

# ENG2603 Mock Exam 1

B.V. SIBIYA

Answer ONE question from Section A, and ONE question from Section B.

Your answers should be two to four pages in length, and written in the form of carefully constructed essays.

## Section A

Answer ONE question in this section for 50 marks.

### Question 1: Poetry

By making close reference to **content** and **poetic devices**, discuss how this poem uses **satire** to portray the coloniser ("The British Settler"). Remember to **quote** from the poem to support your argument.

#### The British Settler

Tune – 'Oh what a row'; or, 'The humours of a Steam-boat'

Oh! what a gay, what a rambling life a Settler's leading!

Spooring cattle, doing battle, quite jocose;

Winning, losing; Whigs abusing; shopping now, then mutton breeding;

Never fearing, persevering, on he goes!

When to the Cape I first came out, in days of Charlie Somerset,

My lands were neatly measured off, and reg'larly my number set;

I strutted round on my own ground, lord of a hundred acres, sir,

And said I'd plough, I'd buy a cow, the butchers cut and bakers, sir.

Oh! what a gay, &c.

On Kowie's banks I built a house, and made a snug location there;

I fenc'd my lands with my own hands to keep all tight;

The river rose, and fore my nose made awful desolation there;

The Kafirs stole my only cow away that night!

I made a trip to Kafirland, in hopes to find my cow again,  
And tried to act the dentist then, which no one can do now again;  
I drew the Kafir's ivory teeth, at risk of hempen collar, sir.  
Which at Graham's Town on the market brought me full 300 dollars, sir!

Oh! what a gay, &c.

My second go was but so so, although the trade was brisk enough;  
The patrols nearly boned me in a secret maze;  
I hid my load out of the road, and, faith, I just had risk enough,  
For this trade was hanging matter in those good old days!  
My stock-in-trade on pack-ox laid, I tried my luck at smouching then,  
But found the Boers were wide awake as Yorkshiremen at chousing them;  
They swept me some rock chrystals – gems, they swore, of purest water, sir;  
And for breeding stock, a scurvy lot of hamels and kapaters, sir!

Oh! what a gay, &c.

Of fortune's frowns, smiles, ups, and downs, I had a great variety;  
I smouching drop. I open shop, the buy a farm;  
Doing charming with my farming, best with friends' society,  
When all at once the Amakose break the charm!  
Assegaing, yelling, crying – murder! fire! and revelry!  
Stealing cattle, bloody battle, every kind of devilry –  
Helter-skelter, seeking shelter, wives and children rustling in!  
Husbands wounded – lost confounded, tender friends are justling in!

Oh! what a gay, &c.

Hopes are blasted, pale and fasted, now reduced to beggary;  
Burnt locations, public rations all we've left;  
Names abused, of climes accused by agents vile of whiggery,

Any sympathy withheld, when of our all bereft.  
Compensation for spol'ation, after such representation,  
Seemed so futile, and inutile, that 'twas scouted by the nation!  
And that we've still a dollar left, our thanks be to no stingy-man,  
Whose name's a charm our souls to warm, – THE GOOD, THE BRAVE  
SIR BENJAMIN!

Oh! what a gay, &c.

Kafirs lauded and rewarded for their savage, fierce irruption,  
By the folks of Downing-street and Ex'ter hall!  
Then no checking Boers from trekking, fleeing, seeing such corruption;  
Hottentots and Fingoes, saucy vagrants all!  
Such delusion and confusion seldom are exhibited,  
When for convenience of the blacks the whites are stabbed and gibbeted!  
Yet, persevering through those ills, the storm again I've weathered, sir!  
My children married happy, and my nest again feathered sir!

Oh! what a gay, &c.

'Tis four and twenty years, my friends, since first on Afric's shore we landed!  
And retrospections crowd my mind of that great day;  
Fear and doubt shut hope all out, for on a desert we seemed stranded,  
And dreary was our prospect then in Algoa Bay!  
View contrasted, while they lasted, times of which I'm now relating  
And our happy meeting here, this great event commemorating!  
Then may our heart be grateful still, that Heaven has so guarded us  
Through all our toilsome pilgrimage, and now so well rewarded us!  
Oh! what a gay, what a rambling life, a Settler's leading!  
Spooring cattle, doing battle, quite jocose;  
Winning, losing; Whigs abusing, shopping now, then cattle breeding;

Never fearing, persevering, on he goes!

### Question 2: Nervous Conditions

Discuss how **Nervous Conditions** portrays **resistance to European colonialism**. In your answer, pay particular attention to the **role of tradition** in the novel.

## Section B

Answer ONE question in this section for 50 marks.

### Question 3: Seven Steps to Heaven

“You are dead. Now you come here bothering me. Who do you think I am? God? You think I can bring you from the dead?”

No, it's you that are dead. You are dead before dying. You are a nobody because there is nothing that marks you out as you. You are always trying to be somebody. You are always living in the shadow of other people's words, ideas beliefs. That's why you are here. It is not that you love me, that you wanted to empathize with me as they pumped bullets into me. You are here because without me you can't be you.”  
(2007:41)

Using the passage above as your starting point, comment on the **relationship between Sizwe and Thulani as depicted in the novel as a whole**.

### Question 4: A Raisin in the Sun

Discuss how **Walter Lee** displays a **sexist attitude towards his sister Beneatha's ambitions**. What **stereotype of a woman is he imagining?** How does this relate to **stereotypes of women** in the play as a whole?

## ENG2603 Mock exam 1 – Feedback

### Question 1: Poetry

By making close reference to content and poetic devices, discuss how this poem uses satire to portray the coloniser (“The British Settler”). Remember to quote from the poem to support your argument.

Firstly, when you see a question like this, make sure you highlight or underline the keywords:

- content
- poetic devices
- satire

You need to refer to both the content and the form of the poem in your answer. You also need to link these aspects to the poem’s use of satire.

Ask yourself: What is satire? **The use of humour/irony/ridicule/exaggeration to expose or criticise people’s shortcomings**

Ask yourself: What does the poem satirise? **The British coloniser, as per the title of the poem. Thus, the poem exposes and ridicules the coloniser for what he “really” is.**

Ask yourself: How does the poem do this? **By means of both content (*what* it talks “about”) and poetic devices or form (*how* it talks “about” it).**

*Once you have identified these key aspects of the question, you are ready to begin your planning.*

### **Introduction:**

“The British Settler” satires the British coloniser by means of both content and form. The speaker in the poem seems to suggest that the coloniser is mighty, but by means of exaggeration and irony he actually shows that the coloniser is weak and pitiful. This is done by means of both the content of the poem, as well as the rhythm and form.

### **Body:**

One or two paragraphs to explain how the speaker suggests that he is mighty/brave/smart, with examples from the poem

One or two paragraphs to explain that, in actual fact, the speaker’s “bravery” is meant ironically, with examples from the poem (content)

One or two paragraphs to show that the poem also uses form to satirise the coloniser – the rhyme scheme and singsong rhythm of the poem undermines its content

### **Conclusion:**

Summarise the findings, and conclude that although the poem seems to suggest that the coloniser is mighty/great/brave etc., it actually uses satire to exaggerate and thereby undermine the speaker; thus, it suggests the opposite of what it seems to

## **Question 2: *Nervous Conditions***

Discuss how *Nervous Conditions* portrays resistance to European colonialism. In your answer, pay particular attention to the role of tradition in the novel.

Firstly, when you see a question like this, make sure you highlight or underline the keywords:

- resistance to European colonialism
- role of tradition

Brainstorm: This question is rather open-ended in that you can refer to a great number of characters/instances in the novel to support your argument. Think about who resists colonialism, and write down their names as well as instances that you recall from the novel. (Hint: This point is especially

relevant in terms of Western education; do all the characters feel that Western education is a good thing? Think about Tambu's parents, for instance.)

Now think about the role of tradition: What role does tradition have in the novel? How can it be linked to this resistance?

Is it perhaps that, by holding onto certain traditions, the characters resist colonialism? Could this resistance also be linked to education? What traditions/when/and how?

Once you have decided what parts of the novel seem to support this reading in the most convincing way, you are ready to plan your essay.

Introduction:

Thesis statement: This essay discusses how the characters (name them, if you are focusing on specific characters) resist European colonialism in *Nervous Conditions*. It pays particular attention to the role of tradition in preserving cultural values/other aspect you wish to focus on. **In your introduction you need to be very specific: If you are focusing on specific characters, name them, if your focus is on events, state these.** The introduction should be used as a map for the rest of the essay: you must include all the most important features of the essay here

Body:

One to two paragraphs per section of your thesis.

Conclusion:

Summary of your main points, as well as concluding argument on resistance in the novel.

### **Question 3: *Seven Steps to Heaven***

"You are dead. Now you come here bothering me. Who do you think I am? God? You think I can bring you from the dead?"

No, it's you that are dead. You are dead before dying. You are a nobody because there is nothing that marks you out as you. You are always trying to be somebody. You are always living in the shadow of other people's words, ideas beliefs. That's why you are here. It is not that you love me, that you wanted to empathise with me as they pumped bullets into me. You are here because without me you can't be you." (2007:41)

Using the passage above as your starting point, comment on the relationship between Sizwe and Thulani as depicted in the novel as a whole.

This question can be approached a number of ways. First of all, you could discuss the theme of multiplicity explored in the novel. You could also discuss identity. As long as you are clear about what you will focus on, and stick to it, this essay could be quite easy.

First of all, read the extract. What themes explored in the novel as a whole does this extract remind you of? You could chose to focus on "you are always trying to be somebody" (identity) or "you are here because without me you can't be you" (multiplicity), or another aspect of the novel that can be substantiated with this passage.

Once you know what your focus will be (identity/multiplicity or both), you can begin to plan how you will answer this question. Remember that you will need to link the theme you have identified to the relationship between Sizwe and Thulani, because that is what the question asks of you.

Introduction:

Thesis statement: This essay discusses the themes of identity and multiplicity as portrayed through the relationship between Sizwe and Thulani in *Seven Steps to Heaven*. It focuses on x, y, and z.

Body:

One to two paragraphs per section of your thesis. Thus, one section on identity, one section on multiplicity, one section on how these are linked through the characters' relationship. Or you could integrate the discussion, but be sure to focus on one main idea per paragraph.

Conclusion:

Summary of your main points, as well as concluding argument on identity/multiplicity in the nov

#### **Question 4: *A Raisin in the Sun***

Discuss how Walter Lee displays a sexist attitude towards his sister Beneatha's ambitions. What stereotype of a woman is he imagining? How does this relate to stereotypes of women in the play as a whole?

Firstly, when you see a question like this, make sure you highlight or underline the keywords:

- Walter's sexist attitude towards Beneatha's ambitions
- stereotype of a specific woman
- stereotypes of women in the play

Brainstorm: What type of attitude does Walter display? How and why is it sexist? What is a stereotype? How are women stereotyped in the play as a whole?

Steer clear of presenting a summary of the plot; focus on the question at all times. If you say that Mama is a strong woman, does this contradict the stereotype or highlight it? Link to the argument throughout

**NB: Avoid using stereotypes yourself: Is Walter Lee a "typical black man"? Is that not a stereotype too? If this is the way in which the play depicts him, you can use this in your analysis, but you have to indicate that you are aware of this.**

Also keep the focus of this question in mind; here you need not go into too much detail about Walter Lee, but rather his views on women, and the play's views on women

Introduction:

Thesis statement: This essay discusses Walter Lee's sexist attitude towards his sister Beneatha's ambitions, arguing that he thinks of her as (insert stereotype here). In this manner he sees her as a stereotypical woman, which links to the stereotype of the woman as XXX portrayed in the novel as a whole.

Body:

One to two paragraphs per section of your thesis. This question has been divided into sections already; you could use each of these as focus points in your argument, just be sure to link them throughout.

Conclusion:

Summary of your main points, as well as concluding argument about stereotypes of women in the play.

## STUDENT ANSWERS

### A RAISIN IN THE SUN

In the " Raisin in the Sun" by Lorraine Hansberry, the protagonist Walter is always at odds with his sister Beneatha over her career choice. He believes that she should fit into his image of what a woman should be and stereotypes her according to her gender to "get married and be quiet". In my essay I will expose how Walter's relationship with Beneatha is fraught with arguments and how he engages with her. This stereotype also relates to his wife and his mum as he views them in the same light and I will discuss these also.

