

Catcher in the Rye

The catcher in the rye is set in 1950 and is narrated by Holden Caulfield who is a teenage boy struggling with adolescence. In the novel, it is clear that he is undergoing treatment in a mental hospital.

The plot begins in Pency prep Pennsylvania Holden's 4th school where we find out he failed 4 of the 5 classes and has been expelled he is not scheduled to return home in Manhattan until Wednesday.

He visits Mr. Spencer an elderly history teacher to talk but Mr. Spencer just reprimands Holden which annoys him so he leaves. Holden returns to his dormitory and gets more irritated by his unhygienic neighbors Ackley and by his roommate Stadlater. Stadlater goes on a date with Jane Gallagher that evening a girl who Holden used to date and still admire. Holden becomes nervous and anxious about this and when Stadlater returns Holden starts questioning him about having sex with Jane. Stadlater started teasing Holden which caused a fight.

Holden decided he had enough of Pency and left to stay in a hotel in Manhattan three days early without informing his parents he is back. He gets a train to New York he meets the mother of a fellow student at Pency prep and although he thinks her son is a bastard he makes up stories to his mother about how shy and respected her son is.

When he arrives at Penn station he goes into a phone booth and considers calling several people but decides not to and leaves. He gets a cab and asks the driver where do the ducks in Central Park go when the lake freezes but his question annoys the driver. Holden goes to Edmont hotel and checks in. From his room, he sees through other people's windows he can see a man putting on stockings and a dress and he can see a woman and man spitting mouthfuls of drink at each other he considers this sexual play and becomes aroused.

He calls Faith Cavendish a woman he has never met but got her number from a friend and remembers them saying she was a stripper so he wanted to persuade her to have sex with him. She was annoyed he called so late and said they could meet the next day but Holden became irritated and hung up the phone. He then goes downstairs to the lavender room and can't get a drink because the waiter sees he is underage so he flirts with 3 women in their thirties and dances with them, he falls half in love with the blonde one because she danced well after the women mocked his age they left and left him with the bill.

Holden starts to think about Jane and the time they spent on summer vacation in Maine where they went to movies and held hands but never kissed on the mouth. Holden leaves Edmont takes a cab to Ernie's Jazz Club in Greenwich Village he sits alone observing other patrons he then runs into Lillian Simmons his older brother's ex gf she offers him to join them but Holden says he has to meet someone and makes an excuse to leave and walks back to Edmont.

Maurice the elevator guy offers Holden a prostitute for \$5 Holden agrees and meets the prostitute Sunny he claimed he had a spinal operation and didn't want sex but would still pay her. Sunny then leaves with \$5 and returns with Maurice who demands another \$5 Holden refuses so Maurice punches

him while sunny took \$5 from his wallet. The next day Holden calls Sally Hayes an attractive girl he dated in the past and arranged to meet at a Broadway show.

He tries to call Jane but her mother answers so he hangs up he then took a cab to meet his sister phoebe at Central Park. He helps phoebes school mate tighten her skates and they say phoebe may be in the museum he goes there but when he gets there he doesn't go inside and leaves to Biltmore hotel to meet sally they go to watch the play and Holden gets annoyed that sally talks to a boy they then go to skate but get a table instead.

Holden tried to get sally to run away with him to Massachusetts or Vermont but she refuses and he says she is a pain in the ass. She then leaves. Holden calls Jane again but no answer so he calls Carl Luce a young man and student advisor who had spoken about his sexual experiences in the past, they arrange to meet for dinner but Carl gets annoyed by Holden being homophobic and talking about Luce's Chinese girlfriend.

Holden gets drunk and calls Sally Hayes about Christmas plans and then goes to Central Park to watch the ducks. He then sneaks into his own apartment to wake up phoebe and admitted to her he was kicked out of school which makes her mad and she accuses him of not liking anything.

Phoebe mentions he misremembered the poem if a body meet a body coming through the rye Not Catch a body. Holden then calls his English teacher Mr. Antolini and goes to his apartment to meet him he tells him about the expulsion and tries to counsel him.

Holden falls asleep on the couch and wakes up to Mr. Antolini stroking his forehead he assumes he is a homosexual and makes an excuse to leave and goes to sleep on a bench in central station. Holden goes to phoebes school and send her a note saying he is leaving home for good and that she can meet him at lunch time at the museum. She arrives with suitcases saying she wants to go with him, he refuses and she starts to cry Holden knows she will follow him and walks to the zoo and buys her a ticket to ride the carousel it starts to rain heavily but Holden is so happy watching his sister he is close to tears.

Characters

Holden Caulfield:-

- Is 16 years old, very tall, grey in hair.
- He is rebellious, full of anger, and fear. Fear of death.
- He negotiates the transition from childhood to adulthood.
- He has a need to save others, to protect children and to prevent them from "falling a cliff."
- Holden is the narrator of the story. First person.
- He writes the story from a rest home to which he was sent for therapy.
- He refuses to talk about his early life.

DB

- Is his older brother.
- He is a Hollywood writer.
- DB has "prostituted" his talents in Hollywood.
- Always comes to visit him in the rest home.

