

Key concepts

by [R BEHARI](#) - 24 Jul 2017 @ 18:27

These are two **key concepts** within the novel:

Patriarchy: *Encyclopedia of Feminism* by Lisa Tuttle, page 242: Patriarchy is the universal political structure or social system which privileges men at the expense of women. It sometimes means male dominance, and sometimes refers to a specific historical and social structure. Literally it means 'rule of the father'.

Gender: *The Encyclopaedia of Feminism* by Lisa Tuttle (Arrow Press, 1986, pgs 123 - 124) defines gender as follows:

“Term for the socially imposed division between the sexes (male and female). Whereas sex refers to the biological, anatomical differences between male and female, gender refers to the emotional and psychological attributes which a given culture expects to coincide with physical maleness or femaleness.

‘Masculine’ and ‘feminine’ are gender terms, and although individuals born male are expected to develop masculine gender-identity as the natural course of events, it is widely recognised that sex and gender do not always coincide. Although a baby’s sex is (usually) obvious at birth, an individual’s sense of self as a sexual being must be acquired.

Out of the awareness of the difference between sex and gender comes one of the most important concepts in feminist theory: that although a human being is born male or female, woman and men and men are created by society rather than nature.

Gender can be used as a term for *sex-role*, and is usually considered to have developed out of the awareness of obvious sexual differences and to have led to the creation of an increasingly rigid definition of masculine and feminine, which results in patriarchy.

Gender may be as inevitable and necessary a part of human identity as sexuality; differences between people need not be hierarchical or reasons for oppression.

Some theorists have argued that women’s oppression may be traced to the universal restrictions of mothering to women. To abolish sexism, therefore, would require that childcare be shared equally between the sexes, to enable male and female infants to develop primary relationships with both same-sex and different-sex caretakers.

How gender is formed, what it means to us, whether and how it can be altered all need to be studied.”

What do you think of these definitions? Can you see gender-roles as they exist in your day to day life? Is anything confusing to you?

How do you think this definition relates to the works you are studying?

Then, go through your copy of *Nervous Conditions* and find three quotes that demonstrate each of these concepts. Please include page references so I can check.

This is a very helpful exercise as you will impress your lecturer during your exam if you know quotes from the novel.

If you are unsure of the definitions and needs help, post here and I will help you.

Nyasha

by [R BEHARI](#) - 24 Jul 2017 @ 18:28

Here is a quote that is worthy of discussion:

*"It's bad enough . . . when a country gets colonized, but when the people do as well!
That's the end, really, that's the end."*

Nyasha says these words in Chapter 7. Place the above quote in context and explain what she means using your knowledge of the novel.

Also, explain who Nyasha is and her role in the novel.

Re: Nyasha

by [S PETERSEN](#) - 25 Jul 2017 @ 14:59

Nyasha is the daughter of Baba makuru, she went to England with her father for 5 years and she knows firsthand what being colonized means and to forget or suppress who you are and where you come from. She struggles to really fit in, in a place where she is supposed to belong and just find it really hard to relate to what used to be normal.

somehow she has lost the Nyasha that she used to be and with Babamakuru on a her case the whole time she really tries to find the person who she was in order to please him and fights with the person who she has become and that really makes her sick.

Regardless of her little small ways Nyasha had a great impact on Thambu in terms of working hard and educating oneself with books not that Thambu needed any convincing.

She was also an eye opener to Thambu ; problems are not just for the poor they are everywhere. Am I on track?

Re: Nyasha

by [R BEHARI](#) - 26 Jul 2017 @ 7:08

Yes, you are. Nyasha is one of the most complex characters in the book. She has been exposed to two different worlds: traditional Rhodesia and England. She actively rebels against tradition but is also very confused about where she fits in.

Re: Nyasha

by [P MCHUNU](#) - 20 Aug 2017 @ 0:58

Nyasha was a simple girl when she went to England. When she came back she was more mature and was able to see the segregation of black people from white people and sexism. Nyasha was an intelligent girl who liked to read which meant that she was conscious or intuitive. She could not fit in because the way she viewed life was different from everyone else. Nyasha felt that her father was under the influence of white people. Following their ways and ignoring his. She felt like her father was blind to the fact that they were being brainwashed to prefer Western ways over African ways. Nyasha had emancipated her mind and could see very clearly. The truth about being black and being a woman. All this made her very angry. She made all these discoveries and had no one to fully share them with. She had a unique beautiful mind which was a blessing and a curse. It made her interesting to read about, but a burden to those who don't understand her.