A stereotype is when a person has a fixed idea or notion of what something or someone should be and in this case Walter has a very definite idea of a woman's role . He is clearly very frustrated when he laments that all "colored women" do not know how to support their men and this is in direct reference to his wife .He expects his wife to constantly pander to his needs and whims as he expects her to speak to his mum on his behalf in getting her to entrust him with the money that she receives from her late husband's insurance. He undermines her authority when she refuses to give Travis', their son; money, clearly demonstrating that he wants to be "the man". He does not take into account how hard Ruth works to support the family and the sacrifices she also makes and feels like he is the only one who is suffering. This is largely due to the fact that as a man he feels emasculated as he cannot be the provider. He treats her with disrespect and indifference when he tells her, "Who even cares about you?". He is too focused on his own needs that must be fulfilled and does not even consider his wife's pregnancy and her concerns.

Although he treats his wife with indifference he is always at odds with Beneatha . He resents that she wants to be a doctor because he has his sight set on how Mama's insurance money should be used and he does not want it going to Beneath a's education. He believes that as a man it should be given to him so that he can then do as he pleases. Walter is resentful of Beneatha and we see this this in his attitude towards her. He reminds her that they are supporting all her whims and fancies when she spends money on her hobbies. He tells her that she should rather go be a nurse like all other women instead of being a doctor or just get married and be quiet. This incident clearly exposes his stereotyping her and his chauvinistic attitude. George , Beneathas love interest also believes that that she should not want more from a man besides a sexual relationship and does not want to engage with her on an intellectual level. He sees that as unnecessary. This shows how men think; that a woman is not supposed to have thoughts and opinions and she is just an object of lust. Assagai although respecting her views and opinions , encourages her to become a doctor in Africa but also seems to think that getting married should be something she should consider as a woman.

Walter's treatment of the women in his life is rather shoddy as he is unable to see beyond his own ambitions and consider the feelings and needs of others. He expects that his mum should allow him to make decisions where the money is concerned and is clearly upset that he cannot. Walter demands to know from Mama where she has been as if asserting his authority .Mama ignores him at first and then responds that he she is not a child and need not be questioned. He clearly believes it is his right as a man to be in charge. He cannot respect her decision to do with her money as she chooses.Mama understands that he has no business acumen and does not approve of his business venture. He proves her right when he makes the wrong choices and loses the money she entrusts him with. He does not bank the money for Beneatha's education as he was asked to do and this goes back to his attitude towards his sister and shows his lack of respect .Mama understands what drives him to this behaviour and she helps him grow and acknowledge this.

Finally in all his actions Walter demonstrates his sexist and chauvinistic stance towards women and



believes as the 'Man' he should be making decisions. He treated all the women in his life with disrespect. Mama, Ruth and Beneatha have had to deal with stereotypes from the men in their lives

#### ANOTHER ANSWER

In the play a Raisin in the Sun, Walter Lee and his sister Beneatha are at each other's throats constantly. Right from the beginning of the play the sibling rivalry is evident when Walter tells Beneatha that she is a horrible looking chick in the morning to which she responds that she dissected something that looks like him in Biology the day before. Walter Lee does not approve of his sister's ambition to become a Doctor. He does not take this decision of hers seriously. Ironically though, both Walter and Beneatha are trying to better themselves through business and education respectively.

Walter's attitude towards Beneatha is of a sexist nature as in his mind, he does not regard being a doctor as a women's job. He says to Beneatha that she should go be a nurse like other women or get married and be quiet. This is a stereotype as he is generalising and is unable to accept that women can in fact be doctors. Beneatha is a modern woman. She is independent and doesn't let anyone tell her what to do. She works hard for what she wants. Walter is used to a more subdued woman such as his wife Ruth. Ruth is more old-fashioned in her ways. For example she allows Walter to undermine her as a parent by giving Travis money for a cap as well as extra when Ruth had just told Travis he couldn't have any. Walter is ruled quiet strictly by his mother which is why he feels the need to belittle others to make himself feel good. When Mama does finally hand over her affairs to Walter by asking him to take care of investing the remainder of the insurance money, Walter fails to bank Beneatha's portion for her schooling which again reiterates that he does not take her choice to become a doctor seriously.

There are other stereotypes towards women in the play. Walter tries to explain to Ruth that business and money matters are for men only; that women's affairs consist of the domestic only when he says to Ruth "Baby, don't nothing happen for you in this world less you pay somebody off". Walter goes on to make blanket, stereotypical statements about women. He accuses women of not being a support to their men when he says "Man say I got to change my life, I'm choking to death baby! And his woman say- your eggs is getting cold!" and he accuses coloured women of "not understanding how to build up their men". This enforces Walter's sexist mind-set as he expects support and understanding on his endeavours in life yet his sisters' are unimportant in his opinion.

George and Asagai do not fall short of stereotypes towards women either. George's views of women are shallow. He expects to get intimate with Beneatha and sees that as a suitable reward after going on a date with Beneatha. He says to her "You're a nice looking girl...all over. That's all you need, honey, forget the atmosphere. Guys aren't going to go for the atmosphere- they're going for what they see". Asagai whilst more considerate in his approach, says "for women, it should be enough". He is referring to love but in Bennie's case she requires much more than love; such as a career. She will not be defined by the man she marries, if she even gets married at all as she tells Ruth earlier in the play.

Sadly Walter's dreams are shattered as he makes poor decisions and hangs his hope on quick fixes and overnight money making deals. This only gives Ruth along with her bright intellect more ammunition to belittle and berate her brother. In dashed hopes, both siblings lose out on their dreams just like a dried up Raisin in the Sun

#### ANOTHER ANSWER

Walter Lee's character is a typical black man, living in the sixties, in the United States of America. His stereotypical attitude towards his sister and other females in the play is that of a black man.

First let me explain what the word stereotypes means. It was taken from the printing process, but in "standard English it is a phrase of a concept, term, or description that is fixed and unchanging"

Now let's get back to Walter Lee's character. Walter sees himself as a dominating male in the younger household, but it is clear that is not the case. Giving away your bus fare unwittingly is a case in point. Walter is incorrect in his thinking, about becoming wealthy by starting and running a business. As is evident by him losing the money. This unfortunately is the way men, more precisely black men, were thinking in the sixties. (How different his thinking to our African learned friend Asagai).

He feels that his sister should be abandoned, her idea of becoming a doctor and taking up a more suitable 'job' for a black woman. This also is evident in the many times during the play that they exchange words because, he thinks like a black man thinks.

Ruth, Walter's wife, character is strong we see this in the many times she talks to her husband. More importantly she 'puts' him in his place very gently, when she informs him he has to take the bus to work, because he gave away his fare to his son.

Mama, now that is a strong woman. The head of the house, much to the dislike of Walter. He can't talk to her as he pleases, or as he would talk to other female characters in the play, because she is his mother, and more importantly she is about to 'come' into her share of her husband's money.

Finally Walter's character comes through for the Younger family in two ways, one when he pulls his sister and starts to dance with her, he forgets about his gender issues with her. Secondly when he instructs Mr Lindbergh to leave, because he is not selling the house to him (even though it is not his house to sell

#### **ANOTHER ANSWER**

The novel *Nervous Conditions* is set in Rhodesia between the years 1965 and 1971. Rhodesia at this time was a British colony and under white dominion. The characters in the story show varying degrees of resistance to the oppression of white rulers and colonialism.

An obvious difference between the Western and African way of life during this time is that of urban homes of white families versus rural dwellings of African families. Tambu and her family show resistance to the European colonialism in the way that they go about their family affairs at the homestead. There is a very dominant patriarchal thread that winds its way through the book whereby men are given preference over women. For example men enter the home first and get to dish up and eat first, then after them it's the women and then the children. This is the opposite in Western society whereby children dish first and then women and then men. The patriarchal system is further seen in the education of women. In Western society, educating girls is seen as just as important as boys. However in the African culture written about in this book, the sons get academic preference. This is a direct rejection of the ways of European colonialism. Tambu is a very hard working child. She is expected to cook, clean, tend to the gardens and crops and mind her younger sisters. This is a very big work load for someone who is still so young herself. Yet she works hard without moaning and this is suggestive of her work ethic and dedication to her school work later on in the story. Nhamo enjoys having power over his sisters because he is a male. He makes his younger sister fetch his bags from the bus stop or shop when he returns from the mission school just so that he has an opportunity to express his authority. He comments to his sisters that carrying his things is a women's job. This infuriates Tambu. She also finds it unfair that Nhamo can go to school because he is a boy and she cannot. Nhamo asks Tambu why she even bothers. He says that he is the one who has to go to school and she can't because she is a girl. It is

not enough for Nhamo to merely mouth off at Tambo about why she can't go to school, he also sabotages Tambu's maize crop to further lessen her chances of getting an education.

Not only must Tambu face her brother's insults but her father's too. Jeremiah did not care when Tambu could not go back to school saying that she could not cook books and feed them to her husband. He also said that education will fill her mind with impractical things and will make her more useless for the real tasks of feminine living. Tambu's mother has accepted the ways of her people and says "poverty of blackness and weight of womanhood, accept your lot and enjoy what you can of it." Although this patriarchal mind-set in direct rejection of what Western society would say and do, it is to the detriment of the family. Tambu understands the importance of an education and insists that the needs and sensibilities of the women in her family were not considered a priority.

Babamukuru and his family have portrayed resistance to European rule by rising above the oppression of white rule and succeeding despite of it. Ironically, Babamukuru's success is largely thanks to the white people working at the mission school where he grew up. Babamukuru although still traditional in the ways of patriarchy has grown up knowing the importance of education and has sent his daughter, Nyasha to school. His wife has also obtained her master's degree yet remains submissive to the rule of Babamukuru. Nyasha having been exposed to life in England for a large portion of her young life struggles to now accept the traditional ways of the Shona culture and rebels against her father's firm rule. Nyasha also struggles with anorexia and bulimia which is not typically a disease associated with Africans and this struggle is symbolic of the struggle against white oppression European colonialism.

Tambu speaks about her escape and Nyasha's rebellion against the patriarchy and tradition of her family. Tambu has experienced the effects of patriarchal rule over women and is tempted to forget her culture but in the end her African roots run deep and she continues to overcome patriarchy and colonialism whilst remaining true to who she really is

Tsitsi Dangaremba's *Nervous Conditions* focuses on the disadvantages of the resistance to English Colonialism. The characters in the novel, especially the men who have their ways set in tradition or the Shona culture view woman as inferior e.g. Babamukuru, who is highly educated has no respect or does not care about the needs of women in his family.

it does not matter if a woman is as highly educated as Maiguru, who has a masters degree in philosophy, she has to abide by his rules and obey him and an example of this is that she has to give him her entire salary every month to do as he pleases, like taking care of his sibling's family on the homestead.

After witnessing an encounter between Babamuku and Nyasha, "Tambu realized at last what was fundamentally wrong with her culture and society: It was the victimisation of women, the making women victims of their femaleness. it has nothing to do with poverty, lack of education, or tradition. It boiled down to femaleness as opposed to and inferior to maleness.

The family that suffers the most from resistance to English Colonialism are Jeremiah and his family. Jeremiah is an absolutely lazy man, who expects his wife and daughters under the age of 13 to do all the work on the farm, including household chores and cooking. He refuses to allow any of his daughters to be educated. One would argue that if his daughters were educated, they would have better opportunities such as work, etc. and this would enable them to provide for the family financially without having to depend on Babamukuru to take care of them.

Another person who is also resistant to English colonialism is Tambu's mother. She believes that the root of their problems are with her children who embrace the "Englishness". She also blames the "Englishness" for Nhamo's death.

The married women like Tambu's mother and Maiguru are trapped in the system of patriarchy, tradition and the Shona culture. Women like Maiguru, who are highly educated can escape this system and leave as there are many opportunities for them but unfortunately the same cannot be said for women like Tambu's mother, who barely has any education or real work experience and she may not be able to survive on her own.

