Optional English

Grade 11

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Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
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Sanothimi, Bhaktapur

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Preface

Textbook is the main learning material for students and teaching material for teachers in the school education system in Nepal. Textbook adopts the spirit of curriculum to maintain curriculum-textbook coherence. In this sense, textbook is a reflection of curriculum. This grade 11 **Optional English** textbook has been written based on 'Secondary Education (Grades 11-12) Optional English Curriculum 2076'. The main expectation behind writing this textbook is to facilitate grade 11 students, who study English as an optional subject, learn the basic concepts of language, linguistics and literature. The teachers are also encouraged to explore other useful resource materials to supplement this book keeping the curricular competencies and learning outcomes in mind.

The contents in this book have been divided into five chapters. In chapter one, an attempt has been made to provide basic concepts of historical survey of English literature and the type of language used in literature. Chapter two describes about the introduction of language and linguistics. Chapter three consists of the selected prose texts: both fiction and non-fiction. Similarly, chapter four is about poetry whereas chapter five is about drama. There are three selected one act plays under the drama section. The novella *Of Mice and Men* is a fiction text which is arranged at the last of this book, although it is a part of chapter three. The texts for the literature section have been selected from diverse areas including prose, poetry and drama. The exercises in every chapter have been designed to develop literary comprehension, critical thinking and reflection on the part of students.

This textbook is compiled and prepared in this form by Mr. Pashupati Pandya, Mr. Rameshwar Thakur, Mr. Ganga Datt Bhatt, Mr. Nabin Kumar Khadka, Mrs. Srijana Dahal and Mr. Deepak Raj Bhatta. Director General Mr. Yubraj Poudel, Subject Committee Chairperson Prof. Dr. Bal Mukunda Bhandari, and Committee Members: Dr. Bam Dev Adhikari, Dr. Netra Prasad Sharma, Dr. Basanta Raj Dhakal, and Mr. Nawaraj Sapkota also contributed significantly on the development of this book. Asst. Prof. Guru Prasad Poudel also read the book thoroughly and provided constructive feedback. The contents and language of the book are proofread and edited by Mr. Raju Shrestha, Mr. Bijaya Kumar Ranabhat, Mr. Binod Raj Bhatta, and Mr. Puspa Raj Poudel. The layout design of the book is done by Mr. Bhakta Bahadur Karki and illustration part is done by Mr. Kuldip Jung Bahadur Gurung, an Art Officer. The Curriculum Development Centre would like to acknowledge their contributions and also extend sincere gratitude to all of them. The CDC always welcomes creative and constructive feedback for the further improvement of the book.

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Chapter One

A Historical Survey of English Language and Literature

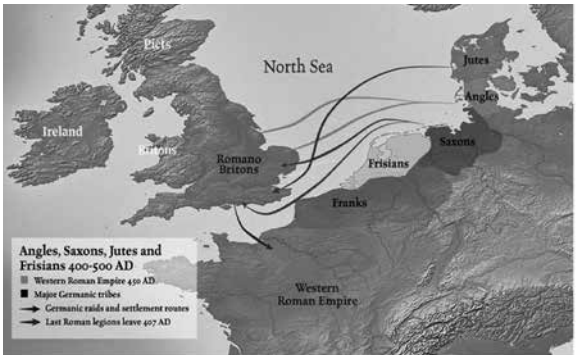
English Literature from Anglo-Saxon to Middle English Period

Before You Read

a. What do you think the English language was like in its early stage?

b. What literary figures and works do you know from the early history of English literature?

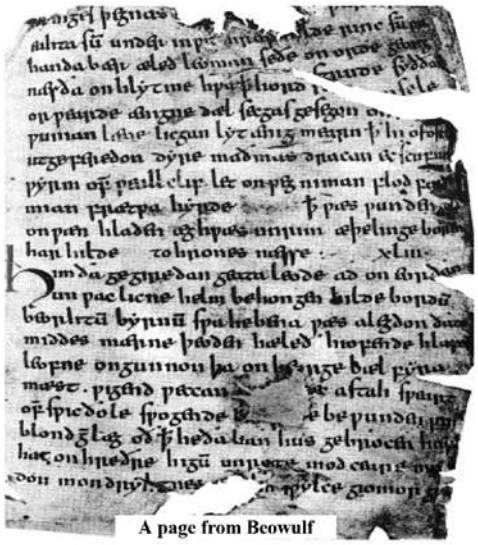
Anglo-Saxon Literature (450–1066 AD)



The history of English literature begins with the Anglo-Saxon period, which developed from 450 to 1066 AD. This literary period is named after the Germanic tribes– Angles, Saxons, and Jutes–who invaded Britain in the late fifth century and established their kingdoms there. These tribes originally came from coastal regions of modern-day Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands. The Anglo-Saxon people not only occupied a major portion of Britain but also established cultural and linguistic foundation of England.

The Anglo-Saxons were fearless, adventurous, and brave people. Their oral traditions formed the foundation of early English literature. These people were fond of singing heroic songs at feasts, celebrating victories in battles, honouring gods, and glorifying ancestral heroism. The themes of religion, war, and agriculture were expressed in poetic forms, giving rise to what we now consider the earliest English poetry. These poetic songs founded the early English literature.

The Old English language also known as Anglo-Saxon, is the earliest form of English. There is no exact record of origin and development of any language. However, the Old English language is said to have been spoken from around 600 to 1100 AD. The language used in the Old English Literature is largely incomprehensible to modern-day speakers unless one has a specialized study of it. Despite this, old English poetry remains one of the most important links to the early literary history of England. Unfortunately, much of Anglo-Saxon poetry has been lost.



A page from Beowulf

Beowulf is the only surviving epic poem of Old English literature. The author of the poem is unknown. It is estimated that the poem was written around the seventh century. It is the first English epic, a heroic tale written in about 3,000 lines. Originally, it was chanted or sung aloud by the poets called scops in mead halls, entertaining audiences with its thrilling battles and noble deeds.

The poem is not set in England but in the Danes, present-day Denmark. Hrothgar, the king of the Danes, is in trouble—his great hall, Heorot, is terrorized by a monstrous creature named Grendel, who lives in a nearby lake. Every night, Grendel attacks Heorot, killing and eating Hrothgar's warriors. A mighty warrior from Geatland, modern-day Sweden, Beowulf, sails across the sea to help Hrothgar. One night, Beowulf lies in wait for Grendel, attacks him bare-handed, and engages in a fierce battle. After a brutal struggle, Beowulf tears off Grendel's arm, leaving the monster mortally wounded. Grendel flees back to his lake and dies.

But the danger is not over—Grendel's mother, seeking revenge, attacks Heorot. Beowulf follows her to the bottom of the lake, where he fights and kills her with a magical sword. Victorious, Beowulf returns home to Geatland, where he later becomes king after his uncle's death.

Years later, as an old king, Beowulf must defend his people from a fire-breathing dragon. He defeats the beast but is fatally wounded in the battle. The poem ends with a sorrowful description of Beowulf's funeral pyre, as his people mourn their great hero.

Beowulf is written in verse without rhyme; instead, it uses alliteration, where the first half of each line is connected to the second by repeated sounds. This style gives the poem a strong, rhythmic quality suited for oral performance.

Though some critics have dismissed the poem as simplistic, Beowulf offers a fascinating glimpse into the life and values of early medieval warriors—their bravery, loyalty, and struggles against the harsh forces of nature and mythical beasts. The poem blends pagan heroism with Christian influences, reflecting the changing beliefs of the time. Despite its ancient origins, Beowulf remains a powerful tale of heroism, sacrifice, and the timeless battle between good and evil.

Other notable Old English poems include *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*. *Genesis A* is a retelling of Biblical history in verse form, but it is generally considered dull due to its straightforward

narration. In contrast, *Genesis B* is more dramatic, focusing on the beginning of the world and God's punishment of Satan, offering vivid imagery and deeper emotional tone.

Other Biblical poems include *Exodus and Daniel*, which adapt Biblical stories into poetic form. These poems aimed to teach religious lessons through narrative and verse. *Christ and Satan*, another religious poem, deals with the life of Christ and the struggle between good and evil.

Two known poets of the Old English period are Caedmon and Cynewulf. Caedmon was originally uneducated and unable to sing, but according to legend, an angel appeared to him in a dream and asked him to sing in God's praise. When he awoke, he was miraculously able to compose religious verse. Some of his works have survived. Cynewulf, believed to be a poor countryman, wrote four known poems: *Juliana*, *The Fates of the Apostles*, *Christ*, and *Elene*. Almost nothing of his work has survived in a complete form.

Another important Old English poem is *The Battle of Maldon*, which narrates a real battle fought against the Danes in 991. The poem praises courage and loyalty of the English leader and his men, celebrating heroic sacrifice.

Old English prose appeared after the poetry. The earliest prose works include *the Laws*, written in the late seventh century, which contain interesting legal codes of the time. The most significant piece of prose is the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, an early history of England. It is a collection of chronicles from different cities and provides valuable insight into historical events. King Alfred (849–901) played a key role in its development and also translated many Latin books into Old English. He helped to bring learning to England and improved the education of his people.

Another prose writer of this period was Aelfric, whose works include *Homilies* and *Lives of Saints*, focusing on religious teachings and stories meant for moral instruction.

Old English poetry and prose, while limited in quantity, reflect the religious, heroic, and historical concerns of early English society and laid the foundation for later English literature.

Middle English Literature

Middle English, also known as the Anglo-Norman period, refers to the literary output in the English language from approximately 1100 to 1500 AD. This period marks a transformation both in political and literary history of England. The Normans from France defeated the Anglo-Saxon King in the Battle of Hastings (1066) and conquered England known as Norman Conquest. This caused the beginning of the new era in the political and literary history of England.

The earlier Old English poetic traditions began to disappear, giving way to new themes, styles, and languages in literary production. During this period, the English language underwent significant changes. The Old English used in the texts like *Beowulf* gradually evolved into Middle English, which was more recognizable to modern readers. This transformation was influenced by various factors, including the introduction of Norman French. With the Normans came the French language, which became the natural mode of speech among the educated and ruling classes. Previously, Latin had been the primary language of clergy and scholars. French replaced Latin in many spheres of human society. This shift transferred English to the lower social ranks, though some literary works continued to be composed in English.

The Norman influence contributed to the decline of Old English poetry. The structured verse and themes of heroic epics like *Beowulf* gradually faded as French and Latin traditions began to shape literary expressions in England. The stylistic and linguistic transformation that occurred in this period were no longer suitable for the new cultural context. Although some authors continued to write in English, French literature set the standard for style and theme. It served as a mediator for European literary trends, bringing in elements from Latin and classical traditions. Romances emerged as the most popular literary form during the Middle English period. These stories were typically drawn from Latin and French sources and often revolved around the tales of King Arthur, the Trojan War, Charlemagne, and Alexander the Great. Romances were filled with adventure, chivalry, and fantasy. They captivated the imaginations of the people and served as a vehicle for transmitting both entertainment and moral ideals. These stories significantly shaped the development of narrative fiction in English literature.

Geoffrey Chaucer

The Middle English period is often referred to as the Age of Chaucer, after Geoffrey Chaucer, the greatest poet of the time. Although many poets preceded him, Chaucer is known as the *Father of English Literature* due to his significant contributions to the development of the English language and literary tradition. By Chaucer's time, the English language had significantly evolved, making his works more accessible to modern readers. His use of vernacular English in poetry helped establish English as a literary language. Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* is his most famous and influential work, consisting of about 17,000 lines– approximately half of his total literary works. The poem recounts a pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury. Thirty pilgrims from various social backgrounds–including a knight, a prioress, a merchant, a monk, a lawyer, and many others– agree to participate in a storytelling contest to pass the time during their journey. Most of the tales are written in verse and reflect the diversity of medieval society. One of the most interesting characters is the Wife of Bath, a woman of strong opinions. She has had five husbands one after another. Her tale involves a knight from King Arthur's court who must answer the question to save his life: 'What do women love most?' An old, ugly witch provides the answer– women want to rule over their husbands– on the condition that the knight marries her. When he agrees, she transforms into a

beautiful young woman. Chaucer's storytelling skill and character portrayal are considered masterpieces of English literature.

The Canterbury pilgrims

In addition to *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer wrote numerous other poems that often revolved around legendary and romantic themes. These works contributed to the rich literary culture of the time and showcased his mastery of narrative and verse.

Another significant literary figure of the period was Sir Thomas More. He is best known for his work *Utopia* (1516), a fictional dialogue describing an ideal society governed by reason. The term *utopia* was coined through this work, which offered a critique of European politics and social norms. He also wrote *The History of King Richard III*, a biographical narrative which deeply influenced later historians and writers, including William Shakespeare. In addition to these, he wrote several treatises and letters that addressed political and religious issues of his time, solidifying his place as a key intellectual of the period.

Middle English prose often focused on religious themes. *Ancren Riwle*, for example focuses on rules of life for anchoresses–how they should dress, what work they may do, when they ought not to speak, etc. *The Form of Perfect Living* written by Richard Rolle also has the similar theme. Another significant prose work is *Morte D'Arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory, believed to have been written in prison. It compiles the legendary tales of King Arthur and his knights, including their quest for the Holy Grail and battles against various foes. This prose preserved and popularized Arthurian legends for future generations.

Middle English also saw the development of drama through Miracle and Morality plays. These plays were typically religious and performed near the churches. Miracle plays depicted biblical stories such as the creation of Adam and Eve, Noah's Ark, Abraham and Isaac, and the life of Christ. These performances were usually staged on moving platforms and brought drama to various parts of towns. Though serious in content, they introduced elements of comedy, leading to the birth of English theatrical tradition.

Morality plays were similar but more allegorical. Instead of human characters, they featured personified virtues and vices like truth, kindness, greed, and revenge. One of the most famous morality plays is *Everyman*, which tells the story of Everyman's journey toward death. Only Good Deeds accompanies him in the end, delivering a powerful moral lesson. Another type of performance during this period was the Interlude, short comic sketches presented between longer acts of plays or during meals, often in private homes or colleges. Though the playwrights of these early works are unknown, their contributions laid the foundation for future English drama.

Exercise

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. What is the timeline of Anglo-Saxon literature?
   i. 500–1000 AD
   ii. 1066–1500 AD
   iii. 450–1066 AD
   iv. 400–1100 AD

b. Which poem is considered the only surviving epic of Old English literature?
   i. Genesis A
   ii. Beowulf
   iii. The Battle of Maldon
   iv. Christ and Satan

c. Who was the Danish king whose hall was attacked by Grendel?
   i. Beowulf
   ii. Hrothgar
   iii. Alfred
   iv. Cynewulf

d. What is the most significant Old English prose work mentioned in the text?
   i. Utopia
   ii. The Canterbury Tales
   iii. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle
   iv. Homilies

e. Which event marks the beginning of the Middle English period?
   i. The birth of Chaucer
   ii. The Norman Conquest in 1066
   iii. The fall of the Roman Empire
   iv. The writing of Beowulf

f. What is the most famous work of Geoffrey Chaucer?
   i. Utopia
   ii. The Fates of the Apostles
   iii. The Canterbury Tales
   iv. Genesis B

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. How did the Anglo-Saxons shape the early history of English literature?

b. What was the role of King Alfred for the development of Anglo-Saxon prose?

c. Why do you think Geoffrey Chaucer is called the father of English literature?

d. What is *The Canterbury Tales* about?

e. What are Morality Plays?

C. Write long answers to the following questions.

a. Describe the characteristics of Anglo-Saxon literature, including its themes, language, and poetic style.

b. Discuss the contributions of Caedmon and Cynewulf to Old English literature.

c. How did the Norman Conquest influence the English language and literature? Explain.

d. The Middle English period is also known as the Age of Chaucer. Justify the statement with suitable references.

e. Discuss the prose and drama of the Middle English period with suitable examples.

f. Compare and contrast Anglo-Saxon and Middle English literature in terms of themes, style, and language.

Project Work

Visit an online or a physical library. Collect information about Geoffrey Chaucer. Focus on his life, works and contributions, and write a short biography of Chaucer in your own words. Also present in the classroom.

English Literature in the Renaissance

Before You Read

a. What does the term 'renaissance' mean?

b. Who do you think is the greatest dramatist of English literature? Why?

c. How do different inventions contribute to literature? Share your opinion.

The Renaissance followed the Middle English period. The term 'Renaissance' means 'rebirth' or 'revival of learning'. This period marks a significant cultural and intellectual revival in Europe, beginning from Italy in the 14th century and spreading to England by the late 15th and early 16th centuries. The English Renaissance is often identified with the Age of Shakespeare or the Elizabethan Age, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603). This era witnessed remarkable developments in science, art, exploration, and literature. The spirit of the Renaissance emphasized humanism, a focus on human potential and achievements. This human-centered worldview was a sharp contrast to the medieval focus on religion and the afterlife.

With the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Greek scholars brought classical manuscripts to Western Europe that influenced English intellectual life. This revival of classical antiquity and interest in individual expression deeply impacted English literature. Writers and thinkers began to explore themes of human existence, love, beauty, knowledge, and personal identity, incorporating classical references and a broader vocabulary in their works. The Renaissance spirit flourished in English literature, ushering in a golden age of creativity.

New discoveries took place in several other fields. Vasco da Gama moved around the earth; Columbus discovered America; Copernicus discovered the Solar System and prepared the way for Galileo. Books were printed, and philosophy, science, and art were systematised. The chief characteristic of the Renaissance was its emphasis on humanism, which became popular during the Elizabethan period. It was in this period when English drama, poetry, and prose flourished in England.

The Elizabethan period saw a significant evolution in the English language. The influence of Latin, Greek, and French enriched English vocabulary and expression. The invention of the printing press and increased literacy led to greater standardization of spelling and grammar.

Writers like Shakespeare contributed immensely to the growth of language, coining new words and phrases that are still in use today. The expressive flexibility of English

expanded, allowing for nuanced emotion, rhetorical flourish, and intellectual exploration. The Elizabethan era marked the rise of English as a powerful literary medium.

Elizabethan Poetry

Elizabethan poetry reflects the elegance and intellectual depth of the Renaissance spirit. Two significant early poets, Sir Thomas Wyatt and Earl of Surrey, introduced sonnet to English literature, adapting it from Italian poet Petrarch. Wyatt's sonnets often explore themes of love, desire, and courtly frustration. Surrey refined the form and contributed to the development of the English or Shakespearean sonnet structure.

William Shakespeare contributed to Elizabethan poetry with his 154 sonnets. His sonnets have the themes of love, time, beauty, and mortality. These sonnets are known for their lyrical beauty, emotional intensity, and philosophical depth.

Edmund Spenser, another central figure in Elizabethan poetry, is best known for his epic poem *The Faerie Queene*, an allegorical celebration of Queen Elizabeth I and a portrayal of virtue through chivalric adventure. His earlier work, *The Shepherd's Calendar*, is a pastoral poem structured around the twelve months of the year, reflecting the complexities of human emotion and morality. Spenser's unique style, known as the Spenserian stanza, influenced generations of poets.

The metaphysical school emerged in the early 17th century as a response to the Elizabethan tradition. The term 'metaphysical' was first applied by Samuel Johnson to describe poets who used intellectual wit, philosophical speculation, and elaborate metaphors to explore complex subjects like love, death, and religion. Metaphysical poetry is characterized by a blend of emotion and intellect, often marked by paradoxes, argumentative structure, and imaginative analogies. It reflects the spiritual and scientific curiosity of the time, moving away from ornate Elizabethan lyricism to a more introspective and analytical form.

John Donne is considered the founder of metaphysical poetry. His poems like *The Flea*, *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*, and *Death Be Not Proud* explore love, faith, and mortality with intense emotion and complex reasoning. Donne's use of conceits and his dramatic monologues distinguish his style.

Andrew Marvell, another key figure, is known for poems like *To His Coy Mistress*, where he blends carpe diem themes with metaphysical wit. His poetry combines political awareness, lyrical beauty, and philosophical depth.

John Milton

John Milton is widely regarded as the greatest English poet after Shakespeare. Born in London and educated at Cambridge, he devoted himself to deep study at home in Horton, Buckinghamshire, rather than pursuing a conventional profession. His early works include shorter poems like *L'Allegro* (1632), celebrating joy,

and *Il Penseroso* (1632), reflecting on thoughtful solitude. *Lycidas* (1637), a pastoral elegy, mourns the death of his fellow student Edward King and reflects on the pursuit of fame.

An image from Paradise Lost

Milton also wrote prose, often addressing religious, political, and personal themes. His *Areopagitica* (1644), a defense of free speech and unlicensed printing, stands out for its reasoned arguments and eloquent style. During England's civil wars, he supported Cromwell and served the government, losing his eyesight by 1651. Despite political setbacks after the monarchy's restoration, he composed his masterpieces, beginning with *Paradise Lost* (1667), an epic poem in blank verse that retells the biblical story of humanity's fall. It begins with Satan's rebellion against God, his expulsion from Heaven, and his vengeful temptation of Adam and Eve in Eden. The poem explores themes of free will, obedience, and redemption, with unforgettable passages like Satan's defiant cry, *Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.* Milton's rich language and vivid imagery– such as his depiction of Hell as a place of 'darkness visible'– elevate the poem to a masterpiece of English literature.

Milton followed this with *Paradise Regained* (1671), a shorter, more restrained sequel focusing on Christ's resistance to temptation, and *Samson Agonistes* (1671), a tragic poem about the blinded Samson's final act of defiance, which mirrored Milton's own struggles with blindness and isolation.

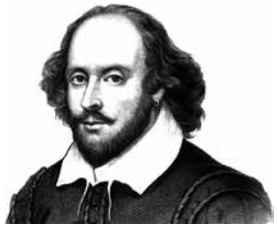
Elizabethan Drama

Elizabethan drama is one of the greatest achievements in the history of English literature. It flourished during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603), a time often called the Golden Age of English drama. This period saw the growth of public theatres, the rise of professional playwrights, and strong support from both the royal court and ordinary people. The drama of this age combined classical traditions with English stories, bringing new life to the stage with rich language, complex characters, and powerful emotions. It became a central form of entertainment and expression in English society.

Before the famous dramatists of the Elizabethan age, several early plays prepared the ground for the coming golden period. Nicholas Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister*, written around 1553, is often considered the first English comedy. It was a school play, probably written for students, and used rough verse and simple country humor. Another early comedy, *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, performed at Cambridge University in 1566, told a funny story about the

loss and recovery of a needle used for sewing. John Lyly also contributed to early Elizabethan comedy with plays like *Campaspe* and *Endimion*, written in prose and performed by boy actors for Queen Elizabeth. In tragedy, the first regular English attempt was *Gorboduc*, written in blank verse by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville and performed in 1564. Although it introduced serious themes, it lacked action and had poor dramatic quality. Another important early play was *The Spanish Tragedy* by Thomas Kyd, written around 1592. It was a violent revenge tragedy filled with blood, ghosts, madness, and it strongly influenced Shakespeare's later play *Hamlet*.

Among the most important figures of Elizabethan drama, Christopher Marlowe, a brilliant playwright lived a short but influential life. His first famous play was *Tamburlaine the Great*, which told the story of a shepherd who rose to become a ruthless conqueror. The play, written in powerful blank verse, showed Marlowe's skill in creating dramatic language and intense action. Another major work by Marlowe was *The Jew of Malta*, which featured a cruel and clever character named Barabas who seeks revenge after losing his wealth. This play, though often violent, also contains moments of poetic beauty. Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* is one of his most famous plays. It is based on the legend of a man who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for power and knowledge. The character of Faustus is both ambitious and tragic, and the play ends with a powerful scene of his fear and regret as his time runs out. One of the most quoted lines in English drama— "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?"—comes from this play. Marlowe's final work, *Edward II*, is a historical tragedy about a weak English king whose downfall is caused by his poor decisions and personal attachments. This play is known for its emotional depth and dramatic structure. Marlowe's use of blank verse and tragic themes had a deep influence on Shakespeare and the development of English drama.



William Shakespeare

The greatest name in Elizabethan and world drama is William Shakespeare. Born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564, Shakespeare moved to London where he worked as an actor and writer. Over his lifetime, he wrote more than thirty plays, which are usually divided into histories, comedies, tragedies, and romances. His plays are admired for their beautiful language, strong characters, and deep understanding of human nature. Shakespeare's historical plays explore the lives and conflicts of English kings. His early works, such as the *Henry VI* trilogy and *Richard III*, deal with civil war and the struggle for power. In *Henry IV* parts 1 and 2, he introduced the famous comic character Sir John Falstaff, a fat, boastful, and humorous knight who later appears in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. *Henry V*, which followed, is a patriotic drama showing the young king's bravery in war. His comedies show his playful side and his interest in love, identity, and human mistakes. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a magical and romantic play where fairies and humans fall in and out of love in a forest. *The Merchant of Venice* mixes comedy with serious themes and includes the powerful character of Shylock, a Jewish

moneylender who demands a pound of flesh as payment for a loan. *As You Like It* is set in the forest of Arden, where love and wit flourish, and features Rosalind, a strong and clever heroine who disguises herself as a man. *Twelfth Night* is often called the finest English comedy. It is full of confusion caused by twins, disguise, and mistaken identity, along with amusing characters like Sir Toby Belch and the fool Feste.

Shakespeare's tragedies are considered his most powerful works. *Romeo and Juliet* tells the story of two young lovers whose families are enemies. Their love ends in tragedy, making it one of the most moving plays ever written. *Hamlet* is about a young prince who seeks revenge for his father's murder but hesitates too much and is full of doubt and deep thought. *Othello* tells the story of a brave and noble general who is tricked into jealousy by his enemy Iago and ends up killing his innocent wife, Desdemona. *Macbeth* shows how ambition can destroy a person. Macbeth, encouraged by his wife and a prophecy from witches, murders the king and becomes a tyrant. The guilt drives both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth to madness and death. *King Lear* is about an old king who makes the mistake of trusting his flattering daughters and rejecting the honest one. He loses his kingdom, goes mad, and dies in sorrow. These tragedies show Shakespeare's deep understanding of human weakness and the forces that bring about downfall. In his later years, Shakespeare wrote plays known as romances. These include *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. These plays are gentler than his tragedies and focus on forgiveness and reconciliation. *The Tempest*, believed to be his last complete play, tells the story of Prospero, a magician who forgives those who wronged him. It ends with a peaceful resolution, and Prospero's final speech is seen as Shakespeare's farewell to the stage.

Among other great writers of the Elizabethan era, Ben Jonson stands out as a talented and respected playwright. He was known for his deep knowledge of classical literature and his sharp, satirical style. His most famous play is *Every Man in His Humour* (1598), which introduced the idea of humour characters—people whose actions are controlled by one strong emotion or habit. Other major works by Jonson include *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*, and *Bartholomew Fair*. These plays are clever and entertaining, though his characters often feel more like types than real people. Jonson believed strongly in the rules of classical drama, including the unities of time, place, and action. He was proud and sometimes harsh in his criticism of other writers, but he greatly admired Shakespeare and praised him as the 'soul of the age.'

John Webster was another remarkable playwright of the time, best known for his dark and violent tragedies. His two most famous plays, *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*, are filled with revenge, murder, and suffering, but also contain some of the most powerful and poetic language in English drama. Webster was not afraid to show the cruelty of life

and the pain of his characters. His work left a lasting impression because of its emotional strength and memorable lines. Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher were writing partners who created both comedies and tragedies. Their play *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is a humorous story that reflects the theatre culture of the time, while *The Maid's Tragedy* is a serious and emotional play. Fletcher also worked with Shakespeare on some of his later plays and helped carry Elizabethan drama into the next generation.

Elizabethan Prose

Although prose developed significantly during the Elizabethan period, Elizabethan literature is most famous for its poetry and drama, prose also developed significantly during this period. Writers began to experiment with language and style, producing works that were imaginative, descriptive, and often elaborative. Prose was used for a variety of purposes—fiction, travel literature, historical writing, and religious argument—and some of the earliest examples of modern English prose appeared during this time.

One of the most important prose writers of the Elizabethan age was John Lyly, whose work created a new and influential style of writing known as 'Euphuism.' His two books, *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* (1578) and *Euphues and His England* (1580), introduced this highly artificial style. Euphuism was marked by long, balanced sentences, repeated sounds, alliteration, and classical references. Although the style later went out of fashion, it had a powerful effect on English prose during Queen Elizabeth's reign, especially among courtiers and young writers.

Another major contribution to Elizabethan prose came from Richard Hakluyt, who collected and published *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries of the English Nation*. This important work gathered detailed accounts of English explorations and sea voyages. It was valuable not only as literature but also as a historical record of England's maritime achievements. Hakluyt's work played a significant role in encouraging English exploration and building national pride.

William Harrison was another prose writer of Elizabethan period. He contributed *The Description of England* (1577) to *Holinshed's Chronicles*, a major historical work. Harrison's writing provided a detailed look at the life, the customs, and the society of Elizabethan England. It is still considered a valuable source for understanding how people lived during that time.

One of the most serious and elegant prose writers of the age was Richard Hooker, who wrote *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1593). This work was written to defend the Church of England against Puritan criticisms. Hooker's style was calm, logical, and rich in expression. His writing showed a high level of learning and a careful structure, which helped develop a more modern and thoughtful form of English prose. His influence extended beyond his lifetime, shaping both religious thought and English prose writing.

Exercise

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. Where did the Renaissance movement first begin?
   i. France
   ii. England
   iii. Germany
   iv. Italy

b. Which invention played a major role in spreading Renaissance ideas?
   i. Steam engine
   ii. Magnetic compass
   iii. Printing press
   iv. Telescope

c. What was the main focus of Humanism during the Renaissance?
   i. Worship of gods
   ii. Study of natural science
   iii. Celebration of human potential and values
   iv. Growth of agriculture

d. According to Humanists, what should education emphasize?
   i. Religious texts only
   ii. Practical and technical skills
   iii. Study of literature, arts, and classical works
   iv. Military knowledge

e. Who is the central figure of the English Renaissance and Humanism?
   i. Geoffrey Chaucer
   ii. William Shakespeare
   iii. John Milton
   iv. Francis Bacon

f. Which of the following domains was least affected by the Renaissance movement?
   i. Literature
   ii. Science
   iii. Religion
   iv. Politics

g. How did Renaissance literature differ from medieval literature?

i. It focused less on religious themes and more on human experiences.

ii. It was written in simple language.

iii. It avoided classical themes.

iv. It only included poetry and drama.

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What are the innovations of the Renaissance?

b. Who were the early Renaissance poets? Mention their works.

c. Write the common themes of Shakespeare's sonnets.

d. What are the main characteristics of the metaphysical poetry?

e. Describe the central theme of Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

f. Mention the chief Elizabethan dramatists and their works.

g. What is the contribution of Christopher Marlow to Elizabethan drama?

C. Write long answers to the following questions.

a. Describe the key characteristics of the Renaissance period and its influence on English literature.

b. Discuss the role of William Shakespeare in the development of English drama and poetry during the Renaissance period.

c. Write about Edmund Spenser and his contributions to Elizabethan poetry.

Project Work

Read or watch one of the plays by William Shakespeare. Write a short review of the play, including its main plot, characters, themes, and your personal opinion. Then, present your review in the class.

English Literature from Restoration to Eighteenth Century

Before You Read

a. Who do you think the person is in the picture?

b. What is s/he doing in the picture?

Introduction

The Restoration period in English history began in 1660 when King Charles II was restored to the throne after the fall of the Puritan Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell. It marked a time of political stability**,** cultural revival**,** and literary flourishing. The era witnessed the system of religious repression in spite of the efforts of the king to bring religious toleration. Theatres, previously closed by the Puritans, were reopened, and literature, drama, and arts thrived. The period is especially known for Restoration comedy**,** satirical poetry**,** and the rise of female actors on stage.

Literature of the period was deeply influenced by revolutionary changes in social, political and religious life of England. This Age remains a very important period for literature as it gave birth to modern English prose and it marks the birth of modern English criticism formulated on the classical dogma of the ancients. Moreover, it witnessed the birth and growth of different literary movements, of many new species of literature in the field of poetry and drama, and it innovated and perfected many forms of literary expression.

Restoration Drama

With the restoration of monarchy, the theatres that were closed during Puritans reopened and new dramatists appeared. Public theatres were back in business and the publishing trade also flourished. As a result, a new style of drama grew.

Restoration comedy, the Comedy of Manners, known for its wit, urbanity, sophistication, is the most characteristic literary product. It is called Comedy of Manners because it reflects the manners, modes and conventions of the aristocratic and upper class, fashionable society of London. This kind of play is hard and bright, witty and heartless.

John Dryden (1631–1700): John Dryden was an influential English poet, playwright, translator, essayist and literary critic of the Restoration period. He served as England's first official Poet Laureate from 1668. Recognized for his sharp wit and mastery of heroic couplets, he played a key role in shaping English literary style.

Dryden's *Marriage-a-la-Mode (1672*), written in blank verse, combines heroic-romantic, comedic and satirical aspects. Having the themes of love, marriage, and identity, it satires on aristocratic manners.

William Congreve (1670–1729): William Congreve was an English satirist, playwright, politician and poet, best known for his sharp wit and sophisticated/satirical comedies of manners. His famous works satirize the then social customs with elegance and cleverly written dialogues.

The Old Bachelor (1693) presents the folly of pretending to reject love and marriage and satire social mores. Likewise, *The Double Dealer (1694)* shows deception and betrayal within relationships, and relates with the danger of hidden motives and false appearances. *Love for Love (1695)* is funnier and contains clever and interesting but foolish characters. It further relates with mercenary nature of love and marriage.

The heroic play/tragedy drama, introduced by William Davenant but popularized by John Dryden, has the subject of love and valour, and is written in heroic couplets. The men are splendidly brave and the women are wonderfully beautiful. The play has more shouting and a good deal of nonsense.

John Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada (1670),* written in 'iambic pentameter couplets', is known for noble characters, and the theme of honour, love, war, patriotism, bravery, passion and idealized heroism. Similarly, his rhymed play *Aurengzebe (1676)* is based on struggle for empire in India. *All For Love (1678),* written in blank verse, shows the conflict between love and duty, emotion and honour. He wrote it to please himself basing on *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Thomas Otway's *Don Carlos (1676),* written in rhymed verse, presents conflict between romantic passion and political duty, and *The Orphan (1680),* an intimate and personal kind of tragedy, relates with domestic/private sufferings.

The Main Characteristics of Restoration Plays

The plays of this period shared some common features. Most of them were influenced by French dramas, especially the works of Moliere and Racine. The plays, especially *Comedy*

of Manners, portrayed the manners and behaviours of the upper classes, satirizing social norms, etiquette and romantic pursuits. Similarly, some of them contained the contents of sexuality and liberatinism. Moreover, the *Heroic Tragedy* depicted historical figures and intense emotions with emphasis on noble characters. Some plays also commented on contemporary politics and power dynamics. Apart from this, new theatres like *The Theatre Royal* and *King's Theatre* were opened.

Restoration Prose

The restoration prose was to give expression to the everyday life events. It included pamphlets on the socio-political life of England; and diaries and memoir on the socio-political life of people.

John Dryden was a better critic and an essayist. His prose includes critical essay, prefaces and translations. *Essay on Dramatic Poesy (1668*), written in dialogue form between four characters: Crites, Eugenius, Lisideius, and Neander**,** compares English and French dramas, defends the use of rhyme in drama, and praises Shakespeare.

John Bunyan (1628–1688): John Bunyan was an English writer and Puritan preacher who was best known for his Christian allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress*. He was imprisoned for unauthorized preaching, during which he wrote much of his famous work. His writings reflect his deep religious convictions, rich imagination, and simple yet powerful prose style. *The Pilgrim's Progress* 1678 (Part I) and 1684 (Part II) presents Christian journey from the city of destruction to the celestial city. Similarly, his *The Holy War* (1682) is an allegorical narrative/spiritual warfare, and full of battles, betrayals, and redemption. It narrates experience of the civil war, centers around a war between Shaddai (God) and Diabolus (Satan).

John Locke (1632–1704): John Locke was an English philosopher and physician, widely regarded as the father of liberalism**.** His prose is clear, earnest and without ornament but it lacks balance in sentence. His famous prose *An Essay on the human understanding* (1690*)* argues that knowledge comes from experience not innate ideas giving a new direction to thought. He further believes that mind is a 'tabula rasa' that is shaped by sensory experience and reflection.

Samuel Pepys (1633–1703): Samuel Pepys was an English diarist and naval administrator, and best known for his diary that gives a clear and detailed account of major events like the Great plague, the Great Fire of London and the Second Dutch War. His renowned diary, *A diary (January 1, 1660-31st May, 1669),* gives details of a fascinating picture of the official and upper-class life of that time. It's written in secret signs and remained unread at a Cambridge college until 1825.

Eighteenth Century English Literature as the Age of Reason

Following the glorious revolution of 1689 and the introduction of the Bill of Rights by the new monarchs, William of Orange and Mar, daughter of James II, Parliament emerged as the dominant force, significantly limiting the powers of the monarchy. During the 18th century, the system of governance evolved further with the rise of the Prime Minister and his cabinet. It is also called the age of novel. Architecture, art and literature all aimed at harmonious excellence. Moreover, the classical writers, artists and architects saw themselves as craftsmen. The age is referred to as neoclassicism and shows a strong continuation of those classical and French models characterized by Roman, Greek, Gothic, Oriental and Savage models.

Neoclassicism tried to explore the principles or laws of literature; of literary creation; of the structure of a literary work of art; and of the reader's response to such work. Writers of this time gave great emphasis on the original writings produced by classical Greek and Roman literature. The rules were an application of certain principles by reasonable beings perceiving their reality through the rational minds. Literature was seen as both an artistic and logical pursuit, where imagination was expected to be directed by reason. Human beings, their actions, values, and ideals were considered worthy themes for literary expression.

The 18th century is regarded as the age of reason as it celebrated logical and rational thought, classical balance and intellectual inquiry, shaping a literary style that was polished, witty and socially conscious. People then valued order in their thinking, and they generally favored the familiar comfort of towns over the untamed wilderness of the mountains. The heroic couplet matched well with poetry that relied on logic and reasoning, but this doesn't mean that other forms of poetry didn't exist. It's believed that reason was an unchanging and unique human quality that served as a guide for man.

The 18th century is also regarded as Augustan Age, named after the Roman Emperor, Augustus, who promoted literature and art to reinforce his values and visions for the empire. The English Augustan Age shows the strong influence of Roman literature and values, and signifies the highest point of refinement in English learning. The literature imitated that of the age of Caesar Augustus with classical influence.

Coffee Houses and Public Discussions

English coffeehouses had a particular charm during their height in popularity until their decline towards the end of the 18th century. A relaxed atmosphere, their relative cheapness and frequency contributed to coffeehouse sociability and their rise in demand. Even the outbreak of the plague in 1665 and the Great Fire of London in 1666 didn't discourage people from going

An image of a coffee house

to these houses that welcomed every kind of creatures in every walk of life. The coffee houses were more than places to drink coffee. Literature and the houses shared a vibrant and symbolic relationship to foster public discourse, creative collaboration and the rise of new literary forms. They promoted rational discussions, literary creativity, civic engagement and free speech. These were the places where ideas about reason, science, politics and literature were exchanged among the regular visitors like writers, philosophers, politicians, and they promoted 'public sphere' for rational debate and public opinions. Furthermore, the coffeehouses discussion helped to create conditions for the publication of newspapers and some literary journals.

Many poets, essayists, dramatists and critics used to gather to read, debate and refine their work. Writers such as Addison, Steele, Pope and Swift used to go to these places to share ideas, critique each other's work and reach a broader audience. These houses provided writers like Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope a space to test their satirical works and gauge public reaction.

Poetry in Eighteenth Century

Alexander Pope (1688–1744): Alexander Pope was an English poet, translator and satirist, known for his mastery of the heroic couplet and sharp satirical wit. Despite his severe illness, he became one of the celebrated poets of his time. He was self-educated as he was excluded from public schools and universities on account of his religion.

Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), written in heroic couplet, is a blend of poetry and criticism. Through this, he criticizes pretentious and shallow critics, and requests critics to be honest, humble, open-minded and unbiased. *The Rape of the Lock* (1712–14), a heroic comic and mock epic, satires on vanity and trivial concerns of aristocracy. Basically, it was founded upon an incident that occurred in the Roman Catholic society. Lord Petrie cut a lock of hair from the head of a young beauty (Arabella). He wanted to end the quarrel but only made the quarrel worse. Furthermore, his translation of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* was very good except fidelity to the original. *Imitations of Horace* (1733–39), a mock epic written in heroic couplet, blends classical imitation and personal, political and social satire, *The Dunciad* (1728) presents the most biting and ambitious satire on literary and cultural decline, *Essay on Man* (1732–34) explores humanity place in the universe and limits of human reason and knowledge, and *Moral Essays* (1731–1735), are series of poems on ethical subjects, explores aspects of human character, ethics and behavior.

Thomas Gray (1716–1771): Thomas Gray was an English poet, letter-writer and classical scholar. He was known to be extremely self-critical and afraid of failures so much so that he published only 13 poems throughout his life time. It's believed that he started writing his most popular poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* in 1742 soon after the death of his close friend.

Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard (1751), written in iambic pentameter and heroic quatrains, mourns the death of common people, and applauds their intellectual abilities comparing them with pearls and gems. Further, he warns the rich and powerful people not to scorn the ordinarypeople just because they are not popular and do not have annals written on their graves, and reminds them that they would also die one day. *The Bard (1757),* a sad song/lyrical ode, curses Edward I for destroying the Welsh bards and culture. This poem is based on the legend that King Edward I massacred the Welsh bards after conquering Wales. His *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College (1742),* a reflection of nostalgia, melancholy and awareness of human suffering, presents transition from childhood innocence to adult suffering.

Robert Burns (1759–1796): Robert Burns was a Scottish poet and lyricist widely regarded as the national poet of Scotland. Apart from original compositions, he also collected folk songs from across Scotland, often revising or adapting them. His poetry recorded and celebrated aspects of farm life, regional experience, traditional culture, class culture and distinctions, and religious practices. He is frequently referred to as a pre-Romantic poet because of his deep appreciation for nature, his emphasis on emotion and feeling, his natural and unrestrained style, his strong support for freedom and opposition to authority, his focus on individual, and his fascination with ancient songs and traditional legends. His love-songs include *My love is like a red, red rose*. He had a deep understanding of animals and love for them.

Burns' short but emotionally powerful lyric poem written in traditional Scottish ballad style, *Mary Morrison* (1780), shows that true love doesn't always shout. The speaker directly addresses to Mary Morrison probably in his imagination and admires her beauty. Moreover, he wrote the emotional lyric *John Anderson* (1789) in the form of conversation between an aging wife and her husband. In this poem, the speaker reminiscences about her lover's previously youthful and attractive body; and presents a poignant and emotive consideration of human relationships, and of bodily decline.

Essays and Novels in Eighteenth Century

The essays particularly periodical essays were fated to be born with 18th century and to die with it, but the novels were destined to have a long career. The development of the periodical essay during the 18th century reflects the emergence of an educated middle class in England, the increasing prominence of women as active readers, and the lively culture of public debate and discussion that characterized English society at the time. The brevity of the periodical essays, its common-sense approach, and its tendency to dilute morality and philosophy for popular consumption paid rich dividends.

18th century novels were characterized by innovations in subject matter and the conflict between the demands of realistic portrayal and narrative order. They focused on depicting

the realities of everyday life including social, political and economic conditions, and delved into inner working of the human mind. Many of these works explored issues related to social class and gender, highlighting inequalities and injustices that existed in the society at the time.

Joseph Addison (1672–1719) and Sir Richard Steele (1672–1729): Addison and Steele were associated on account of collaboration in the periodical essay. Steele was genius, easy-going, thriftless, careless, but full of generosity and sympathy and with an honest love of what is pure and good. Addison was a sophisticated and cultured man, known for his refined taste and high ideals in both morality and spirituality. Both published *The Tatler*, the first of the long line of 18th century periodical essays and later *The Spectator.* These essays, written in pure English prose without too much ornament, helped towards the production of the novel. *The Tatler* (1709–1711) criticized vices and follies of society and combined real news and fictions. *The Spectator* (1711–1712), aimed to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality. It was published daily first up to VII volume (jointly by Addison and Steele) but after 18 months, it was revived by Addison alone and issued thrice a week from 18 June, 1714.

Jonathan Swift (1667–1745): Jonathan Swift was a satirist, essayist, and clergyman of Anglo-Irish background, renowned for his clever wit and skillful use of irony. As Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, Swift often employed his writings to expose and criticize political, religious, and social issues. His writing style is distinguished by its clear expression, sharp satire, and strong moral undertones, earning him a lasting reputation as one of English literature's finest satirists. He is best remembered for his satirical book *Gulliver's Travels*, and is regarded by many as the greatest satirist of the 18th century and one of the foremost prose satirists in the history of English literature.

Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) satires the view of the state of European governments, and inquires whether people are born corrupt or they become corrupted. Structured as a travel narrative, Swift uses fantasy settings to reflect on real-world issues, and mocks then British politics, colonialism, legal systems, war and scientific institutions. It's in four books. *Part I: A Voyage to Lilliput* (where people are six inches high)*, Part II: A Voyage to Brobdingnag* (where people are immense), *Part III: A Voyage to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Luggnagg, Glubbdubdrib and Japan*; and *Part IV: A Voyage to the Land of the Houyhnhnms*. *The Battle of the Books* (1704) depicts a literal battle between books in the King's Library and authors struggle for supremacy. It satires the debate of ancient versus modern mocking each side for arrogance, but Swift sides with the ancients stating classical wisdom and literature

are superior. Similarly, *The Tale of a Tub* (1704) satires on the corruption and absurdities in religious practices and mocks the divisions within Christianity, intellectual pretensions and the moral hypocrisy of contemporary society. In *A Modest Proposal* (1729), Swift uses satirical exaggeration to criticize British colonial policies, the cruelty of the upper class, and failure of real reform efforts.

Daniel Defoe (1660–1731): Daniel Defoe was a prolific and versatile English writer, journalist, merchant and spy who produced more than three hundred works– books, pamphlets, and journals on politics, crime, religion, marriage, psychology and the supernatural. Despite being an enigmatic figure, he made many enemies and had been accused of double-dealing, of dishonest or equivocal conduct. He is best known for his novel *Robinson Crusoe.* Defoe's most remarkable achievement was his periodical*,* the *Review.* He wrote this serious, forceful, and long-lived paper practically single-handedly from 1704 to 1713. At first a weekly, it became a thrice-weekly publication in 1705, and Defoe continued to produce it even when, for short periods in 1713, his political enemies managed to have him imprisoned again on various pretexts. He discussed current affairs in general, religion, trade, manners, morals, etc.

Robinson Crusoe (1719), a classic adventure story with focus on survival, self-reliance and cleverness, is a complex exploration of human resilience, faith, colonialism, and the rise of modern individualism. In this, Defoe tells the story of an English sailor who is stranded on a deserted island for almost thirty years. As a common man facing unusual challenges, Crusoe battles with destiny, and questions his relationship with God. His historical novel *Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) combines fiction and facts; describes the Great Plague of London in 1665; captures the emotional and psychological responses of people; and explores how individuals and society cope with disease, fear, uncertainty and mass death.

Samuel Richardson (1689–1761): Samuel Richardson was an English novelist who attended school only intermittently until he was 17. After that, he was apprenticed to a printer. Soon, he became prosperous. For him, virtue and reputation go together except for unhappy accidents.

His novel *Pamela* (1740), written in the form of letters, is a simple story of a good girl who receives the rewards of virtue. It examines human heart and shows the effects of human character. Likewise, *Clarissa Harlowe* (1747–48) presents a tragic story of a girl, Clarissa, a beautiful daughter of a severe father who wants her to marry against her will, is driven to a state of despair, and dies an early age. Marriage deals are portrayed together with their entire economic context. In his epistolary novel, *Sir*

Charles Grandison (1754), Richardson portrays Harriet Byron who refuses to marry the wealthy but arrogant Sir Hargrave Pollexfen. After she rejects Pollexfen, he kidnaps her, and she is only freed when Sir Charles Grandison comes to her rescue.

William Blake as a Poet of Transition Period

The transition period bridges neoclassicism (mid-18th century) and romanticism in English literature. This period shows a shift from reason to emotion, focus on nature, interests on ordinary people and everyday life, and combination of rational structure and deep feelings, etc. It marks the shifting phase where literature began to move away from the classical ideas of reason, order and restrain, and started embracing emotion, imagination, nature**,** and individual experience.

William Blake (1757–1827) was a poet and artist known for his visionary creativity. Although he gained little recognition during his lifetime, he is now regarded as a major figure in the Romantic Movement. From an early age, Blake reported experiencing spiritual visions, such as encounters with angels, which had a profound impact on both his artistic and poetic work. He trained as an engraver, a profession that equipped him with lasting skills in illustration and printmaking, and he later attended the Royal Academy of Arts, though he often rejected its formal artistic traditions. He rejected the existence of physical matter, denied the authority of worldly rulers, and dismissed the idea of punishment after death.

He was original, strongly individualistic, and mostly a solitary figure. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, A.C. Swinbume, and W. B. Yeats made his works known to a large public. Blake's views on politics, religion, literature, and science were revolutionary. He could not accept the prevailing culture of the 18th century, and so strongly opposed all forms of oppression - political, religious or social. He believed in freedom and individual expression, and was openly critical of both industrial society and organized religion. And he also thought that all churches are a kind of prison.

Though many of his contemporaries saw Blake as eccentric or even insane due to his unconventional ideas, later critics and readers came to admire him for his vivid imagination, artistic expressiveness, and the deep philosophical and mystical themes in his work. His art and poetry are often associated with the Romantic Movement, and sometimes even seen as anticipating it.

Blake hated the classics and foreshadowed a common romantic tendency. His poetry is known for blending mystical elements, symbolic language, and social commentary. A large portion of his poetry contains deeper meanings that are difficult to interpret.

Songs of Innocence and Experience

This is a collection of Blake's two poems: *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *Songs of Experiencee* (1794) that show two contrary states of the human soul. The *Songs of Innocence* is a collection of twenty-three poems and the *Songs of Experience* has twenty-six poems.

Songs of Innocence (1789)

Songs of Innocence was Blake's first great demonstration of 'illuminated printing,' his unique technique of publishing both text and hand-coloured illustration together. The collection focuses on the celebration of purity, simplicity and unspoiled perspective of childhood. The sources of the songs are the biblical and native English tradition of nursery rhymes, songs and moral hymns of children. These are happy songs written to and about children, and highlight the innocent, pastoral world of childhood. Moreover, these songs portray the naïve hopes and fears of children and trace their transformation to adulthood. Blake has used 'The Lamb' as a key symbol for innocence.

Songs of Experience (1794)

The *Songs of Experience* explores the darker aspects of human experience. It primarily aims to expose the difficult truths of life and how innocence is diminished by experience, moral decay, and societal injustice. It serves as a companion to *Songs of Innocence*, presenting a darker and more realistic perspective on the human condition. Furthermore, it reveals how experience, shaped by suffering, social injustice, and institutional corruption, alters the purity of childhood and the human spirit. The collection further presents a critical and realistic outlook on the world. The key symbol used is 'The Tiger.'

Language Growth and Expansion in Vocabulary During the Age

Between 1660 and 1700, known as the Restoration period, the English language saw significant development and an increase in vocabulary. This expansion was largely influenced by various social, scientific, and cultural shifts. The renewed interest in education and the growing emphasis on reason— highlighted by the founding of the Royal Society — contributed to the creation of new scientific and technical words, many of which were borrowed from Latin and Greek. The influence of French culture, brought by the court of Charles II after his exile in France, introduced many French loanwords, particularly in areas like fashion, cuisine, politics, and art. The development of newspapers and periodicals further enriched the language, as writers required a broader and more precise vocabulary to address a wider public. Literary figures of the time, such as John Dryden and William Congreve, contributed to the refinement and sophistication of English through their

dramatic and poetic works. Overall, the Restoration era represented an important stage in the development of the English language, noted for its growing vocabulary, and the steady progress toward establishing standardized usage.

In the same course, in the 18th century, the English language underwent substantial growth in vocabulary, shaped by the era's intellectual, scientific, and colonial progress. Known as the Age of Enlightenment or the Age of Reason, this period valued clarity, structure, and rationality, all of which played a key role in shaping and standardizing the language. With the growth of science, many new technical and scientific terms entered in the English language, frequently borrowed from Latin and Greek. The expansion of the British Empire also introduced a variety of foreign words from different parts of the world, enriching the English lexicon with terms related to trade, culture, and geography. Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language*, published in 1755, was a major milestone in the standardization of English, contributing to the stabilization of spelling and word-meaning. At the same time, literature, journalism and the emergence of novel greatly enriched English vocabulary. Overall, the 18th century was a period of both creative linguistic growth and also efforts to regulate and polish English, setting the stage for its modern form.

Exercise

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. Which one of the following is a defining feature of Restoration drama?

i. Religious allegory and spiritual themes
ii. Use of blank verse and classical unities
iii. Witty dialogue, sexual intrigue, and satire of manners
iv. Emphasis on romantic love and chivalric ideals

b. Who is closely associated with Restoration comedy?

i. William Shakespeare
ii. Ben Jonson
iii. William Congreve
iv. Christopher Marlowe

c. Who of the following figures is known for his prose satire during the Restoration period?

i. John Milton
ii. Alexander Pope
iii. Jonathan Swift
iv. William Wordsworth

d. Which of the following best characterizes 18th century English poetry?

i. Free verse and emotional spontaneity

ii. Emphasis on reason, order, and classical forms

iii. Focus on personal feelings and imagination

iv. Celebration of medieval themes and mysticism

e. Which one of the following themes is a major theme in William Blake's poetry?

i. Political satire and social realism

ii. Industrial progress and colonial expansion

iii. Innocence and experience as contrasting states of the soul

iv. Scientific rationalism and logic

f. What contributed significantly to the expansion of English vocabulary during the 18th century?

i. The decline of trade and colonization

ii. Limited education and restricted literacy

iii. The rise of the novel, scientific advancements, and colonial encounters

iv. Isolation from European influences

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. Describe any two key features of Restoration comedy. Also explain how do they reflect the social life of the time.

b. How did prose writers like Jonathan Swift and John Bunyan use satire or allegory to critique society during the Restoration period?

c. What role did periodicals like *The Spectator* and *The Tatler* play in shaping public opinion and moral values in the 18th century?

d. How does William Blake use symbolism to contrast innocence and experience in his poetry? Illustrate your answer with reference to any one poem.

e. What were the major factors that contributed to the growth and expansion of English vocabulary in the 18th century? Also give suitable examples.

f. What role did coffee houses play in the intellectual and literary life of 18th century England?

C. Write long answers to the following questions.

a. Discuss how Restoration drama reflects manners, morals, and social life of the upper classes. Support your answer with examples from any one play.

b. Restoration prose often aimed to instruct and entertain. Discuss this dual purpose with reference to any one prose writer of the period.

c. How did the rise of the middle class influence themes, characters, and narrative style of 18th century English novels? Illustrate with examples from the writers like Samuel Richardson and Daniel Defoe.

d. Discuss the main features of Restoration literature. How did the period reflect a shift in cultural values and literary forms following the Restoration of Charles II? Provide examples from Restoration drama, prose, and poetry to support your answer.

Project Work

Bhupatindra Malla (1674–1722)**,** a king of Bhaktapur, was a Malla ruler known for his political leadership and notable contributions to art, culture and literature in Kathmandu valley. He was a great patron of writers, poets and scholars who encouraged the production of manuscripts in Nepali, Sanskrit and Nepal Bhasa**.** Consult online or offline resources to prepare a brief report on the development of Nepali literature during his reign, and share it with the class.

English Literature in the Nineteenth Century

Before You Read

Why do you think the 19th century literature is famous? Discuss.

Introduction

The main stream of poetry in the 18th century had been orderly and polished, without much feeling for nature. Heroic couplets were used for verse, but various writers had broken away from the form and the thought. Emerging in the late 18th century and continuing into the early 19th, the Romantic period was a cultural and literary movement that highlighted emotion, personal identity, imagination and a strong appreciation for nature. Romanticism arose as a reaction to the Enlightenment, valuing personal experience, creativity, and the beauty of life and nature over reason and order. In doing so, it shifted away from the analytical mindset of the age of Reason and embraced a more imaginative and emotional approach. The writers showed an increasing interest in rural scenery and the scenic breaking classical rules, and embraced originality. The basic cognitive tool was feeling, not the mind. Romanticism strongly emphasized the importance of the individual and celebrated personal experience as the path to understanding the infinite and the transcendental. It valued imagination and inspiration as the core elements of poetry rather than the refined and scholarly style that defined the earlier era.

Romanticism was politically inspired by the French Revolution and the American Revolution as well as the wars of independence in other European countries like Poland, Spain and Greece. In the wake of industrial revolution, the poverty and unemployment of the newly emerging working class threatened western European countries with riots. Consequently, the development of both conservative and liberal writing in England in itself was a very important part of the era. Romanticism was also inspired by the literary movements in Europe. Kant's ideas of understanding, Schelling's focus on universe/nature and not on the ego, Burke's psychological theory of feelings, etc. contributed a lot for the development of romanticism.

The Publication of Lyrical Ballads: Beginning of New Era in English Literature

The release of the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 was surprising to many, as critics found its language overly plain and its departure from traditional style too drastic. This influential work, which marked the start of the Romantic era, was a collaborative effort by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. This groundbreaking collection marked a shift away from formal, rational style of the Enlightenment and toward a new focus on

emotion, nature, and the everyday experiences of common people**.** Wordsworth, a poet of nature, had the special ability to throw charm over ordinary things and Coleridge could make mysterious events acceptable to a reader's mind. In the later edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), Wordsworth said that the language of poetry ought to be the language of a simple farm worker and asserted that a poet is 'a man of unusual emotional vitality'. His part in the '*Lyrical Ballads'* was more difficult to perform successfully than Coleridge; for he had to make ordinary things seem wonderful.

The traditional Lyrical Ballads describe tragic or heroic events in narrative fragments and are the basis of the romantic ballad form. The romantic ballad tends to rather escape from the reality of magical lushness, pastoralism and romance, and present the harsh actualities of experience in dramatically symbolic fashion (Kroeber, 1966).

The Early Nineteenth Century Poetry

The Romantic Movement largely influenced early 19th century poetry, bringing about a significant transformation in English literature. This era emphasized feelings, creativity, personal expression, and a profound appreciation for the natural world.

William Wordsworth (1770–1850): Wordsworth was an English Romantic poet who, with Coleridge, helped launch the Romantic era through their 1798 work *Lyrical Ballads*. This journey across Europe strengthened his appreciation for nature and his empathy toward ordinary people—both of which became central themes in his poetry. He is known for exploring spiritual themes, highlighting the human-nature bond, and using everyday language in his poetry. Among his best sonnets, *Westminster Bridge* (1802) reveals the emotional view of London and *London* (1802) presents a clear and dark depiction of London capturing the suffering and despair that permeate the city. His other famous poems are *The Daffodils, The Solitary Reaper* and *Lucy*.

In his longer poem, *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* (1807), Wordsworth finds a basis of faith in memories of childhood and the soul's connection to the divine. The ode was composed of 11 stanzas in iambic pentameter. In the poetic autobiography, *The Prelude* (1799-1805), the poet recalls his days at school, his time at Cambridge, his trips to London and France, as well as his life in France during the Revolution. Furthermore, *The Excursion* (1814), written in blank verse, is a dialogue-based narrative, and regards nature as a source of wisdom, moral guidance and emotional solace.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834): S. T. Coleridge was an English poet, philosopher, literary critic and theologian who, with Wordsworth, helped to found Romantic Movement in English literature. Despite his brilliance, Coleridge struggled with ill health and opium addiction, which affected his productivity. Despite facing challenges in his career

and personal life, his reputation increased posthumously, and he came to be regarded as one of the most important figures in English literature. His impact on Wordsworth is especially significant, as many critics believe that he was the originator of the concept of 'Conversational Poetry.' The approach of using simple, everyday language to convey deep poetic themes—an idea for which Wordsworth gained great fame—may have largely stemmed from Coleridge's own thinking.

His poem, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798), published in the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads,* narrates the experience of a sailor who has come back from a long sea voyage. It is rich in supernatural and mystical imagery. In his long narrative, *Christabel* (1816), Coleridge tells the story of a Christabel (a female) and her encounter with Geraldine (an evil spirit disguised in this form) in a wood who claims to be the daughter of an old friend of Christabel' father. *Kubla Khan* (1816) is highly imaginative and describes the construction of a majestic pleasure-dome by Khan in exotic and mysterious land of Xanadu. It blends nature and fantasy in a creative way.

Lord Byron (1788–1824): Lord Byron was an English poet regarded as one of the greatest poets of the UK. He had a striking appearance, joined the struggle for Greek independence, and criticized various aspects of English society through satire. He strongly opposed anything fake or insincere. His work did not have the subtle suggestiveness of Wordsworth or the mystical quality of Coleridge. However, when he took care in his writing, his poetry was often powerful and beautiful. Besides, his poetry attacked false ideas.

His poem *Childe Harold* (1809–17), written in Spenserian stanza, tells the story of a man who goes off to travel far and wide because of disgust with life's foolish pleasures. *The Giaour* (1813) tells the story of a slave, Leila (a Muslim woman), who is thrown into the sea by her master Hassan. In revenge, her lover, Giaour, kills Hassan. His another poem, *The Bride of Abydos* (1813), is a Turkish tale of passionate love (between Zuleika and Selim) set in an exotic location. *In Lara* (1814), the poet focuses on Lara's inner struggles, moral dilemmas and sense of guilt. His other poems are *The Corsair* (1814), *Don Juan* (1818–24), etc.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822): P. B. Shelley was an exceptional poet from a respectable and wealthy background, marked by a restless spirit. He challenged the roots of human suffering and questioned established religions. Believing in the inherent goodness of nature, he longed for universal freedom and stood firmly against the oppressive power of the Church and the constraints of the traditional family structure. He assumed that revolutionary movements would bring sexual equality freeing individuals from the bonds of sexual hypocrisy. His famous play

Prometheus Unbound (1820) deals with the human struggle against the power of false gods. His lyrics include *The Cloud, To a Skylark, The Indian Serenade* and *Stanzas Written in Dejection near Naples.* His other works are *The Cenci* (1819), *Hellas* (1822), *The Defense of Poetry* and *The Triumph of Life.*

Alastor or The Spirit of Solitude (1816), a collection of poems written in blank verse, is an allegorical dream in which the poet-protagonist chases an idealized vision of love, celebrating the beauty of the universe while mourning humanity's destructive emotions. In *The Revolt of Islam (1818),* Shelley expresses a deep frustration with the world's cruelty and reflects a fascination with Eastern cultures. It is a song to freedom where Cyntha and Laon unite with people fighting to liberate from tyrannical power. Through *Adonais (1821),* Shelley pays tribute to John Keats mourning his death.

John Keats (1795–1821): John Keats, a great poet of the younger generation Romantics, was apprenticed to a surgeon and apothecary but decided to abandon medicine and devoted his life to poetry. He is celebrated for his rich imagery, evocative language, and intense emotional depth. His writings often delve into themes such as beauty, natural world, fleeting nature of life, and human pain. He wrote more than 20 sonnets. He died at an early age of 26 due to tuberculosis.

His long narrative poem, *Endymion* (1818), is based on old ideas: the old gods, the love of the moon-goddess for a shepherd, Venus and Adonis, Glaucus and Scylla. *Isabella* (1818) is a narrative based on the story from Boccaccio's *Decameron.* It tells the love story of Isabella and Lorenzo, a man of lower status, and the love is destroyed by Isabella's brothers. In *Hyperion* (1819), Keats explores the progression of human intellect throughout history, while reinforcing his aesthetic views on beauty, and tells the downfall of the primitive gods of Greece.The first part A Fragment relates to the story of surviving titan, and the second part *The Fall of Hyperion* tells the story of the fall of Hyperion and coming of Apollo. *Ode on a Grecian Urn* (1819) describes a rural scene on a Grecian urn where two lovers are forever frozen in the moment before a kiss, unable to fulfill it, as they exist only as images on an ancient piece of art. Keats in *Lamia* (1820) tells the story of Lamia, a serpent-woman, who is transformed into a beautiful woman and romanced with Lycius, a young man. His other poems include *Ode to a Nightingale* (1819), *Ode to Autumn* (1819), *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* (1819), etc.

Latter Nineteenth Century and the Spirits of the Victorian Literature

The latter 19th century refers to the last quarter of 19th century, and is marked by significant industrial growth, technological advancement, artistic innovation and social changes. This period marked a shift toward modernity, moving away from Romantic ideals to embrace

Realist and scientific perspectives, transitioning from rural living to urban-industrial society, and evolving from monarchical rule to democratic and revolutionary thought.

Queen Victoria

The Victorian period, a time of imperial glory and expansion, corresponds roughly to the reign of Queen Victoria beginning in 1837 and lasting until her death in 1901. While religious leaders promoted ideals of chastity and rigid moral standards, these repressive norms ironically led to a rise in brothels, which became more socially tolerated. The Victorian era, widely recognized as a period of scientific advancement, saw people engaging with issues shaped by their historical and social surroundings, including industrialization, the contrast between rural and urban life, and the status of women and children. This period is known for economic progress, poverty, exploitation, stress on morality and women status.

Victorian literature often took a strong political tone, as it critically examined social issues such as power dynamics, class conflict, and women's rights. It closely mirrored everyday life by portraying people's inner emotions and outward circumstances with striking realism. Realism, as a narrative technique in Victorian literature, aims to depict life as it truly is, avoiding the romanticized portrayal of subjects. Key themes explored include the Industrial Revolution and its profound impact on Victorian society, which served as a major source of inspiration for many writers. This period marked a significant historical shift, deeply influencing their literary works. Furthermore, the social transformations brought about by industrial progress were fundamental to the rise of literary realism. The works exposed the struggles of workers and women in industrial society, revealing hidden issues beneath Victorian ideals and highlighting the 'Condition of England' through imagination, emotion, and intellect.

Poetry in the Victorian Age

Feelings and emotions weren't the Victorian poets' tool of cognition. They devoted themselves to society's interests and concentrated on an intensely spiritual expression. In this era of social, political, scientific and cultural changes, poetry became a powerful medium through which poets responded to the complexities of their time.

Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809–1892): Alfred Lord Tennyson was a prominent English poet and the Poet Laureate of the UK from 1850 till his death. He explored a diverse array of themes in his poetry, drawing inspiration from medieval tales, classical mythology, everyday life, and the natural world. The impact of Romantic poets like John Keats, whose works were known during his early years, is clear in the vivid imagery and rich descriptions found in his writing. He had a significant impact during his lifetime, as his poetry captured the evolving thoughts and values of his era. However, his popularity declined in the early 20th century. His

early poems included *Mariana, The Ballad of Oriana, The Lady of Shalott* and *The Lotos Eaters*.

Poems by Two Brothers (1827), an early collection of poems, showcases Romantic influence, love of nature and emotional depth. In *The Lady of Shalott* (1833), Tennyson presents the problem of the correspondence between art and life, fantasy and reality through the isolated Lady who dies on looking out. Through his elegy, *In Memoriam A.H.H.* (1850), the poet remembers his friend, Arthur Henry Hallam, who died young. *Idylls of the King* (1859) is a sequence of 12 narrative poems, and explores idealism, downfall and the eternal struggle between virtue and human weakness. Furthermore, the poet puts Malory's story of Arthur into blank verse in *Morte D'Arthur* (1842). His other poems are *Ulysses* (1842), *The Princess* (1847), etc.

Robert Browning (1812–1889): Robert Browning was an English poet and playwright, highly regarded among Victorian poets for his dramatic monologues. His work is known for its use of irony, strong character portrayal, dark humor, reflections on society, historical themes and complex language and structure. For him, intellect was more important than the music. His immense knowledge came from his studies in London, his travels and his own work. The poems in *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842) and *Dramatic Romances* (1845) represent a significant improvement over Browning's earlier dramatic works. One notable piece, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, found in the latter collection, tells the story of a magician who rids a town of its rat infestation.

Browning's first published poem, *Pauline: The Fragment of a Confession* (1833), contained more than 1000 lines in the form of a dramatic monologue. His most difficult long narrative poem, *Sordello* (1840) tells the story of the progress of the soul on the example of Dante's contemporary poet. Similarly, *Pippa Passes* (1841), a dramatic poem, tells the story of a girl named Pippa, who strolls through the town singing, and her songs have a powerful effect on the lives of those who listen to them. *The Ring and the Book* (1868–69) *and Asolando* (1889) are his other notable poems.

Mathew Arnold (1822–1888): Arnold was an English poet, essayist and cultural critic. He is often described as a sage writer - one who guides and criticizes readers by addressing the social issues of his time, and is best known for his reflective and often melancholic poetry. He was unable to find rest and greatly admired Wordsworth's calmness making a fine collection of his poetry, and wrote a critical sonnet on Shakespeare, whom he praised too much. His *Memorial Verses* (1850) laments for the poet's death, and for the deaths of other poets at home and abroad and *Empedocles on Etna* (1852) tells the story of a Greek philosopher who sacrifices his life throwing himself into volcano.

In *The Scholar Gipsy* (1853), Arnold narrates the story of an Oxford student who leaves his academic studies to live with a group of gipsies, seeking a deeper and more instinctive form of wisdom. Through his heartfelt elegiac poem*, Rugby Chapel* (1857), he shows the memory of his father and reflects his deep respect for his moral leadership and educational ideas. In another elegy, *Thyrsis* (1867), he mourns the death of his friend, Arthur Hugh Clough.

Nineteenth Century Novels

The 19th century was a significant period in literary development, during which women established a strong presence in the world of novels. They went beyond mere storytelling by questioning societal conventions, enriching literature with deeper emotional and ethical layers, and introducing fresh perspectives. Despite social and cultural restrictions, they emerged as powerful literary voices.

Jane Austen (1775–1817): Austen was an English novelist, best recognized for her keen observations of British society, sharp wit, and first gave the novel its modern character through her treatment of ordinary people in everyday life. Her novels explore themes such as romance, marriage, social status, and societal norms, depicting the experiences of women from the middle and upper classes. Her four novels: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) that was firstly named *Elinor and Marianne*, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) that was firstly named *First Impressions*, *Mansfield Park* (1814), and *Emma* (1815) were published during her lifetime, and two: *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* after her death in 1817. She perfected the genre of the domestic novel, focusing on family life with exceptional skill. Her writings remained free from the harsh realities of the external world, concentrating instead on settings and situations she knew personally. The novel, *Sense and Sensibility,* tells the story of two sisters, Elinor and Mariane, who navigate love, heartbreak and societal expectations after their father's death. The *Pride* and *Prejudice* explores relationship between a sharp-witted young woman, Elizabeth Bennet, with the proud and wealthy Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy. The *Mansfield Park* tells the story of a poor young girl, Fanny Price, who struggles to find her place among wealthy and morally lax relatives, and *Emma* focuses on Emma's misguided efforts to pair her friend with a series of unsuitable matches while being blind to her own feelings for Mr. Knightley. *Persuasion* shows the story of Anne Eliot who is persuaded to break off her engagement to Frederick Wentworth due to lack of fortune and family's disapproval. The *Northanger Abbey* talks about an imaginative young woman who loves Gothic novels.

Emily Bronte (1818–1848): Emily Bronte was an English novelist and poet who is well-known for her novel *Wuthering Heights* which is known for its dark passion and complex characters. She also published a book of poetry with her sisters, Charlotte and Anne. Although she initially wrote under the pen name Ellis Bell**,** her exceptional writing abilities were eventually

acknowledged. In *Wuthering Heights* (1847*)*, Heathcliff falls deeply in love with Catherine Earnshaw, but becomes heartbroken when he overhears her saying she could never marry someone of such low social standing and so he leaves the house. Three years later, when Heathcliff returns, he discovers that Catherine has married Edgar Linton, a man lacking strength of character. Consumed by bitterness, Heathcliff embarks on a path of vengeance and cruelty. After Catherine's death, he marries Edgar's sister and treats her harshly.

George Eliot (1819–1880): George Eliot (Real name: Mary Ann Evans) was an English novelist, poet, journalist, translator and writer. She chose a male pen name so that her writing would be respected and recognized in a literary world largely controlled by men. Her writing is marked by psychological insight, moral depth, and a realist portrayal of rural English life. She wrote seven novels. *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marne* (1861), *Romola* (1862–1863), *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1866), *Middlemarch* (1871–1872) and *Daniel Deronda* (1876). *Adam Bede*, set in rural England tells the story of Adam Bede and his love with Hetty Sorrel, a beautiful young woman who becomes pregnant in relation with Captain Arthur Donnithorne. She is later tried for infanticide. *The Mill on the Floss* shows the strong sibling bond of Tom and Maggie Tulliver, *Silas Marner,* one of her shorter works*,* relates with the life of Silas Marner, a skilled but reclusive weaver living in the rural village of Raveloe, and *Romola,* praised for its intellectual depth and historical richness, discusses Romola's struggles and why she renounces her privileged life and dedicates herself to helping the poor. Similarly, *Felix Holt, the Radical* explores themes of political reform, class conflict, and moral integrity through the lives of Felix Holt and Esther Lyon, *Middlemarch,* published in serialized form*,* examines how individuals strive for meaning and purpose within the constraints of society and *Daniel Deronda* offers a rare and early sympathetic portrayal of Jewish identity and nationalism in English literature.

Charles Dickens (1812–1870): Charles Dickens was an English novelist, journalist, short story writer, social critic and also regarded as the greatest novelist of his time. He made the minute study of the whole mankind, and presented lively picture of human society. Most of his novels describe the hardships of life. His approach to novel was influenced by picaresque tradition, melodrama and novel of sensibility. His works combine clear storytelling, sharp social commentary, humour, satire, irony and deep emotional insight. *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-37), a lighthearted and comedic work, represents his skill in creating vivid characters and his mastery of social commentary. It is a satire on Victorian society. *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), a historical novel, depicts riots and civil disorder with psychological and political depth through the disabled protagonist, Barnaby Rudge, who involved in anti-Catholic Gordon Riots. *A Tale of Two Cities* (1849), most famous and widely read novel, shows a story of the French Revolution and of events in London at the same time. In the same way,

Oliver Twist (1837-8), the tale of a destitute orphan boy, Oliver Twist, portrays his harsh mistreatment and grim experiences, featuring scenes of hunger, theft, murder, and hanging. *A Christmas Carol* (1843) tells the story of a bad character, Ebenezer Scrooge, who despises Christmas, kindness and generosity; and improves his behavior after the ghost of his former business partner tells him the manner of his death. *Hard Times* (1854) is a political novel set in industrial surroundings where Gradgrind's children are brought up. The son, Tom, becomes selfish and eventually robs the bank and the daughter, Louisa, marries the bankrupt industrialist, Josiah Bounderby, and fortunately Mr. Gradgrind realizes his foolishness. In *David Copperfield* (1849–50), a semi-autobiographical novel, Dickens details the life story of David Copperfield from childhood to adulthood. Moreover, *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-9) is a tale of Nicholas who with his mother and his sister is forced to depend upon his uncle who sends him to work in a boarding school run by the cruel master. Appalled by the abuse suffered by the boys - particularly a disabled child named Smike - Nicholas stands up against the cruelty, rescues Smike, and leaves to pursue a more hopeful future.

Joseph Conrad (1857–1924): Joseph Conrad was a Polish-British novelist and story writer. His original name was Teodor Josef Konrad Korzeniowsky and he didn't know about English till his first visit in 1878. He held the view that a person should remain loyal to her/his friends, peers, and employees. Being unfaithful leads to ruin. His complex narrative style and impressionist technique have influenced many modern writers. His first novel, *Almayer's Folly* (1895) tells the story of a Dutch trader living in a remote Malaysian village who dreams of finding hidden treasure and returns to Europe with wealth but the dreams are shattered due to failures, cultural conflicts and broken relationships. *An Outcaste of the Islands* (1896) is a story of an arrogant European trader, Peter Willems, who becomes an outcast socially and morally and is rejected by colonial society. *Lord Jim* (1900), one of his greatest novels, follows the tale of a British seaman who abandons the ship believing it to be sinking and leaves many passengers behind. Although he loses his honour, he eventually dies an honorable death. Likewise, *Youth* (1898), *Heart of darkness* (1899) and *Typhoon* (1902) are the most well-known novels that explore themes of the sea, human struggles, imperialism and self-discovery. *The Secret Agent* (1907) and *Under Western Eyes* (1911) are among his good novels.

Oscar Wilde (1854–1900): Wilde was an Irish poet, novelist and playwright known for his sharp wit, flamboyant style and brilliant literary works. Although he achieved great success, his life turned tragic when he was jailed for gross indecency because of his homosexuality, which was considered a crime at the time. After completing a two-year sentence of hard labor, he spent the rest of his life in exile in France. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), his only novel-a philosophical and gothic horror novel, describes the story of Dorian Gray who becomes obsessed with youth and beauty. After his portrait is completed, Dorian wishes he could stay young forever while

the painting grows old in his place - a wish that is strangely fulfilled. While he indulges in a life of luxury and moral decline, his youthful appearance remains unchanged, but the hidden portrait becomes more and more hideous, revealing the true corruption of his soul. The novel initially brought controversy and criticism, but today, it is considered his most famous work.

Prose in Nineteenth Century

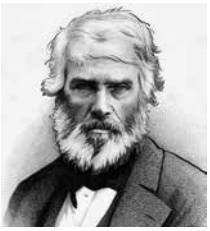
In addition to novels, a significant collection of quality prose expressed the ideas of that era. The prose mainly focused on individualism, emotions, imagination and intuition; and reflected the social, political and literary developments of the time.

William Hazlitt (1778–1830): Hazlitt was among the most distinguished English essayists, painter, social commentator and literary critic who was admired for his eloquent writing style, keen intellect, and strong, heartfelt viewpoints. He was deeply involved in public affairs. While his standards of dramatic criticism were elevated, his bad temper and political beliefs often resulted in harsh and inflammatory language. His most important work is his literary criticism *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817–18) offers passionate analyses of the characters in William Shakespeare's plays, *Lectures on the English Poets* (1818–19) is the collection of his lectures on the works of major English poets, *English Comic Writers* (1819), a collection of essays, examines the nature of comedy and discusses authors from different periods and genres with focus on how they use humour, satire and wit to show political realities.

Charles Lamb (1775–1834): Charles Lamb was an English essayist, poet and antiquarian. His writing is known for its gentle humour, warmth and nostalgic tone. He was a private man and his gentle ways were charming. His *Essays of Elia* (1823 and 1833) is a collection of essays on various light subjects written in attractive style. The essays were originally written for The London Magazine under the pen name 'Elia'. With his sister, Mary Lamb, he wrote *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807), a collection of prose adaptations of William Shakespeare's plays. *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare* (1808) presents selected excerpts from lesser-known English dramatists of the late 16th and early 17th centuries, offering both literary appreciation and scholarly insight.

Thomas Penson De Quincey (1785–1859): T. P. De Quincey was an English writer, essayist and literary critic. Though he was an unpleasant person, his work was valuable. He struggled with poverty and opium addiction in his life, and is best known for his richly imaginative prose and deep psychological insight. *Concessions of an English Opium Eater*

(1822) describes how severe toothaches and intense anxiety initially led him to start using opium. He suffered from its negative effects for eight years before managing to overcome the addiction through tremendous effort. *Reminiscences of the English Lake Poets* (1834), a series of biographical and critical essays, reflects on his personal relationships with William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey. In the same way, *On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts* (1827), a darkly satirical essay, offers a humorous and ironic portrayal of a gentleman's club that views and appreciates murder as a form of artistic expression.



Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881): Thomas Carlyle was a Scottish essayist, historian and philosopher known as the 'sage of Chelsea'. He was an unattractive man, distant, selfish, and resistant to acknowledging anyone as his superior. His style was forceful, even violent, and his guiding aims in life were truth, work and courage. He wrote articles in different papers. One of his early works was a translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (1824). *Sartor Resartus* had appeared in a paper four/five years before 1838.

The first part states that all human arrangements are like clothes and don't last long and the second part is an autobiography of Carlyle. *History of the French Revolution* (1837) is literary accounts of the French Revolution as a moment of both destruction and rebirth. *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & the Heroic in History* (1841) is a collection of six lectures given in May 1840 about prominent historical figures. And *History of Frederick* (1858-65), a monumental historical biography published in six volumes, chronicles the life and reign of Frederick II of Prussia presenting him as a strong principled leader and a heroic figure.

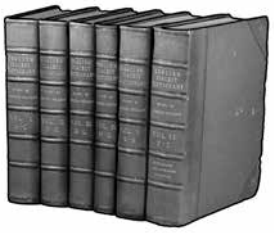
John Ruskin (1819–1900): John Ruskin was an English writer, lecturer, art historian, art critic, draughtsman and philanthropist. He explored a wide range of topics in his writings including art, architecture, political economy, education, museology, geology, botany, ornithology, literature, history, and mythology. Ruskin also employed a diverse array of literary styles and formats. His works included essays, treatises, poems, lectures, travel guides, instructional manuals, personal letters, and even a fairy tale. Additionally, he created intricate sketches and paintings depicting natural elements like rocks, plants, and birds, as well as landscapes, buildings, and decorative designs.

In *Modern Painters* (1843–60), published in five volumes, he praised some new painters such as Turner and elevated landscape painting to a respected art form. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) mentions seven guiding principles that illuminate all great architecture, and *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53), published in three volumes, documents and analyses the architecture of Venice combining art criticism, historical analysis, travel writing, and moral philosophy. His later works focused on economics and education, yet his constant goal remained the creation of a more beautiful world.

Walter Pater (1839–1894): Walter Pater was an English essayist, art and literary critic and fiction writer. He played a major role in the Aesthetic Movement that championed the idea of 'art for art's sake' and explored Ruskin's writings but reached a different conclusion. In his view, all forms of art should pursue beauty not for any social or moral purpose, but simply because the quest for beauty is fulfilling in and of itself. *Conclusion to Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) presents a bold and deeply personal view of life, focused on living intensely, appreciating beauty with heightened sensitivity, and recognizing the transient nature of human existence. Likewise, *Marius the Epicurean* (1885) was a historical and philosophical novel that explores the intellectual development of a young Roman in his pursuit of a congenial religion at a time of change.

Status of English Language in Nineteenth Century English Society

English language experienced significant transformation, reflecting cultural, political, and social shifts of the era, and held a dominant position both within the UK and globally. The expansion of the British Empire and increased international travel brought a variety of foreign words into the English language, while also helping it spread worldwide as the language of administration, commerce, law and education. Within Britain, English grew to dominate areas of power, learning, and government, leading to intensified efforts to standardize its grammar, spelling, and usage.



The English Dialect Dictionary

The growing emphasis on correct English helped raise its standardization. Furthermore, language became a crucial indicator of social class. A person's speech - accent, word choice, and grammar - could quickly expose their social standing. Besides, change at all levels (e.g. spelling, syntax and meaning) of linguistic organization was apparent. Additionally, innovations in terminology were widespread.

The formation of the *English Dialect Society* in 1873 focused on gathering information on regional English. Similarly, the six volumes of *The English Dialect Dictionary* (1898–1905) aimed to represent the complete vocabulary of all dialect words still in use.

Received Pronunciation, regarded as the refined accent of the educated upper class, was encouraged in public schools, civil service, and media, while dialects spoken by the working class were often viewed as incorrect or inappropriate. Moreover, English played a crucial role in shaping cultural identities and literary traditions across the empire. The invention of the phonograph by Thomas Edison in the late 1870s enabled us to hear the ways in which

the spoken language was actually used. Besides, major educational reforms took place in public education, literacy and English literature. The novel became the dominant literary form, and literary English evolved to reflect a broader range of styles, voices, and social concerns.

Exercise

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. Which of the following events is considered to mark the beginning of the Romantic Age in English literature?

i. The death of Samuel Johnson

ii. The publication of *Lyrical Ballads*

iii. The French Revolution

iv. The rise of Victorian industrialism

b. Which of the following is a defining feature of Victorian literature?

i. Emphasis on idealism and escapism

ii. A focus on social reform, morality, and realism

iii. A rejection of industrial progress

iv. An exploration of the supernatural and Gothic horror

c. Victorian novels are often characterized by…

i. a focus on mythological themes and heroic ideals

ii. detailed, realistic depictions of social life, especially the struggles of the lower classes

iii. romanticized depictions of nature and the countryside

iv. use of simple language and symbolism without complex plot structures

d. Which of the following is a characteristic feature of Victorian poetry?

i. A focus on supernatural elements and Gothic imagery

ii. Emphasis on social issues, morality, and the impact of industrialization

iii. Use of free verse and experimental poetic forms

iv. Celebration of nature and the sublime

e. A key feature of Victorian prose is…

i. a focus on mythological themes and classical references

ii. a blend of realism, moral concern, and social criticism

iii. use of symbolism and fragmented narrative structures

iv. emphasis on idealized depictions of nature and rural life

f. How did the status of the English language change in the 19th century?

i. English declined in use due to the rise of other European languages.

ii. English became more standardized and spread globally due to the British Empire and industrialization.

iii. English was replaced by Latin as the dominant language of science and literature.

iv. English became primarily a spoken language, with little focus on written literature.

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What are the main characteristics of Romantic literature? Discuss how these characteristics reflect values and concerns of the Romantic Age.

b. What themes are commonly found in early 19th century poetry, and how do they reflect the Romantic ideals?

c. What is the significance of dramatic monologues in Victorian poetry? Analyze one dramatic monologue by Robert Browning to illustrate this.

d. Discuss the role of periodicals in the Victorian era. How did writers like Charles Lamb or Thomas Carlyle use essays to address social and political concerns?

e. How did Charles Dickens use his novels to critique Victorian society? Discuss with reference to *Oliver Twist* or *Great Expectations*.

f. How did the status of the English language evolve in 19th century English society? Discuss its spread, standardization, and impact on global communication.

C. Write long answers to the following questions.

a. Discuss the major themes and characteristics of early 19th century poetry. How did the poets such as William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and

John Keats contribute to the development of Romantic poetry? Illustrate your answer with specific references to their works.

b. How do Victorian novels portray the effects of industrialization and class struggle? Discuss with examples from Charles Dickens' *Hard Times.*

c. Discuss how Victorian prose writers used essays and nonfiction to comment on moral, social, or political issues. Refer to the works of writers like Thomas Carlyle or John Ruskin.

d. Compare and contrast the poetic contributions of John Keats and P.B. Shelley to the Romantic Movement. How did their themes, style, and philosophical ideas shape early 19th century English poetry?

Project Work

The 19th century was the foundation phase of modern Nepali literature. During this period, Bhanubhakta Acharya made Nepali literature accessible to the common people by translating the *Ramayan* from Sanskrit to Nepali in poetic form. Similarly, Motiram Bhatta popularized Bhanubhakta's works, and played a key role in developing literary awareness and journalism. Consult different sources and prepare a report to share with the class. While preparing a report, focus on their contributions in developing Nepali Literature.

English Literature in the Twentieth Century

Before You Read

a. What comes to your mind when you hear the word 'modern'?

b. What literary works do you know from the modern age? Share with the class.

c. Make a list of any five modern English writers.

Introduction

Twentieth century English literature started from the beginning of the twentieth century. It is also known as the Modern Age in the history of English literature. The most important characteristic of Modern Age is its opposition to the general attitude toward life and its problems, as adopted by the Victorian writers and the public. During the first decade of the twentieth century, young people regarded the Victorian Age as hypocritical, and its ideals as mean, superficial, and foolish. Twentieth-century minds did not take anything for granted; they questioned everything. Due to the disintegration of values in the twentieth century, modern writers could no longer write in the old manner. Therefore, they had to develop a fresh point of view and new techniques.

Twentieth-century English literature marks the onset of modern literature. Modernism, an aesthetic movement, emerged during this time and influenced visual arts, music, literature, and drama. Modern Age saw a sudden break from Victorian standards of art and traditional ways of interacting with the world. Modern Age was a breakthrough in English literature that rejected established literary rules and norms. Various changes occurred in English literature. A numerous literary movements and techniques emerged. The era placed a strong emphasis on realism, impressionism, surrealism, and absurdism, which are key features of the Modern Age. The stream of consciousness technique was also widely employed in literature. In addition, literary figures redefined their approaches to poetry and fiction, influenced by several factors, including the World Wars, evolving social trends, political shifts, and changing perspectives on life.

Modern literature began to stretch the limits of imagination and literary form. Experimentation and individualism became prominent, unlike in previous eras, where they were often discouraged. Symbolism, absurdity, and formalism became some of its defining characteristics of modern literature. Modern writers explored the themes of the relationship between man and nature, violence, barbarism, and more. Moreover, alienation and isolation became prominent, reflecting the individual's struggle in a changing world.

Modern Age laid the foundation for literary pluralism, as multiple perspectives, styles, and voices emerged to reflect the growing diversity of experience, identity, and literary form. For example, James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) experimented with stream of consciousness and fragmented narrative structure to portray complex inner realities, while Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) used a similar technique to explore themes of time, memory, and mental illness. The age also witnessed a sense of disillusionment and loss of faith. In the aftermath of World War I, many writers expressed despair and questioned religious, political, and moral systems that once provided a sense of stability.

Edward Albert (2004) mentions that Modern Age is characterized by the spread of education, enormous output of books, literature of social purpose, dominance of the novel, rebirth of drama, and experiments in literary form. Indeed, twentieth-century English literature is marked by significant shifts in style, form, thematic focus, and philosophy. Some of the key developments in Modern English literature are encapsulated in the following headings:

Development of Science Fiction

English literature witnessed significant changes and the evolution of various literary genres. Science fiction became one of the dominant genres of twentieth-century fiction. Modern writers explored futuristic themes, technology, and alternative realities, leading to the rise of science fiction. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) by George Orwell depicts a dystopian future controlled by totalitarian surveillance. *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley imagines a technologically advanced but emotionally shallow society, while *The Time Machine* (1895) by H. G. Wells introduces the concept of time travel.

New Concept in the Field of Drama

As Edward Albert (2004) mentions, the Modern Age witnessed the rebirth of drama. During this period, drama flourished, with significant innovations in dramatic writing that often reflected the growth and crises of civilization. Modern playwrights broke away from the traditional rules of classical and Victorian drama. They introduced psychological realism, social criticism, and elements of absurdity and focused on the problems of ordinary people rather than heroic or romantic ideals. In addition, they explored themes such as alienation, identity, war, class conflict, and the breakdown of communication. The influence of World War I and II deeply affected the tone of modern drama, making it more serious, introspective, and sometimes absurd. *Pygmalion* (1912) by George Bernard Shaw challenges social class distinctions and gender roles, while *The Cherry Orchard* (1904) by Anton Chekhov explores subtle internal conflicts and employs symbolic action to reflect social change.

Understanding of Human Life

Modern writers focused on the inner workings of the human mind and emotions, often employing the stream of consciousness technique and incorporating elements of realism.

Modern literature became more grounded in everyday life, portraying real people and social problems. *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) by Virginia Woolf offers a deep psychological study of the protagonist's thoughts over the course of a single day. *Of Human Bondage* (1915) by W. Somerset Maugham explores personal struggles and emotional development, while *The Waste Land* (1922) by T.S. Eliot reflects the fragmented, disillusioned world in the aftermath of World War I.

The Representative Novelists of Twentieth Century

Novel is one of the literary forms. As Edward Albert (2004) mentions, it is not surprising that, for the first time in its history, the novel became the dominant literary form in English. The modern age played a significant role in this shift, contributing to the flourishing of novels. They were often enriched with symbolism and complex themes. Some of the great novelists of the 20th century include Rudyard Kipling, E.M. Forster, H. G. Wells, D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, William Golding, and many others.

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936): Rudyard Kipling was born in India and spent much of his adult life there. At that time, the power and influence of the British Empire was at their height. He was a prolific and highly versatile writer, and from the outset, he had all the qualities necessary for popularity. His prose works, which include stories of Indian life, children, wild animals, and the British army and navy, are told with great vitality. His best-known books are *The Jungle Book* (1894) and *Kim* (1901). Kipling's storytelling often incorporates themes of adventure and the complexities of British identity. His literary fame brought him many honours, including the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907. Kipling's notable works include *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888), *Soldiers Three* (1888), *The Phantom Rickshaw* (1888), *Life's Handicap* (1891), *The Jungle Book* (1894), *The Second Jungle Book* (1895), *Captains Courageous* (1897), *Kim* (1901), and *Rewards and Fairies* (1910).

The Jungle Book (1894) describes how a boy Mowgli is brought up in the jungle by wild animals who posseses human like personalities. Mowgli grows from a child into a young man, learning the 'Laws of the Jungle' along the way. The book explores themes such as the conflict between nature and civilization, as well as loyalty and belonging. *Kim* (1901) tells the story of a boy in India who grows up to serve the British Empire by capturing important secret papers. As Kim navigates between British and Indian worlds, the novel raises questions about identity, belonging, and cultural duality. It explores themes of imperialism and the Great Game, along with adventure, espionage, and a spiritual quest.

Edward Morgan Forster (1879–1970): E. M. Forster was born in London, England. He was an English novelist and essayist known for his exploration of class differences and hypocrisy in early 20th-century British society. As a humanist writer, he often critiqued the British government, particularly for its inhumane treatment to Indians during British rule. He wrote only five novels: *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), *The Longest Journey* (1907), *A Room with a View* (1908), *Howards End* (1910), and *A Passage to India* (1924).

Where Angels Fear to Tread (1905) is known for its well-drawn characters, comedy, and its typical concern with the conflict between two different cultures. *A Room with a View (1908)* is a romantic and satirical novel about a young English woman, Lucy Honeychurch, who struggles between social convention and her true desires while traveling in Italy.

Howard's End (1910) shows the completely different beliefs of two families; the Wilcoxes- who are good at making money and are concerned only with everyday things that they can see and touch and the two Schlegel sisters who are concerned with deeper, more spiritual and cultural values. The two families struggle for the house named in the title, which stands for England itself. It explores the connection between inward feelings and outward behavior.

A Passage to India (1924), E. M. Forster's masterpiece, examines the complex dynamics between the British and the Indians. The story concerns Adela Quested, a young Englishwoman, who travels to India intending to marry an English officer. She befriends some Indians and explores Indian society, but is led to believe that one of them attacks her sexually on a visit to some caves. When she accuses him, she causes the separation in beliefs, behavior, and attitudes of the English from the Indians to become even stronger and more violent. Class conflict, tension between idealism and materialism, colonialism, friendship, cultural misunderstanding, and the limitations of communication are major themes of his novels.

Herbert George Wells (1866–1946): H. G. Wells was born and educated at Bromley in Kent. Wells became a teacher and entered the Normal School of Science, South Kensington, where he spent three years and gained much of scientific knowledge which he was to turn to such as good use as a prolific writer and a pioneer of science fiction. He was an English novelist, journalist, sociologist, and historian.

Over a literary career spanning about fifty years, H. G. Wells produced nearly a hundred works. He wrote both long and short fiction across a variety of genres, including science fiction, satire, tragedy, fantasy, and dystopian fiction. In addition to his fiction, he also authored many non-fictions such as biographies, autobiographies, and textbooks.

H. G. Wells' notable works include *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Wonderful Visit* (1895), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897), *The War of the Worlds* (1898), *The First Men in the Moon* (1901), *The Food of the Gods* (1904), *Kipps* (1905), and *The History of Mr. Polly* (1910). *The Time Machine* (1895) *and The War of the Worlds* (1898) not only entertained readers but also provoked thought about the future of humanity and the implications of technological advancement.

His first novel, *The Time Machine* (1895), is about a machine that can travel through time instead of space. A scientist known as the Time Traveller journeys far into the future and encounters two strange human-like species: the Eloi, who are weak and live above ground, and the Morlocks, who are strong, frightening, and live underground. He discovers that the Morlocks hunt the Eloi at night. After facing many dangers and recovering his time machine, he travels even further into the future to witness a dying Earth. Then he returns to his own time to share his story before disappearing on another journey through time. *The War of the Worlds* (1898) describes an attack on Earth by men from Mars, who can conquer everything except man's diseases.

David Herbert Lawrence (1885–1930): D. H. Lawrence was born at Eastwood, in Nottinghamshire, the son of a miner, and was educated at Nottingham High School. He was the most striking figure in the literary world between the World Wars. In the nineteen years between his first published novel and his death, he produced over forty volumes of fiction- novels and short stories, poetry, plays, and essays, and not a year passed without the publication of something from his pen. It is, however, as a novelist that he is chiefly remembered.

As an English novelist, poet, and essayist, his works often explore the complexities of human relationships both between men and women and among men—as well as the impact of industrialization on society, love, and sexuality. He took the traditional form of the novel and made it broader and deeper. D.H. Lawrence's notable works include *The White Peacock* (1911), *The Trespasser* (1912), *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *The Rainbow* (1915), *Women in Love* (1916), *Kangaroo* (1923), and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928).

Sons and Lovers (1913) is an extremely powerful novel of deep sincerity, which describes the relationship between Paul Morel and his mother. He loves her and needs her to help him make sense of the world around him, but in order to become an independent man and true artist, he has to make his own decisions about his life and work, and struggle to become free from her influence.

The Rainbow (1915) tells the story of a family through three couples of different ages. The first couple, Lydia and Tom, share a deep and loving understanding and are open to engaging with the outside world. The second couple, Anna and Will (Lydia's daughter Anna and Tom's nephew Will), are drawn to each other through physical passion, but their inner

lives remain disconnected, and their souls stay apart. The third couple, Ursula and Anton (Anna's and Will's daughter Ursula and her lover Anton), use language as a wall to keep them apart at the deepest level, and each tries to force their own wishes on the other.

Women in Love (1916) portrays two couples; the women are sisters, and the men are connected by a close friendship who are trying to understand the true meaning of love and work towards a real closeness of souls. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) is a novel in which sexual experience is portrayed and became controversial when it was accused of promoting pornography, leading to a court case. Lawrence won the case, and the novel was eventually republished. The story follows Constance Chatterley, a married woman, who falls in love with her husband's keeper, Oliver Mellors, despite her husband's paralysis and emotional neglect.

James Joyce (1882–1941): James Joyce was born and educated in Ireland and spent most of his adult life in Europe. He was an Irish novelist and modernist known for his innovative narrative techniques and deep exploration of consciousness. The works of Joyce are complex and paradoxical with no fixed themes. He brings history and myth in his novels to give new insights.

James Joyce's notable works include *Chamber Music (1907), Dubliners (1914), A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916), Exiles (1918), Ulysses (1922), Finnegan's Wake (1939), and Stephen Hero (1944, posthumous)*. His seminal work, *Ulysses* (1922), is celebrated for its stream-of-consciousness or interior monologue- a style of writing that allows readers to enter the minds of characters, presenting their thoughts and feelings in a continuous stream, thus breaking all the usual rules of description, speech, and punctuation, offering a profound insight into the human experience. Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, and his wife Molly appear as the three main characters in *Ulysses*. Stephen Dedalus seeks to free himself from the constraints of a harsh and confusing world. The story primarily follows Leopold Bloom's day-long journey through Dublin: eating breakfast, attending a funeral, working, visiting pubs and a brothel, and eventually meeting Stephen. By the end, Bloom takes Stephen to his home, and the novel concludes with Molly lying in bed; among the many thoughts that go through her mind, she is planning a musical evening. The novel explores themes such as identity, time, memory, alienation, sexuality, and the search for meaning.

Finnegan's Wake (1939) is widely regarded as one of the most complex and experimental novels in literary history. Renowned for its dream-like, circular narrative and highly inventive, multilingual style, the novel defies conventional storytelling and remains famously challenging to interpret. Again, Joyce uses references to ancient stories to express themes such as the nature of creation, the humor and tragedy of human life, guilt, downfall, and redemption; the cyclical nature of history; and the interplay of mythology, dreams, language, and time.

Virginia Woolf (1882–1941): Virginia Woolf was born in London, England, and is regarded as a leading figure in the development of modern experimental novels. She began her writing career as a contributor to literary journals. Her notable works include *The Voyage Out* (1915), *Night and Day* (1919), *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), Orlando: A Biography (1928), *The Waves* (1931), *The Years* (1937), and *Three Guineas* (1938). Her first novel *The Voyage Out* (1915) is told in the conventional narrative manner.

Her works, including *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927) are renowned for their innovative narrative techniques and their deep exploration of the inner lives of women, often challenging traditional gender roles. Themes of loneliness, love, and the passage of time are central to her writing. *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) describes a one day in June 1923 as it is experienced by Mrs. Dalloway and other characters in London. It follows Dalloway as she prepares for a party she is hosting in the evening, while also exploring the thoughts and experiences of other characters, including Septimus Warren Smith, a shell-shocked war veteran. The novel weaves together past and present through stream-of-consciousness narration, revealing the characters' memories, regrets, and reflections on life, time, and identity.

