

## B.A. (HONOURS) ENGLISH QUESTION BANK

<b>Paper No.</b>	C 14
<b>Paper Title</b>	POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES
<b>Marks</b>	75% + 25%
<b>Contact Hours (L+T)</b>	5+2 Per Week

### MODEL ANSWER

**Q:Constructions of normative femininity in the short stories of Bessie Head, Grace Ogot, and Ama Ata Aidoo.**

**A:**Post colonization is a period of time after colonization and post colonial literature is typically characterized by its opposition to the colonial. Post colonial literature often focuses on race relations and the effects of racism and usually indicts white or colonial societies. The natives were considered inferior, uncivilized, primitive and primordial. The postcolonial literature is an attempt to decolonize the mind of the native through the expression of colonial experiences and memories, the themes of racial injustice and maltreatment are inevitable.

Women in the post-colonial era seem to be the victims of double discrimination and suppression in the society which the postcolonial women authors often try to express in their works; first being a 'women' and second for being 'coloured'. The idea of these women writers is not to depict the injustice against women by the whites, but also to expose the suppression of the women in their own society by the native males. The post colonial literature not only exposes the colonists but also points towards the problems in the native societies. Some women colonial writers draw a relationship between post colonialism and feminism. For many of these writers, who live in strong patriarchal cultures, language and the ability to write and communicate represent power.

Bessie Head's story "The Collector of Treasures" is a dramatic indictment of the oppressive attitudes of men in her culture toward the women and children that they are supposed to take care of and love. In the story, she showed her readers a glimpse of the marital relations and life among females in African culture. The social imbalances between men and women are evident in the story. While the woman struggles for her own individual freedom, the man embraces his and neglects his duties as a father and husband. Freedom is not being alone, without responsibility. It is being loved and storing treasures of friendship throughout life. Centering her story on the character of Dikeledi, Head illustrated how women, in most African societies, are still oppressed and not given equal opportunities as their husbands. Inevitably, because of the dominance of males in African societies, there emerged a thinking that women, particularly "traditional" women like Dikeledi, are to be oppressed, and rightfully so. This is a sad reality that African women accepted, but only to a certain degree, so long as the man is able to take care of his family; in Dikeledi's case, Garesego's indolence, arrogance, and negligence led to Dikeledi's decision to kill him. Thus, in the story, she was able to emerge powerful over her husband and the traditions she had long believed in and practiced despite her suffering and emotional torment.

Ama Ata Aidoo in her story "The Girl Who Can" comments on the position of woman in African society in particular through the perspective of a small seven years old girl Adoja. By choosing a child narrator she not only subverts the conventional notion regarding a child narrator, but also bring a remarkable frankness in her narrative while commenting and questioning the norms of the society. Aidoo firmly believes that it is not possible to separate the condition of women's lives from their role in their society, which must be other than marriage, child bearing, and so on, i.e. something which is prescribed by the society.

In the story, Nana believes that Adoja has too thin a pair of legs to support hips which are required to bear children, and that is why she always makes it her concern to attack and criticize Adoja's legs. But it is interesting to notice that Nana's character is not rigid, she is prone to development, and she changes towards the end of the story. Aidoo does not suggest that a woman should not have children, what she is suggesting is that a woman's role in the society

should not only be to marry and bear children. She should contribute in the idea of nation building economically, socially and politically. And it is only possible when she is able to choose for herself rather than conforming to the social norms. And education is one of the important tool for this. Adoja's legs symbolically represents a woman's breaking away from the social norms and conventions that have been imposed upon her. Nana is so obsessed with Adoja's legs that she does not approve of her legs because she thinks they are not strong enough to support solid pair of hips important for child bearing and so she often argues with Adoja's mother over her legs.

As a writer coming of age at the time of Kenyan independence in 1963, Ogot turned to the conflicts that occurred between the Luo people and the colonialists as a source for her stories. In particular, the early stories of Ogot, such as "The Green Leaves", reveal the tenuous grasp that many indigenous cultures in Kenya had on their traditional ways of life with the takeover of Kenya's political and economic infrastructure by British colonial forces. This is rendered in the scene in which tension flares between the clan leader Olielo and the white policeman over the "right" way to deal with robbery. The two different systems of justice are brought into conflict with the traditional way, that of murdering the thief, being seen as barbaric and outdated.

Not only does Ogot reflect on the injustices of the colonial system in Kenya, but she also contributes to an aspect of literature that, for the most part, was overlooked by many African writers who at the time were predominantly male: the experiences of being a black African woman. Specifically, her stories often reveal the limitations of men and the inability of women to make a cultural impact due to being disempowered by patriarchy within both traditional and colonial societies. Thus, Ogot brings a dual perspective to her works that centers on issues of oppression due to gender and complicated by nationality and colonialism. Grace Ogot's "The Green Leaves" is a post colonial story which highlights the cultural and social aspects of Kenyan society during the colonial time. It also brings in the conflict between the two cultures- African and European- their traditions, values, and perspective towards the justice system.

