G9-19-20 Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Class\_\_\_\_\_#\_\_\_\_\_

**Read and annotate.**

Context Article: **Iran will not drop Rushdie's death sentence (2/18/96) –***Annotate for aspect of Rushdie’s life that you think would impact his writing and could possibly connect to the allegory.*

TEHRAN, Iran (CNN) -- Iran's foreign minister says his country will not remove its death sentence for British writer Salman Rushdie for alleged blasphemy but won't do anything to enforce the policy, either. "In its negotiations with European countries ... the (Iranian) foreign ministry has stressed the validity of Imam Khomeini's fatwa and the impossibility of its withdrawal," Ali Akbar Velayati told the English- language daily Iran News Sunday. The European Union has called on Iran to abide by international law and drop the death sentence. Iran's late leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued the fatwa, or religious edict, in February 1989, condemning Rushdie to death for alleged blasphemy against Islam in his novel.

The Indian/British author Ahmed Salman Rushdie (born 1947) was a political parablist whose work often focused on outrages of history and particularly of religions. His book The Satanic Verses earned him a death sentence from the Iranian Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Although he was called a writer to watch after the appearance of his first novel and was awarded one of the most prestigious literary prizes in Europe for his second, Salman Rushdie became a household word because of the enemies his fiction made rather than the admirers. The Satanic Verses, published in 1988, earned him a death sentence from Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, then religious sovereign of Iran and spiritual leader to millions of fundamentalist Moslems worldwide.

Born Ahmed Salman Rushdie on June 19, 1947, to a middle-class family in Bombay, India, Rushdie was educated in England and eventually received his M.A. from King's College, Cambridge. After a brief career as an actor he made a living as a freelance advertising copywriter in England from 1970 to 1980. The experience of expatriation, which he shared with many writers of his generation who were born in the Third World, is an important theme in his work.

However, Rushdie's opus in particular expanded the meaning of the word "expatriate" to possibly its total linguistic limits. For instance, Midnight's Children (1981) is in part the story of a baby who was not only the result of an extramarital affair, but who was then switched at birth with a second illicit child. The hero of the novel is doubly removed from his true patrimony: His mother's husband is not his father, and the Englishman with whom his Indian mother slept—who his mother thinks is his father—is not his real father either. In addition, the hero is caught between the two great religions of Indian, Islam and Hinduism, neither of which he can claim as his own. Finally, he spends his life being shunted back and forth by circumstance between the Indian republic and its antithesis, Pakistan.

Rushdie unfailingly took the stance of a lifelong member of the diaspora, which may be the most consistently autobiographical aspect of his work. Long before his hurried exile from the public eye, in an interview published after Midnight's Children received the Booker McConnell Prize, Rushdie presciently said: "I have a fear that it may, at some point, become necessary to make choices among [India, England, and America], and that it will be very painful."

Another characteristic of Rushdie's work is its reliance on the fantastic. In fact, Rushdie's first book, Grimus (1979), was classified as science fiction by many critics. It is the story of Flapping Eagle, an American Indian who is given the gift of immortality and goes on an odyssey to find the meaning of life. Shame (1983) has a Pakistani heroine, Sufiya Zinobia, who blushes so hotly with embarrassment at her nation's history her body boils her bath water and burns the lips of men who attempt to kiss her. The title Midnight's Children refers to the 1,001 infants born in the first hour of India's independence, all of whom have para-human powers. And The Satanic Verses opens with the miraculous survival and transfiguration of two Indian men who fall out of the sky after their jumbo jet to England is blown up in midair by Sikh terrorists.

Rushdie always used the element of the fabulous to make painfully incisive political commentary (among other varieties of observation). Shame is so thinly disguised a parody of recent Pakistani history as to be transparent, and the hero of Midnight's Children was described as a man "handcuffed to history" by the political journal Commonweal. Rushdie is often compared with Lawrence Sterne as well as Jonathan Swift as a political parablist, but according to The New York Times Book Review, "It would be a disservice to Salman Rushdie's very original genius to dwell on literary analogues and ancestors."

