasudeva is a guide, both literally and figuratively. While he guides Siddhartha back and forth across the river, he also affirms Siddhartha's spiritual progress and encourages him to continue searching. Vasudeva is poised between the ordinary world and the world of enlightenment. He acts as an intermediary for seekers such as Siddhartha, who venture to the river and hope to pass from one world to the other.

One of the most important lessons the river teaches Siddhartha is that time does not exist, and that the present is all that matters. Siddhartha can now see that all life is unified, just as the river is in all places at one time. By evoking the symbol of the river to suggest the unity of life, Hesse refers to the philosophy and religion of Taoism, which maintains that a force, called *Tao,* flows through and connects all living things and the universe, and that balancing the Tao results in complete happiness. The primary symbol of Taoism is the Yin Yang, a circular shape with one black section and one white section fitting perfectly together.

The Yin Yang suggests the balance of opposites, an idea that the final portion of *Siddhartha* explores. The river, with its constant movement and presence, reveals the existence of opposites such as flux and permanence and time and timelessness. Siddhartha has attempted to find enlightenment in many different ways, but only when he accepts that opposites can co-exist does he reach enlightenment.
The river can be all places at once, and its essence never changes. In this way Siddhartha resembles the river. Despite the changing aspects of his experience, his

essential self has always remained the same. He actually calls his life a river and uses this comparison to determine that time does not exist. Siddhartha, with the help of the river and Vasudeva, is finally able to learn the last elements necessary to achieve enlightenment. Vasudeva reveals the true importance of the river to Siddhartha: the river can teach Siddhartha everything he needs to know, beginning with how to listen. This doctrine suggests that knowledge resides in the present time and place, and that Siddhartha, from his position in the here and now, can discover all there is to know. Siddhartha understands that time does not really exist, since everything can be learned from the present moment. Without a fear of time, worry about the fleetingness of life, or the weight of boredom, Siddhartha can achieve enlightenment.

Summary: The Son

After Kamala's funeral, Siddhartha does his best to console and provide for his son, but the boy is spoiled and cynical. Siddhartha's son dislikes life with the two ferrymen, wishing to return to the city and the life of wealth he knows. Siddhartha cannot convince him that fine clothes, a soft bed, and servants have little meaning. Siddhartha believes he should raise his son himself, and Vasudeva at first agrees. Though he tries as hard as he can to make his son happy and to show him how to live a good life, Siddhartha finds his son filled with rage. His son steals from Vasudeva and Siddhartha and berates them, making their lives unpleasant. Siddhartha finds that, though he has never been able to love before, he now loves his son, and as a result he dismisses his son's behavior as the inevitable result of Kamala's death. He believes that in time his son will come to follow the same path he and Vasudeva have followed.

Vasudeva, however, eventually tells Siddhartha that the son should be allowed to leave if he wants to. Even though old men may be fully satisfied ferrying people across a river, a young boy may be unhappy in such conditions, he says. Vasudeva also reminds Siddhartha that his own father had not been able to prevent him from joining the Samanas or from learning the lessons of worldliness in the city. The boy should follow his own path, even if that makes Siddhartha unhappy. Siddhartha disagrees, feeling that the bond between father and son is important and, as his own flesh and blood, his son will likewise be driven to search for enlightenment. The river, where true enlightenment and learning can be found, should be an ideal spot for the boy to spend his days.

One night the son yells that Siddhartha has neither the authority nor the will to discipline him. The son screams that a ferryman living by a river is the last thing he would ever want to become, that he would rather be a murderer than a man like

Siddhartha. Siddhartha has no reply. The next morning, Siddhartha discovers that his son has run away, stealing all of Siddhartha's and Vasudeva's money. Vasudeva believes that Siddhartha should let the son go, but Siddhartha feels he must follow his son, if only out of concern for his safety. Siddhartha gives chase but soon realizes his task is futile. He knows his son will hide if he sees Siddhartha. Still, Siddhartha keeps going until he has reached the city.

As he looks at the city, memories of his life there come rushing back. He remembers the time he spent with Kamaswami and, especially, with Kamala. In a flash, Siddhartha acknowledges he must let his son go. He understands that no amount of reasoning will convince him to stay. Although the son may grow into a spiritual pilgrim like Siddhartha, the quest must be undertaken on his own. Siddhartha falls to the ground, exhausted, and is awakened by Vasudeva, who has secretly followed him. Together, they return to the river.

Analysis: The Son

Through his interactions with his son, Siddhartha learns the Buddhist lesson of "right endeavor," and that it is not possible to impose one's knowledge of the timeless upon one who is still subject to the limits of time. Siddhartha does not realize he is trying to make his son in his own image, but his son realizes it and resents Siddhartha for doing so. Siddhartha is, after all, little more than a stranger to the son. Even though Vasudeva reminds Siddhartha that no one can determine the boy's calling, Siddhartha is blinded by love, and he ignores something he already knows: Everyone must follow his own voice to enlightenment. He has learned for himself that no one can teach enlightenment, and that enlightenment must be found within. Siddhartha tries to prescribe his son's life just as his father had once tried to prescribe his, and he attempts to impose his views on his son. Siddhartha has come full circle. Just as he ran away from his own father, his son runs away in search of his own path.

Although Siddhartha's road to enlightenment led him through the material world of Kama, he has tested himself only against materialism, not against love—and the appearance of his son forces him to undertake this challenge. Although Siddhartha has attained peace as a ferryman, he is fallible because he has not confronted love itself. Many compelling reasons exist for Siddhartha to allow his son to return to the city, but, blinded by love, he forgets that enlightenment must come from within and tries to impose his views on his son. Since leaving the followers of Gotama, Siddhartha has maintained that a journey toward peace and enlightenment must come from within,

and Vasudeva points out Siddhartha's contradiction of his own beliefs. Logically, Siddhartha should recognize his error in this situation. The fact that Siddhartha ignores his most fundamental belief is a testament to how much he loves his son.

He remembered how once, as a youth, he had compelled his father to let him go and join the ascetic, how he had taken leave of him, how he had gone and never returned. Had not his father also suffered the same pain that he was now suffering for his son?

Summary: Om

Siddhartha meditates for many days on the loss of his son. His pain and sadness are great. One day, Siddhartha looks into the river, and as the water laughs at him for letting the wound burn so deeply, he realizes that life has an inevitable flow, just like a river. When Siddhartha was a boy, he left his own father despite great protestations. Now his own son has left him. Because of this doubled perspective, Siddhartha sympathizes with his father and his son at the same time. He understands that some sorrows in life cannot be prevented and will pass from generation to generation throughout time. Siddhartha feels a new sense of peace. That night he tells Vasudeva all he has felt, and Vasudeva seems to absorb all of his sorrows. Siddhartha realizes that Vasudeva is as enlightened as the Buddha, and that he seems like a god.

The old ferryman invites him to listen more closely to the river. As they sit on the bank, all the images of his life dance before him. He hears voices of joy and sorrow, good and evil, laughter and mourning. But he does not let himself be caught up by any single voice and hears only the single word Om. Sitting beside Vasudeva at the river, Siddhartha realizes that his Self is a part of the great perfection that is all of the voices in the world speaking together. Siddhartha no longer doubts his place in the world or second-guesses his actions. His face now reflects the same divine understanding that he first noticed on Vasudeva's face when he met him. In this hour Siddhartha stops battling his fate, and his eyes glow with the serenity of knowledge. When Vasudeva sees this, he says that he has been waiting for this moment, and he departs to the forest, leaving Siddhartha as the ferryman.

Analysis: Om

In order to achieve enlightenment, Siddhartha must give up what he loves. Siddhartha's difficulty with giving up his son suggests that love is the toughest challenge Siddhartha has faced during his quest and that Siddhartha is actually no different than anyone who has experienced love. Losing his son is difficult for Siddhartha, but what he experiences now as a father is the same as what he experienced years before as a son. When he sees a reflection of himself in the river, a reflection of his father is superimposed upon it, as though his father is subject to the same trial Siddhartha is presently undergoing. He sees a vision of the self in both past and future. His son acts in the way he himself had acted, and he will follow a path of his own choosing in the same way Siddhartha did. Similarly, Siddhartha is acting just as his father did so many years ago, trying to keep his son at home, despite his own wisdom. These similarities, which persist despite all that Siddhartha has learned, suggest that the present moment truly does contain all of time. The present moment contains a concentration of experiences that would take several lifetimes to undergo. Siddhartha knows not only that he himself is always the same despite the changes in his life but also that he is the same as all others in the world.

