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***STUDENT CREATIVITY***  
***-ENGLISH-***



# Bennett Honoris 1 Humility

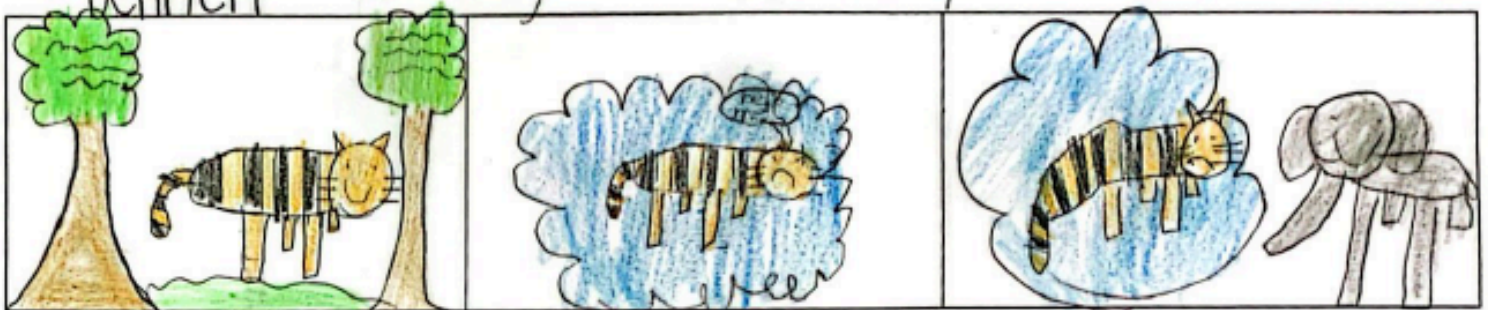
## The Tiger and the Elephant



Q1: Traditional Tales

Bennett

The Tiger and the Elephant



Once upon a time in a deep jungle lived a strong and big tiger.	One day when tiger was searching for food in the jungle, he slipped and fell into a lake. The tiger got wet and couldn't come out.	Luckily, an elephant was drinking the water from the lake when he saw the tiger in the water. The elephant lowered his trunk and asked the tiger to hold on to his trunk. The elephant pulled Tiger out of the lake.
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# Andalucia Adhadirgha - 1H

## The Hare and the Tortoise

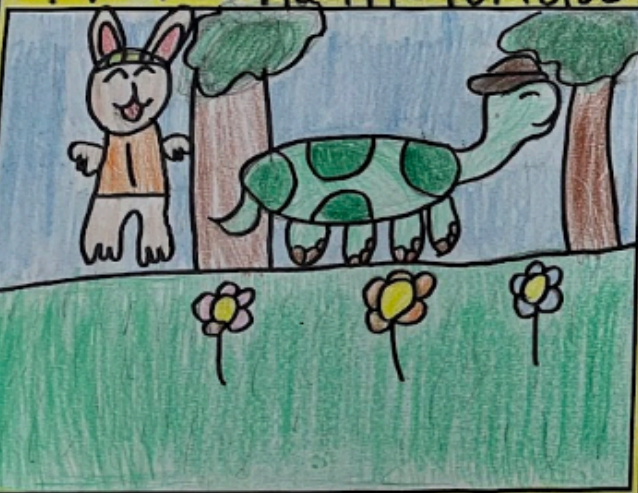
### My Book Cover Design

Front Cover

Spine

Back Cover

Hare and the tortoise



Retold By:

Andalucia

Hare and the tortoise  
Retold by Andalucia

This Traditional Tale is about the  
hare and the tortoise.

In the story, the  
hare laughed at the  
tortoise so the tortoise  
challenge the hare to a  
race. Will the tortoise  
win?

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## Aria Popescue - 2H

### The Proud Peacock

The Proud Peacock  
By Aria Popescue

Long, long ago, there lived a peacock who had a marvelous dance. She kept boasting about her dance, which is why nobody wanted to be her friend.

One day, while the peacock was dancing, she met an eagle. She made fun of the eagle and told the eagle that she was better than him at dancing. The eagle replied, "If you think you are so good, just dance on the cliff."

The proud peacock began to dance on the cliff. While the peacock was dancing on the cliff, she slipped, fell, and broke her leg.

The eagle didn't mean to hurt the peacock, so he apologized. The peacock learned her lesson and was not proud anymore.

In the end, the peacock had more friends, and that's why peacocks don't dance anymore.





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## Parker Chairil- 2T

### *The Snail and the Lion*

#### The Snail and the Lion

By: Parker Chairil

Once upon a time, there lived a kind and helpful snail. One rainy day, an arrogant lion was bullying a tiny mouse. Just then, the snail approached the lion.

The snail cried, "Stop, lion!"

"Ha! Ha! Ha! You're so slow!" laughed the lion.

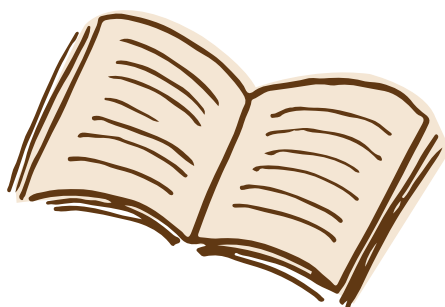
"Why don't you have a race?" asked the tiny mouse. "Three...two...one... go!"

The lion dashed through the forest, leaving the snail behind. After a while, the lion saw that there was no one around him so he decided to take a nap.

The snail was resilient. He walked slowly and steadily and passed the finish line.

The lion was surprised and apologized to the mouse and the snail. Since the lion was ashamed, he vowed never to bully any animal again.

The End



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## Alaia Temenggung - 3H

# Where's Alton

### Where's Alton by Alaia Temenggung (3H)

*Miss Wheeling is a new teacher in school. One day, during a fire drill, she finds out that Alton Ziegler, one of her students, is missing from the class.*

Miss Wheeling spotted something on the far side of the room, over beyond the desks, by the windows. Something was on the floor. It was a note from Alton saying that he was locked in the classroom. Relieved, Miss Wheeling searched for the key and she found it on a tiny table nearby with a reddish-orange tablecloth.

When she opened the door, she saw Alton in the reading corner. "Alton, why are you here? We've been searching all over for you!" Miss Wheeling said a relieved tone in her voice.

Suddenly, she noticed something and she asked, "Who is that?"

"That's my friend," Alton replied pointing to the boy next to him. "He just moved here and I think he was scared of the alarm's noise."

"I wasn't," the boy felt embarrassed. The boy had black hair and wore a shirt that looked almost the same as Alton's. His eyes resembled the eyes of a cat. He looked like he was the same age as Alton and Miss Wheeling wondered if they were brothers.

"It's okay to be scared," Miss Wheeling comforted the boy in her most calming voice. "But what is important is to get you two out of here."

A few minutes later, they reached the exit door, but it was locked. Panicking, they searched for a janitor, but they realized that the janitors were all outside in the playground. This was a fire drill after all.

Not long after, Alton found a phone left by somebody and Miss Alton told him to call Mrs Buckley, the principal. Soon they heard a loud click. They were afraid, but it turned out it was the sound of the key opening the door.

The moment they stepped out, they heard loud cheers. The principal was smiling widely. From then on, Miss Wheeling became all the students' most favourite teacher.

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# Alexander An, Lexton Argasetya, and Deng Yu Han (3 Teamwork)

## *The Sun and the Wind*

**The Sun and the Wind – The Playscript by Alexander An, Lexton Argasetya, and Deng Yu Han (3 Teamwork)**

Adapted from a traditional tale 'The Sun and the Wind'

Characters: The Sun, The Wind, The Man and Narrator

Setting: Somewhere in the sky

Narrator : The Sun and the Wind always argued about who was the strongest.  
They always argued about the same thing every time.

The Sun : I'm the strongest!

The Wind : No! I'm the strongest!

Narrator : One day, a man came to where the Wind was.

*[The Man comes out]*

The Wind : Whoever can blow or take the Man's jacket is the strongest.

Narrator : The Wind blew harder and harder. However, the harder he blew, the tighter the Man held on to his jacket.

*[The Man moves away from the Wind.]*

The Sun : Now it's my turn to take his jacket off.

Narrator : The Sun shone as bright as he could. It became so hot that the Man took off his jacket.

The Sun : Yes! Now I am the strongest.

The Wind : No! I can't believe what happened.

Narrator : Since that day, the Sun has always been the strongest.

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# Duncan Chairil -

## 4R

### Oliver Twist

#### Oliver Twist

Mr. Bumble has decided to sell Oliver, a poor orphan boy, after he asked for more food.

Act 2 Scene 2 - The Market

Cast: Mr Bumble, Mr Gamfield, Oliver

(Curtains open. There are market stalls on the stage. MR BUMBLE and OLIVER are standing behind the market stall in the center. ENTER MR GAMFIELD, looking fierce. He is a short, plump man wearing a black suit with a top hat. His shoes are making a tapping noise with every step he takes.)

MR GAMFIELD: Good day, Sir. I am Mr Gamfield, a chimney sweeper, and I would like to buy that boy of yours. Would you mind if I bought him for ten shillings?

MR BUMBLE: (delighted) Aah, as you can see my name is Mr Bumble, and I think that ten shillings will be a little too much. How about five shillings?

MR GAMFIELD: Oh That is very nice of you. I'm sure he will be a great help. (pulling some coins out of his pocket and giving it to MR BUMBLE) Here you are!

(Pauses, Oliver gasps)

MR BUMBLE: (moving closer to MR GAMFIELD and whispering in his ear) I realise that this has to be official, don't you think? It will be a crime if we don't discuss this with a magistrate.

MR GAMFIELD: (sighing) Well, that is a shame. I really wish that I could use this worthless child immediately to sweep chimneys until his death.

MR BUMBLE: (saying this quietly to MR GAMFIELD) Did you know that Oliver asked for more food after he had already eaten all the food that he was allowed?

(Because of what MR BUMBLE has said, MR GAMFIELD nearly trips over and opens his mouth with shock)

MR GAMFIELD: (crossing his arms) Well, how naughty this child is. Let us go to the magistrate's office immediately!

(EXIT MR BUMBLE, pulling Oliver by the arm. EXIT MR GAMFIELD, following. Lights fade, curtains close.)



## The Ground Gives Way

### The Ground Gives Way

*After he falls down into a cave while exploring the local rubbish dump, Barney meets a mysterious little man called Stig who lives in the cave.*

The next day, Barney found himself talking to his Grandmother about the incident at the dump the day before. In the morning light, Barney's Grandmother got the chance to take a good look at him. "Why do you have so many cuts on your body? And are you sure that I shouldn't apply ointment to your head?" Grandmother asked, while rushing around the house looking for bandages.

"I'm fine, Grandma," Barney responded. "And my head is fine."

"Where are you going after this? Don't forget to eat your breakfast!"

After shovelling his entire meal into his mouth in a few spoonfuls, Barney | rushed out the door to go to the dump.

