

Strumenti didattici
Tracce didattiche
Analisi critica di uno o più testi brevi
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Sommario

William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616)	2
The Tempest.....	2
Daniel Defoe (1660 – 1731)	5
Robinson Crusoe (1719)	5
Joseph Conrad (1857 – 1924)	8
Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)	11
E.M. Forster (1879-1970)	14
Henry James (1843-1916)	17
The Turn of The Screw (1897)	17
Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)	19
The Old Man and the Sea (1952).....	19
George Orwell (1903-1950)	20
Nineteen Eighty-Four (1948)	20
Salman Rushdie (1947)	22

William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616)

The Tempest

- 1) What are the literary sources of this play? (5 lines)
- 2) What are the contemporary pamphlets and events Shakespeare had in mind writing this work? (5 lines)
- 3) Write a summary of the plot of the play. (20 lines)
- 4) Explain the possible interpretations given to the name of Caliban, Prospero's slave. (5 lines)
- 5) The Tempest is regarded nowadays as an important early treatment of colonial themes. A good example of this aspect may be seen in the following passage:

Caliban. This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou takest from me. When thou camest first,
Thou strokedst me and madest much of me, wouldst give me
Water with berries in't, and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less,
That burn by day and night: and then I loved thee
And show'd thee all the qualities o' the isle,
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile:
Cursed be I that did so! All the charms
Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!
For I am all the subjects that you have,
Which first was mine own king: and here you sty me
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
The rest o' the island.

Prospero. Thou most lying slave,
Whom stripes may move, not kindness! I have used thee,
Filth as thou art, with human care, and lodged thee
In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate
The honour of my child.

Caliban. O ho, O ho! would't had been done!
Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else
This isle with Calibans.

Prospero. Abhorred slave,
Which any print of goodness wilt not take,
Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour

One thing or other: when thou didst not, savage,
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes
With words that made them known. But thy vile race,
Though thou didst learn, had that in't which
good natures
Could not abide to be with; therefore wast thou
Deservedly confined into this rock,
Who hadst deserved more than a prison.

Caliban. You taught me language; and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!

(from: *The Tempest*, Act I, sc. II)

Explain the types of relationship existing between Prospero and Caliban and comment on it (25 lines)

- 6) In the Elizabethan age, Britain's growing interest in foreign territories was immediately mirrored in English Literature; the most obvious example is in Francis Bacon's essay "Of Plantation" (1625), which deals with colonies (using the terms "plantations") and shows the commercial side of colonization.

"PLANTATIONS are amongst ancient, primitive, and heroical works. When the world was young, it begat more children; but now it is old, it begets fewer: for I may justly account new plantations, to be the children of former kingdoms. I like a plantation in a pure soil; that is, where people are not displanted, to the end, to plant in others. For else it is rather an extirpation, than a plantation. Planting of countries, is like planting of woods; for you must make account to lose almost twenty years' profit, and expect your recompense in the end. For the principal thing, that hath been the destruction of most plantations, hath been the base and hasty drawing of profit, in the first years. It is true, speedy profit is not to be neglected, as far as may stand with the good of the plantation, but no further. It is a shameful and unblest thing, to take the scum of people, and wicked condemned men, to be the people with whom you plant; and not only so, but it spoileth the plantation; for they will ever live like rogues, and not fall to work, but be lazy, and do mischief, and spend victuals, and be quickly weary, and then certify over to their country, to the discredit of the plantation. The people wherewith you plant ought to be gardeners, ploughmen, laborers, smiths, carpenters, joiners, fishermen, fowlers, with some few apothecaries, surgeons, cooks, and bakers...

For government; let it be in the hands of one, assisted with some counsel; and let them have commission to exercise martial laws, with some limitation. And above all, let men make that profit, of being in the wilderness, as they have God always, and his service, before their eyes. Let not the government of the plantation, depend upon too many counsellors, and undertakers, in the country that planteth, but upon a temperate number; and let those be rather noblemen and gentlemen, than merchants; for they look ever to the present gain. Let there be freedom from custom, till the plantation be of strength; and not only freedom from custom, but freedom to carry their commodities, where they may make their best of them, except there be some special cause of caution. Cram not in people, by sending too fast company after company; but rather hearken how they waste, and send supplies proportionately; but so, as the number may live well in the plantation, and not by surcharge be in penury. It hath been a great endangering to the health of some plantations, that they have built along the sea and rivers, in marish and unwholesome grounds. Therefore, though you begin there, to avoid carriage and like discommodities, yet build still rather upwards from the streams, than along. It concerneth likewise the health of the plantation, that they have good store of salt with them, that they may use it in their victuals, when it shall be necessary. If you plant where savages are, do not only entertain them, with trifles and gingles, but use them justly and graciously, with sufficient guard nevertheless; and do not win their favor, by helping them to invade their enemies, but for their defence it is not amiss; and send oft of them, over to the country that plants, that they may see a better condition than their own, and commend it when they return. When the plantation grows to strength, then it is time to plant with women, as well as with men; that the plantation may spread into generations, and not be ever pieced from without. It is the sinfulllest thing in the world, to forsake or destitute a plantation once in forwardness; for besides the dishonor, it is the guiltiness of blood of many commiserable persons.”

