Step-by-step guide for users to access e-resources linked to QR Codes

The coded box placed on the top corner of every chapter is called Quick Response (QR) Code. It will help you access e-resources, such as audios, videos, multimedia, texts, etc., related to the themes given in the chapter. The first QR code is to access the complete e-textbook. The subsequent QR codes will help you access the relevant e-resources linked to each chapter. This will help you enhance your learning in a joyful manner.

Follow the steps given below and access the e-resources through your smartphone or tablet.

For accessing the e-resources on a computer or laptop follow the steps stated below.
1. Open the web browser Firefox (_Selected), Chrome (_Selected), etc.
2. Go to the ePathshala website (http://ePathshala.nic.in)
3. Click on the menu 'access e-resources'
4. Type the alphanumeric code given under the QR code (_Selected)
5. Search for the e-resources from the links that have appeared.
flamingo

Textbook in English for Class XII
(Core Course)
The National Curriculum Framework, 2005, recommends that children’s life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. This principle marks a departure from the legacy of bookish learning which continues to shape our system and causes a gap between the school, home and community. The syllabi and textbooks developed on the basis of NCF signify an attempt to implement this basic idea. They also attempt to discourage rote learning and the maintenance of sharp boundaries between different subject areas. We hope these measures will take us significantly further in the direction of a child-centred system of education outlined in the National Policy on Education (1986).

The success of this effort depends on the steps that school principals and teachers will take to encourage children to reflect on their own learning and to pursue imaginative activities and questions. We must recognise that, given space, time and freedom, children generate new knowledge by engaging with the information passed on to them by adults. Treating the prescribed textbook as the sole basis of examination is one of the key reasons why other resources and sites of learning are ignored. Inculcating creativity and initiative is possible if we perceive and treat children as participants in learning, not as receivers of a fixed body of knowledge.

These aims imply considerable change in school routines and mode of functioning. Flexibility in the daily time-table is as necessary as rigour in implementing the annual calendar so that the required number of teaching days are actually devoted to teaching. The methods used for teaching and evaluation will also determine how effective this textbook proves for making children’s life at school a happy experience, rather than a source of stress or boredom. Syllabus designers have tried to address the problem of curricular burden by restructuring and reorienting knowledge at different stages with greater consideration for child psychology and the time available for teaching. The textbook attempts to enhance this endeavour by giving
higher priority and space to opportunities for contemplation and wondering, discussion in small groups, and activities requiring hands-on experience.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) appreciates the hard work done by the Textbook Development Committee responsible for this book. We wish to thank the Chairperson of the advisory group in Languages, Professor Namwar Singh and the Chief Advisor for this book, Professor Amritavalli for guiding the work of this committee. Several teachers contributed to the development of this textbook; we are grateful to their principals for making this possible. We are indebted to the institutions and organisations which have generously permitted us to draw upon their resources, material and personnel. We are especially grateful to the members of the National Monitoring Committee, appointed by the Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development under the Chairmanship of Professor Mrinal Miri and Professor G.P. Deshpande, for their valuable time and contribution. As an organisation committed to systemic reform and continuous improvement in the quality of its products, NCERT welcomes comments and suggestions which will enable us to undertake further revision and refinement.

Director

New Delhi  National Council of Educational
20 November 2006  Research and Training
ABOUT THE BOOK

This textbook for Class XII English course has been developed on the basis of the recommendations made in the National Curriculum Framework 2005. It follows the design of the Class XI textbook, *Hornbill*, published in 2006.

The prose selections aim to provide exposure to a wide variety of genres and themes, and writing from different parts of the world. They take into account the interests of young adults while making them aware of the socio-political issues that they will confront as they step into the world outside school. The tasks that follow the units provide opportunities for the development of language skills.

Three short stories, representative of fiction from different parts of the world - French, Swedish and British, have been included. Alphonse Daudet’s *The Last Lesson* deals with the theme of language imposition and language loyalty, Selma Lagerlof’s *The Rattrap*, captures the basic goodness in a human being in the face of material temptations and A.C. Barton’s *Going Places* explores the theme of adolescent hero-worship and fantasising.

Two of the non-fiction pieces are biographical and two autobiographical. Of the two biographical pieces, *Indigo*, an excerpt from Louis Fischer’s *Life of Mahatma Gandhi* portrays Gandhi in action, helping peasants secure legal justice and the excerpt from Anees Jung’s *Lost Spring* is an account of the lives of street children, a contemporary reality that youngsters need to be made sensitive to.

The autobiographical piece by William Douglas, a lawyer who was a close associate of Franklin Roosevelt, deals with his personal experience of overcoming the fear of swimming. The second autobiographical account is by Asokamitran writing in a humorous vein about his years in the Gemini Studios.

The Introduction from *The Penguin Book of Interviews* edited by Christopher Silvester has been included to introduce pupils to the subject of media writing. This is accompanied by a recent newspaper interview with Umberto Eco by Mukund Padmanabhan.
Each Unit is interspersed with ‘Think as you read’ questions to check factual comprehension. This is followed by end-of-unit global questions and text-related issues to be taken up for discussion. Language work on vocabulary and sentence patterns is followed by writing tasks. Useful vocabulary is presented at the beginning of each unit for learners to notice them in the text and understand their meaning from the context. Annotations are added where necessary. ‘About the unit’ highlights the points of focus in the tasks section following each text.

The poetry section has six poems. A short excerpt from Keats’ *Endymion* has been chosen to give pupils a taste of classical poetry, lines which have universal appeal and eternal value. Robert Frost’s *A Roadside Stand* is on the rural-urban economic divide. The other four poems are by reputed contemporary poets including two women, Kamala Das and Adrienne Rich. While the theme of Das’ poem, *My Mother at Sixty-six* touches a personal chord of looking objectively at a close relative, Rich’s poem, *Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers*, gives expression to the voice of women stifled by the institution of marriage. Stephen Spender’s poem on *An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum* sensitively brings out the disparity between the formal education system and the reality of the lives of the poor. The poems are followed by ‘noticing’ items which indicate the elements that deserve special attention in the classroom.

The tasks in the poetry section encourage pupils to enjoy aesthetic writing and evoke subjective responses to the language of poetry.
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For permission to reproduce copyright material in this book NCERT would like to thank the following: Penguin Books Pvt Ltd for Lost Spring by Anees Jung; and for Introduction by Christopher Sylvester; Harper Collins for Indigo by Louis Fischer; The Editorial and Advertising office of Resurgence (No. 233 November-December, 2005) for Keeping Quiet by Pablo Neruda; Chatto and Windus Ltd. for Endymion by John Keats; Shri Asokmitran for Poets and Pancakes by Asokmitran; Hutchinson & Co. Ltd. for Going Places by A. R. Barton; Faber & Faber for An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum by Stephen Spender.

The Council also acknowledges the services of Sunanda Khanna and G.C. Chandrakar, Copy Editors; Surender K Vats, Proof Reader; Mohd. Harun and Arvind Sharma DTP Operators; Rajeev Kumar, Artist and Parash Ram Kaushik, Incharge, Computer station. The efforts of the Publication Department, NCERT are also highly appreciated.

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THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a [SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC] and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the [unity and integrity of the Nation];

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949 do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.

1. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec. 2, for "Sovereign Democratic Republic" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)
2. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec. 2, for "Unity of the Nation" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)
The Last Lesson
Alphonse Daudet

Lost Spring
Anees Jung

Deep Water
William Douglas

The Rattrap
Selma Lagerlöf

Indigo
Louis Fischer

Poets and Pancakes
Asokamitran

The Interview
Christopher Silvester
Umberto Eco

Going Places
A. R. Barton
The Last Lesson

About the author

Alphonse Daudet (1840-1897) was a French novelist and short-story writer. The Last Lesson is set in the days of the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) in which France was defeated by Prussia led by Bismarck. Prussia then consisted of what now are the nations of Germany, Poland and parts of Austria. In this story the French districts of Alsace and Lorraine have passed into Prussian hands. Read the story to find out what effect this had on life at school.

Notice these expressions in the text.
Infer their meaning from the context

- in great dread of
- counted on
- thumbed at the edges
- in unison
- a great bustle
- reproach ourselves with

I started for school very late that morning and was in great dread of a scolding, especially because M. Hamel had said that he would question us on participles, and I did not know the first word about them. For a moment I thought of running away and spending the day out of doors. It was so warm, so bright! The birds were chirping at the edge of the woods; and in the open field back of the sawmill the Prussian soldiers were drilling. It was all much more tempting than the rule for participles, but I had the strength to resist, and hurried off to school.

When I passed the town hall there was a crowd in front of the bulletin-board. For the last two years all our bad news had come from there — the lost battles, the draft, the orders of the commanding officer — and I thought to myself, without stopping, “What can be the matter now?”
Then, as I hurried by as fast as I could go, the blacksmith, Wachter, who was there, with his apprentice, reading the bulletin, called after me, “Don’t go so fast, bub; you’ll get to your school in plenty of time!”

I thought he was making fun of me, and reached M. Hamel’s little garden all out of breath.

Usually, when school began, there was a great bustle, which could be heard out in the street, the opening and closing of desks, lessons repeated in unison, very loud, with our hands over our ears to understand better, and the teacher’s great ruler rapping on the table. But now it was all so still! I had counted on the commotion to get to my desk without being seen; but, of course, that day everything had to be as quiet as Sunday morning. Through the window I saw my classmates, already in their places, and M. Hamel walking up and down with his terrible iron ruler under his arm. I had to open the door and go in before everybody. You can imagine how I blushed and how frightened I was.

But nothing happened. M. Hamel saw me and said very kindly, “Go to your place quickly, little Franz. We were beginning without you.”

I jumped over the bench and sat down at my desk. Not till then, when I had got a little over my fright, did I see that our teacher had on his beautiful green coat, his frilled shirt,
and the little black silk cap, all embroidered, that he never wore except on inspection and prize days. Besides, the whole school seemed so strange and solemn. But the thing that surprised me most was to see, on the back benches that were always empty, the village people sitting quietly like ourselves; old Hauser, with his three-cornered hat, the former mayor, the former postmaster, and several others besides. Everybody looked sad; and Hauser had brought an old primer, thumbed at the edges, and he held it open on his knees with his great spectacles lying across the pages.

While I was wondering about it all, M. Hamel mounted his chair, and, in the same grave and gentle tone which he had used to me, said, “My children, this is the last lesson I shall give you. The order has come from Berlin to teach only German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. The new master comes tomorrow. This is your last French lesson. I want you to be very attentive.”

What a thunderclap these words were to me! Oh, the wretches; that was what they had put up at the town-hall!

My last French lesson! Why, I hardly knew how to write! I should never learn any more! I must stop there, then! Oh, how sorry I was for not learning my lessons, for seeking birds’ eggs, or going sliding on the Saar! My books, that had seemed such a nuisance a while ago, so heavy to carry, my grammar, and my history of the saints, were old friends now that I couldn’t give up. And M. Hamel, too; the idea that he was going away, that I should never see him again, made me forget all about his ruler and how cranky he was.

Poor man! It was in honour of this last lesson that he had put on his fine Sunday clothes, and now I understood why
the old men of the village were sitting there in the back of the room. It was because they were sorry, too, that they had not gone to school more. It was their way of thanking our master for his forty years of faithful service and of showing their respect for the country that was theirs no more.

While I was thinking of all this, I heard my name called. It was my turn to recite. What would I not have given to be able to say that dreadful rule for the participle all through, very loud and clear, and without one mistake? But I got mixed up on the first words and stood there, holding on to my desk, my heart beating, and not daring to look up.

I heard M. Hamel say to me, “I won’t scold you, little Franz; you must feel bad enough. See how it is! Every day we have said to ourselves, ‘Bah! I’ve plenty of time. I’ll learn it tomorrow.’ And now you see where we’ve come out. Ah, that’s the great trouble with Alsace; she puts off learning till tomorrow. Now those fellows out there will have the right to say to you, ‘How is it; you pretend to be Frenchmen, and yet you can neither speak nor write your own language?’ But you are not the worst, poor little Franz. We’ve all a great deal to reproach ourselves with.”

“Your parents were not anxious enough to have you learn. They preferred to put you to work on a farm or at the mills, so as to have a little more money. And I? I’ve been to blame also. Have I not often sent you to water my flowers instead of learning your lessons? And when I wanted to go fishing, did I not just give you a holiday?”

Then, from one thing to another, M. Hamel went on to talk of the French language, saying that it was the most beautiful language
France
1870-71

Sketch map not to scale
in the world — the clearest, the most logical; that we must guard it among us and never forget it, because when a people are enslaved, as long as they hold fast to their language it is as if they had the key to their prison. Then he opened a grammar and read us our lesson. I was amazed to see how well I understood it. All he said seemed so easy, so easy! I think, too, that I had never listened so carefully, and that he had never explained everything with so much patience. It seemed almost as if the poor man wanted to give us all he knew before going away, and to put it all into our heads at one stroke.

After the grammar, we had a lesson in writing. That day M. Hamel had new copies for us, written in a beautiful round hand — France, Alsace, France, Alsace. They looked like little flags floating everywhere in the school-room, hung from the rod at the top of our desks. You ought to have seen how every one set to work, and how quiet it was! The only sound was the scratching of the pens over the paper. Once some beetles flew in; but nobody paid any attention to them, not even the littlest ones, who worked right on tracing their fish-hooks, as if that was French, too. On the roof the pigeons cooed very low, and I thought to myself, “Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?”

Whenever I looked up from my writing I saw M. Hamel sitting motionless in his chair and gazing first at one thing, then at another, as if he wanted to fix in his mind just how everything looked in that little school-room. Fancy! For forty years he had been there in the same place, with his garden outside the window and his class in front of him, just like

Think as you read
1. What was Franz expected to be prepared with for school that day?
2. What did Franz notice that was unusual about the school that day?
3. What had been put up on the bulletin-board?
that. Only the desks and benches had been worn smooth; the walnut-trees in the garden were taller, and the hopvine that he had planted himself twined about the windows to the roof. How it must have broken his heart to leave it all, poor man; to hear his sister moving about in the room above, packing their trunks! For they must leave the country next day.

But he had the courage to hear every lesson to the very last. After the writing, we had a lesson in history, and then the babies chanted their *ba, be bi, bo, bu*. Down there at the back of the room old Hauser had put on his spectacles and, holding his primer in both hands, spelled the letters with them. You could see that he, too, was crying; his voice trembled with emotion, and it was so funny to hear him that we all wanted to laugh and cry. Ah, how well I remember it, that last lesson!

All at once the church-clock struck twelve. Then the Angelus. At the same moment the trumpets of the Prussians, returning from drill, sounded under our windows. M. Hamel stood up, very pale, in his chair. I never saw him look so tall.

“My friends,” said he, “I—I—” But something choked him. He could not go on.

Then he turned to the blackboard, took a piece of chalk, and, bearing on with all his might, he wrote as large as he could —

“*Vive La France!*"

Then he stopped and leaned his head against the wall, and, without a word, he made a gesture to us with his hand —

“School is dismissed — you may go.”
Understanding the text

1. The people in this story suddenly realise how precious their language is to them. What shows you this? Why does this happen?

2. Franz thinks, “Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?” What could this mean?
   *(There could be more than one answer.)*

Talking about the text

1. “When a people are enslaved, as long as they hold fast to their language it is as if they had the key to their prison.”

   Can you think of examples in history where a conquered people had their language taken away from them or had a language imposed on them?

2. What happens to a linguistic minority in a state? How do you think they can keep their language alive? For example:
   - Punjabis in Bangalore
   - Tamilians in Mumbai
   - Kannadigas in Delhi
   - Gujaratis in Kolkata

3. Is it possible to carry pride in one’s language too far?
   Do you know what ‘linguistic chauvinism’ means?

Working with words

1. English is a language that contains words from many other languages. This inclusiveness is one of the reasons it is now a world language. For example:

   petite – French
   kindergarten – German
   capital – Latin
   democracy – Greek
   bazaar – Hindi
Find out the origins of the following words.

tycoon barbecue zero
tulip veranda ski
logo robot trek
bandicoot

2. Notice the underlined words in these sentences and tick the option that best explains their meaning.

(a) “What a thunderclap these words were to me!”

The words were
(i) loud and clear.
(ii) startling and unexpected.
(iii) pleasant and welcome.

(b) “When a people are enslaved, as long as they hold fast to their language it is as if they had the key to their prison”

It is as if they have the key to the prison as long as they
(i) do not lose their language.
(ii) are attached to their language.
(iii) quickly learn the conqueror’s language.

(c) Don’t go so fast, you will get to your school in plenty of time.

You will get to your school
(i) very late.
(ii) too early.
(iii) early enough.

(d) I never saw him look so tall.

M. Hamel had grown physically taller
(b) seemed very confident
(c) stood on the chair

Noticing form

Read this sentence

M. Hamel had said that he would question us on participles.

In the sentence above, the verb form “had said” in the first part is used to indicate an “earlier past”. The whole story is narrated in the past. M. Hamel’s “saying” happened earlier than the events in
this story. This form of the verb is called the **past perfect**.

Pick out five sentences from the story with this form of the verb and say why this form has been used.

### Writing

1. Write a notice for your school bulletin board. Your notice could be an announcement of a forthcoming event, or a requirement to be fulfilled, or a rule to be followed.
2. Write a paragraph of about 100 words arguing for or against having to study three languages at school.
3. Have you ever changed your opinion about someone or something that you had earlier liked or disliked? Narrate what led you to change your mind.

### Things to do

1. Find out about the following (You may go to the internet, interview people, consult reference books or visit a library.)
   - (a) Linguistic human rights
   - (b) Constitutional guarantees for linguistic minorities in India.
2. Given below is a survey form. Talk to at least five of your classmates and fill in the information you get in the form.

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<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Languages you know</th>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>Neighbourhood language</th>
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### About the Unit

**Theme**

The pain that is inflicted on the people of a territory by its conquerors by taking away the right to study or speak their own language.
**SUB-THEME**

Student and teacher attitudes to learning and teaching.

**READING COMPREHENSION**

The comprehension check at the end of each section in the unit helps pupils make sure that they have understood the facts before they move on to the next section. One session of forty minutes is likely to be enough for one section of the unit.

Pupils can read each section silently and discuss the answers in pairs.

The questions at the end of the unit are inferential. These help pupils make sense of the writer’s intention in focussing on a local episode and to comment on an issue of universal significance. There could be a follow-up discussion on parts for which students need explanation.

**TALKING ABOUT THE TEXT**

Topics to be discussed in small groups or pairs. This shall help pupils think of issues that relate to the realities of the society they live in. Gives scope for developing speaking skills in the English language on varied issues. Fluency development.

**WORKING WITH WORDS**

To make pupils aware of

- the enrichment of the English language through borrowings from the other languages.
- idiomatic expressions and figurative use of language.

**NOTICING FORM**

To make pupils notice tense form and understand the context of its use.

**WRITING**

- Practice in a functional genre, e.g., bulletin.
- Argumentative writing on a topic related to their life at school.
- Narrating subjective experience discussing personal likes and dislikes.

**THINGS TO DO**

Extension activity that will help pupils understand language rights of citizens and the problems of linguistic minorities. Social and political awareness.
Lost Spring
Stories of Stolen Childhood

About the author

Anees Jung (1964) was born in Rourkela and spent her childhood and adolescence in Hyderabad. She received her education in Hyderabad and in the United States of America. Her parents were both writers. Anees Jung began her career as a writer in India. She has been an editor and columnist for major newspapers in India and abroad, and has authored several books. The following is an excerpt from her book titled Lost Spring, Stories of Stolen Childhood. Here she analyses the grinding poverty and traditions which condemn these children to a life of exploitation.

Notice these expressions in the text.
Infer their meaning from the context.

- looking for
- perpetual state of poverty
- slog their daylight hours
- dark hutmments
- roof over his head
- imposed the baggage on the child

‘Sometimes I fi nd a Rupee in the garbage’

“Why do you do this?” I ask Saheb whom I encounter every morning scrounging for gold in the garbage dumps of my neighbourhood. Saheb left his home long ago. Set amidst the green fields of Dhaka, his home is not even a distant memory. There were many storms that swept away their fields and homes, his mother tells him. That’s why they left, looking for gold in the big city where he now lives.

“I have nothing else to do,” he mutters, looking away.

“Go to school,” I say glibly, realising immediately how hollow the advice must sound.

“There is no school in my neighbourhood. When they build one, I will go.”
“If I start a school, will you come?” I ask, half-joking. “Yes,” he says, smiling broadly.

A few days later I see him running up to me. “Is your school ready?”

“It takes longer to build a school,” I say, embarrassed at having made a promise that was not meant. But promises like mine abound in every corner of his bleak world.

After months of knowing him, I ask him his name. “Saheb-e-Alam,” he announces. He does not know what it means. If he knew its meaning — lord of the universe — he would have a hard time believing it. Unaware of what his name represents, he roams the streets with his friends, an army of barefoot boys who appear like the morning birds and disappear at noon. Over the months, I have come to recognise each of them.

“Why aren’t you wearing chappals?” I ask one.

“My mother did not bring them down from the shelf,” he answers simply.

“Even if she did he will throw them off,” adds another who is wearing shoes that do not match. When I comment on it, he shuffles his feet and says nothing. “I want shoes,” says a third boy who has never owned a pair all his life. Travelling across the country I have seen children walking barefoot, in cities, on village roads. It is not lack of money but a tradition to stay barefoot, is one explanation. I wonder if this is only an excuse to explain away a perpetual state of poverty.

I remember a story a man from Udipi once told me. As a young boy he would go to school past an old temple, where his father was a priest. He would stop briefly at the temple and pray for a pair of shoes. Thirty years later I visited his town and the temple, which was now drowned in an air of desolation. In the backyard, where lived the new priest, there
were red and white plastic chairs. A young boy dressed in a grey uniform, wearing socks and shoes, arrived panting and threw his school bag on a folding bed. Looking at the boy, I remembered the prayer another boy had made to the goddess when he had finally got a pair of shoes, “Let me never lose them.” The goddess had granted his prayer. Young boys like the son of the priest now wore shoes. But many others like the ragpickers in my neighbourhood remain shoeless.

My acquaintance with the barefoot ragpickers leads me to Seemapuri, a place on the periphery of Delhi yet miles away from it, metaphorically. Those who live here are squatters who came from Bangladesh back in 1971. Saheb’s family is among them. Seemapuri was then a wilderness. It still is, but it is no longer empty. In structures of mud, with roofs of tin and tarpaulin, devoid of sewage, drainage or running water, live 10,000 ragpickers. They have lived here for more than thirty years without an identity, without permits but with ration cards that get their names on voters’ lists and enable them to buy grain. Food is more important for survival than an identity. “If at the end of the day we can feed our families and go to bed without an aching stomach, we would rather live here than in the fields that gave us no grain,” say a group of women in tattered saris when I ask them why they left their beautiful land of green fields and rivers. Wherever they find food, they pitch their tents that become transit homes. Children grow up in them, becoming partners in survival. And survival in Seemapuri means rag-picking. Through the years, it has acquired the proportions of a fine art. Garbage to them is gold. It is their daily bread, a roof over their heads, even if it is a leaking roof. But for a child it is even more.

“I sometimes find a rupee, even a ten-rupee note,” Saheb says, his eyes lighting up. When you can find a silver coin in a heap of garbage, you don't stop scrounging, for there is hope of finding more. It seems that for children, garbage has a meaning different from what it means to their parents. For the children it is wrapped in wonder, for the elders it is a means of survival.

One winter morning I see Saheb standing by the fenced gate of the neighbourhood club, watching two young men dressed in white, playing tennis. “I like the game,” he hums, content to watch it standing behind the fence. “I go inside when no
one is around,” he admits. “The gatekeeper lets me use the swing.”

Saheb too is wearing tennis shoes that look strange over his discoloured shirt and shorts. “Someone gave them to me,” he says in the manner of an explanation. The fact that they are discarded shoes of some rich boy, who perhaps refused to wear them because of a hole in one of them, does not bother him. For one who has walked barefoot, even shoes with a hole is a dream come true. But the game he is watching so intently is out of his reach.

This morning, Saheb is on his way to the milk booth. In his hand is a steel canister. “I now work in a tea stall down the road,” he says, pointing in the distance. “I am paid 800 rupees and all my meals.” Does he like the job? I ask. His face, I see, has lost the carefree look. The steel canister seems heavier than the plastic bag he would carry so lightly over his shoulder. The bag was his. The canister belongs to the man who owns the tea shop. Saheb is no longer his own master!

“I want to drive a car”

Mukesh insists on being his own master. “I will be a motor mechanic,” he announces.

“Do you know anything about cars?” I ask.

“I will learn to drive a car,” he answers, looking straight into my eyes. His dream looms like a mirage amidst the dust of streets that fill his town Firozabad, famous for its bangles. Every other family in Firozabad is engaged in making bangles. It is the centre of India’s glass-blowing industry where families have spent generations
working around furnaces, welding glass, making bangles for all the women in the land it seems.

Mukesh’s family is among them. None of them know that it is illegal for children like him to work in the glass furnaces with high temperatures, in dingy cells without air and light; that the law, if enforced, could get him and all those 20,000 children out of the hot furnaces where they slog their daylight hours, often losing the brightness of their eyes. Mukesh’s eyes beam as he volunteers to take me home, which he proudly says is being rebuilt. We walk down stinking lanes choked with garbage, past homes that remain hovels with crumbling walls, wobbly doors, no windows, crowded with families of humans and animals coexisting in a primeval state. He stops at the door of one such house, bangs a wobbly iron door with his foot, and pushes it open. We enter a half-built shack. In one part of it, thatched with dead grass, is a firewood stove over which sits a large vessel of sizzling spinach leaves. On the ground, in large aluminium platters, are more chopped vegetables. A frail young woman is cooking the evening meal for the whole family. Through eyes filled with smoke she smiles. She is the wife of Mukesh’s elder brother. Not much older in years, she has begun to command respect as the *bahu*, the daughter-in-law of the house, already in charge of three men — her husband, Mukesh and their father. When the older man enters, she gently withdraws behind the broken wall and brings her veil closer to her face. As custom demands, daughters-in-law must veil their faces before male elders. In this case the elder is an impoverished bangle maker. Despite long years of hard labour, first as a tailor, then a bangle maker, he has failed to renovate a house, send his two sons to school. All he has managed to do is teach them what he knows — the art of making bangles.

“It is his *karam*, his destiny,” says Mukesh’s grandmother, who has watched her own husband go blind with the dust from polishing the glass of bangles. “Can a god-given lineage ever be broken?” she implies. Born in the caste of bangle makers, they have seen nothing but bangles — in the house, in the yard, in every other house, every other yard, every street in Firozabad. Spirals of bangles — sunny gold, paddy green, royal blue, pink, purple, every colour born out of the seven colours of the
rainbow — lie in mounds in unkempt yards, are piled on four-wheeled handcarts, pushed by young men along the narrow lanes of the shanty town. And in dark hutments, next to lines of flames of flickering oil lamps, sit boys and girls with their fathers and mothers, welding pieces of coloured glass into circles of bangles. Their eyes are more adjusted to the dark than to the light outside. That is why they often end up losing their eyesight before they become adults.

Savita, a young girl in a drab pink dress, sits alongside an elderly woman, soldering pieces of glass. As her hands move mechanically like the tongs of a machine, I wonder if she knows the sanctity of the bangles she helps make. It symbolises an Indian woman’s suhaag, auspiciousness in marriage. It will dawn on her suddenly one day when her head is draped with a red veil, her hands dyed red with henna, and red bangles rolled onto her wrists. She will then become a bride. Like the old woman beside her who became one many years ago. She still has bangles on her wrist, but no light in her eyes. “Ek waqt ser bhar khana bhi nahin khaya,” she says, in a voice drained of joy. She has not enjoyed even one full meal in her entire lifetime — that’s what she has reaped! Her husband, an old man with a flowing beard, says, “I know nothing except bangles. All I have done is make a house for the family to live in.”

Hearing him, one wonders if he has achieved what many have failed in their lifetime. He has a roof over his head!

The cry of not having money to do anything except carry on the business of making bangles, not even enough to eat, rings in every home. The young men echo the lament of their elders. Little has moved with time, it seems, in Firozabad. Years of mind-numbing toil have killed all initiative and the ability to dream.

“Why not organise yourselves into a cooperative?” I ask a group of young men who have fallen into the vicious circle of middlemen who trapped their fathers and forefathers. “Even if we get organised, we are the ones who will be hauled up by the police, beaten and dragged to jail for doing something
illegal,” they say. There is no leader among them, no one who could help them see things differently. Their fathers are as tired as they are. They talk endlessly in a spiral that moves from poverty to apathy to greed and to injustice.

Listening to them, I see two distinct worlds—one of the family, caught in a web of poverty, burdened by the stigma of caste in which they are born; the other a vicious circle of the sahukars, the middlemen, the policemen, the keepers of law, the bureaucrats and the politicians. Together they have imposed the baggage on the child that he cannot put down. Before he is aware, he accepts it as naturally as his father. To do anything else would mean to dare. And daring is not part of his growing up. When I sense a flash of it in Mukesh I am cheered. “I want to be a motor mechanic,” he repeats. He will go to a garage and learn. But the garage is a long way from his home. “I will walk,” he insists. “Do you also dream of flying a plane?” He is suddenly silent. “No,” he says, staring at the ground. In his small murmur there is an embarrassment that has not yet turned into regret. He is content to dream of cars that he sees hurtling down the streets of his town. Few airplanes fly over Firozabad.

Think as you read

1. What makes the city of Firozabad famous?
2. Mention the hazards of working in the glass bangles industry.
3. How is Mukesh’s attitude to his situation different from that of his family?
Understanding the text

1. What could be some of the reasons for the migration of people from villages to cities?
2. Would you agree that promises made to poor children are rarely kept? Why do you think this happens in the incidents narrated in the text?
3. What forces conspire to keep the workers in the bangle industry of Firozabad in poverty?

Talking about the text

1. How, in your opinion, can Mukesh realise his dream?
2. Mention the hazards of working in the glass bangles industry.
3. Why should child labour be eliminated and how?

Thinking about language

Although this text speaks of factual events and situations of misery it transforms these situations with an almost poetical prose into a literary experience. How does it do so? Here are some literary devices:

- **Hyperbole** is a way of speaking or writing that makes something sound better or more exciting than it really is. For example: Garbage to them is gold.

- **A Metaphor**, as you may know, compares two things or ideas that are not very similar. A metaphor describes a thing in terms of a single quality or feature of some other thing; we can say that a metaphor “transfers” a quality of one thing to another. For example: The road was a ribbon of light.

- **Simile** is a word or phrase that compares one thing with another using the words “like” or “as”. For example: As white as snow.

*Carefully read the following phrases and sentences taken from the text. Can you identify the literary device in each example?*

1. Saheb-e-Alam which means the lord of the universe is directly in contrast to what Saheb is in reality.

2. Drowned in an air of desolation.

3. Seemapuri, a place on the periphery of Delhi yet miles away from it, metaphorically.
4. For the children it is wrapped in wonder; for the elders it is a means of survival.

5. As her hands move mechanically like the tongs of a machine, I wonder if she knows the sanctity of the bangles she helps make.

6. She still has bangles on her wrist, but not light in her eyes.

7. Few airplanes fly over Firozabad.

8. Web of poverty.


10. And survival in Seemapuri means rag-picking. Through the years, it has acquired the proportions of a fine art.

11. The steel canister seems heavier than the plastic bag he would carry so lightly over his shoulders.

**Things to do**

The beauty of the glass bangles of Firozabad contrasts with the misery of people who produce them.

This paradox is also found in some other situations, for example, those who work in gold and diamond mines, or carpet weaving factories, and the products of their labour, the lives of construction workers, and the buildings they build.

- Look around and find examples of such paradoxes.
- Write a paragraph of about 200 to 250 words on any one of them. You can start by making notes.

Here is an example of how one such paragraph may begin:

*You never see the poor in this town. By day they toil, working cranes and earthmovers, squirreling deep into the hot sand to lay the foundations of chrome. By night they are banished to bleak labour camps at the outskirts of the city...*

**About the Unit**

**Theme**

The plight of street children forced into labour early in life and denied the opportunity of schooling.

**Sub-theme**

The callousness of society and the political class to the sufferings of the poor.
COMPREHENSION

Factual understanding and responding with sensitivity.
Thinking on socio-economic issues as a take-off from the text.

TALKING ABOUT THE TEXT

- Fluency development
- Social awareness
Discussion on
  - the dreams of the poor and the reality.
  - problems of child labour.

THINKING ABOUT LANGUAGE

Focus on the use of figures of speech in writing.

THINGS TO DO

Observation of the paradoxes in the society we live in.

WRITING

Note-making and reporting.

Over 20 months from 2013 to 2015 more than 100 garbage collectors and scrap buyers in Delhi were interviewed. Their families lived in poverty in homes constructed with bamboo and plastic sheets. These temporary structures were their shelters as well as place for sorting scrap into about ten different categories. Once the garbage is sorted into sacks it is gold to the buyers on the basis of its weight. Sadly, the collectors usually are not paid the total amount after buying the scrap. Instead, small payments are made for daily expenses, and the rest is noted down as a deposit.

(As reported in THE CONVERSATION, June 27, 2017. Researcher Dana Kornberg, PhD candidate in sociology University of Michigan.

As you have read, a large population works in unorganized sectors like garbage pickers, bangle makers, vegetable sellers, etc. How do you think workers in unorganized sectors can take advantage of digital infrastructure promoted through Digital India Programme? Interview some people working in unorganized sector to collect their views and prepare a report.
Deep Water

About the author

William Douglas (1898-1980) was born in Maine, Minnesota. After graduating with a Bachelor’s of Arts in English and Economics, he spent two years teaching high school in Yakima. However, he got tired of this and decided to pursue a legal career. He met Franklin D. Roosevelt at Yale and became an adviser and friend to the President. Douglas was a leading advocate of individual rights. He retired in 1975 with a term lasting thirty-six years and remains the longest-serving Justice in the history of the court. The following excerpt is taken from Of Men and Mountains by William O. Douglas. It reveals how as a young boy William Douglas nearly drowned in a swimming pool. In this essay he talks about his fear of water and thereafter, how he finally overcame it. Notice how the autobiographical part of the selection is used to support his discussion of fear.

Notice these words and expressions in the text. Infer their meaning from the context.

- treacherous
- subdued my pride
- flailed at the surface
- fishing for landlocked salmon
- misadventure
- bob to the surface like a cork
- curtain of life fell
- back and forth across the pool

It had happened when I was ten or eleven years old. I had decided to learn to swim. There was a pool at the Y.M.C.A. in Yakima that offered exactly the opportunity. The Yakima River was treacherous. Mother continually warned against it, and kept fresh in my mind the details of each drowning in the river. But the Y.M.C.A. pool was safe. It was only two or three feet deep at the shallow end; and while it was nine feet deep at the other, the drop was gradual. I got a pair of water wings...
The Yakima River is a tributary of the Columbia River in eastern Washington, U.S.A. The state is named after the indigenous Yakama people.