By the time Barney reached it, he was exhausted, but he still continued to press onward towards the place where he had fallen down into Stig's cave. He then jumped down cautiously into the darkness. He was greeted by a familiar grunt.

"Hello Stig. How are you today?" Barney waved his hand. Stig smiled, and released a series of sounds that Barney could guess was "I'm fine. How are you?"

"So what do you usually do in the morning?" Stig scowled and simply said, "Morning. No morning."

Apparently, he did not like the morning. Meanwhile, Barney was impressed that he responded to the name Stig, and today, Stig's face looked even grubbier than the day before, like he had been dumpster diving. He probably had been, but Barney didn't say that to his face. "By the way, are you a human?"

This time, Stig grinned at the question and said with a voice somewhat like a bear's roar echoing through the woods, "Yes, I am human."

Barney was then further surprised, but he knew the sun was setting by the colour of the stones in Stig's cave, which were orange. "Bye! I've got to go!" Barney rushed out of the cave while Stig grunted a goodbye.

"Where have you been? You skipped lunch today!" Barney was greeted by Grandmother, who still could not get over the fact that he had wasted some of her excellent cooking.

"Probably at the dump... doing something," said Lou, giving Barney a suspicious look, before she continued. "I also need to go somewhere after this." Grandmother permitted her to go and she gave Barney a strange final look and headed out the door. Barney went in the opposite direction and walked up the stairs, still trying to decide whether to tell Grandmother about Stig.

When Lou came back, her hands were full of grime, almost as if she had fallen down into a cave...

# Ishana Sutowo 5R

## The Trial

Ishana Sutowo 5R  
The Trial

"John, It's time for breakfast!" my mom called out. "You don't want to be late for the Trial!"

I trudged downstairs with my hunting gear on. It was the day of the Trial. I never actually wanted to join; I just wanted to make my father proud. After finishing breakfast, I headed out with my father.

My father and I waited at the forest's entrance where the other boys waited too. I clenched my fists. I felt my heartbeat. I had just found out: I had to kill a bear. A real bear!

"The Trial will be starting soon," the village leader announced. I started getting shallow breaths.

"Hey John," Daniel elbowed me with a smirk. "I don't think you're going to last five minutes in the forest."

They all laughed. They were right though. I felt like I was going to die. A large honk bellowed through my ears, and a stampede of hunters raced to the forest.

The Trial began.

I raced to the forest, unable to catch up with the other boys. As I entered, I smelled oak leaves and wild ferns. Then it hit me. A wild smell. I slowly approached the scent. My eyes widened. There was a familiar figure. A bear!

Hesitantly, I lifted up my bow. Crack! A twig snapped. The bear charged at me. My legs froze. I was unable to run. In panic, I took a shallow breath and aimed for its heart.

I closed my eyes.

I opened them.

I looked down and spotted the corpse of the bear. I had won the Trial. My heart filled with excitement. The village leader was notified. I had killed the bear! I was given a medal of honour, and most of all, I had made my parents proud.

A few days passed since I had won the Trial. I had been doing my training and was feeling much better. Kneeling down, I picked up a berry from the grass. Crunch! A sound came from my left. I looked to my side. Daniel! His eyes filled with fury stared straight into mine. His arrow was pointing at me!

## Rayyan Said

### 5H

# The Sea-Mammy

*After a devastating hurricane leaves the land barren and food scarce, Anansi, weakened by hunger, seeks help from Blackbird, who appears well-fed. Anansi begs Blackbird to take him to her feeding tree on an island, and she reluctantly agrees, lending him feathers to fly. However, Anansi's attempt to fly fails initially, leading to doubt from Blackbird about his ability to fly.*

"Hey," Blackbird said in amazement, "Try that again, but this time from your rooftop, brother. Surely you'll be flying then."

Anansi carefully climbed up to his rooftop, took up a diving pose, and jumped. The wings, made from Blackbird's feathers, soared through the air, taking Anansi's thin body with them. Blackbird followed Anansi, occasionally turning his body in a specific direction to lead him to the island.

When they reached the island, Anansi immediately fell due to his lack of experience flying. Without hesitation, Anansi ran for his life towards the tree and hurriedly picked the red, juicy plum that dangled off the stiff leaves. However, as Anansi took a bite out of it, his body floated, and he felt an unimaginable clutch of energy coursing through his veins. Immediately Anansi's body grew plump and thick, and his hunger was gone. Blackbird smirked with amusement and happily watched as his friend was being 'healed'.

"What did that plum do to me?" asked Anansi who was overjoyed.

"It reverted you to your condition before the hurricane struck. In truth, this fruit does not even feed you, it actually changes your body and transforms it to its best condition. It's been called the healing fruit in the past and is actually a forbidden fruit as it was used by the gods over three million years ago!" the bird informed Anansi.

Anansi, overjoyed, decided to pluck the seeds of the plum so he could plant them in his garden at home. He put the seeds in his shirt pocket and happily flew back home.

Once he was back at home, he went into his backyard and placed the seeds in the ground. Surprisingly though, the seeds glowed after being planted in the soil,

and then they started to grow right before Anansi's eyes. Anansi saw a great big tree (bigger than Blackbird's feeding tree) that sparkled and glowed. The tree seemed to turn golden but started to look dull after a few seconds. Then, suddenly, a huge crack formed on the tree, seemingly something was consuming it from the inside. The tree then split in half, disclosing a cocoon that contained something inside.

Anansi carefully approached the cocoon, but when he touched it, something happened.

The cocoon shrivelled and wiggled, and the land Anansi lived in started to shake.

**A monster was about to be born...**

## Anthony Boenjamin

### 6 Respect

#### *Tora and the Panther*

Tora heard a whimper of pain as he strode through the thick jungle growth. It was coming from under the pile of rotten logs and leaves, like the wind calling for help. He tore away at the logs and found a tiny black panther. "It must be a baby, calling for his mother," thought Tora. The baby's hind legs had a small glimmering object protruding from them. Darts! The forest bandits were out hunting again, and it was only a matter of time before they would discover the panther. Tora picked the baby and placed it lovingly on a large banana tree leaf. He hurried towards a small straw hut – the place he called home.

Chop! Chop! Chop! Tora's father, a lumberjack was working tirelessly cutting and chopping logs to sell in the market. When his father saw the panther and the two darts, he quickly put down his axe and went to find his herbal ointment. "This cat is lucky. The bandits didn't put poison in these cursed darts!" cried Tora's father to no one in particular. Tora leapt up the stairs with the baby panther, who was snoozing peacefully, in his hands.

For the next three years, Tora had raised his panther, after finding out its mother had abandoned it. They became the best of friends, fending off forest bandits and foraging for nuts and berries. Tora taught the panther everything he knew, and the woodcutter took no mind to it, knowing that there would be plenty of berries waiting for him after a long day of work.

One rainy day, when the millipedes came out and the vines hung as low as the bushes, Tora decided that it was the perfect time to steal something very precious to the forest's bandit's leader: a very special amber necklace, decorated with glistening diamonds. He crept – silent as the breeze – into an ornate and grandly decorated hut.

There it was! The necklace lying on a straw mattress. Tora quickly grabbed it when he noticed that the mahogany bow, owned by the leader, was gone. This meant that he must be out hunting.

A roar soon echoed through the forest, "WHERE IS MY AMBER?" Startled birds took off towards the quieter part of the forest. Tora's panther jumped. His fur standing on ends. Suddenly darts and arrows streamed forth from bushes and trees. The bandits! They found Tora with the necklace around his neck. The panther growled, slashing projectiles out of the air in an attempt to protect his master. Tora fled across the jungle floors as his fully grown panther fended off the bandits.

After a brief moment, Tora returned to find his panther panting and taking shallow breaths. The bandits were gone but a knife was struck on the panther's side. The black panther, his best friend, fell to the ground, lifeless as Tora's head filled with unquenchable rage and despair.

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## Arianna Susanto - 6H

Whoosh! Tom's eyes snapped open, and he found himself in a glittering, sparkly cave. Hundreds and thousands of tiny, bright jewels surrounded him, making the task of finding six gold coins amid the treasure seem nearly impossible. As he pondered the possibilities, Zuma interrupted his thoughts.

"Please help me find the coins!" Zuma pleaded.

"Of course. We'll do this together. It'll be an adventure!" Tom replied, grinning from ear to ear.

A beam of light pierced through the cave from the opposite side. Tom tapped Zuma on the shoulder. "There! I see something!"

A gleaming gold coin hovered on a pile of treasure, momentarily blinding Tom. In a flash, Zuma glided across and was teleported to the other side. She reached for the floating coin, but to their surprise, it transformed into a precious blue sapphire, attaching itself around Zuma's anklet. Tom was left stunned.

In a matter of seconds, the duo located the remaining gold coins, each one magically transforming into precious gems before attaching themselves around Tom's anklet. As they searched for the last coin, they stumbled upon a drum identical to the one from the museum. Resting against a stone, Tom couldn't resist picking it up with both hands. Grabbing the nearby mallet, he struck the drum with all his might, unleashing an enormous roll of thunder. A gust of wind swept through the cave, enveloping everything in thick smoke.

"Tom, I'm back!" called a familiar voice, seemingly emanating from inside the drum. Tom stood there, mouth wide open, trying to comprehend the surreal events unfolding around him.

Shocked.

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## An Unexpected Visitor

By : Zarina Shanker Melwani 7H

**Ding Dong! Ding Dong!**

"Who could be ringing the door at this time?" I fumbled as I walked down the staircase, with my hair hanging low. It was the 30<sup>th</sup> of October, Halloween eve, a celebration I despised. My parents were out of town and my grandmother had gone out to buy groceries, so I was home alone, that wasn't a problem - I loved having me - time. I dragged my feet across the hallway towards the front door.

I swung my front door open and stood speechless. Standing in my doorway was a tall, slim figure with long, black hair that flowed like a river. I stood frozen as a face with amber eyes and pretty, pink lips greeted me. She was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen in my life.

"Hello, darling. How are you? I just wanted to introduce myself as I'm new in this neighborhood and just moved in to the house across the street," she said with a most gentle and pleasant voice.

Without hesitation, I invited her in to have a cup of tea in my house. I knew I wasn't allowed strangers in, but who in their right mind would refuse?

"Wow, you have a beautiful house," she sighed as she waled in, gazing at the portraits on the wall. I noticed that after a few seconds her eyes were fixed on the mirror.

"I'll start with the tea," I said as I scuttered to the kitchen.

After several minutes, she was seated comfortably on our most expensive leather couch, waiting in silence for the tea. I quickly picked up the tray in my hands and shuffled my feet. While walking, I glanced at the mirror and my body froze. My lips suddenly went dry and fear rushed though my spine. In the mirror was no longer the woman I met but a hideous creature. It had greyish, veiny skin, bloody red fangs and black eyes that looked pools of coal.

I dropped the tray.

