Scepticism: doubt
Scoff: to speak or act disrespectfully; ridicule
Sycophant: flatterer
Triology: a group of three related books, plays, paintings etc.
Voracious: eating or desiring large quantities of food.

5.10 SUGGESTED READING

Nancy E. Batty “Rushdie’s Art of Suspense” in Midnight’s Children, Ariel 18:3, July 1987


UNIT 6 MIDNIGHT’S CHILDREN AS A LITERARY EVENT

Structure

6.0 Objectives
6.1 Introduction
6.2 Midnight’s Children as a Postmodern Novel
6.3 Midnight’s Children as a Postcolonial Novel
6.4 Midnight’s Children as Historical Fiction
6.5 The Novel of the 1980s
6.6 Children of Midnight’s Children
6.7 Let Us Sum Up
6.8 Glossary
6.9 Questions
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6.0 OBJECTIVES

My objectives in this Unit are to help you assess the contribution of Rushdie’s novel to the body of English fiction. Does it signal a new moment in the history of fiction in English? In what ways has it altered our understanding of writing fiction? Do Rushdie’s experiments set the trend for a new genre in fiction? What impact did it have on the novels that followed in its wake? What does the novel’s enthusiastic reception bode for Indians writing in English?

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The publication of Midnight’s Children in 1981 was hailed as a major literary event for reasons other than its winning the Booker for that year. You are aware that the earlier generation of novelists like Rao, Narayan, Anand, Desai or Sehgal had done their bit to put Indian fiction in English on the world map. But Midnight’s Children blazed a different sort of trail. For the first time, a novel by a writer of Indian origin was seen as best reflecting the spirit of the contemporary West. The astounding reception of the novel in the West was both a sign and anticipation of the new prestige of the margin at the center. Though the space for a novel like Midnight’s Children was created by a West willing to forfeit its claims to mastery, the novel played a crucial role in making voices from the margin heard. The novel and the writer have subsequently become the nodes for contemporary debates on multiculturalism, postmodernism, migrancy and hybridity raging in the Western world today.

Midnight’s Children broke new grounds in many ways. A truly border-crossing work, its challenge to fiction, literature, history and reality called for new classifications. Its blend of fact and fiction, myth and history, storytelling and novelistic conventions defied all rules for writing fiction and to find a new genre. Linda Hutcheon has coined the term historiographic metafiction to classify Rushdie’s peculiar concoction of history and metafiction. What is historiographic metafiction? As the name suggests, it is a kind of fiction that has elements of both history and metafiction. The novel is generically differentiated from history through its dealing with events that are probable but not true. Historiographic metafiction violates this distinction by straying into traditional historical territory. If fiction can be history can
Metafiction, unlike other fiction, that labours to establish the veracity of its referents, unmasksthe “machinery” of fiction to show its referents to be made up. In this manner, metafiction challenges the notion of mimetic realism that was often projected as the only mode of writing fiction. Metafiction shows that mimetic realism is only one mode of creating fiction. As fictional referents can never be real, it least matters which conventions it employs.

Rushdie’s name figures prominently in Hutcheon’s list of practitioners of historiographic metafiction that she sees as exemplifying the condition of postmodernism. This poses a problem because Rushdie is also seen as the paradigmatic figure of post-colonialism. Postcolonial critics claim that the strong political nature of Rushdie’s writing underlines his participation in the oppositional counterdiscourse of post-colonialism. Rushdie professes to carry on the Panchatantra and Arabian Nights legacy in his writings that would make him something of an oriental storyteller. But he seems equally happy basking in postmodern glory. This fencsitting attitude has made Aijaz Ahmed see him as being complicit with both postmodernism and postcolonialism. To complicate things further postmodernism and post-colonialism overlap in so many ways that it is difficult to decide whose allegiances lie where. What do you think?

### 6.2 **Midnight’s Children as a Postmodern Novel**

As Rushdie’s novel shows a concern with the process of how it came to be written, we can perhaps classify his novel as metafiction. Like all metafiction, the telling of the story becomes a theme in *Midnight’s Children*. Rushdie’s narrator begins by sharing with his reader the problem of beginning the novel, introduces the theme of the kind of stories considered appropriate for storytelling and the role of the narrator. Have you read any novels similar to this?