Phoebe

- She is ten years old.
- Holden's younger sister.
- She is intelligent for her age.
- She has red hair, like Allie.
- Holden tries to prevent her making the transition to adulthood.

Allie

- He was Holden's brother
- Two years younger than him.
- Several years ago, he died of leukemia.
- Holden says that he was the most intelligent member of his family.
- Holden still feels Allie's loss strongly.
- He also recounts the night Allie died, he slept in the garage and broke all the windows with his bare hands.

Ackley

- Behaves in annoying ways because he is insecure and unpopular.
- He has poor dental hygiene.
- He is an obvious slob.

Stradlater

- Is outwardly attractive, he is a secret slob.
- He goes on a date with Jane Gallagher, Holden's childhood friend.

Sally

- The girl he meets in New York.
- Her mother don't like him.
- She irritates Holden flirting with pretentious boy from Andover.
- He still takes her ice-skating.
- He suggests that they run away/escape from society, living on their own in a cabin.
- She then points out that his dreams are ridiculous, he becomes agitated.
- He calls her a "royal pain in the ass" and she begins to cry.
- He apologises, but she is upset and angry with him.
- He finally leaves her behind.

Mr. Spencer

- A history teacher, old and I'll with flu.
- He tries to lecturer Holden about his academic failure.

Mr. Antolini

- An English teacher he had at Elkton Hills.
- He drank excessively.
- Mr Antolini was the only teacher who approached James Castles body, after his death.
- The only one who demonstrated any courage or kindness in the situation. James cattle jumped out of a window to his death while being tormented by other boys.
- He was shocked that Holden has been kicked out of another school and invites him to stay the night at his house.
- They had small talk.
- Holden went to sleep on Mr Antolini's couch.
- He woke up, he felt Mr Antolini's hand stroking his head.
- Mr Antolini claims it was nothing.
- Holden believes that Mr Antolini was making a homosexual advance and hurried out of the apartment.

The catcher in the Rye is in many ways a book of innocence by the modern world, despite his bitter tone,. Holden is an innocent, searching the world around him that will not cause him pain.

FULL TITLE ·	The Catcher in the Rye
AUTHOR ·	J. D. Salinger
TYPE OF WORK ·	Novel
GENRE ·	Bildungsroman (coming-of-age novel)
LANGUAGE ·	English
TIME AND PLACE WRITTEN ·	Late 1940s–early 1950s, New York
DATE OF FIRST PUBLICATION ·	July 1951; parts of the novel appeared as short stories in Collier’s, December 1945, and in The New Yorker, December 1946
PUBLISHER ·	Little, Brown and Company
NARRATOR ·	Holden Caulfield, narrating from a psychiatric facility a few months after the events of the novel
POINT OF VIEW ·	Holden Caulfield narrates in the first person, describing what he himself sees and experiences, providing his own commentary on the events and people he describes.
TONE ·	Holden’s tone varies between disgust, cynicism, bitterness, and nostalgic longing, all expressed in a colloquial style.
TENSE ·	Past
SETTING (TIME) ·	A long weekend in the late 1940s or early 1950s
SETTING (PLACE) ·	Holden begins his story in Pennsylvania, at his former school, Pencey Prep. He then recounts his adventures in New York City.
PROTAGONIST ·	Holden Caulfield
MAJOR CONFLICT ·	The major conflict is within Holden’s psyche. Part of him wants to connect with other people on an adult level (and, more specifically, to have a sexual encounter), while part of him wants to reject the adult world as “phony,” and to retreat into his own memories of childhood.
RISING ACTION ·	Holden’s many attempts to connect with other people over the course of the novel bring his conflicting impulses—to interact with other people as an adult, or to retreat from them as a child—into direct conflict.
CLIMAX ·	Possible climaxes include Holden’s encounter with Sunny, when it becomes clear that he is unable to handle a sexual encounter; the end

	of his date with Sally, when he tries to get her to run away with him; and his departure from Mr. Antolini's apartment, when he begins to question his characteristic mode of judging other people.
FALLING ACTION ·	Holden's interactions with Phoebe, culminating in his tears of joy at watching Phoebe on the carousel (at the novel's end he has retreated into childhood, away from the threats of adult intimacy and sexuality)
THEMES ·	Alienation as a form of self-protection; the painfulness of growing up; the phoniness of the adult world
MOTIFS ·	Relationships, intimacy, and sexuality; loneliness; lying and deception
SYMBOLS ·	The "catcher in the rye"; Holden's red hunting hat; the Museum of Natural History; the ducks in the Central Park lagoon
FORESHADOWING ·	At the beginning of the novel, Holden hints that he has been hospitalized for a nervous breakdown, the story of which is revealed over the course of the novel.

Themes

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

ALIENATION AS A FORM OF SELF-PROTECTION

Throughout the novel, Holden seems to be excluded from and victimized by the world around him. As he says to Mr. Spencer, he feels trapped on "the other side" of life, and he continually attempts to find his way in a world in which he feels he doesn't belong.

