

# HARNESSING LITERATURE'S POTENTIAL TO ENGAGE STUDENTS IN LIFE BEYOND OUR BORDERS

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**WORKING WITH THE GOD OF SMALL  
THINGS AND EXPERIENCES OF FELT SENSE**

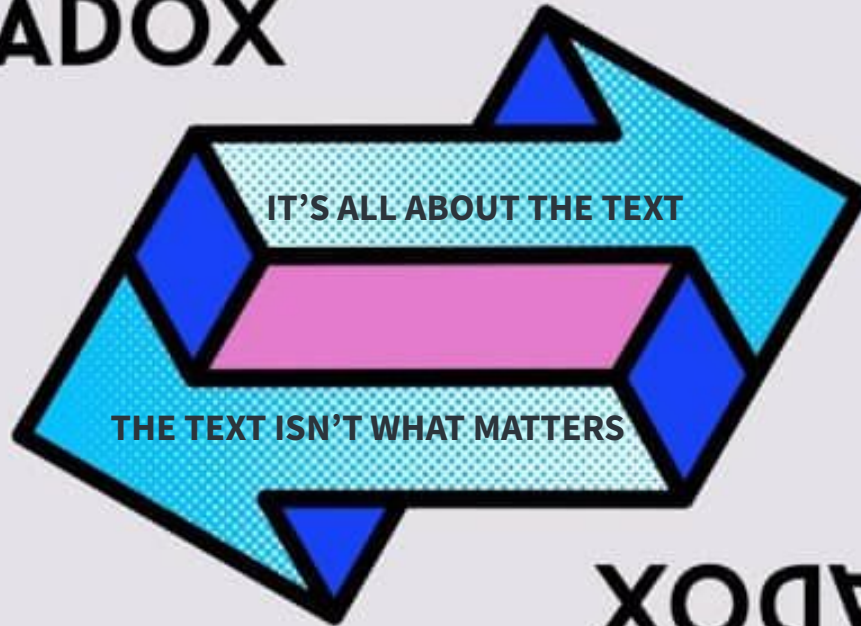
## FOSTERING COMPLEX THINKING

The power of complex thinking lies in the capacity to resolve paradoxes and tolerate uncertainty, ambiguity, and ambivalence.



# The literature teachers' paradox

**PARADOX**



**PARADOX**

## SELF DISCOVERY IS ACHIEVED:

“..not by looking out of the corner of your eye to see if everybody else is getting the same results as you or by trying to find out what others have already discovered. It is achieved by going down into one’s own inner, secret place, and asking there for a direct encounter with the world, independent of convention.” (Alan Watts)

# Fostering a Contemplative Pedagogy Through Mindful Awareness of Felt Sense

Mindful awareness of one's felt sense is a paradoxical experience in that it requires an individual to simultaneously subjectively experience embodied emotion while maintaining enough objective distance to avoid being overwhelmed by an emotional state.

I'm interested in how mindful awareness of felt sense can affect teachers' and students' experiences of reading, writing, instruction, and well-being.

See Section 3: "Getting Started" - Resources for Teachers of Creating Space for Contemplation: Infusing Mindfulness and Awareness Activities in English Language Arts Classes

## What is felt sense?

FELT SENSE IS HERE DEFINED AS A "BODY-SENSE OF MEANING"

(GENDLIN, 1981, P. 10) THAT ENCOMPASSES AND PHYSICALLY

COMMUNICATES TO THE INDIVIDUAL WHAT THEY FEEL AND KNOW ABOUT

A GIVEN SUBJECT AT A GIVEN TIME. "IT IS FELT IN THE BODY, YET IT

HAS MEANINGS. IT IS BODY AND MIND BEFORE THEY ARE SPLIT APART"

(GENDLIN, 1981, P. 165). FELT SENSE REFERS TO A "BODY SENSE OF

MEANING"; IT IS PREVERBAL, HOWEVER WE CAN DESCRIBE, NAME, OR

EXPRESS IT THROUGH ART.

Spend a few moments sensing how your body feels as you rest your gaze on this image. What textures, feelings, emotions, thoughts, memories, imaginings arise in connection with these bodily sensations?









# Writing from felt sense

See Sondra Perl's Composing Guidelines

On City University of New York website

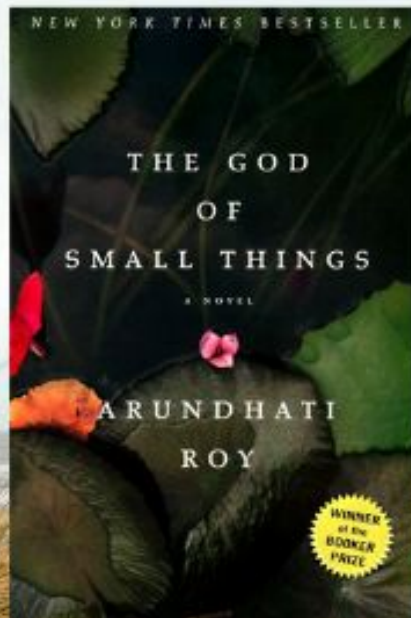
- For some students, this approach has been transformative

Conference: Embodied Liberation: The Felt Sense & Social Justice

Beatrice Blake - El Salvador - Combines Focusing on Felt Sense and Non Violent Communication