Sketch map not to scale
and went to the pool. I hated to walk naked into it and show my skinny legs. But I subdued my pride and did it.

From the beginning, however, I had an aversion to the water when I was in it. This started when I was three or four years old and father took me to the beach in California. He and I stood together in the surf. I hung on to him, yet the waves knocked me down and swept over me. I was buried in water. My breath was gone. I was frightened. Father laughed, but there was terror in my heart at the overpowering force of the waves.

My introduction to the Y.M.CA. swimming pool revived unpleasant memories and stirred childish fears. But in a little while I gathered confidence. I paddled with my new water wings, watching the other boys and trying to learn by aping them. I did this two or three times on different days and was just beginning to feel at ease in the water when the misadventure happened.

I went to the pool when no one else was there. The place was quiet. The water was still, and the tiled bottom was as white and clean as a bathtub. I was timid about going in alone, so I sat on the side of the pool to wait for others.

I had not been there long when in came a big bruiser of a boy, probably eighteen years old. He had thick hair on his chest. He was a beautiful physical specimen, with legs and arms that showed rippling muscles. He yelled, “Hi, Skinny! How’d you like to be ducked?”

With that he picked me up and tossed me into the deep end. I landed in a sitting position, swallowed water, and went at once to the bottom. I was frightened, but not yet frightened out of my wits. On the way down I planned: When my feet hit the bottom, I would make a big jump, come to the surface, lie flat on it, and paddle to the edge of the pool.

It seemed a long way down. Those nine feet were more like ninety, and before I touched bottom my lungs were ready to burst. But when my feet hit bottom I summoned all my strength and made what I thought was a great spring upwards. I imagined I would bob to the surface like a cork. Instead, I came up slowly. I opened my eyes and saw nothing but water
— water that had a dirty yellow tinge to it. I grew panicky. I reached up as if to grab a rope and my hands clutched only at water. I was suffocating. I tried to yell but no sound came out. Then my eyes and nose came out of the water — but not my mouth.

I flailed at the surface of the water, swallowed and choked. I tried to bring my legs up, but they hung as dead weights, paralysed and rigid. A great force was pulling me under. I screamed, but only the water heard me. I had started on the long journey back to the bottom of the pool.

I struck at the water as I went down, expending my strength as one in a nightmare fights an irresistible force. I had lost all my breath. My lungs ached, my head throbbed. I was getting dizzy. But I remembered the strategy — I would spring from the bottom of the pool and come like a cork to the surface. I would lie flat on the water, strike out with my arms, and thrash with my legs. Then I would get to the edge of the pool and be safe.

I went down, down, endlessly. I opened my eyes. Nothing but water with a yellow glow — dark water that one could not see through.

And then sheer, stark terror seized me, terror that knows no understanding, terror that knows no control, terror that no one can understand who has not experienced it. I was shrieking under water. I was paralysed under water — stiff, rigid with fear. Even the screams in my throat were frozen. Only my heart, and the pounding in my head, said that I was still alive.

And then in the midst of the terror came a touch of reason. I must remember to jump when I hit the bottom. At last I felt the tiles under me. My toes reached out as if to grab them. I jumped with everything I had.

But the jump made no difference. The water was still around me. I looked for ropes, ladders, water wings. Nothing but water. A mass of yellow water held me. Stark terror took an even deeper hold on me, like a great charge of electricity. I shook and trembled with fright. My arms wouldn't move. My legs wouldn't move. I tried to call for help, to call for mother. Nothing happened.
And then, strangely, there was light. I was coming out of the awful yellow water. At least my eyes were. My nose was almost out too.

Then I started down a third time. I sucked for air and got water. The yellowish light was going out.

Then all effort ceased. I relaxed. Even my legs felt limp; and a blackness swept over my brain. It wiped out fear; it wiped out terror. There was no more panic. It was quiet and peaceful. Nothing to be afraid of. This is nice... to be drowsy... to go to sleep... no need to jump... too tired to jump... it’s nice to be carried gently... to float along in space... tender arms around me... tender arms like Mother’s... now I must go to sleep...

I crossed to oblivion, and the curtain of life fell.

The next I remember I was lying on my stomach beside the pool, vomiting. The chap that threw me in was saying, “But I was only fooling.” Someone said, “The kid nearly died. Be all right now. Let’s carry him to the locker room.”

Several hours later, I walked home. I was weak and trembling. I shook and cried when I lay on my bed. I couldn’t eat that night. For days a haunting fear was in my heart. The slightest exertion upset me, making me wobbly in the knees and sick to my stomach.

I never went back to the pool. I feared water. I avoided it whenever I could.

A few years later when I came to know the waters of the Cascades, I wanted to get into them. And whenever I did — whether I was wading the Tieton or Bumping River or bathing in Warm Lake of the Goat Rocks — the terror that had seized me in the pool would come back. It would take possession of me completely. My legs would become paralysed. Icy horror would grab my heart.

This handicap stayed with me as the years rolled by. In canoes on Maine lakes fishing for landlocked salmon, bass
fishing in New Hampshire, trout fishing on the Deschutes and Metolius in Oregon, fishing for salmon on the Columbia, at Bumping Lake in the Cascades — wherever I went, the haunting fear of the water followed me. It ruined my fishing trips; deprived me of the joy of canoeing, boating, and swimming.

I used every way I knew to overcome this fear, but it held me firmly in its grip. Finally, one October, I decided to get an instructor and learn to swim. I went to a pool and practiced five days a week, an hour each day. The instructor put a belt around me. A rope attached to the belt went through a pulley that ran on an overhead cable. He held on to the end of the rope, and we went back and forth, back and forth across the pool, hour after hour, day after day, week after week. On each trip across the pool a bit of the panic seized me. Each time the instructor relaxed his hold on the rope and I went under, some of the old terror returned and my legs froze. It was three months before the tension began to slack. Then he taught me to put my face under water and exhale, and to raise my nose and inhale. I repeated the exercise hundreds of times. Bit by bit I shed part of the panic that seized me when my head went under water.

Next he held me at the side of the pool and had me kick with my legs. For weeks I did just that. At first my legs refused to work. But they gradually relaxed; and finally I could command them.

Thus, piece by piece, he built a swimmer. And when he had perfected each piece, he put them together into an integrated whole. In April he said, “Now you can swim. Dive off and swim the length of the pool, crawl stroke.”

I did. The instructor was finished.

But I was not finished. I still wondered if I would be terror-stricken when I was alone in the pool. I tried it. I swam the length up and down. Tiny vestiges of the old terror would return. But now I could frown and say to that terror, “Trying to scare me, eh? Well, here’s to you! Look!” And off I’d go for another length of the pool.

This went on until July. But I was still not satisfied. I was not sure that all the terror had left. So I went to Lake
Wentworth in New Hampshire, dived off a dock at Triggs Island, and swam two miles across the lake to Stamp Act Island. I swam the crawl, breast stroke, side stroke, and back stroke. Only once did the terror return. When I was in the middle of the lake, I put my face under and saw nothing but bottomless water. The old sensation returned in miniature. I laughed and said, “Well, Mr Terror, what do you think you can do to me?” It fled and I swam on.

Yet I had residual doubts. At my first opportunity I hurried west, went up the Tieton to Conrad Meadows, up the Conrad Creek Trail to Meade Glacier, and camped in the high meadow by the side of Warm Lake. The next morning I stripped, dived into the lake, and swam across to the other shore and back — just as Doug Corpron used to do. I shouted with joy, and Gilbert Peak returned the echo. I had conquered my fear of water.

The experience had a deep meaning for me, as only those who have known stark terror and conquered it can appreciate. In death there is peace. There is terror only in the fear of death, as Roosevelt knew when he said, “All we have to fear is fear itself.” Because I had experienced both the sensation of dying and the terror that fear of it can produce, the will to live somehow grew in intensity.

At last I felt released — free to walk the trails and climb the peaks and to brush aside fear.

**Think as you read**

1. Why was Douglas determined to get over his fear of water?
2. How did the instructor “build a swimmer” out of Douglas?
3. How did Douglas make sure that he conquered the old terror?

**Understanding the text**

1. How does Douglas make clear to the reader the sense of panic that gripped him as he almost drowned? Describe the details that have made the description vivid.
2. How did Douglas overcome his fear of water?
3. Why does Douglas as an adult recount a childhood experience of terror and his conquering of it? What larger meaning does he draw from this experience?
Talking about the text

1. “All we have to fear is fear itself”. Have you ever had a fear that you have now overcome? Share your experience with your partner.

2. Find and narrate other stories about conquest of fear and what people have said about courage. For example, you can recall Nelson Mandela’s struggle for freedom, his perseverance to achieve his mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor as depicted in his autobiography. The story We’re Not Afraid To Die, which you have read in Class XI, is an apt example of how courage and optimism helped a family survive under the direst stress.

Thinking about language

If someone else had narrated Douglas’s experience, how would it have differed from this account? Write out a sample paragraph or paragraphs from this text from the point of view of a third person or observer, to find out which style of narration would you consider to be more effective? Why?

Writing

1. Doing well in any activity, for example a sport, music, dance or painting, riding a motorcycle or a car, involves a great deal of struggle. Most of us are very nervous to begin with until gradually we overcome our fears and perform well.

Write an essay of about five paragraphs recounting such an experience. Try to recollect minute details of what caused the fear, your feelings, the encouragement you got from others or the criticism.

You could begin with the last sentence of the essay you have just read — “At last I felt released — free to walk the trails and climb the peaks and to brush aside fear.”

2. Write a short letter to someone you know about your having learnt to do something new.

Things to do

Are there any water sports in India? Find out about the areas or places which are known for water sports.
**About the Unit**

**Theme**
A real-life personal account of experiencing fear and the steps taken to overcome it.

**Sub-theme**
Psychological analysis of fear.

**Comprehension**
- Understanding another person’s experience.
- Relating subjectively to the discussion on fear.

**Talking about the text**
- Sharing personal experiences.
- Sharing accounts of acts of courage.

**Thinking about language**
Focus on first person narrative style.

**Writing**
- First person narration of personal experience.
- Letter-writing on personal learning achievement.

**Things to do**
Gathering information on water sports.
About the author

Selma Lagerlöf (1858-1940) was a Swedish writer whose stories have been translated into many languages. A universal theme runs through all of them — a belief that the essential goodness in a human being can be awakened through understanding and love. This story is set amidst the mines of Sweden, rich in iron ore, which figure large in the history and legends of that country. The story is told somewhat in the manner of a fairy tale.

Notice these expressions in the text. Infer their meaning from the context.

- keep body and soul together
- plods along the road
- impenetrable prison
- eased his way
- hunger gleamed in his eyes
- unwonted joy
- nodded a haughty consent
- fallen into a line of thought
- things have gone downhill

Once upon a time there was a man who went around selling small rattraps of wire. He made them himself at odd moments, from the material he got by begging in the stores or at the big farms. But even so, the business was not especially profitable, so he had to resort to both begging and petty thievery to keep body and soul together. Even so, his clothes were in rags, his cheeks were sunken, and hunger gleamed in his eyes.

No one can imagine how sad and monotonous life can appear to such a vagabond, who plods along the road, left to his own meditations. But one day this man had fallen into a line of thought, which really seemed to him entertaining. He had naturally been thinking of his rattraps when suddenly he was struck by the idea that the whole world about him — the whole world with its lands and seas, its cities and villages — was nothing but a big rattrap. It had never existed for any
other purpose than to set baits for people. It offered riches and joys, shelter and food, heat and clothing, exactly as the rattrap offered cheese and pork, and as soon as anyone let himself be tempted to touch the bait, it closed in on him, and then everything came to an end.

The world had, of course, never been very kind to him, so it gave him unwonted joy to think ill of it in this way. It became a cherished pastime of his, during many dreary ploddings, to think of people he knew who had let themselves be caught in the dangerous snare, and of others who were still circling around the bait.

One dark evening as he was trudging along the road he caught sight of a little gray cottage by the roadside, and he knocked on the door to ask shelter for the night. Nor was he refused. Instead of the sour faces which ordinarily met him, the owner, who was an old man without wife or child, was happy to get someone to talk to in his loneliness. Immediately he put the porridge pot on the fire and gave him supper; then he carved off such a big slice from his tobacco roll that it was enough both for the stranger’s pipe and his own. Finally he got out an old pack of cards and played ‘mjölis’ with his guest until bedtime.

The old man was just as generous with his confidences as with his porridge and tobacco. The guest was informed at once that in his days of prosperity his host had been a crofter at Ramsjö Ironworks and had worked on the land. Now that he was no longer able to do day labour, it was his cow which supported him. Yes, that bossy was extraordinary. She could give milk for the creamery every day, and last month he had received all of thirty kronor in payment.

The stranger must have seemed incredulous, for the old man got up and went to the window, took down a leather pouch which hung on a nail in the very window frame, and picked out three wrinkled ten-kronor bills. These he held up before the eyes of his guest, nodding knowingly, and then stuffed
The next day both men got up in good season. The crofter was in a hurry to milk his cow, and the other man probably thought he should not stay in bed when the head of the house had gotten up. They left the cottage at the same time. The crofter locked the door and put the key in his pocket. The man with the rattraps said good bye and thank you, and thereupon each went his own way.

But half an hour later the rattrap peddler stood again before the door. He did not try to get in, however. He only went up to the window, smashed a pane, stuck in his hand, and got hold of the pouch with the thirty kronor. He took the money and thrust it into his own pocket. Then he hung the leather pouch very carefully back in its place and went away.

As he walked along with the money in his pocket he felt quite pleased with his smartness. He realised, of course, that at first he dared not continue on the public highway, but must turn off the road, into the woods. During the first hours this caused him no difficulty. Later in the day it became worse, for it was a big and confusing forest which he had gotten into. He tried, to be sure, to walk in a definite direction, but the paths twisted back and forth so strangely! He walked and walked without coming to the end of the wood, and finally he realised that he had only been walking around in the same part of the forest. All at once he recalled his thoughts about the world and the rattrap. Now his own turn had come. He had let himself be fooled by a bait and had been caught. The whole forest, with its trunks and branches, its thickets and fallen logs, closed in upon him like an impenetrable prison from which he could never escape.

Think as you read

1. From where did the peddler get the idea of the world being a rattrap?
2. Why was he amused by this idea?
3. Did the peddler expect the kind of hospitality that he received from the crofter?
4. Why was the crofter so talkative and friendly with the peddler?
5. Why did he show the thirty kronor to the peddler?
6. Did the peddler respect the confidence reposed in him by the crofter?
It was late in December. Darkness was already descending over the forest. This increased the danger, and increased also his gloom and despair. Finally he saw no way out, and he sank down on the ground, tired to death, thinking that his last moment had come. But just as he laid his head on the ground, he heard a sound—a hard regular thumping. There was no doubt as to what that was. He raised himself. “Those are the hammer strokes from an iron mill”, he thought. “There must be people near by”. He summoned all his strength, got up, and staggered in the direction of the sound.

The Ramsjö Ironworks, which are now closed down, were, not so long ago, a large plant, with smelter, rolling mill, and forge. In the summertime long lines of heavily loaded barges and scows slid down the canal, which led to a large inland lake, and in the wintertime the roads near the mill were black from all the coal dust which sifted down from the big charcoal crates.

During one of the long dark evenings just before Christmas, the master smith and his helper sat in the dark forge near the furnace waiting for the pig iron, which had been put in the fire, to be ready to put on the anvil. Every now and then one of them got up to stir the glowing mass with a long iron bar, returning in a few moments, dripping with perspiration, though, as was the custom, he wore nothing but a long shirt and a pair of wooden shoes.

All the time there were many sounds to be heard in the forge. The big bellows groaned and the burning coal cracked. The fire boy shovelled charcoal into the maw of the furnace with a great deal of clatter. Outside roared the waterfall, and a sharp north wind whipped the rain against the brick-tiled roof.

It was probably on account of all this noise that the blacksmith did not notice that a man had opened the gate and entered the forge, until he stood close up to the furnace. Surely it was nothing unusual for poor vagabonds without any better shelter for the night to be attracted to the forge by the glow of light which escaped through the sooty panes, and to come in to warm themselves in front of the fire. The
blacksmiths glanced only casually and indifferently at the intruder. He looked the way people of his type usually did, with a long beard, dirty, ragged, and with a bunch of rattraps dangling on his chest.

He asked permission to stay, and the master blacksmith nodded a haughty consent without honouring him with a single word.

The tramp did not say anything, either. He had not come there to talk but only to warm himself and sleep.

In those days the Ramsjö iron mill was owned by a very prominent ironmaster, whose greatest ambition was to ship out good iron to the market. He watched both night and day to see that the work was done as well as possible, and at this very moment he came into the forge on one of his nightly rounds of inspection.

Naturally the first thing he saw was the tall ragamuffin who had eased his way so close to the furnace that steam rose from his wet rags. The ironmaster did not follow the example of the blacksmiths, who had hardly deigned to look at the stranger. He walked close up to him, looked him over very carefully, then tore off his slouch hat to get a better view of his face.

“But of course it is you, Nils Olof!” he said. “How you do look!”

The man with the rattraps had never before seen the ironmaster at Ramsjö and did not even know what his name was. But it occurred to him that if the fine gentleman thought he was an old acquaintance, he might perhaps throw him a couple of kronor. Therefore he did not want to undeceive him all at once.

“Yes, God knows things have gone downhill with me”, he said.

“You should not have resigned from the regiment”, said the ironmaster. “That was the mistake. If only I had still been in the service at the time, it never would have happened. Well, now of course you will come home with me.”

To go along up to the manor house and be received by the owner like an old regimental comrade — that, however, did not please the tramp.
“No, I couldn’t think of it!” he said, looking quite alarmed. He thought of the thirty kronor. To go up to the manor house would be like throwing himself voluntarily into the lion’s den. He only wanted a chance to sleep here in the forge and then sneak away as inconspicuously as possible.

The ironmaster assumed that he felt embarrassed because of his miserable clothing.

“Please don’t think that I have such a fine home that you cannot show yourself there”, he said... “Elizabeth is dead, as you may already have heard. My boys are abroad, and there is no one at home except my oldest daughter and myself. We were just saying that it was too bad we didn’t have any company for Christmas. Now come along with me and help us make the Christmas food disappear a little faster.”

But the stranger said no, and no, and again no, and the ironmaster saw that he must give in.

“It looks as though Captain von Stahle preferred to stay with you tonight, Stjernström”, he said to the master blacksmith, and turned on his heel.

But he laughed to himself as he went away, and the blacksmith, who knew him, understood very well that he had not said his last word.

It was not more than half an hour before they heard the sound of carriage wheels outside the forge, and a new guest came in, but this time it was not the ironmaster. He had sent his daughter, apparently hoping that she would have better powers of persuasion than he himself.

She entered, followed by a valet, carrying on his arm a big fur coat. She was not at all pretty, but seemed modest and quite shy. In the forge everything was just as it had been earlier in the evening. The master blacksmith and his apprentice still sat on their bench, and iron and charcoal still glowed in the furnace. The stranger had stretched himself out on the floor.
and lay with a piece of pig iron under his head and his hat
pulled down over his eyes. As soon as the young girl caught
sight of him, she went up and lifted his hat. The man was
evidently used to sleeping with one eye open. He jumped up
abruptly and seemed to be quite frightened.

“My name is Edla Willmansson,” said the young girl. “My
father came home and said that you wanted to sleep here in
the forge tonight, and then I asked permission to come and
bring you home to us. I am so sorry, Captain, that you are
having such a hard time.”

She looked at him compassionately, with her heavy eyes,
and then she noticed that the man was afraid. “Either he
has stolen something or else he has escaped from, jail”, she
thought, and added quickly, “You may be sure, Captain, that
you will be allowed to leave us just as freely as you came. Only
please stay with us over Christmas Eve.”

She said this in such a friendly manner that the rattrap
peddler must have felt confidence in her.

“It would never have occurred to me that you would bother
with me yourself, miss,” he said. “I will come at once.”

He accepted the fur coat, which the valet handed him with
a deep bow, threw it over his rags, and followed the young
lady out to the carriage, without granting the astonished
blacksmiths so much as a glance.

But while he was riding up to the manor house he had
evil forebodings.

“Why the devil did I take that fellow’s money?” he thought.
“Now I am sitting in the trap and will never get out of it.”

The next day was Christmas Eve, and when the ironmaster
came into the dining room for breakfast he probably thought
with satisfaction of his old regimental comrade whom he had
run across so unexpectedly.

“First of all we must see to it that he gets a little flesh
on his bones,” he said to his daughter, who was busy at the
table. “And then we must see that he gets something else to
do than to run around the country selling rattraps.”
“It is queer that things have gone downhill with him as badly as that,” said the daughter. “Last night I did not think there was anything about him to show that he had once been an educated man.”

“You must have patience, my little girl,” said the father. “As soon as he gets clean and dressed up, you will see something different. Last night he was naturally embarrassed. The tramp manners will fall away from him with the tramp clothes.”

Just as he said this the door opened and the stranger entered. Yes, now he was truly clean and well dressed. The valet had bathed him, cut his hair, and shaved him. Moreover he was dressed in a good-looking suit of clothes which belonged to the ironmaster. He wore a white shirt and a starched collar and whole shoes.

But although his guest was now so well groomed, the ironmaster did not seem pleased. He looked at him with puckered brow, and it was easy to understand that when he had seen the strange fellow in the uncertain reflection from the furnace he might have made a mistake, but that now, when he stood there in broad daylight, it was impossible to mistake him for an old acquaintance.

“What does this mean?” he thundered.

The stranger made no attempt to dissimulate. He saw at once that the splendour had come to an end.

“It is not my fault, sir,” he said. “I never pretended to be anything but a poor trader, and I pleaded and begged to be allowed to stay in the forge. But no harm has been done. At worst I can put on my rags again and go away”.

“Well,” said the ironmaster, hesitating a little, “it was not quite honest, either. You must admit that, and I should not be surprised if the sheriff would like to have something to say in the matter.”

The tramp took a step forward and struck the table with his fist.

“Now I am going to tell you, Mr Ironmaster, how things are,” he said. “This whole world is nothing but a big rattrap. All the good things that are offered to you are nothing but cheese rinds and bits of pork, set out to drag a poor fellow
into trouble. And if the sheriff comes now and locks me up for this, then you, Mr Ironmaster, must remember that a day may come when you yourself may want to get a big piece of pork, and then you will get caught in the trap.”

The ironmaster began to laugh.

“That was not so badly said, my good fellow. Perhaps we should let the sheriff alone on Christmas Eve. But now get out of here as fast as you can.”

But just as the man was opening the door, the daughter said, “I think he ought to stay with us today. I don’t want him to go.” And with that she went and closed the door.

“What in the world are you doing?” said the father.

The daughter stood there quite embarrassed and hardly knew what to answer. That morning she had felt so happy when she thought how homelike and Christmassy she was going to make things for the poor hungry wretch. She could not get away from the idea all at once, and that was why she had interceded for the vagabond.

“I am thinking of this stranger here,” said the young girl. “He walks and walks the whole year long, and there is probably not a single place in the whole country where he is welcome and can feel at home. Wherever he turns he is chased away. Always he is afraid of being arrested and cross-examined. I should like to have him enjoy a day of peace with us here — just one in the whole year.”

The ironmaster mumbled something in his beard. He could not bring himself to oppose her.

“It was all a mistake, of course,” she continued. “But anyway I don’t think we ought to chase away a human being whom we have asked to come here, and to whom we have promised Christmas cheer.”

“You do preach worse than a parson,” said the ironmaster. “I only hope you won’t have to regret this.”

The young girl took the stranger by the hand and led him up to the table.

“Now sit down and eat,” she said, for she could see that her father had given in.

The man with the rattraps said not a word; he only sat down and helped himself to the food. Time after time he looked
at the young girl who had interceded for him. Why had she done it? What could the crazy idea be?

After that, Christmas Eve at Ramsjö passed just as it always had. The stranger did not cause any trouble because he did nothing but sleep. The whole forenoon he lay on the sofa in one of the guest rooms and slept at one stretch. At noon they woke him up so that he could have his share of the good Christmas fare, but after that he slept again. It seemed as though for many years he had not been able to sleep as quietly and safely as here at Ramsjö.

In the evening, when the Christmas tree was lighted, they woke him up again, and he stood for a while in the drawing room, blinking as though the candlelight hurt him, but after that he disappeared again. Two hours later he was aroused once more. He then had to go down into the dining room and eat the Christmas fish and porridge.

As soon as they got up from the table he went around to each one present and said thank you and good night, but when he came to the young girl she gave him to understand that it was her father’s intention that the suit which he wore was to be a Christmas present — he did not have to return it; and if he wanted to spend next Christmas Eve in a place where he could rest in peace, and be sure that no evil would befall him, he would be welcomed back again.

The man with the rattlows did not answer anything to this. He only stared at the young girl in boundless amazement.

The next morning the ironmaster and his daughter got up in good season to go to the early Christmas service. Their guest was still asleep, and they did not disturb him.

When, at about ten o’clock, they drove back from the
church, the young girl sat and hung her head even more dejectedly than usual. At church she had learned that one of the old crofters of the ironworks had been robbed by a man who went around selling rattraps.

“Yes, that was a fine fellow you let into the house,” said her father. “I only wonder how many silver spoons are left in the cupboard by this time.”

The wagon had hardly stopped at the front steps when the ironmaster asked the valet whether the stranger was still there. He added that he had heard at church that the man was a thief. The valet answered that the fellow had gone and that he had not taken anything with him at all. On the contrary, he had left behind a little package which Miss Willmansson was to be kind enough to accept as a Christmas present.

The young girl opened the package, which was so badly done up that the contents came into view at once. She gave a little cry of joy. She found a small rattrap, and in it lay three wrinkled ten kronor notes. But that was not all. In the rattrap lay also a letter written in large, jagged characters —

“Honoured and noble Miss,

“Since you have been so nice to me all day long, as if I was a captain, I want to be nice to you, in return, as if I was a real captain — for I do not want you to be embarrassed at this Christmas season by a thief; but you can give back the money to the old man on the roadside, who has the money pouch hanging on the window frame as a bait for poor wanderers.

“The rattrap is a Christmas present from a rat who would have been caught in this world’s rattrap if he had not been raised to captain, because in that way he got power to clear himself.

“Written with friendship and high regard,

“Captain von Stahle.”
Understanding the text

1. How does the peddler interpret the acts of kindness and hospitality shown by the crofter, the ironmaster and his daughter?
2. What are the instances in the story that show that the character of the ironmaster is different from that of his daughter in many ways?
3. The story has many instances of unexpected reactions from the characters to others’ behaviour. Pick out instances of these surprises.
4. What made the peddler finally change his ways?
5. How does the metaphor of the rattrap serve to highlight the human predicament?
6. The peddler comes out as a person with a subtle sense of humour. How does this serve in lightening the seriousness of the theme of the story and also endear him to us?

Talking about the text

_Discuss the following in groups of four. Each group can deal with one topic. Present the views of your group to the whole class._

1. The reader’s sympathy is with the peddler right from the beginning of the story. Why is this so? Is the sympathy justified?
2. The story also focuses on human loneliness and the need to bond with others.
3. Have you known/heard of an episode where a good deed or an act of kindness has changed a person’s view of the world?
4. The story is both entertaining and philosophical.

Working with words

1. The man selling rattraps is referred to by many terms such as “peddler, stranger” etc. Pick out all such references to him. What does each of these labels indicate of the context or the attitude of the people around him.
2. You came across the words, **plod, trudge, stagger** in the story. These words indicate movement accompanied by weariness. Find five other such words with a similar meaning.
Noticing form

1. He made them **himself** at odd moments.
2. He raised **himself**.
3. He had let **himself** be fooled by a bait and had been caught.
4. ... a day may come when **you yourself** may want to get a big piece of pork.

*Notice the way in which these reflexive pronouns have been used (pronoun+self)*

- In 1 and 4 the reflexive pronouns “himself” and “yourself” are used to convey emphasis.
- In 2 and 3 the reflexive pronoun is used in place of personal pronoun to signal that it refers to the same subject in the sentence.
- Pick out other examples of the use of reflexive pronouns from the story and notice how they are used.

Thinking about language

1. *Notice the words in bold in the following sentence.*
   “The fire boy shovelled charcoal into the **maw of the furnace** with a great deal of clatter”. This is a phrase that is used in the specific context of an iron plant.

   *Pick out other such phrases and words from the story that are peculiar to the terminology of ironworks.*

2. **Mjölis** is a card game of Sweden.
   *Name a few indoor games played in your region. ‘Chopar’ could be an example.*

3. A crofter is a person who rents or owns a small farm especially in Scotland. Think of other uncommon terms for ‘a small farmer’ including those in your language.

About the

**Theme**

The trap of material benefit that most human beings are prone to fall into.

**Sub-theme**

The human tendency to redeem oneself from dishonest ways.
COMPREHENSION
- Factual understanding of events.
- Inferring motives for human actions.

TALKING ABOUT THE TEXT
  Small group discussion on
  - the portrayal of characters in fiction.
  - human emotional needs and human behaviour.
  - real-life recounting of similar incidents.
  - narrative style.

WORKING WITH WORDS
- Choice of synonyms to reflect personal attitudes ‘Noticing form’.
- Focus on the uses of the reflexive pronoun.

THINKING ABOUT LANGUAGE
- Vocabulary specific to a particular field.
- Culture-specific games (especially indoor).
- Region-specific synonyms.
When I first visited Gandhi in 1942 at his ashram in Sevagram, in central India, he said, “I will tell you how it happened that I decided to urge the departure of the British. It was in 1917.”

He had gone to the December 1916 annual convention of the Indian National Congress party in Lucknow. There were 2,301 delegates and many visitors. During the proceedings, Gandhi recounted, “a peasant came up to me looking like any other peasant in India, poor and emaciated, and said, ‘I am Rajkumar Shukla. I am from Champaran, and I want you to come to my district!’” Gandhi had never heard of the place. It was in the foothills of the towering Himalayas, near the kingdom of Nepal.

Under an ancient arrangement, the Champaran peasants were sharecroppers. Rajkumar Shukla was one of them. He was illiterate but resolute. He had come to the Congress
session to complain about the injustice of the landlord system in Bihar, and somebody had probably said, “Speak to Gandhi.”

Gandhi told Shukla he had an appointment in Cawnpore and was also committed to go to other parts of India. Shukla accompanied him everywhere. Then Gandhi returned to his ashram near Ahmedabad. Shukla followed him to the ashram. For weeks he never left Gandhi’s side.

“Fix a date,” he begged.

Impressed by the sharecropper’s tenacity and story Gandhi said, “I have to be in Calcutta on such-and-such a date. Come and meet me and take me from there.”

Months passed. Shukla was sitting on his haunches at the appointed spot in Calcutta when Gandhi arrived; he waited till Gandhi was free. Then the two of them boarded a train for the city of Patna in Bihar. There Shukla led him to the house of a lawyer named Rajendra Prasad who later became President of the Congress party and of India. Rajendra Prasad was out of town, but the servants knew Shukla as a poor yeoman who pestered their master to help the indigo sharecroppers. So they let him stay on the grounds with his companion, Gandhi, whom they took to be another peasant. But Gandhi was not permitted to draw water from the well lest some drops from his bucket pollute the entire source; how did they know that he was not an untouchable?

Gandhi decided to go first to Muzzafarpur, which was en route to Champaran, to obtain more complete information about conditions than Shukla was capable of imparting. He accordingly sent a telegram to Professor J.B. Kripalani, of the Arts College in Muzzafarpur, whom he had seen at Tagore’s Shantiniketan school. The train arrived at

Think as you read

1. Strike out what is not true in the following.
   a. Rajkumar Shukla was
      (i) a sharecropper.
      (ii) a politician.
      (iii) delegate
      (iv) a landlord.
   b. Rajkumar Shukla was
      (i) poor.
      (ii) physically strong.
      (iii) illiterate.

2. Why is Rajkumar Shukla described as being ‘resolute’?

3. Why do you think the servants thought Gandhi to be another peasant?
midnight, 15 April 1917. Kripalani was waiting at the station with a large body of students. Gandhi stayed there for two days in the home of Professor Malkani, a teacher in a government school. “It was an extraordinary thing ‘in those days,” Gandhi commented, “for a government professor to harbour a man like me”.

In smaller localities, the Indians were afraid to show sympathy for advocates of home-rule.

The news of Gandhi’s advent and of the nature of his mission spread quickly through Muzzafarpur and to Champaran. Sharecroppers from Champaran began arriving on foot and by conveyance to see their champion. Muzzafarpur lawyers called on Gandhi to brief him; they frequently represented peasant groups in court; they told him about their cases and reported the size of their fee.

Gandhi chided the lawyers for collecting big fee from the sharecroppers. He said, “I have come to the conclusion that we should stop going to law courts. Taking such cases to the courts does little good. Where the peasants are so crushed and fear-stricken, law courts are useless. The real relief for them is to be free from fear.”

Most of the arable land in the Champaran district was divided into large estates owned by Englishmen and
worked by Indian tenants. The chief commercial crop was indigo. The landlords compelled all tenants to plant three twentieths or 15 per cent of their holdings with indigo and surrender the entire indigo harvest as rent. This was done by long-term contract.

Presently, the landlords learned that Germany had developed synthetic indigo. They, thereupon, obtained agreements from the sharecroppers to pay them compensation for being released from the 15 per cent arrangement.

The sharecropping arrangement was irksome to the peasants, and many signed willingly. Those who resisted, engaged lawyers; the landlords hired thugs. Meanwhile, the information about synthetic indigo reached the illiterate peasants who had signed, and they wanted their money back.

At this point Gandhi arrived in Champaran. He began by trying to get the facts. First he visited the secretary of the British landlord’s association. The secretary told him that they could give no information to an outsider. Gandhi answered that he was no outsider.

Next, Gandhi called on the British official commissioner of the Tirhut division in which the Champaran district lay. “The commissioner,” Gandhi reports, “proceeded to bully me and advised me forthwith to leave Tirhut.”

Gandhi did not leave. Instead he proceeded to Motihari, the capital of Champaran. Several lawyers accompanied him. At the railway station, a vast multitude greeted Gandhi. He went to a house and, using it as headquarters, continued his investigations. A report came in that a peasant had been maltreated in a nearby village. Gandhi decided to go and see; the next morning he started out on the back of an elephant. He had not proceeded far when the police superintendent’s messenger overtook him and ordered him to return to town in his
carriage. Gandhi complied. The messenger drove Gandhi home where he served him with an official notice to quit Champaran immediately. Gandhi signed a receipt for the notice and wrote on it that he would disobey the order.

In consequence, Gandhi received a summons to appear in court the next day.

All night Gandhi remained awake. He telegraphed Rajendra Prasad to come from Bihar with influential friends. He sent instructions to the ashram. He wired a full report to the Viceroy.