As the novel progresses, we begin to perceive that Holden's alienation is his way of protecting himself. Just as he wears his hunting hat (see "Symbols," below) to advertise his uniqueness, he uses his isolation as proof that he is better than everyone else around him and therefore above interacting with them. The truth is that interactions with other people usually confuse and overwhelm him, and his cynical sense of superiority serves as a type of self-protection. Thus, Holden's alienation is the source of what little stability he has in his life.

As readers, we can see that Holden's alienation is the cause of most of his pain. He never addresses his own emotions directly, nor does he attempt to discover the source of his troubles. He desperately needs human contact and love, but his protective wall of bitterness prevents him from looking for such

interaction. Alienation is both the source of Holden's strength and the source of his problems. For example, his loneliness propels him into his date with Sally Hayes, but his need for isolation causes him to insult her and drive her away. Similarly, he longs for the meaningful connection he once had with Jane Gallagher, but he is too frightened to make any real effort to contact her. He depends upon his alienation, but it destroys him.

THE PAINFULNESS OF GROWING UP

According to most analyses, *The Catcher in the Rye* is a bildungsroman, a novel about a young character's growth into maturity. While it is appropriate to discuss the novel in such terms, Holden Caulfield is an unusual protagonist for a bildungsroman because his central goal is to resist the process of maturity itself. As his thoughts about the Museum of Natural History demonstrate, Holden fears change and is overwhelmed by complexity. He wants everything to be easily understandable and eternally fixed, like the statues of Eskimos and Indians in the museum. He is frightened because he is guilty of the sins he criticizes in others, and because he can't understand everything around him. But he refuses to acknowledge this fear, expressing it only in a few instances—for example, when he talks about sex and admits that “[s]ex is something I just don't understand. I swear to God I don't” (Chapter 9).

Instead of acknowledging that adulthood scares and mystifies him, Holden invents a fantasy that adulthood is a world of superficiality and hypocrisy (“phoniness”), while childhood is a world of innocence, curiosity, and honesty. Nothing reveals his image of these two worlds better than his fantasy about the catcher in the rye: he imagines childhood as an idyllic field of rye in which children romp and play; adulthood, for the children of this world, is equivalent to death—a fatal fall over the edge of a cliff. His created understandings of childhood and adulthood allow Holden to cut himself off from the world by covering himself with a protective armor of cynicism. But as the book progresses, Holden's experiences, particularly his encounters with Mr. Antolini and Phoebe, reveal the shallowness of his conceptions.

THE PHONINESS OF THE ADULT WORLD

“Phoniness,” which is probably the most famous phrase from *The Catcher in the Rye*, is one of Holden's favorite concepts. It is his catch-all for describing the superficiality, hypocrisy, pretension, and shallowness that he encounters in the world around him. In Chapter 22, just before he reveals his fantasy of the catcher in the rye, Holden explains that adults are inevitably phonies, and, what's worse, they can't see their own phoniness. Phoniness, for Holden, stands as an emblem of everything that's wrong in

The Song and Book Title Meaning

The song “Comin’ Thro’ the Rye” asks if it is wrong for two people to have a romantic encounter out in the fields, away from the public eye, even if they don’t plan to have a commitment to one another. It is highly ironic that the word “meet” refers to an encounter that leads to recreational sex, because the word that Holden substitutes—“catch”—takes on the exact opposite meaning in his mind. Holden wants to catch children before they fall out of innocence into knowledge of the adult world, including knowledge of sex.

Symbolism

HOLDEN’S RED HUNTING HAT

The red hunting hat is one of the most recognizable symbols from twentieth-century American literature. It is inseparable from our image of Holden, with good reason: it is a symbol of his uniqueness and individuality. The hat is outlandish, and it shows that Holden desires to be different from everyone around him. At the same time, he is very self-conscious about the hat—he always mentions when he is wearing it, and he often doesn’t wear it if he is going to be around people he knows. The presence of the hat, therefore, mirrors the central conflict in the book: Holden’s need for isolation versus his need for companionship.

It is worth noting that the hat’s color, red, is the same as that of Allie’s and Phoebe’s hair. Perhaps Holden associates it with the innocence and purity he believes these characters represent and wears it as a way to connect to them. He never explicitly comments on the hat’s significance other than to mention its unusual appearance.

THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Holden tells us the symbolic meaning of the museum’s displays: they appeal to him because they are frozen and unchanging. He also mentions that he is troubled by the fact that he has changed every time he returns to them. The museum represents the world Holden wishes he could live in: it’s the world of his “catcher in the rye” fantasy, a world where nothing ever changes, where everything is simple, understandable, and infinite. Holden is terrified by the unpredictable challenges of the world—he hates conflict, he is confused by Allie’s senseless death, and he fears interaction with other people.

THE DUCKS IN THE CENTRAL PARK LAGOON

Holden's curiosity about where the ducks go during the winter reveals a genuine, more youthful side to his character. For most of the book, he sounds like a grumpy old man who is angry at the world, but his search for the ducks represents the curiosity of youth and a joyful willingness to encounter the mysteries of the world. It is a memorable moment, because Holden clearly lacks such willingness in other aspects of his life.

