

**ASSIGNMENT FOR MEG – 08**  
**NEW LITERATURES IN ENGLISH**  
**July 2020 and January 2021 Session**

Programme: MEG  
Assignment Code: MEG-8/TMA/2020-2021  
Max Marks: 100

**Attempt all the ten questions and answer each question in approximately 500 words.**

- 1 Do you think 'New Literatures in English is a more appropriate term than 'Commonwealth Literatures'? Give reasons for your answer.
- 2 *A Grain of Wheat* clearly expresses Ngugi's views about British colonial rule in Kenya. Do you agree? Give a reasoned answer.
- 3 Is Wole Soyinka making a political statement through his play *A Dance of the Forests*? Discuss with reference to the play.
- 4 Analyze Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* as a novel of Partition.
- 5 Examine Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* as a diasporic novel.
- 6 Compare and contrast Brathwaite's analysis of Jamaican society in "Wings of a Dove" with Walcott's views on Trinidadian society in "The Spoiler's Return."
- 7 How does the poem "Dan is the Man" subvert and debunk the tools of colonial education?
- 8 Does Patrick White use myths and symbols convincingly in *The Solid Mandala*? Explain with examples from the text.
- 9 Attempt a detailed character sketch of Hager Shipley in the novel *The Stone Angel*.
- 10 There is a close relationship between language and culture. Do you agree? Base your answer on your knowledge of African literature.

# ASSIGNMENT SOLUTIONS GUIDE (2020-2021)

## MEG – 08: NEW LITERATURES IN ENGLISH

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**Q1 Do you think 'New Literatures in English is a more appropriate term than 'Commonwealth Literatures'? Give reasons for your answer.**

**Ans.** It is an accepted form of critical scholarship that concepts and terms which become dated are held up to interrogation. This is what has happened in the case of 'Commonwealth Literature.' At the time when the term gained currency the U.K. had a powerful international presence, not the least because it had been the single largest colonial power till about a decade or so before the 1960s, and its former colonies had recently come together under the umbrella Commonwealth. Even within this contradictions abound. In an essay entitled "'Commonwealth Literature' Does Not Exist" Salman Rushdie observes, "South Africa and Pakistan, for instance, are not members of the Commonwealth, but their authors apparently belong to its literature. On the other hand, England, which, as far as I'm aware, has not been expelled from the Commonwealth quite yet, has been excluded from its literary manifestation" (1991:62). Rushdie's characteristic flippancy should not obscure the seriousness of his purpose in commenting on the naively political origins of literary labels with limited efficacy. As early as 1970 William Walsh, appointed as professor to the first Chair of Commonwealth Literature at the University of Leeds, commented on his usage of the term in a book length study of selected Indian, African, Caribbean, Australian, New Zealand and Canadian authors. Walsh professes an awareness that it "may be objected to by those who take a more exact political view of the Commonwealth than I take here." Writers, he feels, may wish to see themselves as arising out of a particular "historical tradition" and "national context" and not as contributors to the literature of an "amorphous Commonwealth" (1970: 10). Almost twenty years later Naming the Discipline.

The conception of this amorphousness is contemptuously phrased thus. "This bunch of upstarts, huddling together under this new and badly made umbrella-' (Rushdie. 1991:63). I am suggesting that the amorphousness of the concept. Leading to confusion as to what can or cannot be included under this label, is the least serious objection which can be raised against it. Remember that most of the commonwealth countries derive many aspects of their political, legal and educational systems from the British model. The similarities between the British and [Indian legal systems are a case in point. So when the term is adopted for the literatures of these countries it implies as if even the forms of cultural expression derive from and are assessed by conceptual and critical models originating in a country formerly exercising control over, but now supposedly on an equal footing with independent nations. The easy appropriation of the 'common' literary 'wealth' of these nations by the British academia can be critiqued on these grounds. A celebratory view of 'Commonwealth Literature' and wholesale approbation of the two words in conjunction is taken by that veteran of Commonwealth literature. studies in India,

