

Higher Secondary Course
Part III
English Literature Coursebook
STANDARD XI



GOVERNMENT OF KERALA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
2016

PLEDGE

India is my country. All Indians are my brothers and sisters. I love my country, and I am proud of its rich and varied heritage. I shall always strive to be worthy of it. I shall give my parents, teachers and all elders respect, and treat everyone with courtesy.

To my country and my people, I pledge my devotion. In their well-being and prosperity alone lies my happiness.

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

Jana-gana-mana-adhinayaka, jaya he
Bharata-bhagya-vidhata.
Punjab-Sindh-Gujarat-Maratha
Dravida-Utkala-Banga
Vindhya-Himachala-Yamuna-Ganga
Uchchala-Jaladhi-taranga.
Tava shubha name jage,
Tava shubha asisa mage,
Gahe tava jaya gatha,
Jana-gana-mangala-dayaka jaya he
Bharata-bhagya-vidhata.
Jaya he, jaya he, jaya he,
Jaya jaya jaya, jaya he!

Higher Secondary Course - English Literature Coursebook - Part III Standard XI

Prepared by:

State Council of Educational Research & Training (SCERT)

Poojappura, Thiruvananthapuram -12, Kerala.

E-mail: scertkerala@gmail.com

Typesetting by: SCERT Computer Lab.

Printed in quality paper - 80gsm map litho (snow-white)

©

**Government of Kerala
Department of Education
2016**

Dear students

The English Literature Coursebook for Standard XI has been designed with a view to developing literary taste, critical reading skills, skills in expressing your ideas both in the spoken and written forms and reference skills. The learning of any language inevitably involves the learning of its rich and varied literature. The selections in this book represent authors from different cultures ranging from Shakespeare to Sarojini Naidu and Anton Chekhov to Neruda. It also brings in a variety of literary genres like poetry, short story, one act play and non-fiction.

You can enjoy reading the texts and think creatively once you enter the world of letters that the authors create for you. I hope you will make use of this book to hone your English language skills. The variety of activities presented in the book, I am sure, will provide ample opportunities for you to use the language in different contexts. Your teacher will guide you in your efforts to interact with the texts and do the activities in the book.

Learn literature in all its vigour, variety and vivacity.

Wish you all the best.

Dr P. A. Fathima
Director
SCERT

Textbook Development Team

Members

Anu C.R, GBHSS Mavelikkara, Alappuzha
Jose D' Sujeev, GHSS Karakulam, Thiruvananthapuram
Muhammed Akram.M, GGHSS Payyanur, Kannur
Preetha P.V, GVHSS for Boys, Mancha, Nedumangad,
Thiruvananthapuram
Rajitha R, GBHSS Chalai, Thiruvananthapuram
Reshmi Reghunath, GVHSS Karakulam, Thiruvananthapuram
Sabeena Jalal, GVHSS Vellanad, Thiruvananthapuram
Sangeeth Jose, GGHSS Ernakulam
Sajai K.V, GHSS Mannathur, Muvattupuzha
Sajeena Shukkoor, GHSS Cottonhill, Thiruvananthapuram
Smita John, GHSS Chavara, Kollam

Experts

Dr Jayaraj P K, Director, State Institute of English, Thrissur
Dr Muraleedharan K C, Professor, Payyannur College, Kannur
Dr Sherrif K M, Reader, Dept. of English, University of Calicut
Smt. Chitra Trivikraman Nair, Asst. Professor, Govt. Arts College, Thiruvananthapuram
Smt. Roshan Thomas, Retd. Professor, All Saint's College, Thiruvananthapuram
Smt. Bindu S, Retd. Professor, University College, Thiruvananthapuram

Artists

Haridasan N K, Art Teacher, GHSS Azhiyoor, Kozhikode
Rameshan P, Art Teacher, GHSS Iringannur, Kozhikode
Sudheer P.Y

Academic Co-ordinator

Dinesh K.T, Research Officer, SCERT, Kerala

CONTENTS



Section 1 - Poetry

1. Since Brass, Nor Stone, Nor Earth, Nor Boundless Sea -
William Shakespeare 8
2. A Red Red Rose - *Robert Burns* 13
3. The Tyger - *William Blake* 16
4. To the Cuckoo - *William Wordsworth* 22
5. My Last Duchess - *Robert Browning* 27
6. I had Gone a-Begging - *Rabindranath Tagore* 31
7. Bangle Sellers - *Sarojini Naidu* 36
8. The Highway Man - *Alfred Noyes* 40
9. Never Again would Birds' Song be the Same - *Robert Frost*
51
10. Elegy for Jane - *Theodore Roethke* 54
11. Oppression - *Langston Hughes* 58
12. If You Forget Me - *Pablo Neruda* 61



Section 2 - Short Story

1. The Orator - *Anton Chekov* 67
2. The Romance of a Busy Broker - *O Henry* 76
3. A Cup of Tea - *Katherine Mansfield* 85
4. A Canary for One - *Ernest Hemingway* 98
5. A Man - *Vaikom Muhammed Basheer* 106
6. The Night Train at Deoli - *Ruskin Bond* 113



Section 3 - Non-Fiction

1. On Saying 'Please' - *A.G Gardiner* 123
2. Why Literature? - *Jorge Mario Vargas Llosa* 133
3. Am I Blue? - *Alice Walker* 139
4. Last Day at School - *Giovanni Mosca* 148



Section 4 - One-Act Play

1. The Boy Comes Home - *A.A Milne* 155
2. When Lincoln Came to Pittsburgh - *Dorothy.C.Calboun* 183



Section 1 Poetry

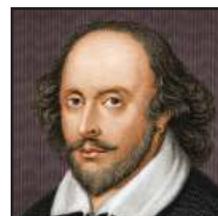


Painting is silent poetry, and poetry is painting that speaks.

- Plutarch

A poet is, before anything else, a person who is passionately in love with language.

- W.H.Auden

Poems**William Shakespeare (1564-1616)**

William Shakespeare is undoubtedly the most quoted author of all times. He lived during the Elizabethan period, the golden age of English literature. Shakespeare has to his credit 37 plays, 154 sonnets and two long narrative poems. This is indeed extraordinary, taking into account the fact that his formal education was only up to the elementary level in a grammar school. The world's pre-eminent dramatist is remembered most notably for his brilliant themes, unforgettable characters and the extraordinary beauty of his language. His plays are broadly classified into comedies, histories, tragedies and tragi-comedies. *Tales from Shakespeare* by Charles Lamb and his sister Mary Lamb, published in 1807, brings Shakespearean plays closer to children of all times.

Focus

The poem 'Since Brass, Nor Stone, Nor Earth, Nor Boundless Sea' is written in a poetic form called sonnet which originated in Italy.

A **sonnet** is a fourteen line lyric that follows a strict rhyme and a specific structure. It was introduced in English literature by Wyatt and Surrey in the 16th century. There are two prominent sonnet forms - the Petrarchan and the Shakespearean. The Shakespearean sonnet has the structure of three quatrains (four line stanzas) and a final concluding couplet (two lines).

This sonnet is a moving expression of the poet's love for his friend, whose identity is still debatable. Critics are of the opinion that the friend mentioned in the sonnet could either be the Earl of Southampton or the Earl of Surrey. Its highly dramatic and intensely personal elements make it one of Shakespeare's best-remembered sonnets.

Poems

Since Brass, Nor Stone, Nor Earth, Nor Boundless Sea

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
But sad mortality o'er-sways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?

O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out
Against the wreckful siege of battering days,
When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
Nor gates of steel so strong, but Time decays?

O fearful meditation! where, alack,
Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?

O, none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

1. What does the expression 'mortality o'er-sways' mean?
2. Long lasting and short-lived things are contrasted in the first stanza. What are they?
3. What are some of the strong objects mentioned in stanza two that are affected by the passage of Time?
4. Who is described as 'Time's best jewel'?
5. Whose swift foot does the speaker wish to hold back?
6. What hope does the speaker express in the final couplet?

mortality: death

plea: an excuse

siege: the art of capturing a fortified place

battering: damaging

impregnable: unconquerable

stout: strong

meditation: thought

alack: an expression showing sorrow or regret

chest: a box used for strong valuables

forbid: prevent

Understanding the poem

1. What is the theme of the sonnet? Does the theme have any universal appeal?
2. The great power of Time is expressed in the first two stanzas. What strategy does the poet employ to express this idea quite convincingly?
3. Comment on the symbolic meaning of summer in the poem.
4. Pick out the expression from the poem which means 'scary thoughts'.
5. What is the tone of the poem? Do you notice any change in tone as the thought progresses? Explain.
6. In the poem, the poet attributes human qualities to 'summer' and 'time'. This is called personification. Find out similar expressions in the poem.
7. Shakespeare uses a number of visual images in the poem. Identify them.
8. A metaphor is a figure of speech that describes something asserting that it is something else. What is the central metaphor in this poem?
9. 'Power' and 'flower' are two rhyming words from the poem. List out other rhyming words.
10. The poet employs a particular pattern of rhyme or a 'rhyme scheme'. What is the rhyme scheme followed in the poem?

Writing about the poem

1. Attempt a critical appreciation of the sonnet highlighting its theme, tone, poetic devices and structure.
2. Collect a few sonnets belonging to various periods in English literature.
3. Read the following sonnet by Elizabeth Barrett Browning expressing her love for her husband Robert Browning.

Sonnets from the Portuguese

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men might strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

- How does the poet express her love for Robert Browning?
- How is it different from Shakespeare's depiction of love for his friend?

Compare the two sonnets using the comparison grid given overleaf:

	'Since Brass, Nor Stone, Nor Earth, Nor Boundless Sea'	'Sonnets from the Portuguese'
Theme		
Structure and rhyme scheme		
Images		
Diction		
Tone		

ICT

- Make a presentation using presentation software hyperlinking the poem with audio/video files of recitation available in the YouTube and with images from Google Images suitable to understand the poem better. You may also hyperlink difficult words that need to be glossed with their meaning from an online dictionary. Present your hyperlinked poem before the class.



Poems**Robert Burns (1759-1796)**

Robert Burns, the 'ploughman poet', is one of the leading voices of Scotland in English literature. He is best known as the pioneer of the Romantic movement for his lyrical poetry and re-writing of Scottish folksongs. His volume of work particularly in Scottish, the language of Southern Scotland, earned him the status of the National Bard of Scotland. The poetry of Robert Burns is in a way a revolt against the preceding age of literature, the Neo-Classical Age, which laid emphasis more on reason and form. His interests on reviving the culture of his land and the focus on very subjective themes make him an inspiring and passionate poet.

Focus

The poem 'A Red Red Rose' is one among the best lyrics of English poetry.

A **lyric** is a song that expresses a subjective, personal point of view. The word 'lyric' stems from a Greek term implying 'singing to the lyre'. The lyre is a stringed musical instrument of the harp family. Poets across the world have employed the lyric in diverse forms to express their thoughts and emotions. This lyric consists of 16 lines divided into four four-line stanzas. The poem blends eternity of love with the mortality of life. It is an address to the speaker's lover to whom he swears eternal love and allegiance. Intense feeling and technical skill characterises the works of Robert Burns.

Poems

A Red Red Rose

1. Who is the speaker of the poem?

O my Luve's like a red, red rose

That's newly sprung in June

2. What does the red rose symbolize?

O my Luve's like the melodie

That's sweetly play'd in tune.

3. What different things does the speaker compare his love to?

As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,

So deep in luve am I:

And I will luve thee still, my dear,

Till a' the seas gang dry:

4. How long will the speaker's love last?

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,

And the rocks melt wi' the sun:

I will luve thee still, my dear,

While the sands o' life shall run.

5. What promise does the poet give his love?

And fare thee well, my only Luve

And fare thee well, a while!

And I will come again, my Luve,

Tho' it were ten thousand mile.

luve: love

melodie: sweet music

art: are

bonnie: pretty (In Middle English Scottish)

lass: girl

gang: going

fare thee well: goodbye to you

Understanding the poem

1. Identify the word that is repeated in all the stanzas of the poem. What does it indicate?
2. What does the phrase 'ten thousand mile' indicate ?
3. 'O my Luve's like a red, red rose.' Here the poet compares his love to a red rose. Identify other similes used in the poem .
4. How does the poet express that he is an eternal lover?
5. Why is the word 'red' repeated?
6. Comment on the use of the expression 'sands of life'.
7. Pick out instances of alliteration in the poem.
8. 'Thee' is an archaic expression of the word 'you'. Pick out other archaic words and words in the Scottish dialect from the poem.
9. See the phrase 'Till a' the seas gang dry'. The poet says that his love will last as long as the seas go dry. He exaggerates his love. This is a figure of speech called Hyperbole. Pick out other instances of hyperbole from the poem.
10. What may have prompted the poet to express his love like this?

Writing about the poem

1. Is this a typical love poem? The poet refers to the things in nature like the sun, the sea, the rocks and the rose. Critically examine the poem to bring out the effect of images in creating a powerful lyric.
2. 'A Red Red Rose' is a typical romantic poem. Examine the statement on the basis of your reading of the poem.

ICT

Visit <http://www.robertburns.org/works> - to know more about Robert Burns and his works.

Listen to the recitation and video on YouTube and prepare a slide presentation showing each stanza of the poem and using pictures to bring out the different visual images used by the poet. You may also use the audio text available on YouTube during your presentation.

Poems



William Blake (1757-1827)

William Blake's works are considered significant in the history of both poetry and the visual arts today. During his life time, he was largely neglected and even dismissed as insane for his idiosyncratic views. His early writings were greatly influenced by the French and the American revolutions. His work *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience* is a milestone in the history of English Literature.

The Romantic Movement in English literature was a revolt that tried to liberate art from Classicism. The movement gave priority to imagination, subjectivity, freedom of thought and an idealization of nature. Romanticism officially started with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth and Coleridge in 1798. But poets like Blake had already started breaking away from the ancient ideas. Blake's use of images, simple diction and spontaneous expression of thoughts and emotions are remarkable.

Focus

'The Tyger' is taken from *Songs of Experience* which is part of the collection titled, *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience*. It is a companion poem to 'The Lamb', included in *Songs of Innocence*. The poems stand contrasting each other with one portraying the meekness of the lamb and the other presenting the darker forces of energy in the tiger.

'The Tyger' is a fine lyric that expresses the reflections of the author about the fearsome, yet beautiful creation of God - the tiger. The poet marvels at the supreme artistry of the Almighty who created both the lamb and the tiger. Blake builds the poem on the conventional idea that nature, like a work of art, reflects the spirit of its creator.

Poems

The Tyger

TYGER, tyger, burning bright
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand and what dread feet?

What the hammer? What the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? What dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

1. Whose hands framed the fearful symmetry of the tyger?

2. How are the tyger's eyes described in the second stanza?

3. Who does the poet refer to when he talks about 'dread hand and dread feet'?

4. What were the tools used to create the tyger's brain?

5. How did the stars
react when they saw
the creation of God?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did He smile His work to see?
Did He who made the lamb make thee?

Tyger, tyger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

immortal: *living for ever*

fearful: *feeling or causing fear*

symmetry: *the exact match in size/shape between two sides of something*

thine: *your*

aspire: *have a hope or ambition*

dare: *to be bold enough to do something*

seize: *take hold of forcibly and suddenly*

sinews: *tough fibrous tissues joining muscle to the bone*

furnace: *an enclosed fireplace for intense heating of something*

anvil: *an iron block on which a smith hammers metal into shape*

deadly: *causing death*

spear: *a weapon with a long shaft and a pointed tip*

Understanding the poem

1. Why does the poet say that 'the tyger' is 'burning bright'?
2. The poet refers to a few tools that were used to create the tyger's brain. Who uses these tools usually? What picture does the description bring to your mind? Which poetic device is used here?
3. Look at the words 'spears' and 'tears' in stanza 5. Can these be related to the tyger and the lamb?
4. What does 'The Tyger' represent? Is it a creation of art? Is it God? Or is it just a tiger?
5. Cite two examples of alliteration from the poem.
6. The last stanza and the first stanza are the same except for the substitution of the word 'could' with 'dare'. What do you think about this substitution?
7. List out the rhyming words in the poem. What is the rhyme scheme?

Writing about the poem

1. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem paying special attention to the theme, tone, figures of speech etc.

2. Read the poem, 'The Lamb' by the same author.

The Lamb

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life and bid thee feed.
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice!

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb I'll tell thee!
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.

Little Lamb God bless thee.

Little Lamb God bless thee.



*Poems**The Tyger*

21

Fill up the table given below choosing appropriate words and phrases used by the poet to describe the tiger and the lamb.

The tiger	The lamb
terror	tender

Now, complete the following table with the expressions used by the poet to describe the tiger and the lamb.

Creating tiger	Creating lamb
fearful symmetry	

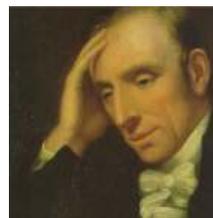
Based on the above activity, write a paragraph comparing the theme, diction and the nature of images used in 'The Tyger' and 'The Lamb'.

ICT

- ◆ Visit <http://www.william-blake.org/slideshow.html> - to watch the slide show of Blake's Paintings. Make use of appropriate paintings and present the poems 'The Tyger' and 'The Lamb' by hyperlinking them with these images. You may also use the audio text of these poems available on YouTube during your presentation.
- ◆ Watch the William Blake documentary available on YouTube and learn more about Blake's life and works.



Poems



William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

William Wordsworth co-authored the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 with Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It formally heralded the Romantic age in English literature, which extended till the mid 19th century. Wordsworth's poems often present instances where nature speaks to him and he responds by speaking for nature. For him, manifestations of the natural world inspire noble, elevated thoughts and passionate emotions.

Wordsworth was the Poet Laureate of Britain from 1843 till his death in 1850. He has written numerous sonnets, and other hugely influential poems including his semi- autobiographical work, 'The Prelude'.

Focus

This poem is an ode. An **ode** is a long lyric poem, serious in subject and treatment, elevated in style and elaborates in stanzaic structure. The prototype of odes was established by the Greek poet Pindar, whose odes were modelled on the songs by the chorus in Greek drama. This form was introduced into England by Ben Jonson. The Romantic poets employed this form to convey their strong sentiments. An ode can be defined as a formal address to an event, a person or a thing.

Here the poet addresses a cuckoo. The poet hears the cuckoo and wonders if it is something more than a bird. His wonder rises from the recollection of memories of his childhood when the elusive bird opens up the world of imagination to him. The bird is an assorted symbol of beauty, innocence and childhood.

Poems

To the Cuckoo

O blithe New-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?

While I am lying on the grass
Thy two-fold shout I hear;
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off, and near.

Though babbling only to the Vale
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery;

The same whom in my school-boy days
I listened to; that Cry

1. Who is being addressed in the poem?

2. What does the poet wish to call the cuckoo?

3. Why does the poet describe the cuckoo's song as a 'twofold shout'?

4. How does the bird's song affect the poet?

5. How does the poet emphasize his eagerness to receive the bird's call?

Poems

William Wordsworth

6. What did the poet as a boy do to seek the bird?

Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky.

7. What intensifies the poet's longing for the bird?

To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green;
And thou wert still a hope, a love;
Still longed for, never seen.

8. Which is the 'golden time' referred to here?

And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

9. The bird is 'blessed'. Who/ what else is 'blessed' here?

O blessèd Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faery place;
That is fit home for Thee!

24

blithe: casual or carefree

babble: chatter without sense

rove: wander

beget: produce

unsubstantial: unreal

Understanding the poem

1. The poem begins by addressing the bird as ‘...blithe New-comer!’ which aptly conveys the bliss experienced by the speaker. What other words or expressions add to this sense of elation?
2. Why does the poet call the cuckoo ‘a wandering voice’?
3. An overstatement is made in stanza 5 - ‘Which made me look a thousand ways.’ A similar statement is there in stanza 4 too. What does this signify?
4. Do you think the choice of the word ‘golden’ in stanza 7 was deliberate? Why?
5. Why do you think the poet has made profuse use of archaisms?
6. Why is the world a fit home for the bird?
7. Does the poem follow a regular structural pattern? What overall effect does this create?
8. A symbol is an object that represents, stands for or suggests an idea or belief. Do you think Wordsworth uses the bird as a symbol? If so, what does it symbolise?

Writing about the poem

1. What elements of romantic poetry do you find in the poem ‘To the Cuckoo’? Prepare a write-up considering the ode as a Romantic lyric.
2. Consider the bird as a link between the poet’s past and present and write a paragraph.

ICT

Compile an anthology of other ‘bird poems’ using internet resources.

Prepare a multimedia presentation on major romantic poets and their works.

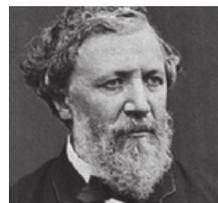
The following websites will help you gather information.

<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5670>

<http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/romantic>



Poems



Robert Browning (1812-1889)

Robert Browning, one of the foremost poets of the Victorian era, is held in high esteem for his mastery of the poetic form known as the dramatic monologue. He was also a playwright. During his life time, he was largely neglected in the literary circles. In fact, his wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning was more popular than him. Browning's writings actually shocked the Victorian readers because of their psychological realism, wild experiments and harsh language. However, it is this raw power of poetry that makes his verses appealing to the readers of all times. Some of the major dramatic monologues of Browning include *My Last Duchess*, *The Bishop Orders His Tomb*, *Andrea del Sarto* etc.

The reign of Queen Victoria (1837 -1901) is known as the Victorian era in British history. It was an age of imperialism, science, technology and prose and it was sandwiched between two great traditions, namely the Romantic and the Modernist movements. Victorian poetry was characterised by the struggle between religion and science, new ideas about nature and romance, sentimentality and the use of sensory images.

Focus

'My Last Duchess' was published in 1842 in the collection of poems titled *Dramatic Lyrics*. As suggested by the title itself, Browning experimented with the lyric form in this poem. The poem is considered to be one of the greatest dramatic monologues in English literature.

The term 'dramatic monologue' was first used by the Greeks.

A **dramatic monologue**, psychological in nature, is a lyric in which a speaker - who is not the poet- addresses a silent listener in a specific situation at a dramatic moment in his life. As the poem progresses, the reader is given an insight into the character of the speaker. 'My Last Duchess' was inspired by the Renaissance Duke, Alfonso II of Ferrara, whose young wife, Lucrezia died under suspicious circumstances.

My Last Duchess

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
'Fra Pandolf' by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat": such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,

1. Who is the speaker of the poem and who is he/she speaking to?

2. How does the poet give the reader an impression that there is a silent listener?

3. What does the speaker mean by saying, 'I said "Fra Pandolf" by design'?

4. How does the speaker describe the Duchess' heart?

Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.

5. What is the tone of the speaker?

Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked

6. What attitude of the Duchess makes the speaker angry?

Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,

Poems

My Last Duchess

Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
 Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
 Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
 As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
 The company below, then. I repeat,
 The Count your master's known munificence
 Is ample warrant that no just pretence
 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
 At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
 Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

7. What is 'stooping' according to the speaker?

8. What does the speaker mean by the expression, 'all smiles stopped together'?

9. What is the significance of the Duke's drawing attention to Neptune taming the sea-horse?

Fra : title for an Italian monk or friar

by design: on purpose

countenance: face

durst (old use): dared

mantle : clothing

courtesy: polite behaviour

officious: self important

mule : the offspring of a horse and a donkey

stoop : to bend your body forward

trifling: of very little importance

disgust : to make one feel shocked

forsooth : used to emphasize a statement, especially in order to show surprise

munificence : generosity

ample : enough

warrant : an acceptable reason for doing something

pretence : a claim

avow : to say firmly and often publicly

tame: to make something easy to control

Neptune : the Roman God of Sea

Understanding the poem

1. How do we know that the painting referred to by the speaker is good?
2. Who is 'Fra Pandolf'?
3. How do we know that the speaker is very possessive of his painting?
4. How do we know that the speaker of the poem is very powerful?
5. What does the Duke tell the listener in the poem about the fate of his former wife?
6. Did the Duchess do anything to displease her husband, the Duke? Justify your answer.
7. Why was the 'nine-hundred-years old name' so important to the Duke?
8. The Duke seems to have executed his wife for very trivial reasons. What were those trivial reasons?

Writing about the poem

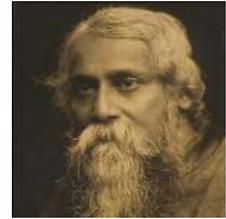
1. In what way can 'My Last Duchess' be called a fine example of a dramatic monologue?
2. Would it have made much of a difference had the poem been called 'My Late Duchess'?
3. In the poem readers are presented with the point of view of the Duke only. Prepare a narrative, imagining that the Duchess is narrating how her husband mistreated her.

ICT

- Visit the schoolworld.tv website (<http://www.schoolworld.tv/node/3065>) and watch the presentation on the poem.
- Design activities like quiz/guessing the missing word/reordering jumbled lines etc. based on the poem using a word processor software or presentation software.



Poems



31

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

Rabindranath Tagore is a versatile genius renowned as a poet, playwright, artist, composer, novelist and a philosopher. He is a source of inspiration to many writers of modern India. Tagore is regarded as one of the greatest mystic poets as his poetry is mostly concerned with his relationship with God. His poems are simple, spontaneous and have a striking originality. Tagore was a prominent figure in the Bengal Renaissance during the 19th and early 20th century. India's first Nobel Laureate, Tagore won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 for his work *Gitanjali*. This prestigious work that took India to the forefront of world literature, is a collection of 157 songs through which Tagore expresses his thoughts on God and humanity. The preface to *Gitanjali* was written by W.B. Yeats, who was a great friend and admirer of Tagore.

Focus

Verse 50 of Tagore's *Gitanjali* is noted for its simplicity and portrayal of emotion. It depicts a strange experience which gives the poet a glimpse of the path that leads to the ultimate realization of God. Tagore has been content to discover the soul and surrender himself to its spontaneity. In *Gitanjali* Tagore writes thus: 'Men going home glance at me and smile and fill me with shame. I sit like a beggar maid, drawing my skirt over my face, and when they ask me, what it is I want, I drop my eyes and answer them not.' The *Gitanjali* abounds in such innocent and simple verses that one mostly fails to find elsewhere in literature. The verse for study, according to critics, can be read as the autobiography of the poet. Its central theme - the realization of God through self-purification and complete submission - has a universal appeal. Verse 50, with its honesty of feeling, radiance of imagery and musical quality, becomes a fine example of lyrical poetry.

Poems

I had Gone A-Begging

1. What is the speaker doing?

"I had gone a-begging from door to door in the village path,

when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance like a gorgeous dream

and I wondered who was this King of all kings!

2. How does the speaker describe the entry of the 'King of all kings'?

My hopes rose high and me thought my evil days were at an end,

and I stood waiting for alms to be given unasked and for wealth scattered on all sides in the dust.

The chariot stopped where I stood.

3. What does the speaker expect from the king?

Thy glance fell on me and thou camest down with a smile.

I felt that the luck of my life had come at last.

Then of a sudden thou didst hold out thy right hand and say

4. Why is the action of the king described as 'a jest'?

`What hast thou to give to me?'

Ah, what a kingly jest was it to open thy palm to a beggar to beg!

5. What does the speaker give the king?

I was confused and stood undecided,

and then from my wallet I slowly took out the least little grain of corn and gave it to thee.

But how great my surprise when at the day's end I emptied my bag on the floor

Poems

I had Gone A-Begging

to find a least little gram of gold among the poor
heap.