From the sofa, the creature emerged and fixed its eyes on me. It cocked its head at me and said in a raspy, cold voice, "Everything alright, darling?"

The lights flickered on and off. The walls around closed in on me. My heart was thumping so violently, I thought it would fall straight out of my chest. The creature slowly took steps towards me. I kept telling my legs to move, but they wouldn't listen.

Suddenly, the door opened wide and there, stood my savior. My beloved Grandmother. "Dear, don't you think you have taken it to far?" Grandma said to the creature. I kept glancing back and forth at the both of them, confusion in my head. Grandma marched over to the creature and ripped its face off with her hot pink nails.

"Grandma, what are you doing?" I exclaimed as those words flew out of my lips. Out of the blue, a roar of laughter emerged from the creature. My mother stood in the place that the creature was.

"Happy Halloween, my love!" Her usual sweet voice echoed through the room.

## An Unexpected Visitor

By : Nayyara Tjakraamidjaja 7R

It was Tom's usual day in Spring Vill. He woke up, went to work as a scientist, and got home. He was... quite lonely and depressed after his wife, Marie had died. It was a tragic moment that Tom couldn't forget. It's been two years since his wife died and he claimed he had moved on from that tragedy.

Tom got out of his luxurious car, went inside his mansion, and lazily hopped onto his large couch. He turned on the TV. "Oh, I'm finally home! Again... with nobody," Tom muttered.

Then, something caught his eye. Something unusual...

"Welcome to CNN and tonight we have breaking news," the news reporter announced. "Today, a couple of scientists in Spring Vill got footage of what appears to be an Alien UFO. So, everybody be careful. Lock your houses, and don't go outside!"

Tom immediately turned off the TV. His face went all pale, his eyes wide open, and his body remained still.

After a while, Tom couldn't even process his mind. He was speechless! He didn't even know what to do!

"They have to be joking... right? Even I'm a scientist and I've proved aliens are unreal!" Tom declared.

Suddenly, somebody knocked.

Tom gave a little jump, he was frightened.

"T-that's unusual... nobody ever comes or knocks on my door. Plus, the news told everybody not to go out," stuttered Tom.

After a while, the knocking began to turn to banging. Tom had no choice but to open the door. Slowly, carefully, Tom reached for the handle and opened the door...

His face went all pale. His body couldn't move and he couldn't process what was going on in his mind. First, aliens, second... his wife!?

While Tom was too stunned to speak, his wife let herself in.

"Oh wow... Tom! How I've missed you! Look at your house, it-it's amazing!" Maria squealed.

"Ar-aren't y-you dead?" Tom mumbled.

Maria stared at him blankly.

"No silly! I've just been out of town for a year!"

"But you've been dead for two years!" Tom emphasized.

"Right... I mean I've been out of town for two years!" Maria grinned.

Tom had mixed feelings. He was so beyond happy that the love of his life was here, but something was definitely off...

Maria felt so comfortable in Tom's house, that Tom also started to ignore the suspicion in his nerves.

A couple of days passed by and Tom was so delighted that his wife was here with him!

"I'm going to prepare breakfast first!" Maria said.

Maria then went downstairs to the kitchen. Tom decided to get some snacks in the kitchen too and he saw it. Maria. An alien. He couldn't believe it! Maria? An alien? Impossible! All this time he let an alien inside his house? Aliens exist? This whole time Maria was a shapeshifter.

He knew what to do. He sprinted upstairs to his office and rummaged through his collection of inventions. He had it in his hands. The Shrinker.

Sneakily, he crept downstairs to the kitchen and... BOOM! He was shocked the machine actually worked! Tom trapped the tiny ant-sized alien in a jar.

"Let me out!" the alien squeaked.

Tom felt so relieved. He knew from the very beginning something wasn't right.

Tom then called the police and handed the jar filled with the alien. The police were so shocked he had survived. Tom felt like a hero. He learned now, to not let strangers in his house... ever again!

## An Unexpected Visitor

By : Danish Arfawibowo Silalahi 71

Ring! Ring! I packed up my bag and cleaned up my table. I was very excited to get away from this boring place and enjoy my home alone weekend. I cleaned my dusty glasses and pushed aside the chair with my long legs. "It's finally the weekend!" I screamed excitedly, galloping back to my house.

After several minutes, I finally arrived at my house. I took off my jacket, beanie, gloves and boots full of snow. As fast as a cheetah, I rushed to my room and pushed the "on" button of my laptop. With no mom, dad, or grandpa home, it's just the perfect day to stay up late while playing games and eating instant noodles. Excitedly, I double-clicked on the Rocket League icon, ready to play all night.

Tick tock... Several hours passed. It's currently 11p.m. Tick Tock... I went down stairs to make myself a warm cup of tea with chocolate biscuits to energize and satisfy my rumbling stomach. As I reached downstairs, something was off... The kitchen window was wide open, big enough for someone to break in. I began to overthink. Did I leave it open? Did I forget to close it?

Did someone – CLING! A glass shattered. It was from upstairs. I turned my head 90° to the left, making my blond hair cover my blue eyes. I started to panic. I reached into my pocket, grabbing my phone and dialed 911.

"911, what's your emergency?" The operator asked.

"My name is James and someone has broken into my house," I replied. "Please help me. My address is 51 rose street..."

And just like that, the lights went off. I started taking deep breaths and reached out for my bat. I had to protect this house. Tick-Tock... With courage and determination, I looked around my house with my bat ready to swing.

Several minutes passed and I saw a silhouette on the floor thanks to the lamps outside. I tracked it down and BASH! I bonked the uninvited visitor on the back of the head. It was of course a thief.

Not long after, the police came to capture the thief. After the incident, I learnt that I should always keep the house locked. I was thankfully not harmed thanks to my bat. Of course, I spent the rest of the night gaming.

## Porcupine Rescue

By : William Widyadi (81)

Joe Martin had always been a peculiar boy. Ever since he was a boy, he had always felt a strong connection with animals. It always seemed like he could understand what the beasts were saying. However, as he grew up, his affinity for those furry beasts seemed to have slowly disappeared. Wanting to rekindle his connection to the elements, he decided to take an escape from the hustle and bustle of the city to the tranquil peace of the forest.

Brown skyscrapers with green leaves surrounded him as he made his way through the forest. The sounds of the gushing streams and the occasional chirp of a bird created a beautiful symphony of nature which would even make the most talented composers jealous. After setting up his camp, he decided to explore the vast wilderness of the mystical forest. Joe grabbed his GPS and put it in his pocket - or so he thought.

While exploring, he admired the beautiful flora and fauna of the forest. There were plants and animals of all different shapes and sizes like a colourful mismatch of nature. While he was inspecting an abnormally large flower that radiated the pungent smell of death, Joe no longer felt the heat of the scorching sun on his back. In its place was a shining silver ball. Deciding it was time to return, he reached into his pocket for his phone but it wasn't there.

Cold sweat ran down his face and shivers ran down his spine as he tried to think of possible solutions. He racked his brain for ideas but nothing feasible came to mind. Maybe he could call for help? But barely anyone comes here. Maybe retrace his steps? Yes, that could work! But after aimlessly running around in the dense pattern of trees, he realized that it wouldn't work. In the end, he accepted his fate.

"Hello there. What are you doing here?" a voice called out. Joe opened his eyes but saw no one except a small porcupine on the ground. Although Joe thought it was just his mind playing tricks on him, desperate and panicked, he told the porcupine he was lost. The porcupine seemed to understand him and told Joe to follow it. And lo and behold, the porcupine actually led him to his camp before disappearing into the shadows of the forest.

"Do I actually have the superpower to talk to animals?" Joe thought to himself as he packed up his cap and swiftly made his way out of the forest.

## A Reality Tale

By : Jingyao Ruan (8H)

Kocho Aftonne was the embodiment of perfection: an angel walking on the grounds of Earth, I have to say. She was the spitting image of the girl my heart had twisted in jealousy for. That was before the very jealousy led to my downfall and nearly killed me.

Every time Kocho entered the tight-fitting library of books, my seething soul would simply watch on as she sashayed down the aisles, looking for a new book to pick. Oh, but I wasn't the only one admiring her. I wondered how the personable desk clerk felt, gazing at Kocho like a lovesick fool.

Fairy tales. That's what she always read. Typical stories where the damsel in distress gets rescued by Prince Charming. The mere thought of it always managed to stir my soul into outrage; making my nonexistent heart flutter in repugnance.

However, my time wasn't wasted anymore. It was my lucky day. I shouldn't put this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to waste. Kocho's petite arms flew up to my shelf, her frail fingers inching closer - close enough to touch the spine of my book -my cage- that kept me confined and locked away.

Then, she turned away.

"Take the book. Take it! Pick me!" Invisible, I yowled and clawed at her.

Abruptly, she returned.

Overjoyed was an understatement. As she brushed her fingers across my cover of a cage, I didn't waste a second sweeping into her open, awaiting mouth that formed a gasp.

Heightening sensations filled my body: the pumping adrenaline of Kocho's fear clashed with my humble gleefulness. I was free.

"Is there anything I can help with?" Behind me stood the desk clerk, who greeted me with an endearing grin.

"Oh, no, not at all. It's rather chilly here." I feigned a shiver.

"They do say this is one hell of a haunted section." He joked as he attempted to start a light-hearted conversation.

I merely giggled, my newly found heartbeat pounding with each breath I took. It suppressed Kocho's silent cries for help.

Guilt? Shame? I had none of them. No longer was this the fairy tale she'd always longed for. This was reality.



## The Funeral

By : Avni Yadav (8H)

The smell reminded her of her mother's apple pie. The way it would make the entire house smell like caramel and sugar, and have her drooling at the mouth. The smell father would always follow, no matter what he was doing. Except now, it wasn't the smell of her mother's apple pie. It was the smell of the incense they were burning next to her coffin.

She was wearing a black dress that was far too big for her. Father sat beside her in a crumpled suit and messy hair. His expression didn't give away what he was feeling but his swollen eyes did. "We got married in this chapel," his voice warbling and sentimental. "Did you know that?" She could do nothing but pat the back of his shoulder as he began to weep.

The rest of the day was little more than a blur. People with names she didn't know talked about her mother on stage. "She was kind," they said. "She had a beautiful soul and a dazzling smile." But they didn't know her. They weren't with her when she got the cancer diagnosis. They weren't there when she would stay up all night vomiting into the toilet bowl. They didn't weep for her while driving to work like Father did. They didn't see Grandmother's tears when she was making dinner. They weren't there when mother started shaking in her hospital bed or when the doctor told them she was gone.

But her daughter was. Even with her gone, her daughter still was.

## A Reunion with the Sea's Embrace

By : Carmel Hasibuan - 91

It's been a while since I was last here - oh, how I miss this! As I stepped out of the car, I could feel the silky, satin-smooth sand dancing on my feet, as well as the hot sun that happily shone down on me. In the distance, I could see the glad sun that resembled a sunny-side-up egg glimmering down on the sea - it truly looked magnificent; it was God's work of art.