When you read a novel you are so carried away by the story that you think it really occurred. You scarcely pay attention to how it was created. What effect does Rushdie’s calling your attention to the behind the scenes activity of his novel have on you? Does it spoil your fun? Rushdie not only destroys the illusion of reality that you normally expect of fiction or film but also kills the suspense by spilling the beans much ahead. What do you make of this? Like Padma, you would like to know what happened next. Similarly, when Saleem keeps referring to events that happen much later, your curiosity is sufficiently aroused to make you request him to go on. At the same time, as you already know the ending, all that leads up to it seems merely an explanation. You feel cheated out of the story. Gradually, you begin to realize that your interest in the story takes a back seat to the story making and its telling. The narrator lets you in one by one into the tricks used by storytellers to tell stories. He tells you about beginnings, middles and endings proper to a novel. He tells you about Sheherezade’s eternally delayed endings. He lets you in the art of building up to a climax. You also learn about the chain through which events are linked to one another.

Having exposed the machinery, does Rushdie stick to the rules he has outlined for you? Yes. In fact, he does so in such an exaggerated fashion that you begin to wonder what’s up. He appears to follow each of the novel’s conventions to the letter, which gives you the feeling that he is being tongue in cheek. Remember how he reduced the notion of fiction beginning with the birth of the hero to absurdity.
Remember the middles and endings that preceded the beginning? Remember the absurd explanation for events? Why does Rushdie do this?

Rushdie does this to mock at the conventions of nineteenth century realism. In turn, he makes us examine the question of fictional realism. The debate about whether art can depict life accurately has been going on since the beginning, though the status of mimetic realism keeps changing. Mimetic realism rests on a belief in the ability of art to imitate reality accurately. Now this had become a value to be cherished, above all in 19th century fiction. Rushdie takes up this aspect for close examination. Let us go back to the definition of the novel to understand the point better.

The novel is defined as a narrative of certain length that depicts events that could probably have occurred. Realist fiction takes this aspect very seriously. Very often, you have admired a piece of fiction because it seemed so lifelike. It is exactly like it might have happened in your own life. Compare this with Rushdie’s story. Saleem warns you that he is going to tell a tale that is “a strange commingling of the real and the improbable”, which turns the real unreal dichotomy topsy turvy to question the probability criterion of fiction. Rushdie takes up events that are unlikely to have occurred in a Western reader’s life. Unlike 19th century realism, which goes to great lengths to convince us that the events depicted there really happened, this novel highlights the bizarre and the uncanny. Magic and the supernatural are quite common in Romance but seem like an unlike setting for fiction. But 19th century fiction that developed as a reaction to romance worked hard at producing verisimilitude. For some reason this quality of 19th century fiction that goes by the name of mimetic realism came to be the standard by which other novels were judged. The undue emphasis on realism overlooked the fact that art can never be lifelike. The conventions of 19th century, therefore, are another set of conventions that might be substituted by any other. Metafiction bares the tricks used by writers to show that novels are all made up. It shows that fiction forms its own autotelic universe that does not correspond to anything in the real world. Unlike the writer of realist fiction, metafiction does not pretend to create an illusion of truth.

This exposure of the made up nature of fiction has unraveled other truths that were unshakeable. Take the truth of history. History is presented as an objective document of observed facts. One is not made aware of the biases that the selection and interpretation of facts is highly subjective and that facts may be distorted to serve the interests of certain people. Which means that the truth of history that we have held sacrosanct is also a made up thing. It was easier for you to accept that fiction is made up. But to think that history, too, could be made up?