C.D. Narasimhaiah. This is evinced in statements like the following: "The Commonwealth offers possibilities for an intelligent meeting of the East and the West . . ." (Narasimhaiah, 1978:xxix). The hierarchization implicit in this meeting which was the direct consequence of colonization leading to imposition of the English language in countries now part of the Commonwealth as well as the irony inherent in the nomenclature of this political body are issues not taken into account. In among recent work Narasimhaiah uses a phrase of Chinua Achebe's to label Commonwealth Literature "the heirloom of . . . [a] multiple heritage" (1995:25). It can be argued that the "heritage" spoken of here was imposed rather than inherited in most cases. There is a hierarchization implicit in this imposition which means that Commonwealth Literature is positioned below English literature 'proper' . . . or . . . places English Literature at the center and the rest of the world at the periphery" (Rushdie. 199 I 356). Recall the concept of the center and the periphery which I explained in the section titled 'Origins' and try and understand Rushdie's statement in the context of the academia. Valorization of Commonwealth Literature does not obscure the fact that literature falling within this rubric is still considered a category within English Literature with most British universities offering a token selection of tests compromising a study of this area.

**Q2. *A Grain of Wheat* clearly expresses Ngugi's views about British colonial rule in Kenya. Do you agree? Give a reasoned answer.**

**Ans.** In *A Grain of Wheat*, Britain's colonization of Kenya is the context against which its characters are formed as well as the primary political tension of the book. Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o, himself a native Kenyan, uses this context and development of his characters to explore the moral aspect of colonization from both the perspective of the British and rural Kenyans. Ngũgĩ's narrative argues that, although both the colonizer and the colonized feel morally justified in their pursuits, colonialism is ultimately an immoral and oppressive practice, justifying the colonized people's struggle for freedom, even through violent means.

The British colonialists and the Kenyan freedom fighters (the Mau Mau) want fundamentally opposing futures for Kenya, pitting them at war with each other and creating a moral tension over the future of Kenya. The British, in the expansion of their empire, seek to modernize Kenya with technology and administration. However, in doing this, they force themselves upon ancient ethnic groups like the Gikuyu and steal their land from them for their own purposes. The Mau Mau fighters, with the support of most of their village, Thabai, seek to push "the whiteman" completely out of Kenya so they can preserve their way of life. Rather than the "modern" future envisioned by the colonizers, the Gikuyu hope to maintain their independence and right to self-govern, as well as their ancestral traditions. The moral tension over the future of Kenya is exemplified by the fact that some Kenyans, and even some Gikuyu, choose to align themselves with the British and adopt their vision of the future as Kenya's best option. This makes colonization more than simply a conflict between nations, but a conflict between moral ideals: Western imperialism versus Kenyan tradition.

Both the colonizer and the colonized see themselves as the righteous, heroic figure working for the good of humanity, and their enemies as evil. This is exemplified in the story by the mirrored characters John Thompson and Kihika. John Thompson, the English regional governor, is an evangelist of British colonialism, believing it to be a moralizing and purifying force of human

progress. Decades before the story takes place, John meets two African students studying in a British institution who are thoroughly knowledgeable of Western history and literature and convinced of British imperialism's benefit to the world. This awes and inspires John, in his eyes demonstrating the power of colonialism to replace the "irrationality, inconsistency, and superstition so characteristic of the African and Oriental races" with "the principle of Reason, of Order, and of Measure." To a group of officers, John makes the declaration, "To administer a people is to administer a soul," suggesting that beyond making subjects more rational and less superstitious, British colonialism makes them more intrinsically human and moral, further from primitive beasts.

In contrast, Kihika, a young Gikuyu man, is raised on stories of British oppression and injustice, inspired by Gandhi's rejection of their imperialism in India. With his own eyes, Kihika sees how the British have forced the Gikuyu tribe—who take their relationship to their ancestral lands very seriously—out of their original territory, stolen their lands, and resettled them in British-controlled districts. Furthermore, for the last three generations the British colonialists have subjected Kihika's people to forced labor and made them pay exorbitant taxes, often with the threat of detention, rape, or murder. From an early age, Kihika knows his life's calling is to lead the moral fight against the British: "from early on, he had visions of himself, a saint, leading Kenyan people to freedom and power." In Kihika's eyes, the sins of the colonizers are obvious, suggesting that colonization is not the establishment of a moral society, but of an evil social order; the righteous cause is Kenyan freedom.