In "Om," suffering acts as a humanizing force for Siddhartha. Through suffering, Siddhartha finds unity among his roles as father, traveler, and son, as well as unity between the past and future. In the past, Siddhartha has looked scornfully at people in the mortal world, but at this moment his suffering allows him to see his unity with the world. He no longer stands above and is no better than anyone else. His suffering has shown him that he is like them, and only in realizing his similarities with the rest of the world can he achieve the compassion necessary for true enlightenment. Vasudeva and Siddhartha have both experienced human suffering, and just as Vasudeva returns to the divine, so too will Siddhartha one day. Both have overcome their suffering in order to achieve enlightenment.

Vasudeva's profession as a ferryman, one who guides a person from one side of the river to the other, fits well with his status as spiritual guide. If one side of the river represents enlightenment, and the other side represents the life as it was lived before enlightenment, then Vasudeva helps to convey people to their final destination. However, people must first reach the river of their own accord and know that they seek to reach the other bank. He does not tell people where they must go but helps those who are ready to complete the journey. When Siddhartha achieves enlightenment, Vasudeva leaves him, and Siddhartha inherits the position Vasudeva previously held. In this way, a level of equality is demonstrated between Vasudeva and Siddhartha. Although Vasudeva is often described in divine terms, he does not maintain the power relationship that would typically exist between student and teacher, or between the divine and the mortal. When he departs, Siddhartha is his

equal. He has guided Siddhartha to his final destination and can now depart, unlike a teacher who would have to stay behind to continue teaching others.

No longer knowing whether time existed, whether this display had lasted a second or a hundred years, whether there was a Siddhartha, or a Gotama, a Self and others, wounded deeply by a divine arrow which gave him pleasure, deeply enchanted and exalted, Govinda stood yet a while bending over Siddhartha's peaceful face which he had just kissed, which had just been the stage of all present and future forms.

Summary: Govinda

Govinda returns to the river to seek enlightenment. He has heard of a wise man living there, but when he arrives, he does not recognize Siddhartha. When Govinda asks him for advice, Siddhartha tells him with a smile that he is searching too hard and that he is possessed by his goal, and then calls him by name. Govinda is as amazed now as when he failed to recognize Siddhartha at the river years earlier. Govinda still follows Gotama but has not attained the kind of enlightenment that Siddhartha now radiates. So he asks Siddhartha to teach him what he knows.

Govinda stays the night in Siddhartha's hut, and Siddhartha gives advice that is a summary of his wisdom. He warns Govinda, however, that his wisdom can't be taught, and that no one can teach the wisdom because verbal explanations are limited and can never communicate the entirety of enlightenment. Knowledge can be passed along, but individuals must earn their own wisdom. Siddhartha points out that when one attempts to teach, as the Buddha did, then one must divide or categorize the world into Samsara and Nirvana, into disappointment and truth, into sorrow and salvation. Siddhartha has learned that for every truth, there is an opposite truth. No one is ever fully saintly or fully sinful, and if someone appears to be so, it is merely a deception that time is real. The world is never incomplete or on its path to completeness. It is complete at every moment. Grace carries every sin, all babies carry death, and all the dying carry eternal life. Siddhartha says he wants only to love the world as it has been, as it is, and as it will be, and to consider all creatures with love, admiration, and reverence.

Govinda asks Siddhartha if there is not some additional advice that might help him. Govinda points out that he is very old and has little time to reach the final

understanding Siddhartha has attained. Siddhartha tells Govinda to kiss him on the forehead. When he does, Govinda sees the timeless flow of forces and images pass before his eyes, just as Siddhartha had envisioned them in the flowing river. With tears streaming from his eyes, Govinda bows down to Siddhartha, whose smiling face is no different from that of the enlightened Buddha. Govinda and Siddhartha have both finally achieved the enlightenment they set out to find in the days of their youth.

Analysis: Govinda

This chapter represents the Buddhist idea of "right rapture," with an enlightened one who rejoices in his enlightenment yet mocks the glory of his knowledge by admitting that full communication is impossible. Yet though Siddhartha cannot fully explain his enlightenment to Govinda, his face is still a vision of truth for Govinda. The face of an enlightened person, whether Gotama, Vasudeva, or Siddhartha, is similarly illuminated. When he looks at Siddhartha, Govinda sees thousands of faces, and though these faces change continuously, they are still Siddhartha's face. While Govinda looks at this face, he realizes, as Kamala did, that it appears no different from Gotama's. Thus the goal Siddhartha has realized for himself, the destruction of time, is visible for Govinda in the face of an enlightened person. Govinda, who has searched for enlightenment without full knowledge of the implications of his search, has struck upon wisdom. No difference exists now between seeker and sage, no difference exists between Siddhartha and Gotama, and no disunity is possible for the enlightened one who has found his way to the wisdom of the other shore.

The mentoring relationships between Vasudeva and Siddhartha and between Siddhartha and Govinda suggest that even though no one can teach the way to enlightenment, seekers still can be guided. At the end of *Siddhartha*, Siddhartha presumably will carry on as the ferryman now that Vasudeva has left. Siddhartha's son bears Siddhartha's name, implying that he may ultimately follow in Siddhartha's footsteps. As ferryman, Siddhartha will pass back and forth between the two worlds that the river symbolically divides and unites, which suggests that the polarities of life will always exist. Like Vasudeva, Siddhartha will be of service to those who cross over the water and will give his passengers the opportunity to listen to the river's message, though few will hear it. Siddhartha will guide those who need guidance, but he will not force his wisdom on those who do not wish to hear it. Govinda comes to Siddhartha in search of a concrete explanation of how to achieve enlightenment, and when Siddhartha's words fail, as any instruction must, Siddhartha is able to communicate his knowledge wordlessly, through a kiss. Siddhartha guides Govinda into understanding all the knowledge Siddhartha has. In this way, Govinda achieves

the enlightenment he would never have achieved had Siddhartha attempted to teach him instead of guide him.

Siddhartha's attempt to explain enlightenment points out a fundamental difference in how various groups and teachers perceive Nirvana. Siddhartha says that while teachers such as Gotama and the Samanas insist that Nirvana is a state that can be obtained *one day*, Nirvana is actually going on all around us. All men can be sinners, and all can be saints, but regardless, all things contain the potential for Nirvana and perfection. A sinner may be on the path to becoming a saint. A gambler may evolve to one day into a Buddha. Therefore, all people are sacred. Siddhartha also implies that a sacredness exists in all things. When he shows Govinda a stone, he wants to convey that even the most humble object is sacred, since that stone may one day turn into soil, which may become a plant, an animal, a man, or even a Buddha. Therefore, Siddhartha reasons, everything is sacred and contains wondrous potential. Enlightenment, rather than being a state one finally reaches, is instead a state already obtained even as it is sought.

Character List

Siddhartha

The novel's protagonist. Siddhartha sets out on a quest for enlightenment and tests the religious philosophies he discovers. Siddhartha's most defining characteristic is his desire for a transcendent, spiritual understanding of himself and the world. He devotes himself wholeheartedly to the pursuit of this understanding, even when the path is difficult. Outside forces do not easily sway Siddhartha, and he follows his heart. A man dedicated to his personal quest for knowledge, Siddhartha will abandon a course if he feels it is flawed. Siddhartha has a son, who is also named Siddhartha.

- **Vasudeva**

  The enlightened ferryman who guides Siddhartha to a transcendent understanding of himself and the universe. Vasudeva is spiritually and socially flawless, and he ferries true seekers of wisdom to enlightenment. He is closely linked to the river, and he helps Siddhartha learn how to listen to the river's secrets. Siddhartha achieves enlightenment only because of his association with Vasudeva.