Morning found the town of Motihari black with peasants. They did not know Gandhi’s record in South Africa. They had merely heard that a Mahatma who wanted to help them was in trouble with the authorities. Their spontaneous demonstration, in thousands, around the courthouse was the beginning of their liberation from fear of the British.

The officials felt powerless without Gandhi’s cooperation. He helped them regulate the crowd. He was polite and friendly. He was giving them concrete proof that their might, hitherto dreaded and unquestioned, could be challenged by Indians.

The government was baffled. The prosecutor requested the judge to postpone the trial. Apparently, the authorities wished to consult their superiors.

Gandhi protested against the delay. He read a statement pleading guilty. He was involved, he told the court, in a “conflict of duties”—on the one hand, not to set a bad example as a lawbreaker; on the other hand, to render the “humanitarian and national service” for which he had come. He disregarded the order to leave, “not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience”. He asked the penalty due.

The magistrate announced that he would pronounce sentence after a two-hour recess and asked Gandhi to furnish bail for those 120 minutes. Gandhi refused. The judge released him without bail.

When the court reconvened, the judge said he would not deliver the judgment for several days. Meanwhile he allowed Gandhi to remain at liberty.
Rajendra Prasad, Brij Kishor Babu, Maulana Mazharul Huq and several other prominent lawyers had arrived from Bihar. They conferred with Gandhi. What would they do if he was sentenced to prison, Gandhi asked. Why, the senior lawyer replied, they had come to advise and help him; if he went to jail there would be nobody to advise and they would go home.

What about the injustice to the sharecroppers, Gandhi demanded. The lawyers withdrew to consult. Rajendra Prasad has recorded the upshot of their consultations — “They thought, amongst themselves, that Gandhi was totally a stranger, and yet he was prepared to go to prison for the sake of the peasants; if they, on the other hand, being not only residents of the adjoining districts but also those who claimed to have served these peasants, should go home, it would be shameful desertion.”

They accordingly went back to Gandhi and told him they were ready to follow him into jail. “The battle of Champaran is won,” he exclaimed. Then he took a piece of paper and divided the group into pairs and put down the order in which each pair was to court arrest.

Several days later, Gandhi received a written communication from the magistrate informing him that the Lieutenant-Governor of the province had ordered the case to be dropped. Civil disobedience had triumphed, the first time in modern India.

Gandhi and the lawyers now proceeded to conduct a far-flung inquiry into the grievances of the farmers. Depositions by about ten thousand peasants were written down, and notes made on other evidence. Documents were collected. The whole area throbbed with the activity of the investigators and the vehement protests of the landlords.

In June, Gandhi was summoned to Sir Edward Gait, the Lieutenant-Governor. Before he went he met
leading associates and again laid detailed plans for civil disobedience if he should not return.

Gandhi had four protracted interviews with the Lieutenant-Governor who, as a result, appointed an official commission of inquiry into the indigo sharecroppers' situation. The commission consisted of landlords, government officials, and Gandhi as the sole representative of the peasants.

Gandhi remained in Champaran for an initial uninterrupted period of seven months and then again for several shorter visits. The visit, undertaken casually on the entreaty of an unlettered peasant in the expectation that it would last a few days, occupied almost a year of Gandhi's life.

The official inquiry assembled a crushing mountain of evidence against the big planters, and when they saw this they agreed, in principle, to make refunds to the peasants. “But how much must we pay?” they asked Gandhi.

They thought he would demand repayment in full of the money which they had illegally and deceitfully extorted from the sharecroppers. He asked only 50 per cent. “There he seemed adamant,” writes Reverend J. Z. Hodge, a British missionary in Champaran who observed the entire episode at close range. “Thinking probably that he would not give way, the representative of the planters offered to refund to the extent of 25 per cent, and to his amazement Mr. Gandhi took him at his word, thus breaking the deadlock.”

This settlement was adopted unanimously by the commission. Gandhi explained that the amount of the refund was less important than the fact that the landlords had been obliged to surrender part of the money and, with it, part of their prestige. Therefore, as far as the peasants were concerned, the planters had behaved as lords above the law. Now the peasant
saw that he had rights and defenders. He learned courage.

Events justified Gandhi’s position. Within a few years the British planters abandoned their estates, which reverted to the peasants. Indigo sharecropping disappeared.

Gandhi never contented himself with large political or economic solutions. He saw the cultural and social backwardness in the Champaran villages and wanted to do something about it immediately. He appealed for teachers. Mahadev Desai and Narhari Parikh, two young men who had just joined Gandhi as disciples, and their wives, volunteered for the work. Several more came from Bombay, Poona and other distant parts of the land. Devadas, Gandhi’s youngest son, arrived from the ashram and so did Mrs. Gandhi. Primary schools were opened in six villages. Kasturbai taught the ashram rules on personal cleanliness and community sanitation.

Health conditions were miserable. Gandhi got a doctor to volunteer his services for six months. Three medicines were available — castor oil, quinine and sulphur ointment. Anybody who showed a coated tongue was given a dose of castor oil; anybody with malaria fever received quinine plus castor oil; anybody with skin eruptions received ointment plus castor oil.

Gandhi noticed the filthy state of women’s clothes. He asked Kasturbai to talk to them about it. One woman took Kasturbai into her hut and said, “Look, there is no box or cupboard here for clothes. The sari I am wearing is the only one I have.”

During his long stay in Champaran, Gandhi kept a long distance watch on the ashram. He sent regular instructions by mail and asked for financial accounts. Once he wrote to the residents that it was time to fill in the old latrine trenches and dig new ones otherwise the old ones would begin to smell bad.

Think as you read

1. Why did Gandhi agree to a settlement of 25 per cent refund to the farmers?
2. How did the episode change the plight of the peasants?
The Champaran episode was a turning-point in Gandhi’s life. “What I did,” he explained, “was a very ordinary thing. I declared that the British could not order me about in my own country.”

But Champaran did not begin as an act of defiance. It grew out of an attempt to alleviate the distress of large numbers of poor peasants. This was the typical Gandhi pattern — his politics were intertwined with the practical, day-to-day problems of the millions. His was not a loyalty to abstractions; it was a loyalty to living, human beings.

In everything Gandhi did, moreover, he tried to mould a new free Indian who could stand on his own feet and thus make India free.

Early in the Champaran action, Charles Freer Andrews, the English pacifist who had become a devoted follower of the Mahatma, came to bid Gandhi farewell before going on a tour of duty to the Fiji Islands. Gandhi’s lawyer friends thought it would be a good idea for Andrews to stay in Champaran and help them. Andrews was willing if Gandhi agreed. But Gandhi was vehemently opposed. He said, “You think that in this unequal fight it would be helpful if we have an Englishman on our side. This shows the weakness of your heart. The cause is just and you must rely upon yourselves to win the battle. You should not seek a prop in Mr. Andrews because he happens to be an Englishman”.

“He had read our minds correctly,” Rajendra Prasad comments, “and we had no reply... Gandhi in this way taught us a lesson in self-reliance”.

Self-reliance, Indian independence and help to sharecroppers were all bound together.

Understanding the text

1. Why do you think Gandhi considered the Champaran episode to be a turning-point in his life?
2. How was Gandhi able to influence lawyers? Give instances.
3. What was the attitude of the average Indian in smaller localities towards advocates of ‘home rule’?
4. How do we know that ordinary people too contributed to the freedom movement?
Talking about the text

Discuss the following.

1. “Freedom from fear is more important than legal justice for the poor.”
   Do you think that the poor of India are free from fear after Independence?
2. The qualities of a good leader.

Working with words

- List the words used in the text that are related to legal procedures.
  For example: deposition
- List other words that you know that fall into this category.

Thinking about language

1. Notice the sentences in the text which are in ‘direct speech’.
   Why does the author use quotations in his narration?
2. Notice the use or non-use of the comma in the following sentences.
   (a) When I first visited Gandhi in 1942 at his ashram in Sevagram, he told me what happened in Champaran.
   (b) He had not proceeded far when the police superintendent’s messenger overtook him.
   (c) When the court reconvened, the judge said he would not deliver the judgment for several days.

Things to do

1. Choose an issue that has provoked a controversy like the Bhopal Gas Tragedy or the Narmada Dam Project in which the lives of the poor have been affected.
2. Find out the facts of the case.
3. Present your arguments.
4. Suggest a possible settlement.

About the Unit

Theme

The leadership shown by Mahatma Gandhi to secure justice for oppressed people through convincing argumentation and negotiation.
**SUB-THEME**
Contributions made by anonymous Indians to the freedom movement.

**READING COMPREHENSION**
- Intensive reading of factual writing to understand events and facts. The think as you read questions at the end of each section help in understanding descriptions of people, consolidating facts and focusing on what is important to understand further sections.
- Scanning for specific instances in the text to support given statements.
- Inferential questions to reason out certain statements in the text.

**TALKING ABOUT THE TEXT**
Discussion as a take-off from the text and making pupils think about issues such as freedom from fear as a prerequisite for justice. Understanding leadership qualities – direct relevance to pupils’ prospects. Fluency development.

**WORKING WITH WORDS**
Making pupils notice the specialist vocabulary used in legal parlance.

**NOTICING FORM**
- Use of direct speech in narration. Pupils are already aware of the form changes when spoken words are reported. They should now be able to notice the choice of form in contexts of use to strengthen the effectiveness of narration.
- Use of the comma to separate subordinate clause from main clause if it precedes it, and its omission if it comes after the main clause.

**THINGS TO DO**
Extension activity to help pupils understand the method of Gandhian activism and relate it to current problems of national importance.
- Investigation of facts
- Presentation of arguments
- Settlement
About the author

Asokamitran (1931), a Tamil writer, recounts his years at Gemini Studios in his book *My Years with Boss* which talks of the influence of movies on every aspect of life in India. The Gemini Studios, located in Chennai, was set up in 1940. It was one of the most influential film-producing organisations of India in the early days of Indian film-making. Its founder was S.S. Vasan. The duty of Asokamitran in Gemini Studios was to cut out newspaper clippings on a wide variety of subjects and store them in files. Many of these had to be written out by hand. Although he performed an insignificant function he was the most well-informed of all the members of the Gemini family. The following is an excerpt from his book *My Years with Boss*.

Notice these words and expressions in the text. Infer their meaning from the context.

- blew over
- catapulted into
- a coat of mail
- played into their hands
- heard a bell ringing
- was struck dumb
- the favourite haunt

Pancake was the brand name of the make-up material that Gemini Studios bought in truck-loads. Greta Garbo¹ must have used it, Miss Gohar must have used it, Vyjayantimala² must also have used it but Rati Agnihotri may not have even heard of it. The make-up department of the Gemini Studios was in the upstairs of a building that was believed to have been Robert Clive’s stables. A dozen other buildings in the city are said to have been his residence. For his brief life and an

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¹ A Swedish actress, in 1954 she received an Honorary Oscar for her unforgettable screen performances. The Guinness Book of World Records named her the most beautiful woman who ever lived. She was also voted Best Silent Actress of the country.

² An Indian actress whose performance was widely appreciated in Bimal Roy’s Devdas. She won three Best Actress awards for her acting. She is now an active politician.
even briefer stay in Madras. Robert Clive seems to have done a lot of moving, besides fighting some impossible battles in remote corners of India and marrying a maiden in St. Mary’s Church in Fort St. George in Madras.

The make-up room had the look of a hair-cutting salon with lights at all angles around half a dozen large mirrors. They were all incandescent lights, so you can imagine the fiery misery of those subjected to make-up. The make-up department was first headed by a Bengali who became too big for a studio and left. He was succeeded by a Maharashtrian who was assisted by a Dharwar Kannadiga, an Andhra, a Madras Indian Christian, an Anglo-Burmese and the usual local Tamils. All this shows that there was a great deal of national integration long before A.I.R. and Doordarshan began broadcasting programmes on national integration. This gang of nationally integrated make-up men could turn any decent-looking person into a hideous crimson hued monster with the help of truck-loads of pancake and a number of other locally made potions and lotions. Those were the days of mainly indoor shooting, and only five per cent of the film was shot outdoors. I suppose the sets and studio lights needed the girls and boys to be made to look ugly in order to look presentable in the movie. A strict hierarchy was maintained in the make-up department. The chief make-up man made the chief actors and actresses ugly, his senior assistant the ‘second’ hero and heroine, the junior assistant the main comedian, and so forth. The players who played the crowd were the responsibility of the office boy. (Even the make-up department of the Gemini Studio had an ‘office boy’!) On the days when there was a crowd-shooting, you could see him mixing his paint in a giant vessel and slapping it on the crowd
players. The idea was to close every pore on the surface of the face in the process of applying make-up. He wasn’t exactly a ‘boy’; he was in his early forties, having entered the studios years ago in the hope of becoming a star actor or a top screen writer, director or lyrics writer. He was a bit of a poet.

In those days I worked in a cubicle, two whole sides of which were French windows. (I didn’t know at that time they were called French windows.) Seeing me sitting at my desk tearing up newspapers day in and day out, most people thought I was doing next to nothing. It is likely that the Boss thought likewise too. So anyone who felt I should be given some occupation would barge into my cubicle and deliver an extended lecture. The ‘boy’ in the make-up department had decided I should be enlightened on how great literary talent was being allowed to go waste in a department fit only for barbers and perverts. Soon I was praying for crowd-shooting all the time. Nothing short of it could save me from his epics.

In all instances of frustration, you will always find the anger directed towards a single person openly or covertly and this man of the make-up department was convinced that all his woes, ignominy and neglect were due to Kothamangalam Subbu. Subbu was the No. 2 at Gemini Studios. He couldn’t have had a more encouraging opening in films than our grown-up make-up boy had. On the contrary he must have had to face more uncertain and difficult times, for when he began his career, there were no firmly established film producing companies or studios. Even in the matter of education, specially formal education, Subbu couldn’t have had an appreciable lead over our boy. But by virtue of being born a Brahmin — a virtue, indeed! — he must have had exposure to

Think as you read

1. What does the writer mean by ‘the fiery misery’ of those subjected to make-up?
2. What is the example of national integration that the author refers to?
3. What work did the ‘office boy’ do in the Gemini Studios? Why did he join the studios? Why was he disappointed?
4. Why did the author appear to be doing nothing at the studios?
more affluent situations and people. He had the ability to look cheerful at all times even after having had a hand in a flop film. He always had work for somebody — he could never do things on his own — but his sense of loyalty made him identify himself with his principal completely and turn his entire creativity to his principal’s advantage. He was tailor-made for films. Here was a man who could be inspired when commanded. “The rat fights the tigress underwater and kills her but takes pity on the cubs and tends them lovingly — I don’t know how to do the scene,” the producer would say and Subbu would come out with four ways of the rat pouring affection on its victim’s offspring. “Good, but I am not sure it is effective enough,” the producer would say and in a minute Subbu would come out with fourteen more alternatives. Film-making must have been and was so easy with a man like Subbu around and if ever there was a man who gave direction and definition to Gemini Studios during its golden years, it was Subbu. Subbu had a separate identity as a poet and though he was certainly capable of more complex and higher forms, he deliberately chose to address his poetry to the masses. His success in films overshadowed and dwarfed his literary achievements — or so his critics felt. He composed several truly original ‘story poems’ in folk refrain and diction and also wrote a sprawling novel *Thillana Mohanamba* with dozens of very deftly etched characters. He quite successfully recreated the mood and manner of the Devadasis of the early 20th century. He was an amazing actor — he never aspired to the lead roles — but whatever subsidiary role he played in any of the films, he performed better than the supposed main players. He had a genuine love for anyone he came across and his house was a permanent residence for dozens of near and far relations and acquaintances. It seemed against Subbu’s nature to be even conscious that he was feeding and supporting so many of them. Such a charitable and improvident man, and yet he had enemies! Was it because he seemed so close and intimate with The Boss? Or was it his general demeanour that resembled a sycophant’s? Or his readiness to say nice things about
everything? In any case, there was this man in the make-up department who would wish the direst things for Subbu.

You saw Subbu always with The Boss but in the attendance rolls, he was grouped under a department called the Story Department comprising a lawyer and an assembly of writers and poets. The lawyer was also officially known as the legal adviser, but everybody referred to him as the opposite. An extremely talented actress, who was also extremely temperamental, once blew over on the sets. While everyone stood stunned, the lawyer quietly switched on the recording equipment. When the actress paused for breath, the lawyer said to her, “One minute, please,” and played back the recording. There was nothing incriminating or unmentionably foul about the actress’s tirade against the producer. But when she heard her voice again through the sound equipment, she was struck dumb. A girl from the countryside, she hadn’t gone through all the stages of worldly experience that generally precede a position of importance and sophistication that she had found herself catapulted into. She never quite recovered from the terror she felt that day. That was the end of a brief and brilliant acting career — the legal adviser, who was also a member of the Story Department, had unwittingly brought about that sad end. While every other member of the Department wore a kind of uniform — khadi dhoti with a slightly oversized and clumsily tailored white khadi shirt — the legal adviser wore pants and a tie and sometimes a coat that looked like a coat of mail. Often he looked alone and helpless — a man of cold logic in a crowd of dreamers — a neutral man in an assembly of Gandhiites and khadiites. Like so many of those who were close to The Boss, he was allowed to produce a film and

Think as you read

1. Why was the office boy frustrated? Who did he show his anger on?
2. Who was Subbu's principal?
3. Subbu is described as a many-sided genius. List four of his special abilities.
4. Why was the legal adviser referred to as the opposite by others?
5. What made the lawyer stand out from the others at Gemini Studios?
though a lot of raw stock and pancake were used on it, not much came of the film. Then one day The Boss closed down the Story Department and this was perhaps the only instance in all human history where a lawyer lost his job because the poets were asked to go home.

Gemini Studios was the favourite haunt of poets like S.D.S.Yogiar\(^3\), Sangu Subramanyam, Krishna Sastry and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya\(^4\). It had an excellent mess which supplied good coffee at all times of the day and for most part of the night. Those were the days when Congress rule meant Prohibition and meeting over a cup of coffee was rather satisfying entertainment. Barring the office boys and a couple of clerks, everybody else at the Studios radiated leisure, a pre-requisite for poetry. Most of them wore khadi and worshipped Gandhiji but beyond that they had not the faintest appreciation for political thought of any kind. Naturally, they were all averse to the term ‘Communism’. A Communist was a godless man — he had no filial or conjugal love; he had no compunction about killing his own parents or his children; he was always out to cause and spread unrest and violence among innocent and ignorant people. Such notions which prevailed everywhere else in South India at that time also, naturally, floated about vaguely among the khadi-clad poets of Gemini Studios. Evidence of it was soon forthcoming.

When Frank Buchman’s Moral Re-Armament army, some two hundred strong, visited Madras sometime in 1952, they could not have found a warmer host in India than the Gemini Studios. Someone called the group an international circus. They weren’t very good on the trapeze and their acquaintance with animals was only at the dinner table, but they presented two plays in a most professional manner. Their ‘Jotham Valley’ and ‘The Forgotten Factor’ ran several shows in Madras and along with the other citizens of the city, the Gemini family of six hundred saw the plays over and over again. The message of the plays were usually plain and simple homilies, but the sets and costumes were first-rate. Madras and the Tamil drama community were terribly impressed and for some

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3. A freedom fighter and a national poet.
4. A poet and a playwright.
years almost all Tamil plays had a scene of sunrise and sunset in the manner of ‘Jotham Valley’ with a bare stage, a white background curtain and a tune played on the flute. It was some years later that I learnt that the MRA was a kind of counter-movement to international Communism and the big bosses of Madras like Mr. Vasan simply played into their hands. I am not sure however, that this was indeed the case, for the unchangeable aspects of these big bosses and their enterprises remained the same, MRA or no MRA, international Communism or no international Communism. The staff of Gemini Studios had a nice time hosting two hundred people of all hues and sizes of at least twenty nationalities. It was such a change from the usual collection of crowd players waiting to be slapped with thick layers of make-up by the office-boy in the make-up department.

A few months later, the telephone lines of the big bosses of Madras buzzed and once again we at Gemini Studios cleared a whole shooting stage to welcome another visitor. All they said was that he was a poet from England. The only poets from England the simple Gemini staff knew or heard of were Wordsworth and Tennyson; the more literate ones knew of Keats, Shelley and Byron; and one or two might have faintly come to know of someone by the name Eliot. Who was the poet visiting the Gemini Studios now?

“He is not a poet. He is an editor. That’s why The Boss is giving him a big reception.” Vasan was also the editor of the popular Tamil weekly Ananda Vikatan.

He wasn’t the editor of any of the known names of British publications in Madras, that is, those known at the Gemini Studios. Since the top men of The Hindu were taking the initiative, the surmise was that the poet was the editor of a daily — but not from The Manchester Guardian or the London Times. That was all that even the most well-informed among us knew.

At last, around four in the afternoon, the poet (or the editor) arrived. He was a tall man, very English, very serious and of course very unknown to all of us. Battling with half a dozen pedestal fans on the shooting stage, The Boss read out
1. Did the people at Gemini Studios have any particular political affiliations?
2. Why was the Moral Rearmament Army welcomed at the Studios?
3. Name one example to show that Gemini studios was influenced by the plays staged by MRA.
4. Who was The Boss of Gemini Studios?
5. What caused the lack of communication between the Englishman and the people at Gemini Studios?
6. Why is the Englishman’s visit referred to as unexplained mystery?

Think as you read

The people at Gemini Studios did not have any particular political affiliations. The Moral Rearmament Army was welcomed at the Studios because of its focus on moral and ethical values. An example to show that Gemini Studios was influenced by the plays staged by MRA is when a long speech was given, which was all in the most general terms but here and there it was peppered with words like ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’. Then the poet spoke. He couldn’t have addressed a more dazed and silent audience — no one knew what he was talking about and his accent defeated any attempt to understand what he was saying. The whole thing lasted about an hour; then the poet left and we all dispersed in utter bafflement — what are we doing? What is an English poet doing in a film studio which makes Tamil films for the simplest sort of people? People whose lives least afforded them the possibility of cultivating a taste for English poetry? The poet looked pretty baffled too, for he too must have felt the sheer incongruity of his talk about the thrills and travails of an English poet. His visit remained an unexplained mystery.

The great prose-writers of the world may not admit it, but my conviction grows stronger day after day that prose-writing is not and cannot be the true pursuit of a genius. It is for the patient, persistent, persevering drudge with a heart so shrunken that nothing can break it; rejection slips don’t mean a thing to him; he at once sets about making a fresh copy of the long prose piece and sends it on to another editor enclosing postage for the return of the manuscript. It was for such people that The Hindu had published a tiny announcement in an insignificant corner of an unimportant page — a short story contest organised by a British periodical by the name The Encounter. Of course, The Encounter wasn’t a known commodity among the Gemini literati. I wanted to get an idea of the periodical before I spent a considerable...
sum in postage sending a manuscript to England. In those
days, the British Council Library had an entrance with no
long winded signboards and notices to make you feel you
were sneaking into a forbidden area. And there were copies
of The Encounter lying about in various degrees of freshness,
almost untouched by readers. When I read the editor’s name,
I heard a bell ringing in my shrunken heart. It was the poet
who had visited the Gemini Studios — I felt like I had found a
long lost brother and I sang as I sealed the envelope and wrote
out his address. I felt that he too would be singing the same
song at the same time — long lost brothers of Indian films
discover each other by singing the same song in the first reel
and in the final reel of the film. Stephen Spender. Stephen — that was his name.

And years later, when I was out of Gemini Studios and I
had much time but not much money, anything at a reduced
price attracted my attention. On the footpath in front of the
Madras Mount Road Post Office, there was a pile of brand
new books for fifty paise each. Actually they were copies
of the same book, an elegant paperback of American origin.
‘Special low-priced student edition, in connection with the
50th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution’, I paid fifty
paise and picked up a copy of the book, The God That Failed.
Six eminent men of letters in six separate essays described ‘their
journeys into Communism and their disillusioned return’; Andre
Gide, Richard Wright, Ignazio Silone, Arthur Koestler, Louis
Fischer and Stephen Spender. Stephen Spender! Suddenly
the book assumed tremendous
5. An English poet essayist who concentrated on themes of social injustice and class struggle.
6. A French writer, humanist, moralist, received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1947.
7. An American writer, known for his novel Native Son and his autobiography Black Boy.
8. An Italian writer, who was the founder member of the Italian communist party in 1921,
and is known for the book The God That Failed, authored by him.
10. A well known American journalist and a writer of Mahatma Gandhi’s biography entitled
The Life of Mahatma Gandhi. The Oscar winning film Gandhi is based on this biographical
account.

Think as you read
1. Who was the English visitor to the studios?
2. How did the author discover who the English visitor to the
studios was?
3. What does The God that Failed refer to?
significance. Stephen Spender, the poet who had visited Gemini Studios! In a moment I felt a dark chamber of my mind lit up by a hazy illumination. The reaction to Stephen Spender at Gemini Studios was no longer a mystery. The Boss of the Gemini Studios may not have much to do with Spender’s poetry. But not with his god that failed.

Understanding the text

1. The author has used gentle humour to point out human foibles. Pick out instances of this to show how this serves to make the piece interesting.

2. Why was Kothamangalam Subbu considered No. 2 in Gemini Studios?

3. How does the author describe the incongruity of an English poet addressing the audience at Gemini Studios?

4. What do you understand about the author’s literary inclinations from the account?

Talking about the text

*Discuss in small groups taking off from points in the text.*

1. Film-production today has come a long way from the early days of the Gemini Studios.

2. Poetry and films.

3. Humour and criticism.

Noticing transitions

- This piece is an example of a chatty, rambling style. One thought leads to another which is then dwelt upon at length.

- Read the text again and mark the transitions from one idea to another. The first one is indicated below.

  Make-up department               Office-boy               Subbu

Writing

You must have met some interesting characters in your neighbourhood or among your relatives. Write a humourous piece about their idiosyncrasies. Try to adopt the author’s rambling style, if you can.
**Things to do**

Collect about twenty cartoons from newspapers and magazines in any language to discuss how important people or events have been satirised. Comment on the interplay of the words and the pictures used.

**About the Unit**

**Theme**

An account of the events and personalities in a film company in the early days of Indian cinema.

**Sub-theme**

Poets and writers in a film company environment.

**Comprehension**

- Understanding humour and satire.
- Following a rambling, chatty style and making inferences.

**Talking about the Text**

**Discuss**

- Today’s film technology compared with that of the early days of Indian cinema (*comparing and contrasting*).
- Poetry and films; criticism and humour.

**Noticing Transitions**

Focus on devices for achieving thematic coherence.

**Writing**

Practice writing in the humorous style.

**Things to do**

Extension activity on cartoons as a vehicle of satirical comment on human foibles.
The Interview

From the Introduction to The Penguin Book of Interviews edited by Christopher Silvester.

About the Author

Christopher Silvester (1959) was a student of history at Peterhouse, Cambridge. He was a reporter for Private Eye for ten years and has written features for Vanity Fair. Following is an excerpt taken from his introduction to the Penguin Book of Interviews, An Anthology from 1859 to the Present Day.

Part I

Since its invention a little over 130 years ago, the interview has become a commonplace of journalism. Today, almost everybody who is literate will have read an interview at some point in their lives, while from the other point of view, several thousand celebrities have been interviewed over the years, some of them repeatedly. So it is hardly surprising that opinions of the interview — of its functions, methods and merits — vary considerably. Some might make quite extravagant claims for it as being, in its highest form, a source of truth, and, in its practice, an art. Others, usually celebrities who see themselves as its victims, might despise the interview as an unwarranted intrusion into their lives, or feel that it somehow diminishes them, just as in some primitive cultures it is believed that if one takes a photographic portrait of somebody then one is stealing that person’s soul. V. S. Naipaul1 ‘feels that some people are wounded by interviews and lose a part of themselves,’ Lewis Carroll, the creator of Alice in Wonderland, was said to have had ‘a just horror of the interviewer’ and he never consented to be interviewed — It was

1. Known as a cosmopolitan writer. In his travel books and in his documentary works he presents his impressions of the country of his ancestors that is India. He received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2001.
his horror of being lionized which made him thus repel would be acquaintances, interviewers, and the persistent petitioners for his autograph and he would afterwards relate the stories of his success in silencing all such people with much satisfaction and amusement. Rudyard Kipling expressed an even more condemnatory attitude towards the interviewer. His wife, Caroline, writes in her diary for 14 October 1892 that their day was ‘wrecked by two reporters from Boston’. She reports her husband as saying to the reporters, “Why do I refuse to be interviewed? Because it is immoral! It is a crime, just as much of a crime as an offence against my person, as an assault, and just as much merits punishment. It is cowardly and vile. No respectable man would ask it, much less give it.” Yet Kipling had himself perpetrated such an ‘assault’ on Mark Twain only a few years before. H. G. Wells in an interview in 1894 referred to ‘the interviewing ordeal’, but was a fairly frequent interviewee and forty years later found himself interviewing Joseph Stalin. Saul Bellow, who has consented to be interviewed on several occasions, nevertheless once described interviews as being like thumbprints on his windpipe. Yet despite the drawbacks of the interview, it is a supremely serviceable medium of communication. “These days, more than at any other time, our most vivid impressions of our contemporaries are through

Think as you read

1. What are some of the positive views on interviews?
2. Why do most celebrity writers despise being interviewed?
3. What is the belief in some primitive cultures about being photographed?
4. What do you understand by the expression “thumbprints on his windpipe”?
5. Who, in today’s world, is our chief source of information about personalities?

2. A prolific writer who was known as the poet of the common soldier. Kipling’s Jungle Book which is a story of Kimball O’Hara and his adventures in the Himalayas is considered as a children’s classic all over the world.

3. An English novelist, journalist, sociologist and historian he is known for his works of science fiction. Wells best known books are The Time Machine, The Invisible Man and The War of the Worlds.

4. A great Russian revolutionary and an active political organiser.

5. A playwright as well as a novelist. Bellow’s works were influenced widely by World War II. Among his most famous characters are Augie March and Moses. He published short stories translated from Yiddish. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1976.
“Flamingo interviews,” Denis Brian has written. “Almost everything of moment reaches us through one man asking questions of another. Because of this, the interviewer holds a position of unprecedented power and influence.”

### Part II

“*I am a professor who writes novels on Sundays*” – Umberto Eco

The following is an extract from an interview of Umberto Eco. The interviewer is Mukund Padmanabhan from *The Hindu*. Umberto Eco, a professor at the University of Bologna in Italy had already acquired a formidable reputation as a scholar for his ideas on semiotics (the study of signs), literary interpretation, and medieval aesthetics before he turned to writing fiction. Literary fiction, academic texts, essays, children’s books, newspaper articles—his written output is staggeringly large and wide-ranging. In 1980, he acquired the equivalent of intellectual superstardom with the publication of *The Name of the Rose*, which sold more than 10 million copies.

Mukund: The English novelist and academic David Lodge once remarked, “I can’t understand how one man can do all the things he [Eco] does.”

Umberto Eco: Maybe I give the impression of doing many things. But in the end, I am convinced I am always doing the same thing.

Mukund: Which is?

Umberto Eco: Aah, now that is more difficult to explain. I have some philosophical interests and I pursue them through my academic work and my novels. Even my books for children are about non-violence and peace... you see, the same bunch of ethical, philosophical interests.

And then I have a secret. Did you know what will happen if you eliminate the empty spaces from the universe, eliminate the empty spaces in all the atoms? The universe will become as big as my fist.

Similarly, we have a lot of empty spaces in our lives.
I call them interstices. Say you are coming over to my place. You are in an elevator and while you are coming up, I am waiting for you. This is an interstice, an empty space. I work in empty spaces. While waiting for your elevator to come up from the first to the third floor, I have already written an article! (Laughs).

Mukund: Not everyone can do that of course. Your non-fictional writing, your scholarly work has a certain playful and personal quality about it. It is a marked departure from a regular academic style — which is invariably depersonalised and often dry and boring. Have you consciously adopted an informal approach or is it something that just came naturally to you?

Umberto Eco: When I presented my first Doctoral dissertation in Italy, one of the Professors said, “Scholars learn a lot of a certain subject, then they make a lot of false hypotheses, then they correct them and at the end, they put the conclusions. You, on the contrary, told the story of your research. Even including your trials and errors.” At the same time, he recognised I was right and went on to publish my dissertation as a book, which meant he appreciated it.

At that point, at the age of 22, I understood scholarly books should be written the way I had done — by telling the story of the research. This is why my essays always have a narrative aspect. And this is why probably I started writing narratives [novels] so late — at the age of 50, more or less.

I remember that my dear friend Roland Barthes was always frustrated that he was an essayist and not a novelist. He wanted to do creative writing one day or another but he died before he could do so. I never felt this kind of frustration. I started writing novels by accident. I had nothing to do one day and so I started.
Novels probably satisfied my taste for narration.

Mukund: Talking about novels, from being a famous academic you went on to becoming spectacularly famous after the publication of *The Name of the Rose*. You’ve written five novels against many more scholarly works of non-fiction, at least more than 20 of them...

Umberto Eco: Over 40.

Mukund: Over 40! Among them a seminal piece of work on semiotics. But ask most people about Umberto Eco and they will say, “Oh, he’s the novelist.” Does that bother you?

Umberto Eco: Yes. Because I consider myself a university professor who writes novels on Sundays. It’s not a joke. I participate in academic conferences and not meetings of Pen Clubs and writers. I identify myself with the academic community.

But okay, if they [most people] have read only the novels... *(laughs and shrugs)*. I know that by writing novels, I reach a larger audience. I cannot expect to have one million readers with stuff on semiotics.

Mukund: Which brings me to my next question. *The Name of the Rose* is a very serious novel. It’s a detective yarn at one level but it also delves into metaphysics, theology, and medieval history. Yet it enjoyed a huge mass audience. Were you puzzled at all by this?

Umberto Eco: No. Journalists are puzzled. And sometimes publishers. And this is because journalists and publishers believe that people like trash and don’t like difficult reading experiences. Consider there are six billion people on this planet. *The Name of the Rose* sold between 10 and 15 million copies. So in a way I reached only a small percentage of readers. But
it is exactly these kinds of readers who don’t want easy experiences. Or at least don’t always want this. I myself, at 9 pm after dinner, watch television and want to see either ‘Miami Vice’ or ‘Emergency Room’. I enjoy it and I need it. But not all day.

Mukund: Could the huge success of the novel have anything to do with the fact that it dealt with a period of medieval history that...

Umberto Eco: That’s possible. But let me tell you another story, because I often tell stories like a Chinese wise man. My American publisher said while she loved my book, she didn’t expect to sell more than 3,000 copies in a country where nobody has seen a cathedral or studies Latin. So I was given an advance for 3,000 copies, but in the end it sold two or three million in the U.S.

A lot of books have been written about the medieval past far before mine. I think the success of the book is a mystery. Nobody can predict it. I think if I had written *The Name of the Rose* ten years earlier or ten years later, it wouldn’t have been the same. Why it worked at that time is a mystery.

