KALEIDOSCOPE

Textbook in English (Elective)
for Class XII

12076

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Foreword

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

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

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

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

Director
National Council of Educational
Research and Training

New Delhi
20 November 2006

A Note for the Teacher

The selections for the Class XII Elective English Textbook, *Kaleidoscope*, are representative of Literature in English and fall into the following genres –fiction, non-fiction, drama, poetry.

There are three short stories and two long ones in the fiction section representing contemporary writers from five cultures: Gabriel Garcia Marquez, James Joyce, Bi Shu-min, Isaac Singer and Joseph Conrad. The stories deal with fantasy and reality, alienation, a mother's sensitivity and the problem of choice in personal life.

Thematic variation is also found in the six pieces included in the non-fiction. George Bernard Shaw's essay on *Freedom* deals with the individual and society, with a companion piece by J.Krishnamurti on discipline and individual freedom. Virginia Woolf's essay, *The Mark on the Wall,* demonstrates the stream of consciousness technique. D.H Lawrence talks of the significance of the Novel as a literary form. Excerpts from *Film-making* by Ingmar Bergman, detailing film-making as a creative art is followed by an excerpt from an interview of Umberto Eco. *The Argumentative Indian* by Amartya Sen is based on the famous dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*. The last piece by Isaac Asimov correlates the *Universe of Science Fiction* to accounts of mythical superhuman beings in the *Pre-scientific Universe* that served to fulfill the same emotional needs as science fiction does.

Two plays find a place in the selection– *Chandalika* by Tagore brings out the intense conflict in the mind of a sensitive untouchable girl. The excerpt from Girish Karnad's *Broken Images* reflects the ambiguities in the mind of a writer who has unexpectedly acquired fame.

Of the eight poems, four are from the classical tradition–Donne, Milton, Blake and Coleridge. The other four are established poets, closer to contemporary times–Yeats, A.K. Ramanujan, Emily Dickinson and Kamala Das. There are two poems each by Blake and Milton. Learners may be encouraged to notice, in each pair of poems, the symmetry and/or contrast in themes and language. In an attempt to introduce learners to Blake as the first

multi-media artist, his engraved illustrations with the poems inscribed in his own handwriting have been reproduced.

The collection seeks to offer a balanced representation of the classical literary tradition, literary genres and contemporary themes to appeal to the modern sensibility and develop in young readers a taste for good reading and an appreciation of the nuances of language.

The exercises following the texts are based on insightful reading and literary appreciation. There is no separate textbook on Phonology and Grammar. Every unit, however, has a section on phonetic and grammatical patterns drawn from the texts.

Three plays and a collection of short stories are recommended for additional reading. Two plays are by contemporary Indian playwrights–*Dance Like a Man* by Mahesh Dattani and *Doongaji House* by Cyrus Mistry and the third is Bertolt Brecht's *Life of Galileo.* Garcia Gabriel Marquez' *Strange Pilgrims: Twelve Stories* is a delightful short story collection that would appeal to young adults.

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Short stories

INTRODUCTION

A short story is a prose narrative of limited length. It organises the action and thoughts of its characters into the pattern of a plot. The plot form may be comic, tragic, romantic or satiric. The central incident is selected to manifest, as much as possible, the protagonist's life and character, and the details contribute to the development of the plot.

The term 'short story' covers a great diversity of prose fiction, right from the really short 'short story' of about five hundred words to longer and more complex works. The longer ones, with their status of middle length, fall between the tautness of the short narrative and the expansiveness of the novel.

There can be thematic variation too. The stories deal with fantasy, reality, alienation and the problem of choice in personal life. There are three short stories and two long ones in this section representing writers from five cultures.

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1

I Sell my Dreams

Gabriel Garcia Marquez
1927-2014

Gabriel Garcia Marquez was brought up by his grandparents in Northern Columbia because his parents were poor and struggling. A novelist, short-story writer and journalist, he is widely considered the greatest living Latin American master of narrative. Marquez won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1982. His two masterpieces are One Hundred Years in Solitude *(1967, tr. 1970) and* Love in The Time of Cholera *(1985, tr. 1988). His themes are violence, solitude and the overwhelming human need for love. This story reflects, like most of his works, a high point in Latin American magical realism; it is rich and lucid, mixing reality with fantasy.*

One morning at nine o'clock, while we were having breakfast on the terrace of the Havana Riviera Hotel under a bright sun, a huge wave picked up several cars that were driving down the avenue along the seawall or parked on the pavement, and embedded one of them in the side of the hotel. It was like an explosion of dynamite that sowed panic on all twenty floors of the building and turned the great entrance window to dust. The many tourists in the lobby were thrown into the air along with the furniture, and some were cut by the hailstorm of glass. The wave must have been immense, because it leaped over the wide two-way street between the seawall and the hotel and still had enough force to shatter the window.

The cheerful Cuban volunteers, with the help of the fire department, picked up the debris in less than six hours, and sealed off the gate to the sea and installed another,

and everything returned to normal. During the morning nobody worried about the car encrusted in the wall, for people assumed it was one of those that had been parked on the pavement. But when the crane lifted it out of its setting, the body of a woman was found secured behind the steering wheel by a seat belt. The blow had been so brutal that not a single one of her bones was left whole. Her face was destroyed, her boots had been ripped apart, and her clothes were in shreds. She wore a gold ring shaped like a serpent, with emerald eyes. The police established that she was the housekeeper for the new Portuguese ambassador and his wife. She had come to Havana with them two weeks before and had left that morning for the market, driving a new car. Her name meant nothing to me when I read it in the newspaper, but I was intrigued by the snake ring and its emerald eyes. I could not find out, however, on which finger she wore it.

This was a crucial piece of information, because I feared she was an unforgettable woman whose real name I never knew, and who wore a similar ring on her right forefinger which, in those days, was even more unusual than it is now. I had met her thirty-four years earlier in Vienna, eating sausage with boiled potatoes and drinking draft beer in a tavern frequented by Latin American students. I had come from Rome that morning, and I still remember my immediate response to her splendid soprano's bosom, the languid foxtails on her coat collar, and that Egyptian ring in the shape of a serpent. She spoke an elementary Spanish in a metallic accent without pausing for breath, and I thought she was the only Austrian at the long wooden table. But no, she had been born in Colombia and had come to Austria between the wars, when she was little more than a child, to study music and voice. She was about thirty, and did not carry her years well, for she had never been pretty and had begun to age before her time. But she was a charming human being. And one of the most awe-inspiring.

Vienna was still an old imperial city, whose geographical position between the two irreconcilable worlds left behind by the Second World War had turned it into a

paradise of black marketeering and international espionage. I could not have imagined a more suitable spot for my fugitive compatriot, who still ate in the students' tavern on the corner only out of loyalty to her origins, since she had more than enough money to buy meals for all her table companions. She never told her real name, and we always knew her by the Germanic tongue twister that we Latin American students in Vienna invented for her: Frau Frieda. I had just been introduced to her when I committed the happy impertinence of asking how she had come to be in a world so distant and different from the windy cliffs of Quindio, and she answered with a devastating:

'I sell my dreams.'

In reality, that was her only trade. She had been the third of eleven children born to a prosperous shopkeeper in old Caldas, and as soon as she learned to speak she instituted the fine custom in her family of telling dreams before breakfast, the time when their oracular qualities are preserved in their purest form. When she was seven she dreamed that one of her brothers was carried off by a flood. Her mother, out of sheer religious superstition, forbade the boy to swim in the ravine, which was his favourite pastime. But Frau Frieda already had her own system of prophecy.

'What that dream means,' she said, 'isn't that he's going to drown, but that he shouldn't eat sweets.'

Her interpretation seemed an infamy to a five-year-old boy who could not live without his Sunday treats. Their mother, convinced of her daughter's oracular talents, enforced the warning with an iron hand. But in her first careless moment the boy choked on a piece of caramel that he was eating in secret, and there was no way to save him.

Frau Frieda did not think she could earn a living with her talent until life caught her by the throat during the cruel Viennese winters. Then she looked for work at the first house where she would have liked to live, and when she was asked what she could do, she told only the truth: 'I dream.' A brief explanation to the lady of the house was all she needed, and she was hired at a salary that just

covered her minor expenses, but she had a nice room and three meals a day—breakfast in particular, when the family sat down to learn the immediate future of each of its members: the father, a refined financier; the mother, a joyful woman passionate about Romantic chamber music; and two children, eleven and nine years old. They were all religious and therefore inclined to archaic superstitions, and they were delighted to take in Frau Frieda, whose only obligation was to decipher the family's daily fate through her dreams.

She did her job well, and for a long time, above all during the war years, when reality was more sinister than nightmares. Only she could decide at breakfast what each should do that day, and how it should be done, until her predictions became the sole authority in the house. Her control over the family was absolute: even the faintest sigh was breathed by her order. The master of the house died at about the time I was in Vienna, and had the elegance to leave her a part of his estate on the condition that she continue dreaming for the family until her dreams came to an end.

I stayed in Vienna for more than a month, sharing the straitened circumstances of the other students while I waited for money that never arrived. Frau Frieda's unexpected and generous visits to the tavern were like fiestas in our poverty-stricken regime. One night, in a beery euphoria, she whispered in my ear with a conviction that permitted no delay.

'I only came to tell you that I dreamed about you last night,' she said. 'You must leave right away and not come back to Vienna for five years.'

Her conviction was so real that I boarded the last train to Rome that same night. As for me, I was so influenced by what she said that from then on I considered myself a survivor of some catastrophe I never experienced. I still have not returned to Vienna.

Stop and Think

1. How did the author recognise the lady who was extricated from the car encrusted in the wall of Havana Riviera Hotel after the storm?
2. Why did the author leave Vienna never to return again?

Before the disaster in Havana, I had seen Frau Frieda in Barcelona in so unexpected and fortuitous a way that it seemed a mystery to me. It happened on the day Pablo Neruda stepped on Spanish soil for the first time since the Civil War, on a stopover during a long sea voyage to Valparaíso. He spent a morning with us hunting big game in the second-hand bookstores, and at Porter he bought an old, dried-out volume with a torn binding for which he paid what would have been his salary for two months at the consulate in Rangoon. He moved through the crowd like an invalid elephant, with a child's curiosity in the inner workings of each thing he saw, for the world appeared to him as an immense wind-up toy with which life invented itself.

I have never known anyone closer to the idea one has of a Renaissance pope: He was gluttonous and refined. Even against his will, he always presided at the table. Matilde, his wife, would put a bib around his neck that belonged in a barbershop rather than a dining room, but it was the only way to keep him from taking a bath in sauce. That day at Carvalleiras was typical. He ate three whole lobsters, dissecting them with a surgeon's skill, and at the same time devoured everyone else's plate with his eyes and tasted a little from each with a delight that made the desire to eat contagious: clams from Galicia, mussels from Cantabria, prawns from Alicante, sea cucumbers from the Costa Brava. In the meantime, like the French, he spoke of nothing but other culinary delicacies, in particular the prehistoric shellfish of Chile, which he carried in his heart. All at once he stopped eating, tuned his lobster's antennae, and said to me in a very quiet voice:

'There's someone behind me who won't stop looking at me.'

I glanced over his shoulder, and it was true. Three tables away sat an intrepid woman in an old-fashioned felt hat and a purple scarf, eating without haste and staring at him. I recognised her right away. She had grown old and fat, but it was Frau Frieda, with the snake ring on her index finger.

She was travelling from Naples on the same ship as Neruda and his wife, but they had not seen each other on board. We invited her to have coffee at our table, and I encouraged her to talk about her dreams in order to astound the poet. He paid no attention, for from the very beginning he had announced that he did not believe in prophetic dreams.

'Only poetry is clairvoyant,' he said.

After lunch, during the inevitable stroll along the Ramblas, I lagged behind with Frau Frieda so that we could renew our memories with no other ears listening. She told me she had sold her properties in Austria and retired to Oporto, in Portugal, where she lived in a house that she described as a fake castle on a hill, from which one could see all the way across the ocean to the Americas. Although she did not say so, her conversation made it clear that, dream by dream, she had taken over the entire fortune of her ineffable patrons in Vienna. That did not surprise me, however, because I had always thought her dreams were no more than a stratagem for surviving. And I told her so.

She laughed her irresistible laugh. 'You're as impudent as ever,' she said. And said no more, because the rest of the group had stopped to wait for Neruda to finish talking in Chilean slang to the parrots along the Rambla de los Pájaros. When we resumed our conversation, Frau Frieda changed the subject.

'By the way,' she said, 'you can go back to Vienna now.'

Only then did I realise that thirteen years had gone by since our first meeting.

'Even if your dreams are false, I'll never go back,' I told her. 'Just in case.'

At three o'clock we left her to accompany Neruda to his sacred siesta, which he took in our house after solemn

preparations that in some way recalled the Japanese tea ceremony. Some windows had to be opened and others closed to achieve the perfect degree of warmth, and there had to be a certain kind of light from a certain direction, and absolute silence. Neruda fell asleep right away, and woke ten minutes later, as children do, when we least expected it. He appeared in the living room refreshed, and with the monogram of the pillowcase imprinted on his cheek.

'I dreamed about that woman who dreams,' he said.

Matilde wanted him to tell her his dream.

'I dreamed she was dreaming about me,' he said.

'That's right out of Borges,' I said.

He looked at me in disappointment.

'Has he written it already?'

'If he hasn't he'll write it sometime,' I said. 'It will be one of his labyrinths.'

As soon as he boarded the ship at six that evening, Neruda took his leave of us, sat down at an isolated table, and began to write fluid verses in the green ink he used for drawing flowers and fish and birds when he dedicated his books. At the first 'All ashore' we looked for Frau Frieda, and found her at last on the tourist deck, just as we were about to leave without saying good-bye. She too had taken a siesta.

'I dreamed about the poet,' she said.

In astonishment I asked her to tell me her dream.

'I dreamed he was dreaming about me,' she said, and my look of amazement disconcerted her. 'What did you expect? Sometimes, with all my dreams, one slips in that has nothing to do with real life.'

Stop and Think

1. How did Pablo Neruda know that somebody behind him was looking at him?
2. How did Pablo Neruda counter Frau Frieda's claims to clairvoyance?

I never saw her again or even wondered about her until I heard about the snake ring on the woman who died in the Havana Riviera disaster. And I could not resist

the temptation of questioning the Portuguese ambassador when we happened to meet some months later at a diplomatic reception. The ambassador spoke about her with great enthusiasm and enormous admiration. 'You cannot imagine how extraordinary she was,' he said. 'You would have been obliged to write a story about her.' And he went on in the same tone, with surprising details, but without the clue that would have allowed me to come to a final conclusion.

'In concrete terms,' I asked at last, 'what did she do?' 'Nothing,' he said, with a certain disenchantment. 'She dreamed.'

Understanding the Text

1. Did the author believe in the prophetic ability of Frau Frieda?
2. Why did he think that Frau Frieda's dreams were a stratagem for surviving?
3. Why does the author compare Neruda to a Renaissance pope?

Talking about the Text

Discuss in groups

1. In spite of all the rationality that human beings are capable of, most of us are suggestible and yield to archaic superstitions.
2. Dreams and clairvoyance are as much an element of the poetic vision as religious superstition.

Appreciation

1. The story hinges on a gold ring shaped like a serpent with emerald eyes. Comment on the responses that this image evokes in the reader.
2. The craft of a master story-teller lies in the ability to interweave imagination and reality. Do you think that this story illustrates this?
3. Bring out the contradiction in the last exchange between the author and the Portuguese ambassador

   'In concrete terms,' I asked at last, 'what did she do?' 'Nothing,' he said, with a certain disenchantment. 'She dreamed.'
4. Comment on the ironical element in the story.

Language Work

A. Vocabulary

Look up the meanings of the following phrases under 'dream' and 'sell' in the dictionary

dream	sell
dream on	sell-by date
dream something away	selling-point
(not) dream of doing something	sell-out
dream something up	selling price
look like a dream	seller's market

B. Grammar: Emphasis

Read this sentence carefully

> One morning at nine o'clock, while we were having breakfast on the terrace of the Havana Riviera Hotel under a bright sun, a huge wave picked up several cars that were driving down the avenue along the seawall or parked on the pavement, and embedded one of them in the side of the hotel.

The position of a word, phrase or an idea within a sentence usually indicates the emphasis it receives. Generally, the most emphatic place in the sentence is its end; the next most emphatic is its beginning; and the least emphatic, its middle.

In the sentence above the most important fact is that the huge wave embedded one of the cars in one side of the hotel.

The other details of time and place are given at the beginning. The general statement of the 'huge wave picking up several cars' precedes the particular car which is pertinent to the theme of the story.

Let us rewrite the sentence, beginning with 'a huge wave' and the first part following 'hotel' and notice the difference in the effect.

> A huge wave picked up several cars that were driving down the avenue along the seawall or parked on the pavement, and embedded one of them in the side of the hotel, one morning at nine o'clock, while we were having breakfast on the terrace of the Havana Riviera Hotel under a bright sun.

Task

Study the following sentences and underline the part which receives emphasis

- I never saw her again or even wondered about her until I heard about the snake ring on the woman who died in the Havana Riviera disaster.
- That did not surprise me, however, because I had always thought her dreams were no more than a stratagem for surviving.
- Although she did not say so, her conversation made it clear that, dream by dream, she had taken over the entire fortune of her ineffable patrons in Vienna.
- Three tables away sat an intrepid woman in an old-fashioned felt hat and a purple scarf, eating without haste and staring at him.
- I stayed in Vienna for more than a month, sharing the straitened circumstances of the other students while I waited for money that never arrived.

C. Pronunciation

The syllable is the basic unit of pronunciation. A word may have a single syllable, such as 'will', 'pen' etc. A word, sometimes, can have more than one syllable as for instance 'willing' (will-ing). Each syllable contains a vowel sound, and usually one or more consonants.

You can show division of a word into syllables like this

foolish	fool-ish(2)
agreement	a-gree-ment(3)
arithmetic	a-rith-me-tic(4)

Task

- Say your name aloud and decide how many syllables there are in it. Do the same with the names of your classmates.
- Pick out five words each for two syllable, three syllable and four syllable words from the lesson.

Suggested Reading

One Hundred Years in Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Love in the Time of Cholera by Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

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2

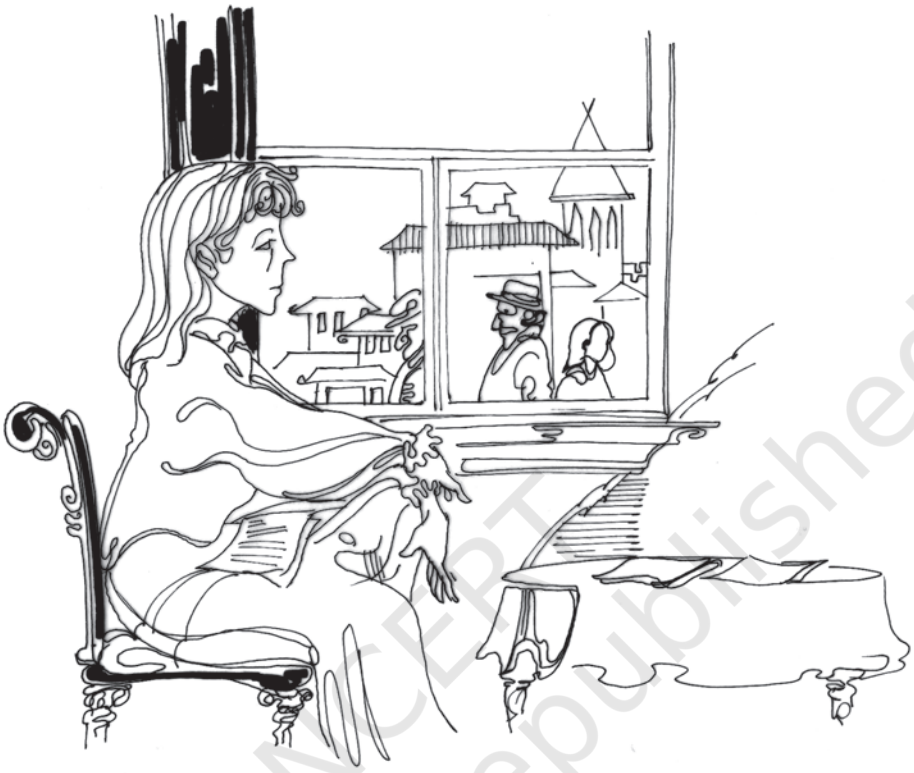
Eveline

James Joyce
1882-1941

James Joyce is a major literary figure of the first quarter of the twentieth century. He is known for his bold experiments in narrative techniques in fiction, and Ulysses *is his most famous work. 'Eveline' is one of the fifteen stories of Dublin life that form* Dubliners*, first published in 1914. It is a sympathetic portrayal of Eveline, who has within her reach escape from the drudgery of her life but cannot gather enough courage to seize it.*

She sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue. Her head was leaned against the window curtains and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne. She was tired.

Few people passed. The man out of the last house passed on his way home; she heard his footsteps clacking along the concrete pavement and afterwards crunching on the cinder path before the new red houses. One time there used to be a field there in which they used to play every evening with other people's children. Then a man from Belfast bought the field and built houses in it—not like their little brown houses but bright brick houses with shining roofs. The children of the avenue used to play together in that field—the Devines, the Waters, the Dunns, little Keogh the cripple, she and her brothers and sisters. Ernest, however, never played: he was too grown up. Her father used often to hunt them in and out of the field with his blackthorn stick; but usually little Keogh used to keep



nix* and call out when he saw her father coming. Still they seemed to have been rather happy then. Her father was not so bad then; and besides, her mother was alive. That was a long time ago; she and her brothers and sisters were all grown up; her mother was dead. Tizzie Dunn was dead, too, and the Waters had gone back to England. Everything changes. Now she was going to go away like the others, to leave her home.

Home! She looked round the room, reviewing all its familiar objects which she had dusted once a week for so many years, wondering where on earth all the dust came from. Perhaps she would never see again those familiar objects from which she had never dreamed of being divided. And yet during all those years she had never found out the name of the priest whose yellowing photograph hung on the wall above the broken harmonium beside the coloured

* *nix: an old slang word, originally used by thieves, to refer to the member of a gang who kept watch*

print of the promises made to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque. He had been a school friend of her father. Whenever he showed the photograph to a visitor her father used to pass it with a casual word: 'He is in Melbourne now.'

She had consented to go away, to leave her home. Was that wise? She tried to weigh each side of the question. In her home anyway she had shelter and food; she had those whom she had known all her life about her. Of course she had to work hard, both in the house and at business. What would they say of her in the Stores when they found out that she had run away with a fellow? Say she was a fool, perhaps; and her place would be filled up by advertisement. Miss Gavan would be glad. She had always had an edge on her, especially whenever there were people listening.

'Miss Hill, don't you see these ladies are waiting?'

'Look lively, Miss Hill, please.'

She would not cry many tears at leaving the Stores.

But in her new home, in a distant unknown country, it would not be like that. Then she would be married—she, Eveline. People would treat her with respect then. She would not be treated as her mother had been. Even now, though she was over nineteen, she sometimes felt herself in danger of her father's violence. She knew it was that that had given her the palpitations. When they were growing up he had never gone for her, like he used to go for Harry and Ernest, because she was a girl; but latterly he had begun to threaten her and say what he would do to her only for her dead mother's sake. And now she had nobody to protect her. Ernest was dead and Harry, who was in the church decorating business, was nearly always down somewhere in the country. Besides, the invariable squabble for money on Saturday nights had begun to weary her unspeakably. She always gave her entire wages—seven shillings—and Harry always sent up what he could but the trouble was to get any money from her father. He said she used to squander the money, that she had no head, that he wasn't going to give her his hard earned money to throw about the streets, and much more, for he was usually fairly bad on Saturday night. In the end he would give her

the money and ask her had she any intention of buying Sunday's dinner. Then she had to rush out as quickly as she could and do her marketing, holding her black leather purse tightly in her hand as she elbowed her way through the crowds and returning home late under her load of provisions. She had hard work to keep the house together and to see that the two young children who had been left to her charge went to school regularly and got their meals regularly. It was hard work—a hard life—but now that she was about to leave it she did not find it a wholly undesirable life.