- **Govinda**

Siddhartha's best friend and sometimes his follower. Like Siddhartha, Govinda devotes his life to the quest for understanding and enlightenment. He leaves his village with Siddhartha to join the Samanas, then leaves the Samanas to follow Gotama. He searches for enlightenment independently of Siddhartha but persists in looking for teachers who can show him the way. In the end, he is able to achieve enlightenment only because of Siddhartha's love for him.

- **Kamala**

  A courtesan who instructs Siddhartha in the art of physical love. In addition to being Siddhartha's lover, Kamala helps him learn the ways of the city and leave his ascetic life as a Samana behind. Just before she dies from a snakebite, she reveals that Siddhartha is the father of her son.

- **Gotama**

  An enlightened religious leader with many followers. Also known as the Buddha, Gotama is said to have attained Nirvana. He teaches the Eightfold Path to his many followers as the way to achieve true enlightenment. Siddhartha and Govinda seek him out, but while Govinda becomes a follower, Siddhartha ultimately rejects him. Siddhartha concludes that while Gotama has achieved enlightenment, his teachings do not necessarily help others find enlightenment.

- **Kamaswami**

  An older businessman who teaches Siddhartha the art of business. Kamala refers Siddhartha to Kamaswami, and with Kamaswami's guidance, Siddhartha successfully insinuates himself into the society of city-dwellers. Nonetheless, the lessons he learns from Kamaswami about the material world lead only to unhappiness. Money and business are just a game for Siddhartha, and they do not lead to fulfillment.

- **Young Siddhartha**

  Siddhartha's son with Kamala. Young Siddhartha poses the final test Siddhartha must pass before enlightenment. When Kamala dies, young Siddhartha resists starting a new life with Siddhartha. He is a materialistic city-dweller, dislikes his father, and wants to return to his familiar city life. Siddhartha loves his son, and he must overcome this potentially binding love in

order to achieve enlightenment. Just as Siddhartha's own father had to let him go out on his own, Siddhartha must let his son discover the world for himself.

- **Siddhartha's Father**

  A respected Brahmin in Siddhartha's boyhood community. Siddhartha's father familiarizes Siddhartha with many basic religious teachings, but he is unable to provide Siddhartha with the answers he needs, which leads to Siddhartha's quest for enlightenment through other religious traditions. When the Samanas arrive to tempt Siddhartha away, Siddhartha's father initially resists but eventually lets him go.

- **The Samanas**

  A group of traveling ascetics who believe that a life of deprivation and wandering is the path to self-actualization. The Samanas initially captivate Siddhartha and Govinda, but the two eventually forsake them to follow the teachings of Gotama. When Siddhartha eventually leaves the Samanas, he appears to have attained a superior level of spirituality.

Siddhartha

An earnest spiritual pilgrim, Siddhartha is totally consumed by his quest for spiritual enlightenment. Though in his youth he learns the wisdom of his Brahmin heritage and masters the skills of the Samanas and the teachings of Gotama, the spiritual explanations that satisfy those around him are inadequate for Siddhartha because they do not lead to enlightenment. No matter how many others accept a particular religious explanation, Siddhartha will refuse the explanation if it rings false. Siddhartha seeks spiritual enlightenment at any cost, even when the search complicates other areas of life. Friends, lovers, and family members fall by the wayside when Siddhartha believes they are not compatible with his quest. Further, he believes no leader or philosophy is beyond questioning. Guided by a strong belief in his convictions, he argues with the head of the Samanas and even with the enlightened Gotama the Buddha himself. Siddhartha does not argue for argument's sake, nor does he question wisdom out of a sense of pride or superiority. He finds logical flaws in the teachings put before him, and he seeks the truth.

Siddhartha possesses an incredible degree of patience, which proves to be important since his quest takes a lifetime to fulfill. He progresses through successive spiritual explorations, experiences failure numerous times, but persists until he reaches his goal. The instantaneous, magical transmission of Nirvana from Siddhartha to Govinda

demonstrates that Siddhartha has found the transcendent understanding they have both sought for so long. He has finally reached his goal.

Siddhartha is the Sanskrit name of the Buddha and means “he who is on the proper road” or “he who achieves his goal.” Hesse is not attempting to directly portray the life of the Buddha himself through Siddhartha but to use Siddhartha as a means of discussing a path to enlightenment. At the same time, many striking similarities exist between Siddhartha and the actual Buddha. For example, both left promising lives in their pursuit of knowledge. In Siddhartha’s case, he leaves Kamala when he becomes disillusioned with the material world, while the Buddha left a wife and son to become an ascetic. Both studied with ascetics, and both spent many years in study by a river, finally achieving enlightenment. Siddhartha has succeeded in his own arduous quest, and at the end of the novel, he is poised to take on followers of his own.

Characters

Govinda

Siddhartha’s best friend, Govinda, is also an earnest spiritual pilgrim but does not question teachings to the same extent Siddhartha does. For example, though Govinda is excited at the chance to follow Gotama, Siddhartha goes along but says he has lost his faith in teachers. When Siddhartha decides to leave Gotama’s side, Govinda instead remains stalwartly committed. Govinda does not choose his own path but follows the suggestions of others. Similarly, when the two old friends meet in the end, Govinda quickly apprentices himself to Siddhartha because Siddhartha has attained the Nirvana they both seek. The significant difference between Govinda and Siddhartha is that Govinda is primarily a follower, whereas Siddhartha is more inclined to strike out on his own path. This difference is one of the reasons Siddhartha is eventually able to achieve enlightenment through his own efforts, while Govinda needs assistance in order to achieve the same state. Siddhartha is better able to see the truth before him because of his self-reliance. Govinda needs others to point out the wisdom he should follow and is unable to see when he is following a flawed path and, ultimately, when he is nearing enlightenment.

At the beginning of their quest, when Govinda joins the Samanas, he may well have gone along simply to be with his friend. However, the severity and austere nature of their new lifestyle leaves little reason to doubt Govinda’s conviction. He may be more of a follower than Siddhartha is, but his conviction and determination to find

enlightenment are still strong. He does, after all, eventually find enlightenment, just as Siddhartha does—he just arrives at it in a different way.

Characters:

Vasudeva

Vasudeva, the enlightened ferryman, is the guide who finally leads Siddhartha to enlightenment. Siddhartha first meets Vasudeva after leaving Gotama and Govinda and immediately notices Vasudeva's serenity. Although Vasudeva lives within this world, his presence seems to transcend it, and all who meet him feel his divine, enlightened energy. He does not boast about his power or wisdom but simply credits all knowledge he has to the river. His primary action, other than ferrying passengers across the river, seems to be listening to whatever wisdom the river imparts to him. He is such a powerful figure that when a desperate, suicidal Siddhartha, convinced he'll never reach enlightenment, encounters Vasudeva a second time, he asks to become Vasudeva's apprentice. In a way, Siddhartha relies on Vasudeva to save his life.

Vasudeva does not teach Siddhartha a complicated philosophical belief system, only that he should learn from the river and allow it to explain its wisdom. Throughout Siddhartha's spiritual progression, Vasudeva keeps him moving in the right direction by prompting him to listen to the river whenever he has questions or doubts. In a bittersweet ending to their time together, Siddhartha's achievement of Nirvana coincides with the end of Vasudeva's time on the river and on earth. Vasudeva, who has literally and figuratively ferried Siddhartha to enlightenment, can now leave the earth, with Siddhartha taking over as ferryman. Vasudeva will live on in Siddhartha's own enlightenment and teachings.

Vasudeva is a name for Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, one of the powerful gods in a Hindu trinity, and means "he who lives in all thoughts, and who lives in all people." He is the most godlike figure within the book, yet he acts with surprising humility.