Nyasha, Babamukuru's daughter, is very rebellious towards her father and the system. One would say that she is a feminist, fighting against the oppression of women. But she is unsuccessful and she ends up being institutionalised with an eating disorder.

In conclusion I would like to say the only 2 successful women in the novel are Tambu and Lucia. Tambu uses the system to her advantage by being obedient and through educating herself. Tambu finds her freedom and emancipation through education. Lucia on the other hand was never trapped by any man. She asked Babamukuru for a job and once she started work, she decided to attend night classes to educate herself.

#### ANOTHER ANSWER

In the novel 'Nervous Conditions' by Tsitsi Dangarembga European colonialism plays an important role in the lives of each of the characters. It is strongly opposed by traditional values upheld by Africans. As a result many of the characters resist colonialism. One can see that characters such as Nyasha who grew up in England and adopted the western culture also questions many of the ideologies imposed by the colonialists. This is a reflection of a changing of times moving towards a post colonialist era.

We are first introduced to colonialism in the form of Nyasha and her brother Chido. They have recently moved from England have adopted English language as their medium of communication and many of the other English mannerisms. As a result of such an upbringing Nyasha opposes many of the traditional ways of life such as patriarchy. She is very strong willed and determined and at every turn disobeys her father. Thus resisting not only a traditional way of thinking but a colonialist way of thinking Nyasha's father is both a traditionalist and a colonialist in his way of thinking and bringing up his children.

In addition to Nyasha Ma Shingayi also opposes colonialism she sees colonialism as being a detriment to her children. She felt it Babamukuru and the mission school that took away her son and fears the impact it will have on her daughter Tambu. In her opinion Nyasha falling ill due to her anorexia problem was caused by her 'Englishness' In other words it was her colonial western upbringing that led to her becoming ill. She does not want the same fate to fall upon Tambu and therefore is very resistant to the Colonial mission school and the affect it has on people. She is in favour of traditional lifestyle even if it is oppressive to her and other women in her family.

On the other hand when Tambu's brother dies she states ' I am not sorry that my brother died' This very powerful and impactful start to the novel. It gives us insight into her character. Tambu grows up in a traditional patriarchal society and as such is not allowed to go to school. The family feels that Nhamo her brother should be afforded such an opportunity as he is the eldest male in the family. Therefore when he dies it is a relief for Tambu as she may now attend school. For Tambu having an education can help her

bring her family out of poverty. It is a means to move away from home into the mission into a better life. Although she has been brought up in a traditional society the colonial mission school is her way out of her patriarchal poverty stricken life. Even though most of the characters are opposed to colonialism Tambu initial view of the mission school and its very colonialist approach is that of progression into a brighter future.

Tambu begins to understand colonialism more while she is at the mission school. Through her interactions with her cousin Nyasha, Tambu begins to question colonialism. Reflecting on her time at the mission school and the convent she wonders why she ever saw whites as minor deities. On reflection she realises that they are all equal no one is better than the other. As Nyasha once tells her blindly following this progressive ideology can be to your undoing. These questions portrayed by both characters shows a thinking which is moving away from colonialism into a post colonial society.

These two ideologies traditional and colonialism come to the forefront when Babmukuru returns to the homestead and find that the family is in a terrible condition. He feels that in order to help the family they would need to need cleanse themselves. For Babamukuru this means that Jeremiah and Ma Shingayi would need to get married to absolve themselves from their sins. In his mind this would solve all their problems. Jeremiah on the other hand would like to hold a traditional cleansing ceremony. As Babamukuru is the eldest in the family his suggestion is what is agreed upon. As the eldest male in the Shona culture leads the family and makes the decisions for the family.

In conclusion traditionalism and colonialism seem to be at loggerheads with one another. It affects people's views on life and they begin to question what the society in which they are living in. Characters such as Tambu and Nysha in the end move towards a thinking that is a progressive post colonial view on their society

## **ANOTHER ANSWER**

Nervous conditions, written by Tsitsi Dangaremba is an autobiographical story about a young girl trying to escape a life of tradition and patriarchy. In the following essay I will demonstrate how people of Africa live in a world filled with colonialism, patriarchy and a search for identity.

The novel begins with the narrator talking about herself, where she addresses herself as I, this suggests that the story is a first person. The novel depicts the life of a young girl, named Tambu, living in a little village of Rhodesia, now known as Botswana. The novel takes us through the many hardships of life in the village.

Tambu lives with her parents in the village and helps with all the chores one is expected to do in the village, this includes helping to grow crops and harvest them. From this one is able to deduce that Tambu is considered a considerably hardworking young woman. Unfortunately Tambu had been denied the opportunity of being allowed to go to school as she belonged a very poor family.

Tambu had a brother, named Nhamo, he was much older than Tambu and he was fortunate enough to be given an opportunity to free education. His uncle Baba Mkuru, took Nhamo to live with him at the Mission. Due to unforeseen circumstances he falls very ill and passes away.

Tambu, after much consideration is then given the opportunity to be educated at Babamkuru's school. Tambu feels very nervous at first to live with her cousins especially Nyasha. The reason why Tambu feels uneasy around her cousins is due the fact they had lived and been brought in a world completely different to her. Babamkuru and his family lived in England due to them completing their studies.

Nyasha demonstrates a life completely different to Tambu. Colonialism centres around one of the many themes in this novel. The lifestyles between Africa and England were very different in that children were not conformed to live by rules and traditions. Nyasha's character portrays that of children not conforming to rules and regulations. She lacks respect for elders and never shows any signs of trying to help the family in anyway. Unlike Tambu who was very hard working and often worried about her family. Tambu took education very seriously while Nyasha did not seem to care very much, although she did do considerably well. Nyasha lacked the sense of urgency to become someone, the need to be responsible for her own future, she lacked responsibility, she had a carefree life.

The type of lifestyle portrayed by Nyasha is that of a typical child of England. Through Nyasha's lifestyle and attitude one can clearly see the influence England had on her. Children of England are completely different in that family responsibility, chores and taking life seriously was not important to them. Through Tambu and Nyasha's character demonstrations we can see that their characters are worlds apart.

Tradition is very important theme in this novel, we see it being portrayed from the beginning of the novel to the very end. In many cultures in and around Africa family, traditions and respect is imperative. Tradition is portrayed in many ways in this novel, example when Babamkuru took responsibility to offer an education for his younger brother's child. Due to the fact that Tambu's parents were very poor and were unable to offer their children an education. Babamkuru felt that it was his duty as an elder to provide assistance for his brother's family. Every time that he visited his brother he never went empty handed, and this is part of tradition among our cultures, to share and care for our siblings.

Another important tradition in this novel is respect, respect especially for elders. Respect is mentioned through out the novel. Nyasha who has been influenced by a different colony lacks respect for her father. Many times in the novel she raises her voice against her father or back chats with her father which is considered highly disrespectful in our traditions. She even goes on to raise her hand towards her father. She is unable to sit down at a dinner table and have a complete meal without having an outburst with her father. Babamkuru is sometimes shocked that it is his very own daughter. She is nothing like him, and this disappoints him very much.

Another tradition recognized in this story is that of patriarchy. It is considered tradition for men to work and to be the provider and for women to be responsible for household chores and taking care of the children. Maiguru was a well educated woman who was trapped in a world dominated by her husband. She demonstrated how she broke out of a world dominated by men.

In conclusion I have shown you many ways as to how colonialism has influenced the different characters in this novel and how tradition is an important part of the many lives of our fellow Africans.

**ANOTHER ANSWER**

During my essay I will reflect on how *Nervous Conditions* portrays resistance to European colonialism. I will accomplish this through the actions and thoughts of various characters.

Whilst the central theme of the novel is undoubtedly identity and 'a nervous condition', tradition versus modernism is often at the heart of conflict within the various characters.

Ma Shingayi and Jeremiah welcome the fruits of colonialism through the success of Babamakuru and what he can do to lift their branch of the family from poverty. Ma Shingayi also opposes colonialism, in particular the effect that she believes it has had on Maiguru, Nyasha and Chido. This is fuelled by the death of Nhamo and her jealousy over the success of Babamakuru's branch of the family.

Ma Shingayi is open to the fact that Nhamo attends the mission school but after his death is against Tambu leaving. She frequently points out the effect that western culture has had on Nyasha and Chido, at one point referring to Nyasha as: "one whom we do not speak of" She is also opposed to Chido having a white girlfriend. It is through Nhamo's death that she resists colonialism.

Chido is mostly a silent character in the novel. His influence on resistance to colonialism is however significant. He routinely adopts colonial ways to the extent that he doesn't feature much. He never attends family gatherings at the traditional homestead. This does leave an air of bitterness and disappointment for those close to tradition. Nyasha's character is at conflict with colonialism but Chido embraces it. It must however be recognised that the novel is written from a single perspective.

Nyasha is a symbolic victim of colonialism. She is an intelligent outspoken character and seemingly strong willed but her character is ungrounded as she is a person caught between two worlds namely, tradition and modernism. For a brief moment, Tambu fills this void in her life. Tambu is her link to tradition.

Nyasha openly challenges Babamakuru's authority and is the only character to physically assault him. This is significant as he is the arch patriarch who is representative of both tradition and modernism. On numerous occasions throughout the novel she ignores tradition. Nyasha does not partake in traditional dance when she first returns from England. She does not eat with the other women in the kitchen but chooses to wash her hands in the water bowl with the other men. On Tambu's first night at the mission Nyasha dishes her food before Babamakuru has completed. She openly rejects traditional ways especially gender inequality

Nyasha's ungrounded identity comes to a head manifesting itself through her eating disorder and psychotic outburst citing colonialism as the root of her and her father's disillusionment. Interestingly she develops this other persona, this 'nervous condition', when her link to tradition, Tambu, attends Sacred Heart.

Babamakuru feeds off tradition as his escape, his emancipation from colonialism. He welcomes praise and attention from the extended family. He enjoys being the rational leader amongst his siblings and having the final verdict on proceedings. We see this Babamakuru as traditional but with an air of condescending arrogance. At one point he tells Jeremiah that he "speaks without thought".

The novel also portrays him as a hardworking principal of a colonial mission. He works late. We sense he does this to avoid emotional intimacy with his family. In this way the novel evokes images of solidarity which is not in keeping with Shona tradition which is one of family and unity.

Tambu launches a silent but consequential protest on her parents wedding which was determined by Babamakuru. Through her character *Nervous Conditions* portrays a resistance to colonialism. Babamakuru insists on them having a traditional Christian wedding to consolidate their relationship

whilst Jerimiah wanted to enlist the help of a medium. The wedding is not welcomed by neither Jerimiah nor Ma Shingayi but they have no choice.

Through the various characters, the novel creates conflict between the two worlds. The main characters are multifaceted. The reader is enticed into making up his or her own mind about the merits and pitfalls of colonialism

## POEM

"The British settler"

In the poem "the British settle" the poet use of poetic devices is highly effective. He uses the setting ,imagery and tone with great zeal.

The poem is set in South Africa. This is evident with the use of "cape" in line 6 and other words in subsequent stanza. The terms used, are also clues to show that this poet is talking about South Africa. Evidence in line 13, with the derogative term "kafirs"used, to refer to a black person.

The tone of the poem is somewhat humorous and contradicting when the poet uses onomatopoeia satire to express himself in, line 4 "winning losing".This is also quite evident in line 16 "I drew the kafirs teeth" here the poet uses imagine of him being a dentist and extracting the man's teeth.

The style of the poet is different, in that he does not keep his poem organized ,that is, there is different number of lines in each stanza,stanza one has 5 lines ,stanza two ,4 lines and stanzas three, 8 lines. The last stanza brings the poet back to reality because he ,bring us the reader to the his present day. By telling us "tis four and twenty year" he shows us that in the previous stanza he was speaking about, when he first came to South Africa.The structure of the poem is unclear in this regard.

The first stanza and the last few lines of the last stanza are repeated. Why? did he run out of ideas? No, he uses repetition to show how much he loved what he was doing, conquering Africa.

