



GOVERNMENT ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE
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STUDY MATERIAL FOR B.A.ENGLISH

AUSTRALASIAN LITERATURE

VI – SEMESTER



ACADEMIC YEAR 2022 - 2023

PREPARED BY

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Australasian Literature

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UNIT I

FROM REMEMBERING BABYLON

David Malouf

Australian author David Malouf published *Remembering Babylon* in 1993. The novel, which won several literary awards, follows a European child's clashing experience in a non-western land. Its inspiration comes from the true observations of a British sailor, James "Gemmy" Morrill. As with *An Imaginary life* (his 1978 novella that follows Virgil's exile in contemporary Mongolia) Malouf's work deals with isolation, the nuances of language acquisition and subjectivity across culture and times.

In *Remembering Babylon*, Malouf gives a close third person tale that follows Gemmy Fairley. The point of view shifts throughout the novel to bolster the plot and mimic how truth and insight is gradually discovered.

Gemmy lives outside a string of an early Queensland settlement. It is the 1850s. The specific city-in-progress he ends up visiting is never revealed. As a young boy, he fell off of a ship and into the ocean; he was rescued by aboriginal tribes in Queensland. Sixteen years have passed when Gemmy living with the aboriginals when he chooses to leave the bush to reconnect with other Europeans.

The narrator describes the different attitudes and feelings the Aboriginals and the incoming Australians have toward the land. The aboriginals feel incorporated into the landscape; the UK settlers feel distrustful of it and therefore need to subjugate and control it.

Gemmy first meets some a group of boys around his own age. Led by 12-year-old Lachlan Beattie, the boys are entertaining themselves in the Australian bush by pretending to hunt for wolves.

When the boys first encounter Gemmy, they are shocked by his sun-tarred skin and fried white hair; they think he's an albino-looking native person. It doesn't help that Gemmy (now a young man) only recalls a few phrases of English. Afraid of Gemmy's mysterious presence, Lachlan grabs a stick and points it at Gemmy. He claims it is a gun, and Gemmy, recognizing the gesture of violence, surrenders.



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The men are deeply suspicious of this young man coming into their settlement. They fear that he's an aboriginal spy, scouting out their camp to report back to his people weaknesses in their own defence system.

In conversations the men have with themselves, Malouf also shows that Gemmy is a threat to qualities they thought were permanent: civilization, language, and race. Gemmy's proves otherwise; traits that seem insurmountable can actually be overtaken and converted to something else entirely.

When some people spot Gemmy talking with two Aboriginals, rumours circulate that Gemmy is definitely a spy. More settlers grow to dislike him, referring to him as "white black."

Gemmy does have some supporters. There is a Scottish farmer, Jock McIvor, who gives speeches defending Gemmy, as well as shelter. The gardener and minister, Reverend Frazer, also speaks in Gemmy's defence. He admires Gemmy for adjusting to the environment rather than cruelly forcing this "part of the world's garden" to meet his personal demands. The school teacher, Abbot, says that Gemmy is a pillar of human fortitude for being able to survive in a brutal land for so long.

McIvor's daughter and nephew, Janet McIvor and Lachlan Beattie tongue.

Time passes and the settlers deliberate among themselves what to do about Gemmy. Though they have settled along the coast, they live close to the wilderness, and horrified that persistent contact with that "other" world will rid themselves of their core identity. Soon, their fears get the best of them: a group violently beats Gemmy before chasing him from the area.

Though Gemmy has disappeared, his effect on the town is final. The people who supported Gemmy are now mistrusted by the community. Gemmy's presence also stays within them like ghosts. For the rest of their lives, they are haunted by Gemmy's exile and the question of the loss of their own identity. This minority also begins to view the landscape as something to be respected, appreciated, and conjoined with (an aboriginal view) rather than a space to be controlled and dominated. For instance, minister Mr. Frazer entreats the local governor of Brisbane, Sir George, to consider Gemmy's attitudes toward the natural world; the governor does not take Mr. Frazer or Gemmy seriously at all.



