CAPITOLO

# 15

# Global Voices: English Literature Today

*A language travels farther than the empire that carried it, and it comes back changed.*

**OBIETTIVI**

1. I can outline decolonisation, the Commonwealth and the main events in Britain and the world from 1947 to today.
2. I can define postcolonial literature and magical realism and present Achebe, Walcott, Rushdie, Heaney, Ishiguro, Atwood, Zadie Smith and Adichie.
3. I can analyse a novel through a precise summary, and show how a description can become a “single story”.
4. I can describe World Englishes and English as a lingua franca, avoid pseudo-anglicisms, and revise five years of grammar on one map.
5. I can rehearse the English part of the colloquio from a starting material, write a thematic essay across subjects and assess my own English.

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English 5 · Parte IV · From 1945 to the Present · versione 1.0
Capitolo 15: Global Voices: English Literature Today · pagine 477–506 del volume completo · estratto per lo studio

In 1947 the British Empire still covered a large part of the world map. Seventy-five years later, when Elizabeth II died in 2022, almost all of its former colonies were independent states, and English had become the first truly global language, spoken by far more people as a second or foreign language than as a mother tongue. This last chapter follows that journey: the end of empire and the new Commonwealth, a Britain changed by migration, devolution and Brexit, and the writers from Nigeria, the Caribbean, India, Ireland, Japan, Canada and London who turned English literature into a literature of the world. It ends where your five years of English end: with the exam, and with what comes after it.

## 15.1 History and Society: From Empire to a Global Language, 1947–Today

The decades after the Second World War transformed Britain's place in the world. Figura 15.1 shows the main events of this chapter on one proportional axis, from the independence of the colonies to the death of Elizabeth II.

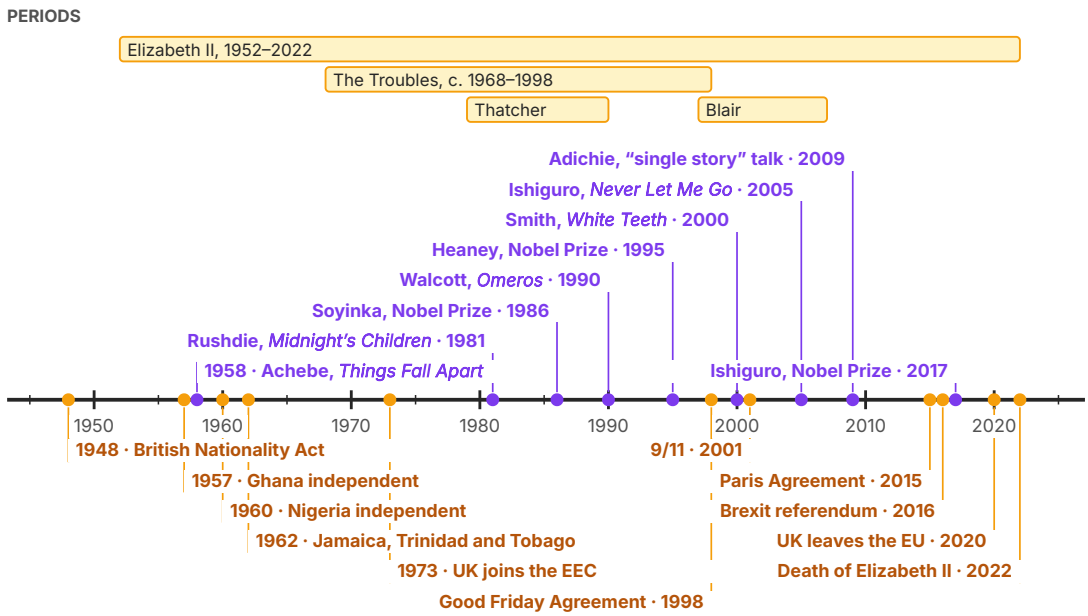



**Figura 15.1** From empire to a global language, 1945–2025: periods (top bands), literary events (above the axis, violet) and historical events (below, amber), on a proportional axis (ticks every 5 years, labels every 10). Thatcher was Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990, Blair from 1997 to 2007.

### 15.1.1 Decolonisation and the Commonwealth

India and Pakistan became independent in August 1947 (chapter 13). In the following thirty years almost all of Britain's colonies in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific followed. Ghana, led by Kwame Nkrumah, became independent on 6 March 1957, and its independence was celebrated across Africa as a sign of what was coming; Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, followed on 1 October 1960, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in August 1962, and Kenya in December 1963, after the British had repressed the Mau Mau uprising with great violence in the 1950s. This process is called **decolonisation** (*decolonizzazione*): the end of colonial rule and the birth of independent states, sometimes negotiated peacefully, sometimes won through long conflicts. Chapter 13 followed its first steps; this chapter follows it to the present. The new states kept many things from the colonial period: borders drawn by Europeans, parliaments on the British model — and, very often, the English language, which became the language of government and education in countries where dozens or hundreds of languages are spoken.

Most of the new states chose to remain in the **Commonwealth of Nations** (*Commonwealth delle nazioni*), a voluntary association of independent and equal states. Only the name is old: it has nothing to do with the Commonwealth of 1649, the English republic proclaimed after the

execution of Charles I (English 4, chapter 3). The London Declaration of 1949 allowed India to remain a member as a republic, recognising the British monarch only as "Head of the Commonwealth". In 2025 the Commonwealth had 56 members, most of them former British territories (Gabon and Togo, which were never British colonies, joined in 2022). It has no power over its members, but it links them through shared values, education, sport — the Commonwealth Games — and a common working language, English.

### 15.1.2 A multicultural Britain

The British Nationality Act of 1948 created a single citizenship "of the United Kingdom and Colonies", which gave the people of the colonies the right to live and work in Britain. The arrival of the *Empire Windrush* (chapter 13) began a migration from the Caribbean, followed by migration from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and East Africa. Later laws (1962, 1968, 1971) restricted immigration from the Commonwealth, while the Race Relations Acts made racial discrimination illegal, first in public places (1965) and then in housing and employment (1968). Britain became a multicultural society, and its literature, music and food changed with it.

That history returned to the headlines in 2018 with the **Windrush scandal**, revealed by journalists, above all Amelia Gentleman of *The Guardian*, whose reports began in late 2017. People who had arrived legally from the Caribbean as children, decades earlier, but had never received documents proving their right to stay, were treated as illegal immigrants under the "hostile environment" policy introduced from 2012: some lost their jobs, their homes or their access to health care, and some were detained or deported to countries they had left as children. The Home Secretary resigned in April 2018, the government apologised, and a compensation scheme opened in 2019.

### 15.1.3 Northern Ireland: the Troubles and the Good Friday Agreement

After the partition of Ireland (chapter 9), Northern Ireland remained in the United Kingdom, with a Protestant, mostly unionist majority and a Catholic, mostly nationalist minority that suffered discrimination in housing, jobs and local elections. From the late 1960s, civil rights marches, the deployment of the British Army (1969) and the violence of republican and loyalist paramilitary groups began thirty years of conflict known as **the Troubles** (*i "Troubles", il conflitto nordirlandese*). On Bloody Sunday, 30 January 1972, British soldiers shot dead thirteen civil rights marchers in Derry (a fourteenth man died months later). More than 3,500 people were killed before the **Good Friday Agreement** of 10 April 1998, approved by referendums in both parts of Ireland in May 1998. It created a **power-sharing** (*condivisione del potere*) government in Belfast, in which unionists and nationalists must govern together, and it stated that Northern Ireland will remain in the UK for as long as a majority of its people wish.

### 15.1.4 Thatcher, Blair and devolution

Margaret Thatcher (Conservative), the first woman Prime Minister, governed from 1979 to 1990. She privatised state industries such as telecommunications and gas, reduced the power of the trade unions — the miners' strike of 1984–85 ended in defeat for the miners — and allowed council tenants to buy their homes; in 1982 she led Britain in the Falklands War against Argentina. Her supporters credit her with modernising the economy; her critics blame her for the decline of the industrial regions and for growing inequality.

Tony Blair (Labour, 1997–2007) presented his party as "New Labour". His governments introduced a national minimum wage (1999) and, after referendums in 1997, created the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales, both opened in 1999: this transfer of powers from London to the nations of the UK is called **devolution** (*devoluzione*). After the attacks of 11 September 2001, in which nearly 3,000 people were killed in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania, Blair took Britain into the war in Afghanistan and, in 2003, into the invasion of Iraq — the most divisive decision of his career.

### 15.1.5 Brexit, a new reign and a warming world

The UK had joined the European Economic Community in 1973 (chapter 13). In a referendum on 23 June 2016, 51.9% of voters chose to leave the European Union and 48.1% to remain: England and Wales voted Leave, Scotland and Northern Ireland Remain. The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020, and the transition period ended on 31 December 2020. Elizabeth II, the longest-reigning monarch in British history, died at Balmoral on 8 September 2022, after seventy years on the throne, and was succeeded by her son, Charles III.

Two challenges now cross every border. Climate change, caused mainly by greenhouse gases from human activity, led 196 parties to adopt the **Paris Agreement** on 12 December 2015, which aims to keep global warming "well below 2 °C" above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5 °C (see the Connections section). And the digital age — the World Wide Web, proposed by the British scientist Tim Berners-Lee at CERN in 1989, then smartphones, social media and, in the 2020s, artificial intelligence that writes text — has made English, the main language of science and of the internet, more global than ever.

### 15.1.6 English as a global language

No language has ever been spoken so widely. English is an official language in more than fifty states (Figura 15.2), and, as the linguist David Crystal has pointed out, its non-native speakers now far outnumber its native speakers. This has two consequences for this chapter: English literature is now written by people of many nations, and English itself has become many Englishes (see the Language section).

