

## Week 1: Understanding Unseens.

Specific objectives: I should be able to:

1. understand unseens;
2. answer questions on them.

Unseen literature is the ability of a student, to answer questions on works of arts-poetry, drama, prose, which are not in their syllabus. Excerpts are extracted from a variety of works, and students are tested upon. Example:

Shall I compare thee to a Summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May

And Summer's lease hath all too short a date.

Questions:

1. What is the structure of the poem?
2. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem?
3. What is the rhyme pattern of the poem?
4. What is the mood of the poet?

## Week 2: Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison.

Specific objectives: I should be able to:

1. discuss the background of the text;
2. discuss the plot of the text;
3. do a chapter by chapter analysis of the text.

Background of the novel and novelist.

Ellison says in his introduction to the 30th Anniversary Edition[7] that he started to write what would eventually become Invisible Man in a barn in Waitsfield, Vermont, in the summer of 1945 while on sick leave from the Merchant Marine. However, the barn was actually in the neighboring town of Fayston.[8] The book took five years to complete with one year off for what Ellison termed an "ill-conceived short novel." [9] Invisible Man was published as a whole in 1952. Ellison had published a section of the book in

1947, the famous "Battle Royal" scene, which had been shown to Cyril Connolly, the editor of Horizon magazine by Frank Taylor, one of Ellison's early supporters.

#### Plot Summary.

The narrator of Invisible Man is a nameless young black man who moves in a 20th-century United States where reality is surreal and who can survive only through pretense. Because the people he encounters "see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination," he is effectively invisible. He leaves the racist South for New York City, but his encounters continue to disgust him. Ultimately, he retreats to a hole in the ground, which he furnishes and makes his home. There, brilliantly illuminated by stolen electricity, he can seek his identity.

#### Week 3: Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison

Specific objectives: I should be able to:

1. discuss the themes of the text;
2. discuss the significant events in the text.

#### Themes

##### Identity

Identity in Invisible Man is a conflict between self-perception and the projection of others, as seen through one man's story: the nameless narrator. His true identity, he realizes, is in fact invi...

##### Race

While most the narrator's difficulties throughout the novel are associated with his race, Invisible Man is a novel aimed at transcending race and all the other ways humanity has used to categorize...

##### Lies and Deceit

Invisible Man is about the process of overcoming deceptions and illusions to reach truth. (One of the most important truths in the book is that the narrator is invisible to those around him.) In In...

##### Ideology

Invisible Man promotes a political philosophy of appealing to the emotional individual. It rejects all forms of ideology, arguing that ideology misses the trees for the forest, so to speak (in othe...

##### Memory and the Past

Most of Invisible Man takes place in the narrator's memory, which inherently brings up issues of how well memory works—in other words, the nameless narrator character is choosing specific scenes...

##### Power

Power infuses nearly all of the relationships depicted in *Invisible Man*. More specifically, white male power threads its way throughout the novel. Even in situations where there are no white males...

### Admiration

Admiration is particularly salient towards the beginning of *Invisible Man*, when the narrator takes Dr. Bledsoe and Mr. Norton to be role models. By the end of the novel, the narrator does not admir...

### Ambition

In *Invisible Man*, admiration tends to fuel ambition. As the narrator admires Dr. Bledsoe, so his ambition is to one day serve as Bledsoe's assistant. The course of ambition throughout the novel als...

### Love

Love is notable in *Invisible Man* because of its absence throughout most of the novel. The narrator rejects it because it would interfere with his ambitions. At the end of the novel, however, the na...

### Events and significance.

The narrator prepares to tell us how he became aware of his invisibility. He remembers getting high and falling into Louis Armstrong's music.

He tells us his story. Welcome to present tense now.

After graduating from high school, the narrator is invited to give a speech to prominent town leaders. Instead, he's thrown into the battle royal, where he (along with nine other young black men) is blindfolded, thrown into a rink, and told to beat one another into a pulp. Told they're going to get paid, the white men watch and laugh as the boys electrocute themselves on the electric rug covered in fake gold coins.

Finally, the narrator is called to give his speech, to which none of the men actually listen.

The narrator is awarded a scholarship to the school for Negroes. He is also given a briefcase. The narrator remembers his grandfather's words that obedience was a betrayal and has a nightmare that the scholarship is given with malicious intent.

The narrator goes off to college and is given the honor of driving around Mr. Norton, one of the school's founders, for the day. Mr. Norton has the narrator promise to tell him of his fate when he learns it.

The narrator drives off campus and takes Mr. Norton to former slave quarters, where they listen to a man named Trueblood tell them the long story about having sex with his daughter.

The narrator takes Mr. Norton to the Golden Day asylum/bar when he asks for alcohol. With the help of one of the vets in particular, the narrator gets Mr. Norton conscious again. But not before he's told off by the vet.

The narrator rushes Mr. Norton back to school and worries that his actions will get him expelled.

The narrator goes to chapel and listens to Barbee's speech on the biography of the school's Founder. Barbee praises the Founder and his achievements, moving the crowd by saying that his spirit lives on in the school.

Then, the narrator gets expelled by Dr. Bledsoe, the college president. He orders the narrator to work in Harlem for the time being and gives him seven letters of recommendation.

The narrator goes to Harlem and meets the vet from the Golden Day on the bus. The vet tells him that the world is possibility, if he can discover it for himself.

The narrator is overwhelmed by the new racial dynamic in New York. He has a quick glimpse of Ras the Exhorter.

The narrator diligently drops off his letters of recommendation, but no dice. Finally, he tries a different approach with his last letter, addressed to a man named Emerson. He goes to the man's office, only to talk with his son. Emerson Jr. tells the narrator that Bledsoe is working against him, showing him the supposed letter of recommendation that clearly says the narrator will not be allowed back at the college.

Upon Emerson's recommendation, the narrator applies for and takes a job at Liberty Paints, where he mixes black ink to make white paint and then watches gauges in the basement with a guy named Lucius Brockway. He gets in a fight with Brockway, which distracts them from watching the boilers. Something explodes and he gets beat up and knocked unconscious.

