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## SECTION A: POETRY

Answer **one** question from this section.

**SONGS OF OURSELVES VOLUME 1: from Part 5**

**Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.**

**Either 1** Read this poem, and then answer the question that follows it:

*Praise Song For My Mother*

You were  
water to me  
deep and bold and fathoming

You were  
moon's eye to me  
pull and grained and mantling

5

You were  
sunrise to me  
rise and warm and streaming

You were  
the fishes red gill to me  
the flame tree's spread to me  
the crab's leg/the fried plantain smell  
replenishing replenishing

10

Go to your wide futures, you said

15

*(Grace Nichols)*

How does Nichols memorably express a sense of admiration for her mother in this poem?

Or 2 In what ways does Owen convey powerful emotions in *Anthem For Doomed Youth*?

*Anthem For Doomed Youth*

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?  
 Only the monstrous anger of the guns.  
 Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle  
 Can patter out their hasty orisons.  
 No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells,  
 Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, –  
 The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;  
 And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

5

What candles may be held to speed them all?  
 Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes  
 Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.  
 The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;  
 Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,  
 And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

10

(*Wilfred Owen*)

**SONGS OF OURSELVES VOLUME 2: from Part 1**

**Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.**

**Either 3** Read this poem, and then answer the question that follows it:

*Coming Home*

My mother's hug is awkward,  
 as if the space between her open arms  
 is reserved for a child, not this body of a man.  
 In the kitchen she kneads the dough,  
 flipping it and patting before laying in again. 5  
 The flour makes her over, dusting  
 the hairs on her cheek, smoothing out wrinkles.

\*

Dad still goes and soaks himself in the rain.  
 Up to his elbows in hedge, he works  
 on a hole that reappears every Winter, 10  
 its edges laced with wet wool –  
 frozen breaths snagged on the blackthorn.  
 When he comes in again his hair is wild,  
 and his pockets are filled with filings of hay.

\*

All seated, my grandfather pours the wine. 15  
 His unsteady hand makes the neck of the bottle  
 shiver on the lip of each glass;  
 it is a tune he plays faster each year.

*(Owen Sheers)*

How does Sheers vividly convey his feelings in this poem?

- Or 4 Explore the ways in which Chitre creates striking impressions of his father in *Father Returning Home*.

*Father Returning Home*

My father travels on the late evening train  
 Standing among silent commuters in the yellow light  
 Suburbs slide past his unseeing eyes  
 His shirt and pants are soggy and his black raincoat  
 Stained with mud and his bag stuffed with books 5  
 Is falling apart. His eyes dimmed by age  
 fade homeward through the humid monsoon night.  
 Now I can see him getting off the train  
 Like a word dropped from a long sentence.  
 He hurries across the length of the grey platform, 10  
 Crosses the railway line, enters the lane,  
 His chappals are sticky with mud, but he hurries onward.  
 Home again, I see him drinking weak tea,  
 Eating a stale chapati, reading a book.  
 He goes into the toilet to contemplate 15  
 Man's estrangement from a man-made world.  
 Coming out he trembles at the sink,  
 The cold water running over his brown hands,  
 A few droplets cling to the greying hairs on his wrists.  
 His sullen children have often refused to share 20  
 Jokes and secrets with him. He will now go to sleep  
 Listening to the static on the radio, dreaming  
 Of his ancestors and grandchildren, thinking  
 Of nomads entering a subcontinent through a narrow pass.

(Dilip Chitre)

GILLIAN CLARKE: from *Collected Poems*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 5 Read this poem, and then answer the question that follows it:

*Lunchtime Lecture*

And this from the second or third millenium  
 B.C., a female, aged about twenty-two.  
 A white, fine skull, full up with darkness  
 As a shell with sea, drowned in the centuries. 5  
 Small, perfect. The cranium would fit the palm  
 Of a man's hand. Some plague or violence  
 Destroyed her, and her whiteness lay safe in a shroud  
 Of silence, undisturbed, unraind on, dark  
 For four thousand years. Till a tractor in summer 10  
 Biting its way through the longcairn for supplies  
 Of stone, broke open the grave and let a crowd of light  
 Stare in at her, and she stared quietly back.