I bitterly wept and wished that

I had had the heart to give thee my all.



6. 'I bitterly wept,'
says the speaker.
Why did he cry?

7. What surprise
awaited the speaker
at the end?

8. Who, do you
think, are 'the King
of kings' and 'the
beggar'?

chariot: *an open vehicle pulled by horses*

gorgeous: *very beautiful and attractive*

alms: *money, clothes and food that are given to poor people*

camest (old use): *second-person singular simple past of 'come'*

didst (old use): *second-person singular past tense of 'do'*

hast (old use): *second-person singular simple present form of 'have'*

jest: *joke*

wallet : *a small flat folding case made of leather or plastic for keeping money*

Understanding the poem

1. The beggar and the king are the central characters in the poem. List the words associated with the beggar and the king in the table given below.

The Beggar	The King
evil days	smile

2. 'The poem is not just a description of an incident that happened in the life of a beggar. It has deeper significance.' Comment.
3. The poem ends with a great revelation for the poet. Discuss.
4. Tagore uses the word 'thy' in the second line of the poem. This is an example of archaism. Identify other archaic words in the poem. What effect do these words create?
5. Tagore's poetry is celebrated for its pictorial quality. The image of the 'golden chariot' is an example. Identify other visual images used by the poet.
6. In the second line, the poet compares the appearance of the golden chariot to a 'gorgeous dream'. Name the poetic device used here.

Writing about the poem

The characters and events in the poem symbolize certain abstract ideas. A literary work in which each character or event is a symbol representing an idea or a quality is called allegory. Write a paragraph on the allegorical nature of the poem.

ICT

Visit the website <http://tagoreweb.in/> and collect other verses from Gitanjali. Prepare a presentation on Tagore including his major works, biographical details and other noteworthy contributions. You may add pictures of the cover pages of his books, Tagore's own paintings and drawings and interesting anecdotes of his life, quotes etc. in your presentation. The following sites will help you collect them:

http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/r/rabindranath_tagore.html



Poems



Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949)

Sarojini Naidu was a freedom fighter, politician, orator, administrator and a poet. She is hailed as the 'Nightingale of India'. She was a close associate of some of India's nationalist leaders and freedom fighters. Her birthday, February 13, is celebrated as National Women's Day. Sarojini Naidu voiced the dreams and aspirations of a nation in its making. She wrote mainly on the rural aspects of Indian culture and women's experiences. Her poems are remarkable for their richness of colour and splendour, lyrical charm and romantic beauty. Her works include *The Golden Threshold*, *The Bird of Time: Songs of Life, Death & the Spring*, *The Broken Wing: Songs of Love*, besides other equally significant collections.

Focus

The poem 'Bangle Sellers' is a lyric which depicts the social and cultural life of Indian women through a string of images associated with 'bangles'. They are not just a series of beautiful imagery, but a symbolic representation of the various stages in the life of a typical Indian woman. Her maidenhood, state of being a bride and motherhood are poignantly and lyrically portrayed in four stanzas. The resultant feeling is one of fulfilment and contentment. Thus, the multi-hued bangles celebrate the beauty and meaning of womanhood.

Bangle Sellers

Bangle sellers are we who bear
Our shining loads to the temple fair...
Who will buy these delicate, bright
Rainbow-tinted circles of light?
Lustrous tokens of radiant lives,
For happy daughters and happy wives.

Some are meet for a maiden's wrist,
Silver and blue as the mountain mist,
Some are flushed like the buds that dream
On the tranquil brow of a woodland stream,
Some are aglow with the bloom that cleaves
To the limpid glory of new born leaves

Some are like fields of sunlit corn,
Meet for a bride on her bridal morn,
Some, like the flame of her marriage fire,
Or, rich with the hue of her heart's desire,
Tinkling, luminous, tender, and clear,
Like her bridal laughter and bridal tear.

1. Who speaks in the poem?

2. Who are the possible bangle buyers?

3. What are the auspicious occasions for buying bangles?

4. How does the poet describe the bangles suitable for maidens?

5. Pick out words that relate bangles to the feelings of a bride.

Poems

Sarojini Naidu

6. Identify the change in the colour of the bangles.

Some are purple and gold flecked grey
For she who has journeyed through life midway,
Whose hands have cherished, whose love has blest,
And cradled fair sons on her faithful breast,
And serves her household in fruitful pride,
And worships the gods at her husband's side

7. List the phrases that reflect the 'proud motherhood' of women.

fair: festival

tinted: coloured

lustrous: having a glow

radiant: gleamed with brilliant light

meet: suitable

maiden: a virgin

mist: droplets of water suspended in the atmosphere

flush: to turn red

tranquil: calm

bloom: flower

cleaves: stick fast to

limpid : unclouded, clear

bue: colour

tinkling: cause to make a light, clear ringing sound

38 *luminous: shining*

tender: soft

flecked: marked with small patches of colour

Understanding the poem

1. How do bangles relate to the lives of their buyers?
2. 'Shining load' is an image used in the poem. Pick out other images used in the poem and comment on their importance.
3. Weddings become befitting occasions to wear bangles. In what ways does the poet associate bangles with a bride?
4. How are the crucial phases in the life of an Indian woman depicted in the poem? How are the words 'dream', 'desire' and 'faithful' related with these phases?
5. How does the poet relate the change in the colour of the bangles to the changes in the life of a maiden?
6. Identify the rhyme scheme employed in the poem. How far does it suit the theme of the poem?
7. Identify instances of alliteration in the poem.

Writing about the poem

1. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem in terms of theme, message, tone, mood and the poetic devices employed. You may consider the structure of the poem, the arrangement of lines etc.
2. The poem describes the beauty and contentment of womanhood. Do women all over the world lead such colourful lives? Comment.

ICT

Make a presentation on the life history of Sarojini Naidu using presentation software. You may make use of images, video and audio files in the presentation to highlight the various stages of her life covering the political and literary phases.

Poems



Alfred Noyes (1880-1958)

Alfred Noyes was an English poet, playwright and novelist who lived in the United States and Canada during much of World War II. He was a noted critic of modernist writers such as James Joyce and T.S. Eliot. Noyes was called a literary conservative as he followed traditional models in the structure and subject of his poetry, refusing to embrace the modernist movement in literature. His verse was influenced by Romantic poets like Tennyson and Wordsworth. ‘The Highway Man’ is arguably the most well-known and popular of his poems.

Focus

‘The Highway Man’ is a ballad. *Ballad* is a song-like narrative poem which tells a story. A ballad is a plot-driven song, with one or more characters and the events in their lives leading to a dramatic conclusion. At the best, a ballad does not tell the reader what is happening, but rather shows the reader what is taking place, describing each crucial moment in the trail of events.

In ‘The Highway Man’, Noyes displays his skill at writing a narrative poetry reminiscent of his two biggest influences, Wordsworth and Tennyson. ‘The Highway Man’ is a tale of an outlaw and his doomed love for the innkeeper’s daughter. It is a splendid example of a modern ballad, full of romance, adventure, thrill and excitement.

Poems

The Highway Man

41

PART 1

I

THE wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,
And the highwayman came riding-
 Riding-riding-
The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn- door.

II

He'd a French cocked- hat on his forehead, a bunch of lace at his chin,
A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doe- skin;
They fitted with never a wrinkle: his boots were up to the thigh!
And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,
 His pistol butts a- twinkle,
His rapier hilt a- twinkle, under the jewelled sky.

III

Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark inn- yard,
And he tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was locked and barred;

1. How does the poet describe the night?

2. How is the Highwayman described?

3. Who whistled a tune and who appeared at the window?

He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be
waiting there

But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,

Bess, the landlord's daughter ,

Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

IV

And dark in the dark old inn-yard a stable-wicket
creaked

Where Tim the ostler listened; his face was white and
peaked;

His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like mouldy
hay,

But he loved the landlord's daughter,

The landlord's red-lipped daughter,

Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber say-

V

'One kiss, my bonny sweetheart, I'm after a prize to-night,

But I shall be back with the yellow gold before the
morning light;

Yet, if they press me sharply, and harry me through the
day,

Then look for me by moonlight,

Watch for me by moonlight,

I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar
the way.'

4. Who is the new
character introduced
here?

5. How does the
poet describe the
landlord's daughter?

6. What was the
promise given by
the Highwayman to
Bess?

Poems

The Highway Man

43

VI

He rose upright in the stirrups; he scarce could reach
her hand,

But she loosened her hair i' the casement! His face burnt
like a brand

As the black cascade of perfume came tumbling over
his breast;

And he kissed its waves in the moonlight,

(Oh, sweet, black waves in the moonlight!)

Then he tugged at his rein in the moonlight, and galloped
away to the West.

PART 2

I

He did not come in the dawning; he did not come at
noon;

And out o' the tawny sunset, before the rise o' the moon,

When the road was a gypsy's ribbon, looping the purple
moor,

A red-coat troop came marching-

Marching-marching-

King George's men came marching, up to the old inn-
door.

II

They said no word to the landlord, they drank his ale
instead,

7. What do the
Highwayman and
Bess do to express
their love?

8. Who came
marching up to the
old inn-door?

9. What did King
George's men do to
Bess?

But they gagged his daughter and bound her to the foot
of her narrow bed;

Two of them knelt at her casement, with muskets at their
side!

There was death at every window;

And hell at one dark window;

For Bess could see, through her casement, the road that
he would ride.

III

They had tied her up to attention, with many a sniggering
jest;

They had bound a musket beside her, with the barrel
beneath her breast!

'Now, keep good watch!' and they kissed her.

She heard the dead man say-

Look for me by moonlight;

Watch for me by moonlight;

*I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar
the way!*

IV

She twisted her hands behind her; but all the knots held
good!

She writhed her hands till her fingers were wet with
sweat or blood!

10. What words of
the Highwayman are
echoed in the heart
of Bess?

11. What did Bess
struggle for? What
was her intention?

12. Why did Bess
decide not to strive
more?

Poems

The Highway Man

They stretched and strained in the darkness, and the hours
crawled by like years,

Till, now, on the stroke of midnight,

Cold, on the stroke of midnight,

The tip of one finger touched it! The trigger at least was
hers!

V

The tip of one finger touched it; she strove no more for
the rest!

Up, she stood up to attention, with the barrel beneath
her breast,

She would not risk their hearing; she would not strive
again;

For the road lay bare in the moonlight;

Blank and bare in the moonlight;

And the blood of her veins in the moonlight throbbed to
her love's refrain.

VI

Plot-plot; tlot-tlot! Had they heard it? The horse- hoofs
ringing clear;

Tlot-tlot, tlot-tlot, in the distance? Were they deaf that
they did not hear?

Down the ribbon of moonlight, over the brow of the hill,

The highwayman came riding,

Riding, riding!

13. Who are the
'they' referred to in
the stanza?

14. What did Bess
do to warn the
Highwayman?

15. What had
happened to Bess?

The red-coats looked to their priming! She stood up,
straight and still!

VII

Plot-tlot, in the frosty silence! Plot-tlot, in the echoing
night!

Nearer he came and nearer! Her face was like a light!

Her eyes grew wide for a moment; she drew one last
deep breath,

Then her finger moved in the moonlight,

Her musket shattered the moonlight,

Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him-
with her death.

VIII

He turned; he spurred to the West; he did not know who
stood

Bowed, with her head o'er the musket, drenched with
her own red blood!

Not till the dawn he heard it, his face grew grey to hear

How Bess, the landlord's daughter,

The landlord's black-eyed daughter,

Had watched for her love in the moonlight, and died in
the darkness there.

16. How did the
Highwayman
respond to his
sweetheart's death?

IX

Back, he spurred like a madman, shrieking a curse to
the sky,

Poems

The Highway Man

With the white road smoking behind him and his rapier
brandished high!

Blood- red were his spurs i' the golden noon; wine- red
was his velvet coat,

When they shot him down on the highway,

Down like a dog on the highway,

And he lay in his blood on the highway, with the bunch
of lace at his throat.

* * * * *

X

*And still of a winter's night, they say, when the wind is
in the trees,*

*When the moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy
seas,*

*When the road is a ribbon of moonlight over the purple
moor,*

A highwayman comes riding-

Riding-riding-

A highwayman comes riding, up to the old inn- door.

XI

*Over the cobbles he clatters and clangs in the dark inn-
yard;*

*He taps with his whip on the shutters, but all is locked
and barred;*

17. What was the local lore about the lovers?

Poems

Alfred Noyes

*He whistles a tune to the window, and who should be
waiting there
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,
Bess, the landlord's daughter,
Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.*



torrent: strong, fast moving

gust: a brief strong rush of wind

moor: a barren, unproductive land

galleon: a large sailing ship

bonny: beautiful

cocked hat: hat bent upward

claret: dark red

breeches: trousers

doe: female deer

cobbles: water-worn rounded stones

clatter: riding with a noisy sound

tawny: golden

Gipsy's ribbon: symbolises dark and dirty

muskets: rifles

48 **sniggering:** half suppressed, secretive laughter

muzzle: open end of a gun

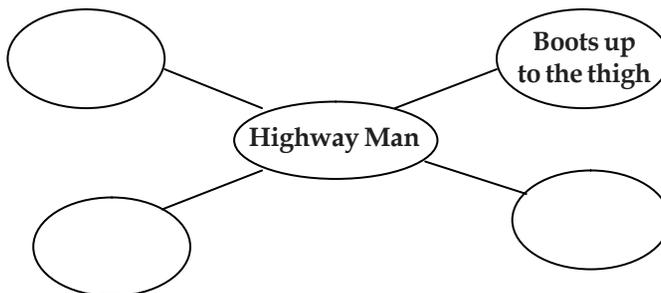
gag: a piece of cloth that is put over or in somebody's mouth to stop them speaking

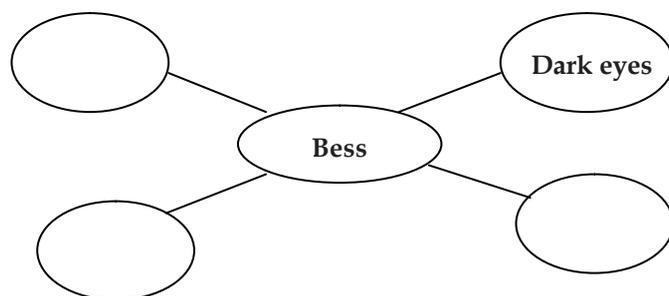
Understanding the poem

1. What mood does Noyes try to set when he uses metaphors like ‘wind was a torrent of darkness’, ‘moon was a ghostly galleon’ and ‘road was a ribbon of moonlight’ in the poem?
2. Refrain is the part of a song/poem repeated in the song/poem. Which are the lines repeated in the poem? What is the significance of the refrain in this ballad?
3. The poet uses words which resemble the sounds they describe. This technique is called onomatopoeia. He also makes use of alliteration (the repetition of consonant sound at the beginning of words that are close together). Pick out examples for both and comment on their effect in the poem.
4. Pick out an instance of simile in the poem and comment on the aptness of the comparison.

Writing about the poem

1. The poet makes use of excellent word-pictures to describe the central characters in the poem. Complete the following web and attempt a character sketch of both.





2. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem as a literary ballad giving emphasis to its poetic form, diction, imagery, theme, unity and musical quality.
3. Discuss how Bess is caught in the crossfire between the Highwayman and the King's soldiers and how she pays with her life for saving the Highwayman's life. Attempt a write-up connecting the events with that of the contemporary society where innocent women are molested, assaulted and killed.

ICT

The ballad which tells the story of adventure and romance is best suited for filming. Watch the video text of the ballad on YouTube and attempt a review of it. You can attempt an audio recording of the poem and present the poem before the class hyperlinking the audio and video files.



Poems



51

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

Robert Lee Frost is one of the most popular 20th century American poets. In an age of Modernism, Frost upheld traditional poetry by strictly keeping meter, rhyme and formalized stanzas instead of writing in free verse. He used themes from everyday life to analyse complex social and philosophical questions. By portraying rural life in the most realistic manner and by bringing in a wide range of human experiences, Frost initiated a new poetic trail. ‘Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening’, ‘The Road not Taken’, ‘Apple Picking’, ‘Home Burial’, ‘Mending Wall’ and ‘Birches’ are some of his well-known verses. He had received the Pulitzer Prize four times, which was unprecedented in the history of American literature.

Focus

‘Never Again would Birds' Song be the Same’, set in the Garden of Eden is a poem in praise of Eve and her eternal charm. She is in deep communion with nature, especially with the birds in the garden. Her sweet voice adds an ‘over sound’ to theirs and thereby makes it sweeter. The poem was an attempt by the poet on the modernist expression, yet he framed it as a sonnet. Frost also experimented a change of scene by setting the poem in the Garden of Eden instead of the usual rural background.

Poems

Never Again would Birds' Song be the Same

1. What is the adjective used by the poet to describe Eve's voice?

2. Which 'garden' is mentioned in the poem?

3. How did Eve's voice influence the birds?

4. Which line indicates that it was a long lasting influence?

5. Why, according to the poet, did Eve come to Eden?

He would declare and could himself believe
That the birds there in all the garden round
From having heard the daylong voice of Eve
Had added to their own an oversound,
Her tone of meaning but without the words.
Admittedly an eloquence so soft
Could only have had an influence on birds
When call or laughter carried it aloft.
Be that as may be, she was in their song.
Moreover her voice upon their voices crossed
Had now persisted in the woods so long
That probably it never would be lost.
Never again would birds' song be the same.
And to do that to birds was why she came.



52

eloquence: persuasive, fluent and powerful speech

aloft: in the air or in a higher position

persist: continue to exist

Understanding the poem

1. 'Be that as may be, she was in their song.' What impression do you get from this regarding the quality of Eve's voice?
2. What difference does the poet notice in the bird's song and Eve's speech?
3. Who is the 'he' in the opening lines of the poem? Why do you think his name has never come up in the poem?
4. What is the meaning of 'oversound' in the poem?
5. How does the poet establish a close link between birds and Eve?
6. Does Eve represent a single biblical character or womanhood as a whole? Justify.
7. Do you think that women are closer to nature than men? Explain with reference to the poem.
8. Birds are associated with liberty. How does that association work in the context of this poem?
9. Allusion is an artistic device of making an indirect reference to something without mentioning it explicitly. What is the allusion in this poem?
10. Pick out the rhyme scheme of the poem.

Writing about the poem

1. If Adam were at the centre of the poem, how different would the treatment of the poet be? Comment.
2. Eco-feminists across the world believe that 'Women are more akin to nature than to culture.' Prepare a review of the poem in the light of the above statement.

ICT

Robert Frost has many poems to his credit. Search the web for more poems and make an e-portfolio of his works.

Poems



Theodore Roethke (1908 - 1963)

Theodore Huebner Roethke is an American poet who makes profuse use of nature images in his poetry. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1954 for his book, *The Waking* and he won the annual National Book Award for Poetry twice, in 1959 for *Words for the Wind* and posthumously in 1965 for *The Far Field*. As Karl Malkoff of *The Sewanee Review* noted, 'He is one of our finest poets, a human poet in a world that threatens to turn man into an object.'

Focus

This is an elegy, a poem reflecting on death or loss.

A **traditional elegy** is written in elegiac stanzas, often in lines of iambic pentameter that have the rhyme scheme *abab*. An elegy often idealises the deceased. It typically ends with a consolation. In this elegy, Roethke chooses to deviate from some of the traditional elements to mirror the unconventional nature of the theme.

'Elegy for Jane', included in *The Waking* is a teacher's emotional response to the death of a student. The poem deals with the complexity of love outside the compartmentalisations prescribed by society. The reader is faced with the challenge of addressing a love different from the typical ones that society teaches us to value or pursue.

Poems

Elegy for Jane (My student, thrown by a horse)

I remember the neckcurls, limp and damp as
tendrils;

And her quick look, a sidelong pickerel smile;

And how, once startled into talk, the light syllables
leaped for her,

And she balanced in the delight of her thought,

A wren, happy, tail into the wind,

Her song trembling the twigs and small branches.

The shade sang with her;

The leaves, their whispers turned to kissing,

And the mould sang in the bleached valleys under
the rose.

Oh, when she was sad, she cast herself down into
such a pure depth,

Even a father could not find her:

Scraping her cheek against straw,

Stirring the clearest water.

My sparrow, you are not here,

Waiting like a fern, making a spiney shadow.

The sides of wet stones cannot console me,

1. How does the speaker recall the physical qualities of the student?

2. How does the happiness of the girl permeate to nature?

3. Why do you think the poet uses the expression 'a father'?

4. Pick out an instance of animal imagery used in the poem.

5. Identify the visual images used to establish the mood of the poem.

6. What wish does the poet express?

7. How does the poet drive home the feeling that he is an outsider?

Nor the moss, wound with the last light.
If only I could nudge you from this sleep,
My maimed darling, my skittery pigeon.
Over this damp grave I speak the words of my love:
I, with no rights in this matter,
Neither father nor lover.

tendrils: *the thin stem-like part of a climbing plant*

wren: *a kind of small, active song bird*

pickerel: *a kind of freshwater fish with a long flat snout*

maimed: *injured, with permanent damage to body*

spiney: *having thorns, difficult to handle*

skittery: *moving restlessly, quickly*

Understanding the poem

1. How does the poet establish the elegiac nature of the poem?
2. Comment on the expressions 'sidelong pickered smile' and 'bleached valleys under the rose'.
3. The poet refers to the girl as a 'wren', a 'sparrow' and a 'pigeon'. Why do you think he selected these birds? How do they relate to the girl?
4. Does the poet employ rhyming words or a definite rhyme scheme? Poems without a definite pattern are said to be written in 'free verse'. How does the choice of this form complement the theme?
5. In the second line of the first stanza, stressed monosyllabic words are used side by side (e.g. quick look). Find out similar usages in the poem. What effect do they create?
6. In the beginning, 'the neck curls' of the girl are compared to wet tendrils. Identify other elements of nature used and their effectiveness in bringing out the personality traits of the girl.
7. In the final stanza, we see the poet standing at the newly dug grave of the girl. How does the setting contribute to the sombre mood of the poem? Comment on the effectiveness of the setting.
8. The poet wonders whether he has the right to acknowledge his intense feelings of grief. Why does he have such a doubt?

Writing about the poem

1. The poem 'Elegy for Jane' explores the impact of one human life on another, outside the context of family or romantic love. Prepare a critical review of the poem.
2. If Jane could read this poem, what would she think? How would she feel about it: flattered, confused, embarrassed, or angry? Why?

ICT

Recite the poem with proper stress, tone and intonation. Record the reading and make a presentation of the poem using presentation software. You may use appropriate images in your presentation.

Poems



Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

James Mereer Langston Hughes is a famous Afro-American poet, novelist, playwright and social activist who started writing in the context of the Harlem Renaissance (1919-1930) which focussed on literature, music, theatre, art and politics. He, being a black, wrote profusely about the meaning and mettle of black identity. His poems voice the black American writing in English. 'The Negro Speaks of Rivers' is one of his best poems. He has written books for the young: *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems* (1932), *The First Book of Rhythms* (1954), *Don't You Turn Back and the Like*, *Montage a Dream Deferred* (poetry), *Without Laughter*, 1930 (novel), *The Big Sea*, 1940 (autobiography) and *Don't You Want to be Free?* 1938 (play) are some of his significant works.

Focus

'Oppression', with its revolutionary content, is a typical Langston Hughes poem in free verse. The discrimination and oppression suffered by the Afro-Americans form the core of Hughes' poems. With his usual economy of words and imagery, the poet expresses the inevitability of social change. The poet also prophesies the end of oppression and the redemption of his dreams quite convincingly.

Poems

Oppression

Now dreams
Are not available
To the dreamers,
Nor songs
To the singers

In some lands
Dark night
And cold steel
Prevail
But the dream
Will come back
And the song
Break
Its jail.

1. How does the poet bring out the condition of oppression?

2. Why are some lands dark and cold?

3. How does the poet express his faith in dreams and songs?

prevail: to be in force/use/effect to be current

Understanding the poem

1. The word 'oppression' does not occur anywhere in the poem. Still an atmosphere of oppression prevails. How?
2. What do cold steel and dark night represent?
3. Is the poet optimistic? Explain.
4. The dream in this poem is not just a day-dream. Do you think that dreams have a motivating influence in our lives? Justify your argument.
5. Have you ever experienced such a situation as described in the poem? Were you able to overcome it? How?
6. What does 'jail' stand for?

Writing about the poem

1. Here is another poem on dreams by Langston Hughes. Compare the idea of dream in both poems and bring out their social significance.

Harlem (Dream Deferred)

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore-
And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over-
Like a syrupy sweet?
May be it just sags
Like a heavy load
Or does it explode?

2. Write a poem of your own on the theme 'dream'.

60 ACT

Find out the literature of African-American origin and prepare profiles of any five of these works including their photographs, works, themes handled etc.

Poems



61

Pablo Neruda (1904-1973)

Pablo Neruda is the pen name and later the legal name of the Chilean poet and politician Neftalí Ricardo Reyes Basoalto. Neruda has gifted us with love poems, historical epics, surrealist poems and a handful of political poems too. After the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), Neruda developed an admiration for Communist ideology. This inkling towards communism made him criticise the Chilean government. In 1948, he was forced into hiding and was exiled for his actions. He returned to Chile in 1952 and continued to live there till his death in 1973. He shared the World Peace Prize with Paul Robeson and Pablo Picasso in 1950. In 1971, he won the Nobel Prize for Literature. The Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez has hailed him as 'the greatest poet of the twentieth century in any language.'

Focus

Neruda wrote his poems in Spanish. This poem is a translated one and was most likely written during his exile. It was published in a collection in 1952 titled 'The Captain's Verses', after his return from exile. Charged with sensuality and passion, Neruda's love poems are the most celebrated pieces of his compositions. This poem is frequently thought to be a love poem dedicated to his wife Matilde Urrutia. But some critics state that this poem is an address to the poet's home country, Chile, rather than a love poem.

The poem comprises of six stanzas of unequal length. The lyric is written in free-form as most of Neruda's other poems are. Love being a persistent subject of interest, 'If You Forget Me' with its themes of passionate love and sacrifice, has captured the attention of many readers across the globe.

Poems

If You Forget Me

1. Who is the poet speaking to?

I want you to know
one thing.

2. List the tangible and intangible objects referred to in these lines.

You know how this is:
if I look
at the crystal moon, at the red branch
of the slow autumn at my window,
if I touch
near the fire
the impalpable ash
or the wrinkled body of the log,
everything carries me to you,
as if everything that exists,
aromas, light, metals,
were little boats
that sail
toward those isles of yours that wait for me.

3. What do 'isles' refer to? What are they waiting for?

Well, now,
if little by little you stop loving me
I shall stop loving you little by little.
If suddenly
you forget me
do not look for me,
for I shall already have forgotten you.

If you think it long and mad,
the wind of banners
that passes through my life,
and you decide
to leave me at the shore
of the heart where I have roots,
remember
that on that day,
at that hour,
I shall lift my arms
and my roots will set off
to seek another land.

4. Loving somebody is not a momentary affair. It is time-consuming. Which words reflect this idea?

5. Can roots be fixed in one's heart? If so, whose 'heart' is referred to?

Poems

Pablo Neruda

6. How do we know that the love in the poem is reciprocal?

But
if each day,
each hour,
you feel that you are destined for me
with implacable sweetness,
if each day a flower
climbs up to your lips to seek me,
ah my love, ah my own,
in me all that fire is repeated,
in me nothing is extinguished or forgotten,
my love feeds on your love, beloved,
and as long as you live it will be in your arms
without leaving mine.