Stop and Think

1. Why did Eveline review all the familiar objects at home?
2. Where was Eveline planning to go?

She was about to explore another life with Frank. Frank was very kind, manly, open-hearted. She was to go away with him by the night boat to be his wife and to live with him in Buenos Aires where he had a home waiting for her. How well she remembered the first time she had seen him; he was lodging in a house on the main road where she used to visit. It seemed a few weeks ago. He was standing at the gate, his peaked cap pushed back on his head and his hair tumbled forward over a face of bronze. Then they had come to know each other. He used to meet her outside the Stores every evening and see her home. He took her to see *The Bohemian Girl* and she felt elated as she sat in an unaccustomed part of the theatre with him. He was awfully fond of music and sang a little. People knew that they were courting and, when he sang about the lass that loves a sailor, she always felt pleasantly confused. He used to call her Poppens out of fun. First of all it had been an excitement for her to have a fellow and then she had begun to like him. He had tales of distant countries. He had started as a deck boy at a pound a month on a ship of the Allan Line going out to Canada. He told her the names of the ships he had been on and the names

of the different services. He had sailed through the Straits of Magellan and he told her stories of the terrible Patagonians. He had fallen on his feet in Buenos Aires, he said, and had come over to the old country just for a holiday. Of course, her father had found out the affair and had forbidden her to have anything to say to him.

'I know these sailor chaps,' he said.

One day he had quarrelled with Frank and after that she had to meet her lover secretly.

The evening deepened in the avenue. The white of two letters in her lap grew indistinct. One was to Harry; the other was to her father. Ernest had been her favourite but she liked Harry too. Her father was becoming old lately, she noticed; he would miss her. Sometimes he could be very nice. Not long before, when she had been laid up for a day, he had read her out a ghost story and made toast for her at the fire. Another day, when their mother was alive, they had all gone for a picnic to the Hill of Howth. She remembered her father putting on her mother's bonnet to make the children laugh.

Her time was running out but she continued to sit by the window, leaning her head against the window curtain, inhaling the odour of dusty cretonne. Down far in the avenue she could hear a street organ playing. She knew the air. Strange that it should come that very night to remind her of the promise to her mother, her promise to keep the home together as long as she could. She remembered the last night of her mother's illness; she was again in the close dark room at the other side of the hall and outside she heard a melancholy air of Italy. The organ player had been ordered to go away and given six-pence. She remembered her father strutting back into the sickroom saying: 'Damned Italians! coming over here!'

As she mused—the pitiful vision of her mother's life laid its spell on the very quick of her being that life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness. She trembled as she heard again her mother's voice saying constantly with foolish insistence: 'Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!'*

* *Derevaun.... Seraun, possibly corrupt Gaelic for 'the end of pleasure is pain'*

Stop and Think

1. Who was Frank? Why did Eveline's father quarrel with him?
2. What significance does Eveline find in the organ-player's appearance on the day she had decided to leave?

She stood up in a sudden impulse of terror. Escape! She must escape! Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love, too. But she wanted to live. Why should she be unhappy? She had a right to happiness. Frank would take her in his arms, fold her in his arms. He would save her.

She stood among the swaying crowd in the station at the North Wall. He held her hand and she knew that he was speaking to her, saying something about the passage over and over again. The station was full of soldiers with brown baggages. Through the wide doors of the sheds she caught a glimpse of the black mass of the boat, lying in beside the quay wall, with illumined portholes. She answered nothing. She felt her cheek pale and cold and, out of a maze of distress, she prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty. The boat blew a long mournful whistle into the mist. If she went, tomorrow she would be on the sea with Frank, steaming toward Buenos Aires. Their passage had been booked. Could she still draw back after all he had done for her? Her distress awoke a nausea in her body and she kept moving her lips in silent fervent prayer.

A bell clanged upon her heart. She felt him seize her hand:

'Come!'

All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. He was drawing her into them: he would drown her. She gripped with both hands at the iron railing.

'Come!'

No! No! No! It was impossible. Her hands clutched the iron in frenzy. Amid the seas she sent a cry of anguish.

'Eveline! Evvy!'

He rushed beyond the barrier and called to her to follow. He was shouted at to go on but he still called to

her. She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition.

Understanding the Text

1. Name the two characters in this story whom Eveline liked and loved, and two she did not. What were the reasons for her feelings towards them?
2. Describe the conflict of emotions felt by Eveline on the day she had decided to elope with Frank.
3. Why do you think Eveline let go of the opportunity to escape?
4. What are the signs of Eveline's indecision that we see as the hour of her departure with Frank neared?

Talking about the Text

1. Deciding between filial duty and the right to personal happiness is problematic. Discuss.
2. Share with your partner any instance of your personal experience where you, or somebody you know, had to make a difficult choice.

Appreciation

1. The description in this story has symbolic touches. What do you think the 'window', the 'gathering dusk', the 'dusty cretonne and its odour' symbolise?
2. Note how the narrative proceeds through the consciousness of Eveline.
3. In the last section of the story, notice these expressions
   (i) A bell clanged upon her heart.
   (ii) AlI the seas of the world tumbled upon her heart.
   (iii) Her hands clutched the iron in frenzy.
   (iv) She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal.

   What are the emotions that these images evoke?
4. Do you think the author indicates his judgement of Eveline in the story?

Language Work

A. Grammar: Parallelism

Notice the following sentence

One *was to* Harry; the other *was to* her father.

When you coordinate two or more elements in a sentence, they are in the same grammatical form, that is they are *parallel.* This ensures balance in the sentence.

In the sentence above, there is a reference to what was said in the previous sentence: two letters.

The predicative pattern is the same and the two parts are separated by a semi-colon.

Parallelism is a basic rhetorical principle. Equal form reinforces equal meaning.

By placing equally important ideas successively you emphasise their relationship to one another. It can show either similarity or contrast as in

> Then a man from Belfast bought the field and built houses in it—not like their *little brown houses* but *bright brick houses* with shining roofs.

Sometimes the choice of words establishes the parallel and reinforces equal meaning as in

> Ernest had been *her favourite* but *she liked* Harry too.

Task

Underline the parts that are parallel in the following sentences

- She had consented to go away, to leave her home.
- Strange that it should come that very night to remind her of the promise to her mother, her promise to keep the home together as long as she could.
- She prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty.
- Frank would take her in his arms, fold her in his arms.
- Her time was running out but she continued to sit by the window, leaning her head against the window curtain, inhaling the odour of dusty cretonne.
- Not long before, when she had been laid up for a day, he had read her out a ghost story and made toast for her at the fire.

B. Pronunciation

A word has as many syllables as it has vowels.

m**a**n (one syllable)

m**a**nn**e**r (two syllables)

The mark( ) indicates that the first syllable in 'manner' is more prominent than the other.

In a word having more than one syllable, the one that is more more prominent than the other syllable(s) is called the stressed syllable.

Task

Mark the stressed syllables in the following words chosen from the lesson. Consult the dictionary or ask the teacher if necessary.

photograph	escape	changes
threaten	excitement	farewell
illumined	sailor	sacrifice
invariable		

Suggested Reading

Dubliners by James Joyce.

12076CH03

3

A Wedding in Brownsville

Isaac Bashevis Singer
1902–1991

Isaac Bashevis Singer was born in Poland. His father and grandfather were rabbis and he was educated at the Warsaw Rabbinical Seminary. In 1935 he emigrated to the US and since then has worked as a regular journalist and columnist for the New York paper, The Jewish Daily Forward. *Apart from some early work published in Warsaw, nearly all his fiction has been written in Yiddish for this journal. It is relatively recently that Singer's work has been translated on any scale and that his merit, and the endurance of his writing, have been recognised by a general audience. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1978. His publications include*—A Friend of Kafka, The Seance and Other Stories.

The wedding had been a burden to Dr Solomon Margolin from the very beginning. True, it was to take place on a Sunday, but Gretl had been right when she said that was the only evening in the week they could spend together. It always turned out that way. His responsibilities to the community made him give away the evenings that belonged to her. The Zionists had appointed him to a committee; he was a board member of a Jewish scholastic society; he had become co-editor of an academic Jewish quarterly. And though he often referred to himself as an agnostic and even an atheist, nevertheless for years he had been dragging Gretl to Seders at Abraham Mekheles', a *Landsman* from Sencimin. Dr Margolin treated rabbis, refugees, and Jewish writers without charge, supplying them with medicines and, if necessary, a hospital bed. There had

been a time when he had gone regularly to the meetings of the Senciminer Society, had accepted positions in their ranks, and had attended all the parties. Now Abraham Mekheles was marrying off his youngest daughter, Sylvia. The minute the invitation arrived, Gretl had announced her decision: she was not going to let herself be carted off to a wedding somewhere out in the wilds of Brownsville. If he, Solomon, wanted to go and gorge himself on all kinds of greasy food, coming home at three o'clock in the morning, that was his prerogative.

Dr Margolin admitted to himself that his wife was right. When would he get a chance to sleep? He had to be at the hospital early Monday morning. Moreover he was on a strict fat-free diet. A wedding like this one would be a feast of poisons. Everything about such celebrations irritated him now: the Anglicised Yiddish, the Yiddishised English, the ear-splitting music and unruly dances. Jewish laws and customs were completely distorted; men who had no regard for Jewishness wore skullcaps; and the reverend rabbis and cantors aped the Christian ministers. Whenever he took Gretl to a wedding or Bar Mitzvah, he was ashamed. Even she, born a Christian, could see that American Judaism was a mess. At least this time he would be spared the trouble of making apologies to her.

Usually after breakfast on Sunday, he and his wife took a walk in Central Park, or, when the weather was mild, went to the Palisades. But today Solomon Margolin lingered in bed. During the years, he had stopped attending functions of the Senciminer Society; meanwhile the town of Sencimin had been destroyed. His family there had been tortured, burned, gassed. Many Senciminers had survived, and, later, come to America from the camps, but most of them were younger people whom he, Solomon, had not known in the old country. Tonight everyone would be there; the Senciminers belonging to the bride's family and the Tereshpolers belonging to the groom's. He knew how they would pester him, reproach him for growing aloof, drop hints that he was a snob. They would address him familiarly, slap him on the back, drag him off to dance.

Well, even so, he had to go to Sylvia's wedding. He had already sent out the present.

The day had dawned, grey and dreary as dusk. Overnight, a heavy snow had fallen. Solomon Margolin had hoped to make up for the sleep he was going to lose, but unfortunately he had woken even earlier than usual. Finally he got up. He shaved himself meticulously at the bathroom mirror and also trimmed the grey hair at his temples. Today of all days he looked his age: there were bags under his eyes, and his face was lined. Exhaustion showed in his features. His nose appeared longer and sharper than usual; there were deep folds at the sides of his mouth. After breakfast he stretched out on the living-room sofa. From there he could see Gretl, who was standing in the kitchen, ironing—blonde, faded, middle-aged. She had on a skimpy petticoat, and her calves were as muscular as a dancer's. Gretl had been a nurse in the Berlin hospital where he had been a member of the staff. Of her family, one brother, a Nazi, had died of typhus in a Russian prison camp. A second, who was a Communist, had been shot by the Nazis. Her aged father vegetated at the home of his other daughter in Hamburg, and Gretl sent him money regularly. She herself had become almost Jewish in New York. She had made friends with Jewish women, joined Hadassah, learned to cook Jewish dishes. Even her sigh was Jewish. And she lamented continually over the Nazi catastrophe. She had her plot waiting for her beside his in that part of the cemetery that the Senciminers had reserved for themselves.

Dr Margolin yawned, reached for the cigarette that lay in an ashtray on the coffee table beside him, and began to think about himself. His career had gone well. Ostensibly he was a success. He had an office on West End Avenue and wealthy patients. His colleagues respected him, and he was an important figure in Jewish circles in New York. What more could a boy from Sencimin expect? A self-taught man, the son of a poor teacher of Talmud? In person he was tall and quite handsome, and he had always had a way with women. He still pursued them—more than was good for him at his age and with his high blood pressure.

But secretly Solomon Margolin had always felt that he was a failure. As a child he had been acclaimed a prodigy, reciting long passages of the Bible and studying the Talmud and Commentaries on his own. When he was a boy of eleven, he had sent for a Responsum to the rabbi of Tarnow who had referred to him in his reply as 'great and illustrious'. In his teens he had become a master in the *Guide for the Perplexed* and the Kuzari. He had taught himself algebra and geometry. At seventeen he had attempted a translation of Spinoza's *Ethics* from Latin into Hebrew, unaware that it had been done before. Everyone predicted he would turn out to be a genius. But he had squandered his talents, continually changing his field of study; and he had wasted years in learning languages, in wandering from country to country. Nor had he had any luck with his one great love, Raizel, the daughter of Melekh the watchmaker. Raizel had married someone else and later had been shot by the Nazis. All his life Solomon Margolin had been plagued by the eternal questions. He still lay awake at night trying to solve the mysteries of the universe. He suffered from hypochondria and the fear of death haunted even his dreams. Hitler's carnage and the extinction of his family had rooted out his last hope for better days, had destroyed all his faith in humanity. He had begun to despise the matrons who came to him with their petty ills while millions were devising horrible deaths for one another.

Gretl came in from the kitchen.

'What shirt are you going to put on?'

Solomon Margolin regarded her quietly. She had had her own share of troubles. She had suffered in silence for her two brothers, even for Hans, the Nazi. She had gone through a prolonged change of life. Now her face was flushed and covered with beads of sweat. He earned more than enough to pay for a maid, yet Gretl insisted on doing all the housework herself, even the laundry. It had become a mania with her. Every day she scoured the oven. She was forever polishing the windows of their apartment on the sixteenth floor and without using a safety belt. All the

other housewives in the building ordered their groceries delivered, but Gretl lugged the heavy bags from the supermarket herself.

Now husband and wife sized each other up wryly, feeling the strangeness that comes of great familiarity. He was always amazed at how she had lost her looks. No one feature had altered, but something in her aspect had given way: her pride, her hopefulness, her curiosity. He blurted out:

'What shirt? It doesn't matter. A white shirt.'

'You're not going to wear the tuxedo? Wait, I'll bring you a vitamin.'

'I don't want a vitamin.'

'But you yourself say they're good for you.'

'Leave me alone.'

'Well, it's your health, not mine.'

And slowly she walked out of the room, hesitating as if she expected him to remember something and call her back.

Stop and Think

1. Who were the Senciminers?
2. Why did Dr Margolin not particularly want his wife to accompany him to the wedding?

Dr Solomon Margolin took a last look in the mirror and left the house. He felt refreshed by the half-hour nap he had had after dinner. Despite his age, he still wanted to impress people with his appearance—even the Senciminers. He had his illusions. In Germany he had taken pride in the fact that he looked like a *Junker*, and in New York he was often aware that he could pass for an Anglo-Saxon. He was tall, slim, blond, blue-eyed. His hair was thinning, had turned somewhat grey, but he managed to disguise these signs of age. He stooped a little, but in company was quick to straighten up. Years ago in Germany he had worn a monocle and though in New York that would have been too pretentious, his glance still retained a European severity. He had his principles. He had never broken the Hippocratic Oath. With his patients he was

honourable to an extreme, avoiding every kind of cant; and he had refused a number of dubious associations that smacked of careerism. Gretl claimed his sense of honour amounted to a mania. Dr Margolin's car was in the garage—not a Cadillac like that of most of his colleagues—but he decided to go by taxi. He was unfamiliar with Brooklyn and the heavy snow made driving hazardous. He waved his hand and at once a taxi pulled over to the curb. He was afraid the driver might refuse to go as far as Brownsville, but he flicked the meter on without a word. Dr Margolin peered through the frosted window into the wintry Sunday night but there was nothing to be seen. The New York streets sprawled out, wet, dirty, impenetrably dark. After a while, Dr Margolin leaned back, shut his eyes, and retreated into his own warmth. His destination was a wedding. Wasn't the world, like this taxi, plunging away somewhere into the unknown toward a cosmic destination? May be a cosmic Brownsville, a cosmic wedding? Yes. But why did God—or whatever anyone wanted to call Him—create a Hitler, a Stalin? Why did He need world wars? Why heart attacks, cancers? Dr Margolin took out a cigarette and lit it hesitantly. What had they been thinking of, those pious uncles of his, when they were digging their own graves? Was immortality possible? Was there such a thing as the soul? All the arguments for and against weren't worth a pinch of dust.

The taxi turned onto the bridge across the East River and for the first time Dr Margolin was able to see the sky. It sagged low, heavy, red as glowing metal. Higher up, a violet glare suffused the vault of the heavens. Snow was sifting down gently, bringing a winter peace to the world, just as it had in the past—forty years ago, a thousand years ago, and perhaps a million years ago. Fiery pillars appeared to glow beneath the East River; on its surface, through black waves jagged as rocks, a tugboat was hauling a string of barges loaded with cars. A front window in the cab was open and icy gusts of wind blew in, smelling of gasoline and the sea. Suppose the weather never changed again? Who then would ever be able to imagine a summer day, a moonlit night, spring? But how much imagination—

for what it's worth—does a man actually have? On Eastern Parkway the taxi was jolted and screeched suddenly to a stop. Some traffic accident, apparently. The siren on police car shrieked. A wailing ambulance drew nearer. Dr Margolin grimaced. Another victim. Someone makes a false turn of the wheel and all a man's plans in this world are reduced to nothing. A wounded man was carried to the ambulance on a stretcher. Above a dark suit and blood-spattered shirt and bow tie the face had a chalky pallor; one eye was closed, the other partly open and glazed. Perhaps he, too, had been going to a wedding, Dr Margolin thought. He might even have been going to the same wedding as I...

Some time later the taxi started moving again. Solomon Margolin was now driving through streets he had never seen before. It was New York, but it might just as well have been Chicago or Cleveland. They passed through an industrial district with factory buildings, warehouses of coal, lumber, scrap iron. Negroes, strangely black, stood about on the sidewalks, staring ahead, their great dark eyes full of gloomy hopelessness. Occasionally the car would pass a tavern. The people at the bar seemed to have something unearthly about them, as if they were being punished here for sins committed in another incarnation. Just when Solomon Margolin was beginning to suspect that the driver, who had remained stubbornly silent the whole time, had gotten lost or else was deliberately taking him out of his way, the taxi entered a thickly populated neighbourhood. They passed a synagogue, a funeral parlour, and there, ahead, was the wedding hall, all lit up, with its neon Jewish sign and Star of David. Dr Margolin gave the driver a dollar tip and the man took it without uttering a word.

Dr Margolin entered the outer lobby and immediately the comfortable intimacy of the Senciminers engulfed him. AII the faces he saw were familiar, though he didn't recognise individuals. Leaving his hat and coat at the checkroom, he put on a skullcap and entered the hall. It was filled with people and music, with tables heaped with food, a bar stacked with bottles. The musicians were

playing an Israeli march that was a hodge-podge of American jazz with Oriental flourishes. Men were dancing with men, women with women, men with women. He saw black skullcaps, white skullcaps, bare heads. Guests kept arriving, pushing their way through the crowd, some still in their hats and coats, munching hors d'oeuvres, drinking schnapps. The hall resounded with stamping, screaming, laughing, clapping. Flash bulbs went off blindingly as the photographers made their rounds. Seeming to come from nowhere, the bride appeared, briskly sweeping up her train, followed by a retinue of bridesmaids. Dr Margolin knew everybody, and yet knew nobody. People spoke to him, laughed, winked, and waved, and he answered each one with a smile, a nod, a bow. Gradually he threw off all his worries, all his depression. He became half-drunk on the amalgam of odours: flowers, sauerkraut, garlic, perfume, mustard, and that nameless odour that only Senciminers emit. 'Hello, Doctor!' 'Hello Schloime-Dovid, you don't recognise me, eh? Look, he forgot!' There were the encounters, the regrets, the reminiscences of long ago. 'But after all, weren't we neighbours? You used to come to our house to borrow the Yiddish newspaper!' Someone had already kissed him: a badly shaven snout, a mouth reeking of whiskey and rotten teeth. One woman was so convulsed with laughter that she lost an earring. Margolin tried to pick it up, but it had already been trampled underfoot. 'You don't recognise me, eh? Take a good look! It's Zissel, the son of Chaye Beyle!' 'Why don't you eat something?' 'Why don't you have something to drink? Come over here. Take a glass. What do you want? Whiskey? Brandy? Cognac? Scotch? With soda? With Coca Cola? Take some, it's good. Don't let it stand. So long as you're here, you might as well enjoy yourself.' 'My father? He was killed. They were all killed. I'm the only one left of the entire family.' 'Berish the son of Feivish? Starved to death in Russia—they sent him to Kazakhstan. His wife? In Israel. She married a Lithuanian.' 'Sorele? Shot. Together with her children.' 'Yentl? Here at the wedding. She was standing here just a moment ago. There she is, dancing with that tall fellow.' 'Abraham Zilberstein? They burned him in the

synagogue with twenty others. A mound of charcoal was all that was left, coal and ash.' 'Yosele Budnik? He passed away years ago. You must mean Yekele Budnik. He has a delicatessen store right here in Brownsville—married a widow whose husband made a fortune in real estate.'

'*Lechayim*, Doctor! *Lechayim*, Schloime-Dovid! It doesn't offend you that I call you Schloime-Dovid? To me you're still the same Schloime-Dovid, the little boy with the blond side-curls who recited a whole tractate of the Talmud by heart. You remember, don't you? It seems like only yesterday. Your father, may he rest in peace, was beaming with pride…' 'Your brother Chayim? Your Uncle Oyzer? They killed everyone, everyone. They took a whole people and wiped them out with German efficiency: *gleichgeschaltet!*' 'Have you seen the bride yet? Pretty as a picture, but too much make-up. Imagine, a grandchild of Reb Todros of Radzin! And her grandfather used to wear two skullcaps, one in front and one in back. 'Do you see that young woman dancing in the yellow dress? It's Riva's sister—their father was Moishe the candlemaker. Riva herself? Where all the others ended up: Auschwitz. How close we came ourselves! All of us are really dead, if you want to call it that. We were exterminated, wiped out. Even the survivors carry death in the hearts. But it's a wedding, we should be cheerful.' '*Lechayim*, Schloime-Dovid! I would like to congratulate you. Have you a son or daughter to marry off? No? Well, it's better that way. What's the sense of having children if people are such murderers?'

Stop and Think

1. What is the Hippocratic oath?
2. What topic does the merry banter at the wedding invariably lead to?

It was already time for the ceremony, but someone still had not come. Whether it was the rabbi, the cantor, or one of the in-laws who was missing, nobody seemed able to find out. Abraham Mekheles, the bride's father, rushed around, scowled, waved his hand, whispered in

people's ears. He looked strange in his rented tuxedo. The Tereshpol mother-in-law was wrangling with one of the photographers. The musicians never stopped playing for an instant. The drum banged, the bass fiddle growled, the saxophone blared. The dances became faster, more abandoned, and more and more people were drawn in. The young men stamped with such force that it seemed the dance floor would break under them. Small boys romped around like goats, and little girls whirled about wildly together. Many of the men were already drunk. They shouted boasts, howled with laughter, kissed strange women. There was so much commotion that Solomon Margolin could no longer grasp what was being said to him and simply nodded yes to everything. Some of the guests had attached themselves to him, wouldn't move, and kept pulling him in all directions, introducing him to more and more people from Sencimin and Tereshpol. A matron with a nose covered with warts pointed a finger at him, wiped her eyes, called him Schloimele. Solomon Margolin inquired who she was and somebody told him. Names were swallowed up in the tumult. He heard the same words over and over again: died, shot, burned. A man from Tereshpol tried to draw him aside and was shouted down by several Senciminers calling him an intruder who had no business there. A latecomer arrived, a horse and buggy driver from Sencimin who had become a millionaire in New York. His wife and children had perished, but, already, he had a new wife. The woman, weighted with diamonds, paraded about in a low-cut gown that bared a back, covered with blotches, to the waist. Her voice was husky. 'Where did she come from? Who was she?' 'Certainly no saint. Her first husband was a swindler who amassed a fortune and then dropped dead. Of what? Cancer. Where? In the stomach. First you don't have anything to eat, then you don't have anything to eat with. A man is always working for the second husband.' 'What is life anyway? A dance on the grave.' 'Yes, but as long as you're playing the game, you have to abide by the rules.' 'Dr Margolin, why aren't you dancing? You're not among strangers. We're all from the same dust. Over there you

weren't a doctor. You were only Schloime-Dovid, the son of the Talmud teacher. Before you know it, we'll all be lying side by side.'