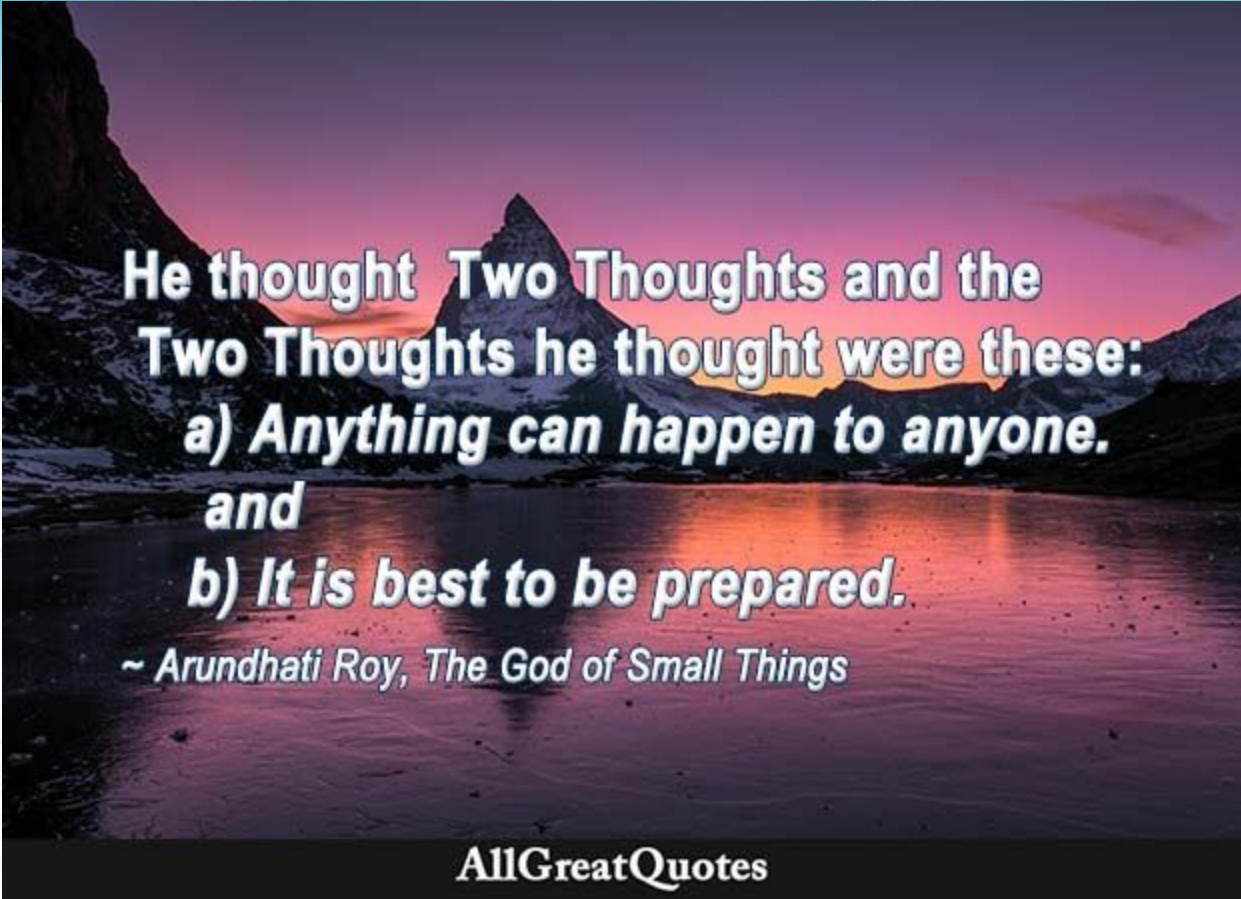
**“ And the air was full of Thoughts and  
Things to Say.  
But at times like these, only the Small  
Things are ever said. Big Things lurk  
unsaid inside.”**

*Arundhati Roy, God of small things*



There are things that can be forgotten. And  
things that cannot - that sit on dusty  
shelves like stuffed birds with baleful,  
sideways staring eyes.

Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*

A scenic landscape featuring a calm lake in the foreground, reflecting the vibrant colors of a sunset or sunrise. The sky transitions from deep purple and blue at the top to bright orange and yellow near the horizon. In the background, dark, rugged mountains rise against the sky, with a prominent, sharp peak in the center. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

**He thought Two Thoughts and the  
Two Thoughts he thought were these:**  
**a) *Anything can happen to anyone.***  
**and**  
**b) *It is best to be prepared.***