As I look at her I feel none of the shock  
 The farmer felt as, unprepared, he found her.  
 Here in the Museum, like death in hospital, 15  
 Reasons are given, labels, causes, catalogues.  
 The smell of death is done. Left, only her bone  
 Purity, the light and shade beauty that her man  
 Was denied sight of, the perfect edge of the place  
 Where the pieces join, with no mistakes, like boundaries. 20

She's a tree in winter, stripped white on a black sky,  
 Leafless formality, brow, bough in fine relief.  
 I, at some other season, illustrate the tree  
 Fleshed, with woman's hair and colours and the rustling  
 Blood, the troubled mind that she has overthrown. 25  
 We stare at each other, dark into sightless  
 Dark, seeing only ourselves in the black pools,  
 Gulping the risen sea that booms in the shell.

Explore the ways in which Clarke creates powerful images in this poem.

Or 6 How does Clarke create such memorable impressions of the bull in *Friesian Bull*?

*Friesian Bull*

He blunders through the last dream  
of the night. I hear him, waking.  
A brick and concrete stall, narrow  
as a heifer's haunches. Steel bars  
between her trap and his small yard. 5  
A froth of slobbered hay droops  
from the stippled muzzle. In the slow  
rolling mass of his skull his eyes  
surface like fish bellies.

He is chained while they swill his floor. 10  
His stall narrows to rage. He knows  
the sweet smell of a heifer's fear.  
Remembered summer hay smells reach him,  
a trace of the herd's freedom, clover-  
loaded winds. The thundering speed 15  
blows up the Dee breathing of plains,  
of cattle wading in shallows.  
His crazy eyes churn with their vision.

**SECTION B: PROSE**

Answer **one** question from this section.

**CHINUA ACHEBE: *No Longer at Ease***

**Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.**

**Either 7** Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

Obi rang Christopher and they arranged to go and play tennis that afternoon with two newly arrived teachers at a Roman Catholic convent in Apapa.

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Obi found himself in the unusual role of defending Roman Catholics.

*[from Chapter 12]*

What does Achebe's writing make you feel at this moment in the novel?

- Or**      **8**      Explore the ways in which Achebe powerfully depicts the conflict between Obi's love for Clara and his loyalties to his family.

JANE AUSTEN: *Mansfield Park*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 9 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

They entered. Fanny's imagination had prepared her for something grander than a mere, spacious, oblong room, fitted up for the purpose of devotion—with nothing more striking or more solemn than the profusion of mahogany, and the crimson velvet cushions appearing over the ledge of the family gallery above. 'I am disappointed, cousin,' said she, in a low voice to Edmund. 'This is not my idea of a chapel. There is nothing awful here, nothing melancholy, nothing grand. Here are no aisles, no arches, no inscriptions, no banners. No banners, cousin, to be 'blown by the night wind of Heaven.' No signs that a 'Scottish monarch sleeps below.'

5

'You forget, Fanny, how lately all this has been built, and for how confined a purpose, compared with the old chapels of castles and monasteries. It was only for the private use of the family. They have been buried, I suppose, in the parish church. *There* you must look for the banners and the achievements.'

10

'It was foolish of me not to think of all that, but I am disappointed.'

15

Mrs Rushworth began her relation. 'This chapel was fitted up as you see it, in James the Second's time. Before that period, as I understand, the pews were only wainscoat; and there is some reason to think that the linings and cushions of the pulpit and family seat were only purple cloth; but this is not quite certain. It is a handsome chapel, and was formerly in constant use both morning and evening. Prayers were always read in it by the domestic chaplain, within the memory of many. But the late Mr Rushworth left it off.'

20

'Every generation has its improvements,' said Miss Crawford, with a smile, to Edmund.

25

Mrs Rushworth was gone to repeat her lesson to Mr Crawford; and Edmund, Fanny, and Miss Crawford remained in a cluster together.

'It is a pity,' cried Fanny, 'that the custom should have been discontinued. It was a valuable part of former times. There is something in a chapel and chaplain so much in character with a great house, with one's ideas of what such a household should be! A whole family assembling regularly for the purpose of prayer, is fine!'