Write a summary of the passage and say whether Bacon was in favor or contrary to the establishment of colonies. (20 – 25 lines)

Daniel Defoe (1660 - 1731)

Robinson Crusoe (1719)

- 1) What Defoe's life experiences and professions might have contributed to his prosaic, realistic style? (5 lines)
- 2) Did Defoe base his novel **Robinson Crusoe** on a real person who had a similar adventure? (5 lines)
- 3) Discuss the reason why the novel was so successful when it was published (10 lines).
- 4) Read the following lines and comment on the features characterizing the style and the content of the novel (15 lines)

I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull. He got a good estate by merchandise, and leaving off his trade, lived afterwards at York, from whence he had married my mother, whose relations were named Robinson, a very good family in that country, and from whom I was called Robinson Kreutznaer; but, by the usual corruption of words in England, we are now called - nay we call ourselves and write our name - Crusoe; and so my companions always called me.

I had two elder brothers, one of whom was lieutenant-colonel to an English regiment of foot in Flanders, formerly commanded by the famous Colonel Lockhart, and was killed at the battle near Dunkirk against the Spaniards. What became of my second brother I never knew, any more than my father or mother knew what became of me.

- 5) Describe the attitude Robinson has considering his "desperate" situation (10 lines)

I now began to consider seriously my condition, and the circumstances I was reduced to; and I drew up the state of my affairs in writing, not so much to leave them to any that were to come after me - for I was likely to have but few heirs - as to deliver my thoughts from daily poring over them, and afflicting my mind; and as my reason began now to master my despondency, I began to comfort myself as well as I could, and to set the good against the evil, that I might have something to distinguish my case from worse; and I stated very impartially, like debtor and creditor, the comforts I enjoyed against the miseries I suffered, thus:-

Evil: I am cast upon a horrible, desolate island, void of all hope of recovery.

Good: But I am alive; and not drowned, as all my ship's company were.

Evil: I am singled out and separated, as it were, from all the world, to be miserable.

Good: But I am singled out, too, from all the ship's crew, to be spared from death; and He that miraculously saved me from death can deliver me from this condition.

Evil: I am divided from mankind - a solitaire; one banished from human society.

Good: But I am not starved, and perishing on a barren place, affording no sustenance.

Evil: I have no clothes to cover me.

Good: But I am in a hot climate, where, if I had clothes, I could hardly wear them.

Evil: I am without any defence, or means to resist any violence of man or beast.

Good: But I am cast on an island where I see no wild beasts to hurt me, as I saw on the coast of Africa; and what if I had been shipwrecked there?

Evil: I have no soul to speak to or relieve me.

Good: But God wonderfully sent the ship in near enough to the shore, that I have got out as many necessary things as will either supply my wants or enable me to supply myself, even as long as I live.

Upon the whole, here was an undoubted testimony that there was scarce any condition in the world so miserable but there was something negative or something positive to be thankful for in it; and let this stand as a direction from the experience of the most miserable of all conditions in this world: that we may always find in it something to comfort ourselves from, and to set, in the description of good and evil, on the credit side of the account.

- 6) Consider the extract and explain why Robinson Crusoe is commonly regarded as the prototype of the English colonizer. Refer also to other parts of the novel dealing with this theme (15 lines)

My island was now peopled, and I thought myself very rich in subjects; and it was a merry reflection, which I frequently made, how like a king I looked. First of all, the whole country was my own property, so that I had an undoubted right of dominion. Secondly, my people were perfectly subjected - I was absolutely lord and lawgiver - they all owed their lives to me, and were ready to lay down their lives, if there had been occasion for it, for me. It was remarkable, too, I had but three subjects, and they were of three different religions - my man Friday was a Protestant, his father was a Pagan and a cannibal, and the Spaniard was a Papist. However, I allowed liberty of conscience throughout my dominions. But this is by the way.