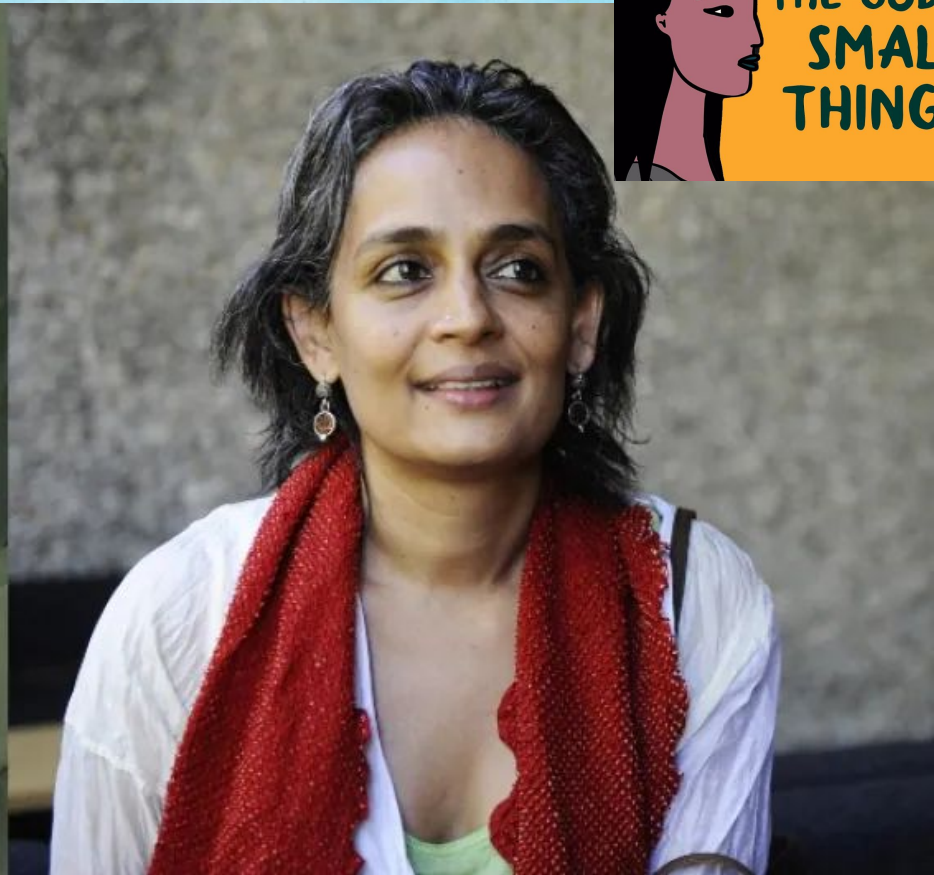
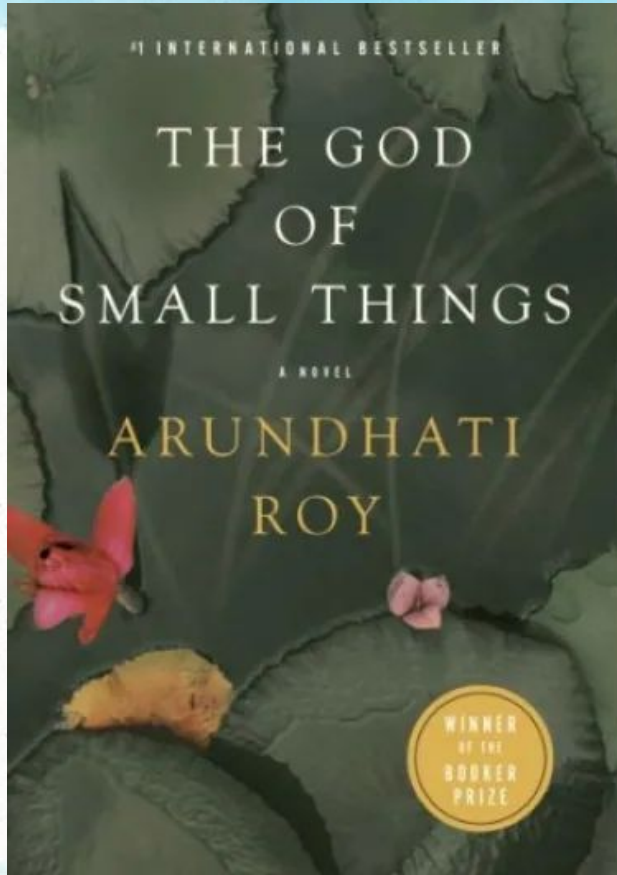
*~ Arundhati Roy, The God of Small Things*

## CONSIDERATIONS

- “The orangedrink lemondrink man”:  
Graphic depiction of sexuality
- Incest
- Faced charges of obscenity in India
- Banned by schools in Alabama after parent complaint