Rushdie and other practitioners of historiographic metafiction parody how writers make up their stories to show how history could also be a made up story. Their crossing into the territory of history in their fictional works is intended to close the division between the two. Midnight’s Children’s strange juxtaposition of history and fiction where historical facts coincide with the life of the protagonist Saleem Sinai creates a unique combination. We shall return to Midnight’s Children as historical fiction in another section in detail. For the moment, let us look at how the novel fits into the mode of historiographic metafiction that Hutcheon celebrates as the true postmodern genre. Rushdie plays with historical incidents and conventions to show them to be as “unreal”, as fictive as things that fiction refers to.

Now let us move on to the postmodern crisis of reality. Having found out that both fiction and history are different kinds of stories, it is not difficult to grasp that reality also could be a made up thing. This idea of reality as being made up by the observer is called the “constructivist” view of the universe. The problem of postmodern fiction is not merely to challenge the view that art can accurately depict reality. Or that while selecting facts, the historian chooses to tell the stories that appeal to him or promote his interests. One is talking about a different understanding of reality that throws what we take to be the real world into doubt. Postmodern fiction, by calling
attention to the made up nature of fiction and history, shows us that reality itself is of
our own making. We too arrange our lives and construct our own reality in the way
Saleem constructs the novel by selecting and arranging events that make him the
hero. Rushdie keeps harping on the fact that the India he portrays is
Saleem/Rushdie's vision of India and might be an India of the imagination but none
the less true. He also shows that he is not interested in writing a history of post
independence India. Rather he is keen to understand how humans “filter” reality.
We all remember things that we choose to remember. Memory works by playing up
all that is pleasant and pushing unpleasant happenings into the background.

Now we must recognize that postmodernism is not a global but uniquely Western
phenomenon. It is either a reaction or a development of Western modernity. As a
critique of modernism, postmodern concerns often spill over to post-colonial
anxieties that make them appear similar. But postmodernism is a deep reaction
against Western modernism, and the crisis of reality experienced by the West today.
Crisis in the nature of reality has also brought down the stock of realism in literature.
When reality itself is shown to be a made up thing, what can fiction possibly imitate?
Postmodern Western fiction reflects and is shaped by the postmodernist crisis in the
West. Postmodern fiction no longer has a story to tell. Instead, it unmasksthe
process of its making constantly calling attention to its made up status.

This contrasts with 19th century fiction’s obsession with verisimilitude that made a
religion out of mimetic realism. On first sight, it appears that Rushdie is working in
the metafiction tradition. But then one thinks of several Indian collections of stories
in which the writing of the stories is a theme. The occasion and the travails of telling
and making the story have always formed the central story in most Indian narrative
collections. True, in Midnight's Children, the theme of the problem of writing a novel
runs through the length of the novel. And Rushdie parodies 19th century fictional
expectations to expose them to be mere conventions.

But Rushdie's narrative does not stop at showing fiction as forming its own reality
that need not have a one to one correspondence with what we take to be reality. As in
other metafiction, the emphasis on the artifice in storytelling opens our eyes to the
fact that fiction can never be life as realist conventions might lull us into believing.
Art has its own truth and its own reality. The uncertainty about what we take to be
real has certainly changed our ideas about fictional realism. The understanding that
fiction is “an infinite play of signs” that do not stand for anything outside is
strengthened by the role that language is increasingly given in shaping reality. One is
happy to note that unlike other postmodern novels, Rushdie’s novel is not an empty
play of signs. Rather it is rooted in a very real history and is grounded in the
particular problems and dilemmas of a particular society.

6.3 MIDNIGHT’S CHILDREN AS A POSTCOLONIAL
NOVEL

For a writer who has one foot in the postmodern and the other in the postcolonial
world, it is difficult to separate the different strands. More so, because postmodern
and postcolonial agendas collide in different respects. In what ways is post-
colonialism similar to or different from postmodernism?