When the narrator comes to, people are experimenting on him by sending electrical currents through him and performing the noninvasive equivalent of lobotomies. He is kept in an operating cage.

The narrator is rescued by Mary Rambo and Ralston when his legs falter in the subway station. He finds comfort, encouragement, and companionship by renting a room in Mary's apartment complex.

The narrator walks out in the night to vent his heated thoughts. He buys a couple of baked yams from a street vendor and rejoices in his irreverent display of eating home food in public. He adopts a new slogan: I yam what I am.

The narrator stumbles across a street scene of an elderly black couple getting evicted from their apartment. The narrator stands up for them, making an impromptu speech in front of a crowd. Everyone rushes to help move the Provos' belongings back inside. When the police arrive, the narrator makes a run for it through the roof. He senses that someone's following him.

The stalker is a man named Brother Jack, who offers the narrator a position in the Brotherhood. Although he's opposed to the idea of joining at first, he accepts the job offer, figuring that he has got to find a way to pay Mary back for her hospitality and food.

The narrator goes to the Chthonian and schmoozes with people in the Brotherhood. When he accepts, he is given a new name and enough money to pay back Mary and buy new clothes. He is directed to a new apartment of his own and ordered not to be in contact with friends or family.

The narrator accompanies some of the brothers to make a speech in a warehouse. He feels a sense of passion go into his speech and enjoys feeling like he can move the community. He is less thrilled when the brothers criticize the speech.

The narrator goes to train with Brother Hambro for four months, during which time we don't hear anything about him. He is to learn the scientific and rational Brotherhood theories.

The narrator meets Brother Jack for a drink and learns he has been promoted to Chief Spokesman of the Harlem District. They go together to the headquarters to see the narrator's new office and to meet Brother Tarp.

At a committee meeting, the narrator meets Brother Tod Clifton. They work together to initiate street speeches, but their first one is crashed by Ras. The narrator wrestles a knife away from Ras as the black nationalist fights with Clifton.

The narrator receives an anonymous letter warning him not to move too quickly, lest people get jealous and suspicious of him.

Brother Tarp reminds the narrator of his grandfather. Brother Tarp tells the narrator a little bit about his past, including the fact that he was in a chain gang for nineteen years. He gives the narrator a piece of his broken shackle as a gift for good luck.

The busybody Brother Wrestrum talks to the narrator about some of his ideas for creating pins and such. While Wrestrum is present, the narrator reluctantly takes an interview from a magazine writer.

The Brotherhood is upset with the narrator and restricts him to work on the Woman Question downtown, if he chooses to stay with the Brotherhood.

The narrator has sex with a woman who attends his speeches and is a real fan of the Brotherhood ideology. He goes over to her place and is surprised when her husband sees them in bed together and doesn't even bat an eye.

The narrator returns to Harlem when he gets a call from Brother Jack and learns that Clifton has been missing for weeks.

The narrator finds that he has fallen out of touch with Harlem, and wonders why he wasn't invited to the Brotherhood's strategy meeting.

The narrator wanders the streets and is horrified to find Clifton on a street corner selling Sambo dolls to the passing public. He is even more horrified when he watches Clifton die right before his eyes.

The narrator is determined to do something about Clifton's shooting by the police, so he organizes and publicizes a funeral.

Jack and the rest of the committee confront the narrator, criticizing his foolishness in acting on his personal responsibility instead of the Brotherhood's wishes. In the excitement of the argument, the narrator learns that Jack has a false left eye. The narrator is instructed to learn the new program from Brother Hambro.

On the way to Brother Hambro's, the narrator is confronted by Ras the Exhorter. To protect himself, he dons sunglasses and then a hat. He is mistaken for a man named Rinehart, and enjoys the freedom of being someone else.

Brother Hambro tells the narrator that Harlem is being sacrificed in the name of bigger aims.

Infuriated, the narrator pretends to be obedient to the Brotherhood wishes but secretly decides to learn its true aims. He makes up a list of fake new members, and then decides to seduce a woman who may have access to the higher ranks of the Brotherhood. Choosing a woman named Sybil as his target, the narrator invites her over and plies her with drink, only to realize that she knows nothing about the Brotherhood and she is just as oppressed by white male patriarchy as he was.

The narrator gets a call to go to Harlem, and he eventually succeeds in getting Sybil in a cab back home.

The narrator navigates his way through Harlem, trying to stay alive amidst all the chaos and violence. He meets Dupre and Scofield and lights a tenement building on fire with them. He encounters Ras the Destroyer. When he is threatened with hanging, he takes Ras's spear and plunges it through his cheeks. Pursued by a crowd seeking to lynch him, he makes a run for it and falls into a manhole filled with coal.

The narrator shares what he has learned and decides that the time has come for him to come out of hibernation.

Week 4: Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison

Specific objectives: I should be able to:

1. discuss the characterization of the text.

The narrator

The nameless protagonist of the novel. The narrator is the "invisible man" of the title. A Black man in 1930s America, the narrator considers himself invisible because people never see his true self beneath the roles that stereotype and racial prejudice compel him to play. Though the narrator is intelligent, deeply introspective, and highly gifted with language, the experiences that he relates demonstrate that he was naïve in his youth. As the novel progresses, the narrator's illusions are gradually destroyed through his experiences as a student at college, as a worker at the Liberty Paints plant, and as a member of a political organization known as the Brotherhood. Shedding his blindness, he struggles to arrive at a

conception of his identity that honors his complexity as an individual without sacrificing social responsibility.

#### Brother Jack

The white and blindly loyal leader of the Brotherhood, a political organization that professes to defend the rights of the socially oppressed. Although he initially seems compassionate, intelligent, and kind, and he claims to uphold the rights of the socially oppressed, Brother Jack actually possesses racist viewpoints and is unable to see people as anything other than tools. His glass eye and his red hair symbolize his blindness and his communism, respectively.