Margolin didn't recall drinking anything but he felt intoxicated all the same. The foggy hall was spinning like a carousel; the floor was rocking. Standing in a corner, he contemplated the dance. What different expressions the dancers wore. How many combinations and permutations of being the Creator had brought together here. Every face told its own story. They were dancing together, these people, but each one had his own philosophy, his own approach. A man grabbed Margolin and for a while he danced in the frantic whirl. Then, tearing himself loose, he stood apart. Who was that woman? He found his eye caught by her familiar form. He knew her! She beckoned to him. He stood baffled. She looked neither young nor old. Where had he known her—that narrow face, those dark eyes, that girlish smile? Her hair was arranged in the old manner, with long braids wound like a wreath around her head. The grace of Sencimin adorned her—something he, Margolin, had long since forgotten. And those eyes, he was in love with those eyes and had been all his life. He half smiled at her and the woman smiled back. There were dimples in her cheeks. She too appeared surprised. Margolin, though he realised he had begun to blush like a boy, went up to her.

'I know you—but you're not from Sencimin?'

'Yes, from Sencimin.'

He had heard that voice long ago. He had been in love with that voice.

'From Sencimin—who are you, then?'

Her lips trembled.

'You've forgotten me already?'

'It's a long time since I left Sencimin.'

'You used to visit my father.'

'Who was your father?'

'Melekh the watchmaker.'

Dr Margolin shivered.

'If I'm not out of my mind then I'm seeing things.'

'Why do you say that?'

'Because Raizel is dead.'

'I'm Raizel.'

'You're Raizel? Here? Oh my God, if that's true—then anything is possible! When did you come to New York?'

'Some time ago.'

'From where?'

'From over there.'

'But everyone told me that you were all dead.'

'My father, my mother, my brother Hershl...'

'But you were married!'

'I was.'

'If that's true, then anything is possible!' repeated Dr Margolin, still shaken by the incredible happening. Someone must have purposely deceived him. But why? He was aware there was a mistake somewhere but could not determine where.

'Why didn't you let me know? After all...'

He fell silent. She too was silent for a moment.

'I lost everything. But I still had some pride left.'

'Come with me somewhere quieter—anywhere. This is the happiest day of my life!'

'But it's night...'

'Then the happiest night! Almost—as if the Messiah had come, as if the dead had come to life!'

'Where do you want to go? All right, let's go.'

Margolin took her arm and felt at once the thrill, long forgotten, of youthful desire. He steered her away from the other guests, afraid that he might lose her in the crowd, or that someone would break in and spoil his happiness. Everything had returned on the instant: the embarrassment, the agitation, the joy. He wanted to take her away, to hide somewhere alone with her. Leaving the reception hall, they went upstairs to the chapel where the wedding ceremony was to take place. The door was standing open. Inside, on a raised platform stood the permanent wedding canopy. A bottle of wine and a silver goblet were placed in readiness for the ceremony. The chapel with its empty pews and only one glimmering light was full of shadows. The music, so blaring below, sounded soft and distant up here. Both of them hesitated at the threshold.

Margolin pointed to the wedding canopy.

'We could have stood there.'

'Yes.'

'Tell me about yourself. Where are you now? What are you doing?'

'It is not easy to tell.'

'Are you alone? Are you attached?'

'Attached? No.'

'Would you never have let me hear from you?' he asked. She didn't answer.

Gazing at her, he knew his love had returned with full force. Already, he was trembling at the thought that they might soon have to part. The excitement and expectancy of youth filled him. He wanted to take her in his arms and kiss her, but at any moment someone might come in. He stood beside her, ashamed that he had married someone else, that he had not personally confirmed the reports of her death. 'How could I have suppressed all this love? How could I have accepted the world without her? And what will happen now with Gretl?—I'll give her everything, my last cent.' He looked round toward the stairway to see if any of the guests had started to come up. The thought came to him that by Jewish law he was not married, for he and Gretl had had only a civil ceremony. He looked at Raizel.

'According to Jewish law, I'm a single man.'

'Is that so?'

'According to Jewish law, I could lead you up there and marry you.'

She seemed to be considering the import of his words.

'Yes, I realise...'

'According to Jewish law, I don't even need a ring. One can get married with a penny.'

'Do you have a penny?'

He put his hand to his breast pocket, but his wallet was gone. He started searching in his other pockets. Have I been robbed? he wondered. But how? I was sitting in the taxi the whole time. Could someone have robbed me here at the wedding? He was not so much disturbed as surprised. He said falteringly:

'Strange, but I don't have any money.'

'We'll get along without it.'

'But how am I going to get home?'

'Why go home?' she said, countering with a question. She smiled with that homely smile of hers that was so full of mystery. He took her by the wrist and gazed at her. Suddenly it occurred to him that this could not be his Raizel. She was too young. Probably it was her daughter who was playing along with him, mocking him. For God's sake, I'm completely confused! he thought. He stood bewildered, trying to untangle the years. He couldn't tell her age from her features. Her eyes were deep, dark, and melancholy. She also appeared confused, as if she, too, sensed some discrepancy. The whole thing is a mistake, Margolin told himself. But where exactly was the mistake? And what had happened to the wallet? Could he have left it in the taxi after paying the driver? He tried to remember how much cash he had had in it, but was unable to. 'I must have had too much to drink. These people have made me drunk—dead drunk!' For a long time he stood silent, lost in some dreamless state, more profound than a narcotic trance. Suddenly he remembered the traffic collision he had witnessed on Eastern Parkway. An eerie suspicion came over him: perhaps he had been more than a witness? Perhaps he himself had been the victim of that accident! That man on the stretcher looked strangely familiar. Dr Margolin began to examine himself as though he were one of his own patients. He could find no trace of pulse or breathing. And he felt oddly deflated as if some physical dimension were missing. The sensation of weight, the muscular tension of his limbs, the hidden aches in his bones, all seemed to be gone. It can't be, it can't be, he murmured. Can one die without knowing it? And what will Gretl do?

Stop and Think

1. Who was the woman that Dr Margolin suddenly encountered at the wedding?
2. What were the events that led to his confused state of mind?

He blurted out:

'You're not the same Raizel.'

'No? Then who am I?'

'They shot Raizel.'

'Shot her? Who told you that?'

She seemed both frightened and perplexed. Silently she lowered her head like someone receiving the shock of bad news. Dr Margolin continued to ponder. Apparently Raizel didn't realise her own condition. He had heard of such a state—what was it called? Hovering in the World of Twilight. The Astral Body wandering in semi-consciousness, detached from the flesh, without being able to reach its destination, clinging to the illusions and vanities of the past. But could there be any truth to all this superstition? No, as far as he was concerned, it was nothing but wishful thinking. Besides, this kind of survival would be less than oblivion. 'I am most probably in a drunken stupor,' Dr Margolin decided. 'All this may be one long hallucination, perhaps a result of food poisoning…'

He looked up, and she was still there. He leaned over and whispered in her ear:

'What's the difference? As long as we're together.'

'I've been waiting for that all these years.'

'Where have you been?'

She didn't answer, and he didn't ask again. He looked around. The empty hall was full, all the seats taken. A ceremonious hush fell over the audience. The music played softly. The cantor intoned the benedictions. With measured steps, Abraham Mekheles led his daughter down the aisle.

(Translated by Chana Faerslein and Elizabeth Pollet)

Understanding the Text

1. What do you understand of Dr Margolin's past? How does it affect his present life?

2. What was Dr Margolin's attitude towards his profession?
3. What is Dr Margolin's view of the kind of life the American Jewish community leads?
4. What were the personality traits that endeared Dr Margolin to others in his community?
5. Why do you think Dr Margolin had the curious experience at the wedding hall?
6. Was the encounter with Raizel an illusion or was the carousing at the wedding-hall illusory? Was Dr Margolin the victim of the accident and was his astral body hovering in the world of twilight?

Talking about the Text

Discuss in small groups

1. Fiction often deals with human consciousness, rather than with the reality of existence.
2. The ways in which survivors of holocausts deal with life.

Appreciation

1. Surrealism was an artistic and literary movement in France between the two World Wars. Its basic idea is that the automatic, illogical and uncontrolled associations of the mind represent a higher reality than the world of practical life and ordinary literature. Do you think this story could be loosely classified as surrealistic? What elements in this story would support the idea?
2. Comment on the technique used by the author to convey the gruesome realities of the war and its devastating effect on the psyche of human beings through an intense personal experience.

Language Work

A. Grammar: Sentence Variety

A long series of sentences of similar structure and length would be monotonous. Sentences of varied length and pattern contribute to a lively style. Let us look at this paragraph

(1) Usually after breakfast on Sunday, he and his wife took a walk in Central Park, or, when the weather

was mild, went to the Palisades. (2) But today Solomon Margolin lingered in bed. (3) During the years, he had stopped attending functions of the Senciminer Society; meanwhile the town of Sencimin had been destroyed. (4) His family there had been tortured, burned, gassed. (5) Many Senciminers had survived, and, later, come to America from the camps, but most of them were younger people whom he, Solomon, had not known in the old country. (6) Tonight everyone would be there; the Senciminers belonging to the bride's family and the Tereshpolers belonging to the groom's. (7) He knew how they would pester him, reproach him for growing aloof, drop hints that he was a snob. (8) They would address him familiarly, slap him on the back, drag him off to dance. (9) Well, even so, he had to go to Sylvia's wedding. (10) He had already sent out the present.

The paragraph has ten sentences in all. The word-lengths of the sentences in the order in which they occur in the paragraph are: 25, 07, 20, 08, 29, 19, 19, 15,10, 07. We find the range to be between 7 and 29.

We find a similar variation in sentence patterns

Sentence (1) Compound sentence. Two independent clauses joined by the coordinating conjunction 'or'

Sentence (2) Simple sentence

Sentence (3) Two simple sentences joined by a semi-colon. Conjunction: meanwhile

Sentence (4) Simple sentence

Sentence (5) Compound-Complex sentence consisting of two independent clauses joined by 'and'; the third part has another independent clause joined with the second by 'but'. It has a relative clause joined to it by the subordinator 'whom'

Sentence (6) Simple sentence. A main clause followed by two non-finite clauses set in apposition to the main clause

Sentence (7) Complex sentence. One main clause and three parallel subordinate clauses, hinging on the subordinator 'how', 'they' and 'would' going with each clause and another subordinate clause depending on 'drop hints'

Sentence (8) Parallel independent clauses following the same subject 'They'. The auxiliary 'would' goes with each verb

Sentence (9) Simple sentence

Sentence (10) Simple sentence.

You will also notice the use of the past tense, past perfect for events and the future. The story is narrated in the *past*. The protagonist's remote past are in the *past perfect.* The protagonist's expectation of what would happen at the wedding is in the *future.*

Note that the variation of form emerges from the emphasis in meaning.

TASK

Examine the paragraph beginning 'Some time later the taxi started moving again...' for variety in sentence length and sentence structure.

B. Pronunciation

In a word such as 'afternoon' the third syllable (noon) is the most prominent. This is called the primary stress

after'noon

You will also notice that the first syllable is less prominent than the third syllable. This is called the secondary stress. In the dictionary, the primary stress and the secondary stress are indicated as

ˌafter'noon

The middle syllable is unstressed.

TASK

- Say the following words with correct stress. These words carry stress-pattern similar to the example given above.

understand	apprehend	rearrange
refugee	addressee	

- Given below are some words chosen from the lesson. Mark the primary and secondary stresses for each word.

invitation	responsible	seventeen
American	illustrious	ambulance
association	honourable	permanent
creator		

Suggested Reading

The Seance and Other Stories by Isaac Bashevis Singer

The Slave by Isaac Bashevis Singer.

12076CH04

4

Tomorrow

Joseph Conrad
1857-1924

Joseph Conrad, born of Polish parents in the Russian Ukraine, began a seafaring life in 1874. He learnt English at the age of 21, and in 1886 became a British citizen. His famous works include The Nigger of the Narcissus *(1898),* Lord Jim *(1900) and* Nostromo *(1904). His greatest skill lies in his capacity to evoke an atmosphere through careful attention to detail. He uses the method of story within a story to convey his sense of the inexplicable inner character of life and the shifting quality of the mind. All Conrad's characters suffer from a sense of isolation.*

What was known of Captain Hagberd in the little seaport of Colebrook was not exactly in his favour. He did not belong to the place. He had come to settle there under circumstances not at all mysterious—he used to be very communicative about them at the time—but extremely morbid and unreasonable. He was possessed of some little money evidently, because he bought a plot of ground, and had a pair of ugly yellow brick cottages run up very cheaply. He occupied one of them himself and let the other to Josiah Carvil—blind Carvil, the retired boat-builder—a man of evil repute as a domestic tyrant.

These cottages had one wall in common, shared in a line of iron railing dividing their front gardens; a wooden fence separated their back gardens. Miss Bessie Carvil was allowed, as it were of right, to throw over it the tea-cloths, blue rags, or an apron that wanted drying.

'It rots the wood, Bessie my girl,' the captain would

remark mildly, from his side of the fence, each time he saw her exercising that privilege.

She was a tall girl; the fence was low, and she could spread her elbows on the top. Her hands would be red with the bit of washing she had done, but her forearms were white and shapely, and she would look at her father's landlord in silence—in an informed silence which had an air of knowledge, expectation and desire.

'It rots the wood,' reported Captain Hagberd. 'It is the only unthrifty, careless habit I know in you. Why don't you have a clothes-line out in your back yard?'

Miss Carvil would say nothing to this—she only shook her head negatively. The tiny back yard on her side had a few stone-bordered little beds of black earth, in which the simple flowers she found time to cultivate appeared somehow extravagantly overgrown, as if belonging to an exotic clime; and Captain Hagberd's upright, hale person, clad in No.1 sailcloth from head to foot, would be emerging knee-deep out of rank grass and the tall weeds on his side of the fence. He appeared, with the colour and uncouth stiffness of the extraordinary material in which he chose to clothe himself—'for the time being', would be his mumbled remark to any observation on the subject—like a man roughened out of granite, standing in a wilderness not big enough for a decent billiard-room. A heavy figure of a man of stone, with a red handsome face, a blue wandering eye, and a great white beard flowing to his waist and never trimmed as far as Colebrook knew.

Seven years before, he had seriously answered 'Next month, I think' to the chaffing attempt to secure his custom made by that distinguished local wit, the Colebrook barber, who happened to be sitting insolently in the tap-room of the New Inn near the harbour, where the captain had entered to buy an ounce of tobacco. After paying for his purchase with three half-pence extracted from the corner of a handkerchief which he carried in the cuff of his sleeve, Captain Hagberd went out. As soon as the door was shut the barber laughed. 'The old one and the young one will be strolling arm in arm to get shaved in my place presently.

The tailor shall be set to work, and the barber, and the candlestick maker. High old times are coming for Colebrook; they are coming, to be sure. It used to be "next week", now it has come to "next month", and so on—soon it will be "next spring", for all I know.'

Noticing a stranger listening to him with a vacant grin, he explained, stretching out his legs cynically, that this queer old Hagberd, a retired coasting-skipper, was waiting for the return of a son of his. The boy had been driven away from home, he shouldn't wonder; had run away to sea and had never been heard of since. Put to rest in Davy Jones's locker this many a day, as likely as not. That old man came flying to Colebrook three years ago all in black broadcloth (had lost his wife lately then), getting out of a third-class smoker as if the devil had been at his heels; and the only thing that brought him down was a letter—a hoax probably. Some joker had written to him about a seafaring man with some such name who was supposed to be hanging about some girl or other, either in Colebrook or in the neighbourhood. 'Funny, ain't it?' The old chap had been advertising in the London papers for Harry Hagberd, and offering rewards for any sort of likely information. And the barber would go on to describe with sardonic gusto how that stranger in mourning had been seen exploring the country, in carts, on foot, taking everybody into his confidence, visiting all the inns and alehouses for miles around, stopping people on the road with his questions, looking into the very ditches almost; first in the greatest excitement, then with a plodding sort of perseverance, growing slower and slower; and he could not even tell you plainly how his son looked. The sailor was supposed to be one of two that had left a timber ship, and to have been seen dangling after some girl; but the old man described a boy of fourteen or so—'a clever-looking, high-spirited boy'. And when people only smiled at this he would rub his forehead in a confused sort of way before he slunk off, looking offended. He found nobody, of course; not a trace of anybody—never heard of anything worth belief, at any rate; but he had not been able, somehow, to tear himself away from Colebrook.

'It was the shock of this disappointment, perhaps, coming soon after the loss of his wife, that had driven him crazy on that point,' the barber suggested, with an air of great psychological insight. After a time the old man abandoned the active search. His son had evidently gone away; but he settled himself to wait. His son had been once at least in Colebrook in preference to his native place. There must have been some reason for it, he seemed to think, some very powerful inducement, that would bring him back to Colebrook again.

'Ha, ha, ha! Why, of course, Colebrook. Where else? That's the only place in the United Kingdom for your long-lost sons. So he sold up his old home in Colchester, and down he comes here. Well, it's a craze, like any other. Wouldn't catch me going crazy over any of my youngsters clearing out. I've got eight of them at home.' The barber was showing off his strength of mind in the midst of a laughter that shook the tap-room.

Stop and Think

1. What brought Captain Hagberd to Colebrook?
2. Why did the people of Colebrook not have a favourable opinion of Captain Hagberd?

Strange though, that sort of thing, he would confess with the frankness of a superior intelligence, seemed to be catching. His establishment, for instance, was near the harbour, and whenever a sailorman came in for a hair-cut or a shave—if it was a strange face he couldn't help thinking directly, 'Suppose he's the son of old Hagberd!' He laughed at himself for it. It was a strong craze. He could remember the time when the whole town was full of it. But he had his hopes of the old chap yet. He would cure him by a course of judicious chaffing. He was watching the progress of the treatment. Next week—next month—next year! When the old skipper had put off the date of that return till next year, he would be well on his way to not saying any more about it. In other matters he was quite rational, so this, too, was bound to come. Such was the barber's firm opinion.

Nobody had ever contradicted him; his own hair had gone grey since that time, and Captain Hagberd's beard had turned quite white, and had acquired a majestic flow over the No.1 canvas suit, which he had made for himself secretly with tarred twine, and had assumed suddenly, coming out in it one fine morning, whereas the evening before he had been seen going home in his mourning of broadcloth. It caused a sensation in the High Street—shopkeepers coming to their doors, people in the houses snatching up their hats to run out—a stir at which he seemed strangely surprised at first, and then scared; but his only answer to the wondering questions was that startled and evasive 'For the present'.

That sensation had been forgotten long ago; and Captain Hagberd himself, if not forgotten, had come to be disregarded—the penalty of dailiness—as the sun itself is disregarded unless it makes its power felt heavily. Captain Hagberd's movements showed no infirmity; he walked stiffly in his suit of canvas, a quaint and remarkable figure; only his eyes wandered more furtively perhaps than of yore. His manner abroad had lost its excitable watchfulness; it had become puzzled and diffident, as though he had suspected that there was somewhere about him something slightly compromising, some embarrassing oddity; and yet had remained unable to discover what on earth this something wrong could be.

He was unwilling now to talk with the townsfolk. He had earned for himself the reputation of an awful skinflint, of a miser in the matter of living. He mumbled regretfully in the shops, bought inferior scraps of meat after long hesitations; and discouraged all allusions to his costume. It was as the barber had foretold. For all one could tell, he had recovered already from the disease of hope; and only Miss Bessie Carvil knew that he said nothing about his son's return because with him it was no longer 'next week', 'next month', or even 'next year'. It was 'tomorrow'.

In their intimacy of back yard and front garden he talked with her paternally, reasonably, and dogmatically, with a touch or arbitrariness. They met on the ground of unreserved confidence, which was authenticated by an

affectionate wink now and then. Miss Carvil had come to look forward rather to these winks. At first they had discomposed her: the poor fellow was mad. Afterwards she had learned to laugh at them: there was no harm in him. Now she was aware of an unacknowledged, pleasurable, incredulous emotion, expressed by a faint blush. He winked not in the least vulgarly; his thin red face with a well-modelled curved nose had a sort of distinction—the more so that when he talked to her he looked with a steadier and more intelligent glance. A handsome, hale, upright, capable man, with a white beard. You did not think of his age. His son, he affirmed, had resembled him amazingly from his earliest babyhood.

Harry would be one-and-thirty next July, he declared. Proper age to get married with a nice, sensible girl that could appreciate a good home. He was a very high-spirited boy. High-spirited husbands were the easiest to manage. These mean, soft chaps, that you would think butter wouldn't melt in their mouths, were the ones to make a woman thoroughly miserable. And there was nothing like home—a fireside—a good roof: no turning out of your warm bed in all sorts of weather. 'Eh, my dear?'

Captain Hagberd had been one of those sailors that pursue their calling within sight of land. One of the many children of a bankrupt farmer, he had been apprenticed hurriedly to a coasting-skipper, and had remained on the coast all his sea life. It must have been a hard one at first: he had never taken to it; his affection turned to the land, with its innumerable houses, with its quiet lives gathered round its firesides. Many sailors feel and profess a rational dislike for the sea, but his was a profound and emotional animosity—as if the love of the stabler element had been bred into him through many generations.

'People did not know what they let their boys in for when they let them go to sea,' he expounded to Bessie. 'As soon make convicts of them at once.' He did not believe you ever got used to it. The weariness of such a life got worse as you got older. What sort of trade was it in which more than half your time you did not put your foot inside your house? Directly you got out to sea you had no means

of knowing what went on at home. One might have thought him weary of distant voyages: and the longest he had ever made had lasted a fortnight, of which the most part had been spent at anchor, sheltering from the weather. As soon as his wife had inherited a house and enough to live on (from a bachelor uncle who had made some money in the coal business) he threw up his command of an East-coast collier with a feeling as though he had escaped from the galleys. After all these years he might have counted on the fingers of his two hands all the days he had been out of sight of England. He had never known what it was to be out of soundings. 'I have never been further than eighty fathoms from the land' was one of his boasts.

Bessie Carvil heard all these things. In front of their cottage grew an undersized ash; and on summer afternoons she would bring out a chair on the grass-plot and sit down with her sewing. Captain Hagberd, in his canvas suit, leaned on a spade. He dug every day in his front plot. He turned it over and over several times every year, but was not going to plant anything 'just at present'.

To Bessie Carvil he would state more explicitly: 'Not till our Harry comes home tomorrow.' And she had heard this formula of hope so often that it only awakened the vaguest pity in her heart for that hopeful old man.

Everything was put off in that way, and everything was being prepared likewise for tomorrow. There was a boxful of packets of various flower-seeds to choose from, for the front garden. 'He will doubtless let you have your say about that, my dear,' Captain Hagberd intimated to her across the railing.

Miss Bessie's head remained bowed over her work. She had heard all this so many times. But now and then she would rise, lay down her sewing, and come slowly to the fence. There was a charm in these gentle ravings. He was determined that his son should not go away again for the want of a home all ready for him. He had been filling the other cottage with all sorts of furniture. She imagined it all new, fresh with varnish, piled up as in a warehouse. There would be tables wrapped up in sacking: rolls of

carpets thick and vertical, like fragments of columns; the gleam of white marble tops in the dimness of the drawn blinds. Captain Hagberd always described his purchases to her, carefully, as to a person having a legitimate interest in them. The overgrown yard of his cottage could be laid over with concrete...after tomorrow.

'We may just as well do away with the fence. You could have your drying-line out, quite clear of your flowers.' He winked, and she would blush faintly.

This madness that had entered her life through the kind impulses of her heart had reasonable details. What if some day his son returned? But she could not even be quite sure that he ever had a son: and if he existed anywhere he had been too long away. When Captain Hagberd got excited in his talk she would steady him by a pretence of belief, laughing a little to salve her conscience.

Stop and Think

1. What sort of a seaman had Captain Hagberd been?
2. Captain Hagberd constantly hinted at something that made Bessie blush. What was it?

Only once she had tried pityingly to throw some doubt on that hope doomed to disappointment, but the effect of her attempt had scared her very much. All at once over that man's face there came an expression of horror and incredulity, as though he had seen a crack open out in the firmament.

'You—you—you don't think he's drowned!'