Thus, all these stories show different aspects of women and how they emerged as strong women later in their lives.

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#### QUESTIONS

1. Explain the keywords: Post-colonial, Marginalisation, Culture, Decolonisation, Identity.
2. What do you understand by Negritude movement in African Literature? Why was it opposed by some of the black writers?
3. Achebe resents the stereotype of the 'African' as presented in western writings, like *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad. To what extent do you think Achebe succeeds in giving a realistic picture of the African (Igbo) people and culture?
4. Achebe chose the title of his novel, *Things Fall Apart*, From W.B. Yeats' poem, "The Second Coming". What does it signify in the context of the novel?
5. Who, according to you, is a true representative of the Igbo culture as presented in the novel *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo or Obierika? Give a reasoned answer.
6. Describe Unoka, Okonkwo's father. What are Okonkwo's feelings toward Unoka, and why?
7. How does the (negative) example of his father shape Okonkwo's character and actions? What do the early descriptions of Okonkwo's success and Unoka's failure tell us about Igbo society?
8. How does one succeed in the cultural context of the novel? What do we learn from the system of the taking of titles? Who seems to be excluded from opportunities to gain such success?
9. The **chi** is an individual's personal god, whose merit is determined by the individual's

good fortune or lack thereof. Along the lines of this interpretation, do you think that Okonkwo's tragic fate is the result of his problematic **chi**?

10. Do you think *Things Fall Apart* is a tragedy for both a society and an individual?
11. How far do you agree that women suffer great losses in this novel but also, in certain circumstances, hold tremendous power?
12. Throughout the novel, drums, music, and the town crier's voice punctuate the narrative at key moments. Are there also moments when silence occurs? What are the implications of the fact that Unoka takes his flute with him to the Evil Forest when he dies?
13. How did people view the relationship between Okonkwo and Ikemefuna? What does Okonkwo's participation in Ikemefuna's killing signify?
14. Do you agree with the view that *Things Fall Apart* is an anthropologically rich text in that it describes the daily village life and Igbo culture in great details? Write a short essay on the setting of the novel.
15. Why do you think that Gabriel García Márquez used real names in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*? How does this decision influence the reader's experience of the narrative?
16. What cultural aspects of the Colombian town affect the course of events leading up to the murder?
17. How does Márquez's narrator use repetition in the story? With what result?
18. What are the forms of resistance that postcolonial writers use? Discuss giving an example from the texts in your syllabus.
19. Give a postcolonial perspective on Derek Walcott's "A far cry from Africa".
20. Comment on the significance of the title "A far cry from Africa".
21. Discuss the metaphors and imagery in a title "A far cry from Africa".
22. Do you agree with the view that the poems like "A Far Cry from Africa" and "Names" present an understanding of the complexities inherent in Caribbean history and identity.
23. Elaborate on the view that poems like "A Far Cry from Africa" and "Names" are attempts on the part of the poet, to rewrite the history of the Caribbean people from a subaltern perspective.
24. Examine the uniqueness of "**Tonight I can Write the Saddest Lines**" as a confessional love poem.
25. In "The Way Spain was" Pablo Neruda's relationship with Spain is examined through his focus on the concrete particulars of daily life. Elaborate.
26. "Ode to the Tomato" is an interesting poem because it gives us a glimpse of Neruda as a human being, who eats and loves food.
27. "Ode to the Tomato" reflects what Neruda believed as both an obligation and joy in speaking gloriously of all life things.
28. Comment on the praxis of rape in "collector of treasures"
29. "Collector of treasures" is a direct indictment of the oppressive attitudes of men. comment
30. Discuss the theme of conflict, freedom and insecurity in Ama Ata Aidoo's short story, "The Girl who can".
31. Critically analyse the role played by the mother and the grandmother in 'The girl who can'
32. Discuss the theme of violence and colonialism in Grace Ogot's "The green leaves".
33. Literature from settler colonies like Australia is also considered postcolonial literature. Is the work of a white David Malouf the same as the work of say Bessie Head or Ngugi Wa Thiago.
34. Dislocation and remaking of identity.
35. Elaborate on the view that David Malouf's poetry is about dislocation and remaking of identity.
36. Comment on silence and poetic inwardness in the poetry of David Malouf.
37. As a tribal Indian writer, a major concern of Mamang Dai's Poetry is that the **question** of identity is closely associated with nature and ecology of the land. Elaborate.
38. Enumerate on the symbolism of the mountain in Mamang Dai's poetry.