7. Does the lyric end in a loving tone or a bitter one?

impalpable: incapable of being perceived by the senses; especially by the sense of touch

aroma: perfume; sweet smell

isles: islands

destined: governed by fate

implacable: incapable of being pacified; cannot be appeased

extinguished: to put an end to or bring to an end

Understanding the poem

1. The summary of each stanza may be listed as one-liners. Two are done for you.
Complete the remaining:
Stanza 1- I want you to know one thing
Stanza 2- Everything reminds me of you
Stanza 3-.....
Stanza 4-.....
Stanza 5-.....
Stanza 6-.....
2. Is the poem an address to the speaker's lover? Substantiate your answer.
3. A historical placing of the poem suggests that the poet was stimulated by his personal experience of exile from his home. Justify.
4. The word 'if' is employed by the poet in all the five stanzas except the first one. Does the word have any significance in the poem? Does the poet wish all that he has written to happen?
5. The poet here is reluctant to leave the heart where he has roots. Here 'heart' is a metaphor for home. What other metaphors are employed by the poet?
6. Use of poetic devices like alliteration adds to the musical quality of a verse. Pick out instances of alliteration from the poem.
7. Find out instances of personification used in the poem.
8. In stanza 2, the poet borrows images from sea life to drive home his passionate longing for his lover. Identify the image used and comment on them.
9. There is a sudden shift in the tone of the poet as the poem progresses. Where do you notice this shift? How does the shift affect the progression of thought of the poet?

Writing about the poem

1. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem taking into account its themes, language, literary devices used, tone and mood.

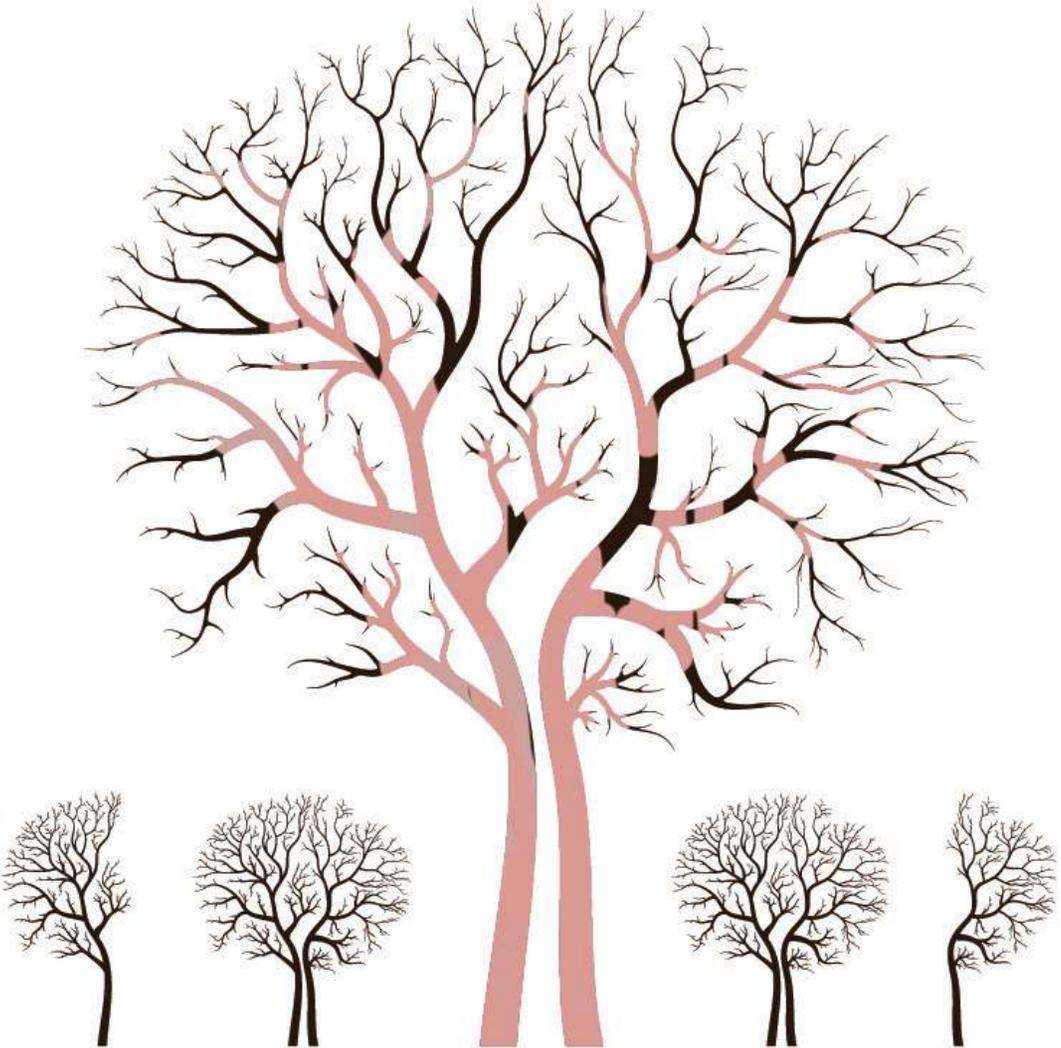
ICT

Prepare a presentation on Neruda's poems. You may include videos on Neruda's poems, audio texts, his biographical details etc. in your presentation.



Section 2

Short Stories



Short Stories



Anton Chekhov (1860-1904)

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov is one of the most insightful and epoch-making dramatists and short story writers Russia has ever produced. His stories and plays have been hailed for their amazing originality and subtlety. As an atheist having a religious background and education, Chekhov combined a realistic approach with philosophic observation and a strong sense of humanity in his works. His plays and short stories are held in high esteem by writers and critics around the world. Some of his famous plays include *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Bear*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Three Sisters* etc. He wrote over 200 short stories of which some of the notable ones are *Vanka*, *A Blunder*, *The Black Monk*, *The Looking Glass*, *Dreams*, *A Work of Art*, *Gooseberries* etc. The social conditions that existed in Russia during his lifetime had a tremendous influence on Chekhov who wrote about them using a simple technique devoid of literary devices.

Focus

As a master of understatement and concealed meaning, Anton Chekhov is at his artistic best in *The Orator*. This story presents the embarrassing situation a gifted orator faces at a funeral ceremony. In this story Chekhov satirises the pretensions and hypocrisy of men. He spares no chance to unfold the human psyche even while narrating the story of a dead man put to grave.

Short Stories

The Orator

1. Who is dead?
How did he die?

ONE fine morning the collegiate assessor, Kirill Ivanovitch Babilonov, who had died of the two afflictions so widely spread in our country, a bad wife and alcoholism, was being buried. As the funeral procession set off from the church to the cemetery, one of the deceased's colleagues, called Poplavsky, got into a cab and galloped off to find a friend, one Grigory Petrovitch Zapoikin, a man who though still young had acquired considerable popularity. Zapoikin, as many of my readers are aware, possesses a rare talent for impromptu speechifying at weddings, jubilees and funerals. He can speak whenever he likes: in his sleep, on an empty stomach, dead drunk or in a high fever. His words flow smoothly and evenly, like water out of a pipe, and in abundance; there are far more moving words in his oratorical dictionary than there are beetles in any restaurant. He always speaks eloquently and at great length, so much so that on some occasions, particularly at merchants' weddings, they have to resort to assistance from the police to stop him.

2. Why is Zapoikin invited by Poplavsky for the funeral procession?

'I have come for you, old man!' began Poplavsky, finding him at home. 'Put on your hat and coat this minute and come along. One of our fellows is dead, we are just sending him off to the other world, so you must do a bit of palavering by way of farewell to him. . . . You are our only hope. If it had been one of the smaller fry it would not have been worth troubling you, but you see it's the secretary . . . a pillar of the office, in a sense. It's awkward for such a whopper to be buried without a speech.'

‘Oh, the secretary!’ yawned Zapoikin. ‘You mean the drunken one?’

‘Yes. There will be pancakes, a lunch . . . you’ll get your cab-fare. Come along, dear chap. You spout out some rigmarole like a regular Cicero at the grave and what gratitude you will earn!’

Zapoikin readily agreed. He ruffled up his hair, cast a shade of melancholy over his face, and went out into the street with Poplavsky.

‘I know your secretary,’ he said, as he got into the cab. ‘A cunning rogue and a beast -- the kingdom of heaven be his -- such as you don’t often come across.’

‘Come, Grisha, it is not the thing to abuse the dead.’

‘Of course not, *aut mortuis nihil bene*, but still he was a rascal.’

The friends overtook the funeral procession and joined it. The coffin was borne along slowly so that before they reached the cemetery they were able three times to drop into a tavern and imbibe a little to the health of the departed.

In the cemetery came the service by the graveside. The mother-in-law, the wife, and the sister-in-law in obedience to custom shed many tears. When the coffin was being lowered into the grave the wife even shrieked ‘Let me go with him!’ but did not follow her husband into the grave probably recollecting her pension. Waiting till everything was quiet again Zapoikin stepped forward, turned his eyes on all present, and began:

3. Identify a couple of instances of humour in the story.

4. How did Zapoikin praise the dead man?

'Can I believe my eyes and ears? Is it not a terrible dream this grave, these tear-stained faces, these moans and lamentations? Alas, it is not a dream and our eyes do not deceive us! He whom we have only so lately seen, so full of courage, so youthfully fresh and pure, who so lately before our eyes like an unwearied bee bore his honey to the common hive of the welfare of the state, he who... he is turned now to dust, to inanimate mirage. Inexorable death has laid his bony hand upon him at the time when, in spite of his bowed age, he was still full of the bloom of strength and radiant hopes. An irremediable loss! Who will fill his place for us? Good government servants we have many, but Prokofy Osipitch was unique. To the depths of his soul he was devoted to his honest duty; he did not spare his strength but worked late at night, and was disinterested, impervious to bribes. . . . How he despised those who to the detriment of the public interest sought to corrupt him, who by the seductive goods of this life strove to draw him to betray his duty! Yes, before our eyes Prokofy Osipitch would divide his small salary between his poorer colleagues, and you have just heard yourselves the lamentations of the widows and orphans who lived upon his alms. Devoted to good works and his official duty, he gave up the joys of this life and even renounced the happiness of domestic existence; as you are aware, to the end of his days he was a bachelor. And who will replace him as a comrade? I can see now the kindly, shaven face turned to us with a gentle smile, I can hear now his soft friendly voice. Peace to thine ashes, Prokofy Osipitch! Rest, honest, noble toiler!'

5. What are the things that seemed strange in Zapoikin's speech?

Zapoikin continued while his listeners began whispering together. His speech pleased everyone and drew some tears, but a good many things in it seemed strange. In the first place they could not make out why the orator called the deceased Prokofy Osipitch when his name was Kirill Ivanovitch. In the second, everyone knew that the deceased had spent his whole life quarelling with his lawful wife, and so consequently could not be called a bachelor; in the third, he had a thick red beard and had never been known to shave, and so no one could understand why the orator spoke of his shaven face. The listeners were perplexed; they glanced at each other and shrugged their shoulders.

‘Prokofy Osipitch,’ continued the orator, looking with an air of inspiration into the grave, ‘your face was plain, even hideous, you were morose and austere, but we all know that under that outer husk there beat an honest, friendly heart!’

Soon the listeners began to observe something strange in the orator himself. He gazed at one point, shifted about uneasily and began to shrug his shoulders too. All at once he ceased speaking, and gaping with astonishment, turned to Poplavsky.

‘I say! he’s alive,’ he said, staring with horror.

‘Who’s alive?’

‘Why, Prokofy Osipitch, there he stands, by that tombstone! He never died! It’s Kirill Ivanovitch who’s dead.’

‘But you told me yourself your secretary was dead.’

6. Why did Zapoikin make a mistake about the identity of the deceased?

'Kirill Ivanovitch was our secretary. You've muddled it, you queer fish. Prokofy Osipitch was our secretary before, that's true, but two years ago he was transferred to the second division as head clerk.'

'How the devil is one to tell?'

'Why are you stopping? Go on, it's awkward.'

Zapoikin turned to the grave, and with the same eloquence continued his interrupted speech. Prokofy Osipitch, an old clerk with a clean-shaven face, was in fact standing by a tombstone. He looked at the orator and frowned angrily.

'Well, you have put your foot into it, haven't you!' laughed his fellow-clerks as they returned from the funeral with Zapoikin. 'Burying a man alive!'

'It's unpleasant, young man,' grumbled Prokofy Osipitch. 'Your speech may be alright for a dead man, but in reference to a living one it is nothing but sarcasm! Upon my soul what have you been saying? Disinterested, incorruptible, won't take bribes! Such things can only be said of the living in sarcasm. And no one asked you, sir, to expatiate on my face. Plain, hideous, so be it, but why exhibit my countenance in that public way! It's insulting.'



Notes

aut mortuis nihil bene: misquoted version of "De mortuis aut nihil aut bene" (of the dead speak well or not at all)

bribes: bribery was extremely common in Chekhov's Russia, particularly among the lower grade officials, who were paid inadequate salaries.

affliction: a cause of pain, suffering, or distress

deceased: dead

gallop: to move or progress swiftly

impromptu: prompted by the occasion rather than being planned in advance

palaver: a type of empty nonsense, a type of flattery

whopper: something exceptionally big or impressive

spout out: to boast about someone or something

rigmarole: nonsense

ruffle up: to disarrange

inexorable: unstoppable

disinterested: impartial

impervious: incapable of being affected

despise: to hate

seductive: attractive

renounce: to give up

perplexed: confused

hideous: grim

morose: gloomy (here withdrawn)

austere: strict or severe

muddle: to mix confusedly

queer fish: a strange person

grumble: to mutter discontentedly

expatiate: to speak or write at length or in detail

countenance: face

Understanding the story

1. What are the two afflictions that caused the death of Babilonov? Bring out the irony and sarcasm in the description.
2. How is Zapoikin described as an orator? His words are compared to 'water out of a pipe'. Find out other images.
3. What are the incentives promised to Zapoikin for his speech? Explain the double standards behind such a speech.
4. How did Zapoikin present himself befitting to the occasion? Why are tears shed at the cemetery? What is the general truth the author wants to tell here?
5. What is the irony in the wife's shriek 'Let me go with him'? Why couldn't she follow her husband? What does this show of the dead man and his wife? Is the characterization realistic? Substantiate.
6. What is the picture of the society you get from Zapoikin's speech?
7. Why did Profoky Osipitch blame Zapoikin of insulting him in public? What does this suggest about human nature?
8. Who do you think was more embarrassed, Zapoikin or Prokofy Osipitch? Why?
9. 'Disinterested, incorruptible, won't take bribes! Such things can be said of the living in sarcasm.' Do you agree with this? Do vices exceed in man so much so that his virtues cannot be praised? Comment.
10. The author unveils a conflict without revealing its magnitude while he exposes the mistake of the orator. How far does the author become successful in resolving the conflict and incorporating a twist at the end of the story?

Writing about the story

1. What, according to you, is the theme/themes of the story? To what extent does the author universalise the theme? Substantiate.
2. Death provides ample opportunities for analyzing human character in its variety. All the characters in the story including the dead man's wife present this philosophy of life through subtle characterisation and climactic moments. Write a critical appreciation of the story in terms of its theme, characterisation, tone and narration.
3. Sarcasm, irony, humour and satire are the devices with which Chekhov attempts his critique of the society. Evaluate the efficacy of these elements in the story.

ICT

Make a presentation on the origin and development of short story as a genre. You may make use of the following websites for collecting data.

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Short_story
- <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/william-boyd-short-history-of-the-short-story/#.UrpOlfuBWS0>

Short Stories



O Henry (1862-1910)

William Sydney Porter, also known as O Henry, was an excellent writer and was famous for the surprise endings to all of his stories. Regarded as one of the most famous American storytellers, he pictured the lives of lower middle class New Yorkers in a humorous style. He presents contemporary American society through his 600 stories with a typical O Henry twist. By 1900, America began to rise and establish itself as one of the most industrialised countries in the world. Most of the urban people in the US were drawn to the American dream of getting rich. Some of the protagonists of O Henry are also caught in this whirlpool. *The Gift of the Magi*, *Cabbages and Kings*, *The Four Million*, *After Twenty Years*, *The Cop and the Anthem* etc. are some of his most acclaimed short stories.

Focus

O Henry, in the story *The Romance of a Busy Broker*, presents Maxwell who indulges in stock-broking, a profession of core significance to capitalist growth. He works like a machine so much so that he forgets quite a few important things in his life.

Short Stories

The Romance of a Busy Broker

77

Pitcher, confidential clerk in the office of Harvey Maxwell, broker, allowed a look of mild interest and surprise to visit his usually expressionless countenance when his employer briskly entered at half past nine in company with his young lady stenographer. With a snappy 'Good-morning, Pitcher,' Maxwell dashed at his desk as though he were intending to leap over it, and then plunged into the great heap of letters and telegrams waiting there for him.

The young lady had been Maxwell's stenographer for a year. She was beautiful in a way that was decidedly unstenographic. She forewent the pomp of the alluring pompadour. She wore no chains, bracelets or lockets. She had not the air of being about to accept an invitation to luncheon. Her dress was grey and plain, but it fitted her figure with fidelity and discretion. In her neat black turban hat was the gold-green wing of a macaw. On this morning she was softly and shyly radiant. Her eyes were dreamily bright, her cheeks genuine peach blow, her expression a happy one, tinged with reminiscence.

Pitcher, still mildly curious, noticed a difference in her ways this morning. Instead of going straight into the adjoining room, where her desk was, she lingered, in the outer office. Once she moved over by Maxwell's desk, near enough for him to be aware of her presence.

The machine sitting at that desk was no longer a man; it was a busy New York broker, moved by buzzing wheels and uncoiling springs.

1. Why was Pitcher surprised when his employer entered the office with his lady stenographer?
2. How did Maxwell approach his work desk? Why?
3. Why was the lady described as 'unstenographic'?
4. How did the stenographer appear that morning?
5. What difference did the clerk notice in the stenographer's behaviour that morning?

6. '...not a single picture hat or piece of pineapple chewing gum has showed up yet.' Who are the people referred to here?

'Well- - what is it? Anything?' asked Maxwell sharply. His opened mail lay like a bank of stage snow on his crowded desk. His keen grey eye, impersonal and brusque, flashed upon her half impatiently.

'Nothing,' answered the stenographer, moving away with a little smile.

'Mr. Pitcher,' she said to the confidential clerk, 'did Mr. Maxwell say anything yesterday about engaging another stenographer?'

'He did,' answered Pitcher. 'He told me to get another one. I notified the agency yesterday afternoon to send over a few samples this morning. It's 9.45 o'clock, and not a single picture hat or piece of pineapple chewing gum has showed up yet.'

'I will do the work as usual, then,' said the young lady, 'until someone comes to fill the place.' And she went to her desk at once and hung the black turban hat with the gold- green macaw wing in its accustomed place.

He who has been denied the spectacle of a busy Manhattan broker during a rush of business is handicapped for the profession of anthropology. The poet sings of the 'crowded hour of glorious life.' The broker's hour is not only crowded, but the minutes and seconds are hanging to all the straps and packing both front and rear platforms.

7. How busy is Maxwell's office?

And this day was Harvey Maxwell's busy day. The ticker began to reel out jerkily its fitful coils of tape, the desk telephone had a chronic attack of buzzing. Men began to throng into the office and call at him over the railing,

jovially, sharply, viciously, excitedly. Messenger boys ran in and out with messages and telegrams. The clerks in the office jumped about like sailors during a storm. Even Pitcher's face relaxed into something resembling animation.

On the Exchange there were hurricanes and landslides and snowstorms and glaciers and volcanoes, and those elemental disturbances were reproduced in miniature in the broker's offices. Maxwell shoved his chair against the wall and transacted business after the manner of a toe dancer. He jumped from ticker to 'phone, from desk to door with the trained agility of a harlequin.

In the midst of this growing and important stress the broker became suddenly aware of a high-rolled fringe of golden hair under a nodding canopy of velvet and ostrich tips, an imitation sealskin sacque and a string of beads as large as hickory nuts, ending near the floor with a silver heart. There was a self-possessed young lady connected with these accessories; and Pitcher was there to construe her.

'Lady from the Stenographer's Agency to see about the position,' said Pitcher.

Maxwell turned half around, with his hands full of papers and ticker tape.

'What position?' he asked, with a frown.

'Position of stenographer,' said Pitcher. 'You told me yesterday to call them up and have one sent over this morning.'

8. What is Maxwell at work compared to? Why?

9. What are the accessories attached to the young lady?

10. 'The silver heart left the office...'
Who is mentioned here? What is the mood of the person?

'You are losing your mind, Pitcher,' said Maxwell. 'Why should I have given you any such instructions? Miss Leslie has given perfect satisfaction during the year she has been here. The place is hers as long as she chooses to retain it. There's no place open here, madam. Countermand that order with the agency, Pitcher, and don't bring any more of 'em in here.'

The silver heart left the office, swinging and banging itself independently against the office furniture as it indignantly departed. Pitcher seized a moment to remark to the bookkeeper that the 'old man' seemed to get more absent-minded and forgetful every day of the world.

The rush and pace of business grew fiercer and faster. On the floor they were pounding half a dozen stocks in which Maxwell's customers were heavy investors. Orders to buy and sell were coming and going as swift as the flight of swallows. Some of his own holdings were imperilled, and the man was working like some high-gear, delicate, strong machine--strung to full tension, going at full speed, accurate, never hesitating, with the proper word and decision and ready and prompt as clockwork. Stocks and bonds, loans and mortgages, margins and securities--here was a world of finance, and there was no room in it for the human world or the world of nature.

When the luncheon hour drew near there came a slight lull in the uproar.

Maxwell stood by his desk with his hands full of telegrams and memoranda, with a fountain pen over his right ear and his hair hanging in disorderly strings over

his forehead. His window was open, for the beloved janitress Spring had turned on a little warmth through the waking registers of the earth.

And through the window came a wandering- - perhaps a lost- - odour- - a delicate, sweet odour of lilac that fixed the broker for a moment immovable. For this odour belonged to Miss Leslie; it was her own, and hers only.

The odour brought her vividly, almost tangibly before him. The world of finance dwindled suddenly to a speck. And she was in the next room- - twenty steps away.

'By George, I'll do it now,' said Maxwell, half aloud. 'I'll ask her now. I wonder I didn't do it long ago.'

He dashed into the inner office with the haste of a short trying to cover. He charged upon the desk of the stenographer.

She looked up at him with a smile. A soft pink crept over her cheek, and her eyes were kind and frank. Maxwell leaned one elbow on her desk. He still clutched fluttering papers with both hands and the pen was above his ear.

'Miss Leslie,' he began hurriedly, 'I have but a moment to spare. I want to say something in that moment. Will you be my wife? I haven't had time to make love to you in the ordinary way, but I really do love you. Talk quick, please- - those fellows are clubbing the stuffing out of Union Pacific.'

'Oh, what are you talking about?' exclaimed the young lady. She rose to her feet and gazed upon him, round-eyed.

11. What other world was brought to Maxwell by the odour?

12. What word will you best choose to describe Maxwell? (lethargic/determined/workaholic)

13. Why do you think Leslie was 'queer?'

'Don't you understand?' said Maxwell, restively. 'I want you to marry me. I love you, Miss Leslie. I wanted to tell you, and I snatched a minute when things had slackened up a bit. They're calling me for the 'phone now. Tell 'em to wait a minute, Pitcher. Won't you, Miss Leslie?'

The stenographer acted very queerly. At first she seemed overcome with amazement; then tears flowed from her wondering eyes; and then she smiled sunnily through them, and one of her arms slid tenderly about the broker's neck.

'I know now,' she said, softly. 'It's this old business that has driven everything else out of your head for the time. I was frightened at first. Don't you remember, Harvey? We were married last evening at 8 o'clock in the Little Church around the Corner.'



countenance: *face*

briskly: *quickly*

snappy: *speak in a bad temper or impatient way*

dashed: *to move suddenly*

pomp: *dignified or magnificent display*

alluring: *attractive*

pompadour: *a hair style formed by sweeping the hair into a high mound in front*

luncheon: *formal lunch*

fidelity: *(here) accurately*

discretion: *modesty*

macaw: *a large tropical bird of the parrot family*

reminiscence: *remembering the past*

brusque: *using very few words and sounding rude*

spectacle: *an impressive sight or view*

jerkily: *to move in sudden, abrupt motions*

throng: *to gather in large numbers*

jovially: *cheerfully*

viciously: *violently*

agility: *able to move quickly and easily*

harlequin: *an amusing character in traditional plays, wearing bright clothes*

canopy: *a layer of something that spreads over an area like a roof (here it refers to a hat)*

sacque: *a woman's full, loose, hip-long jacket*

hickory: *a hard wood in North America*

construe: *to make understand an action in a particular way*

countermand: *to cancel an order that has been given*

seize: *to be quick to make use of a chance*

imperil: *to put something in danger*

lull: *a quiet period between times of activity*

janitress: *a caretaker*

tangibly: *that can be clearly seen and touched*

dwindle: *to become gradually less*

slacken: *to become less active*

Understanding the story

1. Read the story again and identify the following:

The setting	
Time	
The social background	
The point of view	
Theme	

2. From what you have read in the story, give a description of a New York broker's office. Also state the similes and metaphors used to improve upon the description of the office by the writer.
3. '...the 'old man' seemed to get more absent-minded and forgetful every day of the world.' Who is the 'old man' referred to here? Does he deserve to be called so? Do you agree with this comment made by the clerk to the bookkeeper?
4. The writer tries to convey to the reader what is to come as the story progresses. Identify the different situations when the writer knowingly or unknowingly does so?
5. '...I want you to marry me. I love you, Miss Leslie. I wanted to tell you, and I snatched a minute when things had slackened up a bit...' How romantic or unromantic is this? Comment.

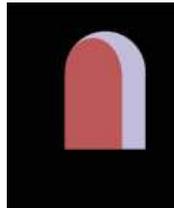
Writing about the story

1. Do you think Maxwell is a successful man in his life? Why?
2. In the light of your reading, comment on the statement 'Modern world gives us many types of luxuries, but snatches away our real happiness and sense of humanity.'
3. Describe an instance of your own forgetfulness.
4. Collect stories of forgetfulness from the life of famous people and retell them.

ICT

The writer makes use of deft elements of surprise, suspense and foreshadowing in the story. You may read O Henry's 'A Service of Love and Identity' and compare instances of such elements used in both the stories. Present your findings before the class.



Short Stories**Katherine Mansfield (1889-1923)**

Katherine Mansfield was the pen-name of Katherine Mansfield Bauchamp, who started writing stories at the age of nine. She was less concerned with the plot but good at presenting rare emotions and experiences. Her husband John Middleton Murray, the famous literary critic was a major influence in her life. During her short span of life she wrote a few stories which place her among the most important short story writers of the 20th century. The memories of her early youth give her works tenderness and picture-like qualities to her character. The end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was a period which witnessed great class distinctions. Katherine Mansfield was very sensitive to class distinctions and her sympathy always lay with the have-nots, though she usually wrote about the English upper class. The egoism and pretense of the bourgeois characters is treated with irony in her stories and this indeed is a mirror held up to the society of her times. *A Dill Pickle*, *The Doll's House*, *The Garden Party*, *The Man without a Temperament* and *The Woman at the Store* are some of her famous short stories.

