

CHAPTER STUDY NOTES: THE POT MAKER

Class: 9 | Subject: English | Textbook: Kaveri (Chapter 2) | Session: 2026–2027

SECTION 1: CHAPTER INFORMATION

Book	Kaveri (NCERT Class 9)
Chapter Number	Chapter 2
Chapter Title	The Pot Maker
Author	Temsula Ao
Literary Form	Short Story
Genre	Socio-Cultural Realism / Traditional Narrative

SECTION 2: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Biography: Temsula Ao (1945–2022) was a major Indian poet, short story writer, and folklorist from Nagaland. She served as a Professor of English at North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU).

Writing Style: Her writing features rich imagery, deep cultural empathy, oral storytelling traditions, and clear, realistic prose.

Literary Contribution: She preserved Nagaland's cultural folklore and brought Northeast Indian literature to mainstream attention with celebrated works like *These Hills Called Home* and *Laburnum for My Head*.

Awards & Recognition: Recipient of the Padma Shri (2007) and the Sahitya Akademi Award (2013).

SECTION 3: INTRODUCTION

"**The Pot Maker**" follows **Sentila**, a young Naga girl who dreams of mastering traditional pottery. The story highlights her perseverance as she works to learn the craft despite initial resistance from her mother, **Arenla**.

SECTION 4: BACKGROUND OF THE STORY

Set in a traditional Naga village where pot making is a strenuous manual process. Pottery is not merely a household chore; it is a shared cultural tradition passed down through generations that requires patience, respect, and hard physical effort.

SECTION 5: CENTRAL IDEA

Determination and passionate observation can overcome initial failure. Cultural art forms belong to the whole community, and true mastery requires patience, mentorship, and quiet focus.

SECTION 6: THEME

- **Preservation of Cultural Heritage:** Traditional crafts must be passed on to future generations to keep tribal identity alive.
- **Perseverance and Dedication:** Continuous effort and resilience transform initial failure into mastery.
- **Role of Mentorship:** Gentle guidance and encouragement can unlock a student's potential where harsh pressure fails.
- **Individual Passion vs. Practical Expectations:** Following a creative calling despite economic constraints and physical hardships.

SECTION 7: COMPLETE DETAILED SUMMARY

Sentila dreams of becoming a pot maker like her mother, **Arenla**, and grandmother. However, Arenla prefers that Sentila learn **weaving**. Arenla considers pot making physically exhausting, requiring a 16-kilometer trek to fetch clay, heavy lifting, and careful firing—all for very little earnings. Weaving, by contrast, is cleaner and offers better income.

Despite her mother's refusal, Sentila secretly watches the village's expert potters at work. She studies how they soften the clay, shape it with a wooden spatula, and fire it in a kiln. Her persistence leads the village council to intervene, reminding Arenla's husband, **Mesoba**, that traditional arts belong to the entire community and must be passed on.

Arenla begins teaching Sentila, but Sentila struggles with shaping the clay. Frustrated and tense, her attempts collapse into misshapen lumps. **Onula**, a kind elder in the girls' dormitory, notices Sentila's anxiety. Onula demonstrates proper technique, encouraging Sentila to relax her hands and observe how her mother shapes the rim of the pot.

One sunny day, Arenla asks Sentila to help make a large batch of pots. Feeling a sudden sense of rhythm and confidence, Sentila works skillfully alongside her mother. When she goes indoors to update her mother, she finds that Arenla has passed away peacefully. Later, Onula discovers two identical rows of pots in the shed—one made by Arenla and one by Sentila—marking the arrival of a new master potter.

SECTION 8: PART-WISE SUMMARY

[Sentila's Dream] → [Mother's Opposition] → [Secret Observation] → [Village Council Intervention] → [Initial Struggle] → [Onula's Guidance] → [Breakthrough & Mastery]

1. **The Passionate Dream:** Sentila desires to learn pot making despite her family's hesitation.
2. **Economic Realities:** Arenla advises her to choose weaving instead due to physical hardship.
3. **Secret Learning:** Sentila visits village potters secretly to study their visual techniques.
4. **Community Responsibility:** Village elders state that traditional skills belong to the tribe and must be taught.
5. **The Struggle:** Sentila learns clay preparation easily but struggles with shaping.

6. **Mentorship:** Onula helps Sentila overcome her internal tension and anxiety.

7. **Mastery:** Sentila successfully crafts a full row of pots, continuing her family's lineage.

SECTION 9: DIFFICULT WORDS & MEANINGS

Word	Meaning	Synonym	Antonym	Sentence
Pittance	A very small amount of money	Trifle, peanuts	Fortune, wealth	She worked hard all day for a mere <i>pittance</i> .
Tedious	Long, slow, and tiresome	Boring, monotonous	Exciting, easy	Pounding the clay inside bamboo cylinders was <i>tedious</i> .
Malleable	Capable of being shaped	Flexible, pliable	Rigid, stiff	The clay became <i>malleable</i> after being pounded.
Deftly	Skillfully and quickly	Nimbly, adroitly	Clumsily, awkwardly	She <i>deftly</i> rotated the clay with her fingers.
Kiln	A furnace for baking clay	Oven, furnace	—	The dry pots were placed in the <i>kiln</i> to be fired.