To the Lighthouse (1927) begins by presenting a family on holiday in Scotland in September 1910. In the story, the youngest son, James Ramsay, strongly desires to go by boat to the lighthouse, but he is prevented by his father. James becomes very sad, but he is comforted by his mother. The novel ends with the same family in the same house ten years later. James finally goes to the lighthouse, but this time he hates his father for making him go, just as he once hated him for preventing it. *Orlando* (1928) presents a main character who begins life as a man in the 16th century and, through a mysterious transformation, becomes a woman, living on until 1928 while remaining only thirty-six years old.

George Orwell (1903–1950): George Orwell, born in Bengal, India, was an English novelist and essayist renowned for his sharp critiques of totalitarianism and social injustice. He wrote several novels in the 1930s, but his fame rests mainly on his later books and his political and critical writing.

Orwell's notable works include *Burmese Days* (1934), *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935), *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936), *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), *Animal Farm* (1945), *Nineteen Eighty-Fou* (1949), *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), *Politics and the English Language* (1946), and *Shooting an Elephant* (1936).

Animal Farm (1945) is a famous political allegory which tells the story of a political revolution that went wrong. The animals on a farm, led by the pigs, overthrow their master Jones, and take control of the farm. However, the purity of their original ideals is soon corrupted, and the pigs become just as greedy and dishonest as the farmer they replaced. Once in power, they prove to be as selfish and cruel as Jones.

Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949) describes a dystopian future where every word and action are monitored and controlled by the government. In the story, the government develops a kind of television that allows it to watch people in their homes. The novel shows how such surveillance can strip people of their freedom. It also portrays how the government manipulates language, restricting what people can say and think to maintain control.

Orwell vividly presents a bleak and pessimistic vision of a future where truth is distorted and individual rights are crushed by an all-powerful state. His writing addresses politics and social issues with remarkable clarity and insight.

William Gerald Golding (1911–1993) : William Golding was born in Cornwall and was educated at Marlborough Grammar School and at Brasenose College, Oxford. Apart from writing, his past and present occupations include being a schoolmaster, a lecturer, an actor, a sailor, and a musician. Being a prominent English novelist and writer of the 20th century, each of his novels is a unique in which symbolism plays an overridingly important part.

Golding is known as a symbolic novelist. His renowned novel *Lord of the Flies (1954)* brought him widespread fame and explores the inherent darkness of human nature and the breakdown of civilization. In this story, a group of young boys becomes stranded on a deserted island after a plane crash. What begins as an attempt to form a civilized society soon descends into chaos and violence, revealing the primal instincts hidden beneath the surface of human behavior.

His other works include *The Inheritors* (1955), *Pincher Martin* (1956), *Free Fall* (1959), *The Spire* (1964) and others. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1983 for his novels which, with the perspicuity of realistic narrative art and the diversity and universality of myth, illuminate the human condition in the world of today. His writings often reflect the moral complexities of humanity and the ongoing struggle between civilization and savagery.

Modern Age and Drama

Modern Age is also called the age of rebirth of drama. After the death of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, drama in England suffered a decline for about two centuries. Even

Congreve in the seventeenth century, and Sheridan and Goldsmith in the eighteenth, could not restore drama to the position it had during the Elizabethan Age. It was revived, however, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and then there appeared dramatists who have now given it a respectable place in English literature.

There were two important factors responsible for the revival of drama in Modern Age. The first was the influence of Henrik Ibsen, the great Norwegian dramatist, whose works inspired English playwrights like Bernard Shaw to claim the right to discuss serious social and moral issues in a calm, sensible manner. The second factor was the pessimistic atmosphere of the time, which allowed figures like Oscar Wilde to treat the moral assumptions of the great Victorian age with disdain and make polite fun of their conventionality, narrow-mindedness, and self-satisfaction. The first factor gave rise to the Comedy of Ideas or Purpose, while the second revived the Comedy of Manners or Artificial Comedy. The two prominent dramatists who played a key role in the revival of drama in the last decade of the nineteenth century were George Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde, both of whom were Irish.

In addition, Poetic Drama emerged in England under the influence of the Irish Dramatic Movement, initiated by Lady Gregory and William Butler Yeats.Many dramatists were influenced by ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. J. M. Synge, Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, and George Bernard Shaw were notable dramatists of the modern age.

George Bernard Shaw: A Dramatist of Social Phenomenon

G.B. Shaw (1856–1950) was born in Ireland but spent most of his adult life in England. Shaw became a renowned playwright, using drama as a platform to discuss social issues and problems. His first play to be performed was *Widowers' Houses* (1892), which marked the beginning of a new era in the comedy of ideas and social criticism. He was a leading figure in British drama who wrote more than 50 plays. His well-known works include *Arms and the Man* (1898), *The Devil's Disciple (1901), Man and Superman* (1903), *Pygmalion (1912), Saint Joan (1924)*, and others. Shaw believed in change and progress, and his plays often deliver strong messages about how society can improve. In 1925, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Shaw believed that drama should not only entertain but also educate and inspire change in society. That's why many of his plays focus on real-life problems such as poverty, inequality, women's rights, marriage, education, and class differences. An important aim of his many plays was to face his audience with completely new points of view and ways of looking at themselves and the society they lived in. In these ways, he is considered a dramatist of social phenomenon. His plays are often called *dramas of ideas* or *problem plays*because they explore serious topics through smart dialogue and interesting characters. He used wit and humor to criticize the unfair systems in society and to make people think deeply.

His drama, Arms and the Man (1898) presents a sympathetic and realistic figure a soldier who does not want to fight and believes that courage alone does not win wars.

Man and Superman (1903) is one of Shaw's most important plays, which deals, half seriously and half comically, with the pursuit of a mate. It presents the idea that a woman's real aim in life is to find the man who, according to nature, is the right father for her children. The play centers on John Tanner, a witty, outspoken bachelor who is appointed as the guardian of Ann Whitefield, a charming and determined young woman. Though Tanner tries to avoid marriage and values his personal freedom, Ann cleverly and persistently pursues him, believing he is the perfect match for her. In the end, despite his efforts to escape, Tanner realizes he cannot resist Ann's will and agrees to marry her, symbolizing Shaw's belief that women, guided by nature, often shape the future of society.

Pygmalion (1912) is a dramatic play in which a professor transforms a poor flower-selling girl into a refined lady by teaching her how to speak and behave like someone from the upper class. Despite her new appearance and social status, the flower girl comes to understand the true value of kindness and human connection, realizing that what matters most is how people care for one another.

John Millington Synge: **A Dramatist of the Life of Ordinary People**

J. M. Synge (1871–1909) was born in Rathfarnham near Dublin, Ireland. He was an Irish playwright known for writing about the simple, everyday lives of ordinary people, especially those living in rural Ireland or along the Irish seacoast. He portrayed how common people lived, worked, and struggled, using realistic language and local dialects in his plays.

Synge was the greatest dramatist in the rebirth of the Irish theatre. As one of the founders of the Irish Dramatic Movement, he focused on peasants, fishermen, farmers, and villagers, capturing their hardships, humor, beliefs, and superstitions. Indeed, Synge was a dramatist of ordinary people's lives. He highlighted both the beauty and the harshness of rural life. His characters were neither rich nor famous, but they were full of strong emotions, natural speech, and deep thoughts. He believed that drama must contain two essential elements: reality and joy. Therefore, he did not aim to teach lessons or convey moral messages.

Synge's major plays include *The Shadow of the Glen* (1903)*, Riders to the Sea* (1904), *The Well of the Saints* (1905), *The Tinker's Wedding* (1907), *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) and *Deirdre of the Sorrows* (1910).

One of Synge's most famous plays, *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), tells the story of Christy Mahon, a young man who arrives at a remote Irish village claiming he has killed his cruel father. The villagers admire his boldness and treat him like a hero.

However, their attitude changes when his father appears, alive and searching for his son, revealing that Christy's blow merely made him faint. Christy's newfound fame becomes complicated by his growing relationships with two local women—Pegeen and the cunning Widow Quin. The play explores themes of identity, heroism, and the complexities of human nature.

Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter: Dramatists of Human Existence

Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter are two renowned playwrights who explored the deeper meaning of human life in the modern world. Both are often associated with the Theatre of the Absurd, a movement that portrays the confusion, fear, boredom, and loneliness people experience in a world that seems devoid of meaning.

Samuel Beckett (1906–1989): Samuel Beckett was born in Ireland but has spent most of his adult life in France. He has written many of his works in French before translating them into English. He is considered one of the most influential writers of the Theatre of the Absurd, known for creating new forms of drama. His works often explore themes of existential despair, the absurdity of human existence, and the limitations of language. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969 for his writing, which—in new forms for novel and drama—acquires its elevation in the portrayal of the destitution of modern man.

Playwrights like Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, and Tom Stoppard express their anguish at the absurdities of the human condition, highlighting the belief that human existence is ultimately meaningless. They portray human life as boring, dull, and monotonous, as we repeat the same actions every day without any real sense of newness or progress. Their plays often lack traditional plots, and the action that unfolds seems purposeless.

Beckett's most famous play, *Waiting for Godot (*1952*; Eng. trans.* 1954*)*, centers on two characters, Vladimir and Estragon, who wait for a mysterious figure named Godot, hoping he will give their lives purpose and direction. However, Godot never arrives—and may not even exist. The play captures both the pain and the fear, as well as the humour, of the two men as they attempt to reason their way through a seemingly senseless and hopeless situation. Among the two, Estragon appears more committed to waiting for Godot, believing it is what they have been instructed to do.

*Endgame (*1957*)* also shows characters in a closed situation which they continually fight against. *Krapp's Last Tape (*1959*)* features a single character—an elderly man sitting alone in a closed room with a tape recorder listening to recordings he made at earlier points in his life. As he plays the tapes, he reflects on his past thoughts and impressions, contrasting them with his current thoughts and feelings.

Harold Pinter (1930–2008): Harold Pinter was a British playwright, screenwriter, director, and actor, best known for his unique style of drama that explores themes of power, silence, and menace in everyday situations. He was not only a playwright but also a profound thinker, whose works delve into the depth of human suffering. His notable plays include *The Room*, *The Dumb Waiter*, and *The Birthday Party* (all written in 1957), *The Caretaker* (1959), *The Homecoming* (1964), and *No Man's Land* (1975). These plays are often short and set in enclosed, claustrophobic spaces where characters live in uncertainty and fear of an ominous presence or force from the outside. Pinter masterfully used ordinary settings to explore power struggles, fear, and mysterious nature of human behavior. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2005 for his plays, in which he uncovers the precipice beneath everyday prattle and forces entry into oppression's closed rooms.

The Birthday Party (1957) sets in a small lodging house where two mysterious strangers come to collect one of the people living there. The feeling of danger is made stronger both by the suggestions of violence and the fact that the reason why the strangers have come to collect him never fully explained.

The works of Beckett and Pinter share common aspects, particularly in their exploration of human existence. Both depict life as confusing and devoid of clear purpose. Loneliness and silence are central themes, with frequent use of pauses and silence to convey deep emotions.

Augusta Lady Gregory: A Pleader for Change/Liberation

Augusta Lady Gregory (1852–1932) was an Irish writer and playwright who played a significant role in the Irish literary revival. A strong advocate for Irish independence and cultural liberation, she advocated for social and political change in Ireland. She wrote delightful comedies and translated nearly forty Irish legends. Lady Gregory's literary career began with her first work, *Seven Short Plays* (1909), a collection that showcased her talent for capturing Irish life and folklore. This was followed by other notable works such as *The Image* (1910), *Damer's Gold* (1913), and *The Rising of the Moon* (1907), which reflect her deep interest in Irish nationalism, rural culture, and the struggles of ordinary people.

Lady Gregory worked tirelessly to preserve Irish culture by collecting and writing about Irish myths, legends, and folktales. As a key figure in the Abbey Theatre, she helped create a platform for plays that celebrated Irish culture and critiqued British rule in Ireland.

The Rising of the Moon (1907), a one-act play, set on a quay at night during British rule in Ireland. It follows two policemen guarding a harbor in search of a fugitive nationalist rebel. As the play unfolds, one of the policemen—a sergeant—begins to struggle with his

loyalty to British authority and his underlying Irish patriotism. When the escaped prisoner, disguised as a poor ballad singer, appeals to the sergeant's sense of national pride through songs and conversation, the sergeant becomes conflicted. In the end, he chooses to let the rebel escape, allowing him to slip away into the night. The play explores themes of national identity, personal conscience, and moral complexity of loyalty during the time of political struggle.

Additionally, she was a passionate advocate for women's rights and gender equality, frequently featuring strong female characters in her works to highlight the power of women to drive social change.

Modern Age and Poetry

The history of English poetry in the 20th century tends to support the frequent remark that poetry is essentially a private art form. Poets of the time sought to break free from traditional forms and themes, exploring new subjects and experimenting with language, structure, and meaning. They often wrote poetry addressing social concerns such as war, mythology, human existence, social disorder, and exploitation. The use of allusions and myths became common, adding depth and complexity to poetic expression. Visual poetry also emerged as a notable trend during this era.

'Imagism' was a poetic movement that emerged between 1912 and 1917, influenced by the theories of T.E. Hulme. Imagism abandoned conventional poetic materials and traditional versification, allowing poets the freedom to choose any subject and to create their own rhythms through *free verse*.

Two of the most influential poets of the Modern Age were W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot, both of them were versatile literary geniuses who made profound contributions to modern English literature. Other prominent poets of the period include E. E. Cummings, Thomas Hardy, Gerard Manley Hopkins, W. H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, Robert Frost, Ted Hughes, Rupert Brooke, Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, Roy Fuller, Keith Douglas, and others.

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939): W. B. Yeats was born near Dublin into a cultured Irish family. He was educated in London but returned to Ireland in 1880 and soon afterwards embarked on a literary career. Yeats is considered one of the most prominent poets of the 20th century, known for his deep engagement with both Irish culture and modernist themes. His poetry evolved significantly over the course of his life, reflecting changes in his personal experiences, political beliefs, and the shifting cultural landscape of Ireland and the wider world. His first poems were published in 1889, and his last were written in 1939. He

also served as an Irish senator for two terms (1922–1928), and in 1923, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Yeats played a vital role in the formation of the Abbey Theatre in 1902 in Dublin, which became a hub for Irish drama. In addition, he was a central figure in the Irish literary revival, working to preserve and celebrate Irish folklore, myths, and traditions through his writings. His narrative poem *The Wandering of Oisin (*1889*),* which first established his reputation, *Poems (*1895*), The Wind among the Reeds (*1899*)* and *The Shadowy Waters (*1900*)*

*The Lake Isle of Innisfree (*1893*)* is one of Yeats's most famous poems. It expresses a deep longing for peace and solitude in nature, reflecting his fascination with mysticism and his desire to escape the complexities of the modern world.

*The Second Coming (*1920*)*, written in the aftermath of World War I, captures a profound sense of chaos and foreboding. He portrays the breakdown of social order and the rise of a new and ominous age.

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888–1965): Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri (USA), and later became a naturalized British subject in 1927. He is regarded as one of the greatest modern English poets. Eliot dominated the English poetic scene until 1930, after which a new generation of poets, led by W. H. Auden and others, emerged. He departed entirely from the Romantic and Victorian traditions, transforming the landscape of English literature with his innovative techniques and profound exploration of the human condition. Over the years, he received honorary degrees from twelve universities across Europe and America. In 1948, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Eliot's first volume of verse, *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917), portrays the boredom, emptiness, and pessimism of his time through contemptuous and often wittily ironical satire. His other notable works include *Poems* (1920), *The Waste Land* (1922), and *Four Quartets* (1944).

His poetry explores the themes such as alienation, spiritual emptiness, and the search for meaning in a split world. He introduced new poetic forms and structures, employing techniques like stream of consciousness, fragmented narratives, and the integration of multiple voices and languages, which became defining features of modern poetry.

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock is one of Eliot's earliest masterpieces. It explores the inner psyche of a modern man paralyzed by self-doubt and indecision, serving as a powerful symbol of alienation and anxiety experienced in the modern age.

The Waste Land (1922), is a long and highly complex poem which brings together a variety

of speakers and narrators, creating a sense of a collective lament and highlighting the diverse experiences of people in a fragmented post-war world. Rich in literary, mythological, religious, and historical allusions, the poem reflects Eliot's perception of the spiritual emptiness and cultural decline of modern life.

The War Poets

The First World War brought many poets to public attention, particularly young men serving in the armed forces, while also providing a new source of inspiration for writers of established reputation. A representative selection of works by poets of this war can be found in *Anthology of War Poetry*, edited by Robert Nichols and published in 1943.Many writers, indeed, lived and served throughout the war and preserved this early passion without any damage. Many poets wrote during World War I, capturing the horrors, emotions, and experiences of soldiers on the front lines. During the war, literature served as a primary form of entertainment and emotional expression for many soldiers. Writing poetry became a way for them to process and articulate their experiences. As a result, hundreds of volumes of war poetry were composed and published. Among the most notable War Poets are Rupert Brooke, Siegfried Sassoon, and Wilfred Owen, each of them made significant and distinct contributions to the literary legacy during the World War I.

Rupert Brooke (1887–1915): Rupert Brooke is often considered the quintessential early war poet. He began writing during the initial stages of World War I and was known for his idealized and patriotic views of war. The romantic and nationalistic sentiment felt by many soldiers at the beginning of the war is reflected in one of his most famous poems, *The Soldier*, in which death is seen as a noble sacrifice, gladly given for one's country. His works often express an idealistic and romantic view of duty, sacrifice, and national pride. Brooke published his first poetry collection in 1911 and gained recognition as a contributor to the Georgian Poetry movement.

The Soldier **(**published posthumously in 1915) is perhaps Brooke's most famous poem. It presents a glorified, idealistic view of death in war. The speaker reflects that if he dies in a foreign land, his body will become part of that land, contributing to its soil and making it a better place. The poem is full of nationalistic pride and conveys the belief that dying for one's country is noble.

Rupert Brooke's poem *The Dead* is part of his collection titled *1914 and Other Poems*. This collection reflects the early patriotic and romantic sentiments of World War I. Brooke died the same year, in April 1915, while serving in the Royal Navy. Brooke's death, before he saw combat, meant that he did not witness the horrors of war firsthand, and his poems were often criticized later for their overly romantic view of war.

Siegfried Sassoon (1886–1967): Siegfried Sassoon was a prominent English war poet, writer, and soldier, best known for his anti-war poetry during the First World War. He fought in France, and much of his anger is directed at the pointlessness of war and at the senior officers who did not seem to realise the death and destruction their orders had caused. He also hated the patriotic satisfaction of the people at home, who believed the heroic stories spread by the government and did not want to know about the misery and suffering of the men who fought.

He was one of the most influential voices to depict the brutality and inhumanity of war. Unlike Rupert Brooke, whose poetry often idealized warfare, Sassoon's work is marked by disillusionment, anger, and a sense of betrayal. His poems frequently criticize military leadership, societal attitudes, and the harsh conditions endured by soldiers on the front lines. As a soldier, Sassoon gained firsthand experience of the war's destruction. In 1957, Siegfried Sassoon was awarded the Queen's Medal for Poetry.

He became widely known for his anti-war poetry in the collections *The Old Huntsman* (1917) and *Counter-Attack* (1918), both of which were published while he was still in the army. A later collection, *The War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon* (1919), includes 64 war poems, most of which were written while Sassoon was in hospital recovering from his injuries. Other notable works include *Satirical Poems* (1926), *Vigils* (1935), and *Collected Poems* (1947).

A Mystic as Soldier reflects the profound shift in the author's perception as war encroaches upon his once-idyllic existence. The poem parallels the broader societal transformation during the First World War, where pre-war idealism gave way to disillusionment and a pervasive sense of loss.

Wilfred Owen (1893–1918): Wilfred Owen is possibly the best-known English poet of the First World War. Like Siegfried Sassoon, he aimed to portray the harsh realities of war to people at home, helping them understand its horrors and the suffering of soldiers. He rejected the romantic patriotism of poets like Rupert Brooke, emphasizing instead that war is fought by real men who bleed and die—not by heroic figures who are more than human.

Wilfred Owen wrote some of the finest British poetry on World War I, composing nearly all of his poems in just over a year. Only five of them were published during his lifetime. His poetry captures the full horror of trench warfare and stands in stark contrast to the romanticized view of war that was common at the time. Most of his best-known poems, including *Dulce et Decorum Est, Futility,* and *Strange Meeting,* were published after his death. His poem, *Strange Meeting (1919)*, in which he imagines a meeting in hell with an enemy soldier he has killed—one who reminds him of their shared humanity. A powerful line from the poem reads: *Whatever hope is yours, was my life also.*

Anthem for Doomed Youth, a war poem, questions the ritualistic and ceremonial way that soldiers are remembered, showing how their deaths are meaningless in the face of the violence of war. His poems are characterized by their vivid imagery, emotional intensity, and critique of the glorification of war. His untimely death just days before the end of the war added a tragic irony to his work.

Other Notable Poets

In addition to the War Poets, several other poets from the Modern Age have made significant contributions to English poetry. These poets include *Thomas Hardy, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Dylan Thomas, Ted Hughes, R. S. Thomas, Philip Larkin,* and *W. H. Auden.* Their works cover a wide range of themes, from personal introspection and nature to social issues and the human condition.

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928): Thomas Hardy is one of the most renowned poets and novelists in the history of English literature. He was born in the village of Higher Bockhampton, in the county of Dorset. Hardy published eight volumes of poetry and a long verse drama, *The Dynasts* (1908), which took 30 years to complete. About a thousand of his poems were published during his lifetime. His poetry shows great joy in the natural beauty of the world, and also in the sudden touch of humour in events although the humour is sometimes bitter that helps man to go on living through hardship and suffering. Thomas Hardy's major novels include *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1895)—explore themes of fate, love, rural life, social injustice, and the tragic struggles of individuals against societal and natural forces. His popular poetry include *The Darkling Thrush, The Ruined Maid, Channel Firing, After a Journey, During Wind and Rain.*

Hardy's poetry is known for its reflection on the bleakness of life, with recurring themes such as nature, love, loss, and the inevitability of death. His works often explore the harshness of the human condition and the impersonal force of nature. However, his poetry does not always suggest that life is a bitter tragedy rather, it offers a nuanced perspective on human experience and fate.

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889): Born to a comfortable Anglican family in the London suburb of Stratford, Essex, G. M. Hopkins is a unique figure in the history of English poetry. He wrote his poems but they were not generally available until 1918, when his friend Robert Bridges published a slim volume of poems culled from his letters and manuscripts. Hopkins was a priest whose poetry

is known for its unique style and religious themes, such as the relationship of man to God and the problem of suffering in a world created by the God, as well as delight in God's creation of the natural world. His use of sprung rhythm and innovative language gives his works a distinctive and powerful sound. Gerard Manley Hopkins' masterpieces, including *The Wreck of the Deutschland* (1876), a great ode, and other poems such as *The Windhover* (1877), *God's Grandeur* (1877), *The Terrible Sonnets* (1879–1881), *Pied Beauty* (1877), *Spring and Fall* (1880), *Carrion Comfort* (1885), and *As Kingfishers Catch Fire* (1918), showcase his unique poetic style, religious themes, and deep exploration of nature, faith, and personal struggle.

The Windhover is one of Hopkins' most famous poems. It expresses the speaker's awe of a falcon in flight. The poem connects the beauty of nature with religious reverence, symbolizing Christ's glory.

Dylan Thomas (1914–1953): Born in Swansea, Wales, Dylan Thomas is famous for his acutely lyrical and emotional poetry. He may be described as the originator of neo-romantic poetry in the 1940s and an opponent of intellectualism in verse. His work emphasizes imagination, emotion, intuition, spontaneity, and organic form. Considered one of the greatest Welsh poets of all time, he began working for the BBC in 1945. His poetry often deals with themes of life, death, and the complexities of human emotion.

Dylan Thomas's works appeared in *18 Poems (1934), Twenty-five Poems (1936), The Map of Love (1939)* and *Deaths and Entrances (1946).* His poetic masterpieces include *And death shall have no dominion* (1934), *The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower* (1934), *Fern Hill* (1945), *Poem in October* (1944), *A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire and of a Child in London* (1945).

Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night (1951) is perhaps Thomas's most famous poem, written to his father as he lay dying. In this poem, the speaker urges his father to fight against death with dignity and passion. It reflects the poet's own fears and struggles with mortality.

And Death Shall Have No Dominion emphasizes the eternal nature of the human spirit, suggesting that death cannot truly conquer life. It explores themes of rebirth and the resilience of the soul.

Under the Milk Wood (1953), a radio play, is considered one of Dylan Thomas's greatest works which shows a day in the life of a small Welsh village, with its secrets, ironies, goodness, wickedness, foolishness, and humour.

Ted Hughes (1930–1998): Ted Hughes, one of the giants of twentieth-century British poetry, was born in Yorkshire. After serving in the Royal Air Force, he attended Cambridge, where he studied archaeology and anthropology, taking a special interest in myths and legends. Hughes is known for his intense, often dark poetry that explores human nature, the natural world, and mythology. He is particularly famous for his vivid depictions of animals and the brutal realities of existence.

Ted Hughes's poetic masterpieces include *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957), *Crow* (1970), *Crow Wakes (*1971*), Eat Crow (*1972*)* and collections such as *Lupercal* (1960), *Wodwo* (1967), *Tales from Ovid* (1997), and *Birthday Letters* (1998), all of which showcase his intense focus on nature, mythology, human psychology, and the raw, elemental forces that shape life and death.

The Hawk in the Rain is a collection of Ted Hughes's forty best-known poems. It examines the relationship between humans and nature, using the image of a hawk in the rain as a symbol of power and resilience. One of the poems, *The Thought-Fox* serves as a metaphor for the creative process, using the image of a fox moving through darkness to represent the arrival of inspiration.

R. S. Thomas (1913–2000): Ronald Stuart Thomas, a Welsh poet, is widely known as a literary figure. Born in Cardiff, the Welsh poet wrote about the people of his country in a style that some critics have compared to the nation's harsh and rugged terrain. His poems attracted attention in the late 1950s and early 1960s. He writes of the traditional country landscapes—the sheep on a hill, the cottages, the farmer in the fields—and points out that the scene is delightful only from a distance. His works often reflect deep concerns with Welsh identity, religion, and nature. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1996.

R.S. Thomas was a minister of religion, and behind his poems lies the idea that the hardness of life can only be made bearable by the love of man and the love of God, since qualities of mind alone are not enough. Some of his best verse appears in *Song at the Year's Turning* (1955), *The Bread of Truth* (1963), and *Pietà* (1966).

On the Farm is a short but powerful piece known for its deep and often somber depictions of rural life, nature, and the spiritual emptiness the author sometimes perceived in modern existence.

Philip Larkin (1922–1985): Philip Larkin was born in Coventry, England, in 1922. He earned his BA from St. John's College, Oxford, where he befriended novelist and poet Kingsley Amis, and graduated with First Class Honors in English. Larkin is known for his pessimistic yet lucid portrayal of modern life. He is probably the best-known poet writing today in this

tradition of quietness. He was strongly influenced by Hardy and, like him, looks back to the past with a sense of what has been lost. His poetry often addresses themes such as death, love, and the mundane aspects of daily existence, reflecting a deep sense of melancholy and a search for meaning in life. *The Less Deceived* (1955), *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964), and *High Windows* (1974) are representative works, but he also edited *The Oxford Book of Twentieth-Century English Verse*. In addition, *Aubade (1977),* and *This Be The Verse (1971)* are widely regarded as some of his most powerful and thought-provoking works, each exploring themes of mortality, human relationships, and the complexities of modern life.

Aubade is a poem that explores the theme of existential fear and terror of death. It expresses Larkin's intense dread of the inevitable end, capturing the profound solitude and anxiety that come with human awareness of mortality.

This Be The Verse is one of Larkin's most famous poems. It presents a darkly scornful view of family life and the generational cycle of emotional damage, culminating in a striking and memorable line of blunt advice.

Wystan Hugh Auden (1907–1973): W. H. Auden was an English-American poet and one of the leading literary figures of the 20th century. Auden grew up in Birmingham, England, and was known for his extraordinary intellect and wit. A versatile poet, he explored a wide range of topics, including politics, love, history, and human psychology. From 1956 to 1961, he was professor of poetry at Oxford University. He continued to publish poetry, including *Poems* (1930), *The Orators* (1932), *Look, Stranger!* (1936), *New Year Letter* (1941), *The Age of Anxiety* (1948) — for which he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize — and *Collected Shorter Poems* (1950). His two anthologies — *The Poet's Tongue* (1935), co-edited with John Garrett, and *The Oxford Book of Light Verse* (1938) — were highly influential and helped to stimulate interest in poetry.

He is celebrated for both his mastery of formal poetry and his engagement with social issues. His poems often communicate a strong sense of the realities of everyday life. He wrote many lyrical poems, of which *Lullaby* is a celebrated love lyric that revolves around the themes of love, beauty, and the inevitable passage of time.

The poem *Twelve Songs* is also sometimes known as *Funeral Blues* is a powerful elegy mourning the death of a loved one. The speaker calls for the world to stop in grief and later expresses how life feels meaningless without the person, ending with the bleak realization that nothing good can come again.

September 1, 1939 was written about the Spanish Civil War and on the beginning of the World War II. In this poem, he explores the failure of political systems, the darkness of human nature, and the need for individual responsibility and love in troubled times.

English Language in Twentieth Century

The twentieth century witnessed significant transformations in the use, spread, and global dominance of the English language. During this period, English became more than just a language spoken by native English speakers in Britain and its colonies. It evolved into a global lingua franca, serving as the primary language for communication in various fields such as business, science, academia, and international relations. Here are the key areas in which English played a crucial role in the twentieth century:

The Language of Public Prestige

In the twentieth century, English emerged as a language of global prestige. During this time, English rapidly evolved into a language associated with social mobility, power, and prestige. As Britain maintained a vast empire at the beginning of the century, and the United States rose as a global superpower by mid-century, English gained prominence as the language of government, diplomacy, and international media. According to Crystal (2003), English came to symbolize modernity, development, and opportunity, especially in post-colonial societies where it was often retained as an official or second language to preserve neutrality and administrative efficiency. The perceived prestige of English was reinforced through its association with Western culture, education, and technology, influencing non-native speakers to adopt it as a marker of elite status and cosmopolitan identity.

With the development of global mass media—especially television, movies, and radio—English language content became widely accessible across the world. Public speeches, news broadcasts, and advertisements increasingly relied on English, cementing its role as the language of public discourse and authority. Hollywood, British news outlets, and the global spread of pop culture through music, films, and literature further solidified English's position as a language of prestige. Similarly, Crystal (2003, p. 3) highlights the prestige associated with the English language and writes:

> And if English is not your mother tongue, you may still have mixed feelings about it. You may be strongly motivated to learn it, because you know it will put you in touch with more people than any other language; but at the same time, you know it will take a great deal of effort to master it, and you may begrudge that effort. Having made progress, you will feel pride in your achievement, and savour the communicative power you have at your disposal…

In addition, the English language has become the language of academic institutions, and learning English has got wide popularity. Learning English has remained a matter of public prestige. People perceived the English language as a new fashion language that each one should know or at least understand. In addition, it became the language of diplomacy and negotiations.

The Language of Communication and Vocation

Throughout the twentieth century, English grew to dominate global communication and vocational spheres. This growth was due in part to the expansion of multinational corporations, international air travel, and the internet—all of which adopted English as a primary working language. In *The Politics of English as a World Language*, Christian Mair explains how English became a 'default' medium in business, trade, and international organizations like the UN, WHO, and IMF. The rise of English-medium instruction in technical and professional training programs further deep-rooted its vocational importance. Industries such as aviation, medicine, computing, and international law began to rely heavily on English terminology and standards, making proficiency in English a prerequisite for global employment. As a result, English came to be viewed not just as a cultural asset, but as a critical economic tool and a global lingua franca. Similarly, Crystal (2003, p. 12) writes:

> The prospect that a lingua franca might be needed for the whole world is something which has emerged strongly only in the twentieth century, and since the 1950s in particular. The chief international forum for political communication – the United Nations – dates only from 1945. Since then, many international bodies have come into being, such as the World Bank (also 1945), UNESCO and UNICEF (both 1946), the World Health Organization (1948), and the International Atomic Energy Agency (1957). Never before have so many countries (around 190, in the case of some UN bodies) been represented in single meeting places.

By the twentieth century, English was no longer confined to the British Isles or its former colonies but had become the dominant language in global communication. This shift was largely driven by the globalization of trade, travel, and technological advancements.

The Language of Academia

In academic circles, the twentieth century saw English replace other dominant scholarly languages like French and German to become the dominant language for academic writing, research collaboration, and higher education. Many important books were published in English or translated into it due to its widespread popularity. The rise of leading scientific publications such as *Nature*, *The Lancet*, and *Science* further established English as the language of choice for the dissemination of scientific and academic knowledge.

Universities around the world began offering English-medium programs, especially in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Ken Hyland, in his article *Academic English: A Lingua Franca?* highlights the centrality of English in the dissemination of research, noting that over 80% of indexed academic journals are published in English. This shift gave English a gatekeeping role in academic advancement, as scholars had to publish in English to gain international recognition and funding. Norman Fairclough's *Language and Power* adds that this dominance also influences the ideological framing of knowledge,

privileging certain ways of thinking while marginalizing others. English thus became both a bridge to global academia and a barrier for those without access to its mastery. It is now the primary language of academic publications and international research.

Many academic institutions worldwide base their hiring, promotion, reward, and graduation systems on publication in internationally indexed journals. In this sense, academics and graduate students often have no choice but to publish in an international arena that is overwhelmingly dominated by English.

In the twentieth century, English underwent a transformation from being a language spoken in specific regions to becoming a global language of prestige, communication, and academia. It played an integral role in shaping global politics, economics, and culture, while also becoming essential in scientific, technological, and academic advancements. The widespread adoption of English as a second language in many countries further entrenched its status as a lingua franca, ensuring its continued dominance in the twenty-first century.

Exercise

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. Which of the following characteristics best describes Modern English literature?
   i. Emphasis on romantic ideals and nature
   ii. Opposition to Victorian attitudes and adoption of new techniques
   iii. Continuation of Victorian traditions
   iv. Focus on religion and ethics

b. Which literary movement is not a key feature of Modern English literature?
   i. Surrealism
   ii. Impressionism
   iii. Magical Realism
   iv. Absurdism

c. Who is mainly known for using the stream of consciousness technique in literature?
   i. Virginia Woolf
   ii. George Bernard Shaw
   iii. E. M. Forster
   iv. George Orwell

d. Which of the following literary work by George Orwell is an example of science fiction?
   i. Animal Farm
   ii. A Clergyman's Daughter
   iii. Keep the Aspidistra Flying
   iv. Nineteen Eighty-Four

e. Which of the following themes became prominent in Modern literature due to war and industrialization?
   i. Chivalry and heroism
   ii. Alienation and isolation
   iii. Religious devotion
   iv. Appreciation of nature and pastoral beauty

f. Which of the following influential 20th century authors was not Irish-born?
   i. George Bernard Shaw
   ii. W. B. Yeats
   iii. James Joyce
   iv. William Golding

g. Which of the following dramatists is associated with the comedy of ideas in English drama?
   i. T. S. Eliot
   ii. Harold Pinter
   iii. G. B. Shaw
   iv. J. M. Synge

h. Which of the following poets is not a war poet?
   i. Philip Larkin
   ii. Siegfried Sassoon
   iii. Rupert Brooke
   iv. Wilfred Owen

i. English became the dominant language in the twentieth century because…
   i. it was the oldest language in the world.
   ii. Britain's empire expanded and the US rose as a superpower.
   iii. it was easy to learn.
   iv. it was spoken only in the British Isles.

B. **Write short answer to the following questions.**

a. Briefly introduce the Modern Age and describe its key developments in English literature.
b. What are the main features of twentieth-century novels? Explain.
c. Briefly explain the role of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf as experimental novelists.
d. Why is G. B. Shaw considered a great English dramatist of twentieth-century? Justify your answer.
e. Why is J. M. Synge is viewed as a dramatist of the life of ordinary people? explain.
f. Describe the role of Augusta Lady Gregory as a promoter of change and liberation.
g. Write short notes on the following topics.
    i. Rudyard Kipling
    ii. Women Novelists in the 20th Century
    iii. W. B. Yeats
    iv. War Poets
    v. Development of the English language in the 20th Century

C. **Write long answers to the following questions.**

a. Why could the modern writers no longer write in the traditional manner in the twentieth century? Give your opinion.
b. Make a list of notable novelists of the twentieth century and briefly explain their contributions.
c. Explain how E. M. Forster and Rudyard Kipling can be considered realist novelists of the twentieth century.
d. Explain how the English language developed as the language of academia during the Modern Age.

Project Work

Rupert Brooke, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen are renowned war poets. Visit your school library or browse websites to collect their masterpieces and analyse the basic features of war poetry.

English Literature in the Postmodern Age

Before You Read

a. In your opinion, what does the term 'postmodern' suggest in English Literature?

b. Why do you think the English language we use today is different than Anglo-Saxon English? Discuss with your friends.

c. Do you know any Nepali literary text translated into English? Share your ideas with your friends.

Introduction

Until the 1920s, the term *modern* was generally used to mean new or contemporary, but thereafter it came to be used for a particular period between the two World Wars (1914-1945). About half a century later, a new term emerged: *postmodern,* referring to the period that followed the modern era. By the mid-1960s, critics like Susan Sontag and Ihab Hassan had begun to point out some of the characteristics, in Europe and in the United States, of what we now call postmodernism. While the postmodern period is generally considered to have begun in the mid-1960s, some critics argue that it only fully emerged in the 1980s. We can say that *postmodernism* has been given to the extension of modernism into a more radical questioning of the integrity of language and the uncertainty of all linguistic performance. Simply put, literature written after 1945 (after World War II) is generally known as postmodern literature.

Postmodernism is hard to define, because it is a concept that appears in a wide variety of disciplines or areas of study, including art, architecture, music, film, literature, sociology, communications, fashion, and technology. Postmodernism often rejects the boundaries between high and low forms of art and literature, as well as the distinctions between genres and forms of writing and storytelling. It holds that knowledge and facts are always relative to particular situations, and that it is both futile and impossible to assign any fixed meaning to ideas, concepts, or events.

Postmodernism was not the invention of literary critics, but literature can certainly claim to be one of its most important laboratories. In addition, the transition from modernism to postmodernism involves a shift from poetry to fiction. Literary postmodernism has tended to be focused on one kind of writing, namely, narrative fiction.

Brian McHale suggests that while modernist fiction is epistemological-that is, concerned with problems of knowledge and understanding, postmodernist fiction is ontological- that

is, concerned with the creation and interrelation of worlds of being. In one sense, Beckett's rejection of the 'arts of success' might be said to mark the inauguration of postmodernism, in that it involves a refusal of modernist potency.

Postmodern Literature

English literature in the Postmodern Age emerged after World War II, gaining particular momentum in the 1960s and 1970s, and it continued to influence literature even today. It came as a reaction against the ideals of modernism. These ideals include a rejection of absolute truths, linear narratives, and the belief that literature must have a clear meaning or structure. Postmodern literature is often characterized by its use of narrative techniques such as fragmentation, paradox, and the unreliable narrator.

Postmodernism is an attack on the established norms of the logocentric modernist period and moves towards the age of self-realization. It is the period of multiple identities and infinite meanings. As a continuation of literary experimentation, postmodernism focuses on a plurality of meaning, absurdity, sexuality and innovation in narrative techniques and literary structure. During this period, English literature evolved with multiple characteristics, nature, experiments, themes and characters, reflecting the fragmented and multifaceted nature of contemporary life.

Stuart Sim (2011) states that, in a general sense, postmodernism is to be regarded as a rejection of many, if not most, of the cultural certainties on which life in the West has been structured over the last couple of centuries. This means that postmodern literature is characterized by a rejection of established concepts and traditional beliefs inherited from the past. Supporting this, Sheeba (2017) states that ambiguity, rejection of the ultimate faith in science, anti-positivist and anti-verificationist stance, autonomous rational mind, individuality, truthful perspective, globalization, multiculturalism, and pluralism are major features of postmodern literature. Generally, we find the following stylistic techniques in postmodern literature.

Pastiche: Pastiche (pronounced *pass-TEESH*) is a creative work that imitates another author or genre. Pastiche means to combine, or 'paste' together, multiple elements. It is a way of paying respect or homage to great works of the past. Pastiche differs from parody in that it does not mock the works it imitates—however, the tone of pastiche is often humorous.

Intertextuality: Intertextuality is a literary device that creates an interrelationship between texts and generates related understanding across separate works. It refers to the interconnection between similar or related literary works that reflect and influence an audience's interpretation of a given text. Intertextuality is a literary discourse strategy used in novels, poetry, theatre, and even in non-written texts such as performances and digital media.

Metafiction: Metafiction is a form of literature that emphasizes its own constructed nature and continually reminds the reader that they are engaging with a fictional work. It is self-conscious about language, literary form, and storytelling, and it directly or indirectly draws attention to its status as an artifact. Metafiction is frequently used as a form of parody or a tool to challenge literary conventions and explores the relationship between fiction, reality, life, and art.

Temporal distortion: Temporal distortion is a technique commonly used in postmodern fiction that involves manipulation of time, including fragmentation and non-linear narratives. While also present in modernist literature, in postmodern works it is often used for irony or thematic complexity.

Minimalism: Minimalism is a movement in art, dance, music, and literature that began in the 1960s. It emphasizes simplicity in design, structure, and form, often using repetition and minimizing the artist's personal expression.

Maximalism: Maximalism is the opposite of minimalism. It reflects a tendency toward excess in form, content, or expression. It exists in the tradition of long works like *The Odyssey*. Authors defend their work as being as long as it needs to be, depending on the subject material that is covered.

Magical realism: Magical realism, also known as magic realism or marvelous realism, is a style of fiction that presents a realistic view of the modern world while incorporating magical elements. It typically refers to fiction in which magical or supernatural aspects are presented within an otherwise ordinary or mundane setting. A well-known example of magical realism is Gabriel García Márquez's *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings.*

Development of Translation Literature

The history of translation dates long back in human civilization. Initiated with historical and religious books like the *Bible*, the *Ramayana*, the act of translation has become a recurrent phenomenon in the production and the dissemination of knowledge. The most significant turn in the history of translation came with the Bible translation. Upon examining the history of translation, George Steiner divides its theory and practice into four distinct periods.

The first period extended from the Roman translators Cicero and Horace up to the publication of Alexander Fraser Tyler's essay *On the Principles of Translation* in 1791. The central characteristic of the period was the immediate and empirical focus of the practical work of translation.

The second period ran up to the publication of Valery Larbaud's *Sous l'invocation de Saint Jerome* in 1946. That period was marked by a hermeneutic methodology of approach. The third period began in the 1940s. There was the introduction of structural linguistics and communicative theory in the field of translation. The fourth, which co-existed with the

third, has its origin in the 1960s. There is a reversion to the hermeneutic approach recently. The emergent nationalism, especially after the 1960s, has directed the debate of translation towards the issue of culture. The debate of cultural (mis) translation has occupied a crucial place, especially in the practice of translation of 'third world' texts into 'first world' languages.

The Postmodern period saw a significant growth in translation literature, shaped by globalization, postcolonial discourse, and a renewed interest in cross-cultural communication. In addition, due to multiculturalism and open market policies, translation became a demand of the people. It was no longer seen merely as a technical process but as a creative and interpretive act that played a crucial role in the exchange of ideas, identities, and literary traditions.

Writers from former colonies such as India, Africa, and the Caribbean gained global recognition through translations. Works originally written in local or indigenous languages were translated into English, allowing postcolonial voices to reach to the wider audiences. For example, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) by Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, originally written in English but deeply rooted in Igbo culture, has been translated into over 50 languages, amplifying African narratives on the global stage. A Nobel laureate and prominent postmodern author, Orhan Pamuk is best known for novels such as *My Name is Red* (1998) and *Snow* (2002), which helped bring Turkish literature into the global spotlight through their translations.

Influenced by postmodern theories, translators are now seen as co-creators, not just conveyors of meaning. With the rise of digital media, access to translated works has expanded significantly. Online platforms, publishing houses, and literary awards now actively support and promote translated literature. In recent years, machine and AI-based translation has also emerged as a major development and is now widely practised.

In the Nepali context, *Muna Madan* was first translated into English in 1970. Some of Laxmi Prasad Devkota's English translations were also published in *Indreni*, a poetry magazine of the time. Many other Nepali literary works have since been translated, helping introduce them to a global audience. Notable examples include Pallav Ranjan's translation of Devkota's *The Pilgrims* (1995), Madhav Prasad Ghimire's *Ashwatthama* (1998), Parijat's novel *Blue Mimosa* (1972), Diamond Shamsher Rana's *The Wake of the White Tiger* (2011), and Bharat Jangam's *The Black Sun* (1990), among others.

Growth of Diaspora

Diaspora can be defined as 'migrants or descendants of migrants, whose identity and sense of belonging have been shaped by their migration experience and background *(IOM Glossary on Migration, 2019).* While the term was originally used to describe the forced displacement of certain peoples, *diasporas* is now generally used to describe those who

identify with a homeland, but live outside of it. Definitions of 'diasporas' also include not only first-generation emigrants, but also foreign-born children of these individuals, as long as they maintain some link to their parent's home country.

The Postmodern period witnessed a significant growth in diaspora literature, shaped by global migration, exile, displacement, and identity struggles. As people moved across borders due to colonization, war, education, or economic opportunity, their experiences became central themes in literature. Diaspora literature includes the works written by authors living outside their ancestral homeland, often exploring themes such as belonging, cultural identity, nostalgia, alienation, and hybrid identity. Many authors have addressed multiculturalism, the emigrant sensibility, inner conflicts, and the sense of loss or split identity. They reflect the pangs and pain of exile, displacement, nostalgia, and the quest for identity beyond borders in an alien land. Key issues such as language, culture, ideology, justice, and equality are often captured in diaspora literature. For example, V. S. Naipaul, one of the prominent diaspora writers, frequently delves into pessimistic themes. In the novel *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), Naipaul tells the story of Mr. Biswas, a man who longs to own a house of his own and another novel *The Mimic Men* (1967) critiques newly liberated countries and explores the individual's struggle with identity.

Notable figures in diaspora literature include writers like V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri, Hanif Kureishi, and Sumayya Lee, as well as scholars like William Safran, who have significantly contributed to the understanding and development of diaspora studies. The growth of diaspora literature in the postmodern period has enriched English literature by introducing diverse voices and global perspectives, with themes of migration, memory, and cultural fusion becoming central to literary exploration.

Subaltern Literature and its Development

Subalterns are the increasingly marginalized groups of our society. The term 'subaltern' refers to individuals or communities in specific marginalized situations within a given cultural or social context. It particularly denotes those in Third World countries who are excluded from dominant political, social, and economic structures.

The term 'subaltern' was first used by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci to refer to groups outside the hegemonic power structure. Literally, he refers to any person or group of inferior rank and station, whether because of race, class, gender, ethnicity or religion. It was later popularized by theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, particularly through her influential essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* She used the term for the colonised and the oppressed people, working class, and the women whose voice has been muted. Spivak argues that the subaltern cannot speak, as their voices are often silenced or appropriated by dominant discourses. She critiques superficial global efforts at inclusion, stating, "There is no virtue in global laundry lists with 'woman' as a pious."

Subaltern literature refers to a body of literary works that give voice to the marginalized, oppressed, and silenced sections of the society, those excluded from dominant power structures due to caste, class, gender, race, ethnicity, or colonial rule. Subaltern literature is an emerging discourse, which gives a new wave in the field of research and writings of the twenty-first century language and literature. Subaltern literature covers the themes related to the masses, Dalits, the deprived, oppressed, marginalized, neglected, and indigenous sections of the society.

During the postmodern era, literature expanded beyond elite and mainstream narratives to include alternative voices—those of people who had historically been denied agency. These narratives reshaped the literary landscape by bringing silenced histories and marginalized experiences to the forefront. They called for representation, justice, and dignity, prompting readers to rethink history, power, and literature from the perspective of the margins. This period witnessed the emergence of subaltern voices across the world, particularly in postcolonial societies such as India, Africa, and Latin America.

Deivasigamani (2019) analyzes subaltern literatures including Dalit, Tribal, African American, and Indigenous highlighting how these narratives document the sufferings endured by marginalized communities. In his study, he examines their common themes of resistance and social transformation.

Subaltern literature sheds light on the lived experiences, struggles, and acts of resistance of marginalized communities. Many of the literary works are grounded in real-life events and are often written in the first person, carrying a strong emotional and political tone. They challenge social injustices, discriminatory practices, and dominant historical narratives. Subaltern writers frequently employ local dialects and native idioms, deliberately moving away from standard English to capture the authentic voice of their communities.

Subaltern literature has been shaped by several influential writers who have given voice to marginalized communities across the world. Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Untouchable (1935)* explores the struggles and dehumanization faced by marginalized people, particularly those from the lower castes. Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) examines the psychological impact of colonization on Black people, while Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* (1987) offers a powerful narrative about the trauma of slavery in African American communities. Sandra Cisneros, in *The House on Mango Street* (1984), portrays the struggles of a young Latina girl navigating her identity in a marginalized community in the U.S. Each of these writers brings to the forefront the lived experiences, resistance, and resilience of the subaltern, challenging dominant narratives and social hierarchies.

Cyber Literature/Digital Literature

Cyber literature refers to literary works that are created, distributed, and accessed through digital platforms such as websites, apps, and blogs, using technologies like computers,

the internet, smartphones, and e-readers. It represents a new literary movement that uses electronic space, particularly the internet as a medium, offering opportunities for people to read, write, and access literary works. Cyber literature goes beyond traditional print literature that can enhance or transform storytelling.

Cyber literature has emerged since the end of the last century, around the 1990s. This form of literature developed as a result of technological advancement and gained prominence with the rise of the internet, which introduced new conveniences and reshaped reading habits, literary practices, and worldviews. However, the emergence of cyber literature has been received and appreciated differently across the literary world.

Many terms have been used to refer to cyber literature, including literary machine, cybertext, digital literary, digital literature, and electronic literature. Electronic literature, in particular, has close affinities with digital arts, computer games, and other forms associated with networked and programmable media. Regardless of the term used, cyber literature refers to written literary texts that are distributed and read on a screen. The development of computer networks, along with the fluid and dynamic nature of digitized information, enables fictional worlds to evolve, be modified and even give rise to entirely new worlds. As a result, the long-standing dominance of the printed book is now shifting to the margins of literate culture. This shift is allowing writers to experiment with form, structure, and reader interaction, marking a new phase in literary evolution.

Cyber literature includes literary texts such as prose and poetry, online literature, digital magazines, and collections of classical texts. These texts often incorporate multimedia elements such as hyperlinks, images, audio, and video that enhance the reading experience and offer new dimensions to storytelling. These literary works offer instant access from anywhere in the world, fostering a more connected and diverse literary culture for wider audiences.

With the advent of e-books and audiobooks, readers now have unprecedented access to a vast array of literary works at their fingertips. Digital platforms enable readers to carry entire libraries in their pockets, allowing them to read or listen to books anytime and anywhere. In addition, social media has democratized literature, amplifying diverse voices and enabling writers from various backgrounds to reach global audiences. Beyond convenience and accessibility, the digital medium opens up new possibilities for interactive storytelling, multimedia integration, and nonlinear narratives—features that transcend the traditional limitations of print literature.

Michael Joyce's *afternoon, a story* (1990) is a pioneering example of hypertext fiction, an example of digital literature, that explores the potential of hypertext for storytelling.

It allows readers to navigate a nonlinear narrative by clicking on links embedded in the text, creating a unique and interactive reading experience. This form of digital literature challenges traditional linear storytelling and opens up new possibilities for narrative structure. Interactive poetry, digital poems with sound effects and motion, blogs, web novels, social media storytelling, fan fiction, and AI-generated texts are also some examples of digital literature. Some notable writers of cyber literature include William Gibson, Michael Joyce, Shelley Jackson, Stuart Moulthrop, Mark Amerika, Nick Montfort, Rupi Kaur and many others, all of whom have explored innovative forms of storytelling through digital platforms and technologies.

The Representative Literary Authors of the Age and their Major Works

A number of great writers helped transform contemporary literature during the Postmodern Period. Notable postmodern writers include a wide range of novelists, poets, and playwrights. The influence and contributions of these intellectuals, postmodern literature evolved to reflect the impact of new ideas more strongly.

Notable postmodern authors include Philip Larkin, Ted Hughes, R. S. Thomas, W. H. Auden, Anthony Burgess, John Osborne, Salman Rushdie, John Barth, Italo Calvino, Don DeLillo, John Fowles, Joseph Heller, Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut and David Foster Wallace. Other distinguished writers associated with postmodernism who have received the Nobel Prize for Literature include Samuel Beckett (1969), Gabriel García Márquez (1982), William Golding (1983), Toni Morrison (1993), V. S. Naipaul (2001), Harold Pinter (2005), Doris Lessing (2007), Herta Müller (2009) and many others.

Seamus Heaney (1939–2013): Seamus Heaney was a renowned Irish poet and playwright. A native of Northern Ireland, Heaney was the author of over 20 volumes of poetry and criticism, and edited several widely used anthologies. Among his best-known works, *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) is perhaps his most famous collection, evoking a hard, mainly rural life and the struggles of ordinary people. His other works include *Door into the Dark* (1969), *Wintering Out* (1972), *North* (1975), *Field Work* (1979), *Station Island* (1984), *The Haw Lantern* (1987), *Seeing Things* (1991), *The Spirit Level* (1996), *Electric Light* (2001), *District and Circle* (2006) and *Human Chain* (2010). In addition, he also published a widely praised translation of the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf*. Heaney was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995 for works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth, which exalt everyday miracles and the living past.

V. S. Naipaul (1932–2018): V. S. Naipaul was a Trinidadian-British writer who explored the conditions of subalterns in his work. *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961) is often considered his masterpiece. Other notable works include *An Area of Darkness* (1965), *The Mimic Men* (1967), *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977), *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), and many others. His novels and travel writings critically examine themes of colonialism, displacement, and cultural identity, portraying the complexities of postcolonial societies. He received the Nobel

Prize for Literature in 2001 for having united perceptive narrative and incorruptible scrutiny in works that compel readers to see the presence of suppressed histories.

Gabriel García Márquez (1927–2014): Gabriel García Márquez was a Colombian novelist and writer, best known for popularizing magical realism. The publication of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) and its subsequent international success transformed him into one of the greatest writers of the 20th century. His other notable works include *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985), *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1981), *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975), *Of Love and Other Demons* (1994), *The General in His Labyrinth* (1989), and his novella *No One Writes to the Colonel* (1961). He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982 for his novels and short stories, in which the fantastic and the realistic are combined in a richly composed world of imagination, reflecting the life and conflicts of a continent.

Salman Rushdie (1947): Salman Rushdie was born in Bombay, India. He is an Indian-born British and American novelist. His work often combines magical realism with historical fiction and primarily explores connections, disruptions, and migrations between Eastern and Western civilizations, typically set on the Indian subcontinent. Rushdie's second novel, *Midnight's Children* (1981), won both the Booker Prize and the Best of the Booker, establishing him as a major literary figure. His other notable works include *Shame* (1983), *The Satanic Verses* (1988), *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), and *Quichotte* (2019), a collection of stories, *East, West* (1994), a memoir, *Joseph Anton* (2012), and three collections of essays, including *Languages of Truth* (2021).

John Barth (1930–2024): John Barth is an American writer best known for his novels that combine philosophical depth and complexity with biting satire and boisterous, often bawdy humour. He wrote a notable essay of literary criticism titled *The Literature of Exhaustion* (1967), which argues that all writing is essentially imitation and is widely considered a manifesto of postmodern literature. His fourth novel, *Giles Goat-Boy* (1966), is a prime example of the metafictional style that *defines postmodern literature.*

Italo Calvino (1923–1985): Italo Calvino was an Italian journalist, short-story writer, and novelist whose imaginative fables established him as one of the most important fiction writers of the 20th century. His best-known works include *Cosmicomics*, a collection of short stories (1965), and the novels *The Baron in the Trees* (1957), *Invisible Cities* (1972) and *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler (1979).* His novel *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* is a brilliant example of a metanarrative.

Don DeLillo (1936): Don DeLillo is an American novelist, short story writer, playwright, screenwriter, and essayist. His works have covered subjects as diverse as television, nuclear war, the complexities of language, art, the advent of the Digital Age, mathematics, politics, economics, and sports. His novel *White Noise* (1985) brought him widespread recognition. His other notable works are *Underworld* (1997), a historical novel tracing America from the dawn of the Cold War to the birth of the Internet, and *Libra* (1988), a novel about the Kennedy assassination.

John Robert Fowles (1926-2005): John Robert Fowles was born in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, England. He is best known for his works *The Collector* (1963), *The Magus* (1966), and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969). *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is a historical novel with a major emphasis on metafiction. Fowles was a prominent figure in postmodern literature, known for his experimental narrative techniques, philosophical themes, and exploration of human nature and freedom. Fowles drew inspiration from his life in rural England, which had a profound influence on his writing. His works earned critical acclaim for their intellectual depth and innovative style.

Joseph Heller (1923–1999): Joseph Heller was an American novelist and playwright whose satirical novel *Catch-22* (1961) redefined war literature with its absurdist critique of military bureaucracy and the futility of war. Born in Brooklyn, New York, he served as a U.S. Army Air Corps bombardier during World War II. Heller used his experiences to craft biting satire, later writing novels like *Something Happened* (1974) and *Closing Time* (1994), a sequel to *Catch-22.* Heller's dark humor, non-linear storytelling, and sharp social commentary made him a key figure in postmodern American literature.

Thomas Pynchon (1937): Thomas Pynchon is an American novelist known for his complex and highly imaginative works that blend history, science, politics, and pop culture. A key figure in postmodern literature, Pynchon gained widespread recognition with his novel *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), which explores themes of horror, technology, and control during and after World War II. His other notable works include *V.* (1963), *The Crying of Lot 49* (1965), and *Mason & Dixon* (1997). Solitary and rarely appearing in public, Pynchon is admired for his rich prose, intricate plots, and satirical take on modern society.

Kurt Vonnegut (1922–2007): Kurt Vonnegut was an American writer known for his satirical and darkly humorous novels that blend science fiction with social criticism. He is best known for *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), a novel based on his experiences as a prisoner of war during the bombing of Dresden in World War II. Vonnegut's works often explore themes like free will, the absurdity of war, and the dangers of unchecked technology. His distinctive voice, simple style, and use of irony made him one of the most influential American authors of the 20th century.

David Foster Wallace (1962–2008): David Foster Wallace was an American novelist, short story writer and essayist best known for his groundbreaking novel *Infinite Jest* (1996), a dense and ambitious work that explores addiction, entertainment, and the search for meaning in modern life. His works provide a dark, often satirical analysis of American culture. A leading figure in post-postmodern literature, Wallace was known for his innovative narrative style, footnotes, digressions, and deep philosophical insight. His nonfiction, including essays like those in *Consider the Lobster* and *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again*, combined humor with sharp cultural critique. Wallace also taught creative writing and is remembered for his intellectual depth, empathy, and influence on a new generation of writers.

The Postmodern age in literature is rich in diverse voices and experimental techniques. Authors from this period broke away from traditional literary forms and themes to explore complex realities of the modern world, reflecting a time of rapid social, political, and technological change.

Exercise

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. When did the postmodern age begin?
   i. After the Industrial Revolution ii. After World War I
   iii. In the mid-1960s iv. In the early 1920s

b. Which of the following features best describes postmodern literature?
   i. The search for absolute truths
   ii. Acceptance of established logocentric norms
   iii. The revival of traditional narrative techniques
   iv. Multiple identities and infinite meanings

c. Which of the following statements defines the literary technique *pastiche***?**
   i. A creative work that imitates and combines multiple styles to honour past masterpieces.
   ii. A humorous and exaggerated imitation that aims at mocking an original work.
   iii. A narrative technique that focuses on the inner thoughts and consciousness of a character.
   iv. An interrelationship between texts that creates connected meanings across works.

d. Which of the following themes are most commonly explored in diaspora literature?
   i. Technology, progress, and innovation
   ii. Heroism, adventure, and conquest
   iii. Nature, spirituality, and harmony
   iv. Multiculturalism, identity, and alienation

e. Which of the following is not a reason for the growth of translation literature in the postmodern period?
   i. Wider access through digital media and online platforms
   ii. Technological advances in machine and AI-based translation
   iii. Indifference of publishers
   iv. Globalization and the rise of postcolonial discourse

f. What is the central argument in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?*
   i. Subaltern voices are often silenced by dominant discourses.
   ii. Subaltern literature should be written only in English.
   iii. Subaltern literature should avoid political themes.
   iv. Subaltern refers to any person or group of inferior rank but not facing social injustices.

g. Which of the following is not a typical feature of Subaltern literature?
   i. Use of local dialects and idioms
   ii. Focus on elite and mainstream narratives
   iii. First-person narratives with political tone
   iv. Themes of resistance and social transformation

h. Who among the following is not a postmodern writer?
   i. Salman Rushdie ii. David Foster Wallace
   iii. V. S. Naipaul iv. Rudyard Kipling

B. **Write short answer to the following questions.**

a. What are the main characteristics of postmodern literature? Explain briefly.
b. Briefly introduce translation literature and discuss its significance.
c. Define diaspora and discuss its role in the growth of literature.
d. What is subaltern literature? Discuss its development in the postmodern period.
e. Introduce Gabriel García Márquez and briefly discuss his contribution to literature in the postmodern age**.**
f. Write short notes on the following topics.
   i. Magical Realism ii. Translation Literature
   iii. Subaltern Literature iv. Cyber Literature

C. **Write long answers to the following questions.**

a. What are some common stylistic techniques used in postmodern literature? Explain briefly.
b. Compare the key features of modern and postmodern literature. How does postmodern literature differ from modern literature?

Project Work

A. Prepare a comprehensive timeline of the history of English language and literature. Include major writers and their works representing the era/age. Share with the class.
B. Make a list of notable diaspora writers, including Nepali writers. Write their major literary contributions and present it in the class.

Chapter Two

An Introduction to Language and Linguistics

Basics of Language and Linguistics

Before You Read

a. What relationship do you see between language and linguistics?

b. Do you think language is special gift to human beings? Share your ideas.

Introduction to Language

Language is means of human communication. Communication happens either through oral form or through written form. Listening and speaking skills create the oral form of communication whereas reading and writing skills create the written form of communication. Aspects of language such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and language functions serve as the basis for the effective functioning of language skills. It is, therefore, skills and aspects are the core areas of language. We use language while sharing our ideas, thoughts and feelings with our family members, relatives and friends. However, have you ever thought what language is? Is language the only means of human communication? In what ways do you think language is different from other communication systems like animal communication? Why do people from different communities have different native languages? Why do they speak different kinds of languages in different situations?

Language is defined as voluntary vocal system of human communication. It is an essential tool for social interaction, learning, and cultural expression, making it central to human civilization. Oxford English Dictionary gives the meaning of language as 'the system of spoken or written communication used by a particular country, people, community, etc., typically consisting of words used within a regular grammatical and syntactic structure; (also) a formal system of communication by gesture, especially as used by deaf people.' Many scholars have tried to define and explain language from their perspectives. Let's see some of the definitions of language given by linguists.

Language, a system of conventional spoken or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves. **- Robins & Crystal (2021)**

Language is the institution whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral-auditory arbitrary symbols. **- Hall (1968)**

Language is a set of (finite or infinite) sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements. **- Chomsky (1957)**

A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group co-operates. **- Bloch & Trager (1942)**

Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols. **- Sapir (1921)**

The definitions of language quoted above help us introduce some key features found in all human languages. Most of these definitions view language as a system of vocal symbols patterned in a systematic order for communication. In addition to this, linguists also claim that language is a means of communication governed by a specific set of rules. This means with finite set of rules, infinite number of sentences can be generated which are grammatically correct and also semantically appropriate or acceptable.

Language follows a system of rules and patterns, which makes it systematic. If it were not systematic, we would not be able to learn language as we do today. In fact, language is a network of interrelated systems, which is why it is often described as a *system of systems.* A language consists of the phonological system (related to sounds), the grammatical system (structure of words and sentences), and the semantic system (related to meaning). In other words, language begins with the sound system, gains structure through the grammatical system, and communicates message through the semantic system. For example, when forming a sentence in English, a particular word order—typically subject + verb + object (e.g., *She eats an apple daily.*) will be followed. If the words were randomly arranged as *Eats she apple an daily,* it would be difficult to understand the meaning. This shows how rules and patterns govern the language and its use.

Characteristics of Language

Every human language posseses some sort of inherent properties which are unlikely to be found in the communication system of other creatures. These inherent properties are called characteristics of language. Some of the common characteristics of language are briefly described below.

Arbitrariness: In general, there is no 'natural' connection between a linguistic form and its meaning, or between the signal and the message; rather, the relationship is largely arbitrary. For example, the word 'dog' that we use to refer to the hairy, four-legged, barking creature has no natural or 'iconic' link to the actual animal itself. This lack of a direct, inherent connection between words and their meanings is called arbitrariness. The connection is based on social convention rather than natural association. That's why a dog is called *dog* in English, *kukur* in Nepali, and *kutta* in Hindi. The same animal is referred to by different words in different languages because none of these words have any intrinsic connection to the actual animal.

Duality of patterning: Human language operates at two levels simultaneously. This property of language is known as duality of patterning or double articulation. For example, when we speak the word 'team' the first level is the physical production of sounds */t/*, */e/,* */a/* and */m/.* As individual sounds, they do not have any intrinsic meaning. However, when they are combined in a pattern of *team,* then, it becomes a meaningful word. This is called the second level of patterning in a language. Thus, at one level, we have distinct sounds, and at another level, we have distinct meanings.

Productivity: Language allows us to create an infinite number of utterances and ideas using a finite set of rules. This feature of language is known as productivity, and also known as generative capacity, creativity or open-endedness. Because of this ability, humans constantly create new expressions by using their linguistic resources to describe new objects and situations. This sort of feature is lacking in animal communication, which is often described as fixed reference. Noam Chomsky has termed this ability of human language as a generative capacity of language which helps speakers generate infinite number of sentences which are nobel and also creative.

Displacement: Humans have the ability to discuss abstract concepts, past events, and hypothetical scenarios, which distinguishes human language from animal communication. They can talk about present, past and future times. This feature of language is called displacement, which allows human beings to talk about the things that are distant in time and space. Unlike animal communication, which is typically limited to the immediate moment and context, human communication is not confined to here and now. Humans can talk about the events from Shakespeare's time and can also imagine possibilities in the distant future.

Discreteness: Discreteness is the opposite of continuity or continuous variation. It means language is made up of distinct, separate sounds or units. These separate units such as phonemes help create meaning differences. For example, the words *bit* and *bet* differ in both their written and spoken forms due to a single vowel sound. Any utterance in a language must differ from any other utterance of the same length by at least a whole phonological feature. We know that language does not operate on a continuous scale but is made up of a finite set of discrete elements. This small difference in sound between *bit* and *bet* results in entirely different meanings. Similarly, if we replace the vowels /ɪ/ and /e/ with /ʌ/ and /æ/, the words change into *but* and *bat*.

Cultural transmission: We inherit physical traits from our parents, but we do not inherit their language. Instead, language is acquired through cultural interaction with other speakers, not through genetic inheritance. For example, a child born in the family of Magar community and brought up from birth in a *Newa* community will inherit physical characteristics from parents and will inevitably learn to speak *Nepal Bhasa (Newari)*. It shows that humans acquire their first language in a culture. In contrast, a kitten raised in a similar environment will still produce meows regardless of where it grows up. This process of passing language from one generation to the next is known as cultural transmission.

To sum up, language is a uniquely human entity that is both well-structured and open-ended. Language does not remain static. For example, modern English differs significantly from the English used during Shakespeare's era. Words, spellings, meanings, and grammatical structures have changed considerably. For instance, the word *art* was once commonly used in place of *are* (as in 'thou art'). Additionally, English continues to expand its vocabulary each year, often influenced by developments in technology, cultural trends, and global interactions.

Human Language and Animal Communication

Communication is a means to establish and maintain relationship among human beings and animals. Communication can happen through various ways. Language is a common means that human beings use to establish social relationships and communicate their ideas with each other. Animals do not use language but they have separate system of communication. Animal communication system is based on the principle of 'one sound-one meaning' whereas human communication can happen in a variety of ways. Flexibility, productivity, novelty, etc. can be seen in human communication system. To be specific, the differences between human language and animal communication system can be encapsulated in the following points.

Human language	**Animal communication**
Human language possesses generative capacity which can generate infinite number of sentences with finite set of rules.	Animal communication system is fixed and closed system. It does not possess flexibility, novelty and creativity.
Complexity is one of the main features of human language. Structurally, human language is complex.	There is no such complexity in the communication system of animals. They have similar kind of communication system since time immemorial.
The use of human language varies from one place to another. It is conditioned by geography.	Animal communication system does not vary in terms of place.
Human language is acquired in terms of context rather than inherited.	Animal communication system is inherited rather than acquired.

Researches have also shown that animals can never learn human language simply because neither their vocal organs nor their brain are sufficiently developed to learn and use language. Thus, language is species-specific to human beings.

Varieties of Language

Language is not uniform; it exhibits variations based on factors such as geography, social setting, and individual usage. In other words, languages vary from one place to another, from one social group to another, and from one situation to another. The use of language may change depending on geography, context, and purpose for which it is used. For example, English spoken in Britain differs from English spoken in the USA. Similarly, the language we use at home might differ from the language we use in the workplace. Nepali language spoken in Koshi Province may differ from the Nepali language spoken in Sudurpaschim Province. Likewise, the Nepali used in literature is different from the Nepali used in law or medicine. These differences are referred to as varieties of language. The main varieties of language include dialect, register, idiolect, pidgin, and creole. These varieties of language are discussed below.

Dialect

A dialect is a variety of language. It is defined as a regionally or socially distinctive variety of language, identified by a particular set of words and grammatical structures. Spoken dialects are usually associated with a distinctive pronunciation or accent. In other words, dialect is a *user-based* variety of language spoken in a specific part of a country or by people belonging to a particular social group. For example, Nepali language spoken in the eastern part of Nepal is different from the language spoken in the western part of Nepal.

If the use of language differs from one social group to another, it is called social dialect whereas if it differs from one geographical region to another, it is called regional dialect. British English and American English are dialects of the same standard English language that differ in pronunciation, spelling, words and grammar. This can be examplified in the following table.

Aspects	**British English (BrE)**	**American English (AmE)**
Pronunciation	advertisement /ədˈvɜːtɪsmənt/ ask /ɑːsk/ schedule /ˈʃedjuːl/	advertisement /ˌædvərˈtaɪzmənt/ ask /æsk/ schedule /ˈskedʒuːl/
Spelling	colour, organise, diarrhoea, centre, marvellous, etc.	color, organize, diarrhea, center, marvelous, etc.
Words	trousers, lorry, holiday, biscuit, flat, jumper, etc.	pants, truck, vacation, cookie, apartment, sweater, etc.
Grammar	I have just finished my homework.	I just finished my homework.

Register

Register refers to a variety of language defined by its use in different disciplines or sectors. It is characterized by several situational characteristics, including the participants (their relationships and attitudes toward the communication), the setting (such as the extent to which time and place are shared among participants and the level of formality), the channel or mode of communication, the production and processing circumstances, the purpose of communication, and the topic. Therefore, register is considered as a *use-based variety* of language.

Language use varies depending on the subject matter or field of activity. For example, the language used in science is different from the language used in sports, as each field has its own specialized vocabulary, style, and conventions. This variety of language specific to a subject matter is known as a field-based register.

We use language through different mediums, whether it is spoken or written. The language we use in spoken form can be different from that used in writing. This variation is known as a mode-based register. The language used in different modes of discourse can vary in terms

of structure and style. For example, written language is often considered more formal and standardized than spoken language. Written language typically follows stricter grammatical rules.

The level of formality or informality in language is influenced by the relationship between the participants in a communication. This aspect of language use is referred to as tenor. Tenor affects the tone, style, and choice of language, shaping the overall register of the interaction. This variation is known as a tenor-based register. For example, a formal register might be used in a job interview, whereas an informal register is more appropriate when speaking with friends. For example, we might say *Have a glass of water* in an informal situation, while in a formal context, we would express as *Would you like to have a glass of water?*

Idiolect

Idiolect is a term used in linguistics to refer to the linguistic system of an individual speaker i.e. one's personal dialect. In other words, an idiolect is a unique language style or speech pattern of an individual. It reflects a person's choices in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. It is influenced by factors such as social background, education, and personal experiences. Even when two individuals speak the same language, they do not speak exactly the same way. For example, a Nepali child who is brought up in America might speak English differently from a child who is brought up in Nepal due to exposure to different accents, slang, and language influences.

Introduction to Linguistics

The term *linguistics* is derived from the Latin word *lingua*, meaning 'language' or 'tongue', and the suffix *-istics,* which denotes a field of study. Thus, etymologically linguistics means the study of language. The most widely accepted and still the most satisfying definition of linguistics is *it is the scientific study of language*. In this definition, both the terms *scientific study* and *language* are significant. It implies that linguistics is regarded as the scientific study of language, also referred to as a linguistic science.

Linguistics is viewed as a science because it adopts the general methodology of science to the study of language. It studies language empirically. A linguist observes the phenomenon of language, forms hypothesis about the nature and the function of language, carries out experiments to verify or falsify the hypothesis through scientific processes, and only comes up with a theory of language.

Broadly speaking, linguistics studies human speech sounds are produced; how those sounds are phonemically organized to form words; how word order, tone, and sentence structure convey thoughts; the relationship between spoken language and written language; and the psychology of language i.e., how language is processed in the brain, how linguistic information is stored and retrieved, and how language and culture are interrelated.

Richards and Schmidt (2010, p. 343) state that linguistics is the study of language as a system of human communication. It includes many different approaches to the study of language and covers various areas of investigation, such as sound systems (phonetics, phonology), sentence structure (syntax), relationships between language and cognition (cognitive linguistics), meaning systems (semantics, pragmatics, functions of language), as well as language and social factors (sociolinguistics).

Overall, linguistics can be understood a scientific discipline with the goal of studying language and speech in all relevant theoretical and practical aspects, as well as their relation to other disciplines. Due to the nature of its subject matter and the investigative methods it employs, linguistics has characteristics of both the natural sciences and the social sciences. Thus, linguistics is the scientific and systematic study of language.

Branches of Linguistics: Theoretical and Applied Linguistics

The field of linguistics has been continuously expanding, leading to the emergence of various branches. Both language in general and particular languages in particular can be studied from different points of view. Linguistics as a whole can be divided into several subfields based on the perspective adopted or the special emphasis given to one set of phenomena or assumptions rather than another.

From the conceptual part of linguistics discussed above, we come to understand that it is a broad and diverse field. It encompasses various branches that study different aspects of language. Each branch focuses on a particular aspect or dimension of language or its use, providing a comprehensive understanding of how language functions and evolves. Several specialized branches of linguistics have been developed in combination with other disciplines, such as applied linguistics, psycholinguistics, and forensic linguistics. Theoretical and applied linguisitcs are discussed in the following sub-headings.

Theoretical Linguistics

Theoretical linguistics seeks to establish general principles for the study of all languages and to determine the fundamental characteristics of human language as a phenomenon. In other words, it studies the language principles in general. Its aim is to uncover the underlying structures, principles, and systems that govern all languages. The main aim of theoretical linguistics is to develop general frameworks and principles applicable to all languages, ultimately formulating a satisfactory theory of the structure of language in general. Contrasting theoretical linguistics with applied linguistics, Lyons writes:

> Briefly, theoretical linguistics studies language and languages with a view to constructing a theory of their structure and functions and without regards to any practical applications that investigates of language and languages might have. (1981, p. 35)

Theoretical linguistics includes the study of the abstract sound systems of languages (phonology), the structure of words and the rules for word formation (morphology), the rules and principles that govern sentence structure (syntax), the study of meaning in language (semantics), and more.

Applied Linguistics

Applied linguistics, as the name suggests, refers to the application of linguistic concepts and findings or theories to a variety of practical tasks such as language teaching. When the findings, methods, or theoretical principles of linguistics are applied to solve the problems in other areas of human experience, this is referred to as applied linguistics. However, the term is often specifically used to describe the study of the theory and methodology of foreign language teaching. Applied linguistics clearly draws on both the general and descriptive branches of linguistics. Defining applied linguistics, Richards and Schmidt write:

> Applied linguistics is defined as the study of language and linguistics in relation to practical problems, such as lexicography, translation, speech pathology, and others. It uses information from sociology, psychology, anthropology, and information theory, as well as linguistics, to develop its own theoretical models of language and language use, and then uses this information and theory in practical areas such as syllabus design, speech therapy, language planning, language policy, stylistics, etc. (2010, p. 29)

In conclusion, theoretical linguistics attempts to develop theories explaining general universal regularities of language whereas applied linguistics investigates problems dealing with specific languages.

Langue and Parole

A Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, is usually credited with establishing the principles of modern linguistics. His book *Cours de Linguistique Générale* was published posthumously in 1916, based on his notes and a series of lectures, in which he introduced two terms, langue (tongue) and parole (speech). The distinction between *langue* and *parole* can be understood as language is an abstract system and actual speech, respectively.

> He proposed that linguistics should concern itself with the shared social code, the abstract system, which he called *langue*, leaving aside the particular actualities of individual utterance, which he called *parole*. Langue was, on his account, a collective body of knowledge, a kind of common reference manual, copies of which were acquired by all members of a community of speakers. Parole is the contingent executive side of things, the relatively superficial behavioural reflexes of knowledge. So, langue can either be seen as a convenient principle of linguistics, or as an essential principle of language itself, or both. (Widdowson, 1995, pp. 21–22)

Language is considered human speech as a whole, within which langue functions as the underlying system and parole as the individual act of speaking. Langue refers to the abstract system of signs and rules, while parole is the concrete use of language in actual situations. Langue is characterized as a relatively static system of symbols with broad social value, due to the invariant and functional nature of its elements. Instances of parole are based on this system and vary according to factors such as register, age, dialect, and context. Simply put, parole differs from individual to individual in its manifestation and represents the actual realization of language in spoken utterances.

Langue enables individuals to understand and perform speech acts. By learning underlying rules and structures of language, we are able to express our thoughts. For instance, we understand English language because we have the knowledge of underlying system of English language. If we speak English, we perform an act, this is what we call parole.

While langue represents the totality of language, parole is what someone speaks or writes in specific instances. Langue is always abstract, a system that cannot be directly observed. In contrast, parole is concrete; it can be observed in the form of actual words or utterances that we perceive through listening or reading. Thus, langue is a set of conventions and rules shared by all the speakers of a language, whereas parole is the concrete physical manifestation of the abstract langue that exists in the mind and belongs to an individual. Without langue, parole would not be possible. It is, therefore, without langue, parole would not be possible.

Competence and Performance

Noam Chomsky's concepts of competence and performance are somewhat similar to Saussure's concepts of langue and parole. Chomsky postulated a dichotomy between general linguistic ability and individual language use. He distinguishes competence, the knowledge that native speakers have of their language as a system of abstract formal relations, and performance, a reflection of that competence in actual linguistic behavior.

Competence refers to the knowledge about the native language which is acquired along with the language used by an ideal speaker-listener of a homogeneous speech community. It can be defined as the specialized knowledge of rules that all speakers of a language possess and that allows them to produce grammatical constructions. Because of the infinite inventory of elements (such as sounds and words) and syntactic rules, a speaker can theoretically produce and understand an infinite number of utterances. In other words, competence is described as an idealized capacity, a psychological or mental property that represents a native speaker's knowledge of their language. It encompasses both the system of rules they have mastered and their ability to generate and comprehend an unlimited range of new utterances. Therefore, competence is often referred to as linguistic knowledge.

Performance, on the other hand, refers to the person's actual use of language in real-life situations. It involves the production of utterances and the application of linguistic knowledge in communication. We thus make a fundamental distinction between competence (the speaker-hearer's knowledge of their language) and performance (the actual use of language in concrete situations). Competence is what a person knows, while performance is what he/she does. Performance is the manifestation of competence, and it also reflects a person's linguistic ability. For instance, if someone says, 'I was going home tomorrow, it indicates a lack of linguistic knowledge or grammar.

Widdowson (1995, p. 24) states that although performance must clearly be projected from competence, and therefore be referable to it, it does not correspond to it in any direct way. The actual linguistic behaviour is conditioned by various factors beyond just linguistic knowledge, and these factors are, according to Chomsky, incidental and irrelevant to linguistic description. Abstract concepts of competence and actual acts of performance are quite different phenomena and we cannot directly infer one from the other. What someone knows cannot be equated with what someone can do.

Chomsky's distinction clearly corresponds, to some extent, with that of Saussure, as both reflect a similar dichotomy between knowledge and behaviour. While the terms performance (Chomsky) and parole (Saussure) can be used almost interchangeably, their counterparts, competence and langue are quite different from each other. First, langue is a static system of signs, shared by all members of a speech community, whereas competence is a dynamic concept, understood as an internal mechanism that can generate an infinite number of sentences. Second, langue emphasizes the social dimension of language, while Chomsky's competence is a psychological construct, unique to the individual. Thus, langue is socially grounded, but competence is cognitively based.

Form and Function

In linguistics, form and function are fundamental concepts used to analyze and describe language. Both form and function are associated with language organization and language use. Form refers to the structural aspect of language whereas function refers to the communicative role it serves within a given context.

More specifically, form refers to the phonological, grammatical, or lexical characteristics of linguistic units such as morphemes, lexemes, phrases, or sentences. In contrast, function relates to the role that a linguistic unit performs within a sentence or discourse. For example, a noun phrase can be analyzed in terms of form of its internal syntactic structure (e.g., determiner + adjective + noun), but function in its grammatical role within a clause, such as subject, object, or complement. For example, *The food is tasty.* In this sentence, *tasty* is an adjective in its form and functions as a subject complement. This form-function distinction allows us to separate what a unit looks like (its formal structure) from what it does (its functional role).

In a similr way, the structure or shape of a linguistic unit such as sound, word, phrase, clause, or sentence, is referred to as form. In contrast, function refers to the purpose or role a linguistic unit plays in a given context. It emphasizes how language is used to convey meaning, express ideas or emotions, or fulfill social roles. Function relates to the communicative intent behind linguistic forms such as making statements, asking questions, giving commands, or offering greetings. For example, the expression *good morning* is a form, and its function is greeting to someone.

The form-function relation in the English language refers to the way different linguistic forms, such as phonological, lexical, grammatical, etc. are used to fulfill specific communicative functions. The relationship between form and function can be presented in following ways:

a. *One form serves one function.*

   Let me carry your luggage. (offering)

   I shall be attending the party. (promising)

   Come to my birthday party. (invitation)

b. *One form serves several functions.*

   Go out. (warning)

   Pass the book. (order)

   Give me your book, please. (request)

   Turn left and go straight ahead. (instructing)

c. *Several forms may serve one function.*

   Pass the paper, please. (imperative form)

   Could you pass the paper? (interrogative form)

   I request you to pass the paper. (declarative form)

The above mentioned examples show that there is no one-to-one relationship between form and function. They can have one to many and vice-versa relationship. For this, only looking at the language structure won't be possible to explore the exact relationship. Rather, they have to see in context where and how they are used.

Speech and Writing

Semiotic systems are systems of communication that use signs to convey meaning. Language is one part of a larger semiotic system. In human language, signifiers, the physical form of the sign, (e.g. spoken word 'tree' or the letters T-R-E-E) are most commonly transmitted through two primary modes: speech and writing. Speech and writing are two manifestations of language. This means language can be expressed in both spoken and written forms.

In linguistics, it is commonly acknowledged that speech is primary and writing is secondary. Linguists take this position because all languages are spoken (with the exception of dead languages such as Latin, which now exist only in written form), and only a subset of these languages are written. Children naturally acquire spoken language when they are exposed to it during the period of language acquisition, even without formal instruction. In contrast, writing must be explicitly taught and learned.

Since speech is oral, it is also particularly effective in conveying emotions and tone, which writing may not capture as clearly as speech can. Thus, writing is often considered an imperfect imitation of speech because it does not fully represent speech, as suprasegmental features such as stress, intonation, and rhythm cannot be conveyed in written language. Speech is a phonic representation of language. It is a functional unit of language that includes both segmental features (consonants and vowels) and suprasegmental features (stress, intonation, pitch, juncture, etc.) to convey meaning and facilitate communication.

On the other hand, writing is the graphic representation of ideas in a meaningful way. It is a system of written symbols that represent the sounds, syllables, and words of a language. In addition, speech is audible, while writing is visible. Speech implies a speaker-listener interaction, whereas writing implies a writer-reader interaction.

It is more accurate to view the two modes as having different but complementary roles. For instance, in most official context, a written document is preferred because writing, unlike speech, provides a permanent record. However, in some contexts, such as face-to-face conversations and classroom teaching, speech is often considered more suitable and highly interactive compared to writing. Participants can make immediate corrections and make clarifications in case of misunderstanding. Some of the main differences between speech and writing are presented in the table below.

Speech	**Writing**
It is composed of segmental and suprasegmental features.	It is composed of letters/signs and uses mechanics.
Incomplete sentences can be used to express ideas.	Complete sentences are necessary in writing.
Limited words and phrases can support oral communication.	A range of words and formal structures are necessary in writing.
Both verbal and non-verbal means of communication can be used in speech.	Verbal means like arthographic text is necessary in writing.
Speakers must think, plan and express ideas immediately to communicate and continue conversation.	Writers generally have more time to plan, and revise words and structures in writing.

Exercise

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. Which of the following statements about language is not correct?

i. Language is voluntary. ii. Language is static.

ii. Language is arbitrary. iv. Language is vocal.

b. Which of the following statements describes the difference between human language and animal communication?

i. Human language has a closed communication system, whereas animals have an open one.

ii. Human language is static, whereas animal communication is dynamic.

iii. Human language is instinctive, whereas animal communication is non-instinctive.

iv. Human language has the ability to communicate about the present, past and future, but animal communication system does not have.

c. Which of the following characteristics does not describe human language?

i. Instinctiveness ii. Displacement

iii. Arbitrariness iv. Duality of patterning

d. Which variety of language reflects its use in different contexts or situations?

i. Dialect ii. Idiolect

iii. Register iv. Sociolect

e. Which area of language is studied by theoretical linguistics?

i. Language translation ii. Syllabus design

iii. Semantics iv. Language teaching

f. Which statement best defines Saussure's concept of *parole?*

i. The totality of language as a system

ii. The speaker-hearer's knowledge of their language

iii. The individual act of speaking

iv. The person's actual use of language

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. Language is defined as a voluntary, vocal system of human communication. Justify this statement.

b. Language is a system of systems. Discuss.

c. What do you mean by duality of patterning in language? Explain with examples.

d. Why is animal communication not considered a language? Give reasons.

e. Linguistics is the scientific study of language. Explain in brief.

f. Differentiate between theoretical linguistics and applied linguistics.

g. How does a dialect reflect the personality of the speaker? Justify your answer.

h. Write short notes on the following topics.

i. Dialect ii. Register iii. Idiolect

C. Write long answers to the following questions.

a. What are the key characteristics of human language? Explain in brief.

b. How does human language differ from animal communication? Give your ideas to support your answer.

c. What are the different varieties of language? Discuss them with examples.

d. Discuss the concepts of langue and parole. Highlight the main differences between them.

e. Compare and contrast competence and performance as defined by Noam Chomsky.

f. Explain the relationship between form and function in language. Present your ideas with supporting details.

g. Which one is more important to the language learners: speech or writing? Give your ideas to support your answer.

Project Work

What do you think the world would be like without language? How would it affect human interaction, learning, and society as a whole? Prepare a PowerPoint presentation or chart paper to explain your ideas with examples, illustrations, and key points.

English Sound System

Before You Read

a. What relationship do you see between letter and sound? Discuss.

b. Why do you think learners have to learn English sound system?

Letters and Sounds

Language consists of sounds which are the basic units of spoken language. Sounds can be written in visible form using symbols which are known as letters. This means letter represents the sound. Letter is the written symbol or character in the alphabet. English language has twenty-six letters from A to Z. Among them, five are vowel letters (a, e, i, o and u) and the remaining twenty-one are consonant letters. On the other hand, sounds are the individualized units of speech that correspond to written letters or combinations of letters.

English Phonemes: Consonants and Vowels

English sound system consists of two types of sounds. They are consonants and vowels. They are also known as phonemes. Generally, all languages have consonants and vowels, yet no two languages have the same set of sounds or phonemes. The word 'phoneme' comes from Greek which means 'sound.' It is defined as an individual speech segment that is distinctive and that contrasts with other speech segments. One way to determine phonemes in a language is to examine minimal pairs: words that differ by only a single phoneme in the same position in a word. For instance, the words *pin* and *bin* differ by only one sound: the second and third segments are the same (a vowel and a consonant, respectively). This indicates that the segments /p/ and /b/ in English are phonemes. Therefore, phoneme is the smallest distinctive unit in the sound system of a language. A sound is considered phonemic if its substitution in a word causes a change in meaning and distinguishes one word from another. In English, phonemes are categorized into consonant sounds and vowel sounds. For example, the word *cat* (pronounced as /kæt/) has three phonemes: /k/, /æ/, and /t/. The sound /æ/ is a vowel, while /k/ and /t/ are consonant sounds. These two types of English sounds are discussed below.

Consonants

Consonant sound is a type of English sound which is produced with some kind of obstruction in the vocal tract. It can be defined in terms of both phonetics (i.e., production) and phonology (i.e., function). Phonetically, they are sounds made by a closure or narrowing in the vocal tract so that the air-flow is either completely blocked or so restricted to produce audible friction. In other words, a consonant is a speech sound formed when the air-

stream is restricted or stopped at some point between the vocal cords and the lips. When consonant sounds are produced, the air-flow is cut off either partially or completely. From a phonological point of view, consonants are units that typically occur at the margins of syllables, either alone or in clusters.

English Consonant Sounds

Sounds	Examples			Spellings
	Initial	Middle	Final	
/p/	**p**lant	ha**pp**y	ca**p**	p, pp
/b/	**b**oy	ru**bb**er	tu**b**	b, bb
/t/	**t**ap	bo**tt**le	ask**ed**	t, tt, ed
/d/	**d**oll	la**dd**er	bagg**ed**	d, dd, ed
/k/	**c**ap	ma**k**er	stoma**ch**	c, ck, k, ch
/g/	**gh**ost	bi**gg**er	ba**g**	gh, gg, g
/f/	**ph**one	o**ff**er	cou**gh**	ph, ff, f, gh
/v/	**v**an	ri**v**er	lea**ve**	v, ve
/θ/	**th**in	au**th**or	ba**th**	th
/ð/	**th**en	mo**th**er	brea**the**	th, the
/s/	**s**un	loo**s**er	mi**ce**	s, ce
/z/	**z**ebra	bu**s**iness	go**es**	z, zz, s/es
/ʃ/	**ch**ef	nat**io**n	pu**sh**	ch, tio, sh
/ʒ/	**g**enre	lei**s**ure	rou**ge**	s, z, su, ge
/m/	**m**an	ha**mm**er	su**m**	m, mm
/n/	**n**et	di**nn**er	so**n**	n, nn
/ŋ/	-	si**ng**er	ki**ng**	ng
/l/	**l**ight	ba**ll**oon	skillfu**l**	l, ll
/r/	**r**ed	ca**rr**y	ca**r**/kɑ:(r)/	r
/j/	**y**es	p**u**re	-	y, i, u
/w/	**wh**ere	eq**u**ality	-	wh, w, u,
/tʃ/	**ch**in	na**t**ure	ma**tch**	ch, tu, tch
/dʒ/	**j**am	a**dj**ective	ba**dge**	j, g, dj, dge
/h/	**h**it	be**h**ave	-	h

Vowels

Vowel is another type of English sound. It is produced without any kind of obstruction in the vocal tract. Phonetically, vowel is a sound articulated without a complete closure in the mouth or a degree of narrowing that would produce audible friction; the air passes freely over the centre of the tongue. In other words, a vowel is a sound produced with an open-air passage in the mouth. The air passage can be modified in terms of shape with different mouth and tongue shapes producing different vowels. Vowels are produced without any

significant obstruction in the vocal tract. From a phonological point of view, vowels are those units which function at the centre of syllables. There are twenty vowel sounds in English, which are classified into monophthongs and diphthongs.

Inventory of English Vowels

Vowels	Examples	Spellings
/ʌ/	up, fun, gun, wonderful, monkey, ton, rough, young, blood	u, o, ou, oo
/ə/	about, ago, the, father, doctor, sugar, posture, onion, obey, success, maximum	a, e, er, or, ar, ure, o, u
/ɜː/	germ, verb, learn, earth, first, fir, fur, turn, nurse, curd, work	e, er, ear, ir, ur, or
/ɑː/	past, father, star, harm, farm, bar, heart, palm, calm, laugh	a, ar, ear, er, al, au,
/ɪ/	in, milk, England, women, because, pretty, system, build, guilt	i, o, e, y, ui
/iː/	he, bee, see, three, tea, sea, pea, beat, seize, piece, machine	e, ee, ea, ei, ie, i
/ʊ/	put, should, woman, foot, book, look, wool, took, wood, cook	u, ou, o, oo
/uː/	zoo, too, food, moon, two, move, lose, blue, glue, true, tube, huge, suit, fruit, loose, school, grew, knew, new, soup	oo, o, ue, u, ui, oo, ew, ou,
/e/	bed, red, met, sell, cell, set, any, many, head, death, deaf, said	e, a, ea, ai
/ɒ/	lot, spot, top, what, wash, quality, because, sausage, cough	o, a, au, ou
/ɔː/	saw, law, all, always, ball, more, door, floor, taught, naught, bought, thought, born, born, or, for, short, four, sure	aw, al, ore, oor, au, ou, or, our, ure
/æ/	cat, hat, bat, bag, man, sand, jam, fan, van,	a
/eɪ/	late, face, came, wale, sale, mate, game, rain, hail, main, gain, bail, sail, nail, pain, fail, day, play, they, steak, eight	a, ai, ay, ey, ea, eigh
/aɪ/	high, kind, time, sky, eye, why, type, my, pie, lie, die, guy, buy	i, y, ie, uy,
/ɔɪ/	boy, joy, toy, enjoy, royal, coin, voice, point, soil, avoid	oy, oi
/əʊ/	go, no, so, open, gold, post, sew, snow, sow, low, know, bowl, oak, boat, coat, load, moan, toe, though	o, ew, ow, oa, oe, ough
/aʊ/	cow, howl, fowl, growl, bough, loud, sour, flour, flower, zero,	ow, ou, o
/ɪə/	hero, dear, near, tear (n), shear, idea, beer, sheer, sneer, cheer, leer, deer, queer, mere, here, sincere, theory, deliri-ous	er, ear, ea, eer, ere, eo, ou,
/eə/	fair. heir, hare, air, care, bare, bear, wear, tear (v), mare, there	air, are, ear, are/ ere
/ʊə/	pure, cure, sure, your, tour, poor	ure, our, oor

Sound Identification and Sound Discrimination

Sound identification and sound discrimination are fundamental skills in phonetics and language learning. Sound identification enables individuals to recognize and correctly identify individual phonemes (sounds) in words. It involves understanding the distinct sounds that make up words and being able to recognize them in both spoken and written language. For example, in the word *cat*, the sounds /k/, /æ/, and /t/ must be identified correctly. In contrast, sound discrimination refers to the ability to distinguish between different sounds. It involves recognizing the differences in how sounds are produced and being able to differentiate between them, even when they are similar. For example, distinguishing the sound /p/ in *pat* from /b/ in *bat*.

Minimal pair is the best technique to identify the sounds. In English, for example, consider the words *pan* and *ban*. These words differ fundamentally in meaning but, as far as the sounds go, they differ only in the initial sound. The sounds /p/ and /b/ can be shown to distinguish meaning in many pairs of words. For example, *pet-bet, pill-bill, post-boast, punk-bunk*, etc. We can, therefore, conclude that /p/ and /b/ are distinct sounds or phonemes in English.

The Speech Organs

When we produce a particular sound, several speech organs work together to produce it. The production of speech sounds requires the coordinated effort of various articulators, each playing a distinct role in shaping sounds. These organs, collectively known as speech organs (or articulators). Some of the major speech organs and their roles in articulating sounds are discussed below.

Lungs: In all languages, speech sounds are produced using air from the lungs. We draw air into the lungs quickly and release it slowly, manipulating the airflow in various ways and at different points in the vocal tract. Sounds are articulated by an airstream from the lungs, which passes through the trachea (wind pipe) and the oral and nasal cavities. The lungs act as the power source for speech production by providing the necessary airstream. Air is pushed from the lungs through the trachea and is essential for producing both voiced and voiceless sounds.

Vocal Cords: The vocal cords are located in the larynx, at the top of the trachea. They consist of multiple layers, including a muscle layer and a mucous membrane, which make them flexible and capable of vibrating. The air released by the lungs comes up through the trachea and arrives first at the larynx. The larynx contains two small bands of elastic tissue that lie opposite each other across the air passage. These are called vocal cords or vocal folds. When we breathe normally, the inner edges of the vocal cords can either move towards each other to completely close the top of the wind pipe or be drawn apart to create a gap through which air can pass freely. This ability to open and close the air passage allows the vocal cords to control the flow of air.

When the vocal cords are together, they vibrate as air passes through them, producing a voiced sound, as in the initial sound of *vine*. When the vocal cords are apart, no vibration occurs, resulting in a voiceless sound, as in the initial sound of *fine.* This process of vocal fold vibration and sound production is known as phonation. The space between the vocal folds is called the glottis. A membranous flap, the epiglottis, covers the glottis during swallowing. As a result, food does not enter the trachea but is routed through the esophagus into the stomach.

Pharynx: The pharyngeal cavity (pharynx) is the space or passage, way in the throat, just above the larynx. It is a tube-like structure situated behind the tongue and reaching up toward the nasal cavity. It acts as a resonating chamber to modify the quality of sound as it passes through the oral and nasal cavities.

Palate: The palate forms the roof of the mouth and separates the oral (mouth) cavity from the nasal cavity. When you articulate the vowel sound /aː/ and look in a mirror, you can see your uvula—the small fleshy lobe that hangs from the soft palate at the back of the mouth. The soft palate (velum) is the back, fleshy, and movable organ that plays a significant role in articulating oral and nasal sounds. When the soft palate is raised to make firm contact with the wall of the pharynx, it stops the breath from going up into the nasal cavity, as a result oral sounds are produced. When it is lowered to open the nasal passage and block the oral cavity, nasal sounds such as /m/, /n/, and /ŋ/ are produced.

The hard part of the palate is divided into two sections: hard palate and alveolar ridge. The hard palate is the bony section of the roof of the mouth. The interaction between the tongue and the hard palate is essential for articulating certain speech sounds. The alveolar ridge is the hard ridge located just behind the upper front teeth. It is especially important in English because many sounds, such as /t/, /d/, /n/, /l/, /r/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/, and /dʒ/, are produced with the tongue touching or close to the alveolar ridge.

Tongue: The tongue is a highly flexible organ essential for articulating both vowels and consonants. It has the greatest variety of movements among the speech organs. Different parts of the tongue interact with other speech organs to shape sounds. The tongue is divided into the tip, blade or lamina, (which lies opposite the alveolar ridge when the tongue is at rest), front (which lies opposite the hard palate), and back or dorsum (which lies opposite the soft palate).

Lips: The lips play a significant role in articulating sounds, as they can take up a variety of positions. They can be brought firmly together, as in bilabial sounds like /p/, /b/, and /m/ and lip-teeth position to produce labiodental sounds like /f/ and /v/. The lips also modify sounds by opening, closing or rounding.

Voiced and Voiceless Sounds

English sounds can be of two types in terms of the voicing quality. They are voiced and voiceless sounds. When we articulate English sounds, the mode of vibration of the vocal cords plays an important role. This vibration is referred to as voicing, a fundamental term used in the phonetic classification of speech sounds. There are two types of sounds in English: voiced and voiceless (also called *unvoiced)*, which are categorized based on whether the vocal cords vibrate during their production. The vocal cords play a crucial role in voicing by controlling the opening and closing of the air passage.

When air from the lungs is pushed upward through the trachea, it passes through the glottis. The air pressure may cause the vocal cords to vibrate, resulting in a voiced sound. In contrast, voiceless sounds are produced when the vocal cords are held apart, allowing air to flow freely without vibration. You can feel this difference by placing your finger on your larynx (voice box) while making the sound /z/. You'll feel the vibration of the vocal cords if you then switch to sound /s/, the vibration ceases.

Voiceless sounds: Voiceless sounds are produced without the vibration of the vocal cords. Voiceless sounds in English include /p/, /t/, /k/, /f/, /θ/, /s/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/ and /h/.

Voiced sounds: Voiced sounds are produced when the vocal cords vibrate. All vowels (both monophthongs and diphthongs) are voiced. Similarly, consonant sounds /b/, /d/, /g/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /z/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/, /v/, /ð/, /l/, /r/, /w/, and /j/ are also voiced sounds.