Focus

A Cup of Tea is a representative story by Katherine Mansfield which ironically presents the complexity of domestic life through the responses of an upper class fashionable woman, Rosemary Fell. People often show generosity to those whom they consider inferior. The magnanimity they shower upon the deprived is only out of pretense to satisfy their ego. Such benevolent feelings evaporate when the recipient of pity moves against their self-interest and vanity. Rosemary, in the story is such a vain glorious character.

A Cup of Tea

1. How is Rosemary Fell described?

Rosemary Fell was not exactly beautiful. No, you couldn't have called her beautiful. Pretty? Well, if you took her to pieces.... But why be so cruel as to take anyone to pieces? She was young, brilliant, extremely modern, exquisitely well dressed, amazingly well read in the newest of the new books, and her parties were the most delicious mixture of the really important people and artists.

2. How was Rosemary's usual shopping?

Rosemary had been married two years. She had a duck of a boy. And her husband absolutely adored her. They were rich, really rich, not just comfortably well-off, so if Rosemary wanted to shop she would go to Paris as you and I would go to Bond Street. If she wanted to buy flowers, the car pulled up at that perfect shop in Regent Street,³ and Rosemary inside the shop just gazed in her dazzled, rather exotic way, and said: 'I want those and those and those. Give me four bunches of those. And that jar of roses. Yes, I'll have all the roses in the jar. No, no lilac. I hate lilac. It's got no shape.' The attendant bowed and put the lilac out of sight, as though this was only too true; lilac was dreadfully shapeless. 'Give me those stumpy little tulips. Those red and white ones.' And she was followed to the car by a thin shop-girl staggering under an immense white paper armful that looked like a baby in long clothes....

One winter afternoon she had been buying something in a little antique shop in Curzon Street. It was a shop she liked. For one thing, one usually had it to oneself. And then the man who kept it was ridiculously fond of

serving her. He beamed whenever she came in. He clasped his hands; he was so gratified he could scarcely speak. Flattery, of course. All the same, there was something...

'You see, madam,' he would explain in his low respectful tones, 'I love my things. I would rather not part with them than sell them to someone who does not appreciate them, who has not that fine feeling which is so rare...!' And, breathing deeply, he unrolled a tiny square of blue velvet and pressed it on the glass counter with his pale fingertips.

To-day it was a little box. He had been keeping it for her. He had shown it to nobody as yet. An exquisite little enamel box with a glaze so fine it looked as though it had been baked in cream. On the lid a minute creature stood under a flowery tree, and a more minute creature still had her arms round his neck. Her hat, really no bigger than a geranium petal, hung from a branch; it had green ribbons. And there was a pink cloud above their heads. Rosemary took her hands out of her long gloves. She always took off her gloves to examine such things. Yes, she liked it very much. She loved it; it was a great duck. She must have it. And, turning the creamy box, opening and shutting it, she couldn't help noticing how charming her hands were against the blue velvet.

'Charming!' Rosemary admired the flowers. But what was the price? For a moment the shopman did not seem to hear. Then a murmur reached her. 'Twenty-eight guineas, madam.'

3. What was the new fancy item displayed by the shopkeeper?

4. Why did Rosemary ask the shopman to keep the box for her?

'Twenty-eight guineas.' Rosemary gave no sign. She laid the little box down; she buttoned her gloves again. Twenty-eight guineas. Even if one is rich... She looked vague. She stared at a plump tea-kettle and her voice was dreamy as she answered:

'Well, keep it for me- will you? I'll...'

But the shopman had already bowed as though keeping it for her was all any human being could ask. He would be willing, of course, to keep it for her for ever.

5. How was the climate like? Did it affect Rose Mary?

The discreet door shut with a click. She was outside on the step, gazing at the winter afternoon. Rain was falling, and with the rain it seemed the dark came too. There was a cold bitter taste in the air, and the new-lighted lamps looked sad. Sad were the lights in the houses opposite. Dimly they burned as if regretting something. And people hurried by, hidden under their hateful umbrellas.

Rosemary felt a strange pang. She pressed her muff against her breast; she wished she had the little box, too, to cling to. Of course the car was there. She'd only to cross the pavement. But still she waited. There are moments, horrible moments in life, when one emerges from a shelter and looks out, and it's awful. One oughtn't to give way to them. One ought to go home and have an extra-special tea. But at the very instant of thinking that, a young girl, thin, dark, shadowy- where had she come from?- was standing at Rosemary's elbow and a voice like a sigh, almost like a sob, breathed: 'Madam, may I speak to you a moment?'

'Speak to me?' Rosemary turned. She saw a little battered creature with enormous eyes, someone quite young, no older than herself, who clutched at her coat-collar with reddened hands, and shivered as though she had just come out of the water.

'M- madam,' stammered the voice. 'Would you let me have the price of a cup of tea?'

'A cup of tea?' There was something simple, sincere in that voice; it wasn't in the least the voice of a beggar. 'Then have you no money at all?' asked Rosemary.

'None, madam,' came the answer.

'How extraordinary!' Rosemary peered through the dusk and the girl gazed back at her. How more than extraordinary! And suddenly it seemed to Rosemary such an adventure. It was like something out of a novel by Dostoyevsky, this meeting in the dusk. Supposing she took the girl home? Supposing she did do one of those things she was always reading about or seeing on the stage, what would happen? It would be thrilling. And she heard herself saying afterwards to the amazement of her friends: 'I simply took her home with me,' as she stepped forward and said to that dim person beside her: 'Come home to tea with me.'

The girl drew back startled. She even stopped shivering for a moment. Rosemary put out a hand and touched her arm. 'I mean it,' she said, smiling. And she felt how simple and kind her smile was. 'Why won't you? Do come home with me now in my car and have tea.'

6. How does the author describe the young girl whom Rosemary met? What was her request?

7. What did Rosemary feel about the girl?

8. What offer did Rosemary give the girl?

'You- you don't mean it, madam,' said the girl, and there was pain in her voice.

'But I do,' cried Rosemary. 'I want you to. To please me. Come along.'

The girl put her fingers to her lips and her eyes devoured Rosemary. 'You're- you're not taking me to the police station?' she stammered.

'The police station!' Rosemary laughed out.

'Why should I be so cruel? No, I only want to make you warm and to hear- anything you care to tell me.'

Hungry people are easily led. The footman held the door of the car open, and a moment later they were skimming through the dusk.

'There!' said Rosemary. She had a feeling of triumph as she slipped her hand through the velvet strap. She could have said, 'Now I've got you,' as she gazed at the little captive she had netted. But of course she meant it kindly. Oh, more than kindly. She was going to prove to this girl that- wonderful things did happen in life, that- fairy godmothers were real, that- rich people had hearts, and that women were sisters. She turned impulsively, saying: 'Don't be frightened. After all, why shouldn't you come back with me? We're both women. If I'm the more fortunate, you ought to expect...'

But happily at that moment, for she didn't know how the sentence was going to end, the car stopped. The bell was rung, the door opened, and with a charming, protecting, almost embracing movement, Rosemary drew the other into the hall. Warmth, softness, light, a sweet scent, all

9. What did Rosemary want to prove? What did she do to make it a reality?

those things so familiar to her she never even thought about them, she watched that other receive. It was fascinating. She was like the rich little girl in her nursery with all the cupboards to open, all the boxes to unpack.

'Come, come upstairs,' said Rosemary, longing to begin to be generous. 'Come up to my room.'

And, besides, she wanted to spare this poor little thing from being stared at by the servants: she decided as they mounted the stairs she would not even ring to Jeanne, but take off her things by herself. The great thing was to be natural!

And 'There!' cried Rosemary again, as they reached her beautiful big bedroom with the curtains drawn, the fire leaping on her wonderful lacquer furniture, her gold cushions and the primrose and blue rugs.

The girl stood just inside the door; she seemed dazed. But Rosemary didn't mind that.

'Come and sit down,' she cried, dragging her big chair up to the fire, 'in this comfy chair. Come and get warm. You look so dreadfully cold.'

'I daren't, madam, said the girl, and she edged backwards.

'Oh, please,'- Rosemary ran forward- 'you mustn't be frightened, you mustn't, really. Sit down when I've taken off my things we shall go into the next room and have tea and be cosy. Why are you afraid?' And gently she half- pushed the thin figure into its deep cradle.

But there was no answer. The girl stayed just as she had been put, with her hands by her sides and her mouth

10. Describe Rosemary's bedroom. What was the girl's reaction on seeing it?

11. Why did the girl say that she was going to faint?

slightly open. To be quite sincere, she looked rather stupid. But Rosemary wouldn't acknowledge it. She leant over her, saying: 'Won't you take off your hat? Your pretty hair is all wet. And one is so much more comfortable without a hat, isn't one?'

There was a whisper that sounded like 'Very good, madam,' and the crushed hat was taken off.

'And let me help you off with your coat, too,' said Rosemary.

The girl stood up. But she held on to the chair with one hand and let Rosemary pull. It was quite an effort. And what was she to do with the coat now? She left it on the floor, and the hat too. She was just going to take a cigarette off the mantelpiece when the girl said quickly, but so lightly and strangely: 'I'm very sorry, madam, but I'm going to faint. I shall go off, madam, if I don't have something.'

'Good heavens, how thoughtless I am!' Rosemary rushed to the bell.

'Tea! Tea at once! And some brandy immediately!' The maid was gone again, but the girl almost cried out: 'No, I don't want no brandy. I never drink brandy. It's a cup of tea I want, madam.' And she burst into tears.

12. Why does the author use 'the other' instead of saying the names?

It was a terrible and fascinating moment. Rosemary knelt beside her chair.

'Don't cry, poor little thing,' she said. 'Don't cry.' And she gave the other her lace handkerchief. She really was touched beyond words. She put her arm round those thin, birdlike shoulders.

Now at last the other forgot to be shy, forgot everything except that they were both women, and gasped out: 'I can't go on no longer like this. I can't bear it. I can't bear it. I shall do away with myself.'

'I can't bear no more.'

'You shant't have to. I'll look after you. Don't cry any more. Don't you see what a good thing it was that you met me? We'll have tea and you'll tell me everything. And I shall arrange something. I promise.'

'Do stop crying. It's so exhausting. Please!'

The other did stop just in time for Rosemary to get up before the tea came. She had the table placed between them. She plied the poor little creature with everything, all the sandwiches, all the bread and butter, and every time her cup was empty she filled it with tea, cream and sugar. People always said sugar was so nourishing. As for herself she didn't eat; she smoked and looked away tactfully so that the other should not be shy.

And really the effect of that slight meal was marvellous. When the tea-table was carried away a new being, a light, frail creature with tangled hair, dark lips, deep, lighted eyes, lay back in the big chair. Rosemary lit a fresh cigarette; it was time to begin.

'And when did you have your last meal?' she asked softly.

But at that moment the door-handle turned.

'Rosemary, may I come in?' It was Philip.

'Of course.'

He came in. 'Oh, I'm so sorry,' he said, and stopped and stared.

13. Why did Rosemary look away when the other was having food?

'It's quite all right,' said Rosemary, smiling. 'This is my friend, Miss-'

'Smith, madam,' said the languid figure, who was strangely still and unafraid.

'Smith,' said Rosemary. 'We are going to have a little talk.'

'Oh yes,' said Philip. 'Quite,' and his eye caught sight of the coat and hat on the floor. He came over to the fire and turned his back to it. 'It's a beastly afternoon,' he said curiously, still looking at that listless figure, looking at its hands and boots, and then at Rosemary again.

'Yes, isn't it?' said Rosemary enthusiastically.

'Vile.'

Philip smiled his charming smile. 'As a matter of fact,' said he, 'I wanted you to come into the library for a moment. Would you? Will Miss Smith excuse us?'

The big eyes were raised to him, but Rosemary answered for her: 'Of course she will.' And they went out of the room together.

'I say,' said Philip, when they were alone. 'Explain. Who is she? What does it all mean?'

Rosemary laughing, leaned against the door and said: 'I picked her up in Curzon Street. Really. She's a real pick-up. She asked me for the price of a cup of tea, and I brought her home with me.'

'But what on earth are you going to do with her?' cried Philip.

'Be nice to her,' said Rosemary quickly. 'Be frightfully nice to her. Look after her. I don't know how. We haven't talked yet. But show her- treat her- make her feel!-'

'My darling girl,' said Philip, 'you're quite mad, you know. It simply can't be done.'

'I knew you'd say that,' retorted Rosemary. 'Why not? I want to. Isn't that a reason? And besides, one's always reading about these things. I decided-'

'But,' said Philip slowly, and he cut the end of a cigar, 'she's so astonishingly pretty.'

'Pretty?' Rosemary was so surprised that she blushed. 'Do you think so? I-I hadn't thought about it.'

'Good Lord!' Philip struck a match. 'She's absolutely lovely. Look again, my child. I was bowled over when I came into your room just now. However... I think you're making a ghastly mistake. Sorry, darling, if I'm crude and all that. But let me know if Miss Smith is going to dine with us in time for me to look up *The Milliner's Gazette*.'

'You absurd creature!' said Rosemary, and she went out of the library, but not back to her bedroom.

She went to her writing-room and sat down at her desk. Pretty! Absolutely lovely! Bowled over!

Her heart beat like a heavy bell. Pretty! Lovely! She drew her cheque-book towards her. But no, cheques would be no use, of course. She opened a drawer and took out five pound notes, looked at them, put two back, and holding the three squeezed in her hand, she went back to her bedroom.

Half an hour later Philip was still in the library, when Rosemary came in.

'I only wanted to tell you,' said she, and she leaned against the door again and looked at him with her dazzled exotic gaze. 'Miss Smith won't dine with us to-night.'

15. Why did Philip think that Rosemary made a ghastly mistake in bringing the woman home?

16. What technique did Philip employ to make Rosemary suddenly lose interest in Miss Smith?

Short Stories

Katherine Mansfield

Philip put down the paper. 'Oh, what's happened? Previous engagement?'

Rosemary came over and sat down on his knee.

'She insisted on going,' said she, 'so I gave the poor little thing a present of money. I couldn't keep her against her will, could I?' she added softly.

Rosemary had just done her hair, darkened her eyes a little and put on her pearls. She put up her hands and touched Philip's cheeks.

'Do you like me?' said she, and her tone, sweet, husky, troubled him.

'I like you awfully,' he said, and he held her tighter. 'Kiss me.'

There was a pause.

Then Rosemary said dreamily: 'I saw a fascinating little box to-day. It cost twenty-eight guineas.

May I have it?'

Philip jumped her on his knee. 'You may, little wasteful one,' said he.

But that was not really what Rosemary wanted to say.

'Philip,' she whispered, and she pressed his head against her bosom, 'am I pretty?'

17. How does the story end? What does it tell about the character of Rosemary?

exquisitely: beautifully and delicately

duck: darling (here) a term of endearment

Bond Street: a street in London famous for fashion stores

lacquer: a liquid used on metal or wood to provide a hard shining surface

comfy: comfortable

Understanding the story

1. Was Rosemary Fell extremely rich? Give evidences to justify your answer.
2. Why did the shopkeeper tell Rosemary that he would rather not part with his things than sell them to someone who did not appreciate them?
3. How did Rosemary react on hearing the price of the box?
4. What seemed like an extraordinary adventure to Rosemary and what did she decide to do?
5. Is it only out of her kindness that Rosemary invites the girl for tea? What do you think?
6. 'She's absolutely lovely.' Why did Philip make such a remark about Miss Smith? What was his intention?
7. Rosemary told Philip that Miss Smith wouldn't dine with them as she insisted on leaving was it true? Why did she say so?
8. What were Rosemary's reactions after hearing Philip's comments on Miss Smith? Was her behaviour unexpected? What does it tell about her character?
9. How can you interpret the odd behaviour of Rosemary towards the end of the story? What may be the reason for this?

Writing about the story

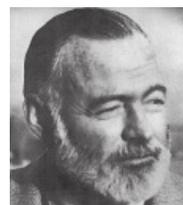
1. Is Rosemary possessive by nature? Sum up your reflections on Rosemary, the central character in the story, based on your reading of the story.
2. Descriptive details used by the writer help to conjure pictures in the reader's mind. How far is it true with Katherine Mansfield's 'A Cup of Tea'? Prepare a write-up presenting your views on the topic.
3. Compare and contrast the characters of Philip and Rosemary.
4. 'The egoism and pretentiousness of the upper class society is contrasted with the helplessness and fragility of the poor.' How far do the characters in the story illustrate this?

ICT

Arrange a quiz programme to test how well your friends have read the story. You may present the quiz using presentation software.



Short Stories



Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)

Ernest Miller Hemingway is one of the most celebrated American fictionists. He was also a noted journalist. Hemingway's writings influenced many fictionists in the 20th century. He rebelled against the elaborate style of the 19th century writers and formed a style of his own which was simple, economic and explicit. Hemingway's style was shaped by his experiences of World War I, in which he had participated. Love, war, wilderness and loss form the themes of his works. Many of his works are considered as classics of American literature. Hemingway was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954. Novels like *The Sun also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, *The Old Man and the Sea* and short story collections titled *Men Without Women*, *The Fifth Column* and *The First Forty-Nine Stories* etc. are some of his noted works.

Focus

A Canary for One which formed a part of the collection titled *Men without Women*, is a story with the quite simple plot of three people on a journey across Europe. Like all other stories of Hemingway, this story is also built around the tragedy of human relationships. The story is written in the typical Hemingway style- precise, laconic, devoid of emotions and sentiments, but concealing much beneath the surface, like an iceberg.

Short Stories

A Canary for One

The train passed very quickly a long, red stone house with a garden and four thick palm trees with table under them in the shade. On the other side was the sea.

"I bought him in Palermo," the American lady said. "We only had an hour ashore and it was Sunday morning. The man wanted to be paid in dollars and I gave him a dollar and a half. He really sings very beautifully."

It was very hot in the train and it was very hot in the lit salon compartment. There was no breeze came through the open window. The American lady pulled the window-blind down and there was no more sea.

There was smoke from many tall chimneys coming into Marseilles, and the train slowed down and followed on track through many others into the station. The train stayed twenty-five minutes in the station at Marseilles and the American lady bought a copy of the Daily Mail. She walked a little way along the station platform, but she stayed near the steps of the car because at Cannes, where it stopped for twelve minutes, the train had left with no signal of departure and she had only gotten on just in time. The American lady was a little deaf and she was afraid that perhaps signals of departure were given and that she did not hear them.

As it was getting dark the train passed a farmhouse burning in a field. Motor-car were stopped along the road and bedding and things from inside the farmhouse were spread in the field. Many people were watching the house burn. After it was dark the train was in

1. Why did the lady stay near the door of the train when it stopped at Marseilles?

2. In which country does the story take place?

Short Stories

Ernest Hemingway

3. Why was the American lady unable to sleep at night?

Avington. People got off. At the news-stand Frenchmen, returning to Paris, bought that day's French paper.

Inside the lit salon compartment the porter had pulled down the three beds from inside the wall and prepared them for sleeping. In the night the American lady lay without sleeping because the train was a rapide and went very fast and she was afraid of the speed in the night. The American lady's bed was the one next to the window. The canary from Palermo, a cloth spread over his cage, was out of the draught in the corridor that went into the compartment, and all night the train went very fast and the American lady lay awake and waited for the wreck.

4. What was the old lady carrying?

In the morning the train was near Paris, and after the American lady had come out of the washroom, looking very wholesome and middle-aged and American in spite of not having slept, and had taken the cloth off the bird-cage and hung the cage in the sun, she went back to the restaurant car for breakfast. When she came back to the lit salon compartment again, the beds had been pushed back into the wall and made into seats, the canary was shaking his feathers in the sunlight that came through the open window, and the train was much nearer Paris.

"He loves the sun," the American lady said. "He'll sing now in a little while."

"I've always loved birds. I'm taking him home to my little girl. There - he's singing now."

5. For whom did she buy the bird?

The train passed through many outside of Paris towns. There were tram-cars in the towns and big advertisements on the walls toward the train. For several

Short Stories

A Canary for One

minutes I had not listened to the American lady, who was talking to my wife.

"Is your husband American too?" asked the lady.

"Yes," said my wife. "We're both Americans."

"I thought you were English."

"Oh, no."

"Perhaps that was because I wore braces," I said. I had started to say suspenders and changed it to braces in the mouth, to keep my English character.

"I'm so glad you're Americans. American men make the best husbands," the American lady was saying. "That was why we left the Continent, you know. My daughter fell in love with a man in Vevey." She stopped. "They were simply madly in love." She stopped again. "I took her away, of course."

"Did she get over it?" asked my wife.

"I don't think so," said the American lady. "She wouldn't eat anything and she wouldn't sleep at all. I've tried so very hard, but she doesn't seem to take an interest in anything. She doesn't care about things. I couldn't have her marrying a foreigner." She paused. "Someone, a very good friend told me once, no foreigner can make an American girl a good husband."

"No," said my wife, "I suppose not."

The train was coming into Paris. There were many cars standing on tracks - brown wooden restaurant cars and brown wooden sleeping cars that would go to Italy at five o'clock that night, if that train still left at five; the

6. Who are the main characters? What is their nationality?

7. What does the old lady think about American men?

8. Why did the old lady leave the Continent?

9. Why didn't the old lady approve of her daughter's lover?

10. How did the mother's intervention affect her daughter?

cars were marked Paris-Rome, and cars, with seats on the roofs, that went back and forth to the suburbs with, at certain hours, people in all the seats and on the roofs, if that were the way it were still done, and passing were white walls and windows of houses. Nothing had eaten any breakfast.

"Americans make the best husbands," the American lady said to my wife. I was getting down the bags. "American men are the only men in the world to marry."

"How long ago did you leave Vevey?" asked my wife.

"Two years ago this fall. It's her, you know, I'm taking the canary to."

"Was the man your daughter was in love with a Swiss?"

"Yes," said the American lady. "He was from a very good family in Vevey. He was going to be an engineer. They met there in Vevey. They used to go on long walks together."

"I know Vevey," said my wife. "We were there on our honeymoon."

"Were you really? That must have been lovely. I had no idea, of course, that she'd fall in love with him."

"It was a very lovely place," said my wife.

"Yes," said the American lady. "Isn't it lovely? Where did you stop there?"

"We stayed at the Trois Couronnes," said my wife.

"It's such a fine old hotel," said the American lady.

"Yes," said my wife. "We had a very fine room and in the fall the country was lovely."

"Were you there in the fall?"

"Yes," said my wife.

We were passing three cars that had been in a wreck. They were splintered open and the roofs sagged in.

"Look," I said. "There's been a wreck."

The American lady looked and saw the last car. "I was afraid of that all night," she said. "I have terrific presentiments about things sometimes. I'll never travel on a rapide again at night. There must be other comfortable trains that don't go fast."

The train was in the dark of the Gare de Lyon, and then stopped and porters came up to the windows. I handed bags through the windows, and we were out on the dim longness of the platform, and the American lady put herself in charge of one of three men from Cook's who said: "Just a moment, madame, and I'll look for your name."

The porter brought a truck and piled on the baggage, and my wife said good-bye and I said good-bye to the American lady whose name had been found by the man from Cook's on a typewritten page in a sheaf of typewritten pages which he replaced in his pocket.

We followed the porter with the truck down the long cement platform beside the train. At the end was a gate and a man took our tickets. We were returning to Paris to set up separate residences.

11. The old lady assumes the American husband and wife to be a perfect couple. How is the assumption proved wrong at the end of the story?

Short Stories

Ernest Hemingway

canary: a small, yellow bird that is known for its singing and sometimes kept as a pet

continent: Europe

splinter: break into small, sharp pieces

pre-sentiment: a feeling that something unpleasant is going to happen

sheaf: a number of things that are held together.

Understanding the story

1. Do you think that the old woman would have been a better narrator? Justify your answer.
2. Does Hemingway shatter the notion of American men making perfect husbands? Comment.
3. Do you think disintegration of marriage is the theme of the story? Discuss.
4. What is the significance of the caged canary in the story? Does it represent anything?
5. Can we consider the train journey as a metaphor? Explain.
6. Discuss the title of the story.
7. How is the French Landscape described in the story? How does Hemingway's use of imagery make the description more vivid?
8. A description of the climate is given at the beginning of the story. Does that description set an appropriate background for the theme?
9. Throughout the story, the American lady repeats that Americans make good husbands. But Hemingway has other ideas when he makes the lady say so. What is the underlying tone here?
10. Discuss the literary device employed by the author to create an unexpected ending to the story.

11. There is a description of a scene of wreck in the story. What is the significance of this description in the narrative?
12. Is the story built upon any conflict? Is it a conflict that goes on in the mind of the characters, or a conflict between the characters and their external circumstances?

Writing about the story

1. Hemingway juxtaposes the American ideal with the harsh reality in the story 'A Canary for One'. Write an essay on the theme of the story in the light of this statement.
2. Attempt a character sketch of the old American lady.
3. Write a short paragraph on the ending of the story.

ICT

Make a presentation titled 'Ernest Hemingway - Life and Works'. Make your presentation attractive with pictures/screenshots and illustrations. You may also include Hemingway's quotable quotes in your presentation.

You may visit the following websites for collecting data for the presentation.

- http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1954/hemingway-bio.html
- <http://www.hemingwayhome.com/>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_Hemingway
- http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/e/ernest_hemingway.html



Short Stories



Vaikom Muhammed Basheer (1908-1994)

Vaikom Muhammed Basheer was a Malayalam fiction writer. He was a humanist, freedom fighter, novelist and short story writer. He wrote effortless, natural and unpretentious prose. He was an active participant in the freedom movement, during which he became a political prisoner and spent eight years wandering throughout India and beyond, enduring adversity and meeting with adventures. Basheer's major works include *Balyakalasakhi*, *Pathummayude Aadu*, *Premalekhanam*, *Shabdangal*, *Poovan Banana and the Other Stories* etc.

Focus

The short story, 'A Man' was originally titled 'Oru Manushyan' from the collection *Pavappettavarude Veshya* (1952). The translation of the story is done by V.Abdulla and is included in the title 'Poovan Banana and Other Stories'. 'A Man' is a marvellous story of a man who is caught up in a difficult situation. He is saved from this situation by the same man who threw him into it indirectly. The story shows that there is an element of virtue even in a hardcore criminal. As always, Basheer seeks all-pervading virtue in this story as well.

Short Stories

A Man

You have no definite plans. You are wandering around far away from home. You have no money with you; you do not know the local language. You can speak English and Hindustani. But very few people know either of these languages. This can land you in many predicaments; many adventures can befall you.

You find yourself caught in a dangerous situation. A total stranger rescues you. Even after years pass by you will sometimes remember the man and wonder why he did so.

Let us say it is I, not you, who remembers the man.

I am now narrating an experience which I had. I have some vague notion about human beings, including myself. There are around me good men and thieves, who suffer from various infectious diseases and from madness - one has to live carefully. The world has more evil than good. We realise this only after we get hurt.

Let me record here that incident which was perhaps quite insignificant.

It was quite a big city in the valley of a mountain, some thousand five hundred miles from home; the inhabitants of which had never been known for the quality of mercy. They were a cruel people. Murder, robbery, pick-pocketing, these were daily occurrences. By tradition the people were professional soldiers. Some of them went to distant places and lent out money on interest. Many others served as watchmen in banks, mills and large

1. What is so striking about the beginning of the story?

2. Where does the incident the author narrates take place? Is the place like any other place? How is it different?

3. What was the author doing in that place?

commercial establishments in big cities. Money was highly valued by them. For money they would do anything, even commit murder.