Title of book

by [R BEHARI](#) - 24 Jul 2017 @ 18:28

Why do you think the novel is called "Nervous Conditions"?

The quote at the start of the book states, "The condition of native is a nervous condition." What does this mean?

How does it apply to Tambu, bearing in mind that the novel is an example of postcolonial literature?

Re: Title of book

by [M WADVALLA](#) - 24 Jul 2017 @ 19:47

The title of the book implies that the condition of the natives, is always anxious and worried due to various aspects of their lives under colonial rule. Although the book is postcolonial literature, it is set during years of colonialism in Rhodesia. Specifically the years of intense hostility between whites and blacks. The first reason for the natives anxious nature is that they are under the influence of white superiority over them. For those living in the developed areas, they are to abide by the laws of the white man. They are constantly nervous regarding their position in society. They are easily targeted and trailed for breaking any laws of the white man. For the natives, that are still subjected to extreme

poverty in the rural areas, their nervous nature stems from the dire need to escape their poverty. Additionally, the natives are also nervous regarding the traditional aspects of their lives. Women are anxious regarding the rights of their husbands. Family heads are anxious regarding their duties to their families. Moreover, we can establish that the natives have become nervous people due to their traditional lifestyle being uprooted and replaced by a foreign lifestyle.

Re: Title of book

by [R BEHARI](#) - 26 Jul 2017 @ 6:55

Yes, you have looked at this from every aspect. Please also see a response a student gave me last semester:

"The reason the novel is called *Nervous Conditions* is central to the fact that the members of the Shona culture live very minimalistic lifestyles, besides of course Babamukuru and his family who live in a large house on the mission. Members of the Shona culture, when Rhodesia became colonised, maintained their ways as, in this culture, change is not seen as an option- everyone must conform and stay in line. Thus, *Nervous Conditions*, which is described as "the condition of native" is a disorder which arises when natives yield themselves and allow themselves to be submissive to the colonial power and ways of life as they step out of their boundaries and roles which the Shona culture clearly sets out for them. This so called disease or affliction has the ability to make a person mentally ill and in extreme cases, psychotic, as the mind of a Shona member is not able to cope with the pressures and roles of a colonial lifestyle."

Identity in Nervous Conditions

by [R BEHARI](#) - 7 Aug 2017 @ 6:17

Identity is shaped by a number of different factors, including race, gender and class.

When reading "Nervous Conditions", it is not possible to understand the character of Tambu without considering how all these factors influence her identity. Write an essay in which you respond to the statement above.

You may agree or disagree with the statement but you must refer closely to the novel to support your view.

Maiguru in Nervous Conditions

by [R BEHARI](#) - 7 Aug 2017 @ 6:17

"What it is," she sighed, "to have to choose between self and security."

These words are spoken by Maiguru on page 103. What do you think Maiguru means when she says this? Use your knowledge of the character to answer. Do you think Maiguru is a positive role model for Tambu?

Assignment 01: Nervous Conditions Due 22 August

by [R BEHARI](#) - 7 Aug 2017 @ 6:21

Tambu's mother, her aunt Maiguru and other married women in *Nervous Conditions* display agency in their roles. Discuss this in relation to African traditional and westernised lifestyles.

Before answering this question, read the novel and the Study Guide. Please do not rewrite the plot of the novel. Consult your study material and any other relevant material in order to understand this portrayal of these characters, and reference all your sources very carefully at the end of the essay, and in the body of the essay.

THIS IS A RESEARCH ESSAY.

Re: Assignment 01: Nervous Conditions Due 14 August

by [J BRAGGE](#) - 15 Jul 2017 @ 16:46

Hi. Please clarify what "agency" means. Does it mean that they "know their place/role"?
Regards Jenny

Re: Assignment 01: Nervous Conditions Due 14 August

by [R BEHARI](#) - 17 Jul 2017 @ 14:00

Hi there,

I would take it to mean their roles as women and wives in a traditional culture and how they act in this capacity. Does this make sense?

The word agency has the following definition:

agency

noun

1. 1.

a business or organization providing a particular service on behalf of another business, person, or group.

"an advertising agency"

-

2. 2.

action or intervention producing a particular effect.

"canals carved **by the agency of** running water"

Another definition of agency.