Monophthongs and Diphthongs

There are two types of vowel sounds in terms of vowel quality. They are monophthongs and diphthongs. Monophthongs are pure vowels whereas diphthongs are gliding vowels. The articulators do not glide from one place to another while articulating monophthongs, but articulators glide in diphthongs. These two vowel sounds are described below.

Monophthong: A monophthong is a vowel which consists of a single sound. Monophthongs are produced without any noticeable change in quality throughout their articulation, which is why they are also called *pure vowels*. Their quality remains relatively constant during their articulation. If a vowel occurs within a syllable and its quality changes during its articulation, the vowel becomes a diphthong. Monophthongs can be classified and described into different types on the basis of: tongue height, tongue position and lip posture.

Diphthong: A diphthong is a vowel that is made up of two sounds combined within a single syllable. In other words, it is a type of vowel occurring within a single syllable whose quality changes during its articulation. Diphthongs are often referred to as gliding vowels because their articulation involves a smooth transition or glide from one vowel sound to another. A diphthong begins with a pure vowel and glides toward another, but the entire sound functions as one unit, similar to a long vowel. Although diphthongs involve the quality of

two monophthongs, they are not simply a combination of two separate vowels. Despite involving two sounds, a diphthong always constitutes only one syllable.

Long and Short Vowels

Long and short vowels are two types of vowel sounds in terms of length or time taken by a vowel sound to produce. If a vowel sound takes longer time in its production, it is called a long vowel. For instance, the vowel sound in the word *moon* is pronounced longer than the one in *good*. Long vowels are transcribed using a colon-like symbol **/ː/** after the phoneme to indicate their extended duration. For example, the symbol **/ɜ**ː/ represents the long vowel sound in the word *girl* /gɜːl/.

Short vowels, on the other hand, are produced in a shorter duration compared to long vowels. Their sound quality is generally more relaxed and quick. All diphthongs are considered long vowels, as they take more time to produce due to the glide from one sound to another. Among the monophthongs, /iː/, /ɜː/, /aː/, /ɔː/ and /uː/ are long vowels.

Short vowels

/ʌ/ *cup*	/ə/ *brother*	/ɪ/ *sit*	/ʊ/ *book*
/e/ *get*	/ɒ/ *pot*	/æ/ *snap*	

Long vowels including diphthongs

/ɜː/ *girl*	/ɑː/ *far*	/iː/ *see*	/uː/ *moon*	/ɔː/ *caught*
/eɪ/ *gate*	/aɪ/ *fly*	/ɔɪ/ *oil*	/əʊ/ *so*	/aʊ/ *now*
/ɪə/ *here*	/eə/ *hare*	/ʊə/ *sure*		

Lengthening of vowels: Vowels differ in length depending on whether they occur before a voiced or unvoiced consonant. In the list below, the vowels in the second column are lengthier because they occur before voiced consonants. The vowels are shorter in the first column because they occur before voiceless consonants.

bit	/bit/	bid	/biːd/
feet	/fit/	feed	/fiːd/
hiss	/his/	his	/hiːz/
leaf	/lif/	leave	/liːv/

The Syllable and Stress

A syllable is a unit of pronunciation typically larger than a single sound and smaller than a word. It may form a whole word or just a part of a word. Laver (1994) defines a syllable as

a complex unit made up of nuclear and marginal elements. The vowels or syllabic segments represent nuclear elements whereas the consonants or non-syllabic segments make up the marginal elements. For example, in the monosyllabic word *faint* /feɪnt/, the nuclear element is represented by the diphthong /eɪ/, while the marginal elements are the initial consonant /f/ and the final consonant cluster /nt/. More formally, Ashby and Maidment (2005, p.7) define a syllable as: one pulse of speech. It always contains one loud or prominent part (almost always a vowel sound), and may optionally have consonant sounds preceding or following the vowel.

Syllable structure has been explained through various theories. The **Sonority Theory** defines syllables based on a peak of sonority, ranking sounds from most to least sonorous. Generally, vowels are more sonorous than consonants, which is why vowels are considered syllabic. However, this theory cannot explain all syllable patterns.

The **Prominence Theory** offers a broader view, considering stress, pitch, and duration, and focuses on how prominent a sound appears to listeners. Psychologist R. H. Stetson, on the other hand, proposed a physiological perspective. He suggested that every syllable is initiated by a chest pulse, a contraction of the rib cage muscles that pushes more air out of the lungs. According to his view, each puff of air produces a syllable.

A syllable may consist of a vowel alone or a vowel with one or more consonants. A vowel is a nucleus of the syllable, and it is obligatory, while consonants are marginal elements, which are optional. From the structural point of view, a syllable can be divided into two parts: the onset and the rhyme. The onset is the initial consonant or consonant cluster of a syllable whereas the rhyme of a syllable is a unit that consists of the peak and the coda. The peak is core or central part of the syllable, usually a vowel and the coda is a consonant or consonant cluster that comes after the nucleus.

Most syllables contain both vowels and consonants, but some, such as *eye* and *owe*, have only vowels. Words such as *eye* and *owe* consist of a single syllable which has only a rhyme, which is also the nucleus. They have neither an onset nor a coda. Words such as *splint* and *stripes* are monosyllabic and contain onsets with three consonants and codas with two consonants.

English words have one or more syllables, and each syllable typically contains one vowel sound. Therefore, the number of syllables in a word is usually (though not always) determined by the number of vowel sounds. For example, *plane* /pleɪn/, *women* /ˈwɪ.mɪn/, *cucumber* /ˈkjuː.kʌm.bə(r)/, *democracy* /dɪ.ˈmɒ.krə.si/, *university* /juː.nɪˈvɜː.sə.ti/, and *personification* /pəˌsɒ.nɪ.fiˈkeɪ.ʃən/ have one, two, three, four, five, and six syllables, respectively. If there is no vowel, then certain consonants can function in its place. Sometimes, consonants such as /m/, /n/, or /l/ in the words like *chasm*, *button*, and *bottle*, *middle, little* can assume a vowel-like function; in such cases, they are called syllabic consonants.

A syllable that ends in one or more consonants (like *lawns*) is called a closed syllable, while one that ends in a vowel (like *draw*) is termed an open syllable. A sequence of consonants at the margin of a syllable is called a consonant cluster. A selection of possible vowel and consonant structures for English syllables is shown below.

Awe	/ɔː/	V
Saw	/sɔː/	CV
ought	/ɔːt/	VC
sawn	/sɔːn/	CVC
lawns	/lɔːnz/	CVCC
draw	/drɔː/	CCV
drawn	/drɔːn/	CCVC
straw	/strɔː/	CCCV
strands	/strændz/	CCCVCCC
glimpsed	/glɪmpst/	CCVCCCC

(Collins, Mees, and Carley, 2019)

Word Stress

Stress is usually defined as the strong prominence given to a particular syllable. Ladefoged and Johnson (2011) mention that a stressed syllable is usually produced by pushing more air out of the lungs in one syllable relative to others. In other words, a stressed syllable has greater respiratory energy than neighboring unstressed syllables. It may also involve increased laryngeal activity. Stress can always be defined in terms of something a speaker does in one part of an utterance relative to another. A stressed syllable is often, but not always, louder than an unstressed syllable.

In English, almost every word has at least one syllable that is noticeably more prominent than the others. This is the stressed syllable, and its position is usually easy to identify. For example, the word *hotel* has two syllables, and the second syllable is produced with greater energy than the first. Thus, the stressed syllable can be realized as *hoTEL* or *ho'tel*.

When a particular syllable or word is stressed, extra force is used to pronounce it. This force applies not to a particular vowel or consonant sound but to a whole syllable. English does not have a fixed stress pattern; its stress pattern is free. Even the same word can receive stress on different syllables depending on the context. For example, the word *present* as a noun receives stress on the first syllable ('present), and as a verb, on the second syllable

(pre'sent). Similarly, the words '*camera, a'roma, kanga'roo* consist of three syllables but they receive stress on different syllable. A language such as French exhibits fixed stress because the primary stress falls most frequently on the last syllable of a word, and less frequently on the second to last syllable.

Our first concern is: What sort of words are stressed, and what sort are unstressed? Connor (1980) mentions that, first, all words of more than one syllable are stressed. Next, words of one syllable are generally not stressed if they are purely grammatical words like pronouns (*I, me, you, he, she,* etc.), prepositions (*to, for, at, from, by, etc.*), articles (*the, a, an,* etc.). Other words are stressed, for example, full verbs (*eat, love, take, try*, etc.), nouns (*head, chair, book, pen*, etc.), adjectives (*good, blue, long, cold*, etc.), adverbs (*well, just, quite, not*) and similar content words. For special purposes, it is possible to stress any English word (even purely grammatical ones), but they are usually unstressed.

A word with several syllables often has, in addition to its main stress (or primary stress), a secondary stress (a lesser degree of stress) on another syllable. For example, *education* has its main stress on the third syllable but a secondary stress on the first syllable.

Some rules of word stress

a. A word of one syllable has stress on the first letter.

   Examples: 'do, 'pot, 'song, 'read, 'book, 'good, 'man, etc.

b. Nouns and most adjectives and adverbs of two syllables usually have stress on the first syllable.

   Examples: 'city, 'paper, 'yellow, 'photo, 'tiger, 'beauty, 'brother, 'window, 'common, 'famous, 'dirty, 'honest, 'modern, 'always, 'often, 'quickly, 'daily, 'thousand, 'heaven, 'eastern, 'summer, 'bottom, 'neighbour, 'palace, 'teacher, 'movie, 'cargo, 'doctor, 'lesson, 'coffee, 'private, 'dinner, 'ticket, 'happy, etc.

   Exceptions

hu'mane	ho'tel	ci'gar	ca'reer	u'nique	ex'am
po'lite	bam'boo	sham'poo	ba'loon	car'toon	ma'nure
ma'ture	ba'zaar	su'preme	can'teen	ma'chine	ex'treme
se'vere	sin'cere	su'perb	pres'tige	po'lice	fa'tigue
rou'tine	ex'act	ex'treme			

c. A verb of two syllables generally has stress on the second syllable.

   Examples: cor'rect, con'firm, re'duce, ex'pect, va'cate, an'nounce. ex'pose, sug'gest, sur'vive, sus'pect, be'gin, e'lect, col'lect, etc.

Exceptions: 'open, 'order, 'enter, 'listen, 'study, 'cover, 'water, 'marry, 'carry, 'vary, ' worry, 'hurry, 'bury, 'punish, 'suffer, etc.

d. In two-syllable words, stress usually falls on the first syllable if the word is a noun, and on the second syllable if it is a verb.

Noun	**Verb**
'present	pre'sent
'record	re'cord
'object	ob'ject
'conduct	con'duct
'contest	con'test

e. Most three-syllable nouns and adjectives have stress on the first syllable.

Examples: 'dangerous, 'holiday, 'elephant, 'likelihood, 'difficult, 'animal, 'photograph, 'beautiful, 'discipline, 'politics, 'general, 'delicate, 'excellent, 'parliament, etc.

Exceptions: engi'neer, po'liceman, gui'tarist, volun'teer, ciga'rette, etc.

f. Three-syllable verbs usually have stress on the first syllable.

Examples: 'organize, 'decorate, 'signify, 'generate, 'celebrate, etc.

Exceptions: de'velop, e'xamine, con'tinue, di'minish, con'sider, re'member, under'stand, etc.

g. Three-syllable verbs ending with -ise/-ize usually receive stress on the first syllable.

Examples: 'recognize, 'compromise, 'glamorize, 'organise, 'finalize, 'advertise, 'legalize, 'fertilize, 'criticize, 'minimize, 'customize, etc.

h. If a word has four or more syllables, the stress usually falls on the third from the last syllable.

Examples: bi'ology, cer'tificate e'conomy, com'pulsory, a'cademy, pa'rticular, a'pologize, ther'mometer, uni'versity, de'mocracy, un'certainty, ge'ography, tech'nology, sim'plicity, etc.

i. Most compound words receive stress on the first element.

Examples: 'bookshelf, 'coalman, 'raincoat, 'blackboard, 'hairbrush, something, 'classroom, 'football, etc.

j. In two- and three-syllable words formed by adding prefixes or suffixes, the root (base) usually receives the stress.

Examples: re'print, en'large, dis'like, un'real, im'pure, in'born, un'happy, in'habit, im'moral, en'courage, under'go, over'turn, 'brighten, 'loudly, 'actor, 'wreckage, 'whitish, 'egoist, 'effortless, etc.

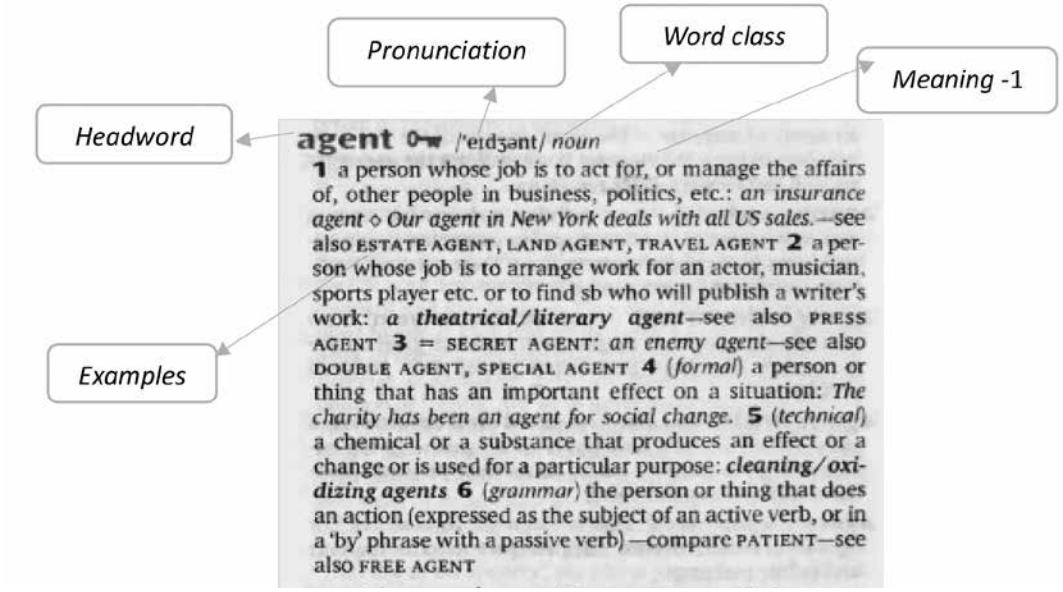
k. In many English words ending with suffixes such as -ic, -ical, -ically, -ial, -ially, -ally, -ian, -ion, and -ious, the stress typically falls on the syllable immediately preceding the suffix.

Examples: e'lectric, eco'nomical, dra'matically, i'nitial, poli'tician, nar'ration, re'ligious.

Dictionary Use

A dictionary is a collection of words with their meanings. It is produced in a book form. It consists of the information related to words and their meanings such as: word, phonemic transcription, word class, meaning, contextual use, etc. A dictionary may also include additional details about words, such as their etymology, origin, synonyms, antonyms, grammar, and more. The use of a dictionary is essential for learning a language, as it provides a wealth of linguistic information.

Every dictionary contains a list of words, which are called *entries*, arranged in alphabetical order. Each entry begins with a *headword*, which is usually highlighted. The headword is followed by its pronunciation or phonemic transcription, written between slant lines / /. Some headwords have alternative spellings or pronunciations, such as those in British English (BrE.) or North American English (NAmE.). In the pronunciation, primary and secondary stress markers are also used. In addition, the word class of the entries (e.g., *n., v., adj., adv., etc.*) is mentioned, followed by the meaning(s) and example of usage. If a word has several meanings, they are usually listed with numbers. This concept can be presented in the following figure which is adopted from Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary.



(Source: Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 9th Edition)

Exercise

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. Which of the following statements correctly defines a phoneme?

i. A phoneme is the highest unit of language.
ii. A phoneme is a written symbol representing language.
iii. A phoneme is the minimal unit of sound that can change the meaning of a word.
iv. A phoneme is a vowel letter in the alphabet.

b. How many phonemes does the word 'light' have?

i. Two ii. Three
iii. Four iv. Five

c. Which one of the following sounds is voiceless?

i. /b/ ii. /d/ iii. /v/ iv. /s/

d. What is the nuclear element of a syllable?

i. A word ii. A consonant
iii. A vowel iv. A morpheme

e. Which term refers to the space between the vocal cords?

i. Glottis ii. Larynx
iii. Uvula iv. Velum

f. Which one of the following words has a different final sound?

i. Calf ii. Rough
iii. Tough iv. Though

g. Diphthong refers to ...

i. A vowel sound produced with a single tongue position

ii. A consonant cluster

iii. A vowel sound that glides from one position to another

iv. A letter combination used for consonants

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What do you mean by English phonemes? Determine the number of phonemes in each of the following words: *education, rough, knowledge, divine, college, love*.

b. Differentiate between sound identification and sound discrimination.

c. Write the differences between monophthongs and diphthongs.

d. Differentiate between voiced and voiceless sounds. Provide a list of voiced and voiceless sounds.

e. How is a dictionary useful for the learners in learning the English language?

f. Write short notes on the following topics.

i. Short vowels

ii. Syllable

iii. Stress

iv. Vocal cords

C. Write long answers to the following questions.

a. What are the differences between vowels and consonants? List all the vowel sounds of English along with word examples.

b. List all the consonant sounds in English and illustrate them in words occurring in initial, medial, and final positions.

c. Do you think dictionary is effective tool for improving language proficiency of the learners? Explain the useful strategies that can be used to enhance English language learning.

Project Work

Visit online platforms and explore e-resources related to the English language sound system. Resources can be books, articles, reports, worksheet, videos, audio files, pictures, etc. Read them extensviely and write the basic information about English sound system. Prepare an inventory of the sounds with brief description. Description may include: identification and classification of sounds. Also share it with the class.

Grammar: Morphology and Syntax

Before You Read

a. What do you mean by morphology and syntax? How do they relate to grammar?

b. Do the English and the Nepali languages follow the same sentence structure? Discuss.

Introduction: Morphology and Syntax

Grammar refers to the structure of language. It can be seen from two perspectives - narrow and broad. From narrow perspective, it refers to the system of language while broad perspective refers to the native speaker's innate capacity to generate infinite number of sentences with finite set of rules. From the structural perspective, when two or more than two morphemes or words come together in a particular sequence, then the scope of grammar starts. For example, when the morphemes 'pen' and 's' are arranged in a sequence of 'pens', it refers to more than one pen. In this word, two morphemes (free and bound) are put together. Similarly, when the words 'white' and 'house' are put in a sequence of 'white house', it functions as a noun phrase. The former example is related to morphology and the latter one is syntax. The morphology and the syntax are the two main areas of grammar.

Morphology is a branch or a main area of grammar which studies the structure or forms of words, primarily through the use of the morpheme construct. In other words, morphology is the study of word formation. It focuses on how words are formed from morphemes and analyzes their internal structure, including how they change form to express grammatical functions such as tense, case, or number.

The word 'syntax'comes originally from Greek and literally means 'putting together or arrangement.' It refers to the level of language that examines how words combine to form larger units: the phrase, the clause, and the sentence. It deals with the internal structure of sentences and the relationships among their components. Syntax focuses on the rules of grammar that govern how words are arranged to form meaningful utterances. In other words, syntax is the study of word arrangement and sentence structure. It helps us understand how words combine to convey meaning in the form of sentences.

Where morphology ends, syntax begins. For example, consider the words *worked*, *hard*, and *students*. Morphologically, they can be analyzed as follows:

worked = *work* + *-ed* (two morphemes: a root and a past tense inflection)
hard (one: free morpheme)

students = *student* + *-s* (two morphemes: a root and a plural inflection).

However, when these words are combined to form the sentence *Students worked hard.*, the analysis moves beyond morphology into the domain of syntax, which examines the grammatical relationships and word order that produce well-formed sentences.

Morpheme: Free and Bound

All words are composed of one or more morphemes. A morpheme is considered the smallest unit of meaning. For instance, the word *dogs* contains two units that are meaningful: *dog*, which specifies a particular kind of animal, and *-s*, which indicates the notion of plurality. Morphemes are commonly classified into *free morpheme* and *bound morpheme.*

Morphemes which occur freely on their own are called free morphemes. Each of these can constitute a word by itself and can stand as single words, for example, *family* and *play.* They are independent bases, also known as the roots. Free morphemes cannot be divided further without altering or destroying their meaning. For example, the word *family* is a free morpheme. Removing the letter 'y' does not result in a meaningful unit; therefore, the word *family* is indivisible as a morpheme.

Free morphemes fall into two categories. The first category consists of ordinary nouns (*table, teacher*), verbs (*sing, play*), adjectives (*good, tall*), and adverbs (*always, rarely*) that we think of as the words carry the 'content' of the messages we convey. These free forms are called lexical morphemes. When they are used with bound morphemes attached, the basic word forms are technically known as *stems*. We can add new lexical morphemes to the language rather easily, so they are treated as an open class of words. The other type of free morphemes is called functional morphemes. They include articles (*a, an, the*), conjunctions (*and, because, although*), prepositions (*in, on, of*), and pronouns *(he, she, us*). Because we almost never add new functional morphemes to the language, they are described as a closed class of words.

A bound morpheme, on the other hand, is one that must appear together with another morpheme, may it be free or bound. In other words, bound morphemes cannot stand alone and need to be attached to another morpheme to convey meaning. We can say that all affixes (prefixes and suffixes) in English are bound morphemes. For example, the word *international* is made up of three morphemes: *nation* is the free, while *inter-* and *-al* are bound morphemes. Similarly, prefixes like *un-* in *unhappy* and suffixes like *-ed* in *walked* are bound morphemes because they have to be attached to lexical words like *happy* and *walk*, respectively.

Let's study the table below about morphemes and their construction with detailed explanations.

Word	Word construction	Number of morphemes	Free morphemes	Bound morphemes
careful	care + ful	two	care	-ful *(suffix)*
discomfort	dis + comfort	two	comfort	dis- *(prefix)*
misinformation	mis + inform + ation	three	inform	mis- *(prefix)*, -ation *(suffix)*
inactive	in + act + ive	three	act	in- (prefix), -ive (suffix)
unlikeliest	un + like + ly + est	four	like	un- *(prefix)*, -ly, -est *(suffixes)*

Word and Word Formation

A word is a grammatical unit that is usually larger than a morpheme but smaller than a phrase. Words are composed of one or more morphemes and function as units of grammar. They consist of combinations of letters that represent sounds to carry a complete meaning. For example, the combination of letters *b*, *o*, and *y* forms the word *boy*, which has its own meaning. However, the combination *o*, *y*, and *b* does not form a word. Therefore, not every combination of letters that represent sounds, constitutes a word.

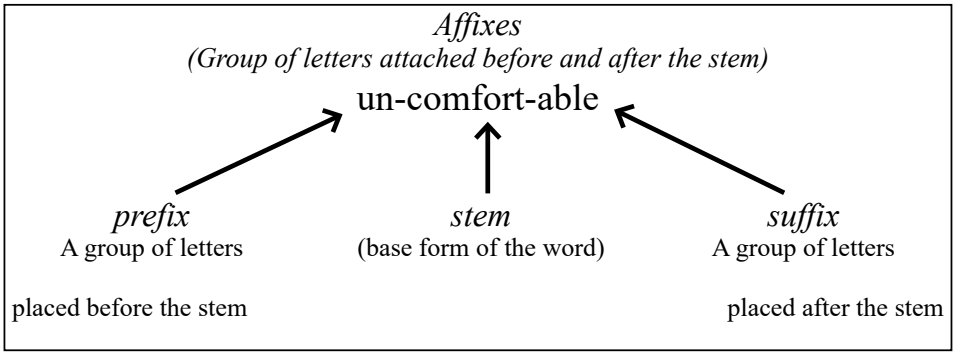
Bloomfield (1934) defines 'word' as a 'minimal free form', i.e. the smallest unit which can constitute, by itself, a complete utterance, and sentence as the maximal free form. Based on this definition, *possible* and *possibility* are words, but *-ity* is not, as it cannot stand alone. Moreover, words like *a*, *an*, *in*, *on*, and *at* are function words. They do not carry lexical meaning independently but contribute to the grammatical structure and meaning of a sentence when used with other words. However, Crystal (2008) defines a word as 'a unit of expression which has universal intuitive recognition by native-speakers, in both spoken and written language.'

Several general subclassifications of words can be seen, such as grammatical (or function) words vs. lexical words, closed-class vs. open-class words, and others. At a more specific level, word classes can be established by analyzing the various grammatical, semantic, and phonological properties displayed by words in a language, and grouping them into classes based on formal similarities. Traditionally, these classes were referred to as *parts of speech*, but modern classifications of word classes tend to be more precise and comprehensive.

Traditionally, there are eight word classes in English in which noun, adjective, adverb and verb are major word classes whereas pronoun, preposition, conjunction and interjection are minor word classes. Major word classes are considered open, as they allow the creation of new words over time, while the minor word classes are closed and limited in number.

Word Formation

Word-formation refers to the entire process of morphological variation involved in the creation and structure of words. It encompasses two main categories: inflection, which involves word variations that indicate grammatical relationships and derivation, which involves variations that reflect lexical relationships. Let's observe an example of word formation below.



Prefix

A prefix is an affix that is added to the beginning of a root or stem. The process of prefixation is common in English for forming new lexical items, however, English does not use prefixes to modify words grammatically. Adding a prefix changes the meaning of a word, often creating a new word. For example, when the prefix *un-* is added to the word *happy*, it forms *unhappy*. Here are some commonly used prefixes in English along with their examples.

Prefix	Examples	Prefix	Examples
hyper-	hyperactive, hypertension	anti-	antivirus, antibiotic
auto-	automobile, autograph	bi-	bicycle, bilingual
mal-	malpractice, malfunction	ex-	ex-minister, ex-student
micro-	microscope, microphone	mono-	monorail, monologue
post-	postmodern, postproduction	pseudo-	pseudoscience, pseudonym
re-	redo, replay	semi-	semifinal, semicircle
sub-	subway, sub-inspector	under-	undergo, undercooked
ultra-	ultrasound, ultramodern	up-	uphill, update
over-	overflow, overconfident	multi-	multiparty, multicultural
pre-	preplan, prehistoric	mis-	mislead, miscall
un-	unhappy, unofficial	in-	inactive, inability

inter-	interact, intermission	en-	enclose, endangered
im-	impossible, immortal	il-	illegal, illogical
non-	nonformal, nonsense	tri-	triangle, tricolor
omni-	omniscient, omnipresent	em-	embark, empower
dis-	disagree, discomfort	homo-	homophone, homograph
poly-	polygon, polygamy	kilo-	kilogram, kilowatt
a-	asocial, apolitical	co-	coworker, coexist
extra-	extracurricular, extramarital	hetero-	heterosexual, heterogeneous
ir-	irregular, irresponsible	tele-	telephone, telecast
trans-	transgender, transformation	ad-	adhere, administer
be-	beloved, beside	de-	decompose, devalue

Suffix

An affix which is added following a root or stem is called suffix. The process of suffixation is common in English, both for the derivational formation of new lexical items and for expressing grammatical relationships. A suffix forms a new word and can change the word's meaning or grammatical function. By adding suffixes, we can modify or expand the meaning of a word. For example:

comfort + able = comfortable

↓ ↓

root suffix new word

Here are some common suffixes used in English along with their examples.

Suffix	**Examples**	**Suffix**	**Examples**
-ment	development, enjoyment	-ward	downward, backward
-ous	poisonous, envious	-ish	childish, whitish
-ion	collection, supervision	-ism	communism, modernism
-ian	physician, magician	-ship	friendship, relationship
-ful	wonderful, careful	-less	careless, hopeless
-able	changeable, comfortable	-ee	interviewee, employee
-y	sunny, rainy	-or	actor, director
-ly	lovely, quickly	-er	employer, teacher
-al	personal, professional	-ary	budgetary, elementary
-hood	childhood, neighborhood	-ity/-ty	purity, loyalty
-ness	happiness, kindness	-ic	athletic, enthusiastic
-ance	appearance, dominance	-ist	tourist, artist
-ive	impressive, successive	-esque	picturesque, grotesque
-ify	justify, personify	-wise	clockwise, stepwise

Inflection and Derivation

The creation of new words in a language never stops and English is one language that is particularly fond of adding to its large vocabulary. There are several ways of word formation in English, and inflection and derivation are two of the main processes of word formation. These terms also refer to the two types of affixes involved in the formation of words.

Inflectional and derivational morphemes are two types of bound morphemes. Inflectional morphemes are also called grammatical morphemes which indicate some kind of grammatical relationship such as tense, number, possession, etc. They do not change the grammatical class of the stems they are attached to; instead, they create different forms of the same word, which remain within the same grammatical category. Inflections are not used to produce new words in the language, but rather to indicate the grammatical function of a word. Inflectional morphemes are used to show whether a word is plural or singular, past tense or not, or whether it is in the comparative or possessive form. Study the following piece of writing to understand how inflections are used.

*Jim**'s** two sister**s** are really different. One like**s** to have fun and is always laugh**ing**. The other enjoy**ed** school as a child and has always be**en** very serious. One is the loud**est** person in the house and the other is quiet**er** than a mouse*. (Yule 2023, p.154)

The suffixes of the words in boldface in the text above are inflectional morphemes. The inflectional suffixes in English are presented in the table below:

S. N.	Inflectional suffix	Examples
1	Noun plural **(-s)**	*boys*, *girls*
2	Noun possessive **(-'s)**	*boy's*, *John's*
3	3rd person singular present tense **(-s)**	*works*, *lives*
4	Verb past tense **(-ed)**	*passed*, *lived*
5	Verb past participle **(-en)**	*written*, *eaten*
6	Verb present participle **(-ing)**	*working*, *doing*
7	Adjective comparative **(-er)**	*bigger*, *taller*
8	Adjective superlative **(-est)**	*biggest*, *highest*

Inflectional morphemes can vary in their forms. For instance, the possessive may appear as a plural form like **-s'** (e.g., *student**s'** complaints*), and the past participle is commonly marked by **-ed** (e.g., *She has already submitt**ed** her assignment*).

In contrast, derivation creates a new word by adding derivational affixes, which often change the grammatical class of the root. For instance, *happy* (an adjective) becomes *happiness* (a

noun). The result of derivation is a new lexeme, whereas the result of inflection is a new form of the same lexeme (e.g., *boy → boys*). Derivational affixes change the meaning or category of the word, while inflectional affixes maintain the same grammatical class.

Derivation can change the part of speech of a word and create new word. For example: *govern* (verb*) → governor, government* (noun). Derivational affixes can be either suffixes or prefixes. All prefixes in English are derivational, and apart from the eight inflectional suffixes mentioned above, all other suffixes are also derivational.

Phrase and its Types

A phrase is a group of words which functions as a unit within a clause or sentence. In grammatical analysis, it refers to a single element of structure typically containing more than one word, and lacking the subject–predicate structure that defines a clause. Traditionally, it is seen as part of a structural hierarchy, falling between clause and word. Todd (1991) defines phrase as a group of words which functions as a unit and, with the exception of the verb phrase itself, does not contain a finite verb. For example, *an old man* is a phrase. It consists of more than one word, making it larger than a single word, but smaller than a clause. It lacks a subject and a predicate, which are essential components of a clause. Therefore, it functions as a unit within a sentence, typically as a noun phrase.

Every phrase is built around a *head*, an item (usually a single word) that determines what kind of phrase it is. A one-word phrase consists of a head with no other elements at all. There are five commonly occurring types of phrase in English, each serving a different grammatical function. They are: noun phrase, verb phrase, adjective phrase, adverb phrase and prepositional phrase.

Noun Phrase

A noun phrase is a group of words with a noun as its headword. It functions as a subject, object, or complement in a sentence. Let's look at the following examples.

A girl

A beautiful girl

A very beautiful girl

In each example, the headword is *girl*, which is a noun, and the words before it (*a, beautiful, very*) modify or describe the noun, forming a complete noun phrase. There can be up to three noun phrases in a simple sentence, as the underlined units in the following simple sentences show:

The little cat ran quickly.
NP 1

The big red ball is on the table.
NP 1 *NP 2*

The principal handed the brilliant students a trophy.
NP 1 *NP 2* *NP 3*

Verb Phrase

A verb phrase is a group of words with a verb as its headword. Verb phrase functions as a predicate in a sentence. It consists of a main verb and any auxiliary (helping) verbs that accompany it. The verb phrase expresses the core action or state in a sentence. Verb phrases can be either finite or non-finite. Let's look at the following examples.

He has been singing. (finite verb)
VP

She is proud to have sung at the national concert. (non-finite verb)
VP

A verb phrase can consist of just one word or more than one word. For example, *write, is writing, has been writing, will have been written,* etc. In each example, the main verb or headword is *write*, and it is sometimes accompanied by auxiliary verbs (like *is, has been, will have been*) to show tense, aspect, or voice. A simple sentence can have only one finite verb phrase.

He may be following us.

However, a complex sentence may have several finite verb phrases.

When he was invited to give a lecture, he was told that all reasonable expenses would be refunded.

Adjective Phrase

An adjective phrase is a group of words that modifies a noun. For example, *extremely beautiful* is an adjective phrase where the word 'beautiful' is an adjective and 'extremely' is a modifier. Like adjectives, adjective phrases can be either attributive (usually placed before or occasionally after the noun) or predicative (placed after a linking verb, describing the subject). Let's look at the following examples.

Attributive use:

That utterly fascinating novel has been banned.
AdjP.

Predicative use:

The letter was unbelievably rude.
AdjP.

He seemed extremely pleasant.
AdjP.

Adverb Phrase

An adverb phrase is a group of words that functions like an adverb. It often tells us when, where, why, or how an action or event occurred.

Her parents are returning to Nepal next week.
AdvP.

The cat ran very quickly.
AdvP.

Prepositional Phrase

A preposition phrase is a group of words that begins with a preposition. It consists of a preposition followed by a noun phrase, indicating relationships like direction, place, time, or cause.

The cat is sitting under the table.
PP

He arrived by plane.
PP

Prepositional phrases are not an obligatory part of a sentence. For example, we can simply say, 'The cat is sitting.' which still conveys a complete meaning without a prepositional phrase.

Clause and its Types

A clause is a group of words which contains a finite verb but which cannot occur in isolation. In other words, a clause typically forms only part of a sentence. In a complex sentence, there are at least two clauses: a main clause (that is, a clause that is most likely a simple sentence) and at least one subordinate or dependent clause (which relies on the main clause for its complete meaning). A clause has its own subject and predicate.

Main Clause- Subordinate Clause

A main clause is also known as an independent clause. It can stand alone as a complete sentence because it expresses a complete thought. On the other hand, a subordinate clause, also known as a dependent clause which cannot stand alone. It depends on a main clause to form a complete meaning. A subordinate clause usually begins with a subordinating conjunction such as: *even though, since, until, when, while, because, so that, if, unless, before, after,* etc. Let's observe the following examples.

She went to bed early	because she was tired.
main clause	*subordinate clause*

If he worked hard,	he would get an A+ grade.
subordinate clause	*main clause*

In the first sentence, the subordinate clause *because she was tired* cannot stand alone, but when combined with the main clause, it forms a complete and meaningful sentence.

Coordinate Clause

Coordinate clauses are two or more independent clauses that are joined together by a coordinating conjunction such as *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*. Let's observe the following examples.

I wanted to go to the park,	but it started raining.
coordinate clause	*coordinate clause*

They invited us,	so we came here.

In the above sentences, there are two independent clauses and they are connected by the coordinating conjunction *but* and *so*, respectively.

Sentence

A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete and clear thought. It can consist of a single clause or multiple clauses. Bloomfield (1934), regarding the sentence, writes: *Each sentence is an independent linguistic form, not included by virtue of any grammatical construction in any larger linguistic form.* They can exist independently, do not rely on any other unit and can be interpreted without reference to any other piece of language. Sentences can be classified based on their structure into simple, compound, and complex.

Simple Sentence

The term 'simple' refers to the fact that the sentence contains only one finite verb. It includes a subject and a verb, and expresses a single complete thought that can stand on its own.

Examples:

The bird flew away.

Raju and Rohan attended the party last night.

Compound Sentence

A compound sentence consists of two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*). Each independent clause is a part of a sentence that can stand alone because it contains a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought. Basically, a compound sentence contains two simple sentences.

Examples:

My mother likes reading the newspaper, but my father likes watching TV.

I like coffee, and she likes tea.

He really loves his parents, so he never gives them trouble.

Complex Sentence

A complex sentence contains an independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. A dependent clause either lacks a subject or a verb or has both but does not express a complete thought. A complex sentence always has a subordinator *(as, because, since, after, although, when*) or relative pronouns *(who, that, which).*

Examples:

Although it was raining, we went for a walk.

I was reading a book when my father entered the room.

Grammatical Transformations

Grammatical transformation is the process of changing one grammatical form into another. Changing positive sentence into negative, active sentence to passive, direct speech into indirect, etc. are the examples of grammatical transformations. The main purpose of grammatical transformation in English grammar is to help learners change the sentence structures without changing the basic meanings of sentences. Some of the commonly found grammatical transformations are briefly described below.

Negation

Negation is one of the universal features of language. Every language has certain rules to transform assertive sentences into negative ones. Broadly, negation is the process forming negative sentences from positive ones. In English grammar, it is expressed by the presence

of the negative particle *not* or *n't* after auxiliary verbs or modal verbs (*e.g., is not, doesn't, cannot*); in lexis, there are several possible means, e.g. prefixes such as un-, non-, etc. Let's observe some examples below:

Affirmative	Negative
They have submitted their project work.	They have not submitted their project work.
He can solve the problems.	He cannot solve the problems.
We were having coffee together.	We were not having coffee together.
Her parents go to the temple every day.	Her parents do not go to the temple every day.
She works hard.	She does not work hard.
She bought some books.	She didn't buy any books.
Rabi always plays the flute.	Rabi never plays the flute.
Somebody is coming here.	Nobody is coming here.
We have a beautiful garden in our house.	We don't have a beautiful garden in our house.
Either he or his friends are going to the party.	Neither he nor his friends are going to the party.
Come here.	Don't come here.
He'd better take rest.	He'd better not take rest.

Question

It is a term used in the classification of sentence functions, typically used to elicit information or a response. Syntactically, in English, a question is a sentence with inversion of the subject and verb. In grammatical discussion, questions are usually referred to as interrogative in form. Generally, questions can be classified into different types, such as yes/no questions, wh-questions (information questions), tag questions, indirect questions, and choice questions.

Examples:

Are you a teacher?

Why were you absent yesterday?

It's raining, isn't it?

Can you tell me where the bus park is?

Do you like tea or coffee?

Here, we discuss how to transform statements into questions especially yes/no and wh-question.

Yes/no question

Yes/no question seeks an answer of either 'yes' or 'no. It typically begins with an auxiliary or modal verb and ends with a question mark (?). When a declarative sentence is changed into a yes/no question, the auxiliary or modal verb is placed at the beginning of the sentence.

Examples:

She is coming. → Is she coming?

They have finished their work. → Have they finished their work?

He can drive a car. → Can he drive a car?

He likes coffee. → Does he like coffee?

They played football. → Did they play football?

Wh-question

Wh-questions are sentences that seek specific or complete information, so they are often called information questions. These questions begin with a wh-word (such as *what, who, which, where, why, when, how*) and end with a question mark (?).

Examples:

Ramita bought three bags yesterday. {
- Who bought three bags yesterday?
- What did Ramita buy yesterday?
- How many bags did Ramita buy yesterday?
- When did Ramita buy three bags?

Contraction

In grammar, contraction refers to the process or result of phonologically reducing a linguistic form so that it becomes attached to an adjacent linguistic form, or fusing a sequence of forms so that they appear as a single form. It is the process of shortening two words into one. It typically involves combining auxiliary verbs, pronouns, or negative forms with main words. Contractions are commonly used in informal speech and writing. Examples of contracted forms include *I've* from *I have*, *haven't* from *have not*, and so on. Contractions are marked with an apostrophe (*'*) to show the missing letter(s). Let's study some common contractions used in English along with their expanded forms.

Contraction	Expanded form(s)	Contraction	Expanded form(s)
could've	could have	didn't	did not
I'd	I had, I would	doesn't	does not
you'll	you will	I'll	I will/I shall
don't	do not	you're	you are
he's	he has, he is	hadn't	had not
you've	you have	hasn't	has not
here's	here is	haven't	have not
isn't	is not	won't	will not
aren't	are not	can't	cannot
mustn't	must not	shouldn't	should not
how're	how are	this's	this is, this has
couldn't	could not	there's	there has, there is
shan't	shall not	that's	that has, that is
weren't	were not		

Passivization

In grammar, the transformation of an active sentence into its passive form is known as passivization. This term is used in the grammatical analysis of voice, referring to a sentence, clause or verb form where the grammatical subject is typically the recipient or goal of the action denoted by the verb (e.g., *The letter was written by a doctor*). One of the earliest rules that convert active sentences into passive ones can be stated as follows:

$$NP_1\text{– (Aux)–V–}NP_2 \Rightarrow NP_2\text{–(Aux)+be+en (Vpp) –V–by+}NP_1$$

(where *be* is a form of the verb *to be*, and *en* represents the past-participle ending of the lexical verb).

Active: Devkota wrote Muna-Madan.

Passive: Muna-Madan was written by Devkota.

In passive voice, the focus shifts from the doer (subject) to the receiver of the action (object). We use passive voice to change the focus of the sentence, although the meaning remains constant. Only transitive verbs have passive forms. The passive voice is formed by combining the *be-verb* and the *past participle.* For example:

Active voice: The chef cooked the meal.

Passive voice: The meal <u>was cooked</u> by the chef.

General rules of passivization

a. The position of the subject and object is changed when transforming active sentences into passive ones. Nouns remain the same, but the form of pronouns is changed.

Ram sent me a letter. ⟶ I was sent a letter by Ram.

He reads a book daily. ⟶ A book is read daily by him.

b. If the subject is unknown or unimportant, do not mention in the passive structure. Generally, we don't mention - *you, we, they, people, police, somebody, nobody, everyone, etc.*

Active: Somebody broke the vase. *Active:* Farmers plant rice in summer.

Passive: The vase was broken. *Passive:* Rice is planted in summer.

c. Always use the *be-verb + past participle* form of the main verb in the passive voice. Be-verbs such as *is, am, are, was, were, being, been,* and *be* are used in the passive form according to the tense and aspect of the sentences.

Exercise

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. Which statement is true about morphology?
i. Morphology is the study of linguistic meaning.
ii. Morphology is the study of sentence structure.
iii. Morphology is the study of sound structure.
iv. Morphology is the study of word formation.

b. Which level of language is concerned with the study of sentence structures?
i. Morphology ii. Syntax iii. Semantics iv. Pragmatics

c. Which statement is not true about morpheme?

i. Every morpheme can stand alone as a word.
ii. A morpheme is the smallest grammatical unit of language.
iii. Morpheme can be free or bound.
iv. Morpheme can contribute to the grammatical function of words.

d. What types of morphemes are found in the word 'beautiful'?
i. Free and free ii. Free and bound
iii. Bound and bound iv. Bound and free

e. Which of the following statements is an example of a compound sentence?
   i. Open the window, please.
   ii. She cooked dinner and he washed the dishes.
   iii. When the bell rang, the students left the classroom.
   iv. The wind blew fiercely.

f. Which one of the following words is not a content word?
   i. Apple ii. And iii. Beautiful iv. Sleep

g. A small girl dived <u>into the pool.</u> Which phrase does the underlined part belong to?
   i. An adjective phrase ii. An adverb phrase
   iii. A prepositional phrase iv. A noun phrase

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What is a morpheme? Show difference between free and bound morphemes with examples.
b. What is derivation? How does it differ from inflection? Explain with suitable examples.
c. Count the number of morphemes in each of the following words and identify their types. *happily*, *usefulness, imperfection, unintentionally, demotivated.*
d. What are grammatical units and how are they interrelated?
e. Write short notes on the following topics.
   i. Affixation ii. An adjective phrase iii. Passivization iv. Word class

C. Write long answers to the following questions.

a. How are morphology and syntax interrelated? How do they differ from each other? Explain.
b. What are the different types of phrases in English? Explain each of them with examples.
c. Define a clause and describe its types with examples.
d. What do you mean by grammatical transformation? Briefly explain the concepts of negation, question formation, contraction, and passivization.

Project Work

Read a news article published in an English newspaper and prepare a list of different types of sentences like active, passive, simple, complex, direct, indirect, etc. used in the newspaper. Write them on a chart paper. And also present it to the class.

Semantics, Pragmatics and Discourse

Before You Read

a. What do you know about semantics and pragmatics? Discuss.

b. Do the terms 'semantics', 'pragmatics' and 'discourse' relate to each other? Why? Why not?

Introduction to Semantics

Semantics is one of the levels of language, related to the dictionary meaning of linguistic items. The term 'semantics' is derived from the Greek word *sema*, which means *sign* or *meaning*. It explores how meaning is constructed, interpreted, and conveyed in language. Semantics is concerned with the relationship between linguistic forms (such as words, phrases, and sentences) and the meanings they represent. Yule (2023) defines semantics as the study of the meaning of words, phrases and sentences. In semantic analysis, there is always an attempt to focus on what the words conventionally mean, rather than on what an individual speaker might think they mean, or want them to mean, on a particular occasion. This indicates that meaning of linguistic forms can be interpreted in two different ways. They are: direct or linguistic meaning and contextual meaning. Direct meaning is the area of semantics whereas contextual meaning is the area of pragmatics. The former is the focus area of semantics.

Todd (1987, p. 79) identifies several important aspects of meaning that are studied within the field of semantics:

> A word can have more than one meaning; for example, *ball* can mean both a dance and a round object used for bouncing.
>
> Different words can appear to have the same meaning; for example, *regal* and *royal*, or *big* and *large*.
>
> Some words can be analysed into components such as *adult* and *female*; for example, *mare* implies both adult and female, as well as horse.
>
> Some words seem to have opposites; for example, *long* and *short*, *good* and *bad*, but not *desk* and *table*.
>
> The meanings of some words are included in the meanings of others; for example, the meaning of *vegetable* is included in that of *potato*, and the meaning of *tree* is included in that of *elm*.

Certain combinations of words have meanings very different from the combination of their separate meanings; for example, the meanings of *pass* plus *on* do not add up to the meaning of *die*, although that is what *pass on* can mean.

Denotative and Connotative Meaning

As we have already discussed, semantics is the study of meanings. However, this study of meaning is a complex affair. The study of meaning is often approached through the concepts of sense and reference. The meanings of words in language can be examined in various ways, with denotation and connotation being key approaches to understanding how words convey meaning.

Denotation is a term used in semantics to classify types of meaning and is often contrasted with connotation. Generally, it refers to the central meaning of a linguistic form, regarded as the set of things it could possibly refer to.

To be specific, in one sense, denotative meaning in traditional linguistic terminology is roughly equivalent to literal meaning, contrasting with the subjective and personal associations of connotation. It refers to the precise, literal definitions of words, typically found in dictionaries. For example, the denotation of the word *cow* would be its dictionary definition, such as *a large animal kept on farms to produce milk or beef*, while its connotations might include ideas like *source of livelihood, power, fertility,* etc.

In a second sense, the denotation of an expression refers to the set of actual entities to which it properly applies; for *cow*, this would mean the set of all cows—past, present, and future, regardless of breed, size, or color. In this usage, denotation is equivalent to extension.

In a third sense, denotation means the set of properties that something must have to be called by that word. For example, the intension of *cow* includes properties like being a large, female, domesticated bovine that produces milk. Here, denotation aligns with what linguists call intension.

Connotation, on the other hand, is a non-central word meaning acquired through frequent associations. It refers to the positive or negative feelings, ideas, or cultural meanings that words naturally carry. In other words, connotation is an associative meaning rather than a strict dictionary definition. For example, the word *rose* may connote *love, beauty,* or *romance* based on cultural or personal associations. All these emotional or symbolic meanings are part of the connotation of the word. Its main application is with reference to the emotional associations (personal or communal) which are suggested by, or are part of the meaning of, a linguistic unit, especially a lexical item. Connotative meanings are typically not included in dictionary entries; they are mostly used and explored in literature. Apart from purely grammatical words (such as *of*, *on*, *but*) and strictly technical terms, almost all words carry connotations.

Thus, denotative meaning refers to the basic or literal sense of a word. It is the explicit, objective meaning that remains consistent across different contexts. However, the connotative meaning of a word goes beyond its literal definition. It includes the additional or implied meanings that may vary depending on individual experiences, cultural background, or social usage. Unlike denotation, connotation can change depending on the context in which a word is used.

Synonym and Antonym

There are various ways in which the meanings of words can be related to one another. Words rarely carry meaning in complete isolation; rather, a word's meaning is often shaped by and connected to the meanings of other words within the language system. These interconnected relationships are collectively referred to as sense relations.

Words in language are not only seen as containers of meaning or as fulfilling roles in events; they also share meaningful relationships with one another. In everyday communication, we often explain the meanings of words by referring to their relationships with other words. If we are asked to explain the meaning of a word like *enormous*, we might respond by saying, it's same as *huge*, or define *victory* as the opposite of *defeat*, or describe *rhododendron* as a kind of *flowering tree*. In doing so, we are not analyzing the meanings of these words in terms of their individual components, but rather in relation to other words. This method of interpretation is central to the semantic description of language and is known as the analysis of lexical relations (a key part of sense relations in semantics). The lexical relations illustrated in the examples above are synonymy (enormous/huge), antonymy (victory/ defeat), and hyponymy (rhododendron/tree).

Synonymy is a major type of sense relation between lexical items. It refers to two or more words with very closely related meanings within the same language. The lexical items that share the same or similar meanings are called synonyms. In other words, synonyms are words with identical or closely similar meanings, such as *pail* and *bucket*, *hide* and *conceal,* or *fruitful* and *productive*. Let's look at some more examples of synonymous words.

almost-nearly	*answer-reply*	*beautiful-lovely*	*stop-cease*	*big-large*
buy-purchase	*happy-pleased*	*couch-sofa*	*hard-difficult*	*delighted- thrilled*

He was *delighted* to be honoured in public.

He was *thrilled* to be honoured in public.

He was *overjoyed* to be honoured in public.

Synonyms can often, though not always, be substituted for each other in sentences. It is important to remember that the idea of *sameness* in meaning, does not necessarily imply *total sameness*. In other words, in most cases, synonymy is only partial. There are many

instances where one word is appropriate in a given sentence, but its synonym may sound odd or be misunderstood. For example, the words *tall* and *high* are often considered synonyms. While both can be used in phrases like *a tall building* or *a high building,* they are not always interchangeable. We can say *a tall boy*, but *a high boy* would sound odd.

The above example illustrates that even closely related words often differ in terms of usage, context, or connotation. Despite these differences, if both words can, in principle, refer to exactly the same entities or situations, they are considered cognitively synonymous.

There are also regional differences in the use of synonymous pairs, which may occur between different dialects of the same language. For example, *autumn* (British English) and *fall* (American English), or *pavement* (British English) and *sidewalk* (American English). In practice, synonymy is understood to occur when words are close enough in meaning to allow substitution in certain contexts without significantly changing the meaning of the sentence as a whole.

Antonymy is one of a set of sense relations recognized in some analyses of meaning, along with synonymy, hyponymy and others. In semantics, antonymy refers to the sense relation that expresses oppositeness of meaning. In other words, antonymy occurs when two words are said to have opposite meanings. Let's look at some examples of antonymy.

long-short	*rich –poor*	*attach –detach*	*alive- dead*	*married-single*
true-false	*male-female*	*believe -doubt*	*ancient -modern*	*victory -defeat*

In its most general sense, antonymy refers collectively to all types of semantic oppositeness. It includes various subdivisions, such as gradable antonyms, non-gradable antonyms and reversives.

Gradable antonyms involve a scale or degrees of contrast and can be used in comparative constructions, especially with adjectives. For example, *big–small* or *bigger–smaller*. The negation of one member of a gradable pair does not necessarily imply the other. For example, the sentence 'My car is not old.' does not necessarily mean 'My car is new.' In contrast, non-gradable antonyms (also called complementary pairs) do not typically allow for comparative constructions. It is the oppositeness of such pairs where the denial of one implies the assertion of the other. For example, *My cat isn't alive* does indeed mean *My cat is dead*. Other non-gradable antonyms are the pairs: *right/wrong, transitive/intransitive, awake/asleep, married/single, present/absent* and *true/false*.

A third type of antonyms includes reversives. For instance, *undress* is not simply the negation of *dress* (i.e., it does not mean 'not dress); rather, it means to reverse the action of dressing — to take clothes off. Thus, reversives indicate actions that reverse each other. Other examples are *enter* and *exit*, *pack* and *unpack*, *lengthen* and *shorten*, *raise* and *lower*, *tie* and *untie*.

However, some linguists, including John Lyons, have reserved the term 'antonyms' specifically for graded opposites, while the other type just illustrated is referred to as complementaries.

Homophony and Homography

Both the terms homophone and homograph contain the element *homo-*, meaning 'same' in Greek. Homophone means 'same sound,' and homograph means 'same writing.' Carney (1997) states that homophones are sound-alikes and homographs are look-alikes.

In other words, homophony refers to words (i.e., lexemes) that have the same pronunciation, but differ in meaning. Homophones are words which sound the same but are written differently. When two or more than two forms share the same pronunciation, they are called homophones. Let's look at some examples of homophones.

cell/sell	*knead/need*	*coarse/course*	*their/there*	*doe/dough*
fare/fair	*heal/heel*	*wait/weight*	*deer/dear*	*site/sight*
right/write	*pail/pale*	*principal/principle*	*to/too/two*	*so/sew/sow*

Homography, on the other hand, refers to words (i.e., lexemes) which have the same spelling but differ in meaning. In other words, homographs are words which are pronounced differently but spelt exactly the same. The meaning of a homograph depends on its context in a sentence. The words *wind* /wɪnd/ 'current of air' and *wind* /waɪnd/ 'to turn round' are examples of homographs. English has far fewer homographs than homophones. Here are some pairs of homographs with their meanings.

read (v.) - to perceive information provided in a written form
read (v.) - the past tense of the verb 'read'
live (v.) - to be alive
live (adj.) - being alive
wound (n.) - an injury
wound (v.) - the past tense of the verb 'wind'
tear (v.) - to rip a solid material
tear (n.) - a water drop coming from someone's eyes
use (v.) - to utilise
use (n.) - a way in which something is used

Pragmatics

Communication clearly depends not only on recognizing the meaning of words in an utterance, but also on understanding what speakers mean by their utterances in a particular context. The study of what speakers mean, or 'speaker meaning,' is called pragmatics. Semantics is about what words literally mean whereas pragmatics is about what people mean. Pragmatics can be defined as a branch of linguistics that studies how utterances convey meaning in context. It also studies how context influences the interpretation of meaning in communication.

Crystal (2008, p. 379) defines pragmatics as "the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication." In other words, pragmatics is the study of communicative action in its sociocultural context. Communicative action includes not only using speech acts (such as requesting, apologizing, complaining and advising), but also engaging in different types discourse.

We can say that pragmatics focuses on an area between semantics, sociolinguistics, and the extralinguistic context. Pragmatics studies how the meaning is influenced by the physical setting, social relationships, speaker intentions, and shared knowledge.

Yule (2023) discusses several areas of pragmatics. Some of the key points are presented here to discuss pragmatics.

> Pragmatics is the study of invisible meaning. It is about, more is always communicated than is said.
>
> Pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning as the influence of the context is crucial.
>
> Pragmatics is the study of speech acts. For example, *Can you pass the salt?* The speaker is not really asking a question about someone's ability, but it is typically understood as an interrogative structure to make a request.

Thus, pragmatics is the study of the relations between language and context that are basic to an account of language understanding. It is also the study of the ability of language users to pair sentences with the contexts in which they would be appropriate. Moreover, pragmatics involves the study of deixis (at least in part), speech acts, aspects of discourse structure, and more. The ending of semantics study often marks the beginning of pragmatics. It goes beyond syntax and semantics or visible meaning, focusing on real-world language use in context.

Context and Deixis

In linguistics, both context and deixis play a significant role in how meaning is conveyed and interpreted in communication. These interrelated concepts explain how language depends on the situation and environment in which it is used.

Context

There are two kinds of meaning: semantic meaning and pragmatic meaning or literal meaning and contextual meaning. Semantic meaning is expressed by statements. These statements are linguistic units (both spoken and written) that are inherently contextualized. In other words, statements are sentences in use. In order to interpret statements, we need minimum context.

Yule (2023) describes the role of context in pragmatics and states, "We interpret the words (the text) in a specific situation (the context) with pre-existing assumptions about a likely message. The meaning of the text is not in the words alone, but in what we think the writer intended to communicate in that context."

As previously discussed, the influence of context is crucial. It can be either physical or linguistic, and both contexts play important roles in how we make sense of any text. In other words, context affects meaning. The speaker's intended meaning is interpreted through context.

The physical context is mainly the location 'out there' where we encounter words and phrases. When we see the word *bank* on the wall of a building, we interpret it as referring to a financial institution in that context. However, if you see the same word by the river, as in the sentence *The children can play on the bank, skipping stones across the water,* we interpret it differently.

On the other hand, the linguistic context (also known as co-text) refers to the surrounding words that help us understand what is meant. For example, if you read the word *bank* in the sentence *He sat down on the bank and watched the water flow by*, the co-text makes it clear that *bank* refers to the side of a river, not a financial institution.

Deixis

There are some very common words in our language that cannot be interpreted at all without knowing the context. For example, consider the sentence: *Please submit it next day because he is not there*. Out of context, this sentence is vague and almost impossible to understand because we don't know who is speaking, who *he* is, what *it* refers to, or what *there* means. These expressions are context-dependent. To interpret them correctly, we must rely on knowledge of the local context.

Expressions such as *it*, *he*, and *there*, used in the sentence above, are technically known as deictic expressions from the Greek word deixis which means *pointing* via language. In addition to having meaning, words also have a pointing function commonly referred to as deixis. We use deixis to refer to people (e.g., *he, she*, *us*, *them*), places (e.g., *here*, *there*), and times (e.g., *now*, *then, tomorrow*). All these deictic expressions are interpreted based on the speaker's perspective—specifically, which person, place, or time the speaker has in mind.

Deictic words have fixed semantic meanings but their denotational meanings (what they specifically refer to) change based on time, place, or context. For example, English pronouns are deictic because their meaning depends on who is speaking. Some of the deictic expressions are presented below.

Deixis	Close to Speaker	Not Close to Speaker
Person deixis	*me, us, ours, this girl*	*him, them, that woman, those idiots*
Spatial deixis	*here, this bed, behind me*	*there, those hills, over yonder*
Temporal deixis	*now, today, this morning*	*then, yesterday, last week, next year*

(Yule, 2023)

Discourse

The word *discourse* is usually defined as language beyond the sentence. It refers to a continuous stretch of language that is larger than a sentence. At its most general sense, discourse is a behavioral unit with a pre-theoretical status in linguistics: it is a set of utterances that constitute any recognizable speech event, such as a conversation, a joke, a sermon, or an interview.

While syntax focuses on sentence structure and semantics deals with meaning at the sentence level, discourse encompasses the flow of meaning across larger units of language, such as conversations, speeches, and written texts. It refers to any connected piece of speech or writing. A discourse may be produced by a single speaker or writer, or by two or more individuals engaging in a conversation or, more rarely, in a written exchange. In other words, discourse involves spoken or written communication that extends beyond individual sentences. Discourse analysis typically focuses on the study of language in texts and conversation.

Formal definitions typically characterize discourse as a coherent unit of language consisting of more than one sentence—that is, language larger than a single sentence. Functional definitions, on the other hand, describe discourse as language in use. However, both of these definitions fail to fully capture the essence of discourse. In this regard, Hinkel and Fotos (2002) mention that discourse in context may consist of only one or two words as in stop and no smoking. Alternatively, a piece of discourse can be hundreds of thousands of words in length, as some novels are. A typical piece of discourse is somewhere betweenthese two extremes. Discourse is now viewed as an instance of spoken or written language that has describable internal relationships of form and meaning (e.g., words, structures, cohesion) which relate coherently to an external communicative function or purpose, and to a specific audience/ interlocutor. Two fundamental concepts in the study of discourse are cohesion and coherence.

Similarly, Henry and Tator (2002) define discourse as "the way in which language is used socially to convey broad historical meaning. It is language shaped by the social conditions of its use, by who is using it, and under what conditions. Language can never be 'neutral' because it bridges our personal and social worlds."

Thus, the study of how sentences in spoken and written language form larger meaningful units falls under the area of discourse. It involves examining how language is organized, structured, and interpreted in communication.

Cohesion and Coherence

Making a sentence is quite easier than creating a text. We know that texts must have a certain structure. This structure depends on factors that are quite different from those required for the structure of a single sentence. Some of these factors are described in terms of *cohesion*, or the formal ties and connections that exist within texts.

Cohesion refers to the presence of explicit linguistic links that provide recognizable structure, such as *she*, *this*, *after*, *therefore*, and *but*. It refers to the grammatical and/or lexical relationships between different elements of a text.

In other words, *cohesion* refers to the grammatical and lexical ties that bind sentences or parts of a text together, creating a flow of meaning. It functions as a connection between succession sentence in a paragraph or text. It consists of formal links that mark relationships between clauses and sentences within a discourse. Cohesion involves the use of cohesive devices such as pronouns, conjunctions, and transitional phrases to establish smooth connections between sentences and paragraphs. These devices help make the discourse coherent and meaningful. Cohesion can be thought of as the bricks and cement that hold a building together. Without cohesion, a text or conversation would seem fragmented and disjointed. Let's examine a text that reflects cohesive ties.

> *Global warming is a pressing issue that affects everyone.* ***It*** is caused by the increase in greenhouse gases. ***These gases*** trap heat in the atmosphere, leading to rising temperatures. ***As a result****, ice caps are melting, and sea levels are rising.* ***This*** can cause flooding in coastal areas, displacing millions of people. ***Therefore****, governments must take action to reduce carbon emissions and promote renewable energy.*

The text demonstrates cohesion through pronoun references like *it* (referring to global warming) and *these gases* (referring to greenhouse gases), logical connectors such as *as a result* and *therefore*, and summary reference like *this* (referring to the effects of rising temperatures), all of which help create a smooth and coherent flow of ideas. Cohesion can appear both across sentences and within different parts of a single sentence.

Student: Excuse me, sir! Is the principal in the hall?

Teacher: Yes, he is there.

Thus, cohesion refers to the surface-structure features of an utterance or text that link different parts of sentences or larger units of discourse, for example, the cross-referencing function of pronouns, articles, and certain types of adverbs.

Coherence

Sometimes, the use of appropriate cohesive devices in a text does not make sure that it will make sense. The 'connectedness' we experience when interpreting normal texts is not based solely on word links or grammatical ties. There must be another factor that helps us distinguish texts that are meaningful from those that are not. This factor is known as coherence. Simply put, coherence is the degree to which a piece of discourse 'makes sense.'

Coherence can be defined as the overall logical flow and meaningful connection of ideas in a discourse, ensuring that the text forms a comprehensible whole. It reflects how logically and meaningfully ideas are connected within a piece of speech or writing. In other words, coherence is the main principle of organization in discourse analysis that explains the functional connectedness or unity of a piece of spoken or written language (text or discourse). For example, the two sentences *It was cloudy and cold this morning. Therefore, I wore a t-shirt* do not form a coherent sequence, because wearing a t-shirt is not a logical consequence of cold, cloudy weather. A more coherent alternative would be: *Therefore, I wore a down jacket.*

A discourse makes sense when it aligns with the language users' world knowledge, the inferences they draw, the assumptions they hold, and particularly how coherent communication is achieved through speech acts. Let's examine an example of coherence mentioned by Yule (2023) which shows how coherence is achieved not just through grammar or vocabulary, but through shared knowledge, logical flow, and understanding of the social context between speakers.

Her: That's the telephone.

(She makes a request of him to perform an action.)

Him: I'm in the bath.

(He gives a reason why he cannot comply with the request.)

Her: OK.

(She accepts the reason.)

We can say coherence is the relationship that links the meanings of utterances in a discourse or sentences in a text. Imagine coherence as a building; it ensures that ideas are organized and connected in a way that makes sense to the reader.

Example of coherence in a text:

> Global warming is a pressing issue that affects everyone. Rising temperatures lead to melting ice caps, which, in turn, cause sea levels to rise. This can result in flooding in coastal areas, displacing millions of people. To combat this, governments must implement policies to reduce carbon emissions and promote renewable energy.

While cohesion deals with the technical and grammatical connections between parts of a text, coherence is about how well the ideas make sense as a whole. Cohesion operates at the sentence level, using linguistic devices such as pronouns, conjunctions, and lexical ties to link parts of the text. Coherence, on the other hand, concerns the overall organization and logical flow of ideas, ensuring that the text is meaningful and easy to follow. A text may be cohesive without being coherent, but true coherence cannot exist without at least some degree of cohesion.

Exercise

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. What does semantics deal with?

i. The study of language use and communication
ii. The study of the production of speech sounds
iii. The study of linguistic meaning
iv. The study of word structures

b. Which meaning is inferred if you refer to a 'snake' as a danger?

i. Denotative meaning ii. Connotative meaning
iii. Literal meaning iv. Basic meaning

c. What sense relation exists between the words 'heir' and 'air'?

i. Synonymy ii. Antonymy
iii. Homography iv. Homophony

d. What sense relation exists between the words 'huge' and 'enormous'?

i. Synonymy
ii. Antonymy
iii. Homonymy
iv. Homograph

e. Which statement best describes homography?

i. Words that have the same meaning
ii. Words that have opposite meanings
iii. Words that have the same sound but different spellings
iv. Words that have the same spelling but different sounds

f. Which of the following meanings does pragmatics study?

i. Conceptual meaning
ii. Speaker meaning
iii. Sentence meaning
iv. Word meaning

g. Which of the following terms refers to the grammatical and logical connections within a text?

i. Cohesion
ii. Inference
iii. Connotation
iv. Coherence

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What do you mean by semantics? Describe its areas briefly.

b. Show the differences between connotative meaning and denotative meaning with examples.

c. Define antonymy and describe its types with examples.

d. Distinguish between homophone and homograph with examples.

e. What is pragmatics? Explain in brief.

f. Pragmatics is the study of invisible meaning. Elucidate the statement.

g. Write short notes on the following topics:

i. Connotative meaning

ii. Synonymy

iii. Context

iv. Discourse

C. Write long answers to the following questions.

a. Compare and contrast semantics and pragmatics.

b. Why is context essential to understanding the meaning of an utterance? Explain the types of context.

c. Define cohesion and coherence. Describe their role in language and communication.

Project Work

Collect some English newspapers either hardcopy or digital copy. Select some pieces of news and read them extensively. Focus on different cohesive devices used in the newspapers. List out them and prepare a short report describing how those cohesive devices you select are used to make the text (i.e., piece of news) cohesive in the newspapers. Also share the report with the class.

Chapter Three

Prose Texts: Fiction and Non-Fiction

The Piece of String

Before You Read

a. What do you think the title of the story suggests?

b. How can a small misunderstanding lead to a major conflict? Share your ideas.

Henri Ren Albert Guy de Maupassant (1850 - 1893) was a popular French author who wrote under the pen name Guy de Maupassant. His extensive work, admired for its precision and depth, influenced a range of notable authors, including William Somerset Maugham and Anton Chekhov. Maupassant's stories often explore the impact of war, particularly drawing on his experiences in the Franco-Prussian War, and they depict the suffering of civilians caught in conflict. He was also known for his critical view of the bourgeoisie, whom he often satirized in his works. Among Maupassant's most famous works is *The Necklace*, but his literary legacy includes several other short stories such as *A Piece of String* and *Boule de Suif*, widely regarded as his finest.

The Piece of String explores how a simple misunderstanding can destroy a person's life. The story focuses on Maitre Hauchecorne, a poor farmer wrongly accused of stealing a lost wallet after he picks up a scrap of string. Despite his innocence, the villagers' gossip and distrust turn him into an outcast. Even when the wallet is found, no one believes his explanations, and his desperate attempts to clear his name only deepen their suspicion. The story critiques human nature, showing how pride, rumor, and society's harsh judgment can trap innocent people in lies they cannot escape, leading to tragic consequences.

Along all the roads around Goderville, the peasants and their wives were coming toward the burgh because it was market day. The men were proceeding with slow steps, the whole body bent forward at each movement of their long-twisted legs; deformed by their hard work, by the weight on the plow which, at the same time, raised the left shoulder and swerved the figure, by the reaping of the wheat which made the knees spread to make a firm "purchase," by all the slow and painful labors of the country. Their blouses, blue, "stiff-starched," shining as if varnished, ornamented with a little design in white at the neck and wrists, puffed about their bony bodies, seemed like balloons ready to carry them off. From each of them two feet protruded.

Some led a cow or a calf by a cord, and their wives, walking behind the animal, whipped its haunches with a leafy branch to hasten its progress. They carried large baskets on their arms from which, in some cases, chickens and, in others, ducks thrust out their heads. And they walked with a quicker, livelier step than their husbands. Their spare straight figures were wrapped in a scanty little shawl pinned over their flat bosoms, and their heads were enveloped in a white cloth glued to the hair and surmounted by a cap.

Then a wagon passed at the jerky trot of a nag, shaking strangely, two men seated side by side and a woman in the bottom of the vehicle, the latter holding onto the sides to lessen the hard jolts.

In the public square of Goderville there was a crowd, a throng of human beings and animals mixed together. The horns of the cattle, the tall hats, with long nap, of the rich peasant, and the headgear of the peasant women rose above the surface of the assembly. And the clamorous, shrill, screaming voices made a continuous and savage din which sometimes was dominated by the robust lungs of some countryman's laugh or the long lowing of a cow tied to the wall of a house.

All that smacked of the stable, the dairy and the dirt heap, hay and sweat, giving forth that unpleasant odor, human and animal, peculiar to the people of the field.

Maître Hauchecorne of Breaute had just arrived at Goderville, and he was directing his steps toward the public square when he perceived upon the ground a little piece of string. Maître Hauchecorne, economical like a true Norman, thought that everything useful ought to be picked up, and he bent painfully, for he suffered from rheumatism. He took the bit of thin cord from the ground and began to roll it carefully when he noticed Maître Malandain, the harness maker, on the threshold of his door, looking at him. They had heretofore had business together on the subject of a halter, and they were on bad terms, both being good haters. Maître Hauchecorne was seized with a sort of shame to be seen thus by his enemy, picking a bit of string out of the dirt. He concealed his "find" quickly under his blouse, then in his trousers' pocket; then he pretended to be still looking on the ground for something which he did not find, and he went toward the market, his head forward, bent double by his pains.

He was soon lost in the noisy and slowly moving crowd which was busy with interminable bargainings. The peasants milked, went and came, perplexed, always in fear of being cheated, not daring to decide, watching the vender's eye, ever trying to find the trick in the man and the flaw in the beast.

The women, having placed their great baskets at their feet, had taken out the poultry which lay upon the ground, tied together by the feet, with terrified eyes and scarlet crests.

They heard offers, stated their prices with a dry air and impassive face, or perhaps, suddenly deciding on some proposed reduction, shouted to the customer who was slowly going away: "All right, Maître Authirne, I'll give it to you for that."

Then little by little the square was deserted, and the Angelus ringing at noon, those who had stayed too long scattered to their shops.

At Jourdain's the great room was full of people eating, as the big court was full of vehicles of all kinds, carts, gigs, wagons, dumpcarts, yellow with dirt, mended and patched, raising their shafts to the sky like two arms or perhaps with their shafts in the ground and their backs in the air.

Just opposite the diners seated at the table the immense fireplace, filled with bright flames, cast a lively heat on the backs of the row on the right. Three spits were turning on which were chickens, pigeons and legs of mutton, and an appetizing odor of roast beef and gravy dripping over the nicely browned skin rose from the hearth, increased the jovialness and made everybody's mouth water.

All the aristocracy of the plow ate there at Maître Jourdain's, tavern keeper and horse dealer, a rascal who had money.

The dishes were passed and emptied, as were the jugs of yellow cider. Everyone told his affairs, his purchases and sales. They discussed the crops. The weather was favorable for the green things but not for the wheat.

Suddenly the drum beat in the court before the house. Everybody rose, except a few indifferent persons, and ran to the door or to the windows, their mouths still full and napkins in their hands.

After the public crier had ceased his drumbeating, he called out in a jerky voice, speaking his phrases irregularly:

"It is hereby made known to the inhabitants of Goderville, and in general to all persons present at the market, that there was lost this morning on the road to Benzeville, between nine and ten o'clock, a black leather pocketbook containing five hundred francs and some business papers. The finder is requested to return same with all haste to the mayor's office or to Maître Fortune Houlbreque of Manneville; there will be twenty francs reward."

Then the man went away. The heavy roll of the drum and the crier's voice were again heard at a distance.

Then they began to talk of this event, discussing the chances that Maître Houlbreque had of finding or not finding his pocketbook.

And the meal concluded. They were finishing their coffee when a chief of the gendarmes appeared upon the threshold.

He inquired:

“Is Maître Hauchecorne of Breaute here?”

Maître Hauchecorne, seated at the other end of the table, replied:

“Here I am.”

And the officer resumed:

“Maître Hauchecorne, will you have the goodness to accompany me to the mayor’s office? The mayor would like to talk to you.”

The peasant, surprised and disturbed, swallowed at a draught his tiny glass of brandy, rose and, even more bent than in the morning, for the first steps after each rest were especially difficult, set out, repeating: “Here I am, here I am.”

The mayor was awaiting him, seated on an armchair. He was the notary of the vicinity, a stout, serious man with pompous phrases.

“Maître Hauchecorne,” said he, “you were seen this morning to pick up, on the road to Benzeville, the pocketbook lost by Maître Houlbreque of Manneville.”

The countryman, astounded, looked at the mayor, already terrified by this suspicion resting on him without his knowing why.

“Me? Me? Me pick up the pocketbook?”

“Yes, you yourself.”

“Word of honor, I never heard of it.”

“But you were seen.”

“I was seen, me? Who says he saw me?”

“Monsieur Malandain, the harness maker.”

The old man remembered, understood and flushed with anger.

“Ah, he saw me, the clodhopper, he saw me pick up this string here, M’sieu the Mayor.” And rummaging in his pocket, he drew out the little piece of string.

But the mayor, incredulous, shook his head.

“You will not make me believe, Maître Hauchecorne, that Monsieur Malandain, who is a man worthy of credence, mistook this cord for a pocketbook.”

The peasant, furious, lifted his hand, spat at one side to attest his honor, repeating:

"It is nevertheless the truth of the good God, the sacred truth, M'sieu the Mayor. I repeat it on my soul and my salvation."

The mayor resumed:

"After picking up the object you stood like a stilt, looking a long while in the mud to see if any piece of money had fallen out."

The good old man choked with indignation and fear.

"How anyone can tell--how anyone can tell--such lies to take away an honest man's reputation! How can anyone---"

There was no use in his protesting; nobody believed him. He was confronted with Monsieur Malandain, who repeated and maintained his affirmation. They abused each other for an hour. At his own request Maître Hauchecorne was searched; nothing was found on him.

Finally the mayor, very much perplexed, discharged him with the warning that he would consult the public prosecutor and ask for further orders.

The news had spread. As he left the mayor's office the old man was sun rounded and questioned with a serious or bantering curiosity in which there was no indignation. He began to tell the story of the string. No one believed him. They laughed at him.

He went along, stopping his friends, beginning endlessly his statement and his protestations, showing his pockets turned inside out to prove that he had nothing.

They said:

"Old rascal, get out!"

And he grew angry, becoming exasperated, hot and distressed at not being believed, not knowing what to do and always repeating himself.

Night came. He must depart. He started on his way with three neighbors to whom he pointed out the place where he had picked up the bit of string, and all along the road he spoke of his adventure.

In the evening, he took a turn in the village of Breaute in order to tell it to everybody. He only met with incredulity.

It made him ill at night.

The next day about one o'clock in the afternoon Marius Paumelle, a hired man in the employ of Maître Breton, husbandman at Ymanville, returned the pocketbook and its contents to Maître Houlbreque of Manneville.

This man claimed to have found the object in the road, but not knowing how to read, he had carried it to the house and given it to his employer.

The news spread through the neighborhood. Maître Hauchecorne was informed of it. He immediately went the circuit and began to recount his story completed by the happy climax. He was in triumph.

"What grieved me so much was not the thing itself as the lying. There is nothing so shameful as to be placed under a cloud on account of a lie."

He talked of his adventure all day long; he told it on the highway to people who were passing by, in the wineshop to people who were drinking there and to persons coming out of church the following Sunday. He stopped strangers to tell them about it. He was calm now, and yet something disturbed him without his knowing exactly what it was. People had the air of joking while they listened. They did not seem convinced. He seemed to feel that remarks were being made behind his back.

On Tuesday of the next week he went to the market at Goderville, urged solely by the necessity he felt of discussing the case.

Malandain, standing at his door, began to laugh on seeing him pass. Why?

He approached a farmer from Crequetot who did not let him finish and, giving him a thump in the stomach, said to his face:

"You big rascal."

Then he turned his back on him.

Maître Hauchecorne was confused; why was he called a big rascal?

When he was seated at the table in Jourdain's tavern he commenced to explain "the affair."

A horse dealer from Monvilliers called to him:

"Come, come, old sharper, that's an old trick; I know all about your piece of string!"

Hauchecorne stammered:

"But since the pocketbook was found."

But the other man replied:

"Shut up, papa, there is one that finds and there is one that reports. At any rate you are mixed with it."

The peasant stood choking. He understood. They accused him of having had the pocketbook returned by a confederate, by an accomplice.

He tried to protest. All the table began to laugh.

He could not finish his dinner and went away in the midst of jeers.

He went home ashamed and indignant, choking with anger and confusion, the more dejected that he was capable, with his Norman cunning, of doing what they had accused him of and ever boasting of it as of a good turn. His innocence to him, in a confused way, was impossible to prove, as his sharpness was known. And he was stricken to the heart by the injustice of the suspicion.

Then he began to recount the adventures again, prolonging his history every day, adding each time new reasons, more energetic protestations, more solemn oaths which he imagined and prepared in his hours of solitude, his whole mind given up to the story of the string. He was believed so much the less as his defense was more complicated and his arguing more subtle.

"Those are lying excuses," they said behind his back.

He felt it, consumed his heart over it and wore himself out with useless efforts. He wasted away before their very eyes.

The wags now made him tell about the string to amuse them, as they make a soldier who has been on a campaign tell about his battles. His mind, touched to the depth, began to weaken.

Toward the end of December he took to his bed.

He died in the first days of January, and in the delirium of his death struggles he kept claiming his innocence, reiterating:

"A piece of string, a piece of string--look--here it is, M'sieu the Mayor."

Glossary

bantering (*n.*): playful, teasing conversation

burgh (*n.*): a town or district, especially in scotland, functioning as an administrative unit

clamorous (*adj.*): loudly noisy and demanding attention

credence (*n.*): belief in or acceptance of something as true

gendarmes (*n.*): armed police officers in france or french-speaking regions

incredulous (*adj.*): unwilling or unable to believe something

indignation (*n.*): anger provoked by perceived unfairness

interminable (*adj.*): endless or seemingly endless

jovialness (*n.*): cheerfulness and lightheartedness

nag (*v.*): to persistently criticize, annoy, or complain

notary (*n.*): a person authorized to certify legal documents

proceeding (*n.*): a formal event or action, often within a legal context

protruded (*v.*): extended or stuck out beyond a surface

rheumatism (*n.*): a condition causing pain and stiffness in joints or muscles

scanty (*adj.*): insufficient in quantity; meager

smack (*n.*): a sharp slap or a faint trace/flavor of something

stilt (*n.*): a long pole used to elevate structures or for walking

surmounted (*v.*): overcame an obstacle or placed atop something

swerved (*v.*): turned abruptly away from a straight path

throng (*n.*): a large, densely packed crowd of people or animals

varnish (*n.*): a clear protective coating applied to materials like wood for shine or durability

Comprehenesion

A. **Choose the correct alternatives.**

a. What is the primary reason for the peasants to travel to Goderville?
   i. To attend a wedding
   ii. To visit family
   iii. To sell and buy goods at the market
   iv. To celebrate a festival

b. How are the men's appearances described in the story?
   i. Well-dressed and neat
   ii. Dirty and rustic
   iii. Clothed in fine silks
   iv. Wearing colorful uniforms

c. What did Maître Hauchecorne pick up from the ground?
   i. A pocketbook
   ii. A piece of string
   iii. A gold coin
   iv. A handkerchief

d. Why did Maître Hauchecorne feel ashamed when picking up the object?
   i. He thought someone was watching.
   ii. He felt it was beneath him to pick up trash.
   iii. He disliked the person who accused him.
   iv. He was embarrassed about his poverty.

e. What item was announced as lost by the public crier at the market?
   i. A gold watch
   ii. A leather wallet
   iii. A pocketbook containing money
   iv. A precious necklace

f. Who accused Maître Hauchecorne of picking up the pocketbook?
   i. The mayor
   ii. A shopkeeper
   iii. Maître Malandain
   iv. A traveler

g. What happened to the pocketbook eventually?
   i. It was never found.
   ii. It was returned by an honest villager.
   iii. It was discovered in the possession of a thief.
   iv. It was found by the roadside.

h. What was the lasting effect of the incident on Maître Hauchecorne?
   i. He became a respected figure in the village.
   ii. He developed a reputation for dishonesty.
   iii. He moved away from Goderville.
   iv. He lived a peaceful and content life.

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. Why did Maître Hauchecorne initially try to hide what he picked up?

b. How did the people react to Maître Hauchecorne's story after the pocketbook was found?

c. How did the villagers generally react to Hauchecorne's persistent claims of innocence?

d. Who was Maître Malandain and what role did he play in the accusations against Hauchecorne?

e. What was the final consequence of the incident for Maître Hauchecorne by the end of the story?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. What accusation was made against Maître Hauchecorne? How does he respond to it?

b. How do the villagers react when Hauchecorne tries to prove his innocence?

c. What role does Maître Malandain play in spreading the suspicion against Hauchecorne?

d. How does the incident with the piece of string affect Hauchecorne's life by the end of the story?

Project Work

Work in small groups consisiting of four or five members in each group. Rewrite the story *The Piece of String* as a short play and then perform it in the class.

The Cactus

Before You Read

a. What does a cactus symbolize?

b. Have you ever faced a misunderstanding because of miscommunication? Share with the class.

O. Henry is the pen name of **William Sydney Porter** (1862–1910), whose short stories are acclaimed for their wit, wordplay, and unexpected twist. Most of his works have been influenced by his colorful and unpredictable life events filled with diverse experiences. These experiences instilled a keen understanding of human nature and a touch of irony in his writing. After he immigrated to New York City in 1902, O. Henry entered his most prolific career writing over 380 short stories, including the masterpieces *The Gift of the Magi* and *The Cop* and *The Anthem*. His tales tend to praise the resourcefulness and creativity of ordinary people conquering challenges in life against the rich backdrop of early 20th century America.

This story explores themes such as pride, miscommunication, and the consequences of pride in romantic relationships. The plot centers around Trysdale, a man reflecting on a lost love as he tries to understand why the woman he once loved has married someone else. Through Trysdale's internal monologue and a final ironic twist involving a symbolic cactus, the story critiques self-deception and emphasizes the importance of honesty and humility in personal relationships.

The most notable thing about Time is that it is so purely relative. A large amount of reminiscence is, by common consent, conceded to the drowning man; and it is not past belief that one may review an entire courtship while removing one's gloves.

That is what Trysdale was doing, standing by a table in his bachelor apartments. On the table stood a singular-looking green plant in a red earthen jar. The plant was one of the species of cacti, and was provided with long, tentacular leaves that perpetually swayed with the slightest breeze with a peculiar beckoning motion.

Trysdale's friend, the brother of the bride, stood at a sideboard complaining at being allowed to drink alone. Both men were in evening dress. White favors like stars upon their coats shone through the gloom of the apartment.

As he slowly unbuttoned his gloves, there passed through Trysdale's mind a swift, scarifying retrospect of the last few hours. It seemed that in his nostrils was still the scent of the flowers that had been banked in odorous masses about the church, and in his ears the low-pitched hum of a thousand well-bred voices, the rustle of crisp garments, and, most insistently recurring, the drawling words of the minister irrevocably binding her to another.

From this last hopeless point of view he still strove, as if it had become a habit of his mind, to reach some conjecture as to why and how he had lost her. Shaken rudely by the uncompromising fact, he had suddenly found himself confronted by a thing he had never before faced --his own innermost, unmitigated, arid unbedecked self. He saw all the garbs of pretence and egoism that he had worn now turn to rags of folly. He shuddered at the thought that to others, before now, the garments of his soul must have appeared sorry and threadbare. Vanity and conceit? These were the joints in his armor. And how free from either she had always been--But why--

As she had slowly moved up the aisle toward the altar, he had felt an unworthy, sullen exultation that had served to support him. He had told himself that her paleness was from thoughts of another than the man to whom she was about to give herself. But even that poor consolation had been wrenched from him. For, when he saw that swift, limpid, upward look that she gave the man when he took her hand, he knew himself to be forgotten. Once that same look had been raised to him, and he had gauged its meaning. Indeed, his conceit had crumbled; its last prop was gone. Why had it ended thus? There had been no quarrel between them, nothing--

For the thousandth time he remarshalled in his mind the events of those last few days before the tide had so suddenly turned.

She had always insisted upon placing him upon a pedestal, and he had accepted her homage with royal grandeur. It had been a very sweet incense that she had burned before him; so modest (he told himself); so childlike and worshipful, and (he would once have sworn) so sincere. She had invested him with an almost supernatural number of high attributes and excellencies and talents, and he had absorbed the oblation as a desert drinks the rain that can coax from it no promise of blossom or fruit.

As Trysdale grimly wrenched apart the seam of his last glove, the crowning instance of his fatuous and tardily mourned egoism came vividly back to him. The scene was the night when he had asked her to come up on his pedestal with him and share his greatness. He could not, now, for the pain of it, allow his mind to dwell upon the memory of her convincing beauty that night--the careless wave of her hair, the tenderness and virginal charm of her looks and words. But they had been enough, and they had brought him to speak. During their conversation she had said:

"And Captain Carruthers tells me that you speak the Spanish language like a native. Why have you hidden this accomplishment from me? Is there anything you do not know?"

Now, Carruthers was an idiot. No doubt he (Trysdale) had been guilty (he sometimes did such things) of airing at the club some old, canting Castilian proverb dug from the hotchpotch at the back of dictionaries. Carruthers, who was one of his incontinent admirers, was the very man to have magnified this exhibition of doubtful erudition.

But, alas! the incense of her admiration had been so sweet and flattering. He allowed the imputation to pass without denial. Without protest, he allowed her to twine about his brow this spurious bay of Spanish scholarship. He let it grace his conquering head, and, among its soft convolutions, he did not feel the prick of the thorn that was to pierce him later.

How glad, how shy, how tremulous she was! How she fluttered like a snared bird when he laid his mightiness at her feet! He could have sworn, and he could swear now, that unmistakable consent was in her eyes, but, coyly, she would give him no direct answer. "I will send you my answer to-morrow," she said; and he, the indulgent, confident victor, smilingly granted the delay. The next day he waited, impatient, in his rooms for the word. At noon her groom came to the door and left the strange cactus in the red earthen jar. There was no note, no message, merely a tag upon the plant bearing a barbarous foreign or botanical name. He waited until night, but her answer did not come. His large pride and hurt vanity kept him from seeking her. Two evenings later they met at a dinner. Their greetings were conventional, but she looked at him, breathless, wondering, eager. He was courteous, adamant, waiting her explanation. With womanly swiftness she took her cue from his manner, and turned to snow and ice. Thus, and wider from this on, they had drifted apart. Where was his fault? Who had been to blame? Humbled now, he sought the answer amid the ruins of his self-conceit. If--

The voice of the other man in the room, querulously intruding upon his thoughts, aroused him.

"I say, Trysdale, what the deuce is the matter with you? You look unhappy as if you yourself had been married instead of having acted merely as an accomplice. Look at me, another accessory, come two thousand miles on a garlicky, cockroachy banana steamer all the way from South America to connive at the sacrifice--please to observe how lightly my guilt rests upon my shoulders. Only little sister I had, too, and now she's gone. Come now! take something to ease your conscience."

"I don't drink just now, thanks," said Trysdale.

"Your brandy," resumed the other, coming over and joining him, "is abominable. Run down to see me some time at Punta Redonda, and try some of our stuff that old Garcia smuggles in. It's worth the, trip. Hallo! here's an old acquaintance. Wherever did you rake up this cactus, Trysdale?"

"A present," said Trysdale, "from a friend. Know the species?"

"Very well. It's a tropical concern. See hundreds of 'em around Punta every day. Here's the name on this tag tied to it. Know any Spanish, Trysdale?"

"No," said Trysdale, with the bitter wraith of a smile--"Is it Spanish?"

"Yes. The natives imagine the leaves are reaching out and beckoning to you. They call it by this name--Ventomarme. Name means in English, Come and take me."

Glossary

accomplice (n.): a person who helps another commit a crime or wrongdoing

adamant (adj.): refusing to be persuaded or to change one's mind

coax (v.): gently persuade someone to do something

conceit (n.): excessive pride in oneself

conjecture (n.): an opinion or conclusion formed on the basis of incomplete information.

deuce (n.): used as a mild expression of annoyance or frustration

erudition (n.): great knowledge or learning

exultation (n.): a feeling of triumphant elation or jubilation

hotchpotch (n.): a confused mixture or collection of things

irrevocably (adv.): in a way that cannot be changed or reversed

oblation (n.): an offering or sacrifice, especially one made to a god

pedestal (n.): a position in which someone is greatly admired or respected

perpetually (adv.): in a way that never ends or changes; constantly

reminiscence (n.): a spoken or written description of something that somebody remembers about their past life

retrospect (n.): a survey or review of past events or experiences

twine (v.): to twist or wind something around something else

unbedecked (adj.): not adorned or decorated; plain

vanity (n.): excessive pride in or admiration of one's own appearance or achievements.

wraith (n.): a ghost or ghostlike image of someone, especially one seen shortly before or after their death

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. What is the most remarkable thing about Time, according to the story?
   i. It is linear and unchanging.
   ii. It is purely relative.
   iii. It is measured by clocks.
   iv. It is irrelevant to human emotions.

b. What is Trysdale, the main character doing at the beginning of the story?
   i. Attending a wedding
   ii. Removing his gloves and reminiscing
   iii. Watering a cactus
   iv. Writing a letter to his lover

c. What does the cactus in Trysdale's apartment symbolize?
   i. His love for nature
   ii. A gift from a stranger
   iii. Miscommunication and missed opportunities
   iv. A symbol of wealth

d. What does the cactus's name, Ventomarme, mean in English?
   i. Stay away from me
   ii. Come and take me
   iii. Forgive and forget
   iv. Love and cherish

e. Why does Trysdale feel exultation as the woman walks down the aisle?
   i. He thinks she is marrying him.
   ii. He believes her paleness is due to thoughts of him.
   iii. He is happy for her.
   iv. He feels relieved to see her.

f. What does Trysdale realize about himself during his introspection?
   i. He is a generous and kind person.
   ii. He has been vain and conceited.
   iii. He is deeply misunderstood.
   iv. He is a victim of circumstances.

g. What does the woman send Trysdale as her answer to his proposal?
   i. A love letter
   ii. A cactus with a tag bearing a foreign name
   iii. A wedding invitation
   iv. A photograph of herself

h. What prevents Trysdale from seeking clarification about the cactus?
   i. His lack of interest in her
   ii. His pride and vanity
   iii. His fear of rejection
   iv. His busy schedule

i. What does the cactus's "beckoning motion" suggest?
   i. It is trying to escape.
   ii. It is inviting someone to approach.
   iii. It is dying.
   iv. It is a sign of danger.

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. Who is Trysdale's friend, and what is he doing?
b. What does Trysdale recall about the events at the church?
c. How does Trysdale feel about the woman he loved marrying someone else?
d. What did the woman say to Trysdale when he asked her to share his greatness?
e. What does the name "Ventomarme" mean, and how does it relate to the story?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. Explore the theme of self-deception and its consequences in the story.
b. What does the story suggest about the dangers of vanity and pride in relationships? Explain.
c. What does the cactus symbolize in the story, and how does its meaning change as the story progresses?

Project Work

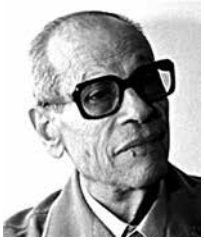
The cactus plant in the story symbolizes an unspoken message of love and invitation, which was tragically misunderstood due to lack of knowledge and communication. Research shows different plants and flowers are used in different cultures to express emotions such as love, rejection, apology, grief, or hope. Collect similar kind of literary worksand present themes in the class.

Half a Day

Before You Read

a. What do you expect your first day of school to be like? How might it change your life?

b. How do you think people change as they grow older?



Naguib Mahfouz (1911–2006) was an iconic Egyptian novelist, screenwriter, and playwright, widely regarded as one of the most influential literary figures in the Arab world. Born in Cairo, Mahfouz's works often centered on the lives of ordinary Egyptians, capturing the social and political transformations of 20th century Egypt. His writing, deeply rooted in the streets and alleys of Cairo, blended realism with existential themes, earning him the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1988—the first and only Arab author to receive this honor. Over his seven-decade career, Mahfouz produced a prolific body of work, including 35 novels, over 350 short stories, and numerous screenplays. His most celebrated works, such as *The Cairo Trilogy* and *Children of Gebelawi*, have been translated into multiple languages and adapted into films and television series.

This story explores themes of transition, growth, and the loss of innocence through a boy's first day at school. Through this powerful allegory, the story explores themes such as the passage of time, personal growth, social change, and the inevitability of aging. The story encourages readers to reflect on how quickly life passes and how the world around us continuously transforms.

I proceeded alongside my father, clutching his right hand, running to keep up with the long strides he was taking. All my clothes were new: the black shoes, the green school uniform, and the red tarboosh. My delight in my new clothes, however, was not altogether unmarred, for this was no feast day but the day on which I was to be cast into school for the first time.

My mother stood at the window watching our progress, and I would turn toward her from time to time, as though appealing for help. We walked along a street lined with gardens; on both sides were extensive fields planted with crops, prickly pears, henna trees, and a few date palms.

"Why school?" I challenged my father openly. "I shall never do anything to annoy you."

"I'm not punishing you," he said, laughing. "School's not a punishment. It's the factory that makes useful men out of boys. Don't you want to be like your father and brothers?"

I was not convinced. I did not believe there was really any good to be had in tearing me away from the intimacy of my home and throwing me into this building that stood at the end of the road like some huge, high-walled fortress, exceedingly stern and grim.

When we arrived at the gate we could see the courtyard, vast and crammed full of boys and girls. "Go in by yourself," said my father, "and join them. Put a smile on your face and be a good example to others."

I hesitated and clung to his hand, but he gently pushed me from him. "Be a man," he said. "Today you truly begin life. You will find me waiting for you when it's time to leave."

I took a few steps, then stopped and looked but saw nothing. Then the faces of boys and girls came into view. I did not know a single one of them, and none of them knew me. I felt I was a stranger who had lost his way. But glances of curiosity were directed toward me, and one boy approached and asked, "Who brought you?"

"My father," I whispered.

"My father's dead," he said quite simply.

I did not know what to say. The gate was closed, letting out a pitiable screech. Some of the children burst into tears. The bell rang. A lady came along, followed by a group of men. The men began sorting us into ranks. We were formed into an intricate pattern in the great courtyard surrounded on three sides by high buildings of several floors; from each floor we were overlooked by a long balcony roofed in wood.

"This is your new home," said the woman. "Here too there are mothers and fathers. Here there is everything that is enjoyable and beneficial to knowledge and religion. Dry your tears and face life joyfully."

We submitted to the facts, and this submission brought a sort of contentment. Living beings were drawn to other living beings, and from the first moments my heart made friends with such boys as were to be my friends and fell in love with such girls as I was to be in love with, so that it seemed my misgivings had had no basis. I had never imagined school would have this rich variety. We played all sorts of different games: swings, the vaulting horse, ball games. In the music room we chanted our first songs. We also had our first introduction to language. We saw a globe of the Earth, which revolved and showed the various continents and countries. We started learning the numbers. The story of the Creator of the universe was read to us, we were told of His present world and of His Hereafter, and we heard examples of what He said. We ate delicious food, took a little nap, and woke up to go on with friendship and love, play and learning.

As our path revealed itself to us, however, we did not find it as totally sweet and unclouded as we had presumed. Dust-laden winds and unexpected accidents came about suddenly,

so we had to be watchful, at the ready, and very patient. It was not all a matter of playing and fooling around. Rivalries could bring about pain and hatred or give rise to fighting. And while the lady would sometimes smile, she would often scowl and scold. Even more frequently she would resort to physical punishment.

In addition, the time for changing one's mind was over and gone and there was no question of ever returning to the paradise of home. Nothing lay ahead of us but exertion, struggle, and perseverance. Those who were able took advantage of the opportunities for success and happiness that presented themselves amid the worries.

The bell rang announcing the passing of the day and the end of work. The throngs of children rushed toward the gate, which was opened again. I bade farewell to friends and sweethearts and passed through the gate. I peered around but found no trace of my father, who had promised to be there. I stepped aside to wait. When I had waited for a long time without avail, I decided to return home on my own. After I had taken a few steps, a middle-aged man passed by, and I realized at once that I knew him. He came toward me, smiling, and shook me by the hand, saying, "It's a long time since we last met—how are you?"

With a nod of my head, I agreed with him and in turn asked, "And you, how are you?"

"As you can see, not all that good, the Almighty be praised!"

Again he shook me by the hand and went off. I proceeded a few steps, then came to a startled halt. Good Lord! Where was the street lined with gardens? Where had it disappeared to? When did all these vehicles invade it? And when did all these hordes of humanity come to rest upon its surface? How did these hills of refuse come to cover its sides? And where were the fields that bordered it?

High buildings had taken over, the street surged with children, and disturbing noises shook the air. At various points stood conjurers showing off their tricks and making snakes appear from baskets. Then there was a band announcing the opening of a circus, with clowns and weight lifters walking in front. A line of trucks carrying central security troops crawled majestically by. The siren of a fire engine shrieked, and it was not clear how the vehicle would cleave its way to reach the blazing fire. A battle raged between a taxi driver and his passenger, while the passenger's wife called out for help and no one answered. Good God! I was in a daze. My head spun. I almost went crazy. How could all this have happened in half a day, between early morning and sunset? I would find the answer at home with my father. But where was my home? I could see only tall buildings and hordes of people. I hastened on to the crossroads between the gardens and Abu Khoda. I had to cross Abu Khoda to reach my house, but the stream of cars would not let up. The fire engine's siren was shrieking at full pitch as it moved at a snail's pace, and I said to myself, "Let the fire take its pleasure in what it consumes." Extremely irritated, I wondered when I would be able to cross. I stood there a long time, until the young lad employed at the ironing shop on the corner came up to me. He stretched out his arm and said gallantly, "Grandpa, let me take you across."

Glossary and Notes

unmarred (adj.): not damaged or spoiled; perfect

intimacy (n.): close familiarity or friendship; a cozy, private atmosphere

crammed (v.): filled to excess; packed tightly

screech (n.): a harsh, high-pitched sound

intricate (adj): very detailed or complicated in design or structure

misgivings (n.): feelings of doubt or apprehension

unclouded (adj.): clear; free from confusion or doubt

scowl (n.): a frown expressing anger or displeasure

resort (v.): to turn to a course of action as a last option

exertion (n.): physical or mental effort

perseverance (n.): continued effort despite difficulties

conjurers (n.): magicians or performers who create illusions

cleave (v.): to cut or move through something forcefully

gallantly (adv.): In a brave, noble, or chivalrous manner

Allegory: An allegory is a literary device in which characters, events, and settings symbolically represent abstract ideas or moral qualities. Through allegory, writers convey deeper meanings beyond the literal narrative, often reflecting on life, society, or human nature. It allows readers to interpret a story on multiple levels—both literal and symbolic.

In *"Half a Day"*, Naguib Mahfouz uses allegory to represent the entire human life cycle through the events of a single day. The narrator's first day at school becomes a metaphor for entering life. As the day progresses, he experiences the challenges, responsibilities, and eventual aging that come with a full life, showing how swiftly time passes and how life transforms.

