

IGCSE

London Examinations IGCSE

IGCSE English Literature (4360)

Additional Teacher Support Material

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Additional Teacher Support Material

London Examinations IGCSE
English Literature

Stories from Around the world

Betrayal

This is an additional website resource provided by Edexcel International to support IGCSE English Literature. This resource provides learning material for:

Stories from Around the World

This resource considers the three stories under the theme of **BETRAYAL**:

Country Lovers by Nadine Gordimer

The Bamboo Blind by Seema Jena

Everyday Use by Alice Walker

Country Lovers

by Nadime Gordimer

Before reading

In 1948 the National Party began to pass laws to introduce a system of apartheid in South Africa and it was not until 1992 that the system was officially abolished.

Activity

In pairs

- discuss the meaning of *apartheid*
- research what kinds of laws were passed and
- consider what daily life must have been like for a black South African at this time. Share your findings with the rest of the class.

Exploring the text

How well do I know the story?

1. A local TV station wants to broadcast this story on the evening news. Imagine you are a newsreader and that you have less than one minute to present the main points to your TV audience. Think carefully about what aspects of the story you would choose to highlight. Prepare your bulletin and present it to the rest of the class.

2. Gifts are significant as several are given and received during the course of the story. Put the following five presents in the order that they are given, stating for each who gave it and to whom:

Gift	Your order: B, A, etc.	Given by	To whom
A a pink plastic bath?			
B a painted box?			
C a tin of Johnson's Baby Powder?			
D a red plastic belt and gilt hoop earrings?			
E a bracelet?			

Characters

Use the following questions (making sure each answer is supported by quotations) to help you build a character study of the following two main characters. Work together in groups of two or three before sharing your ideas with the rest of the class.

Paulus

1. When questioned, why doesn't Paulus tell his friends the truth about who made the bracelet for him?

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2. When talking about his boarding-school life, in what ways can Paulus be seen as slightly boastful and wanting to impress Thebedi?

3. At the river-bed, we are told 'they had known one another always'. What do you think the author really means by '*always*'?

4. On more than one occasion, the author reminds us that Paulus has plenty of other female attention and contact. Find these occasions and explain why you think she deliberately does this.

5. Up until Paulus visits Thebedi in the kraal, the author portrays the two lovers and their secret relationship mostly sympathetically. How might our view of Paulus change however, in the light of

a) his 'grimace of tears, anger and self-pity'

b) his comment 'I feel like killing myself' ?

6. Do you think Paulus is a selfish character? Or do you think his reaction to the baby's fair colouring is a realistic one when considering the cultural and social divisions between them? Explain your reason(s).

7. What importance do you attach to the fact that Paulus repeatedly refers to the baby girl as 'it' when he first sees her and discusses her with Thebedi?

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8. In court, Paulus denies poisoning the baby, but as readers we strongly suspect he did. Examine the various reasons for his actions.

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9. At the start of the story we are told 'The trouble was Paulus Eysendyck did not seem to realize that Thebedi was now simply one of the crowd of farm children down at the kraal...'. Do you think that he just did not 'realize' or that he knew perfectly well but chose to ignore it? Explain your answer.

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Thebedi

1. Fearing that it will lead to trouble, Thebedi, like Paulus, lies about the source of a gift she is given as she tells her father the belt and earrings were a reward from the farmer's wife. Yet, why does she risk discovery by boasting about having a 'sweetheart' to her girlfriends?

2. Why does Thebedi put her shoes on when Paulus is back from boarding-school?

3. Thebedi chooses to tell Paulus neither that she is going to marry nor that she is pregnant. Discuss her reasons for this.

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4. Njabulo buys baby products 'for Thebedi's baby' — why doesn't the author say 'for their baby'? How is the author trying to influence our thinking here?

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5. When Paulus visits the kraal we are told Thebedi's 'eyes begin to glow, to thicken with tears.' Who is she crying for and why? Is there more than one explanation for her tears?

6. Do you think there is strong evidence to suggest Thebedi was aware of Paulus' intentions to kill their baby, or do you think she was ignorant of it? Find references to support your viewpoint.