**Understanding the text**

1. Do you think Umberto Eco likes being interviewed? Give reasons for your opinion.

2. How does Eco find the time to write so much?

3. What was distinctive about Eco’s academic writing style?

4. Did Umberto Eco consider himself a novelist first or an academic scholar?

5. What is the reason for the huge success of the novel, *The Name of the Rose*?
**Talking** about the text

*Discuss in pairs or small groups.*

1. Talk about any interview that you have watched on television or read in a newspaper. How did it add to your understanding of the celebrity, the interviewer and the field of the celebrity?
2. The medium you like best for an interview, print, radio, or television.
3. Every famous person has a right to his or her privacy. Interviewers sometimes embarrass celebrities with very personal questions.

**Noticing** discourse linkers and signallers

**Linkers**

Notice how the utterances of the interviewer and the interviewee are linked to one another. The linkers have been italicised for you.

Linking is done either through the use of reference pronouns, like ‘that’, ‘this’, ‘which’ etc. It can also be done through a repetition of words.

I am convinced I am always doing the same thing.

Which is?

Aah, now that is more difficult to explain.

…..

While waiting for your elevator to come up from the first to the third floor, I have already written an article! *(Laughs).*

Not everyone can do that of course.

………………………………………

Novels probably satisfied my taste for narration.

**Talking about novels,**

…………………………………………

at least more than 20 of them...

Over 40.
Over 40.

I cannot expect to have one million readers with stuff on semiotics.

Which brings me to my next question.

Were you puzzled at all by this?

No. Journalists are puzzled.

Could the huge success of the novel have anything to do with the fact that it dealt with a period of medieval history that...

That’s possible

The use of linkers is important in all continuous stretches of text. It is very important in conversation, especially a structured conversation like an interview.

Signallers

When there are shifts in the topic the speaker usually indicates them through phrases that prepare the listener for the shift.

Notice these two examples taken from the interview:

“Which brings me to another question ....”

“But let me tell you another story...”

Without these preparatory signallers the flow of ideas in a conversation will not be smooth and continuous.

Writing

If the interviewer Mukund Padmanabhan had not got the space in the newspaper to reproduce the interview verbatim, he may have been asked to produce a short report of the interview with the salient points.

Write this report for him.

[The teacher should be able to help the pupils in what to include and what can be omitted. We could also provide a short report of an interview as a sample.]
**Things to do**

Interview a person whom you admire either in school or your neighbourhood and record it in writing.

**About the Unit**

**Theme**

The interview as a communication genre.

**Sub-theme**

An excerpt from an interview with an author.

**Comprehension**

- Understanding personal opinion.
- Understanding conversation and the interview pattern.

**Talking about the text**

- Expressing personal opinion on the interview genre.
- Comparing different media of communication.

**Noticing discourse linkers and signalers**

Focus on cohesion and coherence features of discourse.

**Writing**

Transfer of information from one genre to another, e.g., *interview* to *report*.

**Things to do**

- Extension activity giving practice in interviewing people and personalities.
- Questioning and information gathering techniques.
About the Author

A. R. Barton is a modern writer, who lives in Zurich and writes in English. In the story Going Places, Barton explores the theme of adolescent fantasising and hero worship.

Notice these expressions in the text. Infer their meaning from the context.

- incongruity
- prodigy
- chuffed
- solitary elm
- arcade
- amber glow
- wharf
- pangs of doubt

“When I leave,” Sophie said, coming home from school, “I’m going to have a boutique.”

Jansie, linking arms with her along the street; looked doubtful.

“Takes money, Soaf, something like that.”

“I’ll find it,” Sophie said, staring far down the street.

“Take you a long time to save that much.”

“Well I’ll be a manager then — yes, of course — to begin with. Till I’ve got enough. But anyway, I know just how it’s all going to look.”

“They wouldn’t make you manager straight off, Soaf.”

“I’ll be like Mary Quant,” Sophie said. “I’ll be a natural. They’ll see it from the start. I’ll have the most amazing shop this city’s ever seen.”

Jansie, knowing they were both earmarked for the biscuit factory, became melancholy. She wished Sophie wouldn’t say these things.

When they reached Sophie’s street Jansie said, “It’s only a few months away now, Soaf, you really should be sensible.”
They don’t pay well for shop work, you know that, your dad would never allow it.”

“Or an actress. Now there’s real money in that. Yes, and I could maybe have the boutique on the side. Actresses don’t work full time, do they? Anyway, that or a fashion designer, you know — something a bit sophisticated”.

And she turned in through the open street door leaving Jansie standing in the rain.

“If ever I come into money I’ll buy a boutique.”

“Huh - if you ever come into money... if you ever come into money you’ll buy us a blessed decent house to live in, thank you very much.”

Sophie’s father was scooping shepherd’s pie into his mouth as hard as he could go, his plump face still grimy and sweat — marked from the day.

“She thinks money grows on trees, don’t she, Dad?’ said little Derek, hanging on the back of his father’s chair.

Their mother sighed.

Sophie watched her back stooped over the sink and wondered at the incongruity of the delicate bow which fastened her apron strings. The delicate-seeming bow and the crooked back. The evening had already blacked in the windows and the small room was steamy from the stove and cluttered with the heavy-breathing man in his vest at the table and the dirty washing piled up in the corner. Sophie felt a tightening in her throat. She went to look for her brother Geoff.

He was kneeling on the floor in the next room tinkering with a part of his motorcycle over some newspaper spread on the carpet. He was three years out of school, an apprentice mechanic, travelling to his work each day to the far side of the city. He was almost grown up now, and she suspected areas of his life about which she knew nothing, about which he never spoke. He said little at all, ever, voluntarily. Words had to be prized out of him like stones out of the ground. And she was jealous of his silence. When he wasn’t speaking it was as though he was away somewhere, out there in the world in those places she had never been. Whether they were
only the outlying districts of the city, or places beyond in the surrounding country — who knew? — they attained a special fascination simply because they were unknown to her and remained out of her reach.

Perhaps there were also people, exotic, interesting people of whom he never spoke — it was possible, though he was quiet and didn’t make new friends easily. She longed to know them. She wished she could be admitted more deeply into her brother’s affections and that someday he might take her with him. Though their father forbade it and Geoff had never expressed an opinion, she knew he thought her too young. And she was impatient. She was conscious of a vast world out there waiting for her and she knew instinctively that she would feel as at home there as in the city which had always been her home. It expectantly awaited her arrival.

She saw herself riding there behind Geoff. He wore new, shining black leathers and she a yellow dress with a kind of cape that flew out behind. There was the sound of applause as the world rose to greet them.

He sat frowning at the oily component he cradled in his hands, as though it were a small dumb animal and he was willing it to speak.

“I met Danny Casey,” Sophie said.
He looked around abruptly. “Where?”
“In the arcade — funnily enough.”
“It’s never true.”
“I did too.”
“You told Dad?”
She shook her head, chastened at his unawareness that he was always the first to share her secrets.
“I don’t believe it.”
“There I was looking at the clothes in Royce’s window when someone came and stood beside me, and I looked around and who should it be but Danny Casey.”

Think as you read
1. Where was it most likely that the two girls would find work after school?
2. What were the options that Sophie was dreaming of? Why does Jansie discourage her from having such dreams?
“All right, what does he look like?”
“Oh come on, you know what he looks like.”
“Close to, I mean.”
“Well — he has green eyes. Gentle eyes. And he’s not so tall as you’d think...” She wondered if she should say about his teeth, but decided against it.

Their father had washed when he came in and his face and arms were shiny and pink and he smelled of soap. He switched on the television, tossed one of little Derek’s shoes from his chair onto the sofa, and sat down with a grunt.

“Sophie met Danny Casey,” Geoff said.
Sophie wriggled where she was sitting at the table.
Her father turned his head on his thick neck to look at her. His expression was one of disdain.

“It’s true,” Geoff said.
“I once knew a man who had known Tom Finney,” his father said reverently to the television. “But that was a long time ago.”
“You told us,” Geoff said.
“Casey might be that good some day.”
“Better than that even. He’s the best.”
“If he keeps his head on his shoulders. If they look after him properly. A lot of distractions for a youngster in the game these days.”
“He’ll be all right. He’s with the best team in the country.”
“He’s very young yet.”
“He’s older than I am.”
“Too young really for the first team.”
“You can’t argue with that sort of ability.”
“He’s going to buy a shop,” Sophie said from the table.
Her father grimaced. “Where’d you hear that?”
“He told me so.”
He muttered something inaudible and dragged himself round in his chair. “This another of your wild stories?”
“She met him in the arcade,” Geoff said, and told him how it had been.
“One of these days you’re going to talk yourself into a load of trouble,” her father said aggressively.

“Geoff knows it’s true, don’t you Geoff?”

“He don’t believe you - though he’d like to.”

* * *

The table lamp cast an amber glow across her brother’s bedroom wall, and across the large poster of United’s first team squad and the row of coloured photographs beneath, three of them of the young Irish prodigy, Casey.

“Promise you’ll tell no-one?” Sophie said.

“Nothing to tell is there?”

“Promise, Geoff — Dad’d murder me.”

“Only if he thought it was true.”

“Please, Geoff.”

“Christ, Sophie, you’re still at school. Casey must have strings of girls.”

“No he doesn’t.”

“How could you know that?” he jeered.

“He told me, that’s how.”

“As if anyone would tell a girl something like that.”

“Yes he did. He isn’t like that. He’s... quiet.”

“Not as quiet as all that — apparently.”

“It was nothing like that, Geoff — it was me spoke first. When I saw who it was, I said, “Excuse me, but aren’t you Danny Casey?” And he looked sort of surprised. And he said, “Yes, that’s right.” And I knew it must be him because he had the accent, you know, like when they interviewed him on the television. So I asked him for an autograph for little Derek, but neither of us had any paper or a pen. So then we just talked a bit. About the clothes in Royce’s window. He seemed lonely. After all, it’s a long way from the west of Ireland. And then, just as he was going, he said, if I would care to meet him next week he would give...”

**Think as you read**

1. Why did Sophie wriggle when Geoff told her father that she had met Danny Casey?
2. Does Geoff believe what Sophie says about her meeting with Danny Casey?
3. Does her father believe her story?
4. How does Sophie include her brother Geoff in her fantasy of her future?
5. Which country did Danny Casey play for?
me an autograph then. Of course, I said I would.”
   “As if he’d ever show up.”
   “You do believe me now, don’t you?”
He dragged his jacket, which was shiny and shapeless, from the back of the chair and pushed his arms into it. She wished he paid more attention to his appearance. Wished he cared more about clothes. He was tall with a strong dark face. Handsome, she thought.
   “It’s the unlikeliest thing I ever heard,” he said.

*                  *                  *

On Saturday they made their weekly pilgrimage to watch United. Sophie and her father and little Derek went down near the goal — Geoff, as always, went with his mates higher up. United won two-nil and Casey drove in the second goal, a blend of innocence and Irish genius, going round the two big defenders on the edge of the penalty area, with her father screaming for him to pass, and beating the hesitant goalkeeper from a dozen yards. Sophie glowed with pride. Afterwards Geoff was ecstatic.

   “I wish he was an Englishman,” someone said on the bus.
   “Ireland’ll win the World Cup,” little Derek told his mother when Sophie brought him home. Her father was gone to the pub to celebrate.

   “What’s this you’ve been telling?” Jansie said, next week.
   “About what?”
   “Your Geoff told our Frank you met Danny Casey.”
This wasn’t an inquisition, just Jansie being nosey. But Sophie was startled.
   “Oh, that.”
   Jansie frowned, sensing she was covering. “Yes — that.”
   “Well-yes, I did.”
   “You never did?” Jansie exclaimed.
Sophie glared at the ground. Damn that Geoff, this was a Geoff thing not a Jansie thing. It was meant to be something special just between them. Something secret. It wasn’t a Jansie kind of thing at all. Tell gawky Jansie something like that and
the whole neighbourhood would get to know it. Damn that Geoff, was nothing sacred?

“It’s a secret — meant to be.”

“I’ll keep a secret, Soaf, you know that.”

“I wasn’t going to tell anyone. There’ll be a right old row if my dad gets to hear about it.”

Jansie blinked. “A row? I’d have thought he’d be chuffed as anything.”

She realised then that Jansie didn’t know about the date bit — Geoff hadn’t told about that. She breathed more easily. So Geoff hadn’t let her down after all. He believed in her after all. After all some things might be sacred.

“It was just a little thing really. I asked him for an autograph, but we hadn’t any paper or a pen so it was no good.” How much had Geoff said?

“Jesus, I wish I’d have been there.”

“Of course, my dad didn’t want to believe it. You know what a misery he is. But the last thing I need is queues of people round our house asking him, “What’s all this about Danny Casey?” He’d murder me. And you know how my mum gets when there’s a row.”

Jansie said, hushed, “You can trust me, Soaf, you know that.”

*                  *                  *

After dark she walked by the canal, along a sheltered path lighted only by the glare of the lamps from the wharf across the water, and the unceasing drone of the city was muffled and distant. It was a place she had often played in when she was a child. There was a wooden bench beneath a solitary elm where lovers sometimes came. She sat down to wait. It was the perfect place, she had always thought so, for a meeting of this kind. For those who wished not to be observed. She knew he would approve.

For some while, waiting, she imagined his coming. She watched along the canal, seeing him come out of the shadows, imagining her own consequent excitement. Not until some time had elapsed did she begin balancing against this the idea of his not coming.
Here I sit, she said to herself, wishing Danny would come, wishing he would come and sensing the time passing. I feel the pangs of doubt stirring inside me. I watch for him but still there is no sign of him. I remember Geoff saying he would never come, and how none of them believed me when I told them. I wonder what will I do, what can I tell them now if he doesn’t come? But we know how it was, Danny and me — that’s the main thing. How can you help what people choose to believe? But all the same, it makes me despondent, this knowing I’ll never be able to show them they’re wrong to doubt me.

She waited, measuring in this way the changes taking place in her. Resignation was no sudden thing.

Now I have become sad, she thought. And it is a hard burden to carry, this sadness. Sitting here waiting and knowing he will not come I can see the future and how I will have to live with this burden. They of course will doubt me, as they always doubted me, but I will have to hold up my head remembering how it was. Already I envisage the slow walk home, and Geoff’s disappointed face when I tell him, “He didn’t come, that Danny.” And then he’ll fly out and slam the door. “But we know how it was,” I shall tell myself, “Danny and me.” It is a hard thing, this sadness.

She climbed the crumbling steps to the street. Outside the pub she passed her father’s bicycle propped against the wall, and was glad. He would not be there when she got home.

“Excuse me, but aren’t you Danny Casey?”

Coming through the arcade she pictured him again outside Royce’s.

He turns, reddening slightly. “Yes, that’s right.”

“I watch you every week, with my dad and my brothers. We think you’re great.”

“Oh, well now — that’s very nice.”

“I wonder — would you mind signing an autograph?”

His eyes are on the same level as your own. His nose is freckled and turns upwards slightly, and when he smiles he does so shyly, exposing teeth with gaps between. His eyes are green, and when he looks straight at you they seem to
shimmer. They seem gentle, almost afraid. Like a gazelle's. And you look away. You let his eyes run over you a little. And then you come back to find them, slightly breathless.

And he says, “I don’t seem to have a pen at all.”

You realise you haven’t either.

“My brothers will be very sorry,” you say.

And afterwards you wait there alone in the arcade for a long while, standing where he stood, remembering the soft melodious voice, the shimmer of green eyes. No taller than you. No bolder than you. The prodigy. The innocent genius. The great Danny Casey.

And she saw it all again, last Saturday — saw him ghost past the lumbering defenders, heard the fifty thousand catch their breath as he hovered momentarily over the ball, and then the explosion of sound as he struck it crisply into the goal, the sudden thunderous eruption of exultant approbation.

Understanding the text

1. Sophie and Jansie were class-mates and friends. What were the differences between them that show up in the story?

2. How would you describe the character and temperament of Sophie’s father?

3. Why did Sophie like her brother Geoff more than any other person? From her perspective, what did he symbolise?

4. What socio-economic background did Sophie belong to? What are the indicators of her family’s financial status?

Talking about the text

Discuss in pairs.

1. Sophie’s dreams and disappointments are all in her mind.
2. It is natural for teenagers to have unrealistic dreams. What would you say are the benefits and disadvantages of such fantasising?

**Working with words**

Notice the following expressions. The highlighted words are not used in a literal sense. Explain what they mean.

- **Words had to be prized out of him** like stones out of a ground.
- Sophie felt a **tightening in her throat**.
  - If he **keeps his head on his shoulders**.
- On Saturday they **made their weekly pilgrimage** to the United.
- She saw... him **ghost past** the lumbering defenders.

**Noticing form**

Notice the highlighted words in the following sentences.

1. “When I leave,’ Sophie said, **coming** home from school, “I’m going to have a boutique.”

2. Jansie, **linking** arms with her along the street, looked doubtful.

3. “I’ll find it,” Sophie said, **staring** far down the street.

4. Jansie, **knowing** they were both earmarked for the biscuit factory, became melancholy.

5. And she turned in through the open street door **leaving** Jansie **standing** in the rain.
   - When we add “ing” to a verb we get the present participle form. The present participle form is generally used along with forms of “be”, (is, was, are, were, am) to indicate the present continuous tense as in “Sophie **was coming** home from school.”
   - We can use the present participle by itself without the helping verb, when we wish to indicate that an action is happening at the same time as another.
   - In example 1, Sophie “said” something. “Said”, here, is the main action.
   - What Sophie was doing while she was “saying” is indicated by “**coming** home from school”. So we get the information of two actions happening at the same time. We convey the information in one sentence instead of two.
– Analyse the other examples in the same way.
– Pick out five other sentences from the story in which present participles are used in this sense.

**Thinking about language**

*Notice these words in the story.*

- “chuffed”, meaning *delighted or very pleased*
- “nosey”, meaning *inquisitive*
- “gawky”, meaning *awkward, ungainly.*

These are words that are used in an informal way in colloquial speech.

Make a list of ten other words of this kind.

**Writing**

– Think of a person who you would like to have as your role-model.
– Write down the points to be discussed or questions to be asked, if you were asked to interview that person on a television show.

**Things to do**

Look for other stories or movies where this theme of hero worship and fantasising about film or sports icons finds a place.

**About the Unit**

**Theme**

Adolescent hero-worship and fantasising.

**Sub-theme**

Relationships-family, friends.

**Comprehension**

Inferential comprehension.

**Talking about the text**

Discussion on a subject of immediate relevance to the life of school-leavers.
**WORKING WITH WORDS**
Metaphorical expressions.

**NOTICING FORM**
Focus on the use of present participles to indicate simultaneity of action.

**THINKING ABOUT LANGUAGE**
Colloquial expressions, teenage slang.

**THINGS TO DO**
Extension activity: Relating to other stories or films (any language).
My Mother at Sixty-six
Kamala Das

An Elementary School
Classroom in a Slum
Stephen Spender

Keeping Quiet
Pablo Neruda

A Thing of Beauty
John Keats

A Roadside Stand
Robert Frost

Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers
Adrienne Rich
My Mother at Sixty-six

About the poet

Kamala Das (1934-2009) was born in Malabar, Kerala. She is recognised as one of India’s foremost poets. Her works are known for their originality, versatility and the indigenous flavour of the soil. Kamala Das has published many novels and short stories in English and Malayalam under the name ‘Madhavikutty’. Some of her works in English include the novel Alphabet of Lust (1977), a collection of short stories Padmavati the Harlot and Other Stories (1992), in addition to five books of poetry. She is a sensitive writer who captures the complex subtleties of human relationships in lyrical idiom, My Mother at Sixty-six is an example.

Before you read

Ageing is a natural process; have you ever thought what our elderly parents expect from us?

Driving from my parent’s home to Cochin last Friday morning, I saw my mother, beside me, doze, open mouthed, her face ashen like that of a corpse and realised with pain that she was as old as she looked but soon put that thought away, and looked out at Young Trees sprinting, the merry children spilling out of their homes, but after the airport’s security check, standing a few yards
away, I looked again at her, wan, pale
as a late winter’s moon and felt that
old
familiar ache, my childhood’s fear,
but all I said was, see you soon,
Amma,
all I did was smile and smile and smile......

sprinting : short fast race, running
wan : colourless

Think it out
1. What is the kind of pain and ache that the poet feels?
2. Why are the young trees described as ‘sprinting’?
3. Why has the poet brought in the image of the merry children ‘spilling out of their homes’?
4. Why has the mother been compared to the ‘late winter’s moon’?
5. What do the parting words of the poet and her smile signify?

Notice that the whole poem is in a single sentence, punctuated by commas.
It indicates a single thread of thought interspersed with observations of the real world around and the way these are connected to the main idea.
An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum

About the poet

Stephen Spender (1909-1995) was an English poet and an essayist. He left University College, Oxford without taking a degree and went to Berlin in 1930. Spender took a keen interest in politics and declared himself to be a socialist and pacifist. Books by Spender include Poems of Dedication, The Edge of Being, The Creative Element, The Struggle of the Modern and an autobiography, World Within World. In, An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum, he has concentrated on themes of social injustice and class inequalities.

Before you read

Have you ever visited or seen an elementary school in a slum? What does it look like?

Far far from gusty waves these children’s faces. Like rootless weeds, the hair torn round their pallor: The tall girl with her weighed-down head. The paper-seeming boy, with rat’s eyes. The stunted, unlucky heir Of twisted bones, reciting a father’s gnarled disease, His lesson, from his desk. At back of the dim class One unnoted, sweet and young. His eyes live in a dream, Of squirrel’s game, in tree room, other than this.

On sour cream walls, donations. Shakespeare’s head, Cloudless at dawn, civilized dome riding all cities. Belled, flowery, Tyrolean valley. Open-handed map Awarding the world its world. And yet, for these Children, these windows, not this map, their world, Where all their future’s painted with a fog.
A narrow street sealed in with a lead sky
Far far from rivers, capes, and stars of words.

Surely, Shakespeare is wicked, the map a bad example,
With ships and sun and love tempting them to steal—
For lives that slyly turn in their cramped holes
From fog to endless night? On their slag heap, these children
Wear skins peeped through by bones and spectacles of steel
With mended glass, like bottle bits on stones.
All of their time and space are foggy slum.
So blot their maps with slums as big as doom.

Unless, governor, inspector, visitor,
This map becomes their window and these windows
That shut upon their lives like catacombs,
Break O break open till they break the town
And show the children to green fields, and make their world
Run azure on gold sands, and let their tongues
Run naked into books the white and green leaves open
History theirs whose language is the sun.

Think it out

1. Tick the item which best answers the following.
   (a) *The tall girl with her head weighed down* means
       The girl
       (i) is ill and exhausted

Tyrolese valley : pertaining to the Tyrol, an Austrian Alpine province
catacombs : a long underground gallery with excavations in its sides
for tombs. The name catacombs, before the seventeenth century was applied to the subterranean cemeteries, near Rome
(ii) has her head bent with shame  
(iii) has untidy hair  

(b) The *paper-seeming boy with rat’s eyes* means  
The boy is  
(i) sly and secretive  
(ii) thin, hungry and weak  
(iii) unpleasant looking  

c) The *stunted, unlucky heir of twisted bones* means  
The boy  
(i) has an inherited disability  
(ii) was short and bony  

(d) His eyes live in a dream, A squirrel’s game, in the tree room other than this means  
The boy is  
(i) full of hope in the future  
(ii) mentally ill  
(iii) distracted from the lesson  

e) The children’s faces are compared to ‘rootless weeds’  
This means they  
(i) are insecure  
(ii) are ill-fed  
(iii) are wasters  

2. What do you think is the colour of ‘sour cream’? Why do you think the poet has used this expression to describe the classroom walls?  

3. The walls of the classroom are decorated with the pictures of ‘Shakespeare’, ‘buildings with domes’, ‘world maps’ and beautiful valleys. How do these contrast with the world of these children?  

4. What does the poet want for the children of the slums? How can their lives be made to change?  

Notice how the poet picturises the condition of the slum children.  
Notice the contrasting images in the poem — for example,  
*A narrow street sealed in with a lead sky*  
*Far far from rivers, capes, and stars of words.*  

---  

Flamingo
Keeping Quiet

About the poet

Pablo Neruda (1904-1973) is the pen name of Neftali Ricardo Reyes Basoalto who was born in the town of Parral in Chile. Neruda’s poems are full of easily understood images which make them no less beautiful. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in the year 1971. In this poem Neruda talks about the necessity of quiet introspection and creating a feeling of mutual understanding among human beings.

Before you read

What does the title of the poem suggest to you? What do you think the poem is about?

Now we will count to twelve and we will all keep still.

For once on the face of the Earth let’s not speak in any language, let’s stop for one second, and not move our arms so much.

It would be an exotic moment without rush, without engines, we would all be together in a sudden strangeness.

Fishermen in the cold sea would not harm whales and the man gathering salt would look at his hurt hands.
Those who prepare green wars,
  wars with gas, wars with fire,
  victory with no survivors,
  would put on clean clothes
  and walk about with their
  brothers
  in the shade, doing nothing.

What I want should not be
  confused
  with total inactivity.
  Life is what it is about;
  I want no truck with death.
  If we were not so single-minded
  about keeping our lives moving,
  and for once could do nothing,
  perhaps a huge silence
  might interrupt this sadness
  of never understanding ourselves
  and of threatening ourselves with
  death.

Perhaps the Earth can teach us
  as when everything seems dead
  and later proves to be alive.

Now I'll count up to twelve
  and you keep quiet and I will go.

to have no truck with : to refuse to associate or deal with, to refuse to tolerate something

Think it out
1. What will counting up to twelve and keeping still help us achieve?
2. Do you think the poet advocates total inactivity and death?
3. What is the ‘sadness’ that the poet refers to in the poem?
4. What symbol from Nature does the poet invoke to say that there can be life under apparent stillness?
Try this out

Choose a quiet corner and keep still physically and mentally for about five minutes. Do you feel any change in your state of mind?

Notice the differing line lengths of the stanzas and the shift in thought from stanza to stanza.
A Thing of Beauty

About the poet

John Keats (1795-1821) was a British Romantic poet. Although trained to be a surgeon, Keats decided to devote himself wholly to poetry. Keats’ secret, his power to sway and delight the readers, lies primarily in his gift for perceiving the world and living his moods and aspirations in terms of language. The following is an excerpt from his poem ‘Endymion; A Poetic Romance’. The poem is based on a Greek legend, in which Endymion, a beautiful young shepherd and poet who lived on Mount Latmos, had a vision of Cynthia, the Moon Goddess. The enchanted youth resolved to seek her out and so wandered away through the forest and down under the sea.

Before you read

What pleasure does a beautiful thing give us? Are beautiful things worth treasuring?

A thing of beauty is a joy forever
Its loveliness increases, it will never Pass into nothingness; but will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing. Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing A flowery band to bind us to the earth, Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth Of noble natures, of the gloomy days, Of all the unhealthy and o’er-darkened ways Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all, Some shape of beauty moves away the pall From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon, Trees old, and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in; and clear rills
That for themselves a cooling covert make
‘Gainst the hot season; the mid forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms;
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read;
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven’s brink.

Think it out

1. List the things of beauty mentioned in the poem.
2. List the things that cause suffering and pain.
3. What does the line, ‘Therefore are we wreathing a flowery band to bind us to earth’ suggest to you?
4. What makes human beings love life in spite of troubles and sufferings?
5. Why is ‘grandeur’ associated with the ‘mighty dead’?
6. Do we experience things of beauty only for short moments or do they make a lasting impression on us?
7. What image does the poet use to describe the beautiful bounty of the earth?

Notice the consistency in rhyme scheme and line length. Also notice the balance in each sentence of the poem, as in,

Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o’er-darkened ways
Made for our searching: yes in spite of all,
A Roadside Stand

About the poet

**Robert Frost** (1874-1963) is a highly acclaimed American poet of the twentieth century. Robert Frost wrote about characters, people and landscapes. His poems are concerned with human tragedies and fears, his reaction to the complexities of life and his ultimate acceptance of his burdens. *Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening, Birches, Mending walls* are a few of his well-known poems. In the poem *A Roadside Stand*, Frost presents the lives of poor deprived people with pitiless clarity and with the deepest sympathy and humanity.

Before you read

*Have you ever stopped at a roadside stand? What have you observed there?*

The little old house was out with a little new shed
In front at the edge of the road where the traffic sped,
A roadside stand that too pathetically pled,
It would not be fair to say for a dole of bread,
But for some of the money, the cash, whose flow supports
The flower of cities from sinking and withering faint.
The polished traffic passed with a mind ahead,
Or if ever aside a moment, then out of sorts
At having the landscape marred with the artless paint
Of signs that with N turned wrong and S turned wrong
Offered for sale wild berries in wooden quarts,
Or crook-necked golden squash with silver warts,
Or beauty rest in a beautiful mountain scene,
You have the money, but if you want to be mean,
Why keep your money (this crossly) and go along.
The hurt to the scenery wouldn’t be my complaint
So much as the trusting sorrow of what is unsaid:
Here far from the city we make our roadside stand
And ask for some city money to feel in hand
To try if it will not make our being expand,
And give us the life of the moving-pictures’ promise
That the party in power is said to be keeping from us.

It is in the news that all these pitiful kin
Are to be bought out and mercifully gathered in
To live in villages, next to the theatre and the store,
Where they won’t have to think for themselves anymore,
While greedy good-doers, beneficent beasts of prey,
Swarm over their lives enforcing benefits
That are calculated to soothe them out of their wits,
And by teaching them how to sleep they sleep all day,
Destroy their sleeping at night the ancient way.

Sometimes I feel myself I can hardly bear
The thought of so much childish longing in vain,
The sadness that lurks near the open window there,
That waits all day in almost open prayer
For the squeal of brakes, the sound of a stopping car,
Of all the thousand selfish cars that pass,
Just one to inquire what a farmer’s prices are.
And one did stop, but only to plow up grass
In using the yard to back and turn around;
And another to ask the way to where it was bound;
And another to ask could they sell it a gallon of gas
They couldn’t (this crossly); they had none, didn’t it see?

No, in country money, the country scale of gain,
The requisite lift of spirit has never been found,
Or so the voice of the country seems to complain,
I can’t help owning the great relief it would be
To put these people at one stroke out of their pain.
And then next day as I come back into the sane,
I wonder how I should like you to come to me
And offer to put me gently out of my pain.

quarts : bottles or containers
squash : a kind of vegetable (gourd)
**Think it out**

1. The city folk who drove through the countryside hardly paid any heed to the roadside stand or to the people who ran it. If at all they did, it was to complain. Which lines bring this out? What was their complaint about?

2. What was the plea of the folk who had put up the roadside stand?

3. The government and other social service agencies appear to help the poor rural people, but actually do them no good. Pick out the words and phrases that the poet uses to show their double standards.

4. What is the ‘childish longing’ that the poet refers to? Why is it ‘vain’?

5. Which lines tell us about the insufferable pain that the poet feels at the thought of the plight of the rural poor?

**Talk about it**

*Discuss in small groups.*

The economic well-being of a country depends on a balanced development of the villages and the cities.

**Try this out**

You could stop at a *dhaba* or a roadside eatery on the outskirts of your town or city to see

1. how many travellers stop there to eat?
2. how many travellers stop for other reasons?
3. how the shopkeepers are treated?
4. the kind of business the shopkeepers do.
5. the kind of life they lead.

Notice the rhyme scheme. Is it consistent or is there an occasional variance? Does it indicate thought predominating over sound pattern?

Notice the stanza divisions. Do you find a shift to a new idea in successive stanzas?
About the poet

Adrienne Rich (1929) was born in Baltimore, Maryland, USA. She is widely known for her involvement in contemporary women's movement as a poet and theorist. She has published nineteen volumes of poetry, three collections of essays and other writings. A strong resistance to racism and militarism echoes through her work. The poem Aunt Jennifer's Tigers addresses the constraints of married life a woman experiences.

Before you read

What does the title of the poem suggest to you? Are you reminded of other poems on tigers?

Aunt Jennifer’s tigers prance across a screen,
Bright topaz denizens of a world of green.
They do not fear the men beneath the tree;
They pace in sleek chivalric certainty.

Aunt Jennifer’s fingers fluttering through her wool
Find even the ivory needle hard to pull.
The massive weight of Uncle’s wedding band
Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer’s hand.

When Aunt is dead, her terrified hands will lie
Still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by.
The tigers in the panel that she made
Will go on prancing, proud and unafraid.

denizen: a person, an animal or a plant that lives, grows
or is often found in a particular place.
sleek: elegant
Think it out

1. How do ‘denizens’ and ‘chivalric’ add to our understanding of the tiger’s attitudes?

2. Why do you think Aunt Jennifer’s hands are ‘fluttering through her wool’ in the second stanza? Why is she finding the needle so hard to pull?

3. What is suggested by the image ‘massive weight of Uncle’s wedding band’?

4. Of what or of whom is Aunt Jennifer terrified with in the third stanza?

5. What are the ‘ordeal’s Aunt Jennifer is surrounded by, why is it significant that the poet uses the word ‘ringed’? What are the meanings of the word ‘ringed’ in the poem?

6. Why do you think Aunt Jennifer created animals that are so different from her own character? What might the poet be suggesting, through this difference?

7. Interpret the symbols found in this poem.

8. Do you sympathise with Aunt Jennifer. What is the attitude of the speaker towards Aunt Jennifer?

Notice the colours suggested in the poem.
Notice the repetitive use of certain sounds in the poem.
Hello Children!
If you feel uneasy about someone touching you inappropriately, you should not keep quiet. You must
1. Not blame yourself
2. Tell someone whom you trust
3. You can also inform National Commission for Protection of Child Rights through the POCSO e-box.

When you get an unsafe touch, you may feel bad, confused and helpless
You need not feel “bad” because it’s not your fault

POCSO e-box available at NCPCR@gov.in

If you are below 18 years of age, and are troubled or confused or abused or in distress or know some other child who is...

Call 1098...because some numbers are good!
They change lives!!!

CHILDLINE 1098
NIGHT & DAY

CHILDLINE 1098 - a national 24 hours toll free emergency phone service for children in distress is an initiative of CHILDLINE India Foundation supported by Ministry of Women & Child Development

Ek Kadam Swachhhta ki or

Swachh Bharat
Flamingos are social birds which live together in harmony. There are different species of flamingos. These are found in tropical and subtropical areas of the North-west India, the Middle East, western Mediterranean and Africa. At times, the birds can also be found, in limited numbers, in northern Europe and Siberia. Flamingos are active both in the day and night. As they stand mostly in water, they find food by using their legs to stir up mud. Using their beaks, they then sift through the mud and eat seeds, algae, crustaceans and mollusc. They have webbed feet and can often be seen standing on one foot. Flamingos fly with their heads and necks stretched out in front and their legs held out behind. They are also good swimmers!
Step-by-step guide for users to access e-resources linked to QR Codes

The coded box placed on the top corner of every chapter is called Quick Response (QR) Code. It will help you access e-resources, such as audios, videos, multimedia, texts, etc., related to the themes given in the chapter. The first QR code is to access the complete e-textbook. The subsequent QR codes will help you access the relevant e-resources linked to each chapter. This will help you enhance your learning in a joyful manner.