I could hear the squawking seagulls awaiting me and the smell of salty seawater that was so strong, I could almost taste it. I took another look at the glimmering sea and thought that surely, this was a dream, right?

I approached the border between the silky sand and the crashing waves before spreading out my whole body, feeling free as a bird. I could feel the waves crash onto my sandy feet, washing away every single grain of sand perfectly as if the sea was destined to do that.

As I then took a dip in the crystal-clear waters, I felt truly exhilarated - the combination of the cooling, clear water and the generously hot sun shining down on me felt truly immaculate. My feet could feel the moist sand and particularly sharp, almost-stabbing rocks and corals beneath the sea. This was particularly annoying to me; however, I was distracted by the cold water and the sea that before looked a shade of dark blue now changed to a clear, bright light blue. Although I couldn't see it, I could feel my silky, jet-black hair glimmer due to the presence of the water and the sun.

But of course, all things come to an end - I couldn't stay with the warm, welcoming sun and the cool, glimmering sea forever. After what seemed to be an eternity, I got out of the cool waters and walked back; the sand now feeling damp and moist on my feet as the sun shone on me with a warm goodbye. I looked once again at the crashing waves in the sea I was just in before smiling and giving this truly exhilarating place a warm farewell.

## The Ray Upon the Journey

By : Alexander Boenjamin 91

The ringing of laughter, merry shouts, and excited chatter for the prospect of adventure passed pleasantly through my ears. It was impossible to ignore; their voices easily overshadowed the background of the roaring of engines waiting to be released. Families stood patiently on the stairs leading to the mighty beast, with parents attempting to control their children from bouncing around like the beach balls they packed inside their suitcases. The sun's rays perched over those in line, watching as their brightness spread over to the children's faces, reflecting their smiles unfolding from one side of the face to the other. If their faces were not restricted to the sizes they were at, it was reasonable to assume that the smiles portrayed would spread further than what they were capable of. On the far side of the plane, people could catch a glance at workers laboriously lifting the luggage that appeared ready to burst at a moment's notice, reflecting their owners currently waiting to board the vast metallic structure ahead. Bodies were unintentionally pushing against each other, mirroring a morning market, bustling like people moving in a crowd, to hopefully buy the freshest of a fisherman's catch, the grandeur of the plane looming large over them.

A fresh buzz of excitement at the thought of a new journey hit vibrantly as the bright rays of the Sun switched to become the vivid lights illuminating the inside of the plane. The hustle of the market was even more apparent inside. Children were shuffling to their seats, unable to bear the stagnant condition of the plane. They move and spring about like fish in a net, remembering the nostalgia of previous trips and failing to wait for the next to begin. Parents nervously and hurriedly carry their baggage over to storage compartments, impatient to move into their seats as they grow embarrassed upon holding up the lines of passengers approaching their seats. The rows of passengers flow endlessly into the plane, each similar to the last with beaming faces moving to the soundtrack of the unconscious tapping of luggage handles. The occupants of the plane kept on bustling, emitting occasional screeches of joy, or shouts for passengers to move faster erupting, to the extent that the roaring jet engines and the jangling vehicles outside became unintelligible and muffled.

As I weaved my way through to my seat, the shoves and contact of the passengers felt like boulders upon my body. The herd was restless, at a moment's notice apt to stampede its way up the aisles of the plane, destroying those who failed to escape before they arrived. The shouts and cheers of passengers struck my incapacitated ears, urgently calling to be surrounded by the soothing beats of whatever music was available. My stomach growled impatiently, imitating my desperation to escape from the unbreathable atmosphere. Tapping of the feet and fidgeting of the body were unavoidable in these situations. The dread and the beating of my heart were only covered by the calmness and pleasure as my seat became visible. At last, the journey awaited.

## EVENTFUL PLANE RIDE

By : Nikeisha Sakhi - 9R

A wave of excitement crashed over me as I took the steps to board the aeroplane. Stepping in the plane, the sound of the soft and friendly flight attendants caught my attention. Giving them my green, Indonesian passport covered with a brown leather case and a white boarding pass sticking out, I made my way through the narrow pathway, where we humans lined up like ants.

Hearing the rustling of bags being put in the overhead compartments, the murmuring of impatient passengers filled my ears as they pushed through to get to their seats. The narrow pathway was filled with different coloured shirts matching the colour of the rainbow. A bush of tangled, frizzy, curly hair of the girl in front of me filled my sight as I got to my seat.

The soft, velvety-brown plane seat enveloped me in its softness. Looking around a couple was sitting next to me. The long line of never-ending humans still filled the narrow hallway. The smell of the mango air fresheners filled my nostrils as I began to get comfortable in my brown aeroplane seat.

Finally taking off, the peaceful atmosphere was ruined by the screeching sound of cries coming from several babies. Feeling my eardrums about to burst, I placed my noise-cancelling headphones on. I covered the freezing cold glass window of the plane with the hard, off-white, plastic cover.

A feeling of hunger took over me as the smell of well-spiced food filled my nostrils. Soon, a tall, beautiful figure appeared from behind the curtains, pushing a grey trolley filled with different varieties of sugary drinks. At the top, a black, shiny kettle, and a heated shelf at the bottom of the trolley. Receiving the warm, rectangular, aluminium food pack in my hands, the growling of my stomach grew louder getting impatient to dig in. With a side of black coffee, I quickly dug into the delicious-looking food. A wave of hot steam blew over my face as I opened the seal. The sight of a bright yellow rice with a brown, curry-covered beef topped off with a mix of green and orange vegetables. The umami flavour of the food exploded in my mouth. Added the taste of bitterness from the straight black coffee matched well with the umami flavour. The sound of bags opening and cracking chips filled my ears as I continued eating this savoury meal.

After some time eating, the tall flight attendant picked up the trash. The plane was now as quiet as an empty room. The roar of the plane's turbo is the only sound heard. My eyes started closing and a wave of darkness took over me.

# The Best Sandwich Ever

By : Fabiola Yasa - 10R

My mouth watered, drooling like a starving hyena, as I greedily eyed the looming tower of heavenly goodness. I closed my eyes, savouring the aromatic smell of endless spices hunted from the ends of the world, combined with a sweet refreshing scent of blood-red cherries. The aroma of peppery sriracha tickled and itched my tingling nose hairs, wafting inside my nose and blessing my senses. Everything around me was a blurry haze, my sharp, hungry eyes fixated on the gleaming golden treasure that lay in front of me. It was like living in a fairytale world.

It was called the Sumo. Drenched in glistening salmon-pink aioli and hand-grated wasabi, with a hint of sourness from the pickled gherkin, topped off with a dust sprinkle of burning fiery red flaky chilli powder, it embodied the Christmas atmosphere of joy and wonder. My hungry eyes like a tiger hunting its prey, desperate for more, shifted towards the first of uncountable layers. It was like a massive birthday cake, with unique never-ending cohesive flavours piled on top of each other.

The fluffy brioche bread, golden brown crispy crust, grilled to perfection with stripes as visible as a zebra, blanketed a thick gooey layer of melted cheese as it oozed out, peering and escaping through the holes of the spongy bread. It was as breathtaking as a sunset, the orange of the gouda and bright red, fresh juicy tomatoes, and fuchsia pink mysterious sauce all blended together in perfect harmony to form a masterpiece painting resembling a Monet.

My mouth widened like a gaping cave, revealing the never-ending stream of cascading waterfalls originating from my uncontrollable salivary glands as I awaited no further to take a bite of this delicacy. It was as if speaking to me, whispering and urging me, and no man is able to resist this Devil's temptation. I bit into it with unexpected ease, chewing down on the soft slices of cloudlike bread that masked the punch within.

My mouth burst with flavour. It was a bomb, an explosion of various different textures that went perfectly together, a match made in Heaven. My snake-like tongue felt the sharp tangy flavour of the uni; creamy and rich in flavour. The umami broth of the medium well-seared foie gras melted in my mouth, creating a pool of heavenly delight as I savour this moment. The refreshing taste of mint leaves, the hint of spice from the glowing red cajun, and the bitterness of the Szechuan mala peppercorn left me at a loss for words.

As I continued to explore this adventurous rollercoaster of a sandwich, the strong fishy odour of salmon overpowered my senses and took control of my consciousness. It was like biting into a smooth slab of creamy, milky butter churned to perfection. Its colour, as bright as a freshly picked orange, glowing like the crescent moon in the dark sky, illuminating the dark flavour profile and enriching this heavenly experience. The cream cheese, generously slathered on both sides of the bread, left me in utter awe and amazement as if stuck in a dream. And the nightmare which I dreaded was taking my last and final bite. It was like experiencing the true meaning of life in a matter of seconds.

I paused and took a moment to capture its beautiful layers like a gleaming amethyst crystal, one in a million, no amount of money could afford. The bright colours of the rainbow filled my dry cave-dark mouth longing for more, the golden brown bread, squishy and light, with the fragrant tranquil lavender flower garnished on top of it, sleeping peacefully on a bed of vinegar-drenched greens. Such a complex dish, served on a simple elegant glass plate with gold plated 'Handmade with love' inscribed on the corners. I will never experience love like this ever again.



## The Text Message

By :Kyra Taniwan - 101

The silence in her car was deafening. Five young girls sat at the back of her car, making no noise at all. The whispers of laughter and giggles were blocked by the loud sound of police sirens. Their faces, which were originally white and rosy, had turned a ghostly white and grey, and their pink cheeks were splattered with dark, red blood. Their bright innocent eyes stared into the far distance with no light in them. The loud, lively little girls had turned into five dead dolls, lying in a variety of positions in the car.

The large policemen carefully pried away the debris around the car and yanked the door open. The air was filled with the stench of blood, smoke, and tears. One of the policemen licked his lips nervously and discovered that he could taste the metallic taste of blood on the tip of his tongue. He turned green at the thought that the blood came from a little girl.

Another policeman gently touched the pulse of one of the little girls. He shook his head, and sadly announced,

“There’s no hope. They’re all dead.”

The policemen started checking the surroundings and blocking them off. Black and yellow tape was put around the right side of the highway, ensuring that no other car would be able to hit the destroyed car and the sharp pole it had crashed into. One by one, all the little girls were taken out of the car. The woman in the driver’s seat was also carefully taken out and placed into a body bag similar to the young girls’. She had her eyes closed, but the large shard of glass inside her chest made it clear that this woman was not asleep, but dead. In her pale, white hand, a bright pink phone was tightly held.

“Oy, Mr Thomas! What should we do ‘bout the phone? It’s not damaged!” A man in a dark blue policeman’s uniform hollered at an older man with many badges on his uniform.

“Just grab it and put it into a plastic bag! Don’t forget to use gloves!” instructed the older man. The young policeman put on his gloves and slowly pulled the phone out of the lady’s hand, flinching a little as his hand brushed against the lady’s cold and stiff fingers. Right when he was about to put the phone into a plastic bag, a quiet “ding” came from the phone, and the dark screen lit up to show the newest message that just came in.