The ducks and their pond are symbolic in several ways. Their mysterious perseverance in the face of an inhospitable environment resonates with Holden's understanding of his own situation. In addition, the ducks prove that some vanishings are only temporary. Traumatized and made acutely aware of the fragility of life by his brother Allie's death, Holden is terrified by the idea of change and disappearance. The ducks vanish every winter, but they return every spring, thus symbolizing change that isn't permanent, but cyclical. Finally, the pond itself becomes a minor metaphor for the world as Holden sees it, because it is "partly frozen and partly not frozen." The pond is in transition between two states, just as Holden is in transition between childhood and adulthood.

Things to consider about Holden's view of women:

Holden displays typical adolescent behaviour towards the opposite sex - he is unsure how to relate to girls and at times seems even ambivalent towards them

however, this ambivalence can be an example of his alienation & disconnectedness - he is unable to form relationships with people in general - except with his younger sister, Phoebe

with Phoebe, Holden hangs onto the fact that she is still young and innocent, although she acts as Holden's councilor, confidante & a source of insight & knowledge - he still wants to protect her and hold onto her innocence before she too becomes a 'phony' adult

why does Holden sabotage a relationship with Sally - as soon as someone starts to get close to him, he sabotages the relationship and feels guilty about doing so

Holden is upset on hearing that Jane Gallagher is going out with Stadlater because he knows what kind of person Stadlater is and concerned for Jane - he obviously has some connection to Jane, which he wants to hold onto, but cannot

Holden seems to be aware how the death of Allie has affected his mother but is unable to connect with her despite his own inability to come to terms with Allie's death - Holden does have strong feelings for his mother (consider how he feels packing the ice-skates that his mother has just recently bought for him)

Holden thinks he is ready for a sexual relationship, and calls Sunny to his hotel room - however, as soon as she is in the room with him, he finds he just wants to talk and connect with another person

ROAD TO MECCA

Summary

The Road to Mecca dramatizes the life of Helen Martins, a South African woman living in a Christian community. She refuses to go to a nursing home, choosing instead to build her personal "Mecca" in her yard. It's implied that she kills herself at the end of the play.

Elderly South African woman Helen Martins realizes that she's getting older and that her neighbors expect her to move into a nursing home soon. Pastor Marius Byleveld comes to her house to collect the papers approving this, but Helen refuses to sign.

Helen's friend Elsa drives down from Cape Town, worried about her friend. Elsa knows that Helen has been depressed since her husband's death and has repudiated the Christian values of her community.

For years, Helen has been building her own personal Mecca in her yard, filling it with art and beauty in her search for spiritual fulfillment. When she finishes building her Mecca, she drinks tea laced with valium. It's implied that this is a suicide.

Summary of "The Road to Mecca"

"The Road to Mecca" is the story of the elderly Miss Helen and the interventions of her friends Elsa Barlow and Marius Byleveld. In response to Miss Helen's plea for help in a letter, Elsa visits with her in an attempt to renew her spirit and confidence. Marius, concerned for Miss Helen's well-being, tries to convince her to move into his church's care home. In the midst of trying to do what's best for the elderly artist, beliefs and friendships are challenged. At the end, the love between friends overpowers the differences that placed barriers between them.

Miss Helen

As the protagonist in "The Road to Mecca," Miss Helen fills the bleakness in her life and her Nieu Bethesda property with sculptures and statues that face Mecca. The unconventional pieces and her artistic lifestyle make Miss Helen an outcast in her community as her health and eyesight deteriorate. Throughout the play, Miss Helen struggles with depression, which stems from an aging process that she can't control and the pressure that she feels to leave her beloved home.

Marius Byleveld

Calvinist pastor Marius Byleveld lives in Nieu Bethesda and visits Miss Helen regularly. He represents conservative values and complacency of a pro-Apartheid society. In the play, he and the church try to convince Miss Helen to move out of her home and into a retirement facility. Marius at times arrives to Helen's home with the expectation that she's ready to sign a contract and move out, which only deepens her depression. While Marius' intentions in regard to Miss Helen and the community are good, they reflect the ignorant beliefs of his conservative society.

Elsa Barlow

Elsa is Miss Helen's pen pal and her most trusted friend, despite an age difference. After Helen's plea for help, Elsa makes the 445-mile trip from Cape Town to Nieu Bethesda. As Elsa stands up for Miss Helen and helps her gain confidence, the audience learns about Elsa's apartheid-related struggles as a school teacher with black students. In the play, Marius and Elsa battle for Miss Helen's soul as they each claim to know what's best for the aging artist, who only wants the comforts of home and the freedom to express herself artistically.

Themes and Meanings

The Road to Mecca is an examination of the dual themes of artistic creativity and the often-lonely place of the artist in society. In the character of Miss Helen, Athol Fugard has created an example of an artist driven purely by a need to create. Lacking encouragement, recognition, or any other social reward, Miss Helen persists in her work out of a profound need for self-expression, a need so fundamental that she is willing to risk censure and ridicule from her neighbors as well as the isolation that accompanies them. The play never addresses the question of the actual merits—or lack thereof—of Miss Helen's sculptures, and it is clear that for Fugard's purposes the issue has no meaning. The world's evaluation of Miss Helen's work as "good" or "bad" is unrelated to the crucial fulfillment and meaning it brings to her life.