- 7) The woman writer Aphra Behn (1640-1689) wrote **Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave**, which is one of her works of prose. The following extract gives an account of how the slave trade worked. Comment on it considering the historical and social connections with the novel written by D.DeFoe. (15 lines)

Those who want slaves, make a Bargain with a Master, or Captain of a Ship, and contract to pay him so much a-piece, a matter of twenty Pound a Head for as many as he agrees for, and to pay for 'em when they shall be deliver'd on such a Plantation: So that when there arrives a Ship laden with Slaves, they who have so contracted, go a-board, and receive their Number by Lot; and perhaps in one Lot that may be for ten, there may happen to be three or four Men, the rest , Women and Children: Or be there more or less of either Sex, you are oblig'd to be contented with your Lot.

Coramantien, a Country of Blacks so called, was one of those places in which they found the most advantageous Trading for these slaves; and thither most of our great Traders in that Merchandice traffick'd; for that Nation is very war-like and brave; and having a continual Campaign, being always in Hostility with one neighbouring Prince or other , they had the fortune to take a great many Captives; for all they took in Battel were sold as Slaves; at least those common Men who could' not ransom themselves . Of these Slaves so taken, the General only has all the profit; and of these Generals, our Captains and Masters of Ships buy all their Freights.

Joseph Conrad (1857 - 1924)

- 1) J. Conrad once called himself "homo duplex". Explain why the idea of duality characterizes both his life and his work. (15 lines)
- 2) To what extent did his stories reflect his own experience as a seaman? (10 lines)
- 3) Explain the role of art and the artist which he expressed in the preface to **The Nigger of the Narcissus** (10 lines) .
- 4) Describe the narrative scheme of the novel **Heart of Darkness** (20 lines)
- 5) Comment on the characters of Marlow, who is also the main narrator, and Kurtz. (15 lines)
- 6) Explain the symbolic meaning of the title (10 lines)
- 7) The following extracts narrates the moment when Marlow, during his trip up the river in search for Kurtz, reaches the Company Station. Focus on the detailed description of the landscape and the impressions it conveys. (10 - 15 lines)

At last we opened a reach. A rocky cliff appeared, mounds of turned-up earth by the shore, houses on a hill, others with iron roofs, amongst a waste of excavations, or hanging to the declivity. A continuous noise of the rapids above hovered over this scene of inhabited devastation. A lot of people, mostly black and naked, moved about like ants. A jetty projected into the river. A blinding sunlight drowned all this at times in a sudden recrudescence of glare. 'There's your Company's station,' said the Swede, pointing to three wooden barrack-like structures on the rocky slope. 'I will send your things up. Four boxes did you say? So. Farewell.'

"I came upon a boiler wallowing in the grass, then found a path leading up the hill. It turned aside for the boulders, and also for an undersized railway-truck lying there on its back with its wheels in the air. One was off. The thing looked as dead as the carcass of some animal. I came upon more pieces of decaying machinery, a stack of rusty rails. To the left a clump of trees made a shady spot, where dark things seemed to stir feebly. I blinked, the path was steep. A horn tooted to the right, and I saw the black people run. A heavy and dull detonation shook the ground, a puff of smoke came out of the cliff, and that was all. No change appeared on the face of the rock. They were building a railway. The cliff was not in the way or anything; but this objectless blasting was all the work going on.

- 8) In the following extracts Marlow describes his first observation of the natives : what details does Conrad insist upon? (10 lines)

"A slight clinking behind me made me turn my head. Six black men advanced in a file, toiling up the path. They walked erect and slow, balancing small baskets full of earth on their heads, and the clink kept time with their footsteps. Black rags were wound round their loins, and the short ends behind waggled to and fro like tails. I could see every rib,

the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain whose bights swung between them, rhythmically clinking. ..."

"They were dying slowly--it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now-- nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest. These moribund shapes were free as air--and nearly as thin. I began to distinguish the gleam of the eyes under the trees. Then, glancing down, I saw a face near my hand. The black bones reclined at full length with one shoulder against the tree, and slowly the eyelids rose and the sunken eyes looked up at me, enormous and vacant, a kind of blind, white flicker in the depths of the orbs, which died out slowly. The man seemed young-- almost a boy--but you know with them it's hard to tell..."

6)These extracts deal with Marlow's inner reactions "...sailing up the River Congo...".

He sees this unknown landscape and the native Africans and has contrasting feelings. How do you explain this apparent paradox? (10 lines)

"We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. We could have fancied ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance, to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and of excessive toil. But suddenly, as we struggled round a bend, there would be a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling, under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage. The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy. The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us--who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse. We could not understand, because we were too far and could not remember, because we were traveling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign-- and no memories.