Themes
Main Ideas Themes
Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

The Search for Spiritual Enlightenment
In *Siddhartha,* an unrelenting search for truth is essential for achieving a harmonious relationship with the world. The truth for which Siddhartha and Govinda search is a

universal understanding of life, or Nirvana. Siddhartha and Govinda both have a fundamental desire to understand their lives through spirituality, seek to do this by reaching Nirvana, and start with the conviction that finding Nirvana is possible. Although Nirvana leads to a perfect relationship with the world and is thus an end goal that each man aspires to reach, Siddhartha and Govinda differ in what they're willing to do in search for this truth. In Siddhartha's case, when he becomes suspicious that one path may lead to a dead end, he quickly alters his course. He is willing to abandon the path of the Brahmins for the path of the Samanas, to leave the Samanas for Gotama, and then to make a radical departure from spiritual teachers and search in the material world with Kamala and Kamaswami. He does not relent in his search and instead continues to follow whatever path becomes available if he has clearly not yet reached Nirvana.

Govinda is much less flexible in his quest for spiritual enlightenment. In his quest, he restricts himself to the spiritual and religious world and persists in his need for teachers. Although Siddhartha is willing to break with religion itself and to abandon all his training, Govinda is willing to seek truth only as long as it appears within the narrow confines of Hinduism or Buddhism and is transmitted by a respected teacher. As a result, Govinda is unable to see the truth around him, since he is limited by his belief that truth will appear in the way he has been taught by his teachers. This distinction between Siddhartha's unrelenting search and Govinda's limited search is the reason why Govinda can attain enlightenment only through an act of grace on Siddhartha's part, whereas Siddhartha is able to find truth through his own powers.

Inner vs. Exterior Guidance

In *Siddhartha,* Siddhartha learns that enlightenment cannot be reached through teachers because it cannot be taught—enlightenment comes from within. Siddhartha begins looking for enlightenment initially by looking for external guidance from organized religion in the form of Brahmins, Samanas, and Buddhists. When these external spiritual sources fail to bring him the knowledge and guidance he needs, he discards them for Kamala and Kamaswami in the material world, again using an external source in his quest. These sources also fail to teach him wisdom, and he knows he must now find wisdom on his own. This realization itself comes from within. Siddhartha leaves the Brahmins, the Samanas, Gotama, and the material world because he feels dissatisfied, not because an external source tells him to go. His eventual attainment of Nirvana does not come from someone imparting the wisdom to him but instead through an internal connection to the river, which he finds contains the entire universe.

Vasudeva is a teacher of sorts for Siddhartha, and thus an external guide, but Vasudeva never attempts to tell Siddhartha what the meaning of life is. Instead, Vasudeva directs Siddhartha to listen to the river and search within himself for an understanding of what the river says. Vasudeva does not tell Siddhartha what the river will say, but when Siddhartha reveals what the river has told him, Vasudeva simply acknowledges that he too has received the same wisdom. The river itself never actually tells Siddhartha what its revelations mean. Instead, the river reveals the complexity of existence through sound and image, and Siddhartha meditates on these revelations in order to gain an understanding of them. Govinda, on the other hand, persists in looking to teachers for his wisdom, and in the end, asks Siddhartha to teach him the path to enlightenment. Because of this reliance on an external explanation, Govinda continuously fails to find Nirvana. His final success, however, does not come as explicit directions from Siddhartha on how to achieve enlightenment. Instead, Siddhartha acts as a conduit for Govinda, as the river did for him. He asks Govinda to kiss his forehead, an act that enables Govinda to see the nature of existence in an instant. Govinda's final revelation thus comes through his own interpretation of what Siddhartha shows him in the kiss. Though interior and exterior paths to enlightenment are both explored in *Siddhartha*, the exterior path is roundly rejected. Nirvana comes from within.

The Wisdom of Indirection

Throughout the novel, Siddhartha pursues Nirvana differently, and though at first his tactics are aggressive and deliberate, he eventually finds that a more indirect approach yields greater rewards. Both Siddhartha and Govinda initially seek Nirvana aggressively and directly. Govinda remains dedicated to the relentless practice of Buddhist devotions that are specifically intended to bring about enlightenment, but Siddhartha eventually rejects these methods and instead relies on intuition for guidance. Siddhartha points out that by focusing only on the goal of Nirvana, Govinda failed to notice the tiny clues along the way that would have pointed him in the right direction. In effect, Govinda tries too hard. Siddhartha ultimately understands that because the essence of enlightenment already exists within us and is present in the world at every moment, prescriptive paths simply lead us further from ourselves and from the wisdom we seek. An indirect approach is more likely to take into account all elements of the world and is therefore better able to provide the necessary distance from which to see the unity of the world.

Motifs : Main Ideas Motifs

Love

The role of love in Siddhartha's life changes throughout his search for enlightenment. The many ways love appears and the difficulties love poses are vital to the eventual success of Siddhartha's quest. Love first appears between Siddhartha and his father, a love Siddhartha rejects when he leaves his father to follow the Samanas. Love, at this stage, restricts Siddhartha's ability to realize spiritual wisdom, and he must abandon it. In the Buddha, Siddhartha sees love in action, primarily in the form of compassion, but Siddhartha rejects this love because it is part of teachings that do not lead him to enlightenment. Kamala teaches Siddhartha the physical aspects of love, as well as the importance of love itself. However, Siddhartha is incapable of giving and receiving genuine love at this stage. He has removed himself from the world so thoroughly that he is not motivated by what the world has to offer him.

With his son, Siddhartha finally feels love, but since love is an attachment to the world, it threatens to divert Siddhartha from his course. Until now, Siddhartha has gained wisdom in the absence of love, and the love he feels for his son becomes a test of this wisdom. Enlightenment cannot exist without love, and Siddhartha must accept love, painful as it might be, if he is to achieve Nirvana. Through Kamala and his son he has learned to love the world and accept it, not resist it, in its entirety.. Siddhartha is a part of the world, yet at the same time he can transcend it.

Om

The concept ofOm, which signifies the oneness and unity of all things, marks key moments of awakening for Siddhartha. Siddhartha's ability to finally comprehendOm is his entrance into enlightenment, but along the way he encounters the idea a number of times, each time sparking a change within him. He first encountersOm in his training as a Brahmin. He realizes that though he has been taught whatOm should mean, none of those around him have fully achieved an understanding of it in their own lives. People who chant the word and understand the concept intellectually surround him, but their lives do not reflect the enlightenment that comes from fully embracing the energy ofOm. He hearsOm again when he stands near the river contemplating suicide. Realizing that life itself is indestructible, he must learn to just "be," not try to force his life along specific paths. Essentially, he is trying to merge withOm, which he recognizes as being all around him, rather than continuously search for a philosophy that accesses it on an intellectual basis. At the end of the novel, the more he listens to the river, the more aware he becomes of the complexity ofOm and how it involves not only the physical and spiritual world but also time itself. When he finally comprehends the word in its entirety and understands that all things exist at the

same moment, all possibilities are real and valid, and time itself is meaningless, he finally achieves enlightenment.

Polarities

In *Siddhartha*, Siddhartha finds that enlightenment does not come from mastering either the material or spiritual world but from finding the common ground between these polarities of existence. In the first third of the book, Siddhartha rejects the material world. The Brahmins, Samanas, and Buddhists all maintain that the material world is illusion, or Maya, that distracts a seeker from the spiritual truth. Adopting this belief, Siddhartha completely denies his body and, instead, focuses his efforts on refining his mind and memorizing the knowledge his teachers pass along to him. In the second third of the book, Siddhartha rejects the spiritual world and enters the material world, but relentlessly pursuing carnal desire does not lead him to wisdom either. Siddhartha battles with other polar opposites as well, such as time/timelessness and attachment/detachment, but in these, too, he finds that embracing one and rejecting the other does not lead to enlightenment. The river suggests this battle visually: the opposing banks represent the polarities, and the river itself represents the ideal union of them. Siddhartha finds enlightenment only when he understandsOm, the unity of polarities. He achieves transcendence when he can accept that all is false and true at the same time, that all is living and dead at the same moment, and that all possibilities are united in the spirit of the universe.