## SUMMARY ON NERVOUS CONDITIONS

[Tsitsi Dangarembga](#) is an African author. In *Nervous Conditions*, she writes about the lives and emotions of [Rhodesian](#) girls and women. Hers and other stories are based upon the lives of real people. They are startling, truthful depictions of women in post-colonial African societies. Dangarembga points out the duality of oppression for women living with the burdens of colonialism and patriarchy. These institutions allow them no chance to escape psychological and physical strains and are something it may be difficult for the modern reader to fully realize except through in-depth analysis.



The narrator, Tambudzai, carefully observes small indications of the power men have over women taking place in the home each day in both affluent and indigenous African families. Even the little girls in the novel such as Tambu, can see the implications of men having their hands washed first at meals, eating food first, even if none is left for women or children. Men sleep in beds while women, even while pregnant sleep on the ground in the “domestic” space of the kitchen. Men must be seated at the head of the table, signifying their place within the family structure and are always educated first. Without ever being told, Tambu knows that her brother will be the one to go to school at the mission where her educated uncle, Babamukuru, lives with his family and works as the headmaster. It is through her brother, Nhamo’s, idealistic and sometimes exaggerated portrayal of his opportunistic “new” life that Tambu begins to realize the constraints of her own.

As Tambu continues to live her life on the traditional African homestead, her brother returns from the English school with new ideas about the regression or backwardness of life sustained through labor outside the city. Though Nhamo is expected to help with harvest and chores, he skips them to read, knowing that as an educated male he will never be forced to live in poverty again. Nhamo does not mind watching as his pregnant mother and his small sisters bear the burdens of rural life until dark each night. He even orders his young sister with a baby on her back to carry his luggage for him. The signs of his changing grow greater as he begins to forget his mother tongue for the English he is learning. He is the male who will lead his branch of the family out of poverty. Cruelly reminding his sisters of their lack of hope for the future is only realistic.

Tambu’s lack of feeling or regret upon the death of Nhamo seems disturbing, which is the reason the novel begins with her admission of this fact. With his death, Tambu is given a chance to make change. When Babamukuru, his wife Maiguru, and their children Nyasha and Chido return from living in England for five years, it is decided that Tambu will take Nhamo’s place at the mission school. She will live with her Uncle Baba’s family.

In much the same way that Tambu is struggling to adjust to a completely new life in post-colonized Rhodesian society, Nyasha who has forgotten her native [Shona](#) language must adjust to finding her self-identity somewhere in between the blurry lines of English post-colonialism and traditional Shona cultural customs.

The contrasting environments in which the girls have been raised have lead to extreme personality differences between them and what the two deem acceptable behavior. Where Tambu is timid, Nyasha is outspoken and wants to make her cousin see what’s going on around her. Ironically, much of Nyasha’s behavior is a result of her

parents taking her to a country where they do not fully approve of the customs or behaviors of women. Now they move her back to their homeland and expect her to change, while forgetting the things she learned abroad. Nyasha is confused about how to act and who she is. Nyasha sees her parents compromising who they are, further prompting her to disagree with her father for succumbing to White supremacy. Both girls realize that the problems they experience penetrate far deeper than they can imagine.

Despite the attempts at resistance, a world controlled by men and foreign government could not be escaped. Tambu continued to attend an English school, yet, failed to see hope of a brighter future for herself. The reader is made aware that Tambuzai is an adult looking back on her naiveté. 'Something in my mind began to question things, to assert itself and refuse to be brainwashed.' After years of observing the process of herself as a native being "colonized," she finally understands its implications.

It could be said that the girls have too much knowledge for their own good. With knowledge comes having to face the consequences of the truth and the future-good or bad. Nyasha cannot cope with trying to be two different people in a divided society. In an attempt to gain control, she becomes obsessive about her schooling and eventually bulimic. Tambu does not reveal Nyasha's fate to the reader, as though the fate of all citizens in this situation is unknown. It would appear as though Nyasha had been virtually destroyed. It goes without saying that all others involved remained forever altered.

The boundaries dividing the African and Englander; the necessity to choose one's future above the past and family are a choice that should never have to be made. It is easy for people in English speaking countries such as the U.K. and the United States to live a life-time without ever considering the impact colonization has made on African society. Tsisti Dangarembga has done much for Zimbabwe (once Rhodesia) and her family and ancestors in creating a piece of writing which transcends a national and cultural gap and reaches to the heart of emotional issues we can all relate to. Each person who claims they wish the world were a better place needs to start listening to and reading stories like this one.

## **SOME THEMES**

### **Tradition vs. Progress**

Underpinning *Nervous Conditions* are conflicts between those characters who endorse traditional ways and those who look to Western or so-called "modern" answers to problems they face. Dangarembga remains noncommittal in her portrayal of the divergent belief systems of Babamukuru and his brother

Jeremiah, and she shows both men behaving rather irrationally. Jeremiah foolishly endorses a shaman's ritual cleansing of the homestead, while Babamukuru's belief in a Christian ceremony seems to be rooted in his rigid and unyielding confidence that he is always right. As Tambu becomes more fixed and established in her life at the mission school, she begins to embrace attitudes and beliefs different from those of her parents and her traditional upbringing. Nyasha, ever the voice of reasonable dissent, warns Tambu that a wholesale acceptance of supposedly progressive ideas represents a dangerous departure and too radical of a break with the past

### **Gender**

[Tambu](#) and [Nyasha](#) both grapple with the traditional gender roles in Shona society. As a child, Tambu feels resentment towards her brother, [Nhamo](#), when [Babamukuru](#) offers to pay for his schooling. From an early age, Tambu realizes that "the needs and sensibilities of the women in my family were not considered a priority, or even legitimate." Tambu is, in her words, "not sorry" when Nhamo dies because it means that she will be able to attend a colonial school in his place. When Tambu moves to the mission, however, she feels conflicted between her duty to Babamurku and her burgeoning independence. Meanwhile, Nyasha, who has been educated in England, does not hold back. All of the women in [Nervous Conditions](#) try to rebel against the male patriarchy with various levels of success - but nevertheless, understand that there is a battle to be fought.

### **Colonization**

Both Nyasha and her brother, [Chido](#), have spent their childhood in England and therefore, have developed many Western values. Tambu's mother thinks that Nyasha's bulimia and subsequent mental breakdown are a result of her exposure to Western culture, or "Englishness" and is afraid of the same thing happening to her daughter. This "Englishness" initially drives a wedge between Tambu and Nyasha. Nyasha and Chido cannot speak Shona, and Tambu cannot speak English - nor does she approve of Nyasha's revealing clothing. When Tambu moves to the mission, she has a much easier time obeying Babamukuru than Nyasha, and is often appalled at Nyasha's insolence. However, while looking back and telling her story, Tambu is able to recognize the way the colonial education system created a culture of subjugation - where Africans learned to believe that they were inferior, and then aspired to live by Christian values.

### **Race**

A central issue of the novel is how the children can negotiate a colonial education while still holding onto their Shona identity. As a result of growing up in England, Nyasha has taken on certain Western values, leading her classmates to shun her because "she thinks she is white". She clashes with her parents for the same reason, even though they took her to England and enrolled her in a missionary school. The dichotomy of Nyasha's identity leads her to become internally divided and drives a wedge between her and her parents. Tambu, who has not had much interaction with white people before coming to the mission, is surprised that she actually likes some of them. However, looking back on that time, she describes the white missionaries with an air of sarcasm: "We treated them like minor deities. With the self-satisfied dignity that came naturally to white people in those days, they accepted this improving disguise." All of the racial tension in the novel stems from Tambu and Nyasha's generation - questioning their society as they move towards discovering a postcolonial identity.

### **"Nervous Conditions"**

The title of Dangarembga's novel alludes to the effect colonization has on the minds of her characters.

Tambu is anxious about what it means to be educated, and after leaving for the mission, she is pulled between her Shona roots and her colonial schooling. Tambu's nervous condition manifests itself when she refuses to attend her parents' wedding. She feels anger towards Babamukuru for categorizing her parents as sinners, and she is simultaneously embarrassed as well. However, she cannot express her frustration out loud because she is so grateful to Babamukuru. Meanwhile, Nyasha's nervous condition is more obvious : she develops severe anorexia. Nyasha has not been raised in the Shona culture like Tambu has, so all she knows is the English way. Returning to Rhodesia makes Nyasha feel like an outsider, alone and adrift. Her condition worsens after Tambu, her closest confidante, leaves for convent school. Meanwhile, Ma'Shingayi suffers from depression. She believes that "Englishness" is the root of what killed her son and took her daughter away from her, and she could not stop it.

### **Patriarchy**

All of the men in *Nervous Conditions* are raised in a patriarchic society and do not take kindly to being challenged. Nhamo tortures his sister, saying "Why are you jealous anyway? Did you ever hear of a girl being taken away to school?" Looking back, Tambu realizes that her brother was "sincere in his bigotry. But in those days I took a rosy view of male nature," so she assumed he was just saying hurtful things to bother her when in reality it was not Nhamo, but society, that was determined to hold her back. Tambu really starts to question patriarchy when she moves in with Babamukuru. He is the bridge between the patriarchy of the Shona society and the colonial society. Tambu is torn between her reverence for Babamukuru and her growing frustration with his inflexibility. Because he is her benefactor, she cannot show him disrespect, and yet - she becomes increasingly disillusioned by his conservative values (which are deeply tied to Christianity).

### ***Nervous Conditions* Tea Party Roles**

#### **Tambu (Tambudzai)**

I am not sorry that my brother died. With his death I now have a chance to get something I want desperately. Because I am a girl, some people in my family want to hold me back. My father even thinks I am unnatural and that my education will only benefit strangers. My mother is worried that I will be unfit to be a wife. But, with the help of Mr. Matimba, I will get what I want.

#### **Nyasha**

I am Tambu's cousin. I am 14 years old. Being educated in Britain opened my eyes to the injustices found in the world. My mother thinks that my father and I are always tearing each other to pieces, but I don't think he has the right to treat me like water to be poured wherever he wants. My teachers think that I am smart. I believe my mother is sad because she has assumed a secondary role as all women do in my culture. I don't eat when things upset me.

#### **Ma'Shingayi**

This business of womanhood is a heavy burden. Ask me, I'll tell you about being a mother and a wife. I have been both since I was fifteen years old. I work hard, growing the food to feed my family, raising the money to send my children to school. School is not free here in Rhodesia. My daughter, Tambu, wants too much too soon. I tell her, you have to work hard and be strong to be a woman in this world. Unlike her father who thinks Tambu's dreams are a waste of time, I believe that Tambu must learn from making her own mistakes.

#### **Jeremiah**

I am Tambu's father. When a father raises a daughter, he is growing a woman for another man's family.

I ask you, what is the point of educating daughters? Can a daughter cook books and feed them to her husband? Tambu needs to learn to cook and clean from her mother.

### **Babamukuru**

I am Tambu's uncle. I am the head of the Sigauke clan; my family reveres me, especially after I came back with a Master's Degree from Britain. I am the headmaster of the primary level of the mission school in Umtali. I worry about my daughter disgracing me and how people see us; I cannot have a daughter who behaves like a whore. That is why I have to teach her a lesson.

### **Maiguru**

I am Babamukuru's wife. I teach at the mission school. People don't usually know that I also have a Master's Degree from Britain, although I think that the women in my husband's homestead envy me for that. I am sensible and I try to mediate my daughter Nyasha's relationship with her father. I don't like to see them fight. I keep my opinions to myself.

### **Nhamo**

I was one of the youngest students in my class at school. When I became one of the top students, I had a chance to leave my village. When I grow up, I am going to have many college degrees, just like my uncle, Babamukuru. Tambu is jealous of my opportunities, but she's only a girl. Of course, she will never achieve what I have done.

### **Mr. Matimba**

I am a teacher at the school in the village. When Tambu showed me the beautiful green mealies she grew to sell for school fees, I knew I had to help her. She is a smart girl, maybe as smart as her brother even. The world is changing and girls need an education as much as boys.

### **Lucia**

I am Ma'Shingayi's younger sister. Babamukuru's clan calls me a loose woman. They think I am wild just because I am beautiful. I am carrying Takesure's child. I am here to help my sister and to find work. I don't want to go back to my family and live in dire poverty.