"The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there-- there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were--No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it--this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled, and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity-- like yours--the thought of your remote

kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you--you so remote from the night of first ages--could comprehend. And why not? The mind of man is capable of anything--because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. What was there after all? Joy, fear, sorrow, devotion, valor, rage--who can tell?-- but truth--truth stripped of its cloak of time

- 9) The Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe has written an essay "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness" (1975). He writes as follows:

The point of my observations should be quite clear by now, namely that Joseph Conrad was a thoroughgoing racist. That this simple truth is glossed over in criticisms of his work is due to the fact that white racism against Africa is such a normal way of thinking that its manifestations go completely unremarked. Students of Heart of Darkness will often tell you that Conrad is concerned not so much with Africa as with the deterioration of one European mind caused by solitude and sickness. They will point out to you that Conrad is, if anything, less charitable to the Europeans in the story than he is to the natives, that the point of the story is to ridicule Europe's civilizing mission in Africa. A Conrad student informed me in Scotland that Africa is merely a setting for the disintegration of the mind of Mr. Kurtz. Which is partly the point. Africa as setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor. Africa as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril. Can nobody see the preposterous and perverse arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the break-up of one petty European mind? But that is not even the point. The real question is the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world. And the question is whether a novel which celebrates this dehumanization, which depersonalizes a portion of the human race, can be called a great work of art. My answer is: No, it cannot...

Express your opinion about it (10 – 15 lines)

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

- 1) The White Man's Burden is a famous poem written by R.Kipling explaining the arguments for imperialism. Can you mention the most important ones? (10 lines)

Take up the White Man's burden--
Send forth the best ye breed--
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild--
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child.

Take up the White Man's burden--
In patience to abide,
To veil the threat of terror
And check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple,
An hundred times made plain
To seek another's profit,
And work another's gain.

Take up the White Man's burden--
The savage wars of peace--
Fill full the mouth of Famine
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Watch sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hopes to nought.

Take up the White Man's burden--
No tawdry rule of kings,
But toil of serf and sweeper--
The tale of common things.
The ports ye shall not enter,
The roads ye shall not tread,
Go mark them with your living,

And mark them with your dead.

Take up the White Man's burden--
And reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better,
The hate of those ye guard--
The cry of hosts ye humour
(Ah, slowly!) toward the light:--
"Why brought he us from bondage,
Our loved Egyptian night?"

Take up the White Man's burden--
Ye dare not stoop to less--
Nor call too loud on Freedom
To cloke your weariness;
By all ye cry or whisper,
By all ye leave or do,
The silent, sullen peoples
Shall weigh your gods and you.

Take up the White Man's burden--
Have done with childish days--
The lightly proffered laurel,
The easy, ungrudged praise.
Comes now, to search your manhood
Through all the thankless years
Cold, edged with dear-bought wisdom,
The judgment of your peers!

2) After reading the short story **Lispeth** comment on the epigraph to it . (10 lines)

3) Where is the story set? Find and quote the references to the physical setting in the story. (3 lines)

4) When does the story take place? Find and quote the references to the temporal setting .in the story. (3 Lines)

5) How much time is covered in the course of the story? (3 lines)

6) How does the narrator awaken our interest in Lispeth? Does her physical appearance also have a symbolic meaning? (5 – 10 lines)

7) Comment on the passage and give a brief description of the characters involved in the story. (15 lines)

... "Being a savage by birth, she took no trouble to hide her feelings, and the Englishman was amused. When he went away, Lispeth walked with him up the Hill as far as Narkanda, very troubled and very miserable. The Chaplain's wife, being a good Christian and disliking anything in the shape of fuss or scandal – Lispeth was beyond her management entirely – had told the Englishman to tell Lispeth that he was coming back to marry her. 'She is but a child, you know, and, I fear, at heart a heathen,' said the Chaplain's wife. So all the twelve miles up the Hill the Englishman, with his arm round Lispeth's waist, was assuring the girl that he would come back and marry her; and Lispeth made him promise over and over again. She wept on the Narkanda Ridge till he had passed out of sight along the Muttiani path.

Then she dried her tears and went in to Kotgarh again, and said to the Chaplain's wife, 'He will come back and marry me. He has gone to his own people to tell them so' ...

10) Explain the importance of these statements and the point of view of the narrator. (10 lines)

... 'How can what he and you said be untrue?' asked Lispeth.... 'Then you have lied to me,' said Lispeth, 'you and he?...'