Although to each party, their own aims seem noble, Ngũgĩ's depiction of their representative figures and their methods argues that colonialism is indefensible and barbaric at its core, giving the moral high ground to the Kenyan freedom fighters. Both Kihika and John wage their war through violence; Kihika as the leader of the Mau Mau resistance fighters, and John as the brutal overseer of the detention camps and the colonial soldiers in his region. Notably, both groups blame the need for such violence on the other. While Kihika's fighters kill British soldiers and are labeled as terrorists by the British—Kihika himself assassinates John's predecessor—the British are repeatedly depicted raping and murdering their Kenyan subjects. As the overseer of the detention camps, John and his underlings routinely torture prisoners to get information from them and break their spirit of resistance. Although the British government chastises John for beating eleven prisoners to death in a single week, they only put such pressure on him to save face once the killings make international headlines. Privately, it seems that John's barbarism earns him the quiet adoration of his colleagues, suggesting that on some level, the British revel in the domination of their subjects. Although the author does not depict the freedom fighters as entirely blameless, their violence pales in comparison to the abhorrent violence the British commit, often against defenseless civilians and prisoners. This uneven depiction argues that in the conflict between colonizers and colonized, the Kenyans and their quest for freedom morally outweighs the British mission to "moralize" what they see as a lesser country. If violence is the only way for the Gikuyu to fight British oppression, *A Grain of Wheat* implies, so be it.

The novel ends on the day of Kenya's independence from Britain, thus resolving the conflict between colonizer and colonized. Even so, since the author observes that Britain remains imperialistic, the moral argument against such colonization—by any country—remains firm.

**Q3. Is Wole Soyinka making a political statement through his play *A Dance of the Forests*? Discuss with reference to the play.**

**Ans.** The collectivism and immediacy of dramatic experience challenge playwrights to employ this genre in order to convey political, cultural, and sometimes philosophical or ideological messages. Hence, if a country is in a state of war, under colonialism, or undergoes a revolution, the stage functions as a platform where resistance or acceptance is presented, and where identity marking can take place. In this chapter, my intention is to focus on drama as play that is a medium through which issues of history, cosmology, and a nation's politics are addressed. Particularly, I would like to examine *A Dance of the Forests* by the Nigerian Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka. The play exemplifies how the stage can be used to present the cosmology and worldview of a culture in general, and of the Yoruba in particular, in a context that challenges the romanticised history of pre-colonial Africa and the political future of post-independent Nigeria. In 1960, the year of Nigeria's independence from British colonization, Soyinka was awarded a Rockefeller bursary and returned to Nigeria to study African drama. He returned with a clear sense of scepticism about the political future of his country. Therefore, when he was asked to write a play that would celebrate independence, he seized this opportunity to challenge the Nigerian audience to re-evaluate their political future when the heroism and chivalry of independence fades away. Hence, *the gathering of the tribes* is the pre-colonial context that Soyinka used to parody the political future of Nigeria. My chapter is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on the deployment of the play in terms of presenting the peculiar cosmology and worldview of the Yoruba. *A Dance of the Forests* is a play that demonstrates a complex interplay between gods, mortals, and the dead while it addresses the experience of self-discovery within the context of West African spiritualism. The second part is devoted to the use of the play as a warning against a disturbed political future under the tyranny of local leaders. Soyinka used pre-colonial history to assert that tyranny and dictatorship were not restricted to colonisers, but have also been practiced during the times of African leadership.

**Q4. Analyze Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* as a novel of Partition.**

**Ans.** Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* was first published in London in 1988. In the 1991 American edition, this title was changed to *Cracking India*, because the publishers felt Americans would misunderstand "ice candy" and confuse it with drugs. The novel is set in pre-partition India in Lahore. It belongs to the genre of the Partition novel like Manohar Malgaonkar's *A Bend in The Ganges* (1964), Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1979), Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), B. Rajan's *The Dark Dancer* (1959) and to a certain extent Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980). These books present the Indian perception of the Partition holocaust. Mehr Nigar Masroor's *Shadows of Time* (1987) and Mumtaz Shahnawaz's *The Heart Divided* (1957) present the Pakistani version of these violent and tragic events. Both the versions are however free from religious bias and written more in agony and compassion than in anger. However in the overall genre of Indian-English fiction, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* is the third novel on Partition by a woman author. A couple of years earlier, Mehr Nigar Masroor had written a novel about the impact of Partition on families divided by Partition. The first novel by a woman author on these traumatic events was *Sunlight on a Broken*