### **Anna**

I am the serving woman in Babamukuru's household. When Tambu arrived I was friendly but now that she is going to school, I don't know how to behave. I think I need to treat the girls with respect, that is why I kneel down when I speak to them.

## **List of characters: *Nervous Conditions***

The Shona follow a patrilineal kinship system. Women follow their husbands' authority and live near the men's family. The Sigauke clan includes the relatives of Babamukuru.

Tambudzai ( Sisi Tambu) – narrator, 13-year-old girl, Babamukuru's niece

Jeremiah (Baba) Sigauke – Tambu's father, Babamukuru's brother

Ma'Shingayi – Tambu's mother

Nhamo – older brother

Netsai – younger sister

Rambanai – younger sister

Dambudzai – younger brother

Mbuya – grandmother

Lucia – Tambu's mother's sister

Takesure – distant relative

Babamukuru (Mukona or Babawa Chido) – Uncle, head of the Sigauke clan

Maiguru (Ma'Chido) – Aunt, Babamukuru's wife

Nyasha – female cousin

Chido – male cousin

Anna – serving woman

Aunt Gladys (Tete) – Babamukuru's sister

Aunt Mavis – Babamukuru's sister

Chupitai – cousin

Babamunini Thomas – Uncle, Babamukuru's brother

Mainini Patience – Aunt

Mr. Matinga – Tambu's teacher

Nyari – friend

Chitsua – friend

Jocelyn – friend

Maidei – friend

Mr. Baker – Babamukuru's English friend

Nyaradzo Baker – Tambu’s friend

Andrew and Brian Baker – sons

### Journal Prompts

#### Chapter 1

The title of this story is *Nervous Conditions*. What do you think the author means by the phrase nervous conditions? See if you can predict how the title fits into the story.

#### Chapter 2 (p.16)

Tambu’s mother seems to be the voice of wisdom in this novel. On p.16 she tells Tambu that being a woman was a burden. What do you think she means by this? What are the burdens of: poverty, race, and gender? Pick one and discuss this idea.

#### Chapter 3

The narrator Tambu, opens the novel by stating flatly, “I was not sorry when my brother died.” In chapter 3 she describes the circumstances of her brother’s death. Why isn’t she sorry about her brother’s death?

#### Chapter 4

Compare the characters of Tambu and Nyasha as they are revealed to us once they begin living together at the mission.

#### Chapter 5

Tambu feels as though she has undergone a “reincarnation” at the mission. What are some of her successes in this new life? Write about a time you felt successful.

#### Chapter 6

How has Nyasha’s early life in England shaped the way she is now?

#### Chapter 7

How does the idea of “colonization” apply here? Think about the word and think about the legacy of occupation/colonization. Can you think of any modern day parallels?

#### Chapter 8

What happens to a society or culture when they are colonized? What happens to the colonizer?

#### Chapter 9

Why does Nyasha think Tambu should not go to the exclusive Sacred heart school? What is the

process of assimilation she describes?

#### Chapter 10

Tambu tells us “seeds do grow” p.203. What does she mean by this? Why does she no longer accept Sacred Heart as the “sunrise on my horizon?”

### ***Nervous Conditions* Quotations**

These quotations are provided to serve as prompts for quick writes, journal entries, and discussions, as well as to help students recognize and use strong examples of quotations for essays. Teachers may use the quotations to support student understanding of the text while the class is reading the novel.

“The condition of native is a nervous condition.” (Jean Paul Sartre, in the epigraph to *NC*)

“...[M]y story is not after all about death, but about my escape and Lucia’s; about my mother’s and Maiguru’s entrapment; and about Nyasha’s rebellion—Nyasha, far-minded and isolated, my uncle’s daughter, whose rebellion may not in the end have been successful.” (p.1)

“The needs and sensibilities of women in my family were not considered a priority, or even legitimate.... In those days I felt the injustice of my situation every time I thought about it.... Thinking about it, feeling the injustice of it, this is how I came to dislike my brother: my father, my mother—in fact, everybody.” (p. 12)

“This business of womanhood is a heavy burden.... How could it not be? Aren’t we the ones who bear children? When it is like that you can’t just decide today I want to this, tomorrow I want to do that, the next day I want to be educated! When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them. And these things are not easy; you have to start learning them early, from a very early age. The earlier the better so that it is easy later on. Easy! As if it is ever easy. And these days it is worse, with the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other. Aiwa! What will help you, my child, is to learn to carry your burdens with strength.” (p. 16)



"...[M]y father called me aside to implore me to curb my unnatural inclinations: it was natural for me to stay at home and prepare for the homecoming.

My father's idea of what was natural begun to irritate me a long time ago, at the time I had had to leave school. I used to try to avoid having it explained to me by maintaining a sullen silence, which according to my father was unnatural: 'Now that the mouth is shut, the heart is proud.' He would threaten to beat me, but preferring to be lazy, never bothered to catch me when I ran." (p. 33)

"Chatting to aunts and cousins as we waited for the *sadza* to thicken, pouring in more mealie-meal when it had, I stopped feeling excluded and, since I no longer had need of them, my feelings of superiority disappeared as well. Exclusion held dreadful horrors for me at that time because it suggested superfluity. Exclusion whispered that my existence was not necessary, making me no more than an unfortunate by-product of some inexorable natural process. Or else is mocked that the process had gone wrong and produced me instead of another Nhamo, or another Chido, another Babamukuru-to-be. I often felt superfluous in those days, but there in the camaraderie of the cooking, it was comfortable to occupy the corner that that same natural process had carved out for me. It was comfortable to recognize myself as solid, utilitarian me." (pp. 39-40)

"The change then had to do with me. It was very sobering to think that my change of address had changed me into a person Anna could not talk to. It was disconcerting too, because I was aware only of the change of address. The self I expected to find on the mission would take some time to appear. Besides, it was not to be such a radical transformation that people would have to behave differently towards me. It was to be an extension and improvement of what I really was." (p.85)

"What it is...to have to choose between self and security. When I was in England I glimpsed for a little while the things I could have been, the things I could have done-if-if-if things were different—But there was Babawa Chido and the children and the family. And does anyone realise, does anyone appreciate, what sacrifices were made? As for me, no one even thinks about the things I gave up." (pp. 101-102)

"I [felt] bad for her...thinking how dreadfully familiar that scene had been, with Babamukuru condemning Nyasha to whoredom, making her a victim of her femaleness, just as I had felt victimised at home in the days when Nhamo went to school and I grew my maize. The victimisation, I saw, was universal. It didn't depend on poverty, on lack of education or on tradition. It didn't depend on any of the things I had thought it had depended on. Men took it everywhere with them. Even heroes like Babamukuru did it.... [W]hat I didn't like was the way all conflicts came back to this question of femaleness. Femaleness as opposed and inferior to maleness." (p.115-116)

"...[T]he more I saw of worlds beyond the homestead the more I was convinced that the further we left the old ways behind the closer we came to progress. I was surprised that Nyasha took so much interest in the things our grandparents and great-grandparents had done. We had quite a debate about it, but I

was sure that I was right.....” (p. 147)

“It’s bad enough,” [Nyasha] said severely, “when a country gets colonised, but when the people do as well! That’s the end, really, that’s the end.” (p. 147)

“For a long time now these misfortunes have been on my mind. We cannot deny that these problems are with us. But rather than say they are the result of an evil spirit that someone has sent among us, I have been thinking they are the result of something that we are doing that we should not be doing, or the result of something that we are not doing that we should be doing. That is how we are judged, and blessed accordingly.” (p. 146)

“‘I see Lucia,’ [Babamukuru] explained, ‘that you think Tambudzai is being punished because she did me wrong. It is not that, Lucia, but children must be obedient. If they are not, then they must be taught. So they develop good habits. You know this is very important, especially in the case of girls. My wife here would not have disobeyed me in the way that Tambudzai did.’” (p. 171)

“‘It’s the Englishness,’ she said. ‘It’ll kill them all if they aren’t careful,’ she snorted. ‘Look at them. That boy Chido can hardly speak a word of his own mother’s tongue, and you’ll see, his children will be worse.’” (pp. 202-203)

“I was young then and able to banish things, but seeds do grow. Although I was not aware of it then, no longer could I accept Sacred Heart and what it represented as a sunrise on my horizon. Quietly, unobtrusively and extremely fitfully, something in my mind began to assert itself, to question things and refuse to be brainwashed....” (pp.203-204)

## **SUMMARY ON A RAISIN IN THE SUN**

### **A Raisin in the Sun: Feminism**

**Summary:** Discusses the Lorraine Hansberry play, A Raisin in the Sun. Examines evidence of feminism in the play. Analyzes the character of Beneatha and explores her high aspirations and dreams, her need to express herself, and her defiance of the stereotypical female role within America.

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Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun presents evidence of the rise of feminism in the 1950-60s. "The outspoken (if then yet unnamed) feminism of the daughter" (6) is displayed throughout the play by Beneatha, the radical of the Younger family. She is the clearest example of feminism within the play with her high aspirations and dreams, her need to express herself, and her defiance of the stereotypical female role within America.

The belief that becoming a doctor in a white and male-dominated field is within her grasp as a black woman exhibits one example of Beneatha's feministic attitude within this play. By refusing to except to become the traditional, impotent housewife, she continues to challenge the stereotypical female character of the 1950s, much to her brother's dismay.

Walter Lee's chauvinistic view of Beneatha and other women presents a perpetual problem for Beneatha. The siblings constantly bicker and fight about Beneatha's expensive ambitions

and unruly independence. The obstinate defiance showed towards her brother symbolizes her defiance of the stereotypical female character towards her brother, George Murchison (a love interest), and the like.

Throughout the play, Beneatha searches for her identity by rediscovering her African roots. Her wish to distance herself from the "Assimilationist Negroes" and to express herself as a woman of true African heritage causes her to "naturalize" her hair. Instead of forcing her hair to conform to the style of the stereotypical female of the time she cuts it off and declares natural is beautiful, much to the chagrin of George Murchison.

Feminism is an obvious theme within *A Raisin in the Sun* and Beneatha displayed traits of supporters of this social theory through her need to express herself by rediscovering her roots, her defiance of her brother and other males in the play, and her optimistic stance when facing the troubles of entering a male-dominated profession.

## **SOME THEMES**

### **Power**

"I always thought it was the one concrete thing in the world that a human being could do. Fix up the sick, you know – and make them whole again. That was truly being God..." (*Act Three*)

The power that people have, the power they hold over others, and conversely the powerlessness of people, are all explored in varying ways throughout the play.

### **Race.**

There is a clear demonstration of power through what one can achieve based on one's race. Mama, Walter and Ruth all hold subservient jobs and don't seem to be able to reach higher than what they have. They move in endless circles of backbreaking work serving others that will never get them ahead. In fact, Mama's husband Big Walter died in that circle of work: "I guess that's how come that man finally worked hisself to death like he done. Like he was fighting his own war with this here world that took his baby from him." (*Act One, scene one*)

Beneatha shakes this line of power by getting an education and having aspirations beyond what her family has been able to achieve. Her education gives her the self-perceived power to speak out on racial topics such as assimilation, ("It means someone who is willing to give up his own culture, and submerge himself completely, in the dominant and this case oppressive culture!" *Act Two, scene one*) and on what Africa means to her identity. But Beneatha likes to lord her power over others, which we'll talk about in the *Intellect* section.

Later in the play, Mama reveals she has bought a house in an all-white neighbourhood, the impact of which is not lost on any of the Youngers:

RUTH: Clybourne Park? Mama, there ain't no colored people living in Clybourne Park.

MAMA: Well, I guess there's going to be some now.

WALTER: So that's the peace and comfort you went out and bought for us today. (*Act Two, scene one*)

And indeed, the Clybourne Park Improvement Association tries to bribe the Younger family into not moving in. They want to exert their power by preventing any black families into their neighbourhood.