Postcolonialism, like postmodernism, is a critique of modernism. But unlike
postmodernism, it attacks modernism from a post-colonial angle. While
postmodernism is a reaction against modernism, post-colonialism is an attempt to
show the irrelevance of the western division of pre-modern, modern and postmodern
to non-Western societies. In every field, postmodernism attempts to reverse, extend
or project the movement of modernism. This could be seen in the postmodern return
to history, in its ethic of indeterminacy, or in the rediscovery of intuition and
Midnight's Children

imagination in preference to modernity's technorationalism. But the most important aspect of postmodernism is the collapse of universalizing claims of modernism. This opens a space view other than the western. This postmodern space has been liberating for postcolonialism for the simple reason that postcolonialism has been particularly concerned with revealing that what the West passes off as universal. Thus post modern dictums are actually its own models. For example, to be modern was to move in the direction of the West. This has been rejected by postcolonialism, which shows that different people can become modern in different ways. Postmodern fiction is a natural extension of modern Western fiction just as postmodernism is a growth out of modernism. Both reflect, and are shaped by the trends of their times. Just as it is believed that non-Western societies should trace the Western route towards modernity, non Western fiction is expected to follow the movements in Western fiction.

While postcolonial fiction is bound to have some Western influences, it has grown in response to very different socio-political currents. Helen Tiffin made a very important distinction between postmodernism and post-colonialism when she pointed out that unlike postmodernist fiction, post-colonial works have a strong political content. Postcolonial fiction is deeply embedded in the history and politics of its society. Though the postmodern and the postcolonial might have a lot in common, the postcolonial works in an oppositional manner. The Postcolonial can be seen as a "counterdiscourse" to postmodernism.

In postcolonial fiction, the opposition to Western norms comes through rejecting the norms of writing fiction as specific to the West of a certain period. Rushdie subverts 19th century realist conventions even as he challenges mimetic realism to root them in the Western tradition. You may recall that Rushdie juxtaposes the conventions of 19th century realism with the formulae of oriental storytelling. Each fictional convention is placed against a fairytale formula to show storytelling to be governed by very different standards from fiction. For instance, stories have a way of beginning afresh after every ending; they "leak" into other stories before they are completed; the links between them might be very tenuous. These formulae stand out when incorporated in fiction and have the effect of introducing the fiction reader to the norms of storytelling. At the same time, this strategy also heightens his awareness of fictional convention. Rushdie places fairytale conventions against those of fiction to show that while in the case of the fairytale we are aware of them being conventions we don't realize that fiction is also artificial. While the artificiality of the one has become apparent due to the fact that we are far removed from it, that of the other seems natural to us.

In addition to this, Rushdie confronts Western fiction with eastern storytelling to show that Western literary structures are not universal. He apprises the Western reader of other narrative modes that might differ from those of the West. The difference in the style of Western and non-Western narratives, according to Rushdie, might be due to their emerging from particular knowledge systems. Look at the linear movement of the novel and the cyclic pattern of eastern narratives. They parallel the Western linear and Indian cyclic time respectively. Similarly, while fiction belongs to the scriptural tradition, that is, writing, storytelling is part of the spoken tradition or orature. The convention of a narrator telling his story to an interlocutor that Saleem borrows from Indian epics tales also arises from the specific needs of speech.

Rushdie, therefore, contrasts one set of conventions with another set of conventions to show them both to be artificial. Rushdie does not merely confront Western literature with Indian storytelling. He contrasts one set of conventions with another to reveal 19th century realism to be another convention. Saleem claims to be following in the steps of Indian epic creators like Valmiki. Is Rushdie writing a modern day Ramayana? You may note that Rushdie adopts an equally parodic stance towards his Indian materials. He is too strongly grounded in the literate tradition to return unselfconsciously to pure storytelling. Rushdie cannot be an ancient storyteller. His novels filter the pre-modern through the postmodern. At the same
time, Rushdie's inability to participate fully in the storytelling tradition does not imply disrespect towards them. Rushdie's in-between status, as that of a postcoloniality is reflected in his attempt to challenge eurocentric traditions with indigenous traditions while being aware that they are lost to him.