# INTRO - SYNOPSIS (FIRST 1:09)





## *INTERSECTIONS/ISSUES RELEVANT FOR FOSTERING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP*

Cultural or Ethnic Differences (ways of being or knowing),

Focus on gender/feminist differences,

Socio-Economic status differences,

Religion or Belief differences,

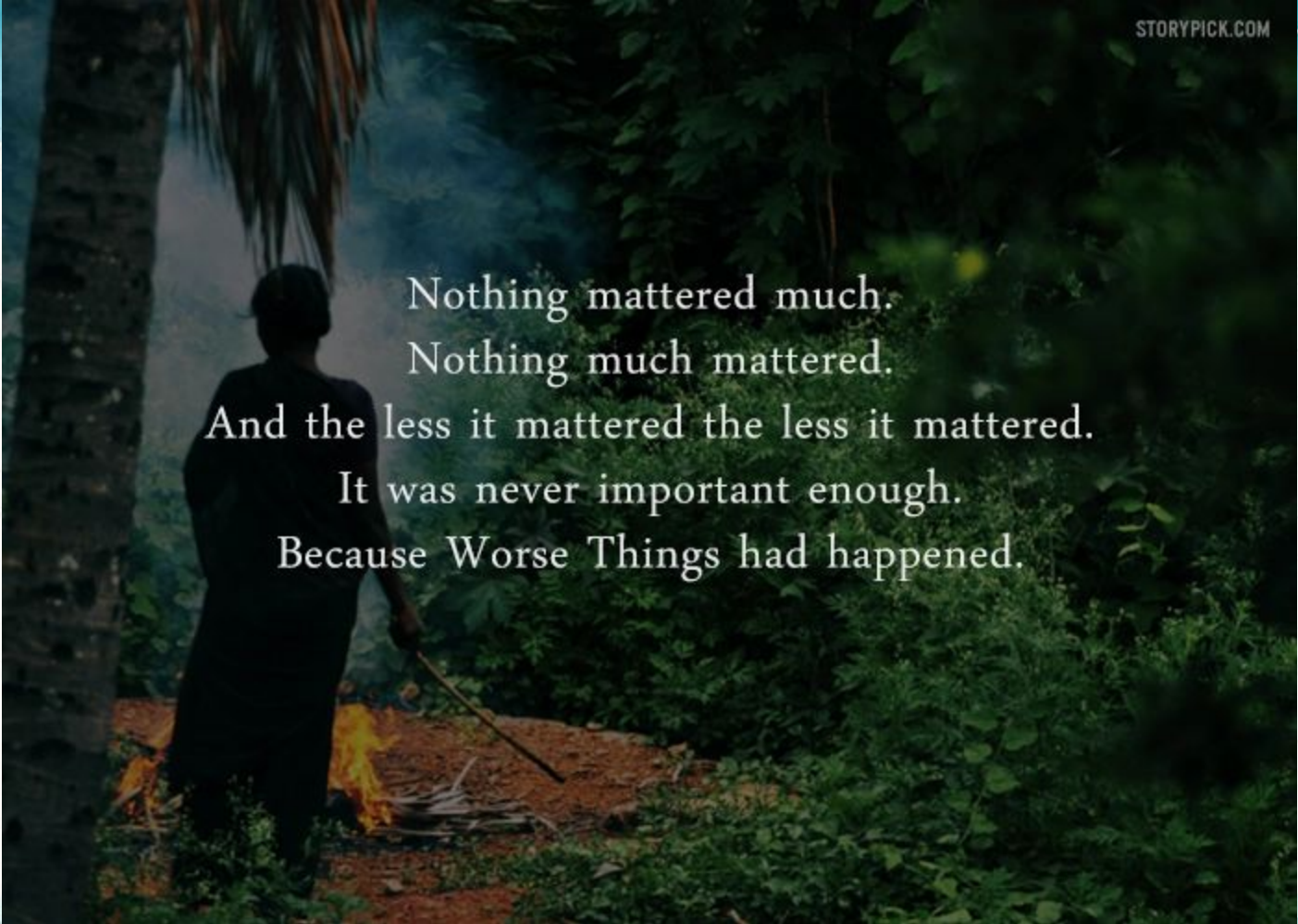
Language/Accent difference,

Global or International perspectives,

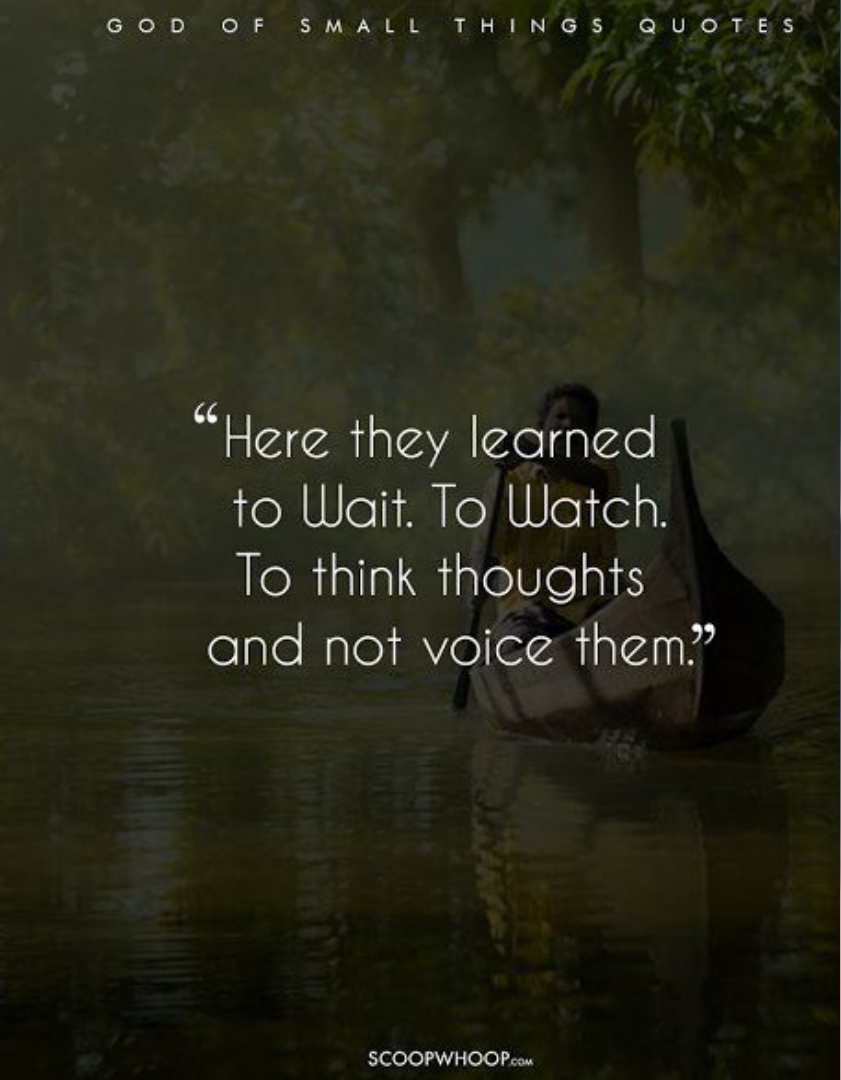
Mental Health,

Polarization or differences in political beliefs


Associated themes: bullying, equity, belonging, discrimination



Nothing mattered much.  
Nothing much mattered.  
And the less it mattered the less it mattered.  
It was never important enough.  
Because Worse Things had happened.

A person is seen from behind, sitting in a small boat on a river. The person is wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants. The boat is simple and appears to be made of woven material. The river is calm, and the background shows lush green trees and foliage. The overall scene is peaceful and contemplative.

“Here they learned  
to Wait. To Watch.  
To think thoughts  
and not voice them.”

A close-up portrait of Arundhati Roy. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a thoughtful expression. Her hair is dark and styled. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue.

There's really no  
such thing as  
the *voiceless*.

There are only  
the deliberately  
silenced, or the  
preferably  
unheard.

ARUNDHATI ROY

# Postcolonial Aspects in The God of Small Things



G O D O F S M A L L T H I N G S Q U O T E S

“Pointed in the wrong direction, trapped outside their own history and unable to retrace their steps because their footprints had been swept away.”

# Ecocriticism in The God of Small Things

There are two different understandings of ecocriticism and this is an illustration of a young girl's view.

"There aren't a whole lot of the books at the store that we can't find" says Roy. "I bought a book with a picture of a horse. That's about the only one I found. The one that showed nothing from the top and not in the middle." The God of Small Things (1)

There are two different understandings of ecocriticism and this is an illustration of a young girl's view.



Works Referenced in the 1980s  
This included  
American  
writing, and  
poetry, and  
and culture,  
and culture,  
and culture.

**The Earth as a Human Being**  
The earth has been regarded as a human being since the beginning of time. In the Bible, the earth is described as a woman who gives birth to nations and is nurtured by God. This view of the earth as a human being is a central theme in ecocriticism, which sees the natural world as a living, breathing entity with its own consciousness and emotions.