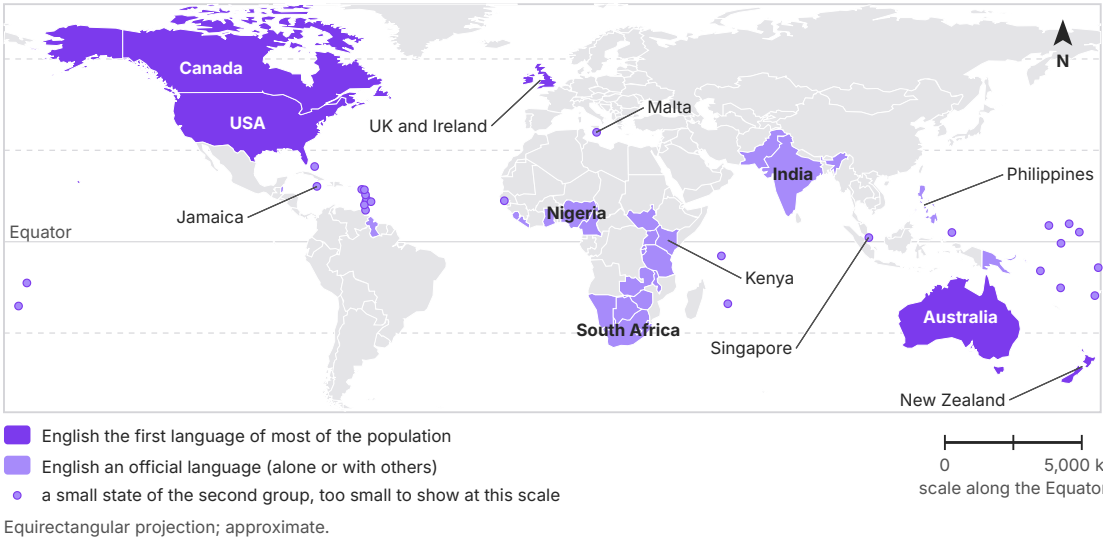



**Figura 15.2** English in the world today: the states where English is the first language of most of the population and those where it is an official language (alone or with other languages, e.g. India, Nigeria, Cameroon, Malta, the Philippines). In several Caribbean states English is official while most people speak an English-based creole at home. Approximate; country outlines from Natural Earth (1:50 million), classification after the states' official-language provisions and Crystal, *English as a Global Language*.

**ERRORE FREQUENTE**

✗ *Il Commonwealth è l'Impero britannico con un altro nome.* → ✓ Il Commonwealth è un'**associazione volontaria** di stati indipendenti ed eguali; nessun membro governa gli altri, e alcuni membri (Mozambico, Ruanda, Gabon, Togo) non sono mai stati colonie britanniche.

✗ *Con la Brexit il Regno Unito è uscito dall'Europa.* → ✓ È uscito dall'**Unione europea** (31 gennaio 2020); resta un paese europeo e membro, per esempio, del Consiglio d'Europa.

## 15.2 Literature: Postcolonial and Global Writing

In 1950 "English literature" still meant, for most readers, books written in Britain and, more and more, in the United States. By the end of the century several of the most celebrated writers in English had been born in Nigeria, Saint Lucia, Trinidad, India and Japan. Writers from the former colonies used the language of the empire to tell their own stories — often to answer the stories the empire had told about them.

**Postcolonial literature** (*letteratura postcoloniale*) is writing from and about societies that were colonised, especially after independence; the term also names the critical approach that reads these works — and rereads older ones — with attention to empire, race, language and

identity. It is a critical category, not a period or a school: it became common in universities in the 1980s, after Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, and several writers have rejected the label as too narrow. In chapter 7 you met colonial literature, which looked at the colonies from the centre of the empire; postcolonial writers look back at the centre — or ignore it altogether.

### 15.2.1 Chinua Achebe and the African novel

**Chinua Achebe** (1930–2013), born in eastern Nigeria into an Igbo family, wrote *Things Fall Apart* (1958) partly as an answer to European novels about Africa; years later he attacked Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (chapter 7). The novel follows Okonkwo, a proud, fearless and violent wrestler and farmer of the village of Umuofia, whose world is broken by the arrival of Christian missionaries and of British colonial government at the end of the nineteenth century. Achebe writes in a clear English shaped by Igbo proverbs, rituals and ways of telling stories, so that the reader sees a complex society from the inside before seeing it destroyed. The title comes from Yeats's "The Second Coming" (chapter 9; see T1). With *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *Arrow of God* (1964) it forms what is often called Achebe's "African trilogy". In 1986 the Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka became the first Black African writer to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature.

### 15.2.2 The Caribbean and India: Walcott, Naipaul, Rushdie

**Derek Walcott** (1930–2017), from Saint Lucia, an island that passed many times between France and Britain, wrote about a Caribbean made of African, European and Asian inheritances. His long poem *Omeros* (1990) moves Homer's characters to a Caribbean fishing village: Achille and Hector are fishermen, Helen a beautiful local woman, and the poem is written in long lines grouped in tercets, a free echo of Dante's terza rima. He received the Nobel Prize in 1992. **V. S. Naipaul** (1932–2018), born in Trinidad to a family of Indian origin, wrote *A House for Mr Biswas* (1961) and *A Bend in the River* (1979); his harsh view of the post-independence world made him both admired and contested (Nobel Prize 2001).

**Salman Rushdie** (born 1947 in Bombay, now Mumbai) became famous with *Midnight's Children* (1981, Booker Prize). Its narrator, Saleem Sinai, is born at the exact moment of India's independence, at midnight on 15 August 1947, and discovers that he and the other children born in that first hour have magical powers; his body and his family become an image of the new nation's history. This mixture of history and the marvellous is called **magical realism** (*realismo magico*): a realistic narrative in which impossible events happen and are told as if they were normal. The German art critic Franz Roh first used the term in 1925; it is linked above all with the Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*, 1967), and in Italy Massimo Bontempelli spoke of "realismo magico" in the 1920s. After *The Satanic Verses* (1988), Iran's leader Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa in February 1989 calling for Rushdie's death; the writer lived under police protection for years, and in 2022 he was seriously injured in a knife attack in the United States.

**APPROFONDIMENTO**

**Which language for African literature?** The Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1938–2025) published his first novels in English, then decided in the late 1970s to write his fiction in Gikuyu, his mother tongue. In *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) he argued that a language carries a whole culture and memory, and that African writers who wrote in English or French were enriching European languages instead of their own. Achebe had taken the opposite view in essays of the 1960s: English, used in a new way and altered to carry African experience, allowed a Nigerian writer to reach readers across a continent of hundreds of languages and across the world. Both positions are still defended. The debate is one reason why the Language section of this chapter speaks of *Englishes*, not of one English.

### 15.2.3 Ireland and Japan: Heaney and Ishiguro

**Seamus Heaney** (1939–2013), born on a farm in County Derry, in Northern Ireland, began with poems of rural childhood and work: in "Digging" (*Death of a Naturalist*, 1966) the poet compares his pen to the spades of his father and grandfather. In *North* (1975) he looked at the violence of the Troubles through the bodies of Iron Age people preserved in the bogs of northern Europe. He received the Nobel Prize in 1995, and his translation of *Beowulf* (1999) brought the Old English poem you met in English 3 to a new public.

**Kazuo Ishiguro** (born 1954 in Nagasaki) moved to England with his family at the age of five and writes in English. His narrators tell their own stories in calm, polite, reticent voices, and slowly reveal what they have avoided seeing. In *The Remains of the Day* (1989, Booker Prize) Stevens, an English butler, looks back on his years of loyal service to a lord who sympathised with Nazi Germany in the 1930s; in *Never Let Me Go* (2005; T2) the narrator is a young woman who was created to donate her organs; *Klara and the Sun* (2021) is narrated by an "Artificial Friend", a robot bought to keep a sick girl company. He received the Nobel Prize in 2017.

### 15.2.4 New voices: Atwood, Zadie Smith, Adichie

The Canadian **Margaret Atwood** (born 1939) returned to dystopia (chapter 12) in *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985): in the Republic of Gilead, a theocracy built on what was the United States, fertile women are forced to bear children for the ruling class. Its sequel, *The Testaments*, shared the Booker Prize in 2019. **Zadie Smith** (born 1975 in London to an English father and a Jamaican mother) published *White Teeth* in 2000: the novel follows the families of Archie Jones and Samad Iqbal, friends since the Second World War, in multicultural north-west London from the 1970s to the early 1990s, and ends around a genetically engineered "FutureMouse" that brings its science, religion and politics together.

**Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie** (born 1977 in Nigeria) wrote *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), on the Nigerian civil war of 1967–70, and *Americanah* (2013), about a young Nigerian woman in the United States. In a TED talk of July 2009, "The Danger of a Single Story", she explained how the

British and American books she read as a child led her, at about seven, to write stories about white children who ate apples and talked about the weather; and how a single story told again and again about a people — Africa as nothing but poverty and war, for example — creates a stereotype, not because it is false, but because it is incomplete. T3 puts her idea to work.

**IN SINTESI**

**Nobel Prizes in Literature to writers in English from the former empire (a selection).** Wole Soyinka, Nigeria (1986) · Nadine Gordimer, South Africa (1991) · Derek Walcott, Saint Lucia (1992) · Seamus Heaney, Northern Ireland (1995) · V. S. Naipaul, Trinidad / UK (2001) · J. M. Coetzee, South Africa (2003) · Doris Lessing, UK, raised in Southern Rhodesia (2007) · Kazuo Ishiguro, UK, born in Japan (2017) · Abdulrazak Gurnah, UK, born in Zanzibar (2021).

**ERRORE FREQUENTE**

✗ *La letteratura postcoloniale è la letteratura scritta dopo il 1945.* → ✓ È una **categoria critica**, non un periodo: riguarda le società colonizzate e il rapporto con l'impero, e molti autori la rifiutano come etichetta.