#### Tod Clifton

A Black member of the Brotherhood and a resident of Harlem. Tod Clifton is passionate, handsome, articulate, and intelligent. He eventually parts ways with the Brotherhood, though it remains unclear whether a falling-out has taken place, or whether he has simply become disillusioned with the group. He begins selling Sambo dolls on the street, seemingly both perpetrating and mocking the offensive stereotype of the lazy and servile slave that the dolls represent.

#### Ras the Exhorter

A stout, flamboyant, charismatic, angry man with a flair for public agitation. Ras represents the Black nationalist movement, which advocates the violent overthrow of white supremacy. Ellison seems to use him to comment on the Black nationalist leader Marcus Garvey, who believed that Blacks would never achieve freedom in white society. A maverick, Ras frequently opposes the Brotherhood and the narrator, often violently, and incites riots in Harlem.

#### Sybil

A white woman whom the narrator attempts to use to find out information about the Brotherhood. Sybil instead uses the narrator to act out her fantasy of being raped by a “savage” Black man.

#### Rinehart

A surreal figure who never appears in the book except by reputation. Rinehart possesses a seemingly infinite number of identities, among them pimp, bookie, and preacher who speaks on the subject of “invisibility.” When the narrator wears dark glasses in Harlem one day, many people mistake him for Rinehart. The narrator realizes that Rinehart’s shape-shifting capacity represents a life of extreme freedom, complexity, and possibility. He also recognizes that this capacity fosters a cynical and manipulative inauthenticity. Rinehart thus figures crucially in the book’s larger examination of the problem of identity and self-conception.

#### Dr. Bledsoe

The president at the narrator’s college. Dr. Bledsoe proves selfish, ambitious, and treacherous. He is a Black man who puts on a mask of servility to the white community. Driven by his desire to maintain his

status and power, he declares that he would see every Black man in the country lynched before he would give up his position of authority.

#### Mr. Norton

One of the wealthy white trustees at the narrator's college. Mr. Norton is a narcissistic man who treats the narrator as a tally on his scorecard—that is, as proof that he is liberal-minded and philanthropic. Norton's wistful remarks about his daughter add an eerie quality of longing to his fascination with the story of Jim Trueblood's incest.

#### Reverend Homer A. Barbee

A preacher from Chicago who visits the narrator's college. Reverend Barbee's fervent praise of the Founder's "vision" strikes an inadvertently ironic note, because he himself is blind. With Barbee's first name, Ellison makes reference to the Greek poet Homer, another blind orator who praised great heroes in his epic poems. Ellison uses Barbee to satirize the college's desire to transform the Founder into a similarly mythic hero.

#### Jim Trueblood

An uneducated Black man who impregnated his own daughter and who lives on the outskirts of the narrator's college campus. The students and faculty of the college view Jim Trueblood as a disgrace to the Black community. To Trueblood's surprise, however, whites have shown an increased interest in him since the story of his incest spread.

#### The veteran

An institutionalized Black man who makes bitterly insightful remarks about race relations. Claiming to be a graduate of the narrator's college, the veteran tries to expose the pitfalls of the school's ideology. His bold candor angers both the narrator and Mr. Norton—the veteran exposes their blindness and hypocrisy and points out the sinister nature of their relationship. Although society has deemed him "shell-shocked" and insane, the veteran proves to be the only character who speaks the truth in the first part of the novel.

#### Emerson

The son of one of the wealthy white trustees (whom the text also calls Emerson) of the narrator's college. The younger Emerson reads the supposed recommendation from Dr. Bledsoe and reveals Bledsoe's treachery to the narrator. He expresses sympathy for the narrator and helps him get a job, but he remains too preoccupied with his own problems to help the narrator in any meaningful way.

#### Mary

A serene and motherly Black woman with whom the narrator stays after learning that the Men's House has banned him. Mary treats him kindly and even lets him stay for free. She nurtures his Black identity as a black man.



Week 5: "Black Woman" Leopold Sedar Senghor

Specific objectives: I should be able to:

1. discuss the background of the poem/poet;
2. discuss the content of the poem;
3. discuss the structure and style of the poem.

"Black Woman"

Naked woman, black woman

Clothed with your colour which is life, with your form which is beauty!

In your shadow I have grown up; the  
gentleness of your hands was laid over my eyes.

And now, high up on the sun-baked  
pass, at the heart of summer, at the heart of noon, I come upon you,  
my Promised Land,  
And your beauty strikes me to the heart like the flash of  
an eagle.

Naked woman, dark woman

Firm-fleshed ripe fruit, sombre raptures of black wine,  
mouth making lyrical my mouth  
Savannah stretching to clear horizons,  
savannah shuddering beneath the East Wind's eager caresses  
Carved tom-tom, taut tom-tom, muttering  
under the Conqueror's fingers  
Your solemn contralto voice is the

spiritual song of the Beloved.

Naked woman, dark woman

Oil that no breath ruffles, calm oil on the

athlete's flanks, on the flanks of the Princes of Mali

Gazelle limbed in Paradise, pearls are stars on the

night of your skin

Delights of the mind, the glinting of red

gold against your watered skin

Under the shadow of your hair, my care

is lightened by the neighbouring suns of your eyes.

Naked woman, black woman,

I sing your beauty that passes, the form

that I fix in the Eternal,

Before jealous fate turn you to ashes to

feed the roots of life.

Background of the Poem 'Black Woman'

"Black Woman" is a response to the countless number of years the white man had devoted to praising and chanting the beauty of the white woman. Writers like Dante, Boccaccio, Spenser, Eluard and Yeats have devoted part of their writings to the elaborate description of the aesthetics of the white woman. her white and elegant hands, the face's whiteness, its radiance as that of the sun, its dazzling as the moon, etc. Over time, a woman's beauty was to be seen in terms of her whiteness, candour, glory and incandescence. However, Senghor's poem published in 1936 was the first time an African was devoting poems to the beauty of the African woman when this had never been thought about. Senghor derived the impetus from the Harlem Renaissance movement of African-American writers of the 1920s in New York. He was to promote this self-assertion using the medium of negritude, a term first used by Aime Césaire in a 1932 poem. "Black Woman" was thus a revolutionary poem, published at a time not too many people were ready for it. It thus became Senghor's most cited poem, largely because of its ideological content and because the black woman was for the first time eulogized.