Rushdie also made a career out of poking fun at religious fanatics of every stripe. One technique of Rushdie's in furtherance of this aim was to infuse common objects with enormous symbolic significance. In Midnight's Children, for instance, pickled chutney is one of the main images for India's cultural and social maelstrom; in The Satanic Verses, bad breath plays a vital role in telling good from evil. Few other writers dare to found entire symbolic structures on items as replaceable as a sheet with a hole in the middle, but to Rushdie it undoubtedly seems a worse exercise in illogic to kill people over the contents of a so-called "holy" book.

Rushdie's habit of using the outrages of history— especially religious outrages and religious history—made The Satanic Verses (1988) a book of frightening precognition. In the novel, Rushdie has a writer sentenced to death by a religious leader. The writer in the book is a scribe meant to chronicle the life of a prophet who—as the writer of the book enjoys riddling—both "is and is not" Mohammed. Creating this character, who exists within a psychotic dream of one of the two men who fell from the airplane, was a natural extension of Rushdie's personal horror at fundamentalist Islamic rule. It is this dream sequence which ignited fatal riots in India and garnered Rushdie the Ayatollah Khomeini's death sentence.

The title of the novel refers to verses from the Koran, which were struck out by later Islamic historians, describing an episode in which Mohammed briefly wavered in his adherence to belief in a single god and allowed mention to be made of three local goddesses. The dream section in the book details, from the point of view of a schizophrenic Indian actor who fancies himself an archangel, how the holy prophet yielded to temptation and then reversed himself. There are other "satanic" verses in the book, notably those a modern-day husband anonymously sings over the phone to drive his wife's lover insane with jealousy. But the contemporary aspect of the novel has been almost completely overlooked by the controversy surrounding it.

Khomeini's death threat extended not only to Rushdie himself, but to the publishers of The Satanic Verses, any bookseller who carried it, and any Moslem who publicly condoned its release. Several major bookstores in England and America had bomb scares, and the novel was temporarily removed from the shelves of America's largest book selling chains. Two Islamic clerics in London were murdered, ostensibly for questioning the correctness of Rushdie's death sentence on a talk show. Numerous book-burnings were held throughout the world.

Rushdie himself, and his possible disguises in hiding, became an established figure of black humor. During the 1990 Academy Awards presentation, which was seen worldwide by an estimated one billion viewers, comedian Billy Crystal joked that "the lovely young woman" who usually hands Oscar statuettes to their recipients "is, of course, Salman Rushdie."

Rushdie's wife of 13 months, author Marianne Wiggins, went into hiding with him when the death threat was announced. She soon emerged and indicated that their marriage was over.

In 1990 Rushdie released the fantasy novel Haroun and the Sea of Stories, written for his son (by a first marriage), Zafar. That same year Rushdie publicly embraced Islam and apologized to those offended by the The Satanic Verses. He made several appearances in London book-stores to autograph his newest work. But even after the Ayatollah's death, his successor, Iran's President Hashemi Rafsanzani, refused to lift the death edict. Rushdie continued to appear in public only occasionally, and then under heavy security.

Although the severity of the Ayatollah's sentence was at least partially a political gambit to aid his regime in its final days, it carried the force of gospel for many terrorists who regard America—and the freedom of speech espoused in the American Constitution—as the "Great Satan." Rushdie will live in danger until the last Khomeini loyalist has passed away. As if in a scene from one of his novels, the innocent speaker of a personal truth is surrealistically threatened with slaughter by his opposite, who claims a patent on universal truth. Rushdie has already been acclaimed as a supreme artist; one can only hope, for his sake as well as ours, that his life will no longer imitate his art.

Rushdie continues to live an isolated life. He has re-married, however, and become a father for the second time. Occasionally he makes radio appearances, but, they are usually unannounced. Rushdie's novel entitled The Moor's Last Sigh was published in 1995. This book drew hostile and negative reactions from Hindu militants in India.

**Answer: What context do you think is important? What would influence Rushdie’s writing? 3+ Sentences.**