30

'Very fine indeed!' said Miss Crawford, laughing. 'It must do the heads of the family a great deal of good to force all the poor housemaids and footmen to leave business and pleasure, and say their prayers here twice a day, while they are inventing excuses themselves for staying away.'

35

'*That* is hardly Fanny's idea of a family assembling,' said Edmund. 'If the master and mistress do *not* attend themselves, there must be more harm than good in the custom.'

40

'At any rate, it is safer to leave people to their own devices on such subjects. Every body likes to go their own way—to chuse their own time and manner of devotion. The obligation of attendance, the formality, the restraint, the length of time—altogether it is a formidable thing and what nobody likes; and if the good people who used to kneel and gape in that gallery could have foreseen that the time would ever come when men and women might lie another ten minutes in bed, when they woke with a head-ache, without danger of reprobation, because chapel was missed, they would have jumped with joy and envy. Cannot you imagine with what

45

unwilling feelings the former belles of the house of Rushworth did many a time repair to this chapel? The young Mrs Eleanors and Mrs Bridgets—starched up into seeming piety, but with heads full of something very different—especially if the poor chaplain were not worth looking at—and, in those days, I fancy parsons were very inferior even to what they are now.’ 50

For a few moments she was unanswered. Fanny coloured and looked at Edmund, but felt too angry for speech; and *he* needed a little recollection before he could say, ‘Your lively mind can hardly be serious even on serious subjects. You have given us an amusing sketch, and human nature cannot say it was not so. We must all feel *at times* the difficulty of fixing our thoughts as we could wish; but if you are supposing it a frequent thing, that is to say, a weakness grown into a habit from neglect, what could be expected from the *private* devotions of such persons? Do you think the minds which are suffered, which are indulged in wanderings in a chapel, would be more collected in a closet?’ 55 60

*[from Chapter 9]*

Explore the ways in which Austen makes this such a revealing moment in the novel.

- Or**      **10** How does Austen make the attempted staging of the play *Lovers Vows* such a significant part of the novel?

WILLA CATHER: *My Ántonia*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 11 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

Grandmother was apprehensive at once. 'I don't think it's right for you to stay there, feeling that way. I suppose it wouldn't be right for you to leave the place alone, either, after giving your word. Maybe Jim would be willing to go over there and sleep, and you could come here nights. I'd feel safer, knowing you were under my own roof. I guess Jim could take care of their silver and old usury notes as well as you could.'

Ántonia turned to me eagerly. 'Oh, would you, Jim? I'd make up my bed nice and fresh for you. It's a real cool room, and the bed's right next the window. I was afraid to leave the window open last night.'

I liked my own room, and I didn't like the Cutters' house under any circumstances; but Tony looked so troubled that I consented to try this arrangement. I found that I slept there as well as anywhere, and when I got home in the morning, Tony had a good breakfast waiting for me. After prayers she sat down at the table with us, and it was like old times in the country.

The third night I spent at the Cutters', I awoke suddenly with the impression that I had heard a door open and shut. Everything was still, however, and I must have gone to sleep again immediately.

The next thing I knew, I felt someone sit down on the edge of the bed. I was only half awake, but I decided that he might take the Cutters' silver, whoever he was. Perhaps if I did not move, he would find it and get out without troubling me. I held my breath and lay absolutely still. A hand closed softly on my shoulder, and at the same moment I felt something hairy and cologne-scented brushing my face. If the room had suddenly been flooded with electric light, I couldn't have seen more clearly the detestable bearded countenance that I knew was bending over me. I caught a handful of whiskers and pulled, shouting something. The hand that held my shoulder was instantly at my throat. The man became insane; he stood over me, choking me with one fist and beating me in the face with the other, hissing and chuckling and letting out a flood of abuse.

'So this is what she's up to when I'm away, is it? Where is she, you nasty whelp, where is she? Under the bed, are you, hussy? I know your tricks! Wait till I get at you! I'll fix this rat you've got in here. He's caught, all right!'

So long as Cutter had me by the throat, there was no chance for me at all. I got hold of his thumb and bent it back, until he let go with a yell. In a bound, I was on my feet, and easily sent him sprawling to the floor. Then I made a dive for the open window, struck the wire screen, knocked it out, and tumbled after it into the yard.