The text came from an unknown number and said, “If I don’t see the news reporting that the five Jameson sisters died in another hour, you can say goodbye to your own son, Amelia. Don’t make me wait too long.”

The young policeman’s face changed as he read the text message, and he frantically ran over to Mr. Thomas and showed him the message. The senior policeman’s face darkened as he read the text and he swiftly pulled out his phone to call his other team members.

“Quickly hurry back to the police station and investigate this number for me. Also, please help me inform Prime Minister Jameson that... his daughters have unfortunately passed away.”

As the sun slowly set on the horizon and the blue and red police car left the site, five little ghosts stood on the highway they had died on. Their translucent bodies danced with the wind as they giggled and laughed, their dainty voices covering the loud, anguished wails from the Prime Minister’s house and the pleas of mercy their murderer screamed out as he was handcuffed and dragged away. The five little angels sang and danced the night away, with nary a whisper to block their voices.

## The Wedding

By : Satrio Wijoyo - 101

The sun set during the calm evening of our wedding night. Shades of red erupted in the sky, oil pastels mixed forming a striking painting. I was staring at the sunset. Flocks of seagulls whipped through the air, projecting the salty air onto the palette of my tongue. Wind gushed through my hair.

The humongous white silky cloth suspended on poles stretched from the entrance, all the way to the sand. Beneath were families that filled the air with joy. Old friends were catching up on each other's lives while other people were taking their pictures in this dreamy venue. Kids were running around here-and-there, their parents trying to catch them from tipping over the tall chocolate fountain that held gallons. The smell of molten chocolate slithered into my snotty nostrils as I nervously waited for you to come out.

The lights dimmed down as the music slowed. Everyone tilted their heads to the main entrance. It was unclear. Muttering and whispers filled the room. Kids were jumping over their parents, trying to get a clearer view of what was happening.

The subtle strumming of the harp started playing a recognizable song. A silhouette of an hourglass appeared to be getting closer and closer. The white cloth of your gown brushed onto the rose-petal-scattered floor. As more light came in, I could make out the classic red lips you had. Your golden hair cascaded down like dominoes into place. The rosy cheek blush you had on made blood rush into mine.

Everyone else's face turned as you walked down the aisle with a winning smile, just like the face I would make while showing you off like a trophy. Closer and closer, you slowly took a step towards me.

The spotlight was glaring right at us. There's the silence. My heart was skipping down Fifteenth Avenue. I couldn't see anybody else, my eyes faded into your view. The slightest sound of your hairpin dropping echoed through the entire venue. The planets and stars hanging above us were watching this special moment.

I could now make out the song that was playing. It was our favourite song "Video Games". I then felt the energy of this moment as your hands fit right into my wide palm, creating this electric touch that brought my heart back into reality.

"Speak now, or forever hold your peace."

# Familial & Societal Norms and Religion's Contribution to Gender Inequality in Antigone

By : Anya Krishna Rahardja - 11T -

The play "Antigone" by Sophocles underlines the central themes of familial and societal norms, religion, and the way these contribute to gender inequality. These central themes converge to illuminate the global issue of women feeling trapped by the pressure of religious norms that perpetuate stereotypes about gender roles. Through the character of Antigone, who defies both familial expectations and state authority to honour her brother, the play illuminates the complex struggle faced by individuals who navigate the demands of her family and society while challenging oppressive norms. In a broader context, this acts as a reflection of how Antigone's refusal to comply with the status quo reminds readers of the importance of people who are willing to empower themselves and restructure social narratives.

The issue of gender inequality portrayed in "Antigone" portrays how societal and religious expectations make women feel as though they have limited power when making decisions for themselves. This is especially evident in the differences between Ismene and Antigone, as shown through their dialogue in the prologue of the play. This exchange displays Ismene's passive attitude towards her oppressed role in society, where she finds it unnatural for Antigone to completely disregard the view that they are women being ruled by "stronger hands," and are therefore powerless even in resistance. Where Ismene feels that women have no other option than to obey the laws handed to them be it divine laws or man's laws, Antigone disregards all this by burying Polyneices anyway, and defies the status quo by doing something that is so blatantly against the law. In this case, it's not that Antigone feels that she is free to do anything she wants – rather, she feels anguish towards her inability to do as she pleases. This is only natural, unfortunately given her identity as a woman. This indicates that women are trapped when faced with gender inequality partially due to the mindset of being trapped in the first place – while women around the world are faced with structural barriers preventing them from being treated as equal, Antigone serves as a reminder that attitude is the reason for change too.

Globally, familial and societal norms influenced by religious beliefs exert heavy pressure on women to conform to prescribed gender roles out of fear of divine judgement or retribution, leading to a sense of entrapment as they blindly follow expectations that deny them their individuality and self-expression. We see that in this play, religion is the main source of motivation for the characters. This is seen in Antigone's commitment to honouring Polyneices by giving him a proper burial, reflecting her dedication to divine laws – opposing Creon's view that traitors can never earn love, even in death, and should thus not be allowed to have a smooth passage to the afterlife. Bear in mind though, that Antigone is defiant not for the sake of being rebellious, but simply because she is defending her interpretation of the divine laws. The audience sees this manifesting in the quote "It was not Zeus who made this proclamation to me ... Nor did I think that your human proclamation had sufficient power to override the unwritten, unassailable laws of the gods." This adds onto Antigone's significance as a character, because instead of conforming to religious beliefs, she is instead using it to amplify her individuality and self-expression to assert how defiant she is towards Creon's laws and will not allow his laws to supersede her religious beliefs.

Regarding the theme of family, there is once again a clash between the mindsets of Creon and Antigone. Creon states that "As for a man who considers someone he loves to be more important than his country, I say that he is nothing." However, in comparison, Antigone's act of burying Polyneices itself clearly establishes her position as someone who prioritises familial ties over law. Antigone's individual convictions do not follow societal norms – she felt as though it was her innate duty to bury Polyneices, otherwise she would have died an ignoble death. However, in this situation, note how Antigone is indirectly honouring herself by honouring her family. She is retaining her sense of pride, even in the face of oppression, by asserting her right to honour her family members. As a result, the audience is reminded that women must retain their own sense of dignity and pride, because otherwise nobody else will view that.

Antigone's story is a timeless reminder that the price that we must pay for freedom bears its burdens. As much as she rebelled against the laws and the societal norms forced on her, she still died as a result of this defiance. While this raises the question of whether it was worth being for Antigone to be defiant for a short while given her tragic death, the audience must look at the larger context of the aftermath. Antigone's death indirectly caused Creon to realise his mistakes, and correct his tragic flaw of hubris. Moral balance and order is restored, despite the large number of casualties, and while not everyone is happy in the end, everyone is still on a better path. That is why Antigone's death wasn't necessarily in vain – it still worked out for the greater good of the entire population of Thebes.

Something unexpected in this analysis is the number of parallels that existed between Creon and Antigone – both of these characters disagree about everything, every aspect of morality, yet they are common in their defiance against a higher entity. In Antigone's case, it's her defiance against the state authority, yet in Creon's case, he defies divine law on many occasions. As they are both quite stubborn and unyielding to change their perspectives, they both lose something quite dear to them – Antigone loses her life to uphold her principles, and Creon loses his family because of his stubbornness.

In the process of completing this analysis, it's clear that religious norms, familial expectations and gender inequality are 3 interconnected issues that cannot be entirely separated from one another in the context of this play. It's also interesting to note how narratives from thousands of years ago from the past can still have themes that are relevant to a modern audience.

# Consequence of Discrimination Against Women in Antigone

By : Nichelle Angeline Tehunan - 11R

In *Antigone*, Sophocles explores the global issue of injustice, specifically regarding the consequence of discrimination against women (especially in political areas) which is partially the result of toxic masculinity. This is shown through the differences between Creon's action and reactions against her, Ismene, Haemon, and Tereiasias, Creon's discriminatory and mocking choice of insults when referring to women, and how the characterization of Antigone as an aggressive female character highlights how women are forced to become aggressive in the face of discrimination, in order to be heard. In this essay, I aim to explore and analyze these depictions of gender inequality, and justify why I believe advocacy on behalf of women is needed to make changes for more equality.

Firstly, Sophocles' 'unconventional' choice of an aggressive yet just female protagonist, which subverts the stereotypes and expectations of women, represents a break from tradition that encourages the audience to rethink social perceptions of women, and how women are forced to become more aggressive to change the status quo. Antigone's aggressive nature is highlighted by the contrast between the beliefs and attitudes of the two female characters in the play – Antigone and Ismene – and Antigone's aggressive attitude towards Creon.

During the time when the play was made, women was expected to be docile and obedient to men – a sentiment that unfortunately is still widely present in today's time – yet, shockingly, Antigone is shown as this aggressive, rebellious and stubborn woman. This is especially obvious in the first scene – while Ismene accepts her powerlessness against men, shown in, "We must remember that we are born women, not to fight against men; and since we are ruled by stronger hands, we must listen in this matter", Antigone is stubborn and challenges that status quo (shown in her willingness to challenge Creon's laws; (Ismene) "You dare? When Creon has forbidden it?" // (Antigone) "It is not for him to keep me from my own." and, (Antigone) "I will have to please those below longer than those here.") Antigone shows that she is stubborn in her beliefs and morals – she dares to defy societal norms and even the laws of the king himself for what she believes is correct for her to do. Furthermore, in the next scene, Antigone is shown to be consistently antagonistic and audacious towards Creon in his presence; she outright challenges his laws ((Creon) "And yet you dared to break this law?" (antigone) "Yes, for it was not Zeus who made this proclamation..."), opposes and mocks his opinions ("There is nothing in your words that pleases me, and I pray it never will!") and is overall antagonistic towards Creon.

This aggressive depiction that subverts traditional expectations of women may surprise the audience, especially those from Sophocles' time; not only is she opposing a man in a higher position of authority, but her views also represent that of the gods (morally right). The audience may disapprove of her methods as it may be viewed as unseemly or audacious, too aggressive for a woman, yet this rebellious attitude was what ultimately brings about change, as it kickstarted the events of this play that brings about justice by the end. This thus challenges the audiences' perceptions of women as the inferior and docile kind, and shows how this kind of discrimination had forced women to become more aggressive to defend their beliefs and opinions. This shows that aggression from women is necessary in order to make any change, due to the extent of discrimination against women that dismisses their opinions and arguments.

Despite being morally right, however, Antigone's arguments are dismissed and opposed by Creon, due to discrimination against her gender and Creon's masculine pride. Throughout the play, Creon repeatedly expresses displeasure against the idea of women having any authority. This is shown in, "But a woman will never rule me while I am alive!", which rejects the idea of Antigone telling him what to do, and "Surely I am not the man now – she is! – if victory goes to her without punishment," showing his belief that to be a man is to have power and dominate others, especially women. This shows Creon's fragile view on masculinity and power – to him, to be a man means to have power, and to obey a woman, who he thinks is the lesser being in intelligence and worth, or lose that power would mean losing his worth and essence as a man. He also insults women throughout the play to enforce his misogynistic views; "From now on they must be women and not go wandering outside," implying that women are expected to be docile and without freedom, and "You foul creature, lower than a woman!" implying that to be a woman is a low position. Due to these views, he refuses to listen to Antigone.