Column (1 96 1) by Attia Hosain. Both Attia Hosain and Bapsi Sidhwa share similar perspectives on the calamities of Partition. The denouement of both novels is comparable as they stress the % vulnerability of human lives. The Partition relentlessly divided friends, families, lovers and neighbours in both countries. b Overall, *Ice-Candy-Man* is a novel of upheave1 which includes a cast of characters from all communities -Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Parsis. Thus a multiple perspective of Partition emerges as viewed by all the affected people. However what really distinguishes Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* is the prism of Parsi sensitivity through which the cataclysmic event is depicted. It is the only novel written by a Parsi on the theme of Partition. This makes it unique. Another fascinating aspect of this novel is the use of the child narrator, the precocious Parsi girl Lenny. Lenny is like the persona that Chaucer adopts in his Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* rendering credibility by being almost a part of the reader's consciousness. It is a device which is a source of sharp irony and enables Bapsi Sidhwa to treat a historical moment such as Partition without morbidity, pedantic display or censure. The unique aspect of this Partition novel is that the author throughout maintains for us a balance between laughter and despair. The change of attitude of the Parsi community, the impact of violence on the girl child narrator, the use of allegory to depict the horrors of Partition, the role of rumour, the dangers of communal frenzy and the rise of obscurantism are all aspects of the Partition which get reflected in *Ice-Candy-Man*. I will show in the subsequent subdivisions how the author uses witty banter, irony and parody in her sensitive handling of the impact of Partition on the Parsi community, the girl-child narrator and deteriorating human relationships. It is these aspects which makes Bapsi Sidhwa's novel unusual. Otherwise the cruelty, the horrors, the human loss and dislocation of Partition have been chronicled in the works of other Partition novelists.

**Q5. Examine Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* as a diasporic novel.**

**Ans.** The diasporic sensibility is valuable for attempting to bridge cultures through a widening of experience. Experience might be widened but bridging cultures, especially for one who has been away from the mother country and generally not in touch with it, is almost impossible. In the process, the diasporan suffers from a sense of loss and unhappiness. A postcolonial reconstruction of *A House for Mr. Biswas* reveals this unhappiness. Despite the statement made in the title, Mr. Biswas did not find a house in keeping with his expectations. He accepted the shortcomings of the house on Sikkim Street in his last days, to the extent that at times it gave the illusion of being the ideal house in the soothing shade of the laburnum tree. But you know that it is the quest that engaged the seeker, not the particular object that he sought. A key text that should help your reading of diasporic history is *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* by Paul Gilroy (Harvard University Press, 1993). Gilroy juxtaposes the metaphors of "root" and "route" in his study of diasporic literature. The "root" metaphor reconstructs memorially a pristine, pure, uncontaminated homeland to which the first generation immigrant dreamt of returning. In the novel one reads about Pundit Tulsi's dream of returning to India, a dream that became meaningless after his death. In *Findings* Centre Naipaul talks about his grandfather who died on his way back to his native village near Gorakhpur. The "route" metaphor suggests the journey and the historical interactions between masters and indentured immigrants little better than slaves, which have forever Why did Mr.

"contaminated" the diasporic ethos and memory. Vijay Mishra in his "(B) ordering Biswas want a Naipaul: Indenture History and Diasporic Poetics" locates the "route7" metaphor in House? Two geographical spaces: the ship and the plantation barracks.

For most of these immigrants who had rarely travelled out of their villages, prior to this voyage, it took time to comprehend the restrictive implications of indenture. When it did, these people, most of whom carried the Rumcharitmanas and the Gita with them as talisman, the experience of indenture was likened to a long exile similar to Rama's vanavasa, out of which they would emerge purer than before. In the barracks, also known as coolie lines, both because the laborers lived in them and they were lines of thirty or forty rooms constructed back to back, each family was allotted a room with no place for cooking, no bathrooms or toilets. To quote from "Totas Tale" a poem by Satendra Nandan, a Fijian Indian poet, critic and statesman.