Symbols

Main Ideas Symbols

The River

The river in *Siddhartha* represents life itself, time, and the path to enlightenment. As a representation of life, it provides knowledge without words, and Siddhartha's reward for studying it is an intuitive understanding of its divine essence. The river's many sounds suggest the sounds of all living things, and the flow of the river, as well as the fact that its water perpetually returns, suggests the nature of time. The ferryman points Siddhartha in the right direction, but the river itself is Siddhartha's final instructor.

The Ferryman

In *Siddhartha*, the ferryman is a guide for both the river and the path to enlightenment. The ferryman is positioned between ordinary world and enlightenment, and those who seek enlightenment and are open to guidance will find what they need within the ferryman. Many teachers of wisdom appear during Siddhartha's search, but each fails

to lead Siddhartha to enlightenment. The ferryman, however, shows Siddhartha how to find enlightenment within himself. The first time Vasudeva meets Siddhartha, Siddhartha wants only to cross the river, and that is all Vasudeva helps him do. Vasudeva is not a teacher who will simply tell Siddhartha what he should know, but a guide who will lead him where he wishes to go. Years later, Siddhartha searches for knowledge from the river itself, and Vasudeva guides him in his attempts to hear what the river has to say. Siddhartha himself becomes a ferryman after he reaches enlightenment. He guides people back and forth across the river and eventually helps Govinda find enlightenment. In *Siddhartha*,only the ferrymen are able to help others find enlightenment.

The Smile

The only characters in *Siddhartha* who smile are those who have achieved enlightenment, and the smile evokes their spiritual perfection and harmony. Smiles are scarce among the Hindus and Samanas and in the material world, since enlightenment cannot be faked or forced. Only after going through the requisite stages leading to enlightenment can one express the beatific smile. Siddhartha first sees the smile in Gotama. The smile evokes Gotama's saintliness and peace, and it impresses Siddhartha. Even when Siddhartha argues with him, Gotama responds with a smile, indicating the balance of an enlightened soul. Similarly, the smile marks Vasudeva as an enlightened soul, and he too impresses Siddhartha with his peaceful state. Vasudeva often smiles rather than talks, suggesting that enlightenment is communicated without words. Siddhartha himself does not exhibit a smile until he has achieved his own enlightenment, and this smile, in part, enables Govinda to realize that Siddhartha is like Gotama.

Key Facts

Main Ideas Key Facts
Full Title *Siddhartha*
Author Hermann Hesse

Type Of Work Novel
Genre Spiritual and Religious Novel
Language German
Time And Place Written 1919–1921, Switzerland
Date Of First Publication 1922
Publisher Bantam
Narrator An unnamed narrator tracks Siddhartha's spiritual progress.

Point Of View Third-person omniscient. The point of view follows Siddhartha most closely.

Tone Measured without being detached; formal

Tense Past

Setting (Time) Concurrent with the life of Buddha, estimated at around 625 b.c.

Setting (Place) India

Protagonist Siddhartha

Major Conflict Siddhartha searches for total spiritual enlightenment.

Rising Action Siddhartha experiments with different teachers and approaches to Nirvana, and when they prove unsatisfactory, he turns his search inward.

Climax Siddhartha finally achieves total spiritual understanding as he sits beside Vasudeva and listens to the river.

Falling Action Siddhartha meets Govinda and shares the Nirvana he has attained.

Themes The search for spiritual enlightenment; inner vs. exterior guidance; the wisdom of indirection

Motifs Love; Om; polarities

Symbols The river; the ferryman; the smile

Foreshadowing

· Siddhartha's sloughing-off of his father's traditional Brahmin beliefs foreshadows Siddhartha's future loss of his own son.

· Siddhartha's observation to Govinda that not even the eldest of the Samanas has attained Nirvana, and Govinda's subsequent dismissal of the statement, foreshadows Govinda's inability to find Nirvana by following the teachings of others.

· The first appearance of the peaceful ferryman, whom Siddhartha encounters on his way to the city, foreshadows Siddhartha's own future as a ferryman and as a man of total spiritual peace.

Section B

Short Story (Notes)

" The Cop and The Anthem " Summary

O. Henry

There is only one character given a name in the story; Soapy is the protagonist, a man with no last name who is homeless, having come to New York to find his fortune at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is late fall, and it's getting cold and frosty. Soapy is worried because he has nowhere to sleep and knows he needs to make some kind of plan for himself if he is to survive the winter. He tends to think of the jail, Blackwell's Island, as his bad-weather hostel and he starts to commit petty crimes with the objective of getting arrested and taken to Blackwell's Island where he will be warm and receive three square meals a day. He plans to throw a brick through a store window, he creates an elaborate and expensive dine and dash, and he pretends that he is drunk and disorderly, but the police don't pick him up because his plan does not work. The expensive restaurant don't let him in. The store owner thinks that another innocent bystander has broken the window. Nothing he tries works.

Soapy comes to terms with the fact that his ploys to get arrested are not going to work. He hovers outside a church, trying to decide what to do next, and whilst he lingers he listens to a church organ playing a hymn. He begins to have a personal epiphany and decides to stop being homeless and jobless, and to get his self-respect back. He was offered a job once; he resolves that the next day he will seek out the man who offered it, and ask if the offer still stands.

While Soapy is daydreaming, a policeman taps him on the shoulder and asks what he is doing. He is arrested for loitering and the following day sentenced to three months in Blackwell's Island for this misdemeanor.

The Cop and the Anthem Summary

Soapy was a young man. He had left his home and parents. He became a vagabond. He spent his days alone in Madison Square. It was all right in summer. He made his bed warm with three newspapers. There were quite a few others like him living there.

What would happen during the winter? He started feeling uneasy. The winter was coming. He felt cold on the park-bench. He realised the need to find some cozy place. But he did not think of going to warmer regions outside the country. Just three months

in the orison on Blackwell's Island was what he wanted. There he was sure of getting food and a bed every night. He would be safe from cold wind and also from fear of the police. He had been to prison for a number of times during winter.

He decided to go to prison somehow. If he goes to any other place, he would have to pay for the room and meals. He might be asked to wash their clothes and answer all of personal questions. Prison was better than all other options. He would be his own master there.

Soapy thought of easy ways to reach the prison. If he goes to eat at restaurant and then tell them he had no money they would call a cop who would arrest him. Next morning die judge would send him to jail. His face was clean and his coat was good enough. But as soon as he put his foot inside the restaurant, the waiters blocked his entry.

He next went to a shop with a glass window. He threw a big stone through the glass. A cop arrived. But the cop did not consider soapy to have done because he had not tried to run out. The cop saw another man running, and went after him. Soapy was shocked at heart for failing two times.

Next he went to another restaurant and sat down at a table was soon eating a big dinner. When he had finished he said that he had no money. Soon he was thrown on the street outside by the waiters. His dream of being taken to prison failed again. No cop was going to arrest him.

Then he began to shout as if he had drunk too much. He danced and cried out. The cop ignored him, taking him for some noisy college boy.

Then he stole a man's umbrella, kept beside a shop door. The owner followed him. But he let Soapy go because he himself was carrying a stolen umbrella.

Soapy, at last, came to a quiet street. He stopped at his old childhood home. There was a sudden change in his soul. He felt sorry for wasting his life in such a way. He decided to pull himself out of the mud, and get a job. Soon there came a cop who arrested min for hanging around there. Next morning the judge sent Soapy to prison on Blackwell's island for three months.

2. Toba Tek Singh Summary

by Saadat Hasan Manto

Story of Partition

The story is set in the background of India-Pakistan partition of 1947. In the aftermath of political separation, many people had to relocate and uproot their lives.

There were chaos and confusion regarding what actually was Indian Territory and what was the newly formed Pakistan. The situation got even worse for patients and especially the ones in mental institutions.

Once the two countries had held talks regarding the situation of mental patients, it was decided that the Muslim patients would stay or move to Pakistan whereas the Hindu and Sikh counterparts will move to India.

Deportation Began

Even though India's move was slightly undecided, authorities in Lahore started the proceedings of deportation of Hindu and Sikh patients to India thorough Wagah-Attari land border.