Follow the steps given below and access the e-resources through your smartphone or tablet.

Install the QR Code Scanner app from Play Store
Open the app to view the QR code scanning window
Place the scanner above the QR code
Select and click on the link
Use available e-resource for learning

For accessing the e-resources on a computer or laptop follow the steps stated below.
1. Open the web browser Firefox (🌐), Chrome (🌐), etc.
2. Go to the ePathshala website (http://ePathshala.nic.in)
3. Click on the menu 'access e-resources'
4. Type the alphanumeric code given under the QR code (เหมาะ)
5. Search for the e-resources from the links that have appeared.
Vistas
Supplementary Reader in English for Class XII
(Core Course)
The National Curriculum Framework, 2005, recommends that children’s life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. This principle marks a departure from the legacy of bookish learning which continues to shape our system and causes a gap between the school, home and community. The syllabi and textbooks developed on the basis of NCF signify an attempt to implement this basic idea. They also attempt to discourage rote learning and the maintenance of sharp boundaries between different subject areas. We hope these measures will take us significantly further in the direction of a child-centred system of education outlined in the National Policy on Education (1986).

The success of this effort depends on the steps that school principals and teachers will take to encourage children to reflect on their own learning and to pursue imaginative activities and questions. We must recognise that, given space, time and freedom, children generate new knowledge by engaging with the information passed on to them by adults. Treating the prescribed textbook as the sole basis of examination is one of the key reasons why other resources and sites of learning are ignored. Inculcating creativity and initiative is possible if we perceive and treat children as participants in learning, not as receivers of a fixed body of knowledge.

These aims imply considerable change in school routines and mode of functioning. Flexibility in the daily time-table is as necessary as rigour in implementing the annual calendar so that the required number of teaching days are actually devoted to teaching. The methods used for teaching and evaluation will also determine how effective this textbook proves for making children’s life at school a happy experience, rather than a source of stress or boredom. Syllabus designers have
tried to address the problem of curricular burden by restructuring and reorienting knowledge at different stages with greater consideration for child psychology and the time available for teaching. The Supplementary Reader attempts to enhance this endeavour by giving higher priority and space to opportunities for contemplation and wondering, discussion in small groups, and activities requiring hands-on experience.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) appreciates the hard work done by the Textbook Development Committee responsible for this book. We wish to thank the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee in Languages, Professor Namwar Singh and the Chief Advisor for this book, Professor Amritavalli for guiding the work of this committee. Several teachers contributed to the development of this Supplementary Reader; we are grateful to their principals for making this possible. We are indebted to the institutions and organisations which have generously permitted us to draw upon their resources, material and personnel. We are especially grateful to the members of the National Monitoring Committee, appointed by the Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development under the Chairmanship of Professor Mrinal Miri and Professor G.P. Deshpande, for their valuable time and contribution. As an organisation committed to systemic reform and continuous improvement in the quality of its products, NCERT welcomes comments and suggestions which will enable us to undertake further revision and refinement.

Director
National Council of Educational Research and Training

New Delhi
20 November 2006
ABOUT THE BOOK

_Vistas_ is a supplementary reader in English (Core course) for Class XII, based on the guidelines of the _National Curriculum Framework_ 2005. The main objective of this book is to make extensive reading an enjoyable experience, lead students to appreciate some of the best examples of writing and understand the social milieu they live in.

An attempt has been made to attain these objectives by presenting varied themes and genres of writing. The themes range from scientific fantasy, political satire, and adventure, to ethical and moral issues and personal conflicts.

Jack Finney’s ‘The Third Level’ is a scientific fantasy, while ‘The Tiger King’ by Kalki is a political satire. ‘Antartica’ is a travel piece, with a suggestion that the young reader could take part in the expedition by logging on to www.studentsonice.com.

The three stories that follow are by Pearl S. Buck, John Updike and Colin Dexter. Buck’s story sets human fellow-feeling against national loyalty; John Updike’s story is about a child participating in the construction of a story by her father and raises issues regarding parental prejudices foisted on children. Dexter’s story is fun-reading about how a criminal escapes jail through creating circumstances by insisting on taking an examination in the prison.

The play by Susan Hill is on the themes of disabilities while excerpts from Bama’s ‘Karukku’ and an excerpt from ‘The Land of the Red Apple’, a story in Zitkala-Sa’s, book ‘The School Days of an Indian Girl’.

Each unit has questions. The question on the texts in the supplementary reader take the learner beyond factual comprehension to contemplating on the issues that the texts raise. Activities suggested take off from the texts.
Gandhiji’s Talisman

I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test:

Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?

Then you will find your doubts and your self melting away.
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It has not been possible to trace the copyright in all cases. The publishers apologise for any omissions and would be glad to hear from any such unacknowledged copyright holders.
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THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a [SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC] and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;
LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;
EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all
FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the [unity and integrity of the Nation];

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949 do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.

1. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec. 2, for “Sovereign Democratic Republic” (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)
2. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec. 2, for “Unity of the Nation” (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)
The Third Level

Jack Finney

Before you read

Have you ever had any curious experience which others find hard to believe?

THE presidents of the New York Central and the New York, New Haven and Hartford railroads will swear on a stack of timetables that there are only two. But I say there are three, because I’ve been on the third level of the Grand Central Station. Yes, I’ve taken the obvious step: I talked to a psychiatrist friend of mine, among others. I told him about the third level at Grand Central Station, and he said it was a waking-dream wish fulfillment. He said I was unhappy. That made my wife kind of mad, but he explained that he meant the modern world is full of insecurity, fear, war, worry and all the rest of it, and that I just want to escape. Well, who doesn’t? Everybody I know wants to escape, but they don’t wander down into any third level at Grand Central Station.

But that’s the reason, he said, and my friends all agreed. Everything points to it, they claimed. My stamp collecting, for example; that’s a ‘temporary refuge from reality.’ Well, maybe, but my grandfather didn’t need any refuge from reality; things were pretty nice and peaceful in his day, from all I hear, and
he started my collection. It's a nice collection too, blocks of four of practically every U.S. issue, first-day covers, and so on. President Roosevelt collected stamps too, you know.

Anyway, here's what happened at Grand Central. One night last summer I worked late at the office. I was in a hurry to get uptown to my apartment so I decided to take the subway from Grand Central because it's faster than the bus.

Now, I don't know why this should have happened to me. I'm just an ordinary guy named Charley, thirty-one years old, and I was wearing a tan gabardine suit and a straw hat with a fancy band; I passed a dozen men who looked just like me. And I wasn't trying to escape from anything; I just wanted to get home to Louisa, my wife.

I turned into Grand Central from Vanderbilt Avenue, and went down the steps to the first level, where you take trains like the Twentieth Century. Then I walked down another flight to the second level, where the suburban trains leave from, ducked into an arched doorway heading for the subway — and got lost. That's easy to do. I've been in and out of Grand Central hundreds of times, but I'm always bumping into new doorways and stairs and corridors. Once I got into a tunnel about a mile long and came out in the lobby of the Roosevelt Hotel. Another time I came up in an office building on Forty-sixth Street, three blocks away.

Sometimes I think Grand Central is growing like a tree, pushing out new corridors and staircases like roots. There's
probably a long tunnel that nobody knows about feeling its way under the city right now, on its way to Times Square, and maybe another to Central Park. And maybe — because for so many people through the years Grand Central has been an exit, a way of escape — maybe that’s how the tunnel I got into... But I never told my psychiatrist friend about that idea.

The corridor I was in began angling left and slanting downward and I thought that was wrong, but I kept on walking. All I could hear was the empty sound of my own footsteps and I didn’t pass a soul. Then I heard that sort of hollow roar ahead that means open space and people talking. The tunnel turned sharp left; I went down a short flight of stairs and came out on the third level at Grand Central Station. For just a moment I thought I was back on the second level, but I saw the room was smaller, there were fewer ticket windows and train gates, and the information booth in the centre was wood and old-looking. And the man in the booth wore a green eyeshade and long black sleeve protectors.

The lights were dim and sort of flickering. Then I saw why; they were open-flame gaslights.
There were brass spittoons on the floor, and across the station a glint of light caught my eye: a man was pulling a gold watch from his vest pocket. He snapped open the cover, glanced at his watch and frowned. He wore a derby hat, a black four-button suit with tiny lapels, and he had a big, black, handlebar mustache. Then I looked around and saw that everyone in the station was dressed like eighteen-ninety-something; I never saw so many beards, sideburns and fancy mustaches in my life. A woman walked in through the train gate; she wore a dress with leg-of-mutton sleeves and skirts to the top of her high-buttoned shoes. Back of her, out on the tracks, I caught a glimpse of a locomotive, a very small Currier & Ives locomotive with a funnel-shaped stack. And then I knew.

To make sure, I walked over to a newsboy and glanced at the stack of papers at his feet. It was *The World*; and *The World* hasn’t been published for years. The lead story said something about President Cleveland. I’ve found that front page since, in the Public Library files, and it was printed June 11, 1894.

I turned toward the ticket windows knowing that here — on the third level at Grand Central — I could buy tickets that would take Louisa and me anywhere in the United States we wanted to go. In the year 1894. And I wanted two tickets to Galesburg, Illinois.

Have you ever been there? It’s a wonderful town still, with big old frame houses, huge lawns, and tremendous trees whose branches meet overhead and roof the streets. And in 1894, summer evenings were twice as long, and people sat out on their lawns, the men smoking cigars and talking quietly, the women waving palm-leaf fans, with the fire-flies all around, in a peaceful world. To be back there with the First World War still twenty years off, and World War II over forty years in the future... I wanted two tickets for that.
The clerk figured the fare — he glanced at my fancy hatband, but he figured the fare — and I had enough for two coach tickets, one way. But when I counted out the money and looked up, the clerk was staring at me. He nodded at the bills. “That ain’t money, mister,” he said, “and if you’re trying to skin me, you won’t get very far,” and he glanced at the cash drawer beside him. Of course the money was old-style bills, half again as big as the money we use nowadays, and different-looking. I turned away and got out fast. There’s nothing nice about jail, even in 1894.

And that was that. I left the same way I came, I suppose. Next day, during lunch hour, I drew three hundred dollars out of the bank, nearly all we had, and bought old-style currency (that really worried my psychiatrist friend). You can buy old money at almost any coin dealer’s, but you have to pay a premium. My three hundred dollars bought less than two hundred in old-style bills, but I didn’t care; eggs were thirteen cents a dozen in 1894.

But I’ve never again found the corridor that leads to the third level at Grand Central Station, although I’ve tried often enough.

Louisa was pretty worried when I told her all this, and didn’t want me to look for the third level any more, and after a while I stopped; I went back to my stamps. But now we’re both looking, every weekend, because now we have proof that the third level is still there. My friend Sam Weiner disappeared! Nobody knew where, but I sort of suspected because Sam’s a city boy, and I used to tell him about Galesburg — I went to school there — and he always said he liked the sound of the place. And that’s where he is, all right. In 1894.

Because one night, fussing with my stamp collection, I found — Well, do you know what a first-day cover is? When a new stamp is issued, stamp collectors buy some and use
them to mail envelopes to themselves on the very first day of sale; and the postmark proves the date. The envelope is called a first-day cover. They’re never opened; you just put blank paper in the envelope.

That night, among my oldest first-day covers, I found one that shouldn’t have been there. But there it was. It was there because someone had mailed it to my grandfather at his home in Galesburg; that’s what the address on the envelope said. And it had been there since July 18, 1894 — the postmark showed that — yet I didn’t remember it at all. The stamp was a six-cent, dull brown, with a picture of President Garfield. Naturally, when the envelope came to Granddad in the mail, it went right into his collection and stayed there — till I took it out and opened it.

The paper inside wasn’t blank. It read:

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941 Willard Street
Galesburg, Illinois
July 18, 1894

Charley

I got to wishing that you were right. Then I got to believing you were right. And, Charley, it’s true; I found the third level! I’ve been here two weeks, and right now, down the street at the Daly’s, someone is playing a piano, and they’re all out on the front porch singing ‘Seeing Nelly Home.’ And I’m invited over for lemonade. Come on back, Charley and Louisa. Keep looking till you find the third level! It’s worth it, believe me!
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The note is signed Sam.

At the stamp and coin store I go to, I found out that Sam bought eight hundred dollars’ worth of old-style currency. That ought to set him up in a nice little hay, feed and grain business; he always said that’s what he really wished he could do, and he certainly can’t go back to his old business. Not in Galesburg, Illinois, in 1894. His old business? Why, Sam was my psychiatrist.
Reading with Insight

1. Do you think that the third level was a medium of escape for Charley? Why?

2. What do you infer from Sam’s letter to Charley?

3. ‘The modern world is full of insecurity, fear, war, worry and stress.’ What are the ways in which we attempt to overcome them?

4. Do you see an intersection of time and space in the story?

5. Apparent illogicality sometimes turns out to be a futuristic projection? Discuss.

6. Philately helps keep the past alive. Discuss other ways in which this is done. What do you think of the human tendency to constantly move between the past, the present and the future?

7. You have read ‘Adventure’ by Jayant Narlikar in Hornbill Class XI. Compare the interweaving of fantasy and reality in the two stories.
Before you read

What is the general attitude of human beings towards wild animals?

THE Maharaja of Pratibandapuram is the hero of this story. He may be identified as His Highness Jamedar-General, Khiledar-Major, Sata Vyaghra Samhari, Maharajadhiraja Visva Bhuvana Samrat, Sir Jilani Jung Jung Bahadur, M.A.D., A.C.T.C., or C.R.C.K. But this name is often shortened to the Tiger King.

I have come forward to tell you why he came to be known as Tiger King. I have no intention of pretending to advance only to end in a strategic withdrawal. Even the threat of a Stuka bomber will not throw me off track. The Stuka, if it likes, can beat a hasty retreat from my story.

Right at the start, it is imperative to disclose a matter of vital importance about the Tiger King. Everyone who reads of him will experience the natural desire to meet a man of his indomitable courage face-to-face. But there is no chance of its fulfilment. As Bharata said to Rama about Dasaratha, the
Tiger King has reached that final abode of all living creatures. In other words, the Tiger King is dead.

The manner of his death is a matter of extraordinary interest. It can be revealed only at the end of the tale. The most fantastic aspect of his demise was that as soon as he was born, astrologers had foretold that one day the Tiger King would actually have to die.

“The child will grow up to become the warrior of warriors, hero of heroes, champion of champions. But...” they bit their lips and swallowed hard. When compelled to continue, the astrologers came out with it. “This is a secret which should not be revealed at all. And yet we are forced to speak out. The child born under this star will one day have to meet its death.”

At that very moment a great miracle took place. An astonishing phrase emerged from the lips of the ten-day-old Jilani Jung Jung Bahadur, “O wise prophets!”

Everyone stood transfixed in stupefaction. They looked wildly at each other and blinked.

“O wise prophets! It was I who spoke.”

This time there were no grounds for doubt. It was the infant born just ten days ago who had enunciated the words so clearly.

The chief astrologer took off his spectacles and gazed intently at the baby.

“All those who are born will one day have to die. We don’t need your predictions to know that. There would be some sense in it if you could tell us the manner of that death,” the royal infant uttered these words in his little squeaky voice.

The chief astrologer placed his finger on his nose in wonder. A baby barely ten days old opens its lips in speech! Not only that, it also raises intelligent questions! Incredible! Rather like the bulletins issued by the war office, than facts.

The chief astrologer took his finger off his nose and fixed his eyes upon the little prince.

“The prince was born in the hour of the Bull. The Bull and the Tiger are enemies, therefore, death comes from the Tiger,” he explained.
You may think that crown prince Jung Jung Bahadur was thrown into a quake when he heard the word 'Tiger'. That was exactly what did not happen. As soon as he heard it pronounced, the crown prince gave a deep growl. Terrifying words emerged from his lips.

“Let tigers beware!”

This account is only a rumour rife in Pratibandapuram. But with hindsight we may conclude it was based on some truth.

II

Crown prince Jung Jung Bahadur grew taller and stronger day by day. No other miracle marked his childhood days apart from the event already described. The boy drank the milk of an English cow, was brought up by an English nanny, tutored in English by an Englishman, saw nothing but English films — exactly as the crown princes of all the other Indian states did. When he came of age at twenty, the State, which had been with the Court of Wards until then, came into his hands.

But everyone in the kingdom remembered the astrologer’s prediction. Many continued to discuss the matter. Slowly it came to the Maharaja’s ears.

There were innumerable forests in the Pratibandapuram State. They had tigers in them. The Maharaja knew the old saying, ‘You may kill even a cow in self-defence’. There could certainly be no objection to killing tigers in self-defence. The Maharaja started out on a tiger hunt.

The Maharaja was thrilled beyond measure when he killed his first tiger. He sent for the State astrologer and showed him the dead beast.

“What do you say now?” he demanded.

“Your majesty may kill ninety-nine tigers in exactly the same manner. But...” the astrologer drawled.

“But what? Speak without fear.”

“But you must be very careful with the hundredth tiger.”
“What if the hundredth tiger were also killed?”
“Then I will tear up all my books on astrology, set fire to
them, and…”
“And…”
“I shall cut off my tuft, crop my hair short and become
an insurance agent,” the astrologer finished on an incoherent
note.

From that day onwards it was celebration time for all the
tigers inhabiting Pratibandapuram.
The State banned tiger hunting by anyone except the
Maharaja. A proclamation was issued to the effect that if
anyone dared to fling so much as a stone at a tiger, all his
wealth and property would be confiscated.
The Maharaja vowed he would attend to all other matters
only after killing the hundred tigers. Initially the king seemed
well set to realise his ambition.
Not that he faced no dangers. There were times when
the bullet missed its mark, the tiger leapt upon him and he
fought the beast with his bare hands. Each time it was the
Maharaja who won.
At another time he was in danger of losing his throne. A high-ranking British officer visited Pratibandapuram. He was very fond of hunting tigers. And fonder of being photographed with the tigers he had shot. As usual, he wished to hunt tigers in Pratibandapuram. But the Maharaja was firm in his resolve. He refused permission. “I can organise any other hunt. You may go on a boar hunt. You may conduct a mouse hunt. We are ready for a mosquito hunt. But tiger hunt! That’s impossible!”

The British officer’s secretary sent word to the Maharaja through the dewan that the durai himself did not have to kill the tiger. The Maharaja could do the actual killing. What was important to the durai was a photograph of himself holding the gun and standing over the tiger’s carcass. But the Maharaja would not agree even to this proposal. If he relented now, what would he do if other British officers turned up for tiger hunts?

Because he prevented a British officer from fulfilling his desire, the Maharaja stood in danger of losing his kingdom itself.

The Maharaja and the dewan held deliberations over this issue. As a result, a telegram was despatched forthwith to a famous British company of jewellers in Calcutta. ‘Send samples of expensive diamond rings of different designs.’

Some fifty rings arrived. The Maharaja sent the whole lot to the British officer’s good lady. The king and the minister expected the duraisani to choose one or two rings and send the rest back. Within no time at all the duraisani sent her reply: ‘Thank you very much for your gifts.’

In two days a bill for three lakh of rupees came from the British jewellers. The Maharaja was happy that though he had lost three lakh of rupees, he had managed to retain his kingdom.

**IV**

The Maharaja’s tiger hunts continued to be highly successful. Within ten years he was able to kill seventy tigers. And then, an unforeseen hurdle brought his mission to a standstill. The tiger population became extinct in the forests
of Pratibandapuram. Who knows whether the tigers practised birth control or committed harakiri? Or simply ran away from the State because they desired to be shot by British hands alone?

One day the Maharaja sent for the dewan. “Dewan saheb, aren’t you aware of the fact that thirty tigers still remain to be shot down by this gun of mine?” he asked brandishing his gun.

Shuddering at the sight of the gun, the dewan cried out, “Your Majesty! I am not a tiger!”

“What idiot would call you a tiger?”

“No, and I’m not a gun!”

“You are neither tiger nor gun. Dewan saheb, I summoned you here for a different purpose. I have decided to get married.”

The dewan began to babble even more. “Your Majesty, I have two wives already. If I marry you ...”

“Don’t talk nonsense! Why should I marry you? What I want is a tiger...”

“Your Majesty! Please think it over. Your ancestors were married to the sword. If you like, marry the gun. A Tiger King is more than enough for this state. It doesn’t need a Tiger Queen as well”

The Maharaja gave a loud crack of laughter. “I’m not thinking of marrying either a tiger or a gun, but a girl from the ranks of human beings. First you may draw up statistics of tiger populations in the different native states. Next you may investigate if there is a girl I can marry in the royal family of a state with a large tiger population.”

The dewan followed his orders. He found the right girl from a state which possessed a large number of tigers.

Maharaja Jung Jung Bahadur killed five or six tigers each time he visited his father-in-law. In this manner, ninety-nine tiger skins adorned the walls of the reception hall in the Pratibandapuram palace.
The Maharaja’s anxiety reached a fever pitch when there remained just one tiger to achieve his tally of a hundred. He had this one thought during the day and the same dream at night. By this time the tiger farms had run dry even in his father-in-law’s kingdom. It became impossible to locate tigers anywhere. Yet only one more was needed. If he could kill just that one single beast, the Maharaja would have no fears left. He could give up tiger hunting altogether.

But he had to be extremely careful with that last tiger. What had the late chief astrologer said? “Even after killing ninety-nine tigers the Maharaja should beware of the hundredth...” True enough. The tiger was a savage beast after all. One had to be wary of it. But where was that hundredth tiger to be found? It seemed easier to find tiger’s milk than a live tiger.

Thus the Maharaja was sunk in gloom. But soon came the happy news which dispelled that gloom. In his own state sheep began to disappear frequently from a hillside village.

It was first ascertained that this was not the work of Khader Mian Saheb or Virasami Naicker, both famed for their ability to swallow sheep whole. Surely, a tiger was at work. The villagers ran to inform the Maharaja. The Maharaja announced a three-year exemption from all taxes for that village and set out on the hunt at once.

The tiger was not easily found. It seemed as if it had wantonly hid itself in order to flout the Maharaja’s will.

The Maharaja was equally determined. He refused to leave the forest until the tiger was found. As the days passed, the Maharaja’s fury and obstinacy mounted alarmingly. Many officers lost their jobs.

One day when his rage was at its height, the Maharaja called the dewan and ordered him to double the land tax forthwith.
“The people will become discontented. Then our state too will fall a prey to the Indian National Congress.”

“In that case you may resign from your post,” said the king.

The dewan went home convinced that if the Maharaja did not find the tiger soon, the results could be catastrophic. He felt life returning to him only when he saw the tiger which had been brought from the People’s Park in Madras and kept hidden in his house.

At midnight when the town slept in peace, the dewan and his aged wife dragged the tiger to the car and shoved it into the seat. The dewan himself drove the car straight to the forest where the Maharaja was hunting. When they reached the forest the tiger launched its satyagraha and refused to get out of the car. The dewan was thoroughly exhausted in his efforts to haul the beast out of the car and push it down to the ground.

On the following day, the same old tiger wandered into the Maharaja’s presence and stood as if in humble supplication, “Master, what do you command of me?” It was with boundless joy that the Maharaja took careful aim at the beast. The tiger fell in a crumpled heap.

“I have killed the hundredth tiger. My vow has been fulfilled,” the Maharaja was overcome with elation. Ordering the tiger to be brought to the capital in grand procession, the Maharaja hastened away in his car.

After the Maharaja left, the hunters went to take a closer look at the tiger. The tiger looked back at them rolling its eyes in bafflement. The men realised that the tiger was not dead; the bullet had missed it. It had fainted from the shock of the bullet whizzing past. The hunters wondered what they should do. They decided that the Maharaja must not come to know that he had missed his target.

If he did, they could lose their jobs. One of the hunters took aim from a distance of one foot and shot the tiger. This time he killed it without missing his mark.
Then, as commanded by the king, the dead tiger was taken in procession through the town and buried. A tomb was erected over it.

A few days later the Maharaja’s son’s third birthday was celebrated. Until then the Maharaja had given his entire mind over to tiger hunting. He had had no time to spare for the crown prince. But now the king turned his attention to the child. He wished to give him some special gift on his birthday. He went to the shopping centre in Pratibandapuram and searched every shop, but couldn’t find anything suitable. Finally he spotted a wooden tiger in a toyshop and decided it was the perfect gift.

The wooden tiger cost only two annas and a quarter. But the shopkeeper knew that if he quoted such a low price to the Maharaja, he would be punished under the rules of the Emergency. So, he said, “Your Majesty, this is an extremely rare example of craftsmanship. A bargain at three hundred rupees!”

“Very good. Let this be your offering to the crown prince on his birthday,” said the king and took it away with him.

On that day father and son played with that tiny little wooden tiger. It had been
carved by an unskilled carpenter. Its surface was rough; tiny slivers of wood stood up like quills all over it. One of those slivers pierced the Maharaja’s right hand. He pulled it out with his left hand and continued to play with the prince.

The next day, infection flared in the Maharaja’s right hand. In four days, it developed into a suppurating sore which spread all over the arm.

Three famous surgeons were brought in from Madras. After holding a consultation they decided to operate. The operation took place.

The three surgeons who performed it came out of the theatre and announced, “The operation was successful. The Maharaja is dead.”

In this manner the hundredth tiger took its final revenge upon the Tiger King.

Reading with Insight

1. The story is a satire on the conceit of those in power. How does the author employ the literary device of dramatic irony in the story?

2. What is the author’s indirect comment on subjecting innocent animals to the willfulness of human beings?

3. How would you describe the behaviour of the Maharaja’s minions towards him? Do you find them truly sincere towards him or are they driven by fear when they obey him? Do we find a similarity in today’s political order?

4. Can you relate instances of game-hunting among the rich and the powerful in the present times that illustrate the callousness of human beings towards wildlife?

5. We need a new system for the age of ecology — a system which is embedded in the care of all people and also in the care of the Earth and all life upon it. Discuss.
Journey to the end of the Earth

Tishani Doshi

Before you read

If you want to know more about the planet’s past, present and future, the Antarctica is the place to go to. Bon Voyage!

EARLY this year, I found myself aboard a Russian research vessel — the Akademik Shokalskiy — heading towards the coldest, driest, windiest continent in the world: Antarctica. My journey began 13.09 degrees north of the Equator in Madras, and involved crossing nine time zones, six checkpoints, three bodies of water, and at least as many ecospheres.

By the time I actually set foot on the Antarctic continent I had been travelling over 100 hours in combination of a car, an aeroplane and a ship; so, my first emotion on facing Antarctica’s expansive white landscape and uninterrupted blue horizon was relief, followed up with an immediate and profound wonder. Wonder at its immensity, its isolation, but mainly at how there could ever have been a time when India and Antarctica were part of the same landmass.

Part of history

Six hundred and fifty million years ago, a giant amalgamated southern supercontinent — Gondwana — did indeed exist, centred roughly around the present-day
Antarctica. Things were quite different then: humans hadn’t arrived on the global scene, and the climate was much warmer, hosting a huge variety of flora and fauna. For 500 million years Gondwana thrived, but around the time when the dinosaurs were wiped out and the age of the mammals got under way, the landmass was forced to separate into countries, shaping the globe much as we know it today.

To visit Antarctica now is to be a part of that history; to get a grasp of where we’ve come from and where we could possibly be heading. It’s to understand the significance of Cordilleran folds and pre-Cambrian granite shields; ozone and carbon; evolution and extinction. When you think about all that can happen in a million years, it can get pretty mind-boggling. Imagine: India pushing northwards, jamming against Asia to buckle its crust and form the Himalayas; South America drifting off to join North America, opening up the Drake Passage to create a cold circumpolar current, keeping Antarctica frigid, desolate, and at the bottom of the world.

For a sun-worshipping South Indian like myself, two weeks in a place where 90 per cent of the Earth’s total ice volumes are stored is a chilling prospect (not just for circulatory and metabolic functions, but also for the imagination). It’s like walking into a giant ping-pong ball devoid of any human
markers — no trees, billboards, buildings. You lose all earthly sense of perspective and time here. The visual scale ranges from the microscopic to the mighty: midges and mites to blue whales and icebergs as big as countries (the largest recorded was the size of Belgium). Days go on and on and on in surreal 24-hour austral summer light, and a ubiquitous silence, interrupted only by the occasional avalanche or calving ice sheet, consecrates the place. It’s an immersion that will force you to place yourself in the context of the earth’s geological history. And for humans, the prognosis isn’t good.

**Human impact**

Human civilisations have been around for a paltry 12,000 years — barely a few seconds on the geological clock. In that short amount of time, we’ve managed to create quite a ruckus, etching our dominance over Nature with our villages, towns, cities, megacities. The rapid increase of human populations has left us battling with other species for limited resources, and the unmitigated burning of fossil fuels has now created a blanket of carbon dioxide around the world, which is slowly but surely increasing the average global temperature.

Climate change is one of the most hotly contested environmental debates of our time. Will the West Antarctic ice sheet melt entirely? Will the Gulf Stream ocean current be disrupted? Will it be the end of the world as we know it? Maybe. Maybe not. Either way, Antarctica is a crucial element in this debate — not just because it’s the only place in the world, which has never sustained a human population and therefore remains relatively ‘pristine’ in this respect; but more importantly, because it holds in its ice-cores half-million-year-old carbon records trapped in its layers of ice. If we want to study and examine the Earth’s past, present and future, Antarctica is the place to go.
Students on Ice, the programme I was working with on the Shokaskiy, aims to do exactly this by taking high school students to the ends of the world and providing them with inspiring educational opportunities which will help them foster a new understanding and respect for our planet. It’s been in operation for six years now, headed by Canadian Geoff Green, who got tired of carting celebrities and retired, rich, curiosity-seekers who could only ‘give’ back in a limited way. With Students on Ice, he offers the future generation of policy-makers a life-changing experience at an age when they’re ready to absorb, learn, and most importantly, act.

The reason the programme has been so successful is because it’s impossible to go anywhere near the South Pole and not be affected by it. It’s easy to be blasé about polar ice-caps melting while sitting in the comfort zone of our respective latitude and longitude, but when you can visibly see glaciers retreating and ice shelves collapsing, you begin to realise that the threat of global warming is very real.

Antarctica, because of her simple ecosystem and lack of biodiversity, is the perfect place to study how little changes in the environment can have big repercussions. Take the microscopic phytoplankton — those grasses of the sea that nourish and sustain the entire Southern Ocean’s food chain. These single-celled plants use the sun’s energy to assimilate carbon and synthesise organic compounds in that wondrous and most important of processes called photosynthesis.
Scientists warn that a further depletion in the ozone layer will affect the activities of phytoplankton, which in turn will affect the lives of all the marine animals and birds of the region, and the global carbon cycle. In the parable of the phytoplankton, there is a great metaphor for existence: take care of the small things and the big things will fall into place.

Walk on the ocean

My Antarctic experience was full of such epiphanies, but the best occurred just short of the Antarctic Circle at 65.55 degrees south. The *Shokalskiy* had managed to wedge herself into a thick white stretch of ice between the peninsula and Tadpole Island which was preventing us from going any further. The Captain decided we were going to turn around and head back north, but before we did, we were all instructed to climb down the gangplank and walk on the ocean. So there we were, all 52 of us, kitted out in Gore-Tex and glares, walking on a stark whiteness that seemed to spread out forever. Underneath our feet was a metre-thick ice pack, and underneath that, 180 metres of living, breathing, salt water. In the periphery Crabeater seals were stretching and sunning themselves on ice floes much like stray dogs will do under the shade of a banyan tree. It was nothing short of a revelation: everything does indeed connect.

Nine time zones, six checkpoints, three bodies of water and many ecospheres later, I was still wondering about the beauty of balance in play on our planet. How would it be if Antarctica were to become the warm place that it once used to be? Will we be around to see it, or would we have gone the way of the dinosaurs, mammoths and woolly rhinos? Who’s to say? But after spending two weeks with a bunch of teenagers who still have the idealism to save the world, all I can say is that a lot can happen in a million years, but what a difference a day makes!
Reading with Insight

1. ‘The world’s geological history is trapped in Antarctica.’ How is the study of this region useful to us?

2. What are Geoff Green’s reasons for including high school students in the Students on Ice expedition?

3. ‘Take care of the small things and the big things will take care of themselves.’ What is the relevance of this statement in the context of the Antarctic environment?

4. Why is Antarctica the place to go to, to understand the earth’s present, past and future?

For more information on Students on Ice visit www.studentsonice.com
Before you Read

*It is the time of the World War. An American prisoner of war is washed ashore in a dying state and is found at the doorstep of a Japanese doctor. Should he save him as a doctor or hand him over to the Army as a patriot?*

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Dr Sadao Hoki’s house was built on a spot of the Japanese coast where as a little boy he had often played. The low, square stone house was set upon rocks well above a narrow beach that was outlined with bent pines. As a boy Sadao had climbed the pines, supporting himself on his bare feet, as he had seen men do in the South Seas when they climbed for coconuts. His father had taken him often to the islands of those seas, and never had he failed to say to the little brave boy at his side, “Those islands yonder, they are the stepping stones to the future for Japan.”

“Where shall we step from them?” Sadao had asked seriously.

“Who knows?” his father had answered. “Who can limit our future? It depends on what we make it.”
Sadao had taken this into his mind as he did everything his father said, his father who never joked or played with him but who spent infinite pains upon him who was his only son. Sadao knew that his education was his father’s chief concern. For this reason he had been sent at twenty-two to America to learn all that could be learned of surgery and medicine. He had come back at thirty, and before his father died he had seen Sadao become famous not only as a surgeon but as a scientist. Because he was perfecting a discovery which would render wounds entirely clean, he had not been sent abroad with the troops. Also, he knew, there was some slight danger that the old General might need an operation for a condition for which he was now being treated medically, and for this possibility Sadao was being kept in Japan.

Clouds were rising from the ocean now. The unexpected warmth of the past few days had at night drawn heavy fog from the cold waves. Sadao watched mists hide outlines of a little island near the shore and then come creeping up the beach below the house, wreathing around the pines. In a few minutes fog would be wrapped about the house too. Then he would go into the room where Hana, his wife, would be waiting for him with the two children.

But at this moment the door opened and she looked out, a dark-blue woollen haori\(^1\) over her kimono. She came to him affectionately and put her arm through his as he stood, smiled and said nothing. He had met Hana in America, but he had waited to fall in love with her until he was sure she was Japanese. His father would never have received her unless she had been pure in her race. He wondered often whom he would have married if he had not met Hana, and by what luck he had found her in the most casual way, by chance literally, at an American professor’s house. The professor and his wife had been kind people anxious to do something for their few foreign students, and the students, though bored, had accepted this kindness. Sadao had often told Hana how nearly he had not gone to Professor Harley’s house that night — the rooms were

\(^1\) **haori**: a loose outer garment worn over the kimono.
so small, the food so bad, the professor’s wife so voluble. But he had gone and there he had found Hana, a new student, and had felt he would love her if it were at all possible.