Re: Assignment 01: Nervous Conditions Due 14 August

by [A KHOMO](#) - 15 Aug 2017 @ 17:29

I also found this definition on agency. Would it have any relevance?

In social science, **agency** is the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices. By contrast, structure is those factors of influence (such as social class, religion, gender, ethnicity, ability, customs, etc.) that determine or limit an agent and his or her decisions.

Re: Assignment 01: Nervous Conditions Due 14 August

by [M WADVALLA](#) - 24 Jul 2017 @ 19:23

Hi, I would just like to clarify. In this essay we will discuss their roles as women and wives in their traditional culture?

Re: Assignment 01: Nervous Conditions Due 14 August

by [R BEHARI](#) - 26 Jul 2017 @ 6:46

Yes, I would take it a step further and investigate this in relation to the men around them.

Re: Assignment 01: Nervous Conditions Due 14 August

by [N PILLAY](#) - 1 Aug 2017 @ 13:01

Good day Lecturer.

I trust that you are well. I am currently working on my draft for assignment 1, and I am finding it difficult to understand how "agency" is displayed in Nervous Conditions despite the previous discussions.

Please correct me if I am wrong. I have gathered my information according to the following: "**Agency**" meaning that the married women in traditional society display powerful roles as they **try** to break free from oppression and patriarchy. Do we discuss in detail how certain married women **question** power structures and go against them?

or

Do we just discuss how they **remain** oppressed and powerless within their traditional society?

Also.....The question clearly states "**Married Women**". I find it necessary to speak about Lucia. Will I be penalized?

Please advise.

Re: Assignment 01: Nervous Conditions Due 14 August

by R BEHARI - 2 Aug 2017 @ 7:09

Hi there, I would take agency to mean their powerless roles in their traditional society. I don't see many of the married women actively trying to break free. Not explicitly. You will not be penalized if you discuss Lucia. She is married to Takesure and therefore a married woman.

Here are some links to YouTube videos on *Nervous Conditions*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xveFIlgNN9A>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTUVBZJy9z8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEuUYtxgc2g>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PV5WGyOd-IY>

Identity in Nervous Conditions

by R BEHARI - 7 Aug 2017 @ 6:17

Identity is shaped by a number of different factors, including race, gender and class.

When reading "Nervous Conditions", it is not possible to understand the character of Tambu without considering how all these factors influence her identity. Write an essay in which you respond to the statement above.

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Maiguru in Nervous Conditions

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"What it is," she sighed, "to have to choose between self and security."

These words are spoken by Maiguru on page 103. What do you think Maiguru means when she says this? Use your knowledge of the character to answer. Do you think Maiguru is a positive role model for Tambu?

Re: Assignment 01: Nervous Conditions Due 14 August

by H SALZMANN - 17 Aug 2017 @ 10:06

Hi A Khomo

I also went in search of more apt definitions for AGENCY in the context of literature, and came across this helpful answer by Chuck Wendig:

"Whenever I talk about character in storytelling — seriously, I'll talk about this stuff with Target clerks, zookeepers, parking meters, carpenter bees — I frequently bring up the notion that, for me, good characters possess *agency*. And this, I often say, is one of the things that really matter in a so-called "strong female character" — not that she is a character who can bend rebar with her crushing breasts, but rather that she has *agency* within the story you're telling."

"Character agency is, to me, a demonstration of the character's ability to **make decisions** and **affect the story**. This character has **motivations all her own**. She is **active more than she is reactive**. She **pushes on the plot** more than the **plot pushes on her**. Even better, the plot exists **as a direct result of the character's actions**."

For the full blog article, visit:

<http://terribleminds.com/ramble/2014/06/03/just-what-the-humping-heck-is-character-agency-anyway/>

Agency, therefore, refers to ways in which the married women show their displeasure and opposition to the oppression they experience - albeit by their compliance - causing the main character to comment on the injustice she observes and the oppression she herself experiences.

I can cite many instances where these married women either silently or openly display their unhappiness with the status quo - especially Lucia and Maiguru. Even the narrative of Thambu's grandmother (1988:18) display agency, in that it describes the way in which the homestead came about in the first place. This, in turn, drives the subtheme of colonialism that runs through the novel. Agency causes the novel to move forward. Thembu's mother displays agency in the way she tries to coax her daughter into accepting the patriarchal reign, perhaps in an attempt to protect her from future heartache. Yet these very words of her mother causes her to draw a sharp contrast between what her child mind perceives as the vast differences between Ma'Shingayi and Maiguru. Thus Ma'shingayi's words display agency because it causes Thembu to question the resignation of her mother and to have greater aspirations for herself.