The patients were a riotous bunch and were even more confused about partition as there was any coherent information or news available at the asylum. Some pretended to create their own piece of home in the asylum and did not want to leave. Some climbed up a tree and made it their dwelling whole. One person claimed himself to be God and decided that both India and Pakistan belonged to him.

Bishen Singh

Among these, there was a Sikh named Bishen Singh. He once had a huge property in Toba Tek Singh (place in Pakistan). He had been in the asylum for nearly two decades and never spoke to anyone save some jumbled mumblings.

He was often visited by his family and his daughter who grew up to become a young woman while he remained locked inside. However, since the violence post-Partition, they had not come. Bishen Singh kept asking everyone at the asylum as to which country gained Toba Tek Singh but no one had any clear answer.

Visit by a Muslims Friend

One day, he was visited by his old Muslim friend from Toba Tek Singh. He informed him that Bishen's family was safe in India and they were waiting for him to arrive in India. He also reassured him that Toba Tek Singh was still in Pakistan.

The day of the exchange came and the patients were taken to the border. There was a lot of clamor and noise. When it came to Bishen Singh's turn, popularly called as Toba Tek Singh, he did not move beyond the buffer zone between the two borders.

No guard could push him and seeing his desperation they let him free for a little while and moved to other patients. However, the man's legs soon gave way and he fell to the ground. At that moment the narrator realized that Toba Tek Singh (place and person) stood exactly nowhere, in between India and Pakistan.

Tragedy

The story is set in the background of the biggest tragedy and episode of violence in the history of independent India. The communal venom and bloodshed marred the whole event and had consequences for the entire populations of the two countries.

The tragedy and its note are loud and clear all through the text of the story. We recapitulate the event through the perspectives of different people, be it the authority or the prisoner.

Separation

Partition brought separation of families and nationalities. People became stranger in their won houses and land overnight. This was particularly true for Bishen Singh who could not even find his town of Toba Tek Singh because no one knew in which country it would end up.

He had his house in Pakistan but his home was in India as his entire family had relocated to India. This conundrum and conflict is something that generations after Independence had to counter and heal from.

Identity

Bishen Singh was a Sikh who was born in Pakistan belonged to India. This was an example of the crisis of identity that resulted from the 1947 partition. There were millions like Bishen Singh who either lost their land, their families, their religion or their life, just in the name of political independence and declaration.

The partition itself was based on religious identity but it was never justified by religion itself. The political war demolished the natural identities of millions of people and made them refugees in their own countries in matter of seconds.

Sanity

Manto plays cleverly with the idea of sanity in this story. The world outside the asylum is represented as chaotic and insane whereas the world inside it is made out to be calm and rational.

The clinical insane seemed to be more receptive of each other's differences and difficulties whereas the bright minds on the political stages seemed to be baying for blood of the 'other nation'. Arguably, it is their ideology which is often arbitrary and expedient.

The idea of madness and sanity is something that is often not discussed as it seems so clear and well defined but in fact it is anything but that. Sanity and rationality are determined by perspectives.

Hence, to a mental patient like Bishen Singh the blazing worlds of India and Pakistan seemed illogical and insane against the simple idea of peaceful home in Toba Tek Singh.

A Critical Analysis of Toba Tek Singh by Saadat Hasan Manto

A 1955 publication by twentieth century colonial Indian-Pakistani writer Saadat Hasan Manto, Toba Tek Singh is an engrossing and profound short story about the relationship between India and Pakistan, a satire on the idea of partition. Manto, known for his daring representation of distressed state of Indian partition in his stories has set the stories amid the time of partition between India and Pakistan. Originally written in Urdu language , the story deals with the inmates of the "lunatic asylum at Lahore." The characters and the setting are tools of reflective reality of the contemporary time of distress and chaos. With a tinge of autobiographical memory, Manto uses the mental asylum as a picture of miniature of the world where people of different caste and religion dwell and face the psychological trauma and imbalance. The main character of the story, Bishan Singh, is symbolic of the pain and trauma of displacement. In addition to him, the fellow inmates of the asylum are the partition refugees who suffer from mental illness but are seen to appear saner than the outer world of political chaos and governmental rift.

The first two paragraphs of the story give an introduction about the time when the story is set and the plot that follows. The two paragraphs foreground the time of exchange and the circumstances under which the "governments of India and Pakistan"

came upon a pact of exchanging the lunatics of the counter religion of the respective countries, i.e., India and Pakistan. It is in the third paragraph that Manto brings into the story the dilemma of the time of exchange and the theme of mental illness. The asylum is the representative symbol of the whole continent and madness a metaphor for trauma that people and refugees went through. The forceful movement of people is evident of the "tough job" and the "pure bedlam" when the people were reluctant to migrate from their native places for the mere reason of their religion of birth. The border lines are arbitrary and artificial. The lunatics show a more humanistic aspect of the society where the governmental aids are nothing but pure politics.

While the story is a piece of fiction, it is imbibed with light of the real exchange in the year of 1950 when the Hindu and Sikh patients from Pakistani asylum were moved to India and the Muslim counterparts moved to Pakistan. Thus, the Asylum of Lahore showcases the big picture in small confinement. The madness of these inmates of the asylum is more about the madness of partition violence than their personal impairment. The trauma of partition appears to be so absurd that it has a profound psychological impact on these inmates, in particular, and the sufferers of the partition, in general. The ruthlessness prevailing in the humankind is the cause of the uncertainty and loss of sense of belonging and disturbed identities. The character of a Sikh lunatic interrogating about the exchange with a fellow Sikh offers a speculative insight on the insignificance of demarcation on basis of caste and religion. "Sardarji, why are we being deported to India? We don't even know their language." The above words also throw a light on the innocence of people who are caught in the web of political world and suffer a loss of identity when try to align with the outer world of chaos. Manto shows underlying righteousness of these lunatic inmates of the asylum with the words that "Not all the inmates were insane." The innocence of their minds and hearts deny them any influence of the outer world. "They had only a vague idea about the division of India or what Pakistan was. They were utterly ignorant of the present situation." Another reason for their ignorance is the lack of literacy among them and the absence of their reach to media, "Newspapers hardly ever gave the true picture…" The only thing they were aware about was some "Quaid-e-Azam" who had made the state of Pakistan. But "they were all at a loss whether they were now in India or in Pakistan." The inmates are distressed with their loss of identities and belongingness: "I don't want to live in India and Pakistan. I'm going to make my home right here on this tree." All the outer chaos of partition is displayed in the hubbub in the asylum when the Muslim lunatic proclaims himself to be Jinnah and Sikh lunatic to be Tara Singh. The induced violence symbolizes the communal riots amid the times of partition. Moreover, the absence of psychiatrists in the asylum shows Manto's criticism of the partition by emphasizing the diplomatic government and bureaucratic procedures.

Manto’s use of easy style and language with words like “zamindar,” “bloody Indians,” “Sardarji” keeps the reader involved, and the use of omniscient narrator keeps the story intact. However, the main conflict is shown with the character of Bishan Singh who utters “gibberish” words and is interrogative about his town Toba Tek Singh. While his attachment of Toba Tek Singh implies his identity and belongingness, his mutterings represent the amalgamation of varied religions, languages, and thoughts, all mixed without balanced proportion. “It was all so confusing!” However the coming of Fasal Din gives an idea of hopeful humanity. The division of Gods, separation of love, the inability of communities to take the decisions et al is all represented by Manto with his own suffering and confusion.

The action reaches the peak when Bishan Singh gets mad over the situation of his Toba Tek Singh and refuses to go to any place, but sit stiff between the two borders and claim this nameless land his place of belonging as “no power on earth could dislodge him.” The last paragraph of the story evokes pity and despair to the humanity criticizing the insignificant border lines made by humans to separate the people who belong to no religion but to religion of humanity and their birth. The psychological trauma of such partitions tear the belongingness of people apart and disturb their identities which Manto was always against of and thus criticized in his works. The narrator ultimately refers to Bishan Singh as Toba Tek Singh. It is the place that belongs to him and not him who suffers for psychological belongingness. Saadat Hasan Manto thus succeeds in posing a satire on loss of psychological equilibrium of people during partition and relationship between the governments.

