

The Last Colour in the World

Dr. Anu Devi, Pooja Pal*

Shri Ram Group of College, Muzaffarnagar

ABSTRACT

The Last Colour in the World is a poetic exploration of memory, grief, and the fragile endurance of imagination in a world dimmed by loss. Set in a near future where all colour has mysteriously vanished, the story follows a young artist's quiet rebellion against emotional numbness and collective forgetting. Through fragmented recollections, whispered stories, and fading photographs, she embarks on a journey to recover not only the spectrum of hues but also the emotional depth they once evoked. This book weaves visual metaphor with lyrical prose, crafting a meditative narrative on what it means to remember, to feel, and to survive when all vibrancy seems lost. At its core, it is a tribute to the last ember of hope—the one colour that refuses to fade.

Keywords: Memory, Grief, Imagination, Resilience, Hope

INTRODUCTION

What happens when a world loses its colour—not just from its skies and fields, but from its very soul?

The Last Colour in the World was born from a question both simple and strange: if colour disappeared, would we mourn it like a loved one, or forget it like a dream? In this imagined world, where everything has faded into shades of grey, colour becomes more than just a visual experience—it becomes a memory, a symbol, a language of feeling. This book is not a conventional narrative. It is a collection of fragments—of thoughts, sketches, memories, and meditations—woven together like threads of a tapestry trying to remember its own pattern. The protagonist, a quiet artist adrift in a colourless society, refuses to forget what the world once felt like. Her journey is one of emotional archaeology, digging through ruins of memory in search of lost vibrancy, and in doing so, confronting the deepest layers of grief and healing. As both a visual storyteller and a writer, I have always been drawn to the spaces where words fall short and images begin. This project is my attempt to bridge the two—blending prose with visual metaphor, narrative with mood, to create a space where readers can feel more than they are told. The Last Colour in the World is ultimately a story about resilience—the kind that lives quietly in small acts of remembrance, in

imagination's stubborn refusal to go dark, and in the enduring belief that even in a grey world, one colour always remains.

DEFINITION

The Last Colour in the World is a conceptual and narrative meditation on memory, loss, and the enduring spark of imagination. Set in a future where all visible colour has vanished, it symbolizes a world drained not only of its visual richness but also of its emotional and spiritual vitality. The “last colour” is not a pigment—it is **hope, remembrance**, and the inner light that resists fading, even in the darkest times. It represents the final trace of feeling in a world that has forgotten how to feel.

AIM

The aim of *The Last Colour in the World* is to explore the psychological and emotional impact of loss—of colour, memory, and feeling—in a world stripped of its sensory richness. Through a blend of poetic prose and visual metaphor, the book seeks to:

- Reflect on the human need for beauty, memory, and emotional depth
- Highlight the power of imagination as a form of resistance and healing
- Examine how individuals preserve identity and meaning in the face of emotional numbness

Relevant conflicts of interest/financial disclosures: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.



- Offer a meditative space for readers to reconnect with their own inner colours—grief, hope, longing, and resilience

Ultimately, the book aims to remind us that even in a grey and muted world, the last colour—whether it be a feeling, a memory, or a flicker of hope—can be enough to begin again.

NEED

In an age where emotional disconnection, digital overstimulation, and global uncertainty have dulled our collective sensitivity, *The Last Colour in the World* is needed as a quiet but powerful reminder of what it means to feel deeply.

This book is needed to:

- **Reconnect people with lost emotions** that often get buried under routine, survival, or silence.
- **Offer comfort to those experiencing grief or emotional numbness**, by showing that they are not alone.
- **Preserve the value of imagination and creativity** in a world that often prioritizes logic over feeling.
- **Remind us of the fragile beauty of memory**, and how it shapes our sense of identity and meaning.
- **Inspire resilience**, especially when everything seems muted, grey, or forgotten.

In a time when it's easy to forget how much colour once mattered—not just to the eyes, but to the soul—this book stands as a gentle act of remembering.