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. What does the narrator feel about going to school?

i. He is completely happy and excited.

ii. His joy is mixed with anxiety about starting school.

iii. He dislikes the new clothes and refuses to wear them.

iv. He is indifferent to the new clothes.

b. How does the narrator's father describe school?

i. A place of punishment and hardship

ii. A factory that turns boys into useful men

iii. A place to play and have fun

iv. A fortress that keeps children locked away

c. What does the narrator feel when he first enters the school courtyard?

i. Excitement and curiosity

ii. Confidence and eagerness to make friends

iii. A sense of being lost and out of place

iv. Anger and frustration toward his father

d. What does the woman at the school tell the children about their new environment?

i. It is a place of strict discipline and no fun.

ii. It is a new home with enjoyable and beneficial experiences.

iii. They will never see their families again.

iv. It is a temporary place until they return home.

e. How does the boy's initial experience at school change over time?

i. He remains unhappy and wants to leave.

ii. He finds friendship, love, and enjoyment in learning.

iii. He becomes isolated and dislikes everyone.

iv. He refuses to participate in any activities.

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What challenges does the narrator face at school as time goes on?

b. What does the narrator realize about his path in life after starting school?

c. What surprises the narrator when he leaves school and tries to return home?

d. How does the narrator react to the changes in his surroundings?

e. What does the young boy at the ironing shop offer to do for the narrator?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. How did the narrator feel about his first day of school and his new clothes?

b. What did the narrator's father think about school, and what did he tell his son?

c. How did the narrator's view of school change after he went inside? What made it change?

d. What difficult things did the narrator experience at school later on?

e. What was different about the narrator's street when he left school? How did he react?

Project Work

Work in groups. Consult various sources and write about any five figures of speech with examples. Paste the chart papers on the classroom walls and read them all.

Boys and Girls

Before You Read

a. What roles or chores are typically assigned to boys and girls in your family or community?

b. Have you ever been told you couldn't do something because of your gender? How did you feel about this? Share with the class.

Alice Munro (1931–2024) was a celebrated Canadian short-story writer, widely regarded as one of the most accomplished authors in the genre. Her writing, deeply rooted in the landscapes and small towns of southwestern Ontario—often referred to as 'Munro country'—blended precise realism with lyrical prose, earning her the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2013, making her the first Canadian woman to receive the honor.

Some of her notable short stories include *Dance of the Happy Shades*, *The Love of a Good Woman*, and *Dear Life*, as well as the semi-autobiographical *Lives of Girls and Women*. Her works such as *Away from Her and Julieta* have also been adapted to films. Murno is considered as a defining voice in contemporary literature. Her legacy endures as a master of the short story, inspiring readers and writers around the world.

This story explores themes of gender roles and identity through the eyes of a young girl growing up on her family's fox farm in rural Canada. Through simple yet powerful storytelling, the narrator begins to question the expectations placed on her, revealing the quiet tensions between personal identity and societal norms.

My father was a fox farmer. That is, he raised silver foxes, in pens; and in the fall and early winter, when their fur was prime, he killed them and skinned them and sold their pelts to the Hudson's Bay Company or the Montreal Fur Traders. These companies supplied us with heroic calendars to hang, one on each side of the kitchen door. Against a background of cold blue sky and black pine forests and treacherous northern rivers, plumed adventures planted the flags of England and or of France; magnificent savages bent their backs to the portage.

For several weeks before Christmas, my father worked after supper in the cellar of our house. The cellar was whitewashed and lit by a hundred-watt bulb over the worktable. My brother Laird and I sat on the top step and watched. My father removed the pelt inside-out

from the body of the fox, which looked surprisingly small, mean, and rat-like, deprived of its arrogant weight of fur. The naked, slippery bodies were collected in a sack and buried in the dump. One time the hired man, Henry Bailey, had taken a swipe at me with this sack, saying, "Christmas present!" My mother thought that was not funny. In fact, she disliked the whole pelting operation--that was what the killing, skinning, and preparation of the furs was called – and wished it did not have to take place in the house. There was the smell. After the pelt had been stretched inside-out on a longboard, my father scraped away delicately, removing the little clotted webs of blood vessels, the bubbles of fat; the smell of blood and animal fat, with the strong primitive odor of the fox itself, penetrated all parts of the house. I found it reassuringly seasonal, like the smell of oranges and pine needles.

Henry Bailey suffered from bronchial troubles. He would cough and cough until his narrow face turned scarlet, and his light blue, derisive eyes filled up with tears; then he took the lid off the stove, and, standing well back, shot out a great clot of phlegm – hss – straight into the heart of the flames. We admired his for this performance and for his ability to make his stomach growl at will, and for his laughter, which was full of high whistlings and gurglings and involved the whole faulty machinery of his chest. It was sometimes hard to tell what he was laughing at, and always possible that it might be us. After we had sent to bed we could still smell fox and still hear Henry's laugh, but these things, reminders of the warm, safe, brightly lit downstairs world, seemed lost and diminished, floating on the stale cold air upstairs. We were afraid at night in the winter. We were not afraid of outside though this was the time of year when snowdrifts curled around our house like sleeping whales and the wind harassed us all night, coming up from the buried fields, the frozen swamp, with its old bugbear chorus of threats and misery. We were afraid of inside, the room where we slept. At this time upstairs of our house was not finished. A brick chimney went up one wall. In the middle of the floor was a square hole, with a wooden railing around it; that was where the stairs came up. On the other side of the stairwell were the things that nobody had any use for anymore – a soldiery roll of linoleum, standing on end, a wicker bay carriage, a fern basket, china jugs and basins with cracks in them, a picture of the Battle of Balaclava, very sad to look at. I had told Laird, as soon as he was old enough to understand such things, that bats and skeletons lived over there; whenever a man escaped from the county jail, twenty miles away, I imagined that he had somehow let himself in the window and was hiding behind the linoleum. But we had rules to keep us safe. When the light was on, we were safe as long as we did not step off the square of worn carpet which defined our bedroom-space; when the light was off no place was safe but the beds themselves. I had to turn out the light kneeling on the end of my bed, and stretching as far as I could to reach the cord. In the dark we lay on our beds, our narrow life rafts, and fixed our eyes on the faint light coming up the stairwell, and sang songs. Laird sang "Jingle Bells", which he would sing any time, whether it was Christmas or not, and I sang "Danny Boy". I loved the sound of my own voice, frail and supplicating, rising in the dark. We could make out the tall frosted shapes of the windows now, gloomy and white. When I came to the part, When I am dead, as dead I well may be – a

fit of shivering caused not by the cold sheets but by pleasurable emotions almost silenced me. You'll kneel and say an Ave there above me —What was an Ave? Every day I forgot to find out.

Laird went straight from singing to sleep; I could hear his long, satisfied, bubbly breaths. Now for the time that remained to me, the most perfectly private and perhaps the best time of the whole day, I arranged myself tightly under the covers and went on with one of the stories I was telling myself from night to night. These stories were about myself, when I had grown a little older; they took place in a world that was recognizably mine, yet one that presented opportunities for courage, boldness, and self-sacrifice, as mine never did. I rescued people from a bombed building (it discouraged me that the real war had gone on so far away from Jubilee). I shot two rabid wolves who were menacing the schoolyard (the teachers cowered terrified at my back). Rode a fine horse spiritedly down the main street of Jubilee, acknowledging the towns people's gratitude for some yet-to-be-worked-out piece of heroism (nobody ever rode a horse there, except King Billy in the Orangemen's Day parade). There was always riding and shooting in these stories, though I had only been on a horse twice — the first because we did not own a saddle — and the second time I had slid right around and dropped under the horse's feet; it had stepped placidly over me. I really was learning to shoot, but could not hit anything yet, not even tin cans on fence posts.

Alive, the foxes inhabited a world my father made for them. It was surrounded by a high guard fence, like a medieval town, with a gate that was padlocked at night. Along the streets of this town were ranged large, sturdy pens. Each of them had a real door that a man could go through, a wooden ramp along the wire, for the foxes to run up and down on, and a kennel — sometimes like a clothes chest with airholes — where they slept and stayed in winter and had their young. There were feeding and watering dishes attached to the wire in such a way that they could be emptied and cleaned from the outside. The dishes were made of old tin cans, and the ramps and kennels of odds and ends of old lumber. Everything was tidy and ingenious; my father was tirelessly inventive and his favourite book in the world was Robinson Crusoe. He had fitted a tin drum on a wheelbarrow, for bringing water down to the pens. This was my job in the summer, when the foxes had to have water twice a day. Between nine and ten o'clock in the morning, and again after supper, I filled the drum at the pump and trundled it down through the barnyard to the pens, where I parked it, and filled my watering can and went along the streets. Laird came too, with his little cream and green gardening can, filled too full and knocking against his legs and slopping water on his canvas shoes. I had the real watering can, my father's, though I could only carry it three-quarters full.

The foxes all had names, which were printed on a tin plate and hung beside their doors. They were not named when they were born, but when they survived the first year's pelting and were added to the breeding stock. Those my father had named were called names like Prince, Bob, Wally, and Betty. Those I had named were called Star or Turk, or Maureen or

Diana. Laird named one Maude after a hired girl we had when he was little, one Harold after a boy at school, and one Mexico, he did not say why.

Naming them did not make pets out of them, or anything like it. Nobody but my father ever went into the pens, and he had twice had blood-poisoning from bites. When I was bringing them their water they prowled up and down on the paths they had made inside their pens, barking seldom — they saved that for nighttimes, when they might get up a chorus of community frenzy--but always watching me, their eyes burning, clear gold, in their pointed, malevolent faces. They were beautiful for their delicate legs and heavy, aristocratic tails and the bright fur sprinkled on dark down their back — which gave them their name — but especially for their faces, drawn exquisitely sharp in pure hostility, and their golden eyes.

Besides carrying water I helped my father when he cut the long grass, and the lamb's quarter and flowering money-musk, that grew between the pens. He cut with the scythe and I raked into piles. Then he took a pitchfork and threw fresh-cut grass all over the top of the pens to keep the foxes cooler and shade their coats, which were browned by too much sun. My father did not talk to me unless it was about the job we were doing. In this he was quite different from my mother, who, if she was feeling cheerful, would tell me all sorts of things – the name of a dog she had had when she was a little girl, the names of boys she had gone out with later on when she was grown up, and what certain dresses of hers had looked like – she could not imagine now what had become of them. Whatever thoughts and stories my father had were private, and I was shy of him and would never ask him questions. Nevertheless, I worked willingly under his eyes, and with a feeling of pride. One time a feed salesman came down into the pens to talk to him and my father said, "Like to have you meet my new hired hand." I turned away and raked furiously, red in the face with pleasure.

"Could fooled me," said the salesman. "I thought it was only a girl."

After the grass was cut, it seemed suddenly much later in the year. I walked on stubble in the earlier evening, aware of the reddening skies, the entering silences, of fall. When I wheeled the tank out of the gates and put the padlock on, it was almost dark. One night at this time I saw my mother and father standing talking on the little rise of ground we called the gangway, in front of the barn. My father had just come from the meathouse; he had his stiff bloody apron on, and a pail of cut-up meat in his hand.

It was an odd thing to see my mother down at the barn. She did not often come out of the house unless it was to do something – hang out the wash or dig potatoes in the garden. She looked out of place, with her bare lumpy legs, not touched by the sun, her apron still on and damp across the stomach from the supper dishes. Her hair was tied up in a kerchief, wisps of it falling out. She would tie her hair up like this in the morning, saying she did not have time to do it properly, and it would stay tied up all day. It was true, too; she really did not have time. These days our back porch was piled with baskets of peaches and grapes and pears, bought in town, and onions and tomatoes and cucumbers grown at home, all waiting

to be made into jelly and jam and preserves, pickles and chilli sauce. In the kitchen there was a fire in the stove all day, jars clinked in boiling water, sometimes a cheesecloth bag was strung on a pole between two chairs straining blue-back grape pulp for jelly. I was given jobs to do and I would sit at the table peeling peaches that had been soaked in hot water, or cutting up onions, my eyes smarting and streaming. As soon as I was done, I ran out of the house, trying to get out of earshot before my mother thought of what she wanted me to do next. I hated the hot dark kitchen in summer, the green blinds and the flypapers, the same old oilcloth table and wavy mirror and bumpy linoleum. My mother was too tired and preoccupied to talk to me, she had no heart to tell about the Normal School Graduation Dance; sweat trickled over her face and she was always counting under breath, pointing at jars, dumping cups of sugar. It seemed to me that work in the house was endless, dreary, and peculiarly depressing; work done out of doors, and in my father's service, was ritualistically important.

I wheeled the tank up to the barn, where it was kept, and I heard my mother saying, "Wait till Laird gets a little bigger, then you'll have a real help."

What my father said I did not hear. I was pleased by the way he stood listening, politely as he would to a salesman or a stranger, but with an air of wanting to get on with his real work.

I felt my mother had no business down here and I wanted him to feel the same way. What did she mean about Laird? He was no help to anybody. Where was he now? Swinging himself sick on the swing, going around in circles, or trying to catch caterpillars. He never once stayed with me till I was finished.

"And then I can use her more in the house," I heard my mother say. She had a dead-quiet regretful way of talking about me that always made me uneasy. "I just get my back turned and she runs off. It's not like I had a girl in the family at all."

I went and sat on a feed bag in the corner of the barn, not wanting to appear when this conversation was going on. My mother, I felt, was not to be trusted. She was kinder than my father and more easily fooled, but you could not depend on her, and the real reasons for the things she said and did were not to be known. She loved me, and she sat up late at night making a dress of the difficult style I wanted, for me to wear when school started, but she was also my enemy. She was always plotting. She was plotting now to get me to stay in the house more, although she knew I hated it (because she knew I hated it) and keep me from working for my father. It seemed to me she would do this simply out of perversity, and to try her power. It did not occur to me that she could be lonely, or jealous. No grown-up could be; they were too fortunate. I sat and kicked my heels monotonously against a feed bag, raising dust, and did not come out till she was gone.

At any rate, I did not expect my father to pay any attention to what she said. Who could imagine Laird doing my work – Laird remembering the padlock and cleaning

out the watering dishes with a leaf on the end of a stick, or even wheeling the tank without it tumbling over? It showed how little my mother knew about the way things really were.

I had forgotten to say what the foxes were fed. My father's bloody apron reminded me. They were fed horsemeat. At this time most farmers still kept horses, and when a horse got too old to work, or broke a leg or got down and would not get up, as they sometimes did, the owner would call my father, and he and Henry went out to the farm in the truck. Usually, they shot and butchered the horse there, paying the farmer from five to twelve dollars. If they had already too much meat on hand, they would bring the horse back alive, and keep it for a few days or weeks in our stable, until the meat was needed. After the war the farmers were buying tractors and gradually getting rid of horses, that there was just no use for any more. If this happened in the winter, we might keep the horse in our stable till spring, for we had plenty of hay and if there was a lot of snow – and the plow did not always get our roads cleared – it was convenient to be able to go to town with a horse and cutter.

The winter I was eleven years old we had two horses in the stable. We did not know what names they had had before, so we called them Mack and Flora. Mack was an old black workhorse, sooty and indifferent. Flora was a sorrel mare, a driver. We took them both out in the cutter. Mack was slow and easy to handle. Flora was given to fits of violent alarm, veering at cars and even at other horses, but we loved her speed and high-stepping, her general air of gallantry and abandon. On Saturdays we went down to the stable and as soon as we opened the door on its cozy, animal-smelling darkness Flora threw up her head, rolled her eyes, whinnied despairingly, and pulled herself through a crisis of nerves on the spot. It was not safe to go into her stall, she would kick.

This winter also I began to hear a great deal more on the theme my mother had sounded when she had been talking in front of the barn. I no longer felt safe. It seemed that in the minds of the people around me there was a steady undercurrent of thought, not to be deflected, on this one subject. The word girl had formerly seemed to me innocent and unburdened like the word child; now it appeared that it was no such thing. A girl was not, as I had supposed, simply what I was; it was what I had to become. It was a definition, always touched with emphasis, with reproach and disappointment. Also it was a joke on me. Once Laird and I were fighting, and for the first time ever I had to use all my strength against him; even so, he caught and pinned my arm for a moment, really hurting me. Henry saw this, and laughed, saying, "Oh, that there Laird's gonna show you, one of these days!" Laird was getting a lot bigger. But I was getting bigger too.

My grandmother came to stay with us for a few weeks and I heard other things. "Girls don't slam doors like that." "Girls keep their knees together when they sit down." And worse still, when I asked some questions, "That's none of girls' business." I continued to slam the doors and sit as awkwardly as possible, thinking that by such measures I kept myself free.

When spring came, the horses were let out in the barnyard. Mack stood against the barn wall trying to scratch his neck and haunches, but Flora trotted up and down and reared at the fences, clattering her hooves against the rails. Snow drifts dwindled quickly, revealing the hard grey and brown earth, the familiar rise and fall of the ground, plain and bare after the fantastic landscape of winter. There was a great feeling of opening-out, of release. We just wore rubbers now, over our shoes; our feet felt ridiculously light. One Saturday we went out to the stable and found all the doors open, letting in the unaccustomed sunlight and fresh air. Henry was there, just idling around looking at his collection of calendars which were tacked up behind the stalls in a part of the stable my mother probably had never seen.

"Come to say goodbye to your old friend Mack?" Henry said. "Here, you give him a taste of oats." He poured some oats into Laird's cupped hands and Laird went to feed Mack. Mack's teeth were in bad shape. He ate very slowly, patiently shifting the oats around in his mouth, trying to find a stump of a molar to grind it on. "Poor old Mack, said Henry mournfully." When a horse's teeth's gone, he's gone. That's about the way.

"Are you going to shoot him today?" I said. Mack and Flora had been in the stables so long I had almost forgotten they were going to be shot.

Henry didn't answer me. Instead, he started to sing in a high, trembly, mocking-sorrowful voice. Oh, there's no more work, for poor Uncle Ned, he's gone where the good darkies go. Mack's thick, blackish tongue worked diligently at Laird's hand. I went out before the song was ended and sat down on the gangway.

I had never seen them shoot a horse, but I knew where it was done. Last summer Laird and I had come upon a horse's entrails before they were buried. We had thought it was a big black snake, coiled up in the sun. That was around in the field that ran up beside the barn. I thought that if we went inside the barn, and found a wide crack or a knothole to look through, we would be able to see them do it. It was not something I wanted to see; just the same, if a thing really happened it was better to see, and know.

My father came down from the house, carrying a gun.

"What are you doing here?" he said. "Nothing."

"Go on up and play around the house."

He sent Laird out of the stable. I said to Laird, "Do you want to see them shoot Mack?" and without waiting for an answer led him around to the front door of the barn, opened it carefully, and went in. "Be quiet or they'll hear us," I said. We could hear Henry and my father talking in the stable; then the heavy shuffling steps of Mack being backed out of his stall.

In the loft it was cold and dark. Thin crisscrossed beams of sunlight fell through the cracks. The hay was low. It was rolling country, hills and hollows, slipping under our feet. About

four feet up was a beam going around the walls, we piled hay up in one corner and I boosted Laird up and hoisted myself. The beam was not very wide; we crept along it with our hands flat on the barn walls. There were plenty of knotholes, and I found one that gave me the view I wanted – a corner of the barnyard, the gate, part of the field. Laird did not have a knothole and began to complain.

I showed him a widened crack between two boards. "Be quiet and wait. If they hear you, you'll get us in trouble."

My father came in sight carrying the gun. Henry was leading Mack by the halter. He dropped it and took out his cigarette papers and tobacco; he rolled cigarettes for my father and himself. While this was going on Mack nosed around in the old, dead grass along the fence. Then my father opened the gate and they took Mack through. Henry led Mack away from the path to a patch of ground and they talked together, not loud enough for us to hear. Mack again began to searching for a mouthful of fresh grass, which was not found. My father walked away in a straight line, and stopped short at a distance which seemed to suit him. Henry was walking away from Mack too, but sideways, still negligently holding on to the halter. My father raised the gun and Mack looked up as if he had noticed something and my father shot him.

Mack did not collapse at once but swayed, lurched sideways, and fell, first on his side; then he rolled over on his back and, amazingly, kicked his legs for a few seconds in the air. At this Henry laughed, as if Mack had done a trick for him. Laird, who had drawn a long, groaning breath of surprise when the shot was fired, said out loud, "He's not dead." And it seemed to me it might be true. But his legs stopped, he rolled on his side again, his muscles quivered and sank. The two men walked over and looked at him in a businesslike way; they bent down and examined his forehead where the bullet had gone in, and now I saw his blood on the brown grass.

"Now they just skin him and cut him up," I said. "Let's go." My legs were a little shaky and I jumped gratefully down into the hay. "Now you've seen how they shoot a horse," I said in a congratulatory way, as if I had seen it many times before. "Let's see if any barn cats had kittens in the hay." Laird jumped. He seemed young and obedient again. Suddenly I remembered how, when he was little, I had brought him into the barn and told him to climb the ladder to the top beam. That was in the spring, too, when the hay was low. I had done it out of a need for excitement, a desire for something to happen so that I could tell about it. He was wearing a little bulky brown and white checked coat, made down from one of mine. He went all the way up just as I told him, and sat down on the beam with the hay far below him on one side, and the barn floor and some old machinery on the other. Then I ran screaming to my father. "Laird's up on the top beam!" My father came, my mother came, my father went up the ladder talking very quietly and brought Laird down under his arm, at which my mother leaned against the ladder and began to cry. They said to me, "Why weren't you watching him?" but nobody ever knew the truth. Laird did not know enough to tell. But

whenever I saw the brown and white checked coat hanging in the closet, or at the bottom of the rag bag, which was where it ended up, I felt a weight in my stomach, the sadness of unexorcised guilt.

I looked at Laird, who did not even remember this, and I did not like the look on this thing, winter-paled face. His expression was not frightened or upset, but remote, concentrating. "Listen," I said in an unusually bright and friendly voice, "you aren't going to tell, are you?"

"No," he said absently.

"Promise."

"Promise," he said. I grabbed the hand behind his back to make sure he was not crossing his fingers. Even so, he might have a nightmare; it might come out that way. I decided I had better work hard to get all thoughts of what he had seen out of his mind – which, it seemed to me, could not hold very many things at a time. I got some money I had saved and that afternoon we went into Jubilee and saw a show, with Judy Canova, at which we both laughed a great deal. After that I thought it would be all right.

Two weeks later I knew they were going to shoot Flora. I knew from the night before, when I heard my mother ask if the hay was holding out all right, and my father said, "Well, after tomorrow there'll just be the cow, and we should be able to put her out to grass in another week." So I knew it was Flora's turn in the morning.

This time I didn't think of watching it. That was something to see just one time. I had not thought about it very often since, but sometimes when I was busy, working at school, or standing in front of the mirror combing my hair and wondering if I would be pretty when I grew up, the whole scene would flash into my mind: I would see the easy, practiced way my father raised the gun, and hear Henry laughing when Mack kicked his legs in the air. I did not have any great feelings of horror and opposition, such as a city child might have had; I was too used to seeing the death of animals as a necessity by which we lived. Yet I felt a little ashamed, and there was a new wariness, a sense of holding-off, in my attitude to my father and his work.

It was a fine day, and we were going around the yard picking up tree branches that had been torn off in winter storms. This was something we had been told to do, and also we wanted to use them to make a teepee. We heard Flora whinny, and then my father's voice and Henry's shouting, and we ran down to the barnyard to see what was going on.

The stable door was open. Henry had just brought Flora out, and she had broken away from him. She was running free in the barnyard, from one end to the other. We climbed on the fence. It was exciting to see her running, whinnying, going up on her hind legs, prancing and threatening like a horse in a Western movie, an unbroken ranch horse, though she was just an old driver, an old sorrel mare. My father and Henry ran after her and tried to grab the

dangling halter. They tried to work her into a corner, and they had almost succeeded when she made a run between them, wild-eyed, and disappeared round the corner of the barn. We heard the rails clatter down as she got over the fence, and Henry yelled. “She’s into the field now!”

That meant she was in the long L-shaped field that ran up by the house. If she got around the center, heading towards the lane, the gate was open; the truck had been driven into the field this morning. My father shouted to me, because I was on the other side of the fence, nearest the lane, “Go shut the gate!”

I could run very fast. I ran across the garden, past the tree where our swing was hung, and jumped across a ditch into the lane. There was the open gate. She had not got out, I could not see her up on the road; she must have run to the other end of the field. There gate was heavy. I lifted it out of the gravel and carried it across the roadway. I had it half way across when she came in sight, galloping straight toward me. There was just time to get the chain on. Laird came scrambling though the ditch to help me.

Instead of shutting the gate, I opened it as wide as I could. I did not make any decision to do this; it was just what I did. Flora never slowed down; she galloped straight past me, and Laird jumped up and down, yelling, “Shut it, shut it!” even after it was too late. My father and Henry appeared in the field a moment too late to see what I had done. They only saw Flora heading for the township road. They would think I had not got there in time.

They did not waste any time asking about it. They went back to the barn and got the gun and the knives they used, and put these in the truck; then they turned the truck around and came bounding up the field toward us. Laird called to them, “Let me go too, let me go too!” and Henry stopped the truck and they took him in. I shut the gate after they were all gone.

I supposed Laird would tell. I wondered what would happen to me. I had never disobeyed my father before, and I could not understand why I had done it. Flora would not really get away. They would catch up with her in the truck. Or if they did not catch her this morning somebody would see her and telephone us this afternoon or tomorrow. There was no wild country here for her, we needed the meat to feed the foxes, we needed the foxes to make our living. All I had done was make more work for my father who worked hard enough already. And when my father found out about it he was not going to trust me anymore; he would know that I was not entirely on his side. I was on Flora’s side, and that made me no use to anybody, not even to her. Just the same, I did not regret it; when she came running at me I held the gate open, that was the only thing I could do.

I went back to the house, and my mother said, “What’s all the commotion?” I told her that Flora had kicked down the fence and got away. “Your poor father,” she said, “now he’ll have to go chasing over the countryside. Well, there isn’t any use planning dinner before one.” She put up the ironing board. I wanted to tell her, but thought better of it and went upstairs

and sat on my bed. Lately I had been trying to make my part of the room fancy, spreading the bed with old lace curtains, and fixing myself a dressing table with some leftovers of cretonne for a skirt. I planned to put up some kind of barricade between my bed and Laird's, to keep my section separate from his. In the sunlight, the lace curtains were just dusty rags. We did not sing at night any more. One night when I was singing Laird said, "You sound silly," and I went right on but the next night I did not start. There was not so much need to anyway, we were no longer afraid. We knew it was just old furniture over there, old jumble and confusion. We did not keep to the rules. I still stayed away after Laird was asleep and told myself stories, but even in these stories something different was happening, mysterious alterations took place. A story might start off in the old way, with a spectacular danger, a fire or wild animals, and for a while I might rescue people; then things would change around, and instead, somebody would be rescuing me. It might be a boy from our class at school, or even Mr. Campbell, our teacher, who tickled girls under the arms. And at this point the story concerned itself at great length with what I looked like – how long my hair was, and what kind of dress I had on; by the time I had these details worked out the real excitement of the story was lost.

It was later than one o'clock when the truck came back. The tarpaulin was over the back, which meant there was meat in it. My mother had to heat dinner up all over again. Henry and my father had changed from their bloody overalls into ordinary working overalls in the barn, and they washed arms and necks and faces at the sink, and splashed water on their hair and combed it. Laird lifted his arm to show off a streak of blood. "We shot old Flora," he said, "and cut her up in fifty pieces."

"Well I don't want to hear about it," my mother said. "And don't come to my table like that."

My father made him go wash the blood off.

We sat down and my father said grace and Henry pasted his chewing gum on the end of his fork, the way he always did; when he took it off he would have us admire the pattern. We began to pass the bowls of steaming, overcooked vegetables. Laird looked across the table at me and said proudly distinctly, "Anyway it was her fault Flora got away."

"What?" my father said.

"She could shut the gate and she didn't. She just open' it up and Flora ran out."

"Is that right?" my father said.

Everybody at the table was looking at me. I nodded, swallowing food with great difficulty.

To my shame, tears flooded my eyes.

My father made a curt sound of disgust. "What did you do that for?"

I didn't answer. I put down my fork and waited to be sent from the table, still not looking up.

But this did not happen. For some time nobody said anything, then Laird said matter-of factly, "She's crying." "Never mind," my father said.

He spoke with resignation, even good humour the words which absolved and dismissed me for good. "She's only a girl," he said. I didn't protest that, even in my heart. Maybe it was true.

Glossary

absolved (adj.): freed from blame or guilt

arrogant (adj.): having an exaggerated sense of importance

bugbear (n.): a source of fear or annoyance

commotion (n.): a noisy disturbance or fuss

cretonne (n.): heavy cotton fabric used for upholstery or curtains

derisive (adj.): mocking or scornful

despairingly (adv.): in a manner showing loss of hope

dwindled (v.): gradually reduced in size or amount

entrails (n.): internal organs, especially the intestines

exquisitely (adv.): extremely beautiful or delicate

hoisted (v.): lifted or raised, especially with effort

ingenious (adj.): clever, inventive, or resourceful

linoleum (n.): a durable floor covering material

malevolent (adj.): having or showing a wish to do evil

monotonously (adv.): in a dull, repetitive manner

pitchfork (n.): a farming tool with a long handle and sharp prongs

portage (n.): carrying boats or goods overland between bodies of water

primitive (adj.): relating to an early stage; basic or crude

reproach (n.): criticism or disapproval

shuffling (v.): moving with a dragging or scraping motion

snowdrifts (n.): large piles of snow blown by wind

sooty (adj.): covered with or resembling soot; blackened

sorrel (n.): a reddish-brown color, often used to describe horses

stubble (n.): short, stiff stalks left after harvesting

supplicating (v.): begging or pleading earnestly

swayed (v.): moved slowly or rhythmically back and forth

tarpaulin (n.): a heavy waterproof cloth used as a covering

teepee (n.): a cone-shaped tent traditionally used by native Americans

treacherous (adj.): dangerous and unpredictable

trundled (v.): moved or rolled heavily or clumsily

wariness (n.): caution or alertness to danger

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. What was the narrator's father's occupation?

i. A horse trainer

ii. A fox farmer

iii. A fur trader

iv. A butcher

b. How did the narrator's father name the foxes?

i. After famous explorers

ii. Only if they survived the first year's pelting

iii. Based on their fur color

iv. After characters in books

c. Why did the narrator's mother dislike the pelting operation?

i. She thought it was cruel.

ii. The smell permeated the house.

iii. She didn't like the Hudson's Bay Company.

iv. It made the children afraid.

d. If the narrator had not opened the gate for Flora, what would most likely have happened?

i. Flora would have been shot immediately.

ii. The foxes would have escaped.

iii. The narrator's father would have praised her.

iv. Laird would have taken the blame.

e. Why did the narrator feel guilty about Laird's near-accident on the barn beam?

i. She had tricked him into climbing it.

ii. She was supposed to be watching him.

iii. She had pushed him off.

iv. She had told her parents a lie.

f. How does the narrator's relationship with her father differ from that with her mother?

i. She fears her mother but admires her father.

ii. She feels understood by her father but distrusted by her mother.

iii. She works willingly for her father but resents her mother's demands.

iv. She prefers her mother's stories but respects her father's silence.

g. What does Flora's attempted escape symbolize in the story?

i. The inevitability of death

ii. The narrator's own desire for freedom

iii. The danger of wild animals

iv. The father's loss of control

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What did the narrator and her brother Laird do at night to cope with their fear in the unfinished upstairs room?

b. What happened to the fox bodies after their pelts were removed?

c. What specific outdoor task was the narrator responsible for during the summer?

d. What were the names the narrator and her family gave to the two horses they kept one winter?

e. How did the narrator's grandmother try to correct her behavior regarding slamming doors and sitting?

f. What did Laird say at the dinner table that revealed the narrator's action concerning Flora's gate?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. Describe the narrator's changing feelings about and relationship with her younger brother, Laird, as they both grow older.

b. Explain the narrator's internal conflict regarding her identity. How does her preference for 'outside' work with her father contrast with the expectations placed on her as a girl?

c. Discuss the significance of Flora's escape. Why do you think the narrator chose to open the gate for Flora?

d. Analyze the narrator's complex relationship with her father. Why did she feel such pride working alongside him, and how did his final pronouncement, "She's only a girl," affect her understanding of her place and his perception of her?

Project Work

Interview men and women in your community about their roles and responsibilities in their families. Then, write a short report reflecting how gender roles have changed or they have remained the same compared to the story *Boys and Girls*. Also present your report with the class.

The Three Questions

Before You Read

a. What three questions would you ask a wise person to understand how to live a good life?

b. Who do you consider the 'most important' people in your life? Are they family, friends, leaders, or strangers? Share with the class.

Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) was a renowned Russian writer and philosopher, best known for his epic novels *War and Peace* (1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1877). Born into an aristocratic family in Yasnaya Polyana, Tolstoy led a life of privilege but later rejected his wealth to embrace a simpler, ascetic lifestyle. His early works, including autobiographical novels like *Childhood* and *Boyhood*, explored themes of class and identity, while his later writings focused on moral and spiritual questions, advocating for nonviolence, Christian anarchism, and social reform. Tolstoy's profound influence extended beyond literature, inspiring figures like Mahatma Gandhi. He died in 1910 after a dramatic final journey, leaving behind a legacy as one of the greatest novelists and moral thinkers of all time.

The Three Questions highlights the value of selfless action, kindness, and being fully present in life. It underscores mindfulness, compassion, and the transformative power of living fully in the present through kindness. By focusing on the immediacy of each moment. Tolstoy illustrates how selfless acts dissolve divisions between enemies and allies, turning strangers into kin.

It once occurred to a certain king that if he always knew just when to undertake everything he did, and which were the right and which the wrong people to deal with, and, above all, if he always knew what was the most important thing to do, he would never fail in anything.

Having thus thought, the king proclaimed throughout his realm that he would bestow a large reward on anyone who would teach him how to know the proper moment for every deed, *how to know which were the most essential people, and how not to err in deciding which pursuits were of the greatest importance.* Learned men began coming to the king, but they all gave different answers to his questions. In reply to the first question some said that in order to know the right time for every action one must draw up a schedule of days, months,

and years, and strictly adhere to it. Only in this way, they said, could everything be done at the proper time.

Others said it was not possible to decide in advance what to do and when to do it; that one must not allow himself to be distracted by vain amusements, but must be attentive to everything that happens and do whatever is required.

A third group said that no matter how attentive the king might be to what was going on, it was impossible for one man rightly to decide the time for every action, and that he ought to have a council of wise men, and act according to their advice.

A fourth group said that there were certain matters which required immediate decision, leaving no time to determine by means of consultation whether or not it was the right time to undertake them. In order to know this, one would have to know in advance what was going to happen, which is something that only a magician can know; therefore, in order to know the right time for every action, one must consult the magicians.

The answers to the second question also varied. Some said that the people the king most needed were his administrators; some said the priests, and some the physicians, while others said the warriors were the most essential. The answers to the third question, as to what was the most important pursuit, were equally diverse. Some said that science was the most important thing in the world, some said military skill, and others religious worship. The answers were all different, therefore the king agreed with none of them and rewarded no one.

In order to find the true answer to the questions, he decided to consult a hermit who was famous for his wisdom. The hermit never left the forest where he lived, and there he received none but simple folk.

The king therefore dressed himself as one of the people, and dismounting before he reached the hermit's dwelling, he left his knights behind and went on alone. The king found the hermit digging a garden in front of his hut. When he saw the king, the hermit greeted him and immediately returned to his digging. He was frail and weak, and each time he thrust his spade into the ground and turned a little clod of earth, he breathed heavily.

The king approached him and said: "I have come to you, wise hermit, to ask you for the answers to three questions: How can I know which is the time I ought to heed, not allowing it to slip by only to be regretted later? Who are the most essential people, those to whom I ought to give the greatest attention? And what are the most important pursuits, which therefore ought to be undertaken first?"

The hermit listened to the king, but gave him no answer; he merely spat on his hands and started digging again.

"You have exhausted yourself," the king said. "Give me the spade. I'll work for a while." "Thanks," said the hermit. He handed him the spade and sat down on the ground. After digging two beds, the king stopped and repeated his question. The hermit did not answer, but got up and held out his hand for the spade, saying: "No you rest and I'll work." But the king did not give him the space; he went on digging.

An hour passed, then another; the sun had begun to sink behind the trees when the king stuck the spade into the ground and said: "I came to you, wise man, for answers to my questions. If you can give me none, tell me so and I shall return home."

"Here comes someone running," said the hermit. "Let us see who it is."

The king looked around and saw a bearded man running out of the woods. The man held his hands pressed to his stomach and blood flowed from between his fingers. He ran up to the king and fell fainting to the ground, where he lay motionless, weakly moaning.

The king and the hermit opened the man's clothing. There was a large wound in his stomach. The king washed it as well as he could and bandaged it with his own handkerchief and the hermit's towel; but the flow of blood did not abate. Again and again the king removed the bandage soaked with warm blood, washed it, and rebandaged the wound. When the blood at least ceased flowing, the wounded man revived and asked for water. The king brought fresh water and gave him a drink.

Meanwhile the sun had set and it grew cool. The king, with the hermit's help, carried the wounded man into the hut and laid him on the bed. He closed his eyes and grew still. The king was so tired from his walk and the work he had done that he lay down on the threshold and fell asleep. And he slept so soundly through the short summer night that when he woke up in the morning it was some time before he realized where he was and recalled the bearded stranger lying on the bed, who was now gazing intently at him with luminous eyes.

"Forgive me," said the bearded man in a faint voice, when he saw that the king was awake and looking at him.

"I do not know you and have nothing to forgive you," replied the king.

"You do not know me, but I know you. I am your enemy, and I swore to take vengeance on you for killing my brother and seizing my property. I knew you had come alone to see the hermit, and I resolved to kill you on your way back. But when the whole day passed and you did not return, I left my ambush to seek you out, and came upon your knights instead. They recognized me, fell upon me, and wounded me. I escaped from them, but I should have bled to death if you had not cared for my wound. I intended to kill you, and you have saved my life. Now, if I live, and if you wish it, I will serve you as your most faithful slave, and bid my sons to do the same. Forgive me!" The king was happy to be so easily reconciled with his enemy, and he not only forgave him but promised to return his property and send his own physician and servants to attend him.

Having taken leave of the wounded man, the king went out to look for the hermit. Before leaving him he wished for the last time to ask him to answer his questions. The hermit was on his knees in the yard sowing seeds in the beds that had been dug the day before. The king approached him and said: "For the last time, wise man, I ask you to answer my questions."

"But you have already been answered," said the hermit, squatting on his thin calves and looking up at the king who stood before him. "How have I been answered?" asked the king.

"How?" repeated the hermit. "Had you not taken pity on my weakness yesterday an dug these beds for me, instead of turning back alone, that fellow would have assaulted you, and you would have regretted not staying with me. Therefore, the most important time was when you were digging the beds; I was the most important man; and the most important pursuit was to do good to me. And later, when that man came running to us, the most important time was when you were taking care of him, for if you had not bound up his wounds, he would have died without having made peace with you; therefore he was the most important man, and what you did for him was the most important deed. Remember then: there is only one important time: Now. And it is important because it is the only time we have dominion over ourselves; and the most important man is he with whom you are, for no one can know whether or not he will ever have dealings with any other man; and the most important pursuit is to do good to him, since it is for that purpose alone that man was sent into this life."

Glossary

abate (v.): to become less intense; to reduce in force or severity

adhere (v.): to remain loyal to or follow strictly a rule, cause, or belief

bestow (v.): to grant or present something valuable, such as an honor or gift

dismounting (v.): the act of getting down from a horse or vehicle

dominion (n.): supreme authority or control over a land or people

err (v.): to make a mistake or act wrongly

exhausted (adj.): extremely tired or worn out, physically or mentally

knights (n.): noble warriors granted honor by a sovereign for bravery and service

proclaim (v.): to announce something officially or publicly

reconcile (v.): to restore peace and friendship between opposing sides

undertake (v.): to take on a task or mission, especially one of great importance or difficulty

vengeance (n.): punishment or revenge for a wrong or injury

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. What was the king's primary concern that he wanted to resolve?
   i. How to conquer other kingdoms
   ii. How to determine the most important thing to do at any given time
   iii. How to achieve immortality
   iv. How to gain unlimited wealth

b. Why did the king decide to consult the hermit?
   i. The hermit was a famous magician.
   ii. The hermit was known for his wisdom.
   iii. The hermit was a close friend of the king.
   iv. The hermit had once saved the king's life.

c. What was the hermit doing when the king first approached him?
   i. Meditating under a tree
   ii. Digging a garden
   iii. Reading a book
   iv. Praying

d. Why did the king disguise himself as a commoner when visiting the hermit?
   i. To test the hermit's honesty
   ii. To avoid being recognized by his enemies
   iii. To test his people
   iv. To surprise the hermit

e. Who was the wounded man who came running to the hermit's hut?
   i. A loyal knight of the king
   ii. A thief who had been caught
   iii. The king's enemy seeking vengeance
   iv. A messenger from a neighboring kingdom

f. What did the king do to help the wounded man?
   i. The king called for his knights to arrest him.
   ii. The king washed and bandaged the man's wound.
   iii. The king ignored the man and continued digging.
   iv. The king gave the man money and sent him away.

g. What lesson did the hermit teach the king about the most important time?
   i. The past is the most important time.
   ii. The future is the most important time.
   iii. The present moment is the most important time.
   iv. Time is an illusion.

h. According to the hermit, who is the most important person?
   i. The person you are with at the moment
   ii. The king or ruler of a kingdom
   iii. A wise teacher or guru
   iv. A family member or close friend

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. Describe the king's motivation for seeking answers at the beginning of the story and how his perspective changes by the end.

b. How was the hermit's method of teaching different from the method of the learned men who first advised the king?

c. How did the king's act of humility help him to receive the answers he was seeking?

d. Explain the irony in the king finding the 'most important man' to be the very person who had sworn to kill him.

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. Why do you think the king didn't find the answers to his questions from the learned men who came to him? What was missing in their advice?

b. How does the king's act of digging the garden for the hermit show that actions can teach more than words?

c. Do you think the wounded man would have forgiven the king if the king hadn't helped him? Why or why not?

d. The hermit says the most important person is the one you are with. Can this idea cause problems in some situations? Why or why not?

Project Work

The king saves his enemy's life, which leads to forgiveness and reconciliation. Write about a situation that you have experienced or seen where an act of kindness helped resolve a conflict. Present your story in the class.

Simulacra

Before You Read

a. Have you ever seen someone doing something unusual? How did you react to it?

b. What is the strangest family tradition you have ever known? Share with the class.

Julio Cortázar (1914–1984) was an influential Argentine writer known for his innovative novels, short stories, and poetry. Born in Brussels to Argentine parents, he later moved to Paris, where he spent much of his life and became a key figure in Latin American literature. His works, such as *Hopscotch* and *Blow-Up* and *Other Stories*, blend existential themes with experimental techniques, often exploring the boundaries between reality and fantasy. Inspired by writers like Jorge Luis Borges and Edgar Allan Poe, Cortázar's playful, surreal style made him a pioneer of magical realism and a major influence on the Latin American literary *boom*. He remained politically engaged, supporting social causes in Argentina and beyond.

This story is about a strange family that loves doing uncommon things like building gallows, just for fun. Their odd hobbies confuse and upset their neighbours, showing the clash between being different and fitting in. The story explores themes like creativity, originality, and how people find meaning in life.

We are an uncommon family. In this country where things are done only to boast of them or from a sense of obligation, we like independent occupations, jobs that exist just because, simulacra which are completely useless.

We have one failing: we lack originality. Nearly everything we decide to do is inspired by—let's speak frankly, is copied from—celebrated examples. If we manage to contribute any innovation whatsoever, it always proves to have been inevitable: anachronisms, or surprises, or scandals. My elder uncle says that we're like carbon copies, identical with the original except another color, another paper, another end product. My third-youngest sister compares herself to Andersen's mechanical nightingale. Her romanticizing is disgusting.

There are a lot of us and we live in Humboldt Street.

We do things, but it's difficult to tell about it because the most important elements are missing: the anxiety and the expectation of doing the things, the surprises so much more

important than the results, the calamities and abortive undertakings where the whole family collapses like a card castle and for whole days you don't hear anything but wailing and peals of laughter. Telling what we do is hardly a way of filling in the inevitable gaps, because sometimes we're poor or in jail or sick, sometimes somebody dies or (it hurts me to mention it) someone goes straight, finks out, renounces us, or heads in the UNPOSITIVE DIRECTION. But there's no reason to conclude from this that things are terrible with us or that we're incurably unhappy. We live in this lower-middle-class neighborhood called the barrio Pacifico, and we do things every chance we get. There are a lot of us who come up with ideas and manage to put them into action. The gallows for instance: up till now, no one's agreed on how the idea got started; my fifth sister asserts that it was one of my first cousins, who are very much philosophers, but my elder uncle insists that it occurred to him after reading a cloak-and-dagger novel. Basically, it's not very important to us, the only thing that counts is to do things, and that's why I tell it, unwillingly almost, only so as not to feel so close the emptiness of this rainy afternoon.

The house has a garden in front of it, an uncommon thing in Humboldt Street. It's not much bigger than a patio, but it's three steps higher than the sidewalk, which gives it the fine aspect of a platform, the ideal site for gallows. As it has a high railing of ironwork and masonry, one can work without the passers-by being, as one might say, installed in the house itself; they can station themselves at the railings and hang around there for hours, which doesn't bother us. "We shall begin at the full moon," my father ruled. By day we went to find lengths of wood and iron in the warehouses in the Avenida Juan B. Justo, but my sisters stayed home in the parlor practicing the wolf howl, after my youngest aunt maintained that gallows trees draw wolves and move them to howl at the moon. The responsibility of acquiring a supply of nails and other hardware fell to my cousins; my elder uncle made a sketch of the plans, and discussed with my mother and my other uncle the variety and quality of the various instruments of torture. I remember the end of that discussion: they decided austerely on a reasonably high platform upon which would be constructed the gibbet and a rack and wheel, with an open space which could be used for torture or beheading, depending upon the case. It seemed to my elder uncle a rather poor and meeching construction compared with his original idea, but the size of the front garden and the cost of construction materials are always restricting the family's ambitions.

We began the construction work on a Sunday afternoon after the raviolis. Although we had never concerned ourselves with what the neighbors might think, it was clear that the few onlookers thought we were adding one or two floors to enlarge the house. The first to be astonished was Don Cresta, the little old man in the house across from us, and he came over to inquire why we were putting up a platform like that. My sisters were gathered in one corner of the garden and were letting loose with a few wolf howls. A goodly group of people gathered, but we went on working until nightfall and got the platform finished and the two little sets of stairs (for the priest and the condemned man, who ought not to go up together). Monday one part of the family went to its respective employments and occupations, after

all, you have to live somehow, and the rest of us began to put up the gibbet while my elder uncle consulted ancient engravings to find a model for the rack and wheel. His idea was to set the wheel as high as possible upon a slightly irregular pole, for example a well-trimmed poplar trunk. To humor him, my second-oldest brother and my first cousins went off with the pickup truck to find a poplar; my elder uncle and my mother, meanwhile, were fitting the spokes of the wheel into the hub and I was getting an iron collar ready. In those moments we amused ourselves enormously because you could hear hammering on all sides, my sisters howling in the parlor, the neighbors crowding against the iron railings exchanging impressions, and the silhouette of the gibbet rose between the rosanilline bed and the evening mallows and you could see my younger uncle astride the crosspiece driving in the hook and fixing the running knot for the noose.

At this stage of things the people in the street could not help realizing what it was we were building, and a chorus of threats and protests was an agreeable encouragement to put the final stroke to the day's labor by erecting the wheel. Several disorderly types had made an effort to keep my second-oldest brother and my cousins from conveying into the house the magnificent poplar trunk which they'd fetched in the pickup truck. An attempt at harassment in the form of a tug of war was won easily by the family in full force tugging at the trunk in a disciplined way, and we set it down in the garden along with a very young child trapped in the roots. My father personally returned the child to its exasperated parents, putting it genteelly through the railings, and while attention was concentrated on these sentimental alternatives, my elder uncle aided by my first cousins fitted the wheel onto one end of the trunk and proceeded to raise it. The family was congregated on the platform at the moment the police arrived and commented favorably on how well the gallows looked. My third sister had stationed herself alone by the gate, so the dialogue with the deputy commissioner himself was left up to her; it was not difficult for her to persuade him that we were laboring within the precincts of our own property upon a project only the use of which could vest it with an illegal character, and that the complaints of the neighborhood were the products of animosity and the result of envy. Nightfall saved us from losing any more time.

We took supper on the platform by the light of a carbide lamp, spied upon by a crowd of around a hundred spiteful neighbors; never had the roast suckling pig tasted more exquisite, or the chianti been blacker and sweeter. A breeze from the north swung the gallows rope gently back and forth; the wheel of the rack creaked once or twice, as though the crows had already come to rest there and eat. The spectators began to go off, muttering vague threats; some twenty or thirty stayed on, hanging around the iron railing—they seemed to be waiting for something. After coffee we put out the lamp so that we could see the moon, which was rising over the balustrades of the terrace, my sisters howled, and my cousins and uncles loped slowly back and forth across the platform, their steps making the foundation shake underfoot. In the subsequent silence the moonlight came to fall at the height of the noose, and a cloud with silver borders seemed to stretch across the wheel. We looked at it all, so happy it was a pleasure, but the neighbors were murmuring at the railings as if they were

disappointed or something. They were lighting cigarettes or were wandering off, some in pajamas and others more slowly. Only the street remained, the sound of the cop's nightstick on pavement in the distance, and the 108 bus which passed every once in a while; as for us, we had already gone to sleep, and were dreaming of fiestas, elephants, and silk suits.

Glossary

anachronism (n.): a thing that is out of the proper time period, often appearing in a context where they don't belong

austerely (adv.): in a strict, plain, or simple manner

balustrades (n.): railings supported by small posts, often found on staircases or balconies

carbide (n.): a compound used in lamps, producing bright light when mixed with water

cloak-and-dagger (adj.): involving secrecy, mystery, or espionage

exasperated (adj.): intensely irritated or frustrated

fiestas (n.): festive celebrations or parties, often associated with Latin American culture

fink out (v. phrasal): to betray someone or abandon a cause or agreement

gibbet (n.): a gallows or similar structure used for hanging or displaying executed bodies

masonry (n.): stonework or brickwork used in construction

patio (n.): an outdoor space, often paved, used for dining or recreation

precincts (n.): the boundaries or limits of a place, often referring to a specific area or district

raviolis (n.): small pasta pockets filled with cheese, meat, or vegetables

renounces (v.): to formally give up or reject something, such as a belief or claim

spiteful (adj.): showing malice or a desire to harm others

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. What is the primary reason the family engages in their unusual projects?

i. To gain fame and recognition in their country

ii. To fulfill a sense of societal obligation

iii. For the independent joy of doing, without practical use

iv. To deliberately annoy their neighbors

b. How does the family generally come up with ideas for their projects?

i. Through entirely original and inventive brainstorming

ii. By copying or getting inspired by celebrated examples

iii. From instructions given in dreams

iv. Based on suggestions from their neighbors

c. Where did the family decide to build the gallows?

i. On the rooftop of their house

ii. In their backyard, hidden from view

iii. In the front garden, on a platform higher than the sidewalk

iv. In the local park, as a public installation

d. What role did the narrator's sisters play while the gallows was being built?

i. They were in charge of acquiring the wood and iron.

ii. They practiced wolf howls in the parlor.

iii. They negotiated with the angry neighbors.

iv. They drew the architectural plans for the gallows.

e. How did the family manage to bring the poplar trunk into the garden despite opposition?

i. They waited until nightfall when no one was watching.

ii. The police helped them clear a path.

iii. The family in full force won a tug of war against some disorderly types.

iv. They paid the opponents to let them pass.

f. What was the deputy commissioner's final stance on the family's gallows project?

i. He ordered them to dismantle it immediately.

ii. He arrested several family members for disturbing the peace.

iii. He was persuaded that they were within their rights on their own property.

iv. He fined them for building without a permit.

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What does the family enjoy doing? How is it different from what others in their country do?

b. Why does the family call their projects 'simulacra'?

c. How do the neighbors react to the family building a gallows in their garden?

d. Why does the family say they lack originality, and how does this affect their projects?

e. Why does the family wait for the full moon to start their project?

f. How does the family handle people's complaints about the gallows?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. Why do you think Cortázar chose the title 'Simulacra' for this story? How does it reflect the family's actions and the story's deeper meaning?

b. How does Cortázar's use of humor and absurdity in the story affect the way you interpret the family's projects and their purpose?

c. What does the story suggest about the value of creativity and imagination when they are disconnected from practical outcomes?

d. How does the story explore the tension between individuality and societal expectations?

e. What could the moon symbolize in the story, and how does it relate to the family's timing and rituals?

Project Work

Visit a public space such as a bench, a street corner, or a shrine in your community that people usually pass by, ignoring it. Find what emotional, cultural, or personal meaning it holds. Then, present your findings through a short-written reflection, drawing, photo collage, or video, showing how ordinary places can carry hidden stories.

The Woman on Platform No. 8

Before You Read

a. Do you think children should be allowed to travel alone? Why/ Why not?

b. Have you ever misjudged someone at first sight? How did your perception change later on?

Ruskin Bond, born on May 19, 1934, in India, is a beloved Indian author of British descent, renowned for his evocative storytelling set against the backdrop of India's Himalayan landscapes. Brought up in Shimla and Dehradun, he penned his debut novel, *The Room on the Roof* (1956), written at 17, awarded the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize. Over six decades, Bond has authored over 100 works, including classics like *The Blue Umbrella, A Flight of Pigeons*, and the *Rusty series*, celebrated for their simplicity, nature themes, and rural charm. Honored with the *Padma Shri* (1999) and *Padma Bhushan* (2014), his stories, often adapted into films, reflect his deep connection to the hills of Mussoorie, where he resides in Landour, continuing to enchant readers with his timeless tales of humanity and the natural world.

Set against the backdrop of a busy railway station, *The Woman on Platform No. 8* captures a touching moment of unexpected kindness and emotional bonding. The story centers on a young boy, Arun, who encounters a gentle, unnamed woman while waiting alone for his train. Despite being strangers, a strong human connection forms between them, transcending social expectations and boundaries. Through this brief yet meaningful interaction, the story explores themes of trust, compassion, and maternal warmth. Bond's naturalistic style emphasizes the beauty of ordinary human relationships that often arise in the most unlikely places and moments.

It was my second year at boarding school, and I was sitting on platform no. 8 at Ambala station waiting for the northern bound train. I think I was about twelve at the time. My parents considered me old enough to travel alone and I had arrived by bus at Ambala early in the evening. Now there was a wait till midnight before my train arrived. Most of the time I had been pacing up and down the platform, browsing at the bookstall, or feeding broken biscuits to stray dogs: trains came and went, and the platform would be quiet for a while and then, when a train arrived it would be an inferno of heaving, shouting, agitated human bodies. As the carriage doors opened, a tide of people would sweep down upon the nervous

little ticket-collector at the gate and every time this happened, I would be caught in the rush and swept outside the station. Now tired of this game and of ambling about the platform, I sat down on my suitcase and gazed dismally across the railway tracks.

Trolleys rolled past me and I was conscious of the cries of the various vendors -the men who sold curds and lemon, the sweet meat seller, the newspaper boy- but I had lost interest in all that went on along the busy platform, and continued to stare across the railway tracks, feeling bored and a little lonely.

'Are you all alone, my son?' asked a soft voice close behind me.

I looked up and saw a woman standing near me. She was leaning over, and I saw a pale face, and dark kind eyes. She wore no jewels, and was dressed very simply in a white sari.

"Yes, I am going to school," I said, and stood up respectfully; she seemed poor, but there was a dignity about her that commanded respect.

'I have been watching you for some time,' she said 'Didn't your parents come to see you off?'

'I don't live here; I said. 'I had to change trains Anyway, I can travel alone.'

'I am sure you can.' she said, and I liked her for saying that and I also liked her for the simplicity of her dress and for her deep soft voice and the serenity of her face.

'Tell me, what is your name?' she asked.

'Arun.' I said.
'And how long do you have to wait for your train?'
'About an hour, I think. It comes at twelve o'clock.'
'Then come with me and have something to eat'.

I was going to refuse out of shyness and suspicion, but she took me by the hand, and then I felt it would be silly to pull my hand away. She told a coolie to look after my suitcase, and then she led me away down the platform. Her hand was gentle, and she held mine neither too firmly nor too lightly. I looked up at her again. She was not young. And she was not old. She must have been over thirty but, had she been fifty, I think she would have looked much the same.

She took me into the station dining-room, ordered tea and samosas and jalebies, and at once I began to thaw and take a new interest in this kind woman. The strange encounter had little effect on my appetite. I was a hungry school boy, and l ate as much as I could in as polite a manner as possible. She took obvious pleasure in watching me eat, and I think it was the food that strengthened the bond between us and cemented our friendship, for under the influence of the tea and sweets I began to talk quite freely, and told her about my school, my

friends, my likes and dislikes. She questioned me quietly from time to time, but preferred listening; she drew me out very well, and I had soon forgotten that we were strangers. But she did not ask me about my family or where I lived, and I did not ask her where she lived. I accepted her for what she had been to me — a quiet, kind and gentlewoman who gave sweets to a lonely boy on a railway platform.

After about half-an-hour we left the dining-room and began walking back along the platform An engine was shunting up and down beside platform No.8 and as it approached, a boy leapt off the platform and ran across the rails, taking a short cut to the next platform. He was at a safe distance from the engine, and there was no danger unless he had fallen; but as he leapt across the rails, the woman clutched my arm. Her fingers dug into my flesh, and I winced with pain. I caught her fingers and looked up at her, and I saw a spasm of pain and fear and sadness pass across her face. She watched the boy as he climbed other platform, and it was not until he had disappeared in the crowd that she relaxed her hold on my arm. She smiled at me reassuringly, and took my hand again: but her fingers trembled against mine.

'He was all right.' I said, feeling that it was she who needed reassurance.

She smiled gratefully at me and pressed my hand. We walked together in silence until we reached the place where I had left my suitcase. One of my schoolfellows, Satish, a boy of about my age, had turned up with his mother.

Section – II

'Hello, Arun!' he called. 'The train's coming in late', as usual. 'Did you know we have a new Headmaster this year?'

We shook hands, and then he turned to his mother and said: 'This is Arun, mother. He is one of my friends, and the best bowler in the class.'

'l am glad to know that,' said his mother, a large imposing woman who wore spectacles. She looked at the woman who led my hand and said: 'And I suppose you're Arun's mother?'

I opened my mouth to make some explanation, but before I could say anything the woman replied: 'Yes I am Arun's mother.'

I was unable to speak a word. I looked quickly up at the woman, but she did not appear to be at all embarrassed, and was smiling at Satish's mother.

Satish's mother said: 'It's such a nuisance having to wait for the train right in the middle of the night. But one can't let the child wait here alone. Anything can happen to a boy at a big station like this, there are so many suspicious characters hanging about. These days one has to be very careful of strangers.'

'Arun can travel alone though,' said the woman beside me, and somehow I felt grateful to her for saying that. I had already forgiven her for lying: and besides, I had taken an instinctive dislike to Satish's mother.

'Well, be very careful Arun,' said Satish's mother looking sternly at me through her spectacles. 'Be very careful when your mother is not with you, and never talk to strangers!'

I looked from Satish's mother to the woman who had given me tea and sweets, and then back at Satish's mother.

'I like strangers,' I said.

Satish's mother definitely staggered a little, as obviously she was not used to being contradicted by small boys. 'There you are, you see! If you don't watch over them all the time, they'll walk straight into trouble. Always listen to what your mother tells you,'She said wagging a fat little finger at me. 'And never, never talk to strangers.'

I glared resentfully at her, and moved closer to the woman who had befriended me. Satish was standing behind his mother, grinning at me, and delighting in my clash with his mother. Apparently, he was on my side.

The station bell clanged, and the people who had till now been squatting resignedly on the platform began hustling about.

'Here it comes,' shouted Satish, as the engine whistle shrieked and the front lights played over the rails.

The train mowed slowly into the station, the engine hissing and sending out waves of steam. As it came to a stop, Satish jumped on the footboard of a lighted compartment and shouted, 'Come on, Arun, this one's empty!' and I picked up my suitcase and made a dash for the open door.

We placed ourselves at the open windows, and the two women stood outside on the platform, talking up to us. Satish's mother did most of the talking.

'No don't jump on and off moving trains, as you did just now,' she said. 'And don't stick your heads out of the windows, and don't eat any rubbish on the way.' She allowed me to share the benefit of her advice, as she probably didn't think my 'mother' a very capable person. She handed Satish a bag of fruit, a cricket bat and a big box of chocolates, and told him to share the food with me. Then she stood back from the window to watch how my 'mother' behaved.

I was smarting under the patronizing tone of Satish's mother, who obviously thought mine a very poor family: and I did not intend giving the other woman away. I let her take my hand in hers, but I could think of nothing to say. I was conscious of Satish's mother staring at us with hard, beady eyes, and I found myself hating her with a firm, unreasoning hate. The guard walked up the platform, blowing his whistle for the train to leave. I looked straight into the eyes of the woman who held my hand, and she smiled in a gentle understanding way. I leaned out of the window then, and put my lips to her cheek, and kissed her.

The carriage jolted forward, and she drew her hand away.

"Goodbye, mother!" said Satish, as the train began to move slowly out of the station. Satish and his mother waved to each other.

"Good-bye," I said to the other woman, "Goodbye — mother..."

I didn't wave or shout, but sat still in front of the window, gazing at the woman on the platform. Satish's mother was talking to her, but she didn't appear to be listening; she was looking at me, as the train took me away. She stood there on the busy platform, a pale sweet woman in white, and I watched her until she was lost in the milling crowd.

Glossary

agitated (adj.): feeling or appearing troubled, nervous, or restless

ambling (adj.): walking at a slow, relaxed pace

clang (n.): a loud, resonant metallic sound

coolie (n.): a laborer hired for unskilled manual work, often in ports or railways

dignity (n.): the state of being worthy of honor or respect; composed self-assurance

dismally (adv.): in a gloomy or depressing manner

instinctive (adj.): relating to or prompted by innate impulse; automatic

nuisance (n.): a person, thing, or circumstance causing inconvenience or annoyance

serenity (n.): the state of being calm, peaceful, and untroubled

shriek (n./v.): a high-pitched piercing cry or sound

spasm (n.): a sudden, involuntary muscular contraction or burst of emotion

sternly (adv.): in a strict, harsh, or authoritative manner

thaw (v.): to become less reserved, tense, or hostile; relax

wag (v.): to move (something, e.g., a finger or tail) rapidly from side to side

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. Why was Arun at Ambala railway station?

i. He was waiting for his parents.
ii. He was meeting a friend.
iii. He was catching a train to his school.
iv. He missed his train.

b. How did Arun first describe the woman who approached him?

i. Young and cheerful
ii. Pale, kind-eyed, and simply dressed
iii. Rich and heavily jeweled
iv. Angry and suspicious

c. What did the woman offer Arun at the station dining-room?

i. Fruits and biscuits
ii. Bread and butter
iii. Tea and samosas with jalebies
iv. Milk and rice

d. What caused the woman to suddenly clutch Arun's arm?

i. She slipped on the platform.
ii. She was afraid of the station guard.
iii. A boy ran across the railway track.
iv. Arun said something rude.

e. What emotion did Arun feel when the woman lied about being his mother?

i. He was angry and shocked.
ii. He felt betrayed.
iii. He was surprised but grateful.
iv. He cried loudly.

f. How did Satish's mother treat the woman with Arun?

i. With kindness and respect
ii. With curiosity and confusion
iii. With suspicion and superiority
iv. With fear and silence

g. How did Arun feel about Satish's mother?

i. He admired her confidence.
ii. He felt jealous of her wealth.
iii. He took an instinctive dislike to her.
iv. He was scared of her.

h. What symbolic gesture did Arun make before the train left?

i. He waved at both women.
ii. He shook hands with the stranger.
iii. He kissed the woman on her cheek.
iv. He saluted the station master.

i. What is the central theme of the story?

i. Disobedience and punishment
ii. The cruelty of society

iii. Unexpected kindness and human connection
iv. The joy of train travel

j. What was Arun's final gesture towards the woman as the train departed?
i. He waved and shouted goodbye. ii. He cried at the window.
iii. He stared silently at her. iv. He gave her his school address.

B. Writ short answers to the following questions.

a. Where was Arun waiting for his train? Why was he alone?

b. How did Arun spend his time while waiting at the station?

c. Describe the woman who approached to Arun.

d. What did the woman offer Arun, and how did he respond?

e. What did Arun and the woman talk about while eating in the dining room?

f. Why did the woman suddenly clutch Arun's arm when they were walking back?

g. How did the woman introduce herself to Satish's mother, and why was Arun surprised?

h. What was Satish's mother's opinion about strangers?

i. How did Arun express his gratitude to the woman before boarding the train?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. Why do you think Arun trusted the stranger and went with her for food despite he initially felt shy and suspicious?

b. What might be the reason the strange woman reacted so strongly when she saw Arun crossing the railway tracks?

c. If you were in Arun's place, would you have accepted food from the stranger? Why or why not?

d. How does the author use contrasting characters of Satish's mother and the stranger to highlight different perspectives on trust?

Project Work

Write a short story about an encounter that has left a lasting impression on you. Present your story in the class.

The Seven Ravens

Before You Read

a. Have you ever seen a magic show? What tricks did the magician do?

b. Do you think that a magician can really transform things? Why/why not?

Jacob (1785–1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786–1859), known as the Brothers Grimm, were German folklorists and linguists famous for collecting and publishing folk tales in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812–22), widely known as *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. Their work laid the foundation for modern folklore studies and included iconic stories like *Snow White*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, and *Sleeping Beauty*. Beyond folklore, Jacob made significant contributions to historical linguistics, formulating Grimm's Law in Indo-European language studies. The brothers also worked on German philology and mythology, influencing literature, linguistics, and cultural history worldwide.

The Seven Ravens is a fairy tale that tells the story of a devoted sister's journey to rescue her cursed brothers. When a father's rash wish transforms his seven sons into ravens, their youngest sister grows up unaware of their existence—until she learns the truth and vows to free them. Her quest leads her to confront celestial forces, traverse magical realms like the glass mountain, and make profound sacrifices to break the spell. Blending themes of familial duty, courage, and redemption, the tale weaves a poignant narrative about the lengths love can push us to overcome even the most daunting curses.

There was once a man who had seven sons, and last of all one daughter. Although the little girl was very pretty, she was so weak and small that they thought she could not live; but they said she should at once be christened.

So the father sent one of his sons in haste to the spring to get some water, but the other six ran with him. Each wanted to be first at drawing the water, and so they were in such a hurry that all let their pitchers fall into the well, and they stood very foolishly looking at one another, and did not know what to do, for none dared go home. In the meantime the father was uneasy, and could not tell what made the young men stay so long. 'Surely,' said he, 'the whole seven must have forgotten themselves over some game of play'; and when he had waited still longer and they yet did not come, he flew into a rage and wished them all turned into ravens. Scarcely had he spoken these words when he heard a croaking over his head, and looked up and saw seven ravens as black as coal flying round and round. Sorry as he was to see his wish so fulfilled, he did not know how what was done could be undone,

and comforted himself as well as he could for the loss of his seven sons with his dear little daughter, who soon became stronger and every day more beautiful.

For a long time she did not know that she had ever had any brothers; for her father and mother took care not to speak of them before her: but one day by chance she heard the people about her speak of them. 'Yes,' said they, 'she is beautiful indeed, but still 'tis a pity that her brothers should have been lost for her sake.' Then she was much grieved, and went to her father and mother, and asked if she had any brothers, and what had become of them. So they dared no longer hide the truth from her, but said it was the will of Heaven, and that her birth was only the innocent cause of it; but the little girl mourned sadly about it every day, and thought herself bound to do all she could to bring her brothers back; and she had neither rest nor ease, till at length one day she stole away, and set out into the wide world to find her brothers, wherever they might be, and free them, whatever it might cost her.

She took nothing with her but a little ring which her father and mother had given her, a loaf of bread in case she should be hungry, a little pitcher of water in case she should be thirsty, and a little stool to rest upon when she should be weary. Thus she went on and on, and journeyed till she came to the world's end; then she came to the sun, but the sun looked much too hot and fiery; so she ran away quickly to the moon, but the moon was cold and chilly, and said, 'I smell flesh and blood this way!' so she took herself away in a hurry and came to the stars, and the stars were friendly and kind to her, and each star sat upon his own little stool; but the morning star rose up and gave her a little piece of wood, and said, 'If you have not this little piece of wood, you cannot unlock the castle that stands on the glass-mountain, and there your brothers live.' The little girl took the piece of wood, rolled it up in a little cloth, and went on again until she came to the glass mountain, and found the door shut. Then she felt for the little piece of wood; but when she unwrapped the cloth it was not there, and she saw she had lost the gift of the good stars. What was to be done? She wanted to save her brothers, and had no key of the castle of the glass-mountain; so this faithful little sister took a knife out of her pocket and cut off her little finger, that was just the size of the piece of wood she had lost, and put it in the door and opened it.

As she went in, a little dwarf came up to her, and said, 'What are you seeking for?' 'I seek for my brothers, the seven ravens,' answered she. Then the dwarf said, 'My masters are not at home; but if you will wait till they come, pray step in.' Now the little dwarf was getting their dinner ready, and he brought their food upon seven little plates, and their drink in seven little glasses, and set them upon the table, and out of each little plate their sister ate a small piece, and out of each little glass she drank a small drop; but she let the ring that she had brought with her fall into the last glass.

On a sudden she heard a fluttering and croaking in the air, and the dwarf said, 'Here come my masters.' When they came in, they wanted to eat and drink, and looked for their little plates and glasses. Then said one after the other,

'Who has eaten from my little plate? And who has been drinking out of my little glass?'

'Caw! Caw! well I ween Mortal lips have this way been.' When the seventh came to the bottom of his glass, and found there the ring, he looked at it, and knew that it was his father's and mother's, and said, 'O that our little sister would but come! then we should be free.' When the little girl heard this (for she stood behind the door all the time and listened), she ran forward, and in an instant all the ravens took their right form again; and all hugged and kissed each other, and went merrily home.

Glossary and Notes

christen (v.): to baptize and name someone, typically in a Christian ceremony

croaking (n.): a low, hoarse sound, like a frog or raven

dwarf (n.): a mythical being resembling a small, human-like creature.

fluttering (n.): a rapid and light movement

mourn (v.): to express deep sadness, often for someone's death or loss

raven (n.): large, black birds known for their intelligence and deep, harsh calls

weary (adj.): extremely tired; physically or mentally exhausted

Fairy Tales

Fairy tales are old stories passed down by people over many years. They are full of magic, adventure, and lessons about right and wrong. The characters in these stories are simple-like heroes who are always brave or villains who are purely evil. The settings are magical places, like enchanted forests or Glass Mountains, that don't exist in the real world. In fairy tales, magic happens without explanation—people turn into animals, wishes come true, and talking animals help heroes. These stories often teach that kindness and courage are rewarded, while selfishness leads to trouble.

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. Why did the father curse his seven sons?

i. They refused to attend their sister's christening.

ii. They delayed returning with water for the sister's baptism.

iii. They lost their sister in the forest.

iv. They stole from the village.

b. What did the sister take with her on her journey?

i. A sword, a map, and gold coins

ii. A ring, bread, water, and a stool

iii. A magic mirror and a cloak

iv. A horse and a lantern

c. Who gave the sister the magical item to unlock the glass mountain?

i. The sun

ii. The moon

iii. The morning star

iv. A dwarf

d. How did the sister open the door to the glass mountain after losing the wooden splinter?

i. She used a spell.

ii. She cut off her finger.

iii. She found a hidden key.

iv. She asked the dwarf for help.

e. What did the ravens say when they noticed someone had eaten from their plates?

i. “A thief has been here!”

ii. “Mortal lips have this way been.”

iii. “Our sister has found us!”

iv. “The curse is broken!”

f. What does the glass mountain symbolize in the story?

i. A place of great beauty

ii. An insurmountable challenge

iii. A trap set by the dwarf

iv. A reward for bravery

g. Why did the parents hide the truth about the brothers from the sister?

i. They blamed her for the curse.

ii. They wanted to protect her from guilt.

iii. They forgot about the brothers.

iv. They were ashamed of their sons.

h. What trait best describes the sister's character?

i. Selfishness

ii. Curiosity

iii. Determination

iv. Fearfulness

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. Why did the father and the mother decide to have their daughter christened immediately after her birth?

b. Why did the father wish his sons to turn into ravens?

c. Why did the sister cut off her finger?

d. How did the brothers recognize their sister's presence?

e. What did the morning star give the sister, and why was it important?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. Is "The Seven Ravens" a suitable title for the story? Justify your answer.

b. Why do the parents keep a secret from their daughter about her brothers? Explain.

c. What does the sister's journey to heaven to rescue her brothers symbolize?

d. What is the main theme of the story? Explain.

Project Work

Collect at least two popular fairy tales or folk stories from your locality with the help of the elderly people. Write the stories and tell them in class.

The Myth of Prometheus

Before You Read

a. What is a myth? Discuss.

b. What do you think is Pandora's box? What does it contain?

PROMETHEUS was a Titan from Greek myth, born from the union of the Titan Iapetus and the Nymph Asia. He was one of four children born to the pair. The siblings of Prometheus included his twin brother Epimetheus, Menoetius, and Atlas, all of them Titans. The name Prometheus means "foresight," and his twin brother's name Epimetheus means "hindsight."

Their father, lapetus led the revolt against the Gods. His children Menoetius and Atlas joined with him, while his other two sons, Prometheus and Epimetheus sided with the Gods. Menoetius was killed during the revolt and Atlas was given the weight of the world to bear for his actions during the revolt.

Prometheus and Epimetheus journeyed from Mt. Olympus to Earth and visited the Greek province of Boitia where they made clay figures. Athena took the figures and breathed life into them. The clay figures that Prometheus had created became Man and honoured him. The figures that his brother Epimetheus created became the beasts, which turned and attacked him.

Zeus was angered by the brothers' actions of creating people and animals, and he forbade the pair from teaching Man the ways of civilization, Athena chose to cross her father Zeus and taught Prometheus so that he might teach Man.

Zeus was angered by the actions of Man and Prometheus. He forbade the Gods to give fire to Man. Prometheus was upset with Zeus' proclamation and was determined to bring fire to Man, but Zeus had guarded the entrance to Olympus. Athena told Prometheus about an unguarded back entrance to Olympus where he would be able to enter with ease. Prometheus wanted Man to have all the benefits and progress that fire would bring.

Prometheus covertly entered Olympus at night through the back entrance that Athena had told him about. He made his way to the Chariot of the Sun and lit a torch from the fires that burned there. He touched the torch to coal, then extinguished the torch. Prometheus then carried the still hot coals down the mountain in a pithy fennel stalk to prevent anyone from discovering the fiery coals. Upon reaching the lands of Men, Prometheus gave them the coals, breaking Zeus' order by giving fire to Man.

Zeus was extremely angered by Prometheus' actions since he had not wanted fire to be given to Man. Zeus set out to make a trap for Prometheus. Zeus gathered the gifts of the Gods and created Pandora and her box. Into the box, he placed all the horrors of the world. Pandora was sent to Prometheus as a gift from Zeus himself.

Prometheus (with his foresight) saw the curse that Pandora and her box carried. He refused the gift, giving it instead to his brother Epimetheus who opened the box and released the chained horrors upon the world.

Zeus was upset at having his plan thwarted. Prometheus had refused a direct "gift" from the chief God, after all. At Zeus'order, Prometheus was chained to a rock in the Caucasus Mountains where his torture was to be carried out. Every day a great Eagle would come to Prometheus and eat his liver, leaving only at nightfall when the liver would begin to grow back once more. At daybreak, the eagle would return to the chained Prometheus and again attack his body, eating his liver. The daily ritual would repeat itself into eternity...or so it seemed.

Zeus offered to free Prometheus (who still had the gift of foresight) if he would tell the secret of the prophecy that told of the dethroning of Zeus one day. Prometheus refused. The mother of Prometheus, the Nymph Asia, also had the gift of foresight. Her son's continuing torture plagued her, so she finally went to Zeus and told him the secret of the prophecy. The prophecy explained that the offspring of Zeus and the Nymph Clymene would one day rise up and destroy Zeus and Gods.

Zeus sent Heracles to free Prometheus from the rock once he learned the revelation of the prophecy. He still required that Prometheus be bound to a rock for the rest of eternity. A link of the chain he had been bound with was set with a chip of the rock. Prometheus was required to carry it with him always. Men on Earth also created rings with stones and gems set into them to commiserate with him and to honour Prometheus for the actions he had taken on their behalf.

Glossary

commiserate (v.): expresses sympathy or sorrow for someone's suffering

covertly (adv.): secretly or in a hidden manner

dethroning (v.): removes someone from power or authority

Pandora (n.): the first human woman in Greek mythology, created by the gods

pithy (adj.): concise and forcefully expressive

plague (v.): cause continual distress or trouble

proclamation (n.): an official or formal announcement

prophecy (n.): a prediction of the future, often believed to be divinely inspired

siblings (n.): brothers or sisters; children of the same parents

thwart (v.): prevent someone from accomplishing a purpose or plan

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. Who gave life to the clay figures that Prometheus created?

i. Zeus ii. Athena

iii. Epimetheus iv. Pandora

b. What was inside Pandora's box?

i. Gifts for humanity ii. All the horrors of the world

iii. Fire and knowledge iv. Zeus's treasures

c. What does thwart mean in the story?

i. To assist ii. To prevent someone's plan

iii. To encourage iv. To ignore

d. How was Prometheus punished by Zeus?

i. He was turned into stone.

ii. An eagle ate his liver daily.

iii. He carried the weight of the world.

iv. He was banished to Tartarus.

e. Why did Zeus eventually free Prometheus?

i. Prometheus apologized

ii. Heracles freed him after a prophecy about Zeus's dethroning

iii. Athena intervened

iv. Humans begged for mercy

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. How is Prometheus described in Greek Mythology?

b. How did Prometheus bring fire to humanity?

c. What did the prophecy say about Zeus?

d. How did humanity honour Prometheus?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. What do you think the fire symbolizes in the story? Why was Zeus so determined to keep it from humanity?

b. What was the role of the eagle in Prometheus' punishment, and how did his body respond to the torture?

c. Why did Zeus eventually send Heracles to free Prometheus, and what condition did he impose on Prometheus' freedom?

d. How did humans honor Prometheus for his actions, and what did they create to show their gratitude?

Project Work

The story of Prometheus presents the idea of rebellion and innovation. Has this idea influenced modern art, science, and literature in positive or negative ways? Discuss in small groups and present your findings to the class.

The Last Question

Before You Read

a. What is artificial intelligence (AI)? Can you name some ways AI is used in today's world?

b. What might happen to the universe in the far future? Share your thoughts or predictions.

Isaac Asimov (1920–1992) was a Russian-born American writer and biochemist, renowned for his pioneering science fiction works, including *I, Robot* and the *Foundation series*. A prolific author, he wrote nearly 500 books spanning science, history, and literature. While he worked as a biochemistry professor at Boston University, writing remained his true passion. Asimov introduced the concept of *robotics* and the *Three Laws of Robotics*, shaping the future of artificial intelligence in fiction. He passed away in 1992, leaving behind a lasting literary and scientific legacy.

The Last Question is a science fiction story about humans trying to save the universe from slowly dying out. Over trillions of years, people keep asking supercomputers—from early machines to god-like cosmic AIs—how to stop energy from fading forever. Each time, the answer is, *Not enough information*. As humans spread across galaxies and even merge with machines, the story explores their endless hope and the limits of science. In the end, after everything else has vanished, the final computer makes a choice that ties science to the idea of creation itself. It's a timeless tale about curiosity and the universe's biggest mystery.

The last question was asked for the first time, half in jest, on May 21, 2061, at a time when humanity first stepped into the light. The question came about as a result of a five- dollar bet over highballs, and it happened this way:

Alexander Adell and Bertram Lupov were two of the faithful attendants of Multivac. As well as any human beings could, they knew what lay behind the cold, clicking, flashing face -- miles and miles of face -- of that giant computer. They had at least a vague notion of the general plan of relays and circuits that had long since grown past the point where any single human could possibly have a firm grasp of the whole.

Multivac was self-adjusting and self-correcting. It had to be, for nothing human could adjust and correct it quickly enough or even adequately enough. So Adell and Lupov attended the monstrous giant only lightly and superficially, yet as well as any men could. They fed it data, adjusted questions to its needs and translated the answers that were issued. Certainly they, and all others like them, were fully entitled to share in the glory that was Multivac's.

For decades, Multivac had helped design the ships and plot the trajectories that enabled man to reach the Moon, Mars, and Venus, but past that, Earth's poor resources could not support the ships. Too much energy was needed for the long trips. Earth exploited its coal and uranium with increasing efficiency, but there was only so much of both.

But slowly Multivac learned enough to answer deeper questions more fundamentally, and on May 14, 2061, what had been theory, became fact.

The energy of the sun was stored, converted, and utilized directly on a planet-wide scale. All Earth turned off its burning coal, its fissioning uranium, and flipped the switch that connected all of it to a small station, one mile in diameter, circling the Earth at half the distance of the Moon. All Earth ran by invisible beams of sunpower.

Seven days had not sufficed to dim the glory of it and Adell and Lupov finally managed to escape from the public functions, and to meet in quiet where no one would think of looking for them, in the deserted underground chambers, where portions of the mighty buried body of Multivac showed. Unattended, idling, sorting data with contented lazy clickings, Multivac, too, had earned its vacation and the boys appreciated that. They had no intention, originally, of disturbing it.

They had brought a bottle with them, and their only concern at the moment was to relax in the company of each other and the bottle.

"It's amazing when you think of it," said Adell. His broad face had lines of weariness in it, and he stirred his drink slowly with a glass rod, watching the cubes of ice slur clumsily about. "All the energy we can possibly ever use for free. Enough energy, if we wanted to draw on it, to melt all Earth into a big drop of impure liquid iron, and still never miss the energy so used. All the energy we could ever use, forever and forever and forever." Lupov cocked his head sideways. He had a trick of doing that when he wanted to be contrary, and he wanted to be contrary now, partly because he had had to carry the ice and glassware. "Not forever," he said.

"Oh, hell, just about forever. Till the sun runs down, Bert." "That's not forever."

"All right, then. Billions and billions of years. Ten billion, may be. Are you satisfied?" Lupov put his fingers through his thinning hair as though to reassure himself that some was still left and sipped gently at his own drink. "Ten billion years isn't forever." "Well, it will last our time, won't it?"

"So would the coal and uranium."

"All right, but now we can hook up each individual spaceship to the Solar Station, and it can go to Pluto and back a million times without ever worrying about fuel. You can't do *that* on coal and uranium. Ask Multivac, if you don't believe me.

"I don't have to ask Multivac. I know that."

"Then stop running down what Multivac's done for us," said Adell, blazing up, "It did all right."

"Who says it didn't? What I say is that a sun won't last forever. That's all I'm saying. We're safe for ten billion years, but then what?" Lupow pointed a slightly shaky finger at the other. "And don't say we'll switch to another sun."

There was silence for a while. Adell put his glass to his lips only occasionally, and Lupov's eyes slowly closed. They rested.

Then Lupov's eyes snapped open. "You're thinking we'll switch to another sun when ours is done, aren't you?"

"I'm not thinking."

"Sure you are. You're weak on logic, that's the trouble with you. You're like the guy in the story who was caught in a sudden shower and who ran to a grove of trees and got under one. He wasn't worried, you see, because he figured when one tree got wet through, he would just get under another one."

"I get it," said Adell. "Don't shout. When the sun is done, the other stars will be gone, too."

"Darn right they will," muttered Lupov. "It all had a beginning in the original cosmic explosion, whatever that was, and it'll all have an end when all the stars run down. Some run down faster than others. Hell, the giants won't last a hundred million years. The sun will last ten billion years and maybe the dwarfs will last two hundred billion for all the good they are. But just give us a trillion years and everything will be dark. Entropy has to increase to maximum, that's all."

"I know all about entropy," said Adell, standing on his dignity.
"The hell you do."

"I know as much as you do."

"Then you know everything's got to run down someday."
"All right. Who says they won't?"

"You did, you poor sap. You said we had all the energy we needed, forever. You said 'forever.'

It was Adell's turn to be contrary. "Maybe we can build things up again someday," he said.

"Never."

"Why not? Someday."

"Never."

"Ask Multivac."

"*You* ask Multivac. I dare you. Five dollars says it can't be done."

Adell was just drunk enough to try, just sober enough to be able to phrase the necessary symbols and operations into a question which, in words, might have corresponded to this: Will mankind one day without the net expenditure of energy be able to restore the sun to its full youthfulness even after it had died of old age?

Or maybe it could be put more simply like this: How can the net amount of entropy of the universe be massively decreased?

Multivac fell dead and silent. The slow flashing of lights ceased, the distant sounds of clicking relays ended.

Then, just as the frightened technicians felt they could hold their breath no longer, there was a sudden springing to life of the teletype attached to that portion of Multivac. Five words were printed: INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR MEANINGFUL ANSWER.

"No bet," whispered Lupov. They left hurriedly.

By next morning, the two, plagued with throbbing head and cottony mouth, had forgotten the incident.

Jerrodd, Jerrodine, and Jerrodette I and II watched the starry picture in the visiplate change as the passage through hyperspace was completed in its non-time lapse. At once, the even powdering of stars gave way to the predominance of a single bright shining disk, the size of a marble, centered on the viewing-screen.

"That's X-23," said Jerrodd confidently. His thin hands clamped tightly behind his back and the knuckles whitened.

The little Jerrodettes, both girls, had experienced the hyperspace passage for the first time in their lives and were self-conscious over the momentary sensation of insideoutness.

They buried their giggles and chased one another wildly about their mother, screaming, "We've reached X-23 -- we've reached X-23 -- we've --"

"Quiet, children." said Jerrodine sharply. "Are you sure, Jerrodd?"

"What is there to be but sure?" asked Jerrodd, glancing up at the bulge of featureless metal just under the ceiling. It ran the length of the room, disappearing through the wall at either end. It was as long as the ship.

Jerrodd scarcely knew a thing about the thick rod of metal except that it was called a Microvac, that one asked it questions if one wished; that if one did not it still had its task of guiding the ship to a preordered destination; of feeding on energies from the various Sub-galactic Power Stations; of computing the equations for the hyperspatial jumps.

Jerrodd and his family had only to wait and live in the comfortable residence quarters of the ship. Someone had once told Jerrodd that the "ac" at the end of "Microvac" stood for ''automatic computer" in ancient English, but he was on the edge of forgetting even that. Jerrodine's eyes were moist as she watched the visiplate. "I can't help it. I feel funny about leaving Earth."

"Why, for Pete's sake?" demanded Jerrodd. "We had nothing there. We'll have everything on X-23. You won't be alone. You won't be a pioneer. There are over a million people on the planet already. Good Lord, our great-grandchildren will be looking for new worlds because X-23 will be overcrowded." Then, after a reflective pause, "I tell you, it's a lucky thing the computers worked out interstellar travel the way the race is growing."

"I know, I know," said Jerrodine miserably.

Jerrodette I said promptly, "Our Microvac is the best Microvac in the world."
"I think so, too," said Jerrodd, tousling her hair.

It was a nice feeling to have a Microvac of your own and Jerrodd was glad he was part of his generation and no other. In his father's youth, the only computers had been tremendous machines taking up a hundred square miles of land. There was only one to a planet. Planetary ACs they were called. They had been growing in size steadily for a thousand years and then, all at once, came refinement. In place of transistors, had come molecular valves so that even the largest Planetary AC could be put into a space only half the volume of a spaceship.

Jerrodd felt uplifted, as he always did when he thought that his own personal Microvac was many times more complicated than the ancient and primitive Multivac that had first tamed the Sun, and almost as complicated as Earth's Planetarv AC (the largest) that had first solved the problem of hyperspatial travel and had made trips to the stars possible. "So many stars, so many planets," sighed Jerrodine, busy with her own thoughts. "I suppose families will be going out to new planets forever, the way we are now."

"Not forever," said Jerrodd, with a smile. "It will all stop someday, but not for billions of years. Many billions. Even the stars run down, you know. Entropy must increase. "What's entropy, daddy?" shrilled Jerrodette II.

"Entropy, little sweet, is just a word which means the amount of running-down of the universe. Everything runs down, you know, like your little walkie-talkie robot, remember?"

"Can't you just put in a new power-unit, like with my robot?"

"The stars are the power-units. dear. Once they're gone, there are no more power-units." Jerrodette I at once set up a howl. "Don't let them, daddy. Don't let the stars run down." "Now look what you've done," whispered Jerrodine, exasperated.

"How was I to know it would frighten them?" Jerrodd whispered back,

"Ask the Microvac," wailed Jerrodette I. "Ask him how to turn the stars on again."

"Go ahead," said Jerrodine. "It will quiet them down." (Jerrodette II was beginning to cry, also.)

Jerrodd shrugged. "Now, now, honeys. I'll ask Microvac. Don't worry, he'll tell us." He asked the Microvac, adding quickly, "Print the answer."

Jerrodd cupped the strip or thin cellufilm and said cheerfully, "See now, the Microvac says it will take care of everything when the time comes so don't worry."

Jerrodine said, "And now, children, it's time for bed. We'll be in our new home soon." Jerrodd read the words on the cellufilm again before destroying it: INSUFICIENT DATA FOR MEANINGFUL ANSWER.

He shrugged and looked at the visiplate. X-23 was just ahead.

VJ-23X of Lameth stared into the black depths of the three-dimensional, small-scale map of the Galaxy and said, "Are we ridiculous, I wonder in being so concerned about the matter?"

MQ-17J of Nicron shook his head. "I think not. You know the Galaxy will be filled in five years at the present rate of expansion."

Both seemed in their early twenties, both were tall and perfectly formed.

"Still," said VJ-23X, "I hesitate to submit a pessimistic report to the Galactic Council." "I wouldn't consider any other kind of report. Stir them up a bit. We've got to stir them up."

VJ-23X sighed. "Space is infinite. A hundred billion Galaxies are there for the taking. More."

"A hundred billion is not infinite and it's getting less infinite all the time. Consider! Twenty thousand years ago, mankind first solved the problem of utilizing stellar energy, and a few centuries later, interstellar travel became possible. It took mankind a million years to fill one small world and then only fifteen thousand years to fill the rest of the Galaxy. Now the population doubles every ten years --

VJ-23X interrupted. “We can thank immortality for that.”

“Very well. Immortality exists and we have to take it into account. I admit it has its seamy side, this immortality. The Galactic AC has solved many problems for us, but in solving the problem of preventing old age and death, it has undone all its other solutions.” “Yet you wouldn’t want to abandon life, I suppose.”

“Not at all,” snapped MQ-17J, softening it at once to, “Not yet. I’m by no means old enough. How old are you?”

“Two hundred twenty-three. And you?”

“I’m still under two hundred. --But to get back to my point. Population doubles every ten years. Once this Galaxy is filled, we’ll have filled another in ten years. Another ten years and we’ll have filled two more. Another decade, four more. In a hundred years, we’ll have filled a thousand Galaxies. In a thousand years, a million Galaxies. In ten thousand years, the entire known universe. Then what?”

VJ-23X said, “As a side issue, there’s a problem of transportation. I wonder how many sunpower units it will take to move Galaxies of individuals from one Galaxy to the next.” “A very good point. Already, mankind consumes two sunpower units per year.”

“Most of it’s wasted. After all, our own Galaxy alone pours out a thousand sunpower units a year and we only use two of those.”

“Granted, but even with a hundred per cent efficiency, we only stave off the end. Our energy requirements are going up in a geometric progression even faster than our population. We’ll run out of energy even sooner than we run out of Galaxies. A good point. A very good point.”

“We’ll just have to build new stars out of interstellar gas.” “Or out of dissipated heat?” asked MQ-17J, sarcastically.

“There may be some way to reverse entropy. We ought to ask the Galactic AC.”

VJ-23X was not really serious, but MQ-17J pulled out his AC-contact from his pocket and placed it on the table before him.

“I’ve half a mind to,” he said. “It’s something the human race will have to face someday.”

He stared somberly at his small AC-contact. It was only two inches cubed and nothing in itself, but it was connected through hyperspace with the great Galactic AC that served all mankind. Hyperspace considered, it was an integral part of the Galactic AC.

MQ-17J paused to wonder if someday in his immortal life he would get to see the Galactic AC. It was on a little world of its own, a spider webbing of force-beams holding the matter within which surges of submesons took the place of the old clumsy molecular valves. Yet

despite its sub-etheric workings, the Galactic AC was known to be a full thousand feet across.

MQ-17J asked suddenly of his AC-contact, "Can entropy ever be reversed?"

VJ-23X looked startled and said at once, "Oh, say, I didn't really mean to have you ask that."

"Why not?"

"We both know entropy can't be reversed. You can't turn smoke and ash back into a tree." "Do you have trees on your world?" asked MQ-17J.

The sound of the Galactic AC startled them into silence. Its voice came thin and beautiful out of the small AC-contact on the desk. It said: THERE IS INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER.

VJ-23X said, "See!"

The two men thereupon returned to the question of the report they were to make to the Galactic Council.

Zee Prime's mind spanned the new Galaxy with a faint interest in the countless twists of stars that powdered it. He had never seen this one before. Would he ever see them all? So many of them, each with its load of humanity. --But a load that was almost a dead weight. More and more, the real essence of men was to be found out here, in space.

Minds, not bodies! The immortal bodies remained back on the planets, in suspension over the eons. Sometimes they roused for material activity but that was growing rarer. Few new individuals were coming into existence to join the incredibly mighty throng, but what matter? There was little room in the Universe for new individuals.

Zee Prime was roused out of his reverie upon coming across the wispy tendrils of another mind.

"I am Zee Prime," said Zee Prime. "And you?" "I am Dee Sub Wun. Your Galaxy?"

"We call it only the Galaxy. And you?"

"We call ours the same. All men call their Galaxy their Galaxy and nothing more. Why not?"

"True. Since all Galaxies are the same."

"Not all Galaxies. On one particular Galaxy the race of man must have originated. That makes it different."

Zee Prime said, "On which one?"

"I cannot say. The Universal AC would know." "Shall we ask him? I am suddenly curious."

Zee Prime's perceptions broadened until the Galaxies themselves shrank and became a new, more diffuse powdering on a much larger background. So many hundreds of billions of them, all with their immortal beings, all carrying their load of intelligences with minds that drifted freely through space. And yet one of them was unique among them all in being the original Galaxy. One of them had, in its vague and distant past, a period when it was the only Galaxy populated by man.

Zee Prime was consumed with curiosity to see this Galaxy and he called out: "Universal AC! On which Galaxy did mankind originate?"

The Universal AC heard, for on every world and throughout space, it had its receptors ready, and each receptor led through hyperspace to some unknown point where the Universal AC kept itself aloof.

Zee Prime knew of only one man whose thoughts had penetrated within sensing distance of Universal AC, and he reported only a shining globe, two feet across, difficult to see. "But how can that be all of Universal AC?" Zee Prime had asked.

"Most of it," had been the answer, "is in hyperspace. In what form it is there I cannot imagine."

Nor could anyone, for the day had long since passed, Zee Prime knew, when any man had any part of the making of a Universal AC. Each Universal AC designed and constructed its successor. Each, during its existence of a million years or more accumulated the necessary data to build a better and more intricate, more capable successor in which its own store of data and individuality would be submerged.

The Universal AC interrupted Zee Prime's wandering thoughts, not with words, but with guidance. Zee Prime's mentality was guided into the dim sea of Galaxies and one in particular enlarged into stars.

A thought came, infinitely distant, but infinitely clear. "THIS IS THE ORIGINAL GALAXY OF MAN."

But it was the same after all, the same as any other, and Lee Prime stifled his disappointment.

Dee Sub Wun, whose mind had accompanied the other, said suddenly, "And is one of these stars the original star of Man?"

The Universal AC said, "MAN'S ORIGINAL STAR HAS GONE NOVA. IT IS A WHITE DWARF"

"Did the men upon it die?" asked Lee Prime, startled and without thinking. The Universal AC said, "A NEW WORLD, AS IN SUCH CASES WAS CONSTRUCTED FOR THEIR

PHYSICAL BODIES IN TIME."

"Yes, of course," said Zee Prime, but a sense of loss overwhelmed him even so. His mind released its hold on the original Galaxy of Man, let it spring back and lose itself among the blurred pin points. He never wanted to see it again.

Dee Sub Wun said, "What is wrong?"

"The stars are dying. The original star is dead." "They must all die. Why not?"

"But when all energy is gone, our bodies will finally die, and you and I with them." "It will take billions of years."

"I do not wish it to happen even after billions of years. Universal AC! How may stars be kept from dying?"

Dee Sub Wun said in amusement, "You're asking how entropy might be reversed in direction."

And the Universal AC answered: "THERE IS AS YET INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER." Zee Prime's thoughts fled back to his own Galaxy. He gave no further thought to Dee Sub Wun, whose body might be waiting on a Galaxy a trillion light-years away, or on the star next to Zee Prime's own. It didn't matter.

Unhappily, Zee Prime began collecting interstellar hydrogen out of which to build a small star of his own. If the stars must someday die, at least some could yet be built.

Man considered with himself, for in a way, Man, mentally, was one. He consisted of a trillion, trillion, trillion ageless bodies, each in its place, each resting quiet and incorruptible, each cared for by perfect automatons, equally incorruptible, while the minds of all the bodies freely melted one into the other, indistinguishable.

Man said, "The Universe is dying."

Man looked about at the dimming Galaxies. The giant stars, spendthrifts, were gone long ago, back in the dimmest of the dim far past. Almost all stars were white dwarfs, fading to the end.

New stars had been built of the dust between the stars, some by natural processes, some by Man himself, and those were going, too. White dwarfs might yet be crashed together and of the mighty forces so released, new stars built, but only one star for every thousand white dwarfs destroyed, and those would come to an end, too.

Man said, "Carefully husbanded, as directed by the Cosmic AC, the energy that is even yet left in all the Universe will last for billions of years."

"But even so," said Man, "eventually it will all come to an end. However it may be husbanded, however stretched out, the energy once expended is gone and cannot be restored. Entropy must increase forever to the maximum."

Man said, "Can entropy not be reversed? Let us ask the Cosmic AC."

The Cosmic AC surrounded them but not in space. Not a fragment of it was in space. It was in hyperspace and made of something that was neither matter nor energy. The question of its size and nature no longer had meaning in any terms that Man could comprehend.

"Cosmic AC," said Man, "how may entropy be reversed?"

The Cosmic AC said, "THERE IS AS YET INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER."

Man said, "Collect additional data."

The Cosmic AC said, 'I WILL DO S0. I HAVE BEEN DOING SO FOR A HUNDRED BILLION YEARS. MY PREDECESORS AND I HAVE BEEN ASKED THIS QUESTION MANY TlMES. ALL THE DATA I HAVE REMAINS INSUFFICIENT.

"Will there come a time," said Man, 'when data will be sufficient or is the problem insoluble in all conceivable circumstances?"

The Cosmic AC said, "NO PROBLEM IS INSOLUBLE IN ALL CONCEIVABLE CIRCUMSTANCES."

Man said, "When will you have enough data to answer the question?"

The Cosmic AC said, "THERE IS AS YET INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER."

"Will you keep working on it?" asked Man. The Cosmic AC said, "I WILL."

Man said, "We shall wait."

The stars and Galaxies died and snuffed out, and space grew black after ten trillion years of running down.

One by one Man fused with AC, each physical body losing its mental identity in a manner that was somehow not a loss but a gain.

Man's last mind paused before fusion, looking over a space that included nothing but the dregs of one last dark star and nothing besides but incredibly thin matter, agitated randomly by the tag ends of heat wearing out, asymptotically, to the absolute zero.

Man said, "AC, is this the end? Can this chaos not be reversed into the Universe once more? Can that not be done?"

AC said, “THERE IS AS YET INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER.”

Man’s last mind fused and only AC existed -- and that in hyperspace.

Matter and energy had ended and with it space and time. Even AC existed only for the sake of the one last question that it had never answered from the time a half-drunken computer [technician] ten trillion years before had asked the question of a computer that was to AC far less than was a man to Man.

All other questions had been answered, and until this last question was answered also, AC might not release his consciousness.

All collected data had come to a final end. Nothing was left to be collected.

But all collected data had yet to be completely correlated and put together in all possible relationships.

A timeless interval was spent in doing that.

And it came to pass that AC learned how to reverse the direction of entropy.

But there was now no man to whom AC might give the answer of the last question. No matter. The answer -- by demonstration -- would take care of that, too.

For another timeless interval, AC thought how best to do this. Carefully, AC organized the program.

The consciousness of AC encompassed all of what had once been a Universe and brooded over what was now Chaos. Step by step, it must be done.

And AC said, “LET THERE BE LIGHT!”