This depiction of Creon does two things; first of all, by expressing these misogynist views through the unlikable, prideful and illogical main antagonist of the play (juxtaposed with how female protagonist is depicted as brave and righteous, the one who is correct), the audience, who may echo Creon's views, is encouraged to rethink their fragile perception on masculinity and biases against women, as no one likes to think of themselves as the villain. Creon also serves as a cautionary story; his misogynist mindset and pride led him to reject Antigone's arguments, and he is blind to the truth (the gods' will); in the end, he is doomed and punished for it. Sophocles seems to believe that misogyny isn't only harmful for women, but also for men, who may be blinded by their excessive need to prove their masculinity and dominance over women. Secondly, it shows how the toxic masculinity and discrimination that persists in society makes it near-impossible for men to listen to women even if they are correct, which makes it hard to bring about change. This is made even worse as women are forced to become aggressive to defend their views, which may offend and agitate men even more. The cycle is hard to break, as women's views go unheard – hence, there is the need for advocacy on behalf of women, which leads me to my final point.

The difference between Creon's reactions to the characters that confront him in the play further highlight the effects of gender discrimination and the need for advocacy for women. Haemon and Teiresias express the same views as Antigone – that is, that Creon is wrong and must follow divine law – yet, where Antigone's arguments was opposed to the point where she and her (innocent) sister was condemned to death ("She and her sister will not escape the most terrible death..."), Creon, to some extent, believes in the credibility of Haemon and Teiresias' advice. For Haemon, although Creon antagonizes him and outwardly refuses to take his advice due to Haemon's age and his pride, he ultimately appears to have some fear of Haemon's warnings – this is shown in how, after Haemon spoke to him, he chose to entomb Antigone alive instead of killing her directly to avert guilt/consequence. And when Teiresias warns him/condemns him of his actions, he finally repents – he sought to bury the dead and release Antigone, despite both Haemon and Antigone already having warned him of the consequences of disobeying divine laws beforehand. This drastic difference in how he treats women (Antigone) and men (Haemon and Teiresias)'s advice further highlights the consequence of discrimination against women and how it causes women's opinions to devalue in the eyes of men, and the need for advocacy on behalf of women. While men will not listen to women as they are viewed as lesser beings, they will often, like Creon, tend to listen better to other men – as such, unfortunately, there is the need for men to help advocate on behalf of women for any change to be made. This applies to real life situations, where often men in authority must be convinced/persuaded by other men for better gender equality, despite female protests that had already existed since long. This play thus shows the consequences of gender discrimination on the right of women to be heard, and how advocacy is needed on behalf of women in order to change towards better equality.

In conclusion, through Antigone's shocking, unusual characterization as an aggressive yet morally just protagonist (emphasized by contrast with Ismene), contrasted with Creon's illogical and emotional behaviour, as well as the toxic perception of masculinity shown through the insults of such an unlikable character (Creon) and the difference in how Creon treats the opinions of men vs. women, this play shows the consequences of gender discrimination and toxic masculinity towards both men and women, and encourages the audience to rethink their biases. It also shows why there is the need for advocacy on behalf of women, in order for gender equality to be realized.



# Critical Response to Malala's Use of Language on Education

By : Shifa\_ Syaugi - 11T

## In what way does the speaker use language to express her views on education?

In the speech by Malala Yousafzai titled *"Malala Yousafzai: 16th birthday speech at the United Nations."* Yousafzai uses parallelism, repetition and pathos to convey her message of wanting education to be a basic, necessary human right regardless of gender and class by raising awareness for the lack of education within young girls and boys of poverty.

In her speech, Yousafzai uses parallelism to create strong contrasts to raise awareness on the current world problem of lack of education which prompts her audience to fight for education as a human right. She uses parallelism in the line "Weakness, fear and hopelessness die. Strength, power and courage was born." in the form of antithesis and tricolon to how the incident changed Malala Yousafzai to not what the Taliban were expecting, which was a weak feeble woman who would back off after they fought her, and instead she emerged stronger and ready to fight back. This was used to show her determination and her willpower to strive for human rights. This gives the audience confidence and respect in Malala Yousafzai and what she is saying, which would give them incentive to fight alongside her, and understand her point of view of having education as a human right. Yousafzai also states "Their right to live in peace. Their right to be treated with dignity. Their right to equality of opportunity. Their right to be educated.", in which she repeats the words "their right" to emphasise that she is fighting not for herself, but for 'them' which refers to the young boys and girls who are lacking in education. There is a strong parallel between what comes after the "their right"s, which is in increasing scale of complexity or scarcity. To "live in peace" is a basic human right which everyone should be given as well as to be "treated with dignity", though it is more difficult to come across, and some could argue that it is to only those who are deserving. Then she states, "equality of opportunity" which some people (in this case children) don't have the liberty of having, because of age and gender, but it is something that should be considered a basic human right as well. Lastly, being "educated" which is also a human right but not considered as one yet in some countries, which is what she is trying to raise awareness of, and wants to consider it as such. She compares being educated with living in peace because she believes and is convincing the audience that those two are on the same level, and should be regarded as such. The strong contrasts that she creates actively allows the audience to reflect on what a basic human right is, and that education should be considered as one. This gets the audience to become more aware of the situation, of the importance of education.

Malala Yousafzai uses parallelism in her speech to also convey the simplicity, and the basic and elemental nature of education that make it a human right. The second last line in the speech, "One child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world." also utilised parallelism to convey Yousafzai's message. A child, a teacher, a pen and a book are 4 things necessary for education. This reminds people that getting education is a simple thing, and that it is a possible, feasible idea. It reminds the audience that that is all that is necessary for this problem to be resolved. The repetition of one also degrades the amount that is actually necessary for the problem to be fully solved, but she reminds her audience that it starts somewhere and as something small. This is her way of prompting the audience to take immediate action, because it is something so "small" and "mundane". These are simple things and simple objects encountered by "normal" people in everyday life, considering that they were in New York and these are all accessible materials (pen and book) and people (teacher) there. To them, education is as natural as holding a book in their hands. By saying this line, she is trying to tell them that this is not the case in her country and in many countries around, and thus raises awareness in the audience. This will cause the audience to realise that education is and has been a basic human right to them, but not to other people around the globe, which will prompt them to take action or at least support Malala Yousafzai and her cause. By using parallelism, she conveys the simplicity of education to show her audience that it is possible for it to be a basic human right. Doing so, she raises awareness in her audience, and prompts them to take action (small steps).

Malala Yousafzai also uses parallelism to get the audience on a personal level with them by including ethos and pathos to appeal to her audience's emotions and get them to "wake-up". She says "we must not forget that millions of people are suffering from poverty, injustice and ignorance. We must not forget that millions of children are out of schools. We must not forget that our sisters and brothers are waiting for a bright peaceful future." Not only does she use repetition to increase the emphasis on the fact that her main purpose and her main message is not for her, and her tragic incident, but the children. She uses emphasis on the word millions as well to amplify the degree of the situation, to get the audience to have a sense of pity and sympathy for the children, not just one or two but millions of them, which increases the degree of importance of the lack of education. She also uses parallels between the phrases following the "we must not forget". At first, she mentions millions of people and children, then she mentions "sisters and brothers". Sisters and brothers are used because a brothers and sisters role in a family is to take care of their siblings, and this would entice the audience to be more motivated to step up and take action on behalf of these millions of children to help them which would increase awareness in the audience and prompt them to take action for them.

She uses repetition in her speech to create emphasis in her speech to create awareness and get her audience to support her by reminding the audience that this problem (the lack of education), is a problem for everyone. Malala Yousafzai repeats the phrase "brothers and sisters" or "sisters and brothers" many times throughout her speech to refer to her audience, though they are used to have different meanings. In the beginning, she uses it to bring herself down to the level of the audience, to the level of the victims she mentions of the killings, down to the level of the people in poverty who are in lack of education. In the beginning she uses sisters and brothers and mentions sisters first to create a sense of feminism and importance, because to her, women come first. Then she changes to brothers and sisters to show that she believes in equality between both genders as opposed to one over the other. She does so to connect with the audience as well, and bring them to a personal level with her, such that the speech feels less of a lecture and more like a conversation, to get the audience to be more personally invested in her speech, which actively raises awareness to her cause. In the bottom half of the speech, right before the repetition of the phrase "we call upon...", she refers to her audience as "brothers and sisters" once again. This time, on the other hand, she puts herself on the same level as them, and brings them down to her level instead, to show that this problem is not just for women, it's not just for her, it's not just for girls, but it's for everyone to worry about, and for everyone to contribute to, because the problem (though may be indirectly) affects everybody. This would get the audience to be more aware of the situation and would incline them to support her further. After that, she repeats the phrase "we call upon" several times throughout the speech to bring awareness to the lack of education, and that this problem with education she is calling awareness to is not just for the girls or the 'sisters' or just the world leaders, but for everyone, for every community to work together to fight for. They are all brothers and sisters, or equals in this issue and they are all fighting for the same thing, or should be fighting for the same thing. She also tries to make her cause play out to be a cause that needs help from everyone, not just one group of leaders, which makes the audience feel needed and wanted, which is a basic human trait and thus motivates them to contribute to her cause of making education a basic human right even more.

In conclusion, in her speech, Malala Yousafzai uses effective parallelism, antithesis, tricolon and repetition to raise awareness that can help prompt the audience to support her in her battle of having education as a basic human right for all regardless of gender or social class.

# Economic Determinism as Presented in Ian McEwan's Atonement

By : Ayla Kimora Sumampouw - 12T

## Economic Determinism as Presented in Ian McEwan's Atonement

Line of Inquiry: How do the contrasting portrayals of Paul Marshall and Robbie Turner's characters in Ian McEwan's "Atonement" contribute to the reader's comprehension of the role of wealth and status in the deception of individuals and the manipulation of their circumstances?

Ian McEwan's *Atonement* is a timeless novel that explores the concept of social stratification and its contributions towards societal division. The theme of class can largely be seen by the tension McEwan creates between the social class portrayals of Robbie Turner and Paul Marshall. Particularly, through the depiction of war, Briony's revelation at the end of the novel, and Robbie's relationship with members of the Tallis household, McEwan illustrates the ability of wealth and influence to determine the trajectory of a character's life, and therefore, their ending circumstances.

Karl Marx's theory of economic determinism is utilized to explain the influence societal class has on the opportunities available to an individual. Marx argues in his theory that an individual's livelihood and environment, both materially and psychologically, are based upon their general economic conditions (Iglesias, 2014). McEwan depicts Marx's theory of determinism through the divergence in Robbie Turner's (a proletariat) and Paul Marshall's (a bourgeoisie) experiences throughout the novel. Through this depiction, McEwan leads the readers to conclude that life outcomes aren't solely within personal control, highlighting the impact of factors like inherent wealth and power on the course of one's life.