"At the moment the overwhelming majority of our people out there feel people get along better, take more of a common interest in the life of the community when they share a common background."  
(*Act Two, scene three*) At first the Younger's dominate, by their steadfast refusal to take the bribe. But when the money might become necessary, Walter is determined to get the money by whatever means, even if it means acting in racial subservience. "That white man is going to walk in that door able to write checks for more money than we ever had. It's important to him and I'm going to help him...I'm going to put on the show, Mama." (*Act Three*)

## Gender.

The play shows a wavering line in the previously clearly defined gender roles. Men no longer consistently hold power over women. There are three generations of Younger women in the play, each with a different opinion of what it means to be a woman, and a different view of who holds the power in the gender relationship.

Mama believes that men should be in charge and speaks very matter-of-factly about who her husband was. It was her 'role' to accept it: "God knows there was plenty wrong with Walter Younger – hard-headed, mean, kind of wild with women – plenty wrong with him." (*Act One, scene one*)

Ruth does not always accept her role. She does not blindly agree with everything Walter says or does. She acts out in small ways to show Walter he does not have ultimate power over her: when Walter responds to the question, "What kind of eggs you want" with, "Not scrambled" she immediately begins scrambling the eggs. However, Ruth is still traditional. She wants her family to behave in a traditional fashion, she wants a traditional home, she wants Beneatha to act traditionally - "sweeter." The only time Ruth truly comes alive is at the prospect of seeing that traditional life come to fruition. It's easy to see that if the Youngers move to their house, Ruth will revert to a very traditional gender role. Ruth acts out only in times of trouble.

Beneatha shows the power of change in gender roles by her desire to become a doctor. "Listen, I'm going to be a doctor. I'm not worried about who I'm going to marry yet – if I ever get married." (*Act One, scene one*) The men in the play try and try again to exert their power over Beneatha and put her in her 'place.' "Who told you you had to be a doctor? If you so crazy 'bout messing 'round with sick people – then go be a nurse like other women – or get married and be quiet." (*Act One, scene one*)

And despite her education, George clearly wants Beneatha to act like a traditional girl: "I want you to cut it out, see, the mood stuff, I mean. I don't like it. You're a nice-looking girl....all over. That's all you need, honey, forget the atmosphere. Guys aren't going to go for the atmosphere – they're going to go for what they see. Be glad for that." (*Act Two, scene two*)

When it comes to gender power, Walter is desperate to show that he stands on top of the mountain. He wants the world to know he is a man in all senses – he gives his son an extra fifty cents (that he cannot spare) as a show of power. He lies when he's intimidated by George, to try and give himself

some power. He has a vision of being in a position of power with a job as an executive, and a house with a gardener. To be a man is to be rich and when Walter speaks of being a man it's almost always in terms of wealth: "I am a man and I think my wife should wear some pearls in the world!" (*Act Three*)

As much as Walter tries, he comes across as weak against the strong women in the Younger family. And so when it comes to assigning blame for his lack of power, he blames most of his problems on the women in his family, and indeed his race: "We are one group of men tied to a race of women with small minds!" (*Act One, scene one*) Walter states over and over again that he's not getting ahead because Ruth won't back him up and Mama won't trust him. It's ironic that there's nothing more Mama wants than for Walter to take his rightful place as the power in the family. Mama is the leader only by default. But Walter does not possess enough strength to be man of the family.

### **Intellect.**

There are varying degrees of 'smarts' in the Younger family and in the surrounding characters.

Several of the characters with a formal education go out of their way to exert power over lesser-educated characters. George speaks to Walter and Ruth in a 'superior' manner to the point of insulting Walter in a way he knows Walter wouldn't understand: "Good night, Prometheus!" (*Act Two, scene one*)

Beneatha thinks she's better than Walter and often speaks down to him. She uses her intellect whenever and wherever she can, using big words, speaking in French and Italian when it's not necessary, trying to engage George in discussion when he'd rather kiss her. Beneatha's education, which is supposed to give her a leg up in the world, has mostly made her frivolous. She takes guitar lessons on a whim and doesn't spend a second thinking about the financial situation of the family.

Less obviously, Beneatha thinks she's better than Ruth and her mother too. She believes her intellect gives her the power to act as if "traditional" tasks, like getting married and religious beliefs are beneath her. Beneatha flaunts her opinions on God, "Mama, you don't understand. It's all a matter of ideas, and God is just one idea I don't accept," (*Act One, scene one*) which is something her religious mother finds offensive: "Now – you say after me, in my mother's house there is still God. (*Act One, scene one.*) This moment shows that intellectual power only reaches so far. All the education in the world will not make Beneatha more powerful than her mother's belief in God.

The one character who does not do use their intellect to show a position of power is Joseph Asagai. He does not talk down to Mama and treats her with respect because that is how one treats their elders.

### **The Family**

"The Youngers is too much for me!" (*Act Two, scene two*)

The family unit is a strong theme in the play. The family is the central image of the play. There is a

reason the play takes place in the household and that the central characters are multi-generations of a family. Characters make decisions to preserve the family. The crux of the play will either destroy or elevate the family. The end of the play shows the family coming together, moving forward for better or for worse. What holds a family together? What tears it apart? How does a family maintain their dignity?

What it boils down to for the Youngers is that the family unit should equal a place of peace and stability, which is not something the Youngers currently have. Mama speaks very specifically to Walter about "going outside his home to look for peace" to which Walter answers, "Then why can't there never be no peace in this house?" (Act One, scene two)

## **CHARACTERS**

### **Walter**

As Mama's only son, Ruth's defiant husband, Travis's caring father, and Beneatha's belligerent brother, Walter serves as both protagonist and antagonist of the play. The plot revolves around him and the actions that he takes, and his character evolves the most during the course of the play. Most of his actions and mistakes hurt the family greatly, but his belated rise to manhood makes him a sort of hero in the last scene.

Throughout the play, Walter provides an everyman perspective of the mid-twentieth-century African-American male. He is the typical man of the family who struggles to support it and who tries to discover new, better schemes to secure its economic prosperity. Difficulties and barriers that obstruct his and his family's progress to attain that prosperity constantly frustrate Walter. He believes that money will solve all of their problems, but he is rarely successful with money.

Walter often fights and argues with Ruth, Mama, and Beneatha. Far from being a good listener, he does not seem to understand that he must pay attention to his family members' concerns in order to help them. Eventually, he realizes that he cannot raise the family up from poverty alone, and he seeks strength in uniting with his family. Once he begins to listen to Mama and Ruth express their dreams of owning a house, he realizes that buying the house is more important for the family's welfare than getting rich quickly. Walter finally becomes a man when he stands up to Mr. Lindner and refuses the money that Mr. Lindner offers the family not to move in to its dream house in a white

neighborhood.

## **Mama**

Mama is Walter and Beneatha's sensitive mother and the head of the Younger household. She demands that members of her family respect themselves and take pride in their dreams. Mama requires that the apartment in which they live always be neat and polished. She stands up for her beliefs and provides perspective from an older generation. She believes in striving to succeed while maintaining her moral boundaries; she rejects Beneatha's progressive and seemingly un-Christian sentiments about God, and Ruth's consideration of an abortion disappoints her. Similarly, when Walter comes to her with his idea to invest in the liquor store venture, she condemns the idea and explains that she will not participate in such un-Christian business. Money is only a means to an end for Mama; dreams are more important to her than material wealth, and her dream is to own a house with a garden and yard in which Travis can play.

Mama is the most nurturing character in the play, and she constantly reminds Walter that all she has ever wanted is to make her children happy and provide for them. She cares deeply for Walter and shows this care by giving him the remaining insurance money. She cares deeply for Ruth as well, consoling her when Walter ignores her. Mama respects Beneatha's assessment of George Murchison as being arrogant and self-centered, telling her daughter not to waste time with such a "fool." Mama loves Travis, her grandchild, and hopes their new house will have a big yard in which he can play. She is also very fond, though in a different way, of her plant, which she tries to nurture throughout the play.

## **Beneatha**

Beneatha is an attractive college student who provides a young, independent, feminist perspective, and her desire to become a doctor demonstrates her great ambition. Throughout the play, she searches for her identity. She dates two very different men: Joseph Asagai and George Murchison. She is at her happiest with Asagai, her Nigerian boyfriend, who has nicknamed her "Alaiyo," which means "One for Whom Bread—Food—Is Not Enough." She is at her most depressed and angry with George, her pompous, affluent African-American boyfriend. She identifies much more with Asagai's interest in rediscovering his African roots than with George's interest in assimilating into white culture.

Beneatha prides herself on being independent. Asagai criticizes her for being both too independent by not wanting to marry and too dependent by not wanting to leave America. Asagai's wish that Beneatha be quieter and less ambitious obviously outrages her, and his contention late in the play that she has been far from independent—she has had to rely on the insurance money from her

father's death and the investments made by her brother to realize her dream of becoming a doctor—greatly influences her. When she realizes this dependence, she gains a new perspective on her dream and a new energy to attain it in her own way. This realization also brings her closer to Walter. While she earlier blames him for his shoddy investing and questions his manhood, she eventually recognizes his strength, a sign that she has become able to appreciate him.

### **Asagai**

One of Beneatha's fellow students and one of her suitors, Asagai is from Nigeria, and throughout the play he provides an international perspective. Proud of his African heritage, he hopes to return to Nigeria to help bring about positive change and modern advancements. He tries to teach Beneatha about her heritage as well. He stands in obvious contrast to Beneatha's other suitor, George Murchison, who is an arrogant African-American who has succeeded in life by assimilating to the white world.

Though Asagai criticizes Beneatha a few times in the play, he seems to do so out of a desire to help her. He criticizes her straightened hair, which resembles Caucasian hair, and persuades her to cut it and keep a more natural, more African look. He criticizes her independent views, but seemingly only to give her new energy and strength. His final criticism of Beneatha—that she is not as independent as she believes herself to be because her dream of attending medical school is bound up in the insurance money from her father's death and her reliance on Walter's investing schemes—further helps to open Beneatha's eyes to the necessity of probing her own existence and identity. The text's implication that Beneatha intends to accept Asagai's proposal of marriage and move to Nigeria with him suggests that he is, in a way, a savior for her.



# ENG2603 Mock Exam 2

## ENG2603 Mock Exam 2

Answer ONE question from Section A, and ONE question from Section B.

Your answers should be two to four pages in length, and written in the form of carefully constructed essays.

### Section A

Question 1: Nervous Conditions

“Lucia is the **most successful** at achieving **freedom** in the novel.”

Do you agree with this statement? In a carefully worded essay of two to four pages, discuss the **resistance to oppression** in the novel as depicted through one character of your choice.

Question 2: A Raisin in the Sun

“In A Raisin in the Sun, there is a **strong gender thread** in which differing ambitions clash within the same gender.”

Respond to this statement by means of a **comparison** between the **needs and wishes** of at least two characters of the **same sex** in the play.

### Section B

Question 3: Poetry

William Plomer's "Johannesburg" provides a poetic representation of South Africa's urban development and its underlying dominant economic order. In an essay of two to four pages, discuss the **collusion between capitalism, Christianity, and patriarchy as depicted in the poem**. In your answer, be sure to refer to both **content and poetic** features. **Quote** from the poem to substantiate your argument.

Johannesburg (William Plomer)

Along the Rand in eighty-five

Fortunes were founded overnight,

And mansions rose among the rocks

To blaze with girls and light;

In champagne baths men sluiced their skins

Grimy with auriferous dust,

Then oiled and scented, fought to enjoy

What young men must;

Took opportunities to cheat,

Or meet expensive whore,

And conjured up with cards and dice,

New orgies from new veins of ore;

Greybeards who now look back

To the old days

Find little in their past to blame

And much to praise –

Riding bareback under stars

As lordly anarchs of the veld,

Venison feasts and tribal wars

Free cruelty and a cartridge belt;

Pioneers, O pioneers  
Grey pillars of a Christian State,  
Respectability has turned  
Swashbuckler prim and scamp sedate;

Prospecting in the brain's recesses  
Seek now the nuggets of your prime,  
And sift the gold dust of your dreams  
From drifted sands of time.

Question 4: Seven Steps to Heaven

“Issues **of bias and discrimination** against black people and **gay people** are prominent in Seven Steps to Heaven.”

Respond to this statement by discussing **racial and sexual stereotyping** in the novel

STUDENT ANSWERS

Question 1: Nervous Conditions

“Lucia is the most successful at achieving freedom in the novel.”

