

# Year 7 English: 'Island at the End of Everything'- Kiran Millwood Hargrave

Plot Overview

1

**Amihan** lives on Culion Island, a leper colony in the Philippines.

Her mother, **Nanay**, is touched by the disease, **Ami** is not. All is well until **Mr Zamora**, a scientist and butterfly collector arrives and makes huge changes to the islanders' lives.

Anyone who does not have leprosy is forced to leave the island. All children who do not have leprosy are forced to go and live in an orphanage on another island.

**Amihan** is forced to leave **Nanay** and got to live at the orphanage, she looks after a young boy called **Kidlat** and she forms a friendship with a girl called **Mari** who has always lived at the orphanage. **Mari** has a shrunken arm and was abandoned by her parents when she was small.

2

## Characters

### Amihan:

- Resilient
- Thoughtful
- Guilt-ridden
- Tenacious

### Nanay:

- Determined
- Strong
- Caring
- Kind

### Mari:

- Strong-willed
- Compassionate
- Wise
- Impulsive

- ### Bondoc:
- Dominant
  - Protective
  - Clever
  - Kind Hearted

### Mr Zamora:

- Thoughtless
- Insensitive
- Obsessive
- Selfish

- ### Sister Margaritte:
- Sympathetic
  - Influential
  - Sensitive
  - Dignified

### Kidlat:

- Vulnerable
- Innocent
- Scared
- Loyal



3

## GENRE: Historical Fiction

(BASED ON REAL-LIFE EVENTS)

### Time and place:

Takes place in the early 1900's when leprosy had been widespread for thousands of years throughout Asia, Africa and Europe until a cure was developed in the 1980's. It is a hugely stigmatised condition linked to dirtiness and sin, in reality it is simply a bacterial disease.

### Setting:

Culion Island is a real place in the Philippines, it was the world's largest leper colony between 1906 and 1998. Culion Island can be visited to this day and there is a museum where people can see the island fascination history.

### Character:

The story is told in **first person and present tense through the eyes of Amihan**. This style of narration gives a sense of immediacy and allows us to feel close to the main character. Other styles of narration can be found in the prologue which is written in **second person and present tense** and the epilogue which is written in **third person and past tense**.

### Historical Context:

The book explores a real-life event surrounding the forced migration of families affected by leprosy. From 1906 to 1910 alone 5,303 men, women and children were transported to Culion Island.

### Key Terms:

**Leprosy:** A bacterial infection which damages the nerves, respiratory tract, skin and eyes. The damage means that sufferers are no longer able to feel pain. Leprosy also leads to weakness in the hand and feet meaning sufferers struggle to complete everyday tasks. **Segregation:** Insisting (by law) that people live in groups and do not mix. **Forced Migration:** People are told to relocate and forced to live in another location.

**Amihan** writes letters to **Nanay**, but **Nanay** only writes one back. **Ami** worries about her mother's failing health as her Leprosy becomes worse.

**Mari** breaks **Mr Zamora's 'killing jar'** in which he traps and kills butterflies for his collection- he threatens to send her to the workhouse unless she fixes it back together. **Mr Zamora** catches **Mari** snooping around his office and realises she has uncovered one of his secrets. He sets about getting revenge and tries to cover up what he has been doing. **Ami** a letter from **Nanay** and learns that she is really poorly in hospital.

5

## The Purpose and Function of DIALOGUE

Dialogue is used for 2 main reasons:

- To reveal something about a character's motives, personality or feeling.

Let's be honest the most important thing readers need to know about any character is what they want: Perhaps they want to achieve something; understand themselves/ the world better or maybe even redeem themselves and be better people. This can all be revealed through dialogue.

- To move the action of the plot forward
- Through dialogue characters are able to provide new information, increase tension or reveal a new conflict/problem to be solved.

To reveal something about a character's motives, personality or feeling- An example:

"The disease has taken your nose. Is that your daughter beside you?" He does not wait for an answer. 'How would you feel if she ended up looking like that?'"

The use of dialogue reveals Mr Zamora's insensitivity and bigotry, he argues that allowing children to stay with parents will lead to them being diseased and disfigured. Mr Zamora's narrow-minded views are unsympathetic and look at the situation in a clinical, scientific and hostile way. Although many people on Culion Island are touched, they are accepting of each other and live in a community where they have always loved and supported each other with sensitivity and without judgement.

To move the action of the plot forward- An example:

"From here on we, we will facilitate this through a process of segregation...Those who are clean must stay in the areas marked Sano. Those who are lepers must keep to their designated places."

The use of dialogue here allows us to understand the full extent of Mr Zamora's plan. He has revealed that from this point on families will be separated and those who have leprosy will not be allowed to mix with those who have not. Ami will no longer be allowed to live with her mother.

**Mari** is blamed for **Mr Zamora's** secret getting out and he promises to send her away to the workhouse, **Mari** and **Ami** decide they must escape to see **Nanay** before it is too late.

**Mari** and **Ami** secretly leave the island and they realise **Kidlat** has followed them, so they take him with them across the water to Culion.

**Mr Zamora** follows to try and track them down, he managed to capture **Mari** and **Kidlat** and sends them away to the mainland.

**Amihan** manages to see **Nanay** in hospital and tells her mother all about her adventures and the friends she has made.

In the epilogue, **Amihan** tells us of a young girl she meets named **Sol**. Sol is lost and because it is getting late, **Ami** lets her stay overnight and drives her back to the orphanage the following day.