In your Essay, you may want to include:

- Elsa's perceptions of the literal and figurative confinements of Nieu Bethesda· Elsa's attitudes and disclosures within the enclosure and confined space of Miss Helen's home· The effects of the confinement of time on the dramatic tension between Elsa and Helen.
- Elsa's literal journey to Helen Martins in New Bethesda is also a figurative one. On her way to visit her aging friend she has given a ride to a desperate African woman, who has lost her husband and home and now carries her child on her back. This encounter serves as a reminder

to Elsa of her own personal and emotional losses from which she tries to move forward (Her abortion and ending the relationship with a married man)

How the Women Experience Oppression

In Athol Fugard's *The Road to Mecca*, the three female characters experience oppression from those living in New Bethesada and in Cape Town, South Africa. This oppression is religious, social, marital, and racial.

Miss Helen Martins

--Religious oppression

The main character, a woman who is nearly seventy named Miss Helen Martins, has lost her husband and now lives alone. She suffers first from religious oppression after leaving her church. The townspeople object to her sculptures that she sets out in her yard, so they send the pastor of their church to convince Miss Helen to rid her yard of pagan idolatry (she has created sculptures of camels, pyramids, dozens of Wise Men who face Mecca, as well as owls with headlights for eyes and wild-colored birds). But Helen objects to his coercion; she contends that the darkness of her life can be dispelled by the light of her candles, her freedom, and her art. "Light is a miracle," Helen says.

--Social oppression

Pastor Byleveld later visits Miss Helen and places her under further duress with the necessary papers for commitment to the Sunshine Home for the Aged. Having previously told her friend Elsa,

"The only reason I've got for being alive is my Mecca. Without it that I'm...nothing...a useless old woman getting on everybody's nerves...."

Helen rejects the idea of going to such an institution. However, under duress later on, Miss Helen almost signs the papers. Ironically, when she refuses, the pastor confides, "There's more light in you than in all your candles put together."

Elsa Marlow

--Social oppression

An English teacher from Cape Town who has developed a friendship with Miss Helen because she can trust this woman, Elsa suffers from social oppression herself. Because she is opposed to apartheid, Elsa has assigned her students a writing assignment, and she has encouraged her black students to rebel against the system under which they live. Elsa tells Helen that when she returns home, she must face the Board of Enquiry of the Cape Town Schools, and she may be fired for her convictions.

Elsa later confides that she has had an affair with a married man, whom she believed would leave his wife and child for her. However, her trust in this man was betrayed and he returned to his wife. Afterwards, Elsa learned that she was pregnant, and she had an abortion because of her fears of the social repercussions of having the baby out of wedlock as a teacher, as well as the complications that would result with the man's family. Now she is filled with guilt over her decision to not oppose an oppressive social system.

Elsa also suffers some social oppression as Pastor Byleveld attempts to pressure her to convince Helen to sign the papers for admission to the Sunshine Home.

Katrina

--Marital oppression and physical abuse

Not only is the seventeen-year-old Katrina, who is a maid for Helen, victimized by apartheid, she is oppressed by a drunkard for a husband. Koos, her husband, accuses her of conceiving their baby with another man, he beats her, and he threatens her.

Essay Sample

At a glance, the character Marius Byleveld in Athol Fugard's play *The Road to Mecca*, is not a sympathetic character, yet on closer reading, he is revealed to be an individual who displays surprising depth tempered by the tragedy of the socio-historical factors he is unable to transcend.

To understand the man, we need to grasp his position among the people he serves. As dominee of the village of Nieu Bethesda, Marius is an important member of a highly conservative community. In that regard, people look up to him, and he is under a fair amount of pressure to maintain high standards and function as the spiritual and moral pillar of this community. It is also clear that he takes his work seriously and is hyper conscious about what he considers his Christian duty, even if it results in actions that might be viewed as authoritarian from a more liberal point of view. As a religious leader, he must display only exemplary behaviour according to the norms of the time, perhaps even at the cost of his own happiness.

This is borne out by his attitude towards Helen's predicament, when he says, "We can't tell you what to do. But if you want us to stop caring about what happens to you, we can try... though I don't know how our Christian consciences would allow us to do that." (Fugard: 60)

He speaks for the community, but in a way, perhaps, it can also be construed that he uses his position as a community leader who expresses what a community feels, as a front behind which he hides his true feelings, consciously or unconsciously.

As dominee and friend, he approaches Helen with the proposition that she apply to live in an old age home. The most obvious reason for this he gives as Helen's recent "accident" where she almost burns

down her home. It is implied that her actions may have been intentional when Marius lets slip, “She had stopped trying to put out the flames herself and was just standing staring at them.” (Fugard: 63)

In the play, he is set up as the antagonist, whose actions threaten Helen’s way of life and her continued connection to her beloved home with all its sculptures and artworks. This does not immediately make him a likeable character, but then Fugard weaves in additional details that develop Marius as a person and allow us to gain a degree of sympathy with him.