11) Is the short story consistent with R. Kipling's idea about colonialism?(5 – 10 lines)

E.M. Forster (1879-1970)

- 1) Write about the events marking E.M. Forster's youth which had a considerable influence on his production. (5-10 lines)
- 2) While attending Cambridge University he met some writers and intellectuals who were later to form the Bloomsbury Group. What were the common ideas they shared? (5-10 lines)
- 3) In his work **Aspect of the Novel** he defined a novel as "a narrative of events arranged in time sequence". He also explained that the plot, which is "the plan of the story", must always present "a close relation of cause and effect" between the events. Considering the statements above and the novels you have read, was Forster a traditional or a modernist writer? (10-15 lines)
- 4) Sum up the structure of Forster's **A Passage to India** and what each section stands for. (5 lines)
- 5) This is the beginning of the novel which shows its setting, the city of Chandrapore. What does its description symbolize? What is the role of the sky in it? (20 lines)

"Except for the Marabar Caves — and they are twenty miles off — the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary. Edged rather than washed by the river Ganges, it trails for a couple of miles along the bank, scarcely distinguishable from the rubbish it deposits so freely. There are no bathing -steps on the river front, as the Ganges happens not to be holy here; indeed

there is no river front, and bazaars shut out the wide and shifting panorama of the stream. The streets are mean, the temples ineffective, and though a few fine houses exist they are hidden away in gardens or down alleys whose filth deters all but the invited guest..."

"...The very wood seems made of mud, the inhabitants of mud moving. So abased, so monotonous is everything that meets the eye, that when the Ganges comes down it might be expected to wash the excrescence back into the soil. Houses do fall, people are drowned and left rotting, but the general outline of the town persists, swelling here, shrinking there, like some low but indestructible form of life.

Inland, the prospect alters. There is an oval Maidan, and a long shallow hospital. Houses belonging to Eurasians stand on the high ground by the railway station. Beyond the railway — which runs parallel to the river — the land sinks, then rises again rather steeply. On the second rise is laid out the little civil station, and viewed hence Chandrapore appears to be a totally different place. It is a city of gardens. It is no city, but a forest sparsely scattered with huts. It is a tropical pleasance washed by a noble river. The toddy palms and neem trees and

mangoes and peepul that were hidden behind the bazaars now become visible and in their turn hide the bazaars. They rise from the gardens where ancient tanks nourish them, they burst out of stifling purlieus and unconsidered temples. Seeking light and air, and endowed with more strength than man or his works, they soar above the lower deposit to greet one another with branches and beckoning leaves, and to build a city for the birds. Especially after the rains do they screen what passes below, but at all times, even when scorched or leafless, they glorify the city to the English people who inhabit the rise, so that newcomers cannot believe it to be as meagre as it is described, and have to be driven down to acquire disillusionment. As for the civil station itself, it provokes no emotion. It charms not; neither does it repel. It is sensibly planned, with a redbrick club on its brow, and farther back a grocer's and a cemetery, and the bungalows are disposed along roads that intersect at right angles. It has nothing hideous in it, and only the view is beautiful; it shares nothing with the city except the overarching sky.

The sky too has its changes, but they are less marked than those of the vegetation and the river. Clouds map it tip at times, but it is normally a dome of blending tints, and the main tint blue. By day the blue will pale down into white where it touches the white of the land, after

sunset it has a new circumference — orange, melting upwards into tenderest purple. But the core of blue persists, and so it is by night. Then the stars hang like lamps from the immense vault. The distance between the vault and them is as nothing to the distance behind them, and that farther distance, though beyond colour, last freed itself from blue. The sky settles everything— not only climates and seasons but when the earth shall be beautiful. By herself she can do little— only feeble outbursts of flowers. But when the sky chooses, glory can rain into the Chandrapore bazaars or a benediction pass from horizon to horizon. The sky can do this because it is so strong and so enormous...”

- 6) In the first section of the novel two main characters, Mrs. Moore and Dr. Aziz meet in the Mosque. Why does he feel attracted by her? What does the sentence “...then you are an Oriental...”, addressed by Dr. Aziz to Mrs. Moore, reveal about the two characters? (20 lines).
- 7) Fielding's comment, "Try seeing Indians" is a key to understanding this man's broader thinking. Explain the role of this character in the novel. (5 lines)
- 8) Consider the passage below and discuss Adela's and Mrs. Moore's attitude towards the Indian ladies they have met at the party and the Indian ladies' attitude towards them. (10 lines)

“...Miss Quested now had her desired opportunity; friendly Indians were before her, and she tried to make them talk, but she failed, she strove in vain against the echoing walls of their civility. Whatever she said produced a murmur of deprecation, varying into a murmur of concern when she dropped her pocket-handkerchief She tried doing nothing, to see what that produced, and they too did nothing. Mrs. Moore was equally

unsuccessful. Mrs. Turton waited for them with a detached expression; she had known what nonsense it all was from the first.

When they took their leave, Mrs. Moore had an impulse, and said to Mrs. Bhattacharya, whose face she liked, "I wonder whether you would allow us to call on you some day."

"When?" she replied, inclining charmingly.