In this socio-cultural context (of triple-layered oppression) they know and display that there is something wrong with their circumstances, even though they are mostly powerless to affect change. Their agency (words and actions) causes the reader to ponder the greater themes explored in the novel.

Please Jeru, advise if I am misleading my fellow students.

Re: Assignment 01: Nervous Conditions Due 14 August

by R BEHARI - 19 Aug 2017 @ 7:48

Hi Riette,

Thank you for this and for finding the blog. I will also have a closer look at it but it seems like just the thing I've been searching the internet for when it comes to looking for a proper definition of agency. I think you have offered a great interpretation of it.

If anyone still has questions, please let me know!

Re: Assignment 01: Nervous Conditions Due 22 August

by P MCHUNU - 21 Aug 2017 @ 7:01

Hi R Behari

I wanted to ask when relating to african traditional and westernised lifestyles, do we use information from way back during colonization? Or do we use any information that relates to african traditional and westernised lifestyle.

I don't understand how we can use Lucia here being she wasnt married to Takesure. She said that to Babumukuru when she spoke to him about his discipline methods. I'm really confused now. She even said Takesurr is a cocroache. Please clarify this. Is Lucia married or not?

If Lucia isn't married that means there are only two characters to reference in the book. MaShingayi and Maiguru.

Re: Assignment 01: Nervous Conditions Due 22 August

by [R BEHARI](#) - 21 Aug 2017 @ 13:24

The book is set in the 1960s. If the information you have found from way back during colonization applies then you can use it. Do not use information that does not apply to the text. I do not know what the information you have is so you must determine if it is relevant and applicable and gets your point across well.

Here is a website I found that discusses Lucia in more detail. <https://digitalobby.spu.edu/eng2248/2016/01/21/the-nervous-condition-of-lucia/>

Summary

This story explores the alienation of two young African girls - Nyasha, brought up in England and now a stranger amongst her own people, and Tamba, who leaves her village for the pricey mission school.

Nervous Conditions Key Concepts

by [R BEHARI](#) - 2 Oct 2017 @ 7:27

Revise the key concepts for *Nervous Conditions*.

These are two **key concepts** within the novel:

Patriarchy and Gender

How would you define these concepts?

Then, go through your copy of *Nervous Conditions* and find three quotes that demonstrate each of these concepts. Please include page references so I can check.

This is a very helpful exercise as you will impress your lecturer during your exam if you know quotes from the novel.

If you are unsure of the definitions and needs help, post here and I will help you.

Re: Nervous Conditions Key Concepts

by [A ALLEN](#) - 24 Oct 2017 @ 12:06

Hi Jeru

Patriarchy is a system of society or government in which the father or eldest male is head of the family and descent is reckoned through the male line.

Babamukuru is Jeremiah's eldest brother and returns to the homestead for Christmas to find that Lucia, Mainini's notorious sister is staying there and he says " Such things do not happen in my house. Takesure must leave and take his women with him." Pg 129-130 Owing to the fact that Jeremiah is afraid of the wrath of Mukuru he promised to make sure that Lucia left with Takesure.

When Babamukuru says that one member from each family must be educated up until Form Four Standard in order to help with family difficulties. Page 44 He says "What I see is that what needs to be done is this. We need to ensure that at least one member from each family is educated, at least to Form Four standard, because after that he will be in a position to take a course."

Page 40 where Tambu had to go on her knees so that everyone could wash their hands. She had to start with the eldest surviving grandfather and then to those descending in seniority. " I knelt this in front of Babamukuru, which was a mistake because he wanted me to let his uncle Isaiah, our eldest surviving grandfather, wash first."

Gender is a range of characteristics pertaining to and differentiating between masculinity and femininity. Typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones.

On page 30, after Tambu goes into town to sell her meilies so that she can start saving to go to school she gets 10 pounds and Mr Matimba gives it to the school principal for safe keeping but Jeremiah goes to the principal and says "That money belongs to me. Tambudzai is my daughter is she not? So isn't it my money?"

Page 117 Mukuru highlights his masculinity by hitting and disciplining his daughter "You must learn to be obedient. Babamukuru told Nyasha and struck her again " Mukuru calls Nyasha a whore when addressing Chido " You let your sister behave like a whore without saying anything. " pg 116 Also, when Nyasha challenges Mukuru he says he is her father and " We cannot have two men in this house."