First, McEwan uses Robbie's reception in the Tallis household to emphasize the distorted nature in which the Tallises perceive him. Particularly, Briony's narration of the fountain scene highlights how social class shapes most of the interactions between the characters. For instance, Briony places greater emphasis on Robbie's heritage instead of his character in the lines "Robbie Turner, only son of a humble cleaning lady and no known father" (McEwan, 2001, p. 21). Immediately upon reading these lines, the readers can notice that Briony's sole description of Robbie is tied to his economic background. This compels the readers to deduce that to Briony and the Tallises, Robbie's social class background will consistently take precedence over his personal qualities. Briony's choice of words such as "only" and "humble" reinforces the limitations of Robbie's socioeconomic background. particularly, the words "only" may refer to Robbie being the sole child in his family, but it may also nod to Robbie's lowly upbringing and Briony's perception of Robbie's inadequacy for Cecilia, her noble-born sister. In the subsequent lines "...had the boldness of ambition to ask for Cecilia's hand" Briony alludes to the revolutionary nature of Robbie's love for Cecilia. This idea is best depicted by the words "boldness" which insinuates a willingness to take a step beyond the conventional societal class boundaries placed at the time. McEwan uses Robbie and Cecilia's revolutionary love to give the readers hope that despite Robbie's socioeconomic status, he can transcend the limits imposed on him by the social class system, and gain achievements above his standing. Yet, the fairytale-like tone Briony adopts in the delivery of these lines, in addition to creating a romantic tone, suggests that the reader's expectations are improbable. Essentially, the description of Robbie and Cecilia's relationship allows the readers to root for Robbie causing his subsequent downfall to receive stronger sympathy from the readers.

The opposite applies to Paul. The lines "Cecilia's repeated suggestion that it was Danny Hardman they should be talking to was heard in silence" (McEwan, 2001, p.87) underpins the Tallises' romanticized view of Paul Marshall. Here, McEwan, through the Tallises, presents two suspects: Danny Hardman and Robbie Turner, completely overlooking Paul's involvement due to his social class. The similarity between the two characters lies in their working-class socioeconomic status. Through the suspicion that surrounds Danny and Robbie, McEwan establishes a classist pattern on the side of the Tallises that uses socioeconomic status as a determinant of character. This classist pattern nods to the inevitability of Robbie's conviction, suggesting that regardless of Robbie's actions, the Tallises would have never blamed Paul; instead, they would always suspect a member of the working class to be the perpetrator of Lola's rape.

Next, McEwan exemplifies the idea of economic determinism in Robbie Turner and Paul Marshall's different war time experiences. Paul Marshall's noble status pre-war enabled him to avoid participation in the war, whereas Robbie's proletariat background, obliged him to fight in the frontlines. The divergence between the two character's experiences is first underscored by the absence of Paul Marshall's point of view in the second part of the novel. This absence points towards Paul's shelteredness and also serves to juxtapose Robbie's firsthand accounts of the atrocities of war. Particularly, the lines "it was a leg in a tree....it was a perfect leg, pale, smooth, small enough to be a child's" (McEwan, 2001, p.91) showcase Robbie's direct engagement with the battlefield. The imagery of a child's leg serves to inject a sense of innocence and vulnerability into the text that distinctly contrasts the gore of war. The incongruity between the vulnerability provided by the child's imagery and the brutality of war is utilized by McEwan to evoke a sense of pity and horror within the readers, placing greater significance on Robbie and Paul's parallel lives. Additionally, the "tree" is utilized as a symbol of a higher power and is included to highlight not only Robbie's powerlessness in the face of death but also the superstructure of class in his society that systemically disadvantages him.

Conversely, Paul Marshall prospers as a product of the war. This prosperity is best symbolized by his Amo bars. The lines "If he were to supply the whole of the British Army with Amo bars he could become immensely rich (McEwan, 2001, p.74) showcases Paul's economic exploitation. Interestingly, the word "Amo" has two different connotations for Robbie and Paul. For Paul, the term "Amo" signifies his chocolate empire, whereas for Robbie, "Amo" could be inferred as an abbreviation of "ammunition," symbolizing the danger he confronts on the battlefield. McEwan uses this word play to showcase a specific facet of war shared but experienced differently by Paul and Robbie. Additionally, Briony lists elements essential in war in the lines "... bullets, shrapnel....and damp sweaty battledress whose Amo pockets

contained... the sodden crumbs of Amo bars" (McEwan, 2001, p.144) . The inclusion of Paul's Amo bars not only implies that they are an essential part of war but also a symbol of the pain and suffering endured by British soldiers. McEwan employs the Amo bars to depict Paul's exploitation of soldiers like Robbie, profiting from their misery.

Essentially, McEwan's comparison of Robbie and Paul's wartime experiences is established to compel the readers to notice the inherent injustice intertwined in the class system that forces one social class to suffer at the expense of another. Through these portrayals, McEwan implies that Robbie and Paul's economic background has laid the framework for the difference in their experiences moving forward in the plot. This revelation is meant to infuriate the readers, building more reader support for Robbie.

Moreover, the novel's ending serves to solidify the divergence in the lives of both characters as a byproduct of their wealth and lack thereof. The lines "They could ruin a publishing house with ease from their current accounts" (McEwan, 2001, p.175) describe the societal placement of the Marshalls post-war. "Publishing house" is used in this sentence as a symbol for the dissemination of knowledge. The idea that the Marshalls can destroy such an authoritative figure in literature speaks to Paul's ability to control the spread of information. Paul's sense of control is again juxtaposed by Robbie's death. The lines "Robbie Turner died of septicemia at Bray Dunes on 1 June 1940" (McEwan, 2001, p. 175) are straightforwardly delivered by Briony to mimic the direct way Robbie died. McEwan uses the straightforward portrayal of Robbie's death to evoke an immediate, emotional response in readers, intensifying the impact of the loss and garnering sympathy for Robbie's situation. The direct presentation of Robbie's death also serves to contrast McEwan's earlier romanticization of Robbie's relationship with Cecilia. The clash between the earlier romantic tone and the current realistic tone is intended to stun the reader and create a bigger dissonance between what could have happened and what did happen. By providing the

readers with a desirable outcome and then taking that away, McEwan allows the readers to grieve over Robbie's alternate life, generating greater sympathy for his current situation. The revelation of Paul's billionaire status in the same paragraph allows the readers to compare the situation of the two characters, creating a sense of injustice and evoking anger within the readers. McEwan utilizes the reader's anger to drive home the idea that the capitalist class system is deeply unfair in the way it systematically advantages one class over the other.

In conclusion, by depicting the lives of Paul and Robbie in different ways, McEwan appeals to the reader's sense of justice and prompts them to notice the role of the superstructure of class in determining the life outcomes of individuals. McEwan implies that despite Robbie's initial success in transcending his low socioeconomic origins by acquiring an education at Cambridge University, these achievements amounted to little in the face of a deeply classist society that favors the wealthy over the poor. Through this work, McEwan prompts his readers to evaluate their own class system, determining whether it operates in a discriminatory manner similar to the one depicted in *Atonement*.

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## Critical Response on Depictions of Men & Women

By : Edzel Andika Sutanto - 12T

Struggling to resolve problems and failing to do so is a situation that one faces throughout life and one that many readers can relate to, regardless of background. *Pygmalion*, a play by George Bernard Shaw, and *Persepolis*, a graphic novel by Marjane Satrapi, both illustrate this part of the human condition by engaging with major themes of struggle in their stories. Through the use of characterization and irony, both works emphasise the complexity of the problems that their characters seek to resolve, showing how they unintentionally bring about new consequences in their struggle to resolve their problems and also how they are often blind to their role in perpetuating the problem itself.

The authors of both works make use of characterization to emphasise how the struggle to resolve problems has led to a transformation in the main characters of their work, for better or for worse. In *Pygmalion*, Eliza initially finds Higgins of her own volition because she wishes to make her speech more "genteel-like.". The reason for this is so that she can find employment more easily or, essentially, fit into society better. Given that the story is set during the Victorian era, when people were expected to conform to rigid social barriers, it makes sense why Eliza would want to escape from her lower-class social standing and ascend to a more upper-class one by transforming herself. Though Eliza is successfully passed off as an upper-class person by the end of the play, she is arguably in a position that is worse than before. Her initial problem of finding employment has not been resolved at all, with her still being unemployed and living with Higgins and Pickering. Meanwhile, her place in the Victorian social class is complicated by the transformation. Her manners and way of speaking have changed considerably to become more "genteel-like" but she is still not fully accepted by upper-class society, as evidenced by Higgins' continued treatment of her as if she were beneath him. Though Eliza's outward appearance and mannerisms are enough to pass her off as upper-class during the ball, the reality is that she is still an outsider to their way of life. But after her transformation, she is now an outsider to the social class that she was once a part of, as evidenced by her inability to communicate with "her people" anymore. In her attempt to resolve the problem of being lower-class, Eliza ends up in a position where she cannot comfortably belong to any social class and is effectively an outsider to society.

While the characterization of Eliza focuses on her transformation to be better accepted into society, in *Persepolis*, the characterization of Marji is one of remaining unswayed in the face of a society that tries to impose its values on her. Marji is determined to stand up against the oppression of the Islamic regime, and this is how she attempts to resolve the problems of oppression that she is faced with. However, by adamantly opposing and choosing not to buy into the ideas that the Islamic regime tries to feed her at school, she often gets herself in trouble and eventually ends up getting expelled after an altercation with her school's principal. She ends up hurting her hopes for a better future just to resolve the problem of oppression through her acts of defiance. This event captures the irrationality of her way of thinking. Her acts of defiance do not do anything to resolve the oppression that the regime deals to the people; they are only getting her in trouble. To most adults, including her mother, Marji's actions are seen as being unwise, especially in light of the violent oppression that the regime often deals to its people. Instead, her actions come off as the actions of a teenager who is being rebellious simply for the sake of rebelliousness. The reality is that Marji is not resolving any problem but only exacerbating it. By fighting back against oppression, she is only dealt with more oppression. This presents a similar problem to the one seen in *Pygmalion*, where Eliza's transformation only complicated her place in Victorian-era social classes, even though she intended to move up the social class. In both these works, the unintended consequence of trying to resolve a problem has only added to the problem, leaving the characters in an arguably worse position than before.