**Q6. Compare and contrast Brathwaite's analysis of Jamaican society in "Wings of a Dove" with Walcott's views on Trinidadian society in "The Spoiler's Return."**

**Ans.** Here I forward the idea of Pastfarimism as a counterculture to the prevailing cultural mores in the Caribbean and particularly Jamaican society, as revealed through the beliefs and the language used by members of this sect. The existence of Rastas on the margins of society has been the subject of Caribbean fiction and poetry. Roger Mais's novel *Brother Man* (1954) depicting a Christ like Rastafarian has been analyzed by Brathwaite in detail as an epitome of Jazz aesthetic. In the 1970s Orlando Pztterson wrote a novel on the same theme titled *Children of Sisyphus* which shows the influence of Mais's work. In poetry the work of Dennis Scott and James Berry has dealt with this figure. Rastafarianism developed in Jamaica, believed Ethiopia to be the ultimate name of all black people and its emperor, Haile Selassi, to be divine. The word originated from 'ras', 'chief', the title of an Ethiopian lord or prince and 'tafari,' family name of the emperor. The appearance and practices of members of this cult are a marker of their peripheral position. .They follow certain Old Testament tenets including refusal to cut the hair and beliefs which include vegetarianism, ganja (opium) smoking and rejection of private property. In keeping with this last tenet they use the word Babylon in its Biblical sense to denote any society characterized by sinful pursuits. Such is the Westernized Jamaican society where people are engaged in dishonest commercial and political dealings. From its beginnings in the nineteen thirties the Rastafarian movement has had a great impact on the people of Jamaica and the Caribbean. Many of its ideas, considered marginal at its inception, have passed into the mainstream and become commonplaces of thought on black power and majority control. This appropriation has been oriented towards a demand for social justice in opposition to hegemonic practices exerted by the state and its apparatuses like the police and the judiciary. The impact of these ideas has been documented by historians like Walter Rodney and cultural critics like Rex Nettleford who see it as an expression of "black consciousness" in the face of a "continuing colonial society" based on suppression and oppression. The Rastafarian efforts to counter power structures in society include a dismantling of hegemony imposed by structures of language. This is particularly evident in modes of address used for asserting identity. They consciously refer to themselves as "black men" rather than "Negroes," as a reaction to the derogatory use of the latter word since colonial times. In Jamaican creole the first person singular is usually expressed by the pronoun "me", and the plural by "we." To the Rastafarians,

however, both "me" and "we" as objects of the sentence are always governed by the subject much like the way in which Europeans governed the slaves. Because the Rastas think the use of "me" points to a subservient attitude on the part of the blacks they insist on the use of "I" for the personal pronoun (Ashcroft 48-49). The letter can also be a homonym with "high" and indicates the spiritually bound human self shared by all believers probably because it is also the last syllable of Ras Tafari. While reading the poem you will notice that Braithwaite has used the counter-language of the Rastas as an inextricable element of his poetic idiom.

**Q7. How does the poem "Dan is the Man" subvert and debunk the tools of colonial education?**

**Ans.** I have quoted entire calypso because it offers a significant insight into an alternative oral literary form that subverts and debunks the tool of colonial education - Capt. J.O. Cutteridge's *West Indian Readers* (1926-1929), a text book widely used in the Caribbean school curriculum for three decades. It questions the worth of a standardizing education for a Caribbean citizen. The narrator deftly articulates his escape from this debilitating system to save himself from becoming a block headed mule. In its use of irony and cultural mimicry, this calypso can be seen as a sign of protest and resistance that helps shape the emerging Caribbean literature. In fact Braithwaite has firmly argued for according a privileged status to the calypso for not only using it as an available literary model for Caribbean discourse but as a literary form itself.