✗ *Il realismo magico l'ha inventato Rushdie.* → ✓ Il termine è del 1925 (Franz Roh) ed è legato soprattutto a García Márquez; Rushdie lo usa per raccontare la storia dell'India.

## 15.3 Texts: Endings, Secrets and Single Stories

None of the novels in this section is in the public domain: their authors are alive or died less than seventy years ago. T1 and T2 are therefore read without the text, through a precise summary with only a few words quoted, beside a public-domain text; T3 is a pair of short texts written by the editors of this book.

### 15.3.1 T1 · W. B. Yeats and Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), ch. 25

Achebe placed four lines of Yeats's "The Second Coming" (1920; chapter 9) at the beginning of his novel as an epigraph. Reread the poem in chapter 9: the third line, about an order that can no longer hold together, gave Achebe his title, and the fourth speaks of anarchy let loose on the world. The European poem, written after the First World War, becomes in Achebe's hands the frame for an African story.

#### Reading without the text

In the chapter before the last, Okonkwo has killed one of the court messengers sent by the colonial government to stop a meeting of his clan; the other men did not follow him. In chapter 25, the last, the District Commissioner arrives at Okonkwo's compound with soldiers to arrest him and finds a group of men sitting outside. Okonkwo's closest friend, Obierika, leads him to a tree

behind the compound, where Okonkwo's body is hanging: he has taken his own life. Obierika explains that this is an offence against the Earth, so his clansmen may not touch the body; strangers must take it down, and he cannot be buried by his own people. Then Obierika, who has always been the calm one, turns on the Commissioner with fury: this was one of the greatest men in Umuofia, and the white men drove him to kill himself.

The last paragraph moves into the Commissioner's mind. He is writing a book about his years in Africa, and he reflects that the story of this man would make interesting reading: perhaps a whole chapter — no, rather "a reasonable paragraph". He has already chosen his title: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. The novel the reader has just finished, with its families, festivals, laws and doubts, will become one paragraph in a colonial officer's book.

#### Analysis

1. Yeats's lines describe the collapse of an order. Whose order collapses in Achebe's novel, and how does the title give the European poem a new meaning?
2. Why does the novel end inside the mind of the Commissioner and not of an Igbo character? What does the reader know that he will never know?
3. "Pacification": what does the word hide? Link it to the language of power and euphemism in chapter 12.
4. A whole life becomes "a reasonable paragraph". Compare the length of the novel with the length of the Commissioner's paragraph: what is Achebe saying about who writes history?
5. Compare Marlow's "blank space" on the map in *Heart of Darkness* (chapter 7) with the Commissioner's book. Who describes Africa in each text, and who is silent?

### 15.3.2 T2 · Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (2005)

#### Reading without the text

The narrator, Kathy H., introduces herself in the first lines: she is thirty-one and has been "a carer" for more than eleven years. The novel's opening heading reads "England, late 1990s", but Kathy soon moves back to her childhood at Hailsham, a boarding school in the countryside, where she grew up with her friends Ruth and Tommy. The children are encouraged to paint and write poems; the best pieces are taken away by a woman they call Madame for her "Gallery"; their teachers are called "guardians". Kathy uses ordinary words in a strange way — *carers*, *donors*, *donations*, *completing* — and she remembers that the children were "told and not told" what they were for.

Only gradually does the reader understand: the students are clones, created to give their vital organs as young adults, one operation after another, until they "complete", that is, die. One rainy afternoon a young guardian, Miss Lucy, tells them the truth plainly, and soon afterwards she leaves the school. Years later Kathy and Tommy, now in love, visit Madame and Miss Emily,

the former head, hoping that a rumoured "deferral" for couples who are truly in love is real. There is no deferral: the Gallery was meant to show the outside world that the students had souls. In the last pages, after Tommy has completed, Kathy stops her car by a fence in a flat Norfolk field, imagines for a moment that he might appear, and then drives away to wherever she is supposed to be.

### Analysis

1. Kathy tells a terrible story in a calm, ordinary voice. Find three words in the summary that are used as euphemisms and say what each one hides (chapter 12).
2. When does the reader understand the truth, and why does Ishiguro delay it? Compare the way Browning's Duke reveals more than he intends (chapter 3).
3. The Gallery was meant to prove that the students had souls. Turing proposed a test for machines (chapter 13). What test does each society use to decide who counts as fully human?
4. In July 1996 Dolly the sheep, born at the Roslin Institute in Scotland, became the first mammal cloned from an adult cell. Why might a novel set in "the late 1990s" and published in 2005 have struck its first readers?
5. The students never try to escape. Is this the weakest point of the novel, or its meaning? Give your opinion with one argument from the summary.

**ESEMPIO SVOLTO**

**Writing about a text you know only in summary.** You can analyse a novel you have read in summary, as long as you say so and quote only what the summary quotes. Task: *Write a PEE paragraph (Point, Evidence, Explanation) on Kathy's language in* Never Let Me Go.

1. **Point** — one claim, in the literary present (chapter 1): *Kathy hides the horror of her life inside ordinary words.*
2. **Evidence** — the words she actually uses, in quotation marks: *She calls herself "a carer" and says that her friends "complete", never that they die.*
3. **Explanation** — what the evidence does to the reader, and a link: *These euphemisms are the language of the system that created her, as in Orwell's Newspeak (chapter 12); by accepting them, Kathy shows how completely she has been shaped by it, and the reader feels the horror that she does not express.*

Avoid two traps: do not invent quotations you have not checked, and do not narrate the plot instead of analysing it. One sentence of context is enough.

## 15.3.3 T3 · The editors, "Naples" — two descriptions of one city

These two short texts were written for this book. Both describe Naples, Italy's third-largest city. Read them as Adichie would: what does each text include, what does it leave out, and what image of the city does it build?

**Tabella 15.1** T3 — Text A, "Naples: Chaos and Pizza" (a deliberately stereotyped description, about 145 words)

Naples is pure chaos, and that is exactly why you will love it. Everyone here shouts, everyone rides a scooter, and nobody ever stops at a red light. The streets are narrow and dirty, washing hangs from every balcony, and old women watch you from their windows all day. Be careful with your bag: everybody knows that Naples is the capital of pickpockets. People are poor but always happy; they sing in the streets and live for football and for their mothers' cooking. Of course, you come to Naples for one thing: pizza. It was invented here, it is still the best in the world, and it is cheap. Above the city, Vesuvius waits to explode one day, but nobody seems to care. Naples has not changed for centuries, and it never will. It is loud, dangerous, colourful and unforgettable — just like in the films.

**Tabella 15.2** T3 — Text B, "Naples: Many Cities in One" (about 140 words)

Naples is Italy's third-largest city and one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in Europe. Greek settlers founded it, and its name comes from *Neapolis*, "new city"; its historic centre, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1995, still follows the plan of the Greek streets. The University of Naples Federico II, founded in 1224, is one of the oldest state universities in the world. The Stazione Zoologica, founded in 1872 by the German biologist Anton Dohrn, is a leading centre of marine biology, and the Vesuvius Observatory, founded in 1841, was the first observatory in the world built to study a volcano. Naples has serious problems — unemployment, organised crime, traffic — and many of its citizens work hard to solve them. It is also a city of theatres, publishers, music and research, where people live, study and work in many different ways.

**Analysis**

1. Underline in Text A every generalisation with *everyone, everybody, nobody, always, never, every*. How many are there, and what do they do to the people of Naples?
2. Who seems to be speaking in Text A, and to whom? Who speaks in Text B? Think about purpose: selling, entertaining, informing.
3. Text B mentions crime and unemployment too. Why is it not a "single story" of a perfect city?
4. Rewrite two sentences of Text A so that they become specific and fair, without losing all their colour.
5. Which "single story" about Italy have you heard abroad, or in films? Which facts would you add to complete it?

## 15.4 Language: World Englishes and Five Years of Grammar

This chapter has no new grammar point. It looks at English with a linguist's eyes — as a language with many varieties — and then looks back at the grammar of your five years on one map.

### 15.4.1 One language, many Englishes

In English 1 (Unit 10) you learnt that English is a lingua franca and that there is not one "correct" English. In English 3 (chapter 2) you distinguished accent and dialect. A **variety** (*varietà*)

is a form of a language used by a community and with its own regular features of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar; a standard variety is the one used in education, law and the press. The term **World Englishes** (*gli inglesi del mondo*) describes the varieties of English that have developed in different countries, each with its own norms, and the field of research that studies them.

In 1985 the Indian-born linguist Braj B. Kachru proposed a model of three concentric circles (Figura 15.3). In the **inner circle** (*cerchio interno*) English is the first language of most people: these countries traditionally provided the norms. In the **outer circle** (*cerchio esterno*) English, a legacy of empire, is a second, official or institutional language and develops its own norms. In the **expanding circle** (*cerchio in espansione*) English is a foreign language, learnt at school and used for international contact — Italy is here. The model is a simplification: it describes countries, not people, and many speakers in the outer circle grow up with English as one of their first languages; but it remains the most quoted picture of English in the world.