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One day, Janet, helping the odd bee-keeper lady, Mrs. Hutchence, is stung by a horde of bees. She has an intense religious experience that paves the way for her orthodox involvement with a religious sect later in the novel.

The novel comes to a close during WWI. It is hinted that Gemmy died in a raid on a native settlement. Lachlan is now a government minister. He visits his cousin Janet in a convent to discuss a naturalized British citizen of German heritage who may be deported because of the anti-German influence during and after World War I. While walking through a garden, they also fondly remember Gemmy and the call for reflection and respect that he encouraged in their own lives.

THE SINS OF THE MOTHER

- **Jamil Ahmed**

The story is set in Baluchistan, evoking desert land and harsh weather. The man and his wife are from an area called Goth Siahpad, a place with a very small population in Pakistan's South Western province, and it is the location that lends the story its culture. It is hard to tell whether the story stereotypes a version of the Balochi tribal life, or if it is a true account of how things actually stand. We have soldiers and forts and old tribal traditions. We have camels and harsh winds and men who stone others to death. All of these things evoke a particular feeling, an idea of a place where people worry about things very different to the ones that readers living in huge metropolitan cities worry about. And yet, at its heart it is a story of survival, of a family struggling, against the odds, to survive. In terms of relevance, this piece of fiction can survive for ever.

Somewhere on an out posting surrounded on all sides by dirt and nothingness, a man turns up with a young woman in tow. Both are dirty, exhausted and close to dying. They have a camel straggling alone besides them and they are barely holding themselves together. Their first request for shelter from the soldiers stationed there is refused quite bluntly, but an earnest request for refuge is finally needed. The couple retreat to a small room to the side of the fort, locking themselves away. And so, as they start emerging slowly from their rooms, the man bringing water for the soldiers on his camel and the woman weaving gift baskets from thorn shrubs, the couple slowly become a parts of the settlement.



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things change when the couple start expecting a child. In an area dominated by men and a harsh, unforgiving climate, the child is a breath of fresh air. He is fed on army rations and follow soldiers on their patrols. At night, he curls into his mother's lap and dreams big dreams. But it is too good to last. They are a couple, who have left a dangerous past behind them, and it is bound to catch up to them. Very soon, a lovely figure on a camel arrives, heralding bad times ahead. And it is here that our story starts revealing the background, propelling the man and his family on another desperate run for their lives.

The implied romance between the couple work in subtle ways. It is worth nothing the implications of the adulterous nature of our two protagonists and how that might affect our perception of them. But the story skews our sympathies for them rather than against them. It is in this couple that we must keep our faith. Possible one of the most interesting aspects of the story is the lack of names. From the soldiers to the subedar and from the child to the sardar, there are no proper nouns used for any of the characters, except for the female protagonist. Even her lover, the man with whom she is one the run, is introduced in relation to her. This is quite interesting in terms of gender representation in a story. A writer does not use particular words without a reason, then the reasoning behind such a blatant lack of names besides Gul Bibi's becomes quite a point of curiosity.



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UNIT II

THIS LANGUAGE, THIS WOMEN

- Yasmine Gooneratne

In this poem she is lamenting over her old love forever because of your missing. You do not see her loveliness which is open and is renewing with no end because of her flexibility and kindness.

If you should try to take her from me, I would not try to bring her back. The prestigious behaviour of the imperial touch that gave her protection is now becoming a wasted wreck. I would send you letters on her behalf in this situation till you win my confidence. She would not leave her faithful qualities which are greater than Helen's being truer than a mother, sister, wife, dearer than life.

She is no longer an honourable lady if she has unfaithful qualities. The unfaithful, opportunist people were given up long ago. They who appeared as her protectors and who while pampering her, collected wealth are gone now. Those men are losing their energy in a distant country: they have no more strength. She is just wandering here all by herself without friends. Now she has nothing else to give but her heart.