Do you agree with this statement? In a carefully worded essay of two to four pages, discuss the resistance to oppression in the novel as depicted through one character of your choice.

Lucia is a strong-willed, outspoken likeable character. In my view she is cunning and a beacon of hope to oppression of the patriarchal system. Throughout this essay I will discuss why in my opinion she is the most successful at achieving freedom in the novel.

Lucia is uneducated in the sense that she had never attended school during her childhood years. Much of her early life is a mystery as the novel is an autobiography of the main character and protagonist, Tambu. Lucia is non-the less both witty and outspoken providing at times comedy relief.

Lucia resists oppression in the most dramatic bold manner during a meeting held by the patriarchy, concerning her and Takesure. Lucia is not invited to sit in on the meeting to protest her ‘innocence’ but intruded all the same. She does not hesitate to challenge the hierarchy by stampeding into the room and

grabbing hold of Takesure's ear. This scene is highly inspirational and significant. It is inspirational in that the other women aside from Maiguru and Nyasha are outside observing with fits of hysterics. They are observant to how the patriarchal system can be challenged. Tambu gains most from this due to her age. She observes first-hand how Lucia resists oppression. Although the novel does not allude to it, she may well have used this memory subconsciously to assist in her own rebellion of not attending her parents wedding.

Babamakuru is the arch patriarch of the novel. His actions are later questioned by Lucia after he harshly punishes Tambu for not attending her parents wedding. Babamakuru admires her tenacity stating to Maiguru "she is like a man herself" Reading this comment one feels a sense of victory on Lucia's behalf.

Lucia is independent and resourceful showing that she is very much in control of her life. She has needs but puts herself first when engaging with the opposite sex. She refers to Takesure as a "cockroach" when discussing their relationship and points out that cockroaches "are easy to chase away, isn't it?"

I refer to Lucia as cunning. Babamakuru uses his influence to find her a job at the mission but it is Lucia's influence on Babamakuru that lands her a job. Lucia understands that Babamakuru enjoys praise and likes to play the part of provider. Lucia uses this to her advantage and even offers him praise by falling to her knees in gratitude for her new job.

Lucia challenges the hierarchy there by setting the scene for her personal journey towards freedom. She offers Babamakuru a solution to her moving from the homestead and away from Takesure. The solution being him finding her a job at the mission.

In this way he is seen as the provider deserving of praise and Lucia is emancipated

"warns" Jeremiah to stay in his chair if he "preferred Takesure with ears".

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being him finding her a job at the mission.

In this way he is seen as the provider deserving of praise and Lucia is emancipated.

#### ANOTHER ANSWER

Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Condition* features many aspects such as racial segregation, patriarchy, poverty, tradition and culture and the oppression of women. This essay is about the oppression of women. Oppression is a prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or exercise of authority. In the novel, oppression of women stems from the patriarchy system practiced by the Shona people or culture. Patriarchy refers to a system of practices and structures in which men have more power than women and are able to use their power to dominate and oppress women. Two women who were successful in achieving freedom are Lucia and Tambu.

Tambu, a young woman, refused to be oppressed by men like her father and brother. She has learnt this from a very young age e.g. when she was about 8 years old, there was no money for her to go to school and she refused to let this stop her. She decided to plant her own maize and sell it to earn money to pay for her school fees. Her father laughed at her and thought that she would not make it. Once the mealies were ready, her brother, Nhamo, tried to sabotage her efforts from going to school by stealing it. But with the help of Mr Matimba and an elderly white lady named Doris, she was given money for her school fees. Tambu's father made another attempt at oppressing her by asking Mr Matimba for the money that belonged to him because Tambu was in fact his daughter. The principal and Mr Matimba saw right through Tambu's father's calculating ways and said no, he cannot have the money. Tambu went to school the following year.

Tambu's mother tried to warn her on many occasions about learning to accept being treated unfairly by men. Her mother said that this business of womanhood is a heavy burden and that women have to make all the sacrifices.

Watching her mother struggle with poverty, having to take care of her children by herself, without any help from her father, Tambu realised that the only way to free herself from this suffering and not end up like her mother, trapped, was through education. The way Tambu feels towards the males in her family are very evident, especially on the first page of the novel when she mentions that she is not sorry that her brother, Nhamo, died.

With the death of her brother, Tambu was given the same privileges as her brother. She had to attend the missionary school and to live with her rich uncle in a big house, where she will be well taken care of.

But when Tambu goes to live with Babamukuru and his family, she witnesses more oppression of women at his house. One would assume that Babamukuru, with all his degrees in education, would not practice the patriarch system, belittle women and not take their needs into consideration.

Tambu always thought that Maiguru was better off than her mother but unfortunately as educated as she was, with a degree in philosophy, Maiguru was also a victim of oppression e.g. Babamukuru takes her entire salary and does as he pleases and also uses the money to support his family on the homestead. Maiguru's entire house is beautiful and well kept except for the kitchen because according to the men who follow the Shona tradition and culture, it is a woman's job to maintain the kitchen.

After witnessing Babamukuru assaulting his daughter, Nyasha, Tambu realised at last what was

fundamentally wrong with her culture and society: It was the victimisation of women, this making women victims of their femaleness. It had nothing to do with poverty, lack of education, or tradition: It boiled down to femaleness as opposed to and inferior to maleness.

In the Shona culture, men are seen as the head of the family and household, they are the providers of food, clothing, shelter, etc and they feel that they have earned the right to own women and make them behave subserviently towards them. Men do not view this kind of treatment as being oppressive but feel that women should be obedient and grateful. These men feel that without them, women won't be able to survive on their own.

Nyasha was very rebellious and totally against the oppression of women, especially women like her mother and Tambu's mother. Nyasha was constantly at war with her father and this had affected her mentally, physically and psychologically. Tambu on the other hand was very wise, she realised that she would rather first obey Babamuru and do as he says and focus on getting a good education. She needed him to get to where she was going because without him, who was going to pay for her school fees, cloth and feed her, absolutely nobody. Tambu knew the only way for women to be able to stand on their own feet and take care of themselves was through education and being obedient and silent at home.

In conclusion I would like to say that when it comes to being oppressed as a woman, some women like Tambu's mother do not have a choice but to remain oppressed because they have little or no education, no money, no real work experience and without any of this, one cannot survive on their own. On the other hand, girls like Nyasha and Tambu are fortunate to be educated and with education comes freedom and emancipation from oppression. They would have freedom and emancipation from oppression and from being victims of tradition and culture. But sadly, Nyasha was institutionalised for an eating disorder and Tambu was the only one that was successful and victorious. I am totally against the oppression of women, especially children like Tambu, who were oppressed for being females and robbed of their childhood.

ANOTHER ANSWER

“Lucia is the most successful at achieving freedom in the novel.”

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Lucia resists oppression in the most dramatic bold manner during a meeting held by the patriarchy, concerning her and Takesure. Lucia is not invited to sit in on the meeting to protest her 'innocence' but intruded all the same. She does not hesitate to challenge the hierarchy by stampeding into the room and grabbing hold of Takesure's ear. She “warns” Jeremiah to stay in his chair if he “preferred Takesure with ears”.

This scene is highly inspirational and significant. It is inspirational in that the other women aside from

Maiguru and Nyasha are outside observing with fits of hysterics. They are observant to how the patriarchal system can be challenged. Tambu gains most from this due to her age. She observes first-hand how Lucia resists oppression. Although the novel does not allude to it, she may well have used this memory subconsciously to assist in her own rebellion of not attending her parents wedding.

Babamakuru is the arch patriarch of the novel. His actions are later questioned by Lucia after he harshly punishes Tambu for not attending her parents wedding. Babamakuru admires her tenacity stating to Maiguru "she is like a man herself" Reading this comment one feels a sense of victory on Lucia's behalf.

Lucia is independent and resourceful showing that she is very much in control of her life. She has needs but puts herself first when engaging with the opposite sex. She refers to Takesure as a "cockroach" when discussing their relationship and points out that cockroaches "are easy to chase away, isn't it?"

I refer to Lucia as cunning. Babamakuru uses his influence to find her a job at the mission but it is Lucia's influence on Babamakuru that lands her a job. Lucia understands that Babamakuru enjoys praise and likes to play the part of provider. Lucia uses this to her advantage and even offers him praise by falling to her knees in gratitude for her new job.

Lucia challenges the hierarchy there by setting the scene for her personal journey towards freedom. She offers Babamakuru a solution to her moving from the homestead and away from Takesure. The solution being him finding her a job at the mission.

In this way he is seen as the provider deserving of praise and Lucia is emancipated.

#### ANOTHER ANSWER

sitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Condition* features many aspects such as racial segregation, patriarchy, poverty, tradition and culture and the oppression of women. This essay is about the oppression of women. Oppression is a prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or exercise of authority. In the novel, oppression of women stems from the patriarchy system practiced by the Shona people or culture. Patriarchy refers to a system of practices and structures in which men have more power than women and are able to use their power to dominate and oppress women. Two women who were successful in achieving freedom are Lucia and Tambu.

Tambu, a young woman, refused to be oppressed by men like her father and brother. She has learnt this from a very young age e.g. when she was about 8 years old, there was no money for her to go to school and she refused to let this stop her. She decided to plant her own maize and sell it to earn money to pay for her school fees. Her father laughed at her and thought that she would not make it. Once the mealies were ready, her brother, Nhamo, tried to sabotage her efforts from going to school by stealing it. But with the help of Mr Matimba and an elderly white lady named Doris, she was given money for her school fees. Tambu's father made another attempt at oppressing her by asking Mr Matimba for the money that belonged to him because Tambu was in fact his daughter. The principal and Mr Matimba saw right through Tambu's father's calculating ways and said no, he cannot have the money. Tambu went to school the following year.

Tambu's mother tried to warn her on many occasions about learning to accept being treated unfairly by men. Her mother said that this business of womanhood is a heavy burden and that women have to make all the sacrifices.

Watching her mother struggle with poverty, having to take care of her children by herself, without any help from her father, Tambu realised that the only way to free herself from this suffering and not end up like her mother, trapped, was through education. The way Tambu feels towards the males in her family are very evident, especially on the first page of the novel when she mentions that she is not sorry that her brother, Nhamo, died.

With the death of her brother, Tambu was given the same privileges as her brother. She had to attend to the missionary school and to live with her rich uncle in a big house, where she will be well taken care of.

But when Tambu goes to live with Babamukuru and his family, she witnesses more oppression of women at his house. One would assume that Babamukuru, with all his degrees in education, would not practice the patriarch system, belittle women and not take their needs into consideration.

Tambu always thought that Maiguru was better off than her mother but unfortunately as educated as she was, with a degree in philosophy, Maiguru was also a victim of oppression e.g. Babamukuru takes her entire salary and does as he pleases and also uses the money to support his family on the homestead. Maiguru's entire house is beautiful and well kept except for the kitchen because

according to the men who follow the Shona tradition and culture, it is a woman's job to maintain the kitchen.

After witnessing Babamukuru assaulting his daughter, Nyasha, Tambu realised at last what was fundamentally wrong with her culture and society: It was the victimisation of women, this making women victims of their femaleness. It had nothing to do with poverty, lack of education, or tradition: It boiled down to femaleness as opposed to and inferior to maleness.

In the Shona culture, men are seen as the head of the family and household, they are the providers of food, clothing, shelter, etc and they feel that they have earned the right to own women and make them behave subserviently towards them. Men do not view this kind of treatment as being oppressive but feel that women should be obedient and grateful. These men feel that without them, women won't be able to survive on their own.

Nyasha was very rebellious and totally against the oppression of women, especially women like her mother and Tambu's mother. Nyasha was constantly at war with her father and this had affected her mentally, physically and psychologically. Tambu on the other hand was very wise, she realised that she would rather first obey Babamuru and do as he says and focus on getting a good education. She needed him to get to where she was going because without him, who was going to pay for her school fees, cloth and feed her, absolutely nobody. Tambu knew the only way for women to be able to stand on their own feet and take care of themselves was through education and being obedient and silent at home.