This brings us to another problem postcolonialism is plagued with. Does post-colonial opposition draw on a pure tradition to confront postmodernism or should it be an opposition from within? Rushdie reiterates Western fiction's conventions in an ironic fashion to show their inappropriateness to the reality he wishes to depict. But he also seems to suggest through his irreverent treatment of his traditional materials, that the solution is not in a return to an autochthonous essence. Rushdie seems to follow the strategy that Stephen Slemon noted in postcolonial resistance. He repeats the givens of Western discourse to work them outwards. Saleem's exaggerated attention to the rules of creating fiction achieves this purpose. While he builds in the Indian storytelling parallel, he does not propose them as an indigenous alternative. For a return to a pre-colonial essence is an impossibility for many like Rushdie. The compromise lies in turning both the pre-colonial and the Western inside out.

Take the much celebrated play with reality that goes under the name of magic realism. Magic realism is the most exciting thing that has happened to Western literature since the days of the Romance. But that is because of the West looking at realism as the only relationship between life and literature. Like someone said, if this were so, we would have to leave out three fourths of world's literature. *Midnight's Children* draws on one such literature - of Indian epics, tales and legends, which don't take the realist premise of Western fiction as axiomatic. Unlike realist fiction, these narratives consistently transgress into the unreal. Most of these have magical settings and characters with magical powers.

*Midnight's Children* also shuttles between the real and the unreal. Strange and bizarre things happen and characters engage in improbable actions. Why does Rushdie juxtapose the stories with unreal settings and the real world of novels? For two reasons. First, he wishes to show that as fiction is always made up, it does not matter whether you abandon all pretense at realism as in fairytales or labour at accuracy. Novels can't do more than tell stories. Secondly, he wants to challenge the notion of reality itself. Here we are treading a more dangerous territory. For societies differ in what they believe to be real. There is a world of difference between secularized societies view of the real and non-secularized societies view of the unreal. The difference between the two is captured in the way of thinking of Padma and that of Saleem. “Real” and “true” are different, according to Saleem. Common Indian folk like Padma and Mary are embedded in the “miracle laden” universe of India. Saleem and his maker Salman merely dream of it but cannot see it in their “Anglo poised pool of light.”

While an English speaking reader might find it difficult to accept the miraculous happenings in the novel, Rushdie shows you that these appear as perfectly natural to Padma or Mary. As with other differences, Rushdie contrast Western and non-Western perspectives on reality to expand the outlines of what the West takes to be the real. While Rushdie, like his anglicized narrator Saleem, might hesitate in the presence of the supernatural, he admits persons who greet the supernatural with total belief. What do you make of this? Like everything else, Rushdie challenges the universalism of West's understanding of the unreal by giving us a glimpse into belief systems that have a different relationship with the unreal.

6.4 *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN* AS A HISTORICAL NOVEL

Now let us return to the novel's relationship with history. As we discussed earlier, history deals with facts while novels deal with fiction. But historical fiction is a
genre that uses historical events and figures as a backdrop for a fictionalized story. Can we classify *Midnight's Children* as historical fiction popularized by its practitioners like Sir Walter Scott? Rushdie does not merely employ a historical setting; he turns to history as a theme. Rushdie takes up the history of postindependence India ending in the Emergency as his main theme. The history of India runs parallel to the life of the narrator Saleem resulting in a unique coupling of the private with the public. Readers of *Midnight's Children* have pointed out discrepancies and anachronisms in Rushdie's account. Rushdie, on his part, claims that he never intended to write the definitive history of India. When apprised of the "errors" in his rendering of history, he sought refuge in the device of the unreliable narrator. Why does Rushdie introduce errors intentionally? Is it merely to show that fiction cannot be confined to history? This is partly so. Rushdie is more concerned with the process of history making than showing the difference between fiction and history.

The “reclaiming” of history in postcolonial fiction has a specific political agenda. The post-colonial writer’s concern with the restoration of his people’s history grows from the imperialist projection of postcolonial people a people without history.

The myth of the lack of “historical consciousness” among “natives” was based on two presuppositions: 1) the natives had no written records 2) they had no way of systematically studying the past. Now writers like Rushdie are trying to disprove the lie. In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie juxtaposes the “remembered” truth against recorded truth and establishes the validity of the former. Oral history proceeds by the logic of memory, which works by selecting, distorting, and adding. This would seem a very imprecise manner of recording events compared to scientific history. But Rushdie tries to show that even the so-called objective history involves a selection and representation of events in a manner that distorts and alters them. This is not made obvious as history is written. Rushdie takes us through the process of history making.