SECTION 10: CHARACTER SKETCHES

1. Sentila (The Protagonist)

- **Personality:** Passionate, determined, observant, and resilient.
- **Qualities:** Refuses to give up after repeated failures; absorbs advice eagerly.
- **Role:** Represents the new generation keeping ancient cultural arts alive.

2. Arenla (The Mother)

- **Personality:** Practical, hardworking, protective, and highly skilled.
- **Qualities:** Wants a less physically demanding life for her daughter.
- **Role:** Represents experienced artisans who understand the physical realities of the craft.

3. Onula (The Mentor)

- **Personality:** Kind, patient, perceptive, and encouraging.
- **Qualities:** Identifies Sentila's underlying tension and offers gentle, practical advice.
- **Role:** The wise teacher who restores Sentila's self-confidence.

SECTION 11: LITERARY DEVICES

- **Imagery:** Visual and auditory details (e.g., *"The regular tap, tap of the spatula on the clay was music to her ears"*).
- **Simile:** *"Like a sprinter who had suddenly found momentum..."*
- **Symbolism:** The identical rows of pots symbolize the seamless passing of artistic heritage from mother to daughter.

SECTION 12: EXTRACT-BASED QUESTIONS

"The riverbank, where the grey and red clay required for making pots is found, is sixteen kilometres from here... And the reward? A few rupees."

Questions & Answers:

1. Who is speaking these lines?

Answer: Arenla, Sentila's mother.

2. Why is the task of fetching clay difficult?

Answer: It requires walking 16 kilometers and carrying heavy loads of clay back home.

3. What alternative craft does the speaker suggest?

Answer: Weaving.

4. Give the antonym of 'reward'.

Answer: Penalty or Loss.

SECTION 13: SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS (2–3 MARKS)

Q1: Why did Arenla want Sentila to become a weaver rather than a pot maker?

Answer: Arenla felt pot making was physically exhausting, required fetching heavy clay from 16 km away, and paid very little. Weaving was cleaner, less strenuous, and offered much better financial returns.

Q2: What guidance did Onula offer to help Sentila?

Answer: Onula noticed Sentila was overly tense while working. She reassured her, demonstrated correct hand pressure, and advised her to watch how her mother shaped the rim of the pot with calm focus.

Q3: What message did the village council send to Mesoba?

Answer: The village council stated that traditional crafts like pot making belong to the entire community and must be passed on to anyone who genuinely wants to learn.



SECTION 14: LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS (5 MARKS)

Q1: Describe Sentila's journey from a struggling beginner to a skilled potter. What factors contributed to her success?

Answer: Sentila's journey began with a strong inner passion for pottery. Despite her mother's strong preference for weaving, Sentila spent time observing expert potters in the village to learn their techniques visually.

When she began practical training, she struggled for months to shape clay properly, resulting in ruined lumps. Her breakthrough came through Onula's gentle mentorship, which helped her stay calm and release tension. By combining relaxed focus with careful observation of her mother, Sentila found her rhythm and mastered the craft, ensuring her village's traditions lived on.



SECTION 15: MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQS)

1. What alternative craft did Arenla recommend to Sentila?

(a) Basket making (b) Weaving (c) Wood carving (d) Agriculture

✓ **Correct Answer: (b) Weaving**

2. How far was the riverbank where potters collected clay?

(a) 5 km (b) 10 km (c) 16 km (d) 20 km

✓ **Correct Answer: (c) 16 km**

3. Who helped Sentila relax and regain her confidence while making pots?

(a) Arenla (b) Mesoba (c) Onula (d) The Village Chief

✓ **Correct Answer: (c) Onula**



SECTION 16: MIND MAP & FLOWCHART SUMMARY

- **Core Subject:** Traditional Naga Pottery
- **Central Character:** Sentila (Determination & Patience)
- **Key Conflict:** Physical Hardship vs. Creative Calling
- **Turning Point:** Onula's Mentorship & Relaxed Practice
- **Resolution:** Seamless Passing of Cultural Heritage



SECTION 17: QUICK REVISION POINTS

1. Sentila dreams of becoming a potter despite her mother's strong preference for weaving.
2. Pot making involves heavy manual labor, long treks for clay, and careful kiln firing.

3. The village council asserts that cultural arts belong to the entire tribe.
4. Sentila initially fails due to muscular tension and anxiety.
5. Onula provides crucial mentorship that restores Sentila's confidence.
6. Sentila learns through keen observation, patience, and practice.
7. The story emphasizes the preservation of traditional heritage across generations.



SECTION 18: SELF-PRACTICE WORKSHEET

1. **Short Answer:** Why was firing the kiln considered a delicate and risky stage in pot making?
2. **Short Answer:** How did Onula realize that Sentila had finally mastered the art of pot making?
3. **Value-Based Question:** *"Traditional crafts represent community identity and cultural heritage."* Explain this statement with reference to the story.