**Modern Technology on the Environment**  
A third issue brought to attention by Roy is the use of modern technology and the effect that is having on people's relationship with the environment. This can be seen in the way that modern technology is used to improve the environment, such as in the use of modern farming techniques and the use of modern technology to improve the environment. This is a central theme in ecocriticism, which sees the natural world as a living, breathing entity with its own consciousness and emotions.

**Industrial Farming**  
The use of modern technology in farming is a central theme in ecocriticism. This is seen in the way that modern technology is used to improve the environment, such as in the use of modern farming techniques and the use of modern technology to improve the environment. This is a central theme in ecocriticism, which sees the natural world as a living, breathing entity with its own consciousness and emotions.

Ecocriticism takes place in Roy's work. The God of Small Things is an ecocritical text because the environmental issues are not being read by Roy. Roy is not just a critic of the environment, but he is also a critic of the way that the environment is being treated. This is a central theme in ecocriticism, which sees the natural world as a living, breathing entity with its own consciousness and emotions.

This passage shows such a respect and reverence for the Earth, and everything that's in it. It's a beautiful, it's really beautiful. Roy's ecocritical views on the relationship between nature and humans, showing that human beings are the most important on earth. This passage adds a vital aid to show exactly how Roy's text has any other aspects on the earth as compared to everything else.

There are two different understandings of ecocriticism and this is an illustration of a young girl's view.

Roy is using ecocriticism to show how the use of technology and all the technological advancements make people lose touch with nature, thus damaging the environment.

**Introduction**  
The God of Small Things is a novel by Arundhati Roy. It is a story of a young girl who grows up in a small town in Kerala, India. The novel is a critique of the Indian caste system and the way that it affects the lives of people. This is a central theme in ecocriticism, which sees the natural world as a living, breathing entity with its own consciousness and emotions.

**The God of Small Things**  
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**Arundhati Roy**  
Roy is a writer and an environmental activist. She is known for her work on environmental issues and her activism. This is a central theme in ecocriticism, which sees the natural world as a living, breathing entity with its own consciousness and emotions.



## CRITICAL PEDAGOGY - CLASS DISCUSSION

Problem-posing takes place through dialogue (voice, attention, and acknowledgement) between participants organized around a key concept, object, or experience that forms the basis for Socratic open-ended questions. *Voice* is when participants offer, articulate, legitimate, and become vulnerable. *Attention* is when they listen, accept, understand, and give legitimacy and acknowledgement. *Acknowledgement* is their recognition of what another sees as a truth.