In conclusion I would like to say that when it comes to being oppressed as a woman, some woman like Tambu's mother do not have a choice but to remain oppressed because they have little or no education, no money, no real work experience and without any of this, one cannot survive on their own. On the other hand, girls like Nyasha and Tambu are fortunate to be educated and with education comes freedom and emancipation from oppression. They would have freedom and emancipation from oppression and from being victims of tradition and culture. But sadly, Nyasha was institutionalised for an eating disorder and Tambu was the only one that was successful and victorious. I am totally against the oppression of women, especially children like Tambu, who were oppressed for being females and robbed



of their childhood.

#### ANOTHER ANSWER

We discover early on in the novel that Tambu is not allowed to go school. According to Shona tradition only the eldest male in the family is afforded such luxuries. It is believed that they will lead the clan so all the families money is used to ensure their success. Tambu being a female in a traditional family is therefore not afforded such a luxury. Regardless she did not want to give up on attaining an education even with the opposition she received from both her parents. She grows and sells mealies to finance her school fees. This shows her determination to make her dreams a reality regardless of her traditional oppressive upbringing. This is the first instance that one sees her resisting oppression.

'I am not sorry that my brother died', says Tambu. This opening remark is a very powerful and impactful statement. One gains insight into the character of Tambu and a better understanding of the pressures women face through oppression. Most people would feel saddened by a sibling's death but not Tambu. In order for her to move forward and progress her brother had to die. Her lack of concern at this tragedy attests to the seriousness of her oppressive situation. His death means she can now realize her dream of getting an education.

After her brother's death her uncle takes her to the mission school in his place. Tambu is in awe of her surroundings and uses this opportunity at the mission school to fulfil her goal of getting a good education and bringing her family out of poverty. She is an obedient conscientious student who gets good grades and obeys her uncle. Tambu feels that he has done so much for her and she needs to show her gratitude. This outlook changes when her uncle forces her parents to get married. She becomes defiant and resists the entire idea of their marriage. For Tambu if her parents got married it meant that her childhood was a sin. She could not allow this and protests in the only way she knows how by not attending the wedding. When her uncle returns home he severely punishes Tambu for her disobedience. In this instance Tambu resistance of oppression has had dire consequences for her. It illustrated that a resistance to oppression in this situation was futile. Regardless of this set back she still remains determined and hardworking.

Tambu through her good grades is given the opportunity to attend a convent. While at the convent she notices a lot of differences in the way people are treated. It opens her eyes to another perspective on life. When she reflects back she wonders why she ever viewed people in awe. When everyone was the same and should be treated equally. She worshipped her uncle for a long time but in the end realised that he too was oppressive. He gave opportunities but with limitations and these were further enhanced by his patriarchal views on life.

In conclusion one sees how Tambu continually battles against her oppressive life. Yet she faces each obstacle with determination. Unfortunately her resistance to oppression is met with very little or no success. Therefore based on the character of Tambu I would agree that the person who had most success in achieving freedom in the novel was Lucia.

play shows that stereotypes will continue to exist, but that identity does not allow it.

#### ANOTHER ANSWER

In the novel *Nervous Conditions*, the major theme that is expressed is patriarchy and woman oppression. Oppression refers to when someone treats a group of people unfairly or prevents them from having the same rights as other people have. I do agree that Lucia is the most successful at achieving freedom in the novel *Nervous Conditions*. She escaped entrapment because she does not care what people are saying. In this essay, I will discuss Nyasha's resistance to oppression as depicted through the novel.

The novel *Nervous Conditions* reveals to us that Nyasha spend her early years in England while her parents were awarded scholarship to complete their degrees in that same country. When they came back to Africa (Rhodesia) she realize that there are lot of differences between the life she has been living in England and the life in Africa especially where woman are concerned. Unlike in England woman in Africa are still leaving under gender oppression whereby men are dominating in all spheres of life. The novel *Nervous Conditions* reveals how Nyasha is struggling to come to terms with these differences.

The novel highlights Nyasha as rebelling against woman oppression. She is not aware of the differences in the way Shona women are treated compared to treatment of British women. Nyasha feels that women are treated unfairly and she refused to be treated like all of them. She feels that her father Babamukuru does not deserve to be treated like a "God" because it is his duty as a parent to provide for them. She is very independent and she belies that people must have freedom of speech regardless of the gender. Nyasha believes in the culture of individualism that she adopted from England while she was staying there.. Nyasha is highlighted in the novel as challenger who is challenging Babamukuru when he disapprove of the book she is reading, she told him that he has no right of telling her what to read.

*Nervous Conditions* reveals Nyasha as very democratic and believe that all men are equal regardless of gender, race, age, and sex. She did not approve of her father nor has any respect for him. She always talks what is in her mind. She thinks that all men and her father are historical artifact. The novel reveals Nyasha as very persuasive and stubborn. She wanted to change things for the better. The willing of freeing other woman from oppression is inside her. Nyasha believes that there is a solution for this women oppression and she will not quit before getting to it.

In conclusion, we see Nyasha struggling against oppression while other women around her are not helping her. She fights this battle of woman oppression alone, until she ended up depressed.

## ANOTHER ANSWER

In the novel 'Nervous Conditions' by Tsitsi Dangarembga resistance to oppression is one of the central themes. Each woman in the novel faces oppression and tries to overcome this hurdle. Some such as Lucia achieve more success than others in attaining their freedom. If one looks at a character such as Tambu throughout the novel she resists oppression. Even though her hard work, determination and persistence is not always met with success, she continues to fight for what she believes in.

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Tambu through her good grades is given the opportunity to attend a convent. While at the convent she notices a lot of differences in the way people are treated. It opens her eyes to another perspective on

life. When she reflects back she wonders why she ever viewed people in awe. When everyone was the same and should be treated equally. She worshipped her uncle for a long time but in the end realised that he too was oppressive. He gave opportunities but with limitations and these were further enhanced by his patriarchal views on life.

In conclusion one sees how Tambu continually battles against her oppressive life. Yet she faces each obstacle with determination. Unfortunately her resistance to oppression is met with very little or no success. Therefore based on the character of Tambu I would agree that the person who had most success in achieving freedom in the novel was Lucia.

#### ANOTHER ANSWER O A RAISIN IN THE SUN

I agree, in Raisin in the Sun there is a strong gender thread in which Lorraine Hansberry explores different themes that highlights why differing ambitions clash within the same gender. Mama, Lena Younger and Matriarch of the play retires from domestic work after receiving a cheque of ten thousand dollars from her husband's life insurance. Beneatha, her daughter, the youngest of the females, display hopes and dreams beyond her mother's comprehension. In this essay I will discuss the aspirations of these characters by comparing and contrasting Mama's character with her daughter's.

Beneatha is depicted as ambitious in her dream to become a doctor. Her aspirations extend to finding her cultural identity. Hansberry's portrayal of Beneatha poses a new stereotype of black female to the audience. In light of this, stereotyping can be defined as generalisations or preconceived notions that usually act as a universal truth about a person sharing traits of a certain group, gender, race or class. Set against the backdrop of racial segregation, during the 1960's, in a society ruled by whites, black female's employment opportunities were limited to domestic workers. As Beneatha's name symbolically suggests, this type of work is "beneath" her. In contrast to her depiction is Mama, who consider this type of employment "a good job" and even considers working extra hours.

Mama's view, one can argue, stems from a generation that experienced greater marginalisation and oppression. She and her husband slaved for a purpose, their family and their dignity. This generation gap and shift in thinking is expressed in her concern for her children. Her dream to live in a bigger house goes beyond materialism and comfort. It is indeed the conflict between Walter and Ruth, Ruth contemplating abortion, and Beneatha's view of God that sets her in action to buy the house. These conflicts and her children's obsession with the money threatens this dignity of future generations.

Despite her falling into the category of domestic, she poses as a new stereotype of being black, contrary to the white assumption that this race values money above all. To Mama money cannot buy happiness. She even goes against her religious beliefs to the extent of handing over the remainder of the cheque to Walter to restore happiness. She does this with the intention and trust that her son should take on the role as head of the family. By handing over the cheque, she displays that family takes higher priority.

Contrary to Mama's view of man being the head and decision-maker, Beneatha's character expresses defiance towards patriarchy and traditional gender roles. She cannot understand why Ruth puts up with Walter. She does not see marriage as Mama and Ruth does, to be married is to struggle together and accept your lot as the lesser sex for the sake of family. She sees a relationship between a man and woman as equal.

This view ironically is contrasted by both potential husbands, George and Assagai. One can argue that Beneatha's hairstyle represents different themes explored in this novel. George who represents the upper class and is denoted by Beneatha as an "assimilationist" wants her to conform to her gender role. He has a sexist opinion of what she must be and what she can do. In contrast to George's assimilation, but similarly, Assagai threatens this equality by being a traditionalist. It becomes clear in the denouement, that she would rather be with Assagai. This can be argued that Assagai is less of a threat to her aspirations. Thus, Beneatha seems to compromise her aspiration of becoming a doctor (her career), for the other, her true identity. Similar to Mama, she chooses dignity above materialism.

In conclusion, Hansberry highlights that the generation gap brings with it change in people; that those who are oppressed and discriminated against, are not left untouched. The fact that the audience is left to make up their mind whether the family will stay happy, shows that the struggle for dignity continues. However, her play makes the point, that people's hearts can only be changed in standing up against those and changing their minds for them.

Walter Lee younger and Beneatha younger are siblings both living at home with their mother Leana younger. The play is set in Chicago south side 1959. I will be exploring the sexist attitude Walter Lee has towards his sister.

This particular morning at the very start of the play Walter Lee speaks of a cheque that is coming tomorrow. A little later in the play we learn that the cheque is an insurance payout to Mama younger, insurance money from the death of her husband

Firstly I'd like to unpack some detail on the living conditions of the younger family. Beneatha, Walter Lee and his wife Ruth and young son Live with their mother in a small apartment where they share a single bathroom with the next door neighbours. The younger family scurries to the bathroom in the mornings hoping to find it unoccupied and maybe some hot water to freshen up for the hard day ahead. Walter Lee is a chauffeur driver, his mother and wife are domestic workers, Travis their young son is a ten year old school boy and Beneatha a young woman attending college. It appears the younger family are not the friendliest people in the morning.

Beneatha enters the play in red flannel night dress she enters into the

lounge still half asleep hoping to find the bathroom empty. Almost immediately quarreling begins between Beneatha and Walter, about the cheque, Beneatha seems not to be in the mood for the topic and brushes Walter off by reminding him that it's not his money and their mother can do whatever she finds fit to do with it. At this stage sibling rivalry enters the scene. Walter sees no sense in Beneatha's dream, and feels that she should just get married and be quiet like all other women. Walter struggles with a low self-esteem, inability to provide for his family has made him feel like a failure. He's of the opinion that women should submit and let the men be in charge, he's sister's ambition sounds more like arrogance to him. Gender inequality is clearly found here. At this point we see a sexist attitude that Walter has towards his sister's ambition.

The fulfilment of her dreams has a large impact on the survival of the family. Walter and Ruth are sacrificing much to keep Beneatha in college. This angers Walter when he sees his son still wearing an old pair of shoes and sleeping on the lounge floor. His fatherly pride is crushed and he feels less of a man. Walter has no interest in her dreams of becoming a doctor, in fact it's a stumbling block to his dreams of owning a liquor store.

Mama Younger plans to pay for her daughter's education when the cheque comes. His dream is to own a liquor store which he sees as a way to financial freedom and a release to his manly inadequacies, if only Mama will leave the money up to him Walter Lee is eager to get his hands on the money and he makes no secret thereof.

Empowering and leadership opportunity for women in particular black women at the time of the play was unseen and unheard of. Beneatha is an ambitious young woman studying to become a doctor. She has dreams of gender equality and women empowerment. Men are considered the head of the home, the breadwinner and women had

the role of mother and wife. The sexist attitude that Walter has towards his sister is ingrown and natural to him for that was all he ever thought women could be, the only role they can play. Stereotypes are shattered in this play Walter is expected to be the man and head of the home, seemingly this is not so Mama younger owns the home and has the authority over all who live there. Which greatly undermines Walters sexist ego.

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