As we follow Saleem fitting historical events to suit his thesis, we realize how objective histories too impose a pattern on related facts. You might have noted the "errors" in *Midnight's Children*. You might have noticed how Saleem provides a certain motivation to events to write himself into a central role. A similar process occurs during the process of interpretation of events in recorded histories. By showing how histories are made up, Rushdie closes the gap between Western and Puranic histories. He tries to show that the perceived absence of history in nations like India is due to the difference in the historiography that lingers on the status of facts. *Puranaitihasa* accords value not only to what happened but what is believed to have occurred. Rushdie holds up the truth of the imagination when he argues for his version of India based on memory or has Saleem make a case for the truth of memory.

While the role of memory and imagination in oral histories is known, we are not aware of the “imagined” nature of historical communities. Rushdie takes us back to the moment when the Indian nation was imagined. His use of the words “myth” and “dream” underlines the imagined nature of the national community. The fact that the nation is imagined into being, does not make it any less real for those who live in it. Rushdie uses this comparison to show that mythic history and scientific history are not different as they are made out to be. Both are, to a certain extent, made up. But while one enjoys the status of truth, the other is dismissed as a fantasy. This is so because one conceals its made up status while the other does not. Rushdie himself adopts puranic historiography to call his reader’s attention to other historiographical methods that were not deemed worthy of serious study. Writers like Rushdie use these methods to restore the history of India. You might have noticed that Saleem prefers to attribute a divine motivation—the method of Puranic histories—to the causality of scientific history. And places Puranic truth along with historical calendar time to show that there are two alternative methods of preserving memory.
6.5 THE NOVEL OF THE 80’S

Viney Kirpal, in *The New Indian Novel in English: A Study of the 1980s*, notes that the Indian English novel since the 1980s is different from its precursors both in technique and sensibility. Do you agree with her?

The most traumatic event in post-independence India was the imposition of Emergency in 1975, which left an indelible mark on the novels after this event. Apart from *Midnight’s Children*, *The Great Indian Novel* and *Such a Long Journey* also place the Emergency as a climatic event in their plot.

Kirpal links the historical obsession of the 1980s novel to this political event. Vrinda Nabar in *Three Indian English Novels of the 1980s* traces it to a global rediscovery of history, which began in the 1960s. The debate on the status and methods of history, the universalistic claims of Western history has culminated in the revisionist project of the Subaltern Studies group in India. This project deconstructs Western historiography from a postcolonial perspective and suggests alternate perspectives. The fiction of the 1980s reflects the novelists’ engagement with similar concerns. As Kirpal puts it, “official versions of history, patriarchal versions of womanhood, institutionalized versions of the subaltern are the discourses that are being contested and undermined by the post 1980s Indian English novelists”.

In terms of technique, the 1980s novel demonstrates the destabilization associated with postmodernism. Kirpal believes that “writing of tradition and destabilizing it, turning it on its head and installing an alternative has given a new freedom to the Indian novelist’s technique and style”. Many of the features typical of 1980s’ fiction are epitomized by *Midnight’s Children*. The novel has become so strongly reflective of the temper of the times that it is difficult to disentangle the two. Kirpal warns that the superficial resemblances between this fiction with postmodern fiction should not lead us to equate the two. This is very important because the novel of the 1980’s is still rooted in the Indian material reality. Rushdie himself made this distinction when he asserted that “books are about the world”. Postmodern fiction, on the other hand, is a linguistic construct with a precarious relationship with the world outside.