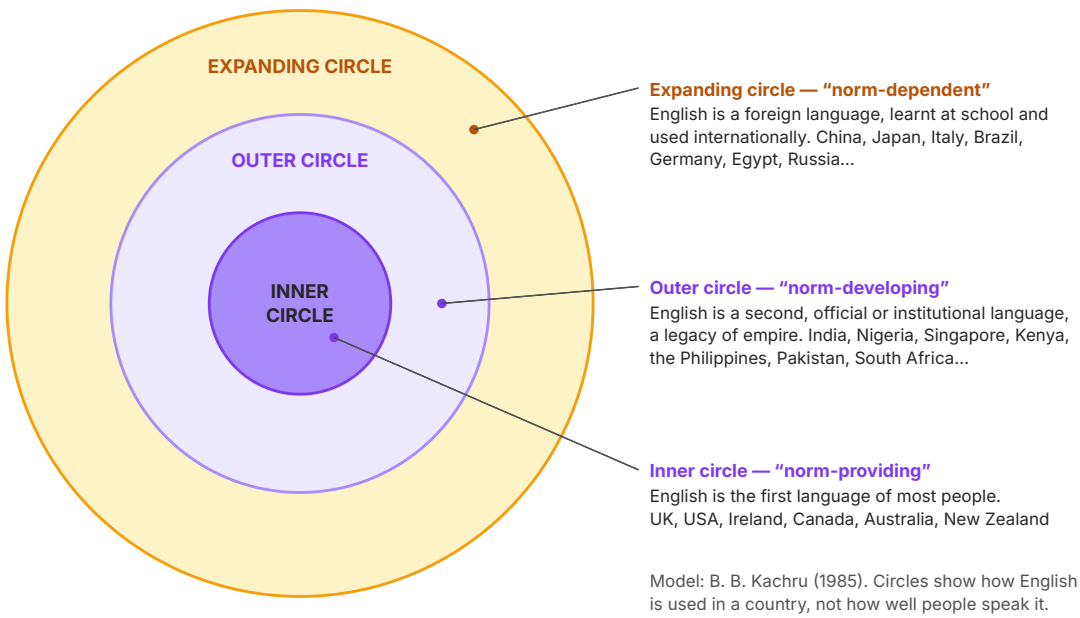



**Figura 15.3** The three circles of English, after Braj B. Kachru (1985), with Kachru's own labels for the role of each circle in setting norms. The examples are a selection; the model is a simplification, discussed in the text.

Varieties of the outer circle are not "broken English": their features are regular and shared by educated speakers. Tabella 15.3 gives one example from each of four varieties.

**Tabella 15.3** Four World Englishes: one feature each

| Variety | Feature | Example | In British English |
|---|---|---|---|
| Indian English | *prepone* (verb): to move an event to an earlier time — the opposite of *postpone* | *The exam has been preponed to Monday.* | *brought forward* |
| Nigerian English | *go-slow* (noun): a traffic jam | *I was stuck in a go-slow for two hours.* | *a traffic jam* (a British *go-slow* is a protest in which workers deliberately work slowly) |
| Trinidad and Tobago English | *lime* (verb): to relax and chat with friends, with no fixed plan | *We're going to lime on the beach tonight.* | *hang out* |
| Singapore English (informal) | the particle *lah* at the end of a sentence, to soften or emphasise it | *Don't worry, lah.* | tone of voice; *really*, *come on* |

### 15.4.2 English as a lingua franca

Most conversations in English today take place between non-native speakers: an Italian engineer and a Japanese supplier, an Erasmus student from Poland and her Spanish flatmate. Researchers call this use **English as a Lingua Franca** (ELF; *inglese come lingua franca*). What matters in ELF is **mutual intelligibility** (*intelligibilità reciproca*): pronouncing clearly the sounds that carry meaning, choosing plain words, checking that you have been understood, and avoiding idioms that only native speakers know (*a sticky wicket*, *to beat around the bush*). In international meetings, native speakers who talk fast and use local idioms can be the hardest people to understand.

Respect is part of good English everywhere. In chapter 2 you studied inclusive language (*chair*, *humanity*, singular *they*); the same principle applies to peoples and places: use the name a community uses for itself (*Mumbai* for today's city, *Inuit*), and ask, if you are not sure, how a person prefers to be described.

**GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO**

**Varietà, non errori.** Una **varietà** è un sistema coerente, usato da una comunità; un **errore** è una deviazione involontaria dalla varietà che si sta usando. *The exam has been preponed* è inglese indiano corretto; *I am agree* è un errore in qualunque varietà. Non esiste un'accademia che stabilisca l'inglese "giusto": la norma nasce dall'uso dei parlanti colti di ciascun paese.

**Confronto con l'italiano.** Anche l'italiano ha varietà regionali: *sto a mangiare* (Roma) accanto a *sto mangiando*, *ho mangiato* al Nord dove al Sud si dice spesso *mangiai*. Nessuno le considera errori di un parlante colto, ma in un testo formale si sceglie l'italiano standard. Vale lo stesso per l'inglese all'esame: scegliete una varietà standard, britannica o americana, e usatela con coerenza (capitolo 6).

**ERRORE FREQUENTE**

✗ *L'inglese indiano è un inglese sbagliato.* → ✓ È una **varietà** con norme proprie, parlata da milioni di persone istruite.

✗ *Our meeting has been preponed to Monday* in una mail a un'azienda di Londra. → ✓ *Our meeting has been **brought forward** to Monday.* Non è un errore, ma il lettore britannico potrebbe non capirlo: scegliete la varietà del vostro destinatario.

### 15.4.3 Five years of grammar on one map

From English 1 to English 5 you have studied about seventy grammar points. Tabella 15.4 arranges them by area, so that you can see how each one grew: from A2 and B1 in the first two years, to B2 in English 3 and 4, towards C1 this year. Use it to revise before INVALSI and the exam: choose a row, find the chapters, reread the form tables and redo two exercises.

**Tabella 15.4** The grammar of English 1–5: a map. E1·3 = English 1, Unit 3; E3·7 = English 3, chapter 7; E5·1 = this book, chapter 1.

| Area | English 1–2 (A2–B1) | English 3–4 (B2) | English 5 (towards C1) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tenses and time | present simple and continuous E1·3, E1·5; past E1·8, E1·9; present perfect E1·13, E2·8; past perfect, *used to* E2·2; future E1·12, E2·5 | narrative tenses E3·1; future forms E3·9; habits E3·12; *was to* E4·13 | tenses for writing about texts E5·1; *will / would* E5·4 |
| Modals | *can, could* E1·6; *must, have to, should* E1·11; deduction E2·6; *should have* E2·11 | past ability E3·2; past modals E3·3; permission and prevention E4·9 | *will* for assumption E5·4 |
| Passive and causative | the passive, *have something done* E2·3 | passive B2 E3·4 | agentless structures E5·12 |
| Conditionals and unreal | first conditional E1·12; zero to second, *wish* E2·4; third E2·11 | mixed conditionals E3·7; alternatives to *if* E3·13; subjunctive E4·7; inverted conditionals E4·8 | — |
| Reporting | reported speech E2·7 | reporting verbs E3·6 | noun clauses E5·7 |
| Clauses in the noun phrase | relative clauses E1·14; non-defining E2·9 | relative clauses B2 E3·5; participle clauses E3·8 | complex noun phrases E5·5 |
| Verb patterns | verb patterns E1·14, E2·10; phrasal verbs E2·12 | gerunds and infinitives E3·10; phrasal verbs B2 E4·10 | — |
| Nouns and determiners | plurals, articles E1·1; countable, quantifiers E1·7 | articles E4·1; determiners E4·2 | agreement E5·13 |
| Comparison and adverbs | comparatives E1·10; modifying comparatives E2·9 | comparison B2 E3·11; adverbs B2 E4·12 | — |
| Questions, emphasis, word order | question forms E1·14; question tags E2·1 | inversion E4·3; clefts E4·6; questions and *-ever* E4·11 | — |
| Linking and text | time linkers E1·9; linkers E2·9 | cohesion E3·14; hedging E4·4; nominalisation E4·5 | concession E5·2; defining E5·3; cause and effect E5·8; punctuation E5·9; purpose and time E5·10; data E5·11 |
| Language and society | English in the world E1·10 | the making of English E3·2 | British and American E5·6; language of power E5·12; spoken grammar E5·14; World Englishes E5·15 |

English 4, chapter 14, reviewed the B2 grammar through key-word transformations; the Language exercises of this chapter mix all five years in the same way.

## 15.5 Skills: the Final Rehearsal

### 15.5.1 Vocabulary: identity, migration and the future

The words in Tabella 15.5 help you talk about the writers of this chapter and about the world you are about to enter.

**Tabella 15.5** Identity, migration and the future: key words

| Word | Meaning | Example |
|---|---|---|
| *diaspora* (n.) | a people scattered far from their original homeland, and their communities abroad | *The Somali diaspora in Italy has produced a new generation of writers.* |
| *hybrid* (adj., n.) | made of different elements combined | *Walcott's Caribbean is a hybrid culture.* |
| *belonging* (n.) | the feeling of being accepted as part of a group or place | *Zadie Smith's characters look for a sense of belonging.* |
| *heritage* (n.) | traditions, language and history passed down from the past | *Achebe celebrates the Igbo heritage.* |
| *sustainability* (n.) | using resources in a way that does not damage the future | *Sustainability is a key word of the Paris Agreement.* |
| *artificial intelligence* (n.) | computer systems that perform tasks we associate with human intelligence | *Klara is a work of artificial intelligence with feelings.* |
| *algorithm* (n.) | a set of step-by-step instructions for solving a problem | *An algorithm chooses the videos you watch next.* |
| *global* (adj.) / *globalisation* (n.) | worldwide / the growing connection of economies and cultures | *Globalisation has made English the language of business.* |

A **diaspora** (*diaspora*) — from the Greek for "scattering" — keeps links with its homeland across generations: Adichie, Zadie Smith and Lahiri all write about diaspora families.

#### Word formation: pseudo-anglicisms

Italian has borrowed hundreds of English words (*computer*, *weekend*, *sport*). But some "English" words used in Italy do not exist in English with that meaning, or do not exist at all: they are **pseudo-anglicisms** (*falsi anglicismi*). They are the opposite of the false friends you studied in English 3 (chapter 2) — *actually*, *eventually*, *sensible*: those are real English words that look like Italian ones. Both can make an Italian speaker misunderstood (Tabella 15.6).