For a moment he seemed to her ready to go out of his mind, for in his ordinary state she thought him more sane than people gave him credit for. On that occasion the violence of the emotion was followed by a most paternal and complacent recovery.

'Don't alarm yourself, my dear,' he said a little cunningly, 'the sea can't keep him. He does not belong to it. None of us Hagberds ever did belong to it. Look at me; I didn't get drowned. Moreover, he isn't a sailor at all; and if he is not a sailor he's bound to come back. There's nothing

to prevent him coming back...'

His eyes began to wander.

'Tomorrow.'

She never tried again, for fear the man should go out of his mind on the spot. He depended on her. She seemed the only sensible person in the town; and he would congratulate himself frankly before her face on having secured such a level-headed wife for his son. The rest of the town, he confided to her once, in a fit of temper, was certainly queer. The way they looked at you—the way they talked to you! He had never got on with anyone in the place. Didn't like the people. He would not have left his own country if it had not been clear that his son had taken a fancy to Colebrook.

She humoured him in silence, listening patiently by the fence; crocheting with downcast eyes. Blushes came with difficulty on her dead-white complexion, under the negligently twisted opulence of mahogany-coloured hair. Her father was frankly carroty.

She had a full figure; a tired, unrefreshed face. When Captain Hagberd vaunted the necessity and propriety of a home and the delights of one's own fireside, she smiled a little, with her lips only. Her home delights had been confined to the nursing of her father during the ten best years of her life.

A bestial roaring coming out of an upstairs window would interrupt their talk. She would begin at once to roll up her crochet-work or fold her sewing, without the slightest sign of haste. Meanwhile the howls and roars of her name would go on, making the fishermen strolling upon the sea-wall on the other side of the road turn their heads towards the cottages. She would go in slowly at the front door, and a moment afterwards there would fall a profound silence. Presently she would reappear, leading by the hand a man, gross and unwieldy like a hippopotamus, with a bad-tempered, surly face.

He was a widowed boat-builder, whom blindness had overtaken years before in the full flush of business. He behaved to his daughter as if she had been responsible for its incurable character. He had been heard to bellow at

the top of his voice, as if to defy Heaven, that he did not care: he had made enough money to have ham and eggs for his breakfast every morning. He thanked God for it, in a fiendish tone as though he were cursing.

Captain Hagberd had been so unfavourably impressed by his tenant that once he told Miss Bessie, 'He is a very extravagant fellow, my dear.'

She was knitting that day, finishing a pair of socks for her father, who expected her to keep up the supply dutifully. She hated knitting, and, as she was just at the heel part, she had to keep her eyes on her needles.

'Of course it isn't as if he had a son to provide for,' Captain Hagberd went on a little vacantly. 'Girls, of course, don't require so much—h'm—h'm. They don't run away from home, my dear.'

'No,' said Miss Bessie, quietly.

Captain Hagberd, amongst the mounds of turned-up earth, chuckled. With his maritime rig, his weather-beaten face, his beard of Father Neptune, he resembled a deposed sea-god who had exchanged the trident for the spade.

'And he must look upon you as already provided for, in a manner. That's the best of it with the girls. The husbands...' He winked. Miss Bessie, absorbed in her knitting, coloured faintly.

'Bessie! my hat!' old Carvil bellowed out suddenly. He had been sitting under the tree mute and motionless, like an idol of some remarkably monstrous superstition. He never opened his mouth but to howl for her, at her, sometimes about her; and then he did not moderate the terms of his abuse. Her system was never to answer him at all; and he kept up his shouting till he got attended to—till she shook him by the arm, or thrust the mouthpiece of his pipe between his teeth. He was one of the few blind people who smoke. When he felt the hat being put on his head he stopped his noise at once. Then he rose, and they passed together through the gate.

He weighed heavily on her arm. During their slow, toilful walks she appeared to be dragging with her for a penance the burden of that infirm bulk. Usually they crossed the road at once (the cottages stood in the fields

near the harbour, two hundred yards away from the end of the street), and for a long, long time they would remain in view, ascending imperceptibly the flight of wooden steps that led to the top of the sea-wall. It ran on from east to west, shutting out the Channel like a neglected railway embankment, on which no train had ever rolled within memory of man. Groups of sturdy fishermen would emerge upon the sky, walk along for a bit, and sink without haste. Their brown nets, like the cobwebs of gigantic spiders, lay on the shabby grass of the slope; and looking up from the end of the street, the people of the town would recognise the two Carvils, by the creeping slowness of their gait. Captain Hagberd, pottering aimlessly about his cottages, would raise his head to see how they got on in their promenade.

Stop and Think

1. What were Bessie's reactions to old Hagberd's ravings?
2. What sort of a person was Mr Carvil?

He advertised still in the Sunday papers for Harry Hagberd. These sheets were read in foreign parts to the end of the world, he informed Bessie. At the same time he seemed to think that his son was in England—so near to Colebrook that he would of course turn up 'tomorrow'. Bessie, without committing herself to that opinion in so many words, argued that in that case the expense of advertising was unnecessary; Captain Hagberd had better spend that weekly half-crown on himself. She declared she did not know what he lived on. Her argumentation would puzzle him and cast him down for a time. 'They all do it,' he pointed out. There was a whole column devoted to appeals after missing relatives. He would bring the newspaper to show her. He and his wife had advertised for years; only she was an impatient woman. The news from Colebrook had arrived the very day after her funeral; if she had not been so impatient she might have been here now, with no more than one day more to wait. 'You are not an impatient woman, my dear.'

'I've no patience with you, sometimes,' she would say.

If he still advertised for his son he did not offer rewards for information any more: for, with the muddled lucidity of a mental derangement, he had reasoned himself into a conviction as clear as daylight that he had already attained all that could be expected in that way. What more could he want? Colebrook was the place, and there was no need to ask for more. Miss Carvil praised him for his good sense, and he was soothed by the part she took in his hope, which had become his delusion; in that idea which blinded his mind to truth and probability, just as the other old man in the other cottage had been made blind, by another disease, to the light and beauty of the world.

But anything he could interpret as a doubt—any coldness of assent, or even a simple inattention to the development of his projects of a home with his returned son and his son's wife—would irritiate him into flings and jerks and wicked side glances. He would dash his spade into the ground and walk to and fro before it. Miss Bessie called it his tantrums. She shook her finger at him. Then, when she came out again, after he had parted with her in anger, he would watch out of the corner of his eyes for the least sign of encouragement to approach the iron railings and resume his fatherly and patronising relations.

For all their intimacy, which had lasted some years now, they had never talked without a fence or a railing between them. He described to her all the splendours accumulated for the setting-up of their housekeeping, but had never invited her to an inspection. No human eye was to behold them till Harry had his first look. In fact, nobody had ever been inside his cottage: he did his own housework, and he guarded his son's privilege so jealously that the small objects of domestic use he bought sometimes in the town were smuggled rapidly across the front garden under his canvas coat. Then, coming out, he would remark apologetically, 'It was only a small kettle, my dear.'

And, if not too tired with her drudgery, or worried beyond endurance by her father, she would laugh at him with a blush, and say: 'That's all right, Captain Hagberd; I am not impatient.'

'Well, my dear, you haven't long to wait now,' he would answer with a sudden bashfulness, and looking about uneasily, as though he had suspected that there was something wrong somewhere.

Every Monday she paid him his rent over the railings. He clutched the shillings greedily. He grudged every penny he had to spend on his maintenance, and when he left her to make his purchases his bearing changed as soon as he got into the street. Away from the sanction of her pity, he felt himself exposed without defence. He brushed the walls with his shoulder. He mistrusted the queerness of the people: yet, by then, even the town children had left off calling after him, and the tradesmen served him without a word. The slightest allusion to his clothing had the power to puzzle and frighten especially, as if it were something utterly unwarranted and incomprehensible.

In the autumn, the driving rain drummed on his sailcloth suit saturated almost to the stiffness of sheet iron, with its surface flowing with water. When the weather was too bad, he retreated under the tiny porch, and, standing close against the door, looked at his spade left planted in the middle of the yard. The ground was so much dug up all over, that as the season advanced it turned to a quagmire. When it froze hard, he was disconsolate. What would Harry say? And as he could not have so much of Bessie's company at that time of year, the roars of old Carvil, that came muffled through the closed windows, calling her indoors, exasperated him greatly.

'Why don't that extravagant fellow get you a servant?' he asked impatiently one mild afternoon. She had thrown something over her head to run out for a while.

'I don't know,' said the pale Bessie, wearily, staring away with her heavy-lidded, grey, and unexpectant glance. There were always smudgy shadows under her eyes, and she did not seem able to see any change or any end to her life.

'You wait till you get married, my dear,' said her only friend, drawing closer to the fence. 'Harry will get you one.'

His hopeful craze seemed to mock her own want of hope with so bitter an aptness that in her nervous irritation she could have screamed at him outright. But she only

said in self-mockery, and speaking to him as though he had been sane, 'Why, Captain Hagberd, your son may not even want to look at me.'

He flung his head back and laughed his throaty affected cackle of anger.

'What! That boy? Not want to look at the only sensible girl for miles around? What do you think I am here for, my dear—my dear—my dear? What? You wait. You just wait. You'll see tomorrow. I'll soon—'

'Bessie! Bessie! Bessie!' howled old Carvil inside. 'Bessie!—my pipe!' That fat blind man had given himself up to a very lust of laziness. He would not lift his hand to reach for the things she took care to leave at his very elbow. He would not move a limb; he would not rise from his chair, he would not put one foot before another in that parlour (where he knew his way as well as if he had his sight) without calling her to his side and hanging all his atrocious weight on her shoulder. He would not eat one single mouthful of food without her close attendance. He had made himself helpless beyond his affliction, to enslave her better. She stood still for a moment, setting her teeth in the dusk, then turned and walked slowly indoors.

Stop and Think

1. What was the point of similarity between Captain Hagberd and old Mr Carvil?
2. Why did Bessie sometimes show signs of irritation and disgust?

Captain Hagberd went back to his spade. The shouting in Carvil's cottage stopped, and after a while the window of the parlour downstairs was lit up. A man coming from the end of the street with a firm leisurely step passed on, but seemed to have caught sight of Captain Hagberd, because he turned back a pace or two. A cold white light lingered in the western sky. The man leaned over the gate in an interested manner.

'You must be Captain Hagberd,' he said, with easy assurance.

The old man spun round, pulling out his spade, startled by the strange voice.

'Yes, I am,' he answered nervously.

The other, smiling straight at him, uttered very slowly: 'You've been advertising for your son, I believe?'

'My son Harry,' mumbled Captain Hagberd, off his guard for once. 'He's coming home tomorrow.'

'The devil he is!' The stranger marvelled greatly, and then went on, with only a slight change of tone: 'You've grown a beard like Father Christmas himself.'

Captain Hagberd drew a little nearer, and leaned forward over his spade. 'Go your way', he said, resentfully and timidly at the same time, because he was always afraid of being laughed at. Every mental state, even madness, has its equilibrium based upon self-esteem. Its disturbance causes unhappiness: and Captain Hagberd lived amongst a scheme of settled notions which it pained him to feel disturbed by people's grins. Yes, people's grins were awful. They hinted at something wrong: but what? He could not tell; and that stranger was obviously grinning—had come on purpose to grin. It was bad enough on the streets, but he had never before been outraged like this.

The stranger, unaware how near he was of having his head laid open with a spade, said seriously: 'I am not trepassing where I stand, am I? I fancy there's something wrong about your news. Suppose you let me come in.'

'*You* come in!' murmured old Hagberd, with inexpressible horror.

'I could give you some real information about your son—the very latest tip, if you care to hear.'

'No,' shouted Hagberd. He began to pace wildly to and fro, he shouldered his spade, he gesticulated with his other arm. 'Here's a fellow—a grinning fellow, who says there's something wrong. I've got more information than you're aware of. I've all the information I want. I've had it for years—for years—for years—enough to last me till to-morrow. Let you come in, indeed! What would Harry say?'

Bessie Carvil's figure appeared in black silhouette on the parlour window: then, with the sound of an opening

door, flitted out before the other cottage, all black, but with something white over her head. These two voices beginning to talk suddenly outside (she had heard them indoors) had given her such an emotion that she could not utter a sound.

Captain Hagberd seemed to be trying to find his way out of a cage. His feet squelched in the puddles left by his industry. He stumbled in the holes of the ruined grass-plot. He ran blindly against the fence.

'Here, steady a bit!' said the man at the gate, gravely, stretching his arm over and catching him by the sleeve. 'Somebody's been trying to get at you. Hallo! what's this rig you've got on? Storm canvas, by George!' He had a big laugh. 'Well, you are a character!'

Captain Hagberd jerked himself free, and began to back away shrinkingly. 'For the present,' he muttered, in a crestfallen tone.

'What's the matter with him?' The stranger addressed Bessie with the utmost familiarity, in a deliberate, explanatory tone. 'I didn't want to startle the old man'. He lowered his voice as though he had known her for years. 'I dropped into a barber's on my way, to get a two penny shave, and they told me there he was something of a character. The old man has been a character all his life.'

Captain Hagberd, daunted by the allusion to his clothing, had retreated inside, taking his spade with him; and the two at the gate, startled by the unexpected slamming of the door, heard the bolts being shot, the snapping of the lock, and the echo of an affected gurgling laugh within.

'I didn't want to upset him,' the man said, after a short silence. 'What's the meaning of all this? He isn't quite crazy?'

'He has been worrying a long time about his lost son,' said Bessie, in a low, apologetic tone.

'Well, I am his son.'

'Harry!' she cried—and was profoundly silent.

'Know my name? Friends with the old man, eh?'

'He's our landlord,' Bessie faltered out, catching hold of the iron railing.

'Owns both them rabbit-hutches, does he?' commented young Hagberd scornfully: 'just the thing he would be proud of. Can you tell me who's that chap coming tomorrow? You must know something of it. I tell you, it's a swindle on the old man—nothing else.'

She did not answer, helpless before an insurmountable difficulty, appalled before the necessity, the impossibility and the dread of an explanation in which she and madness seemed involved together.

'Oh—I am so sorry,' she murmured.

'What's the matter?' he said, with serenity. 'You needn't be afraid of upsetting me. It's the other fellow that'll be upset when he least expects it. I don't care a hang; but there will be some fun when he shows his mug tomorrow. I don't care *that* for the old man's pieces, but right is right. You shall see me put a head on that coon—whoever he is!'

He had come nearer, and towered above her on the other side of the railings. He glanced at her hands. He fancied she was trembling, and it occurred to him that she had her part perhaps in that little game that was to be sprung on his old man tomorrow. He had come just in time to spoil their sport. He was entertained by the idea—scornful of the baffled plot. But all his life he had been full of indulgence for all sorts of women's tricks; she really was trembling very much; her wrap had slipped off her head. 'Poor devil!' he thought. 'Never mind about that chap. I daresay he'll change his mind before tomorrow. But what about me? I can't loaf about the gate till the morning.'

She burst out: 'It is *you*—you yourself that he's waiting for. It is *you* who come tomorrow.'

He murmured 'Oh! It's me!' blankly, and they seemed to become breathless together. Apparently he was pondering over what he had heard; then, without irritation, but evidently perplexed, he said: 'I don't understand. I hadn't written or anything. It's my chum who saw the paper and told me—this very morning... Eh? what?'

He bent his ear; she whispered rapidly, and he listened for a while, muttering the words 'yes' and 'I see' at times. Then, 'But why won't today do?' he queried at last.

'You didn't understand me!' she exclaimed impatiently. The clear streak of light under the clouds died out in the west. Again he stooped slightly to hear better; and the deep night buried everything of the whispering woman and the attentive man, except the familiar contiguity of their faces, with its air of secrecy and caress.

He squared his shoulders; the broad-brimmed shadow of a hat sat cavalierly on his head. 'Awkward, this, eh?' he appealed to her. 'Tomorrow? Well, well! Never heard tell of anything like this. It's all tomorrow, then, without any sort of today, as far as I can see.'

She remained still and mute.

'And you have been encouraging this funny notion,' he said.

'I never contradicted him.'

'Why didn't you?'

'What for should I?' she defended herself. 'It would only have made him miserable. He would have gone out of his mind.'

'His mind!' he muttered, and heard a short nervous laugh from her.

'Where was the harm? Was I to quarrel with the poor old man? It was easier to half believe it myself.'

'Aye, aye,' he meditated intelligently. 'I suppose the old chap got around you somehow with his soft talk. You are good-hearted.'

Her hands moved up in the dark nervously. 'And it might have been true. It was true. It has come. Here it is. This is the tomorrow we have been waiting for.'

She drew a breath, and he said good-humouredly: 'Aye, with the door shut. I wouldn't care if... And you think he could be brought round to recognise me... Eh? What?... You could do it? In a week you say? H'm, I daresay you could—but do you think I could hold out a week in this dead-alive place? Not me. I want either hard work, or an all-fired racket, or more space than there is in the whole of England. I have been in this place, though, once before, and for more than a week. The old man was advertising for me then, and a chum I had with me had a notion of getting

a couple of quid out of him by writing a lot of silly nonsense in a letter. That lark did not come off, though. We had to clear out—and none too soon. But this time I've a chum waiting for me in London, and besides...'

Bessie Carvel was breathing quickly.

'What if 1 tried a knock at the door?' he suggested.

'Try,' she said.

Captain Hagberd's gate squeaked, and the shadow of his son moved on, then stopped with another deep laugh in the throat, like the father's, only soft and gentle, thrilling to the woman's heart, awakening to her ears.

'He isn't frisky—is he? I would be afraid to lay hold of him. The chaps are always telling me I don't know my own strength.'

'He's the most harmless creature that ever lived,' she interrupted.

'You wouldn't say so if you had seen him chasing me upstairs with a hard leather strap,' he said; 'I haven't forgotten it in sixteen years.'

She got warm from head to foot under another soft subdued laugh. At the rat-tat-tat of the knocker her heart flew into her mouth.

'Hey, dad! Let me in. I am Harry, I am. Straight! Come back home a day too soon.'

One of the windows upstairs ran up.

'A grinning information fellow,' said the voice of old Hagberd, up in the darkness. 'Don't you have anything to do with him. It will spoil everything.'

She heard Harry Hagberd say, 'Hallo, dad', then a clanging clatter. The window rumbled down, and he stood before her again.

'It's just like old times. Nearly walloped the life out of me to stop me going away, and now I come back he throws a confounded shovel at my head to keep me out. It grazed my shoulder.'

Stop and Think

1. Who was the stranger who met Captain Hagberd? What was the Captain's reaction to the meeting?
2. What did young Hagberd think it meant when old Hagberd said that his son would be coming home 'tomorrow'?
3. What reasons did Bessie give for encouraging old Hagberd in his insane hopes?

She shuddered.

'I wouldn't care,' he began, 'only I spent my last shillings on the railway fare and my last twopence on a shave—out of respect for the old man.'

'Are you really Harry Hagberd?' she asked swiftly. 'Can you prove it?'

'Can I prove it? Can any one else prove it?' he said jovially. 'Prove with what? What do I want to prove? There isn't a single corner in the world, barring England, perhaps, where you could not find some man, or more likely a woman, that would remember me for Harry Hagberd. I am more like Harry Hagberd than any man alive: and I can prove it to you in a minute, if you will let me step inside your gate.'

'Come in,' she said.

He entered then the front garden of the Carvils. His tall shadow strode with a swagger; she turned her back on the window and waited, watching the shape, of which the footfalls seemed the most material part. The light fell on a tilted hat; a powerful shoulder, that seemed to cleave the darkness; on a leg stepping out. He swung about and stood still, facing the illuminated parlour window at her back, turning his head from side to side, laughing softly to himself.

'Just fancy, for a minute, the old man's beard stuck on to my chin. Hey? Now say. I was the very spit of him from a boy.'

'It's true,' she murmured to herself.

'And that's about as far as it goes. He was always one of your domestic characters. Why, I remember how he used

to go about looking very sick for three days before he had to leave home on one of his trips to South Shields for coal. He had a standing charter from the gas-works. You would think he was off on a whaling cruise—three years and a tail. Ha, ha! Not a bit of it. Ten days on the outside. The *Skimmer of the Seas* was a smart craft. Fine name, wasn't it? Mother's uncle owned her...'

He interrupted himself, and in a lowered voice, 'Did he ever tell you what mother died of?' he asked.

'Yes,' said Miss Bessie, bitterly. 'From impatience.'

He made no sound for a while; then brusquely: 'They were so afraid I would turn out badly that they fairly drove me away. Mother nagged at me for being idle, and the old man said he would cut my soul out of my body rather than let me go to sea. Well, it looked as if he would do it too—so I went. It looks to me sometimes as if I had been born to them by a mistake—in that other hutch of a house.'

'Where ought you to have been born by rights?' Bessie Carvil interrupted him defiantly.

'In the open, upon a beach, on a windy night,' he said, quick as lightning. Then he mused slowly. 'They were characters, both of them, by George; and the old man keeps it up well—don't he? A damned shovel on the—Hark! who's that making that row? "Bessie, Bessie." It's in your house.'

'It's for me,' she said with indifference.

He stepped aside, out of the streak of light. 'Your husband?' he inquired, with the tone of a man accustomed to unlawful trysts. 'Fine voice for a ship's deck in a thundering squall.'

'No; my father. I am not married.'

'You seem a fine girl, Miss Bessie dear,' he said at once.

She turned her face away.

'Oh, I say,—what's up? Who's murdering him?'

'He wants his tea.' She faced him, still and tall, with averted head, with her hands hanging clasped before her.

'Hadn't you better go in?' he suggested, after watching for a while the nape of her neck, a patch of dazzling white skin and soft shadow above the sombre line of her

shoulders. Her wrap had slipped down to her elbows. 'You'll have all the town coming out presently. I'll wait here a bit.'

Her wrap fell to the ground, and he stooped to pick it up: she had vanished. He threw it over his arm, and approaching the window squarely he saw a monstrous form of a fat man in an armchair, an unshaded lamp, the yawning of an enormous mouth in a big feat face encircled by a ragged halo of hair,—Miss Bessie's head and bust. The shouting stopped; the blind ran down. He lost himself in thinking how awkward it was. Father mad; no getting into the house. No money to get back; a hungry chum in London who would begin to think he had been given the go-by. 'Damn!' he muttered. He could break the door in, certainly; but they would perhaps bundle him into chokey for that without asking questions—no great matter, only he was confoundedly afraid of being locked up, even in mistake. He turned cold at the thought. He stamped his feet on the sodden grass.

'What are you?—a sailor?' said an agitated voice.

She had flitted out, a shadow herself, attracted by the reckless shadow waiting under the wall of her home.

'Anything. Enough of a sailor to be worth my salt before the mast. Came home that way this time.'

'Where do you come from?' she asked.

'Right away from a jolly good spree,' he said, 'by the London train—see? Ough! I hate being shut up in a train. I don't mind a house so much.'

'Ah,' she said; 'that's lucky.'

'Because in a house you can at any time open the blamed door and walk away straight before you.'

'And never come back?'

'Not for sixteen years at least,' he laughed. 'To a rabbit hutch, and get a confounded old shovel...'

'A ship is not so very big,' she taunted.

'No, but the sea is great.'

She dropped her head, and as if her ears had been opened to the voices of the world, she heard beyond the rampart of sea-wall the swell of yesterday's gale breaking on the beach with monotonous and solemn vibrations, as if all the earth had been a tolling bell.

'And then, why, a ship's a ship. You love her and leave her; and a voyage isn't a marriage.' He quoted the sailor's saying lightly.

'It is not a marriage,' she whispered.

'I never took a false name, and I've never yet told a lie to a woman. What lie? Why, *the* lie—. Take me or leave me, I say: and if you take me, then it is...' He hummed a snatch very low, leaning against the wall.

Oh, oh, ho! Rio!...
And fare thee well,
My bonnie young girl,
We're bound to Rio... Grande.

'Capstan song,' he explained. Her teeth chattered.

'You are cold,' he said. 'Here's that affair of yours I picked up.' She felt his hands about her, wrapping her closely. 'Hold the ends together in front,' he commanded.

'What did you come here for?' she asked, repressing a shudder.

'Five quid,' he answered promptly. 'We let our spree go on a little too long and got hard up.'

'You've been drinking?' she said.