So do not call her an undisciplined woman, and an outsider. You call those names because of your jealousy and it is your misuse of words. What those words now mean is secret desires. She has been a great lady. She comes from respectable generations. She is rich in her mind and has a lovely nature. Now that her unsuitable old connections are over she is full of these excellent warm qualities. She is suitable to be your bride and she is my goddess.

MAJOR THEME:

Mutual understanding and trust are very important in married life.

OTHER THEMES:

Suspicion causes misery. Mother's love does not change.

TECHNIQUES

metaphor: paper boats Empress's daughter my Muse

Language: simple and slightly metaphorical.



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PARAPHRASE

In 'This language, this woman', Yasmine Gooneratne blames her ex -son in Law for scolding her daughter with bad language. The girl seems to belong to a high society with much wealth and respect. It seems that she spent a luxurious and playboy life which caused the end of her marriage. But ultimately she is left alone. The poet shows the valuable part of her daughter and tries to convince her son in Law that she should be excused and reunited by him.

It is a confession on the one hand and a plea on the other hand. The subject- matter is a broken marriage and the theme is 'A daughter is valuable to her mother whatever blame is put on her.' Appropriate words and vivid descriptions are used in the poem. The language is the simple modern language.



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UNIT III

THE CHOSEN VESSEL

- Barbara Baynton

Barbara Janet Baynton was an Australian writer known primarily for her short stories about life in the bush. She published the collection *Bush Studies* (1902) and the novel *Human Toll* (1907). Baynton's stories challenge the vision of life in the bush in a number of ways: the majority of her protagonists are female; the real danger comes not from the bush but from the men who inhabit it. Baynton originally submitted the story under the title "When the Curlew Cried" but Stephens changed this to "The Tramp".

"The Chosen Vessel" implies that the abstract concept of the maternal can exist only at the cost of the woman by denying the mother – the right to exist as a person: The Virgin Mary exists only to provide God with his son a wife is there to ensure the transmission of power and property from father to son. At the end of Baynton's story even this revered position is denied to women.

The Chosen Vessel is the story of a woman – the nameless wife of a bushman – left alone with her child in their shanty. Her husband leaves each week for a nearby station in order to earn his wages and she is left on her own looking after her infant child. Despite her protests, she is being left in a vulnerable state, she finds herself alone each week, trying to cope on her own and dreading the arrival of strangers on foot.

Baynton shows that women are viewed as objects – stupid, senseless beings whose purpose was to serve a man – an object to be ignored until needed. Baynton presents a woman who makes unsuccessful attempts at chasing a cow. This leads her to remember another time when this occurred and her husband called her 'cur'. The husband was displeased with her inability at the task at hand. Rather than being mad at the cow for disobeying its owner, her husband becomes angry and insults his wife. The woman is treated worse than an animal by her own spouse.

The difference between woman and animal as viewed by a man is continually reiterated in chosen Vessel. The detachment from her husband was greater than from a farm animal. This shows that women are denied a part in the Australian legend though animals are not. As the woman is nameless, it serves the point that "women are not identifiable as individuals, in the bush".



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The woman was not afraid of the horseman, but swagman. Though she gave him food and water, the swagman was not grateful, he kept a watch on the lonely house, She was afraid and wanted to go away from the house, but remembered the harsh words of her husband, when she spoke about the dangers that nobody would want to run away with her. Sensing dangers she took precautions to secure her child and herself. She slept, suddenly she woke up and realized that she had slept. The woman held her baby tightly and watched the shadow moving around. She prayed to god. The uncertainty increased her terror. She stood silently and listened to the movements of the swagman. All of a sudden, she heard the sound of horse's hoof nearby.

The woman darted out of the house and ran frantically, she called to him in Christ's name, in her baby's name. But the distance grew greater and greater. When the man's hand gripped her throat, she cried 'Murder'. She faced her death, finally the child was rescued by a boundary rider.