**Tabella 15.6** Pseudo-anglicisms in Italian

| In Italian | Meaning in Italian | Say in English | What the English word means |
|---|---|---|---|
| *lo smart working* | lavoro da casa o da remoto | *remote working, working from home* | rare in English; a management term for flexible work |
| *il box* | garage; recinto per bambini | *a garage, a parking space; a playpen* | *a box* = una scatola |
| *il footing* | corsa leggera | *jogging, going for a run* | a firm position for the feet; a basis (*on an equal footing*) |
| *il mister* | l'allenatore di calcio | *the manager, the coach* | a title before a surname (*Mr Rossi*) |
| *lo slip* | mutande | *briefs, underpants, knickers* | a small piece of paper; a small mistake; a woman's petticoat (not briefs) |
| *il golf* | maglione, cardigan | *a jumper, a cardigan* | only the sport |

For university, add four false friends that Italian students often trip over: a *lecture* is a *lezione* (a *lettura* is a *reading*); a *conference* is a *convegno* (a *conferenza* is often a *lecture* or *talk*); an *argument* is a *litigio* or an *argomentazione* (an *argomento* is a *topic*); *educated* means *istruito* (*educato* is *polite*).

## 15.5.2 Reading: "What Five Years of English Gave Me"

Two weeks before the exam Giulia writes her last post on The Link, and Sam, Aoife and Callum reply (Tabella 15.7). Read it, then do the Towards INVALSI tasks in the exercises.

**Tabella 15.7** Reading text — Giulia's last post on "The Link, Year Five", and the replies

| **What Five Years of English Gave Me** |
|---|
| In two weeks I'll be sitting in our classroom in front of the commission, and Prof.ssa Rossi has asked us to write one last post before the exam. Not a summary of the programme, she said: what English has given us. So here it is — five years, five things. |
| **Words for things I didn't know I thought.** In the first year English was a list of irregular verbs that I copied into a notebook. Somewhere in the third year, reading Shakespeare's sonnets with Sam over a very bad video connection, I noticed that some ideas came to me more easily in English than in Italian. I still dream in Italian, but I argue with myself in both. |
| **Friends.** I met Sam, Aoife and Callum at Hillside, in Bristol, the year I spent there when we were fifteen. Now Sam studies literature and sends me photos of his reading lists; Aoife spends her days counting crabs (sorry, Aoife: "monitoring coastal ecosystems"); Callum measures rivers in the rain and claims to enjoy it. In March Aoife showed our class round Dublin, and for three days we argued about Joyce in the rain. |

**A way of reading.** Our English lessons taught me to ask four questions of every text: who is speaking, to whom, when, and what is left out. I asked them of Dickens and of Conrad, and then, without meaning to, of a physics textbook, a newspaper and an advert for a phone. Adichie would call it looking for the other stories.

**A decision.** For a year I said "engineering or physics", depending on who asked. What decided me was not a lesson but my placement at the science museum, where I had to explain time dilation to a group of thirteen-year-olds — in Italian, and then in English to a class visiting from the Netherlands. I loved it, and I realised that I don't want to build things: I want to understand them, and to explain them. So in October I'll start physics, here in Turin. Dad says he always knew. He didn't.

**A beginning.** The exam is not the end of English for me. INVALSI is behind me, and the colloquio will be one conversation on one morning. But English is the language of most of the papers I will read at university, of the conferences I hope to go to, and of many of the people I will work with. I'm not finishing English. I'm starting to use it.

**Sam** — Brilliant post. For the record, the connection was bad because you insisted on reading the sonnets in the garden. Good luck — and when you're a famous physicist, remember who taught you to pronounce *Worcestershire*.

**Aoife** — Crabs are fascinating, thank you very much. Proud of you. Physics is the right call. Come to Galway in the summer: I'll show you the Atlantic, and you can explain the tides to me.

**Callum** — Can confirm I enjoy the rain. Two weeks is plenty of time: make a plan, stick to it, and sleep. And if they ask you about global English, tell them a Scottish geographer says hello.

### 15.5.3 Speaking: the final rehearsal

In recent years the colloquio has begun from a material chosen by the commission — a short text, an image, a document, a graph, a problem — from which the candidate builds links between subjects. Whether English is one of the subjects examined, and how the CLIL subject is examined, is decided every year by the ministerial decree and ordinance: **check the current year's rules (MIM)**. Whatever the rules, the skill is the same: to start from something concrete, say clearly what it is, and move from it to texts, ideas and other subjects in a few organised minutes.

**Tabella 15.8** Useful language — talking from a starting material

| Function | Phrases |
|---|---|
| identifying the material | *This is a graph showing… · This quotation comes from… · The image shows, in the foreground…* |
| giving the context | *It dates from… · It was written at a time when… · To understand it, we need to remember that…* |
| making the first link | *The first thing it makes me think of is… · This is a central idea in…* |
| moving to another subject | *From a scientific point of view… · In physics, which we studied in English this year, … · A similar idea appears in Italian literature, in…* |
| comparing | *Both… and… deal with…, but… · Unlike…, … · What they have in common is…* |
| closing | *So what links these texts is… · To sum up, the material opens three questions: …* |

- **Task 1 — a graph.** Your starting material is the graph of carbon dioxide at Mauna Loa (Connections section). Prepare for two minutes, then talk for three: describe the graph (chapter 11), explain the greenhouse effect, and link it to one text or author. A classmate is the examiner: they time you and ask one follow-up question.
- **Task 2 — a quotation.** Your starting material is the third line of Yeats's "The Second Coming" (1920; chapter 9), the one that gave Achebe his title. Prepare for two minutes, then talk for three, linking it to Achebe, to one Italian author and to one other subject. Swap roles.

### 15.5.4 Writing: a thematic essay and a self-assessment

At the end of a literature course you should be able to follow one theme across centuries, languages and subjects. A **thematic essay** does it in writing: one theme, three authors from English 3–5, one Italian author and one other subject, in 260–300 words. Read the model in Tabella 15.9.

**Tabella 15.9** Model text — a thematic essay (about 270 words, title excluded)

| **Creating a Mind: from *Frankenstein* to Klara** |
|---|
| Can human beings create a mind, and who is responsible for it if they do? This question runs through two centuries of literature in English, and today it is also a question of science. |
| In *Frankenstein* (1818), Mary Shelley imagined a scientist who gives life to a creature and then abandons it. The creature is intelligent and sensitive; it becomes violent only when it is rejected. Shelley's warning is not about knowledge itself, but about the creator's responsibility. |
| Twenty-five years later Ada Lovelace, describing Babbage's Analytical Engine, denied that it could "originate" anything: a machine could only do what we know how to order it to do. In 1950 Alan Turing answered her directly in "Computing Machinery and Intelligence", replacing the question "Can machines think?" with a test, the imitation game. |
| Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* (2021) turns the question round. Its narrator is a machine, an "Artificial Friend", who observes the humans around her with more care than they show one another. Ishiguro does not ask whether Klara can think, but whether the people who own her are able to love. |
| In Italian literature, Pirandello's Serafino Gubbio, a cameraman in an early film studio, feels that the machine he operates is reducing him to a hand that turns a handle. His fear is not that machines will become human, but that humans will become machines. |
| Today language models produce text by predicting probable next words, without the creature's suffering or Klara's devotion. The old literary question has become a practical one, for engineers and lawmakers as much as for readers: who is responsible for what our creations say and do? |

- **Introduction** — the theme as a question, and why it matters today.
- **Three authors in chronological order** — one paragraph each: the work with its date, the idea, one detail or short quotation; each paragraph moves the question forward (*Twenty-five years later… turns the question round*).
- **The Italian author** — a comparison, not a list: what does he or she add?
- **The other subject and the conclusion** — the science link and an answer, or a sharper question.

**Checklist.** One theme, stated in the first sentence · dates for every work · the literary present for texts, the past for lives and history (chapter 1) · linkers between paragraphs · only quotations you have checked · 260–300 words.

**Task.** Choose a theme — *the double*, *the city*, *time*, *war and memory*, *freedom*, *nature and science* — and write your thematic essay. Then write a **self-assessment** of about 100 words: what you can do in English now, what is still difficult, and your next steps after the liceo (university, a C1 certificate, Erasmus).

LEARNING TO LEARN

**After the liceo: keeping English alive.** A language you stop using fades, slowly but surely. Five habits keep it growing.

- **Read for pleasure** — one novel a term in English, and the news in English once a week. Reading is the cheapest way to grow your vocabulary.
- **Listen widely** — podcasts, lectures and films in the original, with English subtitles at first, from different varieties: Irish, Indian, Nigerian, American.
- **Certify your level** — a C1 certificate is often asked for by universities, Erasmus programmes and employers: plan it for your first or second year at university.
- **Study in English** — many university courses and free online courses (MOOCs) are taught in English; an Erasmus semester is the best immersion there is.
- **Transfer the method** — the tools of these five years (reading the questions first, the vocabulary notebook by themes, the PEE paragraph, the comparison grid, the percorso map) work for any new language you learn, and for Italian and Latin too.

## 15.6 Connections: Writing between Languages; Climate and Machines

### 15.6.1 Italian literature of migration and the world

Italy was a country of emigrants for a century (English 2, Unit 9); since the 1980s it has also become a country of immigration, and a literature in Italian by writers with migrant backgrounds has grown with it. **Igiaba Scego**, born in Rome in 1974 to Somali parents, writes about Rome from the point of view of a black Italian woman and about Italy's forgotten colonial past in Somalia and Ethiopia: in *La mia casa è dove sono* (2010) she ties the places of her family's Mogadishu to the streets of Rome; in *Adua* (2015) a Somali woman in Rome looks back on her father, who worked for the Italian colonisers. **Jhumpa Lahiri**, born in London in 1967 to Bengali parents and raised in the United States, won the Pulitzer Prize in 2000 for *Interpreter of Maladies*; in 2012 she moved to Rome and chose to write in Italian. *In altre parole* (2015) tells how she learnt the language as an adult; she did not translate it herself, and the English version, *In Other Words* (2016), was translated by Ann Goldstein. Lahiri chose Italian, Ngũgĩ chose Gikuyu, Achebe chose English: each choice of language is also a choice of readers and of identity.