I stayed in that city in a very small, dingy room on a dirty street. I carried on a profession there; teaching English to some migrant labourers from nine- thirty till eleven in the night. I taught them to write addresses in English. Learning to write an address in English was considered great education there. You must have seen people who write address at the post office. They were paid anything between one anna and four annas for writing an address.

4. Why did the author opt for that particular job?

I taught the skill of writing address to people in order to escape the same fate myself and to see if I could save some money.

5. What idea do you gather about the life of the author in those days from the story?

In those days I would sleep all day and wake up at four in the evening. This was to save the expense of drinking my morning tea or eating the noon meal.

One day I got up at 4 p.m. as usual. I finished my daily chores and stepped out for my tea and a meal. You must understand that I was dressed in a suit. I had a wallet in my coat pocket. I had fourteen rupees in it - my life's savings at the time.

I entered a crowded restaurant. I ate a full meal consisting of chapatis and meat curry. I drank tea as well. The bill came to eleven annas.

I put my hand in my coat pocket to pay it. I began sweating profusely and almost digested in an instant all that I had eaten! The reason was my wallet was not there.

I said, 'Someone has picked my pocket and taken away my wallet.'

It was a very busy restaurant. The owner gave a loud guffaw startling everyone around. He caught me by the lapels of my coat and shaking me, cried, 'This trick won't work here! Put the money down and go... or else I'll gouge your eyes out.'

I looked at the people around me. I did not see even one kind face. They had the look of hungry wolves. If he said he would gouge out my eyes, he would gouge them out!

I said, 'Let my coat be here; I'll go and bring some money.'

The restaurant keeper laughed again.

He asked me to take off my coat.

I took off my coat.

He asked me to take off my shirt.

I took off my shirt.

He asked me take off both my shoes.

I took off both shoes.

Finally he asked me to take off my trousers.

So the idea seemed to be to strip me, gouge out my eyes and send me out naked!

I said, 'I have nothing on underneath!'

Everyone laughed.

The restaurant keeper said, 'I doubt it; you must have something on underneath.'

6. What is described as a trick by the owner of the restaurant?

7. Why do you think all those who assembled in the restaurant behaved so?

About fifty people repeated, 'There must be something on underneath.'

My hands refused to move. I saw in my imagination a man standing in the crowd, stark naked and without his eyes. Life was going to end like that. Let it end.... And for all this, I.... Never mind.... Oh creator of the world, my God.... I had nothing to say. Everything would end... everything would end to the satisfaction of all....

I began to undo one by one the buttons of my trousers. Then I heard a voice. 'Stop, I shall pay the money!'

Everyone turned in the direction of the voice.

There stood a fair-complexioned man, six foot tall, with a red turban and white trousers. He sported a handle-bar moustache and had blue eyes.

Blue eyes were quite common at this place. He came forward and asked the restaurant keeper, 'How much did you say it was?'

'Eleven annas.'

He paid the amount. He turned to me and said, 'Put on your clothes.'

I put them on.

'Come,' he called me. I went with him. Did I have words to express my gratitude? I told him, 'You have done a great deed. I have not seen a finer man.'

He laughed.

'What's your name?' he asked. I told him my name and where I came from.

8. 'In that case 'Mercy' must be your name.' Comment on how apt the expression is.

I asked the man his name. He said, 'I have no name.'

I said, 'In that case "Mercy" must be your name.'

He did not laugh at that. He walked on until we reached a deserted bridge.

He looked all around. There was no one. 'Look, you must go away without turning round. If anyone asks you whether you have seen me you must say no.'

I understood.

He took out from his various pockets about five wallets. Five: among them was mine.

'Which of these is yours?'

I pointed to my wallet.

'Open it.'

I opened it. My money was there intact. I put it in my pocket.

He told me, 'Go. May God help you.'

I repeated, 'May... God help you!'

9. Do you think the title of the story is apt? Why?

predicament: *an unpleasant troublesome situation*

dingy: *shabby and dirty*

profusely: *in plenty*

guffaw: *to laugh loudly*

startling: *to frighten*

gouge: *to take out something by force*

Understanding the story

1. 'They had the look of hungry wolves'. What is the narrator trying to convey through this?
2. What difference do you notice in the beginning of the story? What effect does it produce?
3. How is the feeling of the author when asked to remove his dress contrasted with the feeling he has when he got his wallet back?
4. What is the theme of the story?
5. Which, according to you, is the climax of the story?
6. Sketch the character of the restaurant owner.

Writing about the story

1. Assuming that the pickpocket was not present in the restaurant at the right time, write an alternative ending to the story.
2. Select a story having a similar theme by Basheer or any other writer. Compare and contrast it with 'A Man'.
3. Prepare a critical appreciation of the story 'A Man'.

ICT

Make a presentation on the issues of translating the story to 'A Man', after reading the Malayalam original titled *Oru Manushyan*. You may use a two column table in your presentation to show how typical Malayalam expressions are translated into English.

Short Stories



Ruskin Bond (1934 -)

Ruskin Bond is one of India's most prolific writers in English. Living in the foot hills of the Himalayas, his writings are rich in descriptions about Indian rural life, culture, religion and the beauty of nature. His stories for children are noted for their fundamental Indian values like sanctity of family and respect for elders. His first novel, *The Room on the Roof* written when he was seventeen received the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize in 1957. *Vagrants in the Valley*, *A Flight of Pigeons*, *The Blue Umbrella*, *Children's Omnibus*, *Angry River*, *Roads To Mussoorie* are some of his famous works. He received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1992 for his short story collection, *Our Trees Still Grow in Debra*. He was awarded the Padma Sree in 1999 for his contributions to children's literature.

Focus

The Night Train at Deoli is about a chance encounter between a girl who sells baskets at the railway station and a boy of eighteen. The author transforms a momentary, fickle feeling into a deeper and profounder emotion through the exquisite charm of his narration. The anonymity of the girl and the mysterious back drop of the railway station at Deoli add greatly to the romantic appeal of the story. The train journey in the story is not just a journey, but the journey of life which will become sweeter when there is something to hope for.

The Night Train at Deoli

When I was at college I used to spend my summer vacations in Dehra, at my grandmother's place. I would leave the plains early in May and return late in July. Deoli was a small station about thirty miles from Dehra: it marked the beginning of the heavy jungles of the Indian Terrain.

The train would reach Deoli at about five in the morning, when the station would be dimly lit with electric bulbs and oil-lamps, and the jungle across the railway tracks would just be visible in the faint light of dawn. Deoli had only one platform, an office for the station master and a waiting room. The platform boasted a tea stall, a fruit vendor, and a few stray dogs; not much else, because the train stopped there for only ten minutes before rushing on into the forests.

Why it stopped at Deoli, I don't know. Nothing ever happened there. Nobody got off the train and nobody got in. There were never any coolies on the platform. But the train would halt there a full ten minutes, and then a bell would sound, the guard would blow his whistle, and presently Deoli would be left behind and forgotten.

I used to wonder what happened in Deoli, behind the station walls. I always felt sorry for that lonely little platform, and for the place that nobody wanted to visit. I decided that one day I would get off the train at Deoli, and spend the day there, just to please the town.

I was eighteen, visiting my grandmother and the night train stopped at Deoli. A girl came down the platform, selling baskets.

1. Describe the railway station at Deoli.

2. Why did the narrator decide to get off the train at Deoli one day?

It was a cold morning and the girl had a shawl thrown across her shoulders. Her feet were bare and her clothes were old, but she was a young girl, walking gracefully and with dignity.

When she came to my window, she stopped. She saw that I was looking at her intently, but at first she pretended not to notice. She had a pale skin, set off by shiny black hair, and dark, troubled eyes. And then those eyes, searching and eloquent, met mine.

She stood by my window for some time and neither of us said anything. But when she moved on, I found myself leaving my seat and going to the carriage door. She noticed me at the door, and stood waiting at the platform, looking the other way. I walked across to the tea stall. A kettle was boiling over a small fire, but the owner of the stall was busy serving tea somewhere on the train. The girl followed me behind the stall.

'Do you want to buy a basket?' she asked. 'They are very strong, made of the finest cane....'

'No,' I said, 'I don't want a basket.'

We stood looking at each other for what seemed a very long time and then she said, 'Are you sure you don't want a basket?'

'All right, give me one,' I said, and I took the one on the top and gave her a rupee, hardly daring to touch her fingers.

As she was about to speak, the guard blew his whistle; she said something, but it was lost in the clanging of the bell and the hissing of the engine. I had to run back to my compartment. The carriage shuddered and jolted forward.

3. How is the young girl described?

4. Why didn't the narrator think of the girl once he reached Dehra?

I watched her as the platform slipped away. She was alone on the platform and she did not move, but she was looking at me and smiling. I watched her until the signal box came in the way, and then the jungle hid the station, but I could still see her standing there alone....

I sat up awake for the rest of the journey. I could not rid my mind of the picture of the girl's face and her dark, smouldering eyes.

But when I reached Dehra the incident became blurred and distant; for there were other things to occupy my mind. It was only when I was making the return journey, two months later that I remembered the girl.

I was looking out for her as the train drew into the station and I felt an unexpected thrill when I saw her walking up the platform. I sprang off the foot-board and waved to her.

When she saw me, she smiled. She was pleased that I remembered her. I was pleased that she remembered me. We were both pleased, and it was almost like a meeting of old friends.

She did not go down the length of the train selling baskets, but came straight to the tea stall; her dark eyes were suddenly filled with light. We said nothing for some time but we couldn't have been more eloquent. I felt the impulse to put her on the train there and then, and take her away with me; I could not bear the thought of having to watch her recede into the distance of Deoli station. I took the baskets from her hand and put them down on the ground. She put out her hand for one of them, but I caught her hand and held it.

'I have to go to Delhi,' I said.

She nodded. 'I do not have to go anywhere.'

The guard blew his whistle for the train to leave and how I hated the guard for doing that.

'I will come again,' and as she nodded, the bell changed and the train slid forward. I had to wrench my hand away from the girl and run for the moving train.

This time I did not forget her. She was with me for the remainder of the journey, and for long after. All that year she was a bright, living thing. And when the college term finished I packed in haste and left for Dehra earlier than usual. My grandmother would be pleased at my eagerness to see her.

I was nervous and anxious as the train drew into Deoli because I was wondering what I should say to the girl, and what I should do; I was determined that I wouldn't stand helplessly before her, hardly able to speak or do anything about my feelings.

The train came to Deoli, and I looked up and down the platform, but I could not see the girl anywhere.

I opened the door and stepped off the foot-board. I was deeply disappointed, and overcome by a sense of foreboding. I felt I had to do something, and so I ran up to the station-master and said, 'Do you know the girl who used to sell baskets here?'

'No, I don't,' said the station-master. 'You'd better get on the train if you don't want to be left behind.'

5. Why did the narrator leave for Dehra earlier than usual?

6. What did the narrator wish to do on seeing the girl again?

But I paced up and down the platform, and started over the railings at the station yard; all I saw was a mango tree and a dusty road leading into the jungle. Where did the road go? The train was moving out of the station, and I had to run up the platform and jump for the door of my compartment. Then as the train gathered speed and rushed through the forests, I sat brooding in front of the window.

What could I do about finding a girl I had seen only twice, who had hardly spoke to me, and about whom I knew nothing- absolutely nothing- but for whom I felt a tenderness and responsibility that I had never felt before?

7. Why was the grandmother unhappy?

My grandmother was not pleased with my visit after all, because I didn't stay at her place more than a couple of weeks. I felt restless and ill-at-ease. So I took the train back to the plains, meaning to ask further questions to the station-master at Deoli.

But at Deoli there was a new station-master. The previous man had been transferred to another post within the past week. The new man didn't know anything about the girl who sold baskets. I found the owner of the tea stall, a small, shrivelled-up man, wearing greasy clothes, and asked him if he knew anything about the girl with the baskets.

'Yes, there was such a girl here, I remember quite well,' he said. 'But she has stopped coming now.'

'Why?' I asked. 'What happened to her?'

'How should I know?' said the man. 'She was nothing to me.'

And once again I had to run for the train.

As Deoli platform receded, I decided that one day I would have to break journey here, spend a day in the town, make enquiries, and find the girl who had stolen my heart with nothing but a look from her dark, impatient eyes.

With this thought I consoled myself throughout my last term in college. I went to Dehra again in the summer and when, in the early hours of the morning, the night train drew into Deoli station, I looked up and down the platform for signs of the girl, knowing I wouldn't find her but hoping just the same.

Somehow, I couldn't bring myself to break journey at Deoli and spend a day there. (If it was all fiction or a film, I reflected, I would have got down and cleared up the mystery and reached a suitable ending for the whole thing.) I think I was afraid to do this. I was afraid of discovering what really happened to the girl. Perhaps she was no longer in Deoli, perhaps she was married, perhaps she had fallen ill....

In the last few years I have passed through Deoli many times, and I always look out of the carriage window, half expecting to see the same unchanged face smiling up at me. I wonder what happens in Deoli, behind the station walls. But I will never break my journey there. I prefer to keep hoping and dreaming, and looking out of the window up and down that lonely platform, waiting for the girl with the baskets.

I never break my journey at Deoli, but I pass through as often as I can.

8. How did the narrator console himself for not being able to see the girl?

9. What was the boy afraid to do? Why?



Short Stories

Ruskin Bond

faint: *that cannot be clearly seen*

vendor: *a person who sells things especially outdoors*

presently: *soon*

troubled: *worried and anxious*

eloquent: *(of a look or movement) able to express a feeling*

shudder: *(of a vehicle, machine etc.) to shake very hard*

smouldering: *to be filled with a strong emotion that you do not fully express*

impulse: *a sudden strong to do something without stopping to think about the results*

recede: *to move gradually away from somebody*

wrench: *to pull or twist suddenly and violently*

brood: *to think a lot about something*

shrivelled: *old and wrinkled*

carriage: *railway coach*

fiction: *a type of literature that describes imaginary people and events, not real ones*

mystery: *something that is difficult to understand or explain*

Understanding the story

1. Why does the boy say that Deoli would be soon left behind and forgotten?
2. Do you think the girl was also attracted towards the boy the same way he was? Why?
3. 'I do not have to go anywhere'. This single utterance makes the girl a pathetic figure. Do you agree? Explain.
4. She said something to the boy which was lost in the clanging of the bell and the hissing of the engine. Can you guess what she said?
5. The boy would never break his journey there. He preferred to keep hoping and dreaming. Do you think he was in real love with the girl or it was merely an infatuation?
6. 'If it was all fiction or a film. I would have got down and cleared up the mystery and reached a suitable ending for the whole thing', says the narrator. How would you like the story to end? If so, what effect does it make?

Writing about the story

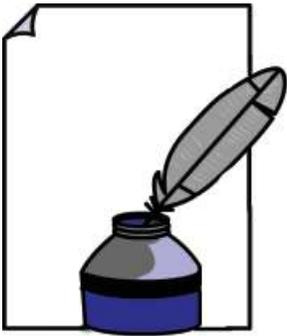
1. The girl is a motive for the traveler to pass through Deoli as often as he could. How?
2. 'I used to wonder what happens in Deoli, behind the station walls.' This sentence appears twice in the story. Do you find any significance? Explain.
3. Do you think that the girl in the story is a symbol of something? Justify your answer.

ICT

Browse the internet and find at least 5 short stories based on a train journey. You may read the stories and prepare a plot summary of each of the stories.

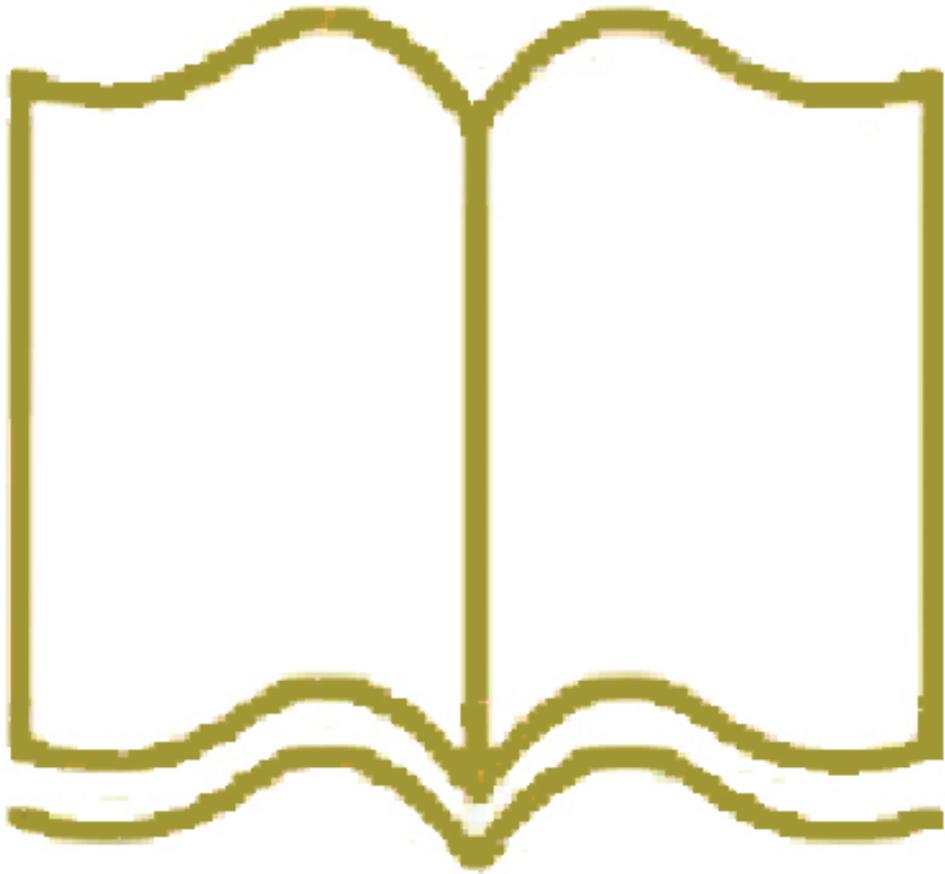


Non-Fiction



Section 3

Non-Fiction



Non-Fiction



Alfred George Gardiner (1865-1946)

A.G. Gardiner, noted British journalist and a writer of eminence is regarded for his significant essays even on trivial topics. Under the pseudonym 'Alpha of the Plough' (the name of the brightest star in the constellation the 'Plough'), he contributed to the periodical, *The Star*. True to this pen-name, his essays permeate the star-like radiance with their elegance, graces and terseness. He amused his readers by writing even on trivial themes, nevertheless, providing basic truths of life. *The Pillars of Society*, *Pebbles on the Shore*, *Many Furrows* and *Leaves in the Wind* are some of his best known works.

Focus

The essay *On Saying Please* touches upon the need to cultivate polite civilities in life. Here, Gardiner discusses the significance of the words 'Please', 'Thank you' and 'Sorry', which refine and elevate the quality of life. Lucidity of style, precision in diction and humour of narration which are the remarkable features of Gardiner's essays become the hallmarks of this essay also.

Non-Fiction

On Saying 'Please'

1. Why did the lift-man throw the passenger out of his lift?

2. Why does the author say that the law is reasonable?

3. What is the penalty for being haughty?

The young lift-man in a City office who threw a passenger out of his lift the other morning and was fined for the offence was undoubtedly in the wrong. It was a question of 'Please'. The complainant entering the lift, said, 'Top'. The lift-man demanded 'Top- please' and this concession being refused he not only declined to comply with the instruction, but hurled the passenger out of the lift. This, of course was carrying a comment on manner too far. Discourtesy is not a legal offence, and it does not excuse assault and battery. If a burglar breaks into my house and I knock him down, the law will acquit me, and if I am physically assaulted, it will permit me to retaliate with reasonable violence. It does this because the burglar and my assailant have broken quite definite commands of the law, but no legal system could attempt to legislate against bad manners, or retaliate could sanction the use of violence against something which it does not itself recognize as a legally punishable offence. And whatever our sympathy with the lift-man, we must admit that the law is reasonable. It would never do if we were at liberty to box people's ears because we did not like their behaviour, or the tone of their voices, or the scowl on their faces. Our fists would never be idle, and the gutters of the City would run with blood all day.

I may be as uncivil as I may please and the law will protect me against violent retaliation. I may be haughty or boorish and there is no penalty to pay except the penalty of being written down an ill-mannered fellow. The law does not compel me to say 'Please' or to attune

Non-Fiction

On Saying 'Please'

my voice to other people's sensibilities any more than it says that I shall not wax my moustache or dye my hair or wear ringlets down my back. It does not recognize the laceration of our feelings as a case for compensation. There is no allowance for moral and intellectual damages in these matters.

This does not mean that the damages are negligible. It is probable that the lift-man was much more acutely hurt by what he regarded as a slur upon his social standing than he would have been if he had a kick on the shins, for which he could have got a legal redress. The pain of a kick on the shins soon passes away but the pain of a wound to our self-respect or our vanity may poison a whole day. I can imagine that lift-man, denied the relief of throwing the author of his wound out of the lift, brooding over the insult by the hour, and visiting it on his wife in the evening as the only way of restoring his equilibrium. For there are few things more catching than bad temper and bad manners. When Sir Anthony Absolute bullied Captain Absolute, the latter went out and bullied his man, Fag, whereupon Fag went out downstairs and kicked the page-boy. Probably the man who said 'Top' to the lift man was really only getting back on his employer who had not said 'Good morning' to him because he himself had been henpecked at breakfast by his wife, to whom the cook had been insolent because the housemaid had 'answered her back'. We infect the world with our ill humours.

Bad manners probably do more to poison the stream of the general life than all the crimes in the calendar. For one wife who gets a black eye from an otherwise good

4. Why does the author say that the lift-man would prefer a physical assault?

5. How do people infect the world with their ill-humour?

Non-Fiction

Alfred George Gardiner

natured husband there are a hundred who live a life of martyrdom under the shadow of a morose temper. But all the same the law cannot become the guardian of our private manners. No Decalogue could cover the vast area of offences and no court could administer a law which governed our social civilities, our speech, the tilt of our eyebrows and all our moods and manners. But though we are bound to endorse the verdict against the lift-man most people will have a certain sympathy with him. While it is true that there is no law that compels us to say 'Please', there is a social practice much older and much more sacred than any law which enjoins us to be civil. And the first requirement of civility is that we should acknowledge a service. 'Please' and 'Thank you' are the small change with which we pay our way as social beings.

6. What is the importance of 'please' and 'thank you' in our lives?

They are the little courtesies by which we keep the machine of life oiled and running sweetly. They put our intercourse upon the basis of a friendly co-operation an easy give and take, instead of on the basis of superiors dictating to inferiors. It is a very vulgar mind that would wish to command where he can have the service for asking, and have it with willingness and good feeling instead of resentment.

7. What is the author's opinion about bus conductors?

I should like to 'feature' in this connection my friend, the polite conductor. By this discriminating title, I do not intend to suggest a rebuke to conductors generally. On the contrary, I am disposed to think that there are few classes of men who come through the ordeal of a very trying calling better than bus conductors do. Here and there you will meet an unpleasant specimen who regards

Non-Fiction

On Saying 'Please'

127

the passengers as his natural enemies - as creatures whose chief purpose on the bus is to cheat him, and who can only be kept reasonably honest by a loud voice and an aggressive manner. But this type is rare - rarer than it used to be. I fancy the public owes much to the Underground Railway Company, which also runs the buses, for insisting on a certain standard of civility in its servants and taking care that that standard is observed. In doing this it not only makes things pleasant for the travelling public, but performs an important social service.

It is not, therefore, with any feeling of unfriendliness to conductors as a class that I pay a tribute to a particular member of that class. I first became conscious of his existence one day when I jumped on to a bus and found that I had left home without any money in my pocket. Everyone has had the experience and knows the feeling, the mixed feeling, which the discovery arouses. You are annoyed because you look like a fool at the best and like a knave at the worst. You would not be at all surprised if the conductor eyed you coldly as much as to say, 'Yes I know that stale old trick. Now then, off you get.' And even if the conductor is a good fellow and lets you down easily, you are faced with the necessity of going back and the inconvenience, perhaps, of missing your train or your engagement. Having searched my pockets in vain for stray coppers, and having found I was utterly penniless, I told the conductor with as honest a face as I could assume that I couldn't pay the fare, and must go back for money. 'Oh, you needn't get off: that's all right', said he. 'All right', said I, 'but I haven't a copper on me.'

8. What becomes an important social service to the travelling public?

Non-Fiction

Alfred George Gardiner

9. What was the good natured action that pleased author?

'Oh I'll book you through, he replied. 'Where d'ye want to go?' and he handled his bundle of tickets with the air of a man who was prepared to give me a ticket for anywhere from the Bank to Hong Kong. I said it was very kind of him, and told him where I wanted to go, and as he gave me the ticket I said, 'But where shall I send the fare?' 'Oh, you'll see me some day all right', he said cheerfully, as he turned to go. And then, luckily, my fingers, still wandering in the corners of my pockets lighted on a shilling and the account was squared. But that fact did not lessen the glow of pleasure which so good-natured an action had given me.

10. Why did the author assure the conductor that he was not hurt?

A few days after, my most sensitive toe was trampled on rather heavily as I sat reading on the top of a bus. I looked up with some anger and more agony, and saw my friend of the cheerful countenance. 'Sorry, sir', he said. 'I know these are heavy boots. Got'em because my own feet get trod on so much, and now I'm treading on other people's. Hope I didn't hurt you, sir,' He had hurt me but he was so nice about it that I assured him he hadn't. After this I began to observe him whenever I boarded his bus, and found a curious pleasure in the constant good nature of his bearing. He seemed to have an inexhaustible fund of patience and a gift for making his passengers comfortable. I noticed that if it was raining he would run up the stairs to give some one the tip that there was 'room inside'. With old people he was as considerate as a son, and with children as solicitous as a father. He had evidently a peculiarly warm place in his heart for young people, and always indulged in some merry jest with them. If he had a blind man on board it wasn't enough to

11. What were the peculiarities of the conductor who was friendly to the author?

Non-Fiction

On Saying 'Please'

129

set him down safely on the pavement. He would call to Bill in front to wait while he took him across the road or round the corner, or otherwise safely on his way. In short, I found that he irradiated such an atmosphere of good temper and kindness that a journey with him was a lesson in natural courtesy and good manners. What struck me particularly was the ease with which he got through his work. If bad manners are infectious, so also are good manners. If we encounter incivility most of us are apt to become uncivil, but it is an unusually uncouth person who can be disagreeable with sunny people. It is with manners as with the weather.

'Nothing clears up my spirits like a fine day', said Keats, and a cheerful person descends on even the gloomiest of us with something of the benediction of a fine day. And so it was always fine weather on the polite conductor's bus, and his own civility, his conciliatory address and good humoured bearing infected his passengers. In lightening their spirits he lightened his own task. His gaiety was not a wasteful luxury, but a sound investment. I have missed him from my bus route of late; but I hope that only means that he has carried his sunshine on to another road. It cannot be too widely diffused in a rather drab world. And I make no apologies for writing a panegyric on an unknown bus conductor. If Wordsworth could gather lessons of wisdom from the poor leechgatherer 'on the lonely moor,' I see no reason why lesser people should not take lessons in conduct from one who shows how a very modest calling may be dignified by good temper and kindly feeling.