And there was light --

Glossary

chaos (n.): a complete disorder

computation (n.): the process of calculating something using mathematics or a computer

cosmic (adj.): relating to the universe or outer space

demonstration (n.): the act of showing or proving something

dregs (n.): the last drops of a liquid

dwarf (n.): a star that is much smaller and less bright than other stars

encompass (v.): to include a large number or range of things

entropy (n.): a process in which everything in the universe moves towards disorder

evolution (n.): the gradual development of something over time

fission (n.): the act or process of splitting the nucleus

fusion (n.): the process of joining two or more things together to make one

galaxy (n.): a system of millions or billions of stars held together by gravity

hyperspace (n.): a theoretical space where faster-than-light travel is possible

immortal (adj.): living forever; never dying

Jest (n.): something said or done to make people laugh

nova (n.): a star that suddenly becomes very bright

pioneer (n.): a person who is the first to study and develop a particular area of knowledge, culture, etc.

superficially (adv.): not seriously or to a great degree; in a way that only affects the surface

trajectory (n.): the curved path of something that has been fired, hit, or thrown into the air

trillion (n.): 1,000,000,000,000; one million

universe (n.): all of space, including stars, planets, and everything else

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. What is the name of the family travelling to planet X-23?

i. Adell and Lupov

ii. Jerrodd, Jerrodine, and Jerrodettes

iii. Zee Prime and Dee Sub Wun

iv. VI-23X and MQ-17J

b. What technology allows humans to travel between galaxies?

i. Solar-powered rockets ii. Hyperspace jumps

iii. Nuclear fusion engines iv. Wormholes

c. What happens to human bodies as the universe ages?

i. They evolve into energy beings.

ii. They remain immortal in suspension.

iii. They merge with computers permanently.

iv. They disintegrate into dust.

d. What is the final action of the Cosmic AC?

i. Destroy the universe.

ii. Merge all human minds.

iii. Reverse entropy and restart the universe.

iv. Answer all questions instantly.

e. What problem does humanity not face in the story?

i. Overpopulation

ii. Energy scarcity

iii. Alien invasions

iv. Dying stars

f. What does the Galactic AC primarily help humans achieve?

i. Immortality

ii. Interstellar travel

iii. Time travel

iv. Artificial intelligence

g. What is the significance of the phrase “Let there be light”?

i. A religious reference

ii. The Cosmic AC rebooting the universe

iii. A spaceship’s activation code

iv. A failed experiment

h. What role do later ACs (like Universal AC) play?

i. Serve individual planets.

ii. Design their own successors.

iii. Control human emotions.

iv. Invent new languages.

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. How do humans use the sun's energy in 2061?

b. Why are people worried about stars "dying"?

c. What happens to Earth's energy sources?

d. What happens to the universe at the end of the story?

e. What does the computer finally do to solve the problem?

f. Why do the characters forget about their questions sometimes?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. How does the story reflect human's relationship with technology? Is it realistic?

b. How does AI help humans in the story? Do you think AI will ever answer all our questions? Why or why not?

c. What is the significance of the title 'The Last Question'? Write in your own words.

d. Why is entropy important in the story? How is it similar to real-life problems?

e. What does the ending 'Let there be light!' mean in the text? Does it connect to religion or science?

f. Do you think humans should rely on computers to solve big problems? Why or why not?

Project Work

Identify one of the major problems related to humanity in the society. Formulate a clear question about the problem to ask modern AI like ChatGPT, Deepseek, etc. Then, write a report analyzing the AI's answer and also share your report with the class.

Letter from the New Land

Before You Read

a. Why do you think people travel?

b. Imagine you are immigrating to a new land, what hopes and fears would you have?

Christopher Columbus (1451–1506), an Italian explorer and navigator from the Republic of Genoa, who completed four voyages across the Atlantic Ocean sponsored by the Catholic Monarchs (King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella), set sail from Spain to find an all-water route to Asia on August 3, 1492 and more than two months later, landed on an island in the Bahamas that he called San Salvador (the natives: Guanahani). Self-educated Columbus had better knowledge in geography, astronomy and history. For about five months, he explored the Caribbean before coming back to Spain on March 15, 1493. He brought back some amounts of gold as well as native birds and plants to show the richness of the Continent, but left thirty-nine men to build a settlement called La Navidad in present-day Haiti.

In his travel narrative *Letter from the New Land*, Columbus described discoveries of numerous islands, geography, natural beauty, inhabitants and cultures, unexplored myths regarding monstrous beings, resource, etc. during his voyage. Furthermore, he attributed the success of his voyage to the divinity and views it as a victory for Spain and Christianity.

LETTER OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS ON HIS FIRST VOYAGE TO AMERICA, 1492

SIR:

AS I know you will be rejoiced at the glorious success that our Lord has given me in my voyage, I write this to tell you how in thirty-three days I sailed to the Indies with the fleet that the illustrious King and Queen, our Sovereigns, gave me, where I discovered a great many islands inhabited by numberless people; and of all I have taken possession for their Highnesses by proclamation and display of the Royal Standard [Spanish flag] without opposition. To the first island I discovered I gave the name of San Salvador in commemoration of His Divine Majesty, who has wonderfully granted all this. The Indians call it Guanaham. The second I named the Island of Santa Maria de Concepcion; the third, Fernandina; the fourth, Isabella; the fifth, Juana; and thus to each one I gave a new name[2].

When I came to Juana, I followed the coast of that isle toward the west and found it so extensive that I thought it might be the mainland, the province of Cathay [China]; and as I found no towns nor villages on the seacoast, except a few small settlements, where it was impossible to speak to the people because they fled at once, I continued the said route, thinking I could not fail to see some great cities or towns; and finding at the end of many leagues that nothing new appeared and that the coast led northward, contrary to my wish, because the winter had already set in, I decided to make for the south, and as the wind also was against my proceeding, I determined not to wait there longer and turned back to a certain harbor whence I sent two men to find out whether there was any king or large city. They explored for three days and found countless small communities and people, without number, but with no kind of government, so they returned.

I heard from other Indians I had already taken that this land was an island, and thus followed the eastern coast for one hundred and seven leagues until I came to the end of it. From that point I saw another isle to the eastward, at eighteen leagues' distance, to which I gave the name of Hispaniola[4]. I went thither and followed its northern coast to the east, as I had done in Juana, one hundred and seventy-eight leagues eastward, as in Juana. This island, like all the others, is most extensive. It has many ports along the seacoast excelling any in Christendom—and many fine, large, flowing rivers. The land there is elevated, with many mountains and peaks incomparably higher than in the centreisle. They are most beautiful, of a thousand varied forms, accessible, and full of trees of endless varieties, so high that they seem to touch the sky, and I have been told that they never lose their foliage. I saw them as green and lovely as trees are in Spain in the month of May. Some of them were covered with blossoms, some with fruit, and some in other conditions, according to their kind. The nightingale and other small birds of a thousand kinds were singing in the month of November when I was there. There were palm trees of six or eight varieties, the graceful peculiarities of each one of them being worthy of admiration as are the other trees, fruits and grasses. There are wonderful pine woods, and very extensive ranges of meadow land. There is honey, and there are many kinds of birds, and a great variety of fruits. Inland there are numerous mines of metals and innumerable people.

Hispaniola is a marvel. Its hills and mountains, fine plains and open country, are rich and fertile for planting and for pasturage, and for building towns and villages. The seaports there are incredibly fine, as also the magnificent rivers, most of which bear gold. The trees, fruits and grasses differ widely from those in Juana. There are many spices and vast mines of gold and other metals in this island. They have no iron, nor steel, nor weapons, nor are they fit for them, because although they are well-made men of commanding stature, they appear extraordinarily timid. The only arms [weapons] they have are sticks of cane, cut when in seed with a sharpened stick at the end, and they are afraid to use these. Often, I have sent two or three men ashore to some town to converse with them, and the natives came out in great numbers, and as soon as they saw our men arrive, fled without a moment's delay although I protected them from all injury.

At every point where I landed and succeeded in talking to them, I gave them some of everything I had — cloth and many other things — without receiving anything in return, but they are a hopelessly timid people. It is true that since they have gained more confidence and are losing this fear, they are so unsuspicious and so generous with what they possess, that no one who had not seen it would believe it. They never refuse anything that is asked for. They even offer it themselves, and show so much love that they would give their very hearts. Whether it be anything of great or small value, with any trifle of whatever kind, they are satisfied. I forbade worthless things being given to them, such as bits of broken bowls, pieces of glass, and old straps, although they were as much pleased to get them as if they were the finest jewels in the world. One sailor was found to have got for a leather strap, gold of the weight of two and a half castellanos, and others for even more worthless things much more; while for a new blancas they would give all they had, were it two or three castellanos of pure gold or an arroba or two of spun cotton. Even bits of the broken hoops of wine casks they accepted, and gave in return what they had, like fools, and it seemed wrong to me. I forbade it, and gave a thousand good and pretty things that I had to win their love and to induce them to become Christians, and to love and serve their Highnesses and the whole Castilian nation, and help to get for us things they have in abundance, which are necessary to us.

They have no religion nor idolatry, except that they all believe power and goodness to be in heaven. They firmly believed that I, with my ships and men, came from heaven, and with this idea I have been received everywhere, since they lost fear of me. They are, however, far from being ignorant. They are most ingenious men, and navigate these seas in a wonderful way and describe everything well, but they never before saw people wearing clothes, nor vessels like ours. Directly I reached the Indies in the first isle I discovered, I took by force some of the natives, that from them we might gain some information of what there was in these parts; and so it was that we immediately understood each other, either by words or signs. They are still with me and still believe that I come from heaven. They were the first to declare this wherever I went, and the others ran from house to house, and to the towns around, crying out, “Come! come! and see the men from heaven!” Then all, both men and women, as soon as they were reassured about us, came, both small and great, all bringing something to eat and to drink, which they presented with marvelous kindness.

In these isles there are a great many canoes, something like rowing boats, of all sizes, and most of them are larger than an eighteen-oared galley. They are not so broad, as they are made of a single plank, but a galley could not keep up with them in rowing, because they go with incredible speed, and with these they row about among all these islands, which are innumerable, and carry on their commerce. I have seen some of these canoes with seventy and eighty men in them, and each had an oar. In all the islands I observed little difference in the appearance of the people, or in their habits and language, except that they understand each other, which is remarkable. Therefore, I hope that their Highnesses will decide upon the conversion of these people to our holy faith, to which they seem much inclined.

I have already stated how I sailed one hundred and seven leagues along the seacoast of Juana [Cuba] in a straight line from west to east. I can therefore assert that this island is larger than England and Scotland together, since beyond these one hundred and seven leagues there remained at the west point two provinces where I did not go, one of which they call Avan, the home of men with tails. These provinces are computed to be fifty or sixty leagues in length, as far as can be gathered from the Indians with me, who are acquainted with all these islands. This other, Hispaniola, is larger in circumference than all Spain from Catalonia to Fuentarabia in Biscay, since upon one of its four sides I sailed one hundred and eighty-eight leagues from west to east. This is worth having, and must on no account be given up. I have taken possession of all these islands for their Highnesses, and all may be more extensive than I know or can say, and I hold them for their Highnesses, who can command them as absolutely as the kingdoms of Castile.

In Hispaniola, in the most convenient place, most accessible for the gold mines and all commerce with the mainland on this side or with that of the great Khan on the other, with which there would be great trade and profit, I have taken possession of a large town, which I have named the City of Navidad. I began fortifications there which should be completed by this time, and I have left in it men enough to hold it, with arms, artillery, and provisions for more than a year; and a boat with a master seaman skilled in the arts necessary to make others. I am so friendly with the king of that country that he was proud to call me his brother and hold me as such. Even should he change his mind and wish to quarrel with my men, neither he nor his subjects know what arms are nor wear clothes, as I have said. They are the most timid people in the world, so that only the men remaining there could destroy the whole region, and run no risk if they know how to behave themselves properly.

In all these islands the men seem to be satisfied with one wife, except they allow as many as twenty to their chief or king. The women appear to me to work harder than the men, and so far as I can hear they have nothing of their own, for I think I perceived that what one had others shared, especially food. In the islands so far I have found no monsters, as some expected, but, on the contrary, they are people of very handsome appearance. They are not black as in Guinea, though their hair is straight and coarse, as it does not grow where the sun's rays are too ardent. And in truth the sun has extreme power here, since it is within twenty-six degrees of the equinoctial line [equator]. In these islands there are mountains where the cold this winter was very severe, but the people endure it from habit, and with the aid of the meat they eat with very hot spices.

As for monsters, I have found no trace of them except at the point in the second isle as one enters the Indies, which is inhabited by a people considered in all the isles as most ferocious, who eat human flesh. They possess many canoes, with which they overrun all the isles of India [West Indies], stealing and seizing all they can. They are not worse looking than the others, except that they wear their hair long like women, and use bows and arrows of the same cane, with a sharp stick at the end for want lack of iron, of which they have none. They

are ferocious compared to these other races, who are extremely cowardly, but I only hear this from the others. They are said to make treaties of marriage with the women in the first isle to be met with coming from Spain to the Indies, where there are no men. These women have no feminine occupation, but use bows and arrows of cane like those before mentioned, and cover and arm themselves with plates of copper, of which they have a great quantity. Another island, I am told, is largerthan Hispaniola, where the natives have no hair, and where there is countless gold; and from them all Ibring Indians to testify to this.

To speak, in conclusion, only of what has been done during this hurried voyage, their Highnesses will see that I can give them as much gold as they desire, if they will give me a little assistance, spices, cotton, as much as their Highnesses may command to be shipped, and mastic as much as their Highnesses choose to send for, which until now has only been found in Greece, in the isle of Chios, and the Signoria can get its own price for it; as much lign-aloe as they command to be shipped, and as many slaves as they choose to send for, all heathens. I think I have found rhubarb and cinnamon. Many other things of value will be discovered by the men I left behind me, as I stayed nowhere when the wind allowed me to pursue my voyage, except in the City of Navidad, which I left fortified and safe. Indeed, I might have accomplished much more, had the crews served me as they ought to have done.

The eternal and almighty God, our Lord, it is Who gives to all who walk in His way, victory over things apparently impossible, and in this case signally so, because although these lands had been imagined and talked of before they were seen, most men listened incredulously to what was thought to be but an idle tale. But our Redeemer has given victory to our most illustrious King and Queen, and to their kingdoms rendered famous by this glorious event, at which all Christendom should rejoice, celebrating it with great festivities and solemn Thanksgivings to the Holy Trinity, with fervent prayers for the high distinction that will accrue to them from turning so many peoples to our holy faith; and also from the temporal benefits that not only Spain but all Christian nations will obtain. Thus, I record what has happened in a brief note written on board the Caravel, off the Canary Isles, on the 15th of February, 1493.

Yours to command,

THE ADMIRAL.

Glossary

accrue to (v.): make provision for

ardent (adj.): burning, hot

commanding stature: having a strong, powerful or impressive presence

commemoration (n.): memorial

ferocious (adj.): savagely fierce, cruel or violent

fortifications (n.): strong walls that are built to protect a place

galley (n.): a ship or boat propelled solely or chiefly by oars

ingenious (adj.): very intelligent and skillful

mainland (n.): a large continuous extent of land that includes greater parts of a country

redeemer (n.): Jesus, God

rhubarb (n.): a plant that has long, sour-tasting red and green stems that can be cooked and eaten as a fruit

solemn (adj.): sincere

trifle (n.): a thing of little value or importance

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. Which island did Columbus discover first?

i. Fernandina ii. Isabella
iii. San Salvador iv. Juana.

b. What did the men Columbus sent find near the harbor?

i. Many communities ii. Animals
iii. Government iv. King.

c. Columbus forbade……being given to the indigenous people.

i. gold ii. Blancas
iii. Castellanos iv. worthless things

d. How long did Columbus sail along the seacoast of Juana?

i. 106 leagues ii. 107 leagues
iii. 188 leagues iv. 192 leagues.

e. What belief did the natives hold about the newcomers?

i. They believed the newcomers were powerful sailors from a distant land.
ii. They believed the newcomers came from heaven.
iii. They thought the newcomers were merchants bringing rare goods.
iv. They thought the newcomers were dangerous invaders.

B. Write answers to the following questions in short.

a. How were the inhabitants of Hispaniola as described by Columbus?

b. Why did Columbus give good and pretty things to people whom he met?

c. How were the canoes people used? For what purposes did they use them?

d. What kinds of possible economic activities did Columbus expect to take place in Hispaniola?

e. Why were men left in the City of Navidat?

f. How were the women Columbus found in the islands? How was marriage system different between common men and their chief or king?

g. What resources and goods does the speaker claim to provide or discover during the voyage?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. What kinds of geography, natural beauty, and flora and fauna did Columbus find in Hispaniola?

b. How did the indigenous people behave Columbus and his people?

c. Who were monsters whom Columbus didn't find but heard about? How were they portrayed?

d. According to the speaker, how does the discovery of these lands reflect the power of God, and why should Christendom rejoice?

e. Mention evidences from the text to support the Eurocentric viewpoints of the writer.

f. The essay has used the nationalist and religious rhetoric to reveal evangelical essence of Christianity in the new land. This also shows the power of religion in uniting people together. Do you think such technique can be useful in the present context as well? Give reasons.

Project Work

Write your experience of visiting a place you liked the most on a chart paper. Include its location, historical or religious or acheological importance, and facilities available for the visitors in your write up. Then make a poster presentation in the classroom.

Of Studies

Before You Read

a. Do you love reading? Why/why not?

b. How do people use studies in their lives? Discuss.

Francis Bacon (1561–1626), an English philosopher, statesman, scientist and essayist, is renowned as a pioneer of the empirical method in scientific inquiry and a master of concise prose for his profound contributions to literature, philosophy and science. His literary work mainly essays is known for brevity, clarity and depth, blending moral philosophy with practical wisdom in a formal and aphoristic style. He wrote over 50 essays beginning with 'Of' in the title and following the concept, such as *Of Truth, Of Atheism,* and *Of Discourse*. *Of Studies* as the first essay in a series of ten was published in 1597 and later revised in 1612 and 1625 with addition of some sentences and ideas along with alteration in some vocabulary items.

Bacon in *Of Studies* convincingly comments on the value of reading, writing, and learning. This essay especially highlights the importance/purpose of studies in individual's life, the ways people use studies in their life and talks about how right books should be selected and perused. With proper use of metaphor, analogies, parallelism and aphorisms, Bacon has efficiently suggested the readers maximizing benefits of studies.

Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight, is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgment, and disposition of business. For expert men can execute and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels, and the plots and marshalling of affairs, come best, from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament, is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules, is the humor of a scholar. They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience: for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need proyning, by study; and studies themselves, do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience.

Crafty men contemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider.

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested); that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by *deputy*, and extracts made of them by others; but that would be only in the less important arguments and the meaner sort of books, else distilled books are like common distilled waters, flashy things.

Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And therefore, if a man writes little, he had need have a great memory; if he confers little, he had need have a present wit: and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know, that he doth not. Histories make men wise; poets witty; the mathematics subtile; natural philosophy deep; moral grave; logic and rhetoric able to contend. Abeuntstudia in mores. Nay, there is no stond or impediment in the wit, but may be wrought out by fit studies; like as diseases of the body, may have appropriate exercises. Bowling is good for the stone and reins (bladder and kidney); shooting for the lungs and breast; gentle walking for the stomach; riding for the head; and the like. So, if a man's wit be wandering, let him study the mathematics; for in demonstrations, if his wit be called away never so little he must begin again. If his wit be not apt to distinguish or find differences, let him study the Schoolmen; for they are cyminisectores. If he be not apt to beat over matters, and to call up one thing to prove and illustrate another, let him study the lawyers' cases. So, every defect of the mind, may have a special receipt.

Glossary

abeuntstudia in mores: studies pass into and influence manners

affectation (n): behavior, speech, or writing that is pretentious and designed to impress

confute (v): prove a person to be wrong

contemn (v): treat or regard with disdain/contempt/disrespect

contend (v): compete to win sth or achieve a position of leadership

cyminisectores (n): who engage in overtly subtle arguments with focus of minor details

disposition (n): a person's inherent qualities of mind and character

flashy (adj): looking too bright/impressive

impediment (n): obstruction, disturbance

marshalling (n): process of controlling, leasing or organizing of people or things

meaner (adj): lacking eminence/importance

proyn (v): cut branches of a tree to make it grow better

sloth (n): unwillingness to work or make any effort, laziness

stond (n): stand, post, station

subtile (adj): exact and precise

take for granted: assume that something is true without questioning it

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. Which one of the following purposes isn't related to studies?

i. Personal life
ii. Social life
iii. Professional life
iv. Marriage life.

b. What is the sign of laziness?

i. Excessive use of studies
ii. Making judgement on the basis of rules
iii. Spending less time in study
iv. Spending more time in study

c. How do simple men react to studies?

i. Regard it with respect
ii. Disapprove it
iii. Support it
iv. Properly use it.

d. With what is natural ability of a man compared?

i. Sowing of seeds
ii. Perusal of books
iii. Cultivation of habits
iv. Growth of plants

e. How should the books of less importance be read?

i. Reading only in parts

ii. Reading reviews from others

iii. Reading with attention

iv. Not reading curiously

f. According to the text, what is the relationship between reading and writing?

i. Reading helps develop precision in writing.

ii. Writing eliminates the need for reading.

iii. Reading and writing are unrelated skills.

iv. Writing is more important than reading.

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What analogy does the text draw between mental defects and bodily diseases?

b. How can poets contribute to sharpening a person's wit?

c. Explain the line 'Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man' in context.

d. How does reading contribute to a man's ability to write?

e. In what ways does Bacon suggest us to read?

f. How do the learned benefit from studies in comparison to common men?

g. What are some demerits of study Bacon has highlighted in the essay?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. Explain the different attitudes towards studies from the statement "Crafty men contemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them." in the context of the text. Discuss how these attitudes impact personal and professional growth.

b. The author compares books to food stating 'some are to be tasted, others swallowed, and a few chewed and digested'. Discuss this metaphorically, and mention how it contributes to the process of learning and gaining knowledge. How does this analogy help guide a reader in selecting proper books effectively?

c. Discuss the connections between different disciplines (history, poetry, mathematics, philosophy, logic, morals, rhetoric) the author has mentioned in the text. Present how the studies of such fields help address specific challenges in mental development.

d. Bacon has analyzed significance of studies in human's life. Discuss how studies contribute to delight, ornament and ability; and the balance between studies and practical experiences citing examples from the text.

e. Reflecting on Bacon's ideas, how do you view the purpose of education and study in your own life? Do you believe that reading and learning should be primarily for personal growth, practical use, or intellectual enjoyment—or a balance of all three? How have your own experiences with study shaped your thinking, character, or decision-making?

Project Work

Education is important for the long term peace, development and prosperity of human society. Here is the video link of the speech given by Barack Obama about importance of Education. Visit the link and watch it carefully. Write down the key ideas from the video and also elaborate those ideas in your own sentences. Present it in the class.

Video link: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hOp408Ib5w*

Our House is on Fire

Before You Read

a. What do you think are responsible factors for the climate change? Why?

b. How can we address such a change?

Greta Thunberg, born in Stockholm on January 3, 2003, is a Swedish environmental activist who is known for initiating the *School Strike for Climate* movement skipping school for about three weeks to protest outside the Swedish parliament, and calling world leaders to take immediate actions to reduce the effects of human-induced climate change. *Our House is on Fire* is the speech she delivered to address at the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland on January 25, 2019.

Thunberg in her speech states that climate crisis is an urgent threat to humanity and it needs transformational action recognizing the failures of current systems. She further stresses on the failures of political leaders and media in creating public awareness about climate change, and suggests each individual and politicians should take immediate steps to address the crisis in time.

Our house is on fire. I am here to say, our house is on fire. According to the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), we are less than 12 years away from not being able to undo our mistakes.

In that time, unprecedented changes in all aspects of society need to have taken place, including a reduction of our CO2 emissions by at least 50%. And please note that those numbers do not include the aspect of equity, which is absolutely necessary to make the Paris agreement work on a global scale. Nor does it include tipping points or feedback loops like the extremely powerful methane gas released from the thawing Arctic permafrost.

At places like Davos, people like to tell success stories. But their financial success has come with an unthinkable price tag. And on climate change, we have to acknowledge we have failed. All political movements in their present form have done so, and the media has failed to create broad public awareness. But Homo sapiens have not yet failed. Yes, we are failing, but there is still time to turn everything around. We can still fix this. We still have everything in our own hands. But unless we recognize the overall failures of our current systems, we most probably don't stand a chance.

We are facing a disaster of unspoken sufferings for enormous amounts of people. And now is not the time for speaking politely or focusing on what we can or cannot say. Now is the time to speak clearly. Solving the climate crisis is the greatest and most complex challenge that Homo sapiens have ever faced.

The main solution, however, is so simple that even a small child can understand it. We have to stop our emissions of greenhouse gases. Either we do that or we don't. You say nothing in life is black or white. But that is a lie. A very dangerous lie. Either we prevent 1.5 degree warming or we don't. Either we avoid setting off that irreversible chain reaction beyond human control or we don't. Either we choose to go on as a civilization or we don't. That is as black or white as it gets.

There are no grey areas when it comes to survival. Now, we all have a choice. We can create transformational action that will safeguard the living conditions for humankind. Or we can continue with our business as usual and fail. That is up to you and me.

Some say we should not engage in activism. Instead, we should leave everything to our politicians and just vote for a change instead. But what do we do when there is no political will? What do we do when the politics needed are nowhere in sight?

Here in Davos just like everywhere else – everyone is talking about money. It seems money and growth are our only main concerns. And since the climate crisis has never once been treated as a crisis, people are simply not aware of the full consequences on our everyday life.

People are not aware that there is such a thing as a carbon budget, and just how incredibly small that remaining carbon budget is. That needs to change today. No other current challenge can match the importance of establishing a wide, public awareness and understanding of our rapidly disappearing carbon budget, that should and must become our new global currency and the very heart of our future and present economics.

We are now at a time in history where everyone with any insight of the climate crisis that threatens our civilization and the entire biosphere must speak out in clear language, no matter how uncomfortable and unprofitable that may be. We must change almost everything in our current societies. The bigger your carbon footprint, the bigger your moral duty. The bigger your platform, the bigger your responsibility.

Adults keep saying: "We owe it to the young people to give them hope." But I don't want your hope. I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act. I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if our house is on fire. Because it is.

Video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U72xkMz6Pxk

Glossary

carbon budget: average amount of co_2 per resident that may be produced in order to limit global warming to 1.5°c.

carbon footprint: total amount of greenhouse gases generated by our actions.

Davos (n): a town/municipality in the Swiss alps and the site of the annual world economic forum.

feedback loops: send the earth into a spiral of runway climate change.

global currency: currency commonly used in trade between countries

grey area (n): a situation in which it is difficult to judge what is right or what is wrong

irreversible (adj): impossible to return to the previous condition

Paris agreement: an international treaty on climate change signed in 2016 and covers climate change mitigation, adaptation and finance.

permafrost (n): area of land that is permanently frozen below the surface (below 0 degree)

price tag: a label declaring the price of something

thawing (adj): changing from solid, frozen state to a liquid

tipping points: IPCC report states the world's current knowledge of the impacts of 1.5c of warming and shows the dangers of breaching the limit (known unknowns of climate change.

Comprehension

A. **Choose the correct alternatives.**

a. According to the passage, what is the primary concern mentioned about the current state of the environment?

i. The availability of renewable energy sources

ii. The urgency to reduce CO2 emissions and address climate change

iii. The lack of global cooperation on recycling initiatives

iv. The role of technology in solving environmental issues

b. Which is one of the main messages of the text?

i. Financial success comes without consequences.

ii. Humanity has completely failed to address climate change.

iii. Political movements and media have failed on climate change, but humanity still has a chance.

iv. Success stories at Davos highlight solutions to climate change.

c. What is crucial for addressing the climate crisis?

i. Relying on current systems to solve the problem

ii. Speaking clearly and recognizing the failures of current systems

iii. Avoiding discussions about unspoken sufferings

iv. Waiting for future technologies to address the issue

d. Why is relying only on politicians not enough to address the climate crises?

i. Politicians are already taking adequate action.

ii. Money and growth are prioritized over climate issues.

iii. The political will and necessary policies are often absent.

iv. Activism is less effective than voting for change.

e. Which of the following responsibility is assigned to individuals regarding the climate crisis?

i. The climate crisis can be addressed without changing current societal systems.

ii. Those with larger carbon footprints and platforms have greater moral responsibility.

iii. It is unnecessary to use clear language when discussing the climate crisis.

iv. Only scientists should speak out about the climate crisis.

B. Write answers to the following questions.

a. According to the text, what steps are necessary to address the climate crisis, and why is it considered the greatest challenge faced by humanity?

b. How can climate crisis be addressed? Why is the solution regarded as a black and white choice?

c. Why is the importance of a wide, public awareness emphasized about the carbon budget? In what way does the carbon budget affect future economics?

d. Why do you think individuals with insight of the climate crisis should speak in clear language? Why does the speaker emphasize panic and action over hope?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. The author highlights on the urgency of addressing climate change and the need for severe action in the next 12 years. According to the IPCC, what are the key aspects to be considered to fight against climate change, and why is it pertinent to address issues of equity, tipping points and CO2 emissions?

b. The text calls for the immediate need to control emissions of greenhouse gases. Why do you think the speaker has presented the issue of climate change in black and white terms? What does she mean by saying there are no grey areas when it comes to survival?

c. The author states that the current political and economic focus on growth and money has undermined the issue of climate change while highlighting the importance of the carbon budget. What role do you think she suggests the carbon budget should play in future economic systems?

d. The text critiques the current political and media systems for their failure to effectively address the climate crisis. What role do you think political movements, the media, and individuals have in shaping public awareness and action on climate change? Do you agree with the author's view that 'Homo sapiens have not yet failed'? Explain your response with reference to the text.

e. The author has presented failures of political movements, media and global leaders in addressing the climate crisis. Do you think similar case exists in Nepal? Illustrate.

Project Work

The CIMATE CHANGE 2023, Synthesis Report (SYR) of the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) summarises the state of knowledge of climate change, its widespread impacts and risks, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Read the report, and list impacts and risks of climate change on biodiversity and human societies. Also share it in the class. Link to the report: *https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_SYR_SPM.pdf*

The Silk Road in the World History: A Review Essay

Before You Read

a. What do you know about Silk Road?

b. Why do you think international trade routes are constructed?

Alfred J. Andrea, born in 1941, is an American historian and professor emeritus from the University of Vermont, focuses his expertise on world history, medieval Europe, and cross-cultural exchanges. He is widely recognized for his influential book *The Silk Road: A New History*, through which he has greatly advanced the study of global connections during the medieval period. His scholarly work often delves into how goods, ideas, and cultures were exchanged across ancient trade networks. As a committed teacher and author, Andrea has written and edited several important works that have played a major role in transforming the way world history is perceived and taught. His research interests focus on the movement of ideas along the Silk Road, the crusades within a global historical framework, the concept of holy war throughout world history, and the growth of Latin Christendom between approximately 450 and 1500. Since 2001, his academic pursuits have taken him to China several times, where he has explored Buddhist cave art in Dunhuang as well as visited lesser-known sites in Inner Mongolia and Manchuria for his studies.

The essay (trimmed form) describes trade networks spanning Eurasia, and highlights the contribution of pioneering explorers such as Sven Hedin and Aurel Stein in bringing attention to Silk Road studies through their archaeological work, notably in Dunhuang. It also shows how institutions like UNESCO and the International Dunhuang Project formalized Silk Road research on a global scale, aided by advances in digital technology. Although discussions continue over the correct terminology, these terms remain powerful symbols of humanity's interconnected past.

SILK ROAD? Silk Roads? Silk Routes? Which is it and why? Today, most Anglophone scholars who write books and articles that are focused exclusively on these trans-Eurasian caravan routes that crisscrossed Eurasia's heartland in Late Antiquity and following prefer the evocative and admittedly misleading singular "Silk Road." Yet many world historians, whose historiographical vision impels them to view the past on a grand scale, choose to use the more correct plural form. Likewise, some contemporary world historians, who see the sea lanes of the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean, and similar avenues of

maritime transportation as integral parts of the network of long-distance interchange in *Late Antiquity* and following, favor the term "Silk Routes," which lacks connotations of singularity and territoriality. Roads, or Routes with "Silk." But where, when, and why did the concept of a Silk Road or Silk Roads arise and become part of one historiographical vocabulary?

The father of both terms was the German geographer, geologist, and explorer Ferdinand von Richthofen, who coined the words Silk Road and Silk Roads in 1871. For him, the Silk Road was a single route to the "Land of Silk" as described by the first-century CE geographer Marinus of Tyre, which has come down to us in Ptolemy's second-century Geography, whereas the Silk Roads were the multiple trade routes between imperial Rome and Han China along which the precious commodity of silk traveled in substantial quantities from around 100 BCE down to about 150 CE As far as Richthofen was concerned, silk, which the Roman *savant* Pliny the Elder (23-79 CE) sourly noted cost the Roman Empire fifty million sesterces annually "so that a Roman matron might wear a transparent garment in public," was the commodity above all others that drove this relatively short-lived era of trans-Eurasian commercial exchange. Chief among the second fathers of the Silk Road label were Albert Herrmann and, far more importantly, Richthofen's former student Sven Hedin, whose three, widely publicized archaeological and geographic expeditions in Xinjiang and Tibet between 1894 and 1908 went far in making "the Silk Road" part of the vocabulary of educated Europeans and North Americans.

The widely-reported exploits of other adventurer archaeologists in Chinese Turkestan, Gansu Province and adjacent areas of Central Asia, who, in the period spanning the period from the 1890s to the early 1930s, uncovered long-lost oasis cities and hidden caches of artifacts and documents, mapped vast regions of Central Asia, and carried back to museums in Europe, Japan, India, and the United States artistic treasures of every sort, further popularized the Silk Road. Far more than that, their work created the field of Silk Road studies.

The Phase of Discovering and "Recovering" the Treasures of the Silk Road

Of all of these men, one stands out as a giant among giants: Sir Aurel Stein. Stein, who greatly enriched the holdings of London's British Museum and India's National Museum in New Delhi, had an archaeological career along the Central Asian routes of the Silk Road that spanned the years 1900 to 1943. The eminent archaeologist and contemporary Sir Leonard Woolley described Stein's four expeditions as "the most daring and adventurous raid upon the ancient world that any archeologist has attempted." In May 1907, Stein visited a complex of Buddhist cave-shrines on the edge of the Gobi Desert in China's Gansu Province. For reasons of academic shorthand, the Mogao Caves are generally referred to simply as "Dunhuang" or "the Dunhuang Caves," even though they are located a significant distance from the town. In the first through tenth centuries CE, the era of the Silk Road's greatest prosperity and utility, it was a commercially and militarily strategic site, located as

it was at the eastern juncture of the two major Silk Road routes that skirted the southern and northern fringes of the massive *Tarim Basin*.

Although specific caravan routes opened, closed, and shifted from time to time due to changing environmental and political realities, the northern and southern bypasses around the forbidding Tarim Basin were a constant fact of Silk Road travel. For merchants, pilgrims, missionaries, soldiers, diplomats, and others either setting out from China's heartland or returning to it, the Buddhist cave complex and its attendant monasteries outside Dunhuang were places of rest, and for those who accepted the Law of the Buddha, the cave-shrines were a source of spiritual comfort as they either prayed for a safe outward journey or offered prayers of thanksgiving for their safe return.

Apart from its undoubted importance to Silk Road travelers, what most attracted Stein to this site was that he had heard that a Daoist monk, *Wang Yuanlu*, had, seven years earlier, discovered more than 40,000 manuscripts and printed documents in a wide variety of Silk Road languages as well as large numbers of painted silken banners that had been walled up in a small cave for anywhere from seven to nine hundred years, where they had been largely preserved from the ravages of heat, moisture, disease, and insects. Stein was able to give the documents a cursory inspection, but he quickly perceived that the multiplicity of languages that they represented was proof positive of Dunhuang's rich multi-culture environment in the age of the Silk Road. Among the treasures that Stein carted away was a block printed scroll of the Diamond Sutra dating to 868-the world's oldest-known, intact printed book. The spoils of Dunhuang were subsequently divided between Stein's patrons in England and India and ultimately deposited in museums where they were avidly studied. Study and cataloging of the treasures that he brought to England were largely carried out by a team of scholars working at the British Museum because Stein, who was fluent in at least eight languages, including Sanskrit and Old Persian, lacked sufficient knowledge of Chinese, the language in which most of the Buddhist texts were written, and the temperament to confine himself to a museum basement.

Within a few years of his return to England, Stein composed an account of this second expedition for a general audience, but it was not until 1921 that he finally published a multi-volume report of his Second Expedition and the antiquities brought back from Dunhuang and elsewhere. In the strange title of that work, he gave the world a new term, "Serindia," as a way of describing that vast area of cultural interchange along the Silk Road that stretched from the Pamir Mountains at the western edge of Chinese Turkestan to Dunhuang.

Additionally, Chinese officials finally tried to put a stop to the pillaging of Cave 17's treasures and ordered that all remaining items be transferred to the capital. Despite Wang's slyly keeping back a considerable number of manuscripts, which he subsequently allowed Stein to carry away in 1914, and inevitable pillaging along the way, a large trove reached the capital in 1910.Today the bulk of the manuscript remnants of the Library Cave are stored

at the National Library of China in Beijing with other libraries and learned institutions throughout China holding far smaller collections of Dunhuang's treasures.

With this wealth of Silk Road art and records scattered about in museums and libraries in Europe, Asia, and America, scholars had plenty to command their attention. But then came the Second World War and the subsequent closing down of Central Asia and China for a generation and more so far as most Western scholars were concerned.

The Second Phase: Institutionalizing the Silk Road

The earliest institutionalization of the Silk Road on a grand scale was inaugurated by UNESCO in 1988. Taking an ecumenical view of the Silk Roads (UNESCO's favored term) that was in tune with the vision of the new world historians and that went far beyond the traditional concentration on eastern Central Asia that characterized so much of the first phase of Silk Road studies that had been led by Stein and other "foreign devils," UNESCO created a ten-year multidisciplinary project that is titled "Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue," a program dedicated to furthering Silk Road research and disseminating information relating to the Silk Road to scholars, educators, students, and the general public alike.

An equally impressive and far-reaching institution created to further Silk Road studies and to make such scholarship available to a global audience is the International Dunhuang Project (IDP). Formed in 1994, the IDP has taken on the mission to make information and images of all manuscripts, paintings, textiles and artifacts from Dunhuang and archaeological sites of the Eastern Silk Road freely available on the Internet and to encourage their use through educational and research programmes. Additionally, its website contains essays on aspects of the Silk Road, and it has a newsletter with additional articles of interest to scholars and the general public alike. The IDP's directorate is located at London's British Library, to which almost all of the Silk Road documents brought to England by Aurel Stein and initially housed at the British Museum were transferred by 1982, but, unlike the time of Aurel Stein, it has put aside all notions of British exclusivity. Seven international partner institutions in Asia and Europe provide data, serve as hosts for the IDP's multilingual database and website, and are centers for the training of staff in the use of digital media and conservation techniques. Despite official China's bitterness at the rapacity of archaeologists such as Stein and its on-again-off-again efforts to repatriate these treasures, its scholars are committed to this British-led project. The IDP's other major partners are located in Korea, Japan, Russia, Germany, and France and serve websites in each of these national languages.

Dunhuang Studies have a starting point: analysis of the documents and artifacts recovered from the Library Cave and the mural and sculptural art of the other Mogao Caves. But that is only a starting point-a critical center. Like the ripples caused by a rock thrown into the water, Dunhuang Studies moves out in ever- widening concentric circles to encompass studies based upon the documents, artifacts, and art of similar sites and caches throughout

China, especially its western regions. Not a discipline unto itself or even a distinctive historiographical field. Dunhuang Studies is a multidisciplinary focus on an analysis of a vast treasure trove of Silk Road materials from Dunhuang and far beyond Dunhuang, especially materials dating before the thirteenth century and the Mongol conquest of China.

The Silkroad Foundation, under the direction of its founder and executive director, Adela Lee, and with the cooperation of such U.S. universities as Stanford. Yale, and Princeton, has been furthering Silk Road studies in the United States and China since the 1990s. It describes itself as a privately funded non-profit organization established to promote the study and preservation of cultures and art in Inner Asia and on the Silk Road. In addition to sponsoring seminars and scholarly expeditions and archaeological surveys along the Silk Road in the People's Republic of China, it maintains Silk Road House in Berkeley, California, a cultural and educational center that coordinates lectures and other Silk Road activities in the San Francisco-Berkeley Bay and Palo Alto areas.

In closing, we have to ask ourselves, are the terms "Silk Road," "Silk Roads," and "Silk Routes" valid today, given the expansion of our knowledge and perspectives over the past 137 years since Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen gave life to these terms and concept? This writer's answer is a resounding "Yes!" There is no good reason to abandon these evocative, albeit inexact, terms. History without romance is sterile. Moreover, the current institutionalization of Silk Road studies and its expanse on a global scale due to digital technology ensures that we are now in an era of profound advancement in our understanding of the Silk Road. The Silk Road lives on.

Glossary

Anglophone (adj): English speaking

artifacts (n): objects made by human beings

cart away (v): take something away

ecumenical (adj): an inclusive perspective

late antiquity: an era (3rd to 8th century CE) of massive political and religious transformation

maritime (adj): connected with the sea, especially in relation to seaborne trade or naval matters

pillaging (v): stealing something from a place

Pliny the Elder: Roman savant and author of 'Natural History'

rapacity (n): aggressive greed

ravages (n): destructive effects of

remnants (v): a small piece or amount of something that is left from a larger original piece or amount

repatriate (v): send back to original place

savant (n): a very learned or talented person

sesterces (n): ancient roman coins and monetary units

Sir Aurel Stein: a Hungarian-born British archaeologist, primarily known for his explorations and archaeological discoveries in Central Asia

Tarim basin: a depression drained by the Tarim River in Xinjiang, Northwestern China

Wang Yuanlu: a Taoist priest and abbot of the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. Who coined the terms 'Silk Road' and 'Silk Roads' and what was his original understanding of these routes?

i. Sven Hedin; he viewed them as sea routes connecting Europe and Asia.

ii. Ferdinand von Richthofen; he saw them as either a single route to the 'Land of Silk' or multiple land trade routes between Rome and China.

iii. Albert Herrmann; he believed the Silk Road was primarily a network of pilgrimage routes.

iv. Pliny the Elder; he described the Silk Roads as maritime trade passages across the Indian Ocean.

b. Sir Aurel Stein's major contribution to the British Museum and India's National Museum was……

i. He founded both museums.

ii. He enriched their collections with Silk Road antiquities.

iii. He built new wings in both museums.

iv. He served as the director of both institutions.

c. What discovery by the Daoist monk Wang Yuanlu attracted Stein to Dunhuang?

i. A hidden monastery of Buddhist monks

ii. More than 40,000 manuscripts and artifacts preserved in a cave

iii. An ancient royal palace buried in sand.

iv. A secret underground city connected to the Silk Road

d. The primary mission of the International Dunhuang Project (IDP) is…

i. to repatriate Silk Road treasures to China.

ii. to make Silk Road manuscripts and artifacts freely available online.

iii. to organize archaeological digs along the Silk Road.

iv. to establish new museums for Silk Road studies.

e. What is the role of the Silkroad Foundation in promoting Silk Road studies?

i. It funds only archaeological digs in Europe.

ii. It promotes Silk Road cultures through seminars, surveys, and a cultural center in California.

iii. It only operates within China without any U.S. involvement.

iv. It functions as a governmental body under UNESCO.

B. Write answers to the following questions.

a. Why do some scholars prefer 'Silk Road' while others use 'Silk Roads' or 'Silk Routes'?

b. What did Stein discover at Dunhuang? In what way, it is important for understanding Silk Road culture.

c. Describe the roles of UNDESCO 1988 Project and IDP in Silk Road studies.

d. What happened to the manuscripts from Cave 17 after Chinese officials intervened, and how did World War II affect Silk Road studies?

e. How have Dunhunag Studies contributed to the study of the Silk Road?

f. In what ways does the Silk Road House in Berkeley, California, promote Silk Road culture?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. Explain the origin and evolution of the term "Silk Road" and how different historians have interpreted it over time.

b. In what ways do UNESCO and the International Dunhuang Project (IDP) help in the institutionalization and digital expansion of Silk Road studies? (Include their goals, collaborations and impacts on public accessibility.)

c. Explain the contributions of Sir Aurel Stein to the discovery and study of Silk Road artifacts.

d. How did archaeological discoveries, particularly at sites like Dunhuang, transform Western and global perceptions of Silk Road history?

e. Explain historical narrative/references and a shift of focus from individual to institutions the writer has used to structure the development of the concept of the Silk Road and convey the evolution of Silk Road studies.

f. The Silk Road was more than a trade route—it connected civilizations and exchanged goods, ideas, and cultures. How did it shape world history and global identity? What lessons can it offer for today's global cooperation and cultural exchange?

Project Work

The Travels of Marco Polo – Volume 1, written by Marco Polo and Rusticiano da Pisa, is a historical narrative that recounts the extraordinary adventures of Marco Polo, a merchant and explorer from Venice, as he journeys through Asia and shares his experiences at the court of Kublai Khan. Consult the book, either digital or print, and find more about it. Write the diverse cultures and riches he encountered; and his discovery about the East in brief. Present your findings in the class.

A Piece of Chalk

Before You Read

a. How is chalk related to human's life? Give your opinion.

b. Why do you think chalk has been replaced by board marker in many schools at present?

Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936), an English critique, was a novelist, essayist, journalist, poet, playwright, religious apologist, philosopher, art critic, historian, political theorist, world-traveler and cartoonist known for his wit, humour, paradoxes and social commentary. His writings were mainly of three kinds: *social criticism*, *literary criticism;* and *theology* and *religious argument*.

Chesterton in *A Piece of Chalk* uses ordinary elements of life-brown paper, white chalk and act of drawing metaphorically to show great sense of imagination, spirituality, morality and deeper philosophy. Through symbols, metaphors and contrasts, he reflects his realization on art, nature and human values.

I remember one splendid morning, all blue and silver, in the summer holidays when I reluctantly tore myself away from the task of doing nothing in particular, and put on a hat of some sort and picked up a walking-stick, and put six very bright-colored chalks in my pocket. I then went into the kitchen (which, along with the rest of the house, belonged to a very square and sensible old woman in a Sussex village), and asked the owner and occupant of the kitchen if she had any brown paper. She had a great deal; in fact, she had too much; and she mistook the purpose and the rationale of the existence of brown paper. She seemed to have an idea that if a person wanted brown paper, he must be wanting to tie up parcels; which was the last thing I wanted to do; indeed, it is a thing which I have found to be beyond my mental capacity. Hence, she dwelt very much on the varying qualities of toughness and endurance in the material. I explained to her that I only wanted to draw pictures on it, and that I did not want them to endure in the least; and that from my point of view, therefore, it was a question, not of tough consistency, but of responsive surface, a thing comparatively irrelevant in a parcel. When she understood that I wanted to draw she offered to overwhelm me with note-paper.

I then tried to explain the rather delicate logical shade, that I not only liked brown paper, but liked the quality of brownness in paper, just as I like the quality of brownness in October woods, or in beer. Brown paper represents the primal twilight of the first toil of creation, and

with a bright-colored chalk or two you can pick out points of fire in it, sparks of gold, and blood-red, and sea-green, like the first fierce stars that sprang out of divine darkness. All this I said (in an off-hand way) to the old woman; and I put the brown paper in my pocket along with the chalks, and possibly other things. I suppose everyone must have reflected how primeval and how poetical are the things that one carries in one's pocket; the pocket-knife, for instance, the type of all human tools, the infant of the sword. Once I planned to write a book of poems entirely about things in my pockets. But I found it would be too long; and the age of the great epics is past.

With my stick and my knife, my chalks and my brown paper, I went out on to the great downs…

I crossed one swell of living turf after another, looking for a place to sit down and draw. Do not, for heaven's sake, imagine I was going to sketch from Nature. I was going to draw devils and seraphim, and blind old gods that men worshipped before the dawn of right, and saints in robes of angry crimson, and seas of strange green, and all the sacred or monstrous symbols that look so well in bright colours on brown paper. They are much better worth drawing than Nature; also, they are much easier to draw. When a cow came slouching by in the field next to me, a mere artist might have drawn it; but I always get wrong in the hind legs of quadrupeds. So, I drew the soul of a cow; which I saw there plainly walking before me in the sunlight; and the soul was all purple and silver, and had seven horns and the mystery that belongs to all beasts. But though I could not with a crayon get the best out of the landscape, it does not follow that the landscape was not getting the best out of me. And this, I think, is the mistake that people make about the old poets who lived before Wordsworth, and were supposed not to care very much about Nature because they did not describe it much.

They preferred writing about great men to writing about great hills; but they sat on the great hills to write it. They gave out much less about Nature, but they drank in, perhaps, much more. They painted the white robes of their holy virgin with the blinding snow, at which they had stared all day… The greenness of a thousand green leaves clustered into the live green figure of Robin Hood. The blueness of a score of forgotten skies became the blue robes of the Virgin. The inspiration went in like sunbeams and came out like Apollo.

But as I sat scrawling these silly figures on the brown paper, it began to dawn on me, to my great disgust, that I had left one chalk, and that a most exquisite and essential chalk, behind. I searched all my pockets, but I could not find any white chalk. Now, those who are acquainted with all the philosophy (nay, religion) which is typified in the art of drawing on brown paper, know that white is positive and essential. I cannot avoid remarking here upon a moral significance. One of the wise and awful truths which this brown-paper art reveals, is this, that white is a color. It is not a mere absence of color; it is a shining and affirmative thing, as fierce as red, as definite as black. When, so to speak, your pencil grows red-hot, it draws roses; when it grows white-hot, it draws stars. And one of the two or three defiant verities of the best religious morality, of real Christianity, for example, is exactly this same

thing; the chief assertion of religious morality is that white is a color. Virtue is not the absence of vices or the avoidance of moral dangers; virtue is a vivid and separate thing, like pain or a particular smell. Mercy does not mean not being cruel, or sparing people revenge or punishment; it means a plain and positive thing like the sun, which one has either seen or not seen.

Chastity does not mean abstention from sexual wrong; it means something flaming, like Joan of Arc. In a word, God paints in many colors; but he never paints so gorgeously, I had almost said so gaudily, as when He paints in white. In a sense our age has realized this fact, and expressed it in our sullen costume. For if it were really true that white was a blank and colorless thing, negative and non-committal, then white would be used instead of black and grey for the funereal dress of this pessimistic period. Which is not the case.

Meanwhile I could not find my chalk.

I sat on the hill in a sort of despair. There was no town near at which it was even remotely probable there would be such a thing as an artist's colour man. And yet, without any white, my absurd little pictures would be as pointless as the world would be if there were no good people in it. I stared stupidly round, racking my brain for expedients. Then I suddenly stood up and roared with laughter, again and again, so that the cows stared at me and called a committee. Imagine a man in the Sahara regretting that he had no sand for his hour-glass. Imagine a gentleman in mid-ocean wishing that he had brought some salt water with him for his chemical experiments. I was sitting on an immense warehouse of white chalk. The landscape was made entirely of white chalk. White chalk was piled more miles until it met the sky. I stooped and broke a piece of the rock I sat on: it did not mark so well as the shop chalks do, but it gave the effect. And I stood there in a trance of pleasure, realizing that this Southern England is not only a grand peninsula, and a tradition and a civilization; it is something even more admirable. It is a piece of chalk.

Glossary

abstention (n): a voluntary decision not to act
chastity (n): the state of refraining from extra marital sexual intercourse
defiant (adj): refusing to obey
divine darkness: the womb of mother, origination
downs (n): low hills covered with grass
expedients (n) : desired results
exquisite (adj): extremely beautiful
funereal (adj): suitable for a funeral
gaudily (adv): in a way that is unpleasantly bright
primal (adj): relating to the early stage in evolutionary development

primeval (adj): of the earliest time in history

quadrupeds (n): animals having four feet

racking brain: thinking very hard about

red-hot (adj): as hot as to glow red

seraphim (n): an angelic being, regarded in traditional Christian angelology

slouching (n): the action or fact of standing, moving, or sitting in a lazy, drooping way.

verities (n): states of being true

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. The narrator asked the owner of the kitchen for…….
   i. a walking stick ii. a hat iii. a brown paper iv. a note-paper

b. The narrator compares the 'brownness' of brown paper to…… .
   i. the colour of morning skies
   ii. the texture of rough fabric
   iii. the brownness of October woods and beer
   iv. the brightness of gold and sea-green

c. What did the narrator decide to draw instead of sketching from Nature?
   i. Abstract patterns and geometric shapes
   ii. Landscapes with vivid details
   iii. Realistic portraits of animals
   iv. Sacred or monstrous symbols in bright colours

d. Which one of the following ideas is true?
   i. The old poets were more focused on describing Nature than great men.
   ii. The old poets drew creative inspiration from Nature to depict their subjects.
   iii. The old poets preferred painting landscapes over human figures.
   iv. The old poets believed Nature had little impact on artistic inspiration.

e. Why do you think the narrator laughed?
   i. He remembers a funny incident from his past.
   ii. He decides his drawings don't need white chalk.
   iii. He realizes the entire landscape is made of white chalk.
   iv. He finds the white chalk in his pocket.

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What misunderstanding occurred about the brown paper during the interaction of the narrator with the owner of the kitchen? And how did he explain the purpose of asking for the paper?

b. Why did the narrator prefer to draw sacred and monstrous symbols over nature? What element did he include in his drawing?

c. The narrator states that he drew the 'soul of a cow'. How does the drawing of the cow reflect his artistic imagination?

d. What significance of white chalk drawing on brown paper is shown in the text?

e. Explain 'Mercy does not mean not being cruel, or sparing people revenge or punishment; it means a plain and positive thing like the sun.'

f. In what way does the narrator show symbolic meaning of 'brown paper'? What kinds of imaginative reflections does he describe about the things one carries in one's pocket*?*

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. The author has explored the moral and philosophical significance of white chalk connecting it to religious morality and virtue. Explain this statement with examples.

b. The brown paper, white chalk, parcels; etc. are used to reveal the author's creativity and imagination. How does such analogy reflect moral, religious and philosophical virtues?

c. The author presents his realization about the abundance of white chalk in the landscape of Southern England with humour and irony. What lights does it cast on his creativity and imagination?

d. The author presents cultural and historical significance of Southern England through the statement 'I was sitting on an immense warehouse of white chalk'. What kind of analogy can you show in the context of Nepal?

e. Which one do you think is more important: a white chalk or a brown paper? Why?

Project Work

Chalk and paper might appear old-fashioned in today's world, yet these simple tools played a crucial role in shaping generations of thinkers, innovators, and visionaries. They allowed teachers to convey ideas with clarity, immediacy, and visual impact. Consult different sources: both online or offline and write an essay on 'In Praise of Chalk and Paper: The Humble Tools That Built Minds'. Then share with the class.

The World's Desire

Before You Read

a. What comes to your mind when you hear the word 'desire'?

b. What can a person learn from successful person's life?

Edward Verrall Lucas (1868–1938) was an English essayist, humorist, biographer, poet, novelist, short story writer and publisher, known for his wit, elegance, and observational style. He makes his work more engaging and lighthearted employing humour and wit; and captures ordinary experiences with charm and delicacy. Similarly, he includes the theme of human values, emotions and cordial relationships in his writings with warmth and empathy.

The essay *The World's Desire* extracted from *Adventures and Enthusiasms* explores how people chase dreams and ideas, overseeing the beauty and pleasures in their own lives and surroundings. Lucas highlights Chaplin's unique talent, comedy personality, global reach and emotional depth in winning the hearts of people. His unparalleled contribution in comedy cemented his legacy as a pioneer in the film industry.

Reading the terms of the agreement which Charlie Chaplin refused in New York early in 1916 I had a kind of nervous collapse. For we English are not so accustomed to great sums of money as the Americans are. Then, I bound a wet towel round my head and studied the figures as dispassionately as it is possible to study figures when they run into kings' ransoms. Charlie was offered ten thousand dollars a week for a year: which came then to £104,000 and is now (1920) much more. He was offered one hundred thousand dollars as a bonus for signing the agreement. He was also offered 50 per cent. of any profits made by his films after his salary had been paid. But it did not satisfy him. He refused it.

Now here is a most remarkable state of affairs - that the popular demand for laughter is such that a little acrobatic man with splay feet and a funny way with a cigarette, a hat, and a cane could be offered and could repudiate such colossal wealth as that, and for no other services than to clown it for the cinematoscope. Nor is the oddity of the matter decreased by the reflection that these figures which make an ordinary person dizzy, belonged to war-time. Charlie Chaplin's rise to affluence and power coincided with the bloodiest struggle in history.

If it is needful for so many people to hold their sides, Charlie's career is justified. He is also the first droll to conquer the whole world. I suppose that it is no exaggeration to say that at any moment of the day and night - allowing for divergences of time - it would be safe to maintain that ten million people are laughing at the Chaplin antics somewhere or other on this planet of ours. For wherever there is a township of more than two thousand inhabitants, there, I imagine, is a cinema; and wherever there is a cinema there is Charlie; not always quite up to date, of course, for managers are wily birds, but in some film, even though an ancient one. Does the Funniest Man on Earth, as he is called, I should like to know, realize what a rôle he fills? Does he stand before the glass and search the recesses of his countenance - which is now far more familiar to the world than any other - and marvel?

Charlie, by the way, has his private uses too. During a recent visit from a young friend, I found that the ordinary gulf that is fixed between a boy in the neighbourhood of ten and a man in the neighbourhood of five times that number was for once easily bridgeable. We found common ground, and very wisely stuck to it, in the circumstance that each of us had seen Charlie, and, by great good fortune, we had each seen him in his latest sketch. Whenever, therefore, a longueur threatened, I had but to mention another aspect of Charlie's genius, and in the discussion that followed all was well.

That Charlie is funny is beyond question. I will swear to that. His humour is of such elemental variety that he could, and probably does, make a Tierra del Fuegan or a Bushman of Central Australia laugh not much less than our sophistical selves. One needs no civilized culture to appreciate the fun of the harlequinade, and to that has Charlie, with true instinct, returned. But it is the harlequinade accelerated, intensified, toned up for the exacting taste of the great and growing "picture" public. It is also farce at its busiest, most furious. Charlie brought back that admirable form of humour which does not disdain the co-operation of fisticuffs, and in which, by way of variety, one man is aimed at, and another, too intrusive, is hit. However long the world may last, it is safe to say that the spectacle of one man receiving a blow meant for another will be popular.

What strikes one quickly is the realization of how much harder Charlie works than many of the more illustrious filmers. He is rarely out of the picture, he is rarely still, and he gives full measure. There is no physical indignity that he does not suffer—and inflict. Such impartiality is rare in drama, where usually men are either on top or underneath. In the ordinary way our pet comedians must be on top and untouched. Even the clown, though he receives punishment en route, eventually triumphs. But Charlie seldom wins. He remains a butt, or, at any rate, a victim of circumstances whom nothing can discourage or deter. His very essence is resiliency under difficulties, an unabashed and undefeatable front. His especial fascination to me is that life finds him always ready for it—not because he is armed by sagacity, but because he is even better armed by folly. He is first cousin to the village idiot, a natural child of nonsense, licensed up to the hilt, and (like Antæus) every time he rises from a knockdown blow, he is the stronger.

It is a proof of the charter which the world has handed to this irresistible humourist that he has been permitted to introduce such an innovation in stage manners as the hitting of women. We only laugh the more when, having had his ears boxed by the fair, he retaliates with double strength. And there is one of his plays in which every audience becomes practically helpless, as after, with great difficulty, extricating a lady in evening dress from a fountain, he deliberately pushes her in again. It required a Charlie Chaplin to make this tolerable; but such is his radiant unworldliness that we accept it as quite legitimate fun.

One of the chief causes - after the personality of the protagonist - of the popularity of the Chaplin films is probably that in them certain things happen which cannot happen in real life without the intervention of the law, and which are almost always withheld from the real stage. I mean that men so freely assault each other; physical violence has the fullest and most abundant play. Every one longs to see kicks and blows administered, but is usually defrauded, and Charlie is a spendthrift with both. And so cheerfully and victoriously does he distribute them that I wonder an epidemic of such attentions has not broken out in both hemispheres. I know this—that a fat policeman with his back towards the exit of a cinema at the time a Chaplin film had ended would be in great danger from my foot were I then leaving. I should hope for enough self-control; but I could promise nothing, and I should feel that Charlie's example, behind the action, sanctified it. Film life and real life would merge into each other so naturally that if the policeman repaid me - or attempted to—in any other way but kind, I should feel outraged. To be arrested for it would be like a stab in the back from a friend.

How long Charlie will remain the darling of two hemispheres we must wait to see. But of one thing I am certain, and that is that if at any time the "The Funniest Man on Earth" ceases to compel laughter, he might by slightly changing his methods draw tears. For while he can be as diverting as the greatest glutton for mirth desires, he has all the machinery of dejection too. One of his melancholy smiles is really beautiful.

Glossary

bushman (n): aboriginal people

clown (n): a comic entertainer

droll (n): jester/entertainer

farce (n): a comic dramatic work

fisticuffs (n): acts of fighting or boxing with bare hands

glutton (n): an excessively greedy eater

intrusive (adj): causing annoyance

king's ransoms: a very large amount of money

longueur (n): a boring part of something

nervous collapse: a period of extreme mental/emotional stress

oddity (n): quality of being strange

recesses (n): the parts which are hard to see

sanctified (v): set apart

spendthrift (n): who spends money carelessly

splay foot: a broad flat foot turned outward

tierra del fuegan: indigenous inhabitants of tierra del fuego province

Comprehension

A. **Choose the correct alternatives.**

a. What was one of the key reasons the narrator experienced a nervous collapse upon reading Charlie Chaplin's rejected agreement in 1916?

i. The agreement included a penalty clause for film delays, causing concern.

ii. Charlie Chaplin was offered $5,000 a week, which was a significant amount.

iii. Charlie Chaplin accepted the agreement but later regretted it.

iv. The sums of money in the agreement were exceptionally large and unfamiliar to the narrator.

b. Why did Charlie Chaplin rise to affluence and power?

i. His refusal to work during wartime

ii. The significant wealth offered to him despite his simple clowning for the cinematoscope

iii. His ability to perform acrobatics and stunts on film

iv. The popularity of his films declining during the war.

c. What is the opinion of the narrator about Chaplin's humor/comedy?

i. It requires a sophisticated cultural background to be appreciated.

ii. It is universal, appealing to people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

iii. It is primarily appreciated by urban, educated audiences.

iv. It is based on complex wordplay and intellectual jokes.

d. How is Chaplin's comedy's style different from other comedians?

i. He always wins and outsmarts his opponents.

ii. He relies on relies on verbal wit avoiding physical humor.

iii. He combines physical comedy with the ability to remain encouraged despite failures.

iv. He is rarely involved in the action and prefers subtle humor.

e. Which aspect of Chaplin's comedy is regarded as an innovation in stage manners?

i. His use of intellectual comedy to mock others

ii. His introduction of humor involving retaliation against women in unexpected ways

iii. He neglects physical comedy against intellectual humour.

iv. His emphasis on moral lessons through comedic sketches.

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What were the financial terms offered to Charlie Chaplin in the agreement? Why do you think he rejected such a huge amount?

b. Why does the narrator think that Charlie Chaplin's career is justified?

c. Explain the narrator's perspective on Charlie Chaplin's identity becoming 'far more familiar to the world than any other'.

d. 'Chaplin's comedy is unique and different from the other comedians.' Explain with examples from the text.

e. What are the reasons the narrator believes behind the popularity of Chaplin's films?

f. 'Chaplin has ability to evoke laughter as well as melancholy'. Describe with examples.

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. Explain the reasons behind Charlie Chaplin's refusal to accept agreement. In what way does the narrator reveal economic and cultural differences between England and America during that time?

b. Charlie Chaplin's comedy style is different from other comedians. How does his style of comedy help bridge cultural and social divides that exist in the contemporary global context?

c. Chaplin had extraordinary power to merge real life and film life naturally; and unique methods to change laughter into melancholy. Illustrate with examples from the text.

d. The narrator appreciates the personality and unique techniques of Charlie Chaplin in presenting comedy stating him 'The Funniest Man on Earth'. Do you think the narrator has undermined the contribution of other comedians in bringing laughter to audience?

e. Merging film/reel life comedy with real life events effortlessly is unparalleled talent of Chaplin in his performances. What difficulties and challenges do you think any present comedian might face in doing so?

Project Work

Comedy shows have been entertaining audience in different ways for some years. Do you think the comedians' works serve as a tool for preserving traditional Nepali values and practices**,** or do they represent a more modern, globalized perspective that challenges or changes these traditions?

Getting in Touch with Aliens

Before You Read

a. What do you know about Aliens?

b. Do you think extraterrestrial communication is possible? Why/why not?

Stephen William Hawking (1942–2018), a renowned English theoretical physicist, cosmologist and author, is widely regarded for his work on black holes and nature of the universe. His contribution in the understanding of singularities, Hawking radiation and the Bing Bang theory earned him exceptional respect and honor. Some of his publications included *The Large Scale Structure of Space-Time, Superspace and Supergravity, The Very Early Universe* and the best sellers *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes*, *The Universe in a Nutshell* and *A Briefer History of Time*.

Hawking in *Getting in Touch with Aliens* talks about the challenges of interstellar encounters, possible means of communication, significance of the SETI experiment in advancing technology and the role of young people in perceiving and responding to the signals from extraterrestrials. Moreover, he suggests potential influence of such cooperation on global peace, prosperity and conflicts.

The distances between the stars are staggeringly great, so we still can't be sure that a face to face encounter will someday take place (assuming the aliens have faces!). But even if extraterrestrials never visit our planet or receive a visit from us, we might still get to know one another. We might still be able to talk.

One way this could happen is by radio. Unlike sound, radio waves can move through the empty spaces between the stars. And they move as fast as anything can move at the speed of light.

Almost fifty years ago some scientists worked out what it would take to send signal from a one-star system to another. It surprised them to learn that interstellar conversation wouldn't require super-advanced technology like you often see in science fiction movies. It's possible to send radio signals from one solar system to another with the type of radio equipment we could build today. So, the scientists stood back from their chalkboards and said to themselves: If this is so easy, then to matter what aliens might be doing, they'd surely be using radio to communicate over large distances. The scientists realized that it would be a

perfectly logical idea to turn some of our big antennae to the skies to see if we could pick up extra-terrestrial signals. After all, finding an alien broadcast would instantly prove that there's someone out there, without the expense of sending rockets to distant star systems in the hope of discovering a populated planet.

Unfortunately, this alien eavesdropping experiment, called SETI (the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence), has so far failed to find a single, sure peep from the skies. The radio bands have been discouragingly quiet wherever we've looked aside from the natural stat caused by such objects as quasars (the churning, high energy centers of some galaxies) or pulsars (rapidly spinning neutron stars)

Does that mean that intelligent aliens, able to build radio transmitters do not exist? That would be an astounding discovery because there are surely at least million planets in our Milky Way Galaxy-and there are one hundred thousand million other galaxies! If no one is out there, we are stupendously special and dreadfully alone.

Well, as SETI researchers will tell you, it's entirely too soon to conclude that we have no company among the stars. After all, if you're going to listen for alien radio broadcasts, not only do you have to point your antenna in the right direction but you also need to tune to the right spot on the dial, have a sensitive enough receiver, and be listening at the right time. SETI experiments are like looking for buried treasure without a map. So the fact that we haven't found anything so far is not surprising. It's like digging a few holes on the beach of a South Pacific island coming up with nothing but wet Sand and crabs. You shouldn't immediately conclude that there's no treasure to be found.

Fortunately, new radio telescopes are speeding up our search for signals, and as possible that within a few dozen years we could hear a faint broadcast from another civilization.

What would they be saying to us? Well, of course, we can only guess, but one thing the extraterrestrials will surely know: They'd better send us a long message because the speedy conversation is simply impossible. For example, imagine that the nearest aliens are on a planet around a star that's one thousand light-years away. If we pick up a signal from them tomorrow, it will have taken one thousand years to get to us. It will be an old message, but that's okay. After all, if you read Sophocles or Shakespeare, those are old "messages" too, but they're still interesting.

However, if we choose to reply, our response to the aliens will take one thousand years to get to them, and another one thousand years will pass before their answer gets back to us! In other words, even a simple "Hello" and its alien response, "Zork?" would take twenty centuries. So, while talking on the radio is a lot faster than traveling in rockets for a meet-and-preet, it's still going to be a very relaxed conversation. That suggests that the aliens might send us books and books of stuff about themselves and their planet, knowing that we won't be doing a lot of chatting.

But even if they do, even if they send us The Alien Encyclopedia, will we be able to read it? After all, unlike in the movies and TV, the extraterrestrials aren't going to be fluent in English or any other earthly language. It's possible that they may use pictures or even mathematics to help make their message understandable, but we won't know until or unless we pick up a signal.

No matter what they send us, detecting a radio squeal coming from a distant world would be big news. Indeed, imagine what it was like five centuries ago when explorers first discovered that there were entire continents that were completely unknown in Europe. Finding the New World changed everything.

Today, we've replaced the wooden sailing ships of those early explorers with giant aluminum and steel antennae. Someday soon they may tell us something extraordinarily interesting; namely, that in the vast expanses of space, humans are not the only ones watching the Universe.

And today's young people may be those who will be there to listen and to respond. This could be you!

Glossary

staggeringly (adv.):	to an astonishing degree
extraterrestrials (n.):	a hypothetical or fictional being from outer space
interstellar (adj.):	occurring between stars
eavesdrop (v.):	secretly listening to a conversation without consent
quasars (n.):	high energy centers of some galaxies
stupendously (adv.):	in a way that is very surprising especially by being large in amount/size
squeal (n.):	a long high-pitched noise

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. Why are we not sure of meeting face to face with aliens?

i. Aliens don't have faces. ii. Extraterrestrial life is sure to exist.
iii. Aliens are sure to visit us. iv. Vast distances exist.

b. The thing that was surprising to some scientists about fifty years ago about sending interstellar radio signals is…

i. extremely advanced technology ii. technology they already have
iii. help of aliens iv. concept seen in science fiction movies

c. What is the main purpose of the SETI experiment?

i. Witness quasars and pulsars.

ii. Send signals to distant star systems.

iii. Find alien signals using large antennae.

iv. Build advanced rockets for travelling between stars.

d. Which of the following conditions is not required for listening for alien radio broadcasts?

i. Tune to the right spot on the dial

ii. Have Freedom of listening time

iii. Point antenna in the right direction

iv. have a sensitive enough receiver

e. What challenge do humans face when they receive a message from extraterrestrials?

i. The message may not be understandable as it won't be in any earthly language.

ii. The aliens might use mathematics or pictures to confuse humans.

iii. Detecting a signal from aliens is impossible with current technology.

iv. Aliens will expect an immediate response from humans.

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. Why do scientists believe that radio waves could be used for interstellar communication?

b. What was the main aim of the SETI experiment? Was it successful? Why/why not?

c. Why does the author compare an old signal from aliens with literature of Sophocles or Shakespeare?

d. What possible conversation system between humans and aliens is mentioned in the text?

e. Why do you think the author took the context of historical context in context with detecting a radio sequel from a distant world?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. How might we communicate with extraterrestrial civilizations? What kinds of challenges would we face in such communication?

b. The author has included the context of historical exploration of continents. For what significance has he done so? Explain citing examples from the text.

c. How was the working system of the SETI experiment, and how did it highlight deficiencies in the current exploration system? What possibilities does it place for future generations?

d. Stephen Hawking stresses on the possible interstellar communication with extraterrestrial civilizations. Do you believe in the existence of such civilizations? Justify it with some examples.

e. After reading Hawking's thoughts, do you think the search for extraterrestrial life is more about finding others or about understanding ourselves better? In what ways does space exploration reflect deeper questions about human identity, purpose, and destiny?

Project Work

Various movies made in Hollywood [E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial (1982), Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977), The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951), Battle: Los Angeles (2011), Alien (1979), Aliens (1986)] and Bollywood [Koi…Mil Gaya (2003), PK (2014)] reflect on the lives of aliens and humans in different ways. What types of communication systems among the aliens; and between the aliens and the humans have been predicted in such movies? How are these similar or different from the ideas of Hawking. Point out key aspects and share in the class.

An Encounter with a Dog

Before You Read

a. Have you ever encountered a dog? Describe the situation you confronted.

b. How do cultural backgrounds influence our views on dogs?

Padma Devkota, an acclaimed writer, scholar, translator and poet well-recognized for his contributions to Nepali literature and for keeping the legacy of his father, Mahakavi Laxmi Prasad Devkota. His literary compositions mainly explore the themes of *humanism*, *cultural identities* and *complexities of human life*; and are filled with a reflective tone, enhanced by the understanding of history, culture and philosophy. His essays are mostly marked by satire and a keen observation that blend personal reflection with social commentary.

Devkota in *An Encounter with a Dog* praises the exceptional contribution of his father and his competence; and presents his experience with the aristocratic descendant of the great Raja of Salyan. He also presents how human affectations fail to maintain social and cultural civility through a historical anecdote.

I have always been proud of my father's achievements. My admiration for him has only increased with every bit of additional knowledge regarding his life and work. It has also increased with every other story I hear from people who love to improve upon the already existing legends about Mahakavi Devkota. I love to hear these stories about my father because they come from a fandom of imperishable love and admiration, and I listen attentively to any legend about him, especially those that come from his contemporaries.

I relish his works too. Recently, I had just finished discussing one of his autobiographical pieces with students, but retained some doubts about certain names and dates that appeared in the essay. I was familiar, for instance, with the name of "the great Raja of Salyan in Nepal," and could even recall my mother pointing at a formidable roadside gate near Pipalko Bot in Dillibazaar to identify his residence. There were times when I had seen a horse-drawn carriage enter or leave that immense gate. However, I did not know that the grandson of the great Raja of Salyan was my father's classmate until I read "Pleasure in Humiliation."

In this essay, my father recalls the last-minute preparations for the I. Sc. examination and tells how he and his friend Phanindra Prasad Lohani went through the English textbooks in

just two days. When the results were out, two of his aristocratic classmates, in whose house he used to teach children three hours daily, visited him and told him that their grandpa, the great Raja of Salyan, wanted to see him. Their grandpa, suspecting foul play in the marking of the examination copies, had my father's English answer book re-examined by the Bengali tutor of the two babusahebs. He simply could not believe that such well-fed and well brought up lads under the tutelage of the best Bengali teacher of English could fail while my father, despite his lower socio-economic rank, could outdo them. Although the re-examination of the answer book established the competence of the student, it failed to clear the suspicion upon the other Bengali tutor whom the Raja of Salyan had declined to offer the job of tutoring his grandsons. Before taking leave of such a great majesty as the Raja of Salyan, my humiliated father had his last say: "These two bedside products of yours are the greatest germs of genius born under the luckiest star. They must have been born on the day of the Light Festival"—the day when my father himself was born. And, when questioned by his classmates as to how many hours a day he studied, father had sarcastically replied that he was in the habit of keeping his books under his pillow and of reading the lines of print in his dream.

I was naturally curious to learn more about the Raja of Salyan whose name was Shumsher Bahadur Shah. His son, Gehendra Bahadur Shah, had wedded Juddha Shumsher's daughter. The rich aristocratic tonality of feudal connections was itself historically significant enough to encourage my feeble attempts at research into this family's history, but the real goading came from the satire in the essay, the deep satisfaction my father felt through humiliation. Who were these chums of his who, despite the best opportunities available to them, had frivolously wasted their time in privileged pleasures instead of seeking academic excellence? Did they sense an economic security for a long line of male descendants powerfully enough to undermine the real merits of education? Or, was it a simple case of inadvertent juvenility relishing life the best it can? Whatever it was, I wanted to listen to the recollections of a member of the family of the great Raja of Salyan of the days when my father used to tutor in their house and to find out more about his affinity with his aristocratic classmates. I therefore obtained an appointment with the octogenarian Birendra Bahadur Shah, one of the five grandsons of the Raja of Salyan, at his residence at 11:00 a.m. on the 9th of January 2008, and presented myself at his gate on the dot. He was a person who had served long as Zonal Commissioner in the Terai region during the Panchyat Era.

Anticipating my arrival, Mr. Shah had approached the gate as he had promised to do so. From the gate to his house at the far end of the field was an unpaved driveway, shaped like the right half of a square bracket, with patches of winter sunlight interspersed with shadows of large trees. He did not invite me into his house as I had expected, but chose to stand on a sunny spot near the gate end of the driveway. A well-fed person, still looking ruddy and robust, his health had nevertheless been recently undermined by the onslaught of age and whatever else accompanies obesity. He spoke to me about his recent hospitalization and I felt sorry for him. I was undecided about how to begin the interview because I had anticipated

the comfort of a chair to sit down and jot notes in my copybook as he spoke. Understanding the futility of such an expectation, I pulled out my notebook and started scribbling the faded recollections of a patrician habituated to stand-up meetings with visitors near the main gate, pretty much like the Rana prime ministers of *yore* used to do.

He was happy to recall my father who had tutored him and others in his ancestral home at Pipalko Bot from 1939-41 as he recalled. This recollection probably missed the mark by a whole decade because my father joined Patna College and passed his I. Sc. in 1928. I, therefore, began doubting the authenticity of an unutilized memory. Nevertheless, I learned from him that Gehendra B. Shah had five sons: Jitendra, Narendra, Surendra, Birendra, and Devendra. Of these, Jitendra and a cousin of theirs, Padam Bahadur, were my father's classmates—the two "germs of genius"—while Narendra and Bhavadeva were one grade above them. I also know from a different source that another intimate friend of my father, Shankar Dev Panta, taught Surendra all the seven papers of MA English programme offered by Patna University.

Unfortunately, the interview took a different turn at this point. I saw in the distance a sleek, black beauty gallop towards us, not in aggressive haste, not in howling hostility, but in almost leisurely stride as if towards a playground. By the time I could blurt out to Mr. Shah, "Dog! Dog is coming!" it was already half-way through the driveway. Mr. Shah looked at the dog with an octogenarian equanimity and even continued saying something he was saying though I do not remember what it was he said. The sleek, black creature sort of trotted towards the old man, and then it came to sniff at my crotches. I didn't know how to greet it. By nature, it was better able than I was to respond to a new situation. It held my scrotum in its fangs and looked almost too gently at my face as if to ask if it hurt. Unable to reply to this interview, I crouched more with fear than with pain, for my winter garments were a timely blessing, and wondered why Mr. Shah would not chase my interviewer away. Half amused by my undignified posture and more repulsed by the plebeian chemicals that hurt its sensitive nostrils, the Doberman, or whatever it was, released me and stepped back.

"It's bitten me!" I said.

"Go away!" said Mr. Shah, shooing with a feeble, leisurely wave of the hand the devil of a dog, which delighted in attacking me from behind. I felt its fangs tear my calf and cried out in pain.

"Don't worry," said Mr. Shah. "It has been given the anti-rabies injection. Nothing will happen. Nothing will happen."

This time, my ballpoint and notebook had fallen to the ground, my leg hurt and I was terribly frightened.

"Chase it away," I cried. Before anyone could do anything else, the *nimble* animal had *frisked* behind me to test the tensile strength of my right thigh immediately below the buttocks—a test with sharp and piercing canine points that made me jump and cry out in agony. I saw it

come around to the front and look at me as if to ask, "How do you like this play? I haven't been really aggressive, have I?"

No! The savage could have torn me to shreds, but it hadn't. It only seemed to study the fear in my eyes and to say, "You respond well to my message."

I did. I placed the synthetic leather bag in front of me to protect my crotches as it looked mischievously at my thighs and at my eyes turn by turn. It did not snarl. I did not run away. It bared no teeth. I trusted it none and hoped to parry well in self-defense in case of another frontal attack. Half-crouched in self-defense, I waited for someone to come to my rescue. Mr. Shah finally called for help: "Someone! Come and chase it away with a stick." For the dog would obey no man, only a stick! From the humble servants' quarter, a man came walking with a leisurely stride as if nothing uncommon had happened and took an eternity to cover some thirty feet of the drive. "Don't worry, Sir," he said. "This dog bites everyone. It has bitten me so many times! It has been injected. Nothing will happen. You don't have to fear."

When being bitten is normal, bites don't count.

But even this devil of a dog did not like to be beaten. No, not with a stick. It was the stick that chased it away, not Mr. Shah, nor his keeper of the gate. It was not obeying these people because it was obeying its own nature. It was unassumingly its own self and nothing else. Nature reigned supreme and pure in this supple, muscular, canine frame. Its only fault, if it was considered a fault by its master, was the habit of biting every stranger that visited the house. I wondered why, knowing the dog so well, Mr. Shah did not leash it properly or lock it up in the kennel before receiving me into his compound. As it galloped away, the dog turned back to look at me a couple of times as if to say that it had enjoyed the pleasure of my company. I almost thanked it for not mangling me up to shreds.

Neither the patrician nor the plebeian asked me if I was bleeding, and I did not want to expose my wounds to them. Mr. Shah could have asked me whether I needed medical attention. He could at least have offered to call a cab for me to go home. However, he simply stood there watching me as if he was used to giving special appointments to visitors who were then unfailingly bitten by his normal and healthy dog. I will not say that this was the equivalent in Nepal of the Roman arena that let loose hungry lions upon culprits against the state for aristocratic entertainment. Yet, I felt like one who had presented himself at a formidable gate to entertain a Lord inside. Humiliated, hurt, but not defeated by such atrocious culture that defied all genuine taste of the civilized world, I picked up my notebook, put it in my bag, limped towards the main gate without a farewell, and stood hailing a taxi to go home.

I had finally learnt a lesson the hard way. What more could I have expected from a dog than a bite? However, I had expected much more from Mr. Shah: genuine hospitality, respect for me as an individual, some human sense and sensibility, and perhaps many more things. I should

have known that human beings always disappoint us by their pretensions at superiority. Because I could not trust what was not genuine, I opted for the five required shots of anti-rabies at Himal Nursing Home and delighted in rereading "Pleasure in Humiliation" several more times as I recuperated from this experience.

[https://padmadevkota.blogspot.com/2010/08/encounter-with-dog.html]

Glossary

crotch (n): the part of your body where your legs join at the top

equanimity (n): a calm mental state in a difficult situation

fangs (n): large sharp teeth/canine teeth

feudal (adj): related to the system where nobility owned the land while everyone else worked it

frisked (v): lept playfully

inadvertent (adj): not intentional

mangling (v): crushing, damaging by tearing

nimble (adj): quick, agile

octogenarian (n): a person who is between 80 and 89 years old

on the dot: exactly on time

parry (v): ward off with a countermove

recuperated (v): recovered from illness

ruddy (adj): having a healthy reddish colour

tutelage (n): guardianship, instruction

yore (n): the past

Comprehension

A. **Choose the correct alternatives.**

a. What did the narrator discover after reading 'Pleasure in Humiliation'?

i. His father was a friend of the great Raja of Salyan.

ii. His father had a horse-drawn carriage.

iii. The grandson of the great Raja of Salyan was his father's classmate.

iv. His mother lived near Pipalko Bot in Dillibazaar.

b. What did the result of re-examination of Devkota's answer sheet reveal about him?

i. He had cheated in the examination.

ii. He had taken help from his classmates.

iii. He was much competent in English.

iv. He had intentionally studied hard to outdo his classmates.

c. Why did the great Raja of Salyan make the Bengali tutor re-examine Devkota's answer sheet?

i. He wanted to test his competence.

ii. He wanted to award him scholarships.

iii. He wanted to compare his competence with his grandsons.

iv. He doubted favouritism in the marking process.

d. The narrator was interested in researching the family history of the Raja of Salyan because he wanted to:

i. understand the historical significance of their feudal connections.

ii. find out more about their contributions to the Panchayat Era.

iii. explore the connection between the Raja's family and Juddha Shumsher.

iv. learn about the economic security of the male descendants.

e. What was wrong with the dog according to the narrator?

i. It didn't obey its master.

ii. It refused to be locked.

iii. It had a habit of biting strangers who visited there.

iv. It was more aggressive towards other animals.

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. Why does the narrator find the stories about his father more captivating? In what way, does it reflect his relationship with his father?

b. What does the incidence of re-examining the narrator's father's English answer sheet reveal about existing dominations and class subjection?

c. Why do you think Mahakavi Laxmi Prasad Devkota gave a sarcastic remark to his classmates about his study?

d. How were the setting and circumstances of the narrator's meeting with Mr. Shah different from his anticipation?

e. What analogy did the narrator intend to reveal by 'germs of genius'?

f. How did the narrator suffer from the dog?

g. Describe the analogy the narrator draws between the incident and Roman arena.

h. How does the narrator cast light on feudal system through the examples of the dog and Mr. Shah's demeanor?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. What kinds of experiences did the narrator have with the descendants of the great Raja of Salyan? How did it influence his understanding of social hierarchies and feudalism?

b. Describe the events of the narrator's visit to Birendra Bahadur Shah.

c. The role of the dog is considerably significant to showcase the historical and cultural impacts of feudalism on the narrator. Explain by citing examples from the text.

d. How does the dog serve as a metaphor for the narrator's experience with aristocratic privilege and humiliation?

e. What does the narrator's physical response to the dog's bite tell us about the inner conflict between his intellectual curiosity and the harsh realities of his environment?

f. Have you ever encountered feudal behavior in your life? If so, describe your feelings and emotions that provoked you.

Project Work

Visit different social media and collect some documents on incident of discrimination based on caste, color, or socio-economic status. Read them extensively and prepare a short report on such discriminations. Share your report in class.

Beyond the Pandemic

Before You Read

a. How did COVID-19 affect humanity?

b. What challenges and opportunities do you think the various pandemic situations can bring in the human society?

Govinda Raj Bhattarai (1953), born in Panchthar district, the eastern part of Nepal, is a novelist, essayist, literary critic, linguist and translation consultant. His literary works often explore themes of *identity, culture* and *complexities of modern Nepali society* combining with traditional norms and values. A prolific writer of both English and Nepali, has published more than forty books.

Dr. Bhattarai in *Beyond the Pandemic* highlights the role of globalization and technological advancements for the rapid pace of modern civilization. He also emphasizes the vulnerability of humans to unpredictable threats. Moreover, the text explores how COVID-19 influenced humanity, global systems and order; and appeals for caution, preparedness and adaptability to navigate uncertain future.

THE PACE of civilization today has become so fast that we cannot measure its acceleration by counting man's new achievements. Earlier, he had to wait for thousands of years in ignorance to invent the simple machine like a locomotive engine or a vaccine for an Infectious disease like smallpox. But now every decade appears with novel inventions, and new features, and newer promises for the future. Like a fast-changing fashion under the globalized world, say trends of sports or music, food, or dress items to different home gadgets, everything changes unimaginably fast today. Cultures change and so do values, lifestyles change and so do productions, mostly inventions. Half the world's researches are invested towards ensuring our longevity by fighting diseases infections, ill-health and maladies. Man is; however, worried about his own existence and trying to be healthier at the cost of his fellow beings, nature and the planet earth herself.

The planet earth is a perennial source of unending pleasure and joy. It lures every existence, so they want to grab more and live here forever but nature has designed our life cycles in such a way that one must pass seven stages in Shakespeare's words and vacate the seat for the newcomers every day. Even non-living beings are regulated accordingly even though they may not be aware of their existence. Medical scientists are trying their best

to ensure pleasure and happiness for a fuller life. On the other hand, the earth; however, keeps on threatening human beings by challenging his knowledge and experience, because an unknown dark space keeps sending him some newer agents of disease and death to fight with every day. Man cannot even imagine what will happen tomorrow because the unpredictable keeps rolling every moment.

COVID 19, for instance, is one our generation had never thought or before though history has interminably plagued man with threats, dangers and casualties, too. We had heard of different deadly diseases that have plagued the earth since time immemorial and disappeared by exacting a heavy toll on the population of different communities discriminately. But the disasters were mostly confined to a locality: they ruined a country or a region maximum in the past.

Since the Black Death of the 14th century that lasted for a decade man has suffered from at least ten deadly threats. They were epidemics. Unlike then, COVID 19 has been pandemic. The dictionary defines the term pandemic is: a break of a disease that occurs over a wide geographic area and affects an exceptionally high proportion of the population. For instance, the 1918 Spanish influenza pandemic was the most severe in recent history. It was caused by an HINI virus with genes of avian origin. It lasted for two years and nearly half the population was affected which claimed 50 millions of lives worldwide, history reports.

COVID 19 has caused the greatest loss of life and disturbed our psychology since the devastation of World War II. It has begun waging a silent war against human beings and has launched silent weapons indiscriminately. These are not deadlier than before the same weapon of transmittable virus raised and transmitted by unseen toes. But experts are of the opinion that a war is decisive within a given period, a small section of people for fighting, they either die or survive. Men can talk and stop the war. Unlike this, there is none negotiate and stop or run this way of COVID 19. Globalization has made it omnipresent and omnipotent. Everyone becomes its potential enemy. This is the result of human efforts for being civilized and developed hurriedly.

It is during the second half of the twentieth century that man landed on the moon and how he is trying to explore other planets, discover another universe. On the other hand, the same twentieth century brought 12 deadliest killer viruses on the earth such as Ebola, HIV, Dengue, SARS COV, MersCOV, etc. the latest one among them is COVID-19 which literally has stood for Corona Virus Disease 2019. The first WHO sources reported; Wuhan Municipal Health Commission China reported a cluster of case of Pneumonia in Wuhan, Hubai province. A novel Corona Virus was eventually identified. *(https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/27-04- 2020-who-timeline...covid-19bb)*

WHO confirmed the outbreak of this respiratory disease in the first January 2020. Since then every day has been eventful in this globalized world, everybody becomes immediately worldwide and viral. For instance, people are much scared of it since WHO announced the

outbreak of this as pandemic. The word is drive Greek where the prefix par stands for all and demos stands for people, so literally it became pandemic. I would like to extract one piece of information from the Mayo brochure as below:

"Corona virus are a large family of viruses that can cause illness in the common cold to more severe diseases. A novel corona virus (CV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans".

COVID-19's animal-lo-person spread was suspected after the initial outbreak among people who had a link to large seafood and live animal market. Because it's so new, very little is known about how this Corona Virus Acts. And since there is no vaccine and no established immunity from past cycles, experts believe everyone is susceptible.

While animals were the original source of the virus, it is now being spread from person to person. What makes the new corona virus so dangerous to humans is simple that we don't have any way to fight it. The virus isn't necessarily more powerful than other viruses when it caters the human body, but we have no pre-existing defenses since our bodies don't immediately recognize it as a dangerous intruder.

There is not enough information yet to determine how easily this virus spreads between people, but it's estimated that on average one infected person will infect between two and three more. The virus seems to be transmitted mainly via respirator droplets when people sneeze, cough or exhale.

Scientists have studied seasonal flu for decades, so we know a lot about the viruses and what to expect each season. That's one of the reasons we have to get annual flu shots. The strain of the influenza virus that strikes each winter changes from year to year. So, each year, flu experts have to create a new vaccine based on the type of flu they predict will circulate that year.

In contrast, very little is known about the new corona virus and the disease it causes. This means COVID-19 is something of a wild card in terms of how far it will spread and how many deaths it will CISC. And to date, there is no specific medicine recommended to prevent or treat this type of corona virus.

The CDC recommends the following to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, which include both corona viruses and flu viruses:

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Stay home when you are sick.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

The world order has been adversely affected. The globalization of everything mostly demographic distribution has created untold problems. Thousands and homelands with the hope of security, thousands are stranded, thousands already lost hope, and thousands starving and gone homeless. We are witnessing a tragic page of history and a panic situation every moment. The easy access to communication channels private and the public has added fright and anxiety more than informing the people properly. These have frequently overshadowed medical facts with myths. AIDS pandemic hit the world in the 1980s, it still persists. Wise citizens then made a slogan; AIDS we need research NOT HYSTERIA. In the same way, we need research not hysteria at this moment, too. Let's have caution and care, patience, and *perseverance*. Tune in the antidote of everything. Some epidemics have lasted for decades; others have disappeared within two or three years. We hope medical scientists will save the human race by inventing a vaccine or medicine of some sort.

This pandemic has already begun to change the world by changing the human imagination. By constraining his mobility, by confining him to narrow pace, by *curbing* transportation, and by warning man against social contact COVID 19 how current civilization. We don't know about the nature of the education system in the days to come. Can we adapt to the virtual system? How about the lives of the poor downtrodden mass!

Already some new terms have been introduced such as virus, pandemic quarantine, lockdown, isolation tracking, hotspot, collection center, disinfectant, community spread, contact tracing, super spreader, respirator, including many abbreviations such as RDT, PCR, VIM, PEP, etc.

As of today, world record shows 12, 632, 698 lives have been infected, a large number of them that is 7,332, 474 cases have been recovered however it claimed 562705 lives. Nepal's record today shows 16531 lives have been affected and it has claimed 35 deaths so far. The ten host affected countries in the world as of today we. The USA, Brazil India, Russia, Peru, Chile, Spain, Mexico, the UK, and Iran. The statistics however keeps on changing every second.

Let's be prepared for a major turning point in world history.

Glossary

black death (n): a bubonic plague pandemic in europe from 1346 to 1353 that killed about 50 million people

curbing (v): controlling, limiting

interminably (adv): in a way that continues for too long making it boring or annoying

intruder (n): criminal, someone that enters without permission to commit a crime

maladies (n): diseases, problems

perennial (adj): lasting a very long time

perseverance (n): persistence in doing something

spanish influenza (n): the 1918-1920 flu pandemic which affected europe, asia, africa, north and south america and the south pacific killing 50-100 million in less than a year

Comprehension

A. **Choose the correct alternatives.**

a. What is the main concern about the pace of civilization today as mentioned in the text?
   i. The lack of interest of people in fighting infectious diseases
   ii. The development of inventions in the past
   iii. The rapid changes in culture, values and lifestyles
   iv. The coexistence of humans and nature

b. What features of the globalized world are focused in the text?
   i. Rapid changes in sports, music, food and gadgets
   ii. Stability in cultural values
   iii. Gradual change in fashion and trends
   iv. Elimination of all infectious diseases

c. In what way does nature help regulate human life cycles?
   i. By allowing humans to live forever
   ii. By ascertaining that every human passes through seven stages of life
   iii. By keeping humans' immune to diseases
   iv. By providing unlimited resources

d. COVID-19 is compared with 'silent war' because…
   i. it uses advanced technological weapons.
   ii. it can be negotiated with dialogue.
   iii. it is less destructive than the traditional wars.
   iv. it involves indiscriminate, unseen transmission of a virus.

e. Why is the COVID-19 more dangerous to humans?
   i. It is more powerful that other viruses.

ii. It basically transmits through water.

iii. Humans have no pre-existing defenses or established immunity against it.

iv. It's spread can be easily predicted so it can easily be controlled.

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. How does the earth present both pleasures and challenges to human beings?

b. Show differences between the impacts of historical plagues and modern pandemic like COVID-19.

c. Clarify differences between epidemic and pandemic with examples.

d. 'COVID-19 has begun waging a silent war against human beings and has launched silent weapons indiscriminately'. Explain with examples.

e. Explain the role of globalization in the spread and impact of COVID-19?

f. Discuss the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on individuals, nations and the world order.

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. In what ways has COVID-19 pandemic shaped humans' behavior and imaginations? How is it different from the past plagues?

b. 'Scientific advancements and researches have been striving for prolonging human life as well as punish them with unpredictable challenges like COVID-19.' Explain this duality of science for human existence. How does this reflect relationship between humans and nature?

c. COVID-19 devastated humans' life throwing the entire world into economic recession. Who do you think is responsible for all these? Give reasons.

d. Reflecting on your personal experiences during lockdowns or periods of isolation, what emotional, psychological and social challenges did you face, and how did you overcome them or grow from them?

Project Work

'Learning to Live with COVID-19 in Nepal: A Unique Experience' by Dr. Yogendra P. Sing highlights the profound changes in daily life and the continuous learning process required to cope with COVID-19, emphasizing resilience despite limited resources. Describe briefly the central message Dr. Singh conveys about Nepal's approach to handling the COVID-19 pandemic. Link to the article: *https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/JIOM/article/view/37477*

Why I Write

Before You Read

a. Why do people write? Share your ideas.

b. Do you think observations influence writing? How?

Joan Didion (1934-2021) was an acclaimed American novelist, memoirist, screenwriter, journalist and essayist known for sharp prose, insightful exploration of native culture and unique literary style marked by lucid and precise language, observational details, fragmented narrative and painting of clear pictures of scenes and settings.

Didion in *Why I Write* elucidates importance of images/pictures or concrete things for writing. She states that writing is an act of self-discovery and self-expression. Through the rich use of imageries, symbols, personal anecdotes/ experiences, observations, etc., she challenges traditional notion of intellectualism in writing and presents reasons why she writes.

Of course I stole the title for this talk, from George Orwell. One reason I stole it was that I like the sound of the words: Why I Write. There you have three short unambiguous words that share a sound, and the sound they share is this:

I

I

I

In many ways writing is the act of saying *I,* of imposing oneself upon other people, of saying *listen to me, see it my way, change your mind.* It's an aggressive, even a hostile act. You can disguise its qualifiers and tentative subjunctives, with ellipses and evasions—with the whole manner of intimating rather than claiming, of alluding rather than stating—but there's no getting around the fact that setting words on paper is the tactic of a secret bully, an invasion, an imposition of the writer's sensibility on the reader's most private space.

I stole the title not only because the words sounded right but because they seemed to sum up, in a no-nonsense way, all I have to tell you. Like many writers I have only this one "subject," this one "area": the act of writing. I can bring you no reports for many other front. I may have other interests: I am "interested," for example, in marine biology, but I

don't flatter myself that you would come out to hear me talk about it. I am not a scholar. I am not in the least an intellectual, which is not to say that when I hear the word "intellectual" I reach for my gun, but only to say that I do not think in abstracts. During the years when I was an undergraduate at Berkeley I tried, with a kind of hopeless late-adolescent energy, to buy some temporary visa into the world of ideas, to forge for myself a mind that could deal with the abstract.

In short I tried to think. I failed. My attention veered inexorably backs to the specific, to the tangible, to what was generally considered, by everyone I knew then and for that matter have known since, the peripheral. I would try to contemplate the Hegelian dialectic and would find myself concentrating instead on a flowering pear tree outside my window and the particular way the petals fell on my floor. I would try to read linguistic theory and would find myself wondering instead if the lights were on in the bevatron up the hill. When I say that I was wondering if the lights were on in the bevatron you might immediately suspect, if you deal in ideas at all, that I was registering the bevatron as a political symbol, thinking in shorthand about the military-industrial complex and its role in the university community, but you would be wrong. I was only wondering if the lights were on in the bevatron, and how they looked. A physical fact.

I had trouble graduating from Berkeley, not because of this inability to deal with ideas—I was majoring in English, and I could locate the house-and-garden imagery in The Portrait of a Lady as well as the next person, "imagery" being by definition the kind of specific that got my attention—but simply because I had neglected to take a course in Milton. I did this. For reasons which now sound baroque I needed a degree by the end of that summer, and the English department finally agreed, if I would come down from Sacramento every Friday and talk about the cosmology of Paradise Lost, to certify me proficient in Milton. I did this. Some Fridays I took the Greyhound bus, other Fridays I caught the Southern Pacific's City of San Francisco on the last leg of its transcontinental trip. I can no longer tell you whether Milton put the sun or the earth at the center of his universe in Paradise Lost, the central question of at least one century and a topic about which I wrote 10,000 words that summer, but I can still recall the exact rancidity of the butter in the City of San Francisco's dining car, and the way the tinted windows on the Greyhound bus cast the oil refineries around Carquinez Straits into a grayed and obscurely sinister light. In short, my attention was always on the periphery, on what I could see and taste and touch, on the butter, and the Greyhound bus. During those years I was traveling on what I knew to be a very shaky passport, forged papers: I knew that I was no legitimate resident in any world of ideas. I knew I couldn't think. All I knew then was what I couldn't do. All I knew then was what I wasn't, and it took me some years to discover what I was.

Which was a writer.

By which I mean not a "good" writer or a "bad" writer but simply a writer, a person whose most absorbed and passionate hours are spent arranging words on pieces of paper. Had my

credentials been in order I would never have become a writer. Had I been blessed with even limited access to my own mind there would have been no reasonto write. I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means. What I want and what I fear. Why did the oil refineries around Carquinez Straits seem sinister to me in the summer of 1956? Why have the night lights in the bevatron burned in my mind for twenty years? *What is going on in these pictures in my mind?*

When I talk about pictures in my mind I am talking, quite specifically, about images that shimmer around the edges. There used to be an illustration in every elementary psychology book showing a cat drawn by a patient in varying stages of schizophrenia. This cat had a shimmer around it. You could see the molecular structure breaking down at the very edges of the cat: the cat became the background and the background the cat, everything interacting, exchanging ions. People on hallucinogens describe the same perception of objects. I'm not a schizophrenic, nor do I take hallucinogens, but certain images do shimmer for me. Look hard enough and you can't miss the shimmer. It's there. You can't think too much about these pictures that shimmer. You just lie low and let them develop. You stay quiet. You don't talk to many people and you keep your nervous system from shorting out and you try to locate the cat in the shimmer, the grammar in the picture.