In chapter 14 you read Article 3 of the Italian Constitution, which names language among the differences that must never create inequality. Another article speaks directly to the question of languages and communities. Article 6 states:

*«La Repubblica tutela con apposite norme le minoranze linguistiche.»*

> "The Republic protects linguistic minorities by means of appropriate laws." (Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana, art. 6; translation by the editors)

Law no. 482 of 15 December 1999 (*legge 482/1999*) opens by declaring Italian the official language of the Republic, then protects the language and culture of twelve historical linguistic minorities, from Albanian and Greek to Friulian, Ladin and Sardinian. It does not cover dialects or the languages of recent immigration, such as Somali or Bengali. Scego and Lahiri write in Italian — but which languages should a country protect, and why?

Italo Calvino's *Lezioni americane* (1988) look at the future of literature from Italy. Calvino wrote them in 1985 for the Norton Lectures at Harvard, but died in September 1985, before he could give them. He completed five "memos for the next millennium" — *Leggerezza*, *Rapidità*, *Esattezza*, *Visibilità*, *Molteplicità* (Lightness, Quickness, Exactitude, Visibility, Multiplicity); a sixth, on Consistency, was never written. Which memo fits Ishiguro's quiet narrators best, and which fits Rushdie's crowded India?

### 15.6.2 Screen, music and art: Bristol's walls and global pop

Bristol, Sam's city, is one of the capitals of street art. Banksy, an artist whose identity has never been officially confirmed, began painting in Bristol in the 1990s with stencils and spray paint. His *Well Hung Lover* (2006), on the wall of a sexual health clinic in Frogmore Street, shows a man hanging by his hands from a window ledge while, at the window above, a man in a suit looks out for him and a woman stands behind; after an online consultation in which most respondents asked for it to stay, the city council decided not to remove it. In the summer of 2009 the exhibition *Banksy versus Bristol Museum*, prepared in secret with the museum, drew hundreds of thousands of visitors, many of whom queued for hours. Street art asks the same questions as postcolonial writing: who has the right to speak on the walls of a city, and whose story do they tell?

Pop music shows English as a lingua franca at work. In 2020 the South Korean group BTS reached number one in the US Billboard Hot 100 with "Dynamite", their first song entirely in English. The Italian band Måneskin won the Eurovision Song Contest in Rotterdam in May 2021 singing in Italian, and later that year became known around the world with an English-language song, their cover of "Beggin'". Like many writers in this chapter, many musicians now move between their own language and English.

### 15.6.3 Climate and machines

Two of the great scientific questions of your generation are bound up with English: it is the main language in which climate science is published, and the language on which most artificial-intelligence systems are trained. Figura 15.4 shows one of the most famous data series in science.

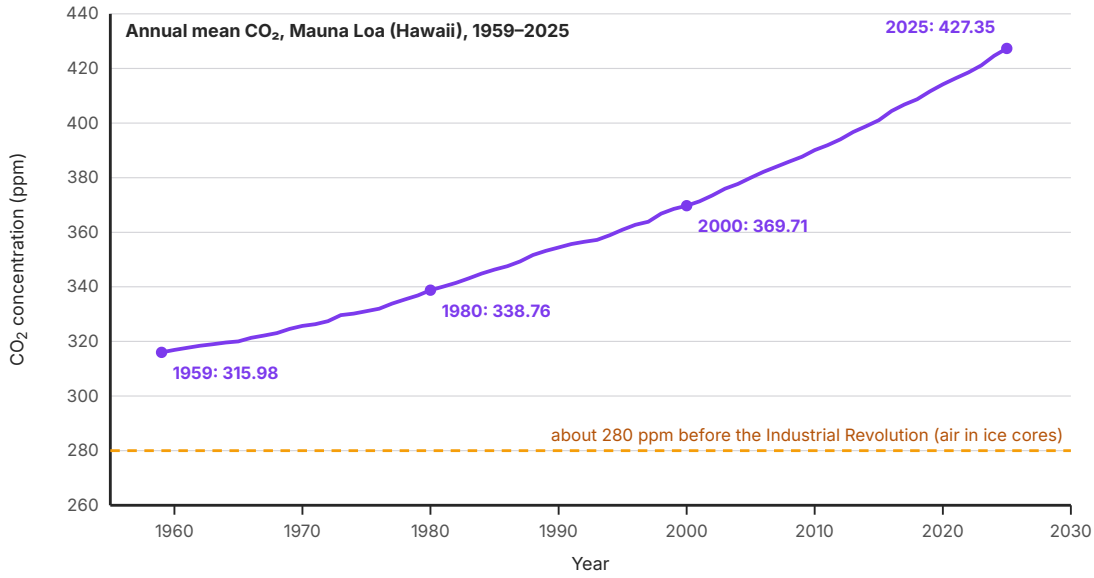



**Figura 15.4** Annual mean concentration of carbon dioxide ($CO_2$) in the atmosphere, in parts per million (ppm), 1959–2025. Data: NOAA Global Monitoring Laboratory, Mauna Loa (Hawaii) annual means (file of 9 October 2026; after the eruption of Mauna Loa, measurements from December 2022 to July 2023 come from Maunakea, about 21 miles, or 34 km, to the north). The pre-industrial value (about 280 ppm) comes from air trapped in Antarctic ice.

**COLLEGAMENTI**

**Earth science and physics: the greenhouse effect.** Sunlight reaches the Earth mostly as visible and near-infrared radiation and warms the surface; the warm surface emits infrared radiation. Gases such as water vapour, carbon dioxide ($CO_2$) and methane absorb part of this infrared radiation and re-emit it in all directions, including back towards the surface. This **greenhouse effect** (*effetto serra*) keeps the Earth's average surface temperature about 33 °C higher than it would otherwise be — about 15 °C instead of about −18 °C. Burning coal, oil and gas adds $CO_2$ to the atmosphere and strengthens the effect.

Since 1958 the American scientist Charles David Keeling, and others after him, have measured $CO_2$ continuously on Mauna Loa, Hawaii, far from local sources of pollution. The annual mean rose from 315.98 ppm in 1959 to 427.35 ppm in 2025 (Figura 15.4): an increase of about 35% in 66 years, and of about 53% over the pre-industrial value of about 280 ppm. The small rise and fall within each year, visible in the monthly data, follows the growth of plants in the northern hemisphere.

COLLEGAMENTI

**Computer science: how a language model writes.** A **large language model** (*modello linguistico di grandi dimensioni*) is a computer program trained on an enormous amount of text. The text is divided into **tokens** (*token*) — words or parts of words. During training the model learns to predict the next token from the tokens before it, by adjusting billions of numbers (its parameters) so that its predictions become more accurate. When you ask it a question, it produces the answer one token at a time, each time choosing among the most probable continuations. It has no direct experience of the world and can write fluent sentences that are false, so what it produces must be checked against reliable sources. Much of the text these models learn from is in English, and they often work best in English — a consequence, and a cause, of English as a global language.

Lovelace (chapter 2) said the Analytical Engine could not "originate" anything; Turing (chapter 13) asked whether machines could think. A language model reopens both questions: is predicting the next word a way of thinking, or only a very good imitation of it?

DA RICORDARE

**For the exam.** Starting point: the third line of W. B. Yeats's "The Second Coming" (1920; chapter 9), an order that falls apart because its centre cannot hold. Three links it opens:

- **Another English author** — Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (1958): the collapse of Igbo society under colonial rule, and the colonial officer who reduces it to "a reasonable paragraph".
- **An Italian author** — Pirandello: the self that falls apart into "one, no one and a hundred thousand" (chapter 10), or Montale's "male di vivere", summarised.
- **Another subject** — physics: the second law of thermodynamics (in an isolated system entropy, a measure of disorder, never decreases); or history: decolonisation and the end of the British Empire.

**SINTESI**

- After 1947 almost all British colonies became independent (**decolonisation**): Ghana in 1957, Nigeria in 1960, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in 1962, Kenya in 1963. Most joined the **Commonwealth of Nations**, a voluntary association that now has 56 members.
- The British Nationality Act (1948) opened Britain to migrants from the colonies; Britain became multicultural. The **Windrush scandal** (2018) revealed that legal residents from the Caribbean had been treated as illegal immigrants.
- In Northern Ireland **the Troubles** (late 1960s–1998) cost more than 3,500 lives; the **Good Friday Agreement** (10 April 1998) created a power-sharing government.
- Thatcher (1979–1990) privatised industries and defeated the miners' strike; Blair (1997–2007) introduced the minimum wage and **devolution** (Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly, 1999) and joined the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.
- The UK voted to leave the EU on 23 June 2016 (51.9%) and left on 31 January 2020; Elizabeth II died on 8 September 2022. The **Paris Agreement** (2015) aims to keep warming well below 2 °C.
- **Postcolonial literature** is writing from and about formerly colonised societies, and a critical approach; it is a category, not a period, and some writers reject the label.
- Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), whose title comes from Yeats, shows Igbo society from the inside and ends with a colonial officer reducing Okonkwo's life to a paragraph.
- Walcott (*Omeros*, 1990), Naipaul, Heaney and Ishiguro received the Nobel Prize; Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) is a classic of **magical realism**.
- Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) is narrated by a clone who describes her fate in euphemisms; Atwood, Zadie Smith and Adichie extend the global voices of English; Adichie warns against the "single story".
- **World Englishes** are the varieties of English around the world; Kachru's model divides them into the inner, outer and expanding circles. A variety is not an error.
- In **English as a Lingua Franca** what counts is mutual intelligibility: clear pronunciation, plain words, no local idioms. **Pseudo-anglicisms** such as *footing* or *mister* do not work in English.
- $CO_2$ at Mauna Loa rose from 315.98 ppm (1959) to 427.35 ppm (2025); a **large language model** writes by predicting the next token — both are part of the world in which you will use your English.