12. Why was it 'always fine weather' in the conductor's bus?

Non-Fiction

Alfred George Gardiner

13. How could the lift-man have had a better revenge?

It is a matter of general agreement that the war has had a chilling effects upon those little every day civilities of behaviour that sweeten the general air. We must get those civilities back if we are to make life kindly and tolerable for each other. We cannot get them back by invoking the law. The policeman is a necessary symbol and the law is a necessary institution for a society that is still somewhat lower than the angels. But the law can only protect us against material attack. Nor will the lift man's way of meeting moral affront by physical violence help us to restore the civilities. I suggest to him, that he would have had a more subtle and effective revenge if he had treated the gentleman who would not say 'Please' with elaborate politeness. He would have had the victory, not only over the boor, but over himself, and that is the victory that counts. The polite man may lose the material advantage, but he always has the spiritual victory.

I commend to the lift- man a story of Chesterfield. In his time the London streets were without the pavements of today and the man who 'took the wall' had the driest footing. 'I never give the wall to a scoundrel,' said a man who met Chesterfield one day in the street. 'I always do', said Chesterfield, stepping with a bow into the road. I hope the lift- man will agree that his revenge was much more sweet than if he had flung the fellow into the mud.

offence: *a breach of a law or rule; an illegal act*

comply: *to act in accordance with a wish or command*

assault: *to attack*

battery: *a fortified emplacement for heavy guns*

acquit: *to free (someone) from a criminal charge by a verdict of not being guilty*

retaliate: *to make an attack in return for a similar attack*

Non-Fiction

On Saying 'Please'

assailant: a person who physically attacks another**scowl:** an angry or bad-tempered expression**uncivil:** being impolite**haughty:** arrogantly superior and disdainful**boorish:** rough and bad-mannered; coarse**attune:** to make one receptive or aware**laceration:** a deep cut or tear, especially in the skin; a gash**shins:** the front of the leg below the knee**henpecked:** (of a woman) continually criticize and order about (her husband or male partner)**insolent:** showing a rude and arrogant lack of respect**illhumour:** irritability or bad temper**black eye:** an area of bruised skin around the eye resulting from a blow**morose:** sullen and ill-tempered**Decalogue:** the Ten Commandments of the New Testament**tilt:** to move or cause to move into a sloping position**endorse:** to declare one's public approval or support of somebody or something**enjoin:** instruct or urge (someone) to do something**resentment:** bitter indignation at having been treated unfairly**rebuke:** to scold**disposed:** inclined to or willing for something**ordeal:** a very unpleasant and prolonged experience**knave:** (archaic) a dishonest or unscrupulous man**stale:** no longer fresh and pleasant to eat; hard, musty or dry**trample:** to tread on and crush**bearing:** a person's way of standing or moving**solicitous:** characterized by or showing interest or concern**irradiated:** light up**uncouth:** lacking good manners, refinement, or grace**benediction:** the utterance of a blessing, especially at the end of a religious service**conciliatory:** likely to placate or pacify**gaiety:** the state or quality of being light-hearted or cheerful**panegyric:** a public speech or published text in praise of someone or something**commend:** to praise

Non-Fiction

Alfred George Gardiner

Understanding the essay

1. Do you agree with the lift-man's action of throwing the passenger out of the lift for refusing to say 'Please'? If so/not, give reasons.
2. How does the author substantiate that a wound to our self-respect poisons a whole day?
3. 'The first requirement of civility is that we should acknowledge a service'. Comment.
4. Do you think that the bus conductor who allowed the author a free ride in the bus was fair to the law of the country? Do you think he was equally fair to all passengers? What should he have done when he found that the author did not have the ticket fare?
5. Does a 'Sorry' for a physical harm save us as in the author's personal experience in all real life situations?
6. Do you support the author's view that "gaiety was not a wasteful luxury, but a sound investment"? Elucidate.
7. Does physical violence restore civilities as the lift-man expected? Discuss.
8. Do you believe that spiritual victory can be drawn from kindness and tolerance to scoundrels and assailants? If so, how far would this be agreeable? Explain.

Writing about the essay

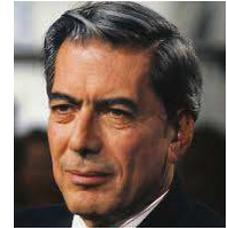
1. What is the basic principle of life evoked in this essay? Does the essayist put on the garb of a preacher? Write on style, diction, tone and other linguistic features used by A.G. Gardiner in this essay.
2. Discuss the necessity of the police and law in the society.
3. Prepare a speech on the topic 'Good manners are Infectious'.

ICT

You may start a blog and post your experiences of coming across courteous/ discourteous behaviour from others.



Non-Fiction



Jorge Mario Vargas Llosa (1936 -)

Jorge Mario Vargas Llosa (b. March 28, 1936) is a Peruvian-Spanish writer, politician, journalist, essayist and recipient of the 2010 Nobel Prize for Literature. He rose to fame in 1960s with novels such as *The Time of the Hero*, *The Green House* and the monumental work *Conversation in the Cathedral*. His prolific writings, across a wide array of literary genres-novels, plays, literary criticism and journalism, cover a broad range of human experiences.

Focus

This extract is from ‘Why Literature?’ published in the May 14, 2001 issue of the *New Republic*, where he examines the significance of literature in a society dominated by science and technology. He argues that literature provides a link which establishes a dialogue among human beings that is essential for a democratic society.

Non-Fiction

Why Literature?

It has often happened to me, at book fairs or in bookstores, that a gentleman approaches me and asks me for a signature. "It is for my wife, my young daughter, or my mother," he explains. "She is a great reader and loves literature." Immediately I ask: "And what about you? Don't you like to read?" The answer is almost always the same: "Of course I like to read, but I am a very busy person." I have heard this explanation dozens of times: this man and many thousands of men like him have so many important things to do, so many obligations, so many responsibilities in life, that they cannot waste their precious time buried in a novel, a book of poetry, or a literary essay for hours and hours. According to this widespread conception, literature is a dispensable activity, no doubt lofty and useful for cultivating sensitivity and good manners, but essentially an entertainment, an adornment that only people with time for recreation can afford. It is something to fit in between sports, the movies, a game of bridge or chess; and it can be sacrificed without scruple when one "prioritizes" the tasks and the duties that are indispensable in the struggle of life.

1. There are more women than men who read. What is the reason generally given for this?

It seems clear that literature has become more and more a female activity. In bookstores, at conferences or public readings by writers, and even in university departments dedicated to the humanities, the women clearly outnumber the men. The explanation traditionally given is that middle-class women read more because they work fewer hours than men, and so many of them feel

that they can justify more easily than men the time that they devote to fantasy and illusion. I am somewhat allergic to explanations that divide men and women into frozen categories and attribute to each sex its characteristic virtues and shortcomings; but there is no doubt that there are fewer and fewer readers of literature, and that among the saving remnant of readers women predominate.

This is the case almost everywhere. In Spain, for example, a recent survey organized by the General Society of Spanish Writers revealed that half of that country's population has never read a book. The survey also revealed that in the minority that does read, the number of women who admitted to reading surpasses the number of men by 6.2 percent, a difference that appears to be increasing. I am happy for these women, but I feel sorry for these men, and for the millions of human beings who could read but have decided not to read.

They earn my pity not only because they are unaware of the pleasure that they are missing, but also because I am convinced that a society without literature, or a society in which literature has been relegated- like some hidden vice- to the margins of social and personal life and transformed into something like a sectarian cult, is a society condemned to become spiritually barbaric and even to jeopardize its freedom. I wish to offer a few arguments against the idea of literature as a luxury pastime, and viewing it as one of the most primary and necessary undertakings of the mind, an irreplaceable activity for the formation of citizens in a modern and democratic society, a society of free individuals.

2. Why does the writer feel sorry for those people who can read but choose not to?

3. Is literature a luxury pastime? What is the writer's view regarding this?

Non-Fiction

Jorge Mario Vargas Llosa

4. What has led to the specialization of knowledge? What are its merits? What are its defects?

We live in the era of the specialization of knowledge, thanks to the prodigious development of science and technology and to the consequent fragmentation of knowledge into innumerable parcels and compartments. This cultural trend is, if anything, likely to be accentuated in years to come. To be sure, specialization brings many benefits. It allows for deeper exploration and greater experimentation; it is the very engine of progress. Yet it also has negative consequences, for it eliminates those common intellectual and cultural traits that permit men and women to co-exist, to communicate, to feel a sense of solidarity. Specialization leads to a lack of social understanding, to the division of human beings into ghettos of technicians and specialists. The specialization of knowledge requires specialized languages and increasingly arcane codes, as information becomes more and more specific and compartmentalized. This is the particularism and the division against which an old proverb warned us: do not focus too much on the branch or the leaf, lest you forget that they are part of a tree, or too much on the tree, lest you forget that it is part of a forest. Awareness of the existence of the forest creates the feeling of generality, the feeling of belonging, that binds society together and prevents it from disintegrating into a myriad of solipsistic particularities. The solipsism of nations and individuals produces paranoia and delirium, distortions of reality that generate hatred, wars, and even genocide.

5. What does the solipsism of nations and individuals lead to?

In our time, science and technology cannot play an integrating role, precisely because of the infinite richness of knowledge and the speed of its evolution, which have

led to specialization and its obscurities. But literature has been, and will continue to be, as long as it exists, one of the common denominators of human experience through which human beings may recognize themselves and converse with each other, no matter how different their professions, their life plans, their geographical and cultural locations, their personal circumstances. It has enabled individuals, in all the particularities of their lives, to transcend history: as readers of Cervantes, Shakespeare, Dante, and Tolstoy, we understand each other across space and time, and we feel ourselves to be members of the same species because, in the works that these writers created, we learn what we share as human beings, what remains common in all of us under the broad range of differences that separate us. Nothing better protects a human being against the stupidity of prejudice, racism, religious or political sectarianism, and exclusivist nationalism than this truth that invariably appears in great literature: that men and women of all nations and places are essentially equal, and that only injustice sows among them discrimination, fear, and exploitation.

Nothing teaches us better than literature to see, in ethnic and cultural differences, the richness of the human patrimony, and to prize those differences as a manifestation of humanity's multi-faceted creativity. Reading good literature is an experience of pleasure, of course; but it is also an experience of learning what and how we are, in our human integrity and our human imperfection, with our actions, our dreams, and our ghosts, alone and in relationships that link us to others, in our public image and in the secret recesses of our consciousness.



6. How does literature protect human beings from prejudice, sectarianism and exclusivist nationalism?

7. In what way does reading good literature become an experience of learning?

Non-Fiction

Jorge Mario Vargas Llosa

arcane: known and understood by only a few

solipsism: the theory that self is the only thing that can be known or verified

paranoia: baseless or excessive suspicion of the motives of others

sectarianism: narrow-minded adherence to a particular sect or group

Cervantes: Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, a Spanish writer best remembered for **Don Quixote** which satirizes chivalry

Dante: Dante Alighieri, a major Italian poet of the Middle Ages, famous for his work **Divine Comedy** that describes a journey through hell, purgatory and paradise

Understanding the essay

1. Literature can be sacrificed when one 'prioritizes' the duties of everyday life. Do you agree with this statement? Why?
2. What role does literature play in transcending national, social and cultural barriers?

Writing about the essay

1. 'Like writing, reading is a protest against the insufficiencies of life.' - Llosa. Examine this statement in the light of your reading of 'Why Literature?'

ICT

Read the entire article in the May 14, 2001 issue of the *New Republic*, available online (<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/books-and-arts/78238/mario-vargas-llosa-literature>) and list out the arguments Llosa makes in favour of literature using any presentation software. Present your findings before the class.

Non-Fiction



Alice Walker (1944 -)

Alice Walker, born and raised in Eatonton, Georgia in the USA, champions women's issues in general and the concerns of the African Americans in particular. She is a social activist, teacher and lecturer who took part in the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi in 1960. Walker was awarded the 1983 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for her 1982 novel, *The Color Purple*. She is also a remarkable poet and essayist. Her novels and other writings raised questions of justice and fairness in the African-American literary landscape.

Walker's writings were influenced by the political and societal happenings around her during the 1960s and 1970s. The Civil Rights Movement influenced her the most. She participated in the Civil Rights Movement while teaching at various universities. Hers became the major voice in the feminist movement led mostly by white middle-class women. Becoming aware of the issues of race from her experiences in that movement, she later introduced a specific black woman centered theory called 'womanism'. It was a means of speaking on gender issues without attacking black men. Alice Walker brings to our attention the cruelty and inhumane abuse endured by the African Americans.

Focus

This essay 'Am I Blue?' appeared in the collection *Living by the Word* (1988). 'Am I Blue?' is an essay featuring a horse and is a powerful reflection on slavery and freedom. The narrator's deep empathy for non-human beings is the predominant aspect of the essay.

Non-Fiction

Am I Blue?

'Ain't these tears in these eyes tellin' you?'

1. What was 'pleasant' about the house where Alice Walker lived?

For about three years my companion and I rented a small house in the country that stood on the edge of a large meadow that appeared to run from the end of our deck straight into the mountains. The mountains, however, were quite far away and between us and them there was, in fact, a town. It was one of the many pleasant aspects of the house that you never really were aware of this.

2. Who is described as the closest neighbour? Is there anything interesting in this description?

It was a house of many windows, low, wide, nearly floor to ceiling in the living room, which faced the meadow and it was from one of these that I first saw our closest neighbour, a large white horse, cropping grass, flipping its mane, and ambling about - not over the entire meadow, which stretched well out of sight of the house, but over the five or so fenced in acres that were next to the twenty-odd that we had rented. I soon learned that the horse, whose name was Blue, belonged to a man who lived in another town, but was boarded by our neighbours next door. Occasionally, one of the children, usually a stocky teenager, but sometimes a much younger girl or boy, could be seen riding Blue. They would appear in the meadow, climb up on his back, ride furiously for ten or fifteen minutes, then get off, slap Blue on the flanks and not be seen again for a month or more.

3. Why and how did the narrator feed the horse with apples?

There were many apple trees in our yard, and one by the fence that Blue could almost reach. We were soon in the habit of feeding him apples, which he relished, especially because by the middle of summer the meadow grasses -

Non-Fiction

Am I Blue?

14

so green and succulent since January - had dried out from lack of rain and Blue stumbled about munching the dried stalks half-heartedly. Sometimes he would stand very still just by the apple tree and when one of us came out he would whinny, short loudly, or stamp the ground. This meant, of course, I want an apple.

It was quite wonderful to pick a few apples, or collect those that had fallen to the ground overnight, and patiently hold them, one by one, up to his large, toothy mouth. I remained as thrilled as a child by his flexible dark lips, huge, cube like teeth that crunched the apples, core and all, with such finality, and his high, broad breasted enormity beside which, I felt small indeed. When I was a child, I used to ride horses, and was especially friendly with one named Nan until the day I was riding and my brother deliberately spooked her and I was thrown, head first, against the trunk of a tree. When I came she was in bed and my mother was bending worriedly over me; we silently agreed that perhaps horseback riding was not the sagest sport for me. Since then I have walked, and prefer walking to horseback riding - but I had forgotten the depth of feeling one could see in horses' eyes.

I was therefore unprepared for the expression in Blue's. Blue was lonely. Blue was horribly lonely and bored. I was not shocked that this should be the case; five acres to tramp by yourself, endlessly, even in the most beautiful of meadows - and his was - cannot provide many interesting events, and once rainy season turned to dry that was about it. No, I was shocked that I had forgotten that human animals and non-human animals can

4. How did the writer feel when she stood feeding the horse?

5. Why was Blue horribly lonely and bored?

Non-Fiction

Alice Walker

communicate quite well; if we are brought up around animals as children we take this for granted. By the time we are adults we no longer remember. However, the animals have not changed. They are in fact completed creations (at least they seem to be, so much more than we) who are not likely to change; it is their nature to express themselves. What else are they going to express? And they do. And, generally speaking, they are ignored.

After giving Blue the apples, I would wander back to the house, aware that he was observing me. Were more apples not forthcoming then? Was that to be his sole entertainment for the day? My partner's small son had decided he wanted to learn how to piece a quilt; we worked in silence on our respective squares as I thought....

6. How does the speaker describe the love of black women who raise white children?

Well, about slavery: about white children, who were raised by black people, who knew their first all - accepting love from black women, and then, when they were twelve or so, were told they must "forget" the deep levels of communication between themselves and "mammy" that they knew. Later they would be able to relate quite calmly, "My old mammy was sold to another good family", "My old mammy was----," Fill in the blank. Many more years later a white woman would say: "I can't understand these Negroes, these blacks. What do they want? They're so different from us."

7. Why is the term 'animal' called a 'benign euphemism' by the speaker?

And about the Indians, considered to be "like animals" by the "settlers" (a very benign euphemism for what they actually were), who did not understand their description as a compliment.

*Non-Fiction**Am I Blue?*

143

And about the thousands of American men who marry Japanese, Korean, Filipina, and other non - English - speaking women and of how happy they report they are, 'blissfully,' until their brides learn to speak English, at which point the marriages tend to fall apart. What then did the men see, when they looked into the eyes of the women they married, before they could speak English? Apparently only their own reflections.

I thought of society's impatience with the young. "Why are they playing the music so loud?" Perhaps the children have listened to much of the music of oppressed people their parents danced to before they were born, with its passionate but soft cries for acceptance and love and they have wondered why their parents failed to hear.

I do not know how long Blue had inhabited his five beautiful, boring acres before we moved into our house; a year after we had arrived- and had also travelled to other valleys, other cities, other worlds - he was still there.

But then, in our second year at the house, something happened in Blue's life. One morning, looking out the window at the fog that lay like a ribbon over the meadow, I saw another horse, a brown one, at the other end of Blue's field. Blue appeared to be afraid of it, and for several days made no attempt to go near. We went away for a week. When we returned, Blue had decided to make friends and the two horses ambled or galloped along together, and Blue did not come nearly as often to the fence underneath the apple tree.

When he did, bringing his new friend with him, there was a different look in his eyes. A look of independence,

8. When does the marriages between American men and non-English speaking women fall apart?

9. What is the society's complaint about young people?

10. What was the difference the narrator found in Blue when he made friends with the new horse?

*Non-Fiction**Alice Walker*

of self - possession, of in alienable horseness. His friend eventually became pregnant. For months and months there was, it seemed to me, a mutual feeling between me and the horses of justice, of peace. I fed apples to them both. The look in Blue's eyes was one of unabashed "this is itness."

It did not, however, last forever. One day, after a visit to the city, I went out to give Blue some apples. He stood waiting, or so I thought, though not beneath the tree. When I shook the tree and jumped back from the shower of apples, he made no move. I carried some over to him. He managed to half-crunch one. The rest he let fall to the ground. I dreaded looking into his eyes - because I had of course noticed that Brown, his partner, had gone - but I did look. If I had been born into slavery, and my partner had been sold or killed, my eyes would have looked like that. The children next door explained that Blue's partner had been "put with him" (the same expression that old people used, I had noticed, when speaking of an ancestor during slavery who had been impregnated by her owner) so that they could mate and she conceive. Since that was accomplished, she had been taken back by her owner, who lived somewhere else.

Will she be back? I asked.

They didn't know.

Blue was like a crazed person. Blue was, to me, a crazed person. He galloped furiously, as if he were being ridden, around and around his five beautiful acres. He whinnied until he couldn't. He tore at the ground with his hooves. He butted himself against his single shade tree. He looked

11. How does the author connect horse breeding and abuse of black women in slavery?

*Non-Fiction**Am I Blue?*

145

always and always toward the road down which his partner had gone. And then, occasionally, when he came up for apples, or I took apples to him, he looked at me. It was a look so piercing, so full of grief, a look so human, I almost laughed (I felt too sad to cry) to think there are people who do not know that animals suffer. People like me who have forgotten, and daily forget, all that animals try to tell us. "Everything you do to us will happen to you, we are your teachers, as you are ours. We are one lesson" is essentially it, I think. There are those who never once have even considered animals' rights: those who have been taught that animals actually want to be used and abused by us, as small children "love" to be frightened, or women "love" to be mutilated and raped.... They are the great-grandchildren of those who honestly thought, because someone taught them this: "Women can't think," and "higgers can't faint." But most disturbing of all, in Blue's large brown eyes was a new look, more painful than the look of despair: the look of disgust with human beings, with life; the look of hatred. And it was odd what the look of hatred did. It gave him, for the first time the look of a beast. And what that meant was that he had put up a barrier within to protect himself from further violence; all the apples in the world wouldn't change that fact.

And so Blue remained, a beautiful part of our landscape, very peaceful to look at from the window, white against the grass. Once a friend came to visit and said, looking out on the soothing view: "And it would have to be a white horse; the very image of freedom." And I thought, yes, the animals are forced to become for us merely "images" of

12. How did Blue behave after Brown was taken away?

Non-Fiction

Alice Walker

what they once so beautifully expressed. And we are used to drinking milk from containers showing "contented" cows, whose real lives we want to hear nothing about, eating eggs and drumsticks from "happy" hen, and munching hamburgers advertised by bulls of integrity who seem to command their fate.

As we talked of freedom and justice one day for all, we sat down to steaks. I am eating misery, I thought, as I took the first bite. And spit it out. 

flipping: to change position with sudden movement

ambling: to walk at a slow, relaxed speed

stocky: short with strong, solid body

succulent: juicy

spooked: strange and frightened

tramp: a long walk

quilt: a decorative cover for a bed

benign: kind and gentle

euphemism: an indirect word or phrase used to refer to something unpleasant

inalienable: something that cannot be taken from one

unabashed: not ashamed

whinnied: made a quiet neigh

hooves: hard part of the feet of animals

butt: to hit or push something hard with your head

mutilate: to damage somebody's body severely

content: happy and satisfied

steak: a thick slice of meat

misery: great suffering

Understanding the essay

1. The extended commentary on slavery and oppression is the major concern of the essay. Comment.
2. In the essay, Alice Walker says that animals try to tell human beings that ‘Everything you do to us will happen to you, we are your teachers, as you are ours. We are one lesson.’ Explain.
3. At the end of the essay the narrator took a bite of steak and spat it out. Why?
4. Explain the phrase ‘eating misery’?
5. Describe Alice Walker’s attitude to human animals and non-human animals as reflected in the essay.
6. How did Blue communicate with the narrator?

Writing about the essay

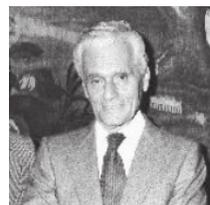
1. Most people realize that animals have physical needs, such as the need for food, shelter and water but some ignore animal’s need for companionship, mental stimulation, leisure and exercise. Do you think that human beings should consider such an aspect of animal life? Justify your answer.
2. Compare the emotions of the horse with those of the society Alice Walker grew up in.
3. Do you feel that Alice Walker, through the essay, tries to persuade the reader to adopt new beliefs and behaviour? Comment.

ICT

Browse the internet and collect literary pieces in which birds and animals figure as leading characters. You may make a presentation based on your inquiry.



Non-Fiction



Giovanni Mosca (1908-1983)

Giovanni Mosca is one of the well-known Italian journalists of the twentieth century. He was formerly the Editor-in-chief of humorous weekly magazines. He started his career as a teacher and became a journalist in 1936. He is also a cartoonist of repute and his cartoons are known for their harsh humour. He wrote and drew cartoons for the Rome daily *Il Tempo*. After working in various newspapers, he was among the founders of satirical magazines, the most famous in Italy in the years of the Second World War. In 1936 he started the weekly *Il Bertoldo* and in 1945, the *Candido* along with Giovannino Guareschi. He also published a *History of Italy in 200 cartoons* (1975) and a *History of the World in 200 cartoons* (1978). He has also authored over 32 books which also include translations of great Latin authors like Horace and Luciano.

Focus

The memoir, 'Last Day at School' describes the feelings of a teacher on his last day at school. He is not only leaving his school, but moving on to a different career. The writing seems to be influenced by the minimalist writing style perfected by the American author, Ernest Hemingway. In this style, the memoir is presented with simple sentences and conversations and many details are left out. This forces readers to use their imagination to understand the implied meaning of what is written.

Non-Fiction

Last Day at School

“WELL, Boys, we've spent the past two years together. Very soon the bell will ring and it'll be time to say good- bye.”

I've handed the reports out. Martinelli's passed. He could hardly believe his eyes when he saw his marks. This morning, his mother carefully combed his hair, making him wear a new tie that looks like an enormous white butterfly.

Crippa has also got through - that tall, 13 year- old with hairy legs who is forever falling asleep and who'll continue to fall asleep next year also.

The next one to have failed is Antonelli, a boy who has spent the whole year carving his surname on the desk with a penknife ; but he's so slow that he got only as far as Anton. Next year, under a new teacher, he'll get round to writing elli.

Manili used to be a small boy whose new smock reached his toes. Now, it barely covers his knees. Spadoni used to tell tales when he came into my class two years ago ; now, he would be ashamed to do so.

When the bell rings, you'll go away, boys, and we'll never see each other again because I'm leaving teaching and moving to another city. I open the drawer to hand back everything I've confiscated during this year : Giordani's water pistol, Spadoni's caps, Manili's top and Danieli's five very common Swiss stamps, which he believes to be of great value.

1. What news shocked Martinelli?

2. How much did Antonelli learn in the last two years?

3. Why is the teacher bidding farewell to his boys?

Non-Fiction

Giovanni Mosca

4. Giordani is very happy. Why?

The street must be full of relatives. You can hear the buzz of voices. Spadoni's grandmother must be there, an old lady who says "thank you , thank you, sir" and tries to kiss my hand each time she sees me.

Giordani's father must be there, too, a sturdy, little man who greets me even when he's a hundred metres away. At the beginning of the year, whenever I told him that his son wasn't working, he'd grab the boy by the ear and drag him home. But this morning, Giordani is happy because he's passed and, for the first time in nine months, his father won't pull his ears.

" Be good and carry on working hard, because your teachers at high school will be far more strict. I'll always remember you. Everything I've taught you has come from the heart. Don't forget this."

Martinelli, his eyes brimming with tears, comes towards me. All the others follow, crowding around my desk.

"I confiscated your top, Manili ; your Swiss stamps, Danieli; Giordani, I'm sorry that everyday your father pulled your ears because of me."

5. Why does Spadoni also say, 'Me, too'?

Giordani's eyes begin to fill up with tears, too. "It doesn't matter, sir. I've got a corn there now." He comes near to let me feel it.

"Me, too, " says Spadoni, drawing close. It isn't true, of course; it's just that he, too, wants to be patted before going.

They all press around my desk.

Each one of them has something to show me, an excuse

Non-Fiction

Last Day at School

15

to come close; a painful finger, a burn, a scar under his hair.

"It was me, sir," sobs Martinelli, "who put the lizard in your drawer."

"I," says Spadoni, "used to make that trumpeting noise at the back of the classroom. "

"Do it now, Spadoni," Martinelli asked.

And Spadoni, puffing out his tear- marked cheeks, makes that mysterious noise. I hadn't been able to make out all year who was responsible for it.

"Well done, Spadoni, "I say, and I stroke his hair.

"Me, too. I know how to do it, too."

"Me, too, sir. "

"Go on then, all of you do it. "

And so, squeezed tightly against me like younger brothers, they puff out their cheeks in all seriousness and make a trumpeting noise, a noise of farewell.