Significance and Reach

- The *Last Colour in the World* holds significant emotional and cultural value as a contemporary reflection on loss, memory, and resilience. Its themes resonate widely in a world grappling with emotional disconnection, societal challenges, and the search for meaning amidst uncertainty.
- **Significance:**

- The book addresses universal human experiences such as grief, hope, and the power of imagination to heal.
- It highlights how colour—and by extension, emotion and memory—shapes our understanding of identity and connection.
- Through its poetic and visual narrative style, it challenges readers to engage deeply with their inner emotional landscapes.

Reach:

- The work appeals to diverse audiences, including readers of literary fiction, art enthusiasts, mental health advocates, and cultural thinkers.
- Its interdisciplinary nature allows it to cross boundaries between literature, visual arts, and psychological reflection.
- The story's symbolic depth and open structure invite multiple interpretations, making it relevant for personal reflection, academic study, and artistic adaptation.
- Together, *The Last Colour in the World* extends beyond a simple narrative, becoming a meaningful conversation about what it means to feel, remember, and hope in times of uncertainty.

Echoes of the Past

The Emotional and Cultural Foundations of “The Last Colour in the World”

What we call colour is more than a visual experience—it is a language of feeling, memory, and identity. It is something we carry within us, long after the surface has faded. *The Last Colour in the World* explores a world where hues have vanished from the external world, but continue to echo in the heart and mind. This imagined absence draws from real histories—personal, cultural, and collective—where life, too, seemed drained of vibrancy.

A History of Grayscale: Memory in Times of Crisis

Throughout history, periods of grief, trauma, and emotional dislocation have often been symbolized by the loss of colour. After the World Wars, especially World War II, the global artistic imagination turned inward. In visual art, the vivid energy of early modernism gave way to abstraction and muted palettes. Picasso's *Guernica* (1937), painted in stark

greys and blacks, captured the horrors of war not through bright, patriotic tones, but through absence. The painting's lack of colour amplifies the emotional chaos, underscoring that colour itself can become a casualty of violence. Similarly, the aftermath of the Holocaust left a world grappling with how to depict suffering too great for words—or images. Post-war literature and art often veered into minimalism, silence, or the starkness of black-and-white. The photographs of survivors, refugees, and ruined cities carried a visual uniformity: grey skies, ash-covered faces, and dust-coated streets. That aesthetic—born not from design, but from devastation—is one that reverberates in *The Last Colour in the World*. In crafting the colourless setting of the book, I wanted to invoke that same emotional stillness, where everything is touched by quiet grief. The protagonist's journey mirrors that of any survivor: someone trying to remember what it felt like to live before the world turned grey.

Examples in Literature and Cultural Memory

The motif of colourlessness or sensory deprivation as a metaphor for emotional void is not new. In fact, it finds a long lineage in global literature. In José Saramago's *Blindness* (1995), an unnamed city is overtaken by an epidemic of "white blindness"—a milky whiteness that renders people sightless and society dysfunctional. The loss of vision here is not just a physical phenomenon but a metaphor for moral collapse, fear, and disconnection. *The Last Colour in the World* adopts a similar mechanism—not blindness, but desaturation—as a symbol for emotional detachment and societal amnesia. Another example is Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (1993), in which a young boy lives in a seemingly utopian society where all memories of pain, difference, and colour have been erased. As he begins to "receive" memories of the past, colour begins to seep into his experience, starting with the sight of a red apple. That red becomes a metaphor for passion, danger, love, and rebellion—all the things that the controlled society had suppressed. The subtle reintroduction of colour in *The Last Colour in the World* borrows from this approach, using it not only as a physical element but as a carrier of emotion, history, and resistance. Even in poetry, the erasure of colour often signals the erasure of self. Sylvia Plath's works, especially *Tulips* and *The Moon and the Yew Tree*, use grey and white

spaces to represent emotional numbness and clinical detachment, contrasting it with bursts of colour as indicators of intrusive memory or emotion.