The second part of the story is about Peter Hennessey. He was a good Catholic that he dared to look back, even when he heard the sound 'For Christ's sake'. He rode fast to cast his vote later, he met the priest and poured forth the story, of his vision. The priest was astonished that he did not stop to save the woman.

For most of the way through the second section, it is difficult to see any connection between the two parts, but connection is definitely there. And that gives the story its gothic power.

The Drover's Wife

- Henry Lawson

The bush woman is alerted to the fact that a snake has just entered her small, ramshackle house deep in the Australian outback by her eldest son, Tommy. Tommy goes after the snake with a stick, and the family dog, Alligator, follows suit. Both are unable to catch the snake, however, which slips under the floorboards of the house.

Aware that a snake bite so far from help would be deadly, the bush woman unsuccessfully attempts to lure the snake out. With the sun setting and a thunderstorm on the horizon, she sets up a bed on the kitchen table for her children, where they will be out of the snake's reach.



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The bush woman once dreamt of a more comfortable life and enjoyed being pampered by her husband, a drover. Ever since he lost everything in a drought, however, she has grown used to being alone and working tirelessly to ensure her family's survival. Although she does not see her husband very often, he treats her well. However, because he is gone for long periods of time, she is left to take care of the family on her own and protect them from the various threats they face in the bush. She once nearly died in childbirth, and only survived with the help of a local Aboriginal couple. When one of her children died, she rode nearly 20 miles with the child's body in search of help. She also once fought a bush-fire that nearly consumed the house, managing to put it out with the help of four bushmen who arrived at the last minute.

She has not always won against the assaults of nature: she cried after a flood broke through the dam her husband had built, and she lost two her two best cows to illness. But she has successfully fought off many wild animals, and also held her own against men who have come to the door while her husband is away. She has few pleasures in the outback, though she makes time to read the Young Ladies' Journal is sure to dress herself and her children up every Sunday and go for long walks through the bush with her baby carriage.

The bush woman realizes that her candle is about to go out, so she goes to get some wood from the woodpile. When she does so, the woodpile collapses, causing her to realize that the Aboriginal man who constructed it must have deceived her by building it hollow. She begins to cry, but soon calms down.

Alligator suddenly approaches the partition between the kitchen and the rest of the house, and the bush woman realizes that the snake must be emerging. She grabs her stick, but Alligator gets there first. The dog grabs the snake with his mouth and shakes it until it dies. The woman then throws the snake's remains into the fire. Tommy embraces his mother and promises that he will never be a drover like his father.

Silent Noise

- Jackie Kabir

In Bengal, there has been very disastrous flood. As a result, a large portion of the village was flooded. There is hardly a spot of dry ground left during the rains. The water rose inch by inch. The people were estranged. Life seemed



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meaningless. All the furniture were immersed in a feet of water. Such was the condition to which the people were reduced that they had to be helped by the people of nearby houses in order to be saved from the utter ruin which stared them in the face. It often became impossible for them to go from one house to another on foot.

A flood is caused mainly due to excessive rainfall. Like a fire or storm, a flood is one of the greatest of affection that comes upon humanity. Thousands of people were rendered destitute and homeless for the flood was not confined to a small area, but extended over other places. As flood is generally due to forces over which man has no control, it is popularly believed to be the punishment of God inflicted upon man for the violation of his laws. The whole area looked like a river. Rumki's grandmother stayed in an adjacent room. The best person in the houses was the five-year old Rumki who was simply adorable. The picture of the young children of such a household gathered round an old grandmother of an evening. Listening to some fairy tale, the women busy cooking and providing for other comforts with a cheerful face.

Rumki's father returned home. He saw the condition of the house. He always came home at different times but it was inevitable after dusk. Rumki was determined to stay back. Next to an earthquake, a flood is perhaps the most disastrous of all the calamities of nature. The peacefulness of this scene while the shades of the evening were drawing closer and closer was unrivalled. By a middle-class householder was meant a man of moderate means. In short, their life was so simple and peaceful that even the wealthiest of families could have no ideas of the pure joy and happiness which these people enjoyed. It is due to co-operation and selfishness of the members that harmony and peace is maintained in such families.