Analysis of the poem

The poem begins with a direct call “Naked woman, black woman...” and culminates into the comfort that ‘she’ has given the persona since his childhood, “...In your shadow I have grown up...”. The ‘woman’ which could be representative of Africa, nurtured the persona and he in turn expresses gratitude and praise for ‘her’ gentleness and charm.

The persona shifts his focus to the physical features of the ‘woman’ and through this, proceeds to metaphorically adore the landscape and geography of the continent. His comparison of the “black woman” to ‘ripe fruit’ and ‘black wine’ lays bare the qualities that he intends to project to the rest of the world. “Savannah stretching to clear horizons...” secures another praise for the geography of the continent. The persona refers to the ‘woman’ as ‘...the Promised Land’ which is a biblical allusion to further stress the importance of the ‘woman’ to him.

The cultural heritage of drumming and singing receives the next praise from the persona as he considers these activities as distinctly something that the ‘black woman’, Africa, offers. The drummers are described as ‘Conquerors’ while the singers’ voices are viewed as ‘solemn’ and ‘spiritual’. These attributes contribute to the esteemed qualities of the ‘woman’. The persona further brings to the fore the even tempered nature of the woman, her graciousness when she moves and her ability to bring the best out of others, “... pearls are stars on the night of your skin...”

The persona again glowingly reiterates the comfort that he had received from the ‘woman’ by stating, “... Under the shadow of your hair, my care // is lightened by the neighbouring suns of your eyes.”. This brings him to the point where he finds it his duty to sing the praises of the ‘black woman’ and make her know her value. The end of the poem reveals the persona’s awareness, that nothing is bound to endure forever and so soon, the ‘black woman’ may have to make way and give up all her qualities in order for there to be a new beginning as expressed in, “...Before jealous fate turn you to ashes to

feed the roots of life”

Structure of the poem Black Woman

There are thirty lines including the additional projected lines into the lines follows ink. Without the jutting-out lines, the poem is supposed to be much shorter. However, the projected lines are artistically a property of the poem. The poet uses those short lines for purposes of emphasis and for the reader take a special notice of.

Language and Style

## Rejection of European standards of beauty

Through the use of an impassioned language, Senghor rejects the European standards of beauty, and, instead creates his own. A beautiful woman has to be judged from her total nakedness when she has no clothes on. This appears an uncanny suggestion or a desire to be erotic! However, the fact is that Senghor's idea of beauty is to be realized most fully when the woman is assessed from nature. Black is the colour which should matter because it is the colour of life; it is also the "form/which is beauty!" The poet promotes all attributes of the black woman and of Africa such as "shadow" (mentioned twice in the poem), "sun-baked pass" (Africa being the land of sunshine). The "heart of summer" and "the heart of noon", each points to what the sun can do at these times. The poet emphasizes ripeness and maturity as when he refers to "firm-fleshed ripe fruit", "somber raptures of black wine", "taut torn-tom", "contralto voice", "oil that no breath ruffles", "calm oil", "gazelle limbed in paradise", "the glinting of red gold", the "neighbouring suns" etc. These are some of the bases upon which an African woman's beauty is to be judged. Notice also that the poet makes reference to "naked woman, black (or dark) woman" several times which shows that he is not keen about the beauty of any other human species.

## Sensual imagery

The poem has images that evoke pleasurable and/or erotic sensations. Even the reference to "naked woman" already recalls sensuality; she is "clothed with your colour" which re-inforces the nakedness. There is "the gentleness of your hands" which smothers his eyes. One of the most effective uses of sensuality in the poem is for the poet to have remarked thus: "And your beauty strikes me to the heart like the flash of an eagle". Other sensual images include, "firm-fleshed ripe fruit". "mouth making lyrical my mouth", "East Wind's eager caresses", "taut tom-tom", "contralto voice", "spiritual song of the/Beloved", "calm oil", "the athlete's/flanks", "gazelle limbed", "pearls are stars". "delights of the mind", "the glinting of red gold against/you - watered skin" etc. The poet also refers to the woman's beauty as having a shape ("form") which is of her-worldly and refers to "Tate" as being "jealous" as men could be if they share a woman with another man or know that she is available to their rival.

## Ambiguity and abstraction

Ambiguity is a word or sentence that is open to more than one interpretation, explanation or meaning, especially if that meaning, for instance, cannot be determined from its context. Similarly, an abstraction is the act of generalizing features and characteristics, an idea of an unrealistic or visionary nature. Abstractions in a piece of poetry would be imprecise, occasionally making what is said to be ambiguous

or making meaning contained therein to be double-deckered. How, for instance, may one who is naked "clothed with your colour which life..."? Has life a colour? The expression, "In your shadow I have grown up" either means "I grew up while sitting or learning under your shadow" or "Your shadow has enabled me to grow up." The poet describes the naked woman as "my Promised Land." This is metaphorical but a human being is not meant to be a piece of land! Again the writer equates the beauty, of a Woman, not to an eagle's but a "flash" of it. This is an abstraction, somewhat unrealistic, The poet) further says: "mouth making lyrical my mouth." Is this caused by the 'raptures of black wine" or another mouth as in kissing? what is the direct meaning of "calm oil on the athlete's/flanks, on the flanks of Princes of Mali"? Again, this is vague or rather an abstraction. Similarly, we have in the poem "the neighbouring suns of your eyes" which may indicate that the eyes have suns or one's two eyes live and give light like neighbours do assist each other. In like manner, the poetic persona talks of "the form that I fix in the/Eternal" which is rather ambiguous: is it that the woman's beauty is to be found in the world outside this one or is it that this beauty will last forever? Yet in the next line, the poet is in a hurry because a waste of time in appreciating her would turn her into "ashes to feed the roots of life:" The implication of this is that her beauty is after all earthy rather than spiritual.