This is illustrated when he shares that he came to Nieu Bethesda to escape a painful past. “This was going to be where I finally escaped from life,” Marius says, “turned my back on it and justified what was left of my existence by ministering to you people’s simple needs. I was very wrong. I didn’t escape life here, I discovered it, what it really means, the fullness and the goodness of it.” (Fugard: 53)

He also expresses his deep connection with the earth (through his thriving vegetable garden), and the practical nature of his soul, when he says, “With every spadeful of earth that I turned when I went down on my knees to lift the potatoes out of the soil, there it was: ‘thank you.’”

Not only is he in this case—almost literally—down to earth, but he is by his own admission also deeply spiritual and humble. His intentions are good; he honestly wishes to serve his community even at the expense of himself.

He is about to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of his service to Nieu Bethesda and its people, and it’s been twenty-one years since his wife, Aletta, passed away, and it is clear that his reason for coming here in the first place was to escape and find peace (this is also a play on the Biblical Bethesda in Jerusalem, that was associated with healing).

Yet at the same time, for all his good, Marius (and by default the majority of the Nieu Bethesda community) also displays that he is incapable of understanding why Helen’s home and its art is so important to her. Examples of this are:

“And then your hobby, if I can call it that, hasn’t really helped matters. This is not exactly the sort of room the village ladies are used to or would feel comfortable in having afternoon tea. As for all that out there... the less said about it, the better.” (Fugard: 60)

This encapsulates how Marius misunderstands the nature of Helen’s art, as if it were a mere hobby, a trifle. In a way he blames her for isolating herself by creating an environment that is contrary to accepted norms. He simply cannot wrap his head around the idea that an individual would willingly step outside of accepted social behaviour.

This results in him, despite his good intentions, to act in a patronising manner towards Helen (for which Elsa chastises him) because he cannot control nor understand her yearning for artistic expression. He cares deeply, yet he himself cannot express himself.

When the subject of the community's behaviour towards Helen's eccentricity is brought up (children damaged some of her sculptures) Marius claims, "We don't persecute harmless old ladies", (Fugard: 65) yet he goes on to admit, "You've seen what is out there... How else do you expect the simple children of the village to react to all that? It frightens them, Miss Barlow. I'm not joking! Think back to your impressionable years as a little girl. I know for a fact that all the children in the village believe that this house is haunted and that ghosts walk around out there at night. Don't scoff at them. I'm sure there were monsters and evil spirits in your childhood as well."

With this statement, I feel Marius truly reveals what he is feeling about Helen's art, though he hides behind his designation as work as a community leader and representative when he makes that statement.

Elsa points out to Marius that Helen dared to be different by not going to church anymore and engaging more in her art, which is representative of her freedom. Helen, according to Elsa, is expressing an awareness of self and life versus the groupthink of the community, and in that very fact she isn't as harmless as Marius would make out.

This pushes Marius into admitting, "You call that... that nightmare out there an expression of freedom? ... In another age and time it might have been called idolatry." (Fugard: 67)

He views her art as not only a threat to her spiritual well being but to her physical well being too – taking up space meant, in his opinion, for growing vegetables that could nourish her body. (Fugard: 68)

Helen uses her art as a way to pass time, thereby implying that people only attend church to "pass time". That first Sunday she skipped church Marius worried about her and went to check up on her after the service, only to discover that she was busy making a sculpture.

It is a natural step for him to feel threatened and jealous by her attraction to this pursuit, and view the sculptures as idols.

He is angry and confused, when he says, "I feel as if I'm on trial, Helen. For what? For caring about you? That I am frightened of what you have done to yourself and your life, yes, that is true!" (Fugard: 59)

This is a turning point for Marius, where the mask of Marius-the-dominee slips to reveal Marius-the-man, who has harboured feelings for Helen all these years without admitting them. He has hidden behind his role as an authority figure in the community all this time until events come to a head in Helen's house that evening.

Helen further communicates how Marius's world has lost meaning to her when she says, "All those years when, as Elsa said, I sat there so obediently next to Stefanus, it was all a terrible, terrible lie. I tried hard, Marius, but your sermons, the prayers, the hymns, they all became just words. And there came a time when even they lost their meaning." (Fugard: 70)

She reveals more when she discusses how, after her husband Stefanus's funeral, she felt it was her own life being packed away. With Stefanus gone, so was her last tie to her old life and her reason to pretend. Marius's action of lighting a single candle for her that evening became highly symbolic to her choosing her new path and her discovery of her inner world.

When Helen talks about her Mecca, Marius still doesn't understand. He can't get past Mecca as a physical place that one has to look up on an atlas. Yet he has his epiphany that he is incapable, at his age, of making that intuitive leap that Helen has, and Marius-the-man triumphs over Marius-the-dominee, in that he admits that Helen's way of seeing things is valid, even if he can never follow her there.

"I've never seen you as happy as this," he says. "There is more light in you than all your candles put together." (Fugard: 74) This is perhaps the most telling statement near the conclusion of Act Two. Marius shows that he is mature enough to let Helen go; the gulf between them is too vast. He has loved her for twenty years and has only admitted it now, when it is too late, which is to my mind the real tragedy.