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UNIT IV

KULLARK (HOME)

- Jack Davis

INTRODUCTION

Kullark is a play written by an Aboriginal Australian writer Jack Davis. The play represents the author's real-life experience as an aborigine. *Kullark* depicts the postcolonial Australia under the whites and also depicts the sufferings of the native people, experienced for the sake of race/skin colour. The author has used various stage techniques like symbolism and stage settings. The play deals with themes like Identity, marginalization, racism and colonialism.

Summary

The play has two different plots interwoven with one another. First plot depicts the present life of native Australian Alec and another one deals with the past history of colonization. The history begins with the British settlement in Australia. Captain Stirling, the founder of Swan River Colony and Frazer meet Yagan's father and mother and offers their dresses. They find the aborigines friendly and establish the colony near Swan River. Thus, the British colony is established in Australia.

The next scene presents a friendly relationship between Will, a white settler and Yagan, an aborigine. They exchange fish for Flour. The relationship continuous until Jenkin, another officer threatens Yagan with Gunshot. In the course of time, Will and his wife Alice comes to know that Yagan has killed two whites for killing his (Yogan's) brother. Yagan soon escapes from prison and comes to Will's home. The government announces thirty pounds reward for the person who catches Yagan. Yagan is shot dead by a little boy, William Keats who pretends to befriend Yagan. Soon the British brings the area under their control and threatens the natives with their guns.

After the colonization, the races begin to mix because of interracial marriages between natives and settlers. Soon, half-aborigine children begin to born. The half-black people struggle to establish a single identity throughout the play. Act II revolves around the history of the life of Alec's father Thomas who is arrested and forced to live in settlement area, just because he is multiracial. Thomas tries to escape from the prison four times but caught by the police and



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put into prison for six months for each escapement. Finally, the day comes when he is released and ordered to live with his wife and children in his desired area.

Thomas's son Alec becomes an Army officer and builds his own identity as an aborigine Australian citizen and begins to despise whites for the marginalization which he experienced when he was a child. Alec becomes a drunkard and retires from Army and marries Rosie. Alec and Rosie beget Jamie, who is their son. In the first act, Jamie returns from abroad after higher studies. Jamie and Alec quarrels over Alec's drinking habit and the play ends with their realization of their freedom and free existence in their own home.

Postcolonial reading of *Kullark*:

The play can be analysed with a postcolonial perspective with the application of the concepts such as *mimicry*, *hybridity*, and *agency*. The four generations of people represent four kinds of colonial attitudes. Yagan is targeted and killed by the coloniser because they think himself to be a threat to their colonial power. He epitomizes the colonized aboriginal community. Thomas represents the quality of *agency* and *mimicry*. He both serves the white and despises them as well; Thus, reveals *ambivalent* nature. Alec shows his mimic attitude by drinking British drinks and shows his resistance through appropriation of English language. Jamie exemplifies *hybridity* by swaying between two different life styles.

Conclusion:

The play *Kullark*, thus, exposes the sufferings of the aborigines and the history of colonization of Australia with the life of main characters.