Now he felt her hand on his arm and was aware of the pleasure it gave him, even though they had been married years enough to have the two children. For they had not married heedlessly in America. They had finished their work at school and had come home to Japan, and when his father had seen her the marriage had been arranged in the old Japanese way, although Sadao and Hana had talked everything over beforehand. They were perfectly happy. She laid her cheek against his arm.

It was at this moment that both of them saw something black come out of the mists. It was a man. He was flung up out of the ocean — flung, it seemed, to his feet by a breaker. He staggered a few steps, his body outlined against the mist, his arms above his head. Then the curled mists hid him again.

“Who is that?” Hana cried. She dropped Sadao’s arm and they both leaned over the railing of the veranda. Now they saw him again. The man was on his hands and knees crawling. Then they saw him fall on his face and lie there.

“A fisherman perhaps,” Sadao said, “washed from his boat.” He ran quickly down the steps and behind him Hana
came, her wide sleeves flying. A mile or two away on either side there were fishing villages, but here was only the bare and lonely coast, dangerous with rocks. The surf beyond the beach was spiked with rocks. Somehow the man had managed to come through them — he must be badly torn.

They saw when they came toward him that indeed it was so. The sand on one side of him had already a stain of red soaking through.

"He is wounded," Sadao exclaimed. He made haste to the man, who lay motionless, his face in the sand. An old cap stuck to his head soaked with sea water. He was in wet rags of garments. Sadao stopped, Hana at his side, and turned the man’s head. They saw the face.

"A white man!" Hana whispered.

Yes, it was a white man. The wet cap fell away and there was his wet yellow hair, long, as though for many weeks it had not been cut, and upon his young and tortured face was a rough yellow beard. He was unconscious and knew nothing that they did for him.

Now Sadao remembered the wound, and with his expert fingers he began to search for it. Blood flowed freshly at his touch. On the right side of his lower back Sadao saw that a gun wound had been reopened. The flesh was blackened with powder. Sometime, not many days ago, the man had been shot and had not been tended. It was bad chance that the rock had struck the wound.

"Oh, how he is bleeding!" Hana whispered again in a solemn voice. The mists screened them now completely, and at this time of day no one came by. The fishermen had gone home and even the chance beachcombers would have considered the day at an end.

“What shall we do with this man?” Sadao muttered. But his trained hands seemed of their own will to be doing what they could to stanch the fearful bleeding. He packed the wound
with the sea moss that strewed the beach. The man moaned with pain in his stupor but he did not awaken.

“The best thing that we could do would be to put him back in the sea,” Sadao said, answering himself.

Now that the bleeding was stopped for the moment he stood up and dusted the sand from his hands.

“Yes, undoubtedly that would be best,” Hana said steadily. But she continued to stare down at the motionless man.

“If we sheltered a white man in our house we should be arrested and if we turned him over as a prisoner, he would certainly die,” Sadao said.

“The kindest thing would be to put him back into the sea,” Hana said. But neither of them moved. They were staring with a curious repulsion upon the inert figure.

“What is he?” Hana whispered.

“There is something about him that looks American,” Sadao said. He took up the battered cap. Yes, there, almost gone, was the faint lettering. “A sailor,” he said, “from an American warship.” He spelled it out: “U.S. Navy.” The man was a prisoner of war!

“He has escaped.” Hana cried softly, “and that is why he is wounded.”

“In the back,” Sadao agreed.

They hesitated, looking at each other. Then Hana said with resolution:

“Come, are we able to put him back into the sea?”

“If I am able, are you?” Sadao asked.

“No,” Hana said, “But if you can do it alone…”

Sadao hesitated again. “The strange thing is,” he said, “that if the man were whole I could turn him over to the police without difficulty. I care nothing for him. He is my enemy. All Americans are my enemy. And he is only a common fellow. You see how foolish his face is. But since he is wounded…”

“You also cannot throw him back to the sea,” Hana said. “Then there is only one thing to do. We must carry him into the house.”

“But the servants?” Sadao inquired.
“We must simply tell them that we intend to give him to the police — as indeed we must, Sadao. We must think of the children and your position. It would endanger all of us if we did not give this man over as a prisoner of war.”

“Certainly,” Sadao agreed. “I would not think of doing anything else.”

Thus agreed, together they lifted the man. He was very light, like a fowl that had been half-starved for a long time until it is only feathers and skeleton. So, his arms hanging, they carried him up the steps and into the side door of the house. This door opened into a passage, and down the passage they carried the man towards an empty bedroom. It had been the bedroom of Sadao’s father, and since his death it had not been used. They laid the man on the deeply matted floor. Everything here had been Japanese to please the old man, who would never in his own home sit on a chair or sleep in a foreign bed. Hana went to the wall cupboards and slid back a door and took out a soft quilt. She hesitated. The quilt was covered with flowered silk and the lining was pure white silk.

“He is so dirty,” she murmured in distress.

“Yes, he had better be washed,” Sadao agreed. “If you will fetch hot water I will wash him.”

“I cannot bear for you to touch him,” she said. “We shall have to tell the servants he is here. I will tell Yumi now. She can leave the children for a few minutes and she can wash him.”

Sadao considered a moment. “Let it be so,” he agreed. “You tell Yumi and I will tell the others.”

But the utter pallor of the man’s unconscious face moved him first to stoop and feel his pulse. It was faint but it was there. He put his hand against the man’s cold breast. The heart too was yet alive.

“He will die unless he is operated on,” Sadao said, considering. “The question is whether he will not die anyway.”

Hana cried out in fear. “Don’t try to save him! What if he should live?”

“What if he should die?” Sadao replied. He stood
gazing down on the motionless man. This man must have extraordinary vitality or he would have been dead by now. But then he was very young — perhaps not yet twenty-five.

“You mean die from the operation?”

Hana asked.

“Yes,” Sadao said.

Hana considered this doubtfully, and when she did not answer Sadao turned away. “At any rate something must be done with him,” he said, “and first he must be washed.” He went quickly out of the room and Hana came behind him. She did not wish to be left alone with the white man. He was the first she had seen since she left America and now he seemed to have nothing to do with those whom she had known there. Here he was her enemy, a menace, living or dead.

She turned to the nursery and called, “Yumi!”

But the children heard her voice and she had to go in for a moment and smile at them and play with the baby boy, now nearly three months old.

Over the baby’s soft black hair she motioned with her mouth, “Yumi — come with me!”

“I will put the baby to bed,” Yumi replied. “He is ready.”

She went with Yumi into the bedroom next to the nursery and stood with the boy in her arms while Yumi spread the sleeping quilts on the floor and laid the baby between them.

Then Hana led the way quickly and softly to the kitchen. The two servants were frightened at what their master had just told them. The old gardener, who was also a house servant, pulled the few hairs on his upper lip.

“The master ought not to heal the wound of this white man,” he said bluntly to Hana. “The white man ought to die. First he was shot. Then the sea caught him and wounded him with her rocks. If the master heals what the gun did and what the sea did they will take revenge on us.”

“I will tell him what you say,” Hana replied courteously. But she herself was also frightened, although she was not superstitious as the old man was. Could it ever be well to help
an enemy? Nevertheless she told Yumi to fetch the hot water and bring it to the room where the white man was.

She went ahead and slid back the partitions. Sadao was not yet there. Yumi, following, put down her wooden bucket. Then she went over to the white man. When she saw him her thick lips folded themselves into stubbornness. “I have never washed a white man,” she said, “and I will not wash so dirty a one now.”

Hana cried at her severely. “You will do what your master commands you!”

There was so fierce a look of resistance upon Yumi’s round dull face that Hana felt unreasonably afraid. After all, if the servants should report something that was not as it happened?

“Very well,” she said with dignity. “You understand we only want to bring him to his senses so that we can turn him over as a prisoner?”

“I will have nothing to do with it,” Yumi said, “I am a poor person and it is not my business.”

“Then please,” Hana said gently, “return to your own work.”

At once Yumi left the room. But this left Hana with the white man alone. She might have been too afraid to stay had not her anger at Yumi’s stubbornness now sustained her.

“Stupid Yumi,” she muttered fiercely. “Is this anything but a man? And a wounded helpless man!”

In the conviction of her own superiority she bent impulsively and untied the knotted rugs that kept the white man covered. When she had his breast bare she dipped the small clean towel that Yumi had brought into the steaming hot water and washed his face carefully. The man’s skin, though rough with exposure, was of a fine texture and must have been very blond when he was a child.

Will Hana help the wounded man and wash him herself?
While she was thinking these thoughts, though not really liking the man better now that he was no longer a child, she kept on washing him until his upper body was quite clean. But she dared not turn him over. Where was Sadao? Now her anger was ebbing, and she was anxious again and she rose, wiping her hands on the wrong towel. Then lest the man be chilled, she put the quilt over him.

“Sadao!” she called softly.

He had been about to come in when she called. His hand had been on the door and now he opened it. She saw that he had brought his surgeon’s emergency bag and that he wore his surgeon’s coat.

“You have decided to operate!” she cried.

“Yes,” he said shortly. He turned his back to her and unfolded a sterilized towel upon the floor of the tokonoma alcove, and put his instruments out upon it.

“Fetch towels,” he said.

She went obediently, but how anxious now, to the linen shelves and took out the towels. There ought also to be old pieces of matting so that the blood would not ruin the fine floor covering. She went out to the back veranda where the gardener kept strips of matting with which to protect delicate shrubs on cold nights and took an armful of them.

But when she went back into the room, she saw this was useless. The blood had already soaked through the packing in the man’s wound and had ruined the mat under him.

“Oh, the mat!” she cried.

“Yes, it is ruined,” Sadao replied, as though he did not care. “Help me to turn him,” he commanded her.

She obeyed him without a word, and he began to wash the man’s back carefully.

“Yumi would not wash him,” she said.

“Did you wash him then?” Sadao asked, not stopping for a moment his swift concise movements.

“Yes,” she said.

He did not seem to hear her. But she was used to his absorption when he was at work. She wondered for a moment

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2 tokonoma: a niche or an alcove in a Japanese home for displaying a flower arrangement, kakemono, or other piece of art.
if it mattered to him what was the body upon which he worked so long as it was for the work he did so excellently.

“You will have to give the anesthetic if he needs it,” he said.

“I?” she repeated blankly. “But never have I!”

“It is easy enough,” he said impatiently.

He was taking out the packing now, and the blood began to flow more quickly. He peered into the wound with the bright surgeon’s light fastened on his forehead. “The bullet is still there,” he said with cool interest. “Now I wonder how deep this rock wound is. If it is not too deep it may be that I can get the bullet. But the bleeding is not superficial. He has lost much blood.”

At this moment Hana choked. He looked up and saw her face the colour of sulphur.

“Don’t faint,” he said sharply. He did not put down his exploring instrument. “If I stop now the man will surely die.” She clapped her hands to her mouth and leaped up and ran out of the room. Outside in the garden he heard her retching. But he went on with his work.

“It will be better for her to empty her stomach,” he thought. He had forgotten that of course she had never seen an operation. But her distress and his inability to go to her at once made him impatient and irritable with this man who lay like dead under his knife.
“This man.” he thought, “there is no reason under heaven why he should live.”

Unconsciously this thought made him ruthless and he proceeded swiftly. In his dream the man moaned but Sadao paid no heed except to mutter at him.

“Groan,” he muttered, “groan if you like. I am not doing this for my own pleasure. In fact, I do not know why I am doing it.”

The door opened and there was Hana again.

“Where is the anesthetic?” she asked in a clear voice.

Sadao motioned with his chin. “It is as well that you came back,” he said. “This fellow is beginning to stir.”

She had the bottle and some cotton in her hand.

“But how shall I do it?” she asked.

“Simply saturate the cotton and hold it near his nostrils,” Sadao replied without delaying for one moment the intricate detail of his work. “When he breathes badly move it away a little.”

She crouched close to the sleeping face of the young American. It was a piteously thin face, she thought, and the lips were twisted. The man was suffering whether he knew it or not. Watching him, she wondered if the stories they heard sometimes of the sufferings of prisoners were true. They came like flickers of rumour, told by word of mouth and always contradicted. In the newspapers the reports were always that wherever the Japanese armies went the people received them gladly, with cries of joy at their liberation. But sometimes she remembered such men as General Takima, who at home beat his wife cruelly, though no one mentioned it now that he had fought so victorious a battle in Manchuria. If a man like that could be so cruel to a woman in his power, would he not be cruel to one like this for instance?

She hoped anxiously that this young man had not been tortured. It was at this moment that she observed deep red scars on his neck, just under the ear.

“Those scars,” she murmured, lifting her eyes to Sadao.

But he did not answer. At this moment he felt the tip of his instrument strike against something hard, dangerously
near the kidney. All thought left him. He felt only the purest pleasure. He probed with his fingers, delicately, familiar with every atom of this human body. His old American professor of anatomy had seen to that knowledge. “Ignorance of the human body is the surgeon’s cardinal sin, sirs!” he had thundered at his classes year after year. “To operate without as complete knowledge of the body as if you had made it — anything less than that is murder.”

“It is not quite at the kidney, my friend,” Sadao murmured. It was his habit to murmur to the patient when he forgot himself in an operation. “My friend,” he always called his patients and so now he did, forgetting that this was his enemy.

Then quickly, with the cleanest and most precise of incisions, the bullet was out. The man quivered but he was still unconscious. Nevertheless he muttered a few English words. “Guts,” he muttered, choking. “They got...my guts...”

“Sadao!” Hana cried sharply.

“Hush,” Sadao said.

The man sank again into silence so profound that Sadao took up his wrist, hating the touch of it. Yes, there was still a pulse so faint, so feeble, but enough, if he wanted the man to live, to give hope.

“But certainly I do not want this man to live,” he thought.

“No more anesthetic,” he told Hana.

He turned as swiftly as though he had never paused and from his medicines he chose a small vial and from it filled a hypodermic and thrust it into the patient’s left arm. Then putting down the needle, he took the man’s wrist again. The pulse under his fingers fluttered once or twice and then grew stronger.

“This man will live in spite of all,” he said to Hana and sighed.

The young man woke, so weak, his blue eyes so terrified when he perceived where he...
was, that Hana felt compelled to apologise. She herself served him, for none of the servants would enter the room.

When she came in the first time, she saw him summon his small strength to be prepared for some fearful thing.

“Don’t be afraid,” she begged him softly.

“How come... you speak English...” he gasped.

“I was a long time in America,” she replied.

She saw that he wanted to reply to that but he could not, and so she knelt and fed him gently from the porcelain spoon. He ate unwillingly, but still he ate.

“Now you will soon be strong,” she said, not liking him and yet moved to comfort him.

He did not answer.

When Sadao came in the third day after the operation, he found the young man sitting up, his face bloodless with the effort.

“Lie down,” Sadao cried. “Do you want to die?”

He forced the man down gently and strongly and examined the wound. “You may kill yourself if you do this sort of thing,” he scolded.

“What are you going to do with me?” the boy muttered. He looked just now barely seventeen. “Are you going to hand me over?”

For a moment Sadao did not answer. He finished his examination and then pulled the silk quilt over the man.

“I do not know myself what I shall do with you,” he said. “I ought of course to give you to the police. You are a prisoner of war — no, do not tell me anything,” He put up his hand as he saw the young man was about to speak. “Do not even tell me your name unless I ask it.”

They looked at each other for a moment, and then the young man closed his eyes and turned his face to the wall.

“Okay,” he whispered, his mouth a bitter line.

Outside the door Hana was waiting for Sadao. He saw at once that she was in trouble.

“Sadao, Yumi tells me the servants feel they cannot stay if we hide this man here any more,” she said. “She tells me that they are saying that you and I were so long in America
that we have forgotten to think of our own country first. They think we like Americans."

"It is not true," Sadao said harshly "Americans are our enemies. But I have been trained not to let a man die if I can help it."

"The servants cannot understand that," she said anxiously.

"No," he agreed.

Neither seemed able to say more, and somehow the household dragged on. The servants grew more watchful. Their courtesy was as careful as ever, but their eyes were cold upon the pair to whom they were hired.

"It is clear what our master ought to do," the old gardener said one morning. He had worked with flowers all his life, and had been a specialist too in moss. For Sadao’s father he had made one of the finest moss gardens in Japan, sweeping the bright green carpet constantly so that not a leaf or a pine needle marred the velvet of its surface. "My old master’s son knows very well what he ought to do," he now said, pinching a bud from a bush as he spoke. "When the man was so near death why did he not let him bleed?"

"That young master is so proud of his skill to save life that he saves any life," the cook said contemptuously. She split a fowl’s neck skillfully and held the fluttering bird and let its blood flow into the roots of a wistaria vine. Blood is the best of fertilisers, and the old gardener would not let her waste a drop of it.

"It is the children of whom we must think," Yumi said sadly. "What will be their fate if their father is condemned as a traitor?"

They did not try to hide what they said from the ears of Hana as she stood arranging the day’s flowers in the veranda near by, and she knew they spoke on purpose that she might hear. That they were right she knew too in most of her being. But there was another part of her which she herself could not understand. It was not sentimental liking of the prisoner. She had come to think of him as a prisoner. She had not liked him even yesterday when he had said in his impulsive way,
“Anyway, let me tell you that my name is Tom.” She had only bowed her little distant bow. She saw hurt in his eyes but she did not wish to assuage it. Indeed, he was a great trouble in this house.

As for Sadao, every day he examined the wound carefully. The last stitches had been pulled out this morning, and the young man would, in a fortnight be nearly as well as ever. Sadao went back to his office and carefully typed a letter to the Chief of police reporting the whole matter. “On the twenty-first day of February an escaped prisoner was washed up on the shore in front of my house.” So far he typed and then he opened a secret drawer of his desk and put the unfinished report into it.

On the seventh day after that, two things happened. In the morning the servants left together, their belongings tied in large square cotton kerchiefs. When Hana got up in the morning nothing was done, the house not cleaned and the food not prepared, and she knew what it meant. She was dismayed and even terrified, but her pride as a mistress would not allow her to show it. Instead, she inclined her head gracefully when they appeared before her in the kitchen, and she paid them off and thanked them for all that they had done for her. They were crying, but she did not cry. The cook and the gardener had served Sadao since he was a little boy in his father’s house, and Yumi cried because of the children. She was so grieving that after she had gone she ran back to Hana.

“If the baby misses me too much tonight, send for me. I am going to my own house and you know where it is.”

“Thank you,” Hana said smiling. But she told herself she would not send for Yumi however the baby cried.

She made the breakfast and Sadao helped with the children. Neither of them spoke of the servants beyond the fact that they were gone. But after Hana had taken morning food to the prisoner, she came back to Sadao.

“Why is it we cannot see clearly what we ought to do?” she asked him. “Even the servants see more clearly than we do. Why are we different from other Japanese?”

Sadao did not answer. But a little later he went into the room where the prisoner was and said brusquely, “Today you
may get up on your feet. I want you to stay up only five minutes at a time. Tomorrow you may try it twice as long. It would be well that you get back your strength as quickly as possible.”

He saw the flicker of terror on the young face that was still very pale. “Okay,” the boy murmured. Evidently he was determined to say more. “I feel I ought to thank you, Doctor, for having saved my life.”

“Don’t thank me too early,” Sadao said coldly. He saw the flicker of terror again in the boy’s eyes — terror as unmistakable as an animal’s. The scars on his neck were crimson for a moment. Those scars! What were they? Sadao did not ask.

In the afternoon the second thing happened. Hana, working hard on unaccustomed labour, saw a messenger come to the door in official uniform. Her hands went weak and she could not draw her breath. The servants must have told already. She ran to Sadao, gasping, unable to utter a word. But by then the messenger had simply followed her through the garden and there he stood. She pointed at him helplessly.

Sadao looked up from his book. He was in his office, the other partition of which was thrown open to the garden for the southern sunshine. “What is it?” he asked the messenger and then he rose, seeing the man’s uniform.

“You are to come to the palace,” the man said. “The old General is in pain again.”

“Oh,” Hana breathed, “is that all?” “All?” the messenger exclaimed. “Is it not enough?” “Indeed it is,” she replied. “I am very sorry.”

When Sadao came to say goodbye, she was in the kitchen, but doing nothing. The children were asleep and she sat merely resting for a moment, more exhausted from her fright than from work.
“I thought they had come to arrest you”, she said. He gazed down into her anxious eyes. “I must get rid of this man for your sake,” he said in distress. “Somehow I must get rid of him.”

*(Sadao goes to see the General)*

“Of course,” the General said weakly, “I understand fully. But that is because, I once took a degree in Princeton. So few Japanese have.”

“I care nothing for the man, Excellency,” Sadao said, “but having operated on him with such success...”

“Yes, yes” the General said. “It only makes me feel you more indispensable to me. Evidently you can save anyone — you are so skilled. You say you think I can stand one more such attack as I have had today?”

“Not more than one,” Sadao said.

“Then certainly I can allow nothing to happen to you,” the General said with anxiety. His long pale Japanese face became expressionless, which meant that he was in deep thought. “You cannot be arrested,” the General said, closing his eyes. “Suppose you were condemned to death and the next day I had to have my operation?”

“There are other surgeons, Excellency,” Sadao suggested.

“None I trust,” the General replied. “The best ones have been trained by Germans and would consider the operation successful even if I died. I do not care for their point of view.” He sighed. “It seems a pity that we cannot better combine the German ruthlessness with the American sentimentality. Then you could turn your prisoner over to execution and yet I could be sure you would not murder me while I was unconscious.”

The General laughed. He had an unusual sense of humour. “As a Japanese, could you not combine these two foreign elements?” he asked.

Sadao smiled. “I am not quite sure,” he said, “but for your sake I would be willing to try, Excellency.”

The General shook his head. “I had rather not be the test case,” he said. He felt suddenly weak and overwhelmed with the cares of his life as an official in times such as these when repeated victory brought great responsibilities all over the south.
Pacific. “It is very unfortunate that this man should have washed up on your doorstep,” he said irritably.

“I feel it so myself,” Sadao said gently.

“It would be best if he could be quietly killed,” the General said. “Not by you, but by someone who does not know him. I have my own private assassins. Suppose I send two of them to your house tonight or better, any night. You need know nothing about it. It is now warm — what would be more natural than that you should leave the outer partition of the white man’s room open to the garden while he sleeps?”

“Certainly it would be very natural,” Sadao agreed. “In fact, it is so left open every night.”

“Good,” the General said, yawning. “They are very capable assassins — they make no noise and they know the trick of inward bleeding. If you like I can even have them remove the body.”

Sadao considered. “That perhaps would be best, Excellency,” he agreed, thinking of Hana.

He left the General’s presence then and went home, thinking over the plan. In this way the whole thing would be taken out of his hands. He would tell Hana nothing, since she would be timid at the idea of assassins in the house, and yet certainly such persons were essential in an absolute state such as Japan was. How else could rulers deal with those who opposed them?

He refused to allow anything but reason to be the atmosphere of his mind as he went into the room where the American was in bed. But as he opened the door, to his surprise he found the young man out of bed, and preparing to go into the garden.

“What is this!” he exclaimed. “Who gave you permission to leave your room?”

“I’m not used to waiting for permission,” Tom said gaily. “Gosh, I feel pretty good again! But will the muscles on this side always feel stiff?”

“Is it so?” Sadao inquired, surprised. He forgot all else. “Now I thought I had provided against that,” he murmured. He lifted the edge of the man’s shirt and gazed at the healing
scar. “Massage may do it,” he said, “if exercise does not.”

“It won’t bother me much,” the young man said. His young face was gaunt under the stubbly blond beard. “Say, Doctor, I’ve got something I want to say to you. If I hadn’t met a Jap like you — well, I wouldn’t be alive today. I know that.”

Sadao bowed but he could not speak.

“Sure, I know that,” Tom went on warmly. His big thin hands gripping a chair were white at the knuckles. “I guess if all the Japs were like you there wouldn’t have been a war.”

“Perhaps,” Sadao said with difficulty. “And now I think you had better go back to bed.”

He helped the boy back into bed and then bowed. “Good night,” he said.

Sadao slept badly that night. Time and time again he woke, thinking he heard the rustling of footsteps, the sound of a twig broken or a stone displaced in the garden — a noise such as men might make who carried a burden.

The next morning he made the excuse to go first into the guest room. If the American were gone he then could simply tell Hana that so the General had directed. But when he opened the door he saw at once that there on the pillow was the shaggy blond head. He could hear the peaceful breathing of sleep and he closed the door again quietly.

“He is asleep,” he told Hana. “He is almost well to sleep like that.”

“What shall we do with him?” Hana whispered her old refrain.

Sadao shook his head. “I must decide in a day or two,” he promised.

But certainly, he thought, the second night must be the night. There rose a wind that night, and he listened to the sounds of bending boughs and whistling partitions.

Hana woke too. “Ought we not to go and close the sick man’s partition?” she asked.

“No,” Sadao said. “He is able now to do it for himself.”

But the next morning the American was still there.

Then the third night of course must be the night. The wind changed to quiet rain and the garden was full of the sound of
dripping eaves and running springs. Sadao slept a little better, but he woke at the sound of a crash and leaped to his feet.

“What was that?” Hana cried. The baby woke at her voice and began to wail. “I must go and see,”

But he held her and would not let her move.

“Sadao,” she cried, “what is the matter with you?”

“Don’t go,” he muttered, “don’t go!”

His terror infected her and she stood breathless, waiting. There was only silence. Together they crept back into the bed, the baby between them.

Yet when he opened the door of the guest room in the morning there was the young man. He was very gay and had already washed and was now on his feet. He had asked for a razor yesterday and had shaved himself and today there was a faint colour in his cheeks.

“I am well,” he said joyously.

Sadao drew his kimono round his weary body. He could not, he decided suddenly, go through another night. It was not that he cared for this young man’s life. No, simply it was not worth the strain.

“You are well,” Sadao agreed. He lowered his voice. “You are so well that I think if I put my boat on the shore tonight, with food and extra clothing in it, you might be able to row to that little island not far from the coast. It is so near the coast that it has not been worth fortifying. Nobody lives on it because in storm it is submerged. But this is not the season of storm. You could live there until you saw a Korean fishing boat pass by. They pass quite near the island because the water is many fathoms deep there.”

The young man stared at him, slowly comprehending. “Do I have to?” he asked.

“I think so,” Sadao said gently. “You understand — it is not hidden that you are here.”
The young man nodded in perfect comprehension. “Okay,” he said simply.

Sadao did not see him again until evening. As soon as it was dark he had dragged the stout boat down to the shore and in it he put food and bottled water that he had bought secretly during the day, as well as two quilts he had bought at a pawnshop. The boat he tied to a post in the water, for the tide was high. There was no moon and he worked without a flashlight.

When he came to the house he entered as though he were just back from his work, and so Hana knew nothing. “Yumi was here today,” she said as she served his supper. Though she was so modern, still she did not eat with him. “Yumi cried over the baby,” she went on with a sigh. “She misses him so.”

“The servants will come back as soon as the foreigner is gone,” Sadao said.

He went into the guest room that night before he went to bed himself and checked carefully the American’s temperature, the state of the wound, and his heart and pulse. The pulse was irregular but that was perhaps because of excitement. The young man’s pale lips were pressed together and his eyes burned. Only the scars on his neck were red.

“I realise you are saving my life again,” he told Sadao.

“Not at all,” Sadao said. “It is only inconvenient to have you here any longer.”

He had hesitated a good deal about giving the man a flashlight. But he had decided to give it to him after all. It was a small one, his own, which he used at night when he was called.

“If your food runs out before you catch a boat,” he said, “signal me two flashes at the same instant the sun drops over the horizon. Do not signal in darkness, for it will be seen. If you are all right but still there, signal me once. You will find fresh fish easy to catch but you must eat them raw. A fire would be seen.”

“Oh, that’s okay,” the young man breathed.
He was dressed now in the Japanese clothes which Sadao had given him, and at the last moment Sadao wrapped a black cloth about his blond head.

“You say the man escaped?” the General asked faintly. He had been operated upon a week before, an emergency operation to which Sadao had been called in the night. For twelve hours Sadao had not been sure the General would live. The gall bladder was much involved. Then the old man had begun to breathe deeply again and to demand food. Sadao had not been able to ask about the assassins. So far as he knew they had never come. The servants had returned and Yumi had cleaned the guest room thoroughly and had burned sulphur in it to get the white man’s smell out of it. Nobody said anything. Only the gardener was cross because he had got behind with his chrysanthemums.

But after a week Sadao felt the General was well enough to be spoken to about the prisoner.

“Yes, Excellency, he escaped,” Sadao now said. He coughed, signifying that he had not said all he might have said, but was unwilling to disturb the General further. But the old man opened his eyes suddenly.

“That prisoner,” he said with some energy, “did I not promise you I would kill him for you?”
“You did, Excellency,” Sadao said.
“Well, well!” the old man said in a tone of amazement, “so I did! But you see, I was suffering a good deal. The truth is, I thought of nothing but myself. In short, I forgot my promise to you.”
“I wondered, Your Excellency,” Sadao murmured.
“It was certainly very careless of me,” the General said. “But you understand it was not lack of patriotism or dereliction of duty.” He looked anxiously at his doctor. “If the matter should come out you would understand that, wouldn’t you?”
“Certainly, Your Excellency,” Sadao said. He suddenly comprehended that the General was in the palm of his hand and that as a consequence he himself was perfectly safe. “I can swear to your loyalty, Excellency,” he said to the old General, “and to your zeal against the enemy.”
“You are a good man,” the General murmured and closed his eyes. “You will be rewarded.”
But Sadao, searching the spot of black in the twilighted sea that night, had his reward. There was no prick of light in the dusk. No one was on the island. His prisoner was gone — safe, doubtless, for he had warned him to wait only for a Korean fishing boat.
He stood for a moment on the veranda, gazing out to the sea from whence the young man had come that other night. And into his mind, although without reason, there came other white faces he had known — the professor at whose house he had met Hana, a dull man, and his wife had been a silly talkative woman, in spite of her wish to be kind. He remembered his old teacher of anatomy, who had been so insistent on mercy with the knife, and then he remembered the face of his fat and slatternly landlady. He had great difficulty in finding a place to live in America because he was a Japanese. The Americans were full of prejudice and it had been bitter to live in it, knowing himself their superior. How he had despised the ignorant and dirty old woman who had at last consented to house him in her miserable home! He had once tried to be grateful to her because she had in his last year nursed him
through influenza, but it was difficult, for she was no less repulsive to him in her kindness. Now he remembered the youthful, haggard face of his prisoner — white and repulsive. “Strange,” he thought. “I wonder why I could not kill him?”

Reading with Insight

1. There are moments in life when we have to make hard choices between our roles as private individuals and as citizens with a sense of national loyalty. Discuss with reference to the story you have just read.

2. Dr Sadao was compelled by his duty as a doctor to help the enemy soldier. What made Hana, his wife, sympathetic to him in the face of open defiance from the domestic staff?

3. How would you explain the reluctance of the soldier to leave the shelter of the doctor’s home even when he knew he couldn’t stay there without risk to the doctor and himself?

4. What explains the attitude of the General in the matter of the enemy soldier? Was it human consideration, lack of national loyalty, dereliction of duty or simply self-absorption?

5. While hatred against a member of the enemy race is justifiable, especially during wartime, what makes a human being rise above narrow prejudices?

6. Do you think the doctor’s final solution to the problem was the best possible one in the circumstances?

7. Does the story remind you of ‘Birth’ by A. J. Cronin that you read in Snapshots last year? What are the similarities?

8. Is there any film you have seen or novel you have read with a similar theme?
Should Wizard Hit Mommy?

John Updike

Before you read

Here is a story about the worldview of a little child, and the difficult moral question she raises during the story session with her father.

In the evenings and for Saturday naps like today’s, Jack told his daughter Jo a story out of his head. This custom, begun when she was two, was itself now nearly two years old, and his head felt empty. Each new story was a slight variation of a basic tale: a small creature, usually named Roger (Roger Fish, Roger Squirrel, Roger Chipmunk), had some problem and went with it to the wise old owl. The owl told him to go to the wizard, and the wizard performed a magic spell that solved the problem, demanding in payment a number of pennies greater than the number that Roger Creature had, but in the same breath directing the animal to a place where the extra pennies could be found. Then Roger was so happy he played many games with other creatures, and went home to his mother just in time to hear the train whistle that brought his daddy home from Boston. Jack described their supper, and the story was
over. Working his way through this scheme was especially fatiguing on Saturday, because Jo never fell asleep in naps any more, and knowing this made the rite seem futile.

The little girl (not so little any more; the bumps her feet made under the covers were halfway down the bed, their big double bed that they let her be in for naps and when she was sick) had at last arranged herself, and from the way her fat face deep in the pillow shone in the sunlight sifting through the drawn shades, it did not seem fantastic that some magic would occur, and she would take her nap like an infant of two. Her brother, Bobby, was two, and already asleep with his bottle. Jack asked, “Who shall the story be about today?”

“Roger...” Jo squeezed her eyes shut and smiled to be thinking she was thinking. Her eyes opened, her mother’s blue. “Skunk,” she said firmly.

A new animal; they must talk about skunks at nursery school. Having a fresh hero momentarily stirred Jack to creative enthusiasm. “All right,” he said. “Once upon a time, in the deep dark woods, there was a tiny little creature by the name of Roger Skunk. And he smelled very bad.”

“Yes,” Jo said.

“He smelled so bad that none of the other little woodland creatures would play with him.” Jo looked at him solemnly; she hadn’t foreseen this. “Whenever he would go out to play,” Jack continued with zest, remembering certain humiliations of his own childhood, “all of the other tiny animals would cry, “Uh-oh, here comes Roger Stinky Skunk,” and they would run away, and Roger Skunk would stand there all alone, and two little round tears would fall from his eyes.” The corners of Jo’s mouth drooped down and her lower lip bent forward as he traced with a forefinger along the side of her nose the course of one of Roger Skunk’s tears.

“Won’t he see the owl?” she asked in a high and faintly roughened voice.

Sitting on the bed beside her, Jack felt the covers tug as her legs switched tensely. He was pleased with this moment
— he was telling her something true, something she must know — and had no wish to hurry on. But downstairs a chair scraped, and he realised he must get down to help Clare paint the living-room woodwork.

“Well, he walked along very sadly and came to a very big tree, and in the tiptop of the tree was an enormous wise old owl.”

“Good.”

“Mr Owl,” Roger Skunk said, “all the other little animals run away from me because I smell so bad.” “So you do,” the owl said. “Very, very bad.” “What can I do?” Roger Skunk said, and he cried very hard.

“The wizard, the wizard,” Jo shouted, and sat right up, and a Little Golden Book spilled from the bed.

“Now, Jo. Daddy’s telling the story. Do you want to tell Daddy the story?”

“No. You me.”

“Then lie down and be sleepy.”

Her head relapsed onto the pillow and she said, “Out of your head.”

“Well. The owl thought and thought. At last he said, “Why don’t you go see the wizard?”

“Daddy?”

“What?”