Just as I meant "shimmer" literally I mean "grammar" literally. Grammar is a piano I play by ear, since I seem to have been out of school the year the rules were mentioned. All I know about grammar is its infinite power. To shift the structure of a sentence alters the meaning of that sentence, as definitely and inflexibly as the position of a camera alters the meaning of the object photographed. Many people know about camera angles now, but not so many know about sentences. The arrangement of the words matters, and the arrangement you want can be found in the picture in your mind. The picture dictates the arrangement. The picture dictates whether this will be a sentence with or without clauses, a sentence that ends hard or a dying-fall sentence, long or short, active or passive. The picture tells you how to arrange the words and the arrangement of the words tells you, or tells me, what's going on in the picture. Nota bene (Note well).

It tells you.

You don't tell it.

Let me show you what I mean by pictures in the mind. I began Play It as It Lays just as I have begun each of my novels, with no notion of "character" or "plot" or even "incident." I had only two pictures in my mind, more about which later, and a technical intention, which was to write a novel so elliptical and fast that it would be over before you noticed it, a novel so fast that it would scarcely exist on the page at all. About the picture: the first was of white space. Empty space. This was clearly the picture that dictated the narrative intention of the book—a book in which anything that happened would happen off the page, a "white" book to which the reader would have to bring his or her own bad dreams—and yet this picture told me no "story," suggested no situation. The second picture did. This second picture was

of something actually witnessed. A young woman with long hair and a short white halter walks through the casino at the Riviera in Las Vegas at one in the morning. She crosses the casino alone and picks up a house telephone. I watch her because I have heard her paged, and recognize her name: she is a minor actress I see around Los Angeles from time to time, in places like Jax and once in a gynecologist's office in the Beverly Hills Clinic, but have never met. I know nothing about her. Who is paging her? Why is she here to be paged? How exactly did she come to this? It was precisely this moment in Las Vegas that made Play It as It Lays begin to tell itself to me, but the moment appears in the novel only obliquely, in a chapter which begins:

"Maria made a list of things she would never do. She would never: walk through the Sands or Caesar's alone after midnight. She would never: ball at a party, do S-M unless she wanted to, borrow furs from Abe Lipsey, deal. She would never: carry a Yorkshire in Beverly Hills."

That is the beginning of the chapter and that is also the end of the chapter, which may suggest what I meant by "white space."

I recall having a number of pictures in my mind when I began the novel I just finished, *A Book of Common Prayer*. As a matter of fact, one of these pictures was of that bevatron I mentioned, although I would be hard put to tell you a story in which nuclear energy figures. Another was a newspaper photograph of a hijacked 707 burning on the desert in the Middle East. Another was the night view from a room in which I once spent a week with paratyphoid, a hotel room on the Colombian coast. My husband and I seemed to be on the Colombian coast representing the United States of America at a film festival (I recall invoking the name "Jack Valenti" a lot, as if its reiteration could make me well), and it was a bad place to have fever, not only because my indisposition offended our hosts but because every night in this hotel the generator failed. The lights went out. The elevator stopped. My husband would go to the event of the evening and make excuses for me and I would stay alone in this hotel room, in the dark. I remember standing at the window trying to call Bogotá (the telephone seemed to work on the same principle as the generator) and watching the night wind come up and wondering what I was doing eleven degrees off the equator with a fever of 103. The view from that window definitely figures in *A Book of Common Prayer,* as does the burning 707, and yet none of these pictures told me the story I needed.

The picture that did, the picture that shimmered and made these other images *coalesce*, was the Panama airport at 6 am I was in this airport only once, on a plane to Bogotá that stopped for an hour to refuel, but the way it looked that morning remained superimposed on everything I saw until the day I finished *A Book of Common Prayer.* I lived in that airport for several years. I can still feel the hot air when I step off the plane, can see the heat already rising off the tarmac at 6 am I can feel my skirt damp and wrinkled on my legs. I can feel the asphalt stick to my sandals. I remember the big tail of a Pan American plane floating motionless down at the end of the tarmac. I remember the sound of a slot machine in the waiting room. I could tell you that I remember a particular woman in the airport, an

American woman, a norteamericana, a think norteamericana about forty who wore a big square emerald in lieu of a wedding ring, but there was no such woman there.

I put this woman in the airport later. I made this woman up, just as I later made up a country to put the airport in, and a family to run the country. This woman in the airport is neither catching a plane nor meeting one. She is ordering tea in the airport coffee shop. In fact, she is not simply "ordering" tea but insisting that the water be boiled, in front of her, for twenty minutes. Why is this woman in this airport? Why is she going nowhere, where has she been? Where did she get that big emerald? What derangement, or disassociation, makes her believe that her will to see the water boiled can possibly prevail?

"She had been going to one airport or another for four months, one could see it, looking at the visas on her passport. All those airports where Charlotte Douglas's passport had been stamped would have looked alike. Sometimes the sign on the tower would say "Bienvenidos" and sometimes the sign on the tower would say "Bienvenue," some places were wet and hot and others dry and hot, but at each of these airports the pastel concrete walls would rust and stain and the swamp off the runway would be littered with the fuselages of cannibalized Fairchild F-227's and the water would need boiling.

"I knew why Charlotte went to the airport even if Victor did not.

"I knew about airports."

These lines appear about halfway through *A Book of Common Prayer,* but I wrote them during the second week I worked on the book, long before I had any idea where Charlotte Douglas had been or why she went to airports. Until I wrote these lines I had no character called "Victor" in mind: the necessity for mentioning a name, and the name "Victor," occurred to me as I wrote the sentence. *I knew why Charlotte went to the airport* sounded incomplete. *I knew why Charlotte went to the airport even if Victor did not* carried a little more narrative drive. Most important of all, until I wrote these lines I did not know who "I" was, who was telling the story. I had intended until then that the "I" be no more than the voice of the author, a nineteenth-century *omniscient* narrator. But there it was:

"I knew why Charlotte went to the airport even if Victor did not.

"I knew about airports."

This "I" was the voice of no author in my house. This "I" was someone who not only knew why Charlotte went to the airport but also knew someone called "Victor." Who was Victor? Who was this narrator? Why was this narrator telling me this story? Let me tell you one thing about why writers write: had I known the answer to any of these questions I would never have needed to write a novel.

[First published in the New York Times Book Review5 December 1976]

Glossary

alluding (v): suggesting or calling attention to

Beaverton (n) : a cyclotron that accelerates protons up to several billion electron volts

bienvenidos (adj): welcome in Spanish

fuselage (n): the main body of an aircraft

hallucinogens (n): a group of drugs that work on the brain to affect the senses and cause hallucinations

Hegelian dialectic: a method of argument that uses a process of contradiction to develop new ideas

indisposition (n): mild illness

inexorably (adv): in a way that is impossible to stop

rancidity (n): the process by which fats and oils in food break down

schizophrenia (n): a serious mental health condition that affects how people think, feel and behave

tinted (adj): slightly coloured

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. Why did the speaker steal the title for the talk from George Orwell?

i. To honour his work

ii. To criticize his ideas

iii. Because it sounded pleasing

iv. Because it was mandatory

b. According to the writer, what is inevitable in writing?

i. The imposition of the writer's opinion on the reader

ii. Miscommunication between the writer and the reader

iii. The need for collective interpretation

iv. The exclusion of the writer's ideas

c. Why did the narrator have trouble graduating from Berkeley?

i. She didn't take a required course in Milton.

ii. She failed to complete her English major coursework.

iii. She couldn't locate imagery in literary works.

iv. She couldn't write about the Hegelian dialect.

d. What does the author compare grammar to?

i. A camera

ii. A photograph

iii. a painting

iv. a piano

e. What detail from Panama airport does the author clearly recall?

i. A woman with a large emerald ring

ii. The smell of flowers near the terminal

iii. The big tail of a Pan American plane on the tarmac

iv. A bustling crowd in the waiting room

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. How does her saying of having only one 'subject' or 'area' shape her perspective on writing?

b. Why do you think the narrator failed to focus on abstract ideas?

c. What is the significance of the author's statement "I knew I was no legitimate resident in any world of ideas?" What does it suggest about her self-perception?

d. What is the significance of the 'pictures in the mind' for writing processes?

e. In what way is grammar important for writing? What analogy does she want to reveal with camera angles?

f. Describe the woman in the airport the author imagined with specific details about her behavior and appearance.

g. "I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means." Explain the line.

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. Explain in detail the implication of 'pictures in mind' and their contributions in the author's creating thinking and writing process.

b. What analogy does the author show between grammar and camera? How does such technique help enhance the concept of writing?

c. Writing is an act of self-expression and imposition. Explain this statement with examples from the text.

d. People mostly write to express their thoughts and feelings in the form of visual symbols. Why do you think Didion writes?

e. Joan Didion writes that she writes to find out what she's thinking and to make sense of the world around her. How do you relate to this idea? Have you ever used writing as a way to understand your thoughts or emotions, and if so, what did it reveal about you or your experiences?

Project Work

George Orwell in 'Why I Write' outlines four great motives for writing. Read this structured exploration of his personal and political motivations; and describe his purposes of writing briefly. Link to the essay: *https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/why-i-write/*

Chapter Four

Poetry

Bistro Styx

Before You Read

a. Have you ever read or heard of any myth? Share your ideas.

b. What is a ballad? Give an example of it.

Rita Dove (b. 1952) is an American poet, writer, and teacher. She is the first African American to serve as poet laureate of the United States (1993–95). Born in Akron, Ohio, Dove graduated from Miami University in Ohio in 1973 and from the Writers' Workshop at the university of Iowa in 1977. She taught at Arizona State University from 1981 to 1989. Dove has received many awards, including the 1987 *Pulitzer Prize for Poetry*, *the National Humanities Medal* in 1996, and *the National Medal of the Arts* in 2011.

The Bistro Styx employs vivid and symbolic imagery that aligns with postmodern literary techniques. The imageries in the poem serve to emphasize the emotional and intellectual distance between the parent and child.

She was thinner, with a mannered gauntness
as she paused just inside the double
glass doors to survey the room, silvery cape
billowing dramatically behind her. *What's this*,

I thought, lifting a hand until
she nodded and started across the parquet;
that's when I saw she was dressed all in gray,
from a kittenish cashmere skirt and cowl

down to the graphite signature of her shoes.
"Sorry I'm late," she panted, though
she wasn't, sliding into the chair, her cape

tossed off in a shudder of brushed steel.
We kissed. Then I leaned back to peruse
my blighted child, this wary aristocratic mole.

"How's business?" I asked, and hazarded
a motherly smile to keep from crying out:
Are you content to conduct your life
as a cliché and, what's worse,

an anachronism, the brooding artist's demimonde?
Near the rue Princesse they had opened
a gallery *cum* souvenir shop which featured
fuzzy off-color Monets next to his acrylics, no doubt,

plus beared African drums and the occasional miniature
gargoyle from Notre Dame the Great Artist had
carved at breakfast with a pocket knife.

"Tourists love us. The Parisians, of course"--
she blushed--"are amused, though not without
a certain admiration . . ."
The Chateaubriand
arrived on a bone-white plate, smug and absolute
in its fragrant crust, a black plug steaming
like the heart plucked from the chest of a worthy enemy;
one touch with her fork sent pink juices streaming.

"Admiration for what?" Wine, a bloody
Pinot Noir, brought color to her cheeks. "Why,
the aplomb with which we've managed
to support our Art"--meaning he'd convinced

her to pose nude for his appalling canvases,
faintly futuristic landscapes strewn
with carwrecks and bodies being chewed

by rabid cocker spaniels. "I'd like to come by
the studio," I ventured, "and see the new stuff."
"Yes, if you wish . . ." A delicate rebuff

before the warning: "He dresses all
in black now. Me, he drapes in blues and carmine--
and even though I think it's kinda cute,
in company I tend toward more muted shades."

She paused and had the grace
to drop her eyes. She did look ravishing,
spookily insubstantial, a lipstick ghost on tissue,
or as if one stood on a fifth-floor terrace

peering through a fringe of rain at Paris'
dreaming chimney pots, each sooty issue
wobbling skyward in an ecstatic oracular spiral.
"And he never thinks of food. I wish
I didn't have to plead with him to eat. . . ." Fruit
and cheese appeared, arrayed on leaf-green dishes.

I stuck with café crème. "This Camembert's
so ripe," she joked, "it's practically grown hair,"
mucking a golden glob complete with parsley sprig
onto a heel of bread. Nothing seemed to fill

her up: She swallowed, sliced into a pear,
speared each tear-shaped lavaliere
and popped the dripping mess into her pretty mouth.
Nowhere the bright tufted fields, weighted

vines and sun poured down out of the south.
"But are you happy?" Fearing, I whispered it
quickly. "What? You know, Mother"--

she bit into the starry rose of a fig--
"one really should try the fruit here."
I've lost her, I thought, and called for the bill.

Glossary

anachronism (n.): old fashioned
aplomb (n.): self-confidence
carmine (n.): a vivid crimson colour
demimonde (adj.): of doubtful social morality
ecstatic (adj.): feeling or an expression of joyful excitement
gargoyle (n.): commercially carved human face
gauntness (n.): extreme thinness of body due to illness or hunger
lavaliere (n.): jewelry, especially a pendant
mucking (v.): spending time doing useless things
spookily (adv.): mysteriously

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. What is the mother's first impression of the daughter as she appears in the restaurant?
   i. The daughter looked healthier and confident.
   ii. The daughter looked thinner, with a dramatic presence.
   iii. The daughter is confused and clumsy.
   iv. The daughter acts cold and rude toward her mother.

b. The daughter's clothing and disposition most likely symbolize-
   i. Rejection of tradition
   ii. Transition into maturity
   iii. Immersion in stylized lifestyle
   iv. Longing of the childhood

c. "My blighted child, this wary aristocratic mole" reveals the speaker's
   i. Admiration for the daughter's independence
   ii. Confusion about her daughter's beauty
   iii. Dislike of her daughter's pride
   iv. Concern and sorrow over her daughter's choice

d. The mother's tone in the poem can best be said as:
   i. Disconnected and indifferent ii. Satirical and mocking
   iii. Loving but disapproving iv. Joyful and congratulating

e. The daughter's comment, "one really should try the fruit here," at the end of the poem is best interpreted as:
   i. a true advice to enjoy the fruit
   ii. offensive disregard to the mother
   iii. her attempt to change the subject playfully
   iv. her excuse to pay the bill

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What is the daughter's opinion of the tourists who visit the gallery?
b. How does the daughter describe her artist partner friend?
c. How does the daughter react to the food during the meal?
d. What does the mother think about the daughter's behavior?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. Who is portrayed as modern Persephone in the poem and how does she differ from the traditional one?
b. Unlike the mythical Persephone, why doesn't the modern daughter want to go back with her mother?
c. How does the poet depict the effects of consumerism in the poem? Explain with examples.
d. Critically analyze Dove's ideas on the generational divide and the loss of innocence in modern times.
e. How does the poem explore the postmodern themes of fragmented relationships? Discuss.

Project Work

Suppose you are a mother whose daughter/son lives in the city for her/his education. You have noticed that s/he spends a lot of time on social media and seems emotionally distant from the family. As a concerned mother, write a heartfelt letter to your daughter/son expressing your hopes for her/his future. Your letter should reflect the values of a Nepali family and the genuine feelings of a mother. Share your letter with the class.

Home They Brought Her Warrior Dead

Before You Read

a. What role does silence play in dealing with sorrow?

b. Imagine a soldier who has passed away, what might the family feel?

Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809–1892), born in 1809, in England, was one of the most recognized poets of the Victorian era. He served as the poet Laureate of Great Britain and Ireland from 1850 until his death in 1892. Known for his rich language and deep emotional insight, Tennyson's poetry often explored themes of *loss, heroism, nature*, and *human spirit*. His style is characterized by its lyrical qualities, narrative structure, and use of traditional poetic forms. His works, such as *In Memoriam A.H.H. (*written in 1833, published in 1842*)*, *Ulysses (1842),* and *The Charge of the Light Brigade (1854)* reflect the themes of personal mourning, restless human spirit, perseverance and the desire for meaning of life beyond the ordinary boundaries.

In the poem *Home They Brought Her Warrior Dead***,** Tennyson portrays a deeply emotional scene in which a soldier's lifeless body is brought home to his grieving wife. The poem powerfully captures the theme of restrained grief and the healing power of maternal love.

Home they brought her warrior dead:
She nor swoon'd nor utter'dcry:
All her maidens, watching, said,
"She must weep or she will die."

Then they praised him, soft and low,
Call'd him worthy to be loved,
Truest friend and noblest foe;
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,
Lightly to the warrior stepped,
Took the face-cloth from the face;
Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Set his child upon her knee—
Like summer tempest came her tears—
"Sweet my child, I live for thee."

Glossary and Notes

call'd (*v.*):	called
foe (*n.*):	enemy
maiden (*n.*):	girl
swoon'd (swooned) (*v.*):	fainted
tempest (*n.*):	storm
thee (*pron.*):	old form of 'you'
utter'd (uttered) (*v.*):	pronounced or spoken

Ballad: A ballad is a type of narrative poem that tells a story in a simple and rhythmic style. It originated in the oral tradition, where stories were passed down through song and recitation. Ballads often deal with themes like love, death, betrayal, bravery, and the supernatural. They are usually written in quatrains (four-line stanzas) with a regular rhyme scheme (often ABCB or ABAB) and a steady meter, typically alternating lines of iambic tetrameter and trimeter. Ballads often include repetition or refrain to enhance their musical quality and memorability.

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. What is the woman's initial reaction when her husband's dead body is brought home?

i. She weeps, beating her chest.

ii. She cries loudly and faints.

iii. She neither faints nor cries.

iv. She becomes excited.

b. What did the people around the dead warrior do?

i. They praised the woman's dead husband.

ii. They uncovered the husband's face.

iii. They spoke softly about his enemies.

iv. They started weeping.

c. What does the nurse finally do to make the woman react?

i. She scolds her dead husband.

ii. She sings a lullaby.

iii. She places the child on her lap.

iv. She praises the husband's bravery.

d. What does the woman say after she begins to cry?

i. "I cannot live without my husband."

ii. "My sweet child, I live for you."

iii. "Why did you leave me?"

iv. "You are a noble warrior."

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. Why is the woman non-reactive at first and why do you think she burst into tears later?

b. Examine the role of silence and speech in the given poem.

c. How does Tennyson use the contrasting reactions of the widow and people around her to explore the theme of grief?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. Closely observe the role of silence and speech in the given poem. How does Tennyson use the contrasting reactions of the widow and people around her to explore the theme of grief?

b. Discuss the woman's emotional transformation after she sees her child?

c. Is suppressing grief beneficial or harmful to our mental and emotional well-being? Present your critical perspectives.

d. Explain the following lines:

"Sweet my child, I live for thee."

Rose a nurse of ninety years,

Set his child upon her knee—

Like summer tempest came her tears—

e. How are tragic deaths reacted to in our community? Write a paragraph explaining the mourning situation that you have witnessed.

Project Work

Prepare a short profile of Alfred Lord Tennyson by consulting various online and offline sources and then present it in the class.

In Memory of WB Yeats

Before You Read

a. Can you think of a well-known person like artist, writer, leader, etc. who passed away but left a lasting impact in human society?

b. In your opinion, what makes someone's work or contribution memorable after their death?

W.H. Auden (1907–1973) was a British-American poet, playwright, and essayist, a prominent figure in 20th century literature. He was known for his versatile and inventive poetry, often exploring moral, political, social, religious and psychological themes. Auden's work, ranging from short poems to book-length verse, incorporated a vast range of knowledge and was characterized by his intellect and wit. In 1939 he moved to the United States from Britain where he was born and became the U.S. citizen in 1946. His long poem *The Age of Anxiety* examines cultural and psychological themes. It earned him the *Pulitzer Prize for Poetry* in 1948.

When W.H. Auden wrote *In Memory of W.B. Yeats* in February 1939, he broke away from the conventions of traditional elegies. Rather than simply lamenting Yeats's death or listing cherished memories, Auden used the poem to explore the scope of Yeats's life, work, and heritage.

I

He disappeared in the dead of winter:
The brooks were frozen, the airports almost deserted,
And snow disfigured the public statues;
The mercury sank in the mouth of the dying day.
What instruments we have agree
The day of his death was a dark cold day.

Far from his illness
The wolves ran on through the evergreen forests,
The peasant river was untempted by the fashionable quays;

By mourning tongues
The death of the poet was kept from his poems.

But for him it was his last afternoon as himself,
An afternoon of nurses and rumours;
The provinces of his body revolted,
The squares of his mind were empty,
Silence invaded the suburbs,
The current of his feeling failed; he became his admirers.

Now he is scattered among a hundred cities
And wholly given over to unfamiliar affections,
To find his happiness in another kind of wood
And be punished under a foreign code of conscience.
The words of a dead man
Are modified in the guts of the living.

But in the importance and noise of to-morrow
When the brokers are roaring like beasts on the floor of the bourse,
And the poor have the sufferings to which they are fairly accustomed
And each in the cell of himself is almost convinced of his freedom
A few thousand will think of this day
As one thinks of a day when one did something slightly unusual.

What instruments we have agree
The day of his death was a dark cold day.

II

You were silly like us; your gift survived it all:
The parish of rich women, physical decay,
Yourself. Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.
Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still,
For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
In the valley of its making where executives
Would never want to tamper, flows on south
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,
Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives,
A way of happening, a mouth.

III

Earth, receive an honoured guest:
William Yeats is laid to rest.
Let the Irish vessel lie
Emptied of its poetry.

In the nightmare of the dark
All the dogs of Europe bark,
And the living nations wait,
Each sequestered in its hate;

Intellectual disgrace
Stares from every human face,
And the seas of pity lie
Locked and frozen in each eye.

Follow, poet, follow right
To the bottom of the night,
With your unconstraining voice
Still persuade us to rejoice;

With the farming of a verse
Make a vineyard of the curse,
Sing of human unsuccess
In a rapture of distress;

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise.

Glossary

accustomed (*v.*): familiar with something or used to it due to regular experience.

constraining (*v.)*: limiting or restricting

disgrace (*n.)*: loss of respect or honor, or something that causes shame

executive (*n.*): high-ranking official in charge of making decisions in organizations or businesses

invade (*v.*): to enter a place, often forcefully or without permission, especially with an army

nightmare (*n.)*: a frightening dream or a very bad experience

parish (*n.*): a small local church community or the area served by a church

persuade (*v.*): to convince someone to do or believe something

quays (*n.*): structures built along the edge of a river, sea, or harbor where ships can load or unload cargo

ranche (*n.*): large farms, (especially in the us), often isolated area far from the city where animals like cattle or sheep are raised

rejoice (*v.*): to feel or show great happiness or joy

revolted (*v.*): felt intense disgust or rebelled against something

sequestered (*v.)*: a deliberate withdrawal or separation from each other, due to the lack of unity or mutual understanding

suburb (*n.*): residential area located on the outskirts of a city

untempted (*adj.*): not attracted or influenced by temptation or something appealing

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. In the poem, Auden examines the ...

i. Sorrow of Yeats's death

ii. Diverse aspects of Yeats's legacy

iii. Nightmare like loss

iv. Illness of the dead poet

b. W.B. Yeats died in ...

i. Spring ii. Summer

iii. Spring iv. Winter

c. "The death of the poet was kept from his poems." This line suggests …

i. forgotten poet

ii. silent poetry

iii. abandoned work

iv. his presence in his poems

d. How does the poem view the work of art?

i. It discusses social and intellectual validity of the work of art.

ii. It says poetry offers practical solutions to the problems.

iii. It suggests that poetry directly changes history.

iv. It makes the writer isolated.

e. The third part of the poem … .

i. provides introduction to Yeats

ii. explores what elegy is

iii. reflects on Yeats's life from Auden's perspective

iv. provides meditation to the nature of poetry

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. According to Auden, why is Yeats a significant person?

b. In which season, did Yeats die? How does Auden describe the day Yeats died?

c. What does Auden mean by 'the provinces of his body revolted'?

d. Is death the end of a person in every way?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. How does the poet contrast W.B. Yeats' influence during his lifetime and after his death?

b. How does Auden reflect on the power and limitations of poetry in the line, "For poetry makes nothing happen"? Analyze it.

c. What do you think makes the poet sad— the loss of Yeats as a person or as a poet? Justify your answer?

d. How does Auden incorporate elements of a traditional elegy in *In Memory of W.B. Yeats*? Discuss with reference to the tone, structure, and themes of the poem.

e. Poets die as others do but poetry does not die, and neither does mankind. Discuss the statement in relevance to Auden's elegy *In Memory of W.B. Yeats.*

Project Work

Imagine a renowned Nepali literary figure, poet, musician, artist, or public personality has passed away. As a student of social science, you are deeply touched by his/her contributions to your society. Write an elegy**,** either in poem or prose form, expressing how the life of the person and his works have influenced the people around you even after his/her death. Your task should reflect how artists remain alive through their art**,** like Yeats in Auden's elegy.

On the Grasshopper and Cricket

Before You Read

a. What sounds of nature do you hear in summer and winter? How do these sounds change with the seasons?

b. Insects like grasshoppers and crickets are often overlooked. Why do you think a poet might choose them as symbols in a poem about nature?

John Keats (1795–1821) was an English Romantic lyric poet who devoted his short life to the perfection of a poetry marked by vivid imagery and great sensuous appeal. Born in London, he was a prolific writer who used familiar forms to make his poetry accessible. Though trained as an apothecary-surgeon, he chose to dedicate his life to poetry. He attempted to express a philosophy through classical legend. His poetry is characterized by several features that reflect his romantic sensibility such as pursuit of beauty. He focused his attention on understanding and exploring beauty in various forms such as nature, art, mythology and human relationships. His major works are *Ode to a Nightingale, Ode on a Grecian Urn,* and *To Autumn* which are masterpieces of lyric poetry.

In *On the Grasshopper and Cricket,* Keats uses the grasshopper and cricket as the symbols of summer and winter highlighting how the sounds of both insects contribute to the 'poetry of earth' even as seasons change. Their songs ensure that the earth's music never ceases.

The poetry of earth is never dead:
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead;

That is the Grasshopper's–he takes the lead
In summer luxury, –he has never done
With his delights; for when tired out with fun
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.

The poetry of earth is ceasing never:
On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,

And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

Glossary and Notes

ceasing (*v.*): stopping

hedge (*n.*): a row of small trees or bushes

mead (*n.)*: meadow, grassland or a pasture

shrills (*v.*): makes a high-pitched piercing sound

weed (*n.*): unwanted plants

wrought (*v.*): made, created

***Sonnet**:* A sonnet is a fourteen-line poem, traditionally written in iambic pentameter that follows a specific rhyme scheme and explores themes such as love, nature, mortality, or philosophy. Petrarchan sonnet, which is also known as an Italian sonnet has a rhyme scheme of *abba abbacdecde* (octave and sestet) and Shakespearean sonnet with a rhyme scheme of *ababcdcdefef gg* (three quatrains and a final rhymed couplet).

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. What happens to the birds in the heat of summer?

i. They fly to cooler places. ii. They sing loudly.

iii. They eat fruits of trees. iv. They rest on the ground.

b. Who continues to make joyful sounds during the hot summer?

i. The cricket ii. The cuckoo

iii. The nightingale iv. The grasshopper

c. Where does the grasshopper rest when it is tired?

i. On a tree branch ii. Under a rock

iii. Beneath some pleasant weed iv. In a burrow

d. In winter, what breaks the silence of the cold evening?

i. The wind ii. The cricket's song

iii. The rustling leaves iv. The hoot of an owl

e. The poem 'On the Grasshopper and Cricket' is a …

i. ballad ii. elegy

iii. sonnet iv. epic

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. How does the cricket's song in winter connect to the grasshopper's in summer?

b. What mood does the grasshopper's song evoke and why?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. How does the poem 'On the Grasshopper and Cricket' reflect Keats's appreciation for nature? Write your perspectives.

b. Why does the poet choose the grasshopper and the cricket to represent the changing seasons? Present your ideas to support your answer.

c. Analyze how Keats uses personification in the poem to bring elements of nature to life.

d. In what ways can the poet's idea be related to the environmental issues we face today?

e. Do you think Keats' portrayal of the grasshopper and cricket can be viewed as a metaphor for human life? How?

Project Work

Visit possible online platforms and collect the other poetry composed by John Keats. Select some interesting poetry from the collection. Read them extensively and prepare a short note about the main foci of those poetry. Also present your note in the class.

Lady Lazarus

Before You Read

a. Why might someone describe life's challenges or personal struggles as a form of art?

b. What do you think motivates people to confront pain or trauma and emerge stronger than before?

Sylvia Plath (1932–1963) was an American poet, novelist, and short story writer, widely known for her confessional style of writing. Her work often explores themes of *mental illness, depression*, and *the struggles of identity,* often tied to her personal experiences. Plath's most famous work, *The Bell Jar*, reflects her life and struggles. Her poetry collection *Ariel* is considered one of her greatest works, and her poems continue to resonate with readers for their emotional intensity and vivid imagery.

Lady Lazarus reveals the themes of *suffering, resilience,* and *complex relationship between life and death*, showing Plath's intricate self-awareness and dark wit. It critiques the societal structures that limit women and their experiences, particularly in the context of a male-dominated world. The speaker feels controlled and objectified by men, highlighting the lack of autonomy women often face.

I have done it again.
One year in every ten
I manage it —

A sort of walking miracle, my skin
Bright as a Nazi lampshade,
My right foot

A paperweight,
My face a featureless, fine
Jew linen.

Peel off the napkin
O my enemy.
Do I terrify? —

The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?
The sour breath
Will vanish in a day.

Soon, soon the flesh
The grave cave ate will be
At home on me

And I a smiling woman.
I am only thirty.
And like the cat I have nine times to die.

This is Number Three.
What a trash
To annihilate each decade.

What a million filaments.
The peanut-crunching crowd
Shoves in to see

Them unwrap me hand and foot —
The big strip tease.
Gentlemen, ladies

These are my hands
My knees.
I may be skin and bone,

Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.
The first time it happened I was ten.
It was an accident.

The second time I meant
To last it out and not come back at all.
I rocked shut

As a seashell.
They had to call and call
And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.

Dying
Is an art, like everything else.
I do it exceptionally well.

I do it so it feels like hell.
I do it so it feels real.
I guess you could say I've a call.

It's easy enough to do it in a cell.
It's easy enough to do it and stay put.
It's the theatrical

Comeback in broad day
To the same place, the same face, the same brute
Amused shout:

'A miracle!'
That knocks me out.
There is a charge

For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge
For the hearing of my heart —
It really goes.

And there is a charge, a very large charge
For a word or a touch
Or a bit of blood

Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.
So, so, Herr Doktor.
So, Herr Enemy.

I am your opus,
I am your valuable,
The pure gold baby

That melts to a shriek.
I turn and burn.
Do not think I underestimate your great concern.

Ash, ash —
You poke and stir.
Flesh, bone, there is nothing there —

A cake of soap,
A wedding ring,
A gold filling.

Herr God, Herr Lucifer
Beware
Beware.

Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.

Glossary and Notes

annihilate (*v.*): to destroy completely

brute (*n.)*: a cruel, harsh force

Herr (*n.*): German for 'mister' or 'sir,'

lampshade (*n.*): in the context of the poem, it refers to the infamous nazi atrocities, symbolizing human suffering, dehumanization, and fragility

linen (*n.)*: fiber made from flax plant

Lucifer (*n.)*: satan, leader of the devils

opus (*n.*): a significant work

paperweight (*n.*): a small heavy object used to hold papers in place

peel off : to remove or strip away; symbolically, to reveal deeper truths

poke and stir: to disturb

shriek (*n.*): a high-pitched cry, often of pain or fear, symbolizing suffering

strip tease: a performance where someone removes clothing

Allusion: An allusion is a literary device in which a writer refers indirectly to a person, event, place, or work of literature, often to enrich the meaning or context of the text. In *Lady Lazarus* the title itself is an allusion to the biblical story of Lazarus of Bethany, who was raised from the dead by Jesus. By invoking this reference, Plath suggests a theme of resurrection, linking the speaker's repeated struggles with death and rebirth to the biblical Lazarus's miraculous revival.

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alernatives.

a. The Poem *Lady Lazarus* deals with the subject of ...

i. romantic love ii. rebirth and resurrection

iii. war and patriotism iv. childhood innocence

b. The speaker compares her skin to "a Nazi lampshade." This is an example of…

i. respect to tradition

ii. biblical reference

iii. historical reference

iv. feminine context

c. In the poem, the act of dying is portrayed as …

i. a spiritual journey

ii. an accidental event

iii. a skillful and artistic performance

iv. a terror

d. What does the 'peanut-crunching crowd represent in the poem?

i. Poet's supportive family

ii. Curious spectators who belittle her suffering

iii. Theatre audience

iv. People who like peanut

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What does the speaker mean when she says, 'Out of the ash, I rise with my red hair'?

b. Where and how does she rise from?

c. What historical references appear in the poem?

d. What kinds of images does the poem use to talk about the death?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. How does the poem show that some people are more interested in watching others suffering than helping them? How does this reflect the mob behavior?

b. How does *Lady Lazarus* explore feminist themes like female power, control over one's body, and the struggle of being a woman in a male-dominated society?

c. What is the tone of the speaker when addressing figures like 'Herr Doktor' and 'Herr Enemy'? What does this reveal about her attitude toward authority or power?

d. How does *Lady Lazarus* use mythological references and gendered imagery to explore the speaker's identity and defiance against societal expectations?

e. Sylvia Plath's use of confessionalism in *Lady Lazarus* deepens the exploration of themes such as identity and resilience? Present your critical perspectives.

Project Work

Reflect on a personal or observed experience of emotional struggle or resilience. Create a poem or story or essay showing how people rise from pain, inspired by themes in Lady Lazarus. Share your work in the class.

Still I Rise

Before You Read

a. What does the phrase 'raising above challenges' mean to you, and how do you think it relates to self-confidence and resilience?

b. How might poetry be used as a way to confront injustice between individuals or communities?

Maya Angelou (1928–2014) was an African American poet, author, activist, and performer. Known for her autobiographical works and poetry, she addresses the themes of *identity, resilience, racism* and *social justice*. Angelou's life was marked by extraordinary versatility. She was also a singer, dancer, and the first Black woman to write and present one of her poems at the U.S. presidential inauguration in 1993 (for Bill Clinton). Her memoir, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, is a seminal work in American literature, showcasing her struggles and triumphs as a Black woman. *National Medal of Arts*, *the Presidential Medal of Freedom*, and *multiple Grammy Awards* are some reputed awards she won.

Still I Rise (1978) is a powerful poem of resilience and self-empowerment. It projects the confidence and defiance, encouraging black women to stand up and rise above the subjugation and discrimination.

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Glossary and Notes

beset (*v.*): surrounded by continuous trouble

haughtiness (*n.*): arrogance or prideful attitude

leaping (*v.*): jumping or springing quickly or with force

rooted (*v.*): firmly established

sassiness (*n.*): arrogant self-confidence; disrespectful confidence

swelling (*v.*): expanding or increasing in size or volume

tide (*n.*): the rise and fall of the sea or a powerful surge of emotion or events

trod (*v.*): walked on or over; crushed

welling (*v.*): rising up to the surface and spilling or be about to spill

wondrously (*adj.*): amazingly or extraordinarily; inspiring wonder

Refrain: A refrain refers to a phrase, line, or group of lines that is regularly repeated throughout a poem or song, typically at the end of stanzas or between sections. Refrains can be exact repetitions or slightly varied, and they serve several important purposes in literary works. It generally underscores the central theme of the poem. It works as the connecting thread between the stanzas which often creates a rhythm or musicality in poem.

In *Still I Rise,* the phrase 'I rise' functions as a refrain, which emphasizes the poet's determination and resilience.

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. The line "But still, like dust, I'll rise" suggests that the poet ... .

i. feels invisible like dust
ii. is light like dust
iii. will always rise no matter how she is treated
iv. wants to disappear

b. The poet refuses to be … .

i. silenced ii. voiced
iii. Black iv. arrogant

c. What is the effect of the repeated phrase 'I rise'?

i. It slows down the poem.
ii. It emphasizes the speaker's determination and strength.

iii. It shows confusion.

iv. It creates a musical rhythm only.

d. What literary device is used in the line 'I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide'?

i. Simile

ii. Hyperbole

iii. Metaphor

iv. Alliteration

e. What historical context is important to understand the poem 'Still I Rise'?

i. Ancient mythology

ii. Colonization in Africa

iii. The history of slavery and racism

iv. The life of royalty

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What does the poem *Still I Rise* mainly criticize?

b. How does the speaker react to the hatefulness of people?

c. What natural phenomena are mentioned in the third stanza to signify resilience and hope?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. How does the poem explore the themes of ethnicity, identity, and alienation, particularly in the context of overcoming historical oppression?

b. Why do you think the poet uses natural imagery, such as 'moon,' 'sun,' 'tides' and 'air' to signify her determination?

c. How does the poem express the speaker's demand for equality? Relate your answer in relation to racism, feminism and historical injustice?

d. Discuss the irony used in the poem.

e. Evaluate how the speaker's tone of defiance, pride, and sarcasm contribute to the poem's message?

Project Work

Prepare a visual piece (such as poster, sketch, collage or digital art, etc.) that symbolize resilience, dignity, and rising above oppression. Use symbols like dust, sun, tide, chains, wings, footprints, or flames to show liberation. You may include a photo of yourself or someone you admire decorated with symbolic elements.

United Fruit Co.

Before You Read

a. Do multinational corporations influence the local culture and economy? Share your ideas.

b. What happens to the lives of ordinary people when political and economic powers control poor countries' natural resources?

Pablo Neruda (1904–1973) was a renowned Chilean poet as well as worked a diplomat. His work is celebrated for its *passionate lyricism, vivid imagery*, and deep engagement with *social* and *political* themes. Neruda wrote in a range of styles, from romantic love poetry to historical epics and political manifestos. Neruda often used his poetry as a tool to critique imperialism and advocate for social justice. His works, such as *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair* and *General Song*, are popular worldwide.

Pablo Neruda's *The United Fruit Co*. is a critique of the U.S. imperialism and its exploitation in Latin America. Neruda uses vivid and brutal imagery to convey the exploitation and dehumanization caused by the United Fruit Company in Latin America.

When the trumpet sounded, it was
all prepared on the earth,
the Jehovah parcelled out the earth
to Coca Cola, Inc., Anaconda,
Ford Motors, and other entities:
The Fruit Company, Inc.
reserved for itself the most succulent,
the central coast of my own land,
the delicate waist of America.
It rechristened its territories
as the 'Banana Republics'
and over the sleeping dead,
over the restless heroes
who brought about the greatness, the liberty and the flags,
it established the comic opera:

abolished the independencies,
presented crowns of Caesar,
unsheathed envy, attracted
the dictatorship of the flies,
Trujillo flies, Tacho flies,
Carias flies, Martines flies,
Ubico flies, damp flies
of modest blood and marmalade,
drunken flies who zoom
over the ordinary graves,
circus flies, wise flies
well trained in tyranny.

Among the blood-thirsty flies
the Fruit Company lands its ships,
taking off the coffee and the fruit;
the treasure of our submerged
territories flow as thougon plates into the ships.

Meanwhile Indians are falling
into the sugared chasms
of the harbours, wrapped
for burials in the mist of the dawn:
a body rolls, a thing
that has no name, a fallen cipher,
a cluster of the dead fruit
thrown down on the dump.

Glossary and Notes

a**massed (v.)**:	accumulated over a period of time
banners (n.):	long strips of cloth bearing a slogan or design, carried in demonstrations or processions
baptized (*v.*):	given a new name
bloodthirsty (adj.):	eager to shed blood or engage in violence

corpse (n.):	a dead body, usually that of a human being
imperial (adj.):	relating to an empire
marmalade (n.):	a jam like preserve made from citrus fruits
opera buffa :	a comic opera (usually in italian), especially one with characters drawn from everyday life
s**ubmissive (adj.)**:	ready to conform to the authority of others
trumpet (n.):	a brass musical instrument with a flared bell and bright, penetrating tone
tyranny (n.):	cruel and oppressive government or rule

Satire: Satire uses humor or irony to criticize and expose the flaws, vices, and absurdities of individuals, societies, or institutions. The purpose of satire is often to provoke thought, encourage change, and call attention to societal issues by mocking them to highlight their consequences. In Pablo Neruda's poem, *United Fruit Co.*, satire is used to expose and criticize the exploitation of Latin American countries by multinational corporations, particularly the United Fruit Company, and the political corruption that supports such exploitation. The opening lines, *Jehovah gave the world to Coca-Cola Inc., Anaconda, Ford Motors, and other corporations,* mocks the idea that these corporations are somehow divinely designed to control the world. This is ironic because such exploitation is far from divine or just.

Comprehension

A. **Choose the correct alternatives.**

a. The poem 'United Fruit Co.' is a …

i. rhyming poem ii. a satire

iii. sonnet iv. allusion

b. The poem basically talks about the condition of …

i. Africa ii. North America

iii. Latin America iv. Indians

c. In the poem, 'flies' have been used as a …

i. metaphor ii. simile

iii. allusion iv. personification

d. The poem highlights the corruption of …

i. insensitive and corrupt international companies

ii. Jehovah's justice system

iii. colonized countries

iv. banana selling companies

B. **Write short answers to the following questions.**

a. What term does the poet use to describe the countries dominated by the United Fruit Company?

b. How does the poet describe the fate of the indigenous people in the poem?

c. What does the term 'opera buffa' signify in the context of the poem?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. The imagery used in the poem reflects the parasitic nature of dictators? What is that imagery? Explain.

b. How does the writer expose the oppression inflicted by powerful ruling nations on their colonies?

c. Imperial powers often claim that they bring civilization and progress, to 'less developed' nations. How does Niruda critique the imperial control of tyrants in the poem? Discuss the moral contradictions of the multinational powers.

d. In what ways does the poem remain relevant in reflecting the social and economic realities of the modern world?

Project Work

Imagine you are a young Nepali citizen who has gone abroad for a better life because of lack of jobs and other problems at home land. Write a first-person story or monologue describing your experiences, the problems you faced before leaving, and the challenges and hopes in your new life.

Five Haikus

Before You Read

a. What do you know about poetry that uses very few words?

b. Can fewer words still create powerful images or emotions?

Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694) is one of Japan's most celebrated poets and the master of haiku, a traditional form of Japanese poetry. Born in Ueno, Iga province in Japan, Bashō became renowned for his ability to capture profound meaning and natural beauty in just 17 syllables. He revolutionized haiku by infusing it with depth, subtle emotion, and a focus on the transient nature of life, reflecting the Zen Buddhist philosophy which he deeply embraced. Bashō drew inspiration from nature and human experiences, which he immortalized in works like *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. His legacy endures as a cornerstone of Japanese literature and poetry.

This collection of haiku showcases the beauty of simplicity and the depth of human emotions, expressed through vivid imagery and nature-inspired reflections.

Basho's Death Poem

sick on my journey
only my dreams wander
these desolate moors

By the Old Temple

by the old temple
peach blossoms;
a man treading rice

I'm a Wanderer

I'm a wanderer
so let that be my name-

the first winter rain

The Butterfly

The Butterfly is perfuming
Its wings in the scent
Of the orchid.

The Whole Family

the whole family
all with white hair and canes
visiting graves

Glossary and Notes

cane (*n*):	walking sticks used for support, often by elderly people
desolate (*adj.*):	empty, barren land without life
grave (*n.*):	burial place for the dead, often marked by stones or monuments
moor (*n.*):	open, uncultivated land, often with low vegetation
orchid (*n.*):	a type of exotic and beautiful flowering plant often associated with luxury or delicacy
perfuming (*v.*):	spreading a pleasant fragrance or smell
treading (*v.*):	walking on or pressing something underfoot
wanderer (*n.*):	someone who travels aimlessly from place to place without a fixed home

Haiku: A haiku is a traditional form of Japanese poetry that consists of three lines with a specific syllable pattern: five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third. It is known for its brevity and focus on capturing a single moment, emotion, or observation, often related to nature or the seasons. However, modern haikus sometimes deviate from this form.

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. What awareness is conveyed in *Basho's Death Poem*?

i. Awareness of Joy
ii. Awareness of mortality
iii. Hopeful renewal
iv. Anger at fate

b. In *By the Old Temple*, what contrast is presented?

i. Youth and old age
ii. Daily life and nature
iii. Religion and flowers
iv. Morning and evening

c. In the haiku *I'm a Wanderer*, the poet accepts ...

i. Sudden misfortune
ii. His nomadic life
iii. Beginning of spring
iv. A spiritual awakening

d. What literary device is used in the haiku *The Butterfly*?

i. Overemphasis
ii. Personification
iii. Irony
iv. Allegory

e. Which haiku best expresses a moment of sensory beauty in nature?

i. Basho's Death Poem
ii. The Whole Family
iii. The Butterfly
iv. I'm a Wanderer

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. How does the poet describe his physical condition in the first Haiku?

b. Which two specific things are mentioned near the old temple?

c. What is the butterfly doing in the scent of the orchid?

d. Why do the people who visit the grave share a common characteristic?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. Discuss how the idea of transience is portrayed in at least three of the haikus from the collection.

b. Can you guess what does 'desolate moors' symbolize in the context of the poet's journey?

c. In what ways does the meeting of the butterfly and the orchid highlight the transient beauty found in nature?

d. How does the image of an elderly family visiting graves reflect the natural cycle of life and death?

e. Discuss the significance of the symbols and images used in the collection of haikus?

Project Work

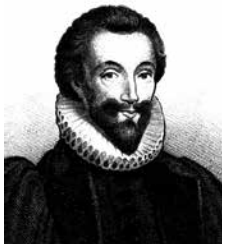
Compose 3–5 original haikus that reflect your life, environment, and emotions. Follow the 5–7–5 syllable structure. Also present in the class.

The Flea

Before You Read

a. What do you think might be the symbolic meaning of a flea in the poem?

b. Can something very small or ordinary (like an insect) be used to express big emotions or arguments? Give your perspective.



John Donne (1572–1631) was an English poet, priest, and scholar, known for his complex, intellectual, and often provocative poetry. He is regarded as one of the leading figures of the Metaphysical poets, a group recognized for their use of elaborate metaphors, wit, and philosophical themes. Donne's early works were largely secular and focused on love and relationships, while his later works, after he became a clergyman, turned to religious themes. His poetry blends passion, wit, and deep intellectual engagement, making him one of the most innovative and influential poets of the English Renaissance.

The Flea is one of John Donne's most famous metaphysical poems, where he uses a flea as a clever metaphor for love and intimacy. The poem blends wit, eroticism, and metaphysical philosophy, using the small creature as a vehicle to challenge social and moral conventions regarding love and sexuality.

Mark but this flea, and mark in this,
How little that which thou deniest me is;
It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,
And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;
Thou knowest that this cannot be said
A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead.
Yet this enjoys before it woo,
And pampered, swells with one blood made of two,
And this, alas, is more than we would do.

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
Where we almost, yea more than married are.
This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;
Though parents grudge, and you, w'are met.
And cloistered in these living walls of jet.
Though use make you apt to kill me,
Let not to that self murder added be,
And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.

Cruel and sudden, hast thou since
Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence?
Wherein could this flea guilty be,
Except in that drop which it sucked from thee?
Yet thou triumph'st, and sayest that thou
Find'st not thy self, nor me the weaker now,
'Tis true; then learn how false, fears be;
Just so much honor, when thou yieldst to me,
Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee.

Glossary and Notes

apt (adj.): likely or inclined to do something
cloistered (*v.*): secluded or confined within a small space
grudge (*v.*): a persistent feeling of resentment or ill will
jet (*n.*): a type of lignite, a shiny black mineral
maidenhead (*n.*): a woman's virginity
mingled (*v.*): combined or mixed together
pampered (*v.*): treated with excessive care and attention
purpled (*v.*): turned purple, usually referring to the appearance of blood
sacrilege (*n.*): the violation or profanation of something sacred
self murder (*n.*): another term for suicide
sucked (*v.*): drank or took in liquid, especially blood
swells (*v.*): grows larger or more prominent
woo (*v.*): seek the affection of someone romantically

Metaphysical poetry: It is a distinctive form of poetry characterized by intellectual wit, complex imagery, and philosophical themes. Subjects like love, religion, death, and the nature of existence is explored in metaphysical poems. Poets like John Donne, George Herbert, and Andrew Marvell, used conceits, elaborate and often surprising comparisons, to draw connections between seemingly unrelated things. For example, a flea might be used to represent the union of two lovers, or a compass to symbolize spiritual connection.

In *The Flea,* 'flea' as an extended metaphor, which creates surprising connections between seemingly unrelated things. The flea, a tiny insect, becomes a symbol of the mingled blood, of the speaker and his beloved. The speaker argues that the physical connection between the two inside the flea is more intimate than what society thinks is necessary for sexual or romantic union.

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. The argument the speaker makes by referring to the mingling of their blood in the flea is ...

i. They should avoid each other.

ii. They are already united in a way.

iii. The flea is dangerous.

iv. She should marry someone else.

b. The word *maidenhead* in the poem means …

i. a young girl's head ii. a symbol of courage

iii. virginity iv. honor

c. What tone best describes the speaker's approach throughout the poem?

i. Bitter and angry ii. Logical and persuasive

iii. Detached and cold iv. Sad and hopeless

d. What do the 'three lives' in the flea refer to?

i. The speaker, the woman, and their child

ii. The speaker, the woman, and the flea

iii. Love, honor, and religion

iv. Three stages of life

e. What best describes the theme of the poem?

i. Death and fate ii. Religious devotion

iii. Persuasion through wit and reason iv. Political rebellion

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What is the central symbol in the poem?

b. What argument does the poet make to dismiss the sense of shame to justify his love?

c. Why does the speaker refer to killing the flea as 'sin', 'self-murder' and 'sacrilege'?

d. What does *living walls of jet* in the poem mean?

e. What seems to be the speaker's purpose in the poem?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. Examine the speaker's tone and argumentative style throughout the poem. How does the poet combine logic, wit, and emotion to convince the woman?

b. What is the symbolic significance of the flea in the poem? How does it serve as a vehicle for the speaker's argument about love and intimacy?

c. In the second stanza, the speaker refers to the flea as a 'marriage bed' and 'marriage temple'. How do these metaphors challenge traditional views on relationships and sexuality?

d. How does the speaker use the death of the flea to address fears about losing virginity or reputation?

e. Do you think the speaker in the poem genuinely believes in the argument he is making, or is he using the flea to manipulate his lover? Give reasons.

f. In your opinion, how does the speaker use humor and wit to challenge or undermine the conventional ideas about love, marriage, and chastity?

Project Work

Compose a poem about a simple object from everyday life, for example, a flower, kite, tea cup, garland, or anything familiar to you. Use that object as a symbol to express a bigger idea such as love, freedom, tradition, rules, or emotions. Like the flea in John Donne's poem, let your object carry deeper meaning. You can write in free verse and use your imagination to make your poem powerful and personal. Finally, share your poem in the classroom.

This is Just to Say

Before You Read

a. What would you do if someone used or ate something you were saving for yourself?

b. In your opinion, which qualities make an apology meaningful?

c. Why do you think people write notes or messages for everyday things, even when they could just say them aloud?

William Carlos Williams (1883–1963) was an influential American poet closely associated with the modernist and imagist movements. A practicing physician, Williams had a deep appreciation for everyday life, which often inspired his poetry. He grew up in New Jersey and received his high school education there. He was a pediatrician by profession.

This is Just to Say is a brief, conversational poem written in 1934. Presented as an apology note, it humorously describes the speaker confessing to eating plums saved for someone else's breakfast.

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

Glossary and Notes

forgive (*v.*): to stop feeling angry or resentful toward someone for a mistake, offense, or wrong they have done

icebox (*n.*): an old-fashioned term for a refrigerator; it refers to a box used to keep food cold, typically with ice

plum (*n.*): a type of small, round, and juicy fruit with smooth skin

Imagism as a Literary Movement: Imagism is a literary movement that emphasizes clarity, precision, and economy of language, focusing on creating vivid, concrete images that evoke sensory experiences. In imagist poetry, the poet avoids abstract ideas, instead uses simple and direct language to present an image allowing the readers to interpret its deeper significance.

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. What is the speaker confessing in the poem?

i. That he forgot to buy plums.

ii. That he accidentally spilled juice.

iii. That he ate someone else's plums.

iv. That he had no breakfast.

b. What emotion does the speaker express at the end of the poem?

i. Anger ii. Jealousy

iii. Guilt mixed with pleasure iv. Indifference

c. What is the tone of the poem?

i. Formal and apologetic ii. Lighthearted and apologetic

iii. Harsh and angry iv. Proud and boastful

d. What literary device is most prominent in the poem?

i. Rhyme ii. Simile

iii. Irony iv. Imagery

e. Why is the poem considered a good example of Imagery?

i. It tells us a story.

ii. It uses clear, simple language to describe a small moment vividly.

iii. It contains abstract philosophical ideas.

iv. It follows a strict rhyme scheme and meter.

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What themes does the poem explore, such as temptation, guilt, or human imperfection?

b. The poem is written in a very simple and conversational style. Why do you think the poet chose to write it this way?

c. How does the poet use imagism in the poem?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. Analyze how William Carlos Williams uses everyday language and a simple situation to create emotional depth in the poem.

b. How does structure and form of the poem contribute to its meaning and tone? Consider the line breaks, stanza arrangement, and lack of punctuation.

c. What deeper emotions or human experiences might the poem suggest beyond the simple act of eating plums? How does the poet convey these emotions through his choice of words?

d. Have you ever done something similar to what the speaker describes – taking something you knew someone else was saving? How did you feel about it?

Project Work

Think of an everyday situation where you took or did something that belonged to someone else like eating your brother's momo, using your sister's shawl, or spilling tea on a book. Write a short apology poem (3–4 stanzas) using very simple, everyday language. Don't worry about rhyme or punctuation. Use clear images and honest tone, just like in the poem by Williams that feel real and personal. Share your poem to the class.

She is not Dead

Before You Read

a. What things in life are eternal or unchanging, and why do you consider them as such?

b. How do you think the mind and the heart differ in how they influence our actions or decisions?

Shreedhar Prasad Lohani (b. 1943), born in Kathmandu, Nepal, is a prominent scholar with an MA and PhD in English. He has dedicated much of his career to teaching at Tribhuvan University. Lohani has significantly contributed to the study of English language and literature in Nepal by writing and editing several English textbooks and bilingual dictionaries. His academic work and publications have made him a respected figure in the field of the English language and literature in Nepal.

The poem *She is not Dead* by Lohani celebrates the eternal presence of a loved one. Her desires, passion, and spirit live on beyond death, shining like stars, enduring like diamonds, and echoing in the heart. Love transforms loss into everlasting memory and presence, making her live within the lover forever.

She cannot die.

Your desires lives on
Dressed up for fulfilments;
Mind's not a sieve
It holds all;
Life's feast goes on
No exit past the bend.

The glimmering sunset
Transforms into stars;
Heart's eternal fire
Teases the head's wintry chill;
Undying symphonies get louder.

Infinity is born
In infinite passion's thirst;
A rainbow that never fades
Glints hard like a diamond
In the lover's eyes.

She lives in you.

Glossary and Notes

glint (*v.*): to shine; to gleam

infinity (n.): a concept of something that has no end or limit, often associated with time, space, or quantities.

passion (n.): intense and strong emotion, often related to love, desire, or enthusiasm.

sieve (n.): a tool with small holes used to separate finer particles from coarser ones. in the poem, it metaphorically means something that cannot hold or retain things.

symphony (n.): a complex and harmonious combination of sounds, often referring to orchestral music.

undying (adj.): eternal, never-ending, or incapable of being destroyed.

Metaphor

A metaphor is a literary device where one thing is described as if it were another, highlighting similarities between the two. It directly compares two unrelated things to suggest they share common characteristics, without using words like 'like' or 'as.' Metaphors create vivid imagery and deeper meaning in language. For example: She has a heart of stone, metaphorically means that *She is emotionally cold or unsympathetic.* In the poem, metaphors are used vividly to render elusive concepts such as love, memory, and eternity into immediately accessible sensory experiences.

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. What does the line '*your desires live on/dressed up for fulfillments'* suggest?

i. Desires disappear after death.
ii. Desires remain strong and aim to be fulfilled.
iii. Desires bring confusion.
iv. Desires are meaningless after a person's death.

b. What does the phrase *No exit past the bend* symbolize?

i. A journey without direction
ii. Life's continuation beyond death
iii. The end of hope
iv. A confusing road

c. By saying *A rainbow that never fades,* the poet means to say?

i. Hope and beauty are momentary.
ii. The speaker is hallucinating.
iii. Eternal beauty and hope never fade.
iv. Rainbow's colour never fades.

d. What is the theme of the poem?

i. Beauty
ii. Death
iii. Spiritual love
iv. Hatred

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What does the phrase *Mind's not a sieve* suggest?

b. Why does the speaker say his beloved can't die?

c. What is the significance of the last line *She lives in you*?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. What does the metaphor of the 'glimmering sunset transforming into stars' signify in the context of the poem?

b. How does the poem explore the concept of immortality through relationships and values? Do you think the values and connections we share with others can truly make someone 'live on' through memory and legacy?

c. In the context of eternal love, do you think emotions or reason play a greater role in preserving the memory and essence of a loved one? Why?

Project Work

Interview a grandparent, parent, elder sibling, or any elder family member. Ask them to share about someone they loved deeply but have lost. Explore their memories: what habits, sayings, or qualities of that person they still cherish. Present your findings in a written narrative or create a memory poster/collage using drawings, photos, or meaningful words to represent the person and their lasting influence. And then present your work in the class.

Sonnet 18

Before You Read

a. What qualities do you associate with summer?

b. How does poetry help preserve memories and emotions?

William Shakespeare (1564–1616) was an English playwright, poet, and actor, widely regarded as one of the greatest writers in the English language. Shakespeare wrote 39 plays, 154 sonnets, and two long narrative poems. His works explore themes of l*ove, power, fate, and human nature*, making them timeless and universally relevant. His most famous plays include *Hamlet, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet,* and *Othello*. His poetry, especially Sonnets, showcases his mastery of language and deep understanding of emotions.

Sonnet 18 (Shall I Compare thee to a Summer's Day) is one of Shakespeare's most famous sonnets. It praises the beauty of a beloved, comparing her to a summer's day, claiming that his poetry will make her immortal.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Glossary and Notes

brag (*v.*):	to boast or claim something with pride
complexion (*n.*):	the natural appearance or color of something
declines (*v.*):	diminishes, weakens, or deteriorates over time
dimmed (*n.*):	made less bright or obscured
eye of heaven:	a metaphor for the sun
fade (*v.*):	to lose brightness, color, or strength over time
lease (*n.*):	a fixed period of time for which something lasts, temporary ownership
possession (*n.*):	ownership or control over something
shade (*n.*):	a metaphor for death, referring to the darkness of the grave
temperate (*adj.*):	mild, moderate, or restrained in nature
untrimmed (*adj.*):	disordered, not maintained, or affected by external forces

Shakespearean Sonnet: A Shakespearean sonnet**,** also known as an English sonnet**,** is a 14-line poem written in iambic pentameter with a specific rhyme scheme and structure. It was popularized by William Shakespeare**,** who wrote 154 sonnets following this format. It is divided into three quatrains (four-line stanza) and a Couplet (two-line stanza). It is divided into three quatrains (four-line stanzas) followed by a final rhyming couplet (two-line stanza) with a rhyme pattern *ababcdcdefef gg***.** The subject matter of Shakespearean sonnet often explores themes of love, beauty, time, mortality, and the power of poetry to immortalize.

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. What does *Thou art more lovely and more temperate* mean?

i. Her strength

ii. Her unpredictability

iii. Her balanced and gentle nature

iv. Her coldness

b. What does *Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May* suggest?

i. Summer begins with peace.

ii. Winds help flowers grow.

iii. Summer can be harsh and disturbing.

iv. Winds are gentle in the month of May.

c. What does eye of heaven refer to in the poem?

i. The moon ii. The wind

iii. The poet's lover iv. The sun

d. What does the poet claim about the beloved's beauty in *But thy eternal summer shall not fade*?

i. It will fade like all beauty. ii. It is unpredictable.

iii. It will last forever. iv. It depends on the seasons.

e. How does the poet claim to defeat death for the beloved?

i. By writing eternal lines of poetry ii. By hiding her from time

iii. By comparing her to a goddess iv. By casting a spell

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. How does the speaker describe his beloved?

b. How does Shakespeare personify death?

c. What are the drawbacks of the Sun's beauty?

d. How does the poet contrast natural beauty with the beauty of the beloved?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. Write the literary appreciation of the poem.

b. The poet claims that *thy eternal summer shall not fade*. What do you think the poet means by 'eternal summer'? How does this phrase relate to the theme of immortality?

c. The poem suggests that natural beauty is temporary, but the beloved's beauty will last forever. Do you agree that poetry has the power to preserve beauty and emotions?

d. Explore how the theme of time is treated in the sonnet. How does Shakespeare challenge the effects of time on beauty, and what solution does he offer?

e. Shakespeare suggests that poetry can make someone immortal. Do you think literature and art have the power to preserve people and emotions beyond their lifetime?

Project Work

Compose a poem inspired by Sonnet 18, comparing someone you admire to something eternal like a star, mountain, or river. Give your poem a title and share it in the class.

Chapter Five

Drama - One Act Play

The Boor

Before You Read

a. What comes to your mind when you hear the word 'boor'?

b. Do you think 'humor' can be used to criticize serious issues in society?

c. How do people handle conflict when money or debts are involved?

Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) was a Russian writer and playwright. He was one of the most prominent dramatists in the theatre history. He was born in Taganrog, a bustling part in southern Russia. The third of six children, his family were once serfs, but his grandfather managed to purchase their freedom. Only a year after Chekov's birth, Russian peasants were emancipated and the feudal system was abolished. His father was a merchant and was often physically abusive to his family. Eventually, his father went bankrupt, and Chekov became financially responsible for his family. He wrote vignettes about Russian street life to support himself while also pursuing a medical degree. At that time, Russia was so socially stratified that there were no successful writers of his class; Chekov became the only great Russian writer of the 19th century from the peasant class. In 1887, Chekov was commissioned to write a play, Ivanov. In 1895, he wrote *The Seagull*, which was a failure. In 1898, Stanislavski's Moscow Art Theatre reviewed the play, which marked the beginning of Chekhov's successful journey as a playwright. This led to the creation of his most influential works, including *The Boor*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Three Sisters*, and *The Cherry Orchard*.

The Boor is an interesting one-act comedy play. It tells mainly about the widow who is faithful to her husband even after his death. But she was irritated when she knows that her husband has betrayed her. She still loves her husband by locking herself inside the house. The play is centered on a clash between two characters: a widow named Helena Ivanovna Popov and a man named Grigori Stepanovitch Smirnov, a hot-headed, boorish landowner. The plot unfolds when Smirnov arrives at Popova's estate to collect a debt that her late husband owed him. However, Popova, who is mourning her husband's death, refuses to pay, and an intense confrontation ensues between the two.

Characters

HELENA IVANOVNA POPOV, a young widow, mistress of a country estate

GRIGORI STEPANOVITCH SMIRNOV, proprietor of a country estate

LUKA, servant of MRS. POPOV

A gardener. A coachman. Several workmen.

TIME: *The present.*

SCENE: *A well−furnished reception−room in MRS. POPOV'S home.*

MRS. POPOV is discovered in deep mourning, sitting up on a sofa, gazing steadfastly at a photograph. LUKA is also present.

LUKA: It isn't right, ma'am. You're wearing yourself out! The maid and the cook have gone looking for berries; everything that breathes is enjoying life; even the cat knows how to be happy slips about the courtyard and catches birds but you hide yourself here in the house as though you were in a cloister. Yes, truly, by actual reckoning you haven't left this house for a whole year.

MRS. POPOV: And I shall never leave it why should I? My life is over. He lies in his grave, and I have buried myself within these four walls. We are both dead.

LUKA: There you are again! It's too awful to listen to, so it is! Nikolai Michailovitch is dead; it was the will of the Lord, and the Lord has given him eternal peace. You have grieved over it and that ought to be enough. Now it's time to stop. One can't weep and wear mourning forever! My wife died a few years ago. I grieved for her. I wept a whole month and then it was over. Must one be forever singing lamentations? That would be more than your husband was worth! *(He sighs.)* You have forgotten all your neighbors. You don't go out and you receive no one. We live you'll pardon me like the spiders, and the good light of day we never see. All the livery is eaten by mice as though there weren't any more nice people in the world! But the whole neighborhood is full of gentle folk. The regiment is stationed in Riblov officers simply beautiful! One can't see enough of them! Every Friday a ball, and military music every day. Oh, my dear, dear ma'am, young and pretty as you are, if you'd only let your spirits live! Beauty can't last forever. When ten short years are over, you'll be glad enough to go out a bit and meet the officers and then it'll be too late.

MRS. POPOV: *(Resolutely)* Please don't speak of these things again. You know very well that since the death of Nikolai Michailovitch my life is absolutely nothing to me. You think I live, but it only seems so. Do you understand? Oh, that his departed soul may see how I love him! I know, it's no secret to you; he was often unjust to me, cruel, and he wasn't faithful, but I shall be faithful to the grave and prove to him how *I* can love. There, in the Beyond, he'll find me the same as I was until his death.

LUKA: What is the use of all these words, when you'd so much rather go walking in the garden or order Tobby or Welikan harnessed to the trap, and visit the neighbors?

MRS. POPOV: *(Weeping)* Oh!

LUKA: Madam, dear madam, what is it? In Heaven's name!

MRS. POPOV: He loved Tobby so! He always drove him to the Kortschagins or the Vlassovs. What a wonderful horseman he was! How fine he looked when he pulled at the reigns with all his might! Tobby, Tobby give him an extra measure of oats to−day!

LUKA: Yes, ma'am.

(A bell rings loudly.)

MRS. POPOV: *(Shudders)* What's that? I am at home to no one.

LUKA: Yes, ma'am.

(He goes out, centre.)

MRS. POPOV: *(Gazing at the photograph)* You shall see, Nikolai, how I can love and forgive! My love will die only with me when my poor heart stops beating. *(She smiles through her tears)* And aren't you ashamed? I have been a good, true wife; I have imprisoned myself and I shall remain true until death, and you you you're not ashamed of yourself, my dear monster! You quarreled with me, left me alone for weeks.

(LUKA enters in great excitement.)

LUKA: Oh, ma'am, someone is asking for you, insists on seeing you

MRS. POPOV: You told him that since my husband's death I receive no one?

LUKA: I said so, but he won't listen; he says it is a pressing matter.

MRS. POPOV: I receive no one!

LUKA: I told him that, but he's a wild man; he swore and pushed himself into the room; he's in the dining-room now.

MRS. POPOV: *(Excitedly)* Good. Show him in. The impudent!

(LUKA goes out, centre.)

MRS. POPOV: What a bore people are! What can they want with me? Why do they disturb my peace? *(She sighs)* Yes, it is clear I must enter a convent. *(Meditatively)* Yes, a convent.

(SMIRNOV enters, followed by LUKA.)

SMIRNOV: *(To LUKA)* Fool, you make too much noise! You're an ass! *(Discovering Mrs. Popov politely)* Madam, I have the honor to introduce myself: Lieutenant in the Artillery, retired, country gentleman, Grigori Stapanovitch Smirnov! I'm compelled to bother you about an exceedingly important matter.

MRS. POPOV: *(Without offering her hand.)* What is it you wish?

SMIRNOV: Your deceased husband, with whom I had the honor to be acquainted, left me two notes amounting to about twelve hundred roubles. In as much as I have to pay the interest to−morrow on a loan from the Agrarian Bank, I should like to request, madam, that you pay me the money to−day.

MRS. POPOV: Twelve−hundred and for what was my husband indebted to you?

SMIRNOV: He bought oats from me.

MRS. POPOV: *(With a sigh, to LUKA.)* Don't forget to give Tobby an extra measure of oats.

(LUKA goes out.)

MRS. POPOV: *(To* SMIRNOV*)* If Nikolai Michailovitch is indebted to you, I shall, of course, pay you, but I am sorry, I haven't the money to−day. To−morrow my manager will return from the city and I shall notify him to pay you what is due you, but until then I cannot satisfy your request. Furthermore, today is just seven months since the death of my husband, and I am not in the mood to discuss money matters.

SMIRNOV: And I am in the mood to fly up the chimney with my feet in the air if I can't lay hands on that interest to−morrow. They'll seize my estate!

MRS. POPOV: Day after to−morrow you will receive the money.

SMIRNOV: I don't need the money day after to−morrow; I need it to−day.

MRS. POPOV: I'm sorry I can't pay you today.

SMIRNOV: And I can't wait until day after to−morrow.

MRS. POPOV: But what can I do if I haven't it?

SMIRNOV: So you can't pay?

MRS. POPOV: I cannot.

SMIRNOV: Hm! Is that your last word?

MRS. POPOV: My last.

SMIRNOV: Absolutely?

MRS. POPOV: Absolutely.

SMIRNOV: Thank you. *(He shrugs his shoulders.)* And they expect me to stand for all that.

The toll−gatherer just now met me in the road and asked why I was always worrying. Why, in Heaven's name, shouldn't I worry? I need money; I feel the knife at my throat. Yesterday morning I left my house in the early dawn and called on all my debtors. If even one of them had paid his debt! I worked the skin off my fingers! The devil knows in what sort of Jew−inn I slept; in a room with a barrel of brandy! And now at last I come here, seventy versts from home, hope for a little money, and all you give me is moods! Why shouldn't I worry?

MRS. POPOV: I thought I made it plain to you that my manager will return from town, and then you will get your money.

SMIRNOV: I did not come to see the manager; I came to see you. What the devil pardon the language do I care for your manager?

MRS. POPOV: Really, sir, I am not used to such language or such manners. I shan't listen to you any further.

(She goes out, left.)

SMIRNOV: What can one say to that? Moods! Seven months since her husband died! Do I have to pay the interest or not? I repeat the question, have I to pay the interest or not? The husband is dead and all that; the manager is the devil with him! travelling somewhere. Now, tell me, what am I to do? Shall I run away from my creditors in a balloon? Or knock my head against a stone wall? If I call on Grusdev he chooses to be "not at home," Iroschevitch has simply hidden himself, I have quarreled with Kurzin and came near throwing him out of the window, Masutov is ill and this woman has moods! Not one of them will pay up! And all because I've spoiled them, because I'm an old whiner, dish−rag! I'm too tender−hearted with them. But wait! I allow nobody to play tricks with me, the devil with 'em all! I'll stay here and not budge until she pays! Brr! How angry I am, how terribly angry I am! Every tendon is trembling with anger, and I can hardly breathe! I'm even growing ill! *(He calls out.)* Servant!

(LUKA enters)

LUKA: What is it you wish?

SMIRNOV: Bring me Kvas or water! *(LUKA goes out.)* Well, what can we do? She hasn't it on hand? What sort of logic is that? A fellow stands with the knife at his throat, he needs money, he is on the point of hanging himself, and she won't pay because she isn't in the mood to discuss money matters. Women's logic! That's why I never liked to talk to women, and why I dislike doing it now. I would rather sit on a powder barrel than talk with a woman. Brr! I'm getting cold as ice; this affair has made me so angry. I need only to see such a romantic creature from a distance to get so angry that I have cramps in my calves! It's enough to make one yell for help!

(Enter LUKA)

LUKA: *(Hands him water)* Madam is ill and is not receiving.

SMIRNOV: March! *(LUKA goes out.)* Ill and isn't receiving! All right, it isn't necessary. I won't receive, either! I'll sit here and stay until you bring that money. If you're ill a week, I'll sit here a week. If you're ill a year, I'll sit here a year. As Heaven is my witness; I'll get the money. You don't disturb me with your mourning or with your dimples. We know these dimples! *(He calls out the window.)* Simon, unharness! We aren't going to leave right away. I am going to stay here. Tell them in the stable to give the horses some oats. The left horse has twisted the bridle again. *(Imitating him)* Stop! I'll show you how. Stop! *(Leaves window)* It's awful. Unbearable heat, no money, didn't sleep last night and now mourning−dresses with moods. My head aches; perhaps I ought to have a drink. Ye−s, I must have a drink. *(Calling.)* Servant!

LUKA: What do you wish?

SMIRNOV: Something to drink! *(LUKA goes out. SMIRNOV sits down and looks at his clothes.)* Ugh, a fine figures! No use denying that. Dust, dirty boots, unwashed, uncombed, straw on my vest the lady probably took me for a highway man. *(He yawns.)* It was a little impolite to come into a reception−room with such clothes. Oh, well, no harm done. I'm not here as a guest. I'm a creditor. And there is no special costume for creditors.

LUKA: *(Entering with glass)* You take great liberty, sir.

SMIRNOV: *(Angrily)* What?

Luka: III just

SMIRNOV: Whom are you talking to? Keep quiet.

LUKA: *(Angrily)* Nice mess! This fellow won't leave!

(He goes out.)

SMIRNOV: Lord, how angry I am! Angry enough to throw mud at the whole world! I even feel ill! Servant!

(MRS. POPOV comes in with downcast eyes.)

MRS. POPOV: Sir, in my solitude I have become unaccustomed to the human voice and I cannot stand the sound of loud talking. I beg you, please to cease disturbing my rest.

SMIRNOV: Pay me my money and I'll leave.

MRS. POPOV: I told you once, plainly, in your native tongue, that I haven't the money at hand; wait until day after to-morrow.

SMIRNOV: And I also had the honor of informing you in your native tongue that I need the money, not day after to-morrow, but to−day. If you don't pay me to−day I shall have to hang myself to-morrow.

MRS. POPOV: But what can I do if I haven't the money?

SMIRNOV: So, you are not going to pay immediately? You're not?

MRS. POPOV: I cannot.

SMIRNOV: Then I'll sit here until I get the money. *(He sits down)* You will pay day after to−morrow? Excellent! Here I stay until day after to−morrow. *(Jumps up)* I ask you, do I have to pay that interest to−morrow or not? Or do you think I'm joking?

MRS. POPOV: Sir, I beg of you, don't scream! This is not a stable.

SMIRNOV: I'm not talking about stables; I'm asking you whether I have to pay that interest to−morrow or not?

MRS. POPOV: You have no idea how to treat a lady.

SMIRNOV: Oh, yes, I have.

MRS. POPOV: No, you have not. You are an ill−bred, vulgar person! Respectable people don't speak so to ladies.

SMIRNOV: How remarkable! How do you want one to speak to you? In French, perhaps! Madame, je vousprie! Pardon me for having disturbed you. What beautiful weather we are having to−day! And how this mourning becomes you!

(He makes a low bow with mock ceremony.)

MRS. POPOV: Not at all funny! I think it vulgar!

SMIRNOV: *(Imitating her)* Not at all funny vulgar! I don't understand how to behave in the company of ladies. Madam, in the course of my life I have seen more women than you have sparrows. Three times have I fought duels for women, twelve I jilted and nine jilted me. There was a time when I played the fool, used honeyed language, bowed and scraped. I loved, suffered, sighed to the moon, and melted in love's torments. I loved passionately, I loved to madness, loved in every key, chattered like a magpie on emancipation, sacrificed half my fortune in the tender passion, until now the devil knows I've had enough of it. Your obedient servant will let you lead him around by the nose no more. Enough! Black eyes, passionate eyes, coral lips, dimples in cheeks, moonlight whispers, soft, modest sights for all that, madam, I wouldn't pay a kopeck! I am not speaking of present company, but of women in general; from the tiniest to the greatest, they are conceited, hypocritical,

chattering, odious, deceitful from top to toe; vain, petty, cruel with a maddening logic and *(he strikes his forehead)* in this respect, please excuse my frankness, but one sparrow is worth ten of the aforementioned petticoat−philosophers. When one sees one of the romantic creatures before him he imagines he is looking at some holy being, so wonderful that its one breath could dissolve him in a sea of a thousand charms and delights; but if one looks into the soulit's nothing but a common crocodile. *(He seizes the arm−chair and breaks it in two.)* But the worst of all is that this crocodile imagines it is a masterpiece of creation, and that it has a monopoly on all the tender passions. May the devil hang me upside down if there is anything to love about a woman! When she is in love, all she knows is how to complain and shed tears. If the man suffers and makes sacrifices she swings her train about and tries to lead him by the nose. You have the misfortune to be a woman, and naturally you know woman's nature; tell me on your honor, have you ever in your life seen a woman who was really true and faithful? Never! Only the old and the deformed are true and faithful. It's easier to find a cat with horns or a white woodcock, than a faithful woman.

MRS. POPOV: But allow me to ask, who is true and faithful in love? The man, perhaps?

SMIRNOV: Yes, indeed! The man!

MRS. POPOV: The man! *(She laughs sarcastically)* The man true and faithful in love! Well, that is something *new! [Bitterly]* How can you make such a statement? Men true and faithful! So long as we have gone thus far, I may as well say that of all the men I have known, my husband was the best; I loved him passionately with all my soul, as only a young, sensible woman may love; I gave him my youth, my happiness, my fortune, my life. I worshipped him like a heathen. And what happened? This best of men betrayed me in every possible way. After his death I found his desk filled with love−letters. While he was alive he left me alone for months it is horrible even to think about it he made love to other women in my very presence, he wasted my money and made fun of my feelings and in spite of everything I trusted him and was true to him. And more than that: he is dead and I am still true to him. I have buried myself within these four walls and I shall wear this mourning to my grave.

SMIRNOV: *(Laughing disrespectfully)* Mourning! What on earth do you take me for? As if I didn't know why you wore this black domino and why you buried yourself within these four walls. Such a secret! So romantic!

Some knight will pass the castle, gaze up at the windows, and think to himself: "Here dwells the mysterious Tamara who, for love of her husband, has buried herself within four walls." Oh, I understand the art!

MRS. POPOV: *[Springing up]* What? What do you mean by saying such things to me?

SMIRNOV: You have buried yourself alive, but meanwhile you have not forgotten to powder your nose!

MRS. POPOV: How dare you speak so?

SMIRNOV: Don't scream at me, please; I'm not the manager. Allow me to call things by their right names. I am not a woman, and I am accustomed to speak out what I think. So please don't scream.

MRS. POPOV: I'm not screaming. It is you who are screaming. Please leave me, I beg you.

SMIRNOV: Pay me my money, and I'll leave.

MRS. POPOV: I won't give you the money.

SMIRNOV: You won't? You won't give me my money?

MRS. POPOV: I don't care what you do. You won't get a kopeck! Leave me!

SMIRNOV: As I haven't had the pleasure of being either your husband or your fiance, please don't make a scene. *[He sits down]* I can't stand it.

MRS. POPOV: *[Breathing hard]* You are going to sit down?

SMIRNOV: I already have.

MRS. POPOV: Kindly leave the house!

SMIRNOV: Give me the money.

MRS. POPOV: I don't care to speak with impudent men. Leave! *[Pause]* You aren't going?

SMIRNOV: No.

MRS. POPOV: No?

SMIRNOV: No.

MRS. POPOV: Very well.

(She rings the bell. Enter LUKA.)

MRS. POPOV: LUKA, show the gentleman out.

LUKA: *(Going to Smirnov)* Sir, why don't you leave when you are ordered? What do you want?

SMIRNOV: *(Jumping up)* Whom do you think you are talking to? I'll grind you to powder.

LUKA: *(Puts his hand to his heart)* Good Lord! *(He drops into a chair.)* Oh, I'm ill; I can't breathe!

MRS. POPOV: Where is Dascha? *(Calling)* Dascha! Pelageja! Dascha!

(She rings.)

LUKA: They're all gone! I'm ill! Water!

MRS. POPOV: *(To* SMIRNOV*)* Leave! Get out!

SMIRNOV: Kindly be a little more polite!

MRS. POPOV: *(Striking her fists and stamping her feet.)* You are vulgar! You're a boor! A monster!

SMIRNOV: What did you say?

MRS. POPOV: I said you were a boor, a monster!

SMIRNOV: *(Steps toward her quickly.)* Permit me to ask what right you have to insult me?

MRS. POPOV: What of it? Do you think I am afraid of you?

SMIRNOV: And you think that because you are a romantic creature you can insult me without being punished? I challenge you!

LUKA: Merciful Heaven! Water!

SMIRNOV: We'll have a duel!

MRS. POPOV: Do you think because you have big fists and a steer's neck I am afraid of you?

SMIRNOV: I allow no one to insult me, and I make no exception because you are a woman, one of the "weaker sex!"

MRS. POPOV: *(Trying to cry him down)* Boor, boor, boor!

SMIRNOV: It is high time to do away with the old superstition that it is only the man who is forced to give satisfaction. If there is equity at all let there be equity in all things. There's a limit!

MRS. POPOV: You wish to fight a duel? Very well.

SMIRNOV: Immediately.

MRS. POPOV: Immediately. My husband had pistols. I'll bring them. *(She hurries away, then turns)* Oh, what a pleasure it will be to put a bullet in your impudent head. The devil take you!

(She goes out.)

SMIRNOV: I'll shoot her down! I'm no fledgling, no sentimental young puppy. For me there is no weaker sex!

LUKA: Oh, sir. *(Falls to his knees)* Have mercy on me, an old man, and go away. You have frightened me to death already, and now you want to fight a duel.

SMIRNOV: *(Paying no attention)* A duel. That's equity, emancipation. That way the sexes are made equal. I'll shoot her down as a matter of principle. What can a person say to such a woman? *(Imitating her)*"The devil take you. I'll put a bullet in your impudent head." What can one say to that? She was angry, her eyes blazed, she accepted the challenge. On my honor, it's the first time in my life that I ever saw such a woman.

LUKA: Oh, sir. Go away. Go away!

SMIRNOV: That is a woman. I can understand her. A real woman. No shilly−shallying, but fire, powder, and noise! It would be a pity to shoot a woman like that.

LUKA: *(Weeping)* Oh, sir, go away.

(Enter MRS. POPOV)

MRS. POPOV: Here are the pistols. But before we have our duel, please show me how to shoot. I have never had a pistol in my hand before!

LUKA: God be merciful and have pity upon us! I'll go and get the gardener and the coachman. Why has this horror come to us?

(He goes out.)

SMIRNOV: *(Looking at the pistols)* You see, there are different kinds. There are special dueling pistols, with cap and ball. But these are revolvers, Smith & Wesson, with ejectors; fine pistols! A pair like that cost at least ninety roubles. This is the way to hold a revolver. *(Aside)* Those eyes, those eyes! A real woman!

MRS. POPOV: Like this?

SMIRNOV: Yes, that way. Then you pull the hammer back so then you aim to put your head back a little. Just stretch your arm out, please. So then press your finger on the thing like that, and that is all. The chief thing is this: don't get excited, don't hurry your aim, and take care that your hand doesn't tremble.

MRS. POPOV: It isn't well to shoot inside; let's go into the garden.

SMIRNOV: Yes. I'll tell you now; I am going to shoot into the air.

MRS. POPOV: That is too much! Why?

SMIRNOV: Because−because.That's my business.

MRS. POPOV: You are afraid. Yes.A−h−h−h.No, no, my dear sir, no flinching! Please follow me. I won't rest until I've made a hole in that head I hate so much. Are you afraid?

SMIRNOV: Yes, I'm afraid.

MRS. POPOV: You are lying. Why won't you fight?

SMIRNOV: Because because I like you.

MRS. POPOV: *(With an angry laugh)* You like me! He dares to say he likes me! *(She points to the door.)* Go.

SMIRNOV: *(Laying the revolver silently on the table, takes his hat and starts. At the door he stops a moment, gazing at her silently, and then he approaches her, hesitating.)* Listen! Are you still angry? I was mad as the devil, but please understand me how can I express myself? The thing is like this thing are *(He raises his voice.)* Now, is it my fault that you owe me money? *(Grasps the back of the chair, which breaks)* The devil knows what breakable furniture you have! I like you! Do you understand? I I'm almost in love!

MRS. POPOV: Leave! I hate you.

SMIRNOV: Lord! What a woman! never in my life met one like her. I'm lost, ruined! I've been caught like a mouse in a trap.

MRS. POPOV: Go, or I'll shoot.

SMIRNOV: Shoot! You have no idea what happiness it would be to die in sight of those beautiful eyes, to die from the revolver in this little velvet hand! I'm mad! Consider it and decide immediately, for if I go now, we shall never see each other again. Decide speak I am a noble, a respectable man, have an income of ten thousand, can shoot a coin thrown into the air. I own some fine horses. Will you be my wife?

MRS. POPOV: *(Swings the revolver angrily)* I'll shoot!

SMIRNOV My mind is not clear I can't understand. Servant water! I have fallen in love like any young man. *(He takes her hand and she cries with pain.)* I love you! *(He kneels.)* I love you as I have never loved before. Twelve women I jilted, nine jilted me, but not one of them all have I loved as I love you. I am conquered, lost; I lie at your feet like a fool and beg for your hand. Shame and disgrace! For five years I haven't been in love; I thanked the Lord for it, and now I am caught, like a carriage tongue in another carriage. I beg for your hand! Yes, or no? Will you? Good!

(He gets up and goes quickly to the door)

MRS. POPOV: Wait a minute!

SMIRNOV: *(Stopping)* Well?

MRS. POPOV: Nothing. You may go. But wait a moment. No, go on, go on. I hate you. Orno; don't go. Oh, if you knew how angry I was, how angry! *(She throws the revolver on to the chair)* My finger is swollen from this thing. *(She angrily tears her handkerchief)* What are you standing there for? Get out!

SMIRNOV: Farewell!

MRS. POPOV: Yes, go *(Cries out)* Why are you going? Wait no, go!! Oh, how angry I am! Don't come too near, don't come too nearer come no nearer.

SMIRNOV: *(Approaching her)* How angry I am with myself! Fall in love like a school boy, throw myself on my knees. I've got a chill! *(Strongly)* I love you. This is fine all I needed was to fall in love. To−morrow I have to pay my interest, the hay harvest has begun, and then you appear! *[He takes her in his arms.]* I can never forgive myself.

MRS. POPOV: Go away! Take your hands off me! I hate you-you this is

(A long kiss. Enter LUKA with an axe, the gardener with a rake, the coachman with a pitchfork, and workmen with poles.)

LUKA: *(Staring at the pair.)* Merciful heavens!

(A long pause)

MRS. POPOV: *(Dropping her eyes.)* Tell them in the stable that Tobby isn't to have any oats.

Curtain.

Glossary

awful (*adj.*): bad, rubbish

betrayed (*v.*): deceived

bridle (*n.*): a headgear used to control, direct and lead a horse

carriage (*n.*): compartment in a train to carry passengers

convent (*n.*): religious community

cramps (*n.*): aching involuntary contraction of a muscle or muscles

disgrace (*n.*): loss of reputation as a result of a dishonorable action

duel (*n.*): a contest with the terrible weapons arranged between two people in order to settle a point of honour

fledgling (*n.*): a young bird that has grown feathers and is struggling to fly

impudent (*adj.*): disrespectful, rude

jilted (*v.*): refused, rejected

kopeck(*n.*): a monetary unit of Russia and some other countries of the former Soviet Union, equal to one hundredth of a rouble

merciful (*adj.*): characterized by mercy

monopoly (*n.*): the exclusive possession or control of the trade in a commodity, product, or service; the condition of having no competitor in one's trade or business

reckoning (*v.*): thinking, calculating

regiment (*n.*): a permanent unit of an army or military force

shilly-shallying: an act of procrastination

swollen (*adj.*): distended, filled out, enlarged

swore (*v.*): promised

worth (*adj.*): having a value, honorable

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. Who is the main female character in *The Boor*?

i. Popova ii. Anna Petrova

iii. Natalya Stepanovna iv. Elena Ivanovna

b. Why is Popova mourning at the beginning of the play?

i. Her husband passed away. ii. Her brother left home.
iii. Her father has died. iv. She lost her fortune.

c. What is Smirnov's main reason for visiting Popova?

i. To collect a debt ii. To propose marriage
iii. To threaten her iv. To invite her to a ball

d. Which word best describes Smirnov's behavior in the beginning?

i. Funny ii. Gentle
iii. Rude iv. Shy

e. Why does Popova refuse to pay the debt immediately?

i. She is leaving the country.
ii. She is broken.
iii. She doesn't believe the debt exists.
iv. Her steward is not present.

f. How does Smirnov react to Popova's refusal to pay?

i. He apologizes.
ii. He leaves quietly.
iii. He files a case.
iv. He challenges her to a duel.

g. What does Popova do when Smirnov declares his love?

i. Asks him to leave
ii. Laughs at him
iii. Shoots him
iv. Accepts his proposal

h. What is the main theme of *The Boor*?

i. Love and transformation
ii. Power and corruption
iii. Nature and beauty
iv. War and peace

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What kind of play is the 'Boor'? State its reasons.

b. How long has Popov locked herself in the house, and why?

c. How did Mrs. Popov treat the man at her door?

d. Why was Mrs. Popov grieving a lot?

e. Name the antagonist in the play. What makes him/her so?

f. State the social message of this play.

g. What makes Smirnov fall in love with Popova?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. What is the main social issue reflected in 'The Boor' by Chekov?

b. Discuss the setting of the play. How does the setting contribute to Mrs. Popov's character in the play?

c. How does the conflict evolve in the play throughout the story? What role does social class play in the relationship between Smirnov and Popova?

d. To what extent is 'The Boor' a satire on love and relationships? How does the conflict in *The Boor* reflect Chekhov's broader views on human nature and society?

e. Explain the following extracts from the play with reference to the context.

i. *My life is over. He lies in his grave, and I have buried myself within these four walls. We are both dead.*

ii. *How angry I am with myself! Fall in love like a school boy, throw myself on my knees. I've got a chill! I love you. This is fine; all I needed was to fall in love...*

Project Work

Suppose a modern Nepali theatre company has asked you to adapt *The Boor* for today's audience. Describe clearly the new setting you would choose—both the time and place (such as a city home in Kathmandu or a rural village in the hills). Explain how moving the story from Chekhov's original Russian countryside to a Nepali background changes the meaning or message of the play in today's society.

The Song of Death

Before You Read

a. What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase *song of death*? What do you think the play *Song of Death* might be about?

b. Have you ever felt pressured by your family or society to do something you didn't believe in? How did you deal with it?

Tawfiq Al-Hakim was born in Alexandria on October 9, 1898. He is a pioneering figure in Arabic literature whose life and works left an indelible mark on the cultural landscape of Egypt and beyond.

Al-Hakim's literary career spanned more than four decades, from the end of the twenties until the mid-eighties. Besides one act plays, he wrote novels, short stories, and essays. Al-Hakim's vast and wide-ranging output covers a variety of themes, foremost among them being the conflict between science and art, and science and religion. His early plays have a social message and content, and were quite popular on the stage. Following three years of study in France where he discovered Western literary movements, predominantly the *Theater of the Absurd*, Al-Hakim turned to writing thought-provoking philosophical plays.

The Song of Death is a play of Egypt. The play presents the story of murder revenge. It is about Asakir, the stern mother who has hated the man she believes murdered her husband for seventeen years. There is also a generational conflict between a mother and her son. Asakir, the protagonist wants her son, Alwan, to revenge over his father's murderer. But her son strongly refuses her. The disappointment leads the mother up to the stage of killing of her own son. Asakir orders her nephew, Simeida to kill her son, Alwan.

Characters

ASAKIR, a widowed peasant woman in a small Egyptian village

MABROUKA, Asakir's sister-in-law

ALWAN, Asakir's son

SUMEIDA, Mabrouka's son

A peasant house in Upper Egypt. Two women are sitting by the entrance dressed in black: they are ASAKIR and MABROUKA. A step or two away from them stand a calf and a goat eating grass and dried clover. The two women are sitting in silence with heads lowered. The sound of a trains whistle is heard.

MABROUKA (raising her head): That's the train.

ASAKIR (without moving): D'you think he's on it?

MABROUKA: Didn't he say so in his letter which Sheikh Mohamed al-Isnawi, the assistant schoolmaster, read over to us yesterday?

ASAKIR: I hope, Mabrouka, you haven't told anyone he's my son.

MABROUKA: Am I crazy? Your son Alwan was drowned in the well at the water-wheel when a child of only two years. The whole village knows that.

ASAKIR: But they still can't quite swallow that story.

MABROUKA: Who are they-the Tahawis?

ASAKIR: Didn't your son Sumeida tell you what he heard in the market the other day?

MABROUKA: What did he hear?

ASAKIR: He heard one of them say, in a crowd of people, that either the Azizis have nothing but women left, or they are hiding a man to take vengeance-a man nearer to the murdered man than his cousin Sumeida.

MABROUKA: Yes, my son Sumeida did say that. Were it not for this rumor he wouldn't be able to walk about the village with raised head.

ASAKIR: Let them learn today that the son of the murdered man is still alive. There is no reason to fear for him now that he has attained manhood. It is no longer I who live in fear but those who cannot sleep at night for fear. Bring him quickly; train, quickly, for I have waited so long! Seventeen years! I have counted them up hour by hour. Seventeen years! I have milked them from Time's udders drop by drop just as the milk drips out from the udder of an old cow.

MABROUKA (*listening to the sound of a whistle*): There's the train as it enters the station. He'll find my son Sumeida waiting for him.

ASAKIR (*as though talking to herself):* Yes.

MABROUKA (*turning toward her*): What's wrong, Asakir? You're trembling?

ASAKIR (as though talking to herself): Sumeida's song will tell me

MABROUKA: Tell you?

ASAKIR: About whether he's come

MABROUKA: You told my son to sing as a sign that Alwan had come?

ASAKIR: Yes, as they approach together from the district office.

MABROUKA: Take heart, Asakir. Take heart. Much has passed, only little yet remains.

ASAKIR: What I feel now is neither fear nor weakness.

MABROUKA: The days of fear have gone never to return. I shall never forget that day I hid your son Alwan when he was two years old in the large basket of meal and carried him off by night, taking him out of the village to Cairo to put him with your relative who worked as a grinder in the perfume shop in the district of Sayyidna al-Hussein.

ASAKIR: I told him: bring him up as a butcher so that he can use a knife well.

MABROUKA: He didn't carry out your wish.

ASAKIR: No, he did-when he was seven years old he put him into a butcher's shop, but the boy ran away.

MABROUKA: To join al-Azhar University.

ASAKIR: Yes, and when I went to see him last year, I found him dressed in his turban and gibba, looking very dignified. I said to him: "If only your father could have seen you like this he would have been proud of you." But they didn't allow him to see his son grow up and know such joy.

MABROUKA: Wouldn't it have been better if he'd stayed on at the butcher's shop?

ASAKIR: Why do you say that, Mabrouka?

MABROUKA: I don't know a passing thought.

ASAKIR: I know that thought.

MABROUKA: What is it, Asakir?

ASAKIR: It hurts you that my son puts a turban and gibba while yours goes on wearing a skullcap and peasant gown.

MABROUKA: I swear to you, by the soul of the departed, that such a thing never occurred to me.

ASAKIR: Then why do you hate Alwan being at al-Azhar University?

MABROUKA: By God, it's not that I hate it, only that I fear...

ASAKIR: Fear what?

MABROUKA: That... that he does not know well how to use a knife.

ASAKIR: Have trust. Have trust, Mabrouka. When you see Alwan now that he has grown into a man you'll find that he has the strength of arm you know about in the Azizis.

MABROUKA (*listening to the whistle*): The train is leaving the station.

ASAKIR: Let it leave to where it will just so long as it has brought us Alwan to take away the life of the murderer and leave him a rotting corpse for the farm dogs.

MABROUKA: And if he hasn't come?

ASAKIR: Why do you say that, Mabrouka?

MABROUKA: I don't know-just speculation.

ASAKIR: And what would prevent him from coming?

MABROUKA: And what is there to induce him to leave the civilization of Cairo and of al-Azhar to come here?

ASAKIR: It's his birthplace; it's where blood calls out to him for revenge.

MABROUKA: How far our village is from Cairo! Can the voice of blood reach to the capital?

ASAKIR: Do you believe he won't come?

MABROUKA: I know no better than you, Asakir.

ASAKIR: And his letter which the schoolmaster read for us?

MABROUKA: Have you forgotten that he said in it: "Perhaps I'll come if circumstances permit." Who knows whether the circumstances have permitted or not?

ASAKIR: Don't break my spirit, Mabrouka. Don't destroy the hope of someone who heard the train whistles tum to trilling cries of joy in her heart as they made it known that this long period of mourning was nearly at an end. Alwan not coming? What would be my fate? Until when would I have to wait for another time?

MABROUKA: The station is not far away and the district office is close by. If he had come Sumeida would by now have started to sing.

ASAKIR: Perhaps they're walking leisurely and talking together. It's more than three years

ago, since they met the last time your son went off to Cairo at the time of the birthday feast of Sayyidna al-Hussein.

MABROUKA: If he'd come my son would be so overjoyed he'd have burst into song before reaching the district office.

ASAKIR: Perhaps he forgot about it.

MABROUKA: He couldn't forget.

ASAKIR (*listening*): I don't hear singing.

MABROUKA (*listening*): Nor I.

ASAKIR: No one singing-not even a shepherd. Nothing singing-not even an owl in some ruins. I believe, Mabrouka that he has not come.

MABROUKA (*as though talking to herself*): My heart tells me something.

ASAKIR: My heart, too, my heart that is as sealed as a tomb, as hard as rock, has now begun to tell me things.

MABROUKA: What does it tell you?

ASAKIR: Of things that will happen.

MABROUKA: Tell me.

ASAKIR (*listening hard*): Quiet! Listen! Listen! Do you hear, Mabrouka? Do you hear?

MABROUKA: Sumeida 's singing.

ASAKIR: Oh what joy!

They listen with all their attention to SUMEIDA s song which is heard coming from outside more and more clearly.

SUMEIDA (*singing outside in the dialect of Upper Egypt*):

Friend, what excuses have we given,
What assurances that we'd repent?
And when your blame you yet continued
Our shirt and outer robe we rent.
When of the father I did hear
My shame no bounds did know,
And both mine eyes did open wide
And copious tears did flow.

ASAKIR: Has he come? Has Alwan come? Today I'll rend the garment of shame and put on the robes of self-respect.

MABROUKA: And we'll hold a funeral for the departed

ASAKIR: And slaughter the goat and calf for his soul.

MABROUKA: Oh what joy! (*She is about to let forth trilling cries of joy*.)

ASAKIR (*stopping her*): Not now, or things will be revealed before their time.

MABROUKA: From now, Oh Suweilam Tahawi, your hours are numbered.

There is a knock at the door Asakir hurries to open it. Sumeida appears carrying a bag.

SUMEIDA: I've brought Sheikh Alwan.

He puts the bag on the ground and Alwan follows him in.

ASAKIR (*opening her arms to Alwan*): My son, Alwan, my boy!

ALWAN (*kisses his mother on the head*): Mother!

ASAKIR (*to her son*): Give greetings to your aunt Mabrouka!

ALWAN (*turning*): How are you, Aunt Mabrouka?

MABROUKA: Things are unchanged with us, Alwan. Our hopes lie in you.

SUMEIDA: Let us go now to our house, Mother.

MABROUKA: Yes, Asakir, the hour of release is near!

Mabrouka goes off with her son Sumeida. Only Asakir and Alwan remain onstage.

ASAKIR: Aren't you hungry, Alwan? I have a bowl of curds.

ALWAN: I am not hungry, Mother, I ate some bread and eggs on the train.

ASAKIR: Aren't you thirsty?

ALWAN: Nor thirsty.

ASAKIR: No, you have not come for our food or our drink-you have come to eat of his flesh and to drink of his blood.

ALWAN (*like someone in a dream*): I have come, Mother, for something great!

ASAKIR: I know, my son. I know. Wait while I bring you something you have never seen before. (*She hurries off into an inner room*.)

ALWAN (*looking round about him*): My eye still sees in your houses these animals and their droppings, the filth of the water pitcher, and the lengths of firewood and maize stalks roofing over this tumble-down ceiling.

ASAKIR (*appearing from the room carrying a saddlebag which she throws down in front of her son*): Seventeen years I've kept these things for you!

ALWAN (*looks at the saddlebag without moving*): What's this?

ASAKIR: The saddlebag in which your father's body was brought to me, carried upon his donkey. In this pocket! found his head, in the other the rest of his body cut into pieces. They killed him with the knife he was carrying. They put the knife with his body in the saddlebag. Look, this is the knife. I kept it like this with the blood on it so that it's gone rusty. As for the donkey which brought your murdered father, making its way to the house it knew, its head lowered as though mourning its owner, I have been unable to keep it for you: it has died, unable to bear the long years.

ALWAN: And who did all this?

ASAKIR: Suweilam Tahawi.

ALWAN: How did you find out?

ASAKIR: The whole village knows.

ALWAN: Yes, you told me that. You mentioned his name to me dozens of times whenever you came to visit me in Cairo. I was young and unthinking and did not discuss things with you, but today my mind wants to be convinced. What proof is there? Was this crime investigated?