6.6 THE CHILDREN OF MIDNIGHT’S CHILDREN

Whether one believes that Rushdie “labeled a generation and liberated a literature” with Shashi Tharoor or dismisses the novel as “one great, big confused bluff”, Rushdie’s influence on the novels that followed cannot be wished away. Not only has the novel been used to benchmark others, younger writers appear to find it difficult to step out of the Rushdiesque mode. It is difficult to think of novels that do not carry the unmistakable Rushdie stamp. From *The Great Indian Novel* to *The God of Small Things*, the *Midnight’s Children* factor is never absent. One notices the same irreverent play with words and conventions, the retreat into the bizarre and the uncanny, the epic sweep, the historical ambitions, the blend of private and public that Rushdie began. Many of these novelists are too talented to blindly ape their distinguished compatriot. But few have been able to resist the Rushdie magic and attempt, at times unsuccessfully to replicate it. Do you think that the similarities in the 1980s’ fiction spring from the temper of an era or do you attribute them to the overpowering presence of Salman Rushdie? One could conclude that Rushdie invented a new genre of fiction that has been carried forward with varying degrees of success by the younger Indian writers. But it could also prove to be limiting for those who want to break free of the Rushdie mould. Some talented writers have not
Midnight’s Children received their due because Indian writing in English is expected to be the exotic masala khichdi that Rushdie patented.

6.7 LET US SUM UP

You are now in a position to understand how Midnight’s Children set up a new genre in fiction writing. Rushdie’s novel has been appropriated by both postmodernism and post-colonialism because it articulates their intersecting concerns. Whether one likes the novel or not, one is forced to concede that Midnight’s Children has been the most significant publishing event of the last decades of the 20th century. Do you think it deserved the Booker of Booker?

6.8 GLOSSARY

Appropriate: to set aside for some purpose / suitable
Agendas: subjects to be considered at a meeting
Apprises: to inform
Axiomatic: self-evident
Anachronisms: person or thing that appears to be in the wrong period of time
Allegiances: loyalty
Artifice: clever skill
Bizarre: strange, peculiar
Collide: to meet and strike violently
Complicit: to be a partner in a crime
Culminated: reach the highest point
Constructivism: the view that reality is always constructed artificially
Discrepancies: difference
Disentangle: to free from confusion
Exotic: strange and unusual
Eurocentric: European literary practices
Epitomized: a person or thing who has the essence of a certain quality
Harping on: to talk a lot about something
Historiographic Metafiction: Fiction that blends history with metafiction
Intersecting: a point where roads, lines, cross
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interlocutor:</th>
<th>The person who is talking to someone</th>
<th>As a Literary Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indeterminancy:</td>
<td>not fixed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous:</td>
<td>native</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indelible:</td>
<td>which cannot be rubbed out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metafiction:</td>
<td>Fiction concerned with the process of its own making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patent:</td>
<td>invention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precarious:</td>
<td>unsaved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmodernism:</td>
<td>Historically the phase in Western civilization that follows modernism but has also been interpreted as a concept that emphasizes indeterminacy, play, hybridity, fragmentation and so on.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postcolonialism:</td>
<td>Has been interpreted as the period following colonialism, as decolonization or a state of being pervaded in the world today shaped by the colonial encounter.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revisionist:</td>
<td>derogatory reference to an existing Marxist political system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referent:</td>
<td>that which is referred to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stance:</td>
<td>a way of standing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scriptural:</td>
<td>according to a holy writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subverts:</td>
<td>to try to destroy the power and influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacrosanct:</td>
<td>sacred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secularized:</td>
<td>secular</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technorationalism:</td>
<td>the elevation of rationality in a technocratic age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenuous:</td>
<td>very thin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgress:</td>
<td>to go beyond</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongue in cheek:</td>
<td>saying or doing something one does not seriously mean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travails:</td>
<td>pains of giving birth to a child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unraveled:</td>
<td>to make clear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verismilitude:</td>
<td>a quality of seeming to be true</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wished away:</td>
<td>to want the absence of something</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.9 QUESTIONS

1. What is historiographic metafiction? Does Midnight's Children belong to this kind of fiction?

2. Do you consider Midnight's Children a postcolonial or a postmodern novel?

3. Do you think Rushdie has set the trend for a new genre of fiction? If so, how?

4. How has Rushdie's novel influenced the novel of the 80s and the 90s?

6.10 SUGGESTED READING