"Whenever is convenient."

"All days are convenient."

"Thursday ..."

"Most certainly."

"We shall enjoy it greatly, it would be a real pleasure. What about the time?"

"All hours."

"Tell us which you would prefer. We're quite strangers to your country; we don't know when you have visitors," said Miss Quested.

Mrs. Bhattacharya seemed not to know either. Her gesture implied that she had known, since Thursdays began, that English ladies would come to see her on one of them, and so always stayed in..."

- 9) Comment on the central episode of the visit to the Marabar Caves and the devastating effect this visit has on Mrs. Moore, Adela and Dr. Aziz.(20 lines)
- 10) Give an interpretation to the "echo" the characters hear inside the caves. (10 lines)
- 11) In the last part of the novel, two years after the trial, Dr. Aziz and Mr. Fielding meet. What is the main idea expressed in their discussion ? (5 lines)
- 12) What kind of narrator does Forster use in the novel? Does the author show different points of view? (5 lines)
- 13) The novel deals with the period of India' s transformation into a new country and Dr. Aziz embodies the spirit of an Indian national consciousness. Write about the historical and social events happening in those years in India. (15 lines)

Henry James (1843-1916)

The Turn of The Screw (1897)

1) His stone at the Cambridge Cemetery of Massachusetts is inscribed with the following sentence: "Novelist, Citizen of Two Countries, Interpreter of His Generation On Both Sides of the Sea".

Comment on it referring both to his biography and literary production. (10-15 lines)

2) The introduction to the plot of the Turn of the Screw is complex, so as to create a great atmosphere of suspense typical of a Gothic story. Outline its structure and all the situations and elements creating this sense of mystery and ambiguity. (10-15 lines)

3) These are the governess's impressions of her first meetings with Flora and Miles:

"The little girl who accompanied Mrs Grose appeared to me on the spot a creature so charming as to make it a great fortune to have to do with her. She was the most beautiful child I had ever seen...."

"He was incredibly beautiful, and Mrs Grose had put her finger on it: everything but a sort of passion of tenderness for him was swept away by his presence. What I then and there took him to my heart for was something divine that I have never found to the same degree in any child – his indescribable little air of knowing nothing in the world but love. It would have been impossible to carry a bad name with a greater sweetness of innocence..."

"Both the children had a gentleness that kept them – how shall I express it? – almost impersonal and certainly quite unpunishable. They were like the cherubs ..."

While the following lines are about Peter Quint and Miss Jessel, the two "ghosts":

"He has no hat." ... "He has red hair, very red, close-curling, and a pale face, long in shape, with straight, good features and little, rather queer whiskers that are as red as his hair. His eyebrows are, somehow, darker; they look particularly arched and as if they might move a good deal. His eyes are sharp, strange--awfully; but I only know clearly that they're rather small and very fixed. His mouth's wide, and his lips are thin, and except for his little whiskers he's quite clean-shaven. He gives me a sort of sense of looking like an actor."

"Another person--this time; but a figure of quite as unmistakable horror and evil: a woman in black, pale and dreadful--with such an air also, and such a face!..."

Compare the way the two couples of characters are described. (10-15 lines)

4) Describe the personality and the state of mind of the governess during her narration. (10-15 lines)

5) Analyse the following passage and point out the main theme of The Turn of the Screw. (10-15 lines)

I scarce know how to put my story into words that shall be a credible picture of my state of mind; but I was in these days literally able to find a joy in the extraordinary flight of heroism the occasion demanded of me. I now saw that I had been asked for a service admirable and difficult; and there would be a greatness in letting it be seen--oh, in the right quarter!--that I could succeed where many another girl might have failed. It was an immense help to me--I confess I rather applaud myself as I look back!--that I saw my service so strongly and so simply. I was there to protect and defend the little creatures in the world the most bereaved and the most lovable, the appeal of whose helplessness had suddenly become only too explicit, a deep, constant ache of one's own committed heart. We were cut off, really, together; we were united in our danger. They had nothing but me, and I--well, I had them. It was in short a magnificent chance. This chance presented itself to me in an image richly material. I was a screen--I was to stand before them. The more I saw, the less they would. I began to watch them in a stifled suspense, a disguised excitement that might well, had it continued too long, have turned to something like madness. What saved me, as I now see, was that it turned to something else altogether. It didn't last as suspense--it was superseded by horrible proofs. Proofs, I say, yes--from the moment I really took hold.