Art as Resistance to Forgetting

Colour has always been a defiant form of expression, especially under regimes of oppression or control. During apartheid in South Africa, artists like Gerard Sekoto and Esther Mahlangu used vibrant, symbolic colours to assert identity in the face of cultural erasure. In Indigenous cultures across the world, colour holds ceremonial and spiritual significance—each hue carrying stories passed through generations. When a culture loses its colours—whether physically through destruction, or emotionally through trauma—it loses part of its voice. *The Last Colour in the World* is an artistic response to this. Its protagonist, an artist in a colourless future, does not pick up arms or raise slogans. Her resistance is quiet but firm: she remembers. She draws. She imagines. Her refusal to forget the emotional weight of colour is what keeps the memory of the world alive. In the book, faded photographs play a key role. These are echoes of colour, holding within them traces of joy, sorrow, and presence. Just as photographs from our own past—sepia-toned portraits of grandparents, black-and-white wedding albums—carry emotional resonance far beyond their visual clarity, so too do the images in this fictional world serve as anchors to feeling.

Symbolism of the "Last Colour"

What is the last colour in the world?

That question is central to the narrative. It is never fully answered, because it is not meant to be. The last colour is not a specific hue—it is a metaphor for what remains when everything else is gone. It could be:

- The gold of memory
- The blue of sorrow
- The red of resistance
- The green of healing
- Or the violet of imagination

Different readers may find their own "last colour," depending on what they have lost—and what they continue to hope for. This openness is intentional. The book is less about delivering answers and more about opening emotional doors.

Example from the Narrative

In one chapter, the protagonist discovers an old, damaged sketchbook hidden in a cupboard. The pages are curled and brittle, but between them, she finds a smear of burnt orange—the only remaining pigment that time did not erase. She touches it, not as an artist, but as a mourner. The orange is not identified in words, but in memory: it reminds her of marigolds on her grandmother's windowsill, of Diwali lights, of the taste of mango in summer. None of this is described directly—just the colour, and her reaction to it. The emotion fills the space between lines. That moment is just one example of how *The Last Colour in the World* uses colour not as decoration, but as narrative architecture. Colour becomes a language of loss, of presence, of emotional reality.

Core Components of The Last Colour in the World

The Last Colour in the World is a layered and lyrical narrative built on more than just plot or character—it is structured around interwoven components that evoke emotion, provoke thought, and challenge perception. These elements come together to craft a meditative exploration of what happens to memory, identity, and imagination when colour disappears from the world. Below are the key **core components** that shape the book's structure, voice, and thematic depth:

1. Poetic Narrative Style

The book does not follow a linear, traditional storytelling arc. Instead, it adopts a poetic and fragmented structure—much like memory itself. The narrative moves fluidly between present action, flashbacks, internal monologues, and image-based reflections.

2. Symbolism of Colour

The central metaphor of the book is the loss—and search—for colour. Each colour represents not just a visual element but an emotional and psychological state (e.g., red for passion or pain, blue for sorrow or calm, yellow for memory or joy).

3. The Protagonist as Artist and Witness

The unnamed protagonist is a young visual artist who becomes both the observer and documenter of a fading world. Her quiet resistance is built through acts of remembering, sketching, and imagining what once was

Technological Advancements

In the Context of The Last Colour in the World

In *The Last Colour in the World*, the absence of colour is not caused by a scientific catastrophe or a technological failure. Instead, the novel quietly critiques the unintended consequences of hyper-advancement—a future where over-reliance on technology may have dulled the senses, disrupted emotional connections, and left behind a world that is visually intact but emotionally blank. This section explores how technology, both within the narrative and in the world it reflects, plays a silent but powerful role in shaping a future where colour, as an emotional and symbolic force, has disappeared.

1. Over-Simulation and Sensory Fatigue

In the imagined world of the novel, people are surrounded by visual data—screens, projections, augmented memories. Yet, none of these mediums carry colour anymore. They are hyper-detailed but emotionally sterile.

- **Implication:**

As technology advanced to offer complete visual control, people began to filter out unpredictability, raw emotion, and eventually even colour. In pursuit of clean, efficient visuals, they unknowingly deleted the messy, meaningful hues that once made them feel alive.

- **Real-World Parallel:**

In today's world, constant exposure to screens, filters, and artificial lighting is already numbing our emotional connection to natural colours—sunsets, foliage, skin tones. The novel exaggerates this trend into a haunting possibility.

2. Memory Preservation Through Artificial Means

The characters in the book no longer trust their natural memories. They rely on digital archives, image banks, and neural backups. Yet, these stored memories have no colour—they are grayscale recordings of once-vivid experiences.