(Birch, p. 67)

# Discussion Questions & Essays

## The Consequences Of Our Actions

Many times we, as human beings, do not realize the consequences of our actions as we choose to act. We are impulsive beings, and this is evident in our decision making in everyday life. We take risks, we say what comes to mind, we don't hold back. We often hurt others in doing so, and we are not aware of this until it is too late. In Arundhati Roy's novel, *The God of Small Things*, we see many events where a person's actions result in somebody else getting hurt. More often than not, the person making these impulsive decisions is the character of Rahel. Through *The God Of Small Things*, readers are taught the crucial lesson that your actions and words have consequences, and unsurprisingly, these consequences hurt other people.

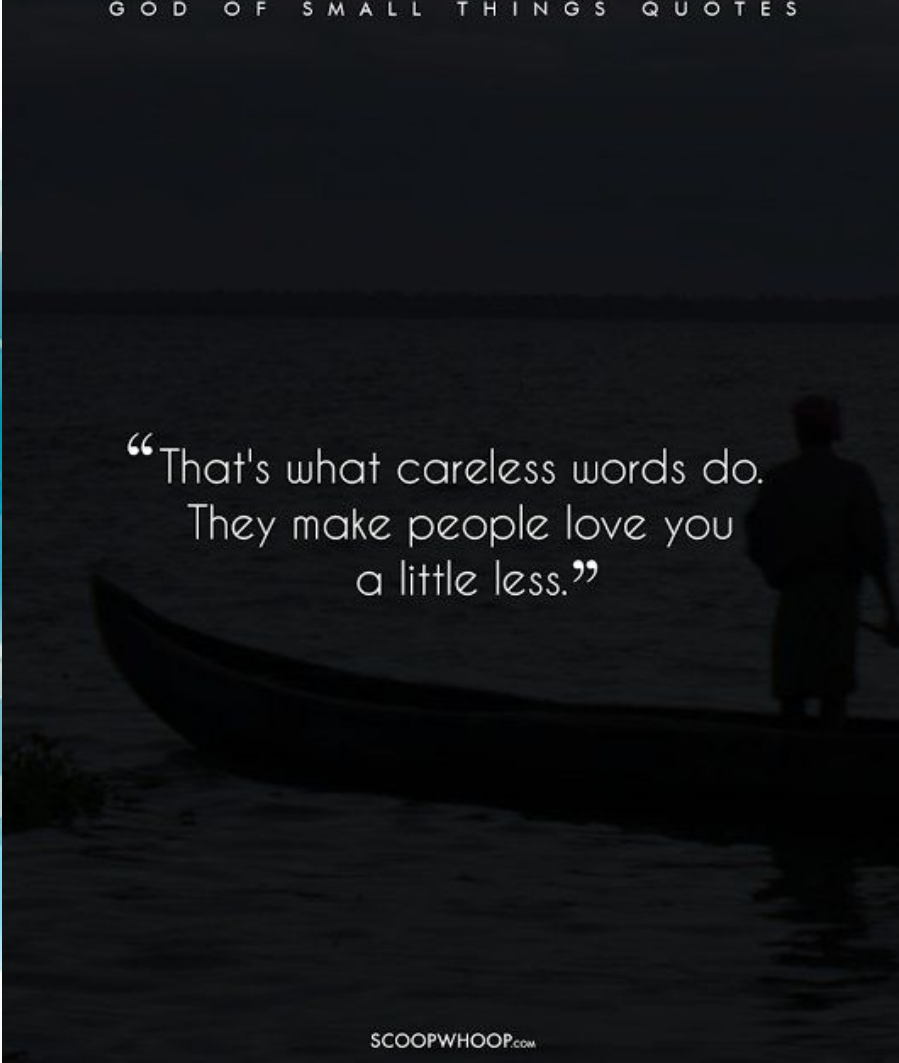
THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

This was the trouble with families.  
Like invidious doctors, they knew  
just where it hurt.