7. How does Thebedi's evidence and behaviour at the preparatory examination contrast with that at the trial a year later? Why do you think she changes her version of events?

8. In your opinion, which character has more to lose at the end of the story and why: Paulus or Thebedi?

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9. To what extent do you feel Thebedi is equally responsible for the baby's death?

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And the moral of this story is...

Short stories often have a moral ending which gives a message or lesson to the reader and is usually something we learn as a direct result of a character's behaviour or actions.

1. Killing a baby is morally wrong and inexcusable. What do Paulus' actions teach us about the value of life and solutions to problems?

2. In what way are Thebedi's morals, particularly as a mother, equally questionable?

3. In small groups, take one theme from those below. Discuss how that theme is explored in the story, and report back to the rest of the class.

Love

Prejudice

Culture

The different types of betrayal

Language, style and structure

Language

Repetition

1. Allusions to 'dark' occur frequently in the story when describing Thebedi, along with a few references to 'shade'. Find **two** examples of this and discuss whether the author is merely using these words to describe Thebedi's skin colour, or could they have other references?

2. Which phrase is repeated twice during their lovemaking to highlight the sincerity of their experience at this moment?

Local vocabulary

How do the inclusion of South African nouns add to the authenticity of the setting? Give one example.

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Descriptive language

1. Paulus and Thebedi's union is described as knowing no boundaries as each follows 'an urge' to be with the other. What does the following phrase suggest about the place of race and culture in their relationship?

they squatted side by side on the earth bank

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2. How does the style of language change at the end of the story when the author describes the court case and then the media interest?

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Sentence lengths

Reread the sentence near the start of the story beginning ‘When he was fifteen...’ and ending ‘for the black girl, Thebedi.’ Why do you think the author uses such a long sentence here, aided by the fourfold repetition of ‘When...’? How might it reflect Paulus’ feelings for Thebedi?

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Style

Contrast

1. Contrast occurs several times in the course of the story and one of the most distinct examples is the difference between the accepted educational paths of the black and white children. How does the author compare the two?

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2. How does the contrast between Thebedi’s secrecy towards her father and the boast she tells her friends add to the dramatic tension?

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3. What contrast can you find between Thebedi's two different pieces of evidence given one year apart?

Symbolism

What do you think Thebedi's gilt hoop earrings have come to symbolise by the end of the story, and why?

Irony

Why is it ironic that Thebedi is wearing the gilt hoop earrings that Paulus gave her during her first testimony in the witness box when she accuses him of murdering the baby?

Structure

1. Many short stories take place over a short space of time, such as a few hours or a few days. *Country Lovers*, however, takes the reader on a journey of years. How does the author mark the passing of time?

2. Although the story constantly moves forward in time, it also refers back to childhood in quite a few places. Why do you think it does this?

The Bamboo Blind

by Seema Jena

Before reading

The tradition of an arranged marriage (whereby the marital partners are usually chosen by their respective families) is still a common form of marriage in several countries in South Asia, especially in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Activity

Working in pairs, write down **three** advantages and **three** disadvantages of the arranged marriage tradition. Now join up with another pair and discuss your ideas, before sharing them with the rest of the class.

Exploring the text

How well do I know the story?

The setting for this story is mainly Manchester in England, but the main character Razia also details her previous life in Lucknow, India.

1. Which setting opens the story and what happens?

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2. What was Razia's life like in Lucknow?

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3. Describe Razia's life in Manchester living with her in-laws.

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4. What is the cause of conflict and how is it resolved?

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Characters

Razia

1. How does the October weather in Manchester mirror Razia's emotions in the opening paragraph?

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2. What do you learn about the place of women in Razia's culture from the first four paragraphs?

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3. What do you learn about Razia's own views on that issue?

4. What language in the fourth paragraph suggests Razia feels imprisoned by her situation and surroundings?

5. We are told that Razia 'loathed the whole arrangement behind the bamboo blind'. Explain the 'arrangement' she is referring to and discuss why you think she finds it so distasteful.