#### Landscape as imagery

We have already identified the sensual use of imagery. In addition, there are in the poem references to land and its facets. There is, for instance, "the sun-baked pass." A pass is a way created between two or more mountain peaks. Notice the use of "high up"; it is "sun-baked" because the area is sunny, without any shade. Then the poetic persona describes the black woman as "my Promised Land 's Fruits would be products of the land: "firm-fleshed ripe fruit" and "black wine" comes from fruits. Then there is the "savannah stretching to clear horizons" and "savannah/shuddering beneath the East Wind's eager caresses". Yet another landscape image is "paradise", similar to "the Promised Land." The phrase, "oil that no breath ruffles" may be mineral oil found in the earth's crust. "Pearls", "glinting...red gold" or "watered skin" remind one of minerals and land irrigation respectively. The "roots of life" recalls what could happen on the land while the "ashes" fertilize the land.

An exemplar of Litany Litany is a Catholic church's pattern of prayer, the most popular of which is the one devoted to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Sedar Senghor, the poet, was a Catholic and must have been influenced by this prayer mode.

Naked woman

black woman

dark woman

Clothed with your colour which is life

with your form which is beauty

high up on the sun-baked pass

at the heart of summer

at the heart of noon

I come upon you, my Promised Land

Naked woman

black woman

dark woman

Firm-fleshed ripe fruit

Sombre raptures of black wine

Mouth making lyrical my mouth...

### Diction

the poet uses choice of words to symbolized the beauty of the black woman. He deliberately uses words like nakedness, black and darkness which are seen as negative attributes to praise the natural beauty of the black woman. The poet is also challenging the African woman to appreciate her natural beauty. And to bleach the dark skin in the name of sophisticated culture of the western world.

### Mood

the mode of the poem is that of Adoration. The poet adores the awesome beauty of the black woman. He describes everything about the African woman as naturally beautiful. Senghor sees Africa as the black woman he loves to celebrate. He seeks to adore that state of natural beauty before it is taken away by death.

### Tone

the poet's tone of the appreciation of natural beauty of the black woman pervades the poem. He praises the African woman not only for her natural smooth dark skin, but also for the way and manner she brings up her children.

## Ode

the poem is a hymn of praise to the black woman, an African mother, daughter or sister and indeed mother Africa which deserves to be treated like a woman, the poet praise the natural beauty of the African woman, and stresses the need to accord her the rightful place in the society.

Week 6: "Black Woman" by Leopold Sedar Senghor

Specific objectives: I should be able to;

1. discuss the themes of the poem;

2. discuss the poetic devices of the poem.

Themes in the poem 'Black Woman'

### African beauty

As pointed out earlier, beauty had not been associated with the African woman. But as negritude had tried to establish, the black woman is beautiful. The entire poem is devoted to the beauty of the black female. To be able to do this, the woman had to be totally naked or metaphorically undressed by the poetic persona's eyes. The poet does not seem to be addressing this poem to a particular woman as those he devoted to Naette or the woman he makes reference to in the poem. "I Will Pronounce Your Name." With respect to "Black Woman," the reference to woman is in the generic sense of the word from the perspective of the African. The poem describes her colour, shape, shadow and the gentleness of her hands. Elements of beauty are evoked in "sun-baked pass", the "heart of summer" and "the heat of noon." The reference to "Promised Land" suggests the poet may also be talking about Africa herself as is common in negritude poetry. Other references to African beauty are "firm-fleshed ripe fruit". "sombre raptures of black wine" "mouth making lyrical my mouth", "East Wind's eager caresses". "solemn contralto voice". "the Beloved", "calm oil on the athlete's flanks", "gazelle limbed in paradise". "peals are stars on the night/of your skin", "glinting of the red gold", "watered skin", "neighbouring suns of the eyes" etc. As already mentioned, these elements of beauty could be referring to the African land as well. However, what is obvious and direct are the nakedness and blackness of the African woman.

## The Theme of Praise

There is also the theme of praise in the poem. The poet uses choice word to praise the black woman, and the greatness of African woman. He showers praises on the natural black colour of the African woman's skin, and everything about the black woman. Her smooth skin is compared to that of an athlete. He further praises the African woman as graceful and elegant as a gazelle. His praises of the natural beauty of the black woman, also implies the richness of the African culture before the colonization. Childhood memory is another theme in this poem. The poet looks back to the period of his childhood, and remembers his place of birth, Senegal. "In your shadow I have grown up; the gentleness of your hands was laid over my eyes". It is a memory lane down to his frowning days as a child, which he considers as living in paradise. He sets on a poetic journey to the "promised land" of his home land, Senegal. He recalls the Caring attitude of his mother, which sustains him as a child. He appreciates the black woman as a wife and mother, who nourishes his childhood.

## Mortality

The end of the poem turns to ideas of mortality and the natural progression of life into death. Senghor writes that he fixes the titular woman "in the Eternal" before she is turned "to ashes to / feed the roots of life." Here, he acknowledges that, despite the beauty (of women, of the culture, of the land, of everything), all must eventually turn to dust and help build other things. This is a sort of spiritual "circle of life," and he uses his poem to freeze a moment of beauty before it must give way to something else. Blackness as a subject of beauty

## Africa and African Culture

Beyond just praising the beauty of blackness, the poem also celebrates and reflects upon Africa and African culture. Senghor mentions the Princes of Mali, Gazelles, and savannahs, as well as tom-tom drums "muttering / under the Conqueror's fingers." This line is likely a reference to colonialism in Senegal (or even Africa at large). It acknowledges and empowers the ways that Africans were able to use African culture to subvert European imperialism.

## Poetic devices

### Metaphor



the figure of speech prominently used in the poem is that of metaphor. The black woman is compared to the promised land, ripe fruit, Savannah, oil and gazelle in lines 4,7,12, and 13.

#### Simile

The literary device is used by the poet in line 5 “your beauty strikes me to the heart like the flash of an eagle,” the comparism brings to mind the beauty and nobility of an eagle.

#### Repetition

line 1 “naked woman, black woman”

and. Line 6 “naked woman, dark woman ” are repeated in lines 11 and 16 respectively to emphasize the natural beauty of the African woman.