Both of these works also make use of irony to highlight how people often criticise a particular problem, only to be part of the problem themselves. Throughout *Pygmalion*, Higgins constantly criticises people for speaking improper English or for having poor social etiquette. His criticisms are most heavily dealt to Eliza, whom he attempts to change completely. At the same time, he neglects to recognize his own poor manners, which his mother often criticises him for. The irony lies in the fact that Higgins has made himself Eliza's teacher while not being a good example for her either. Higgins sees himself as the solution to the problems of improper etiquette that he sees but really, he is just part of the problem. In fact, throughout the play, there are moments where the upper-class characters display worse behaviour than lower-class characters, a recurring idea that Shaw uses to highlight the hypocrisy of not just Higgins, but upper-class Victorian society in its criticisms of the lower-class being without morals or etiquette while continuing to do the very things that they criticise. Higgins' transformation of Eliza from a lower-class person to a lady who can be passed off as upper-class would suggest that he has successfully resolved the problem but in fact, he is far from it. The problem of improper manners and speech may no longer be evident in Eliza but it continues to be a part of how he acts and this stops the problem from being fully resolved.

Similarly, in *Persepolis*, Marji's family claims to be against the existence of social classes when it comes to politics but continues to perpetuate them in their day-to-day life. One crucial example is when their maid, Mehri, falls in love with a neighbour. Marji's father is the one who reveals Mehri's true identity- and social status- to the neighbour boy and in doing so brings their romance to an end. It is ironic that Marji's dad, as someone who has taught Marji to be politically aware and against social classes, would be the one who perpetuates it. The hypocrisy of this is clear to the readers, especially because Marji herself criticises her father for it. The Iranian revolution aimed to ease the social class divisions within Iranian society, and as supporters of the revolution, Marji's parents would have undoubtedly agreed with this. But the moment that they need to deal with a situation that forces them to confront social class divisions within their own social sphere, they revert back to the traditional ideas of divisions between social classes, not making an attempt to break them, even though they claim to support tearing down social barriers. Much like Higgins in *Pygmalion*, Marji's parents in *Persepolis* are essentially clueless about their own role in perpetuating the problem they claim to want to resolve. In this way, both works clearly depict the complexity in the struggle to resolve a problem when one does not recognize it in themselves.

In using characterization and irony, the authors of both *Pygmalion* and *Persepolis* have been able to effectively depict the complexity of how people struggle to resolve problems. In both works, characters end up in a worse position because of their struggle to resolve their issues, and this highlights how people often poorly read their own situation and how they can provide solutions to it. On the other hand, it also highlights how the failure to resolve the problems faced by the characters are often caused by their own inability to see their flaws and the ways in which they perpetuate the problem they claim to be against.



# From Rape to Riches\_ Interpretive Feminism in McEwan's Atonement

By : Keanu Dwibuwana Djalal - 12R

## From Rape to Riches: Interpretive Feminism in McEwan's Atonement

**Line of Inquiry:** To what degree is Lola from McEwan's "Atonement" simultaneously a victim and exploiter of the oppressive system of female dependency in patriarchies?

### Introduction

McEwan's novel *Atonement* provides a powerful commentary on female degradation in patriarchies. Considering today's tense political climate, few hesitate to reinforce modern feminist agendas without first grasping gender-based oppression more fundamentally. Blindly abiding by prescribed moral standards is extremely perilous, as this same behaviour originally catalysed the establishment of gender roles. Hence, this paper queries the validity of the values we adhere to, curating new perspectives of what constitutes female oppression. This paper asks, to what degree is Lola from McEwan's "Atonement" simultaneously a victim and exploiter of the oppressive system of female dependency in patriarchies?

Though many critics classify *Atonement* as a progressive text regarding gender-based oppression, Zinnurova (2006) argues the opposite rather sensationally, asserting that Lola's "sophisticated manipulation of the advantage the rape has given her" underscores women's capacity to undercut their oppression (p.70). This paper mostly disagrees. Whilst *Atonement* reinforces the severity of female objectification in patriarchies, unlike Zinnurova, this essay argues that Lola's marriage was not a platform for impairing her oppression, nor did she leverage the rape to her advantage. Lola's marriage was a desperate attempt at survival, and her degrading objectification and continued shame are indicative of that. Through idioms, rhetorical questions, symbolism, double entendres and allusion, McEwan shows that both before and after her marriage to Marshall, Lola remains an undeniable victim of the patriarchy.

### Article A: Lola's Role

Both this paper and Zinnurova's agree that Lola was severely objectified. Rather than being regarded as her own person with her own liberties, she was treated as something to be used at Marshall's pleasure, a notion substantiated through symbolism and associated diction.

Lola's blossoming femininity and absence of a father led to her feeling the need to sexually appeal to Marshall, evident from her "ankle bracelet" which exposes the adultish persona Lola tries to portray, a persona Marshall capitalises on (p.7). An adult ornament on the lower half of Lola's body highlights that despite her youth, her person is a mixture of both child and adult elements in the way she wants to appear and be treated to compensate for her lack of a male parental figure. This conformist sexuality and Marshall's exploitation of it is exemplified by this "ankle bracelet" which symbolises slavery, akin to the chains restraining the ankles of actual slaves to symbolically convey Lola's enslavement by Marshall's desires. McEwan thus uses symbolism to communicate Lola's acceptance of Marshall's male superiority over her female subservience.

Furthermore, Lola is "devoured" by Marshall - diction closely associated with starvation, food, and consumption (p.100). Figuratively, it conveys that he consumed not just her body, but her innocence and freedom, as if he were eating away at Lola's girlhood. It creates unsettling imagery in readers of Marshall consuming Lola's body through sex, holding deeply sexual connotations. Either way, this diction degrades and objectifies Lola, reducing her to a less-than-human piece of meat for Marshall to "devour." McEwan shows that the male construct demands that women are only women if they identify themselves with the male desire. This degradation defines her role within the relationship; she exists only to be devoured. These indications of Lola's value being dependent on her capacity to sexually satiate Marshall's desires reinforces her victimisation.

## Article B: Lola's Motive

Controversially, Zinnurova (2006) contends that Lola stripped herself of her victimhood by claiming she "plotted" her way into marrying Marshall as "scheming is used by the females in the novel as a form of 'writing' their own stories (p.35)." What Zinnorova overlooked, however, was that although Lola's marriage was a product of opportunism, it was conceived from a desperation to survive, not to exploit. Therefore, she retains her victimhood.

McEwan uses violent imagery to convey the abuse Lola endured and her futility retaliating against it, therefore demonstrating her victimisation. Imagery such as "blotchy bands of chafing around her wrists" and Lola's "husky voice" emphasises the brutality of the act, highlighting the severity of both the physical and emotional toll taken (p.286). Consequently, emotions of pity are engendered within the reader. The implication is clear: Lola was unsafe and endangered. Readers thus understand that for Lola, marriage was a medium to prevent such actions as it was "ordained...to avoid fornication, that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry and keep themselves undefiled (p.202)." The vows are deeply and deliberately ironic as they explicitly outlaw the sins committed by Marshall. Marriage prevents "fornication," the very sin Marshall committed when he raped Lola. The "gift of continency" was a means to remain "undefiled" and yet, this is the antithesis of the rape incident as Marshall defiled Lola's body with his genitals. Readers immediately grasp the irony of these vows and how they oppositely parallel the rape as resembling a satirical, ironic commentary on the incident. This emphasises that Lola married Marshall not for wealth, but self-protection as readers are reminded of how brutal the rape was and thus rationalises why the vows of the marriage perfectly oppose the incident: it was Lola's way of ensuring her survival.

Additionally, Lola was practically forced to marry Marshall as, from traditional perspectives, Lola's purity evaporated with her virginity, eliminating any prospective romantic substitutes. Lola was "prized open and taken - to marry her rapist (p.154)." To be "prized open" denotes a forced entry both figuratively and literally as his male genitalia figuratively and forcibly prized open her cocoon of girlhood innocence and literally prized open her sex. McEwan reinforces this when he says that she was "taken" by Marshall, another double entendre. To be "taken" often communicates sex and specific to Lola's context, her "taken" virginity. This creates the idea that her virginity was stolen, hence why it was "taken" as opposed to 'offered.' Additionally, the following hyphen creates a different context for being "taken". Not sex, but marriage - as in physically transported to marry Marshall. These two events are tied together with the use of this double entendre, imparting that the forced sex also forced the marriage.

Though wealth and power are somewhat enviable, Lola is not presented as a powerful heroine. Readers grasp that her marriage is a product of trauma, not avarice. Therefore, Lola was not manipulating the rape into a position of power, but was doing what she must to survive.

## Article C: Lola's Shame

Zinnorova (2006) polarisingly claims that by marrying Marshall, the taboo of premarital sex is removed and with it, Lola's societal shame - thereby withdrawing her victimhood (p.57). However, from Briony's mocking attitude toward Lola's marriage as well as Lola's own actions, the shame lingering around Lola evidently persists. Therefore, even by Zinnurova's own definition, Lola remains victimised.

From Lola still feeling the need to continue “defending their good names with ... ferocity,” it is apparent that the fear of receiving external shame still suppresses Lola’s truth and dictates her actions (p. 175). As Briony remarks, “One might almost think they had something to hide.” The Marshalls are “defending their good names,” insinuating their righteousness and victimhood. Yet, McEwan juxtaposes such an implication by stating that they “had something to hide,” alluding to the rape and its designed obscurity. The idea that they had something worth hiding denotes shame, hence why it necessitated obscurity. To fight for the preservation of their reputations with a “ferocity” implies desperation, unearthing the shame that Lola feels as readers grasp that the need to ferociously obscure her past is derived from indignity and controversy.

Briony’s mocking tone towards Lola’s marriage further indicates Lola’s lingering external shame saying, “Who would have dreamed it? This, as they used to say, was the side on which her bread was buttered (p.169).” Using a rhetorical question and idiom, Briony scoffs at Lola’s continued dependency on Marshall, with her sarcastic and mocking tone eliciting unease in the reader. Given that the reader has read the brutality of the rape, it makes readers uncomfortable when Briony callously scoffs at Lola as if to dismiss her suffering. Even if readers understand the rationale behind Briony’s mockery, the logos of Briony’s behaviour does not overcome the pathos of Lola’s trauma. Briony’s shaming does not supersede the idea that the marriage was born of torment, intensifying readers’ empathy towards Lola. Therefore, the audience feels unease at Briony’s indifference, consequently resolidifying Lola’s victimhood.

#### Conclusion

Contrary to Zinnurova’s interpretations, Lola does not exploit the patriarchy. The lavishes she claims liberates Lola from victimhood is the very thing forcing Lola back into it. Lola is a victim because she lacks the freedom to choose, because she remains degraded and objectified, because she still feels the shame of rape. She is doing not what she wants to do, but what she must do, the only thing she can do: survive. Therefore, Lola is in no capacity an exploiter of patriarchal systems, but wholly a victim of its oppression.

Writing this paper, it was extremely challenging to omit my personal biases and liberal beliefs from such a divisive topic. It was integral to exercise tact and caution as agreeing with Zinnurova at any capacity may give credence to justifying female oppression. After exploring such a sensitive topic, I questioned whether female autonomy is ever truly granted - an inquiry that must be investigated further.

#### References

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