6. How do you imagine Razia felt when she was 'told' by her brothers that her college education was finished and that she would be better off learning to cook and embroider?

7. 'Marrying someone living in England would be a dream come true.' What do you think Razia's 'dream' about her future life in England involves?

8. How far do you feel Razia's 'dream' is really a fantasy? Describe her daily life in the house and her feelings about its occupants.

9. Why do you think Razia is so upset by Hasina's remarks?

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10. What evidence suggests she might feel patronised by her mother-in-law's comments?

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11. To what extent does Razia's attitude towards Razak, whilst waiting for him to return home, appear negative and accusing?

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12. Looking at the venetian blind, Razia says 'In Lucknow, we call it the *chilman*.'

(a) What is ironic about Razak's solution to her problem?

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(b) Consider whether Razia's life in Manchester is better or worse than her life in Lucknow.

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13. To what degree do you feel Razia has been let down by her own culture?

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Razak

1. What are our first impressions of Razak from the descriptions given of him?

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2. To what extent is Razak's observation about life in Manchester, 'In many ways it is just like Lucknow', actually true?

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3. How does Razak's choice of evening entertainment contribute to Razia's growing sense of isolation?

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4. What method does Razak use to dissuade Razia from complaining about his family?

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5. What is Razak's reaction to Razia's outburst?

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6. Which simile is used in the concluding scene to refer to Razak? How far do you feel Razak deserves this simile?

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And the moral of this story is...

1. What lesson do you think this story is trying to teach us about life?

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2. To what extent must we experience that lesson ourselves for it to be a valid one, rather than through someone else's teachings?

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3. To what degree can Razia be seen as being betrayed by her own culture?

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Language, style and structure

Language

Rhetorical questions

These are used frequently by both Hasina and Razia's mother-in-law. Find one example from each character and explain what effect each has on the tone of the passage at that point.

Hasina:

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Razia:

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Imagery

The author uses personification twice within the opening paragraph to enrich her description and set the mood of this scene. Describe the effectiveness of each example.

Example 1:

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Example 2:

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Local dialect

What does the inclusion of local dialect at various points add to the story?

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Style

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Irony

What is ironic about Razia's situation at the end of the story?

Parallels

We are invited to draw parallels between Razia's life in Lucknow and her life in Manchester. Carefully consider the parallels that exist between the following:

1. The melodramatic and exaggerated words and actions of Begum Mazhar in Lucknow with those of Razia's mother-in-law in Manchester

2. Razia's expectations of daily life in both settings

3. The *chilman* and the venetian blind.

What other parallels exist?

Structure

The story is constructed in a circular fashion, since it ends where it began: in Razia's bedroom at the window. How effectively do you think the author weaves in the background information about Lucknow into the course of the story, without detracting from its Manchester setting?

Everyday Use

by Alice Walker

Exploring the text

How well do I know the story?

The real 'action' of this story doesn't take place until after Dee arrives, yet the first part of the story still plays an important part in the development of the story as a whole.

What background information are we given in this first part and how does it help us to understand what happens in the second part with Dee's arrival?

Characters

The narrator (Maggie and Dee's mother)

1. How does the narrator's unflattering physical description of herself and the skills she is proud of clearly contrast with the way in which her daughter Dee would like her to be in her TV dream?

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2. After reading the narrator's dream, what do you imagine the relationship between Dee and the narrator is really like?

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3. The narrator makes a couple of initial references to her relationship with white people and a few paragraphs later tells us 'in 1927 coloureds asked fewer questions than they do now'. Look carefully at what she says and discuss what she means by this statement in particular.

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4. The narrator is heavily critical of Dee's attempts to 'improve' her and Maggie once she starts school. What language does she use which suggests she is resentful of Dee's behaviour?

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5. How far do you believe the narrator is fully aware of Dee's manipulative and critical behaviour when she tells us about Dee's relationship with 'Jimmy T'?

6. During the conflict over the quilts, what do you think was the turning point after which the narrator decisively told Dee that Maggie was having them?