## ESERCIZI

### History and Literature

1. ● What did the Good Friday Agreement (1998) establish?
   - **A.** The reunification of Ireland under one government.
   - **B.** A power-sharing government in Northern Ireland, which stays in the UK as long as a majority wishes.
   - **C.** The partition of Ireland into two states.
   - **D.** The withdrawal of Northern Ireland from the European Union.

2. ● Which writer was born in Nagasaki and moved to England as a child?
   - **A.** Salman Rushdie
   - **B.** V. S. Naipaul
   - **C.** Derek Walcott
   - **D.** Kazuo Ishiguro

3. ● Magical realism is…
   - **A.** a realistic narrative in which impossible events happen and are told as normal.
   - **B.** a form of science fiction set in the future.
   - **C.** a movement founded by Salman Rushdie in 1981.
   - **D.** the Gothic novel of the nineteenth century in a modern setting.

4. ● The Windrush scandal (2018) concerned…
   - **A.** the sinking of a ship carrying migrants from the Caribbean.
   - **B.** a law that closed Britain to migrants from the Commonwealth in 1948.
   - **C.** legal residents who had come from the Caribbean as children and were treated as illegal immigrants.
   - **D.** the refusal of Caribbean states to join the Commonwealth.

5. ●● Match each author with a work and a date: Achebe · Walcott · Rushdie · Atwood · Zadie Smith — *Omeros* · *White Teeth* · *Things Fall Apart* · *The Handmaid's Tale* · *Midnight's Children* — 1958 · 1981 · 1985 · 1990 · 2000.

6. ●● True or false? Correct the false statements. a Ghana became independent in 1957. b Seamus Heaney was born in the Republic of Ireland. c The Paris Agreement aims to keep warming "well below 2 °C". d Postcolonial literature is everything written in English after 1945. e The UK left the European Union on 31 January 2020. f Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o chose to write his later fiction in Gikuyu.

7. ●●● Short answer (100–130 words, a definition + an example + a link): What is postcolonial literature?

### Text Analysis

8. ●● At the end of *Things Fall Apart* (T1), the title of the Commissioner's book is ironic because…
   - **A.** the Commissioner has never been to Nigeria.
   - **B.** Okonkwo would have liked to read it.
   - **C.** it is written in Igbo.
   - **D.** the word "pacification" hides the violence of colonial rule, and the novel has shown that the "primitive tribes" had a complex society.

9. ●● T1: Explain in 60–80 words why Achebe ends the novel inside the Commissioner's mind.

10. ●● T2: Find four words that Kathy uses in a special sense and explain what each one means in the world of the novel.

11. ●● T2: Why does Ishiguro reveal the truth about the students gradually? Answer in 60–80 words.

12. ●● T3: Compare Text A and Text B. For each text say: a who seems to be speaking, and with what purpose; b two generalisations or two precise facts; c one thing it leaves out.

13. ●●● Write a PEE paragraph (80–100 words): "In *Never Let Me Go*, as in Adichie's talk, the danger lies in a story that is incomplete."

### Language

14. ● Match each feature with its variety: Indian English · Nigerian English · Trinidad and Tobago English · Singapore English — a *Don't worry, lah.* b *We're going to lime by the sea.* c *The test has been preponed.* d *I was stuck in a go-slow.*

15. ●● Variety (V) or learner error (E)? Correct the errors. a *The meeting has been preponed to Friday.* b *I am agree with Adichie.* c *People is worried about climate change.* d *Don't worry, lah.* e *She explained me the poem.* f *We limed on the beach all afternoon.*

16. ●● Grammar map. Name the structure in each sentence and find its row in Tabella 15.4. a *Had Achebe written in Igbo, fewer readers would have known his work.* b *It was Adichie who spoke of a single story.* c *Much as he admired Conrad's style, Achebe criticised his image of Africa.* d *The number of writers who live between two languages is growing.* e *Not until the last pages does the reader understand.* f *Kathy will sit for hours remembering Hailsham.*

17. ●● Key-word transformations. Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first, using 2–5 words including the word given. a *Although he admired Conrad's style, Achebe attacked his image of Africa.* MUCH — _____ Conrad's style, Achebe attacked his image of Africa. b *The reader only understands the truth near the end.* UNTIL — Not _____ the reader understand the truth. c *People say that Banksy comes from Bristol.* SAID — Banksy _____ from Bristol. d *It's a pity I didn't read* Things Fall Apart *earlier.* WISH — I _____ Things Fall Apart earlier. e *The UK left the EU because of the 2016 referendum.* RESULT — The UK left the EU _____ the 2016 referendum.

18. ●● Find and correct the mistake in each sentence (each comes from a language point of this book). a ✗ *Rushdie was born in 1947, he grew up in Bombay.* b ✗ *In* Never Let Me Go *Kathy remembered her childhood at Hailsham.* c ✗ *$CO_2$ at Mauna Loa rose of about 35% between 1959 and 2025.* d ✗ *We discussed about if Adichie's talk is a lecture.* e ✗ *Each of the novels have a first-person narrator.* f ✗ *Climate change is caused from greenhouse gases.*

19. ●● Rewrite for an international audience (English as a Lingua Franca): replace each idiom with plain English. a *Let's not beat around the bush.* b *The exam was a piece of cake.* c *Let's touch base next week.* d *Working from home is a whole new ball game.*

20. ●● Translate into English. a *Sebbene sia nata a Londra, Jhumpa Lahiri ha scelto di scrivere in italiano.* b *Il numero degli scrittori che vivono tra due lingue è in aumento.* c *È importante che chi legge un romanzo postcoloniale ne conosca il contesto.*

### Vocabulary

21. ● Complete with *diaspora, heritage, sustainability, algorithm, hybrid, belonging*. a The Nigerian _____ in London has its own newspapers and churches. b Achebe wanted Nigerians to be proud of their _____. c An _____ decides which posts you see first. d Walcott describes a _____ culture, half African and half European. e Many migrants' children search for a sense of _____. f _____ means meeting our needs without harming future generations.

22. ●● Giulia's cousin uses Italian pseudo-anglicisms in an email to Sam. Correct them. a *Our mister says we must do footing every morning.* b *I left my bike in the box.* c *My dad is doing smart working today.* d *I need a new golf for the winter.*

23. ●● Choose the correct word. a I have a *lecture / reading* on quantum physics at nine. b She gave a paper at an international *conference / lecture* in Vienna. c They had an *argument / topic* about Brexit and didn't speak for a week. d He is very *educated / polite*: he has two degrees. e My *parents / relatives* — my mum and dad — live in Turin.

24. ●● Complete with the correct form of the word in brackets. a _____ has made English the language of business. (GLOBAL) b Burning coal is not a _____ way to produce energy. (SUSTAIN) c Many _____ from the Caribbean arrived in the 1950s. (MIGRATE) d Her grandparents _____ from Ireland to America in 1920. (MIGRATE)

### Writing and Speaking

25. ●●● Write a thematic essay (260–300 words): one theme, three authors from English 3–5, one Italian author and one other subject. Then write a self-assessment (about 100 words) on what you can do in English now and your next steps.

26. ●● Speaking. Your starting material is Figura 15.2, the map of English in the world. Talk for three minutes: describe the map, explain why English is official in so many countries, and link it to one writer and one other subject.

### Towards INVALSI

27. ● (B1) Read Giulia's post (Tabella 15.7). Why does Giulia write it?
    - **A.** Because Sam asked her to describe her exam.
    - **B.** Because her teacher asked the class to write a last post on what English has given them.
    - **C.** To summarise the English programme for the commission.
    - **D.** To announce that she will move to Galway.

28. ●● (B2) What made Giulia choose physics?
    - **A.** Explaining a scientific idea to younger students during her placement.
    - **B.** A lesson on Joyce in Dublin.
    - **C.** Her father's advice.
    - **D.** Her good results in the INVALSI test.

29. ●● (B1) Answer in no more than four words. a When did Giulia first notice that some ideas came more easily in English? b What does Aoife really do, according to Aoife herself? c Where did the class go in March? d What did Giulia explain to the thirteen-year-olds? e What three things does Callum advise?

30. ●● (B2) True, false or not given? a Giulia met Sam, Aoife and Callum when they were all fifteen. b Giulia now dreams in English. c The Dutch students were the same age as the Italian ones. d Giulia's father predicted her choice. e Sam reminds Giulia why the video connection was bad. f Aoife invites Giulia to Galway in the summer.

### Towards the Exam

31. ●●● Starting material: Figura 15.4, carbon dioxide at Mauna Loa, 1959–2025. Talk for 3 minutes and link it to two other subjects.

32. ●●● Starting material: a date, 31 January 2020. Talk for 3 minutes and link it to two other subjects.

## PER APPROFONDIRE

- [BOE] E. Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*: the chapters on decolonisation and on postcolonial writing, with Achebe, Walcott and Rushdie.
- [CRY] D. Crystal, *English as a Global Language*: the chapters on why English became global and on its future.
- [NOR] S. Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. F: the section on colonial and postcolonial writing and the selections from Heaney.
- [HOB] E. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*: the chapters on the Third World and on the last decades of the century.
- [ABR] M. H. Abrams, G. G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*: the entries "postcolonial studies" and "magic realism".
- [IND] *Indicazioni nazionali per i licei* (D.I. 211/2010): the pages on Lingua e cultura straniera, quinto anno, the goals this book has worked towards.

# Glossario del capitolo

**Commonwealth of Nations**
*Commonwealth delle nazioni* — the voluntary association of independent states, most of them former British territories (56 members in 2025); not Cromwell's republic of 1649.

