**ING 218 SELECTIONS FROM ANGLOPHONE LITERATURE**

**Introduction**

**English Around the World**

Approximately 375 million people speak English around the world and there are more than 50 English speaking countries, where English is either the official or the primary language. It is the third most common primary language in the world (behind Mandarin Chinese and Spanish). The English language, which evolved from a combination of Old English and the German Anglo-Saxon tongue, began to be commonly used around the 5th century.

**English Speaking Countries in North America**

The largest English speaking countries are located in North America--the United States and Canada. Although English and French are both the official languages in Canada, fully 85 percent of that country's population speaks English. In addition to the US and Canada, several Caribbean countries speak English. These are primarily the countries that were colonized by England, and include Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica, Grenada, and the Turks and Caicos Islands. Bermuda, still a part of Great Britain, speaks primarily English as does the tiny, Central American country of Belize.

**English Speaking Countries in Europe**

The English language has its roots in northern Europe and so it is fitting that it is widely spoken there. More than 98 percent of the residents of the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales) speak English. In addition, English is the official language in the Republic of Ireland and the Isle of Man.

**English Speaking Countries in the Rest of the World**

The British Empire of the 19th and early 20th centuries as well as the popularity of American culture since World War II has brought the English language to all corners of the globe. It is rare spot where the population doesn't have at least a working understanding of the language. Major English speaking countries outside of Europe and North America include Australia, Nigeria, New Zealand, and South Africa. English is also the primary language in such diverse locales as Guam, Singapore, and the Philippines. Though only a minority of the people (12 percent) in India speak English, that still amounts to more than 125 millions persons in that densely-populated country.

Taken literally, “Anglophone literature” refers to literatures written in English; however, in literary studies the term has many inflections, hence the need for a working definition. For the purpose of this examination, we define “Anglophone literature” as literatures in English produced by writers from nations that are former colonies of Britain, excluding the United States. The term “Anglophone" highlights the linguistic commonality of these writings. However, Anglophone literary critical discourse recognizes that the shared historical experience of British colonial rule and contemporary forms of imperialism forge other forms of connectedness of these writings besides the use of English. In addition, the discourse takes into serious account disparate historical, cultural and political contexts within which these literatures are produced. Finally, it should be noted that as a field of study, Anglophone literature has much in common with Commonwealth literature, Postcolonial literature and New Literatures in English.