“Are magic spells real?” This was a new phase, just this last month, a reality phase. When he told her spiders eat bugs, she turned to her mother and asked, “Do they really?” and when Clare told her God was in the sky and all around them, she turned to her father and insisted, with a sly yet eager smile, “Is He really?”

“They’re real in stories,” Jack answered curtly. She had made him miss a beat in the narrative. “The owl said, “Go through the dark woods, under the apple trees, into the swamp, over the crick —”

“What’s a crick?”
A little river. “Over the crick, and there will be the wizard’s house.” And that’s the way Roger Skunk went, and pretty soon he came to a little white house, and he rapped on the door.” Jack rapped on the window sill, and under the covers Jo’s tall figure clenched in an infantile thrill. “And then a tiny little old man came out, with a long white beard and a pointed blue hat, and said, “Eh? Whatzis? Whatcher want? You smell awful.” The wizard’s voice was one of Jack’s own favourite effects; he did it by scrunching up his face and somehow whining through his eyes, which felt for the interval rheumy. He felt being an old man suited him.

“I know it,” Roger Skunk said, “and all the little animals run away from me. The enormous wise owl said you could help me.”

“Eh? Well, maybe. Come on in. Don’t get too close.” Now, inside, Jo, there were all these magic things, all jumbled together in a big dusty heap, because the wizard did not have any cleaning lady.”

“Why?”

“Why? Because he was a wizard, and a very old man.”

“Will he die?”

“No. Wizards don’t die. Well, he rummaged around and found an old stick called a magic wand and asked Roger Skunk what he wanted to smell like. Roger thought and thought and said, “Roses.”

“Yes. Good,” Jo said smugly.

Jack fixed her with a trance like gaze and chanted in the wizard’s elderly irritable voice:

“Abracadabry, hocus-poo,
Roger Skunk, how do you do,
Roses, boises, pull an ear,
Roger Skunk, you never fear:
Bingo!”
He paused as a rapt expression widened out from his daughter’s nostrils, forcing her eyebrows up and her lower lip down in a wide noiseless grin, an expression in which Jack was startled to recognise his wife feigning pleasure at cocktail parties. “And all of a sudden,” he whispered, “the whole inside of the wizard’s house was full of the smell of — roses! ‘Roses!’ Roger Fish cried. And the wizard said, very cranky, “That’ll be seven pennies.”

“Daddy.”
“What?”
“Roger Skunk. You said Roger Fish.”
“Yes. Skunk.”
“You said Roger Fish. Wasn’t that silly?”
“Very silly of your stupid old daddy. Where was I? Well, you know about the pennies.”
“Say it.”
“O.K. Roger Skunk said, ‘But all I have is four pennies,’ and he began to cry.” Jo made the crying face again, but this time without a trace of sincerity. This annoyed Jack. Downstairs some more furniture rumbled. Clare shouldn’t move heavy things; she was six months pregnant. It would be their third.

“So the wizard said, ‘Oh, very well. Go to the end of the lane and turn around three times and look down the magic well and there you will find three pennies. Hurry up.’ So Roger Skunk went to the end of the lane and turned around three times and there in the magic well were three pennies! So he took them back to the wizard and was very happy and ran out into the woods and all the other little animals gathered around him because he smelled so good. And they played tag, baseball, football, basketball, lacrosse, hockey, soccer, and pick-up-sticks.”

“What’s pick-up-sticks?”
“It’s a game you play with sticks.”
“Like the wizard’s magic wand?”
“Kind of. And they played games and laughed all afternoon and then it began to get dark and they all ran home to their mommies.”
Jo was starting to fuss with her hands and look out of the window, at the crack of day that showed under the shade. She thought the story was all over. Jack didn’t like women when they took anything for granted; he liked them apprehensive, hanging on his words. “Now, Jo, are you listening?”

“Yes.”

“Because this is very interesting. Roger Skunk’s mommy said, ‘What’s that awful smell?’

“Wha-at?”

“And, Roger Skunk said, ‘It’s me, Mommy. I smell like roses.’ And she said, ‘Who made you smell like that?’ And he said, ‘The wizard,’ and she said, ‘Well, of all the nerve. You come with me and we’re going right back to that very awful wizard.’

Jo sat up, her hands dabling in the air with genuine fright. “But Daddy, then he said about the other little animals run away!” Her hands skittered off, into the underbrush.

“All right. He said, ‘But Mommy, all the other little animals run away,’ and she said, ‘I don’t care. You smelled the way a little skunk should have and I’m going to take you right back to that wizard,’ and she took an umbrella and went back with Roger Skunk and hit that wizard right over the head.”

“No,” Jo said, and put her hand out to touch his lips, yet even in her agitation did not quite dare to stop the source of truth. Inspiration came to her. “Then the wizard hit her on the head and did not change that little skunk back.”

“No,” he said. “The wizard said ‘O.K.’ and Roger Skunk did not smell of roses any more. He smelled very bad again.”

“But the other little amum — oh! — amum — ”

“Joanne. It’s Daddy’s story. Shall Daddy not tell you any more stories?” Her broad face looked at him through sifted light, astounded. “This is what happened, then. Roger Skunk
and his mommy went home and they heard *Woo-oo, wooo-oo* and it was the choo-choo train bringing Daddy Skunk home from Boston. And they had lima beans, celery, liver, mashed potatoes, and Pie-Oh-My for dessert. And when Roger Skunk was in bed Mommy Skunk came up and hugged him and said he smelled like her little baby skunk again and she loved him very much. And that’s the end of the story.”

“But Daddy.”

“What?”

“Then did the other little animals run away?”

“No, because eventually they got used to the way he was and did not mind it at all.”

“What’s evenshiladee?”

“In a little while.”

“That was a stupid mommy.”

“It was not,” he said with rare emphasis, and believed, from her expression, that she realised he was defending his own mother to her, or something as odd. “Now I want you to put your big heavy head in the pillow and have a good long nap.” He adjusted the shade so not even a crack of day showed, and tiptoed to the door, in the pretense that she was already asleep. But when he turned, she was crouching on top of the covers and staring at him. “Hey. Get under the covers and fall faaast asleep. Bobby’s asleep.”

She stood up and bounced gingerly on the springs.

“Daddy.”

“What?”

“Tomorrow, I want you to tell me the story that that wizard took that magic wand and hit that mommy” — her plump arms chopped forcefully — “right over the head.”

“No. That’s not the story. The point is that the little skunk loved his mommy more than he loved all the other little animals and she knew what was right.”

“No. Tomorrow you say he hit that mommy. Do it.” She kicked her legs up and sat down on the bed with a great heave and complaint of springs, as she had done hundreds of times.
before, except that this time she did not laugh. “Say it, Daddy.” “Well, we’ll see. Now at least have a rest. Stay on the bed. You’re a good girl.”

He closed the door and went downstairs. Clare had spread the newspapers and opened the paint can and, wearing an old shirt of his on top of her maternity smock, was stroking the chair rail with a dipped brush. Above him footsteps vibrated and he called, “Joanne! Shall I come up there and spank you?” The footsteps hesitated. “That was a long story,” Clare said. “The poor kid,” he answered, and with utter weariness watched his wife labour. The woodwork, a cage of moldings and rails and baseboards all around them, was half old tan and half new ivory and he felt caught in an ugly middle position, and though he as well felt his wife’s presence in the cage with him, he did not want to speak with her, work with her, touch her, anything.

Reading with Insight

1. What is the moral issue that the story raises?
2. How does Jo want the story to end and why?
3. Why does Jack insist that it was the wizard that was hit and not the mother?
4. What makes Jack feel caught in an ugly middle position?
5. What is your stance regarding the two endings to the Roger Skunk story?
6. Why is an adult’s perspective on life different from that of a child’s?
Before you read

This is a play featuring an old man and a small boy meeting in the former’s garden. The old man strikes up a friendship with the boy who is very withdrawn and defiant. What is the bond that unites the two?

Scene One

Mr Lamb’s garden [There is the occasional sound of birdsong and of tree leaves rustling. Derry’s footsteps are heard as he walks slowly and tentatively through the long grass. He pauses, then walks on again. He comes round a screen of bushes, so that when Mr Lamb speaks to him he is close at hand and Derry is startled]

Mr Lamb: Mind the apples!
Derry: What? Who’s that? Who’s there?
Mr Lamb: Lamb’s my name. Mind the apples. Crab apples those are. Windfalls in the long grass. You could trip.
Derry: I….there….I thought this was an empty place. I didn’t know there was anybody here....
Mr Lamb: That's all right. I'm here. What are you afraid of, boy? That's all right.

Derry: I thought it was empty....an empty house.

Mr Lamb: So it is. Since I'm out here in the garden. It is empty. Until I go back inside. In the meantime, I'm out here and likely to stop. A day like this. Beautiful day. Not a day to be indoors.

Derry: [Panic] I've got to go.

Mr Lamb: Not on my account. I don't mind who comes into the garden. The gate's always open. Only you climbed the garden wall.

Derry: [Angry] You were watching me.

Mr Lamb: I saw you. But the gate's open. All welcome. You're welcome. I sit here. I like sitting.

Derry: I'd not come to steal anything.

Mr Lamb: No, no. The young lads steal....scrump the apples. You're not so young.

Derry: I just....wanted to come in. Into the garden.

Mr Lamb: So you did. Here we are, then.

Derry: You don't know who I am.

Mr Lamb: A boy. Thirteen or so.


Mr Lamb: Nothing to be afraid of. Just a garden. Just me.

Derry: But I'm not....I'm not afraid. [Pause] People are afraid of me.

Mr Lamb: Why should that be?

Derry: Everyone is. It doesn't matter who they are, or what they say, or how they look. How they pretend. I know. I can see.

Mr Lamb: See what?

Derry: What they think.

Mr Lamb: What do they think, then?

Derry: You think.... 'Here's a boy.' You look at me...and then you see my face and you think. 'That's bad. That's a terrible thing. That's the ugliest thing I ever saw.' You think, 'Poor boy.' But I'm not. Not poor. Underneath, you are afraid. Anybody would be. I am. When I look in the mirror, and see it, I'm afraid of me.
MR LAMB: No, Not the whole of you. Not of you.

DERRY: Yes!

[Pause]

MR LAMB: Later on, when it's a bit cooler, I'll get the ladder and a stick, and pull down those crab apples. They're ripe for it. I make jelly. It's a good time of year, September. Look at them....orange and golden. That's magic fruit. I often say. But it's best picked and made into jelly. You could give me a hand.

DERRY: What have you changed the subject for? People always do that. Why don't you ask me? Why do you do what they all do and pretend it isn't true and isn't there? In case I see you looking and mind and get upset? I'll tell....you don't ask me because you're afraid to.

MR LAMB: You want me to ask....say so, then.

DERRY: I don't like being with people. Any people.

MR LAMB: I should say....to look at it.... I should say, you got burned in a fire.

DERRY: Not in a fire. I got acid all down that side of my face and it burned it all away. It ate my face up. It ate me up. And now it's like this and it won't ever be any different.
**Mr Lamb:** No.

**Derry:** Aren’t you interested?

**Mr Lamb:** You’re a boy who came into the garden. Plenty do. I’m interested in anybody. Anything. There’s nothing God made that doesn’t interest me. Look over there....over beside the far wall. What can you see?

**Derry:** Rubbish.

**Mr Lamb:** Rubbish? Look, boy, look....what do you see?

**Derry:** Just....grass and stuff. Weeds.

**Mr Lamb:** Some call them weeds. If you like, then....a weed garden, that. There’s fruit and there are flowers, and trees and herbs. All sorts. But over there....weeds. I grow weeds there. Why is one green, growing plant called a weed and another ‘flower’? Where’s the difference. It’s all life.... growing. Same as you and me.

**Derry:** We’re not the same.

**Mr Lamb:** I’m old. You’re young. You’ve got a burned face, I’ve got a tin leg. Not important. You’re standing there....I’m sitting here. Where’s the difference?

**Derry:** Why have you got a tin leg?

**Mr Lamb:** Real one got blown off, years back. Lamey-Lamb, some kids say. Haven’t you heard them? You will. Lamey-Lamb. It fits. Doesn’t trouble me.

**Derry:** But you can put on trousers and cover it up and no one sees, they don’t have to notice and stare.

**Mr Lamb:** Some do. Some don’t. They get tired of it, in the end. There’s plenty of other things to stare at.

**Derry:** Like my face.

**Mr Lamb:** Like crab apples or the weeds or a spider climbing up a silken ladder, or my tall sun-flowers.

**Derry:** Things.

**Mr Lamb:** It’s all relative. Beauty and the beast.

**Derry:** What’s that supposed to mean?

**Mr Lamb:** You tell me.

**Derry:** You needn’t think they haven’t all told me that fairy story before. ‘It’s not what you look like, it’s what you are inside. Handsome is as handsome does. Beauty
loved the monstrous beast for himself and when she kissed him he changed into a handsome prince.' Only he wouldn't, he'd have stayed a monstrous beast. I won't change.

**Mr Lamb:** In that way? No, you won't.

**Derry:** And no one'll kiss me, ever. Only my mother, and she kisses me on the other side of my face, and I don't like my mother to kiss me, she does it because she has to. Why should I like that? I don't care if nobody ever kisses me.

**Mr Lamb:** Ah, but do you care if you never kiss them.

**Derry:** What?

**Mr Lamb:** Girls. Pretty girls. Long hair and large eyes. People you love.

**Derry:** Who'd let me? Not one.

**Mr Lamb:** Who can tell?

**Derry:** I won't ever look different. When I'm as old as you, I'll look the same. I'll still only have half a face.

**Mr Lamb:** So you will. But the world won't. The world's got a whole face, and the world's there to be looked at.

**Derry:** Do you think this is the world? This old garden?

**Mr Lamb:** When I'm here. Not the only one. But the world, as much as anywhere.

**Derry:** Does your leg hurt you?

**Mr Lamb:** Tin doesn't hurt, boy!

**Derry:** When it came off, did it?

**Mr Lamb:** Certainly.

**Derry:** And now? I mean, where the tin stops, at the top?

**Mr Lamb:** Now and then. In wet weather. It doesn't signify.

**Derry:** Oh, that's something else they all say. 'Look at all those people who are in pain and brave and never cry and never complain and don't feel sorry for themselves.'

**Mr Lamb:** I haven't said it.

**Derry:** And think of all those people worse off than you. Think, you might have been blinded, or born deaf, or have to live in a wheelchair, or be daft in your head and dribble.
And that’s all true, and you know it.

It won’t make my face change. Do you know, one day, a woman went by me in the street — I was at a bus-stop — and she was with another woman, and she looked at me, and she said.... whispered.... only I heard her.... she said, “Look at that, that’s a terrible thing. That’s a face only a mother could love.”

So you believe everything you hear, then?

It was cruel.

Maybe not meant as such. Just something said between them.

Only I heard it. I heard.

And is that the only thing you ever heard anyone say, in your life?

Oh no! I’ve heard a lot of things.

So now you keep your ears shut.

You’re....peculiar. You say peculiar things. You ask questions I don’t understand.

I like to talk. Have company. You don’t have to answer questions. You don’t have to stop here at all. The gate’s open.

Yes, but...

I’ve a hive of bees behind those trees over there. Some hear bees and they say, bees buzz. But when you listen to bees for a long while, they humm....and hum means ‘sing’. I hear them singing, my bees.

But....I like it here. I came in because I liked it.... when I looked over the wall.

If you’d seen me, you’d not have come in.

No.

No.

It’d have been trespassing.

Ah. That’s not why.

I don’t like being near people. When they stare.... when I see them being afraid of me.

You could lock yourself up in a room and never leave it. There was a man who did that. He was afraid,
you see. Of everything. Everything in this world. A bus might run him over, or a man might breathe deadly germs onto him, or a donkey might kick him to death, or lightning might strike him down, or he might love a girl and the girl would leave him, and he might slip on a banana skin and fall and people who saw him would laugh their heads off. So he went into this room, and locked the door, and got into his bed, and stayed there.

**Derry:** For ever?

**Mr Lamb:** For a while.

**Derry:** Then what?

**Mr Lamb:** A picture fell off the wall on to his head and killed him.

* [Derry laughs a lot]

**Mr Lamb:** You see?

**Derry:** But...you still say peculiar things.

**Mr Lamb:** Peculiar to some.

**Derry:** What do you do all day?

**Mr Lamb:** Sit in the sun. Read books. Ah, you thought it was an empty house, but inside, it’s full. Books and other things. Full.

**Derry:** But there aren’t any curtains at the windows.

**Mr Lamb:** I’m not fond of curtains. Shutting things out, shutting things in. I like the light and the darkness, and the windows open, to hear the wind.

**Derry:** Yes. I like that. When it’s raining, I like to hear it on the roof.

**Mr Lamb:** So you’re not lost, are you? Not altogether? You do hear things. You listen.

**Derry:** They talk about me. Downstairs, When I’m not there. ‘What’ll he ever do? What’s going to happen to him when we’ve gone? How ever will he get on in this world? Looking like that? With that on his face?’ That’s what they say.
Mr Lamb: Lord, boy, you've got two arms, two legs and eyes and ears, you've got a tongue and a brain. You'll get on the way you want, like all the rest. And if you chose, and set your mind to it, you could get on better than all the rest.

Derry: How?

Mr Lamb: Same way as I do.

Derry: Do you have any friends?

Mr Lamb: Hundreds.

Derry: But you live by yourself in that house. It's a big house, too.

Mr Lamb: Friends everywhere. People come in.... everybody knows me. The gate’s always open. They come and sit here. And in front of the fire in winter. Kids come for the apples and pears. And for toffee. I make toffee with honey. Anybody comes. So have you.

Derry: But I'm not a friend.

Mr Lamb: Certainly you are. So far as I'm concerned. What have you done to make me think you're not?

Derry: You don't know me. You don't know where I come from or even what my name is.

Mr Lamb: Why should that signify? Do I have to write all your particulars down and put them in a filing box, before you can be a friend?

Derry: I suppose...not. No.

Mr Lamb: You could tell me your name. If you chose. And not, if you didn’t.

Derry: Derry. Only it’s Derek....but I hate that. Derry. If I'm your friend, you don't have to be mine. I choose that.

Mr Lamb: Certainly.

Derry: I might never come here again, you might never see me again and then I couldn’t still be a friend.

Mr Lamb: Why not?

Derry: How could I? You pass people in the street and you might even speak to them, but you never see them again. It doesn’t mean they’re friends.
Mr. Lamb: Doesn't mean they're enemies, either, does it?
Derry: No they're just...nothing. People. That's all.
Mr. Lamb: People are never just nothing. Never.
Derry: There are some people I hate.
Mr. Lamb: That'd do you more harm than any bottle of acid. Acid only burns your face.
Derry: Only....
Mr. Lamb: Like a bomb only blew up my leg. There's worse things can happen. You can burn yourself away inside.
Derry: After I'd come home, one person said, “He'd have been better off stopping in there. In the hospital. He'd be better off with others like himself.” She thinks blind people only ought to be with other blind people and idiot boys with idiot boys.
Mr. Lamb: And people with no legs altogether?
Derry: That's right.
Mr. Lamb: What kind of a world would that be?
Derry: At least there’d be nobody to stare at you because you weren’t like them.
Mr. Lamb: So you think you’re just the same as all the other people with burned faces? Just by what you look like? Ah....everything’s different. Everything’s the same, but everything is different. Itself.
Derry: How do you make all that out?
Mr. Lamb: Watching. Listening. Thinking.
Derry: I’d like a place like this. A garden. I’d like a house with no curtains.
Mr. Lamb: The gate’s always open.
Derry: But this isn’t mine.
Mr. Lamb: Everything’s yours if you want it. What’s mine is anybody’s.
Derry: So I could come here again? Even if you were out....I could come here.
Mr. Lamb: Certainly. You might find others here, of course.
Derry: Oh....
Mr. Lamb: Well, that needn’t stop you, you needn’t mind.
Derry: It’d stop them. They’d mind me. When they saw me here. They look at my face and run.
Mr Lamb: They might. They might not. You’d have to take the risk. So would they.
Derry: No, you would. You might have me and lose all your other friends, because nobody wants to stay near me if they can help it.
Mr Lamb: I’ve not moved.
Derry: No....
Mr Lamb: When I go down the street, the kids shout ‘Lamey-Lamb.’ But they still come into the garden, into my house; it’s a game. They’re not afraid of me. Why should they be? Because I’m not afraid of them, that’s why not.
Derry: Did you get your leg blown off in the war?
Mr Lamb: Certainly.
Derry: How will you climb on a ladder and get the crab apples down, then?
Mr Lamb: Oh, there’s a lot of things I’ve learned to do, and plenty of time for it. Years. I take it steady.
Derry: If you fell and broke your neck, you could lie on the grass and die. If you were on your own.
Mr Lamb: I could.
Derry: You said I could help you.
Mr Lamb: If you want to.
Derry: But my mother’ll want to know where I am. It’s three miles home, across the fields. I’m fourteen. but they still want to know where I am.
Mr Lamb: People worry.
Derry: People fuss.
Mr Lamb: Go back and tell them.
Derry: It’s three miles.
Mr Lamb: It’s a fine evening. You’ve got legs.
Derry: Once I got home, they’d never let me come back.
Mr Lamb: Once you got home, you’d never let yourself come back.
Derry: You don’t know....you don’t know what I could do.
Mr Lamb: No. Only you know that.
Derry: If I chose....
Mr Lamb: Ah....if you chose. I don’t know everything, boy. I can’t tell you what to do.
Derry: They tell me.
Mr Lamb: Do you have to agree?
Derry: I don’t know what I want. I want...something no one else has got or ever will have. Something just mine. Like this garden. I don’t know what it is.
Mr Lamb: You could find out.
Derry: How?
Mr Lamb: Waiting. Watching. Listening. Sitting here or going there. I’ll have to see to the bees.
Derry: Those other people who come here....do they talk to you? Ask you things?
Mr Lamb: Some do, some don’t. I ask them. I like to learn.
Derry: I don’t believe in them. I don’t think anybody ever comes. You’re here all by yourself and miserable and no one would know if you were alive or dead and nobody cares.
Mr Lamb: You think what you please.
Derry: All right then, tell me some of their names.
Mr Lamb: What are names? Tom, Dick or Harry.
[Getting up] I’m off down to the bees.
Derry: I think you’re daft....crazy....
Mr Lamb: That’s a good excuse.
Derry: What for? You don’t talk sense.
Mr Lamb: Good excuse not to come back. And you’ve got a burned-up face, and that’s other people’s excuse.
Derry: You’re like the others, you like to say things like that. If you don’t feel sorry for my face, you’re frightened of it, and if you’re not frightened, you think I’m ugly as a devil. I am a devil. Don’t you? [Shouts]
[Mr Lamb does not reply. He has gone to his bees.]
Derry: [Quietly] No. You don’t. I like it here.
[Derry runs off. Silence. The sounds of the garden again.]
MR LAMB: [To himself] There my dears. That’s you seen to. Ah....you know. We all know. I’ll come back. They never do, though. Not them. Never do come back. [The garden noises fade.]

SCENE TWO

Derry’s house.

MOTHER: You think I don’t know about him, you think. I haven’t heard things?
DERRY: You shouldn’t believe all you hear.
MOTHER: Been told. Warned. We’ve not lived here three months, but I know what there is to know and you’re not to go back there.
DERRY: What are you afraid of? What do you think he is? An old man with a tin leg and he lives in a huge house without curtains and has a garden. And I want to be there, and sit and....listen to things. Listen and look.
MOTHER: Listen to what?
DERRY: Bees singing. Him talking.
MOTHER: And what’s he got to say to you?
DERRY: Things that matter. Things nobody else has ever said. Things I want to think about.
MOTHER: Then you stay here and do your thinking. You’re best off here.
DERRY: I hate it here.
MOTHER: You can’t help the things you say. I forgive you. It’s bound to make you feel bad things....and say them. I don’t blame you.
DERRY: It’s got nothing to do with my face and what I look like. I don’t care about that and it isn’t important. It’s what I think and feel and what I want to see and find out and hear. And I’m going back there. Only to help him with the crab apples. Only to look at things and listen. But I’m going.
MOTHER: You’ll stop here.
DERRY: Oh no, oh no. Because if I don’t go back there, I’ll never go anywhere in this world again.

[The door slams. Derry runs, panting.]

And I want the world....I want it....I want it....

[The sound of his panting fades.]

**Scene Three**

*Mr Lamb’s garden [Garden sounds: the noise of a branch shifting; apples thumping down; the branch shifting again.]*

**Mr Lamb:** Steady....that’s....got it. That’s it... [More apples fall] And again. That’s it....and....

[A click. A crash. The ladder falls back, Mr Lamb with it. A thump. The branch swishes back. Creaks. Then silence. Derry opens the garden gate, still panting.]

**Derry:** You see, you see! I came back. You said I wouldn’t and they said....but I came back, I wanted....

[He stops dead. Silence.]

Mr Lamb, Mr....You’ve.....

[He runs through the grass. Stops. Kneels]

Mr Lamb, It’s all right....You fell....I’m here, Mr Lamb, It’s all right.

[Silence]
I came back. Lamey-Lamb. I did.....come back.  
[Derry begins to weep.]

**The End**

**Reading with Insight**

1. What is it that draws Derry towards Mr Lamb inspite of himself?
2. In which section of the play does Mr Lamb display signs of loneliness and disappointment? What are the ways in which Mr Lamb tries to overcome these feelings?
3. The actual pain or inconvenience caused by a physical impairment is often much less than the sense of alienation felt by the person with disabilities. What is the kind of behaviour that the person expects from others?
4. Will Derry get back to his old seclusion or will Mr Lamb’s brief association effect a change in the kind of life he will lead in the future?

**How about...**

using your imagination to suggest another ending to the above story.
Before you read

Should criminals in prison be given the opportunity of learning and education?

Dramatis Personae

The Secretary of the Examinations Board
The Governor of HM Prison, Oxford
James Evans, a prisoner
Mr Jackson, a prison officer
Mr Stephens, a prison officer
The Reverend S. McLeery, an invigilator
Mr Carter, Detective Superintendent
Mr Bell, Detective Chief Inspector

All precautions have been taken to see to it that the O-level German examination arranged in the prison for Evans does not provide him with any means of escape.

It was in early March when the Secretary of the Examinations Board received the call from Oxford Prison.

“It’s a slightly unusual request, Governor, but I don’t see why we shouldn’t try to help. Just the one fellow, you say?”
“That’s it. Chap called Evans. Started night classes in O-level German last September. Says he’s dead keen to get some sort of academic qualification.”

“Is he any good?”

“He was the only one in the class, so you can say he’s had individual tuition all the time, really. Would have cost him a packet if he’d been outside.”

“Well, let’s give him a chance, shall we?”

“That’s jolly kind of you. What exactly’s the procedure now?”

“Oh, don’t worry about that. I’ll be sending you all the forms and stuff. What’s his name, you say? Evans?”

“James Roderick Evans.” It sounded rather grand.

“Just one thing, Governor. He’s not a violent sort of fellow, is he? I don’t want to know his criminal record or anything like that, but — ”

“No. There’s no record of violence. Quite a pleasant sort of chap, they tell me. Bit of a card, really. One of the stars at the Christmas concert. Imitations, you know the sort of thing: Mike Yarwood stuff. No, he’s just a congenital kleptomaniac, that’s all.” The Governor was tempted to add something else, but he thought better of it. He’d look after that particular side of things himself.

“Presumably,” said the Secretary, “you can arrange a room where — ”

“No problem. He’s in a cell on his own. If you’ve no objections, he can sit the exam in there.”

“That’s fine.”

“And we could easily get one of the parsons from St. Mary Mags to invigilate, if that’s — ”

“Fine, yes. They seem to have a lot of parsons there, don’t they?” The two men chuckled good-naturedly, and the Secretary had a final thought. “At least there’s one thing. You shouldn’t have much trouble keeping him incommunicado, should you?”

The Governor chuckled politely once more, reiterated his thanks, and slowly cradled the phone.

Evans!
“Evans the Break” as the prison officers called him. Thrice he’d escaped from prison, and but for the recent wave of unrest in the maximum-security establishments up north, he wouldn’t now be gracing the Governor’s premises in Oxford; and the Governor was going to make absolutely certain that he wouldn’t be disgracing them. Not that Evans was a real burden: just a persistent, nagging presence. He’d be all right in Oxford, though: the Governor would see to that — would see to it personally. And besides, there was just a possibility that Evans was genuinely interested in O-level German. Just a slight possibility. Just a very slight possibility. At 8.30 p.m. on Monday 7 June, Evans’s German teacher shook him by the hand in the heavily guarded Recreational Block, just across from D Wing.

“Guten Glück, Herr Evans.”
“Pardon?”
“I said, “Good luck”. Good luck for tomorrow.”
“Oh. Thanks, er, I mean, er, Danke Schön.”
“You haven’t a cat in hell’s chance of getting through, of course, but — ”
“I may surprise everybody,” said Evans.

At 8.30 the following morning, Evans had a visitor. Two visitors, in fact. He tucked his grubby string-vest into his equally grubby trousers, and stood up from his bunk, smiling cheerfully. “Mornin”, Mr Jackson. This is indeed an honour.”

Jackson was the senior prison officer on D Wing, and he and Evans had already become warm enemies. At Jackson’s side stood Officer Stephens, a burly, surly-looking man, only recently recruited to the profession.

Jackson nodded curtly. “And how’s our little Einstein this morning, then?”

“Wasn’t ’e a mathematician, Mr Jackson?”
“I think ’e was a Jew, Mr. Jackson.”

Evans’s face was unshaven, and he wore a filthy-looking red-and-white bobble hat upon his head. “Give me a chance, Mr Jackson. I was just goin’ to shave when you bust in.”
“Which reminds me.” Jackson turned his eyes on Stephens. “Make sure you take his razor out of the cell when he’s finished scraping that ugly mug of his. Clear? One of these days he’ll do us all a favour and cut his bloody throat.”

For a few seconds Evans looked thoughtfully at the man standing ramrod straight in front of him, a string of Second World War medals proudly paraded over his left breast-pocket. “Mr Jackson? Was it you who took my nail-scissors away?” Evans had always worried about his hands.

“And your nail-file, too.”

“Look!” For a moment Evans’s eyes smouldered dangerously, but Jackson was ready for him.

“Orders of the Governor, Evans.” He leaned forward and leered, his voice dropping to a harsh, contemptuous whisper. “You want to complain?”

Evans shrugged his shoulders lightly. The crisis was over. “You’ve got half an hour to smarten yourself up, Evans — and take that bloody hat off!”

“Me ’at? Huh!” Evans put his right hand lovingly on top of the filthy woollen, and smiled sadly. “D’you know, Mr Jackson, it’s the only thing that’s ever brought me any sort o’ luck in life. Kind o’ lucky charm, if you know what I mean. And today I thought — well, with me exam and all that…”

Buried somewhere in Jackson, was a tiny core of compassion; and Evans knew it.
“Just this once, then, Shirley Temple.” (If there was one thing that Jackson genuinely loathed about Evans it was his long, wavy hair.) “And get shaving!”

At 8.45 the same morning the Reverend Stuart McLeery left his bachelor flat in Broad Street and stepped out briskly towards Carfax. The weatherman reported temperatures considerably below the normal for early June, and a long black overcoat and a shallow-crowned clerical hat provided welcome protection from the steady drizzle which had set in half an hour earlier and which now spattered the thick lenses of his spectacles. In his right hand he was carrying a small brown suitcase, which contained all that he would need for his morning duties, including a sealed question paper envelope, a yellow invigilation form, a special “authentication” card from the Examinations Board, a paper knife, a Bible (he was to speak to the Women’s Guild that afternoon on the Book of Ruth), and a current copy of The Church Times.

The two-hour examination was scheduled to start at 9.15 a.m.

Evans was lathering his face vigorously when Stephens brought in two small square tables, and set them opposite each other in the narrow space between the bunk on the one side and on the other a distempered stone wall. Next, Stephens brought in two hard chairs, the slightly less battered of which he placed in front of the table which stood nearer the cell door.

Jackson put in a brief final appearance. “Behave yourself, laddy!”

Evans turned and nodded.

“And these” — (Jackson pointed to the pin-ups) — “off!”

Evans turned and nodded again. “I was goin’ to take em down anyway. A minister, isn’t ’e? The chap comin’ to sit in, I mean.”

“And how did you know that?” asked Jackson quietly.

“Well, I ’ad to sign some forms, didn’t I? And I couldn’t ’elp — ”

Evans drew the razor carefully down his left cheek, and left a neat swath in the white lather. “Can I ask you something,
Mr. Jackson? Why did they ‘ave to bug me in this cell?” He nodded his head vaguely to a point above the door.

“Not a very neat job,” conceded Jackson.

“They’re not — they don’t honestly think I’m goin’ to try to — ”

“They’re taking no chances, Evans. Nobody in his senses would take any chance with you.”

“Who’s goin’ to listen in?”

“I’ll tell you who’s going to listen in, laddy. It’s the Governor himself, see? He don’t trust you a bloody inch — and nor do I. I’ll be watching you like a hawk, Evans, so keep your nose clean. Clear?” He walked towards the door.

Evans nodded. He’d already thought of that, and Number Two Handkerchief was lying ready on the bunk — a neatly folded square of off-white linen.

“Just one more thing, Einstein.”

“Ya? Wha’s ‘at?”

“Good luck, old son.”

In the little lodge just inside the prison’s main gates, the Reverend S. McLeery signed his name neatly in the visitors’ book, and thence walked side by side with a silent prison officer across the exercise yard to D Wing, where he was greeted by Jackson. The Wing’s heavy outer door was unlocked, and locked behind them, the heavy inner door the same, and McLeery was handed into Stephens’s keeping.

“Get the razor?” murmured Jackson.

Stephens nodded.

“Well, keep your eyes skinned. Clear?”

Stephens nodded again; and McLeery, his feet clanging up the iron stairs, followed his new guide, and finally stood before a cell door, where Stephens opened the peep-hole and looked through.

“That’s him, sir.”

Evans, facing the door, sat quietly at the farther of the two tables, his whole attention riveted to a textbook of elementary German grammar. Stephens took the key from its ring, and the cell lock sprang back with a thudded, metallic twang.
It was 9.10 a.m. when the Governor switched on the receiver. He had instructed Jackson to tell Evans of the temporary little precaution — that was only fair. (As if Evans wouldn’t spot it!) But wasn’t it all a bit theatrical? Schoolboyish, almost? How on earth was Evans going to try anything on today? If he was so anxious to make another break, why in heaven’s name hadn’t he tried it from the Recreational Block? Much easier. But he hadn’t. And there he was now — sitting in a locked cell, all the prison officers on the alert, two more locked doors between his cell and the yard, and a yard with a wall as high as a haystack. Yes, Evans was as safe as houses...