Just then, the bell rings, its ringing coming up from the courtyard, spreading through the corridors and going into all the classes.

Martinelli leaps up, hugs and kisses me on the cheek, leaving it covered with toffee marks. They hold on to my hands, my jacket. Danieli puts the Swiss stamps into my pocket and Spadoni, the caps.

The bell is still ringing and the other classes are already on their way.

6. Why is Spadoni congratulated?

7. What is the 'noise of farewell' made by the boys?

8. What do the boys gift the teacher?

Non-Fiction

Giovanni Mosca

"This is it, boys. We must go. "

I should make them walk in a line, but it's impossible. We practically run, all the boys around me. But as soon as we reach the street, the boys disappear, as though into thin air. Their mothers, fathers, grandmothers and elder sisters have all taken them away and I am left standing on the threshold alone, dishevelled and with a button missing from my jacket. Who could have taken it? And my cheek is still dirty with toffee marks.

Good-bye, school. When, after a long time I come back, I'll find other teachers who won't know me. What excuse will I find to go back to the old classroom, to open that drawer where Martinelli had put the lizard?

But I have been able to hang on to something: Danieli's Swiss stamps and Spadoni's caps; and Martinelli has been able to keep something, too, for it can only have been him who tore the button off my jacket. As soon as I get home, if there's one thing I'll regret doing, it'll be having to wash the toffee marks off my cheek.

9. What might the teacher regret doing once he gets back home?



smock: a loose garment worn outside other clothes

dishevelled: in a disorderly or untidy condition

caps: small pieces or rolls of paper with tiny explosive charges to make noise in a toy gun

corn: an area of hard skin, usually found on the foot, caused by constant pressure or rubbing

top: a child's toy that goes round and round very quickly

confiscate: to seize something with power

sturdy: stout

threshold: at the entrance

Understanding the essay

1. How does the essayist introduce the boys?
2. How do the parents treat the teacher?
3. What does the teacher mean by 'confiscation'? What are the things he had confiscated from the boys?
4. How do the boys express their innocent love for their teacher?
5. Do you think that the teacher's life is rich? If so, what is the sense of it?

Writing about the essay

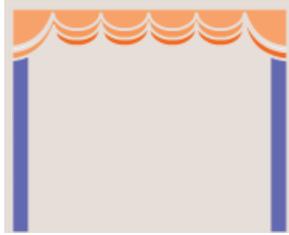
1. How did the teacher create a lasting impression among his boys?
2. If you were in the place of one of the boys in the class, how would you respond to your teacher bidding farewell to you, the class and the school?

ICT

Browse the internet and collect school stories. Make a compilation of ten best school stories. You may design cover pages, write a preface and blurb and upload the compilation as a digital book.



One-Act Play



Section 4

One Act Play



One-Act Play



155

Alan Alexander Milne (1882-1956)

Alan Alexander Milne was an English author, best known for his books about the teddy bear Winnie-the-Pooh and for novels, plays and poems. A humourist, he also worked as a journalist, and served as Assistant Editor of *The Punch*. Considered to be the inheritor of Charles Lamb's tradition, his plays are characterized by 'laughter of things, surface gaieties' and the 'comedy of existence'. He does not allow pathos or the background of disaster to dull his plays. He began with one act plays, including 'The Boy Comes Home' but his reputation as a dramatist rests upon *Mr. Pim Passes By* and *The Truth about Blayds*. His characters are the pleasant people one may meet in an English country house. He excels in dialogue.

Focus

The play, 'The Boy Comes Home' is a light comedy. It has been woven around the main theme of the conflict between a villain type uncle, James and his nephew Philip. Uncle James who represents the old generation thinks that people like Philip are immature just like a school boy. In fact, the young generation is mature and can take right decisions. The conflict between uncle and the nephew seems to be multidimensional and encircles the factors of difference of personality, age and point of view. Early in the play we know that the conflict must take place, and we are kept in a state of hope and fear until the climax is reached. But the writer has very skilfully handled the situation with the help of a dream. The dream gives a turn to the story and resolves the conflict between uncle and the nephew.

One-Act Play

The Boy Comes Home

(A Comedy in One Act)

Characters

Uncle James

Aunt Emily

Philip

Mary

Mrs Higgins

[SCENE- A room in Uncle James' house in the Cromwell Road]

[TIME- The day after the War]

[Any room in Uncle James' house is furnished in heavy mid-Victorian style; this particular morning-room is perhaps solider and more respectable even than the others, from the heavy table in the middle of it to the heavy engravings on the walls. There are two doors to it. The one at the back opens into the hall, the one at the side into the dining-room.]

[Philip comes from the hall and goes into the dining-room. Apparently he finds nothing there, for he returns to the morning-room, looks about him for a moment and then rings the bell. It is ten o'clock, and he wants his breakfast. He picks up the paper, and sits in a heavy armchair in front of the fire- a pleasant-looking well-built person of twenty-three, with an air of decisiveness about him. Mary, the parlour-maid, comes in.]

MARY: Did you ring, Master Philip?

One-Act Play

The Boy Comes Home

157

Philip (absently): Yes; I want some breakfast, please, Mary.

Mary (coldly): Breakfast has been cleared away an hour ago.

Philip: Exactly. That's why I rang. You can boil me a couple of eggs or something. And coffee, not tea.

Mary: I'm sure I don't know what Mrs. Higgins will say?

Philip (getting up): Who is Mrs. Higgins?

Mary: The cook. And she's not used to being put about like this.

Philip: Do you think she'll say something?

Mary: I don't know what she'll say.

Philip: You needn't tell me, you know, if you don't want to. Anyway, I don't suppose it will shock me. One gets used to it in the Army. (He smiles pleasantly at her.)

1. Who is Mr. Philip?
Where did he work?

Mary: Well, I'll do what I can, sir. But breakfast at eight sharp is the master's rule, just as it used to be before you went away to the war.

Philip: Before I went away to the war I did a lot of silly things. Don't drag them up now. (More curtly) Two eggs, and if there's a ham bring that along too. (He turns away.)

Mary (doubtfully, as she prepares to go): Well, I'm sure I don't know what Mrs. Higgins will say. [Exit Mary.]

(As she goes out she makes way for Aunt Emily to come in, a kind-hearted mid-Victorian lady who has never had any desire for the vote.)

Emily: There you are, Philip! Good-morning, dear. Did you sleep well?

One-Act Play

Alan Alexander Milne

Philip: Rather; splendidly, thanks, Aunt Emily. How are you? (He kisses her.)

Emily: And did you have a good breakfast? Naughty boy to be late for it. I always thought they had to get up so early in the Army.

Philip: They do. That's why they're so late when they get out of the Army.

Emily: Dear me! I should have thought a habit of four years would have stayed with you.

Philip: Every morning for four years, as I've shot out of bed, I've said to myself, "Wait! A time will come." (Smiling) That doesn't really give a habit a chance.

Emily: Well, I daresay you wanted your sleep out. I was so afraid that a really cosy bed would keep you awake after all those years in the trenches.

Philip: Well, one isn't in the trenches all the time. And one gets leave- if one's an officer.

Emily (reproachfully): You didn't spend much of it with us, Philip.

Philip (taking her hands): I know; but you did understand, didn't you, dear?

Emily: We're not very gay, and I know you must have wanted gaiety for the little time you had. But I think your Uncle James felt it. After all, dear, you've lived with us for some years, and he is your guardian.

Philip: I know. You've been a darling to me always, Aunt Emily. But (awkwardly) Uncle James and I-

One-Act Play

The Boy Comes Home

159

Emily: Of course, he is a little difficult to get on with. I'm more used to him. But I'm sure he really is very fond of you, Philip.

Philip: H'm! I always used to be frightened of him.... I suppose he's just the same. He seemed just the same last night- and he still has breakfast at eight o'clock. Been making pots of money, I suppose?

Emily: He never tells me exactly, but he did speak once about the absurdity of the excess-profits tax. You see, jam is a thing the Army wants.

Philip: It certainly gets it.

Emily: It was so nice for him, because it made him feel he was doing his bit, helping the poor men in the trenches.

[Enter Mary.]

Mary: Mrs. Higgins wishes to speak to you, ma'am. (She looks at Philip as much as to say, "There you are!")

Emily (getting up): Yes, I'll come. (To Philip) I think I'd better just see what she wants, Philip.

Philip (firmly to Mary): Tell Mrs. Higgins to come here. (Mary hesitates and looks at her mistress.) At once, please. [Exit Mary.]

Emily (upset): Philip, dear, I don't know what Mrs. Higgins will say-

Philip: No; nobody seems to. I thought we might really find out for once.

Emily (going towards the door): Perhaps I'd better go-

One-Act Play

Alan Alexander Milne

Philip (putting his arm round her waist): Oh no, you mustn't. You see, she really wants to see me.

Emily: You?

Philip: Yes; I ordered breakfast five minutes ago.

Emily: Philip! My poor boy! Why didn't you tell me? And I daresay I could have got it for you. Though I don't know what Mrs. Higgins-

(An extremely angry voice is heard outside, and Mrs. Higgins, stout and aggressive, comes in.)

Mrs. Higgins (truculently): You sent for me, ma'am?

Emily (nervously): Yes- er- I think if you- perhaps-

Philip (calmly): I sent for you, Mrs. Higgins. I want some breakfast. Didn't Mary tell you?

Mrs. Higgins: Breakfast is at eight o'clock. It always has been as long as I've been in this house, and always will be until I get further orders.

Philip: Well, you've just got further orders. Two eggs, and if there's a ham-

Mrs. Higgins: Orders. We're talking about orders. From whom in this house do I take orders, may I ask?

Philip: In this case from me.

Mrs. Higgins (playing her trump-card): In that case, ma'am, I wish to give a month's notice from to-day. Inclusive.

Philip (quickly, before his aunt can say anything): Certainly. In fact, you'd probably prefer it if my aunt

2. Why does Mrs. Higgins refuse to serve breakfast at ten o'clock?

One-Act Play

The Boy Comes Home

16

gave you notice, and then you could go at once. We can easily arrange that. (To Aunt Emily as he takes out a fountain pen and cheque-book) What do you pay her?

Emily (faintly): Forty- five pounds.

Philip (writing on his knee): Twelves into forty- five.... (Pleasantly to MRS. HIGGINS, but without looking up) I hope you don't mind a Cox's cheque. Some people do; but this is quite a good one. (Tearing it out) Here you are.

Mrs. Higgins (taken aback): What's this?

Philip: Your wages instead of notice. Now you can go at once.

Mrs. Higgins: Who said anything about going?

Philip (surprised): I'm sorry; I thought you did.

Mrs. Higgins: If it's only a bit of breakfast, I don't say but what I mightn't get it, if I'm asked decent.

Philip (putting back the cheque): Then let me say again, "Two eggs, ham and coffee." And Mary can bring the ham up at once, and I'll get going on that. (Turning away) Thanks very much.

Mrs. Higgins: Well, I- well- well! [Exit speechless.]

Philip (surprised): Is that all she ever says? It isn't much to worry about.

Emily: Philip, how could you! I should have been terrified.

Philip: Well, you see, I've done your job for two years out there.

Emily: What job?

3. How does Philip make Mrs. Higgins serve him breakfast?

One-Act Play

Alan Alexander Milne

Philip: Mess President.... I think I'll go and see about that ham.

(He smiles at her and goes out into the dining-room. Aunt Emily wanders round the room, putting a few things tidy as is her habit, when she is interrupted by the entrance of Uncle James. James is not a big man, nor an impressive one in his black morning-coat; and his thin straggly beard, now going grey, does not hide a chin of any great power; but he has a severity which passes for strength with the weak.)

James: Philip down yet?

Emily: He's just having his breakfast.

James (looking at his watch): Ten o'clock. (Snapping it shut and putting it back) Ten o'clock. I say ten o'clock, Emily.

4. Why does Uncle James stay away from the office?

Emily: Yes, dear, I heard you.

James: You don't say anything?

Emily (vaguely): I expect he's tired after that long war.

James: That's no excuse for not being punctual. I suppose he learnt punctuality in the Army?

Emily: I expect he learnt it, James, but I understood him to say that he'd forgotten it.

James: Then the sooner he learns it again the better. I particularly stayed away from the office to-day in order to talk things over with him, and (looking at his watch) here's ten o'clock-past ten-and no sign of him. I'm practically throwing away a day.

One-Act Play

The Boy Comes Home

163

Emily: What are you going to talk to him about?

James: His future, naturally. I have decided that the best thing he can do is to come into the business at once.

Emily: Are you really going to talk it over with him, James, or are you just going to tell him that he must come?

James (surprised): What do you mean? What's the difference? Naturally we shall talk it over first, and-er-naturally he'll fall in with my wishes.

Emily: I suppose he can hardly help himself, poor boy.

James: Not until he's twenty-five, anyhow. When he's twenty-five he can have his own money and do what he likes with it.

Emily (timidly): But I think you ought to consult him, dear. After all, he has been fighting for us.

James (with his back to the fire): Now that's the sort of silly sentiment that there's been much too much of. I object to it strongly. I don't want to boast, but I think I may claim to have done my share. I gave up my nephew to my country, and I-er-suffered from the shortage of potatoes to an extent that you probably didn't realize. Indeed, if it hadn't been for your fortunate discovery about that time that you didn't really like potatoes, I don't know how we should have carried on. And, as I think I've told you before, the excess-profits tax seemed to me a singularly stupid piece of legislation- but I paid it. And I don't go boasting about how much I paid.

Emily (unconvinced): Well, I think that Philip's four years out there have made him more of a man; he doesn't seem

5. What does Uncle James propose to talk to James about?

6. What are the 'sacrifices' that Uncle James claims to have done for the country during the war?

One-Act Play

Alan Alexander Milne

7. Why does Aunt Emily say that Philip is 'different' from what he was earlier?

somehow like a boy who can be told what to do. I'm sure they've taught him something.

James: I've no doubt that they've taught him something about- er- bombs and- er- which end a revolver goes off, and how to form fours. But I don't see that that sort of thing helps him to decide upon the most suitable career for a young man in after- war conditions.

Emily: Well, I can only say you'll find him different.

James: I didn't notice any particular difference last night.

Emily: I think you'll find him rather more- I can't quite think of the word, but Mrs. Higgins could tell you what I mean.

James: Of course, if he likes to earn his living any other way, he may; but I don't see how he proposes to do it so long as I hold the purse- strings. (Looking at his watch) Perhaps you'd better tell him that I cannot wait any longer.

(Emily opens the door leading into the dining- room and talks through it to Philip.)

Emily: Philip, your uncle is waiting to see you before he goes to the office. Will you be long, dear?

Philip (from the dining- room): Is he in a hurry?

James (shortly): Yes.

Emily: He says he is rather, dear.

Philip: Couldn't he come and talk in here? It wouldn't interfere with my breakfast.

James: No.

One-Act Play

The Boy Comes Home

165

Emily: He says he'd rather you came to him, darling.

Philip (resigned): Oh, well.

Emily (to James): He'll be here directly, dear. Just sit down in front of the fire and make yourself comfortable with the paper. He won't keep you long. (She arranges him.)

James (taking the paper): The morning is not the time to make oneself comfortable. It's a most dangerous habit. I nearly found myself dropping off in front of the fire just now. I don't like this hanging about, wasting the day. (He opens the paper.)

Emily: You should have had a nice sleep, dear, while you could. We were up so late last night listening to Philip's stories.

James: Yes, yes. (He begins a yawn and stifles it hurriedly.) You mustn't neglect your duties, Emily. I've no doubt you have plenty to do.

Emily: All right, James, then I'll leave you. But don't be hard on the boy.

James (sleepily): I shall be just, Emily; you can rely upon that.

Emily (going to the door): I don't think that's quite what I meant. [She goes out.]

(James, who is now quite comfortable, begins to nod. He wakes up with a start, turns over the paper, and nods again. Soon he is breathing deeply with closed eyes.)

~~*

PHILIP (coming in): Sorry to have kept you waiting, but

One-Act Play

Alan Alexander Milne

I was a bit late for breakfast. (He takes out his pipe.) Are we going to talk business or what?

James (taking out his match): A bit late! I make it just two hours.

Philip (pleasantly): All right, Uncle James. Call it two hours late. Or twenty-two hours early for tomorrow's breakfast, if you like. (He sits down in a chair on the opposite side of the table from his uncle, and lights his pipe.)

James: You smoke now?

Philip (staggered): I what?

James (nodding at his pipe): You smoke?

Philip: Good heavens! what did you think we did in France?

James: Before you start smoking all over the house, I should have thought you would have asked your aunt's permission.

(Philip looks at him in amazement, and then goes to the door.)

Philip (calling): Aunt Emily!... Aunt Emily!... Do you mind my smoking in here?

Emily (from upstairs): Of course not, darling.

Philip (to James, as he returns to his chair): Of course not, darling. (He puts back his pipe in his mouth.)

James: Now, understand once and for all, Philip, while you remain in my house I expect not only punctuality, but also civility and respect. I will not have impertinence.

8. Does Uncle James approve of Philip's smoking? Why?

One-Act Play

The Boy Comes Home

167

Philip (unimpressed): Well, that's what I want to talk to you about, Uncle James. About staying in your house, I mean.

James: I don't know what you do mean.

Philip: Well, we don't get on too well together, and I thought perhaps I'd better take rooms somewhere. You could give me an allowance until I came into my money. Or I suppose you could give me the money now if you really liked. I don't quite know how father left it to me.

James (coldly): You come into your money when you are twenty-five. Your father very wisely felt that to trust a large sum to a mere boy of twenty-one was simply putting temptation in his way. Whether I have the power or not to alter his dispositions, I certainly don't propose to do so.

Philip: If it comes to that, I am twenty-five.

James: Indeed? I had an impression that that event took place in about two years' time. When did you become twenty-five, may I ask?

Philip (quietly): It was on the Somme. We were attacking the next day and my company was in support. We were in a so-called trench on the edge of a wood—a damned rotten place to be, and we got hell. The company commander sent back to ask if we could move. The C.O. said, 'Certainly not; hang on.' We hung on; doing nothing, you know—just hanging on and waiting for the next day. Of course, the Boche knew all about that. He had it on us nicely... (Sadly) Dear old Billy! He was one of the best—our company commander, you know. They got him, poor

9. How did Philip prove that he was twenty five?

One-Act Play

Alan Alexander Milne

devil! That left me in command of the company. I sent a runner back to ask if I could move. Well, I'd had a bit of a scout on my own and found a sort of trench five hundred yards to the right. Not what you'd call a trench, of course, but compared to that wood-well, it was absolutely Hyde Park. I described the position and asked if I could go there. My man never came back. I waited an hour and sent another man. He went west too. Well, I wasn't going to send a third. It was murder. So I had to decide. We'd lost about half the company by this time, you see. Well, there were three things I could do- hang on, move to this other trench, against orders, or go back myself and explain the situation.... I moved.... And then I went back to the C.O. and told him I'd moved.... And then I went back to the company again.... (Quietly) That was when I became twenty- five.... or thirty- five.... or forty- five.

10. What idea does Uncle James have regarding young boys who have returned from war?

James (recovering himself with an effort): Ah yes, yes. (He coughs awkwardly.) No doubt points like that frequently crop up in the trenches. I am glad that you did well out there, and I'm sure your Colonel would speak kindly of you; but when it comes to choosing a career for you now that you have left the Army, my advice is not altogether to be despised. Your father evidently thought so, or he would not have entrusted you to my care.

Philip: My father didn't foresee this war.

James: Yes, yes, but you make too much of this war. All you young boys seem to think you've come back from France to teach us our business. You'll find that it is you who'll have to learn, not we.

One-Act Play

The Boy Comes Home

169

Philip: I'm quite prepared to learn; in fact, I want to.

James: Excellent. Then we can consider that settled.

Philip: Well, we haven't settled yet what business I'm going to learn.

James: I don't think that's very difficult. I propose to take you into my business. You'll start at the bottom of course, but it will be a splendid opening for you.

Philip (thoughtfully): I see. So you've decided it for me? The jam business.

James (sharply): Is there anything to be ashamed of in that?

Philip: Oh no, nothing at all. Only it doesn't happen to appeal to me.

James: If you knew which side your bread was buttered, it would appeal to you very considerably.

Philip: I'm afraid I can't see the butter for the jam.

James: I don't want any silly jokes of that sort. You were glad enough to get it out there, I've no doubt.

Philip: Oh yes. Perhaps that's why I'm so sick of it now ... No, it's no good, Uncle James; you must think of something else.

James (with a sneer): Perhaps you've thought of something else?

Philip: Well, I had some idea of being an architect-

James: You propose to start learning to be an architect at twenty-three?

One-Act Play

Alan Alexander Milne

11. Why does Uncle James disapprove of Philip's decision to be an architect?

Philip (smiling): Well, I couldn't start before, could I?

James: Exactly. And now you'll find it's too late.

Philip: Is it? Aren't there going to be any more architects, or doctors, or solicitors, or barristers? Because we've all lost four years of our lives, are all the professions going to die out?

James: And how old do you suppose you'll be before you're earning money as an architect?

Philip: The usual time, whatever that may be. If I'm four years behind, so is everybody else.

James: Well, I think it's high time you began to earn a living at once.

Philip: Look here, Uncle James, do you really think that you can treat me like a boy who's just left school? Do you think four years at the front have made no difference at all?

James: If there had been any difference, I should have expected it to take the form of an increased readiness in obeying orders and recognizing authority.

Philip (regretfully): You are evidently determined to have a row. Perhaps I had better tell you once and for all that I refuse to go into the turnip and vegetable narrow business.

James (thumping the table angrily): And perhaps I'd better tell you, sir, once and for all, that I don't propose to allow rudeness from an impertinent young puppy.

Philip (reminiscently): I remember annoying our Brigadier once. He was covered with red, had a very red

One-Act Play

The Boy Comes Home

17

face, about twenty medals, and a cold blue eye. He told me how angry he was for about five minutes while I stood to attention. I'm afraid you aren't nearly impressive, Uncle James.

James (rather upset): Oh! (Recovering himself) Fortunately I have other means of impressing you. The power of the purse goes a long way in this world. I propose to use it.

Philip: I see.... Yes... that's rather awkward, isn't it?

James (pleasantly): I think you'll find it very awkward.

Philip (thoughtfully): Yes.

(With an amused laugh James settles down to his paper as if the interview were over.)

Philip (to himself): I suppose I shall have to think of another argument. (He takes out a revolver from his pocket and fondles it affectionately.)

James (looking up suddenly as he is doing this- amazed): What on earth are you doing?

Philip: Souvenir from France. Do you know, Uncle James, that this revolver has killed about twenty Germans?

James (shortly): Oh! Well, don't go playing about with it here, or you'll be killing Englishmen before you know where you are.

Philip: Well, you never know. (He raises it leisurely and points it at his uncle.) It's a nice little weapon.

James (angrily): Put it down, sir. You ought to have grown out of monkey tricks like that in the Army. You ought to

12. 'The power of the purse goes a long way in this world'. What does Uncle James mean by this statement?

13. Did Philip take out the revolver to threaten Uncle James? Why?

One-Act Play

Alan Alexander Milne

know better than to point an unloaded revolver at anybody. That's the way accidents always happen.

Philip: Not when you've been on a revolver course and know all about it. Besides, it is loaded.

James (very angry because he is frightened suddenly): Put it down at once, sir. (PHILIP turns it away from him and examines it carelessly.) What's the matter with you? Have you gone mad suddenly?

Philip (mildly): I thought you'd be interested in it. It's shot such a lot of Germans.

James: Well, it won't want to shoot any more, and the sooner you get rid of it the better.

Philip: I wonder. Does it ever occur to you, Uncle James, that there are about a hundred thousand people in England who own revolvers, who are quite accustomed to them and- who have nobody to practise on now?

James: No, sir, it certainly doesn't.

Philip (thoughtfully): I wonder if it will make any difference. You know, one gets so used to potting at people. It's rather difficult to realize suddenly that one oughtn't to.

James (getting up): I don't know what the object of this tomfoolery is, if it has one. But you understand that I expect you to come to the office with me tomorrow at nine o'clock. Kindly see that you're punctual. (He turns to go away.)

Philip (softly): Uncle James.

James (over his shoulder): I have no more-

14. 'I don't know what the object of this tomfoolery is,' What tomfoolery is referred to here?

One-Act Play

The Boy Comes Home

173

Philip (in his parade voice): Damn it, sir! stand to attention when you talk to an officer! (James instinctively turns round and stiffens himself.) That's better; you can sit down if you like. (He motions James to his chair with the revolver.)

James (going nervously to his chair): What does this bluff mean?

Philip: It isn't bluff, it's quite serious. (Pointing the revolver at his uncle) Do sit down.

James (sitting): Threats, eh?

Philip: Persuasion

James: At the point of the revolver? You settle your arguments by force? Good heavens, sir! this is just the very thing that we were fighting to put down.

Philip: We were fighting! We! We! Uncle, you're humorist.

James: Well, "you," if you prefer it. Although those of us who stayed at home-

Philip: Yes, never mind about the excess profits now. I can tell you quite well what we fought for. We used force to put down force. That's what I'm doing now. You were going to use force- the force of money- to make me do what you wanted. Now I'm using force to stop it. (He levels the revolver again.)

James: You're- you're going to shoot your old uncle?

Philip: Why not? I've shot lots of old uncles- Landsturm-ers

James: But those were Germans! It's different shooting

15. What argument did Philip have for pointing the gun at his uncle?

One-Act Play

Alan Alexander Milne

Germans. You're in England now. You couldn't have a crime on your conscience like that.

Philip: Ah, but you mustn't think that after four years of war one has quite the same ideas about the sanctity of human life. How could one?

James: You'll find that juries have kept pretty much the same ideas, I fancy.

Philip: Yes, but revolvers often go off accidentally. You said so yourself. This is going to be the purest accident. Can't you see it in the papers? "The deceased's nephew, who was obviously upset- "

James: I suppose you think it's brave to come back from the front and threaten a defenceless man with a revolver? Is that the sort of fair play they teach you in the Army?

Philip: Good heavens! Of course it is. You don't think that you wait until the other side has got just as many guns as you before you attack? You're really rather lucky. Strictly speaking, I ought to have thrown half a dozen bombs at you first. (Taking one out of his pocket) As it happens, I've only got one.

James (thoroughly alarmed): Put that back at once.

Philip (putting down the revolver and taking it in his hands): You hold it in the right hand- so- taking care to keep the lever down. Then you take the pin in the finger- so, and- but perhaps this doesn't interest you?

James (edging his chair away): Put it down at once, sir. Good heavens! anything might happen.

16. What was Uncle James's reaction towards Philip before and after Philip wielding the revolver?

One-Act Play

The Boy Comes Home

175

Philip (putting it down and taking up the revolver again): Does it ever occur to you, Uncle James, that there are about three million people in England who know all about bombs, and how to throw them, and-

James: It certainly does not occur to me. I should never dream of letting these things occur to me.

Philip (looking at the bomb regretfully): It's rather against my principles as a soldier, but just to make things a bit more fair- (generously) you shall have it. (He holds it out to him suddenly.)

James (shrinking back again): Certainly not, sir. It might go off at any moment.

Philip (putting it back in his pocket): Oh no; it's quite useless; there's no detonator.... (Sternly) Now, then, let's talk business.

James: What do you want me to do?

Philip: Strictly speaking, you should be holding your hands over your head and saying "Kamerad!" However, I'll let you off that. All I ask from you is that you should be reasonable.