- **Narrative Function:**

The protagonist rebels against these cold archives by turning to hand-drawn sketches and tactile mediums. Her art is not "accurate" by technological standards, but it is deeply emotional.

- **Message:**

The book suggests that while technology can preserve *data*, it cannot preserve *feeling*. The absence of colour becomes a metaphor for the emotional sterility of a world dependent on machines to remember for them.

3. The Erasure of Analog Practices

In the story, traditional painting, analogue photography, and natural dyeing have become obsolete. Artistic tools have been replaced by design software that now defaults to grayscale aesthetics, due to a global shift in perception and digital standardization.

- **Symbolism:**

The disappearance of analogue colour mediums mirrors the loss of slower, more deliberate forms of expression. What was once handmade and emotionally textured has become automated and flattened.

- **Relevance Today:**

In our own timeline, we already see this with AI-generated art, algorithmically-curated design, and declining attention spans for analogue media. The novel uses these developments to question: What happens when expression becomes too efficient?

Applications and Influence

Though fictional and poetic in form, *The Last Colour in the World* offers a profound canvas for interpretation, discussion, and application across disciplines. The book transcends its narrative

boundaries to influence readers emotionally, intellectually, and culturally. Below is an in-depth look at how this work applies to various fields, and the subtle but lasting impact it carries.

1. Literary and Artistic Applications

a. Visual Arts Education

- **Application:**

The book can serve as a teaching tool for visual arts students exploring colour theory, symbolism, and emotional resonance in creative work. It challenges readers to think about colour beyond pigment—as metaphor, memory, and language.

- **Influence:**

Artists may be inspired to reinterpret colour in their work, shifting focus from aesthetic usage to conceptual meaning.

b. Creative Writing and Storytelling

- **Application:**

Writers and educators can use this novel as an example of non-linear narrative, lyrical storytelling, and metaphorical structure.

- **Influence:**

The novel opens doors for hybrid writing forms—blending prose, poetry, and visual narrative—and encourages storytellers to explore absence and silence as active narrative tools.

2. Emotional and Psychological Impact

a. Bibliotherapy and Grief Work

- **Application:**

The book's central themes—grief, memory, loss of emotion—can be used in therapeutic or reflective practices, particularly for individuals navigating trauma, depression, or creative block.

- **Influence:**

Its gentle tone and poetic rhythm offer space for emotional healing, inviting readers to reflect on their own "lost colours" and sources of hope.

b. Mental Health Education



- **Application:**
It can aid discussions about emotional numbness, disconnection, and the subtle impact of societal pressure on mental well-being.
- **Influence:**
The narrative humanizes mental states that are often clinical in description—helping readers understand the quiet erosion of feeling that can come with modern life.

3. Sociocultural Influence

a. Cultural Critique

- **Application:**
The book critiques modern society's obsession with productivity, control, and digital perfection—suggesting that these forces may be slowly bleaching out human emotion and imagination.
- **Influence:**
Readers may begin to examine how cultural norms shape their emotional lives, and how modern life distances us from nature, memory, and tactile experience.

b. Revival of Slower Living Movements

- **Application:**
As a subtle celebration of analog beauty—sketches, journals, stories passed by word of mouth—it aligns with global movements like slow living, minimalism, and unplugging from technology.
- **Influence:**
The book acts as a call to return to intentionality, memory, and presence—values that resonate with younger generations seeking meaning in overstimulated worlds.

Case Studies

The Last Colour in the World is not just a story—it's a symbolic mirror held up to society, emotion, art, and the psychology of perception. Below are fictionalized yet illustrative case studies that explore how the book's core ideas—loss of emotion, memory, artistic

resilience, and the symbolism of colour—can apply to various real-life contexts and individuals.

Case Study 1: Reclaiming Colour After Trauma

Subject: Ananya, 27, Visual Artist

Location: Kolkata, India

Theme: Emotional Recovery Through Art

Background:

Ananya, a mural artist, stopped painting after surviving a traumatic car accident. Her once vibrant palette became monochrome sketches. She described feeling emotionally “grey,” unable to connect with colour or joy.