Marriage is a Private Affair Study Guide

Written in 1952, Chinua Achebe's short story "Marriage is a Private Affair" is about a Nigerian father who rejects his son's decision to marry for love instead of accepting an arranged marriage. While arranged marriages are traditional in the father's Ibo village, the son chooses to marry a non-Ibo woman he meets while living in the city of Lagos. The son holds out hope that his father, Okeke, will learn to accept his decision. However, years pass with Okeke obstinately refusing to have anything to with his son and daughter-in-law. It is only once Okeke learns he has two grandsons who want to visit him that he realizes the error of having hardened his heart against his family. After his revelation, the old man goes to sleep full of fear that he will die before he has the opportunity to make it up to his grandsons.

Exploring the conflicts between tradition and modernity, "Marriage is a Private Affair" uses the example of Okeke's obstinate insistence on arranged marriage to show the divide between the values of those living in cities and those living in villages in mid-century Nigeria. While Nene and Nnaemeka represent a youthful embrace of cosmopolitan ideals that prize individuality and love, Okeke represents a stubborn attachment to tradition. Ultimately, Okeke's refusal to adapt to the changing attitudes that arise alongside modernity leaves him isolated and embittered, and perhaps unable to pass on any of his culture and wisdom to his grandchildren.

Written less than a decade before Nigeria declared independence from Britain, "Marriage is a Private Affair" illustrates some of the cultural, political, and ethnic tensions that characterized Nigeria as it sought to establish its post-colonial national identity. The clash between Nnaemeka's newfound identity in Lagos and his Ibo roots speaks to the animosity between the Ibo people and northern Nigeria in the mid-twentieth century, a conflict that led to the Nigerian Civil War of the late 1960s, which saw the Ibo attempt to establish the independent secessionist state of Biafra.

Marriage is a Private Affair Summary

Set in Nigeria in the 1950s, "Marriage is a Private Affair" opens with a couple, living in the city of Lagos, having a conversation. Nene believes Nnaemeka should write to his father to tell him about their engagement. Nnaemeka explains that he will tell his father in person, adding that he does not expect that his father will look kindly upon their union, because Nene is not a member of the Ibo tribe. Further, the engagement was not an arranged marriage, which is the custom in Nnaemeka's father's village. Nnaemeka leaves Nene's place and walks home thinking about the letter his father, Okeke, recently sent him. The letter outlines Okeke's plans for Nnaemeka to marry Ugoye, a girl Nnaemeka remembers from his childhood for her tendency to beat up boys. Okeke insists in the letter that she will be a good Christian wife.

Weeks later, Nnaemeka visits home and tells his father he cannot marry Ugoye because he does not love her. His father doesn't see this as a problem. Nnaemeka tries in vain to explain that marriage is different today, and Okeke insists that nothing about marriage has changed. Nnaemeka asks Okeke's forgiveness as he explains that he is engaged to Nene. Instead of erupting in anger, as Nnaemeka expects, Okeke goes

quiet for the night. Before Nnaemeka leaves, Okeke says their engagement is Satan's work and vows that he will never meet Nene.

Okeke barely speaks to his son. Fellow villagers commiserate with the old man and recommend that he hire a herbalist to prepare *Amalile*, a medicine that women use to keep their cheating husbands faithful. Okeke rejects the idea as superstition. Six months later Nnaemeka receives a letter from his father, who has returned their wedding photograph, only he has cut it up to separate the couple. Nene cries at the sight of the mutilated photo. Nnaemeka assures her that his father will come around, but years pass with Okeke refusing to have anything to do with his son and his daughter-in-law.

Eventually, news of Nene and Nnaemeka's happy marriage travels back to Okeke's village. However, Okeke becomes known for flying into a rage when his son's name is mentioned, so nobody passes on the information. The strain of hardening his heart against his son nearly kills Okeke, but he perseveres.

One day Okeke receives a letter from Nene in which she tells him that his grandsons would like to meet him. She promises she will stay in Lagos. Having learned about his grandsons, Okeke feels his stubborn resolution falling in. Simultaneously, a rainstorm occurs, pelting his roof with large sharp drops of rain. Okeke pictures his grandsons standing in the rain, shut out from his house.

The story ends with Okeke having difficulty sleeping that night. He is full of remorse for having rejected his family, and he fears that he will not live long enough to make it up to them.

Character List

Nene
Nene is a young schoolteacher living in Lagos, Nigeria. She is engaged and then married to Nnaemeka, eventually giving birth to two unnamed sons. Although she is Christian, Nene is not an Ibo like Nnaemeka, leading Nnaemeka's father to refuse to accept the couple's union. Nene is so used to living in cosmopolitan Lagos that she is almost amused by Okeke's prejudice. Despite Okeke's many years of stubborn rejection, Nene persists in her belief that Okeke will accept their family, eventually appealing to his emotions by writing to tell him that his grandsons want to meet their grandfather.

Nnaemeka
Nnaemeka is a young man from an Ibo village who lives and works in Lagos. More modern than his orthodox father, Nnaemeka breaks his community's tradition of

arranged marriage by opting to marry for love. Although Nnaemeka anticipates his father's disapproval, he doesn't predict his father's decision to disown him, holding a grudge for years.

Ugoye Nweke
Ugoye is an Ibo woman from Nnaemeka's village who Okeke arranges for Nnaemeka to marry. Although Okeke thinks she will serve as a good Christian wife, Nnaemeka remembers Ugoye from his youth, knowing her to be slow-witted and prone to fighting.

Okeke
Okeke is Nnaemeka's father. Living in an unnamed Ibo village, Okeke is a devout Christian and traditionalist who believes marriages should be arranged by one's family and rejects the importance of marrying for love. When his son betrays his wishes, Okeke reveals his obstinacy and ability to hold a grudge, refusing for several years to have anything to do with his son and his daughter-in-law. Upon learning of the existence of his grandsons, Okeke feels remorse for having cut his family out of his life and he hopes he will live long enough to make it up to them.

Themes :

Arranged Marriage vs. Love
The central conflict in "Marriage is a Private Affair" stems from Nnaemeka's and his father's clashing conceptions of what makes a good marriage. The village-dwelling Okeke stubbornly insists upon the Ibo tradition of arranged marriage, which is orchestrated and agreed upon by the bride and groom's families, often ignoring the wishes of the couple being wed. Nnaemeka, however, values love over tradition, and thus finds a wife who is not Ibo but whom he knows he will be happy with. Nnaemeka's arguments in favor of privileging love over tradition do not sway Okeke: When Nnaemeka protests to his father that he cannot marry Ugoye because he does not love her, Okeke replies, "Nobody said you did. Why should you?" Nnaemeka insists that contemporary ideas around marriage are different than they were when Okeke was young, but Okeke refuses to accept his son's appeal, insisting that nothing about marriage has changed and the only important qualities in a wife are her Christian upbringing and good character. Ultimately, in their clashing views of matrimony, Nnaemeka embodies a modern privileging of emotion over convention while Okeke exemplifies an orthodoxy that gradually loses the battle against feelings.

Obstinacy

Obstinacy—the quality of stubbornly sticking to an opinion in the face of persuasion—is another of the story's major themes. Embodied in Okeke's refusal to accept his son's decision to marry for love, obstinacy enables Okeke to reject every emotional appeal Nnaemeka and Nene make to him over the years. Preferring to disown his son rather than entertain the possibility that he is not entitled to determine who his son marries, Okeke grows to old age alone in his village, becoming so angry when his son is mentioned that villagers learn to keep their mouths shut about the happy couple. Okeke's obstinacy leads him to cut up Nnaemeka and Nene's wedding picture and send it back to the couple as a symbol of his contempt. It is only when Okeke learns that he has grandsons that his obstinacy is shaken. Having successfully hardened his heart to his family, Okeke finally loses the battle against familial affection when he pictures his grandsons standing in the rain, shut out from his home. By the end of the story, Okeke feels remorse for having been so stubborn and unfeeling.

