

**WMU English Department Ph.D. Degree  
Qualifying Exam List for Postcolonial Literature  
2009 Revision**

Postcolonial literature refers to works written in the former European empire after the formal end of colonial rule. In English this primarily means Anglophone literature from Africa, the Caribbean, and India since about 1947 (Indian independence), though some works from before this period are relevant. Texts from North and South America, Australasia, the Middle East, and Europe may also be described as postcolonial when they address issues of imperialism and its aftermath, such as nation building, race relations, diaspora, emigration, and exile.

The WMU English department postcolonial literature core list was revised in 2009 to recognize the impact of globalization and the post-9/11 world order on postcolonial studies. Works in translation and works from the Middle East are included along with exemplary texts from the Anglophone tradition. The study of postcolonial literature inevitably includes postcolonial theory and criticism, and historical, cultural, and political knowledge of the various contexts in which postcolonial texts are written and circulate.

Students taking the Postcolonial Literature qualifying exam must be familiar with all literature and criticism on the Core List below. Each student must also be familiar with **at least twenty** additional texts, which should be chosen to reflect an area of interest to that student. Such areas of interest might include:

- Literature of a particular ethnic group, language, region, nation, or continent (African, Australian, Canadian, Irish, Indian, Latin American, Middle Eastern, Native American)
- British or European imperial literature (by authors like Kipling, Conrad, etc.)
- Translated postcolonial literature (in Arabic, French, Spanish, etc.)
- A thematic focus (like gender, diasporic identity, forced exile, adolescent literature)
- Postcolonial theory

Students are also encouraged to develop their own areas of interest and a list of corresponding texts in conjunction with appropriate English department faculty members (Drs. Steve Feffer, Todd Kuchta, Jil Larson, Mustafa Mirzeler, and Allen Webb).

**A. Core Literature**

Understanding postcolonial literature requires knowledge of the colonial literature to which it responds. Thus, students taking the exam should be familiar with at least three of the following British colonial texts: Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1899); Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719); E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (1924); Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (1901); and William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (1610). In addition, students must be familiar with the following literary works:

1. Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (1959, Nigeria)
2. Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable* (1935, India)
3. Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest* (1969, Martinique)
4. J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980, South Africa)

5. Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (1988, Rhodesia/Zimbabwe)
6. Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979, Nigeria)
7. Aminatta Forna, *Ancestor Stones* (2006, Sierra Leone)
8. Brian Friel, *Translations* (1981, Ireland)
9. Athol Fugard, *Blood Knot; Sizwe Bansi is Dead; Master Harold ... and the Boys* (South Africa)
10. Nadine Gordimer, *July's People* (1981, South Africa)
11. Sahar Khalifeh, *Wild Thorns* (1976, Palestine)
12. V. S. Naipaul, *The Mimic Men* (1967, Britain)
13. R. K. Narayan, *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (1961, India)
14. Ousmane Sembene, *Xala* (Senegal, 1973)
15. Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966, Britain/Caribbean)
16. Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (1997, India)
17. Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (1981, India)
18. Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (1966, Sudan)
19. Wole Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975, Nigeria)
20. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Devil on the Cross* (1980, Kenya)
21. Derek Walcott, *Collected Poems* (1986, Caribbean)

## B. Core Theory and Criticism

To highlight some of the central issues in postcolonial studies, the secondary readings below are organized according to key concepts. Except for the books listed under 1 and 2, all sources are available from Dr. Kuchta for photocopying.

1. Resistance. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961; New York: Grove, 1977).
2. Language. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: James Currey, 1986).
3. Orientalism. Edward Said, "Introduction" to *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).
4. Hybridity and Mimicry. Homi Bhabha. Two of the following: "Of Mimicry and Man," "Sly Civility," "Signs Taken for Wonders," "DissemiNation." In *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).
5. The Subaltern. Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. U of Illinois P, 1988.
6. Feminism. Chandra Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Boundary 2* (Spring-Fall 1984): 333-58.
7. National Allegory. Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text* 15 (Fall 1986): 65-88; AND Ahmad, Aijaz. "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory,'" *Social Text* 17 (Fall 1987): 3-25.
8. Diaspora and Ethnicity. Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities." *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. Ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996). 441-49.
9. The Middle East. Magda M. Al-Nowaihi. "The 'Middle East'? Or ... / Arabic Literature and the Postcolonial Predicament." *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, Ed. Henry Schwartz and Sangeeta Ray (New York: Blackwell, 2000), 282-303; AND Fatema Keshavarz, *Jasmine and Stars: Reading More than Lolita in Tehran* (North Carolina Press, 2007).

10. Globalization. Masao Miyoshi, "A Borderless World? From Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation-State." *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Summer 1993): 726-51.
11. "Terrorism." Elleke Boehmer, "Postcolonial Writing and Terror." *Wasafiri* 22.2 (July 2007): 4-7. AND Stephen Morton, "Terrorism, Orientalism and Imperialism." *Wasafiri* 22.2 (July 2007): 36-42.

### **C. Recommended Supplemental Reading**

Works listed below are not required for the exam. However, you may find these supplemental texts useful depending on your familiarity with imperial and postcolonial literature, theory, and history.

#### I. Theory and Criticism

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Write Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. New York: Routledge, 1989. Among the first works of post-colonial theory and criticism.

—. *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. London: Routledge, 2001. A dictionary of key terms, by the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*. Available in both electronic and hard copy versions through Waldo Library.

Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Post-colonialism*. London: Routledge, 2002. An extremely useful and accessible introduction to colonial and post-colonial studies, with helpful readings of key theorists. Available in both electronic and hard copy versions through Waldo Library.

Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf, 1993. An influential study by the author of *Orientalism*. See especially chapter 1.

Thieme, John. *Post-Colonial Studies: The Essential Glossary*. London: Arnold, 2003. Similar to Ashcroft *Key Concepts* (above).

#### II. History

Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983). This analysis of the nation as an imaginary construct has been crucial for postcolonial studies.

Carter, Jimmy. *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* (2006). The former U. S. President's appraisal of the Palestine situation.

Eric Hobsbawm. *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914* (1989). An excellent introduction to European imperialism. See especially chapters 1-3.

Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold's Ghost* (1998). A best-selling history of the Belgian king's exploitation of the Congo.

James, C. L. R. *The Black Jacobins* (1938). A history of the Haitian Revolution by the prominent Marxist historian.

Rodney, Walter. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1981). An influential critique of the west's role in perpetuating African poverty.

Williams, Eric. *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944). An economic analysis of the slave trade by the Caribbean historian and politician.