#### Symbolism

Senghor uses symbolic words like: the promised land, ripe fruit, Savannah, oil and gazelle to symbolize the natural beauty of the black woman as a person, as well as a symbol of African woman and mother Africa.

#### Apostrophe

it is a literary device that poet employs to address the black woman, the object of praise as though she were physically present with him.

#### Personification

the black woman is figuratively used to personified the African continent and Senghor’s country, Senegal. The poet uses beauty of colour of the African woman skin to personified the rich African culture before western influence and colonization.

#### Imagery

the poet natural imagery to link the Beauty of the black woman to nature, and by the same token to his homeland of Senegal. Natural images like: wind, sun, noon, night, and stars are presented as attributes of the darkness of the African woman’s skin.

## Alliteration

the poet uses alliteration to buttress the beauty of the black woman in lines 1,2,3,6,7,9 etc.

Line 1,6,11 and 16 naked woman black woman

Line 2 “clothed with your colour which is life, with your form which is beautt”

Line 3 “...grown up; the gentleness....”

Line 7 “ firm-fleshed ripe fruit..... Mouth making lyrical my mouth ”

Line 9 “carved tom-tom, taut tom- tom...”

Line 12 “...flanks, on the flanks...”

## Week 7: Second-Class Citizen by Buchi Emecheta

Specific objectives: I should be able to:

- 1.discuss the plot of the novel;
- 2.discuss the background of the novelist;
- 3.discuss the characters of the novel.

Background of the novelist.

Buchi Emecheta was born on 21 July 1944, in Lagos, Nigeria, to Igbo parents,[4][5] Alice (Okwuekwuhe) Emecheta and Jeremy Nwabudinke.[6][7] Her parents were from Umuezeokolo Odeanta village in Ibusa,

Delta State. Her father was a railway worker and moulder.[6] Due to the gender bias of the time, the young Emecheta was initially kept at home while her younger brother was sent to school; but after persuading her parents to consider the benefits of her education, she spent her early childhood at an all-girls' missionary school. When she was nine years old her father died ("of complications brought on by a wound contracted in the swamps of Burma, where he had been conscripted to fight for Lord Louis Mountbatten and the remnants of the British Empire").[8][9] A year later, Emecheta received a full scholarship to Methodist Girls' School in Yaba, Lagos, where she remained until the age of 16. During this time, her mother died, leaving Emecheta an orphan. In 1960, she married Sylvester Onwordi,[5][7] a schoolboy to whom she had been engaged since she was 11 years old.[10][11] Later that year, she gave birth to a daughter, and in 1961 their younger son was born.[1]

Onwordi immediately moved to London to attend a university, and Emecheta joined him there with their first two children in 1962.[1] She gave birth to five children in six years, three daughters and two sons[11] Her marriage was unhappy and sometimes violent, as chronicled in her autobiographical writings such as 1974's *Second-Class Citizen*. [1][12] To keep her sanity, Emecheta wrote in her spare time. However, her husband was deeply suspicious of her writing, and he ultimately burned her first manuscript,[13] as revealed in *The Bride Price*, eventually published in 1976. That was her first book, but she had to rewrite it after the first version had been destroyed. She later said: "There were five years between the two versions." [14] At the age of 22, pregnant with her fifth child, Emecheta left her husband.[15][16] While working to support her children alone, she earned a B.Sc. (Hons) degree in Sociology in 1972 from the University of London. [5][6][15] In her 1984 autobiography, *Head above Water*, she wrote: "As for my survival for the past twenty years in England, from when I was a little over twenty, dragging four cold and dripping babies with me and pregnant with a fifth one—that is a miracle." [17] She went on to gain her PhD from the university in 1991.

#### Plot of the novel

*Second Class Citizen* is a 1974 novel by Nigerian writer Buchi Emecheta, first published in London by Allison and Busby. It was subsequently published in the US by George Braziller in 1975. A poignant story of a resourceful Nigerian woman who overcomes strict tribal domination of women and countless setbacks to achieve an independent life for herself and her children, the novel is often described as semi-autobiographical, with the journey from Nigeria to London following closely Emecheta's own trajectory as an author.

#### MAJOR AND MINORS CHARACTERS FROM THE NOVEL

A. MAJOR CHARACTERS– The two major characters in the novel are:

1. ADAH OBI: Her name is Adah Ofili but married to Obi, from Ibuza, her husband is an Ibuza man, daughter of Ma and Pa. Ma, a seamstress, Pa, a railway molder. She lost her father and her mother remarried. Not well trained by her cousin—Vincent. After the death of her father, she needed home and married Francis. Boy, her brother is sent to school. She sponsored her husband education to England. She travelled to England. Both couple quarreled most time, her husband burnt her manuscript and they separated.

2. FRANCIS OBI: Husband of Adah. Married Adah because she was an orphan and a hardworking woman. He enjoyed immunity based on priority placed on male child. A self-conscious man, depended on his wife. His education was sponsored by his wife, not serious in school, failed most time in his examination, jealous of Adah's success, a male chauvinist. A wicked husband, burnt his marriage certificate and his children's birth certificates. He allows Igbo way of life to control him. Finally, they separated.

#### B. MINOR CHARACTERS:

The following are some of the minor characters from the novel.

BABALOLA: He came to London to study like Obi, on a Northern Nigerian Scholarship and never had any studies. Lived a reckless life, lavished his money. He believed Allah will take care of "future action". Married Janet an English girl. His friends abandoned him for the action. He connected Adah to Trudy, the child minder.

MR. COLE: He is a Sierra Leonian, a neighbor of Ofili on Akinwumi street. He was a teacher at the Methodist school. Adah went into his class. Mr. Cole encouraged Adah to get education. He led Adah home at the close of school.

COUSIN VINCENT: A cousin from Adah's motherside. Adah lived with him after she lost her father and her mother remarried. He could not pass his school examination. He gave two shillings to buy a pound of steak from the market. Adah used the money to buy entrance form into Methodist Girls High School. He flogged Adah for what she did.