James: And if I refuse, you'll shoot me?

Philip: Well, I don't quite know, Uncle James. I expect we should go through this little scene again to-morrow. You haven't enjoyed it, have you? Well, there's lots more of it to come. We'll rehearse it every day. One day, if you go on being unreasonable, the thing will go off. Of course, you think that I shouldn't have the pluck to fire. But you can't be quite certain. It's a hundred to one that I shan't-

One-Act Play

Alan Alexander Milne

only I might. Fear- it's a horrible thing. Elderly men die of it sometimes.

James: Pooh! I'm not to be bluffed like that.

Philip (suddenly): You're quite right; you're not that sort. I made a mistake. (Aiming carefully) I shall have to do it straight off, after all. One- two-

James (on his knees, with uplifted hands, in an agony of terror): Philip! Mercy! What are your terms?

Philip (picking him up by the scruff, and helping him into the chair): Good man, that's the way to talk. I'll get them for you. Make yourself comfortable in front of the fire till I come back. Here's the paper. (He gives his uncle the paper, and goes out into the hall.)

17. Did Uncle James attitude change after the dream? Why?

(James opens his eyes with a start and looks round him in a bewildered way. He rubs his heart, takes out his match and looks at it, and then stares round the room again. The door from the dining- room opens, and Philip comes in with a piece of toast in his hand.)

Philip (his mouth full): You wanted to see me, Uncle James?

James (still bewildered): That's all right, my boy, that's all right. What have you been doing?

Philip (surprised): Breakfast. (Putting the last piece in his mouth) Rather late, I'm afraid.

James: That's all right. (He laughs awkwardly.)

One-Act Play

The Boy Comes Home

177

Philip: Anything the matter? You don't look your usual bright self.

James: I- er- seem to have dropped asleep in front of the fire. Most unusual thing for me to have done. Most unusual.

Philip: Let that be a lesson to you not to get up so early. Of course, if you're in the Army you can't help yourself. Thank Heaven I'm out of it, and my own master again.

James: Ah, that's what I wanted to talk to you about. Sit down, Philip. (He indicates the chair by the fire.)

Philip (taking a chair by the table): You have that, uncle; I shall be all right here.

James (hastily): No, no; you come here. (He gives Philip the armchair and sits by the table himself.) I should be dropping off again. (He laughs awkwardly.)

Philip: Righto. (He puts his hand into his pocket. Uncle James shivers and looks at him in horror. Philip brings out his pipe, and a sickly grin of relief comes into James's face.)

James: I suppose you smoked a lot in France?

Philip: Rather! Nothing else to do. It's allowed in here?

James (hastily): Yes, yes, of course. (Philip lights his pipe.) Well now, Philip, what are you going to do, now you've left the Army?

Philip (promptly): Burn my uniform and sell my revolver.

James (starting at the word "revolver"): Sell your revolver, eh?

One-Act Play

Alan Alexander Milne

Philip (surprised): Well, I don't want it now, do I?

James: No.... Oh no.... Oh, most certainly not, I should say. Oh, I can't see why you should want it at all. (With an uneasy laugh) You're in England now. No need for revolvers here- eh?

Philip (staring at him): Well, no, I hope not.

James (hastily): Quite so. Well now, Philip, what next? We must find a profession for you.

Philip (yawning): I suppose so. I haven't really thought about it much.

James: You never wanted to be an architect?

Philip (surprised): Architect? (JAMES rubs his head and wonders what made him think of architect.)

James: Or anything like that.

Philip: It's a bit late, isn't it?

James: Well, if you're four years behind, so is everybody else. (He feels vaguely that he has heard this argument before.)

Philip (smiling): To tell the truth, I don't feel I mind much anyway. Anything you like- except a commissionaire. I absolutely refuse to wear uniform again.

James: How would you like to come into the business?

Philip: The jam business? Well, I don't know. You wouldn't want me to salute you in the mornings?

James: My dear boy, no!

*One-Act Play**The Boy Comes Home*

179

Philip: All right, I'll try it if you like. I don't know if I shall be any good- what do you do?

James: It's your experience in managing and-er-handling men which I hope will be of value.

Philip: Oh, I can do that all right. (Stretching himself luxuriously) Uncle James, do you realize that I'm never going to salute again, or wear a uniform, or get wet- really wet, I mean- or examine men's feet, or stand to attention when I'm spoken to, or- oh, lots more things. And best of all, I'm never going to be frightened again. Have you ever known what it is to be afraid- really afraid?

James (embarrassed): I- er- well- (He coughs.)

Philip: No, you couldn't- not really afraid of death, I mean. Well, that's over now. Good lord! I could spend the rest of my life in the British Museum and be happy....

James (getting up): All right, we'll try you in the office. I expect you want a holiday first, though.

Philip (getting up): My dear uncle, this is holiday. Being in London is holiday. Buying an evening paper- wearing a waistcoat again- running after a bus- anything- it's all holiday.

James: All right, then, come along with me now, and I'll introduce you to Mr. Bamford.

Philip: Right. Who's he?

James: Our manager. A little stiff, but a very good fellow. He'll be delighted to hear that you are coming into the firm.

18. 'A good joke that! Ha, ha, ha! A good joke—but only a joke'. What does Uncle mean by 'a good joke'?

One-Act Play

Alan Alexander Milne

Philip (smiling): Perhaps I'd better bring my revolver, in case he isn't.

James (laughing with forced heartiness as they go together to the door): Ha, ha! A good joke that! Ha, ha, ha! A good joke- but only a joke, of course. Ha, ha! He, he, he!

[Philip goes out. James, following him, turns at the door, and looks round the room in a bewildered way. Was it a dream, or wasn't it? He will never be quite certain.]

CURTAIN

air of decisiveness: self-possessed, sure of oneself

put about: ordered around

ham: the cooked part of a pig's leg

trench: a long deep hole dug in the ground where soldiers can be protected from enemy attacks

absurdity: ridiculousness

legislation: law passed by a parliament

boast: to talk with too much pride of oneself

propose: to intend to do

drop off: to start to sleep

impertinence: rudeness

came into: inherited

temptation: the desire to do or have something which you know to be bad or wrong

fondle: touch gently

tomfoolery: playful behaviour

The Boche: the German soldiers

Kamerad: a shout of surrender, used by German soldiers

righto: (old-fashioned) used to show that you accept a statement or an order

Understanding the play

- 1) What is the central conflict of the play?
- 2) Reading through the play assess how you developed a sense of:
 - a) setting b) character c) background
- 3) Compare and contrast Uncle James' attitude to Philip on having breakfast and smoking pipe.
- 4) What significance does Philip's four year service in the army hold in the play?
- 5) Should youth be allowed total freedom to develop or be controlled by the wisdom of elders? Substantiate your arguments with reasons.
- 6) When elders want to control you, they do it mostly out of genuine concern. Is this the case with Mr. James in the play? Does he act out of concern or is it his desire to enjoy power and control? Why?
- 7) Is the title of the play appropriate? Why?
- 8) What are the expectations of Uncle James about the boy?
- 9) 'The Boy Comes Home' is replete with tone indicators. A list of them is given below. Go to the text and say aloud the dialogue that follows the indicators in the tone indicated.

absently, coldly, doubtfully, awkwardly, reproachfully, vaguely, unconvinced, resigned, sleepily, recovering himself, reminiscently, mildly, parade voice, hastily, sternly

- 10) The play also contains a number of expressions indicating body language. Note the following body language indicators.

with his back to the fire, thumping the table, looking at his watch, snapping it shut and putting it back

Identify the personality traits suggested by the body language indicators.

One-Act Play

Alan Alexander Milne

Writing about the play

- 1) Write a short essay on 'The Boy Comes Home' as an anti-war comedy.
- 2) Write a paragraph on the dream of Uncle James.
- 3) Describe the breakfast episode in a paragraph.
- 4) Sketch the character of Uncle James.
- 5) Write a paragraph on the background of war in 'The Boy Comes Home'.
- 6) Describe how Philip succeeds in forcing Uncle James to agree with him.

ICT

The play has three important episodes, viz. the breakfast scene, the dream scene and Uncle James' meeting with Philip after the dream. You may change the setting of the play to Kerala. What changes would you make? Enact the episodes forming three different groups. Take care to present the dialogue and actions based on your analysis of the character's traits and tone. Publish the script of your play as three different plays/skits in your class blog.

You may also video record/voice record your performance and upload the recorded version in You Tube.



One-Act Play



Dorothy C Calhoun (1917 -)

Dorothy C Calhoun, presumed to be born about 1917, in Kansas, USA, was a prolific writer of radio plays. 'When Lincoln came to Pittsburgh' is a delightful one-act play on a small boy's adventurous trip to meet Lincoln and his encounter with the President elect. It is a radio play. Radio play is a dramatized, purely acoustic performance, broadcast on radio. With no visual component, radio drama depends on dialogue, music and sound effects to help the listener imagine the characters and story. It is auditory in the physical dimension but equally powerful as a visual force in the psychological dimension. Radio drama achieved widespread popularity within a decade of its initial development in the 1920s. By the 1940s, it was a leading international popular entertainment. With the advent of television in the 1950s, however, radio drama lost some of its popularity.

Acting for radio is not a simple skill to master. Facial expressions, gestures and eye contact are vital in conveying emotion and meaning to the dialogues. So how then is it possible to create a believable character and an engrossing atmosphere using only your voice? There are four things employed while making a radio drama: voice, sound effects, music and, particularly important, silence.

One-Act Play

When Lincoln Came to Pittsburg

Characters

DOCTOR JOHN GOUCHER and his wife Mrs. JOHN GOUCHER

Their children: TOM, MARK, JOHN. John is a very small boy.

SPIKE: another very young boy

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Mr. DUNN and Mr ADAMS: two men with Lincoln

Mrs. ALLEN: neighbour to the Gouchers

MUSIC: (Fanfare)

ANNOUNCER: An episode in 'American Yesterdays'- 'When Lincoln came to Pittsburgh'

MUSIC: (Theme up, then fade under and out)

ANNOUNCER: Were the great men of American history heroes to their own times? Did their fellow citizens realize that they were going to be historical figures in the future?

That's an interesting question which the School, College, Camp is going to answer for you today by this dramatization of an incident in Lincoln's visit to Pittsburgh.

MUSIC: (Up for a moment)

ANNOUNCER: It is early one February morning in 1861. The Goucher family is eating breakfast in the kitchen. We hear the bacon sizzling in the skillet... (fade)

SOUND (Sizzling bacon.)

One-Act Play

When Lincoln Came to Pittsburgh

185

Mrs. Goucher: More bacon, John? Eat your porridge, boys!

Tom: Oh, Mother, Dad says the President is here!

Mark: Imagine, the President of the United States right here - Pittsburgh. Tom!

Mrs. Goucher: You don't say so! Is he John?

Doc: Yes, Mary - President - elect Lincoln arrived here last night.

Mark: A flesh and blood president! Did you see him, Dad?

Doc: Yes, Mark

Mark: You did! Dad saw the president! Dad saw the president!

Doc: I was downtown on a case and saw him arrive at the Federal Station!

Tom: What's he look like?

Doc: Well, Tom, he is very tall - over six feet, three inches, I should say. His rugged features are kind and friendly, but determined.

John (piping up): Do presidents wear crowns?

Doc (laughing): No, John. This one wore a stovepipe hat which the wind was continuously trying to blow off! At last he made some joke about it. I wish I could have heard it, but I was too far away. The people near him laughed.

Mark: Where is he now?

Doc: I heard that he was staying at the Monongahela House last night, but he is leaving soon for Washington, where he is to be inaugurated.

One-Act Play

Dorothy C Calhoun

John: I wish I could see him!

Tom: I'm going to see him! It'll be something to tell my descendents.

Doc (laughing): Well, I must be off on my round of calls. Good-bye boys. Be good and help mother.

Boys (chorus): We will.

Doc: Good-bye, Mary - (Going. Pauses off mike)- Oh, if you are not too tired this afternoon, perhaps you will go with me to see Mrs. Moore. She needs more than medicine, she needs hope.

Mrs. Goucher: I'll be glad to.

Doc: That's fine. G'bye, dear.

Mrs. Goucher: Bye!

SOUND (Door closes.)

I am too going - just as soon's I -

Mrs. Goucher: Never mind, Mr. Lincoln, boys - tend to your breakfast.

Mark: Don't be in too big a hurry. Remember you have to bring in the wood first.

Tom: Oh! John can do that.

Mark: Shame on you!

Tom: Well come on - I'll fill the wood-box now.

John (coming up): Are you really going to see President Lincoln. Mark?

One-Act Play

When Lincoln Came to Pittsburgh

187

Mark (sullenly): Perhaps we will. I don't know.

John: Take me with you, please.

SOUND: (Door opens and closes.)

Tom: You- you'd get lost in the crowd. You're too young. Stay at home where you belong.

1. Why does Tom and Mark decide not to take John with them?

John: Aw, Tom- I wanna see President Lincoln, too. (Ready to cry.)

Tom: Now, stop sniffing-- Here, help throw the wood in the box.

SOUND: (Wood being flung in box. Continue under)

John (Beginning to cry): P- p-please t-take me too! I wanna talk to the President!

Mark: Don't worry, John I'll tell you all about it ...

SOUND: (Stop wood in box.)

Tom and Mark (calling): Good- bye, Mother.

Mother (distant): Where are you boys, going?

Tom: We're going to try to see the President.

Mother (coming up): Aren't you taking John with you?

Tom: Ah. gee... Mother, we can't. He'd be in the way. Anyway, he might get lost in the crowd.

Mother: I wish you'd take John with you. He might never have the chance again.

Mark: Aw, Mother. Presidents don't want to be bothered with babies.

One-Act Play

Dorothy C Calhoun

2. 'Spike, I wish I was big.' Why did John wish to be a big boy?

Mother: Be home early, boys.

SOUND: (Clatter of dishes.)

Mother: Don't cry, John, here comes Spike to play with you.

SOUND: (Door opens.)

Spike: Hi, John ... What are you crying about?

John: Ah, gee, Spike, I wish I was big! I'm always getting left out.

Spike: Me too!

John: You know what President Lincoln is in our town. Mark and Tom get to see him. They wouldn't take me - said I was too small.

Spike: That's tough. Hey, let's go and try to see him - just you and me, Huh?

Spike: Aw, I ain't skeered.

John: Can we, Mom?! Can Spike 'n me go down to see the President?

Mother: Just you two? You are pretty young!

Boys (together): Aw! Please

Mother: Well, I - I guess you can, dear. There may be a terrible crowd, and for goodness sake, do watch the carriages.

John: Gee, thanks mother, we'll be careful, good-bye! (going)

SOUND : (Door slams.)

One-Act Play

When Lincoln Came to Pittsburgh

189

Mother: T isn't every day they can see a President! May be Mr. Lincoln 'll be in the history books.

MUSIC: (Transition)

Announcer: Mark and Tom found themselves unable to move amidst the festive crowd on the corner of Smithfield and Water Streets.... (Fade)

SOUND: (Fade in murmuring crowd)

Mark: Gee, what a crowd Ouch

Tom: What's a matter, Mark?

Mark: That man stepped right on my toe.

Tom: Aw, don't let a little thing like that bother you. Remember, we're going to see Lincoln.

Mark: Well, I wish he'd hurry up - I'm tired of this crowd already.

Tom: So am I. Isn't it a good thing we didn't bring John?

Mark: He'd be wreck by this time. Imagine, he thought he'd even get a chance to talk to Lincoln.

MUSIC: (short flare of distant band music. Band record of some number like 'Hail the Chief' can be used.)

Hey, look! Here he comes!

Crowd (shouts up): Hooray for President Lincoln!

Mark: Can you see him, Tom? I see his legs.

Tom: I saw his hat! I wish people weren't so tall!

SOUND: (Crowd murmur continues,)

One-Act Play

Dorothy C Calhoun

Mark: Listen- he's speaking.

Tom: I can't hear him, Can you ? What's he talking about?

Mark: He said 'I see clouds of ...'

Tom: Clouds of what?

Mark: Oh, I don't know-- we might as well go. I can't hear him, either...

SOUND: (Applause. Cheers.)

Tom: For heaven's sakes- he's through already!

Mark: Well. We can say we saw him anyhow!

Tom: Let's see if we can push through the crowd and talk to him.

Mark: We'll never get through in time to see Lincoln

Tom: Ouch!

Mark: Someone step on your foot?

Tom: Naw, I got a bump on my shoulder. Ow - I guess you're right. C'mon, let's go home.

Crowd: (cheering, 'Hooray for Lincoln.' fade)

Announcer: While Tom and Mark tried to catch a glimpse of the tall, ungainly figure of the new President, John and Spike were slipping through the crowd.

SOUND: (Crowd murmur.)

Spike: Where is he? What's he like? When did he get here?

One-Act Play

When Lincoln Came to Pittsburgh

19

John: He's at the Monongahela House on water street, see over there where the crowd is? That's the lottest of people I ever saw!

Spike: Take my hand, we don't want to get lost. C'mon, Jet's yell, like tile rest.

Crowd: We want Lincoln. Hooray Mr. Lincoln.

John: Hooray for Lincoln! Here is a hole over there! Scuse me, Lady, Scooch down, Spike, you can see between the people! He's coming out on the veranda. Isn't he tall?

Spike: Uh- huh!

John: Gosh, maybe I'll be that tall some day - then I'll be President too!

Spike: Look. He's looking at the people. May be he'll say something. He is - he's going to speak. Shush

SOUND: (The noise of the crowd stops.)

Man (shouting): Speech, speech, Mr. President!

John (hoarse whisper): He's lifting his hand!

Lincoln (off mike): My friends. I am so happy to be here in Pittsburgh for a few hours. You people are privileged to live here. Never have I seen more beautiful hills... I would wish that I might have a longer visit, but in less than a month I must be in Washington, there to be inaugurated President of the United States. My good friends! It is a great responsibility which has been given to me, for I see clouds of war rising in the South. I see, however, that our nation will see a rainbow above the clouds.

3. Explain the reference to the clouds and the rainbow.

One-Act Play

Dorothy C Calhoun

SOUND: (Applause and cheers)

Spike: (as cheers fade.) Gee- John look over the river, there is an awful black cloud!

John: I wish I could shake hands with President Lincoln.

SOUND: (Crowd murmur continues)

Spike: Look it the folks crowd'n- around him!

John: Listen, Spike we are little. We would crawl under their legs.

Spike: We might get stepped on.

John: No, we wouldn't. Let's try.

Spike: All right (panting) Gosh! That was easy that man was bow- legged!

John: Ha ha, this way, Spike. There's President Lincoln over there. I wish ladies wore pants too!

Spike: Boy, that's a crowd of people around him. He's shaking hands with them.

John: Umpgh! Scuse me, Mister! (Panting) Mebbe he'll shake hands with us, too.

Spike: But there is such a crowd. Hey John! Where are you going?

John (going): I am going to see the President

SOUND: (Crowd murmur alone for moments)

Mr. Dunn (fading on)- :- Yes. Mr. Lincoln , it has been a pleasure to meet you.

4. Why did John wish ladies wore pants too?

One-Act Play

When Lincoln Came to Pittsburgh

193

Lincoln: The pleasure- was mine, sir. And who is this little man? How did you get here son?

John: I am John Goucher. I want so much to see Mr Lincoln that I crept under men's legs in the crowd.

Lincoln: Well, You may see him if you look up far enough.

John: Oh, You're the President!

Lincoln: You are a brave little fellow to struggle through that crowd just to see me. I am very glad to meet you. Perhaps we may talk together again some time.

5. How did Lincoln treat John?

John: Oh, I hope so, I would like to ask you so many things.

Lincoln: You would? What would you like to ask me?

John: Well- er- you see, I want to be a great- man like you some day and do good deeds.

Lincoln (sadly): And do good deeds ... I pray- you are right my boy!

John: How did you get to be great, Mr. Lincoln?

Lincoln: My son, none of us is great. But to do good deeds and to serve others is a truly noble ambition and the only way to live up to that ambition is to practice the Golden Rule. If you do this, you are bound to have a successful life.

6. What did Lincoln advise John to do?

John: Oh, I will try very hard. I'll never forget what you said. Thank you so much. I'd better go now. Good- bye!

Lincoln: Good- bye, my son. I think perhaps you will be a great man some day, John.

One-Act Play

Dorothy C Calhoun

Mr. Adams: Truly, did you ever see a man so kind to children? Mr. Lincoln, I want you to meet my friend, Colonel Mead. (Fade.)

John (excitedly): Spike Spike, I did it. I met President Lincoln!

Music: (Transition.)

Announcer: Mrs. Goucher is setting the table for supper when Mrs. Allen, a neighbor, enters excitedly.

Mrs. Allen: Oh, did you hear Mr Lincoln this afternoon, Mrs. Goucher? He was simply marvelous; so calm, stately and majestic. I just know that he is going to be a wonderful President.

Mrs. Goucher: No I didn't hear him. I'm so sorry, but I had to go on an errand with the Doctor.

Mrs. Allen: He certainly was inspiring, it's a shame that you missed hearing him. Oh, by the way was John downtown? Some little chap, who looked amazingly like your little son, struggled through the crowd and shook hands with Mr. Lincoln.

Mrs. Goucher: Why, yes, John did ask me to let him downtown. He was terribly eager to meet the President. Oh, but there were many little fellows, downtown, it probably was not little John.

Mrs. Allen: Perhaps not. I might have been mistaken. Oh, I almost forgot what I came over for: here is the cup of flour which I borrowed last week. So sorry to be late in

7. Why did Mrs. Allen visit the Goucher family?

One-Act Play

When Lincoln Came to Pittsburgh

195

returning it. Well I must hurry and get supper. David will be waiting. Good- bye. (Going.)

Mrs. Goucher: Goodbye Mrs. Allen, come over again soon. Oh, here- comes the Doctor.

Sound: (Door opening)

Mrs. Allen (off the mike) Good evening, Doctor did you hear Lincoln speak?

Doc (off mike): No, I didn't. Too many sick people needed me.

Mrs. Allen (off mike): A wonderful speech it was. Well I must be off. Good- bye.

Sound: (Door closes)

Mrs. Goucher: Mr Allen was just telling me that some little boy who looked like John squeezed through the crowd and shook hands with the President. I cannot quite believe John would do such a daring thing.

Doc: Oh, I don't know about that. It would be just like, the little monkey.

Mrs .Goucher: Here come the boys. I'll have dinner on the table in a jiffy.

Mark and Tom (coming in): H'llo, Dad.

Doc: Mark and Tom but - but where's John! Isn't he with you"?

Tom: Why, no! We didn't take him!

Mark : We thought he'd be a lot of trouble in the crowd!

8. How important is Mrs. Allen's role in the play?

9. How was John able to reach Lincoln and shake hands with Lincoln?

One-Act Play

Dorothy C Calhoun

Mrs. Goucher (calling from away): Dinner!

Doc (calling): Mark and Tom are here, Mother, but John hasn't come yet!

Mrs. Goucher (coming up): Oh, what can have happened to him? I shouldn't have let him go with all the carriages on the streets! (Ready to cry) but he pleaded so hard!

Tom: Gee, Mother- don't cry!

Mark: I wish we'd taken him with us.

John: Hello, everybody!

All (ad lib): John, where have you been? Did you get lost?

John (coming up): Huh - Our house got losted. I didn't. But I'm here now.

Tom: You might as well have come with us, John. We didn't get within two blocks of Mr. Lincoln.

Mark: We saw his umbrella and the top of his tall hat.

Tom: We heard a few words he said. 'I see clouds of ---' something. We couldn't hear the rest.

John (quoting): 'Clouds of war rising in the South, but I see a rainbow above the clouds.'

Mark: What?

Tom: What's that?

Mark: How do you know, John?

Doc: Did you hear what President Lincoln said John?

John: Sure. And I shook hands with him, too.

One-Act Play

When Lincoln Came to Pittsburgh

All (ad lib): You did? Shook hands with the President?
You?

John: He talked to me and called me 'little man'. He was
awful nice.

Tom: But how did you get anywhere near him. John?

John: I crawled under people's legs!

Mother: Tell us what the President said, dear.

John: He asked me what I wanted to be when I grew
up

Mother: And what did you tell him?

John: I said I wanted to be a great man like him! And he
said the only way to grow up great was to do kind things
to other people.

Tom (laughing): I guess Mark and I aren't going to be
great or we'd have taken you with us this morning?

John: He was awful tall. I had to look up and up ... He
said, 'I think perhaps you will be a great man some day
John.'

Tom: Well. Of all things.

Mark (simultaneously): Well, fr gosh sakes!

John: Could I be a great man. Daddy?

Father: I wouldn't be surprised! If you succeed in other
things as well as you did in seeing President Lincoln you
don't need to worry!

Music: (Theme up- Fade under.)

Announcer: You have been listening to another delightful
episode in the series of "American Yesterdays" as
portrayed each week by the ...S

10. What aspect of
Lincoln's character
do you see in this
play?

One-Act Play

Dorothy C Calhoun

1861: Lincoln was elected as President and made a tour of America as President elect.

Bacon: side and back meat of hog, sliced and salted

sizzling: hot

skillet: frying pan

rugged: strong

piping up: shrill cry

stovepipe hat: hat with a tall crown; usually silk or beaver fur covered

Monongabela House: Pittsburgh's premier hotel where Lincoln stayed overnight in 1861

skeered: scared or frightened

gee: expression of dismay/surprise

wreck: condition of being broken, in bad shape

ungainly: awkward, clumsy, lacking grace

scooch: to move forward through a crowd by pushing and shoving, to wriggle forward

clouds of war: Lincoln refers to the secession of some of the Southern states that wanted slavery to remain from the Union and the aggravation of the situation when he assumes the Presidentship. As Lincoln anticipated, the situation led to a civil war of the worst kind in America on the issue of emancipation of slaves.

bow-legged: have legs that curve outward at the knees, bandy-legged

jiffy: a very short time

ad lib: without forethought

One-Act Play

When Lincoln Came to Pittsburgh

Understanding the play

199

1. What is the theme of the play?
2. Who do you think is the hero of the play-Lincoln or John? Why?
3. What traits of Abraham Lincoln make him popular among the people?
4. From where does Lincoln draw the imagery/metaphor in his speech?
5. List the American slang usages in the play. Are they ungrammatical? Why?
6. What role does the Announcer play in 'When Lincoln came to Pittsburgh?'
7. How do adults usually judge children? There are four examples for this in the play. The elder brothers, the mother, the father and Lincoln spoke to John in different ways. How are they different?
8. The Gettysburg Address delivered by Abraham Lincoln is one of the classic speeches in history. Browse the site <http://www.history.com/topics/gettysburg-address/videos#abraham-lincoln> and listen to the Gettysburg Address. How does Lincoln make his speech persuasive, emotional and touching?

One-Act Play

Dorothy C Calhoun

Writing about the play

1. Write an essay on the small boy's adventurous trip to meet Lincoln and his encounter with the president elect.
2. How is the image of Abraham Lincoln constructed in this short play? What are the narrative strategies used for that?
3. Imagine you are a small boy and write down an account of a meeting with a national figure of your choice.
4. Write a radio play of 10 minutes duration making use of any interesting anecdotes associated with the freedom movement of India.

ICT

Browse the internet for more radio play scripts and make a digital compilation of such scripts. You may design cover pages, write preface and blurb and publish your compilation in your class blog.