6) Consider both Flora's breakdown and escape from Bly and Miles's death. Could they be interpreted as the results of the governess's evil behaviour towards them? Explain which contrasting interpretations can be given to the short novel. (15-20lines)

7) The critic Oscar Cargill considered H. James as "a Freudian pioneer", "a remarkable innovator in fiction". Comment on this definition. (10-15 lines)

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)

The Old Man and the Sea (1952)

About the author :

1) Hemingway's life was as interesting as his works: point out some of his experiences which are strictly connected to his literary production. (10 lines)

2) Considering what the critic S.Sanderson wrote about him:

" The Hemingway style of narration, crisp, staccato, with its cinematic eye focused clearly on the object and its action, is that of an inspired reporter: the selection of relevant details is that of a skilled artist"

analyse the style of the novel. (10 lines)

3) Discuss the special relationship between Santiago and Manolin.(5-10 lines)

4) Comment on the following lines related to the content of the novel: (5-10 lines)

'Have faith in the Yankees my son. Think of the great DiMaggio' [...]

[...]'In the American League it is the Yankees as I said', the old man said happily.

'They lost today', the boy told him,

'That means nothing. The great DiMaggio is himself again'.

'They have other men on the team'.

'Naturally. But he makes the difference [...]

[...]'I would like to take the great DiMaggio fishing', the old man said. 'They say his father was a fisherman. Maybe was as poor as we are and would understand'. [...]

5)Describe the sea and the animals in it as seen through the old man's eyes. (10-15 lines)

6) In most of his works Hemingway describes the "defeat" of his characters. How would you define Santiago in his struggle against the natural world? (10 lines)

7) State the Christian religious allusions in the novel. (5-10 lines)

George Orwell (1903-1950)

Nineteen Eighty-Four (1948)

And vision of the film *The Lives of the Others* directed by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck (2006)

1) About the author:

What personal experiences contributed to his concern for social problems and what contributed to his distrust of both extreme left and right political movements? (10 lines)

2) Write a short summary of the beginning of the novel, where the narrator describes London. Comment on it. (5-10 lines)

3) Focus on the three slogans of the Party: WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH. Analyse their paradoxes. (5-10 lines)

4) Explain what the name and the surname of the protagonist and his description symbolize. (5-10 lines)

5) After reading these lines (from part 1, chapter 1), outline the use of television in Orwell's famous dystopia. (10 lines).

'Behind Winston's back the voice from the telescreen was still babbling away about pig iron and the overfulfillment of the Ninth Three-Year Plan. The telescreen received and transmitted simultaneously. Any sound that Winston made, above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by it; moreover, so long as he remained within the field of vision which the metal plate commanded, he could be seen as well as heard. There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How often, or on what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. but at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to. You have to live - did live, from habit that became instinct - in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized.'

6) Comment on the following passage (from part 1, chapter 5) in which Syme is illustrating to Winston Smith the new language of their society. (10-15 lines)

'It's a beautiful thing, the destruction of words. Of course the great wastage is in the verbs and adjectives, but there are hundreds of nouns that can be got rid of as well. It isn't only the synonyms; there are also the antonyms. After all, what justification is there for a word

which is simply the opposite of some other word? A word contains its opposite in itself. Take "good", for instance. If you have a word like "good", what need is there for a word like "bad"? "Ungood" will do just as well -- better, because it's an exact opposite, which the other is not. Or again, if you want a stronger version of "good", what sense is there in having a whole string of vague useless words like "excellent" and "splendid" and all the rest of them? "Plusgood" covers the meaning, or "doubleplusgood" if you want something stronger still. Of course we use those forms already. but in the final version of Newspeak there'll be nothing else. In the end the whole notion of goodness and badness will be covered by only six words -- in reality, only one word. Don't you see the beauty of that, Winston? It was B.B.'s idea originally, of course,' he added as an afterthought.

7) Compare the contents of Nineteen Eighty-Four with those of the film "The lives of the others". (15 lines)

Salman Rushdie (1947)

- 1) Write about the relevant events of S.Rushdie's life, his personal and cultural experiences which might have influenced his fiction. (15 lines)
- 2) Considering the structure and the style of his novel **Midnight's Children**, who are the main authors who have influenced S. Rushdie?(15 lines)
- 3) Rushdie's fiction belongs to the trend which is defined as Magic Realism. Explain the meaning of it in relation to the plot of **Midnight's Children**. (15 lines)
- 4) Comment on the narrative technique used by Rushdie in the novel (10 lines)
- 5) "Re-reading my work, I have discovered an error in chronology. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi occurs, in these pages, on the wrong date. But I cannot say, now, what the actual sequence of events might have been; in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time. Does one error invalidate the entire fabric? Am I so far gone, in my desperate need for meaning, that I'm prepared to distort everything – to re-write the whole history of my times purely in order to place myself in a central role?"