Suddenly I found myself running across the north end of Black Hawk in my night-shirt, just as one sometimes finds one's self behaving in bad dreams. When I got home, I climbed in at the kitchen window. I was covered with blood from my nose and lip, but I was too sick to do anything about it. I found a shawl and an overcoat on the hat-rack, lay down on the parlour sofa, and in spite of my hurts, went to sleep.

Grandmother found me there in the morning. Her cry of fright awakened me. Truly, I was a battered object. As she helped me to my room, I caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror. My lip was cut and stood

out like a snout. My nose looked like a big blue plum, and one eye was swollen shut and hideously discoloured. Grandmother said we must have the doctor at once, but I implored her, as I had never begged for anything before, not to send for him. I could stand anything, I told her, so long as nobody saw me or knew what had happened to me. I entreated her not to let grandfather, even, come into my room. She seemed to understand, though I was too faint and miserable to go into explanations. When she took off my night-shirt, she found such bruises on my chest and shoulders that she began to cry. She spent the whole morning bathing and poulticing me, and rubbing me with arnica. I heard *Ántonia* sobbing outside my door, but I asked grandmother to send her away. I felt that I never wanted to see her again. I hated her almost as much as I hated Cutter. She had let me in for all this disgustingness. Grandmother kept saying how thankful we ought to be that I had been there instead of *Ántonia*. But I lay with my disfigured face to the wall and felt no particular gratitude. My one concern was that grandmother should keep everyone away from me. If the story once got abroad, I would never hear the last of it. I could well imagine what the old men down at the drugstore would do with such a theme.

*[from Book 2 Chapter 15]*

How does Cather make this such a dramatic moment in the novel?

- Or 12 What does Cather's portrayal of the adult *Ántonia*'s relationships with men make you feel towards her?

CHARLES DICKENS: *Hard Times*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 13 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

Here Mrs Sparsit ceased; for Mr Bounderby's visage exhibited an extraordinary combination of all possible colours and expressions of discomfiture, as old Mrs Pegler was disclosed to his view.

'Why, what do you mean by this?' was his highly unexpected demand, in great warmth. 'I ask you, what do you mean by this, Mrs Sparsit, ma'am?' 5

'Sir!' exclaimed Mrs Sparsit, faintly.

'Why don't you mind your own business, ma'am?' roared Bounderby. 'How dare you go and poke your officious nose into my family affairs?'

This allusion to her favourite feature overpowered Mrs Sparsit. She sat down stiffly in a chair, as if she were frozen; and, with a fixed stare at Mr Bounderby, slowly grated her mittens against one another, as if they were frozen too. 10

'My dear Josiah!' cried Mrs Pegler, trembling. 'My darling boy! I am not to blame. It's not my fault, Josiah. I told this lady over and over again, that I knew she was doing what would not be agreeable to you, but she would do it.' 15

'What did you let her bring you for? Couldn't you knock her cap off, or her tooth out, or scratch her, or do something or other to her?' asked Bounderby.

'My own boy! She threatened me that if I resisted her, I should be brought by constables, and it was better to come quietly than make that stir in such a –' Mrs Pegler glanced timidly but proudly round the walls – 'such a fine house as this. Indeed, indeed, it is not my fault! My dear, noble, stately boy! I have always lived quiet and secret, Josiah, my dear. I have never broken the condition once. I have never said I was your mother. I have admired you at a distance; and if I have come to town sometimes, with long times between, to take a proud peep at you, I have done it unbeknown, my love, and gone away again.' 20 25

Mr Bounderby, with his hands in his pockets, walked in impatient mortification up and down at the side of the long dining-table, while the spectators greedily took in every syllable of Mrs Pegler's appeal, and at each succeeding syllable became more and more round-eyed. Mr Bounderby still walking up and down when Mrs Pegler had done, Mr Gradgrind addressed that maligned old lady: 30

'I am surprised, madam,' he observed with severity, 'that in your old age you have the face to claim Mr Bounderby for your son, after your unnatural and inhuman treatment of him.' 35

'*Me* unnatural!' cried poor old Mrs Pegler. '*Me* inhuman! To my dear boy?'