Tradition vs. Modernity

The tensions that arise from the conflict between tradition and modernity is another central theme in "Marriage is a Private Affair." Explored overtly through the conflict between arranged marriage and marrying for love, as well as the juxtaposition between city life and rural life, the theme of tradition vs. modernity also arises within the dynamics of Okeke's village. Despite his obstinate rejection of his son's decision to marry for love, Okeke is considered more modern than his fellow villagers. When other men discuss the option of hiring a herbalist to brew a concoction that could keep Nnaemeka's heart under his father's control, Okeke rejects the idea, as he is "known to be obstinately ahead of his more superstitious neighbours in these matters." However, Okeke is unaware of the hypocrisy of having a steadfast adherence to the tradition of arranged marriage while easily dismissing the concept of traditional medicine. Nene and Nnaemeka also hold a mix of traditional and modern values. While they are willing to disobey Okeke in the matter of love and marriage, they cannot reject him in the way he rejects them, continuing to reach out to him in the tradition of honoring one's elders.

City vs. Village

In "Marriage is a Private Affair," Achebe juxtaposes the differences between city life in Lagos and rural life in an Ibo village. While urbanity is associated with a diversity of backgrounds and viewpoints, the village is associated with tradition, adherence to a

singular culture, superstition, religiosity, and a stubborn refusal to change. While Nene represents the city, having lived so long in the "cosmopolitan atmosphere" of Lagos that she is surprised to learn that Nnaemeka's father still believes in arranged marriage, Okeke represents the country, obstinate in his belief in tradition. Regularly traveling between the city and the village, Nnaemeka finds himself torn between his newfound urban identity and his rural origins, feeling allegiance to both his wife and his father. Although Achebe begins the story from Nnaemeka's point of view in the city, the narrative point of view stays in the village after Okeke rejects his son. The shift in perspective immerses the reader in Okeke's stubborn and lonely life apart from family. Alone, Okeke cannot pass on any wisdom or traditions to his grandsons—a state of affairs Okeke comes to regret. In this way, "Marriage is a Private Affair" illustrates how the village's refusal to adapt to the cultural changes brought about in the city leads to a greater divide that will cause the village and its traditions to die out.

Marriage is a Private Affair Symbols, Allegory and Motifs

Mutilated Wedding Picture (Symbol)

The cut-up wedding picture of Nene and Nnaemeka is a symbol of Okeke's stubborn refusal to accept Nene as his son's wife. Even though Okeke does not approve of their marriage, Nene and Nnaemeka send Okeke a photograph of the couple on their wedding day, believing that he will reverse his position. To show his sustained contempt for their union, Okeke cuts Nene's figure out of the picture of the couple and mails it back. Nene cries when she sees the mutilated image, not having anticipated that the old man's disdain for her could be so strong.

Herbalist's Medicine (Symbol)

The herbalist's medicine is a symbol of loyalty. Midway through the story, Okeke's fellow villagers commiserate with him about his son's decision to marry for love. The men discuss how Okeke ought to hire a native doctor herbalist to prepare *Amalile*, a medicine that supposedly induces cheating husbands to return their loyalty to their wives. Okeke is opposed to the idea, citing the example of Mrs. Ochuba, a woman who tried out the Amalile by feeding it to the herbalist instead of her husband, a change which resulted in the herbalist's death. Ultimately, the knowledge of his grandsons causes Okeke to regret his rejection of his family, showing how the grandsons bring about familial loyalty in Okeke in the same way *Amalile* is said to promote loyalty in men.

Storm (Symbol)

The storm at the end of "Marriage is a Private Affair" symbolizes Okeke's emotional state. A storm is first mentioned in relation to Okeke's emotions when Nnaemeka insists that Nene is the only woman he can marry and Nnaemeka expects his father will unleash a storm of anger. That storm doesn't come, as Okeke instead recedes from his son physically and emotionally. The storm finally arrives at the end of the story, after Okeke learns that he has grandsons. However, the sudden appearance of a storm in the sky coincides not with Okeke's anger but with his sorrow and regret. Achebe writes that "it was one of those rare occasions when even Nature takes a hand in a human fight," implying that the heavy rains help convince Okeke that he needs to give up his opposition to his son's marriage. With the rain beating down on his roof, Okeke is distracted in his attempt at humming a hymn by the mental image of his grandsons standing outside, shut out of his house. Okeke cannot bear to think of himself inflicting this rejection upon his grandsons. He goes to sleep full of remorse for his behavior, hoping he will live long enough to make it up to the boys. In this way, the storm represents the love and affection Okeke has needed to hold back to sustain his obstinate disapproval of his son's choice to marry for love.

Marriage is a Private Affair Essay Questions

1

What is the significance of the storm at the end of "Marriage is a Private Affair"?

The storm at the end of "Marriage is a Private Affair" is a symbol of the love Okeke withholds from his son after learning of his son's engagement to Nene. When Nnaemeka tells Okeke of the engagement, arguing that he is breaking with the tradition of arranged marriage to marry for love, Nnaemeka expects "the storm to burst." In this instance, the storm is a metaphor for the anger Nnaemeka anticipates after having disobeyed his father. However, that storm doesn't come. Instead of erupting in anger, Okeke keeps his emotions to himself, retiring to his room for the night. The storm—both literal and metaphorical—finally arrives at the end of the story, once Okeke has learned of the existence of his grandsons. However, the sudden breaking of a storm coincides not with a release of anger but a release of remorse and affection. Achebe writes, "It was one of those rare occasions when even Nature takes a hand in a human fight." In this

passage, Achebe suggests that the rain convinces Okeke to see the error of his ways, prompting him to picture his grandsons standing out in the rain, shut out of his house, shut out of his love. In this way, the storm represents the feelings that Okeke denies himself in order to hold on to his resentment of Nnaemeka. Eventually, those feelings, acting with the full force of Nature, overpower his stubborn will and cause Okeke to regret that he ever withheld his love.

2

Explain the significance of the central conflict in "Marriage is a Private Affair."

The central conflict in "Marriage is a Private Affair" revolves around Nnaemeka and Okeke's competing visions of why one should marry. While Okeke insists upon the Ibo tradition of arrange marriage, which involves family members deciding who one should marry, Nnaemeka has lived long enough in the city to have learned that love is a prerequisite for marriage. Conflicts erupt when Nnaemeka cannot convince Okeke to understand his view. While Okeke insists to Nnaemeka that his newfangled ideas are the work of Satan, Nnaemeka insists upon marrying Nene, going through with the wedding without his father's blessing. Nnaemeka holds fast to the idea that his father will come around, but he underestimates the extent to which Okeke is attached to custom. Ultimately, the battle against marrying for love and arranged marriage is won by love. Okeke softens when he learns about his grandsons, and he must accept that his adherence to tradition has not preserved the family but has left him alone and embittered.

3

What is the significance of the geographic divide in "Marriage is a Private Affair"?

By having Nene and Nnaemeka live in the city of Lagos and Okeke live in an unnamed Ibo village, Achebe presents a juxtaposition of not just place but values. Having lived in the diverse, modern, and cosmopolitan atmosphere of Lagos most of her life, Nene is shocked to learn that Okeke is so attached to the custom of arranged marriage. Okeke, by contrast, is shocked to learn that his son is willing to dispense with his village's customs after having lived in the city. While Nene represents the modernity of the city and Okeke represents the traditions and religious scrupulosity associated with rural life, Nnaemeka travels between the village and Lagos, torn between allegiances to his origins and to his new self-conception. Ultimately, Nnaemeka chooses the city and Nene over his father and the village. Although Nnaemeka reaches out to his father and offers to visit, his

father rejects these offers, refusing to let his son believe he can live in both realities. Although Okeke considers himself to have "won" in his stubborn refusal to see his family, Nene and Nnaemeka develop a happy life together, while Okeke is embittered and alone. Stuck in the village, Okeke restricts himself from sharing in the love of his family and in passing on the village traditions to his grandsons. In this way, it is the city that wins out over the village, whose traditions are destined to die out if not kept alive by the next generation.

Thank you * Good luck