**Decolonisation**
*decolonizzazione* — the process by which colonies became independent states, above all between 1945 and the 1970s.

**Devolution**
*devoluzione* — the transfer of powers from the UK Parliament to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

**Diaspora**
*diaspora* — a people scattered far from their homeland, and their communities abroad.

**English as a Lingua Franca**
*inglese come lingua franca* — English used for communication between speakers who have different first languages.

**Expanding circle**
*cerchio in espansione* — in Kachru's model, the countries where English is a foreign language used for international contact.

**Greenhouse effect**
*effetto serra* — the warming of the Earth's surface by gases that absorb and re-emit infrared radiation.

**Inner circle**
*cerchio interno* — in Kachru's model, the countries where English is the first language of most people.

**Large language model**
*modello linguistico di grandi dimensioni* — a computer program trained on huge amounts of text to predict the next word or part of a word.

**Magical realism**
*realismo magico* — realistic narrative in which impossible events happen and are told as normal.

**Mutual intelligibility**
*intelligibilità reciproca* — the degree to which speakers of different varieties can understand each other.

**Outer circle**
*cerchio esterno* — in Kachru's model, the countries where English is a second or official language, a legacy of empire.

**Postcolonial literature**
*letteratura postcoloniale* — writing from and about formerly colonised societies, and the critical approach that reads it.

**Power-sharing**
*condivisione del potere* — a system in which rival communities must govern together, as in Northern Ireland after 1998.

**Pseudo-anglicism**
*falso anglicismo* — a word that looks English and is used in another language, but that English does not use with that meaning.

**The Troubles**
*il conflitto nordirlandese* — the violent conflict in Northern Ireland from the late 1960s to 1998.

**Token**
*token* — in a language model, a unit of text (a word or part of a word) that the model reads and predicts.

**Variety**
*varietà (di una lingua)* — a form of a language used by a community, with its own regular features.

**World Englishes**
*gli inglesi del mondo* — the varieties of English that have developed in different countries, and the study of them.

# Soluzioni

**1.** B.

**2.** D (Rushdie was born in Bombay, Naipaul in Trinidad, Walcott in Saint Lucia).

**3.** A (the term goes back to Franz Roh, 1925; Rushdie used the technique, he did not found it).

**4.** C.

**5.** Achebe — *Things Fall Apart* — 1958 · Rushdie — *Midnight's Children* — 1981 · Atwood — *The Handmaid's Tale* — 1985 · Walcott — *Omeros* — 1990 · Zadie Smith — *White Teeth* — 2000.

**6.** a T (6 March 1957). b F: he was born in County Derry, in Northern Ireland (UK). c T. d F: it is a critical category about colonised societies and their writing, not a period. e T. f T.

**7.** Model: *Postcolonial literature is writing from and about societies that were colonised, especially after independence, and also the critical approach that reads it with attention to empire, race, language and identity. It is a category, not a period: the term spread in the 1980s, and some writers reject it. A classic example is Chinua Achebe's* Things Fall Apart *(1958), which shows Igbo society from the inside before colonial rule destroys it, and ends with a British officer reducing Okonkwo's life to a paragraph. It answers colonial literature such as Conrad's* Heart of Darkness *(chapter 7), in which Africans hardly speak. The debate between Achebe and Ngũgĩ on writing in English or in African languages shows that language itself is a postcolonial question.* (c. 125 words)

**8.** D.

**9.** Model: *By ending inside the Commissioner's mind, Achebe makes the reader see the colonial point of view from the outside. We have followed Okonkwo's life, family and society for a whole novel; the Commissioner, who knows nothing of it, plans to reduce it to "a reasonable paragraph" in a book on "pacification". The shift creates bitter irony and shows how colonial history was written by people who did not understand what they described.* (c. 75 words)

**10.** *carer*: a clone who looks after the donors before beginning donations; *donor*: a clone who gives organs; *donation*: an operation to remove a vital organ; *complete*: to die after the donations. (Also accepted: *guardians* = teachers; *deferral* = a postponement of donations.)

**11.** Model: *Ishiguro lets the reader discover the truth as the students did, "told and not told". Kathy's calm narration and her euphemisms hide the horror, so we slowly realise what the ordinary words mean. The delay makes us share the students' acceptance and then judge it; it also creates suspense and makes the revelation more painful, because by then we know and care about Kathy, Ruth and Tommy.* (c. 70 words)

**12.** a A: a tourist guide or travel blogger, to entertain and attract visitors; B: an informative writer, to describe the city fairly. b A: e.g. "Everyone here shouts", "nobody ever stops at a red light"; B: e.g. the University founded in 1224, the Vesuvius Observatory (1841). c A leaves out e.g. history, science, culture, ordinary working life; B leaves out e.g. food, the sea, daily street life — even a many-sided text must select. Accept any reasonable answer supported by the texts.

**13.** Model: *Point: in both Ishiguro's novel and Adichie's talk, an incomplete story is dangerous. Evidence: the students of Hailsham are "told and not told" what they are for, and Kathy calls death "completing". Explanation: like the single story Adichie describes, the half-truth that the students receive is not false, but it leaves out what matters most; because they never hear the whole story, they never imagine another life, and they accept their fate.* (c. 80 words)

**14.** a Singapore English. b Trinidad and Tobago English. c Indian English. d Nigerian English.

**15.** a V (Indian English). b E: *I agree with Adichie.* c E: *People are worried…* (chapter 13). d V (Singapore English, informal). e E: *She explained the poem to me.* f V (Trinidad and Tobago English).

**16.** a inverted (third) conditional — Conditionals and unreal (E4·8). b cleft sentence — Questions, emphasis, word order (E4·6). c concession with *much as* — Linking and text (E5·2). d agreement with *the number of* — Nouns and determiners (E5·13). e inversion after a negative adverbial — Questions, emphasis, word order (E4·3). f *will* for characteristic behaviour — Tenses and time (E3·12, recalled in E5·4).

**17.** a *Much as he admired*. b *until near the end does* (also accepted: *until the end does*). c *is said to come*. d *wish I had read*. e *as a result of*.

**18.** a *Rushdie was born in 1947 and grew up in Bombay.* (or a semicolon; comma splice, chapter 9). b *… Kathy* ***remembers*** *her childhood…* (literary present, chapter 1). c *…rose* ***by*** *about 35%…* (chapter 11). d *We discussed* ***whether*** *Adichie's talk is a lecture.* (*discuss* takes no preposition; *whether*, chapter 7). e *Each of the novels* ***has…*** (chapter 13). f *…is caused* ***by*** *greenhouse gases.* (chapter 8).

**19.** a *Let's speak directly / get to the point.* b *The exam was very easy.* c *Let's talk again / contact each other next week.* d *Working from home is completely different.*

**20.** a *Although she was born in London, Jhumpa Lahiri chose to write in Italian.* (also: *Though born in London…*) b *The number of writers who live between two languages is growing / increasing.* c *It is important that readers of a postcolonial novel (should) know its context. / It is important for anyone who reads a postcolonial novel to know its context.*

**21.** a diaspora. b heritage. c algorithm. d hybrid. e belonging. f Sustainability.

**22.** a *Our* ***coach*** *says we must* ***go jogging / go for a run*** *every morning.* b *I left my bike in the* ***garage***. c *My dad is* ***working from home*** *today.* d *I need a new* ***jumper / cardigan*** *for the winter.*

**23.** a lecture. b conference. c argument. d educated. e parents.

**24.** a Globalisation. b sustainable. c migrants (also: immigrants). d emigrated (also: migrated).

**25.** Guidance: follow the model essay, the structure and the checklist of the Writing section. Assess: one theme stated at once; three authors from English 3–5 with dates, in chronological order; a real comparison with the Italian author; a correct link to the other subject; literary present for texts; 260–300 words. The self-assessment should be honest and concrete (e.g. *I can now read a novel without a dictionary, but I still make mistakes with articles; next year I will take a C1 certificate*).

**26.** Model: *The map shows the states where English is the first language of most people, in dark violet — the UK, Ireland, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand — and those where it is an official language, in light violet, such as India, Nigeria and South Africa. Most of the second group are former British colonies: after decolonisation they kept English as a language of government and education, often because dozens of languages are spoken within their borders. This is Kachru's outer circle. In literature, it links to Achebe, who chose to write in English to reach readers across Africa and the world, while Ngũgĩ chose Gikuyu. In geography and history, it links to the Scramble for Africa and the Berlin Conference (chapter 7), whose borders the new states inherited.*

**27.** B.

**28.** A.

**29.** a in the third year (reading Shakespeare's sonnets). b monitoring coastal ecosystems. c (to) Dublin. d time dilation. e plan, stick, sleep / make a plan, stick to it, sleep.

**30.** a T. b F (she still dreams in Italian). c NG. d F ("He didn't."). e T. f T.

**31.** Guidance (*traccia*): describe the graph with the language of chapter 11 (it rose steadily from 315.98 ppm in 1959 to 427.35 ppm in 2025, about 35%; the curve becomes steeper). Explain the greenhouse effect and the role of fossil fuels. Links: **physics / earth science** — infrared radiation and the energy balance of the Earth; **history** — the Industrial Revolution (chapter 1: Coketown's smoke) and the Paris

Agreement (2015); **English** — Dickens's Coketown or Hardy's "The Darkling Thrush" and nature; **Italian** — Leopardi's "La ginestra" (chapter 3) on human beings and a nature that does not care for them.

**32.** Guidance (*traccia*): the UK left the European Union on 31 January 2020, after the referendum of 23 June 2016 (51.9% Leave). Links: **history** — Britain's entry into the EEC (1973), the Commonwealth and the end of empire; **English** — Zadie Smith or Ishiguro on identity and belonging in Britain, or Orwell on national feeling (chapter 12); **Italian / citizenship** — Article 3 of the Constitution and the European Union as a community of law; **language** — English as the EU's main working language even after the UK left.