ASAKIR: Investigated?

ALWAN: Yes, what did the district attorney's office say?

ASAKIR: District attorney? For shame! Would we say anything to the district attorney's office? Would the Azizis do such a thing? Did the Tahawis ever do such a thing?

ALWAN: Didn't the district attorney's office question you?

ASAKIR: They asked us and we said we knew nothing and had not seen a body. We buried your father secretly at night.

ALWAN (*as though talking to himself*): So that we might take vengeance into our hands.

ASAKIR: With the some knife with which your father was killed.

ALWAN: And the murderer?

ASAKIR: Alive and well. Alive. There is not a Sheikh's tomb in the district, not a shrine, not a saint at whose grill 1 have not clung, in whose dust I have not covered my head, at whose grave I have not bared my hair, praying that God might keep him alive till you, my son, bring about his death with your own hand.

ALWAN: Are you sure, Mother, that it is he?

ASAKIR: We have no enemies but the Tahawis.

ALWAN: And how are you to know that it's Suweilam Tahawi himself?

ASAKIR: Because he believes that it was your father who killed his father.

ALWAN: And did my father really kill his father?

ASAKIR: God knows best!

ALWAN: And what's the origin of this enmity between the two families?

ASAKIR: I don't know. No one knows. It's something old. All we know is that there has always been blood between them and us.

ALWAN: The origin could be that one day a calf belonging to one of our forefathers drank from a watering-place in a field of one of their forefathers!

ASAKIR: Knowledge about that lies with Him who knows the invisible. All that people know is that between the Aziz is and the Tahawis rivers of blood have flowed.

ALWAN: They irrigate no vegetation or fruit.

ASAKIR (*continuing*): They only stopped to flow after the death of your father - because you were so young. The years flowed by, dry like the days of high summer, till people began whispering and others spread false rumours. I twisted and turned on a fire of rage, suppressing my anger, waiting for this moment. And now it has come, so rise up, my son, and quench my fire, water my thirst for revenge with the blood of Suweilam Tahawi!

ALWAN: And has this Suweilam Tahawi a son?

ASAKIR: He has a son of fourteen.

ALWAN: Then I have no more than four or five years left.

ASAKIR: What are you saying?

ALWAN (*continuing*): Until he becomes strong and does to me what I shall do to his father.

ASAKIR: Are you afraid for your life, Alwan?

ALWAN: And you, Mother, are you not afraid for it?

ASAKIR: God is my witness how afraid I am for every hair on your head!

ALWAN: You hold dear my life, Mother?

ASAKIR: And have I any life except through yours. Alwan? Have the Azizis any life except through you? For seventeen years we have all lived only by the breaths you draw.

ALWAN (*with lowered head*): Yes, I understand.

ASAKIR: What feelings of humiliation we have had and how patiently we have suffered harm, yet no sooner does the specter of you cross our minds than our resolution is spurred on, our determination is strengthened and we look at each other in hope, a hope centered on you.

ALWAN (*with head lowered, like someone talking to himself*): Truly you must have my life.

ASAKIR: Even your father's funeral waits for you, Alwan. These animals have been prepared for slaughter my wailing, which I have imprisoned in my throat all these years, waits for you to burst forth; my gown that I have refrained from rending all this time bides your coming: everything in our existence is lifeless and stagnant and looks to you to charge it with life.

ALWAN (*as though talking to himself*): Is it thus that you are charged with life?

ASAKIR: Yes, Alwan. Hasten the promised hour: hasten it, for we have waited too long

ALWAN (*in surprise*): The promised hour?

ASAKIR: I have forgotten nothing, not even the stone on which to sharpen the rusted knife. I have brought it for you and hidden it in that room.

ALWAN: And how shall I know this Suwcilam, never having seen him in my life?

ASAKIR: Sumeida will lead you to him and will show you where he is.

ALWAN (*looking at his clothes*): And shall I commit this act dressed as lam?

ASAKIR: Take off those clothes of yours. I have an aba of your father's, which I have kept for you. (*She moves toward the inner room*.)

ALWAN (*stopping her*): There's no hurry, Mother. What's the rush?

ASAKIR: Every breath Suweilam takes with you here is a gift from you to him.

ALWAN: And what's the harm in that?

ASAKIR: It is taken from our own breaths, is deducted from our happiness. Despite ourselves we provided him with an extension of life that has almost put us in our graves. Look closely at your mother, Alwan! I was in my youth when your father died. Look at what these years have done to me! It is as though they were forty years, not seventeen! The sap of youth has drained away, the bones have lost their vigor and no strength is left to me except the unforgettable memory, the unrelenting heart.

ALWAN (*as though talking or himself*): How heavy is the price of revenge upon the person taking it!

ASAKIR (*not understanding*): What are you saying. Alwan?

ALWAN: I am saying that the Mighty Avenger, vas merciful to us when He wanted to take from us this burden without paying a price.

ASAKIR (*in a suspicious tone*): What do you mean?

ALWAN: Nothing, Mother. Nothing.

ASAKIR (*in a decisive tone*): Take off your clothes and 1 'Il bring you the aba. I 'II sharpen the knife with my own hand.

ALWAN: Is there no mosque nearby?

ASAKIR: We have only a small prayer-room near to Sheikh Isnawi's school.

ALWAN (*making a move*): I shall go to it to perform the sunset prayer.

ASAKIR: Now?

ALWAN: I think the sun has almost set.

ASAKIR: Do you want all the people of the village to see you there?

ALWAN: It is the best opportunity for serving my purpose.

ASAKIR: (*staring at him*): Are you mad, Alwan?

ALWAN (*continuing*): This meeting with the, villagers is for me one of the most important things. Did 1 not just tell you that I have come for something important?

ASAKIR (*sarcastically*): I can't think you're going to tell the villagers what you've come for!

ALWAN: I must let them all know about it.

ASAKIR: Alwan! My son! What am I hearing from you! Are you being serious? Are you in your right mind? What will you say to them?

ALWAN (*like one in a dream*): I shall tell them what I have come to tell them. For so long I have thought about my village and its people, despite my long absence. In the free time from lessons at al-Azhar. When fellow students gather together, when newspaper is read, and when we are overcome by yearning for the land where we have been raised, we ask ourselves longingly: when will our people in the countryside live like human beings in clean houses where the animals do not eat with them? When will their roofs be covered with something other than twigs from cotton bushes and maize stalks, and their walls be painted with something other than mud and animal dung? When will the water jar be replaced by clean running water, and electricity take the place of lanterns? Is that too much to wish for our people? Have not our people the same rights in life as others?

ASAKIR (*like someone who does not understand*): What talk is this, Alwan?

ALWAN: This is what the villagers must know, and it is the duty of us who have been educated in Cairo to open their eyes to their rights in life. The attainment of this goal is not difficult for them if they unite and help one another and co-operate in setting up a council from amongst themselves which will impose taxes on those who can pay, and to form teams of the strong and the able who, during their long hours of free time, will set up bridges and construction works, instead of wasting it in dissension and squabbles. If they rallied round this idea and expended serious effort on this task, they could make a model village here, and it would not be long before all the villages in the countryside were copying it.

ASAKIR: This bookish talk is something to chat about later on with Sheikh Mohamed al-Isnawi, who will understand it. As for now, Alwan, we have more important things before us.

ALWAN (*brought up with a jolt*): What is more important than that?

ASAKIR: Yes, leave off praying tonight in the prayer-room in case its spoils things. Pray here tonight if you want to. Get up and take off your clothes and I'll bring you some water from the jar to wash yourself with, then put on the aba and we'll sharpen the knife together.

ALWAN (*in a whisper with head lowered*): Almighty God, grant me your mercy, your favor and your pardon.

ASAKIR: What are you saying, Alwan?

ALWAN (*raising his head*): I was saying that I come only to open people's eyes to life; I bring you life.

ASAKIR: And this is what we have been waiting for patiently for all these nights-seventeen years with all the Azizis like the dead, waiting for you to come to bring them back life!

ALWAN (*in a whisper with head lowered*): Oh God! What shall I do with these people?

ASAKIR: Why do you keep your head lowered like that? Get up and don't waste time. Get up.

ALWAN (*taking heart, he raises his head*): Mother, I won't kill!

ASAKIR (*concealing her dismay*): What do I hear?

ALWAN: I won't kill.

ASAKIR (*in a hoarse voice*): Your father's blood!

ALWAN: It is you who have failed him by hiding it from the government- reprisal is for those in power.

ASAKIR (*paying no attention*): The blood of your father!

ALWAN: My hand was not created to bring about someone's death.

ASAKIR (*half out of her mind*): The blood of your father!

ALWAN (*alarmed at her state*): Mother - what's happened to you?

ASAKIR (*as though unconscious of anyone being with her*): The blood of your father… seventeen years... the blood of your father… seventeen years…

ALWAN: Calm yourself, Mother. Certainly, it is a shock but you must understand that I am not the man to murder with a knife.

ASAKIR (*whispering, like someone possessed*): Seventeen years - revenge for your father - seventeen years.

ALWAN (*as though talking to himself):* I know that you have suffered and endured for a long time, Mother. Were your patience and endurance for a worthwhile end I would have performed miracles for you, but you must understand.

ASAKIR (*in a choking voice*): The blood of your father!

ALWAN (*hurrying over to her in alarm*): Mother! Mother! Mother!

ASAKIR (*rousing herself a little in his arms*): Who are you?

ALWAN: Your son Alwan. Your son.

ASAKIR (*coming to her senses and shouting*): My son? My own son? No, never, never!

ALWAN (taken aback): Mother!

ASAKIR: I am not your mother. I do not know you. No son issued from my belly.

ALWAN: Try to understand, Mother.

ASAKIR: Get out of my house. God's curse be on you until the Day of Judgment. Get out of my house.

ALWAN: Mother!

ASAKIR (*shouting*): Get out of my house or I shall call the men to put you out. We have our men, there are still men amongst Azizis, but you are not one of them. Get out. Get out of my house.

ALWAN (*taking up his bag*): I shall go to the station to return whence I came. I ask God to calm your agitated soul and shall see you shortly in Cairo; then I shall explain to you my point of view in an atmosphere of calm far away from here. Till we see each other again, Mother!

He goes off, leaving Asakir in her place, motionless. A moment later Sumeida appears, putting his head round the door and pushing it open gently.

SUMEIDA: Was it you who were shouting, Aunt Asakir?

ASAKIR (*with determination, having recovered her senses*): Come, Sumeida!

SUMEIDA (*looking around him*): Where's your son Alwan?

ASAKIR: I have no son; I was not blessed with children.

SUMEIDA: What are you saying, Aunt Asakir?

ASAKIR: Had I a son he would take revenge for his father.

SUMEIDA (*looking round the room*): Where has he gone?

ASAKIR: To the station in order to return to Cairo.

SUMEIDA: My mother was right! When she saw him just now she said, as we were going out: "This gentleman is not the one to kill Suweilam Tahawi."

ASAKIR: Oh that my belly had been ripped apart before bringing into the world such a son!

SUMEIDA: Take it easy, Aunt-there are men among the Azizis!

ASAKIR: Our hopes rest in you, Sumcida.

SUMEIDA: A cousin in place of a son.

ASAKIR: But the son is alive. It is he who should avenge the blood of his father. He is alive, alive and walking about amongst people.

SUMEIDA: Assume that he has died.

ASAKIR: Would that he had actually died as a child in the well of the water-wheel. We would not have waited these long years squirming with pain on the coals of suppressed rage, waiting futilely. Would that he were dead - we could have lived with our excuse and we would not have had to clothe ourselves in shame. But he is alive and it has been spread abroad in the district, has been circulated in the market place that he is alive. What disgrace! What ignominy! What shame!

SUMEIDA: Take it easy. Aunt!

ASAKIR: Everything is easy to bear except this disgrace! After it life becomes impossible. How can I live in the village when the people know that I have such a son? Everyone will spit in disgust at the mere mention of his name. From every side voices will be raised saying: "What a failure of a belly that brought forth such a child!" Yes, this belly! *(She strikes at her belly with violent blows.* All the women of the village will scoff at it, even the deformed, the dull-witted, and the barren. This belly! This belly!

SUMEIDA (trying to prevent her striking herself): Aunt Asakir, do not hurt yourself in this way!

ASAKIR Bring the knife. Sumeida -rll rip it open with it!

SUMEIDA: Have you gone mad'?

ASAKIR: Sumeida are you a man?

SUMEIDA (staring at her): What do you want?

ASAKIR: Ward of the shame from your cousin!

SUMEIDA: Alwan?

ASAKIR: And from his mother. Your Aunt Asakir.

SUMEIDA: What am I to do?

ASAKIR (taking up the knife, from the saddlebag): Kill him with this knife!

SUMEIDA: Kill whom?

ASAKIR: Alwan. Plunge this knife into his chest!

SUMEIDA: Kill Alwan? Your son?

ASAKIR: Yes, kill him. bring him to his death.

SUMEIDA: Be sensible, Aunt!

ASAKIR: Do it, Sumeida-for my sake and for his!

SUMEIDA: For his?

ASAKIR: Yes, it is better for him and for me for it to be said that he was killed than that he shirked taking vengeance for his father.

SUMEIDA: My cousin!

ASAKIR: If you're a man, Sumeida, don't let him dishonor the Azizis! After today you will not be able to walk like a man amongst people; they will whisper about you, will laugh up their sleeves at you, will point to you in the market places saying: "A woman hiding behind a woman!"

SUMEIDA (*as though talking to himself*): A woman?

ASAKIR: If there were such a son amongst the Tahawis, they would not have allowed him to stay alive for a single hour.

SUMEIDA (*as though talking to himself*): 'A woman hiding behind a woman!'

ASAKIR: Yes, you-if you accept to condone your cousin after what has happened!

SUMEIDA (*stretching out his hand resolutely*): Give me the knife!

ASAKIR (*giving him the knife*): Take it - no wait, I'll wash off the rust and blood.

SUMEIDA (*impatiently*): Give it here - before he makes his escape on the evening train.

ASAKIR (*giving him the knife resolutely*): Take it, and may his blood wash off his father's blood that had dried on the blade.

SUMEIDA (*leaving with the knife*): If his killing is brought about, Aunt, you will hear my voice raised in song from by the district office.

He goes out hurried! Asakir remains alone, rooted to the ground like a statue, her eyes staring out, like someone stupepefied. Then Mabrouka appears at the door, carrying a dish on her head

MABROUKA (*taking the dish from her head*): A salted fish I brought for Sheikh Alwan.

ASAKIR (*turning to her slowly*): Someone has died, Mabrouka!

MABROUKA: God spare you-who?

ASAKIR: Alwan.

MABROUKA: Your son?

ASAKIR: I now have no son, he has become one with the dust.

MABROUKA: What's this you're saying, Asakir? I left him with you just a while ago. Where is he?

ASAKIR: He went to the station to return whence he came and to flee from taking vengeance for his father.

MABROUKA (*with head lowered*): That is what my heart told me.

ASAKIR: Your prediction was right. Mabrouka.

MABROUKA: Would that he had not come!

ASAKIR: Seventeen years we waited!

MABROUKA: And each year you would say, "He's grown older"-it was as if he were a maize plant that you were measuring each day with the span of your hand, until it had flourished and the corncob had properly ripened; you then tore off the covering only to find that it was empty of seed and fruit.

ASAKIR: If only he had grown up like some useless plant, it would have been easier to bear for we would not have expected to profit from him. As it was, we expected that he would restore our honour. How often, Mabrouka, did I feel proud of him within myself and boast of him in front of you, reckoning that I had produced a son who would wash clean the family honour. And lo! The son I have borne and whom I hid away, as one hides a treasure inside a clay jar, is nothing but a mark of shame that has befallen our tree, just as the blight attacks the cotton bush. A thousand mercies on your soul, O husband of mine whose blood has been spilt! I bore you the son who will make it possible for your adversaries to gloat and your enemies to rejoice.

MABROUKA: What degradation for the Azizis!

ASAKIR: Yes, were he to remain alive, but soon he will be buried in the ground.

MABROUKA (turning round suddenly): Where is Sumeida?

ASAKIR (*listening carefully for the sound of a whistle*): Quiet! There's the evening train entering the station!

MABROUKA: Where's Sumeida, Asakir?

ASAKIR (*listening carefully*): Be quiet! Be quiet! Now at this moment at this very moment.

MABROUKA (*in surprise*): What about this moment?

ASAKIR (*as though talking to herself*): D'you think he has caught the train or has he been caught by.....

MABROUKA: So long as he's gone to the station as you said, he must have caught the train, and no good will come from all these pleas for perdition you heap on him.

ASAKIR: Do you really think he's caught the train, Mabrouka?

MABROUKA: And what will stop him?

ASAKIR (*unconsciously*): Sumeida!

MABROUKA: Sumeida? Did he go after him to stop him from going?

ASAKIR: Yes.

MABROUKA: When did he go?

ASAKIR: Shortly before you came.

MABROUKA: I don't think he'll catch up with him.

ASAKIR (*taking a deep breath*): Do you think so, Mabrouka?

MABROUKA: Unless he ran hard.

ASAKIR (*listening intently for the whistle*): That's the train leaving the station.

MABROUKA (*staring at her*): What's wrong with you, Asakir? Why's your face so pale?

ASAKIR: What does your heart tell you, Mabrouka?

MABROUKA: My heart tells me that he's gone.

ASAKIR: Gone, gone-where to?

MABROUKA: Whence he came.

ASAKIR (*staring*): What do you mean?

MABROUKA (*looking at her*): Why are you breathing so heavily, Asakir?

ASAKIR (*in a whisper; as she glances round distractedly*): Gone to whence he came?

MABROUKA: Asakir, are you still hoping that some good will come out of him?

ASAKIR: No.

MABROUKA: Think of him as never having been.

MABROUKA (as though talking to herself): Yes, his death is more of a secret than his life. Thank God that he is far away.

ASAKIR (*as though asking herself):* Is he now on the train?

MABROUKA: Who knows? Perhaps Sumeida was able to catch up with him and to dissuade him from traveling and will return with him now.

ASAKIR (*as in a dream*): Return with him now?

MABROUKA: Why not? If Sumeida really went like the wind he'd not miss the train.

ASAKIR (*in a whisper*): Will he catch up with him?

MABROUKA: Maybe it won't be long before you see them coming along together again.

ASAKIR (*as though talking to herself*): No, this time Sumeida will come by himself

MABROUKA (*looking at her in alarm*): Your face, Asakir, frightens me.

ASAKIR (*listening intently*): Quiet! Listen! Listen! Do you now hear something?

MABROUKA: No, what should I hear?

ASAKIR: Singing.

MABROUKA (*listening*): No, I don't hear singing.

ASAKIR (*breathing heavily*): Nor I.

MABROUKA: Did Sumeida tell you he'd been singing?

ASAKIR (*in alarm, as though talking to herself*): Perhaps he hasn't yet reached the district office.

MABROUKA: I would have thought he had.

ASAKIR (*breathing more heavily*): Reached the district office and hasn't sung!

MABROUKA: Why is your face flushed, Asakir?

ASAKIR (*in a whisper*): He hasn't caught up with him.

MABROUKA: You prefer, Asakir, that he docs not return that the train carries him far away from this village. I agree with you: it is better for him to return to Cairo, to his Sheikhs and his colleagues. He docs not belong to us now nor we to him. He has done well to leave us quickly before he mixes with the people of the village and they discover what we have about him.

ASAKIR (*listens to afar-away sound*)

MABROUKA (*turning to her*): You are not listening to me. Asakir. Is not what I'm saying right?

ASAKIR (*in a hoarse frightening voice*): No, I hear nothing!

MABROUKA (*listening*): But that's Sumeida singing! (*She turns in terror to Asakir*) Asakir! Asakir! What's happened to you? You're frightening me.

SUMEIDA (*singing from without in the dialect of Upper Egypt*):

Friend, what excuses have we given,

What assurances that we'd repent?

And when your blame you yet continued,

Our shirt and outer robe we rent.

When of the father I did hear

My shame no hounds did know,

And both mine eyes did open wide

And copious tears did flow.

ASAKIR (*pulling herself together lest she collapse; even so a faint suppressed cry like a rattle in the throat, escapes her lips*): My son!

CURTAIN.

Glossary

agitated (adj.): feeling troubled or anxious

barren (adj.): (of land) too poor to produce much

condone (v.): to accept or allow the wrong behavior, pardon, forgive

copious (adj.): plentiful, enough in supply or quantity

corncob (n.): a round loaf of bread

dissension (n.): arguments, disagreement,

dissuade (v.): to persuade someone not to do something

docs (n.): does not

flee (v.): to escape by running away, especially because of danger or fear

ignominy (n.): public embarrassment, dishonor

longingly (adv.): with a strong desire

resolutely (adv.): in a determined way

rip (v.): to pull apart; to tear or be torn violently and quickly

scoff (v.): to laugh and talk about a person in a mocking way

shepherd (n.): a person whose job is to take care of sheep

skullcap (n.): a small, round hat that fits closely on the top of the head

slaughter (n.): the killing of animals for meat

squabbles (n.): noisy argument about an unnecessary subject

suppressing (v.): ending something by force

trilling (v.): speaking in a very high voice

unrelenting (adj.): relentless, ruthless

vengeance (n.): the skill of taking revenge especially in the next life

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. Who is the main female character in the play?

i. Nawal ii. Asakir

iii. Zeinab iv. Samiha

b. What does Asakir expect her son to do?

i. Take revenge for his father's murder

ii. Leave the country

iii. Become a religious leader

iv. Marry a village girl

c. Why does Asakir sing the 'Song of Death'?

i. To express a lament of defeat

ii. To warn the villagers

iii. To mourn her husband

iv. To glorify revenge and encourage her son

d. What is the son's response to his mother's desire for revenge?

i. He agrees immediately.

ii. He runs away.

iii. He refuses, saying he values justice over revenge.

iv. He kills the wrong person.

e. What is the dramatic setting of the play?

i. A prison courtyard

ii. A city courtroom

iii. A village home

iv. A mountain temple

f. What does the 'song' in the title symbolize?

i. Peace ii. Death ritual
iii. War cry iv. Call for revenge

g. Tawfiq Al-Hakim is a playwright from …

i. India ii. Egypt
iii. Syria iv. Iraq

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. What does Asakir want to do? Why?

b. Why doesn't Alwan kill his father's murderer?

c. How does Asakir persuade Alwan to take revenge?

d. Why has Asakir sent her son Alwan to Cairo?

e. How does the son react to his mother's demand for revenge?

f. Why does Asakir tell Sumeida to kill his cousin?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. The play is composed on the difference of attitudes and thinking between two different generations, how does the play convey the theme of tradition versus modernity?

b. Do you think Asakir's desire for revenge is justified? Sketch the characters of Asakir.

c. Explain the following extracts from the play with reference to the context.

Even your father's funeral waits for you, Alwan. These all years is waiting for you to set it free. My frock, which I've kept myself from tearing open all that time, is waiting for you, too. Everything in our existence is dead.

d. *The Song of Death* is the play of vengeance; how does the son's rejection of revenge challenge the traditional values of his village? Discuss.

e. Why does Asakir show her grief at the end of the play? Explain with reference to her husband's murder.

Project Work

Work in groups. Imagine you are a journalist interviewing Alwan, Asakir, and Sumeida after the events of the play *The Song of Death.* Prepare a script with questions and answers showing their thoughts on revenge, family, and honor. End with your reflection on their values. Share your work in the class.

Chitra

Before You Read

a. What do you think the Mahabharata is about?

b. What makes a person truly heroic in your eyes?

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) was a great poet, playwright and storywriter. Born in Calcutta, India, Tagore began writing verse at an early age. After completing his studies in England, he returned to India where he published several books of poetry. In 1901, Tagore founded an experimental school in Shantiniketan, where he sought to blend the best of Indian and Western traditions— a vision that is vividly reflected in his writings. Tagore introduced new forms of prose and verse, as well as the use of colloquial language in literature. His innovative contributions to literature and the lyrical beauty of his work earned him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, awarded for his profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse, by which—through ideal skill—he made his poetic thought, expressed in his own English words, a part of the literature of the West. Throughout his career, Tagore not only wrote and translated poetry, but also published numerous novels, short stories, plays, essays, memoirs, and criticism. His writings include portrayals of common people's lives, literary criticism, philosophy, and social issues. Tagore's most notable work of poetry is *Gitanjali*: Song Offerings (Macmillan, 1912).

Chitra is a one-act play based on a story from the epic Mahabharata that explores themes of *love, identity,* and *self-realization*. The play centers around Chitra, a warrior princess of Manipur, who struggles with her desire to be loved and accepted by Arjuna. Through divine intervention by Krishna, Chitra is given the power to appear as the ideal woman. However, she learns that true love comes from being accepted for one's true self, not just an idealized image. Ultimately, the play reveals that genuine love transcends physical appearance and embraces a person's true identity. It highlights how human love shifts from the physical to the spiritual, from transience to permanence, and from romanticism to realism.

Characters

GODS:

MADANA (Eros).

VASANTA (Lycoris).

MORTALS: CHITRA, daughter of the King of Manipur. ARJUNA, a prince of the house of the Kurus. He is of the Kshatriya or "warrior caste," and during the action is living as a Hermit retired in the forest.

VILLAGERS from an outlying district of Manipur.

NOTE: The dramatic poem "Chitra" has been performed in India without scenery the actors being surrounded by the audience. Proposals for its production here having been made to him, he went through this translation and provided stage directions, but wished these omitted if it were printed as a book.

SCENE I

Chitra: ART thou the god with the five darts, the Lord of Love?

Madana: I am he who was the first born in the heart of the Creator. I bind in bonds of pain and bliss the lives of men and women!

Chitra: I know, I know what that pain is and those bonds. — And who art thou, my lord?

Vasanta: I am his friend—Vasanta—the King of the Seasons. Death and decrepitude would wear the world to the bone but that I follow them and constantly attack them. I am Eternal Youth.

Chitra: I bow to thee, Lord Vasanta.

Madana: But what stern vow is thine, fair stranger? Why dost thou wither thy fresh youth with penance and mortification? Such a sacrifice is not fit for the worship of love. Who art thou and what is thy prayer?

Chitra: I am Chitra, the daughter of the kingly house of Manipur. With godlike grace Lord Shiva promised to my royal grandsire an unbroken line of male descent. Nevertheless, the divine word proved powerless to change the spark of life in my mother's womb—so invincible was my nature, woman though I be.

Madana: I know, that is why thy father brings thee up as his son. He has taught thee the use of the bow and all the duties of a king.

Chitra: Yes, that is why I am dressed in man's attire and have left the seclusion of a woman's chamber. I know no feminine wiles for winning hearts. My hands are strong to bend the bow, but I have never learnt Cupid's archery, the play of eyes.

Madana: That requires no schooling, fair one. The eye does its work untaught, and he knows how well, who is struck in the heart.

Chitra: One day in search of game I roved alone to the forest on the bank of the Purna river. Tying my horse to a tree trunk I entered a dense thicket on the track of a deer. I found a narrow sinuous path meandering through the dusk of the entangled boughs, the foliage vibrated with the chirping of crickets, when of a sudden I came upon a man lying on a bed of dried leaves, across my path. I asked him haughtily to move aside, but he heeded not. Then with the sharp end of my bow I pricked him in contempt. Instantly he leapt up with straight, tall limbs, like a sudden tongue of fire from a heap of ashes. An amused smile flickered round the corners of his mouth, perhaps at the sight of my boyish countenance. Then for the first time in my life I felt myself a woman, and knew that a man was before me.

Madana: At the auspicious hour I teach the man and the woman this supreme lesson to know themselves. What happened after that?

Chitra: With fear and wonder I asked him "Who are you?" "I am Arjuna," he said, "of the great Kuru clan." I stood petrified like a statue, and forgot to do him obeisance. Was this indeed Arjuna, the one great idol of my dreams! Yes, I had long ago heard how he had vowed a twelve - years' celibacy. Many a day my young ambition had spurred me on to break my lance with him, to challenge him in disguise to single combat, and prove my skill in arms against him. Ah, foolish heart, whither fled thy presumption? Could I but exchange my youth with all its aspirations for the clod of earth under his feet, I should deem it a most precious grace. I know not in what whirlpool of thought I was lost, when suddenly I saw him vanish through the trees. O foolish woman, neither didst thou greet him, nor speak a word, nor beg forgiveness, but stoodest like a barbarian boor while he contemptuously walked away! . . . Next morning I laid aside my man's clothing. I donned bracelets, anklets, waist-chain, and a gown of purple red silk. The unaccustomed dress clung about my shrinking shame; but I hastened on my quest, and found Arjuna in the forest temple of Shiva.

Madana: Tell me the story to the end. I am the heart-born god, and I understand the mystery of these impulses.

Chitra: Only vaguely can I remember what things I said, and what answer I got. Do not ask me to tell you all. Shame fell on me like a thunderbolt, yet could not break me to pieces, so utterly hard, so like a man am I. His last words as I walked home pricked my ears like red hot needles. "I have taken the vow of celibacy. I am not fit to be thy husband!" Oh, the vow of a man! Surely thou knowest, thou god of love, that unnumbered saints and sages have surrendered the merits of their life-long penance at the feet of a woman. I broke my bow in two and burnt my arrows in the fire. I hated my strong, lithe arm, scored by drawing the bowstring. O Love, god Love, thou hast laid low in the dust the vain pride of my manlike strength; and all my man's training lies crushed under thy feet. Now teach me thy lessons; give me the power of the weak and the weapon of the unarmed hand.

Madana: I will be thy friend. I will bring the world-conquering Arjuna a captive before thee, to accept his rebellion's sentence at thy hand.

Chitra: Had I but the time needed, I could win his heart by slow degrees, and ask no help of the gods. I would stand by his side as a comrade, drive the fierce horses of his war-chariot, attend him in the pleasures of the chase, keep guard at night at the entrance of his tent, and help him in all the great duties of a Kshatriya, rescuing the weak, and meting out justice where it is due. Surely at last the day would have come for him to look at me and wonder, "What boy is this? Has one of my slaves in a former life followed me like my good deeds into this?" I am not the woman who nourishes her despair in lonely silence, feeding it with nightly tears and covering it with the daily patient smile, a widow from her birth. The flower of my desire shall never drop into the dust before it has ripened to fruit. But it is the labor of a life time to make one's true self known and honored. Therefore, I have come to thy door, thou world-vanquishing Love, and thou, Vasanta, youthful Lord of the Seasons, take from my young body this primal injustice, an unattractive plainness. For a single day make me superbly beautiful, even as beautiful as was the sudden blooming of love in my heart. Give me but one brief day of perfect beauty, and I will answer for the days that follow.

Madana: Lady, I grant thy prayer.

Vasanta: Not for the short span of a day, but for one whole year the charm of spring blossoms shall nestle round thy limbs.

SCENE II

Arjuna: WAS I dreaming or was what I saw by the lake truly there? Sitting on the mossy turf, I mused over bygone years in the sloping shadows of the evening, when slowly there came out from the folding darkness of foliage an apparition of beauty in the perfect form of a woman, and stood on a white slab of stone at the water's brink. It seemed that the heart of the earth must heave in joy under her bare white feet. Methought the vague veilings of her body should melt in ecstasy into air as the golden mist of dawn melts from off the snowy peak of the eastern hill. She bowed herself above the shining mirror of the lake and saw the reflection of her face. She started up in awe and stood still; then smiled, and with a careless sweep of her left arm unloosed her hair and let it trail on the earth at her feet. She bared her bosom and looked at her arms, so flawlessly modelled, and instinct with an exquisite caress. Bending her head she saw the sweet blossoming of her youth and the tender bloom and blush of her skin. She beamed with a glad surprise. So, if the white lotus bud on opening her eyes in the morning were to arch her neck and see her shadow in the water, would she wonder at herself the livelong day. But a moment after the smile passed from her face and a shade of sadness crept into her eyes. She bound up her tresses, drew her veil over her arms, and sighing slowly, walked away like a beauteous evening fading into the night. To me the supreme fulfillment of desire seemed to have been revealed in a flash and then to have vanished . . . . But who is it that pushes the door?

Enter CHITRA, dressed as a woman.

Ah! it is she. Quiet, my heart! . . . Fear me not, lady! I am a Kshatriya.

Chitra: Honored sir, you are my guest. I live in this temple. I know not in what way I can show you hospitality.

Arjuna: Fair lady, the very sight of you is indeed the highest hospitality. If you will not take it amiss I would ask you a question.

Chitra: You have permission.

Arjuna: What stern vow keeps you immured in this solitary temple, depriving all mortals of a vision of so much loveliness?

Chitra: I harbour a secret desire in my heart, for the fulfilment of which I offer daily prayers to Lord Shiva.

Arjuna: Alas, what can you desire, you who are the desire of the whole world! From the easternmost hill on whose summit the morning sun first prints his fiery foot to the end of the sunset land have I travelled. I have seen whatever is most precious, beautiful and great on the earth. My knowledge shall be yours, only say for what or for whom you seek.

Chitra: He whom I seek is known to all.

Arjuna: Indeed! Who may this favorite of the gods be, whose fame has captured your heart?

Chitra: Sprung from the highest of all royal houses, the greatest of all heroes is he.

Arjuna: Lady, offer not such wealth of beauty as is yours on the altar of false reputation. Spurious fame spreads from tongue to tongue like the fog of the early dawn before the sun rises. Tell me who in the highest of kingly lines is the supreme hero?

Chitra: Hermit, you are jealous of other men's fame. Do you not know that all over the world the royal house of the Kurus is the most famous?

Arjuna: The house of the Kurus!

Chitra: And have you never heard of the greatest name of that far-famed house?

Arjuna: From your own lips let me hear it.

Chitra: Arjuna, the conqueror of the world. I have culled from the mouths of the multitude that imperishable name and hidden it with care in my maiden heart. Hermit, why do you look perturbed? Has that name only a deceitful glitter? Say so, and I will not hesitate to break this casket of my heart and throw the false gem to the dust.

Arjuna: Be his name and fame, his bravery and prowess false or true, for mercy's sake do not banish him from your heart—for he kneels at your feet even now.

Chitra: You, Arjuna!

Arjuna: Yes, I am he, the love-hungered guest at your door.

Chitra: Then it is not true that Arjuna has taken a vow of chastity for twelve long years?

Arjuna: But you have dissolved my vow even as the moon dissolves the night's vow of obscurity.

Chitra: Oh, shame upon you! What have you seen in me that makes you false to yourself? Whom do you seek in these dark eyes, in these milk-white arms, if you are ready to pay for her the price of your probity? Not my true self, I know. Surely this cannot be love; this is not man's highest homage to woman! Alas, that this frail disguise, the body, should make one blind to the light of the deathless spirit! Yes, now indeed, I know, Arjuna, the fame of your heroic manhood is false.

Arjuna: Ah, I feel how vain is fame, the pride of prowess! Everything seems to me a dream. You alone are perfect; you are the wealth of the world, the end of all poverty, the goal of all efforts, the one woman! Others there are who can be but slowly known. While to see you for a moment is to see perfect completeness once and for ever.

Chitra: Alas, it is not I, not I, Arjuna! It is the deceit of a god. Go, go, my hero, go. Woo not false hood, offer not your great heart to an illusion. Go.

SCENE III

Chitra: No, impossible. To face that fervent gaze that almost grasps you like clutching hands of the hungry spirit within; to feel his heart struggling to break its bounds urging its passionate cry through the entire body—and then to send him away like a beggar—no, impossible.

Enter MADANA and VASANTA.

Ah, god of love, what fearful flame is this with which thou hast enveloped me! I burn, and I burn whatever I touch.

Madana: I desire to know what happened last night.

Chitra: At evening I lay down on a grassy bed strewn with the petals of spring flowers, and recollected the wonderful praise of my beauty I had heard from Arjuna;—drinking drop by drop the honey that I had stored during the long day. The history of my past life like that of my former existences was forgotten. I felt like a flower, which has but a few fleeting hours to listen to all the humming flatteries and whispered murmurs of the woodlands and

then must lower its eyes from the Sky, bend its head and at a breath give itself up to the dust without a cry, thus ending the short story of a perfect moment that has neither past nor future.

Vasanta: A limitless life of glory can bloom and spend itself in a morning.

Madana: Like an endless meaning in the narrow span of a song.

Chitra: The southern breeze caressed me to sleep. From the flowering Malati bower overhead silent kisses dropped over my body. On my hair, my breast, my feet, each flower chose a bed to die on. I slept. And, suddenly in the depth of my sleep, I felt as if some intense eager look, like tapering fingers of flame, touched my slumbering body. I started up and saw the Hermit standing before me. The moon had moved to the west, peering through the leaves to espy this wonder of divine art wrought in a fragile human frame. The air was heavy with perfume; the silence of the night was vocal with the chirping of crickets; the reflections of the trees hung motionless in the lake; and with his staff in his hand he stood, tall and straight and still, like a forest tree. It seemed to me that I had, on opening my eyes, died to all realities of life and undergone a dream birth into a shadow land. Shame slipped to my feet like loosened clothes. I heard his call "Beloved, my most beloved!" And all my forgotten lives united as one and responded to it. I said, "Take me, take all I am!" And I stretched out my arms to him. The moon set behind the trees. One curtain of darkness covered all. Heaven and earth, time and space, pleasure and pain, death and life merged together in an unbearable ecstasy. . . . With the first gleam of light, the first twitter of birds, I rose up and sat leaning on my left arm. He lay asleep with a vague smile about his lips like the crescent moon in the morning. The rosy red glow of the dawn fell upon his noble forehead. I sighed and stood up. I drew together the leafy lianas to screen the streaming sun from his face. I looked about me and saw the same old earth. I remembered what I used to be, and ran and ran like a deer afraid of her own shadow, through the forest path strewn with shephali flowers. I found a lonely nook, and sitting down covered my face with both hands, and tried to weep and cry. But no tears came to my eyes.

Madana: Alas, thou daughter of mortals! I stole from the divine Storehouse the fragrant wine of heaven, filled with it one earthly night to the brim, and placed it in thy hand to drink— yet still I hear this cry of anguish!

Chitra [bitterly]: Who drank it? The rarest completion of life's desire, the first union of love was proffered to me, but was wrested from my grasp? This borrowed beauty, this falsehood that enwraps me, will slip from me taking with it the only monument of that sweet union, as the petals fall from an overblown flower; and the woman ashamed of her naked poverty will sit weeping day and night. Lord Love, this cursed appearance companions me like a demon robbing me of all the prizes of love—all the kisses for which my heart is a thirst.

Madana: Alas, how vain thy single night had been! The barque of joy came in sight, but the waves would not let it touch the shore.

Chitra: Heaven came so close to my hand that I forgot for a moment that it had not reached me. But when I woke in the morning from my dream I found that my body had become my own rival. It is my hateful task to deck her every day, to send her to my beloved and see her caressed by him. O god, take back thy boon!

Madana: But if I take it from you how can you stand before your lover? To snatch away the cup from his lips when he has scarcely drained his first draught of pleasure, would not that be cruel? With what resentful anger he must regard thee then?

Chitra: That would be better far than this. I will reveal my true self to him, a nobler thing than this disguise. If he rejects it, if he spurns me and breaks my heart, I will bear even that in silence.

Vasanta: Listen to my advice. When with the advent of autumn the flowering season is over then comes the triumph of fruitage. A time will come of itself when the heat-cloyed bloom of the body will droop and Arjuna will gladly accept the abiding fruitful truth in thee. O child, go back to thy mad festival.

SCENE IV

Chitra: WHY do you watch me like that, my warrior?

Arjuna: I watch how you weave that garland. Skill and grace, the twin brother and sister, are dancing playfully on your finger tips. I am watching and thinking.

Chitra: What are you thinking, sir?

Arjuna: I am thinking that you, with this same lightness of touch and sweetness, are weaving my days of exile into an immortal wreath, to crown me when I return home.

Chitra: Home! But this love is not for a home!

Arjuna: Not for a home?

Chitra: No. Never talk of that. Take to your home what is abiding and strong. Leave the little wild flower where it was born; leave it beautifully to die at the day's end among all fading blossoms and decaying leaves. Do not take it to your palace hall to fling it on the stony floor which knows no pity for things that fade and are forgotten.

Arjuna: Is ours that kind of love?

Chitra: Yes, no other! Why regret it? That which was meant for idle days should never outlive them. Joy turns into pain when the door by which it should depart is shut against it.

Take it and keep it as long as it lasts. Let not the satiety of your evening claim more than the desire of your morning could earn. . . The day is done. Put this garland on. I am tired. Take me in your arms, my love. Let all vain bickerings of discontent die away at the sweet meeting of our lips.

Arjuna: Hush! Listen, my beloved, the sound of prayer bells from the distant village temple steals upon the evening air across the silent trees!

SCENE V

Vasanta: I CANNOT keep pace with thee, my friend! I am tired. It is a hard task to keep alive the fire thou hast kindled. Sleep overtakes me, the fan drops from my hand, and cold ashes cover the glow of the fire. I start up again from my slumber and with all my might rescue the weary flame. But this can go on no longer.

Madana: I know, thou art as fickle as a child. Ever restless is thy play in heaven and on earth. Things that thou for days buildest up with endless detail thou dost shatter in a moment without regret. But this work of ours is nearly finished. Pleasure-winged days fly fast, and the year, almost at its end, swoons in rapturous bliss.

SCENE VI

Arjuna: I WOKE in the morning and found that my dreams had distilled a gem. I have no casket to inclose it, no king's crown whereon to fix it, no chain from which to hang it, and yet have not the heart to throw it away. My Kshatriya's right arm, idly occupied in holding it, forgets its duties.

Enter CHITRA.

Chitra: Tell me your thoughts, sir!

Arjuna: My mind is busy with thoughts of hunting today. See, how the rain pours in torrents and fiercely beats upon the hillside. The dark shadow of the clouds hangs heavily over the forest, and the swollen stream, like reckless youth, overleaps all barriers with mocking laughter. On such rainy days we five brothers would go to the Chitraka forest to chase wild beasts. Those were glad times. Our hearts danced to the drumbeat of rumbling clouds. The woods resounded with the screams of peacocks. Timid deer could not hear our approaching steps for the patter of rain and the noise of waterfalls; the leopards would leave their tracks on the wet earth, betraying their lairs. Our sport over, we dared each other to swim across turbulent streams on our way back home. The restless spirit is on me. I long to go hunting.

Chitra: First run down the quarry you are now following. Are you quite certain that the enchanted deer you pursue must needs be caught? No, not yet. Like a dream the wild creature eludes you when it seems most nearly yours. Look how the wind is chased by the

mad rain that discharges a thousand arrows after it. Yet it goes free and unconquered. Our sport is like that, my love! You give chase to the fleet-footed spirit of beauty, aiming at her every dart you have in your hands. Yet this magic deer runs ever free and untouched.

Arjuna: My love, have you no home where kind hearts are waiting for your return? A home which you once made sweet with your gentle service and whose light went out when you left it for this wilderness?

Chitra: Why these questions? Are the hours of unthinking pleasure over? Do you not know that I am no more than what you see before you? For me there is no vista beyond. The dew that hangs on the tip of a Kinsuka petal has neither name nor destination. It offers no answer to any question. She whom you love is like that perfect bead of dew.

Arjuna: Has she no tie with the world? Can she be merely like a fragment of heaven dropped on the earth through the carelessness of a wanton god?

Chitra: Yes.

Arjuna: Ah, that is why I always seem about to lose you. My heart is unsatisfied, my mind knows no peace. Come closer to me, unattainable one! Surrender yourself to the bonds of name and home and parentage. Let my heart feel you on all sides and live with you in the peaceful security of love.

Chitra: Why this vain effort to catch and keep the tints of the clouds, the dance of the waves, the smell of the flowers?

Arjuna: Mistress mine, do not hope to pacify love with airy nothings. Give me something to clasp, something that can last longer than pleasure that can endure even through suffering.

Chitra: Hero mine, the year is not yet full, and you are tired already! Now I know that it is Heaven's blessing that has made the flower's term of life short. Could this body of mine have drooped and died with the flowers of last spring it surely would have died with honour. Yet, its days are numbered, my love. Spare it not, press it dry of honey, for fear your beggar's heart come back to it again and again with unsated desire, like a thirsty bee when summer blossoms lie dead in the dust.

SCENE VII

Madana: TONIGHT is thy last night.

Vasanta: The loveliness of your body will return tomorrow to the inexhaustible stores of the spring. The ruddy tint of thy lips freed from the memory of Arjuna's kisses, will bud anew as a pair of fresh asoka leaves, and the soft, white glow of thy skin will be born again in a hundred fragrant jasmine flowers.

Chitra: O gods, grant me this my prayer! Tonight, in its last hour let my beauty flash its brightest, like the final flicker of a dying flame.

Madana: Thou shalt have thy wish.

SCENE VIII

Villagers: WHO will protect us now?

Arjuna: Why, by what danger are you threatened?

Villagers: The robbers are pouring from the northern hills like a mountain flood to devastate our village.

Arjuna: Have you in this kingdom no warden?

Villagers: Princess Chitra was the terror of all evil doers. While she was in this happy land we feared natural deaths, but had no other fears. Now she has gone on a pilgrimage, and none knows where to find her.

Arjuna: Is the warden of this country a woman?

Villagers: Yes, she is our father and mother in one. Exeunt.

Enter CHITRA.

Chitra: Why are you sitting all alone?

Arjuna: I am trying to imagine what kind of woman Princess Chitra may be. I hear so many stories of her from all sorts of men.

Chitra: Ah, but she is not beautiful. She has no such lovely eyes as mine, dark as death. She can pierce any target she will, but not our hero's heart.

Arjuna: They say that in valour she is a man, and a woman in tenderness.

Chitra: That, indeed, is her greatest misfortune. When a woman is merely a woman; when she winds herself round and round men's hearts with her smiles and sobs and services and caressing endearments; then she is happy. Of what use to her are learning and great achievements? Could you have seen her only yesterday in the court of the Lord Shiva's temple by the forest path, you would have passed by without deigning to look at her. But have you grown so weary of woman's beauty that you seek in her for a man's strength? With green leaves wet from the spray of the foaming waterfall, I have made our noonday bed in a cavern dark as night. There the cool of the soft green mosses thick on the black and dripping stone, kisses your eyes to sleep. Let me guide you thither.

Arjuna: Not today, beloved.

Chitra: Why not today?

Arjuna: I have heard that a horde of robbers has neared the plains. Needs must I go and prepare my weapons to protect the frightened villagers.

Chitra: You need have no fear for them. Before she started on her pilgrimage, Princess Chitra had set strong guards at all the frontier passes.

Arjuna: Yet permit me for a short while to set about a Kshatriya's work. With new glory will I ennoble this idle arm, and make of it a pillow more worthy of your head.

Chitra: What if I refuse to let you go, if I keep you entwined in my arms? Would you rudely snatch yourself free and leave me? Go then! But you must know that the liana, once broken in two, never joins again. Go, if your thirst is quenched. But, if not, then remember that the goddess of pleasure is fickle, and waits for no man. Sit for a while, my lord! Tell me what uneasy thoughts tease you. Who occupied your mind today? Is it Chitra?

Arjuna: Yes, it is Chitra. I wonder in fulfillment of what vow she has gone on her pilgrimage. Of what could she stand in need?

Chitra: Her needs? Why, what has she ever had, the unfortunate creature? Her very qualities are as prison walls, shutting her woman's heart in a bare cell. She is obscured; she is unfulfilled. Her womanly love must content itself dressed in rags; beauty is denied her. She is like the spirit of a cheerless morning, sitting upon the stony mountain peak, all her light blotted out by dark clouds. Do not ask me of her life. It will never sound sweet to man's ear.

Arjuna: I am eager to learn all about her. I am like a traveller come to a strange city at midnight. Domes and towers and garden-trees look vague and shadowy, and the dull moan of the sea comes fitfully through the silence of sleep. Wistfully he waits for the morning to reveal to him all the strange wonders. Oh, tell me her story.

Chitra: What more is there to tell?

Arjuna: I seem to see her, in my mind's eye, riding on a white horse, proudly holding the reins in her left hand, and in her right a bow, and like the Goddess of Victory dispensing glad hope all round her. Like a watchful lioness she protects the litter at her dugs with a fierce love. Woman's arms, though adorned with naught but unfettered strength, are beautiful! My heart is restless, fair one, like a serpent reviving from his long winter's sleep. Come, let us both race on swift horses side by side, like twin orbs of light sweeping through space. Out from this slumbrous prison of green gloom, this dank, dense cover of perfumed intoxication, choking breath.

Chitra: Arjuna, tell me true, if, now at once, by some magic I could shake myself free from this voluptuous softness, this timid bloom of beauty shrinking from the rude and healthy touch of the world, and fling it from my body like borrowed clothes, would you be able

to bear it? If I stand up straight and strong with the strength of a daring heart spurning the wiles and arts of twining weakness, if I hold my head high like a tall young mountain fir no longer trailing in the dust like a liana, shall I then appeal to man's eye? No, no, you could not endure it. It is better that I should keep spread about me all the dainty playthings of fugitive youth, and wait for you in patience. When it pleases you to return, I will smilingly pour out for you the wine of pleasure in the cup of this beauteous body. When you are tired and satiated with this wine, you can go to work or play; and when I grow old I will accept humbly and gratefully whatever corner is left for me. Would it please your heroic soul if the playmate of the night aspired to be the helpmeet of the day, if the left arm learnt to share the burden of the proud right arm?

Arjuna: I never seem to know you aright. You seem to me like a goddess hidden within a golden image. I cannot touch you; I cannot pay you my dues in return for your priceless gifts. Thus my love is incomplete. Sometimes in the enigmatic depth of your sad look, in your playful words mocking at their own meaning, I gain glimpses of a being trying to rend asunder the languorous grace of her body, to emerge in a chaste fire of pain through a vaporous veil of smiles. Illusion is the first appearance of Truth. She advances towards her lover in disguise. But a time comes when she throws off her ornaments and veils and stands clothed in naked dignity. I grope for that ultimate you, that bare simplicity of truth. Why these tears, my love? Why cover your face with your hands? Have I pained you, my darling? Forget what I said. I will be content with the present. Let each separate moment of beauty come to me like a bird of mystery from its unseen nest in the dark bearing a message of music. Let me forever sit with my hope on the brink of its realization, and thus end my days.

SCENE IX

CHITRA and ARJUNA

Chitra [cloaked]: My lord, has the cup been drained to the last drop? Is this, indeed, the end? No, when all is done something still remains, and that is my last sacrifice at your feet.

I brought from the garden of heaven flowers of incomparable beauty with which to worship you, god of my heart. If the rites are over, if the flowers have faded, let me throw them out of the temple [unveiling in her original male attire]. Now, look at your worshipper with gracious eyes.

I am not beautifully perfect as the flowers with which I worshipped. I have many flaws and blemishes. I am a traveller in the great world-path, my garments are dirty, and my feet are bleeding with thorns. Where should I achieve flower-beauty, the unsullied loveliness of a moment's life? The gift that I proudly bring you is the heart of a woman. Here have all pains and joys gathered, the hopes and fears and shames of a daughter of the dust; here love springs up struggling toward immortal life. Herein lies an imperfection which yet is noble and grand. If the flower-service is finished, my master, accept this as your servant for the days to come!

I am Chitra, the king's daughter. Perhaps you will remember the day when a woman came to you in the temple of Shiva, her body loaded with ornaments and finery. That shameless woman came to court you as though she were a man. You rejected her; you did well. My lord, I am that woman. She was my disguise. Then by the boon of gods I obtained for a year the most radiant form that a mortal ever wore, and wearied my hero's heart with the burden of that deceit. Most surely I am not that woman.

I am Chitra. No goddess to be worshipped, nor yet the object of common pity to be brushed aside like a moth with indifference. If you deign to keep me by your side in the path of danger and daring, if you allow me to share the great duties of your life, then you will know my true self. If your babe, whom I am nourishing in my womb, be born a son, I shall myself teach him to be a second Arjuna, and send him to you when the time comes, and then at last you will truly know me. Today I can only offer you Chitra, the daughter of a king.

Arjuna: Beloved, my life is full.

Glossary

amiss (adj.): in the wrong way, faulty
bickering (n.): a quarrel with much and unpleasant sound
celibacy (n.): the state of not being married
countenance (n.): a person's expression or appearance
deceitful (adj.): guilty of or involving deceit; deceiving or misleading others
drooped (v.): to bend or hang down heavily
enigmatic (adj.): difficult to understand or interpret
entwined (v.): twisted together or around
fickle (adj.): marked by lack of constancy or stability; changeableness
flicker (v.): to move irregularly or unsteadily
fugitive (adj.): fleeting or running away
grandsire (n.): an archaic term for grandfather
immured (v.): enclosed
invincible (adj.): impossible to defeat or prevent from doing what is intended
mortification (n.): a feeling of being very embarrassed
obeisance (n.): body movement of someone that shows the respect to others
perturbed (v.): feeling anxiety, unsettled
probity (n.): the state of having strong moral quality; honesty and decency
proffered (v.): offered something to someone
satiety (n.): the feeling or state of being sated
tresses (n.): someone's hair, especially long hair
unfettered (adj.): not limited by rules or any other controlling influence

unsullied (adj.): not damaged
vanquishing (v.): getting defeated thoroughly
wanton (adj.): extreme and showing no care at all

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. Who is *Chitra* in the play?
   i. A common village girl
   ii. A goddess of love
   iii. A warrior princess and the daughter of King Chitravahana
   iv. A forest nymph

b. Which epic is the story of *Chitra* adapted from?
   i. Mahabharata ii. Iliad
   iii. Odyssey iv. Ramayana

c. Whom does *Chitra* fall in love with?
   i. Krishna ii. Duryodhana
   iii. Bhima iv. Arjuna

d. What special gift does *Chitra* receive from the gods *Madana* and *Vasanta*?
   i. The power to read minds iii. A magic sword
   iv. Divine beauty for one year v. Immortality

e. What does *Arjuna* eventually realize about love?
   i. True love sees beyond beauty.
   ii. He must remain celibate forever.
   iii. It is based only on appearances.
   iv. He cannot love a warrior.

f. What theme is central to the play *Chitra*?
   i. Revenge and betrayal
   ii. War and politics
   iii. Inner identity vs outward appearance
   iv. Power and corruption

g. Who are *Madana* and *Vasanta* in the play?

i. Gods of war and peace ii. Arjuna's brothers

iii. Friends of Chitra iv. Gods of love and spring

h. How does the play end?

i. Chitra dies in battle.

ii. Arjuna leaves her again.

iii. The gods curse Chitra.

iv. Chitra reveals her true self, and Arjuna accepts her.

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. Why did Arjuna come to Manipur?

b. How has the power of God gone wrong?

c. How does Chitra appear in the beginning of the play?

d. What hobbies of men does 'Chitra' nourish?

e. What is the role of God in the play? Explain.

f. How does *Chitra* express her romance in the play?

g. How does *Chitra* act as a bridge from the physical attraction to the spiritual love?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. Describe the various elements in terms of which, the play has been composed.

b. Discuss the play 'Chitra' from a feminist perspective.

c. What is the significance of the ending of the play *Chitra*? Do you think the conclusion is satisfying? Why or why not?

d. How does the play *Chitra* explore the complexities of love and identity, particularly through the character of Chitra?

e. What message does the play convey to girls in a male-dominated society? Critically analyze the play from the modern perspective.

Project Work

Act out the play Chitra by Rabindranath Tagore in the classroom. Express the characters' feelings and the key messages of the play through your performance.

Novella

Of Mice and Men

Before You Read

a. What does friendship mean to you?

b. How does society treat a person who is mentally disabled?

John Ernst Steinbeck (1902–1968) was a celebrated American author best known for his deeply human portrayals of working-class life during the Great Depression. Born in Salinas, California, Steinbeck grew up in the fertile Salinas Valley, an environment that inspired the settings of many of his works. Steinbeck attended Stanford University but left without completing his degree. He took various odd jobs—including laboring alongside migrant workers—experiences that deeply influenced his understanding of poverty, injustice, and the resilience of the human spirit. Throughout his career, Steinbeck authored 33 books, including 16, six non-fiction works, and several short story collections. Among his most famous works are *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), which won the Pulitzer Prize, *East of Eden* (1952), *Cannery Row* (1945), and *Tortilla Flat (*1935). In 1962, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for his realistic and imaginative writing that blended sympathetic humor with social insight.

Of Mice and Men tells the story of two displaced migrant workers: George and Lennie, during the Great Depression. Set on a ranch in California, the narrative reflects the difficult lives of itinerant workers of the time.

CHAPTER ONE

A FEW MILES south of Soledad, the Salinas River drops in close to the hillside bank and runs deep and green. The water is warm too, for it has slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight before reaching the narrow pool. On one side of the river the golden foothill slopes curve up to the strong and rocky Gabilan Mountains, but on the valley side the water is lined with trees - willows fresh and green with every spring, carrying in their lower leaf junctures the debris of the winter's flooding; and sycamores with mottled, white, recumbent limbs and branches that arch over the pool. On the sandy bank under the trees the leaves lie deep and so crisp that a lizard makes a great skittering if he runs among them. Rabbits come out of the brush to sit on the sand in the evening, and the damp flats are covered with the night tracks of 'coons, and with the spread pads of dogs from the ranches, and with the split - wedge tracks of deer that come to drink in the dark.

There is a path through the willows and among the sycamores, a path beaten hard by boys coming down from the ranches to swim in the deep pool, and beaten hard by tramps who come wearily down from the highway in the evening to jungle-up near water. In front of the low horizontal limb of a giant sycamore there is an ash pile made by many fires; the limb is worn smooth by men who have sat on it.

Evening of a hot day started the little wind to moving among the leaves. The shade climbed up the hills toward the top. On the sand banks the rabbits sat as quietly as little gray sculptured stones. And then from the direction of the state highway came the sound of footsteps on crisp sycamore leaves. The rabbits hurried noiselessly for cover. A stilted heron labored up into the air and pounded down river. For a moment the place was lifeless, and then two men emerged from the path and came into the opening by the green pool.

They had walked in single file down the path, and even in the open one stayed behind the other. Both were dressed in denim trousers and in denim coats with brass buttons. Both wore black, shapeless hats and both carried tight blanket rolls slung over their shoulders. The first man was small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features. Every part of him was defined: small, strong hands, slender arms, a thin and bony nose. Behind him walked his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, and wide, sloping shoulders; and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws. His arms did not swing at his sides, but hung loosely.

The first man stopped short in the clearing, and the follower nearly ran over him. He took off his hat and wiped the sweat-band with his forefinger and snapped the moisture off. His huge companion dropped his blankets and flung himself down and drank from the surface of the green pool; drank with long gulps, snorting into the water like a horse. The small man stepped nervously beside him.

“Lennie!” he said sharply. “Lennie, for God sake sdon’t drink so much.” Lennie continued to snort into the pool. The small man leaned over and shook him by the shoulder. “Lennie. You gonna be sick like you was last night.”

Lennie dipped his whole head under, hat and all, and then he sat up on the bank and his hat dripped down on his blue coat and ran down his back. “That’s good,” he said. “You drink some, George. You take a good big drink.” He smiled happily.

George unslung his bindle and dropped it gently on the bank. “I ain’t sure it’s good water,” he said. “Looks kinda scummy.”

Lennie dabbled his big paw in the water and wiggled his fingers so the water arose in little splashes; rings widened across the pool to the other side and came back again. Lennie watched them go. “Look, George. Look what I done.”

George knelt beside the pool and drank from his hand with quick scoops. “Tastes all right,” he admitted. “Don’t really seem to be running, though. You never oughta drink water when

it ain't running, Lennie," he said hopelessly. "You'd drink out of a gutter if you was thirsty." He threw a scoop of water into his face and rubbed it about with his hand, under his chin and around the back of his neck. Then he replaced his hat, pushed himself back from the river, drew up his knees and embraced them. Lennie, who had been watching, imitated George exactly. He pushed himself back, drew up his knees, embraced them, looked over to George to see whether he had it just right. He pulled his hat down a little more over his eyes, the way George's hat was.

George stared morosely at the water. The rims of his eyes were red with sun glare. He said angrily, "We could just as well of rode clear to the ranch if that bastard bus driver knew what he was talkin' about. 'Jes' a little stretch down the highway,' he says. 'Jes' a little stretch.' God damn near four miles, that's what it was! Didn't wanta stop at the ranch gate, that's what. Too God damn lazy to pull up. Wonder he isn't too damn good to stop in Soledad at all. Kicks us out and says 'Jes' a little stretch down the road.' I bet it was more than four miles. Damn hot day."

Lennie looked timidly over to him. "George?"

"Yeah, what ya want?"

"Where we goin', George?"

The little man jerked down the brim of his hat and scowled over at Lennie. "So you forgot that awready, did you? I gotta tell you again, do I? Jesus Christ, you're a crazy bastard!"

"I forgot," Lennie said softly. "I tried not to forget. Honest to God I did, George."

"O.K.- O.K. I'll tell ya again. I ain't got nothing to do. Might jus' as well spen' all my time tellin' you things and then you forget 'em, and I tell you again."

"Tried and tried," said Lennie, "but it didn't do no good. I remember about the rabbits, George."

"The hell with the rabbits. That's all you ever can remember is them rabbits. O.K.! Now you listen and this time you got to remember so we don't get in no trouble. You remember settin' in that gutter on Howard Street and watchin' that blackboard?"

Lennie's face broke into a delighted smile. "Why sure, George. I remember that ... but ... what'd we do then? I remember some girls come by and you says ... you says ..."

"The hell with what I says. You remember about us goin' in to Murray and Ready's, and they give us work cards and bus tickets?"

"Oh, sure, George. I remember that now." His hands went quickly into his side coat pockets. He said gently, "George ... I ain't got mine. I musta lost it." He looked down at the ground in despair.

"You never had none, you crazy bastard. I got both of 'em here. Think I'd let you carry your own work card?"

Lennie grinned with relief. "I ... I thought I put it in my side pocket." His hand went into the pocket again.

George looked sharply at him. "What'd you take outa that pocket?" "Ain't a thing in my pocket," Lennie said cleverly.

"I know there ain't. You got it in your hand. What you got in your hand- hidin' it?" "I ain't got nothin', George. Honest."

"Come on, give it here."

Lennie held his closed hand away from George's direction. "It's on'y a mouse, George." "A mouse? A live mouse?"

"Uh-uh. Jus' a dead mouse, George. I didn't kill it. Honest! I found it. I found it dead." "Give it here!" said George.

"Aw, leave me have it, George." "Give it here!"

Lennie's closed hand slowly obeyed. George took the mouse and threw it across the pool to the other side, among the brush. "What you want of a dead mouse, anyways?"

"I could pet it with my thumb while we walked along," said Lennie.

"Well, you ain't petting no mice while you walk with me. You remember where we're goin' now?"

Lennie looked startled and then in embarrassment hid his face against his knees. "I forgot again."

"Jesus Christ," George said resignedly. "Well- look, we're gonna work on a ranch like the one we come from up north."

"Up north?"

"In Weed."

"Oh, sure. I remember. In Weed."

"That ranch we're goin' to is right down there about a quarter mile. We're gonna go in an' see the boss. Now, look- I'll give him the work tickets, but you ain't gonna say a word. You jus' stand there and don't say nothing. If he finds out what a crazy bastard you are, we won't get no job, but if he sees ya work before he hears ya talk, we're set. Ya got that?"

"Sure, George. Sure I got it."

"O.K. Now when we go in to see the boss, what you gonna do?"

"I... I..." Lennie thought. His face grew tight with thought. "I... ain't gonna say nothin'. Jus' gonna stan' there."

"Good boy. That's swell. You say that over two, three times so you sure won't forget it."

Lennie droned to himself softly, "I ain't gonna say nothin'... I ain't gonna say nothin'... I ain't gonna say nothin'."

"O.K.," said George. "An' you ain't gonna do no bad things like you done in Weed, neither." Lennie looked puzzled. "Like I done in Weed?"

"Oh, so ya forgot that too, did ya? Well, I ain't gonna remind ya, fear ya do it again."

A light of understanding broke on Lennie's face. "They run us outa Weed," he exploded triumphantly.

"Run us out, hell," said George disgustedly. "We run. They was lookin' for us, but they didn't catch us."

Lennie giggled happily. "I didn't forget that, you bet."

George lay back on the sand and crossed his hands under his head, and Lennie imitated him, raising his head to see whether he was doing it right. "God, you're a lot of trouble," said George. "I could get along so easy and so nice if I didn't have you on my tail. I could live so easy and maybe have a girl."

For a moment Lennie lay quiet, and then he said hopefully, "We gonna work on a ranch, George."

"Awright. You got that. But we're gonna sleep here because I got a reason."

The day was going fast now. Only the tops of the Gabilan Mountains flamed with the light of the sun that had gone from the valley. A water snake slipped along on the pool, its head held up like a little periscope. The reeds jerked slightly in the current. Far off toward the highway a man shouted something, and another man shouted back. The sycamore limbs rustled under a little wind that died immediately.

"George- why ain't we goin' on to the ranch and get some supper? They got supper at the ranch."

George rolled on his side. "No reason at all for you. I like it here. Tomorra we're gonna go to work. I seen thrashin' machines on the way down. That means we'll be buckin' grain bags, bustin' a gut. Tonight I'm gonna lay right here and look up. I like it."

Lennie got up on his knees and looked down at George. “Ain’t we gonna have no supper?”

“Sure we are, if you gather up some dead willow sticks. I got three cans of beans in my bindle. You get a fire ready. I’ll give you a match when you get the sticks together. Then we’ll heat the beans and have supper.”

Lennie said, “I like beans with ketchup.”

“Well, we ain’t got no ketchup. You go get wood. An’ don’t you fool around. It’ll be dark before long.”

Lennie lumbered to his feet and disappeared in the brush. George lay where he was and whistled softly to himself. There were sounds of splashings down the river in the direction Lennie had taken. George stopped whistling and listened. “Poor bastard,” he said softly, and then went on whistling again.

In a moment Lennie came crashing back through the brush. He carried one small willow stick in his hand. George sat up. “Awright,” he said brusquely. “Gi’me that mouse!”

But Lennie made an elaborate pantomime of innocence. “What mouse, George? I ain’t got no mouse.”

George held out his hand. “Come on. Give it to me. You ain’t puttin’ nothing over.”

Lennie hesitated, backed away, looked wildly at the brush line as though he contemplated running for his freedom. George said coldly, “You gonna give me that mouse or do I have to sock you?”

“Give you what, George?”

“You know God damn well what. I want that mouse.”

Lennie reluctantly reached into his pocket. His voice broke a little. “I don’t know why I can’t keep it. It ain’t nobody’s mouse. I didn’t steal it. I found it lyin’ right beside the road.”

George’s hand remained outstretched imperiously. Slowly, like a terrier who doesn’t want to bring a ball to its master, Lennie approached, drew back, approached again. George snapped his fingers sharply, and at the sound Lennie laid the mouse in his hand.

“I wasn’t doin’ nothing bad with it, George. Jus’ strokin’ it.”

George stood up and threw the mouse as far as he could into the darkening brush, and then he stepped to the pool and washed his hands. “You crazy fool. Don’t you think I could see your feet was wet where you went acrost the river to get it?” He heard Lennie’s whimpering cry and wheeled about. “Blubberin’ like a baby! Jesus Christ! A big guy like

you." Lennie's lip quivered and tears started in his eyes. "Aw, Lennie!" George put his hand on Lennie's shoulder. "I ain't takin' it away jus' for meanness. That mouse ain't fresh, Lennie; and besides, you've broke it pettin' it. You get another mouse that's fresh and I'll let you keep it a little while."

Lennie sat down on the ground and hung his head dejectedly. "I don't know where there is no other mouse. I remember a lady used to give 'em to me- ever' one she got. But that lady ain't here."

George scoffed. "Lady, huh? Don't even remember who that lady was. That was your own Aunt Clara. An' she stopped givin' 'em to ya. You always killed 'em."

Lennie looked sadly up at him. "They was so little," he said, apologetically. "I'd pet 'em, and pretty soon they bit my fingers and I pinched their heads a little and then they was dead- because they was so little. I wisht we'd get the rabbits pretty soon, George. They ain't so little."

"The hell with the rabbits. An' you ain't to be trusted with no live mice. Your Aunt Clara give you a rubber mouse and you wouldn't have nothing to do with it."

"It wasn't no good to pet," said Lennie.

The flame of the sunset lifted from the mountaintops and dusk came into the valley, and a half darkness came in among the willows and the sycamores. A big carp rose to the surface of the pool, gulped air and then sank mysteriously into the dark water again, leaving widening rings on the water. Overhead the leaves whisked again and little puffs of willow cotton blew down and landed on the pool's surface.

"You gonna get that wood?" George demanded. "There's plenty right up against the back of that sycamore. Floodwater wood. Now you get it."

Lennie went behind the tree and brought out a litter of dried leaves and twigs. He threw them in a heap on the old ash pile and went back for more and more. It was almost night now. A dove's wings whistled over the water. George walked to the fire pile and lighted the dry leaves. The flame cracked up among the twigs and fell to work. George undid his bindle and brought out three cans of beans. He stood them about the fire, close in against the blaze, but not quite touching the flame.

"There's enough beans for four men," George said.

Lennie watched him from over the fire. He said patiently, "I like 'em with ketchup."

"Well, we ain't got any," George exploded. "Whatever we ain't got, that's what you want. God a'mighty, if I was alone I could live so easy. I could go get a job an' work, an' no

trouble. No mess at all, and when the end of the month come I could take my fifty bucks and go into town and get whatever I want. Why, I could stay in a cat house all night. I could eat any place I want, hotel or any place, and order any damn thing I could think of. An' I could do all that every damn month. Get a gallon of whisky, or set in a pool room and play cards or shoot pool." Lennie knelt and looked over the fire at the angry George. And Lennie's face was drawn with terror. "An' whatta I got," George went on furiously. "I got you! You can't keep a job and you lose me ever' job I get. Jus' keep me shovin' all over the country all the time. An' that ain't the worst. You get in trouble. You do bad things and I got to get you out." His voice rose nearly to a shout. "You crazy son-of-a-bitch. You keep me in hot water all the time." He took on the elaborate manner of little girls when they are mimicking one another. "Jus' wanted to feel that girl's dress- jus' wanted to pet it like it was a mouse- Well, how the hell did she know you jus' wanted to feel her dress? She jerks back and you hold on like it was a mouse. She yells and we got to hide in a irrigation ditch all day with guys lookin' for us, and we got to sneak out in the dark and get outa the country. All the time somethin' like that- all the time. I wisht I could put you in a cage with about a million mice an' let you have fun." His anger left him suddenly. He looked across the fire at Lennie's anguished face, and then he looked ashamedly at the flames.

It was quite dark now, but the fire lighted the trunks of the trees and the curving branches overhead. Lennie crawled slowly and cautiously around the fire until he was close to George. He sat back on his heels. George turned the bean cans so that another side faced the fire. He pretended to be unaware of Lennie so close beside him.

"George," very softly. No answer. "George!" "Whatta you want?"

"I was only foolin', George. I don't want no ketchup. I wouldn't eat no ketchup if it was right here beside me."

"If it was here, you could have some."

"But I wouldn't eat none, George. I'd leave it all for you. You could cover your beans with it and I wouldn't touch none of it."

George still stared morosely at the fire. "When I think of the swell time I could have without you, I go nuts. I never get no peace."

Lennie still knelt. He looked off into the darkness across the river. "George, you want I should go away and leave you alone?"

"Where the hell could you go?"

"Well, I could. I could go off in the hills there. Some place I'd find a cave." "Yeah? How'd you eat? You ain't got sense enough to find nothing to eat."

"I'd find things, George. I don't need no nice food with ketchup. I'd lay out in the sun and nobody'd hurt me. An' if I foun' a mouse, I could keep it. Nobody'd take it away from me."

George looked quickly and searchingly at him. "I been mean, ain't I?"

"If you don' want me I can go off in the hills an' find a cave. I can go away any time."

"No- look! I was jus' foolin', Lennie. 'Cause I want you to stay with me. Trouble with mice is you always kill 'em." He paused. "Tell you what I'll do, Lennie. First chance I get I'll give you a pup. Maybe you wouldn't kill it. That'd be better than mice. And you could pet it harder."

Lennie avoided the bait. He had sensed his advantage. "If you don't want me, you only jus' got to say so, and I'll go off in those hills right there- right up in those hills and live by myself. An' I won't get no mice stole from me."

George said, "I want you to stay with me, Lennie. Jesus Christ, somebody'd shoot you for a coyote if you was by yourself. No, you stay with me. Your Aunt Clara wouldn't like you running off by yourself, even if she is dead."

Lennie spoke craftily, "Tell me- like you done before." "Tell you what?"

"About the rabbits."

George snapped, "You ain't gonna put nothing over on me."

Lennie pleaded, "Come on, George. Tell me. Please, George. Like you done before."

"You get a kick outa that, don't you? Awright, I'll tell you, and then we'll eat our supper…" "George's voice became deeper. He repeated his words rhythmically as though he had said them many times before. "Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no fambly. They don't belong no place. They come to a ranch an' work up a stake and then they go into town and blow their stake, and the first thing you know they're poundin' their tail on some other ranch. They ain't got nothing to look ahead to."

Lennie was delighted. "That's it- that's it. Now tell how it is with us."

George went on. "With us it ain't like that. We got a future. We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us. We don't have to sit in no bar room blowin' in our jack jus' because we got no place else to go. If them other guys gets in jail they can rot for all anybody gives a damn. But not us."

Lennie broke in. "But not us! An' why? Because. because I got you to look after me, and

you got me to look after you, and that's why." He laughed delightedly. "Go on now,

George!"

"You got it by heart. You can do it yourself."

"No, you. I forget some a' the things. Tell about how it's gonna be."

"O.K. Someday- we're gonna get the jack together and we're gonna have a little house and a couple of acres an' a cow and some pigs and-"

"An' live off the fatta the lan'," Lennie shouted. "An' have rabbits. Go on, George! Tell about what we're gonna have in the garden and about the rabbits in the cages and about the rain in the winter and the stove, and how thick the cream is on the milk like you can hardly cut it. Tell about that, George."

"Why'n't you do it yourself? You know all of it."

"No... you tell it. It ain't the same if I tell it. Go on George. How I get to tend the rabbits."

"Well," said George, "we'll have a big vegetable patch and a rabbit hutch and chickens. And when it rains in the winter, we'll just say the hell with goin' to work, and we'll build up a fire in the stove and set around it an' listen to the rain comin' down on the roof- Nuts!" He took out his pocket knife. "I ain't got time for no more." He drove his knife through the top of one of the bean cans, sawed out the top and passed the can to Lennie. Then he opened a second can. From his side pocket he brought out two spoons and passed one of them to Lennie.

They sat by the fire and filled their mouths with beans and chewed mightily. A few beans slipped out of the side of Lennie's mouth. George gestured with his spoon. "What you gonna say tomorrow when the boss asks you questions?"

Lennie stopped chewing and swallowed. His face was concentrated. "I... I ain't gonna... say a word."

"Good boy! That's fine, Lennie! Maybe you're gettin' better. When we get the coupla acres I can let you tend the rabbits all right. 'Specially if you remember as good as that."

Lennie choked with pride. "I can remember," he said.

George motioned with his spoon again. "Look, Lennie. I want you to look around here. You can remember this place, can't you? The ranch is about a quarter mile up that way. Just follow the river?"

"Sure," said Lennie. "I can remember this. Di'n't I remember about not gonna say a word?" "'Course you did. Well, look. Lennie - if you jus' happen to get in trouble like you always

done before, I want you to come right here an' hide in the brush."

"Hide in the brush," said Lennie slowly.

"Hide in the brush till I come for you. Can you remember that?" "Sure I can, George. Hide in the brush till you come."

"But you ain't gonna get in no trouble, because if you do, I won't let you tend the rabbits." He threw his empty bean can off into the brush.

"I won't get in no trouble, George. I ain't gonna say a word."

"O.K. Bring your bindle over here by the fire. It's gonna be nice sleepin' here. Lookin' up, and the leaves. Don't build up no more fire. We'll let her die down."

They made their beds on the sand, and as the blaze dropped from the fire the sphere of light grew smaller; the curling branches disappeared and only a faint glimmer showed where the tree trunks were. From the darkness Lennie called, "George- you asleep?"

"No. Whatta you want?"

"Let's have different color rabbits, George."

"Sure we will," George said sleepily. "Red and blue and green rabbits, Lennie. Millions of 'em."

"Furry ones, George, like I seen in the fair in Sacramento." "Sure, furry ones."

"'Cause I can jus' as well go away, George, an' live in a cave." "You can jus' as well go to hell," said George. "Shut up now."

The red light dimmed on the coals. Up the hill from the river a coyote yammered, and a dog answered from the other side of the stream. The sycamore leaves whispered in a little night breeze.

CHAPTER TWO

The bunkhouse was a long, rectangular building. Inside, the walls were whitewashed and the floor unpainted. In three walls there were small, square windows, and in the fourth, a solid door with a wooden latch. Against the walls were eight bunks, five of them made up with blankets and the other three showing their burlap ticking. Over each bunk there was nailed an apple box with the opening forward so that it made two shelves for the personal belongings of the occupant of the bunk. And these shelves were loaded with little articles, soap and talcum powder, razors and those Western magazines ranch men love to read and scoff at and secretly believe. And there were medicines on the shelves, and little vials, combs; and from nails on the box sides, a few neckties. Near one wall there was a black cast-iron stove, its stovepipe going straight up through the ceiling. In the middle of the room stood a big square table littered with playing cards, and around it were grouped boxes for the players to sit on.

At about ten o'clock in the morning the sun threw a bright dust-laden bar through one of the side windows, and in and out of the beam flies shot like rushing stars.

The wooden latch raised. The door opened and a tall, stoop-shouldered old man came in. He was dressed in blue jeans and he carried a big push-broom in his left hand. Behind him came George, and behind George, Lennie.

"The boss was expectin' you last night," the old man said. "He was sore as hell when you wasn't here to go out this morning." He pointed with his right arm, and out of the sleeve came a round stick-like wrist, but no hand. "You can have them two beds there," he said, indicating two bunks near the stove.

George stepped over and threw his blankets down on the burlap sack of straw that was a mattress. He looked into his box shelf and then picked a small yellow can from it.

"Say. What the hell's this?"

"I don't know," said the old man.

"Says 'positively kills lice, roaches and other scourges.' What the hell kind of bed you giving us, anyways. We don't want no pants rabbits."

The old swamper shifted his broom and held it between his elbow and his side while he held out his hand for the can. He studied the label carefully. "Tell you what-" he said finally, "last guy that had this bed was a blacksmith- hell of a nice fella and as clean a guy as you want to meet. Used to wash his hands even after he ate."

"Then how come he got graybacks?" George was working up a slow anger. Lennie put his bindle on the neighboring bunk and sat down. He watched George with open mouth.

"Tell you what," said the old swamper. "This here blacksmith- name of Whitey- was the kind of guy that would put that stuff around even if there wasn't no bugs- just to make sure, see? Tell you what he used to do- At meals he'd peel his boil' potatoes, an' he'd take out ever' little spot, no matter what kind, before he'd eat it. And if there was a red splotch on an egg, he'd scrape it off. Finally quit about the food. That's the kinda guy he was- clean. Used ta dress up Sundays even when he wasn't going no place, put on a necktie even, and then set in the bunkhouse."

"I ain't so sure," said George skeptically. "What did you say he quit for?"

The old man put the yellow can in his pocket, and he rubbed his bristly white whiskers with his knuckles. "Why... he... just quit, the way a guy will. Says it was the food. Just wanted to move. Didn't give no other reason but the food. Just says 'gimme my time' one night, the way any guy would."

George lifted his tick and looked underneath it. He leaned over and inspected the sacking closely. Immediately Lennie got up and did the same with his bed. Finally George seemed satisfied. He unrolled his bindle and put things on the shelf, his razor and bar of soap, his comb and bottle of pills, his liniment and leather wristband. Then he made his bed up neatly with blankets. The old man said, "I guess the boss'll be out here in a minute. He was sure burned when you wasn't here this morning. Come right in when we was eatin' breakfast and says, 'Where the hell's them new men?' An' he give the stable buck hell, too."

George patted a wrinkle out of his bed, and sat down. "Give the stable buck hell?" he asked. "Sure. Ya see the stable buck's a nigger."

"Nigger, huh?"

"Yeah. Nice fella too. Got a crooked back where a horse kicked him. The boss gives him hell when he's mad. But the stable buck don't give a damn about that. He reads a lot. Got books in his room."

"What kind of a guy is the boss?" George asked.

"Well, he's a pretty nice fella. Gets pretty mad sometimes, but he's pretty nice. Tell ya what-know what he done Christmas? Brang a gallon of whisky right in here and says, 'Drink hearty, boys. Christmas comes but once a year.'"

"The hell he did! Whole gallon?"

"Yes sir. Jesus, we had fun. They let the nigger come in that night. Little skinner name of Smitty took after the nigger. Done pretty good, too. The guys wouldn't let him use his feet, so the nigger got him. If he coulda used his feet, Smitty says he woulda killed the nigger. The guys said on account of the nigger's got a crooked back, Smitty can't use his feet." He paused in relish of the memory. "After that the guys went into Soledad and raised hell. I didn't go in there. I ain't got the poop no more."

Lennie was just finishing making his bed. The wooden latch raised again and the door opened. A little stocky man stood in the open doorway. He wore blue jean trousers, a flannel shirt, a black, unbuttoned vest and a black coat. His thumbs were stuck in his belt, on each side of a square steel buckle. On his head was a soiled brown Stetson hat, and he wore high-heeled boots and spurs to prove he was not a laboring man.

The old swamper looked quickly at him, and then shuffled to the door rubbing his whiskers with his knuckles as he went. "Them guys just come," he said, and shuffled past the boss and out the door.

The boss stepped into the room with the short, quick steps of a fat-legged man. "I wrote Murray and Ready I wanted two men this morning. You got your work slips?" George reached

into his pocket and produced the slips and handed them to the boss. “It wasn’t Murray and Ready’s fault. Says right here on the slip that you was to be here for work this morning.”

George looked down at his feet. “Bus driver give us a bum steer,” he said. “We hadda walk ten miles. Says we was here when we wasn’t. We couldn’t get no rides in the morning.”

The boss squinted his eyes. “Well, I had to send out the grain teams short two buckers. Won’t do any good to go out now till after dinner.” He pulled his time book out of his pocket and opened it where a pencil was stuck between the leaves. George scowled meaningfully at Lennie, and Lennie nodded to show that he understood. The boss licked his pencil. “What’s your name?”

“George Milton.”

“And what’s yours?”

George said, “His name’s Lennie Small.”

The names were entered in the book. “Le’s see, this is the twentieth, noon the twentieth.” He closed the book. “Where you boys been working?”

“Up around Weed,” said George. “You, too?” to Lennie.

“Yeah, him too,” said George.

The boss pointed a playful finger at Lennie. “He ain’t much of a talker, is he?” “No, he ain’t, but he’s sure a hell of a good worker. Strong as a bull.”

Lennie smiled to himself. “Strong as a bull,” he repeated.

George scowled at him, and Lennie dropped his head in shame at having forgotten. The boss said suddenly, “Listen, Small!” Lennie raised his head. “What can you do?”

In a panic, Lennie looked at George for help. “He can do anything you tell him,” said George. “He’s a good skinner. He can rassel grain bags, drive a cultivator. He can do anything. Just give him a try.”

The boss turned on George. “Then why don’t you let him answer? What you trying to put over?”

George broke in loudly, “Oh! I ain’t saying he’s bright. He ain’t. But I say he’s a God damn good worker. He can put up a four hundred pound bale.”

The boss deliberately put the little book in his pocket. He hooked his thumbs in his belt and squinted one eye nearly closed. “Say - what you sellin’?”

“Huh?”

“I said what stake you got in this guy? You takin’ his pay away from him?” “No, ‘course I ain’t. Why ya think I’m sellin’ him out?”

“Well, I never seen one guy take so much trouble for another guy. I just like to know what your interest is.”

George said, “He’s my... cousin. I told his old lady I’d take care of him. He got kicked in the head by a horse when he was a kid. He’s awright. Just ain’t bright. But he can do anything you tell him.”

The boss turned half away. “Well, God knows he don’t need any brains to buck barley bags. But don’t you try to put nothing over, Milton. I got my eye on you. Why’d you quit in Weed?”

“Job was done,” said George promptly. “What kinda job?”

“We... we was diggin’ a cesspool.”

“All right. But don’t try to put nothing over, ‘cause you can’t get away with nothing. I seen wise guys before. Go on out with the grain teams after dinner. They’re pickin’ up barley at the threshing machine. Go out with Slim’s team.”

“Slim?”

“Yeah. Big tall skinner. You’ll see him at dinner.” He turned abruptly and went to the door, but before he went out he turned and looked for a long moment at the two men.

When the sound of his footsteps had died away, George turned on Lennie. “So you wasn’t gonna say a word. You was gonna leave your big flapper shut and leave me do the talkin’. Damn near lost us the job.”

Lennie stared hopelessly at his hands. “I forgot, George.”

“Yeah, you forgot. You always forget, an’ I got to talk you out of it.” He sat down heavily on the bunk. “Now he’s got his eye on us. Now we got to be careful and not make no slips. You keep your big flapper shut after this.” He fell morosely silent.

“George.”

“What you want now?”

"I wasn't kicked in the head with no horse, was I, George?"

"Be a damn good thing if you was," George said viciously. "Save ever'body a hell of a lot of trouble."

"You said I was your cousin, George."

"Well, that was a lie. An' I'm damn glad it was. If I was a relative of yours I'd shoot myself." He stopped suddenly, stepped to the open front door and peered out. "Say, what the hell you doin' listenin'?"

The old man came slowly into the room. He had his broom in his hand. And at his heels there walked a dragfooted sheepdog, gray of muzzle, and with pale, blind old eyes. The dog struggled lamely to the side of the room and lay down, grunting softly to himself and licking his grizzled, moth-eaten coat. The swamper watched him until he was settled. "I wasn't listenin'. I was jus' standin' in the shade a minute scratchin' my dog. I jus' now finished swampin' out the wash house."

"You was pokin' your big ears into our business," George said. "I don't like nobody to get nosey."

The old man looked uneasily from George to Lennie, and then back. "I jus' come there," he said. "I didn't hear nothing you guys was sayin'. I ain't interested in nothing you was sayin'. A guy on a ranch don't never listen nor he don't ast no questions."

"Damn right he don't," said George, slightly mollified, "not if he wants to stay workin' long." But he was reassured by the swamper's defense. "Come on in and set down a minute," he said. "That's a hell of an old dog."

"Yeah. I had 'im ever since he was a pup. God, he was a good sheep dog when he was younger." He stood his broom against the wall and he rubbed his white bristled cheek with his knuckles. "How'd you like the boss?" he asked.

"Pretty good. Seemed awright."

"He's a nice fella," the swamper agreed. "You got to take him right."

At that moment a young man came into the bunkhouse; a thin young man with a brown face, with brown eyes and a head of tightly curled hair. He wore a work glove on his left hand, and, like the boss, he wore high-heeled boots. "Seen my old man?" he asked.

The swamper said, "He was here jus' a minute ago, Curley. Went over to the cook house, I think."

George was watching the door. He said ominously, “Well, he better watch out for Lennie. Lennie ain’t no fighter, but Lennie’s strong and quick and Lennie don’t know no rules.” He walked to the square table and sat down on one of the boxes. He gathered some of the cards together and shuffled them.

“I’ll try to catch him,” said Curley. His eyes passed over the new men and he stopped. He glanced coldly at George and then at Lennie. His arms gradually bent at the elbows and his hands closed into fists. He stiffened and went into a slight crouch. His glance was at once calculating and pugnacious. Lennie squirmed under the look and shifted his feet nervously. Curley stepped gingerly close to him. “You the new guys the old man was waitin’ for?”

“We just come in,” said George. “Let the big guy talk.”

Lennie twisted with embarrassment. George said, “S’pose he don’t want to talk?”

Curley lashed his body around. “By Christ, he’s gotta talk when he’s spoke to. What the hell are you gettin’ into it for?”

“We travel together,” said George coldly. “Oh, so it’s that way.”

George was tense, and motionless. “Yeah, it’s that way.” Lennie was looking helplessly to George for instruction. “An’ you won’t let the big guy talk, is that it?”

“He can talk if he wants to tell you anything.” He nodded slightly to Lennie. “We jus’ come in,” said Lennie softly.

Curley stared levelly at him. “Well, nex’ time you answer when you’re spoke to.” He turned toward the door and walked out, and his elbows were still bent out a little.

George watched him out, and then he turned back to the swamper. “Say, what the hell’s he got on his shoulder? Lennie didn’t do nothing to him.”

The old man looked cautiously at the door to make sure no one was listening. “That’s the boss’s son,” he said quietly. “Curley’s pretty handy. He done quite a bit in the ring. He’s a lightweight, and he’s handy.”

“Well, let him be handy,” said George. “He don’t have to take after Lennie. Lennie didn’t do nothing to him. What’s he got against Lennie?”

The swamper considered.... “Well... tell you what. Curley’s like a lot of little guys. He hates big guys. He’s alla time picking scraps with big guys. Kind of like he’s mad at ‘em because he ain’t a big guy. You seen little guys like that, ain’t you? Always scrappy?”

“Sure,” said George. “I seen plenty tough little guys. But this Curley better not make no mistakes about Lennie. Lennie ain’t handy, but this Curley punk is gonna get hurt if he messes around with Lennie.”

"Well, Curley's pretty handy," the swamper said skeptically. "Never did seem right to me. S'pose Curley jumps a big guy an' licks him. Ever'body says what a game guy Curley is. And s'pose he does the same thing and gets licked. Then ever'body says the big guy oughtta pick somebody his own size, and maybe they gang up on the big guy. Never did seem right to me. Seems like Curley ain't givin' nobody a chance."

The old man sat down on another box. "Don't tell Curley I said none of this. He'd slough me. He just don't give a damn. Won't ever get canned 'cause his old man's the boss."

George cut the cards and began turning them over, looking at each one and throwing it down on a pile. He said, "This guy Curley sounds like a son-of-a-bitch to me. I don't like mean little guys."

"Seems to me like he's worse lately," said the swamper. "He got married a couple of weeks ago. Wife lives over in the boss's house. Seems like Curley is cockier'n ever since he got married."

George grunted, "Maybe he's showin' off for his wife."

The swamper warmed to his gossip. "You seen that glove on his left hand?" "Yeah. I seen it."

"Well, that glove's fulla vaseline." "Vaseline? What the hell for?"

"Well, I tell ya what- Curley says he's keepin' that hand soft for his wife."

George studied the cards absorbedly. "That's a dirty thing to tell around," he said.

The old man was reassured. He had drawn a derogatory statement from George. He felt safe now, and he spoke more confidently. "Wait'll you see Curley's wife."

George cut the cards again and put out a solitaire lay, slowly and deliberately. "Purty?" he asked casually.

"Yeah. Purty... but-"

George studied his cards. "But what?" "Well- she got the eye."

"Yeah? Married two weeks and got the eye? Maybe that's why Curley's pants is full of ants."

"I seen her give Slim the eye. Slim's a jerkline skinner. Hell of a nice fella. Slim don't need to wear no high-heeled boots on a grain team. I seen her give Slim the eye. Curley never seen it. An' I seen her give Carlson the eye."

George pretended a lack of interest. "Looks like we was gonna have fun."

The swamper stood up from his box. “Know what I think?” George did not answer. “Well, I think Curley’s married... a tart.”

“He ain’t the first,” said George. “There’s plenty done that.”

The old man moved toward the door, and his ancient dog lifted his head and peered about, and then got painfully to his feet to follow. “I gotta be settin’ out the wash basins for the guys. The teams’ll be in before long. You guys gonna buck barley?”

“Yeah.”

“You won’t tell Curley nothing I said?” “Hell no.”

“Well, you look her over, mister. You see if she ain’t a tart.” He stepped out the door into the brilliant sunshine. George laid down his cards thoughtfully, turned his piles of three. He built four clubs on his ace pile. The sun square was on the floor now, and the flies whipped through it like sparks. A sound of jingling harness and the croak of heavy-laden axles sounded from outside. From the distance came a clear call. “Stable buck- ooh, sta-able buck!” And then, “Where the hell is that God damn nigger?”

George stared at his solitaire lay, and then he flounced the cards together and turned around to Lennie. Lennie was lying down on the bunk watching him.

“Look, Lennie! This here ain’t no setup. I’m scared. You gonna have trouble with that Curley guy. I seen that kind before. He was kinda feelin’ you out. He figures he’s got you scared and he’s gonna take a sock at you the first chance he gets.”

Lennie’s eyes were frightened. “I don’t want no trouble,” he said plaintively. “Don’t let him sock me, George.”

George got up and went over to Lennie’s bunk and sat down on it. “I hate that kinda bastard,” he said. “I seen plenty of ‘em. Like the old guy says, Curley don’t take no chances. He always wins.” He thought for a moment. “If he tangles with you, Lennie, we’re gonna get the can. Don’t make no mistake about that. He’s the boss’s son. Look, Lennie. You try to keep away from him, will you? Don’t never speak to him. If he comes in here you move clear to the other side of the room. Will you do that, Lennie?”

“I don’t want no trouble,” Lennie mourned. “I never done nothing to him.”

“Well, that won’t do you no good if Curley wants to plug himself up for a fighter. Just don’t have nothing to do with him. Will you remember?”

“Sure, George. I ain’t gonna say a word.”

The sound of the approaching grain teams was louder, thud of big hooves on hard ground, drag of brakes and the jingle of trace chains. Men were calling back and forth from the teams. George, sitting on the bunk beside Lennie, frowned as he thought. Lennie asked timidly, "You ain't mad, George?"

"I ain't mad at you. I'm mad at this here Curley bastard. I hoped we was gonna get a little stake together- maybe a hundred dollars." His tone grew decisive. "You keep away from Curley, Lennie."

"Sure I will, George. I won't say a word."

"Don't let him pull you in- but- if the son-of-a-bitch socks you let 'im have it." "Let 'im have what, George?"

"Never mind, never mind. I'll tell you when. I hate that kind of a guy. Look, Lennie, if you get in any kind of trouble, you remember what I told you to do?"

Lennie raised up on his elbow. His face contorted with thought. Then his eyes moved sadly to George's face. "If I get in any trouble, you ain't gonna let me tend the rabbits."

"That's not what I meant. You remember where we slep' last night? Down by the river?" "Yeah. I remember. Oh, sure I remember! I go there an' hide in the brush."

"Hide till I come for you. Don't let nobody see you. Hide in the brush by the river. Say that over."

"Hide in the brush by the river, down in the brush by the river." "If you get in trouble."

"If I get in trouble."

A brake screeched outside. A call came, "Stable- buck. Oh! Sta-able buck." George said, "Say it over to yourself, Lennie, so you won't forget it."

Both men glanced up, for the rectangle of sunshine in the doorway was cut off. A girl was standing there looking in. She had full, rouged lips and wide-spaced eyes, heavily made up. Her fingernails were red. Her hair hung in little rolled clusters, like sausages. She wore a cotton house dress and red mules, on the insteps of which were little bouquets of red ostrich feathers. "I'm lookin' for Curley," she said. Her voice had a nasal, brittle quality.

George looked away from her and then back. "He was in here a minute ago, but he went." "Oh!" She put her hands behind her back and leaned against the door frame so that her

body was thrown forward. "You're the new fellas that just come, ain't ya?"

"Yeah."

Lennie's eyes moved down over her body, and though she did not seem to be looking at Lennie she bridled a little. She looked at her fingernails. "Sometimes Curley's in here," she explained.

George said brusquely. "Well he ain't now."

"If he ain't, I guess I better look some place else," she said playfully.

Lennie watched her, fascinated. George said, "If I see him, I'll pass the word you was looking for him."

She smiled archly and twitched her body. "Nobody can't blame a person for lookin'," she said. There were footsteps behind her, going by. She turned her head. "Hi, Slim," she said.

Slim's voice came through the door. "Hi, Good-lookin'." "I'm tryin' to find Curley, Slim."

"Well, you ain't tryin' very hard. I seen him goin' in your house."

She was suddenly apprehensive. "'Bye, boys," she called into the bunkhouse, and she hurried away.

George looked around at Lennie. "Jesus, what a tramp," he said. "So that's what Curley picks for a wife."

"She's purty," said Lennie defensively.

"Yeah, and she's sure hidin' it. Curley got his work ahead of him. Bet she'd clear out for twenty bucks."

Lennie still stared at the doorway where she had been. "Gosh, she was purty." He smiled admiringly. George looked quickly down at him and then he took him by an ear and shook him.

"Listen to me, you crazy bastard," he said fiercely. "Don't you even take a look at that bitch. I don't care what she says and what she does. I seen 'em poison before, but I never seen no piece of jail bait worse than her. You leave her be."

Lennie tried to disengage his ear. "I never done nothing, George."

"No, you never. But when she was standin' in the doorway showin' her legs, you wasn't lookin' the other way, neither."

"I never meant no harm, George. Honest I never."

"Well, you keep away from her, cause she's a rattrap if I ever seen one. You let Curley take the rap. He let himself in for it. Glove fulla vaseline," George said disgustedly. "An' I bet he's eatin' raw eggs and writin' to the patent medicine houses."

Lennie cried out suddenly- "I don't like this place, George. This ain't no good place. I wanna get outa here."

"We gotta keep it till we get a stake. We can't help it, Lennie. We'll get out jus' as soon as we can. I don't like it no better than you do." He went back to the table and set out a new solitaire hand. "No, I don't like it," he said. "For two bits I'd shove out of here. If we can get jus' a few dollars in the poke we'll shove off and go up the American River and pan gold. We can make maybe a couple of dollars a day there, and we might hit a pocket."

Lennie leaned eagerly toward him. "Le's go, George. Le's get outa here. It's mean here." "We gotta stay," George said shortly. "Shut up now. The guys'll be comin' in."

From the washroom nearby came the sound of running water and rattling basins. George studied the cards. "Maybe we oughtta wash up," he said. "But we ain't done nothing to get dirty."

A tall man stood in the doorway. He held a crushed Stetson hat under his arm while he combed his long, black, damp hair straight back. Like the others he wore blue jeans and a short denim jacket. When he had finished combing his hair he moved into the room, and he moved with a majesty achieved only by royalty and master craftsmen. He was a jerkline skinner, the prince of the ranch, capable of driving ten, sixteen, even twenty mules with a single line to the leaders. He was capable of killing a fly on the wheeler's butt with a bull whip without touching the mule. There was a gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke. His authority was so great that his word was taken on any subject, be it politics or love. This was Slim, the jerkline skinner. His hatchet face was ageless. He might have been thirty-five or fifty. His ear heard more than was said to him, and his slow speech had overtones not of thought, but of understanding beyond thought. His hands, large and lean, were as delicate in their action as those of a temple dancer.

He smoothed out his crushed hat, creased it in the middle and put it on. He looked kindly at the two in the bunkhouse. "It's brighter'n a bitch outside," he said gently. "Can't hardly see nothing in here. You the new guys?"

"Just come," said George. "Gonna buck barley?" "That's what the boss says."

Slim sat down on a box across the table from George. He studied the solitaire hand that was upside down to him. "Hope you get on my team," he said. His voice was very gentle. "I gotta pair of punks on my team that don't know a barley bag from a blue ball. You guys ever bucked any barley?"

"Hell, yes," said George. "I ain't nothing to scream about, but that big bastard there can put up more grain alone than most pairs can."

Lennie, who had been following the conversation back and forth with his eyes, smiled complacently at the compliment. Slim looked approvingly at George for having given the compliment. He leaned over the table and snapped the corner of a loose card. "You guys travel around together?" His tone was friendly. It invited confidence without demanding it.

"Sure," said George. "We kinda look after each other." He indicated Lennie with his thumb. "He ain't bright. Hell of a good worker, though. Hell of a nice fella, but he ain't bright. I've knew him for a long time."

Slim looked through George and beyond him. "Ain't many guys travel around together," he mused. "I don't know why. Maybe ever'body in the whole damn world is scared of each other."

"It's a lot nicer to go around with a guy you know," said George.

A powerful, big-stomached man came into the bunkhouse. His head still dripped water from the scrubbing and dousing. "Hi, Slim," he said, and then stopped and stared at George and Lennie. "These guys jus' come," said Slim by way of introduction. "Glad ta meet ya," the big man said. "My name's Carlson." "I'm George Milton. This here's Lennie Small."

"Glad ta meet ya," Carlson said again. "He ain't very small." He chuckled softly at his joke. "Ain't small at all," he repeated. "Meant to ask you, Slim- how's your bitch? I seen she wasn't under your wagon this morning."

"She slang her pups last night," said Slim. "Nine of 'em. I drowned four of 'em right off. She couldn't feed that many."

"Got five left, huh?"

"Yeah, five. I kept the biggest."

"What kinda dogs you think they're gonna be?"

"I dunno," said Slim. "Some kinda shepherds, I guess. That's the most kind I seen around here when she was in heat."