'Blind three days; on purpose. I am not given that way—don't you think. There's nothing and nobody that can get over me unless I like. I can be as steady as a rock. My chum sees the paper this morning and says he to me: "Go on, Harry: loving parent. That's five quid sure." So we scraped all our pockets for the fare. Devil of a lark!'

'You have a hard heart, I am afraid,' she sighed.

'What for? For running away? Why! he wanted to make a lawyer's clerk of me—just to please himself. Master in his own house; and my poor mother egged him on—for my good, I suppose. Well, then—so long; and I went. No, I tell you: the day I cleared out, I was all black and blue from his great fondness for me. Ah! he was always a bit of a character. Look at that shovel, now. Off his chump? Not much. That's just exactly like my dad. He wants me here just to have somebody to order about. However, we two were hard up; and what's five quid to him—once in sixteen hard years?'

'Oh, but I am sorry for you. Did you never wait to come back home?'

'Be a lawyer's clerk and rot here—in some such place as this?' he cried in contempt. 'What! if the old man set me up in a home today, I would kick it down about my ears—or else die there before the third day was out.'

'And where else is it that you hope to die?'

'In the bush somewhere; in the sea; on a blamed mountain-top for choice. At home? Yes! the world's my home; but I expect I'll die in a hospital some day. What of that? Any place is good enough, as long as I've lived; and I've been everything you can think of almost but a tailor or soldier. I've been a boundary rider; I've sheared sheep; and humped my swag; and harpooned a whale. I've rigged ships, and prospected for gold, and skinned dead bullocks,—and turned my back on more money than the old man would have scraped in his whole life. Ha, ha!'

He overwhelmed her. She pulled herself together and managed to utter, 'Time to rest now.'

He straightened himself up, away from the wall, and in a severe voice said, 'Time to go.'

But he did not move. He leaned back again, and hummed thoughtfully a bar or two of an outlandish tune.

She felt as if she were about to cry. 'That's another of your cruel songs,' she said.

'Learned it in Mexico—in Sonora.' He talked easily. 'It is the song of the Gambusinos. You don't know? The song of restless men. Nothing could hold them in one place—not even a woman. You used to meet one of them now and again, in the old days, on the edge of the gold country, away north there beyond the Rio Gila. I've seen it. A prospecting engineer in Mazatlan took me along with him to help look after the waggons. A sailor's a handy chap to have about you anyhow. It's all a desert: cracks in the earth that you can't see the bottom of; and mountains—sheer rocks standing up high like walls and church spires, only a hundred times bigger. The valleys are full of boulders and black stones. There's not a blade of grass to see; and the sun sets more red over that country than I have seen it anywhere—blood-red and angry. It *is* fine.'

'You do not want to go back there again?' she stammered out.

He laughed a little. 'No. That's the blamed gold country. It gave me the shivers sometimes to look at it—and we were a big lot of men together, mind; but these Gambusinos wandered alone. They knew that country before anybody had ever heard of it. They had a sort of gift for prospecting, and the fever of it was on them too; and they did not seem to want the gold very much. They would find some rich spot, and then turn their backs on it; pick up perhaps a little—enough for a spree—and then be off again, looking for more. They never stopped long where there were houses: they had no wife, no chick, no home, never a chum. You couldn't be friends with a Gambusino; they were too restless—here today, and gone, God knows where, to-morrow. They told no one of their finds, and there has never been a Gambusino well off. It was not for the gold they cared; it was the wandering about looking for it in the stony country that got into them and wouldn't let them rest: so that no woman yet born could hold a Gambusino for more than a week. That's what the song says. It's all about a pretty girl that tried hard to keep hold of a Gambusino lover, so that he should bring her lots of gold. No fear! Off he went, and she never saw him again.'

'What became of her?' she breathed out.

'The song don't tell. Cried a bit, I daresay. They were the fellows: kiss and go. But it's the looking for a thing—a something... Sometimes I think I am a sort of Gambusino myself.'

'No woman can hold you, then, she began in a brazen voice, which quavered suddenly before the end.

'No longer than a week,' he joked, playing upon her very heartstrings with the gay, tender note of his laugh; 'and yet I am fond of them all. Anything for a woman of the right sort. The scrapes they got me into, and the scrapes they got me out of! I love them at first sight. I've fallen in love with you already, Miss—Bessie's your name—eh?'

She backed away a little, and with a trembling laugh: 'You haven't seen my face yet.'

He bent forward gallantly. 'A little pale: it suits some. But you are a fine figure of a girl. Miss Bessie.'

She was all in a flutter. Nobody had ever said so much to her before.

Stop and Think

1. What makes Bessie convinced that the young man is indeed Harry?
2. What kind of life had Harry lived after he left home?

His tone changed. 'I am getting middling hungry, though. Had no breakfast today. Couldn't you scare up some bread from that tea for me, or—'

She was gone already. He had been on the point of asking her to let him come inside. No matter. Anywhere would do. Devil of a fix! What would his chum think?

'I didn't ask you as a beggar,' he said jestingly, taking a piece of bread-and-butter from the plate she held before him. 'I asked as a friend. My dad is rich, you know.'

'He starves himself for your sake.'

'And I have starved for his whim,' he said, taking up another piece.

'All he has in the world is for you,' she pleaded.

'Yes, if I come here to sit on it like a dam' toad in a hole. Thank you; and what about the shovel, eh? He always had a queer way of showing his love.'

'I could bring him round in a week,' she suggested timidly.

He was too hungry to answer her; and, holding the plate submissively to his hand, she began to whisper up to him in a quick, panting voice. He listened, amazed, eating slower and slower, till at last his jaws stopped altogether. 'That's his game, is it?' he said, in a rising tone of scathing contempt. An ungovernable movement of his arm sent the plate flying out of her fingers. He shot out a violent curse.

She shrank from him, putting her hand against the wall.

'No!' he raged. 'He expects! Expects *me*—for his rotten money!... Who wants his home? Mad—not he! Don't you

think. He wants his own way. He wanted to turn me into a miserable lawyer's clerk, and now he wants to make of me a blamed tame rabbit in a cage. Of me! Of me! His subdued angry laugh frightened her now.

'The whole world ain't a bit too big for me to spread my elbows in, I can tell you—what's your name—Bessie—let alone a dam' parlour in a hutch. Marry! He wants me to marry and settle! And as likely as not he has looked out the girl too—dash my soul! And do you know the Judy, may I ask?'

She shook all over with noiseless dry sobs; but he was fuming and fretting too much to notice her distress. He bit his thumb with rage at the mere idea. A window rattled up.

'A grinning, information fellow,' pronounced old Hagberd dogmatically, in measured tones. And the sound of his voice seemed to Bessie to make the night itself mad—to pour insanity and disaster on the earth. 'Now I know what's wrong with the people here, my dear. Why, of course! With this mad chap going about. Don't you have anything to do with him, Bessie. Bessie, I say!'

They stood as if dumb. The old man fidgeted and mumbled to himself at the window. Suddenly he cried piercingly: 'Bessie—I see you. I'll tell Harry.'

She made a movement as if to run away, but stopped and raised her hands to her temples. Young Hagberd, shadowy and big, stirred no more than a man of bronze. Over their heads the crazy night whimpered and scolded in an old man's voice.

'Send him away, my dear. He's only a vagabond. What you want is a good home of your own. That chap has no home—he's not like Harry. He can't be Harry. Harry is coming tomorrow. Do you hear? One day more,' he babbled more excitedly; 'never you fear—Harry shall marry you.'

His voice rose very shrill and mad against the regular deep soughing of the swell coiling heavily about the outer face of the sea-wall.

Stop and Think

1. What does Bessie tell Harry about his father's plans for him?
2. What did Captain Hagberd call out to Bessie from the window?

'He will have to. I shall make him, or if not'—he swore a great oath—'I'll cut him off with a shilling tomorrow, and leave everything to you. I shall. To you. Let him starve.'

The window rattled down.

Harry drew a deep breath, and took one step towards Bessie. 'So it's you—the girl,' he said, in a lowered voice. She had not moved, and she remained half turned away from him, pressing her head in the palms of her hands. 'My word!' he continued, with an invisible half-smile on his lips. 'I have a great mind to stop...'

Her elbows were trembling violently.

'For a week,' he finished without a pause.

She clapped her hands to her face.

He came up quite close, and took hold of her wrists gently. She felt his breath on her ear.

'It's a scrape I am in—this, and it is you that must see me through.' He was trying to uncover her face. She resisted. He let her go then, and stepping back a little, 'Have you got any money?' he asked. 'I must be off now.'

She nodded quickly her shamefaced head, and he waited, looking away from her, where, trembling all over and bowing her neck, she tried to find the pocket of her dress.

'Here it is!' she whispered. 'Oh, go away! go away for God's sake! If I had more—more—I would give it all to forget—to make you forget.'

He extended his hand. 'No fear! I haven't forgotten a single one of you in the world. Some gave me more than money—but I am a beggar now—and you women always had to get me out of my scrapes.'

He swaggered up to the parlour window, and in the dim light filtering through the blind, looked at the coin lying in his palm. It was a half-sovereign. He slipped it

into his pocket. She stood a little on one side, with her head drooping, as if wounded; with her arms hanging passive by her side, as if dead.

'You can't buy me in,' he said, 'and you can't buy yourself out.'

He set his hat firmly with a little tap, and next moment she felt herself lifted up in the powerful embrace of his arms. Her feet lost the ground; her head hung back; he showered kisses on her face with a silent and overmastering ardour, as if in haste to get at her very soul. He kissed her pale cheeks, her hard forehead, her heavy eyelids, her faded lips; and the measured blows and sighs of the rising tide accompanied the enfolding power of his arms, the overwhelming might of his caresses. It was as if the sea, breaking down the wall protecting all the homes of the town, had sent a wave over her head. It passed on; she staggered backwards, with her shoulders against the wall, exhausted, as if she had been stranded there after a storm and a shipwreck.

She opened her eyes after a while; and, listening to the firm, leisurely footsteps going away with their conquest, began to gather her skirts, staring all the time before her. Suddenly she darted through the open gate into the dark and deserted street.

'Stop!' she shouted. 'Don't go!'

And listening with an attentive poise of the head, she could not tell whether it was the beat of the swell or his fateful tread that seemed to fall cruelly upon her heart. Presently every sound grew fainter, as though she were slowly turning into stone. A fear of this awful silence came to her—worse than the fear of death. She called upon her ebbing strength for the final appeal:

'Harry!'

Not even the dying echo of a footstep. Nothing. The thundering of the surf, the voice of the restless sea itself, seemed stopped. There was not a sound—no whisper of life, as though she were alone, and lost in that stony country of which she had heard, where madmen go looking for gold and spurn the find.

Captain Hagberd, inside his dark house, had kept on the alert. A window ran up; and in the silence of the stony country a voice spoke above her head, high up in the black air—the voice of madness, lies and despair—the voice of inextinguishable hope. 'Is he gone yet—that information fellow? Do you hear him about, my dear?'

She burst into tears. 'No! no! no! I don't hear him any more,' she sobbed.

He began to chuckle up there triumphantly. 'You frightened him away. Good girl. Now we shall be all right. Don't you be impatient, my dear. One day more.'

In the other house old Carvil, wallowing regally in his arm-chair, with a globe lamp burning by his side on the table, yelled for her in a fiendish voice: 'Bessie! Bessie! You, Bessie!'

She heard him at last, and, as if overcome by fate, began to totter silently back towards her stuffy little inferno of a cottage. It had no lofty portal, no terrific inscription of forfeited hopes—she did not understand wherein she had sinned.

Captain Hagberd had gradually worked himself into a state of noisy happiness up there.

'Go in! Keep quiet!' she turned upon him tearfully, from the doorstep below.

He rebelled against her authority in his great joy at having got rid at last of that 'something wrong'. It was as if all the hopeful madness of the world had broken out to bring terror upon her heart, with the voice of that old man shouting of his trust in an everlasting tomorrow.

Understanding the Text

1. What is the consistency one finds in the old man's madness?
2. How does Captain Hagberd prepare for Harry's homecoming?
3. How did Bessie begin to share Hagberd's insanity regarding his son?
4. What were Harry's reasons for coming to meet old Hagberd?
5. Why does Harry's return prove to be a disappointment for Bessie?

Talking about the Text

Discuss in small groups or pairs

1. 'Every mental state, even madness, has its equilibrium based upon self-esteem. Its disturbance causes unhappiness'.
2. Joyce's 'Eveline' and Conrad's 'Tomorrow' are thematically similar.

Appreciation

1. Comment on the technique used by the author to unfold the story of Captain Hagberd's past.
2. Identify instances in the story in which you find streaks of insanity in people other than Hagberd. What implications do they suggest?

Language Work

A. Figures of speech: Allusion

Notice the comparison in the following sentence

With his maritime rig, his weather-beaten face, his beard *of Father Neptune*, he resembled a deposed *sea-god who had exchanged the trident for the spade.*

In this sentence there is a comparison made between Hagberd and Neptune, the god of sea in Roman mythology who is shown with a trident in his hand.

The figure of speech which makes a casual or indirect reference to a famous historical or literary event or figure is called *allusion.*

TASK

Pick out one or two other examples of allusion from the story and comment briefly on the comparison made.

B. Pronunciation

- Words often have a different stress pattern when their grammatical function changes. Read the following words

Verb	Noun
ˈinform	inforˈmation
ˈhesitate	hesiˈtation

Task

Now complete the columns below and mark the syllable that receives primary stress.

Verb	Noun
present	.....
examine	.....
.....	production
calculate	.....
.....	distribution
specialise	.....

Suggested Reading

'An Outpost of Progress' by Joseph Conrad

Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad.

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5

One Centimetre

Bi Shu-min
Born 1952

Bi Shu-min has been serving her country, China, as a doctor for over twenty years. She also has a Master's degree in literature from the Beijing Teacher's College.

Bi Shu-min is one of the best known writers currently working in China. Her works have been translated into many languages. She has won innumerable literary awards both in China and in Taiwan. 'One Centimetre' is a fine example of a mature artist working at the height of her powers.

When Tao Ying rides on the bus alone, quite often she does not bother to buy a ticket.

Why should she? Without her, the bus would still be stopping at every stop, a driver and a conductor would still have to be employed, and the same amount of petrol used.

Clearly Tao Ying has to be astute. When the bus conductor looked like the responsible type, she would buy a ticket as soon as she got on board. But if he appeared to be casual and careless, she would not dream of paying, considering it a small punishment for him and a little saving for herself.

Tao Ying works as a cook in the canteen of a factory. She spends all day next to an open fire, baking screw-shaped wheat cakes with sesame butter.

Today she is with her son Xiao Ye. She follows him onto the bus. As the doors shut her jacket is caught, ballooning up like a tent behind her. She twists this way and that, finally wrenching herself free.

'Mama, tickets!' Xiao Ye says. Children are often more conscious of rituals than adults. Without a ticket in his hand, the ride doesn't count as a proper ride.

On the peeling paint of the door somebody has painted the shape of a pale finger. It points at a number: 1.10 m.

Xiao Ye pushed through. His hair looks as fluffy as a bundle of straw—dry and without lustre. As a rule, Tao Ying is very careful with her purse, but she has never skimped on her child's diet. Nonetheless the goodness in his food refuses to advance beyond his hairline. As a result Xiao Ye is healthy and clever, but his hair is a mess.

Tao Ying tries to smooth it down, as if she was brushing away topsoil to get to a firm foundation. She can feel the softness of her son's skull, rubbery and elastic to the touch. Apparently there is a gap on the top of everyone's head, where the two halves meet. If they don't meet properly, a person can end up with a permanently gaping mouth. Even when the hemispheres are a perfect match, it still takes a while for them to seal. This is the door to life itself—if it remains open, the world outside will feel like water, flowing into the body through this slit. Every time Tao Ying happens upon this aperture on her son's head, she would be overwhelmed by a sense of responsibility. It was she who had brought this delicate creature into the world after all. Although she senses her own insignificance in the world, that her existence makes no difference to anyone else, she also realises that to this little boy she is the centre of the universe and she must try to be the most perfect, flawless mother possible.

Between Xiao Ye's round head and the tip of the painted digit setting out the height requirement for a ticket rests the beautiful slender fingers of Tao Ying. Since she is in contact with oil all day, her nails are shiny, glistening like the smooth curved back of a sea shell.

'Xiao Ye, you are not quite tall enough, still one centimetre away,' she tells him softly. Tao Ying does not come from a privileged background, and has not read very many books. But she likes to be gentle and gracious, to set an example for her son and make a good impression. This

elevates her sense of self-worth and makes her feel like an aristocrat.

'Mama! I'm tall enough, I'm tall enough!' Xiao Ye shouts at the top of his voice, stamping on the floor as if it were a tin drum. 'You told me the last time I could have a ticket the next time, this is the next time. You don't keep your word!' He looks up at his mother angrily.

Tao Ying looks down at her son. A ticket costs twenty cents. Twenty cents is not to be scoffed at. It can buy a cucumber, two tomatoes or, at a reduced price, three bunches of radishes or enough spinach to last four days. But Xiao Ye's face is raised up like a half-open blossom, waiting to receive his promise from the sun.

'Get in! Don't block the entrance! This is not a train, where you stand from Beijing to Bao Ding. We're almost at the next stop...!' the conductor bellows.

Normally, an outburst like this would certainly have discouraged Tao Ying from buying a ticket. But today she says, 'Two tickets, please.'

The fierce conductor has beady eyes. 'This child is one centimetre short of requiring a ticket.'

Xiao Ye shrinks, not just one but several centimetres—the need for a ticket has all of a sudden become interwoven with the pride of a small child.

To be able to purchase self-esteem with twenty cents is something that can only happen in childhood and certainly no mother can resist an opportunity to make her son happy.

'I would like to buy two tickets,' she says politely.

Xiao Ye holds the two tickets close to his lips and blows, making a sound like a paper windmill.

They had entered through the central doors of the bus, but alight towards the front. Here another conductor is poised to examine their tickets. Tao Ying thinks that this man can't be very bright. What mother accompanied by a child would try to avoid paying the correct fare? However poor she would never have allowed herself to lose face in front of her own son.

She hands over the tickets nonchalantly. The conductor asks: 'Are you going to claim these back?' 'No.' In fact Tao Ying ought to have kept the tickets so that the next time there is a picnic or an outing at work she could use her bicycle and then claim back the fare with the stubs. Both she and her husband are blue-collar workers, and any saving would have been a help. But Xiao Ye is a smart boy, and might well question her aloud, 'Mama, can we claim back tickets even when we are on a private outing?' In front of the child, she would never lie.

It is exhausting to follow rules dictated by parental guide-books all the time, but Tao Ying is determined to be the ideal mother and create a perfect example for her son to look up to. She needs really to concentrate—living this way is not unlike carrying an audience with you wherever you go. But her actions are full of love and tenderness. For instance, whenever she eats a watermelon in front of Xiao Ye, she would take care not to bite too close to the rind even though she doesn't actually think there is much difference between the flesh and the skin. True, the sweetness gradually diminishes as you work your way through the red towards the green, but every part of the melon is equally refreshing. In any case the skin of a melon is supposed to have a beneficial cooling effect, and is often used as medicine.

One day, she came across her son eating a melon in the same manner she did. When Xiao Ye looked up, Tao Ying could see a white melon seed stuck to his forehead. She was furious: 'Who taught you to gnaw at a melon like that? Are you going to wash your face in it too?' Xiao Ye was terrified. The small hand holding the melon began to tremble, but the big round eyes remained defiant.

Children are the best imitators in the world. From then on Tao Ying realised that if she wanted her son to behave as if he were the product of a cultured home, then she must concentrate and never fail in her own example. This was very difficult, like 'shooting down aeroplanes with a small gun'—but with determination, she knew that nothing was impossible. With this clear objective in mind,

Tao Ying found her life becoming more focused, more challenging.

Stop and Think

1. What made Tao Ying decide whether to buy a ticket or not when she rode a bus alone?
2. Why did she insist on buying tickets both for herself and her son that day?

Today she is taking Xiao Ye to visit a big temple. He has never seen the Buddha before. Tao Ying is not a believer and she does not intend to ask him to kow-tow. That is superstition, she knows.

The tickets cost five dollars a piece—these days even temples are run like businesses. Tao Ying's ticket was a gift from Lao Chiang, who worked at the meat counter. The ticket was valid for a month, and today was the last day. Lao Chiang was one of those people who seemed to know everybody. Occasionally he would produce a battered coverless month-old magazine and say: 'Seen this before? This is called the Big Reference, not meant for the eyes of the common people.' Tao Ying had never seen anything like this before and wondered how such a small rag, smaller even than a regular newspaper, could be called a Big Reference. She asked Lao Chiang but he seemed confused. He said everybody called it that—perhaps if you were to take out the pages and laid them flat they would end up bigger than a normal newspaper. It seemed to make sense. Studying this publication written in large print, Tao Ying could see that it was full of speculation about the war in the Middle East. Foremost on everyone's mind seemed to be whether the export of dates from Iraq to China would continue as it did in the sixties during the famine. In any case, Tao Ying was full of admiration for Lao Chiang. In return for her indiscriminate respect, Lao Chiang decided to reward her with a ticket for the temple. 'Is there just the one?' Tao asked, not without gratitude but with some uncertainty. 'Forget your husband, take your son and open his eyes! Children under 110 centimeters do not need a

ticket. If you don't want to go, sell it at the door and you'll earn enough to buy a couple of watermelons!' Lao Chiang had always been a practical man.

Tao Ying decided to take the day off and go on an outing with Xiao Ye.

It is rare to find such a large patch of grass in the middle of the city. Even before they got there, there was something refreshing, something green in the air, as if they were approaching a valley, or a waterfall. Xiao Ye snatches the ticket from his mother's hand, puts it between his lips, and flies towards the gilded gates of the temple. A little animal rushing to quench his thirst.

Tao Ying suddenly feels a little sad. Is the mere attraction of a temple enough for Xiao Ye to abandon his mother? But almost immediately she banishes the thought—hasn't she brought her son here today to make him happy?

The guard at the gate is a young man dressed in a red top and black trousers. Tao Ying feels somehow that he ought to have been in yellow. This uniform makes him look somewhat like a waiter.

Xiao Ye knows exactly what he has to do. Moving amongst the crowd, he seems like a tiny drop of water in the current of a large river.

The young man takes the ticket from his mouth, plucking a leaf from a spring branch.

Tao Ying's gaze softly envelopes her son, a strand of silk unwinding towards him, following his every gesture.

'Ticket.' The youth in red bars her way with one arm, his voice as pithy as if he was spitting out a date stone.

Tao Ying points at her son with infinite tenderness. She feels that everybody should see how lovely he is.

'I am asking for your ticket.' The red youth does not budge.

'Didn't the child just give it to you?' Tao Ying's voice is peaceful. This boy is too young, years away from being a father, she thinks. Tao Ying is not working today and is in a really good mood. She is happy to be patient.

'That was his ticket, now I need to see yours.' The youth remains unmoved.

Tao Ying has to pause for a moment before it sinks in—there are two of them and they need a ticket each.

'I thought that children were exempt?' She is confused.

'Mama, hurry up!' Xiao Ye shouts to her from inside the doors.

'Mama is coming!' Tao Ying shouts back. A crowd is beginning to gather, so many fishes swarming towards a bright light.

Tao Ying starts to panic. She wants this fracas to end, her child is waiting for her.

'Who told you he doesn't need a ticket?' The guard tilts his head—the more onlookers the better.

'It says so on the back of the ticket.'

'Exactly what does it say?' This boy is obviously not a professional.

'It says that children under 110 centimetres do not have to pay.' Tao Ying is full of confidence. She moves to pick up one of the tickets from a box next to the guard and reads out what is printed on the back for all to hear.

'Stop right there!' The youth has turned nasty. Tao Ying realises she should not have touched the box and quickly withdraws her hand.

'So you are familiar with the rules and regulations are you?' Now the young man addresses her with the formal 'you'. Tao Ying detects the sarcasm in his tone but she simply nods.

'Well, your son is over 110 centimetres,' he says with certainty.

'No he isn't.' Tao Ying is still smiling.

Everybody begins to look at the mother with suspicion.

'He just ran past the mark. I saw it clearly.' The guard is equally firm, pointing at a red line on the wall which looks like an earthworm inching across the road after a rainstorm.