Anyway, it wouldn’t be any trouble at all to have the receiver turned on for the next couple of hours or so. It wasn’t as if there was going to be anything to listen to, was it? Amongst other things, an invigilator’s duty was to ensure that the strictest silence was observed. But... but still that little nagging doubt! Might Evans try to take advantage of McLeery? Get him to smuggle in a chisel or two, or a rope ladder, or —

The Governor sat up sharply. It was all very well getting rid of any potential weapon that Evans could have used; but what about McLeery? What if, quite unwittingly, the innocent McLeery had brought in something himself? A jack-knife, perhaps? And what if Evans held him hostage with such a weapon?

The Governor reached for the phone. It was 9.12 a.m.

The examinee and the invigilator had already been introduced by Stephens when Jackson came back and shouted to McLeery through the cell door. “Can you come outside a minute, sir? You too, Stephens.”

Jackson quickly explained the Governor’s worries, and McLeery patiently held out his arms at shoulder level whilst Jackson lightly frisked his clothes. “Something hard here, sir.”

“Ma reading glasses,” replied McLeery, looking down at the spectacle case.

Jackson quickly reassured him, and bending down on the landing thumb-flicked the catches on the suitcase. He picked up each envelope in turn, carefully passed his palms along their surfaces — and seemed satisfied. He riffled
Evans Tries an O-Level

cursorily through a few pages of Holy Writ, and vaguely shook The Church Times. All right, so far. But one of the objects in McLeery’s suitcase was puzzling him sorely.

“Do you mind telling me why you’ve brought this, sir?” He held up a smallish semi-inflated rubber ring, such as a young child with a waist of about twelve inches might have struggled into. “You thinking of going for a swim, sir?”

McLeery’s hitherto amiable demeanour was slightly ruffled by this tasteless little pleasantry, and he answered Jackson somewhat sourly. “If ye must know, I suffer from haemorrhoids, and when I’m sitting down for any length o’ time —”

“Very sorry, sir. I didn’t mean to, er...” The embarrassment was still reddening Jackson’s cheeks when he found the paper-knife at the bottom of the case. “I think I’d better keep this though, if you don’t mind, that is, sir.”

It was 9.18 a.m. before the Governor heard their voices again, and it was clear that the examination was going to be more than a little late in getting under way.

McLeery: “Ye’ve got a watch?”
Evans: “Yes, sir.”

McLeery: “I’ll be telling ye when to start, and again when ye’ve five minutes left. A’ right?”
Silence.

McLeery: “There’s plenty more o’ this writing paper should ye need it.”
Silence.

McLeery: “Now. Write the name of the paper, 021-1, in the top left-hand corner.”
Silence.

McLeery: “In the top right-hand corner write your index number-313. And in the box just below that, write your centre number-271. A’ right?”

Will the exam now go as scheduled?
Silence. 9.20 a.m.

**McLeery:** “I’m now going to — ”

**Evans:** “E’s not goin’ to stay ’ere, is ’e?”

**McLeery:** “I don’t know about that. I — ”

**Stephens:** “Mr Jackson’s given me strict instructions to — ”

**Evans:** “How am I suppose to concentrate on my exam... with someone breathin’ down my neck? Christ! Sorry, sir, I didn’t mean — ”

The Governor reached for the phone. “Jackson? Ah, good. Get Stephens out of that cell, will you? I think we’re perhaps overdoing things.”

“As you wish, sir.”

The Governor heard the exchanges in the cell, heard the door clang once more, and heard McLeery announce that the examination had begun at last.

It was 9.25 a.m.; and there was a great calm.

At 9.40 a.m. the Examinations Board rang through, and the Assistant Secretary with special responsibility for modern languages asked to speak to the Governor. The examination had already started, no doubt? Ah, a quarter of an hour ago. Yes. Well, there was a correction slip which some fool had forgotten to place in the examination package. Very brief. “Could the Governor please...?”

“Yes, of course. I’ll put you straight through to Mr Jackson in D Wing. Hold the line a minute.”

Was this the sort of thing the Governor had feared? Was the phone call a fake? Some signal? Some secret message...?

But he could check on that immediately. He dialled the number of the Examinations Board, but heard only the staccato bleeps of a line engaged. But then the line *was* engaged, wasn’t it? Yes. Not very intelligent, that...

Two minutes later he heard some whispered communications in the cell, and then McLeery’s broad Scots voice:

“Will ye please stop writing a wee while, Mr Evans, and listen carefully. Candidates offering German, 021-1, should note the following correction. ‘On page three, line fifteen,
the fourth word should read goldenen, not, goldene; and the whole phrase will therefore read zum goldenen Lowen, not zum goldene Lowen.’ I will repeat that…”

The Governor listened and smiled. He had taken German in the sixth form himself, and he remembered all about the agreements of adjectives. And so did McLeery, by the sound of things, for the minister’s pronunciation was most impressive. But what about Evans? He probably didn’t know what an adjective was.

The phone rang again. The Magistrates’ Court. They needed a prison van and a couple of prison officers. Remand case. And within two minutes the Governor was wondering whether that could be a hoax. He told himself not to be so silly. His imagination was beginning to run riot.

Evans!

For the first quarter of an hour Stephens had dutifully peered through the peep-hole at intervals of one minute or so; and after that, every two minutes. At 10.45 a.m. everything was still all right as he looked through the peep-hole once more. It took four or five seconds — no more. What was the point? It was always more or less the same. Evans, his pen between his lips, sat staring straight in front of him towards the door, seeking — it seemed — some sorely needed inspiration from somewhere. And opposite him McLeery, seated slightly askew from the table now: his face in semi-profile; his hair (as Stephens had noticed earlier) amateurishly clipped pretty closely to the scalp; his eyes behind the pebble lenses peering short-sightedly at The Church Times; his right index finger hooked beneath the narrow clerical collar; and the fingers of the left hand, the nails meticulously manicured, slowly stroking the short black beard.

At 10.50 a.m. the receiver crackled to life and the Governor realised he’d almost forgotten Evans for a few minutes.

**Evans:** “Please, sir!” (A whisper)
**Evans:** “Please, sir!” (Louder)
**Evans:** “Would you mind if I put a blanket round me
shoulders, sir? It’s a bit parky in ’ere, isn’t it?”

Silence.

Evans: “There’s one on me bunk ’ere, sir.”

McLeery: “Be quick about it.”

Silence.

At 10.51 a.m. Stephens was more than a little surprised to see a grey regulation blanket draped round Evans’s shoulders, and he frowned slightly and looked at the examinee more closely. But Evans, the pen still between his teeth, was staring just as vacantly as before. Blankly beneath a blanket... Should Stephens report the slight irregularity? Anything at all fishy, hadn’t Jackson said? He looked through the peep-hole once again, and even as he did so Evans pulled the dirty blanket more closely to himself. Was he planning a sudden batman leap to suffocate McLeery in the blanket? Don’t be daft! There was never any sun on this side of the prison; no heating, either, during the summer months, and it could get quite chilly in some of the cells. Stephens decided to revert to his earlier every minute observation.

At 11.20 a.m. the receiver once more crackled across the silence of the Governor’s office, and McLeery informed Evans that only five minutes remained. The examination was almost over now, but something still gnawed away quietly in the Governor’s mind. He reached for the phone once more.

At 11.22 a.m. Jackson shouted along the corridor to Stephens. The Governor wanted to speak with him — “Hurry, man!” Stephens picked up the phone apprehensively and listened to the rapidly spoken orders. Stephens himself was to accompany McLeery to the main prison gates. Understood? Stephens personally was to make absolutely sure that the door was locked on Evans after McLeery had left the cell. Understood?

Understood.

At 11.25 a.m. the Governor heard the final exchanges.
McLeery: “Stop writing, please.”

Silence.

McLeery: “Put your sheets in order and see they’re correctly numbered.”

Silence.

Scraping of chairs and tables.

Evans: “Thank you very much, sir.”

McLeery: “A’ right, was it?”

Evans: “Not too bad.”

McLeery: “Good... Mr Stephens!” (Very loud)

The Governor heard the door clang for the last time.

The examination was over.

“How did he get on, do you think?” asked Stephens as he walked beside McLeery to the main gates.

“Och. I canna think he’s distinguished himself, I’m afraid.”

His Scots accent seemed broader than ever, and his long black overcoat, reaching almost to his knees, fostered the illusion that he had suddenly grown slimmer.

Stephens felt pleased that the Governor had asked him, and not Jackson, to see McLeery off the premises, and all in all the morning had gone pretty well. But something stopped him from making his way directly to the canteen for a belated cup of coffee. He wanted to take just one last look at Evans. It was like a programme he’d seen on TV — about a woman who could never really convince herself that she’d locked the front door when she’d gone to bed: often she’d got up twelve, fifteen, sometimes twenty times to check the bolts.

He re-entered D Wing, made his way along to Evans’s cell, and opened the peep-hole once more. Oh, no! CHRIST, NO! There, sprawled back in Evans’s chair was a man (for a semi second Stephens thought it must be Evans), a grey regulation blanket slipping from his shoulders, the front of his closely cropped, irregularly tufted hair awash...
with fierce red blood which had dripped already through the small black beard, and was even now spreading horribly over the white clerical collar and down into the black clerical front.

Stephens shouted wildly for Jackson: and the words appeared to penetrate the curtain of blood that veiled McLeery’s ears, for the minister’s hand felt feebly for a handkerchief from his pocket, and held it to his bleeding head, the blood seeping slowly through the white linen. He gave a long low moan, and tried to speak. But his voice trailed away, and by the time Jackson had arrived and despatched Stephens to ring the police and the ambulance, the handkerchief was a sticky, squelchy wodge of cloth.

McLeery slowly raised himself, his face twisted tightly with pain. “Dinna worry about the ambulance, man! I’m a’ right... I’m a’ right... Get the police! I know...I know where... he...” He closed his eyes and another drip of blood splashed like a huge red raindrop on the wooden floor. His hand felt along the table, found the German question paper, and grasped it tightly in his bloodstained hand. “Get the Governor! I know... I know where Evans...”

Almost immediately sirens were sounding, prison officers barked orders, puzzled prisoners pushed their way along the corridors, doors were banged and bolted, and phones were ringing everywhere. And within a minute McLeery, with Jackson and Stephens supporting him on either side, his face now streaked and caked with drying blood, was greeted in the prison yard by the Governor, perplexed and grim.

“We must get you to hospital immediately. I just don’t — ”

“Ye’ve called the police?”

“Yes, yes. They’re on their way. But — ”

“I’m a’ right. I’m a’ right. Look! Look here!” Awkwardly he opened the German question paper and thrust it before the Governor’s face. “It’s there! D’ye see what I mean?”

The Governor looked down and realised what McLeery was trying to tell him. A photocopied sheet had been carefully and cleverly superimposed over the last (originally blank) page of the question paper.
“Ye see what they’ve done, Governor. Ye see...” His voice trailed off again, as the Governor, dredging the layers of long neglected learning, willed himself to translate the German text before him:

_Sie sollen dem schon verabredeten Plan genau folgen. Der wichtige Zeitpunkt ist drei Minuten vor Ende des Examens..._

“You must follow the plan already somethinged. The vital point in time is three minutes before the end of the examination but something something — something something... Don’t hit him too hard — remember, he’s a minister! And don’t overdo the Scots accent when...”

A fast-approaching siren wailed to its crescendo, the great doors of the prison yard were pushed back, and a white police car squealed to a jerky halt beside them.

Detective Superintendent Carter swung himself out of the passenger seat and saluted the Governor. “What the hell’s happening, sir?” And, turning to McLeery: “Christ! Who’s hit him?”

But McLeery cut across whatever explanation the Governor might have given. “Elsfield Way, officer! I know where Evans...” He was breathing heavily, and leaned for support against the side of the car, where the imprint of his hand was left in tarnished crimson.

In bewilderment Carter looked to the Governor for guidance. “What — ?”

“Take him with you, if you think he’ll be all right. He’s the only one who seems to know what’s happening.”

Carter opened the back door and helped McLeery inside; and within a few seconds the car leaped away in a spurt of gravel.

“Elsfield Way”, McLeery had said; and there it was staring up at the Governor from the last few lines of the German text: “From Elsfield Way drive to the Headington roundabout, where...” Yes, of course. _The Examinations Board was in Elsfield Way_, and someone from the Board must have been involved in the escape plan from the very beginning: the question paper itself, the correction slip...

The Governor turned to Jackson and Stephens. “I don’t need to tell you what’s happened, do I?” His voice sounded
almost calm in its scathing contempt. “And which one of you two morons was it who took Evans for a nice little walk to the main gates and waved him bye-bye?”

“It was me, sir,” stammered Stephens. “Just like you told me, sir. I could have sworn — ”

“What? Just like I told you, you say? What the hell — ?”

“When you rang, sir, and told me to — ”

“When was that?” The Governor’s voice was a whiplash now.

“You know, sir. About twenty past eleven just before — ”

“You blithering idiot, man! It wasn’t me who rang you. Don’t you realise — ” But what was the use? He had used the telephone at that time, but only to try (unsuccessfully, once more) to get through to the Examinations Board.

He shook his head in growing despair and turned on the senior prison officer. “As for you, Jackson! How long have you been pretending you’ve got a brain, eh? Well, I’ll tell you something, Jackson. Your skull’s empty. Absolutely empty!” It was Jackson who had spent two hours in Evans’s cell the previous evening; and it was Jackson who had confidently reported that there was nothing hidden away there — nothing at all. And yet Evans had somehow managed to conceal not only a false beard, a pair of spectacles, a dogcollar and all the rest of his clerical paraphernalia, but also some sort of weapon with which he’d given McLeery such a terrible blow across the head. Aurrgh!

A prison van backed alongside, but the Governor made no immediate move. He looked down again at the last line of the German: “...to the Headington roundabout, where you go straight over and make your way to...to Neugraben.” “Neugraben”? Where on earth — ? “New” something. “Newgrave”? Never heard of it: There was a “Wargrave”, somewhere near Reading, but... No, it was probably a code word, or — And then it hit him. Newbury! God, yes! Newbury was a pretty big sort of place but —
He rapped out his orders to the driver. “St Aldates Police Station, and step on it! Take Jackson and Stephens here, and when you get there ask for Bell. Chief Inspector Bell. Got that?”

He leaped the stairs to his office three at a time, got Bell on the phone immediately, and put the facts before him.

“We'll get him, sir,” said Bell. “We'll get him, with a bit o’luck.”

The Governor sat back, and lit a cigarette. Ye gods! What a beautifully laid plan it had all been! What a clever fellow Evans was! Careless leaving that question paper behind; but then, they all made their mistakes somewhere along the line. Well, almost all of them. And that’s why very shortly Mr clever-clever Evans would be back inside doing his once more.

The phone on his desk erupted in a strident burst, and Superintendent Carter informed him that McLeery had spotted Evans driving off along Elsfield Way; they’d got the number of the car all right and had given chase immediately, but had lost him at the Headington roundabout; he must have doubled back into the city.

“No,” said the Governor quietly. “No, he’s on his way to Newbury.” He explained his reasons for believing so, and left it at that. It was a police job now — not his. He was just another good-for-a-giggle, gullible governor, that was all.

“By the way, Carter. I hope you managed to get McLeery to the hospital all right?”

“Yes. He’s in the Radcliffe now. Really groggy, he was, when we got to the Examination offices, and they rang for the ambulance from there.”

The Governor rang the Radcliffe a few minutes later and asked for the accident department.

“McLeery, you say?”

“Yes. He’s a parson.”
“I don’t think there’s anyone — ”
“Yes, there is. You’ll find one of your ambulances picked him up from Elsfield Way about — ”
“Oh, that. Yes, we sent an ambulance all right, but when we got there, the fellow had gone. No one seemed to know where he was. Just vanished! Not a sign — ”

But the Governor was no longer listening, and the truth seemed to hit him with an almost physical impact somewhere in the back of his neck.

A quarter of an hour later they found the Reverend S. McLeery, securely bound and gagged, in his study in Broad Street. He’d been there, he said, since 8.15 a.m., when two men had called and...

Enquiries in Newbury throughout the afternoon produced nothing. Nothing at all. And by tea-time everyone in the prison knew what had happened. It had not been Evans, impersonating McLeery, who had walked out; it had been Evans, impersonating McLeery, who had stayed in.

The fish and chips were delicious, and after a gentle stroll round the centre of Chipping Norton, Evans decided to return to the hotel and have an early night. A smart new hat concealed the wreckage of his closely cropped hair, and he kept it on as he walked up to the reception desk of the Golden Lion. It would take a good while for his hair to regain its former glories — but what the hell did that matter. He was out again, wasn’t he? A bit of bad luck, that, when Jackson had pinched his scissors, for it had meant a long and tricky operation with his only razor blade the previous night. Ah! But he’d had his good luck, too. Just think! If Jackson had made him take his bobble hat off! Phew! That really had been a close call. Still, old Jackson wasn’t such a bad fellow...

One of the worst things — funny, really! — had been the beard. He’d always been allergic to sticking plaster, and even now his chin was irritatingly sore and red.
The receptionist wasn’t the same girl who’d booked him in, but the change was definitely for the better. As he collected his key, he gave her his best smile, told her he wouldn’t be bothering with breakfast, ordered the *Daily Express*, and asked for an early-morning call at 6.45 a.m. Tomorrow was going to be another busy day.

He whistled softly to himself as he walked up the broad stairs... He’d sort of liked the idea of being dressed up as a minister dog collar and everything. Yes, it had been a jolly good idea for “McLeery” to wear *two* black fronts, *two* collars. But that top collar! Phew! It had kept on slipping off the back stud; and there’d been that one panicky moment when “McLeery” had only just got his hand up to his neck in time to stop the collars springing apart before Stephens... Ah! They’d got *that* little problem worked out all right, though: a pen stuck in the mouth whenever the evil eye had appeared at the peep-hole. Easy! But all that fiddling about under the blanket with the black front and the stud at the back of the collar — that had been far more difficult than they’d ever bargained for... Everything else had gone beautifully smoothly, though. In the car he’d found everything they’d promised him: soap and water, clothes, the map — yes, the *map*, of course. The Ordnance Survey Map of Oxfordshire... He’d got some good friends; some very clever friends. Christ, ah!

He unlocked his bedroom door and closed it quietly behind him — and then stood frozen to the spot, like a man who has just caught a glimpse of the Gorgon.

Sitting on the narrow bed was the very last man in the world that Evans had expected — or wanted — to see.

“It’s not worth trying anything,” said the Governor quietly, as Evans’s eyes darted desperately around the room. “I’ve got men all round the place.” (Well, there were only *two*, really: but Evans needn’t know that.) He let the words sink in. “Women, too. Didn’t you think the blonde girl in reception was rather sweet?”

Evans was visibly shaken. He sat down slowly in the only chair the small room could offer, and held his head between his hands. For several minutes there was utter silence.
Finally, he spoke. “It was that bloody correction slip, I s’pose.”

“We-ell” (the Governor failed to mask the deep satisfaction in his voice) “there are a few people who know a little German.”

Slowly, very slowly, Evans relaxed. He was beaten — and he knew it. He sat up at last, and managed to smile ruefully.

“You know, it wasn’t really a mistake. You see, we ‘adn’t been able to fix up any ‘otel, but we could’ve worked that some other way. No. The really important thing was for the phone to ring just before the exam finished — to get everyone out of the way for a couple of minutes. So we ‘ad to know exactly when the exam started, didn’t we?”
“And, like a fool, I presented you with that little piece of information on a plate.”

“Well, somebody did. So, you see, sir, that correction slip killed two little birds with a single stone, didn’t it? The name of the ‘otel for me, and the exact time the exam started for, er, for, er...”

The Governor nodded. “It’s a pretty common word.”

“Good job it is pretty common, sir, or I’d never ‘ave known where to come to, would I?”

“Nice name, though: zum goldenen Lowen.”

“How did you know which Golden Lion it was? There’s ‘undreds of ‘em.”

“Same as you, Evans. Index number 313; Centre number 271. Remember? Six figures? And if you take an Ordnance Survey Map for Oxfordshire, you find that the six-figure reference 313/271 lands you bang in the middle of Chipping Norton.”

“Yea, you’re right. Huh! We’d ‘oped you’d run off to Newbury.”

“We did.”

“Well, that’s something, I s’pose.”

“That question paper, Evans. Could you really understand all that German? I could hardly — ”

“Nah! Course I couldn’t. I knew roughly what it was all about, but we just ‘oped it’d throw a few spanners in the works — you know, sort of muddle everybody a bit.’

The Governor stood up. “Tell me one thing before we go. How on earth did you get all that blood to pour over your head?”

Evans suddenly looked a little happier. “Clever, sir. Very clever, that was — ’ow to get a couple o’ pints of blood into a cell, eh? When there’s none there to start off with, and when, er, and when the “invigilator”, shall we say, gets, searched before ‘e comes in. Yes, sir. You can well ask about that, and I dunno if I ought to tell you. After all, I might want to use that particular — ”

“Anything to do with a little rubber ring for piles, perhaps?”

Evans grinned feebly. “Clever, though, wasn’t it?”
“Must have been a tricky job sticking a couple of pints
“Nah! You’ve got it wrong, sir. No problem about that.”
“No?”
“Nah! It’s the clotting, you see. That’s the big trouble.
We got the blood easy enough. Pig’s blood, it was — from the
slaughter house in Kidlington. But to stop it clotting you’ve got
to mix yer actual blood” (Evans took a breath) “with one tenth
of its own volume of 3.8 per cent trisodium citrate! Didn’t
know that, did you, sir?”

The Governor shook his head in a token of reluctant
admiration. “We learn something new every day, they tell me.
Come on, m’lad.”

Evans made no show of resistance, and side by side the
two men walked slowly down the stairs.

“Tell me, Evans. How did you manage to plan all this
business? You’ve had no visitors — I’ve seen to that. You’ve
had no letters — ”
“T’ve got lots of friends, though.”
“What’s that supposed to mean?”
“Me German teacher, for a start.”
“You mean — ? But he was from the Technical College.”
“Was ‘e?” Evans was almost enjoying it all now. “Ever check up on ‘im, sir?”
“God Almighty! There’s far more going on than I — ”
“Always will be, sir.”
“Everything ready?” asked the Governor as they stood by
the reception desk.

“The van’s out the front, sir,” said the pretty blonde
receptionist. Evans winked at her; and she winked back at
him. It almost made his day.

A silent prison officer handcuffed the recaptured Evans,
and together the two men clambered awkwardly into the back
seat of the prison van.

“See you soon, Evans.” It was almost as if the Governor
were saying farewell to an old friend after a cocktail party.

“Cheerio, sir. I, er, I was just wonderin’. I know your
German’s pretty good, sir, but do you know any more o’ these
modern languages?”
“Not very well. Why?”
Evans settled himself comfortably on the back seat, and grinned happily. ‘Nothin’, really. I just ‘apppened to notice that you’ve got some O-level Italian classes comin’ up next September, that’s all.’

“Perhaps you won’t be with us next September, Evans.”

James Roderick Evans appeared to ponder the Governor’s words deeply. “No. P’r’aps I won’t,” he said.

As the prison van turned right from Chipping Norton on to the Oxford road, the hitherto silent prison officer unlocked the handcuffs and leaned forward towards the driver, ‘For Christ’s sake get a move on! It won’t take ‘em long to find out —’

“Where do ye suggest we make for?” asked the driver, in a broad Scots accent..

“What about Newbury?” suggested Evans.
Reading with Insight

1. Reflecting on the story, what did you feel about Evans’ having the last laugh?

2. When Stephens comes back to the cell he jumps to a conclusion and the whole machinery blindly goes by his assumption without even checking the identity of the injured ‘McLeery’. Does this show how hasty conjectures can prevent one from seeing the obvious? How is the criminal able to predict such negligence?

3. What could the Governor have done to securely bring back Evans to prison when he caught him at the Golden Lion? Does that final act of foolishness really prove that “he was just another good-for-a-giggle, gullible governor, that was all”?

4. While we condemn the crime, we are sympathetic to the criminal. Is this the reason why prison staff often develop a soft corner for those in custody?

5. Do you agree that between crime and punishment it is mainly a battle of wits?
Memories of Childhood
Zitkala-Sa and Bama

Before you read

This unit presents autobiographical episodes from the lives of two women from marginalised communities who look back on their childhood, and reflect on their relationship with the mainstream culture. The first account is by an American Indian woman born in the late nineteenth century; the second is by a contemporary Tamil Dalit writer.

Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, born in 1876, was an extraordinarily talented and educated Native American woman who struggled and triumphed in a time when severe prejudice prevailed towards Native American culture and women. As a writer, she adopted the pen name ‘Zitkala-Sa’ and in 1900 began publishing articles criticising the Carlisle Indian school. Her works criticised dogma, and her life as a Native American woman was dedicated against the evils of oppression.

Bama is the pen-name of a Tamil Dalit woman from a Roman Catholic family. She has published three main works: an autobiography, ‘Karukku’, 1992; a novel, ‘Sangati’, 1994; and a collection of short stories, ‘Kisumbukkaaran’, 1996. The following excerpt has been taken from ‘Karukku’. ‘Karukku’ means ‘Palmyra’ leaves, which with their serrated edges on both sides, are like double-edged swords. By a felicitous pun, the Tamil word ‘Karukku’, containing the word ‘karu’, embryo or seed, also means freshness, newness.
I. The Cutting of My Long Hair

The first day in the land of apples was a bitter-cold one; for the snow still covered the ground, and the trees were bare. A large bell rang for breakfast, its loud metallic voice crashing through the belfry overhead and into our sensitive ears. The annoying clatter of shoes on bare floors gave us no peace. The constant clash of harsh noises, with an undercurrent of many voices murmuring an unknown tongue, made a bedlam within which I was securely tied. And though my spirit tore itself in struggling for its lost freedom, all was useless.

A paleface woman, with white hair, came up after us. We were placed in a line of girls who were marching into the dining room. These were Indian girls, in stiff shoes and closely clinging dresses. The small girls wore sleeved aprons and shingled hair. As I walked noiselessly in my soft moccasins, I felt like sinking to the floor, for my blanket had been stripped from my shoulders. I looked hard at the Indian girls, who seemed not to care that they were even more immodestly dressed than I, in their tightly fitting clothes. While we marched in, the boys entered at an opposite door. I watched for the three young braves who came in our party. I spied them in the rear ranks, looking as uncomfortable as I felt. A small bell was tapped, and each of the pupils drew a chair from under the table. Supposing this act meant they were to be seated, I pulled out mine and at once slipped into it from one side. But when I turned my head, I saw that I was the only one seated, and all the rest at our table remained standing. Just as I began to rise, looking shyly around to see how chairs were to be used, a second bell was sounded. All were seated at last, and I had to crawl back into my chair again. I heard a man’s voice at one end of the hall, and I looked around to see him. But all the others hung their heads over their plates. As I glanced at the long chain of tables, I caught the eyes of a paleface woman upon me. Immediately I dropped my eyes, wondering why I was so keenly watched by the strange woman. The man ceased
his mutterings, and then a third bell was tapped. Every one picked up his knife and fork and began eating. I began crying instead, for by this time I was afraid to venture anything more.

But this eating by formula was not the hardest trial in that first day. Late in the morning, my friend Judewin gave me a terrible warning. Judewin knew a few words of English; and she had overheard the paleface woman talk about cutting our long, heavy hair. Our mothers had taught us that only unskilled warriors who were captured had their hair shingled by the enemy. Among our people, short hair was worn by mourners, and shingled hair by cowards!

We discussed our fate some moments, and when Judewin said, “We have to submit, because they are strong,” I rebelled.

“No, I will not submit! I will struggle first!” I answered.

I watched my chance, and when no one noticed, I disappeared. I crept up the stairs as quietly as I could in my squeaking shoes, — my moccasins had been exchanged for shoes. Along the hall I passed, without knowing whither I was going. Turning aside to an open door, I found a large room with three white beds in it. The windows were covered with dark green curtains, which made the room very dim. Thankful that no one was there, I directed my steps toward the corner farthest from the door. On my hands and knees I crawled under the bed, and huddled myself in the dark corner.

From my hiding place I peered out, shuddering with fear whenever I heard footsteps near by. Though in the hall loud voices were calling my name, and I knew that even Judewin was...
searching for me, I did not open my mouth to answer. Then the steps were quickened and the voices became excited. The sounds came nearer and nearer. Women and girls entered the room. I held my breath and watched them open closet doors and peep behind large trunks. Some one threw up the curtains, and the room was filled with sudden light. What caused them to stoop and look under the bed I do not know. I remember being dragged out, though I resisted by kicking and scratching wildly. Inspite of myself, I was carried downstairs and tied fast in a chair.

I cried aloud, shaking my head all the while until I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck, and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit. Since the day I was taken from my mother I had suffered extreme indignities. People had stared at me. I had been tossed about in the air like a wooden puppet. And now my long hair was shingled like a coward’s! In my anguish I moaned for my mother, but no one came to comfort me. Not a soul reasoned quietly with me, as my own mother used to do; for now I was only one of many little animals driven by a herder.

II. We Too are Human Beings

When I was studying in the third class, I hadn’t yet heard people speak openly of untouchability. But I had already seen, felt, experienced and been humiliated by what it is.

I was walking home from school one day, an old bag hanging from my shoulder. It was actually possible to walk the distance in ten minutes. But usually it would take me thirty minutes at the very least to reach home. It would take me from half an hour to an hour to dawdle along, watching all the fun and games that were going on, all the entertaining novelties and oddities is the streets, the shops and the bazaar.

The performing monkey; the snake which the snakecharmer kept in its box and displayed from time to time; the cyclist who had not got off his bike for three days, and who kept pedalling as hard as he could from break of day; the rupee
notes that were pinned on to his shirt to spur him on; the spinning wheels; the Maariyaata temple, the huge bell hanging there; the pongal offerings being cooked in front of the temple; the dried fish stall by the statue of Gandhi; the sweet stall, the stall selling fried snacks, and all the other shops next to each other; the street light always demonstrating how it could change from blue to violet; the narikkuravan huntengypsy with his wild lemur in cages, selling needles, clay beads and instruments for cleaning out the ears — Oh, I could go on and on. Each thing would pull me to a stand-still and not allow me to go any further.

At times, people from various political parties would arrive, put up a stage and harangue us through their mikes. Then there might be a street play, or a puppet show, or a “no magic, no miracle” stunt performance. All these would happen from time to time. But almost certainly there would be some entertainment or other going on.

Even otherwise, there were the coffee clubs in the bazaar: the way each waiter cooled the coffee, lifting a tumbler high up and pouring its contents into a tumbler held in his other hand. Or the way some people sat in front of the shops chopping up onion, their eyes turned elsewhere so that they would not smart. Or the almond tree growing there and its fruit which was occasionally blown down by the wind. All these sights taken together would tether my legs and stop me from going home.

And then, according to the season, there would be mango, cucumber, sugar-cane, sweet-potato, palm-shoots, gram, palm-syrup and palm-fruit, guavas and jack-fruit. Every day I would see people selling sweet and savoury fried snacks, payasam, halva, boiled tamarind seeds and iced lollies.

Gazing at all this, one day, I came to my street, my bag slung over my shoulder. At the opposite corner, though, a threshing floor had been set up, and the landlord watched the proceedings, seated on a piece of sacking spread over a stone ledge. Our people were hard at work, driving cattle in pairs, round and round, to tread out the grain from the straw.
The animals were muzzled so that they wouldn’t help themselves to the straw. I stood for a while there, watching the fun.

Just then, an elder of our street came along from the direction of the bazaar. The manner in which he was walking along made me want to double up. I wanted to shriek with laughter at the sight of such a big man carrying a small packet in that fashion. I guessed there was something like vadai or green banana bhajji in the packet, because the wrapping paper was stained with oil. He came along, holding out the packet by its string, without touching it. I stood there thinking to myself, if he holds it like that, won’t the package come undone, and the vadais fall out?

The elder went straight up to the landlord, bowed low and extended the packet towards him, cupping the hand that held the string with his other hand. The landlord opened the parcel and began to eat the vadais.

After I had watched all this, at last I went home. My elder brother was there. I told him the story in all its comic detail. I fell about with laughter at the memory of a big man, and an elder at that, making such a game out of carrying the parcel. But Annan was not amused. Annan told me the man wasn’t being funny when he carried the package like that. He said everybody believed that they were upper caste and therefore must not touch us. If they did, they would be polluted. That’s why he had to carry the package by its string.
When I heard this, I didn’t want to laugh any more, and I felt terribly sad. How could they believe that it was disgusting if one of us held that package in his hands, even though the *vadai* had been wrapped first in a banana leaf, and then parcelled in paper? I felt so provoked and angry that I wanted to touch those wretched *vadais* myself straightaway. Why should we have to fetch and carry for these people, I wondered. Such an important elder of ours goes meekly to the shops to fetch snacks and hands them over reverently, bowing and shrinking, to this fellow who just sits there and stuffs them into his mouth. The thought of it infuriated me.

How was it that these fellows thought so much of themselves? Because they had scraped four coins together, did that mean they must lose all human feelings? But we too are human beings. Our people should never run these petty errands for these fellows. We should work in their fields, take home our wages, and leave it at that.

My elder brother, who was studying at a university, had come home for the holidays. He would often go to the library in our neighbouring village in order to borrow books. He was on his way home one day, walking along the banks of the irrigation tank. One of the landlord’s men came up behind him. He thought my Annan looked unfamiliar, and so he asked, “Who are you, appa, what’s your name?” Annan told him his name. Immediately the other man asked, “Thambi, on which street do you live?” The point of this was that if he knew on which street we lived, he would know our caste too.

Annan told me all these things. And he added, “Because we are born into this community, we are never given any honour or dignity or respect; we are stripped of all that. But if we study and make progress, we can throw away these indignities. So study with care, learn all you can. If you are always ahead in your lessons, people will come to you of their own accord and attach themselves to you. Work hard and learn.” The words that Annan spoke to me that day made a very deep impression on me. And I studied hard, with all my breath and being, in a frenzy almost.
As Annan had urged, I stood first in my class. And because of that, many people became my friends.

Reading with Insight

1. The two accounts that you read above are based in two distant cultures. What is the commonality of theme found in both of them?

2. It may take a long time for oppression to be resisted, but the seeds of rebellion are sowed early in life. Do you agree that injustice in any form cannot escape being noticed even by children?

3. Bama’s experience is that of a victim of the caste system. What kind of discrimination does Zitkala-Sa’s experience depict? What are their responses to their respective situations?
Hello Children!
If you feel uneasy about someone touching you inappropriately, you should not keep quiet. You must
1. Not blame yourself
2. Tell someone whom you trust
3. You can also inform National Commission for Protection of Child Rights through the POCSO e-box.

When you get an unsafe touch, you may feel bad, confused and helpless
You need not feel “bad” because it’s not your fault

POCSO e-box available at NCPCR@gov.in

If you are below 18 years of age, and are troubled or confused or abused or in distress or know some other child who is...

Call 1098...because some numbers are good!
They change lives!!!

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Swachh Bharat
Ek Kadam Swachchhla ki or
While astonishment
With deep-drawn sighs was quieting,
he went
Into a marble gallery, passing through
A mimic temple, so complete and true
In sacred custom, that he well nigh fear'd
To search it inwards; whence far off