However it would be naive to presume that this revisionist agenda for a literature of social engagement went unchallenged by a more orthodox position. There were still many writers who accorded an apolitical status to art and subscribed to a more universal, standard and anglocentric view of literature. Two quotations will help us to understand this position. The first is by J.E.C. Mac Farlane from his 1935 address 'The Challenges of Our Time' - "

". . . As representatives of a great tradition. We offer you poetry upon which we feel certain the true foundation of this Europe rests and by which it will be preserved throughout the storm that hangs above the horizon of the civilization.. ." - (1 10)

Mr. Farlane also speaks about the function of poetry as being of greatest service to humanity in "restoring the lost outline, in raising it from the maze of sensuous things into the clear atmosphere of the spirit". E. A. Carr's opinion concurs with Mac Farlanes' position -

". . . Many good artists today are deliberately denying . . . . The essential part that tradition plays in art. The flouting of this fact has something evers of the fanaticism of a crusade . . . . It seems the political unrest of the age has seeped into and infected the serenity of the sphere of art . . . "(111) - - Literature

- Literature Notice that both McFarlane and Carr unequivocally divorce art and literature from the social and political context and advocate a Leavsite version of tradition and moral values. They privilege the imperial motherland and speak of themselves as part of the imperial culture. Carr in fact derides socially committed art as a fanatic crusade with the obvious implication that this crusade needs to be tempered down. According a privileged and enabling position to the Western tradition is also evident in C.L.R. James' essay 'Discovering Literature in Trinidad' (1930). He claims an undisguised pride in his intellectual heritage and emphasizes his apprenticeship to western literature. However it is significant to remember that C.L.R. James was a central figure in Trinidad's anti-colonial movements and he drew upon his 'mastery' of



classical education to make Trinidadians aware of their society and literature. He is also responsible for upholding cricket as a West Indian sport. His ambivalent subject position reflects the paradoxical situation of a colonized intellectual. He both incorporates the view of the colonizer and the colonized. At least James denies ideologically fixed positions to the heritage of Western Tradition. In this, his position is markedly different to that of McFarlane and Carr who subscribe totally to the ideology of colonial traditions. The texts and debates within this period were clearly shaped by and instrumental in major cultural transitions that emerged in the Caribbean in later decades. They sought to remake their national identities and Caribbean homelands from their colonial selves. Yet the powerful dominance of the colonial ideology continued to spawn orthodox positions and aesthetic models. The project of cultural decolonization was far from complete, as our next section will testify. We shall turn to the 'booming' of the West Indian novel in the 1950s and examine the critical practice of this decade.

**Q8. Does Patrick White use myths and symbols convincingly in *The Solid Mandala*? Explain with examples from the text.**

**Ans.**

Patrick White's avowed desire to rise above realistic writing and discover the poetry and mystery encapsulated in ordinary lives has made him extensively use mythopoeic elements in his works. His works embody a structure or framework linked to myths and parallel motifs. *The Solid Mandala* is no exception, though how exactly he has employed these elements and to what effect remains a matter of interpretation. He has drawn on Christian motifs, beginning with the Adam and Eve motif in *The Tree of Man* right through to the crucifixion motif in *Riders in the Chariot*. Marshall Best sees a continuation of this trend in his interpretation of the relationship of the two brothers. "In *The Solid Mandala*, still absorbed with aspects of the problem of personal identity, he tried out his own version of the Cain and Abel legend in a story of two contemporary brothers"(Best, 692). Patricia Morely interprets that same relationship as allegory. "On the allegorical level there is the further connotation of the mystery of the relationship between man's body and soul, identified with Arthur and self-will, identified with Waldo"(Morley, 5).

Equally significant is White's ability to invest an ambience of myth and cosmic symbolism replete with allusions to many kinds of religions - ancient, modern, Eastern, Western around the most mundane of situations. Life itself becomes a series of epiphanic moments for Arthur. For example, when Arthur delivers groceries, Mrs. Feinstein offers him lemonade and asks him to "drink it slowly and concentrate" so

he can “extract the *prana* from this lemonade”(241). Some of this is again a matter of interpretation and having an eye for details. For example Walsh says, “The bus journey has in it a certain ritual quality, as though the two ladies were not only beating the bounds of the terrain of the novel but defining its sensibility”(Walsh, 85). Similarly, Thelma Herring comments, “The symbolic use of physical characteristics is in fact a marked feature of the novel. Arthur’s brown eyes link him not only with his gentle father but also with Dulcie, Len Saporta, and their children... while Waldo with his “inherited eyes”, pale and cold, is linked with the mother whose aristocratic connections fascinate him, and feels an affinity with other blue-eyed people”(Herring, 79).