Why do you think the author deliberately introduces mistakes into Saleem's narration?(10 lines)

- 6) "Reality is a question of perspective; the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems - but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible. Suppose yourself in a large cinema, sitting at first in the back row, and gradually moving up, row by row, until your nose is almost pressed against the screen. Gradually the stars' faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions; the illusion dissolves - or rather, it becomes clear that the illusion itself *is* reality..."

"No colours except green and black the walls are green the sky is black (there is no roof) the stars are green the Widow is green but her hair is black as black. The Widow sits on a high chair the chair is green the seat is black the Widow's hair has a centre-parting it is green on the left and on the right black. High as the sky the chair is green the seat is black the Widow's arm is long as death its skin is green the fingernails are long and sharp and black. Between the walls the children green the walls are green the Widow's arm comes snaking

down the snake is green the children scream the fingernails are black the scratch the Widow's arm is hunting see the children run and scream the Widow's hand curls round them green and black..."

Throughout his narration, Saleem uses the images and language of Bollywood to describe the action unfolding. How effective do you think this technique is? Discuss the ideas of perspective, illusion and reality raised by the novel. (20 lines)

- 7) "...Hurtling on, I pose to pick up the game of hit-the spittoon. Five years before the birth of a nation, my inheritance grows, to include an optimism disease which would flare up again in my own time, and cracks in the earth which will-be-have-been reborn in my skin, and an ex-conjurer Hummingbirds who began the long line of street-entertainers which has run parallel with my own life..."

Saleem veers between the past, the present and the future. What do you think Rushdie is trying to achieve by rejecting a more straightforward chronological structure? (10 lines)

- 8) "...I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country. For the next three decades, there was to be no escape. Soothsayers had prophesized me, newspapers celebrated my arrival, politicians ratified my authenticity. I was left entirely without a say in the matter.

From the opening scenes of the novel, Saleem insists on the connection between his private history (and those of the other midnight's children), and the wider, public history of the nation. How are the personal and the public linked throughout the novel? (10 lines).

- 9) Read the following passage and summarize features of Rushdie's novel and its links with Indian History and literature.(15-20 lines)

"As authentic, but even more remarkable, is that of Salman Rushdie, the author of *Midnight's Children*, published in 1981. This novel, dramatizing the history of independent India in the person of the beak-nosed wildly extravagant Muslim, Saleem Aziz, who was born on the stroke of midnight bringing in India's independence, combines the rush and fluency of Mulk Raj Anand, the speculative and metaphysical habit of Raja Rao, the shrewd psychological acumen of R.K.Narayan with the linguistic wildness, inventiveness and fantasy of G.V.Desani.

Its astonishing staple is composed of elements of magic and fantasy, the grimmest realism ('cripples everywhere, mutilated by loving parents, to ensure them of a lifetime's income from begging'), extravagant farce, multi-mirrored analogy and a potent symbolic structure. All this is indelibly stamped into unity by a powerful personality, which wrestles the language and the fiction down and masters it to serve a huge purpose, namely the personification of India and the realization of Indian life.

Salman Rushdie's most celebrated novel, *Satanic Verses*, derives its fame from its status as a political event rather than from its distinction as fiction. The terrible fatwah condemning him to an existence of concealment and stress was provoked by the confrontation of two totally opposed kinds of mind and sensibility, one ancient and absolutist, the other relativist and agnostic. In manner the novel resembles the fiction before and after *Midnight's Children*, immensely energetic, sprawling, brilliant in patches and generally mocking. As with his other novels it has a serious and fascinating theme – the structure and the dynamics of emigration – but is treated in a disorderly and self-indulgent way. It suffers from the deficiency of other modern novels with huge sociological themes – the disappearance of the solitary individual. It would be hard to conceive of two authors of the same nation, class and generation – though not religion – so utterly unlike one another as Seth and Rushdie. Rushdie is compelled by a near ungovernable imagination which crosses all boundaries, natural and supernatural.

Rushdie's novel is a contemporary intellectual's allegory, Seth's a novelist's tale with its own particular, practical wisdom and its own rewarding satisfaction for the reader. India has entered the English sensibility in another way, as the title of this chapter implies. For some two hundred years it has figured in the English imagination as experience, theme, and lately even as a metaphor of human experience itself. Kipling (1865-1936) not only evoked the rash, self-confident attitudes of the English ruling class in India, but he also realized and expressed with uncanny fidelity and subtleties of insight the experience of the Indian landscape. At the other end of the scale from Kipling, E.M. Forster (1879-1970), representing the finest and the most humane in the liberal spirit, began in *A Passage to India* (1924) the tradition of using Indian life as an image of personal experience."

W.Walsh, *India and the Novel*, from *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*