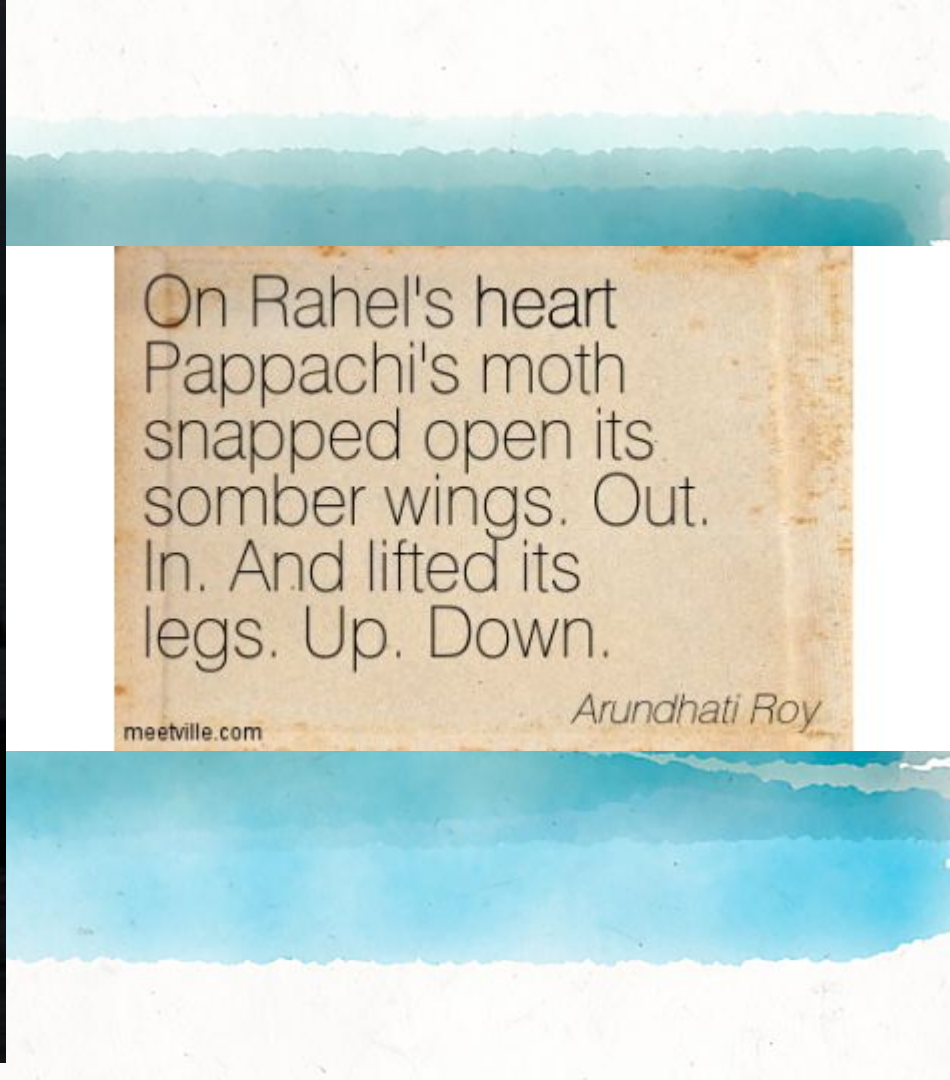


Life  Lesson





“That's what careless words do.  
They make people love you  
a little less.”



On Rahel's heart  
Pappachi's moth  
snapped open its  
somber wings. Out.  
In. And lifted its  
legs. Up. Down.

## HOW DOES A [TEXT] MEAN?

I'm trained as an architect; writing is like architecture. In buildings, there are design motifs that occur again and again, that repeat patterns, curves. These motifs help us feel comfortable in a physical space. And the same works in writing, I've found. For me, the way words, punctuation and paragraphs fall on the page is important as well the graphic design of the language. That was why the words and thoughts of Estha and Rahel, the twins, were so playful on the page ... I was being creative with their design. Words were broken apart, and then sometimes fused together.

~ Author: Arundhati Roy

# CLOSE READING - INTERACTIVE NOTES ASSIGNMENT

<b>Quote from text re: motif (e.g. Pappachi's moth) or theme (In this example: postcolonial concerns)</b>	'In the evenings (For that Regional Flavour) the tourists were treated to truncated kathakali performances... Six hour classics were slashed into 20 minute cameos...' (Pg.121)
<b>Comments</b>	Focusses on the appropriation of local culture, something that started in the colonial era, for the purpose of outsider entertainment
<b>Analysis</b>	Finally, one of the biggest postcolonial concerns was with the appropriation of their local culture, not by the colonial powers, but by outside societies as a whole. This idea is best shown on page 121, where tourists in a hotel facility are treated to a 'traditional' Kathakali performance. To any outside culture, uneducated in Indian history, this would seem like a proper showing of traditional Indian culture, but as Rahel puts it, these are in fact 'Six hour classics' slashed into '20 minute cameos'. This shows us the use of traditional Indian culture not for their original people, but in a manner meant to entertain more than to educate.

## COMMENTARY/ANALYSIS OF A KEY PASSAGE – ASSIGNMENT

“In an exuberant display, Roy compiles a novel with many seemingly insignificant passages, that together form a complex arrangement, and a deep sophisticated story. Just like “the small things” in the novel, “The Sophie Mol Incident” is a small piece of a large enterprise, affecting the future for all the characters in the novel.”