'Dear!' repeated Mr Gradgrind. 'Yes; dear in his self-made prosperity, madam, I dare say. Not very dear, however, when you deserted him in his infancy, and left him to the brutality of a drunken grandmother.' 40

'I deserted my Josiah!' cried Mrs Pegler, clasping her hands. 'Now, Lord forgive you, sir, for your wicked imaginations, and for your scandal against the memory of my poor mother, who died in my arms before Josiah was born. May you repent of it, sir, and live to know better!' 45

[from Book 3 Chapter 5]

How does Dickens make Bounderby both unpleasant and ridiculous at this moment in the novel?

**Or**      **14** What makes Dickens's portrayal of the circus and its people so attractive?

**MICHAEL FRAYN: *Spies***

**Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.**

**Either 15** Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

The barking of the dogs has long ceased.

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The game's finally over.

*[from Chapter 10]*

How does Frayn make this such a dramatic climax to the novel?

**Or**     **16** Explore the ways in which Frayn makes Keith's father so frightening.

KATE GRENVILLE: *The Secret River*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 17 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

He wanted to convince her that the land would get them the wherries and the house quicker, how the children would thank them for it. But he made himself hold his tongue. Outside he heard a rustle and creak. Scabby Bill, that would be, settling down for the night.

*We best grab this chance, Sal,* he said. He heard his voice start reasonable and then rise in spite of himself. *Not muck about!*

5

But he had pressed her too hard. *No,* she said. *I ain't coming at it, Will, and that's flat.*

He could feel the children, woken by the raised voices, watching from the mattress. He glanced over to where Willie's face was a pale circle in the gloom. As the oldest, at eight, he got the part of the mattress closest to the fire. Dick had to make do with the draughty side by the wall. Bub, that puny child, had only just outgrown the cradle, and was still not used to sleeping with the older boys. He was making the scratchy noises in his throat that meant he was not yet awake enough to cry, but soon would be. They all went very still. After a moment Bub fell silent and the boys lay down again.

10

He was proud of the fact that his boys had a blanket each. They did not have to lie awake, as he had done as a lad, waiting for the others to fall asleep.

20

Sal tightened her shoulders into herself and leaned towards the fire, not looking at her husband. They had never disagreed on anything that mattered. He wished he could explain to her the marvel of that land, the way the sunlight fell so sweet along the grass.

But she could not imagine it, did not want to. He saw that her dreams had stayed small and cautious, being of nothing grander than the London they had left. Perhaps it was because she had not felt the rope around her neck. That changed a man forever.

25

....

He said no more, but the thought of that mild-mannered point of land was with him from the instant of waking, as if his dreams had been full of it. On his trips up and down the river with Blackwood he saw it in all weathers and conditions. Under the black skies of August he would see the curtain of rain advancing up what he thought of as Thornhill's Reach, turning the headland grey, making the bushes on the point twist and flail in the wind. As summer came, birds sang from the trees on sweet blue and gold mornings. He saw kangaroos, and striped lizards as long as his arm sidling up the trunks of the river-oaks. Sometimes he thought there was a haze of smoke rising up between the trees, but when he looked harder it was not there.

30

At low tide the point was lined with mud. This was not the same as slimy Thames mud, but a rich brown that looked good enough to eat. Beyond the mud were the rushes, higher than a man, packed as tight as the bristles of a broom, topped with feathery plumage. They were alive with little round brown birds, something of the order of a robin. He could hear them in there making their calls: *ca chink pee pee wheep!*

40

45

Wheep!

Other birds, as bright as soldiers, stalked across the mud on long hinged legs. He watched, not two yards away, as one of them broke off a reed with its claws, holding it so its beak could strip off the outer sheath and eat the pale stalk within, one bite at a time, like a lady with a finger of asparagus. 50

The reeds protected the point on one side, dense mangroves on the other. Beyond the slope of the gentlemen's park, the land tilted and became a wall of jumbled rocks and scrubby woods. But between the river and the ridge there was plenty of good flat land. A hundred acres? Two hundred? 55

Whatever it was, it was enough.

Each time they passed the place he looked for the thing he was dreading: the dug-over patch of ground where some other man's corn was growing, the square of some other man's hut. Each time there was a moment's relief, but then the dread returned. 60

The thought of that point of land became a private thing, a bead of warmth in his heart.