DR. HUDSON: She was a surgeon, ran a surgery at the crescent. It was her surgery Adah ran to when her fetus kicked hard at her stomach. Adah avoided the hospital because of the cost involved.

MR. NOBLE: A Nigerian that acquired the "noble" as soon as he got to England. Many stories were heard about his background, came to London to study Law and could not make a law degree. He got job at the railway to shoulder a lift without electricity. He had accident and was compensated. He bought an old terrace house on Willes Road by Kentish Town Station. He was Obi's landlord.

LAWYER NWEZE: He was the first lawyer from Ibuza. He was given a heroic welcome after his education in England, an inspiration to Adah Ofili. He never married a white woman.

TRUDY: She was introduced to Adah by Babalola. She was a baby minder. She was charged to take care of Adah's two babies, she stayed a block away from Obis. She lived in a slummy area. Vicky contacted virus meningitis, Adah accused her of incompetency. Adah's action led to the removal of Trudy's name from the list of approved child-minders. She left Malden Road to Camden Town.

## Week 8: Second-Class Citizen by Buchi Emecheta

Specific objectives: I should be able to:

1. discuss the themes of the novel;
2. discuss main events in the novel.

Themes.

The novel *Second-Class Citizen* by Buchi Emecheta presents several important themes including misogyny, immigration, racial prejudice, and female strength.

The novel reveals the deeply engrained misogyny in Nigerian culture. As a young girl, Adah longs for an education, but her family will not send her to school, for they view education as unnecessary for females. Adah goes anyway, however, and is allowed to continue her education when her family realizes that they will get a higher bride-price for an educated young woman.

As Adah grows older, she decides to forgo further education because of pressure from her family to marry. They would like her to marry an older man, but Adah wants to make her own choice and marries Francis Obi. Francis, however, turns out to be just as misogynist as others in their homeland. After Adah joins him in London, Francis forces himself on her, beats and abuses her, and refuses to care for their children. Eventually, when Adah seeks divorce, Francis denies that the children are even his. In his eyes, Adah (and all women) are no more than an object to be used or a piece of trash to be thrown out.

Another theme in the novel is immigration and the experiences of immigrants. In London, Adah must learn how to adapt to another culture, and she is shocked by the differences between Nigeria and Great Britain. Adah has always dreamed of living in Great Britain, but she soon discovers that the reality is nothing like her dreams. She finds the city and their apartments dirty and unwelcoming. Her children suffer at the hands of a daycare provider who behaves badly and lives in filth, and officials refuse to do anything about it, at least at first.

Further, Adah and her family face strong racial prejudice and discrimination. They have difficulty even finding a place to live because of their race, and they are treated very much as second-class citizens. Adah, who has always been a member of the upper class at home, struggles to adapt.

Yet even in the midst of misogyny, the trials of an immigrant life, prejudice, and discrimination, Adah remains surprisingly strong. She finds jobs in libraries, builds friendships, resists and eventually divorces her husband, and even writes a novel. By the end of the story, Adah is on her own with five children, determined to make her way in the world and care for her children as well as she can. She vows she will survive.

Events and significance.

### Chapter 1 Summary

Begin reading a simplified version of the novel *Second Class Citizen* with the first in this series of its chapter summaries. As always, I'm going to focus on the major incidents in this summary of Chapter One of *Second Class Citizen*. This is a novel by the celebrated Nigerian author, Buchi Emecheta. The first chapter of *Second Class Citizen* forms the backbone of the entire narrative. You cannot, therefore, afford to ignore it.

### Chapter 2 Summary

This chapter opens with Pa's sudden death (and later, a passing reference to Ma's death as well). In fact, Chapter Two recounts most of the events that serve as stumbling blocks in Adah's way in her desire to achieve her dream of travelling to the United Kingdom.

### Chapter 3 Summary

Next in this compilation, is a summary of Chapter Three. In Chapter Three, Adah finds herself in the United Kingdom. Our heroine in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* is happy to have made Pa, her late father, proud. She remembers Pa at this moment and her heart sings with joy.

#### Chapter 4 Summary

On the first day of June, just about three months after her arrival in the United Kingdom, Adah, our heroine, starts her new job as a librarian at the North Finchley Library. Each morning, she boards a train at Finchley Central to go to work.

#### Chapter 5 Summary

Chapter Five of *Second Class Citizen* by Buchi Emecheta recounts an incident which causes Adah unbearable pain and nearly cost her the life of Vicky, her baby son with his "small Francis mouth". [READ MORE ...](#)

#### Chapter 6 Summary

The title of Chapter Six of *Second Class Citizen* is a disturbing, "Sorry, No Coloureds". This refers to a racist inscription on notices that advertise room vacancies in London. In effect, you cannot be accepted as a tenant in a white-owned property if you're a coloured or black people.

#### Chapter 7 Summary

After their bitter experience with the racist white landlady in Hawley Street in Chapter Six, the Obis have been praying for a miracle that will make them get a new place to live. *Second Class Citizen* Chapter Seven is, therefore, about how that miracle will unfold. This chapter tells the story of Mr Noble or Pa Noble and how Adah and Francis have been lucky to find a place in Mr Noble's house.

#### Chapter 8 Summary

Join me; let's do a quick summary of *Second Class Citizen* Chapter Eight. Chapter 8 of Buchi Emecheta's novel, *Second Class Citizen* is titled *Role Acceptance*. It is principally about the continuation of Adah's woes in her unhappy marriage to Francis Obi. In this chapter, the narrator also recounts the events leading to the eventful birth of Bubu, Adah's remarkable third child and second son.

## Chapter 9 Summary

In this chapter 9 summary of *Second Class Citizen*, the focus is on Adah's experiences in the maternity ward of the University College Hospital. As you go deeper into this tutorial, you will discover, later, that the happenings in this chapter serve to prepare the ground for the conflicts that unfold in the remaining chapters, culminating in the breakdown of the marriage between Adah and Francis.

## Chapter 10 Summary

Here are the highlights of Chapter 10 in these chapter by chapter summaries of *Second Class Citizen*.