## Commonly Confused Homophones

Their  
There

These two homophones are the most frequently confused, yet they are two easy to remember. Their, to do with people, has an 'i' in it which could easily be turned into a person. There, to do with place. Has an 'r' in it which could easily be turned into a signpost.

### For example:

'You were in such a rush to take these children from **their** families, you have arrived early.'

'I see her clearly as if I were **there** too.'

4

6

## Themes

### Friendship, love and family.

The strong bond between Nanay and Amihan is evident from the beginning. Ami is devoted to Nanay and her well-being comes first. Ami chooses to go straight home after school instead of playing with her classmates. It seems Ami is naturally caring as she takes on this role with Kidlat. Ami and Mari are connected by their individuality and difference, as they story progresses it is clear they share a strong bond have strengths with complement each other.

### Death and Sickness

From the very beginning of the novel we see reference to sickness and witness the appalling and undignified treatment of those with leprosy. The fragility of life is further emphasised on several occasions as Ami witnesses the deaths of the brutal and unexpected deaths of butterflies, and fish.

### Home and journeys

Ami yearns to be home with her mother and the novel follows her journey away from home and back again. Each journey fraught with heart ache and difficult decisions. We watch Ami's personal journey and watch her grow and adapt.

### Religion and Forgiveness

Faith and religion are important throughout the novel as the nuns play a significant role as caregivers, both on Culion Island and in the orphanage. We learn about forgiveness through the nun's treatment of Mr Zamora and we can also see forgiveness between Mari and Ami as they face several challenges. We also learn about Tolerance through Sister Margaritte who often turns to prayer when times get tough, yet for her humanity prevails above all.

8

**NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE:** Refers to the person telling the story. This could be a narrator or one of the characters.

### 1st Person

- 'My body jumps awake, as if stopping itself falling from a great height.'
- 'I open my eyes and Mari is there, in a colourless, uncertain morning light, nudging me.'

### 2nd Person

- 'There are some places you would not want to go.'
- 'You sit and clutch your bundle of things from home, what you saved before it was burned.'

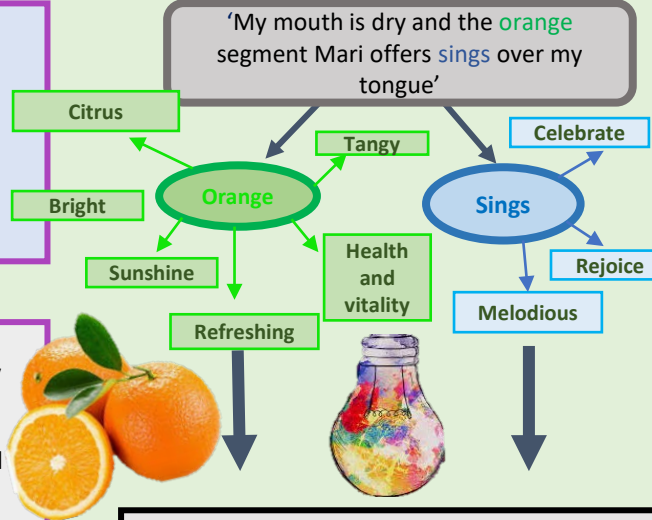
### 3rd Person

- 'Amihan looked at her over the rim of her cup.'
- 'The woman's face seemed to snap shut and darkened, her eyes suddenly fierce.'



### Butterflies

Butterflies are incredibly resilient, during mass migration they fly in their hundreds at heights as tall as the Empire State building. The contrast between something so fragile, yet incredibly resilient is compelling.



7

## The Function and Purpose of SYMBOLISM

Symbolism helps readers to visualise complex ideas and track their development easily. They often communicate big ideas in an efficient and artistic way. Symbols usually suggest the growth and changes within a character over the course of the story. Symbolic meaning is often given to simple/ordinary objects (usually of important/sentimental value) or colours which have a far deeper meaning or significance within the novel. For example, they may link to abstract emotions/traits/ideas (greed/guilt/freedom/love.) or they may be linked/ representative of time (past memories or future ambitions/goals).



### Nanay's Cooking basin:

Nanay's cooking basin unites Nanay and Ami when they are apart, it reminds Ami of the time they spent together and it represents the bond between mother and daughter as Nanay's mother gave it to her as a wedding present. Nanay had hoped to pass it on to Ami as a wedding present too.



### The Killing Jar:

Mr Zamora is one of the wickedest and cruellest characters and yet we can see how he is deeply disturbed. He kills the butterflies to keep them perfect before the world can inflict any damage on them. In his head that makes sense. Ami re-names hers a 'resting jar' at the end of the novel.



9

## The Function and Purpose of Metaphors

Metaphors help a writer create powerful images by comparing 2 ideas or objects we would not usually place side by side. Metaphors help the writer to compare personal or imaginary experiences in terms that most readers will be able to relate to. By thinking about each item/idea separately we are then able to place them side by side and consider what qualities they share and how they are connected. The writer is making us see the world or a concept in a unique, new or surprising way. Let's look at an example from the novel.

When Ami says the 'orange segment Mari offers sings over her tongue', she means that the orange is refreshing and welcome after they the journey they have just endured. Most importantly, the orange is an offering from Mari and a sign that she has not held a grudge against Ami for the unpleasant way she spoke to her on the boat. Mari's act of compassion goes a long way to showing her forgiveness and solidifying their friendship. It is a sign of hope.