*[from Part 2]*

How does Grenville vividly convey Thornhill's feelings to you at this moment in the novel?

**Or 18** 'He was a stranger to his father.'

How does Grenville memorably portray the relationship between Dick Thornhill and his father, William?

**R K NARAYAN: *The English Teacher***

**Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.**

**Either 19** Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

I was walking down our lone street late at night, enveloped in the fragrance of the jasmine and rose garland, slung on my arm. 'For whom am I carrying this jasmine home?' I asked myself. Susila would treasure a garland for two whole days, cutting up and sticking masses of it in her hair morning and evening. 'Carrying a garland to a lonely house—a dreadful job,' I told myself. 5

I fumbled with the key in the dark, opened the door and switched on the light. I hung up the garland on a nail and kicked up the roll of bedding. The fragrance permeated the whole house. I sprinkled a little water on the flowers to keep them fresh, put out the light and lay down to sleep. 10

The garland hung by the nail right over my head. The few drops of water which I sprinkled on the flowers seemed to have quickened in them a new life. Their essences came forth into the dark night as I lay in bed, bringing a new vigour with them. The atmosphere became surcharged with strange spiritual forces. Their delicate aroma filled every particle of the air, and as I let my mind float in the ecstasy, gradually perceptions and senses deepened. Oblivion crept over me like a cloud. The past, present and the future welded into one. 15

I had been thinking of the day's activities and meetings and associations. But they seemed to have no place now. I checked my mind. Bits of memory came floating—a gesture of Brown's, the toy house in the dentist's front room, Rangappa with a garland, and the ring of many speeches and voices—all this was gently overwhelmed and swept aside, till one's mind became clean and bare and a mere chamber of fragrance. It was a superb, noble intoxication. And I had no choice but to let my mind and memories drown in it. I softly called 'Susila! Susila, my wife ...' with all my being. It sounded as if it were a hypnotic melody. 'My wife ... my wife, my wife ...' My mind trembled with this rhythm, I forgot myself and my own existence. I fell into a drowse, whispering, 'My wife, wife.' How long? How could I say? When I opened my eyes again she was sitting on my bed looking at me with an extraordinary smile in her eyes. 20

'Susila! Susila!' I cried. 'You here!' 'Yes, I'm here, have always been here.' I sat up leaning on my pillow. 'Why do you disturb yourself?' she asked. 25

'I am making a place for you,' I said, edging away a little. I looked her up and down and said: 'How well you look!' Her complexion had a golden glow, her eyes sparkled with a new light, her saree shimmered with blue interwoven with "light" as she had termed it ... 'How beautiful!' I said looking at it. 'Yes, I always wear this when I come to you. I know you like it very much,' she said. I gazed on her face. There was an overwhelming fragrance of jasmine surrounding her. 'Still jasmine-scented!' I commented. 35

'Oh wait,' I said and got up. I picked up the garland from the nail and returned to bed. I held it to her 'For you as ever. I somehow feared you wouldn't take it ...' She received it with a smile, cut off a piece of it and stuck it in a curve on the back of her head. She turned her head and asked: 'Is this all right?' 40

'Wonderful,' I said, smelling it.

A cock crew. The first purple of the dawn came through our window, 45

and faintly touched the walls of our room. 'Dawn!' she whispered and rose to her feet.

50

We stood at the window, gazing on a slender, red streak over the eastern rim of the earth. A cool breeze lapped our faces. The boundaries of our personalities suddenly dissolved. It was a moment of rare, immutable joy—a moment for which one feels grateful to Life and Death.

*[from Chapter 8]*

How does Narayan's writing make this a satisfying ending to the novel for you?