'Mama, why are you taking so long? I thought I had lost you!' Xiao Ye shouts to her affectionately. He runs towards his mother, as if she was one of his favourite toys.

The crowd titters. Good, they think, here is proof, the whole matter can be cleared up at once.

The youth is getting a little nervous. He is just doing his job. He is certain he is right. But this woman seems very confident, perhaps that would be awful...

Tao Ying remains calm. In fact, she feels a little smug. Her son loves excitement. This is turning into something of an event so it is bound to delight him.

'Come over here,' the youth commands.

The crowd holds its breath.

Xiao Ye looks at his mother. Tao Ying gives him a little nod. He walks over to the guard graciously, coughs a little, adjusts his jacket. In front of the gaze of the crowd, Xiao Ye is every inch the hero as he approaches the earthworm.

Then—the crowd looks, and sees—the worm comes to Xiao Ye's ear.

How is this possible?

Tao Ying is by his side in two paces. The flat of her hand lands heavily on the little boy's head, making a sound as crisp as a ping-pong ball popping underfoot.

Xiao Ye stares at his mother. He is not crying. He is shocked by the pain. He has never been hit before.

The crowd draws its breath.

'Punishing a child is one thing, hitting him on the head is totally unacceptable!'

'What a way for a mother to behave! So what if you have to buy another ticket? This is a disgrace, hitting a child to cover up your own mistake!'

'She can't be his natural mother...'

Everybody has an opinion.

Tao Ying is feeling a little agitated now. She had not meant to hit Xiao Ye. She meant to smooth down his hair, But she realises that even if Xiao Ye were bald at this instant, he would still be towering above the worm on the wall.

'Xiao Ye, don't stand on tip-toe!' Tao Ying's voice is severe.

'Mama, I'm not...' Xiao Ye begins to cry.

It's true. He isn't. The worm crawls somewhere next to his brow.

The guard stretches himself lazily. His vision is sharp,

he has caught quite a few people who had tried to get through without paying. 'Go get a ticket!' he screams at Tao Ying. All pretence of courtesy has by now been eaten up by the worm.

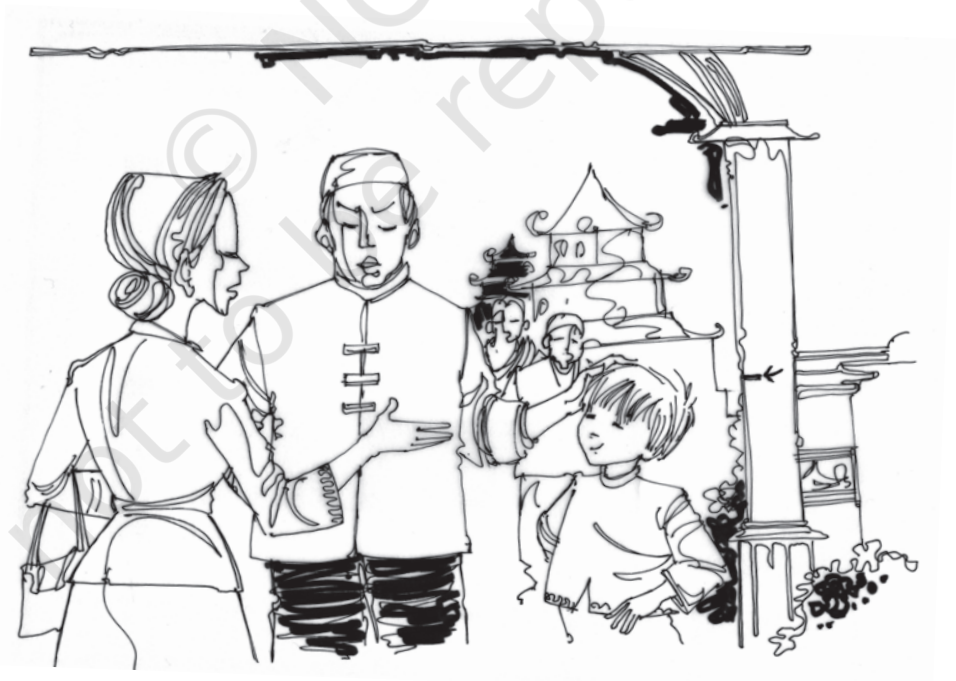
'But my son is less than one meter ten!' Tao Ying insists even though she realises she stands alone.

'Everyone who tries to escape paying always says the same thing. Do you think these people are going to believe you, or are they going to believe me? This is a universally accepted measurement. The International Standard Ruler is in Paris, made of pure platinum. Did you know that?'

Tao is flummoxed. All she knows is that to make a dress she needs two metres eighty centimetres, she does not know where the International Ruler is kept. She is only astonished at the power of the Buddha which can make her son grow several centimetres within minutes!

'But we were on the bus just now and he wasn't as tall…'

'No doubt when he was born he wasn't as tall either!' the youth sneers, chilling the air.



Standing in the middle of the jeering crowd, Tao Ying's face has turned as white as her ticket.

'Mama, what is happening?' Xiao Ye comes away from the earthworm to hold his mother's frozen hand with his own little warm one.

'It's nothing. Mama has forgotten to buy a ticket for you.' Tao Ying can barely speak.

'Forgotten? That's a nice way of putting it! Why don't you forget you have a son as well?' The youth will not forgive her calm confidence of a moment ago.

'What more do you want?' Tao Ying's temper rises. In front of her child, she must preserve her dignity.

'You have a nerve! This is not to do with what I want, clearly you must apologise! God knows how you had managed to get hold of a complimentary ticket in the first place. To get in free is not enough, now you want to sneak in an extra person. Have you no shame? Don't think you can get away with this, go, get yourself a valid ticket!' The youth is now leaning on the wall, facing the crowd as if he is pronouncing an edict from on high.

Tao Ying's hands are trembling like the strings on a *pei-pa.* What should she do? Should she argue with him? She is not afraid of a good fight but she doesn't want her child to be witness to such a scene. For the sake of Xiao Ye, she will swallow her pride.

'Mama is going to buy a ticket. You wait here, don't run off.' Tao Ying tries to smile. This outing is such a rare occasion, whatever happens she mustn't spoil the mood. She is determined to make everything all right.

'Mama, did you really not buy a ticket?' Xiao Ye looks at her, full of surprise and bewilderment. The expression on her child's face frightens her.

She cannot buy this ticket today! If she went ahead, she would never be able to explain herself to her son.

'Let's go!' She gives Xiao Ye a yank. Thankfully the child has strong bones, or his arm might have fallen off.

'Let's go and play in the park.' Tao Ying wants her son to be happy, but the little boy has fallen silent, sullen. Xiao Ye has suddenly grown up.

Stop and Think

1. Did Tao Ying really intend to cheat at the temple?
2. Why did Tao Ying change her intention to buy another ticket?

As they walk past an ice-cream seller, Xiao Ye says, 'Mama, give me money!'

Taking the money, Xiao Ye runs towards an old woman behind the stall and says to her: 'Please measure me!' It is only then that Tao Ying notices the old lady sitting next to a pair of scales for measuring weight and height.

The old woman extends with difficulty the measuring pole, pulling it out centimetre by centimetre.

She strains to make out the numbers: 'One metre eleven.'

Tao Ying begins to wonder if she has encountered a ghost or is her son beginning to resemble a shoot of bamboo, growing every time you look at him?

Something moist begins to glisten in Xiao Ye's eyes. Leaving his mother behind and without a backward glance, he starts to run away. He trips. One moment he is in the air, taking flight like a bird, another and he has dropped to the ground with a heavy thud. Tao Ying rushes over to lend a hand but just as she is about to reach him Xiao Ye has picked himself up and is off again. Tao Ying stops in her tracks. If she gives chase Xiao Ye will only keep falling. Watching her son's vanishing silhouette, her heart begins to break: Xiao Ye, aren't you going to look back at your mother?

Xiao Ye runs for a long time and eventually comes to a halt. He throws a quick glance backwards to find his mother, but the moment he can see her, he takes off once more...

Tao Ying finds the whole incident incomprehensible. She wanders back to the old woman and asks politely: 'Excuse me, these scales you have...'

'My scales are here to make you happy! Don't you want your son to grow tall? Every mother wants her sons to

shoot up, but don't forget when he is tall, that means you'll be old! Mine are flattering scales,' the old woman explains kindly, but Tao Ying remains baffled.

'You see my scales are old and not very accurate and they make people seem lighter than they really are. I have also adjusted it to make them seem taller. These days it is fashionable to be long and lean—mine are fitness scales!' The old woman might be kind, but she is not without cunning.

So that is the reason! Xiao Ye should have heard this speech! But he is a long way away and in any case would he have understood the convoluted logic?

Xiao Ye still looks suspicious, as if mother has turned into a big bad wolf, ready to eat him up. Later when they are back at home, Tao Ying takes out her own tape measure and insists on measuring him again.

'I don't want to! Everybody says I am tall enough except you. It's because you don't want to buy me a ticket, don't think I don't know. If you measure me I am bound to get shorter again. I don't trust you! I don't trust you!'

The yellow tape in Tao Ying's hands has turned into a poisonous viper.

Stop and Think

1. Were the old lady's scales a reliable measure of height and weight? What convoluted logic were her measurements based on?
2. What was the conflict between the mother and son?

***

'Chef! Your cakes look as if they are wearing camouflage uniforms, all black and brown!' a customer queuing in front of her counter shouts out.

The cakes are ruined. They are full of burnt marks, and look like tiny terrapins,

Sorry sorry sorry.

Tao Ying feels very guilty. She is usually very conscientious in her work, but these couple of days she often finds herself distracted.

She must rescue the situation! At night, after Xiao Ye has gone to sleep, Tao Ying straightens his little legs so that he is lying as flat as a piece of newly shrunken fabric. Tao Ying then stretches her tape from the soles of his feet to the top of his head—one metre nine centimetres.

She decides to write a letter to the administrators at the temple.

She picks up her brush but suddenly realises that this is harder than she thinks! Seeing her deep in thought with knitted brows, her husband says, 'So what do you imagine might happen even if you wrote to them?'

He is right, she doesn't know if anything would come of it. But in order to melt the ice in her son's eyes, she must do something.

At last the letter is done. There is a man in the factory nicknamed 'the Writer'. People say he has had some small articles published at the back of a news rag once. Tao Ying finds him and respectfully offers up her literary work.

'This sounds like an official communication. Not lively enough, not moving.' The Writer traces the letter with his nicotine-stained fingers.

Tao Ying doesn't know what an official communication is but she detects a tone of dissatisfaction in the scholar's voice. She looks at the lines he is pointing to, and nods in agreement.

'What you need to do is this. You must open with a strong and righteous claim, fawned by a passage of stunning originality so that your work stands out and grabs the attention of the editor. This would make him pick it out of a large pile on his desk. It has to catch his eyes like a blinding light, an apple in a mound of potatoes. But most important of all, your letter must touch his heart. Have you heard of the saying, grieving soldiers always win?'

Tao Ying keeps nodding.

The Writer is encouraged to continue: 'Let us look at the opening paragraph—it should go something like this: "The power of the Buddha is surely infinite! The foot of a five-year-old boy has scarcely touched the threshold of the temple and he has grown two centemetres; but alas, the power of the Buddha is finite after all—on his return home

the boy shrinks back to his original size...'' I know this is not yet perfect, but have a think about it along these lines...'

Tao Ying tries to memorise the words of the Writer, but she finds it hard to recall all of it. Back home she makes a few corrections as best she can, and sends out the letter.

***

The Writer comes by her stall at lunch-time. Tao Ying's face is framed in a small window where she is collecting vouchers. She looks like a photograph, staring out at the camera with a sombre expression.

'Please wait a moment,' and she disappears behind the frame.

The Writer suspects the cakes are burnt again. Perhaps Tao Ying has gone to find a few which are less burnt than others, to thank him for pointing her in the right direction.

'This is for you, with extra sugar and sesame,' Tao Ying says shyly.

This is the greatest gift a baker could offer a friend as a token of gratitude.

***

Then comes the long wait.

Tao Ying looks through the newspapers every day, reading everything from cover to cover including small classified advertisements for videos. In the meantime she would listen to the radio, imagining that one morning she will hear her own letter read out by one of those announcers with a beautiful voice. Afterwards she would go down to the post office, in case the administrative department of the temple has replied to her letter, apologising for their misdeed...

She has imagined a hundred different scenarios, but not what actually happens.

The days have been like the white flour she works with, one very much like another. Xiao Ye appears to have recovered from the ordeal but Tao Ying firmly believes that he has not really forgotten.

Finally, one day, she hears a question, 'Which way is it to comrade Tao's home?'

'I know, I'll take you.' Xiao Ye excitedly shows two elderly gentlemen in uniform through the front door. 'Mama, we have visitors!'

Tao Ying is doing the laundry, immersed in soap up to her armpits.

'We are from the administrative office at the temple. The local newspaper has forwarded your letter to us and we have come to ascertain the truth.'

Tao Ying is very nervous, and somewhat depressed. Chiefly because her house is very messy, and she has not had the time to tidy up. If they think that she is prone to laziness they might not believe her.

'Xiao Ye, why don't you go out to play?' In Tao Ying's fantasies, Xiao Ye would be in the room to witness the revelation of the truth. Now that the moment has finally arrived, she feels uncomfortable having him there. She cannot predict what will happen. These are after all the people who employed the youth in red, so how reasonable can they be?

The younger of the two speaks. 'We have investigated the matter with the party concerned, and he insisted he was in the right. Don't tell the boy to leave, we want to measure him.'

Xiao Ye obeys and stands next to the wall. The white of the wall looks like a virgin canvas and Xiao Ye a painting filling up the space. He leans tightly against the wall as if the act of measuring his height has once again stirred up some terrifying memory in the recesses of his mind.

The men are very serious. First of all they draw a bold line across the wall from the top of Xiao Ye's head. Then they take out a metallic tape and take the measurement from the line to the floor. The metal of the tape glistens like a flowing stream in sunlight.

Tao Ying regains her calm.

'What does it say?'

'One metre ten, just so,' the younger man answers.

'This is not just so. There was a delay of one month and nine days before you came. A month ago he wasn't this tall.'

The two officials look at each other. This is a statement they cannot refute.

They produce a five-dollar bill from a pocket. The note pokes out of an envelope. They have evidently come prepared. Before they left the temple, they must have checked the height of the earthworm, and realised it was not drawn accurately.

'The other day you and your son were unable to enter. This is a small token to redress the situation.' This time it is the elder of the two gentlemen who speaks. His demeanour is kind, so he must be the more senior of the two.

Tao Ying remains still. That day's happiness can never be bought again.

'If you don't want the money, here are two tickets. You and your son are welcome to visit the temple any time.' The younger man is even more polite.

This is a tempting proposition indeed, but Tao Ying shakes her head. To her, to her son, that place will always be associated with unhappy memories now.

'So which would you prefer,' both men ask in unison.

In fact Tao Ying is asking herself the same question. She is gracious by nature—if the youth in red had come in person to apologise today, she would not have made him feel awkward.

So what is it that she wants?

She shoves Xiao Ye in front of the two elderly officials.

'Say Grandpa,' she tells him.

'Grandpa.' Xiao Ye sounds infinitely sweet.

'Dear Leaders, please take back the money, and the tickets. Kindly do not punish the guard on duty, he was only doing his job...'

The two officials are puzzled.

Tao Ying nudges Xiao Ye closer: 'Gentlemen, would you be so kind as to explain to my son exactly what happened on that day. Please tell him that his mother has not done anything wrong...'

Understanding the Text

1. How did Tao Ying's son influence the way she led her life?
2. Pick out instances from the story to show that official rules are often arbitrary.
3. Tao Ying was very careful about spending money. What were her reasons for refusing the compensation offered by the temple officials?
4. Why was her final vindication important to Tao Ying?

Talking about the Text

Discuss the following in pairs or in small groups

1. The way a child looks at the world is very different from that of an adult.
2. There is always a gap between what we really are and what we wish to appear to be to others.

Appreciation

1. Comment on the significance of the first sentence of the story to its theme.
2. Would you describe the author's portrayal of Tao Ying's character in the story as sympathetic, critical or realistic?
3. Identify the episodes that bring out the ambivalent attitude to ethics commonly seen in human life?
4. How effectively does the narrative technique adopted in this story illustrate 'unity of thought'?

Language Work

A. Figures of Speech

a. *Simile*

Notice the underlined phrases in the following sentences

(i) As the doors shut her jacket is caught, *ballooning up like a tent* behind her.

The comparison here is between the ballooning of the jacket and a tent made explicit by the use of the conjunction, 'like'.

(ii) The *white of the wall looks like a virgin canvas* and *Xiao Ye a painting filling up the space.*

The comparison in (ii) is between the whiteness of the wall and a virgin canvas made explicit by the use of 'like'. In the second 'like' is understood. Xiao Ye is like a painting...

Such explicit comparisons are called similes.

b. *Metaphor*

Sometimes comparisons are made by the application of words or phrases to a concept that they do not literally denote.

An example of this is

But in order *to melt the ice in her son's eyes*, she must do something.

Here the ice stands for the coldness and distance in her son's eyes and how she wishes to make him come closer to her.

The comparison of a mental attitude to ice is not explicitly emphasised but is understood. Similes and metaphors add to the richness of language and help to make the reader visualise more vividly the thoughts of the author.

TASK

Pick out examples of simile and metaphor from the story and state the two elements or concepts that are compared and the manner of comparison.

B. Pronunciation

Look at the word 'object'

We can see that

(i) It is a two-syllable word: ob - ject

(ii) It can be used as both a noun and a verb.

Examples

(i) Place the ˈ*object* on the table. (noun)

[Pronounce *ob* as in *bob*]

(ii) I *ob*ˈ*ject*, your honour. (verb)

[Pronounce *ob* as in *hub*]

- The stress and the way the word is pronounced change accordingly.
- You will notice that, when used as a noun, the word carries the stress on the first syllable; when used as a verb, the stress is received on the second syllable.
- Also, the way you pronounce the initial syllable would change.

Task

The following words can be used as both a noun and a verb

conduct protest permit
progress desert

- Where would the stress fall? Mark the stress when the word is used
  (i) as a noun
  (ii) as a verb
- Is there a change in the pronunciation of the first syllable? Form words that rhyme with the pronunciation of the first syllable, as in the example of 'object' given above.

Suggested Reading

The Vintage Book of Contemporary Chinese Fiction ed. by Carolyn Choa and David Su Li-Qun

This Kind of Woman: Ten Stories by Japanese Women Writers 1960-1976. ed. by Yukiko Tanaka and Elizabeth Hansen.

Poetry

Introduction

A poem is a composition in verse, usually characterised by concentrated and heightened language in which words are chosen for their sound and suggestive power as well as for their meaning, and using techniques such as rhythm and metre. To read and hear good poetry is to appreciate the subtleties of cadence and rhythm, the variety of pace and pattern and all that goes to make up the music of poetry.

Every poem that we read adds to, in some degree, our total conception of poetry.

Of the eight poets in this selection, four are from the classical tradition: Donne, Milton, Blake and Coleridge. The other four are closer to contemporary times: Yeats, A.K.Ramanujan, Emily Dickinson and Kamala Das.

12076CH06

1

A Lecture Upon the Shadow

John Donne was representative of the metaphysical poets of his time. He set the metaphysical mode by vibrancy of language and startling imagery, and a preference for a diction modelled on direct utterances. He was brought up as a Roman Catholic (later he converted to Anglicanism), and was Dean of St. Paul's Church till his death.
The total effect of a metaphysical poem at its best is to startle the reader into seeing and knowing what he has not really noticed or thought about before. Like all Donne's poetry this poem too reflects an emphasis on the intellect and wit as against feeling and emotion.

John Donne
1572-1631

Stand still and I will read to thee
A Lecture, Love, in loves philosophy,
These three houres that we have spent,
Walking here, Two shadowes went
Along with us, which we our selves produc'd;
But, now the Sunne is just above our head,
We doe those shadowes tread;
And to brave clearnesse all things are reduc'd.
So whilst our infant loves did grow,
Disguises did, and shadowes, flow,
From us, and our cares; but now 'tis not so.

That love hath not attain'd the high'st degree,
Which is still diligent lest others see.
Except our loves at this noone stay,

We shall new shadowes make the other way.
As the first were made to blinde
Others; these which come behinde
Will worke upon our selves, and blind our eyes.
If our loves faint, and westwardly decline;

To me thou, falsely thine;
And I to thee mine actions shall disguise.
The morning shadowes were away,
But these grow longer all the day,
But oh, loves day is short, if love decay.

Love is a growing, or full constant light;
And his first minute, after noone, is night.

Understanding the Poem

1. How do the shadows before noon differ from the shadows after noon? What do the two kinds of shadow represent?
2. Love is described as light. What makes the poet talk about shadows?
3. Comment on the use of the image of the shadows for the idea that the poet wants to convey.
4. The poet seems to be addressing his beloved in the poem. What is the message he wishes to convey to her?
5. Instead of 'A Lecture Upon Love' the poet calls the poem 'A Lecture Upon the Shadow'. What is the effect that this has on our reading of the poem?

Language Work

1. Notice the spelling of the following words

houres	shadowes	Sunne
noone	clearnesse	behinde

The 'e' that was used in Donne's period got dropped from English orthography later. Pick out the other words in the poem that have this peculiar feature.

2. Take note also that the apostrophe is not used for indicating the possessive form: loves philosophy.
3. Examples from other poems from this period:
   - How neatly **doe** we give one **onely** name
   - To **parents** issue and the **sunnes** bright starre!

Try this out

Notice the adjectives in phrases such as 'infant loves' and 'brave clearnesse'. What is the meaning of these adjectives

(i) in isolation

(ii) as part of these phrases.

Suggested Reading

'Go and Catch a Falling Star' by John Donne

'The Flea' by John Donne.

12076CH07

2

Poems by Milton

John Milton began writing poetry at the age of ten. After finishing his formal education at Cambridge, he read almost everything available in Latin, Greek, Italian and English. He was appointed Latin Secretary where he worked so hard that eyestrain, from years of late night reading, caused him to become totally blind at the age of forty- five. In the final years of his life he wrote (through dictation) Paradise Lost *and* Paradise Regained.

John Milton
1608-1674

I
On Time

Fly envious *Time,* till thou run out thy race,
Call on the lazy leaden-stepping hours,
Whose speed is but the heavy Plummets pace;
And glut thy self with what thy womb devours,
Which is no more than what is false and vain,
And merely mortal dross;
So little is our loss,
So little is thy gain.
For when as each thing bad thou hast entomb'd,
And last of all, thy greedy self consum'd,
Then long Eternity shall greet our bliss
With an individual kiss;
And Joy shall overtake us as a flood,
When every thing that is sincerely good
And perfectly divine,
With Truth, and Peace, and Love shall ever shine

About the supreme Throne
Of him, t'whose happy-making sight alone,
When once our heav'nly guided soul shall clime,
Then all this Earthy grossnes quit,
Attir'd with Stars, we shall for ever sit,
Triumphing over Death, and Chance, and thee O Time.

NOTES

Envious Time: According to ancient mythology Cronos devoured each of his children at birth.

Plummets: A lead weight whose slow mechanism activates the ticking mechanism in a clock.

Understanding the Poem

1. Why has the poet pitted the flight of Time against the 'lazy leaden-stepping hours' and 'the heavy Plummets pace'?
2. What are the things associated with the temporal and what are associated with the eternal?
3. What guides human souls towards divinity? Who is the final winner in the race against Time?

II
On Shakespear.* 1630

What needs my *Shakespear* for his honour'd Bones,
The labour of an age in piled Stones,
Or that his hallow'd reliques should be hid
Under a Star-ypointing *Pyramid?*
Dear son of memory, great heir of Fame,
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thy self a live-long Monument.
For whilst to th'shame of slow endeavouring art,
Thy easie numbers flow, and that each heart
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalu'd Book,
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,
Then thou our fancy of it self bereaving

Dost make us Marble with too much conceaving;
And so Sepulcher'd in such pomp dost lie,
That Kings for such a Tomb would wish to die.