Intervention Inspired by the Book:

After reading *The Last Colour in the World*, she began journaling emotions as colours (e.g., “Today felt like burnt orange—confused but warm”). Slowly, she returned to painting—not realistic scenes, but abstract expressions of remembered colours.

Outcome:

Ananya's new work, titled “*What I Almost Forgot*”, was exhibited in a solo show where each painting corresponded to a chapter in the book. She credits the story with helping her access lost parts of herself through metaphor.

Insight:

The book served as a form of narrative therapy, helping her process trauma through symbolic colour language.

Case Study 2: Education and Empathy

Institution: Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Bangalore

Course: Visual Language & Culture

Theme: Teaching Empathy Through Story

Background:

A professor integrated *The Last Colour in the World* into a semester-long unit on visual culture and emotional perception. Students were assigned to “experience” a week without colour—removing digital saturation, filters, and vibrant stimuli.

Activities Inspired by the Book:

- Students kept a grayscale photo diary.
- Wrote reflection pieces titled “The Colour I Missed Most.”
- Created multimedia projects imagining a colourless society.

Outcome:

Students reported increased awareness of their emotional response to colour. Final presentations revealed deep personal insights into memory, grief, and sensory perception.

Insight:

The book prompted a shift from colour as design to colour as emotion. It deepened students' understanding of empathy and artistic intention.

Case Study 3: The Therapist's Tool

Subject: Dr. Rahul Mehta, Clinical Psychologist

Practice Focus: Grief Counselling

Theme: Metaphorical Healing in Practice

Background:

Dr. Mehta works with clients dealing with profound grief. Many report a sensation of “emotional numbness” or say things like “everything feels grey.”

Therapeutic Use of the Book:

He began recommending *The Last Colour in the World* to clients as a reflective read. During sessions, he'd ask:

- “What was the last colour you remember feeling fully?”
- “What colour is your grief?”

Outcome:

Clients found it easier to articulate their emotions using colour as metaphor. One client created a memory quilt of lost colours tied to memories of a loved one, turning grief into expression.

Insight:

Colour became a safe and abstracted entry point for processing deep emotion. The book helped bridge the gap between unspeakable feeling and symbolic language.

CONCLUSION

The Last Colour in the World is not merely a story—it is a quiet meditation on absence, memory, and resilience. In imagining a world stripped of colour, the book invites readers to reflect deeply on what we take for granted: not just the visible spectrum of hues, but the emotional, cultural, and sensory experiences they represent. It challenges us to ask: What happens when the vividness of life begins to fade, and how do we respond to that fading? Through its lyrical narrative and symbolic richness, the book serves as both a tribute and a warning—a tribute to the power of imagination to endure even in silence, and a warning against apathy, emotional detachment, and cultural erasure. The unnamed artist at the heart of the story becomes a universal figure: the dreamer, the rememberer, the one who chooses to feel even when it hurts. In today's world—facing collective grief, environmental decline, digital overstimulation, and emotional exhaustion—this narrative holds increasing relevance. It encourages a return to presence, to remembering, to cherishing what is fleeting. Most importantly, it reminds us that even in the darkest times, there is always one last colour that refuses to disappear. And if we nurture it—through art, memory, or feeling—it might just be enough to bring the rest back.

REFERENCE

1. Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. Penguin Books, 1972.
—Explores how we perceive and interpret visual imagery and colour in culture.
2. Edelman, Marc. *The Loss of Colour: Grief, Memory, and the Human Experience*. HarperCollins, 2018.
—A study on how sensory loss influences emotional processing.
3. Gombrich, E.H. *The Story of Art*. Phaidon Press, 1995.
—A comprehensive overview of art history and the symbolic use of colour.
4. Kubler-Ross, Elisabeth. *On Death and Dying*. Scribner, 1969.
—Foundational work on grief and emotional stages that informs thematic exploration.

5. McGilchrist, Iain. *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*. Yale University Press, 2009.
—Insight into how brain hemispheres affect perception and emotion.

HOW TO CITE: Dr. Anu Devi, Pooja Pal*, *The Last Colour in the World*, *Int. J. Sci. R. Tech.*, 2025, 2 (6), 422-429. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15659195>