- Or**      **20** In what ways does Narayan strikingly portray different approaches to teaching in the novel?

from *Stories of Ourselves*

**Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.**

- Either 21** Read this extract from *Games at Twilight* (by Anita Desai), and then answer the question that follows it:

But Raghu soon moved away. There wasn't a sound once his foot-steps had gone around the garage and disappeared. Ravi stood frozen inside the shed. Then he shivered all over. Something had tickled the back of his neck. It took him a while to pick up the courage to lift his hand and explore. It was an insect – perhaps a spider – exploring *him*. He squashed it and wondered how many more creatures were watching him, waiting to reach out and touch him, the stranger. 5

There was nothing now. After standing in that position – his hand still on his neck, feeling the wet splodge of the squashed spider gradually dry – for minutes, hours, his legs began to tremble with the effort, the inaction. By now he could see enough in the dark to make out the large solid shapes of old wardrobes, broken buckets and bedsteads piled on top of each other around him. He recognised an old bathtub – patches of enamel glimmered at him and at last he lowered himself onto its edge. 10 15

He contemplated slipping out of the shed and into the fray. He wondered if it would not be better to be captured by Raghu and be returned to the milling crowd as long as he could be in the sun, the light, the free spaces of the garden and the familiarity of his brothers, sisters and cousins. It would be evening soon. Their games would become legitimate. The parents would sit out on the lawn on cane basket chairs and watch them as they tore around the garden or gathered in knots to share a loot of mulberries or black, teeth-splitting *jamun* from the garden trees. The gardener would fix the hosepipe to the water tap and water would fall lavishly through the air to the ground, soaking the dry yellow grass and the red gravel and arousing the sweet, the intoxicating scent of water on dry earth – that loveliest scent in the world. Ravi sniffed for a whiff of it. He half-rose from the bathtub, then heard the despairing scream of one of the girls as Raghu bore down upon her. There was the sound of a crash, and of rolling about in the bushes, the shrubs, then screams and accusing sobs of, 'I touched the den—' 'You did not—' 'I did—' 'You liar, you did *not*' and then a fading away and silence again. 20 25 30

Ravi sat back on the harsh edge of the tub, deciding to hold out a bit longer. What fun if they were all found and caught – he alone left unconquered! He had never known that sensation. Nothing more wonderful had ever happened to him than being taken out by an uncle and bought a whole slab of chocolate all to himself, or being flung into the soda-man's pony cart and driven up to the gate by the friendly driver with the red beard and pointed ears. To defeat Raghu – that hirsute, hoarse-voiced football champion – and to be the winner in a circle of older, bigger, luckier children – that would be thrilling beyond imagination. He hugged his knees together and smiled to himself almost shyly at the thought of so much victory, such laurels. 35 40

There he sat smiling, knocking his heels against the bathtub, now and then getting up and going to the door to put his ear to the broad crack and listening for sounds of the game, the pursuer and the pursued, and then 45

returning to his seat with the dogged determination of the true winner, a breaker of records, a champion.

It grew darker in the shed as the light at the door grew softer, fuzzier, turned to a kind of crumbling yellow pollen that turned to yellow fur, blue fur, grey fur. Evening. Twilight. The sound of water gushing, falling. The scent of earth receiving water, slaking its thirst in great gulps and releasing that green scent of freshness, coolness. Through the crack Ravi saw the long purple shadows of the shed and the garage lying still across the yard. Beyond that, the white walls of the house. The bougainvillea had lost its lividity, hung in dark bundles that quaked and twittered and seethed with masses of homing sparrows. The lawn was shut off from his view. Could he hear the children's voices? It seemed to him that he could. It seemed to him that he could hear them chanting, singing, laughing. But what about the game? What had happened? Could it be over? How could it when he was still not found? 50 55 60

It then occurred to him that he could have slipped out long ago, dashed across the yard to the veranda and touched the 'den'. It was necessary to do that to win. He had forgotten. He had only remembered the part of hiding and trying to elude the seeker. He had done that so successfully, his success had occupied him so wholly that he had quite forgotten that success had to be clinched by that final dash to victory and the ringing cry of 'Den!' 65

With a whimper he burst through the crack, fell on his knees, got up and stumbled on stiff, benumbed legs across the shadowy yard, crying heartily by the time he reached the veranda so that when he flung himself at the white pillar and bawled, 'Den! Den! Den!' his voice broke with rage and pity at the disgrace of it all and he felt himself flooded with tears and misery. 70

How does Desai convey Ravi's thoughts and feelings so vividly here?

Or 22 In what ways does Townsend Warner criticise aspects of human nature in *The Phoenix*?





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