**Notice the spelling of 'Shakespear' and of the words 'easie', 'conceaving'.*

Understanding the Poem

1. Why does Milton feel it is not necessary to put up a monument in stone for Shakespeare?
2. What does the 'weak witness of thy name' refer to?
3. How does Milton describe Shakespeare as the source of inspiration for all succeeding generations of poets?
4. What is the best tribute that posterity has bestowed on Shakespeare?

Language Study

Etymology is the study of the history of linguistic change. When applied to individual words, it is an account of (i) the history of a word (ii) the derivation of a word.

The dictionary meaning of a word is followed by notes on its origin.

For the word 'entomb'd' the information we get is: [late ME *entoumbe(n)* MF *entombe(r)*]. This means that

- The word is found in late Middle English
- The word is of French origin and is found in use from 1578
- Also, about 30 per cent of the words in English are of French origin. Borrowings from French reached its height after the Norman Conquest (1066)—between 1250 and 1400.

Suggested Reading

'On his Blindness' by John Milton.

12076CH08

3

Poems by Blake

William Blake
1757-1827

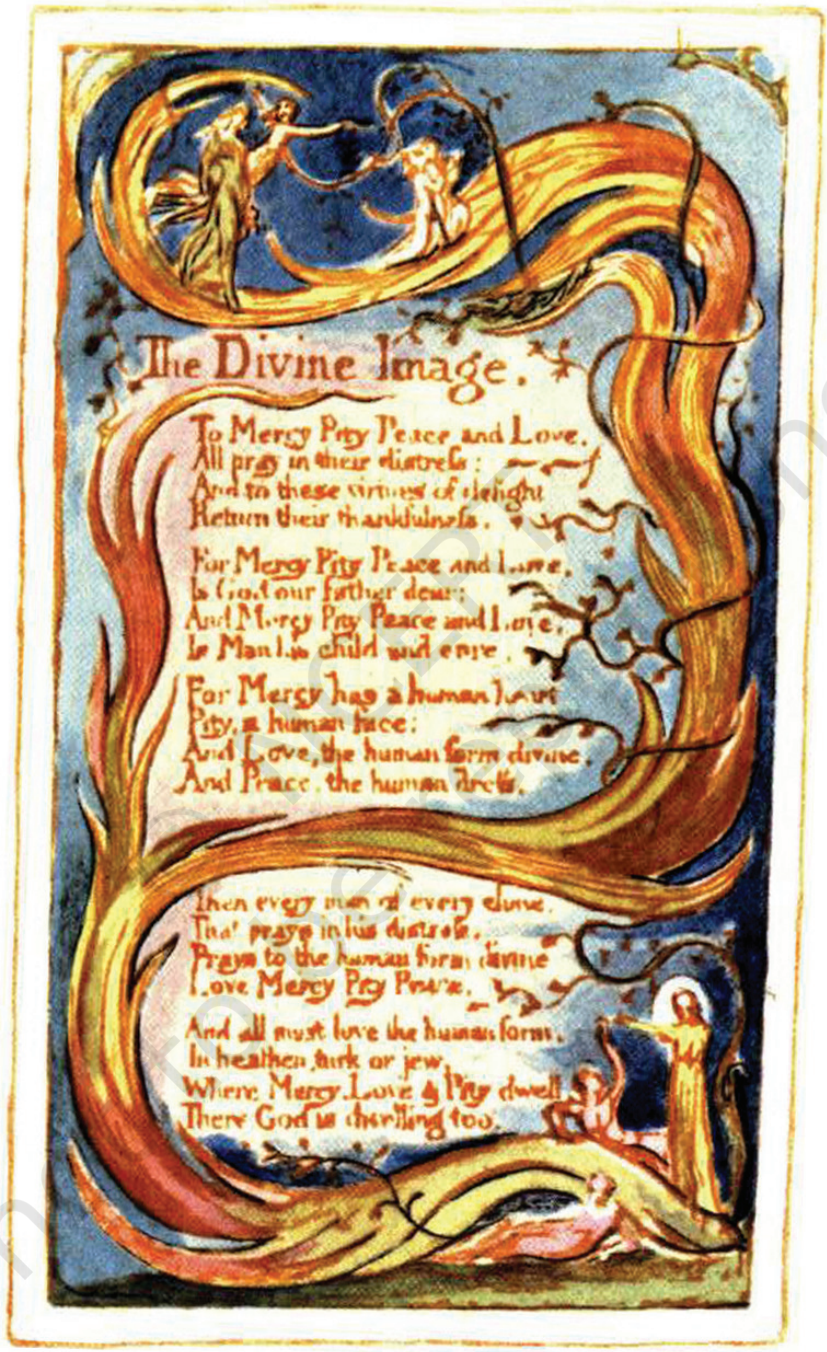
William Blake was a poet, painter and engraver. He abhorred the rationalism and materialism of his times. What he saw and painted were human beings beset with evil, yet striving for the divine within them.
Blake's lyrics appeared in two sets of volumes: Songs of Innocence *(from which* The Divine Image *has been chosen) and* Songs of Experience *(from which* The Human Abstract *has been taken) representing the two contrary states of the human soul. Most of the poems in the first volume have counterparts in the second.*

I
The Divine Image

To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
All pray in their distress;
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is God our father dear,
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is Man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face,
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.


The Divine Image.
To Mercy Pity Peace and Love,
All pray in their distress:
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.
For Mercy Pity Peace and Love,
Is God our Father dear;
And Mercy Pity Peace and Love,
Is Man his child and care.
For Mercy has a human heart
Pity, a human face:
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.
Then every man of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine
Love Mercy Pity Peace.
And all must love the human form,
In heathen, turk or jew.
Where Mercy, Love & Pity dwell
There God is dwelling too.

Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine,
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, turk, or jew;
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell
There God is dwelling too.

II
The Human Abstract

Pity would be no more
If we did not make somebody Poor;
And Mercy no more could be
If all were as happy as we.

And mutual fear brings peace,
Till the selfish loves increase:
Then Cruelty knits a snare,
And spreads his baits with care.

He sits down with holy fears,
And waters the ground with tears;
Then Humility takes its root
Underneath his foot.

Soon spreads the dismal shade
Of Mystery over his head;
And the Caterpillar and Fly
Feed on the Mystery.

And it bears the fruit of Deceit,
Ruddy and sweet to eat;
And the Raven his nest has made
In its thickest shade.


The Human Abstract.
Pity would be no more,
If we did not make somebody Poor;
And Mercy no more could be,
If all were as happy as we;
And mutual fear brings peace;
Till the selfish loves increase.
Then Cruelty knits a snare,
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He sits down with holy fears,
And waters the ground with tears:
Then Humility takes its root
Underneath his foot.
Soon spreads the dismal shade
Of Mystery over his head;
And the Caterpiller and Fly,
Feed on the Mystery.
And it bears the fruit of Deceit,
Ruddy and sweet to eat;
And the Raven his nest has made
In its thickest shade.
The Gods of the earth and sea,
Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree,
But their search was all in vain:
There grows one in the Human Brain

The Gods of the earth and sea
Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree;
But their search was all in vain:
There grows one in the Human Brain.

Note: Blake's poetry was published in a manner most unusual in literature and art history; he personally manufactured each copy. The verses were not typeset but were, with the engravings that illustrated them, cut into copper plates. The pages themselves he illuminated in water colours. Thus Blake can be called the first multi-media artist.

Understanding the Poem

1. How are these two matched poems related to each other in content? How is the human being depicted in the *Song of Innocence* and how is he/she depicted in the *Song of Experience*? Do we find both aspects working in an average human being?
2. How would you explain the lines

   For Mercy has a human **heart,**
   Pity a human **face,**
   And Love, the human **form** divine,
   And Peace, the human **dress.**
3. How do Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love get distorted in the human brain?
4. Blake's poetry expresses one aspect of his multi-dimensional view of human experience—of mankind once whole and happy, now fallen into discord and tyranny, from which it must be rescued. Explain with reference to these two poems.

Language Work

1. Certain words in the poem have been capitalised. Can you think of reasons for this?
2. Count the syllables in the lines of 'The Divine Image'. Do you see a pattern?

   The first line has eight and the second line has six syllables. Two syllables make a foot in poetry. Here the first syllable of each foot is unstressed and the second syllable is stressed.

Try this Out

Read 'The Chimney Sweeper' in *Songs of Innocence*, and then 'The Chimney Sweeper' in *Songs of Experience*, and contrast the two. You could also read 'The Lamb' and 'The Tiger'.

Suggested Reading

Songs of Innocence by William Blake

Songs of Experience by William Blake.

12076CH09

4

Kubla Khan

Or

A Vision in a Dream: A Fragment

S.T. Coleridge was imaginative even as a child. He studied at Cambridge. In 1797, he met Wordsworth; the two belonged to the first generation of Romantic poets. Coleridge was responsible for presenting the supernatural as real and Wordsworth would try to render ordinary reality as remarkable and strange. Byron, Shelley and Keats belonged to the next generation of Romantic Poets.

The genesis of this poem was a vision seen by Coleridge in a trance-like state of mind. He tried to capture its essence but an interruption caused an irreparable break in his poetic flow.

S.T.Coleridge
1772-1834

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,

* *Kubla Khan founded the Mongol dynasty in China in the thirteenth century.*

* *You will notice that this poem is incomplete. There is a reason behind this. In 1797, when Coleridge fell ill, some medicine was prescribed, from the effects of which he fell asleep in his chair while reading about Kubla Khan. In the three hours of profound sleep, he had a wonderful dream. On awakening he distinctly recollected it, and began to write it down, when he was interrupted by a chance visitor. The poem thus remained incomplete.*

Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced;
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!
The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight, 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,

I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honeydew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Understanding the Poem

Find out where the river Alph is.

1. Does the poem have a real geographical location? How does the poet mix up the real and the imaginary to give a sense of the surreal?
2. Pick out
   (i) contrasting images that are juxtaposed throughout the poem.
   (ii) images that strike the eye and images that strike the ear, both positive and negative.
   (iii) the words used to describe the movement of water.
3. What is the discordant note heard at the end of the third stanza? Can we relate this to the grandeur and turmoil that are a part of an emperor's life?
4. Which are the lines that refer to magical elements?
5. What is poetic ecstasy likened to?
6. The poem is a fragment. What do you think has made it a lasting literary piece?

Language Study

Dulcimer is a string instrument struck with two light hammers, used both in China and in Europe in different forms.

Task

Write short descriptions of five other rare musical instruments that are used by folk cultures.

Try this Out

The poem is a product of subconscious fusion of dream images and ideas from Coleridge's wide reading. Which of the details in the poem do you think are factual, and which imaginary? Surf the internet to get interesting details.

Suggested Reading

'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' by S.T. Coleridge

'Christabel' by S.T. Coleridge.

12076CH10

5

Trees

Emily Dickinson
1830-1886

Emily Dickinson is regarded as one of America's quintessential poets of the nineteenth century. She lived an introverted and hermetic life, and published very few of her poems in her lifetime. Her output, 1789 poems in all, were published posthumously.

Her poetry is characterised by unconventional capitalisation and extensive use of dashes, along with unusual imagery and lyric style.

The Trees like Tassels hit – and – swung –
There seemed to rise a Tune
From Miniature Creatures
Accompanying the Sun –

Far Psalteries of Summer –
Enamoring the Ear
They never yet did satisfy –
Remotest – when most fair

The Sun shone whole at intervals –
Then Half – then utter hid –
As if Himself were optional
And had Estates of Cloud

Sufficient to enfold Him
Eternally from view –
Except it were a whim of His
To let the Orchards grow –

A Bird sat careless on the fence –
One gossiped in the Lane
On silver matters charmed a Snake
Just winding round a Stone –

Bright Flowers slit a Calyx
And soared upon a Stem
Like Hindered Flags – Sweet hoisted –
With Spices – in the Hem –

'Twas more – I cannot mention –
How mean – to those that see
Vandyke's Delineation
Of Nature's – Summer Day!

Responding to the Poem

1. What imagery does the poet use to delineate Summer's day more picturesquely than any painter could?
2. What do you understand by 'Psalteries of Summer'?
3. In which lines are creatures attributed with human qualities? How does this add to the beauty of the Summer's day?
4. How would you explain the image of the 'Hindered Flags'?
5. Why are the pronouns referring to the Sun capitalised?
6. Give examples from the poem to show that great poetry is a result of close observation of natural phenomena.

Language Study

You came across 'dulcimer' in the poem 'Kubla Khan'. Did you note down 'Psaltery' as another musical instrument? They are very similar. Look up the illustrations for the two in an illustrated dictionary. Find out in what ways they are different from one another.

Suggested Reading

The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson.

12076CH11

6

The Wild Swans at Coole

W.B.Yeats
1865-1939

W.B. Yeats was an Irish poet, dramatist and mystic. He was one of the driving forces behind the Irish Literary Revival, and was co-founder of the Abbey Theatre. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923.

The trees are in their autumn beauty, A
The woodland paths are dry, B
Under the October twilight the water C
Mirrors a still sky; B
Upon the brimming water among the stones D
Are nine-and-fifty swans. E

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me G
Since I first made my count;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,
And now my heart is sore.
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,

The first time on this shore,
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,
Trod with a lighter tread.
Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water,
Mysterious, beautiful;
Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day
To find they have flown away?

Understanding the Poem

1. How do the 'trees in their autumn beauty', 'dry woodland paths', 'October twilight', 'still sky' connect to the poet's own life?
2. What do 'the light tread' and 'the sore heart' refer to?
3. What is the contrast between the liveliness of the swans and human life?
4. What contributes to the beauty and mystery of the swans' lives?

Language Study

Notice the rhyme scheme in the poem. Do you notice a consistent pattern? We use a new letter for every new sound at the end of the lines. The rhyme scheme for the first stanza is given alongside the lines. Do it for the rest of the poem.

Suggested Reading

The Green Helmet by W.B. Yeats

The *Celtic Twilight* by W.B. Yeats.

12076CH12

7

Time and Time Again

A.K. Ramanujan is one of India's finest English-language poets. He is best known for his pioneering translations of ancient Tamil poetry into modern English. At the time of his death he was professor of linguistics at the University of Chicago and was recognised as the world's most profound scholar of South Indian languages and culture.
His interests included anthropology and folklore. These influenced his work as a craftsman of English. This poem represents the complex distillation of a lifetime of unusual thought and feeling.

A.K.Ramanujan
1929-1993

Or listen to the clocktowers
of any old well-managed city

beating their gongs round the clock, each slightly
off the others' time, deeper or lighter

in its bronze, beating out a different
sequence each half-hour, out of the accidents

of alloy, a maker's shaking hand
in Switzerland, or the mutual distances

commemorating a donor's whim,
the perennial feuds and seasonal alliance

of Hindu, Christian, and Muslim—
cut off sometimes by a change of wind,

a change of mind, or a siren
between the pieces of a backstreet quarrel.

One day you look up and see one of them
eyeless, silent, a zigzag sky showing

through the knocked-out clockwork, after a riot,
a peace-march time bomb, or a precise act

Of nature in a night of lightnings.

Responding to the Poem

1. What did you think the poem was about when you read the first few lines?
2. From which line does the import of the title strike the reader?
3. What makes for the differences between the timekeeping of the various clocks? What is the implicit comparison?
4. Why is the act of nature described as 'precise'?
5. Which of the following reflects the poet's attitude towards communal disharmony
   (i) Critical condemnation
   (ii) Helpless acceptance
   (iii) Wistful lament
6. Is the poet's attitude a representation of how the average Indian feels both towards human violence and nature's fury?

Suggested Reading

The Interior Landscape by A.K. Ramanujan

Poems of Love and War by A.K. Ramanujan.

12076CH13

8

Blood

Kamala Das
1934-2009

One of the greatest literary figures in Malayalam, Kamala Das was born in the year 1934 in Punnayurkulum, in South Malabar, Kerala. Her work, in poetry and in prose, has given her a permanent place in modern Malayalam literature as well as in Indian writing in English. She is best known for her feminist writings and focus on womanhood.

She has been the recipient of such famous awards as the Poetry Award for the Asian PEN Anthology, the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award for the best collection of short stories in Malayalam, and the Chaman Lal Award for fearless journalism.

When we were children
My brother and I
And always playing on the sands
Drawing birds and animals
Our great-grandmother said one day,
You see this house of ours
Now three hundred years old,
It's falling to little bits
Before our very eyes
The walls are cracked and torn
And moistened by the rains,
The tiles have fallen here and there
The windows whine and groan
And every night
The rats come out of the holes
And scamper past our doors.
The snake-shrine is dark with weeds

And all the snake-gods in the shrine
Have lichen on their hoods.
O it hurts me she cried,
Wiping a reddened eye
For I love this house, it hurts me much
To watch it die.
When I grow old, I said,
And very very rich
I shall rebuild the fallen walls
And make new this ancient house.
My great-grandmother
Touched my cheeks and smiled.
She was really simple.
Fed on God for years
All her feasts were monotonous
For the only dish was always God
And the rest mere condiments.
She told us how she rode her elephant
When she was ten or eleven
Every Monday without fail
To the Siva shrine
And back to home again
And, told us of the jewel box
And the brocade from the north
And the perfumes and the oils
And the sandal for her breasts
And her marriage to a prince
Who loved her deeply for a lovely short year
And died of fever, in her arms
She told us
That we had the oldest blood
My brother and she and I
The oldest blood in the world
A blood thin and clear and fine
While in the veins of the always poor
And in the veins
Of the new-rich men
Flowed a blood thick as gruel
And muddy as a ditch.

Finally she lay dying
In her eighty sixth year
A woman wearied by compromise
Her legs quilted with arthritis
And with only a hard cough
For comfort
I looked deep into her eyes
Her poor bleary eyes
And prayed that she would not grieve
So much about the house.
I had learnt by then
Most lessons of defeat,
Had found out that to grow rich
Was a difficult feat.
The house was crouching
On its elbows then,
It looked that night in the pallid moon
So grotesque and alive.
When they burnt my great grandmother
Over logs of the mango tree
I looked once at the house
And then again and again
For I thought I saw the windows close
Like the closing of the eyes
I thought I heard the pillars groan
And the dark rooms heave a sigh.
I set forth again
For other towns,
Left the house with the shrine
And the sands
And the flowering shrubs
And the wide rabid mouth of the Arabian Sea.

* * *

I know the rats are running now
Across the darkened halls
They do not fear the dead
I know the white ants have reached my home
And have raised on walls

Strange totems of burial.
At night, in stillness,
From every town I live in
I hear the rattle of its death
The noise of rafters creaking
And the windows' whine.
I have let you down
Old house, I seek forgiveness
O mother's mother's mother
I have plucked your soul
Like a pip from a fruit
And have flung it into your pyre
Call me callous
Call me selfish
But do not blame my blood
So thin, so clear, so fine
The oldest blood in the world
That remembers as it flows
All the gems and all the gold
And all the perfumes and the oils
And the stately
Elephant ride...

Responding to the Poem

1. What makes the depiction of a crumbling village house so authentic in the poem? Is this a common feature of most village houses in the context of rapid urbanisation? Is the poet speaking from actual experience?
2. What aspects of Indian society and history get highlighted in the poem?
3. Does the poem bring out the contrast between tradition and modernity? Illustrate your answer with examples from the poem.
4. While the poet respected her grandmother's sentiments of royal grandeur, we can also see that she revolts against it. Identify the lines which bring this out.
5. Which lines reveal the poet's criticism of class distinctions?
6. Is it 'selfishness' and 'callousness' that makes the poet break her childhood promise to her grandmother of renovating the house? Why does she do nothing about rebuilding the house?

7. What do you understand of the conflict in the poet's conscience?

Language Study

Comment on the changes in poetic expression in English from the time of Donne to that of Kamala Das with reference to

- prosodic features (rhyme, rhythm and metre)
- vocabulary
- language
- themes.

Suggested Readings

The Old Playhouse and Other Poems by Kamala Das

Summer in Calcutta by Kamala Das

The Descendants by Kamala Das.

Non-fiction

Introduction

Non-fiction is virtually everything that we read as literature but that does not come under the categories of novel, short story, play or poem. Non-fiction, then, is writing that is factually true. It can include articles, editorials, reports, critical essays and interviews, humorous sketches, biographies and autobiographies, lectures, speeches and sermons.

This section contains six non-fiction pieces, three by established writers of the canon: George Bernard Shaw, Virginia Woolf and D.H.Lawrence; one each by Ingmar Bergman, Amartya Sen and Isaac Asimov.

The themes are: freedom, stream of consciousness, importance of the novel as a creative form, the details that make film-making a creative art and the argumentative tradition in Indian culture based on the famous dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita. Asimov's piece talks of the universe of science fiction, correlating it to accounts of mythical superhuman beings in the pre-scientific universe which served to fulfil the same emotional needs as science fiction does.

The purpose of such writing is to explain, analyse, define or clarify something—to provide us with information and to show the how and why of things.

12076CH14

1

Freedom

G.B. Shaw
1856-1950

George Bernard Shaw was a dramatist and critic. His work as a London newspaper critic of music and drama resulted in The Quintessence of Ibsenism. *His famous plays include* Arms and the Man, Candida *and* Man and Superman. *His works present a fearless intellectual criticism, sugar-coated by a pretended lightness of tone. He rebelled against muddled thinking, and sought to puncture hollow pretensions.*

What is a perfectly free person? Evidently a person who can do what he likes, when he likes, and where he likes, or do nothing at all if he prefers it. Well, there is no such person, and there never can be any such person. Whether we like it or not, we must all sleep for one third of our lifetime—wash and dress and undress—we must spend a couple of hours eating and drinking—we must spend nearly as much in getting about from place to place. For half the day we are slaves to necessities which we cannot shirk, whether we are monarchs with a thousand slaves or humble labourers with no servants but their wives. And the wives must undertake the additional heavy slavery of child-bearing, if the world is still to be peopled.

These natural jobs cannot be shirked. But they involve other jobs which can. As we must eat we must first provide food; as we must sleep, we must have beds, and bedding in houses with fireplaces and coals; as we must walk through the streets, we must have clothes to cover our nakedness. Now, food and houses and clothes can be

produced by human labour. But when they are produced they can be stolen. If you like honey you can let the bees produce it by their labour, and then steal it from them. If you are too lazy to get about from place to place on your own legs you can make a slave of a horse. And what you do to a horse or a bee, you can also do to a man or woman or a child, if you can get the upper hand of them by force or fraud or trickery of any sort, or even by teaching them that it is their religious duty to sacrifice their freedom to yours.

So beware! If you allow any person, or class of persons, to get the upper hand of you, he will shift all that part of his slavery to Nature that can be shifted on to your shoulders; and you will find yourself working from eight to fourteen hours a day when, if you had only yourself and your family to provide for, you could do it quite comfortably in half the time or less. The object of all honest governments should be to prevent your being imposed on in this way. But the object of most actual governments, I regret to say, is exactly the opposite. They enforce your slavery and call it freedom. But they also regulate your slavery, keeping the greed of your masters within certain bounds. When chattel slavery of the negro sort costs more than wage slavery, they abolish chattel slavery and make you free to choose between one employment or one master and another and this they call a glorious triumph for freedom, though for you it is merely the key of the street. When you complain, they promise that in future you shall govern the country for yourself. They redeem this promise by giving you a vote, and having a general election every five years or so.

At the election two of their rich friends ask for your vote and you are free to choose which of them you will vote for to spite the other—a choice which leaves you no freer than you were before, as it does not reduce your hours of labour by a single minute. But the newspapers assure you that your vote has decided the election, and that this constitutes you a free citizen in a democratic country. The amazing thing about it is that you are fool enough to believe them.

Now mark another big difference between the natural slavery of man to Nature and the unnatural slavery of

man to man. Nature is kind to her slaves. If she forces you to eat and drink, she makes eating and drinking so pleasant that when we can afford it we eat and drink too much. We must sleep or go mad: but then sleep is so pleasant that we have great difficulty in getting up in the morning. And firesides and families seem so pleasant to the young that they get married and join building societies to realise their dreams. Thus, instead of resenting our natural wants as slavery, we take the greatest pleasure in their satisfaction. We write sentimental songs in praise of them. A tramp can earn his supper by singing Home, Sweet Home.