The Road to Mecca is at its core, a story of the tension that arises between societal norms and the individual's need for self-expression, and much of the dramatic tension in Marius's story arc presents the opportunity to subvert the audience's opinion of the man. In Act One, Marius is offered as the antagonist, very much Marius-the-dominee, who is the linchpin poised to separate Helen from her home for her own good (in his and the community he represents' point of view). By the time Marius appears in Act Two, it's difficult to like him and what he represents, but then Fugard goes on to show us the man behind the somewhat dour mask. Marius is revealed as humble, and down to earth, and as genuinely caring despite his prejudice against artistic freedom and his somewhat patronising attitude towards Helen.

However, as the tension builds, and many of Marius's deeply held feelings are exposed, he begins his journey of acceptance by letting go of his fear. He may not understand the appeal of Helen's artistic freedom, but he can appreciate her personal light and beauty, for what it is.

Tragically, he cannot let go and join her, but there is a resolution of sorts, and peace is made. Marius, though he has dropped his mask and the authoritarian figure has been defeated, still retains his human side, and has gained the reader's grudging respect for having backed down even as Helen has learnt to stand up for herself out of her mire of self-pity. They both go their separate ways, their differences irreconcilable—freedom vs. tradition—but they have a better understanding of who they are and what they want. We are not left with complete closure, but rather a "happy for now" situation.

When Rain Clouds Gather

Main character in the novel. Makhaya

Young SA Zulu male - political prisoner.

His name means "one who stays home"

He does not live up to his name.

He is frustrated with the unbearable conditions of apartheid-leaves SA for Botswana.

He takes refuge in Golema Mmidi in Botswana.

How he becomes involved in an agricultural co-operative which is run by locals and Gilbert Balfour. They became friends.

How he gets a sense of perspective and a measure of clarity on a range of issue. Example power, race and oppression.

He finds joyest fulfilment in his friendship with Gilbert Balfour and relation with Paulina whom he proposes marriage at the end of the novel and success of co-operative.

In a sense, this success provides the healing process that Makhaya needs in order to forget the pain and inner turmoil caused by apartheid.

His healing is fully realised by teaching ladies tobacco farming and relation with Paulina.

Similarity in life on Bessie Head and Makhaya leave lives in Botswana. Both escaping injustice of apartheid.

Both settling with refugees. She also healed through relations.

Makhaya having Paulina he realised only people could bring real rewards to living and give love and happiness.

Author: Bessie head

Born of mixed parentage - father Black, mother White.

Born - 1937 in heart of SA apartheid.

Apartheid laws forced her grandmother to adopt her.

She was placed in an orphanage in Durban

She trained to be a teacher but became a journalist in 1960.

1964 left SA for Botswana to teach.

She was refused a passport. She couldn't return to SA.

She remained long a stateless person 1964-1979 was a refugee.

She established herself as a famous writer in Botswana.

Genre is a narrative novel (storytelling)

Main character is called protagonist.

Rain clouds gather is about a South African man Makhaya who was caught in a bomb plot during apartheid times and he fled SA to a village in Botswana called Golema Mmidi. An old man helped him cross the border and the first shelter he stayed at was this old bitter lady's place where she offered her granddaughter to have sex with him for money but he wasn't interested.

He then registered himself as a refugee and met Dinorego they became friends and Dinorego helped with translating for Makhaya he then introduced Makhaya to Gilbert a British agriculturist who offered him a job working on the cattle cooperative Gilbert was running.

The village was run by chief Sekoto and his brother the sub-chief Matenga. Matenga was a selfish greedy man who used the people in the village to get rich by buying cattle at a low price and selling it at more than double the price. He drove a nice car lived in a nice house and strongly believed that Money and power should remain in the hands of few he was also close friends with a corrupt politician Joas Tsepe.

So, when chief Sekoto found out about Gilbert and his cattle cooperative he sent Matenga there to keep an eye on things. Matenga did not like the fact that Gilbert and Makhaya were helping the village grow and develop and he decides to report Makhaya to the constable George Appleby Smith but like most people George liked Makhaya and decided to leave them to continue. The women in Golema Mmidi worked on the tobacco farms which Gilbert left Makhaya in charge of this is where he met Paulina a widower with an eight-year-old son. Paulina was attracted to Makhaya but he didn't know about.

Paulina's son was working on the farm one day and was sent home because of a bad cough but never made it home. Paulina and Makhaya eventually found him and he was dead from TB. Paulina had a funeral for him and chief Matenga reported her for not announcing the funeral to the chief.. this infuriated the villagers and they all gathered outside chief Matenga house but when they knocked down the door he had hung himself. Makhaya and Paulina get married and Gilbert and Maria get married Maria is Dinorego's daughter. So, this makes them more stable and able to set up their life in the village

Who is chief Matenga?

Chief Matenge is introduced in the second chapter of the book. Chief Matenge is the younger brother of the paramount chief Sekoto. Matenge was the sub-chief of Golema Mmidi village in Botswana.

He was a short overweight individual. The paramount chief Sekoto disliked his brother therefore he made him the sub-chief of Golema Mmidi. This was a distance from the chief Sekoto's home.

Chief Matenge was disliked by many people in the village due to his unpleasant personality.

Chief Matenge is a greedy selfish individual who cares for no-one but himself. He has no sympathy for the people in the village. He disapproves of all the ideas that Gilbert comes up with. These ideas could possibly get rid of poverty in the village.