**Q9. Attempt a detailed character sketch of Hagar Shipley in the novel The Stone Angel.**

**Ans.** Hagar Shipley is the novel’s protagonist and narrator. A ninety-year-old woman whose rapid physical and mental decline often sends her reeling backwards into memories of her youth in the fictional Manitoba prairie town of Manawaka, Hagar is a heavy, flatulent, raving mess of a woman who nonetheless clings to the small remaining scraps of agency over her own choices. At the start of the book, Hagar is living with her oldest son Marvin and his wife Doris, though she resents their company, the fact that they have moved into her home, and the concerned way they talk to and handle her. Hagar begins to suspect that Marvin and Doris want to be rid of her, and when she comes across an advertisement for a nursing home left out on the kitchen table, she knows her time is limited. Hagar takes one of her social security checks and runs away, boarding a bus bound for the coast. As she hides out in the coastal forests, she declines even further, and her moments of lucidity grow farther and farther apart as she reflects on her strict father’s dominion over her and her brothers’ childhoods, the end of her marriage, years ago, to the crass, coarse farmer Brampton Shipley, and the chaotic life and tragic death of her second, favorite son John. Hagar is eventually rescued and brought to a hospital, where she lives out her final days in a haze of stubborn resistance and, eventually, conscious attempts to overcome her own stubborn personality and finally give her family the kindness they have long deserved. Hagar’s life is a rich tapestry of indecision and wrong decisions, dependence and independence, as well as love, lust, and loss. Her complicated life is the basis for several of the novel’s major themes: womanhood, choices and identity, and the twinned love and resentment that often coexist within—and can even come to define—one’s life with one’s family.

**Q10. There is a close relationship between language and culture. Do you agree? Base your answer on your knowledge of African literature.**

**Ans.** The relationship between language and culture is deeply rooted. Language is used to maintain and convey culture and cultural ties. Different ideas stem from differing language use within one’s culture and the whole intertwining of these relationships start at one’s birth.

When an infant is born, it is not unlike any other infant born, in fact, quite similar. It is not until the child is exposed to their surroundings that they become individuals in and of their cultural group. This idea, which describes all people as similar at birth, has been around for thousands of years and was discussed by Confucius as recorded in the book by his followers, *Analects* (Xu, 1997). From birth, the child’s life, opinions, and language are shaped by what it comes in contact with. Brooks (1968) argues that physically and mentally everyone is the same, while the

interactions between persons or groups vary widely from place to place. Patterns which emerge from these group behaviours and interactions will be approved of, or disapproved of. Behaviours which are acceptable will vary from location to location (Brooks, 1968) thus forming the basis of different cultures. It is from these differences that one's view of the world is formed. Hantrais (1989) puts forth the idea that culture is the beliefs and practices governing the life of a society for which a particular language is the vehicle of expression. Therefore, everyone's views are dependent on the culture which has influenced them, as well as being described using the language which has been shaped by that culture. The understanding of a culture and its people can be enhanced by the knowledge of their language. This brings us to an interesting point brought up by Emmitt and Pollock (1997), who argue that even though people are brought up under similar behavioural backgrounds or cultural situations but however speak different languages, their world view may be very different. As Sapir-Whorf argues, different thoughts are brought about by the use of different forms of language. One is limited by the language used to express one's ideas. Different languages will create different limitations, therefore a people who share a culture but speak different languages, will have different world views. Still, language is rooted in culture and culture is reflected and passed on by language from one generation to the next (Emmitt & Pollock 1997).

From this, one can see that learning a new language involves the learning of a new culture (Allwright & Bailey 1991). Consequently, teachers of a language are also teachers of culture (Byram 1989).

The implications of language being completely entwined in culture, in regards for language teaching and language policy are far reaching. Language teachers must instruct their students on the cultural background of language usage, choose culturally appropriate teaching styles, and explore culturally based linguistic differences to promote understanding instead of misconceptions or prejudices. Language policy must be used to create awareness and understandings of cultural differences, and written to incorporate the cultural values of those being taught.