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UNIT V

A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS

- Kahled Hossain

On the outskirts of Herat, a girl named Mariam lives with her embittered and estranged mother, Nana. Mariam's father, Jalil, is a businessman who owns a cinema and lives in Herat with his three wives and nine children, but his affair with Mariam's mother led to him sweeping her under the rug by building her a small hut outside of the city, relegating her to it. Nana resents Jalil for his mistreatment of her and deceptive attitude towards Mariam. Jalil travels to visit Mariam, his illegitimate daughter, every Thursday. On her fifteenth birthday, Mariam wants her father to take her to see Pinocchio at his movie theater, against the pleas of her mother. Jalil promises to do so. When he does not come, she travels to his house in Herat and sleeps on the street outside after Jalil's doorman refuses to let her in, claiming that Jalil is busy. Later, she storms into the house and sees her father, but Jalil's chauffeur drives her back home. Upon returning home, Mariam finds that her mother has committed suicide out of fear that her daughter had deserted her. She is taken to live in Jalil's house, but his wives push him to quickly arrange for Mariam to be married to Rasheed, a shoemaker from Kabul who is thirty years her senior. Mariam resists, but is soon pressured into the marriage, moving away with Rasheed. In Kabul, Rasheed is initially kind and waits for her to adjust. However, as Mariam becomes pregnant and miscarries multiple times, their relationship sours, and he becomes increasingly moody and abusive over her inability to bear him a son.

Meanwhile, a younger girl named Laila grows up in a neighboring house in Kabul. She is close to her father, a kind-hearted teacher, but worries over her mother, who is depressed and unresponsive following her two sons' death in the army. Laila is also close friends with Tariq, a neighbor boy, but their friendship is increasingly frowned upon by others as they grow older; in spite of this, they develop a secret romance. When Afghanistan enters the war and Kabul is bombarded by rocket attacks, Tariq's family decides to leave the city, and the emotional farewell between him and Laila culminates in them making love. Laila's family eventually also decides to leave the city, but a rocket destroys their house as they are preparing to leave, killing her parents and severely injuring Laila. She is subsequently taken in by Rasheed and Mariam.



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As Laila recovers from her injuries, Rasheed expresses interest in her, to Mariam's dismay. Laila is also informed that Tariq and his family have died on their way out of the city. Upon discovering that she is pregnant with Tariq's child, Laila agrees to marry Rasheed to protect herself and the baby, giving birth to a daughter, Aziza, whom Rasheed rejects and neglects for being a girl. Jealous of Laila and Rasheed's interest in her, Mariam initially is very cold, but gradually warms Laila as she attempts to cope with both Rasheed's abuse and the baby. The two become close friends and confidants, formulating a plan to run away from Rasheed and leave Kabul, but they are soon caught. Rasheed beats them both, locking them up separately and depriving them of water, almost killing Aziza.

A few years later, the Taliban rises to power and imposes harsh rules on the Afghan population, severely curtailing women's rights. In a women's hospital that has been stripped of all supplies, Laila is forced to undergo a C-section without anesthesia to give birth to Rasheed's son, Zalmai. Laila and Mariam struggle with raising Zalmai, who Rasheed dotes on and favors greatly over Aziza. There is a drought, and living conditions in Kabul become poor. Rasheed's workshop burns down, and he is forced to take other jobs. He sends Aziza to an orphanage, and Laila endures a number of beatings from the Taliban when caught alone in attempts to visit her daughter.

One day, Tariq appears at the house and is reunited with Laila, who realizes that Rasheed had hired the man to falsely inform her of Tariq's death so that she would agree to marry him. When Rasheed returns home from work, Zalmai tells him about the visitor. Suspicious of Laila and Tariq's relationship, Rasheed savagely beats Laila. He attempts to strangle her, but Mariam intervenes and kills him with a shovel, telling Laila and Tariq to run. Afterward, she confesses to killing Rasheed in order to draw attention away from them and is publicly executed. Laila and Tariq leave for Pakistan with Aziza and Zalmai, and spend their days working at a guest house in Murree, a summer retreat.

After the fall of the Taliban, Laila and Tariq return to Afghanistan. They stop in the village where Mariam was raised and discover a package that Mariam's father left behind for her: a videotape of *Pinocchio*, a small sack of money, and a letter. Laila reads the letter and discovers that Jalil had regretted sending Mariam away, wishing that he had fought for her. Laila and Tariq return to Kabul and use the money to repair the orphanage Aziza had stayed in, where Laila starts working as a teacher. She becomes pregnant with her third child, and if it is a girl, vows to name her Mariam.