Chief Matenge is described to have an extremely cunning mind and an evil mind. He makes innocent villagers believe they are responsible for the evil.

Chief Matenge was also known to be a liar. He accused Gilbert of secretly purchasing land from the paramount chief and was using the name of co-operative to enslave the people. This was not true.

Chief Matenge made enemies very quickly. He made an enemy out of Gilbert, who was an individual who wanted to help the villagers. He also quickly made an enemy of Makhaya as he was looked at as a threat to the chief.

Matenge understood tribalism and it was the rule of the illiterate man. This tribalism is described as a darkness in which he (the chief) lived.

"Matenge was the epitome of this darkness with his long, gloomy, melancholy, suspicious face his ceaseless intrigue, bitter jealousy and hatred." (P43,7-9)

Chief Matenge also had a lot of hatred inside him as he hated his brother because he felt chieftaincy should be his.

"Chief Matenge really believed he was royalty. So deeply ingrained was this belief in him that he had acquired a number of personal possessions to bolster the image. (P62,1-3)

Although chief Matenge was an educated man, he had a crooked mind.

He was not a very friendly and he did not want refugees in his village. He said to Makhaya that he does not want him in the village. "We want you to get out. When are you going?"(p66,6-7)

Golema Mmidi suffered a serious drought which caused many cattle to die. Even a little boy died of malnutrition. Matenge was unable to deal with this and became emotional. He then barricaded himself up because the villagers were coming for him."He was an evil pervert and knew it" (186,23-24)

He ended his life as a coward and hanged himself.

Chief Matenge is an example of corrupt leadership. Whereas Makhaya n Gilbert is out there to help the villagers in their way.

Symbolism in when rain clouds gather..

- The words which is the title is used in the chapter 11 page 168 are used in a symbol of fashion.
- The words are spoken as a metaphor.
- Rivers live inside people.
- All good people are called rain.
- Rain clouds gather even if not a cloud appear.
- It represents the basic goodness.
- Reflects the spirit of character e.g. Gilbert Balfour, Dinorego, etc all of whom assisted with the healing of Makhaya's soul, Paulina's sadness of losing her son etc co-operative

Gilbert Balfour

- He is a practical and down to earth kind of guy.
- He is prepared to be of service to fellow human.
- He is initiated of the co-operative.
- The co-operative shows immense potential for success.
- He is a committed optimists.
- He lives like the locals and marries a local woman, Maria, Dinorego daughter.
- He is from Britain/England. He is a British agronomist.

When considering the novel *When Rain Clouds Gather* by Bessie Head, the theme of tribalism is a very broad one. The plot is centered around the tribal society of Golema Mmidi and the trials and tribulations of the protagonist, Makhaya. Throughout the novel we witness a society that is largely based around the roles of men and women, the plot is centered around the idea that each gender should stick to its designated roles, and no more. Example: The men of the village are seen to be the ones to collect the food and provide for the family. The women however, stick to their traditional role of preparing food and watching over the children. Although to some extent this may seem sexist, it has been what has helped keep their small village functioning for many a generation, and therefore can be seen as a part of tribal life and society for people living in Golema Mmidi. Traditions in Agriculture.

Makhaya and Paulina in regards to Tribalism In the novel, Paulina and Makhaya are two important characters. Both of them have a tribalistic background, and we can understand some things about tribalism through them.

Makhaya is not a tribal person He is not completely isolated from tribalism, as shown here: “Tribalism is meat and drink to them.’ ‘Oh Papa,’ he said. ‘I just want to step on free ground. I don’t care about... anything.” One ‘rule’ he does not follow is that African men are “grovelling sex organs”. When confronted by the little girl in the hut, he sends her out with money, and not taking anything for himself. Quotes “Look here, I’m no tribalist...” “It’s just a tribal name...”

Paulina was a tribal person Paulina has lived in Botswana all her life. She is a northerner, and they pride themselves in being inexplicable to the rest of the country. She married a foreigner at the age of 18 who was also a tribalist. Quotes “I must see the body... it is our custom” [Paulina] married, at the age of 18, a foreign man... whose tribal tradition...”

Makhaya’s tribal views are altered He went to the cattle post to find Isaac. When he saw the bare land, the dry ground, the arid head, and he compared it to his home country, he realised that Botswana was much worse off than he had thought He knew he would never look at any crop, grass, or portion of water the same, and that he would do his utmost to take care of it. Quotes “From this day Makhaya was to become peculiarly Motswana in his outlook.” “Makhaya still observed some African customs...”

Conclusion In the novel When Rain Clouds Gather, tribalism is a key element. All throughout the book, tribalism acts as a rulebook for men and woman, as it tells them what their role in a community is. It acts as a barrier for Gilbert, as he cannot convince others to use his ideas for agriculture, because people are bound to their customs. It acts as a hindrance for Paulina and Makhaya, as both came from a tribalistic background, and it stops Paulina from talking to Makhaya as a person (for a while), and forces Paulina to look at the body of her deceased son. Makhaya and Gilbert have their ideas of change that they know will help the village, but in everything tribalism is their main blockage.