Adah returns with Bubu, her newly-born baby, from the University College Hospital.

Francis takes up a job as a postman but complains bitterly about his troubles with it.

Adah decides to ignore him.

It is Christmas time but there is nothing for Adah and her children to celebrate.

Meanwhile, Vicky's ear starts growing very large and it scares the life out of Adah.

## Chapter 11 Summary

*Second Class Citizen* Chapter 11 is titled *Population Control*. This title of Chapter 11 of Buchi Emecheta's novel, *Second Class Citizen* captures the main incident at this stage in the narrative. It is an incident surrounding the ill-fated decision Adah takes to gain personal control over her reproductive health.

Next in our chapter by chapter summaries of *Second Class Citizen* is a summary of Chapter 12.

## Chapter 12 Summary

This Chapter 12 summary of *Second Class Citizen* begins with Adah's unsuccessful attempt to terminate her fourth pregnancy (the second upon her arrival in London, UK). It ends with a quick reference to her writing of the manuscript for her first novel, *The Bride Price*. This will happen in Chapter 13. You will also



find further details regarding Adah's difficult marriage to Francis Obi, her experiences at the Chalk Farm Library as well as the birth of the baby girl called Dada.

## Chapter 13 Summary

This is the last in the chapter by chapter summaries of *Second Class Citizen*. In Chapter 13 of Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, Adah's worldview of what constitutes freedom and happiness for a married woman has changed considerably. She wants more freedom for herself and cherishes the idea of being just a housewife who can write, knit clothes and take care of her children. Adah is now more conscious of her need for freedom from Francis, her abusive husband. Thus, at the end of this chapter, Adah, with lasting emotional scars, leaves behind her marriage to Francis hoping to begin a better and happier life.

Week 9: "Do Not Go Gentle Into The Good Night" by Dylan Thomas

Specific objectives: I should be able to:

1. discuss the background of the poem/poet;
2. discuss the content analysis of the poem;
3. discuss the structure and style of the poem.

Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night

Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
Because their words had forked no lightning they  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright  
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,  
And learn, too late, they grieve it on its way,  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,  
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.  
Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

#### Background of the poem/poet

"Do not go gentle into that good night" is a poem in the form of a villanelle by Welsh poet Dylan Thomas (1914–1953); it has been described as his most famous work.[1] Though first published in the journal *Botteghe Oscure* in 1951,[2] the poem was written in 1947 while Thomas visited Florence with his family. Subsequent publication, along with other Thomas works, include *In Country Sleep, And Other Poems* (New Directions, 1952)[1] and *Collected Poems, 1934–1952* (Dent, 1952).[3]

It has been suggested that the poem was written for Thomas's dying father, although he did not die until just before Christmas 1952.[4][5] It has no title other than its first line, "Do not go gentle into that good night", a line that appears as a refrain throughout the poem along with its other refrain, "Rage, rage against the dying of the light".

Content analysis.

In the first stanza of "Do Not Go Gentle", the speaker encourages their father not to "go gentle into that good night" but rather to "rage, rage against the dying of the light." Then, in the subsequent stanzas, they proceed to list all manner of men, using terms such as "wise", "good", "wild", and "grave" as descriptors, who, in their own respective ways, embody the refrains of the poem. In the final stanza, the speaker implores their father, whom they observe upon a "sad height", begging him to "Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears", and reiterates the refrains once more.

Structure and style

The villanelle consists of five stanzas of three lines (tercets) followed by a single stanza of four lines (a quatrain) for a total of nineteen lines.[7] It is structured by two repeating rhymes and two refrains: the first line of the first stanza serves as the last line of the second and fourth stanzas, and the third line of the first stanza serves as the last line of the third and fifth stanzas.[7] The rhyme-and-refrain pattern of "Do not go gentle into that good night" can be schematized, as shown below.[8]

Refrain 1 (A1)

Line 2 (b)

Refrain 2 (A2)

Line 4 (a)

Line 5 (b)

Refrain 1 (A1)

Line 7 (a)

Line 8 (b)

Refrain 2 (A2)

Line 10 (a)

Line 11 (b)

Refrain 1 (A1)

Line 13 (a)

Line 14 (b)

Refrain 2 (A2)

Line 16 (a)

Line 17 (b)

Refrain 1 (A1)

Refrain 2 (A2)

Week 10: "Do Not Go Gentle Into The Good Night" by Dylan Thomas.

Specific objectives: I should be able to:

1. discuss the themes of the poem;
2. discuss the poetic devices of the poem.

Themes

The main themes in "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" are facing death, the lessons of age, and grief.

Facing death: The poem illustrates the painful and often paradoxical experience of confronting death.

The lessons of age: Through a series of examples, the poem shows some of the lessons learned by the aged as their lives come to an end.

Grief: The speaker discusses grief in general terms but also grieves for his dying father, whom he addresses at the poem's conclusion.

Poetic Devices.

"Do Not Go Gentle Into The Good Night" is a villanelle, a verse form consisting of five three-line stanzas followed by a four-line stanza. The main feature of a villanelle is repetition according to a set scheme: The first line of the first stanza is repeated as the last line of the second and fourth stanzas. The last line of the first stanza is then repeated as the last line of the third and fifth stanzas. This creates a pleasing

sense of rhythm and makes it easy to remember the two most important lines of the poem, which are repeated together in the final two lines.

Within this form, Thomas also uses apostrophe. In apostrophe, the poem's speaker directly addresses an absent person or object. In this case, the speaker is talking directly to his father. This adds to the emotional force of the words. Thomas uses personification, which is when objects, concepts, or animals are given human characteristics, when he refers to "frail deeds" dancing as if they are human. Thomas employs alliteration in phrases such as "blind eyes could blaze" and "deeds might have danced," and he employs assonance in such lines as "words had forked."

Thomas also uses imagery throughout the poem in words such as "lightning," "light," "sun," "blaze," and "meteor" to paint a visual picture of the way old men should fight back against death. He employs a simile when he compares old men's blind eyes to "meteors."