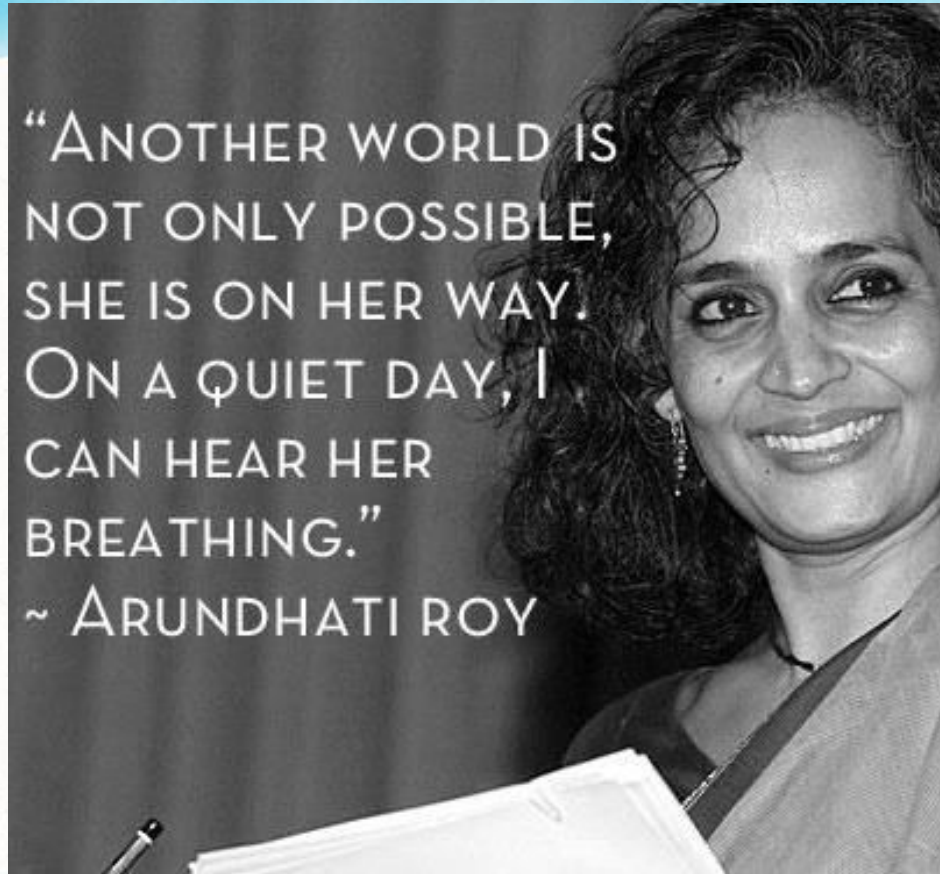
## EXTENSION OF STUDY - IB STUDENT'S EXTENDED ESSAY

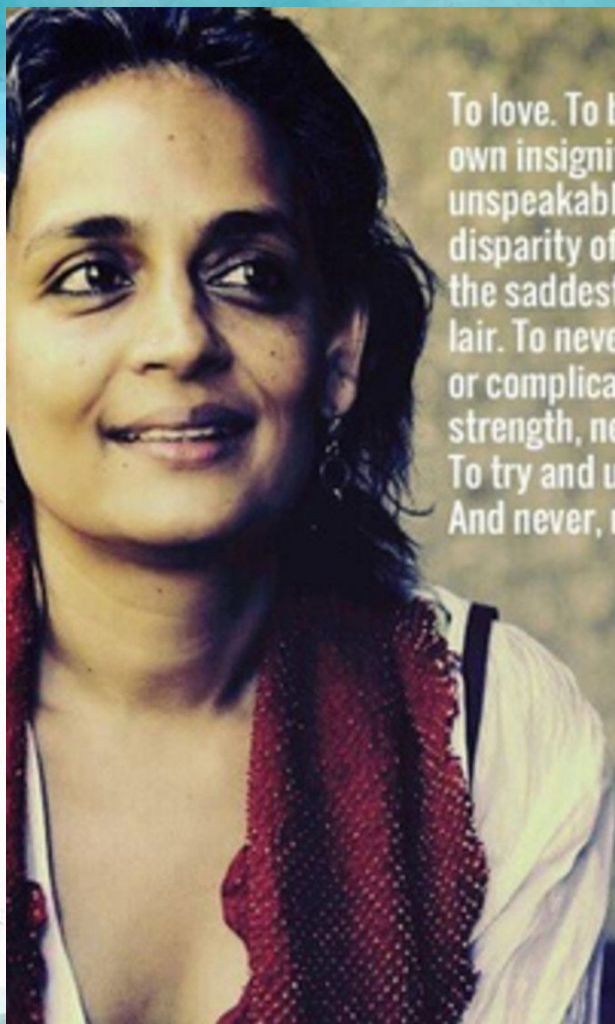
- ▶ Student whose family came from Kerala, India
- ▶ motivated by a genuine passion for social justice
- ▶ became passionate about the rights and needs of women in India in relation to stigmatization of menstruation
- ▶ following her interest led to research and an in-depth discussion of two areas - both religion and history - in her extended essay
- ▶ She took a scholarly approach throughout the development of her independent research work, resulting in a very informative and sensitive, thoughtful work.

## THE ARTIST AS ACTIVIST

“ANOTHER WORLD IS  
NOT ONLY POSSIBLE,  
SHE IS ON HER WAY.  
ON A QUIET DAY, I  
CAN HEAR HER  
BREATHING.”


~ ARUNDHATI ROY





To love. To be loved. To never forget your own insignificance. To never get used to the unspeakable violence and the vulgar disparity of life around you. To seek joy in the saddest places. To pursue beauty to its lair. To never simplify what is complicated or complicate what is simple. To respect strength, never power. Above all, to watch. To try and understand. To never look away. And never, never, to forget.

- ARUNDHATI ROY

The image features a central dark rectangular area containing white text. This central area is set against a background of a light blue and white marbled pattern. The top and bottom edges of the image are decorated with horizontal bands of teal and light blue watercolor-style washes.

We cannot all do great  
things, but we can do  
small things with great  
love.

Mother Teresa



**THANK YOU!**



**ANY  
QUESTIONS  
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