7. Why do you think the narrator refers to Dee's hands as 'Miss Wangero's hands' at the climax of this story?

8. Which question of the narrator's in the final passage suggests she is now ready for battle with Dee and no longer prepared to put up with her rude behaviour?

9. What does the final image of the narrator and Maggie calmly sitting together outside imply about how they view Dee's visit?

Dee

1. What are our first impressions of Dee that are given in the second paragraph?

2. How do these impressions help prepare us when we actually meet her later on in the story?

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3. When the fire takes place and Maggie is being rescued by her mum in a distressing scene, what is Dee doing? How might her behaviour surprise us at a time of such panic?

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4. To what extent can Dee be described as a materialistic person?

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5. What evidence is there to imply that Dee is ashamed of her family?

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6. From the way she is dressed, what gives us the idea that Dee is a person who likes to be both seen and heard?

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7. What does Dee's name change suggest about her connection with her family?

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8. What do you think was the real purpose of Dee's visit?

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9. How does Dee's body language initially make us believe she will keep the quilts she wants?

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10. Locate the two contrasting similes the narrator uses to describe Dee's change of mood from happy to angry once she realises she will not get the quilts. How effective are they in each case?

Smile 1:

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Effectiveness:

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Smile 2:

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Effectiveness:

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11. Look at Dee's last two comments to her family which she speaks with a superior air. What does she mean by these?

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And the moral of this story is...

1. There are several references to change in this story. What do you think these references are trying to teach us about both changing other people and changing oneself?

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2. What other themes does this story explore?

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Language, style and structure

Language

The narrator

We are given a very visual depiction of the narrator's physique with clear suggestions of masculinity: 'large, big-boned..rough, man-working hands.' What kind of verbs are used in this paragraph to describe her 'skills' and how do they support this masculine image?

Look at the quick succession of four monosyllabic verbs the narrator uses within one sentence towards the end of the passage when she describes how she 'did something' she 'never had done before.' What do these verbs suggest about the narrator's mood at that moment in time?

Imagery

The paragraph detailing Dee's attempts to 'improve' the lives of her family is a particularly vivid one and uses several metaphors to describe it. Clearly the narrator is a religious woman since she talks about God and church songs.

1. What religious ceremony does the following metaphor remind you of 'She *washed* us in a river of make-believe'?

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2. Why is it a particularly fitting one in this context?

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3. What is ironic about the narrator's choice of metaphor in the following line: '*burned* us with a lot of knowledge we didn't necessarily need to know'?

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Style

Humour

What examples of humour can you find? How does the narrator use humour to make light of otherwise serious comments or issues?

First person narrative

Everyday Use is the only story in the *Betrayal* section that uses the first person narrative. In what ways does using this viewpoint add to the success of this story and involve us on a deeper level than if it were written in the third person narrative?

Audience address

The narrator addresses us directly on more than one occasion: ‘You’ve no doubt seen...’ and ‘Have you ever seen...’ What effect does this have upon us as readers?

Direct speech

Once Dee arrives, a great deal of conversation takes place between the characters, with some of it more heated than others. How does the inclusion of direct speech quicken the pace of the narrative?

Conversational tone

Since we are directly addressed, it seems fitting for the narrator to use a colloquial, chatty style which she combines on occasions with rhetorical questions. Find one example of her conversational tone and one instance of the narrator using a rhetorical question.

Conversational
tone:

Rhetorical
question:

Structure

1. To what extent can the structure of this story be likened to a patchwork quilt? Which character would you therefore consider to be the 'thread' that touches every piece?

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2. In what way does this story end where it began, but with a victory for the real victim of this story, Maggie?

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Exam practice

In pairs, make brief notes on how to answer each question before comparing ideas with the rest of the class. Then practise answering a question under timed conditions in class.

- Show how conflict is revealed in any TWO of the stories from the collection.
- 'Both Paulus and Thebedi are guilty of their baby's murder.' To what extent do you agree with this statement about these two characters in *Country Lovers*?