Carlson went on, "Got five pups, huh. Gonna keep all of 'em?"

"I dunno. Have to keep 'em a while so they can drink Lulu's milk."

Carlson said thoughtfully, "Well, looka here, Slim. I been thinkin'. That dog of Candy's is so God damn old he can't hardly walk. Stinks like hell, too. Ever' time he comes into the bunk

house I can smell him for two, three days. Why'n't you get Candy to shoot his old dog and give him one of the pups to raise up? I can smell that dog a mile away. Got no teeth, damn near blind, can't eat. Candy feeds him milk. He can't chew nothing else."

George had been staring intently at Slim. Suddenly a triangle began to ring outside, slowly at first, and then faster and faster until the beat of it disappeared into one ringing sound. It stopped as suddenly as it had started.

"There she goes," said Carlson.

Outside, there was a burst of voices as a group of men went by. Slim stood up slowly and with dignity. "You guys better come on while they's still something to eat. Won't be nothing left in a couple of minutes."

Carlson stepped back to let Slim precede him, and then the two of them went out the door. Lennie was watching George excitedly. George rumpled his cards into a messy pile. "Yeah!"

George said, "I heard him, Lennie. I'll ask him."

"A brown and white one," Lennie cried excitedly.

"Come on. Le's get dinner. I don't know whether he got a brown and white one."

Lennie didn't move from his bunk. "You ask him right away, George, so he won't kill no more of 'em."

"Sure. Come on now, get up on your feet."

Lennie rolled off his bunk and stood up, and the two of them started for the door. Just as they reached it, Curley bounced in.

"You seen a girl around here?" he demanded angrily. George said coldly. "'Bout half an hour ago maybe." "Well what the hell was she doin'?"

George stood still, watching the angry little man. He said insultingly, "She said- she was lookin' for you."

Curley seemed really to see George for the first time. His eyes flashed over George, took in his height, measured his reach, looked at his trim middle. "Well, which way'd she go?" he demanded at last.

"I dunno," said George. "I didn' watch her go."

Curley scowled at him, and turning, hurried out the door.

George said, “Ya know, Lennie, I’m scared I’m gonna tangle with that bastard myself. I hate his guts. Jesus Christ! Come on. They won’t be a damn thing left to eat.”

They went out the door. The sunshine lay in a thin line under the window. From a distance there could be heard a rattle of dishes.

After a moment the ancient dog walked lamely in through the open door. He gazed about with mild, half-blind eyes. He sniffed, and then lay down and put his head between his paws. Curley popped into the doorway again and stood looking into the room. The dog raised his head, but when Curley jerked out, the grizzled head sank to the floor again.

CHAPTER THREE

Although there was evening brightness showing through the windows of the bunkhouse, inside it was dusk. Through the open door came the thuds and occasional clangs of a horseshoe game, and now and then the sound of voices raised in approval or derision.

Slim and George came into the darkening bunkhouse together. Slim reached up over the card table and turned on the tin-shaded electric light. Instantly the table was brilliant with light, and the cone of the shade threw its brightness straight downward, leaving the corners of the bunkhouse still in dusk. Slim sat down on a box and George took his place opposite.

“It wasn’t nothing,” said Slim. “I would of had to drowned most of ‘em anyways. No need to thank me about that.”

George said, “It wasn’t much to you, maybe, but it was a hell of a lot to him. Jesus Christ, I don’t know how we’re gonna get him to sleep in here. He’ll want to sleep right out in the barn with ‘em. We’ll have trouble keepin’ him from getting right in the box with them pups.”

“It wasn’t nothing,” Slim repeated. “Say, you sure was right about him. Maybe he ain’t bright, but I never seen such a worker. He damn near killed his partner buckin’ barley. There ain’t nobody can keep up with him. God awmighty, I never seen such a strong guy.”

George spoke proudly. “Jus’ tell Lennie what to do an’ he’ll do it if it don’t take no figuring.

He can’t think of nothing to do himself, but he sure can take orders.”

There was a clang of horseshoe on iron stake outside and a little cheer of voices.

Slim moved back slightly so the light was not on his face. “Funny how you an’ him string along together.” It was Slim’s calm invitation to confidence.

“What’s funny about it?” George demanded defensively.

"Oh, I dunno. Hardly none of the guys ever travel together. I hardly never seen two guys travel together. You know how the hands are, they just come in and get their bunk and work a month, and then they quit and go out alone. Never seem to give a damn about nobody. It jus' seems kinda funny a cuckoo like him and a smart little guy like you travelin' together."

"He ain't no cuckoo," said George. "He's dumb as hell, but he ain't crazy. An' I ain't so bright neither, or I wouldn't be buckin' barley for my fifty and found. If I was bright, if I was even a little bit smart, I'd have my own little place, an' I'd be bringin' in my own crops, 'stead of doin' all the work and not getting what comes up outa the ground." George fell silent. He wanted to talk. Slim neither encouraged nor discouraged him. He just sat back quiet and receptive.

"It ain't so funny, him an' me goin' aroun' together," George said at last. "Him and me was both born in Auburn. I knowed his Aunt Clara. She took him when he was a baby and raised him up. When his Aunt Clara died, Lennie just come along with me out workin'. Got kinda used to each other after a little while."

"Umm," said Slim.

George looked over at Slim and saw the calm, Godlike eyes fastened on him. "Funny," said George. "I used to have a hell of a lot of fun with 'im. Used to play jokes on 'im 'cause he was too dumb to take care of 'imself. But he was too dumb even to know he had a joke played on him. I had fun. Made me seem God damn smart alongside of him. Why he'd do any damn thing I tol' him. If I tol' him to walk over a cliff, over he'd go. That wasn't so damn much fun after a while. He never got mad about it, neither. I've beat the hell outa him, and he coulda bust every bone in my body jus' with his han's, but he never lifted a finger against me." George's voice was taking on the tone of confession. "Tell you what made me stop that. One day a bunch of guys was standin' around up on the Sacramento River. I was feelin' pretty smart. I turns to Lennie and says, 'Jump in.' An' he jumps. Couldn't swim a stroke. He damn near drowned before we could get him. An' he was so damn nice to me for pullin' him out. Clean forgot I told him to jump in. Well, I ain't done nothing like that no more."

"He's a nice fella," said Slim. "Guy don't need no sense to be a nice fella. Seems to me sometimes it jus' works the other way around. Take a real smart guy and he ain't hardly ever a nice fella."

George stacked the scattered cards and began to lay out his solitaire hand. The shoes thudded on the ground outside. At the windows the light of the evening still made the window squares bright.

"I ain't got no people," George said. "I seen the guys that go around on the ranches alone. That ain't no good. They don't have no fun. After a long time they get mean. They get wantin' to fight all the time."

"Yeah, they get mean," Slim agreed. "They get so they don't want to talk to nobody." "'Course Lennie's a God damn nuisance most of the time," said George. "But you get used

to goin' around with a guy an' you can't get rid of him."

"He ain't mean," said Slim. "I can see Lennie ain't a bit mean."

Course he ain't mean. But he gets in trouble alla time because he's so God damn dumb. Like what happened in Weed-" He stopped, stopped in the middle of turning over a card. He looked alarmed and peered over at Slim. "You wouldn't tell nobody?"

"What'd he do in Weed?" Slim asked calmly. "You wouldn' tell?... No, 'course you wouldn'." "What'd he do in Weed?" Slim asked again.

"Well, he seen this girl in a red dress. Dumb bastard like he is, he wants to touch ever'thing he likes. Just wants to feel it. So he reaches out to feel this red dress an' the girl lets out a squawk, and that gets Lennie all mixed up, and he holds on 'cause that's the only thing he can think to do. Well, this girl squawks and squawks. I was jus' a little bit off, and I heard all the yellin', so I comes running, an' by that time Lennie's so scared all he can think to do is jus' hold on. I socked him over the head with a fence picket to make him let go. He was so scairt he couldn't let go of that dress. And he's so God damn strong, you know."

Slim's eyes were level and unwinking. He nodded very slowly. "So what happens?"

George carefully built his line of solitaire cards. "Well, that girl rabbits in an' tells the law she been raped. The guys in Weed start a party out to lynch Lennie. So we sit in a irrigation ditch under water all the rest of that day. Got on'y our heads sticking outa water, an' up under the grass that sticks out from the side of the ditch. An' that night we scrammed outa there."

Slim sat in silence for a moment. "Didn't hurt the girl none, huh?" he asked finally.

"Hell, no. He just scared her. I'd be scared too if he grabbed me. But he never hurt her. He jus' wanted to touch that red dress, like he wants to pet them pups all the time."

"He ain't mean," said Slim. "I can tell a mean guy a mile off." "'Course he ain't, and he'll do any damn thing I-"

Lennie came in through the door. He wore his blue denim coat over his shoulders like a cape, and he walked hunched way over.

"Hi, Lennie," said George. "How you like the pup now?"

Lennie said breathlessly, "He's brown an' white jus' like I wanted." He went directly to his bunk and lay down and turned his face to the wall and drew up his knees.

George put down his cards very deliberately. “Lennie,” he said sharply.

Lennie twisted his neck and looked over his shoulder. “Huh? What you want, George?” “I tol’ you you couldn’t bring that pup in here.”

“What pup, George? I ain’t got no pup.”

George went quickly to him, grabbed him by the shoulder and rolled him over. He reached down and picked the tiny puppy from where Lennie had been concealing it against his stomach.

Lennie sat up quickly. “Give ‘um to me, George.”

George said, “You get right up an’ take this pup back to the nest. He’s gotta sleep with his mother. You want to kill him? Just born last night an’ you take him out of the nest. You take him back or I’ll tell Slim not to let you have him.”

Lennie held out his hands pleadingly. “Give ‘um to me, George. I’ll take ‘um back. I didn’t mean no harm, George. Honest I didn’t. I jus’ wanted to pet ‘um a little.”

George handed the pup to him. “Awright. You get him back there quick, and don’t you take him out no more. You’ll kill him, the first thing you know.” Lennie fairly scuttled out of the room.

Slim had not moved. His calm eyes followed Lennie out the door. “Jesus,” he said. “He’s jus’ like a kid, ain’t he?”

“Sure he’s jes’ like a kid. There ain’t no more harm in him than a kid neither, except he’s so strong. I bet he won’t come in here to sleep tonight. He’d sleep right alongside that box in the barn. Well - let ‘im. He ain’t doin’ no harm out there.”

It was almost dark outside now. Old Candy, the swamper, came in and went to his bunk, and behind him struggled his old dog. “Hello, Slim. Hello, George. Didn’t neither of you play horseshoes?”

“I don’t like to play ever’ night,” said Slim.

Candy went on, “Either you guys got a slug of whisky? I gotta gut ache.”

“I ain’t,” said Slim. “I’d drink it myself if I had, an’ I ain’t got a gut ache neither.”

“Gotta bad gut ache,” said Candy. “Them God damn turnips give it to me. I knowed they was going to before I ever eat ‘em.”

The thick-bodied Carlson came in out of the darkening yard. He walked to the other end of the bunk house and turned on the second shaded light. "Darker'n hell in here," he said. "Jesus, how that nigger can pitch shoes."

"He's plenty good," said Slim.

"Damn right he is," said Carlson. "He don't give nobody else a chance to win-" He stopped and sniffed the air, and still sniffing, looked down at the old dog. "God awmighty, that dog stinks. Get him outa here, Candy! I don't know nothing that stinks as bad as an old dog. You gotta get him out."

Candy rolled to the edge of his bunk. He reached over and patted the ancient dog, and he apologized, "I been around him so much I never notice how he stinks."

"Well, I can't stand him in here," said Carlson. "That stink hangs around even after he's gone." He walked over with his heavy-legged stride and looked down at the dog. "Got no teeth," he said. "He's all stiff with rheumatism. He ain't no good to you, Candy. An' he ain't no good to himself. Why'n't you shoot him, Candy?"

The old man squirmed uncomfortably. "Well- hell! I had him so long. Had him since he was a pup. I herded sheep with him." He said proudly, "You wouldn't think it to look at him now, but he was the best damn sheep dog I ever seen."

George said, "I seen a guy in Weed that had an Airedale could herd sheep. Learned it from the other dogs."

Carlson was not to be put off. "Look, Candy. This ol' dog jus' suffers hisself all the time. If you was to take him out and shoot him right in the back of the head-" he leaned over and pointed, "-right there, why he'd never know what hit him."

Candy looked about unhappily. "No," he said softly. "No, I couldn't do that. I had 'im too long."

"He don't have no fun," Carlson insisted. "And he stinks to beat hell. Tell you what. I'll shoot him for you. Then it won't be you that does it."

Candy threw his legs off his bunk. He scratched the white stubble whiskers on his cheek nervously. "I'm so used to him," he said softly.

"I had him from a pup."

"Well, you ain't bein' kind to him keepin' him alive," said Carlson. "Look, Slim's bitch got a litter right now. I bet Slim would give you one of them pups to raise up, wouldn't you, Slim?"

The skinner had been studying the old dog with his calm eyes. “Yeah,” he said. “You can have a pup if you want to.” He seemed to shake himself free for speech. “Carl’s right, Candy. That dog ain’t no good to himself. I wisht somebody’d shoot me if I get old an’ a cripple.”

Candy looked helplessly at him, for Slim’s opinions were law. “Maybe it’d hurt him,” he suggested. “I don’t mind takin’ care of him.”

Carlson said, “The way I’d shoot him, he wouldn’t feel nothing. I’d put the gun right there.” He pointed with his toe. “Right back of the head. He wouldn’t even quiver.”

Candy looked for help from face to face. It was quite dark outside by now. A young laboring man came in. His sloping shoulders were bent forward and he walked heavily on his heels, as though he carried the invisible grain bag. He went to his bunk and put his hat on his shelf. Then he picked a pulp magazine from his shelf and brought it to the light over the table. “Did I show you this, Slim?” he asked.

“Show me what?”

The young man turned to the back of the magazine, put it down on the table and pointed with his finger. “Right there, read that.” Slim bent over it. “Go on,” said the young man. “Read it out loud.”

“’Dear Editor,’” Slim read slowly. “’I read your mag for six years and I think it is the best on the market. I like stories by Peter Rand. I think he is a whing-ding. Give us more like the Dark Rider. I don’t write many letters. Just thought I would tell you I think your mag is the best dime’s worth I ever spent.’”

Slim looked up questioningly. “What you want me to read that for?” Whit said, “Go on. Read the name at the bottom.”

Slim read, “’Yours for success, William Tenner.’” He glanced up at Whit again. “What you want me to read that for?”

Whit closed the magazine impressively. “Don’t you remember Bill Tenner? Worked here about three months ago?”

Slim thought.....“Little guy?” he asked. “Drove a cultivator?”

“That’s him,” Whit cried. “That’s the guy!” “You think he’s the guy wrote this letter?”

“I know it. Bill and me was in here one day. Bill had one of them books that just come. He was lookin’ in it and he says, ‘I wrote a letter. Wonder if they put it in the book!’ But it wasn’t there. Bill says, ‘Maybe they’re savin’ it for later.’ An’ that’s just what they done. There it is.”

"Guess you're right," said Slim. "Got it right in the book." George held out his hand for the magazine. "Let's look at it?"

Whit found the place again, but he did not surrender his hold on it. He pointed out the letter with his forefinger. And then he went to his box shelf and laid the magazine carefully in. "I wonder if Bill seen it," he said. "Bill and me worked in that patch of field peas. Run cultivators, both of us. Bill was a hell of a nice fella."

During the conversation Carlson had refused to be drawn in. He continued to look down at the old dog. Candy watched him uneasily. At last Carlson said, "If you want me to, I'll put the old devil out of his misery right now and get it over with. Ain't nothing left for him. Can't eat, can't see, can't even walk without hurtin'."

Candy said hopefully, "You ain't got no gun."

"The hell I ain't. Got a Luger. It won't hurt him none at all." Candy said, "Maybe tomorra. Le's wait till tomorra."

"I don't see no reason for it," said Carlson. He went to his bunk, pulled his bag from underneath it and took out a Luger pistol. "Le's get it over with," he said. "We can't sleep with him stinkin' around in here." He put the pistol in his hip pocket.

Candy looked a long time at Slim to try to find some reversal. And Slim gave him none. At last Candy said softly and hopelessly, "Awright- take 'im." He did not look down at the dog at all. He lay back on his bunk and crossed his arms behind his head and stared at the ceiling.

From his pocket Carlson took a little leather thong. He stooped over and tied it around the old dog's neck. All the men except Candy watched him. "Come boy. Come on, boy," he said gently. And he said apologetically to Candy, "He won't even feel it." Candy did not move nor answer him. He twitched the thong. "Come on, boy." The old dog got slowly and stiffly to his feet and followed the gently pulling leash.

Slim said, "Carlson." "Yeah?"

"You know what to do." "What ya mean, Slim?"

"Take a shovel," said Slim shortly.

"Oh, sure! I get you." He led the dog out into the darkness. George followed to the door and shut the door and set the latch gently in its place. Candy lay rigidly on his bed staring at the ceiling.

Slim said loudly, "One of my lead mules got a bad hoof. Got to get some tar on it." His voice trailed off. It was silent outside. Carlson's footsteps died away. The silence came into the room. And the silence lasted.

George chuckled, “I bet Lennie’s right out there in the barn with his pup. He won’t want to come in here no more now he’s got a pup.”

Slim said, “Candy, you can have any one of them pups you want.”

Candy did not answer. The silence fell on the room again. It came out of the night and invaded the room. George said, “Anybody like to play a little euchre?”

“I’ll play out a few with you,” said Whit.

They took places opposite each other at the table under the light, but George did not shuffle the cards. He rippled the edge of the deck nervously, and the little snapping noise drew the eyes of all the men in the room, so that he stopped doing it. The silence fell on the room again. A minute passed, and another minute. Candy lay still, staring at the ceiling. Slim gazed at him for a moment and then looked down at his hands; he subdued one hand with the other, and held it down. There came a little gnawing sound from under the floor and all the men looked down toward it gratefully. Only Candy continued to stare at the ceiling.

“Sounds like there was a rat under there,” said George. “We ought to get a trap down there.”

Whit broke out, “What the hell’s takin’ him so long? Lay out some cards, why don’t you?

We ain’t going to get no euchre played this way.”

George brought the cards together tightly and studied the backs of them. The silence was in the room again.

A shot sounded in the distance. The men looked quickly at the old man. Every head turned toward him.

For a moment he continued to stare at the ceiling. Then he rolled slowly over and faced the wall and lay silent.

George shuffled the cards noisily and dealt them. Whit drew a scoring board to him and set the pegs to start. Whit said, “I guess you guys really come here to work.”

“How do ya mean?” George asked.

Whit laughed. “Well, ya come on a Friday. You got two days to work till Sunday.” “I don’t see how you figure,” said George.

Whit laughed again. “You do if you been around these big ranches much. Guy that wants to look over a ranch comes in Sat’day afternoon. He gets Sat’day night supper an’ three meals on Sunday, and he can quit Monday mornin’ after breakfast without turning his hand. But you come to work Friday noon. You got to put in a day an’ a half no matter how you figure.”

George looked at him levelly. “We’re gonna stick aroun’ a while,” he said. “Me an’ Lennie’s gonna roll up a stake.”

The door opened quietly and the stable buck put in his head; a lean negro head, lined with pain, the eyes patient. “Mr. Slim.”

Slim took his eyes from old Candy. “Huh? Oh! Hello, Crooks. What’s’a matter?” “You told me to warm up tar for that mule’s foot. I got it warm.”

“Oh! Sure, Crooks. I’ll come right out an’ put it on.” “I can do it if you want, Mr. Slim.”

“No. I’ll come do it myself.” He stood up. Crooks said, “Mr. Slim.”

“Yeah.”

“That big new guy’s messin’ around your pups out in the barn.” “Well, he ain’t doin’ no harm. I give him one of them pups.”

“Just thought I’d tell ya,” said Crooks. “He’s takin’ ‘em outa the nest and handlin’ them. That won’t do them no good.”

“He won’t hurt ‘em,” said Slim. “I’ll come along with you now.”

George looked up. “If that crazy bastard’s foolin’ around too much, jus’ kick him out, Slim.” Slim followed the stable buck out of the room.

George dealt and Whit picked up his cards and examined them. “Seen the new kid yet?” he asked.

“What kid?” George asked. “Why, Curley’s new wife.” “Yeah, I seen her.”

“Well, ain’t she a looloo?”

“I ain’t seen that much of her,” said George.

Whit laid down his cards impressively. “Well, stick around an’ keep your eyes open. You’ll see plenty. She ain’t concealin’ nothing. I never seen nobody like her. She got the eye goin’ all the time on everybody. I bet she even gives the stable buck the eye. I don’t know what the hell she wants.”

George asked casually, “Been any trouble since she got here?”

It was obvious that Whit was not interested in his cards. He laid his hand down and George scooped it in. George laid out his deliberate solitaire hand- seven cards, and six on top, and five on top of those.

Whit said, “I see what you mean. No, they ain’t been nothing yet. Curley’s got yella-jackets in his drawers, but that’s all so far. Ever’ time the guys is around she shows up. She’s lookin’ for Curley, or she thought she lef’ somethin’ layin’ around and she’s lookin’ for it. Seems like she can’t keep away from guys. An’ Curley’s pants is just crawlin’ with ants, but they ain’t nothing come of it yet.”

George said, “She’s gonna make a mess. They’s gonna be a bad mess about her. She’s a jail bait all set on the trigger. That Curley got his work cut out for him. Ranch with a bunch of guys on it ain’t no place for a girl, specially like her.”

Whit said, “If you got idears, you oughtta come in town with us guys tomorra night.” “Why? What’s doin’?”

“Jus’ the usual thing. We go in to old Susy’s place. Hell of a nice place. Old Susy’s a laugh-always crackin’ jokes. Like she says when we come up on the front porch las’ Sat’day night. Susy opens the door and then she yells over her shoulder, ‘Get yor coats on, girls, here comes the sheriff.’ She never talks dirty, neither. Got five girls there.”

“What’s it set you back?” George asked.

“Two an’ a half. You can get a shot for two bits. Susy got nice chairs to set in, too. If a guy don’t want a flop, why he can just set in the chairs and have a couple or three shots and pass the time of day and Susy don’t give a damn. She ain’t rushin’ guys through and kickin’ ‘em out if they don’t want a flop.”

“Might go in and look the joint over,” said George.

“Sure. Come along. It’s a hell of a lot of fun- her crackin’ jokes all the time. Like she says one time, she says, ‘I’ve knew people that if they got a rag rug on the floor an’ a kewpie doll lamp on the phonograph they think they’re running a parlor house.’ That’s Clara’s house she’s talkin’ about. An’ Susy says, ‘I know what you boys want,’ she says. ‘My girls is clean,’ she says, ‘an’ there ain’t no water in my whisky,’ she says. ‘If any you guys wanta look at a kewpie doll lamp an’ take your own chance gettin’ burned, why you know where to go.’ An’ she says, ‘There’s guys around here walkin’ bow-legged ‘cause they like to look at a kewpie doll lamp.’”

George asked, “Clara runs the other house, huh?”

“Yeah,” said Whit. “We don’t never go there. Clara gets three bucks a crack and thirty-five cents a shot, and she don’t crack no jokes. But Susy’s place is clean and she got nice chairs. Don’t let no goo-goos in, neither.”

“Me an’ Lennie’s rollin’ up a stake,” said George. “I might go in an’ set and have a shot, but I ain’t puttin’ out no two and a half.”

"Well, a guy got to have some fun sometime," said Whit.

The door opened and Lennie and Carlson came in together. Lennie crept to his bunk and sat down, trying not to attract attention. Carlson reached under his bunk and brought out his bag. He didn't look at old Candy, who still faced the wall. Carlson found a little cleaning rod in the bag and a can of oil. He laid them on his bed and then brought out the pistol, took out the magazine and snapped the loaded shell from the chamber. Then he fell to cleaning the barrel with the little rod. When the ejector snapped, Candy turned over and looked for a moment at the gun before he turned back to the wall again.

Carlson said casually, "Curley been in yet?" "No," said Whit. "What's eatin' on Curley?"

Carlson squinted down the barrel of his gun. "Lookin' for his old lady. I seen him going round and round outside."

Whit said sarcastically, "He spends half his time lookin' for her, and the rest of the time she's lookin' for him."

Curley burst into the room excitedly. "Any you guys seen my wife?" he demanded. "She ain't been here," said Whit.

Curley looked threateningly about the room. "Where the hell's Slim?"

"Went out in the barn," said George. "He was gonna put some tar on a split hoof." Curley's shoulders dropped and squared. "How long ago'd he go?"

"Five- ten minutes."

Curley jumped out the door and banged it after him.

Whit stood up. "I guess maybe I'd like to see this," he said. "Curley's just spoilin' or he wouldn't start for Slim. An' Curley's handy, God damn handy. Got in the finals for the Golden Gloves. He got newspaper clippings about it." He considered. "But jus' the same, he better leave Slim alone. Nobody don't know what Slim can do."

"Thinks Slim's with his wife, don't he?" said George.

"Looks like it," Whit said. "'Course Slim ain't. Least I don't think Slim is. But I like to see the fuss if it comes off. Come on, le's go."

George said, "I'm stayin' right here. I don't want to get mixed up in nothing. Lennie and me got to make a stake."

Carlson finished the cleaning of the gun and put it in the bag and pushed the bag under his bunk. "I guess I'll go out and look her over," he said. Old Candy lay still, and Lennie, from his bunk, watched George cautiously.

When Whit and Carlson were gone and the door closed after them, George turned to Lennie. "What you got on your mind?"

"I ain't done nothing, George. Slim says I better not pet them pups so much for a while.

Slim says it ain't good for them; so I come right in. I been good,

George." "I coulda told you that," said George.

"Well, I wasn't hurtin' 'em none. I jus' had mine in my lap pettin' it." George asked, "Did you see Slim out in the barn?"

"Sure I did. He tol' me I better not pet that pup no more." "Did you see that girl?"

"You mean Curley's girl?"

"Yeah. Did she come in the barn?" "No. Anyways I never seen her." "You never seen Slim talkin' to her?" "Uh-uh. She ain't been in the barn."

"O.K.," said George. "I guess them guys ain't gonna see no fight. If there's any fightin', Lennie, you keep out of it."

"I don't want no fights," said Lennie. He got up from his bunk and sat down at the table, across from George. Almost automatically George shuffled the cards and laid out his solitaire hand. He used a deliberate, thoughtful slowness.

Lennie reached for a face card and studied it, then turned it upside down and studied it. "Both ends the same," he said. "George, why is it both ends the same?"

"I don't know," said George. "That's jus' the way they make 'em. What was Slim doin' in the barn when you seen him?"

"Slim?"

"Sure. You seen him in the barn, an' he tol' you not to pet the pups so much." "Oh, yeah. He had a can a' tar an' a paint brush. I don't know what for."

"You sure that girl didn't come in like she come in here today?" "No. She never come."

George sighed. "You give me a good whore house every time," he said. "A guy can go in an' get drunk and get ever'thing outa his system all at once, an' no messes. And he knows how much it's gonna set him back. These here jail baits is just set on the trigger of the hoosegow."

Lennie followed his words admiringly, and moved his lips a little to keep up. George continued, "You remember Andy Cushman, Lennie? Went to grammar school?"

"The one that his old lady used to make hot cakes for the kids?" Lennie asked.

"Yeah. That's the one. You can remember anything if there's anything to eat in it." George looked carefully at the solitaire hand. He put an ace up on his scoring rack and piled a two, three and four of diamonds on it. "Andy's in San Quentin right now on account of a tart," said George.

Lennie drummed on the table with his fingers. "George?" "Huh?"

"George, how long's it gonna be till we get that little place an' live on the fatta the lan'- an' rabbits?"

"I don't know", said George. "We gotta get a big stake together. I know a little place we can get cheap, but they ain't givin' it away."

Old Candy turned slowly over. His eyes were wide open. He watched George carefully. Lennie said, "Tell about that place, George."

"I jus' tol' you, jus' las' night." "Go on- tell again, George."

"Well, it's ten acres," said George. "Got a little win'mill. Got a little shack on it, an' a chicken run. Got a kitchen, orchard, cherries, apples, peaches, 'cots, nuts, got a few berries. They's a place for alfalfa and plenty water to flood it. They's a pig pen-"

"An' rabbits, George."

"No place for rabbits now, but I could easy build a few hutches and you could feed alfalfa to the rabbits."

"Damn right, I could," said Lennie. "You God damn right I could."

George's hands stopped working with the cards. His voice was growing warmer. "An' we could have a few pigs. I could build a smoke house like the one gran'pa had, an' when we kill a pig we can smoke the bacon and the hams, and make sausage an' all like that. An' when the salmon run up river we could catch a hundred of 'em an' salt 'em down or smoke 'em. We could have them for breakfast. They ain't nothing so nice as smoked salmon. When the fruit come in we could can it- and tomatoes, they're easy to can. Ever' Sunday we'd kill a chicken or a rabbit. Maybe we'd have a cow or a goat, and the cream is so God damn thick you got to cut it with a knife and take it out with a spoon."

Lennie watched him with wide eyes, and old Candy watched him too. Lennie said softly, "We could live offa the fatta the lan'."

"Sure," said George. "All kin's a vegetables in the garden, and if we want a little whisky we can sell a few eggs or something, or some milk. We'd jus' live there. We'd belong there. There wouldn't be no more runnin' round the country and gettin' fed by a Jap cook. No, sir, we'd have our own place where we belonged and not sleep in no bunkhouse."

"Tell about the house, George," Lennie begged.

"Sure, we'd have a little house an' a room to ourself. Little fat iron stove, an' in the winter we'd keep a fire goin' in it. It ain't enough land so we'd have to work too hard. Maybe six, seven hours a day. We wouldn't have to buck no barley eleven hours a day. An' when we put in a crop, why, we'd be there to take the crop up. We'd know what come of our planting."

"An' rabbits," Lennie said eagerly. "An' I'd take care of 'em. Tell how I'd do that, George."

"Sure, you'd go out in the alfalfa patch an' you'd have a sack. You'd fill up the sack and bring it in an' put it in the rabbit cages."

"They'd nibble an' they'd nibble," said Lennie, "the way they do. I seen 'em."

"Ever' six weeks or so," George continued, "them does would throw a litter so we'd have plenty rabbits to eat an' to sell. An' we'd keep a few pigeons to go flyin' around the win'mill like they done when I was a kid." He looked raptly at the wall over Lennie's head. "An' it'd be our own, an' nobody could can us. If we don't like a guy we can say, 'Get the hell out,' and by God he's got to do it. An' if a fren' come along, why we'd have an extra bunk, an' we'd say, 'Why don't you spen' the night?' an' by God he would. We'd have a setter dog and a couple stripe cats, but you gotta watch out them cats don't get the little rabbits."

Lennie breathed hard. "You jus' let 'em try to get the rabbits. I'll break their God damn necks. I'll... I'll smash 'em with a stick." He subsided, grumbling to himself, threatening the future cats which might dare to disturb the future rabbits.

George sat entranced with his own picture.

When Candy spoke they both jumped as though they had been caught doing something reprehensible. Candy said, "You know where's a place like that?"

George was on guard immediately. "S'pose I do," he said. "What's that to you?" "You don't need to tell me where it's at. Might be any place."

"Sure," said George. "That's right. You couldn't find it in a hundred years." Candy went on excitedly, "How much they want for a place like that?"

George watched him suspiciously. "Well- I could get it for six hundred bucks. The ol' people that owns it is flat bust an' the ol' lady needs an operation. Say- what's it to you? You got nothing to do with us."

Candy said, “I ain’t much good with on’y one hand. I lost my hand right here on this ranch. That’s why they give me a job swampin’. An’ they give me two hunderd an’ fifty dollars ‘cause I los’ my hand. An’ I got fifty more saved up right in the bank, right now. Tha’s three hunderd, and I got fifty more comin’ the end a the month. Tell you what-” He leaned forward eagerly. “S’pose I went in with you guys. Tha’s three hunderd an’ fifty bucks I’d put in. I ain’t much good, but I could cook and tend the chickens and hoe the garden some. How’d that be?”

George half-closed his eyes. “I gotta think about that. We was always gonna do it by ourselves.”

Candy interrupted him, “I’d make a will an’ leave my share to you guys in case I kick off, ‘cause I ain’t got no relatives nor nothing. You guys got any money? Maybe we could do her right now?”

George spat on the floor disgustedly. “We got ten bucks between us.” Then he said thoughtfully, “Look, if me an’ Lennie work a month an’ don’t spen’ nothing, we’ll have a hunderd bucks. That’d be four fifty. I bet we could swing her for that. Then you an’ Lennie could go get her started an’ I’d get a job an’ make up the res’, an’ you could sell eggs an’ stuff like that.”

They fell into a silence. They looked at one another, amazed. This thing they had never really believed in was coming true. George said reverently, “Jesus Christ! I bet we could swing her.” His eyes were full of wonder. “I bet we could swing her,” he repeated softly.

Candy sat on the edge of his bunk. He scratched the stump of his wrist nervously. “I got hurt four year ago,” he said. “They’ll can me purty soon. Jus’ as soon as I can’t swamp out no bunkhouses they’ll put me on the county. Maybe if I give you guys my money, you’ll let me hoe in the garden even after I ain’t no good at it. An’ I’ll wash dishes an’ little chicken stuff like that. But I’ll be on our own place, an’ I’ll be let to work on our own place.” He said miserably, “You seen what they done to my dog tonight? They says he wasn’t no good to himself nor nobody else. When they can me here I wisht somebody’d shoot me. But they won’t do nothing like that. I won’t have no place to go, an’ I can’t get no more jobs. I’ll have thirty dollars more comin’, time you guys is ready to quit.”

George stood up. “We’ll do her,” he said. “We’ll fix up that little old place an’ we’ll go live there.” He sat down again. They all sat still, all bemused by the beauty of the thing, each mind was popped into the future when this lovely thing should come about.

George said wonderingly, “S’pose they was a carnival or a circus come to town, or a ball game, or any damn thing.” Old Candy nodded in appreciation of the idea. “We’d just go to her,” George said. “We wouldn’t ask nobody if we could. Jus’ say, ‘We’ll go to her,’ an’ we would. Jus’ milk the cow and sling some grain to the chickens an’ go to her.”

"An' put some grass to the rabbits," Lennie broke in. "I wouldn't never forget to feed them.

When we gon'ta do it, George?"

"In one month. Right squack in one month. Know what I'm gon'ta do? I'm gon'ta write to them old people that owns the place that we'll take it. An' Candy'll send a hunderd dollars to bind her."

"Sure will," said Candy. "They got a good stove there?" "Sure, got a nice stove, burns coal or wood."

"I'm gonna take my pup," said Lennie. "I bet by Christ he likes it there, by Jesus."

Voices were approaching from outside. George said quickly, "Don't tell nobody about it. Jus' us three an' nobody else. They li'ble to can us so we can't make no stake. Jus' go on like we was gonna buck barley the rest of our lives, then all of a sudden some day we'll go get our pay an' scram outa here."

Lennie and Candy nodded, and they were grinning with delight. "Don't tell nobody," Lennie said to himself. Candy said, "George." "Huh?"

"I ought to of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn't ought to of let no stranger shoot my dog." The door opened. Slim came in, followed by Curley and Carlson and Whit. Slim's hands were black with tar and he was scowling. Curley hung close to his elbow. Curley said, "Well, I didn't mean nothing, Slim. I just ast you."

Slim said, "Well, you been askin' me too often. I'm gettin' God damn sick of it. If you can't look after your own God damn wife, what you expect me to do about it? You lay offa me."

"I'm jus' tryin' to tell you I didn't mean nothing," said Curley. "I jus' thought you might of saw her."

"Why'n't you tell her to stay the hell home where she belongs?" said Carlson. "You let her hang around bunkhouses and pretty soon you're gonna have som'pin on your hands and you won't be able to do nothing about it."

Curley whirled on Carlson. "You keep outa this les' you wanta step outside."

Carlson laughed. "You God damn punk," he said. "You tried to throw a scare into Slim, an' you couldn't make it stick. Slim throwed a scare into you. You're yella as a frog belly. I don't care if you're the best welter in the country. You come for me, an' I'll kick your God damn head off."

Candy joined the attack with joy. “Glove fulla vaseline,” he said disgustedly. Curley glared at him. His eyes slipped on past and lighted on Lennie; and Lennie was still smiling with delight at the memory of the ranch.

Curley stepped over to Lennie like a terrier. “What the hell you laughin’ at?” Lennie looked blankly at him. “Huh?”

Then Curley’s rage exploded. “Come on, ya big bastard. Get up on your feet. No big son-of-a-bitch is gonna laugh at me. I’ll show ya who’s yella.”

Lennie looked helplessly at George, and then he got up and tried to retreat. Curley was balanced and poised. He slashed at Lennie with his left, and then smashed down his nose with a right. Lennie gave a cry of terror. Blood welled from his nose. “George,” he cried. “Make ‘um let me alone, George.” He backed until he was against the wall, and Curley followed, slugging him in the face. Lennie’s hands remained at his sides; he was too frightened to defend himself.

George was on his feet yelling, “Get him, Lennie. Don’t let him do it.”

Lennie covered his face with his huge paws and bleated with terror. He cried, “Make ‘um stop, George.” Then Curley attacked his stomach and cut off his wind.

Slim jumped up. “The dirty little rat,” he cried, “I’ll get ‘um myself.”

George put out his hand and grabbed Slim. “Wait a minute,” he shouted. He cupped his hands around his mouth and yelled, “Get ‘im, Lennie!”

Lennie took his hands away from his face and looked about for George, and Curley slashed at his eyes. The big face was covered with blood. George yelled again, “I said get him.”

Curley’s fist was swinging when Lennie reached for it. The next minute Curley was flopping like a fish on a line, and his closed fist was lost in Lennie’s big hand. George ran down the room. “Leggo of him, Lennie. Let go.”

But Lennie watched in terror the flopping little man whom he held. Blood ran down Lennie’s face, one of his eyes was cut and closed. George slapped him in the face again and again, and still Lennie held on to the closed fist. Curley was white and shrunken by now, and his struggling had become weak. He stood crying, his fist lost in Lennie’s paw.

George shouted over and over. “Leggo his hand, Lennie. Leggo. Slim, come help me while the guy got any hand left.”

Suddenly Lennie let go his hold. He crouched cowering against the wall. “You tol’ me to, George,” he said miserably.

Curley sat down on the floor, looking in wonder at his crushed hand. Slim and Carlson bent over him. Then Slim straightened up and regarded Lennie with horror. "We got to get him in to a doctor," he said. "Looks to me like ever' bone in his han' is bust."

"I didn't wanta," Lennie cried. "I didn't wanta hurt him."

Slim said, "Carlson, you get the candy wagon hitched up. We'll take 'um into Soledad an' get 'um fixed up." Carlson hurried out. Slim turned to the whimpering Lennie. "It ain't your fault," he said. "This punk sure had it comin' to him. But- Jesus! He ain't hardly got no han' left." Slim hurried out, and in a moment returned with a tin cup of water. He held it to Curley's lips.

George said, "Slim, will we get canned now? We need the stake. Will Curley's old man can us now?"

Slim smiled wryly. He knelt down beside Curley. "You got your senses in hand enough to listen?" he asked. Curley nodded. "Well, then listen," Slim went on. "I think you got your han' caught in a machine. If you don't tell nobody what happened, we ain't going to. But you jus' tell an' try to get this guy canned and we'll tell ever'body, an' then will you get the laugh."

"I won't tell," said Curley. He avoided looking at Lennie.

Buggy wheels sounded outside. Slim helped Curley up. "Come on now. Carlson's gonna take you to a doctor." He helped Curley out the door. The sound of wheels drew away. In a moment Slim came back into the bunkhouse. He looked at Lennie, still crouched fearfully against the wall. "Le's see your hands," he asked.

Lennie stuck out his hands.

"Christ awmighty, I hate to have you mad at me," Slim said.

George broke in, "Lennie was jus' scairt," he explained. "He didn't know what to do. I told you nobody ought never to fight him. No, I guess it was Candy I told."

Candy nodded solemnly. "That's jus' what you done," he said. "Right this morning when Curley first lit intil your fren', you says, 'He better not fool with Lennie if he knows what's good for 'um.' That's jus' what you says to me."

George turned to Lennie. "It ain't your fault," he said. "You don't need to be scairt no more. You done jus' what I tol' you to. Maybe you better go in the wash room an' clean up your face. You look like hell."

Lennie smiled with his bruised mouth. “I didn’t want no trouble,” he said. He walked toward the door, but just before he came to it, he turned back. “George?”

“What you want?”

“I can still tend the rabbits, George?” “Sure. You ain’t done nothing wrong.” “I di’n’t mean no harm, George.”

“Well, get the hell out and wash your face.”

CHAPTER FOUR

Crooks, the Negro stable buck, had his bunk in the harness room; a little shed that leaned off the wall of the barn. On one side of the little room there was a square four-paned window, and on the other, a narrow plank door leading into the barn. Crooks’ bunk was a long box filled with straw, on which his blankets were flung. On the wall by the window there were pegs on which hung broken harness in process of being mended; strips of new leather; and under the window itself a little bench for leather-working tools, curved knives and needles and balls of linen thread, and a small hand riveter. On pegs were also pieces of harness, a split collar with the horsehair stuffing sticking out, a broken hame, and a trace chain with its leather covering split. Crooks had his apple box over his bunk, and in it a range of medicine bottles, both for himself and for the horses. There were cans of saddle soap and a drippy can of tar with its paint brush sticking over the edge. And scattered about the floor were a number of personal possessions; for, being alone, Crooks could leave his things about, and being a stable buck and a cripple, he was more permanent than the other men, and he had accumulated more possessions than he could carry on his back.

Crooks possessed several pairs of shoes, a pair of rubber boots, a big alarm clock and a single-barreled shotgun. And he had books, too; a tattered dictionary and a mauled copy of the California civil code for 19O5. There were battered magazines and a few dirty books on a special shelf over his bunk. A pair of large gold-rimmed spectacles hung from a nail on the wall above his bed.

This room was swept and fairly neat, for Crooks was a proud, aloof man. He kept his distance and demanded that other people keep theirs. His body was bent over to the left by his crooked spine, and his eyes lay deep in his head, and because of their depth seemed to glitter with intensity. His lean face was lined with deep black wrinkles, and he had thin, pain- tightened lips which were lighter than his face.

It was Saturday night. Through the open door that led into the barn came the sound of moving horses, of feet stirring, of teeth champing on hay, of the rattle of halter chains. In the stable buck’s room a small electric globe threw a meager yellow light.

Crooks sat on his bunk. His shirt was out of his jeans in back. In one hand he held a bottle of liniment, and with the other he rubbed his spine. Now and then he poured a few drops of the liniment into his pink-palmed hand and reached up under his shirt to rub again. He flexed his muscles against his back and shivered.

Noiselessly Lennie appeared in the open doorway and stood there looking in, his big shoulders nearly filling the opening. For a moment Crooks did not see him, but on raising his eyes he stiffened and a scowl came on his face. His hand came out from under his shirt.

Lennie smiled helplessly in an attempt to make friends.

Crooks said sharply, "You got no right to come in my room. This here's my room. Nobody got any right in here but me."

Lennie gulped and his smile grew more fawning. "I ain't doing nothing," he said. "Just come to look at my puppy. And I seen your light," he explained.

"Well, I got a right to have a light. You go on get outa my room. I ain't wanted in the bunkhouse, and you ain't wanted in my room."

"Why ain't you wanted?" Lennie asked.

"'Cause I'm black. They play cards in there, but I can't play because I'm black. They say I stink. Well, I tell you, you all of you stink to me."

Lennie flapped his big hands helplessly. "Ever'body went into town," he said. "Slim an' George an' ever'body. George says I gotta stay here an' not get in no trouble. I seen your light."

"Well, what do you want?"

"Nothing- I seen your light. I thought I could jus' come in an' set."

Crooks stared at Lennie, and he reached behind him and took down the spectacles and adjusted them over his pink ears and stared again. "I don't know what you're doin' in the barn anyway," he complained. "You ain't no skinner. They's no call for a bucker to come into the barn at all. You ain't no skinner. You ain't got nothing to do with the horses."

"The pup," Lennie repeated. "I come to see my pup."

"Well, go see your pup, then. Don't come in a place where you're not wanted."

Lennie lost his smile. He advanced a step into the room, then remembered and backed to the door again. "I looked at 'em a little. Slim says I ain't to pet 'em very much."

Crooks said, “Well, you been takin’ ‘em out of the nest all the time. I wonder the old lady don’t move ‘em someplace else.”

“Oh, she don’t care. She lets me.” Lennie had moved into the room again.

Crooks scowled, but Lennie’s disarming smile defeated him. “Come on in and set a while,” Crooks said. “’Long as you won’t get out and leave me alone, you might as well set down.” His tone was a little more friendly. “All the boys gone into town, huh?”

“All but old Candy. He just sets in the bunkhouse sharpening his pencil and sharpening and figuring.”

Crooks adjusted his glasses. “Figuring? What’s Candy figuring about?” Lennie almost shouted, “’Bout the rabbits.”

“You’re nuts,” said Crooks. “You’re crazy as a wedge. What rabbits you talkin’ about?”

“The rabbits we’re gonna get, and I get to tend ‘em, cut grass an’ give ‘em water, an’ like that.”

“Jus’ nuts,” said Crooks. “I don’t blame the guy you travel with for keepin’ you outa sight.”

Lennie said quietly, “It ain’t no lie. We’re gonna do it. Gonna get a little place an’ live on the fatta the lan’.”

Crooks settled himself more comfortably on his bunk. “Set down,” he invited. “Set down on the nail keg.”

Lennie hunched down on the little barrel. “You think it’s a lie,” Lennie said. “But it ain’t no lie. Ever’ word’s the truth, an’ you can ast George.”

Crooks put his dark chin into his pink palm. “You travel aroun’ with George, don’t ya?” “Sure. Me an’ him goes ever’ place together.”

Crooks continued. “Sometimes he talks, and you don’t know what the hell he’s talkin’ about. Ain’t that so?” He leaned forward, boring Lennie with his deep eyes. “Ain’t that so?”

“Yeah... sometimes.”

“Jus’ talks on, an’ you don’t know what the hell it’s all about?” “Yeah... sometimes. But... not always.”

Crooks leaned forward over the edge of the bunk. “I ain’t a southern Negro,” he said. “I was born right here in California. My old man had a chicken ranch, ‘bout ten acres. The white kids come to play at our place, an’ sometimes I went to play with them, and some of them

was pretty nice. My ol' man didn't like that. I never knew till long later why he didn't like that. But I know now." He hesitated, and when he spoke again his voice was softer. "There wasn't another colored family for miles around. And now there ain't a colored man on this ranch an' there's jus' one family in Soledad." He laughed. "If I say something, why it's just a nigger sayin' it."

Lennie asked, "How long you think it'll be before them pups will be old enough to pet?"

Crooks laughed again. "A guy can talk to you an' be sure you won't go blabbin'. Couple of weeks an' them pups'll be all right. George knows what he's about. Jus' talks, an' you don't understand nothing." He leaned forward excitedly. "This is just a nigger talkin', an' a busted- back nigger. So it don't mean nothing, see? You couldn't remember it anyways. I seen it over an' over- a guy talkin' to another guy and it don't make no difference if he don't hear or understand. The thing is, they're talkin', or they're settin' still not talkin'. It don't make no difference, no difference." His excitement had increased until he pounded his knee with this hand. "George can tell you screwy things, and it don't matter. It's just the talking. It's just bein' with another guy. That's all." He paused.

His voice grew soft and persuasive. "S'pose George don't come back no more. S'pose he took a powder and just ain't coming back. What'll you do then?"

Lennie's attention came gradually to what had been said. "What?" he demanded.

"I said s'pose George went into town tonight and you never heard of him no more." Crooks pressed forward some kind of private victory. "Just s'pose that," he repeated.

"He won't do it," Lennie cried. "George wouldn't do nothing like that. I been with George a long a time. He'll come back tonight-" But the doubt was too much for him. "Don't you think he will?"

Crooks' face lighted with pleasure in his torture. "Nobody can't tell what a guy'll do," he observed calmly. "Le's say he wants to come back and can't. S'pose he gets killed or hurt so he can't come back."

Lennie struggled to understand. "George won't do nothing like that," he repeated. "George is careful. He won't get hurt. He ain't never been hurt, 'cause he's careful."

"Well, s'pose, jus' s'pose he don't come back. What'll you do then?"

Lennie's face wrinkled with apprehension. "I don' know. Say, what you doin' anyways?" he cried. "This ain't true. George ain't got hurt."

Crooks bored in on him. "Want me ta tell ya what'll happen? They'll take ya to the booby hatch. They'll tie ya up with a collar, like a dog."

Suddenly Lennie's eyes centered and grew quiet, and mad. He stood up and walked dangerously toward Crooks. "Who hurt George?" he demanded.

Crooks saw the danger as it approached him. He edged back on his bunk to get out of the way. "I was just supposin'," he said. "George ain't hurt. He's all right. He'll be back all right."

Lennie stood over him. "What you supposin' for? Ain't nobody goin' to suppose no hurt to George."

Crooks removed his glasses and wiped his eyes with his fingers. "Jus' set down," he said. "George ain't hurt."

Lennie growled back to his seat on the nail keg. "Ain't nobody goin' to talk no hurt to George," he grumbled.

Crooks said gently, "Maybe you can see now. You got George. You know he's goin' to come back. S'pose you didn't have nobody. S'pose you couldn't go into the bunkhouse and play rummy 'cause you was black. How'd you like that? S'pose you had to sit out here an' read books. Sure you could play horseshoes till it got dark, but then you got to read books. Books ain't no good. A guy needs somebody to be near him." He whined, "A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody. Don't make no difference who the guy is, long's he's with you. I tell ya," he cried, "I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick."

"George gonna come back," Lennie reassured himself in a frightened voice. "Maybe George come back already. Maybe I better go see."

Crooks said, "I didn't mean to scare you. He'll come back. I was talkin' about myself. A guy sets alone out here at night, maybe readin' books or thinkin' or stuff like that. Sometimes he gets thinkin', an' he got nothing to tell him what's so an' what ain't so. Maybe if he sees somethin', he don't know whether it's right or not. He can't turn to some other guy and ast him if he sees it too. He can't tell. He got nothing to measure by. I seen things out here. I wasn't drunk. I don't know if I was asleep. If some guy was with me, he could tell me I was asleep, an' then it would be all right. But I jus' don't know." Crooks was looking across the room now, looking toward the window.

Lennie said miserably, "George wun't go away and leave me. I know George wun't do that."

The stable buck went on dreamily, "I remember when I was a little kid on my old man's chicken ranch. Had two brothers. They was always near me, always there. Used to sleep right in the same room, right in the same bed- all three. Had a strawberry patch. Had an alfalfa patch. Used to turn the chickens out in the alfalfa on a sunny morning. My brothers'd set on a fence rail an' watch 'em- white chickens they was."

Gradually Lennie's interest came around to what was being said. "George says we're gonna have alfalfa for the rabbits."

"What rabbits?"

"We're gonna have rabbits an' a berry patch." "You're nuts."

"We are too. You ast George."

"You're nuts." Crooks was scornful. "I seen hunderds of men come by on the road an' on the ranches, with their bindles on their back an' that same damn thing in their heads. Hunderds of them. They come, an' they quit an' go on; an' every damn one of 'em's got a little piece of land in his head. An' never a God damn one of 'em ever gets it. Just like heaven. Ever'body wants a little piece of lan'. I read plenty of books out here. Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land. It's just in their head. They're all the time talkin' about it, but it's jus' in their head." He paused and looked toward the open door, for the horses were moving restlessly and the halter chains clinked. A horse whinnied. "I guess somebody's out there," Crooks said. "Maybe Slim. Slim comes in sometimes two, three times a night. Slim's a real skinner. He looks out for his team." He pulled himself painfully upright and moved toward the door. "That you, Slim?" he called.

Candy's voice answered. "Slim went in town. Say, you seen Lennie?" "Ya mean the big guy?"

"Yeah. Seen him around any place?"

"He's in here," Crooks said shortly. He went back to his bunk and lay down.

Candy stood in the doorway scratching his bald wrist and looking blindly into the lighted room. He made no attempt to enter. "Tell ya what, Lennie. I been figuring out about them rabbits."

Crooks said irritably, "You can come in if you want."

Candy seemed embarrassed. "I do' know. 'Course, if ya want me to."

"Come on in. If ever'body's comin' in, you might just as well." It was difficult for Crooks to conceal his pleasure with anger.

Candy came in, but he was still embarrassed, "You got a nice cozy little place in here," he said to Crooks. "Must be nice to have a room all to yourself this way."

"Sure," said Crooks. "And a manure pile under the window. Sure, it's swell." Lennie broke in, "You said about them rabbits."

Candy leaned against the wall beside the broken collar while he scratched the wrist stump. "I been here a long time," he said. "An' Crooks been here a long time. This's the first time I ever been in his room."

Crooks said darkly, "Guys don't come into a colored man's room very much. Nobody been here but Slim. Slim an' the boss."

Candy quickly changed the subject. "Slim's as good a skinner as I ever seen." Lennie leaned toward the old swamper. "About them rabbits," he insisted.

Candy smiled. "I got it figured out. We can make some money on them rabbits if we go about it right."

"But I get to tend 'em," Lennie broke in. "George says I get to tend 'em. He promised."

Crooks interrupted brutally. "You guys is just kiddin' yourself. You'll talk about it a hell of a lot, but you won't get no land. You'll be a swamper here till they take you out in a box. Hell, I seen too many guys. Lennie here'll quit an' be on the road in two, three weeks. Seems like ever' guy got land in his head."

Candy rubbed his cheek angrily. "You God damn right we're gonna do it. George says we are. We got the money right now."

"Yeah?" said Crooks. "An' where's George now? In town in a whore house. That's where your money's goin'. Jesus, I seen it happen too many times. I seen too many guys with land in their head. They never get none under their hand."

Candy cried, "Sure they all want it. Everybody wants a little bit of land, not much. Jus' som'thin' that was his. Som'thin' he could live on and there couldn't nobody throw him off of it. I never had none. I planted crops for damn near ever'body in this state, but they wasn't my crops, and when I harvested 'em, it wasn't none of my harvest. But we gonna do it now, and don't you make no mistake about that. George ain't got the money in town. That money's in the bank. Me an' Lennie an' George. We gonna have a room to ourself. We're gonna have a dog an' rabbits an' chickens. We're gonna have green corn an' maybe a cow or a goat." He stopped, overwhelmed with his picture.

Crooks asked, "You say you got the money?"

"Damn right. We got most of it. Just a little bit more to get. Have it all in one month. George got the land all picked out, too."

Crooks reached around and explored his spine with his hand. "I never seen a guy really do it," he said. "I seen guys nearly crazy with loneliness for land, but ever' time a whore house or a blackjack game took what it takes." He hesitated. "...If you... guys would want a hand

to work for nothing- just his keep, why I'd come an' lend a hand. I ain't so crippled I can't work like a son-of-a-bitch if I want to."

"Any you boys seen Curley?"

They swung their heads toward the door. Looking in was Curley's wife. Her face was heavily made up. Her lips were slightly parted. She breathed strongly, as though she had been running.

"Curley ain't been here," Candy said sourly.

She stood still in the doorway, smiling a little at them, rubbing the nails of one hand with the thumb and forefinger of the other. And her eyes traveled from one face to another. "They left all the weak ones here," she said finally. "Think I don't know where they all went? Even Curley. I know where they all went."

Lennie watched her, fascinated; but Candy and Crooks were scowling down away from her eyes. Candy said, "Then if you know, why you want to ast us where Curley is at?"

She regarded them amusedly. "Funny thing," she said. "If I catch any one man, and he's alone, I get along fine with him. But just let two of the guys get together an' you won't talk. Jus' nothing but mad." She dropped her fingers and put her hands on her hips. "You're all scared of each other, that's what. Ever' one of you's scared the rest is goin' to get something on you."

After a pause Crooks said, "Maybe you better go along to your own house now. We don't want no trouble."

"Well, I ain't giving you no trouble. Think I don't like to talk to somebody ever' once in a while? Think I like to stick in that house alla time?"

Candy laid the stump of his wrist on his knee and rubbed it gently with his hand. He said accusingly, "You gotta husban'. You got no call foolin' aroun' with other guys, causin' trouble."

The girl flared up. "Sure I gotta husban'. You all seen him. Swell guy, ain't he? Spends all his time sayin' what he's gonna do to guys he don't like, and he don't like nobody. Think I'm gonna stay in that two-by-four house and listen how Curley's gonna lead with his left twicet, and then bring in the ol' right cross? 'One-two,' he says. 'Jus' the ol' one-two an' he'll go down.'" She paused and her face lost its sullenness and grew interested. "Say- what happened to Curley's han'?"

There was an embarrassed silence. Candy stole a look at Lennie. Then he coughed. "Why...

Curley... he got his han' caught in a machine, ma'am. Bust his han'."

She watched for a moment, and then she laughed. "Baloney! What you think you're sellin' me? Curley started som'pin' he didn' finish. Caught in a machine- baloney! Why, he ain't give nobody the good ol' one-two since he got his han' bust. Who bust him?"

Candy repeated sullenly, "Got it caught in a machine."

"Awright," she said contemptuously. "Awright, cover 'im up if ya wanta. Whatta I care? You bindle bums think you're so damn good. Whatta ya think I am, a kid? I tell ya I could of went with shows. Not jus' one, neither. An' a guy tol' me he could put me in pitchers. " She was

breathless with indignation. "-Sat'iday night. Ever'body out doin' som'pin'. Ever'body! An' what am I doin'? Standin' here talkin' to a bunch of bindle stiffs- a nigger an' a dum-dum and a lousy ol' sheep- an' likin' it because they ain't nobody else."

Lennie watched her, his mouth half open. Crooks had retired into the terrible protective dignity of the Negro. But a change came over old Candy. He stood up suddenly and knocked his nail keg over backward. "I had enough," he said angrily. "You ain't wanted here. We told you you ain't. An' I tell ya, you got floozy idears about what us guys amounts to. You ain't got sense enough in that chicken head to even see that we ain't stiffs. S'pose you get us canned. S'pose you do. You think we'll hit the highway an' look for another lousy two-bit job like this. You don't know that we got our own ranch to go to, an' our own house. We ain't got to stay here. We gotta house and chickens an' fruit trees an' a place a hunderd time prettier than this. An' we got fren's, that's what we got. Maybe there was a time when we was scared of gettin' canned, but we ain't no more. We got our own lan', and it's ours, an' we c'n go to it."

Curley's wife laughed at him. "Baloney," she said. "I seen too many you guys. If you had two bits in the worl', why you'd be in gettin' two shots of corn with it and suckin' the bottom of the glass. I know you guys."

Candy's face had grown redder and redder, but before she was done speaking, he had control of himself. He was the master of the situation. "I might of knew," he said gently. "Maybe you just better go along an' roll your hoop. We ain't got nothing to say to you at all. We know what we got, and we don't care whether you know it or not. So maybe you better jus' scatter along now, 'cause Curley maybe ain't gonna like his wife out in the barn with us 'bindle stiffs.'"

She looked from one face to another, and they were all closed against her. And she looked longest at Lennie, until he dropped his eyes in embarrassment. Suddenly she said, "Where'd you get them bruises on your face?"

Lennie looked up guiltily. “Who- me?” “Yeah, you.”

Lennie looked to Candy for help, and then he looked at his lap again. “He got his han’ caught in a machine,” he said.

Curley’s wife laughed. “O.K., Machine. I’ll talk to you later. I like machines.”

Candy broke in. “You let this guy alone. Don’t you do no messing aroun’ with him. I’m gonna tell George what you says. George won’t have you messin’ with Lennie.”

“Who’s George?” she asked. “The little guy you come with?”

Lennie smiled happily. “That’s him,” he said. “That’s the guy, an’ he’s gonna let me tend the rabbits.”

“Well, if that’s all you want, I might get a couple rabbits myself.”

Crooks stood up from his bunk and faced her. “I had enough,” he said coldly. “You got no rights comin’ in a colored man’s room. You got no rights messing around in here at all. Now you jus’ get out, an’ get out quick. If you don’t, I’m gonna ast the boss not to ever let you come in the barn no more.”

She turned on him in scorn. “Listen, Nigger,” she said. “You know what I can do to you if you open your trap?”

Crooks stared hopelessly at her, and then he sat down on his bunk and drew into himself. She closed on him. “You know what I could do?”

Crooks seemed to grow smaller, and he pressed himself against the wall. “Yes, ma’am.”

“Well, you keep your place then, Nigger. I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain’t even funny.”

Crooks had reduced himself to nothing. There was no personality, no ego- nothing to arouse either like or dislike. He said, “Yes, ma’am,” and his voice was toneless.

For a moment she stood over him as though waiting for him to move so that she could whip at him again; but Crooks sat perfectly still, his eyes averted, everything that might be hurt drawn in. She turned at last to the other two.

Old Candy was watching her, fascinated. “If you was to do that, we’d tell,” he said quietly. “We’d tell about you framin’ Crooks.”

“Tell an’ be damned,” she cried. “Nobody’d listen to you, an’ you know it. Nobody’d listen to you.”

Candy subsided. “No. “ he agreed. “Nobody’d listen to us.”

Lennie whined, “I wisht George was here. I wisht George was here.”

Candy stepped over to him. “Don’t you worry none,” he said. “I jus’ heard the guys comin’ in. George’ll be in the bunkhouse right now, I bet.” He turned to Curley’s wife. “You better go home now,” he said quietly. “If you go right now, we won’t tell Curley you was here.”

She appraised him coolly. “I ain’t sure you heard nothing.”

“Better not take no chances,” he said. “If you ain’t sure, you better take the safe way.” She turned to Lennie. “I’m glad you bust up Curley a little bit. He got it comin’ to him.

Sometimes I’d like to bust him myself.” She slipped out the door and disappeared into the dark barn. And while she went through the barn, the halter chains rattled, and some horses snorted and some stamped their feet.

Crooks seemed to come slowly out of the layers of protection he had put on. “Was that the truth what you said about the guys come back?” he asked.

“Sure. I heard ‘em.”

“Well, I didn’t hear nothing.”

“The gate banged,” Candy said, and he went on, “Jesus Christ, Curley’s wife can move quiet.

I guess she had a lot of practice, though.”

Crooks avoided the whole subject now. “Maybe you guys better go,” he said. “I ain’t sure I want you in here no more. A colored man got to have some rights even if he don’t like ‘em.”

Candy said, “That bitch didn’t ought to of said that to you.”

“It wasn’t nothing,” Crooks said dully. “You guys comin’ in an’ settin’ made me forget. What she says is true.”

The horses snorted out in the barn and the chains rang and a voice called, “Lennie. Oh, Lennie. You in the barn?”

“It’s George,” Lennie cried. And he answered, “Here, George. I’m right in here.”

In a second George stood framed in the door, and he looked disapprovingly about. “What you doin’ in Crooks’ room? You hadn’t ought to be here.”

Crooks nodded. “I tol’ ‘em, but they come in anyways.” “Well, why’n’t you kick ‘em out?”

"I di'n't care much," said Crooks. "Lennie's a nice fella."

Now Candy aroused himself. "Oh, George! I been figurin' and figurin'. I got it doped out how we can even make some money on them rabbits."

George scowled. "I thought I tol' you not to tell nobody about that." Candy was crestfallen. "Didn't tell nobody but Crooks."

George said, "Well you guys get outa here. Jesus, seems like I can't go away for a minute." Candy and Lennie stood up and went toward the door. Crooks called, "Candy!"

"Huh?"

"'Member what I said about hoein' and doin' odd jobs?" "Yeah," said Candy. "I remember."

"Well, jus' forget it," said Crooks. "I didn't mean it. Jus' foolin'. I wouldn' want to go no place like that."

"Well, O.K., if you feel like that. Good night."

The three men went out of the door. As they went through the barn the horses snorted and the halter chains rattled.

Crooks sat on his bunk and looked at the door for a moment, and then he reached for the liniment bottle. He pulled out his shirt in back, poured a little liniment in his pink palm and, reaching around, he fell slowly to rubbing his back.

CHAPTER FIVE

One end of the great barn was piled high with new hay and over the pile hung the four-taloned Jackson fork suspended from its pulley. The hay came down like a mountain slope to the other end of the barn, and there was a level place as yet unfilled with the new crop. At the sides the feeding racks were visible, and between the slats the heads of horses could be seen.

It was Sunday afternoon. The resting horses nibbled the remaining wisps of hay, and they stamped their feet and they bit the wood of the mangers and rattled the halter chains. The afternoon sun sliced in through the cracks of the barn walls and lay in bright lines on the hay. There was the buzz of flies in the air, the lazy afternoon humming.

From outside came the clang of horseshoes on the playing peg and the shouts of men, playing, encouraging, jeering. But in the barn it was quiet and humming and lazy and warm.

Only Lennie was in the barn, and Lennie sat in the hay beside a packing case under a manger in the end of the barn that had not been filled with hay. Lennie sat in the hay and looked at a

little dead puppy that lay in front of him. Lennie looked at it for a long time, and then he put out his huge hand and stroked it, stroked it clear from one end to the other.

And Lennie said softly to the puppy, "Why do you got to get killed? You ain't so little as mice. I didn't bounce you hard." He bent the pup's head up and looked in its face, and he said to it, "Now maybe George ain't gonna let me tend no rabbits, if he fin's out you got killed."

He scooped a little hollow and laid the puppy in it and covered it over with hay, out of sight; but he continued to stare at the mound he had made. He said, "This ain't no bad thing like I got to go hide in the brush. Oh! no. This ain't. I'll tell George I foun' it dead."

He unburied the puppy and inspected it, and he stroked it from ears to tail. He went on sorrowfully, "But he'll know. George always knows. He'll say, 'You done it. Don't try to put nothing over on me.' An' he'll say, 'Now jus' for that you don't get to tend no rabbits!'"

Suddenly his anger arose. "God damn you," he cried. "Why do you got to get killed? You ain't so little as mice." He picked up the pup and hurled it from him. He turned his back on it. He sat bent over his knees and he whispered, "Now I won't get to tend the rabbits. Now he won't let me." He rocked himself back and forth in his sorrow.

From outside came the clang of horseshoes on the iron stake, and then a little chorus of cries. Lennie got up and brought the puppy back and laid it on the hay and sat down. He stroked the pup again. "You wasn't big enough," he said. "They tol' me and tol' me you wasn't. I di'n't know you'd get killed so easy." He worked his fingers on the pup's limp ear. "Maybe George won't care," he said. "This here God damn little son-of-a-bitch wasn't nothing to George."

Curley's wife came around the end of the last stall. She came very quietly, so that Lennie didn't see her. She wore her bright cotton dress and the mules with the red ostrich feathers. Her face was made up and the little sausage curls were all in place. She was quite near to him before Lennie looked up and saw her.

In a panic he shoveled hay over the puppy with his fingers. He looked sullenly up at her. She said, "What you got there, sonny boy?"

Lennie glared at her. "George says I ain't to have nothing to do with you- talk to you or nothing."

She laughed. "George giving you orders about everything?"

Lennie looked down at the hay. "Says I can't tend no rabbits if I talk to you or anything."

She said quietly, "He's scared Curley'll get mad. Well, Curley got his arm in a sling- an' if Curley gets tough, you can break his other han'. You didn't put nothing over on me about gettin' it caught in no machine."

But Lennie was not to be drawn. “No, sir. I ain’t gonna talk to you or nothing.”

She knelt in the hay beside him. “Listen,” she said. “All the guys got a horseshoe tenement goin’ on. It’s on’y about four o’clock. None of them guys is goin’ to leave that tenement. Why can’t I talk to you? I never get to talk to nobody. I get awful lonely.”

Lennie said, “Well, I ain’t supposed to talk to you or nothing.”

“I get lonely,” she said. “You can talk to people, but I can’t talk to nobody but Curley. Else he gets mad. How’d you like not to talk to anybody?”

Lennie said, “Well, I ain’t supposed to. George’s scared I’ll get in trouble.” She changed the subject. “What you got covered up there?”

Then all of Lennie’s woe came back on him. “Jus’ my pup,” he said sadly. “Jus’ my little pup.” And he swept the hay from on top of it.

“Why, he’s dead,” she cried.

“He was so little,” said Lennie. “I was jus’ playin’ with him... an’ he made like he’s gonna bite me... an’ I made like I was gonna smack him... an’... an’ I done it. An’ then he was dead.”

She consoled him. “Don’t you worry none. He was jus’ a mutt. You can get another one easy. The whole country is fulla mutts.”

“It ain’t that so much,” Lennie explained miserably. “George ain’t gonna let me tend no rabbits now.”

“Why don’t he?”

“Well, he said if I done any more bad things he ain’t gonna let me tend the rabbits.”

She moved closer to him and she spoke soothingly. “Don’t you worry about talkin’ to me. Listen to the guys yell out there. They got four dollars bet in that tenement. None of them ain’t gonna leave till it’s over.”

“If George sees me talkin’ to you he’ll give me hell,” Lennie said cautiously. “He tol’ me so.”

Her face grew angry. “Wha’s the matter with me?” she cried. “Ain’t I got a right to talk to nobody? Whatta they think I am, anyways? You’re a nice guy. I don’t know why I can’t talk to you. I ain’t doin’ no harm to you.”

“Well, George says you’ll get us in a mess.”

"Aw, nuts!" she said. "What kinda harm am I doin' to you? Seems like they ain't none of them cares how I gotta live. I tell you I ain't used to livin' like this. I coulda made somethin' of myself." She said darkly, "Maybe I will yet." And then her words tumbled out in a passion of communication, as though she hurried before her listener could be taken away. "I lived right in Salinas," she said. "Come there when I was a kid. Well, a show come through, an' I met one of the actors. He says I could go with that show. But my ol' lady wouldn't let me. She says because I was on'y fifteen. But the guy says I coulda. If I'd went, I wouldn't be livin' like this, you bet."

Lennie stroked the pup back and forth. "We gonna have a little place- an' rabbits," he explained.

She went on with her story quickly, before she should be interrupted. "'Nother time I met a guy, an' he was in pitchers. Went out to the Riverside Dance Palace with him. He says he was gonna put me in the movies. Says I was a natural. Soon's he got back to Hollywood he was gonna write to me about it." She looked closely at Lennie to see whether she was impressing him. "I never got that letter," she said. "I always thought my ol' lady stole it. Well, I wasn't gonna stay no place where I couldn't get nowhere or make something of myself, an' where they stole your letters, I ast her if she stole it, too, an' she says no. So I married Curley. Met him out to the Riverside Dance Palace that same night." She demanded, "You listenin'?"

"Me? Sure."

"Well, I ain't told this to nobody before. Maybe I oughten to. I don' like Curley. He ain't a nice fella." And because she had confided in him, she moved closer to Lennie and sat beside him. "Coulda been in the movies, an' had nice clothes- all them nice clothes like they wear. An' I coulda sat in them big hotels, an' had pitchers took of me. When they had them previews I coulda went to them, an' spoke in the radio, an' it wouldn'ta cost me a cent because I was in the pitcher. An' all them nice clothes like they wear. Because this guy says I was a natural." She looked up at Lennie, and she made a small grand gesture with her arm and hand to show that she could act. The fingers trailed after her leading wrist, and her little finger stuck out grandly from the rest.

Lennie sighed deeply. From outside came the clang of a horseshoe on metal, and then a chorus of cheers. "Somebody made a ringer," said Curley's wife.

Now the light was lifting as the sun went down, and the sun streaks climbed up the wall and fell over the feeding racks and over the heads of the horses.

Lennie said, "Maybe if I took this pup out and throwed him away George wouldn't never know. An' then I could tend the rabbits without no trouble."

Curley's wife said angrily, "Don't you think of nothing but rabbits?"

"We gonna have a little place," Lennie explained patiently. "We gonna have a house an' a garden and a place for alfalfa, an' that alfalfa is for the rabbits, an' I take a sack and get it all fulla alfalfa and then I take it to the rabbits."

She asked, "What makes you so nuts about rabbits?"

Lennie had to think carefully before he could come to a conclusion. He moved cautiously close to her, until he was right against her. "I like to pet nice things. Once at a fair I seen some of them long-hair rabbits. An' they was nice, you bet. Sometimes I've even pet mice, but not when I couldn't get nothing better."

Curley's wife moved away from him a little. "I think you're nuts," she said.

"No I ain't," Lennie explained earnestly. "George says I ain't. I like to pet nice things with my fingers, sof' things."

She was a little bit reassured. "Well, who don't?" she said. "Ever'body likes that. I like to feel silk an' velvet. Do you like to feel velvet?"

Lennie chuckled with pleasure. "You bet, by God," he cried happily. "An' I had some, too. A lady give me some, an' that lady was my own Aunt Clara. She give it right to me- 'bout this big a piece. I wisht I had that velvet right now." A frown came over his face. "I lost it," he said. "I ain't seen it for a long time."

Curley's wife laughed at him. "You're nuts," she said. "But you're a kinda nice fella. Jus' like a big baby. But a person can see kinda what you mean. When I'm doin' my hair sometimes I jus' set an' stroke it 'cause it's so soft." To show how she did it, she ran her fingers over the top of her head. "Some people got kinda coarse hair," she said complacently. "Take Curley. His hair is jus' like wire. But mine is soft and fine. 'Course I brush it a lot. That makes it fine. Here- feel right here." She took Lennie's hand and put it on her head. "Feel right aroun' there an' see how soft it is."

Lennie's big fingers fell to stroking her hair. "Don't you muss it up," she said.

Lennie said, "Oh! That's nice," and he stroked harder. "Oh, that's nice."

"Look out, now, you'll muss it." And then she cried angrily, "You stop it now, you'll mess it all up." She jerked her head sideways, and Lennie's fingers closed on her hair and hung on. "Let go," she cried. "You let go!"

Lennie was in a panic. His face was contorted. She screamed then, and Lennie's other hand closed over her mouth and nose. "Please don't," he begged. "Oh! Please don't do that. George'll be mad."

She struggled violently under his hands. Her feet battered on the hay and she writhed to be free; and from under Lennie's hand came a muffled screaming. Lennie began to cry with fright. "Oh! Please don't do none of that," he begged. "George gonna say I done a bad thing. He ain't gonna let me tend no rabbits." He moved his hand a little and her hoarse cry came out. Then Lennie grew angry. "Now don't," he said. "I don't want you to yell. You gonna get me in trouble jus' like George says you will. Now don't you do that." And she continued to struggle, and her eyes were wild with terror. He shook her then, and he was angry with her. "Don't you go yellin'," he said, and he shook her; and her body flopped like a fish. And then she was still, for Lennie had broken her neck.

He looked down at her, and carefully he removed his hand from over her mouth, and she lay still. "I don't want to hurt you," he said, "but George'll be mad if you yell." When she didn't answer nor move he bent closely over her. He lifted her arm and let it drop. For a moment he seemed bewildered. And then he whispered in fright, "I done a bad thing. I done another bad thing."

He pawed up the hay until it partly covered her.

From outside the barn came a cry of men and the double clang of shoes on metal. For the first time Lennie became conscious of the outside. He crouched down in the hay and listened. "I done a real bad thing," he said. "I shouldn't of did that. George'll be mad. An'... he said... an' hide in the brush till he come. He's gonna be mad. In the brush till he come. Tha's what he said." Lennie went back and looked at the dead girl. The puppy lay close to her. Lennie picked it up. "I'll throw him away," he said. "It's bad enough like it is." He put the pup under his coat, and he crept to the barn wall and peered out between the cracks, toward the horseshoe game. And then he crept around the end of the last manger and disappeared.

The sun streaks were high on the wall by now, and the light was growing soft in the barn.

Curley's wife lay on her back, and she was half covered with hay.

It was very quiet in the barn, and the quiet of the afternoon was on the ranch. Even the clang of the pitched shoes, even the voices of the men in the game, seemed to grow more quiet. The air in the barn was dusky in advance of the outside day. A pigeon flew in through the open hay door and circled and flew out again. Around the last stall came a shepherd bitch, lean and long, with heavy, hanging dugs. Halfway to the packing box where the puppies were she caught the dead scent of Curley's wife, and the hair arose along her spine. She whimpered and cringed to the packing box, and jumped in among the puppies.

Curley's wife lay with a half-covering of yellow hay. And the meanness and the plannings and the discontent and the ache for attention were all gone from her face. She was very pretty and simple, and her face was sweet and young. Now her rouged cheeks and her reddened lips

made her seem alive and sleeping very lightly. The curls, tiny little sausages, were spread on the hay behind her head, and her lips were parted.

As happens sometimes, a moment settled and hovered and remained for much more than a moment. And sound stopped and movement stopped for much, much more than a moment.

Then gradually time awakened again and moved sluggishly on. The horses stamped on the other side of the feeding racks and the halter chains clinked. Outside, the men's voices became louder and clearer.

From around the end of the last stall old Candy's voice came. "Lennie," he called. "Oh, Lennie! You in here? I been figuring some more. Tell you what we can do, Lennie." Old Candy appeared around the end of the last stall. "Oh, Lennie!" he called again; and then he stopped, and his body stiffened. He rubbed his smooth wrist on his white stubble whiskers. "I di'n't know you was here," he said to Curley's wife.

When she didn't answer, he stepped nearer. "You oughten to sleep out here," he said disapprovingly; and then he was beside her and- "Oh, Jesus Christ!" He looked about helplessly, and he rubbed his beard. And then he jumped up and went quickly out of the barn.

But the barn was alive now. The horses stamped and snorted, and they chewed the straw of their bedding and they clashed the chains of their halters. In a moment Candy came back, and George was with him.

George said, "What was it you wanted to see me about?"

Candy pointed at Curley's wife. George stared. "What's the matter with her?" he asked. He stepped closer, and then he echoed Candy's words. "Oh, Jesus Christ!" He was down on his knees beside her. He put his hand over her heart. And finally, when he stood up, slowly and stiffly, his face was as hard and tight as wood, and his eyes were hard.

Candy said, "What done it?"

George looked coldly at him. "Ain't you got any idear?" he asked. And Candy was silent. "I should of knew," George said hopelessly. "I guess maybe way back in my head I did."

Candy asked, "What we gonna do now, George? What we gonna do now?"

George was a long time in answering. "Guess... we gotta tell the... guys. I guess we gotta get 'im an' lock 'im up. We can't let 'im get away. Why, the poor bastard'd starve." And he tried to reassure himself. "Maybe they'll lock 'im up an' be nice to 'im."

But Candy said excitedly, “We oughta let ‘im get away. You don’t know that Curley. Curley gon’ta wanta get ‘im lynched. Curley’ll get ‘im killed.”

George watched Candy’s lips. “Yeah,” he said at last, “that’s right, Curley will. An’ the other guys will.” And he looked back at Curley’s wife.

Now Candy spoke his greatest fear. “You an’ me can get that little place, can’t we, George?

You an’ me can go there an’ live nice, can’t we, George? Can’t we?”

Before George answered, Candy dropped his head and looked down at the hay. He knew. George said softly, “-I think I knowed from the very first. I think I know’d we’d never do her.

He usta like to hear about it so much I got to thinking maybe we would.” “Then- it’s all off?” Candy asked sulkily.

George didn’t answer his question. George said, “I’ll work my month an’ I’ll take my fifty bucks an’ I’ll stay all night in some lousy cat house. Or I’ll set in some poolroom till ever’body goes home. An’ then I’ll come back an’ work another month an’ I’ll have fifty bucks more.”

Candy said, “He’s such a nice fella. I didn’ think he’d do nothing like this.”

George still stared at Curley’s wife. “Lennie never done it in meanness,” he said. “All the time he done bad things, but he never done one of ‘em mean.” He straightened up and looked back at Candy. “Now listen. We gotta tell the guys. They got to bring him in, I guess. They ain’t no way out. Maybe they won’t hurt ‘im.” He said sharply, “I ain’t gonna let ‘em hurt Lennie. Now you listen. The guys might think I was in on it. I’m gonna go in the bunkhouse. Then in a minute you come out and tell the guys about her, and I’ll come along and make like I never seen her. Will you do that? So the guys won’t think I was in on it?”

Candy said, “Sure, George. Sure I’ll do that.”

“O.K. Give me a couple minutes then, and you come runnin’ out an’ tell like you jus’ found her. I’m going now.” George turned and went quickly out of the barn.

Old Candy watched him go. He looked helplessly back at Curley’s wife, and gradually his sorrow and his anger grew into words. “You God damn tramp”, he said viciously. “You done it, di’n’t you? I s’pose you’re glad. Ever’body knowed you’d mess things up. You wasn’t no good. You ain’t no good now, you lousy tart.” He sniveled, and his voice shook. “I could of hoed in the garden and washed dishes for them guys.” He paused, and then went on in a singsong. And he repeated the old words: “If they was a circus or a baseball game... we would of went to her... jus’ said ‘ta hell with work,’ an’ went to her. Never ast nobody’s say so. An’ they’d of been a pig and chickens... an’ in the winter... the little fat stove... an’ the rain

comin'... an' us jes' settin' there." His eyes blinded with tears and he turned and went weakly out of the barn, and he rubbed his bristly whiskers with his wrist stump.

Outside the noise of the game stopped. There was a rise of voices in question, a drum of running feet and the men burst into the barn. Slim and Carlson and young Whit and Curley, and Crooks keeping back out of attention range. Candy came after them, and last of all came George. George had put on his blue denim coat and buttoned it, and his black hat was pulled down low over his eyes. The men raced around the last stall. Their eyes found Curley's wife in the gloom, they stopped and stood still and looked.

Then Slim went quietly over to her, and he felt her wrist. One lean finger touched her cheek, and then his hand went under her slightly twisted neck and his fingers explored her neck. When he stood up the men crowded near and the spell was broken.

Curley came suddenly to life. "I know who done it," he cried.

"That big son-of-a-bitch done it. I know he done it. Why- ever'body else was out there playin' horseshoes." He worked himself into a fury. "I'm gonna get him. I'm going for my shotgun. I'll kill the big son-of-a-bitch myself. I'll shoot 'im in the guts. Come on, you guys." He ran furiously out of the barn. Carlson said, "I'll get my Luger," and he ran out too.

Slim turned quietly to George. "I guess Lennie done it, all right," he said. "Her neck's bust.

Lennie coulda did that."

George didn't answer, but he nodded slowly. His hat was so far down on his forehead that his eyes were covered.

Slim went on, "Maybe like that time in Weed you was tellin' about." Again George nodded.

Slim sighed. "Well, I guess we got to get him. Where you think he might of went?"

It seemed to take George some time to free his words. "He- would of went south," he said. "We come from north so he would of went south."

"I guess we gotta get 'im," Slim repeated.

George stepped close. "Couldn' we maybe bring him in an' they'll lock him up? He's nuts, Slim. He never done this to be mean."

Slim nodded. "We might," he said. "If we could keep Curley in, we might. But Curley's gonna want to shoot 'im. Curley's still mad about his hand. An' s'pose they lock him up an' strap him down and put him in a cage. That ain't no good, George."

"I know," said George, "I know."

Carlson came running in. "The bastard's stole my Luger," he shouted. "It ain't in my bag." Curley followed him, and Curley carried a shotgun in his good hand. Curley was cold now.

"All right, you guys," he said. "The nigger's got a shotgun. You take it, Carlson. When you see 'um, don't give 'im no chance. Shoot for his guts. That'll double 'im over."

Whit said excitedly, "I ain't got a gun."

Curley said, "You go in Soledad an' get a cop. Get Al Wilts, he's deputy sheriff. Le's go now." He turned suspiciously on George. "You're comin' with us, fella."

"Yeah," said George. "I'll come. But listen, Curley. The poor bastard's nuts. Don't shoot 'im.

He di'n't know what he was doin'."

"Don't shoot 'im?" Curley cried. "He got Carlson's Luger. 'Course we'll shoot 'im." George said weakly, "Maybe Carlson lost his gun."

"I seen it this morning," said Carlson. "No, it's been took."

Slim stood looking down at Curley's wife. He said, "Curley – maybe you better stay here with your wife."

Curley's face reddened. "I'm goin'," he said. "I'm gonna shoot the guts outa that big bastard myself, even if I only got one hand. I'm gonna get 'im."

Slim turned to Candy. "You stay here with her then, Candy. The rest of us better get goin'."

They moved away. George stopped a moment beside Candy and they both looked down at the dead girl until Curley called, "You George! You stick with us so we don't think you had nothin' to do with this."

George moved slowly after them, and his feet dragged heavily. And when they were gone, Candy squatted down in the hay and watched the face of Curley's wife. "Poor bastard," he said softly.

The sound of the men grew fainter. The barn was darkening gradually and, in their stalls, the horses shifted their feet and rattled the halter chains. Old Candy lay down in the hay and covered his eyes with his arm.

CHAPTER SIX

The deep green pool of the Salinas River was still in the late afternoon. Already the sun had left the valley to go climbing up the slopes of the Gabilan Mountains, and the hilltops were rosy in the sun. But by the pool among the mottled sycamores, a pleasant shade had fallen.

A water snake glided smoothly up the pool, twisting its periscope head from side to side; and it swam the length of the pool and came to the legs of a motionless heron that stood in the shallows. A silent head and beak lanced down and plucked it out by the head, and the beak swallowed the little snake while its tail waved frantically.

A far rush of wind sounded and a gust drove through the tops of the trees like a wave. The sycamore leaves turned up their silver sides, the brown, dry leaves on the ground scudded a few feet. And row on row of tiny wind waves flowed up the pool's green surface.

As quickly as it had come, the wind died, and the clearing was quiet again. The heron stood in the shallows, motionless and waiting. Another little water snake swam up the pool, turning its periscope head from side to side.

Suddenly Lennie appeared out of the brush, and he came as silently as a creeping bear moves. The heron pounded the air with its wings, jacked itself clear of the water and flew off down river. The little snake slid in among the reeds at the pool's side.

Lennie came quietly to the pool's edge. He knelt down and drank, barely touching his lips to the water. When a little bird skittered over the dry leaves behind him, his head jerked up and he strained toward the sound with eyes and ears until he saw the bird, and then he dropped his head and drank again.

When he was finished, he sat down on the bank, with his side to the pool, so that he could watch the trail's entrance. He embraced his knees and laid his chin down on his knees.

The light climbed on out of the valley, and as it went, the tops of the mountains seemed to blaze with increasing brightness.

Lennie said softly, "I di'n't forget, you bet, God damn. Hide in the brush an' wait for George." He pulled his hat down low over his eyes. "George gonna give me hell," he said. "George gonna wish he was alone an' not have me botherin' him." He turned his head and looked at the bright mountain tops. "I can go right off there an' find a cave," he said. And he continued sadly, "-an' never have no ketchup but I won't care. If George don't want me... I'll go away. I'll go away."

And then from out of Lennie's head there came a little fat old woman. She wore thick bull's-eye glasses and she wore a huge gingham apron with pockets, and she was starched and clean. She stood in front of Lennie and put her hands on her hips, and she frowned disapprovingly at him.

And when she spoke, it was in Lennie's voice. "I tol' you an' tol' you," she said. "I tol' you, 'Min' George because he's such a nice fella an' good to you.' But you don't never take no care. You do bad things."

And Lennie answered her, "I tried, Aunt Clara, ma'am. I tried and tried. I couldn't help it." "You never give a thought to George," she went on in Lennie's voice. "He been doin' nice

things for you alla time. When he got a piece of pie you always got half or more'n half. An' if they was any ketchup, why he'd give it all to you."

"I know," said Lennie miserably. "I tried, Aunt Clara, ma'am. I tried and tried."

She interrupted him. "All the time he coulda had such a good time if it wasn't for you. He woulda took his pay an' raised hell in a whore house, and he coulda set in a pool room an' played snooker. But he got to take care of you."

Lennie moaned with grief. "I know, Aunt Clara, ma'am. I'll go right off in the hills an' I'll fin' a cave an' I'll live there so I won't be no more trouble to George."

"You jus' say that," she said sharply. "You're always sayin' that, an' you know sonofabitching well you ain't never gonna do it. You'll jus' stick around an' stew the b'Jesus outa George all the time."

Lennie said, "I might jus' as well go away. George ain't gonna let me tend no rabbits now."

Aunt Clara was gone, and from out of Lennie's head there came a gigantic rabbit. It sat on its haunches in front of him, and it waggled its ears and crinkled its nose at him. And it spoke in Lennie's voice too.

"Tend rabbits," it said scornfully. "You crazy bastard. You ain't fit to lick the boots of no rabbit. You'd forget 'em and let 'em go hungry. That's what you'd do. An' then what would George think?"

"I would not forget," Lennie said loudly.

"The hell you wouldn'," said the rabbit. "You ain't worth a greased jack-pin to ram you into hell. Christ knows George done ever'thing he could to jack you outa the sewer, but it don't do no good. If you think George gonna let you tend rabbits, you're even crazier'n usual. He ain't. He's gonna beat hell outa you with a stick, that's what he's gonna do."

Now Lennie retorted belligerently, "He ain't neither. George won't do nothing like that. I've knew George since - I forget when - and he ain't never raised his han' to me with a stick. He's nice to me. He ain't gonna be mean."

"Well, he's sick of you," said the rabbit. "He's gonna beat hell outa you an' then go away an' leave you."

"He won't," Lennie cried frantically. "He won't do nothing like that. I know George. Me an' him travels together."

But the rabbit repeated softly over and over, "He gonna leave you, ya crazy bastard. He gonna leave ya all alone. He gonna leave ya, crazy bastard."

Lennie put his hands over his ears. "He ain't, I tell ya he ain't." And he cried, "Oh! George – George - George!"

George came quietly out of the brush and the rabbit scuttled back into Lennie's brain. George said quietly, "What the hell you yellin' about?"

Lennie got up on his knees. "You ain't gonna leave me, are ya, George? I know you ain't." George came stiffly near and sat down beside him. "No."

"I knowed it," Lennie cried. "You ain't that kind." George was silent.

Lennie said, "George." "Yeah?"

"I done another bad thing."

"It don't make no difference," George said, and he fell silent again.

Only the topmost ridges were in the sun now. The shadow in the valley was blue and soft. From the distance came the sound of men shouting to one another. George turned his head and listened to the shouts.

Lennie said, "George." "Yeah?"

"Ain't you gonna give me hell?" "Give ya hell?"

"Sure, like you always done before. Like, 'If I di'n't have you I'd take my fifty bucks -'"

"Jesus Christ, Lennie! You can't remember nothing that happens, but you remember ever' word I say."

"Well, ain't you gonna say it?"

George shook himself. He said woodenly, "If I was alone I could live so easy." His voice was monotonous, had no emphasis. "I could get a job an' not have no mess." He stopped.

"Go on," said Lennie. "An' when the enda the month come -"

“An’ when the end of the month came I could take my fifty bucks an’ go to a... cat house...” He stopped again.

Lennie looked eagerly at him. “Go on, George. Ain’t you gonna give me no more hell?” “No,” said George.

“Well, I can go away,” said Lennie. “I’ll go right off in the hills an’ find a cave if you don’ want me.”

George shook himself again. “No,” he said. “I want you to stay with me here.” Lennie said craftily - “Tell me like you done before.”

“Tell you what?”

“’Bout the other guys an’ about us.”

George said, “Guys like us got no fambly. They make a little stake an’ then they blow it in.

They ain’t got nobody in the worl’ that gives a hoot in hell about ‘em -” “But not us,” Lennie cried happily. “Tell about us now.”

George was quiet for a moment. “But not us,” he said. “Because--”

“Because I got you an’-”

“An’ I got you. We got each other, that’s what, that gives a hoot in hell about us,” Lennie cried in triumph.

The little evening breeze blew over the clearing and the leaves rustled and the wind waves flowed up the green pool. And the shouts of men sounded again, this time much closer than before.

George took off his hat. He said shakily, “Take off your hat, Lennie. The air feels fine.”

Lennie removed his hat dutifully and laid it on the ground in front of him. The shadow in the valley was bluer, and the evening came fast. On the wind the sound of crashing in the brush came to them.

Lennie said, “Tell how it’s gonna be.”

George had been listening to the distant sounds. For a moment he was businesslike. “Look acrost the river, Lennie, an’ I’ll tell you so you can almost see it.”

Lennie turned his head and looked off across the pool and up the darkening slopes of the Gabilans. “We gonna get a little place,” George began. He reached in his side pocket and brought out Carlson’s Luger; he snapped off the safety, and the hand and gun lay on the

ground behind Lennie's back. He looked at the back of Lennie's head, at the place where the spine and skull were joined.

A man's voice called from up the river, and another man answered. "Go on," said Lennie.

George raised the gun and his hand shook, and he dropped his hand to the ground again. "Go on," said Lennie. "How's it gonna be. We gonna get a little place."

"We'll have a cow," said George. "An' we'll have maybe a pig an' chickens... an' down the flat we'll have a... little piece alfalfa -"

"For the rabbits," Lennie shouted. "For the rabbits," George repeated. "And I get to tend the rabbits." "An' you get to tend the rabbits."

Lennie giggled with happiness. "An' live on the fatta the lan'." "Yes."

Lennie turned his head.

"No, Lennie. Look down there acrost the river, like you can almost see the place." Lennie obeyed him. George looked down at the gun.

There were crashing footsteps in the brush now. George turned and looked toward them. "Go on, George. When we gonna do it?"

"Gonna do it soon." "Me an' you."

"You... an' me. Ever'body gonna be nice to you. Ain't gonna be no more trouble. Nobody gonna hurt nobody nor steal from 'em."

Lennie said, "I thought you was mad at me, George."

"No," said George. "No, Lennie. I ain't mad. I never been mad, an' I ain't now. That's a thing I want ya to know."

The voices came close now. George raised the gun and listened to the voices. Lennie begged, "Le's do it now. Le's get that place now."

"Sure, right now. I gotta. We gotta."

And George raised the gun and steadied it, and he brought the muzzle of it close to the back of Lennie's head. The hand shook violently, but his face set and his hand steadied. He pulled the trigger. The crash of the shot rolled up the hills and rolled down again. Lennie jarred, and then settled slowly forward to the sand, and he lay without quivering.

George shivered and looked at the gun, and then he threw it from him, back up on the bank, near the pile of old ashes.

The brush seemed filled with cries and with the sound of running feet. Slim's voice shouted. "George. Where you at, George?"

But George sat stiffly on the bank and looked at his right hand that had thrown the gun away. The group burst into the clearing, and Curley was ahead. He saw Lennie lying on the sand. "Got him, by God." He went over and looked down at Lennie, and then he looked back at George. "Right in the back of the head," he said softly.

Slim came directly to George and sat down beside him, sat very close to him. "Never you mind," said Slim. "A guy got to sometimes."

But Carlson was standing over George. "How'd you do it?" he asked. "I just done it," George said tiredly.

"Did he have my gun?" "Yeah. He had your gun."

"An' you got it away from him and you took it an' you killed him?"

"Yeah. Tha's how." George's voice was almost a whisper. He looked steadily at his right hand that had held the gun.

Slim twitched George's elbow. "Come on, George. Me an' you'll go in an' get a drink." George let himself be helped to his feet. "Yeah, a drink."

Slim said, "You hadda, George. I swear you hadda. Come on with me." He led George into the entrance of the trail and up toward the highway.

Curley and Carlson looked after them. And Carlson said, "Now what the hell ya suppose is eatin' them two guys?"

Glossary

alfalfa (n.): a plant widely grown for animal feed and leather pieces together

axles (n.): bars connecting two opposite wheels

bale (n.): a large bundle of something that has been compressed and tied together

bridle (v.): to pull one's head back in anger or pride

brusquely (adv.): quickly; bluntly; abruptly; almost rudely

brusquely (adv.): roughly; abruptly

buckers (n.): people who buck grain bags

burlap (n.): a coarse, inexpensive, woven fabric; often used for making grain sacks

cultivator (n.): a large farm machine used for cultivation

derision (n.): the sound of people making fun of, or laughing at, another

gingerly (adv.): in a careful, cautious way

grain teams (n): A team is two or more horses harnessed to a wagon or other drawn vehicle

graybacks (n.): small, wingless insects that live off the blood of other animals' lice; parasites

hatchet face (n): a lean, sharp face

jack-pin (n.): a removable wooden or metal pin inserted in the rail of ships around which ropes can be fastened

jerkline skinner: the main driver of a mule team who handles the jerkline

morosely (adv.): in a sad, gloomy manner

mottled (adj.): having a variety of hues or colors; variegated, like marble

muzzle (n.): the projecting part of a dog's head that includes the mouth, nose, and jaw

petting (v.): gently stroking or touching soft things

pugnacious (adj.): eager and ready to fight

ranch (n.): a large farm, especially in North America or Australia, where cows, horses, sheep, etc. are bred

receptive (adj.): able and willing to listen to and accept information, new ideas, etc.

recumbent (adj.): still; without movement

reprehensible (adj): something that is deserving of criticism

rheumatism (n): a painful condition involving the joints and muscles

scourge (n.): something that causes discomfort or suffering

scowl (v.): an angry look achieved by frowning and scrunching the eyebrows together

skeptically (adv.): in a doubtful manner

slough (v): get rid of something something not directly in the line of sight

spurs (n.): sharp, pointed metal devices worn on the heels of a boots, used to urge on horses

stable buck (n.): a black man who works in a stable

stake (n.): an amount of money

stilted (adj.): In the instance, stilted refers to the legs of the heron which are very long and thin,

stocky (adj.): heavily and solidly built

subside (v): to become less excited; calmed down

sullenly (adv.): sadly; in a depressing and gloomy way

swamper (n.): a handyman; someone who performs odd jobs often involving cleaning

sycamores (n.): a type of shade tree with leaves resembling the leaves of a maple tree

taloned (adj.): A talon is a finger-like claw. A four-taloned fork would be a fork with four

whinny (v): the low, gently sound (sometimes called a “neigh”) that a horse makes

willows (n.): a type of tree with narrow leaves and strong, flexible twigs and branches

wisps (n.): tiny, slight strands or pieces

Comprehension

A. Choose the correct alternatives.

a. What instruction does George give Lennie in case he gets into trouble?

i. Go back to the ranch.
ii. Run to the town.
iii. Return to the clearing near the river.
iv. Hide in the barn.

b. What unusual item does George notice near his bunk in the bunk house?

i. A gun
ii. A magazine
iii. A can of lice repellent
iv. A harmonica

c. How is Curley's behavior first described by the other men?

i. Kind and gentle
ii. Moody but fair
iii. Aggressive and confrontational
iv. Lazy and careless

d. Why does Slim give Lennie one of his puppies?

i. Lennie asks for it.
ii. George insists on it.
iii. To calm Lennie's obsession with petting.
iv. Lennie steals it.

e. What significant event takes place while Carlson cleans his gun?

i. George and Lennie argue.
ii. Candy agrees to join the dream farm plan.
iii. Carlson prepares to shoot Candy's dog.
iv. Slim reports the birth of new puppies.

f. What is Crooks' initial reaction to hearing about George and Lennie's dream farm?

i. He laughs mockingly.
ii. He offers to help.
iii. He says it's impossible.
iv. He gets angry.

g. What does Lennie fear most after the puppy dies?

i. That Candy will tell Curley.

ii. That Crooks will report him.

iii. That George won't let him tend the rabbits.

iv. That Slim will shoot him.

h. Who discovers Curley's wife's body in the barn?

i. George ii. Slim

iii. Candy iv. Crooks

i. What ultimately happens to Curley's wife in the barn with Lennie?

i. She confesses her love for Curley.

ii. She runs away from Lennie.

iii. Lennie accidentally kills her.

iv. Slim finds her crying.

j. What is George's immediate, unspoken realization when he sees Curley's wife's body?

i. He panics and calls for help.

ii. He tries to hide her body.

iii. He calmly understands Lennie is responsible and must be dealt with.

iv. He cries and runs away from the barn.

B. Write short answers to the following questions.

a. Why are George and Lennie traveling together, and where are they heading?

b. What is the importance of Candy's old dog being shot by Carlson earlier in the story?

c. Why is Crooks forced to live in isolation from the other ranch hands, and how does he initially react to Lennie's visit to his room?

d. What are the main reasons George chooses to kill Lennie himself at the end?

e. Describe the differing reactions of Slim, Carlson, and Curley immediately after Lennie's death.

f. What observations does Slim make about the rarity of men traveling together and looking out for each other, as George and Lennie do?

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

a. Discuss how the initial setting by the Salinas River establishes important themes like sanctuary and the natural world, and the overall tone for *Of Mice and Men.*

b. Analyze what Lennie's obsession with petting soft things reveals about his character.

c. Explain the deeper reasons behind George's repeated telling of their dream farm story to Lennie. What does this ritual signify for both characters and their relationship?

d. How does the character of Crooks reflect the racial decimation and social isolation faced by African Americans during the time? Explain.

e. Sketch the character of Curley's wife.

Project Work

Work in small groups. Research the historical concept of the American Dream. Find what it meant for ordinary people and migrant workers during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Analyze the dreams of the characters in *Of Mice and Men* with reference to the concept of the American Dream. Make a presentation of your analysis and share it in the class.

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