Lastly, page 136 when there are 24 family members at the homestead for Christmas the females had to do all the work. " So Maiguru, Nyasha, the three helping girls and myself were on our feet all day."

Hoping these are right

Kind regards

Ami


Re: Nervous Conditions Key Concepts

by R BEHARI - 25 Oct 2017 @ 6:55

These are correct! Great examples!

Structure of an essay

by [R BEHARI](#) - 23 Oct 2017 @ 16:13

Attachments: 

Paragraphs give structure to a piece of writing. They are a way to organize your thoughts, and to give clarity to your ideas. Paragraphs tell readers where one area of discussion begins and ends.

In an essay, there are usually three different types of paragraphs:

1. The introduction sets up the essay topic. It contains the thesis statement and background information. All definitions and concepts are explained here. The objective is also stated in the introduction. The objective of the paper is the reason given for writing the paper. By stating your objective, you're telling the reader exactly what you're hoping to demonstrate, and exactly what they can hope to learn or be convinced of.
2. Then body paragraphs build the content of your essay. Each body paragraph begins with a topic sentence. This indicates what the main focus of the paragraph will be. This also aligns with the thesis statement. Good topic sentences generally work to create paragraph and paper unity but could be stronger with some revision to help clarify the specific point you're trying to develop. Every paragraph should be relevant to the main idea you presented in your thesis. One very important way to do this is to write clear topic sentences that show readers the relationship between each paragraph and the thesis statement. You want only one main idea per paragraph because it gives you space to develop the idea and show readers the significance of what you're saying to the overall idea of the paper. The topic sentence is what makes this happen. Without a clear topic sentence, your thoughts may begin to wander, and the paragraph will become unfocused and, sometimes, meaningless.
3. Lastly, the conclusion sums up the points. Conclusions complement the introduction but aren't just a repetition of the same information found there. What conclusions need to do is reinforce the ideas you've developed in the paper's body. Once you've done that, give your readers closure by helping them understand the importance or implications of those main ideas. Readers expect conclusions to "look back," showing the ground covered in the essay. Think about the main ideas you want to reiterate to readers and include those points in the conclusion. Don't repeat ideas word-for-word, though: restate them so readers see how all ideas come together to form a solid, final point.

For instance, let's say I was writing an essay on patriarchy in *Nervous Conditions*. In my introduction, I would explain what patriarchy is and how it applies to the book. I would also include background on the book, such as who wrote it, when it was written and the basic plot. I would end the introduction with a thesis statement, previewing what my body paragraphs will discuss. For instance, if my thesis statement is, "Patriarchy can be seen in the book through Babamukuru's relationship with Tambu, Nyasha and Maiguru. Therefore, my first body paragraph will be about Babamukuru and Tambu. My second paragraph will deal with Babamukuru and Nyasha and finally, my last body paragraph will look at his relationship with Maiguru. In the conclusion, I would reiterate the main points from my whole essay.

The thesis statement

by [R BEHARI](#) - 23 Oct 2017 @ 16:04

The thesis statement is a crucial part of an essay. The thesis statement needs to prepare readers for the content of your essay. This information should align with the topic sentences of your essay to provide a preview of your content to readers. Topic sentences are the first sentence of each paragraph. This sentence guides what the paragraph will be about.

The thesis statement shows the objective of the essay as a whole. The objective of the paper is the reason given for writing the paper. By stating your objective, you're telling the reader exactly what you're hoping to demonstrate, and exactly what they can hope to learn or be convinced of.

All writing, no matter what form it takes, has a primary topic. In a well-developed academic essay, this primary topic is usually expressed in a thesis statement. Typically, the thesis statement is the last sentence in your introductory paragraph.

The thesis statement should dictate what you discuss in your essay. Each point should align with a topic sentence so readers know exactly what is coming up in your content. Here is a thesis statement on symbolism in *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald:

- As much as the symbol of the green light at the end of Daisy's dock in the novel represents Gatsby's hopes and dreams for the future, it also represents the past, as well as the power of money.

The statement tells the reader what issues will be discussed in the essay. This thesis gives the reader three specific points to read about, and the three body paragraphs will each deal with one. For example, the first body paragraph would align with this as it would focus on Gatsby's hopes and dreams for the future.