The slavery of man to man is the very opposite of this. It is hateful to the body and to the spirit. Our poets do not praise it: they proclaim that no man is good enough to be another man's master. The latest of the great Jewish prophets, a gentleman named Marx, spent his life in proving that there is no extremity of selfish cruelty at which the slavery of man to man will stop if it be not stopped by law. You can see for yourself that it produces a state of continual civil war—called the class war—between the slaves and their masters, organised as Trade Unions on one side and Employers' Federations on the other. Saint Thomas More, who has just been canonized, held that we shall never have a peaceful and stable society until this struggle is ended by the abolition of slavery altogether, and the compulsion of everyone to do his share of the world's work with his own hands and brains, and not to attempt to put it on anyone else.

Naturally the master class, through its parliaments and schools and newspapers, makes the most desperate efforts to prevent us from realising our slavery. From our earliest years we are taught that our country is the land of the free, and that our freedom was won for us by our forefathers when they made King John sign Magna Charta (also spelt Carta)—when they defeated the Spanish Armada—when they cut off King Charles's head—when they made King William accept the Bill of Rights—when they issued and made good the American Declaration of Independence—when they won the battles of Waterloo and

Trafalgar on the playing-fields of Eton—and when, only the other day, they quite unintentionally changed the German, Austrian, Russian, and Ottoman empires into republics.

When we grumble, we are told that all our miseries are our own doing because we have the vote. When we say 'What good is the vote?' we are told that we have the Factory Acts, and the Wages Boards, and free education, and the New Deal, and the dole; and what more could any reasonable man ask for? We are reminded that the rich are taxed a quarter—a third—or even a half and more of their incomes; but the poor are never reminded that they have to pay that much of their wages as rent in addition to having to work twice as long every day as they would need if they were free.

Whenever famous writers protest against this imposture—say Voltaire and Rousseau and Tom Paine in the eighteenth century, or Cobbett and Shelley, Karl Marx and Lassalle in the nineteenth, or Lenin and Trotsky in the twentieth—you are taught that they are atheists and libertines, murderers and scoundrels, and often it is made a criminal offence to buy or sell their books. If their disciples make a revolution, England immediately makes war on them and lends money to the other Powers to join her in forcing the revolutionists restore the slave order. When this combination was successful at Waterloo, the victory was advertised as another triumph for British freedom; and the British wage-slaves, instead of going into mourning like Lord Byron, believed it all and cheered enthusiastically. When the revolution wins, as it did in Russia in 1922, the fighting stops; but the abuse, the calumnies, the lies continue until the revolutionised State grows into a first-rate military power. Then our diplomatists, after having for years denounced the revolutionary leaders as the most abominable villains and tyrants, have to do a right turn and invite them to dinner.

Stop and Think

1. What are the links between natural jobs, labour and slavery?
2. What ought to be the object of all governments, and what do we actually find it to be?

Now, though this prodigious mass of humbug is meant to delude the enslaved masses only, it ends in deluding the master class much more completely. A gentleman whose mind has been formed at a preparatory school for the sons of gentlemen, followed by a public school and university course, is much more thoroughly taken in by the falsified history and dishonest political economy and the snobbery taught in these places than any worker can possibly be, because the gentleman's education teaches him that he is a very fine fellow, superior to the common run of men whose duty it is to brush his clothes, carry his parcels, and earn his income for him, and as he thoroughly agrees with this view of himself, he honestly believes that the system which has placed him in such an agreeable situation and done such justice to his merits is the best of all possible systems, and that he should shed his blood, and yours, to the last drop in its defence. But the great mass of our rack-rented, underpaid, treated-as-inferiors cast-off-on-the-dole workers cannot feel so sure about it as the gentleman. The facts are too harshly against it. In hard times, such as we are now passing through, their disgust and despair sometimes lead them to kick over the traces, upset everything, and they have to be rescued from mere gangsterism by some Napoleonic genius who has a fancy for being an emperor, and who has the courage and brains and energy to jump at the chance. But the slaves who give three cheers for the emperor might just as well have made a cross on a British or American ballot paper as far as their freedom is concerned.

So far I have mentioned nothing but plain natural and historical facts. I draw no conclusions, for that would lead me into controversy, and controversy would not be fair when you cannot answer me back. I am never

controversial over the wireless. I do not even ask you to draw your own conclusions, for you might draw some very dangerous ones, unless you have the right sort of head for it. Always remember that though nobody likes to be called a slave, it does not follow that slavery is a bad thing. Great men, like Aristotle, have held that the law and order and government would be impossible unless the persons the people have to obey are beautifully dressed and decorated, robed and uniformed, speaking with a special accent, travelling in first-class carriages or the most expensive cars, or on the best-groomed and best-bred horses, and never cleaning their own boots, not doing anything for themselves that can possibly be done by ringing a bell and ordering some common person to do it. And this means, of course, that they must be made very rich without any obligation other than to produce an impression of almost godlike superiority on the minds of common people. In short, it is contended, you must make men ignorant idolaters before they will become obedient workers and law-abiding citizens.

To prove this, we are reminded that, although nine out of ten voters are common workers, it is with the greatest difficulty that a few of them can be persuaded to vote for the members of their own class. When women were enfranchised and given the right to sit in Parliament, the first use they made of their votes was to defeat all the women candidates who stood for the freedom of the workers and had given them years of devoted and distinguished service. They elected only one woman—a titled lady of great wealth and exceptionally fascinating personality.

Now this, it is said, is human nature, and you cannot change human nature. On the other hand, it is maintained that human nature is the easiest thing in the world to change if you catch it young enough, and that the idolatry of the slave class and the arrogance of the master class are themselves entirely artificial products of education and of a propaganda that plays upon our infants long before they have left their cradles. An opposite mentality could, it is argued, be produced by a contrary education and propaganda. You can turn the point over in your mind for yourself; do not let me prejudice you one way or the other.

The practical question at the bottom of it all is how the income of the whole country can best be distributed from day to day. If the earth is cultivated agriculturally in vast farms with motor ploughs and chemical fertilisers, and industrially in huge electrified factories full of machinery that a girl can handle, the product may be so great that an equal distribution of it would provide enough to give the unskilled labourers as much as the managers and the men of the scientific staff. But do not forget, when you hear tales of modern machinery enabling one girl to produce as much as a thousand men could produce in the reign of good Queen Anne, that this marvelous increase includes things like needles and steel pins and matches, which we can neither eat nor drink nor wear. Very young children will eat needles and matches eagerly—but the diet is not a nourishing one. And though we can now cultivate the sky as well as the earth, by drawing nitrogen from it to increase and improve the quality of our grass and, consequently, of our cattle and milk and butter and eggs, Nature may have tricks up her sleeve to check us if the chemists exploit her too greedily.

And now to sum up. Wipe out from your dreams of freedom the hope of being able to do as you please all the time. For at least twelve hours of your day Nature orders you to do certain things, and will kill you if you don't do them. This leaves twelve hours for working; and here again Nature will kill you unless you either earn your living or get somebody else to earn it for you. If you live in a civilised country your freedom is restricted by the laws of the land enforced by the police, who oblige you to do this, and not to do that, and to pay rates and taxes. If you do not obey these laws the courts will imprison you, and, if you go too far, kill you. If the laws are reasonable and are impartially administered you have no reason to complain, because they increase your freedom by protecting you against assault, highway robbery, and disorder generally.

But as society is constituted at present, there is another far more intimate compulsion on you: that of your landlord and that of your employer. Your landlord may refuse to let you live on his estate if you go to chapel instead

of to church, or if you vote for anyone but his nominee, or if you practise osteopathy, or if you open a shop. Your employer may dictate the cut, colour, and condition of your clothes, as well as your hours of work. He can turn you into the street at any moment to join the melancholy band of lost spirits called the Unemployed. In short, his power over you is far greater than that of any political dictator could possibly be. Your only remedy at present is the Trade Union weapon of the strike, which is only the old Oriental device of starving on your enemy's doorstep until he does you justice. Now, as the police in this country will not allow you to starve in your employer's doorstep, you must starve on your own—if you have one. The extreme form of the strike—the general strike of all workers at the same moment—is also the extreme form of human folly, as, if completely carried out, it would extinguish the human race in a week. And the workers would be the first to perish. The general strike is Trade Unionism gone mad. Sane Trade Unionism would never sanction more than one big strike at a time, with all the other trades working overtime to support it.

Now let us put the case in figures. If you have to work for twelve hours a day you have four hours a day to do what you like with, subject to the laws of the land, and your possession of money enough to buy an interesting book or pay for a seat at the pictures, or, on a half-holiday, at a football match, or whatever your fancy may be. But even here Nature will interfere a good deal, for, if your eight hours' work has been of a hard physical kind, and when you get home you want to spend your four hours in reading my books to improve your mind, you will find yourself fast asleep in half a minute, and your mind will remain in its present benighted condition.

I take it, then, that nine out of ten of us desire more freedom, and that this is why we listen to wireless talks about it. As long as we go on as we are—content with a vote and a dole—the only advice we can give one another is that of Shakespeare's Iago: 'Put money in thy purse.' But as we get very little money into our purses on pay-day, and all the rest of the week other people are taking money

out of it, Iago's advice is not very practical. We must change our politics before we can get what we want; and meanwhile we must stop gassing about freedom, because the people of England in the lump don't know what freedom is, never having had any. Always call freedom by its old English name of leisure, and keep clamouring for more leisure and more money to enjoy it in return for an honest share of work. And let us stop singing Rule, Britannia! until we make it true. Until we do, let us never vote for a parliamentary candidate who talks about our freedom and our love of liberty, for, whatever political name he may give himself, he is sure to be at bottom an Anarchist who wants to live on our labour without being taken up by the police for it as he deserves.

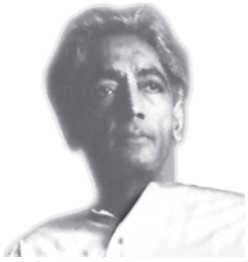
And now suppose we at last win a lot more leisure and a lot more money than we are accustomed to. What are we going to do with them? I was taught in my childhood that Satan will find mischief still for idle hands to do. I have seen men come into a fortune and lose their happiness, their health, and finally their lives by it as certainly as if they had taken daily doses of rat poison instead of champagne and cigars. It is not at all easy to know what to do with leisure unless we have been brought up to it.

I will, therefore, leave you with a conundrum to think over. If you had your choice, would you work for eight hours a day and retire with a full pension at forty-five, or would you rather work four hours a day and keep on working until you are seventy? Now don't send the answer to me, please talk it over with your wife.

Stop and Think

1. What causes the master class to be more deluded than the enslaved classes?
2. According to Aristotle, what are the conditions to be fulfilled for the common people to accept law and order, and government, and all that they imply?
3. How can reasonable laws, impartially administered, contribute to one's freedom?
4. What are the ways in which individual freedom gets restricted?

Understanding Freedom and Discipline



J. Krishnamurti
1895-1986

Jiddu Krishnamurti was a world renowned writer and speaker on fundamental philosophical and spiritual subjects such as the purpose of meditation, human relationships, and how to bring about positive change in global society. His supporters, working through several non-profit foundations, oversee a number of independent schools centred on his views on education, in India, England and the United States. His talks, group and individual discussions, and other writings are published in a variety of formats including print, audio-video as well as online, in many languages.

The problem of discipline is really quite complex, because most of us think that through some form of discipline we shall eventually have freedom. Discipline is the cultivation of resistance, is it not? By resisting, by building a barrier within ourselves against something which we consider wrong, we think we shall be more capable of understanding and of being free to live fully; but that is not a fact, is it? Surely, it is only when there is freedom, real freedom to think, to discover—that you can find out anything.

But freedom obviously cannot exist in a frame. And most of us live in a frame, in a world enclosed by ideas, do we not? For instance, you are told by your parents and your teachers what is right and what is wrong. You know what people say, what the priest says, what tradition says, and what you have learned in school. All this forms a kind of enclosure within which you live; and, living in that enclosure, you say you are free. Are you? Can a man ever be free as long as he lives in a prison?

So, one has to break down the prison walls of tradition. One has to experiment and discover on one's own, and not merely follow somebody, however good, however noble and exciting that person may be, and however happy one may feel in his presence. What has significance is to be able to

examine and not just accept all the values created by tradition, all the things that people have said are good, beneficial, worthwhile. The moment you accept, you begin to conform, to imitate; and conforming, imitating, following, can never make one free and happy.

Our elders say that you must be disciplined. Discipline is imposed upon you by yourself, and by others from outside. But what is important is to be free to think, to inquire, so that you begin to find out for yourself. To think deeply, to go into things and discover for oneself what is true, is very difficult; it requires alert perception, constant inquiry, and most people have neither the inclination nor the energy for that. They say, 'You know better than I do; you are my guru, my teacher, and I shall follow you.'

So, it is very important that from the tenderest age you are free to find out, and are not enclosed by a wall of *do's* and *don'ts*; for if you are constantly told what to do and what not to do, what will happen to your intelligence? You will be a thoughtless entity who just walks into some career, who is told by his parents whom to marry or not to marry; and that is obviously not the action of intelligence. You may pass your examinations and be very well off, you may have good clothes and plenty of jewels, you may have friends and prestige; but as long as you are bound by tradition, there can be no intelligence.

Surely, intelligence comes into being only when you are free to question, free to think out and discover, so that your mind becomes very active, very alert and clear. Then you are a fully integrated individual—not a frightened entity who, not knowing what to do, inwardly feels one thing and outwardly conforms to something different.

Intelligence demands that you break away from tradition and live on your own; but you are enclosed by your parents' ideas and by the traditions of society. So there is a conflict going on inwardly, is there not? You are all young, but I don't think you are too young to be aware of this. So there is an inward struggle going on; and as long as you do not resolve that struggle you are going to be caught in conflict, in pain, in sorrow, everlastingly wanting to do something and being prevented from doing it.

If you go into it very carefully you will see that discipline and freedom are contradictory, and that in seeking real freedom there is set going quite a different process which brings its own clarification so that you just do not do certain things.

While you are young it is very important that you be free to find out, and be helped to find out, what you really want to do in life. If you don't find out while you are young, you will never find out, you will never be free and happy individuals. The seed must be sown now, so that you begin now to take the initiative.

On the road you have often passed villagers carrying heavy loads, have you not? Those poor women with torn and dirty clothes, with insufficient food, working day after day for a pittance—do you have any feeling for them? Or are you so frightened, so concerned about yourself, about your examinations, about your looks, about your saris, that you never pay any attention to them? Do you feel you are much better than they, that you belong to a higher class and therefore need have no regard for them? Don't you want to help them? No? That indicates how you are thinking. Are you so dulled by centuries of tradition, by what your fathers and mothers say, so conscious of belonging to a certain class, that you do not even look at the villagers? Are you actually so blinded that you do not know what is happening around you?

It is fear—fear of what your parents will say, of what the teachers will say, fear of tradition, fear of life—that gradually destroys sensitivity, is it not? To be sensitive is to feel, to receive impressions, to have sympathy for those who are suffering, to have affection, to be aware of the things that are happening around you. When the temple bell is ringing, are you aware of it? Do you listen to the sound? Do you ever see the sunlight on the water? Are you aware of the poor people, the villagers who have been controlled, trodden down for centuries by exploiters? When you see a servant carrying a heavy carpet, do you give him a helping hand?

All this implies sensitivity. But, you see, sensitivity is destroyed when one is disciplined, when one is fearful or concerned with oneself. To be concerned about one's looks,

about one's saris, to think about oneself all the time—which most of us do in some form or other—is to be insensitive, for then the mind and heart are enclosed and one loses all appreciation of beauty.

To be really free implies great sensitivity. There is no freedom if you are enclosed by self-interest or by various walls of discipline. As long as your life is a process of imitation there can be no sensitivity, no freedom. It is very important, while you are here, to sow the seed of freedom, which is to awaken intelligence; for with that intelligence you can tackle all the problems of life.

Stop and Think

1. Why do most people find it easier to conform, imitate, and follow a self-appointed guru?
2. What is the inward struggle that the author refers to?

Understanding the Text

1. Point out the difference between the slavery of man to Nature and the unnatural slavery of man to Man.
2. What are the ways in which people are subjected to greater control in the personal spheres than in the wider political sphere?
3. List the common misconceptions about 'freedom' that Shaw tries to debunk.
4. Why, according to Krishnamurti, are the concepts of freedom and discipline contradictory to one another?

5 How does the process of inquiry lead to true freedom?

Talking about the Text

1. According to the author, the masses are prevented from realising their slavery; the masses are also continually reminded that they have the right to vote. Do you think this idea holds good for our country too?
2. 'Nature may have tricks up her sleeve to check us if the chemists exploit her too greedily.' Discuss.
3. Respect for elders is not to be confused with blind obedience. Discuss.

Appreciation

1. Both the texts are on 'freedom'. Comment on the difference in the style of treatment of the topic in them.
2. When Shaw makes a statement he supports it with a number of examples. Identify two sections in the text which explain a statement with examples. Write down the main statement and the examples.

   Notice how this contributes to the effectiveness of the writing.
3. Notice the use of personal pronouns in the two texts. Did this make you identify yourself more with the topic than if it had been written in an impersonal style? As you read the texts, were you able to relate the writer's thoughts with the way you lead your own life?

Language Work

A. Grammar

I. Sentence Types

The smallest meaningful unit in language is the word. Words combine to form phrases, clauses and sentences.

- a sentence consists of one or more clauses
- a clause consists of one or more phrases
- a phrase consists of one or more words.

Look at these examples

(i) Nature *is* kind to her slaves.

(ii) As we *must eat* we *must* first *provide* food.

(iii) You *are* all young, but I don't think you *are* too young to be aware of this.

In example (i) you find only one verb, *is*. There is only one idea expressed. It is a single clause sentence known as *a simple sentence.*

In example (ii) you find two sets of verbs, *must eat* and *must provide*. It is a two clause sentence.

(a) As we must eat

(b) We must first provide food.

You can see that (b) is complete in its sense. This is the main clause. The meaning of clause (a) depends on (b). This is the

subordinate clause. Sentences with a main clause and one or more subordinate clauses are *complex sentences*.

In example (iii) you again find two verbs: *are* and *are*

(a) You are all young.

(b) But I don't think you are too young to be aware of this.

In this case (a) and (b) both make sense independent of each other though there is a link. There are two main clauses joined by the conjunction *but.* Sentences with more than one main clause are called *compound sentences*.

When sentences are too long and complicated, it is useful to look for the main clause which carries the main idea and the subordinate clauses which carry ideas that depend on the idea expressed in the main clause.

TASK

Split the following sentences into their constituent clauses

- There is no freedom if you are enclosed by self interest or by various walls of discipline.
- When you see a servant carrying a heavy carpet, do you give him a helping hand?
- Very young children will eat needles and matches eagerly—but the diet is not a nourishing one.
- We must sleep or go mad: but then sleep is so pleasant that we have great difficulty in getting up in the morning.
- Always call freedom by its old English name of leisure, and keep clamouring for more leisure and more money to enjoy it in return for an honest share of work.

Sometimes we have long sentences which have one main clause and several subordinate clauses of the same kind depending upon the main clause or another subordinate clause for meaning.

Notice this long sentence from the first section

> *From our earliest years we are taught* that our country is the land of the free, and that our freedom was won for us by our forefathers—when they made King John sign Magna Charta—when they defeated the Spanish Armada—when they cut off King Charles's head—when they made King William accept the Bill of Rights—when they issued and made good the American Declaration of Independence—when they

won the battles of Waterloo and Trafalgar on the playing-fields of Eton—and when, only the other day, they quite unintentionally changed the German, Austrian, Russian, and Ottoman empires into republics.

From our earliest years we are taught is the main clause; *taught* what?

(i) that our country is the land of the free

(ii) that our freedom was won for us by our forefathers

The succeeding five 'when' clauses depend upon clause ii for their meaning. Try to understand long sentences by splitting them into constituent clauses. Such sentences are usually used by authors to add force to their writing by combining ideas that are connected to one another.

II. Rhetorical Questions

A sentence which has the form of a question need not necessarily ask a question. Its communicative intention may actually be a statement.

Look at this example from the second section by J.Krishnamurti

On the road you have often passed villagers carrying heavy loads, have you not? What is your feeling about them? Those poor women with torn and dirty clothes, with insufficient food, working day after day for a pittance—do you have any feeling for them? Or are you so frightened, so concerned about yourself, about your examinations, about your looks, about your saris, that you never pay any attention to them? Do you feel you are much better than they, that you belong to a higher class and therefore need have no regard for them? When you see them go by, what do you feel? Don't you want to help them? No? That indicates how you are thinking. Are you so dulled by centuries of tradition, by what your fathers and mothers say, so conscious of belonging to a certain class, that you do not even look at the villagers? Are you actually so blinded that you do not know what is happening around you?

Such questions are called rhetorical questions which are used as persuasive devices by public speakers. If the rhetorical question is positive the implied statement is negative and vice versa. The implied statement is the mental answer that the speaker intends the hearer to infer from the rhetorical question.

TASK

Pick out examples of such rhetorical questions from the text and understand what the writer/speaker wishes to communicate through them.

B. Pronunciation

The way that sounds combine to produce syllables, words and sentences is interesting. Two classes of sound are established

(i) Vowels, or sounds that can occur on their own or are at the centre of a sequence of sounds (indicated as V)

(ii) Consonants, or sounds that cannot occur on their own or are at the edge of a sequence (indicated as C).

Examples

Word	Sound Sequence
I	V
see	CV
train	CCVC
boat	CVC

Notice that the two letters *ee* correspond to a single vowel sound. Similarly, the two letters *ai* in *train* correspond to a single vowel sound, as do the two letters *oa* in *boat*.

Do not confuse the vowel sounds with the names of letters of the alphabet that are sometimes called 'vowels'.

TASK

Write the sound sequences for the following words

sleep	thrift	snake	task
smear	facts	sweet	boasts
strain	street	strangle	strengths

Suggested Reading

Candida by George Bernard Shaw

Arms and the Man by George Bernard Shaw

Life Ahead by J. Krishnamurti

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2

The Mark on the Wall

Virginia Woolf was a novelist and essayist. She grew up in a literary atmosphere and was educated in her father's extensive library. The famous group of intellectuals which came to be known as the Bloomsbury Group originated in gatherings of Cambridge University graduates and their friends in Virginia's home. Along with her husband, Virginia started the Hogarth Press which became a successful publishing house.

In her novels, Mrs Dalloway *and* To the Lighthouse, *she experimented with new techniques, particularly new ways of capturing the flow of time. She believed that much imaginative literature is false to life because it relates episodes in a straight line, whereas our experiences actually flow together like a stream.*

This essay records fleeting impressions and delicate shades of mental experience.

Virginia Woolf
1882-1941

Perhaps it was the middle of January in the present year that I first looked up and saw the mark on the wall. In order to fix a date it is necessary to remember what one saw. So now I think of the fire; the steady film of yellow light upon the page of my book; the three chrysanthemums in the round glass bowl on the mantelpiece. Yes, it must have been the winter time, and we had just finished our tea, for I remember that I was smoking a cigarette when I looked up and saw the mark on the wall for the first time. I looked up through the smoke of my cigarette and my eye lodged for a moment upon the burning coals, and that old fancy of the crimson flag flapping from the castle tower came into my mind, and I thought of the cavalcade of red

knights riding up the side of the black rock. Rather to my relief the sight of the mark interrupted the fancy, for it is an old fancy, an automatic fancy, made as a child perhaps. The mark was a small round mark, black upon the white wall, about six or seven inches above the mantelpiece.

How readily our thoughts swarm upon a new object, lifting it a little way, as ants carry a blade of straw so feverishly, and then leave it... If that mark was made by a nail, it can't have been for a picture; it must have been for a miniature—the miniature of a lady with white powdered curls, powder-dusted cheeks, and lips like red carnations. A fraud of course, for the people who had this house before us would have chosen pictures in that way—an old picture for an old room. That is the sort of people they were—very interesting people, and I think of them so often, in such queer places, because one will never see them again, never know what happened next. They wanted to leave this house because they wanted to change their style of furniture, so he said, and he was in process of saying that in his opinion art should have ideas behind it when we were torn asunder, as one is torn from the old lady about to pour out tea and the young man about to hit the tennis ball in the back garden of the suburban villa as one rushes past in the train.

But for that mark, I'm not sure about it; I don't believe it was made by a nail after all; it's too big, too round, for that. I might get up, but if I got up and looked at it, ten to one I shouldn't be able to say for certain; because once a thing's done, no one ever knows how it happened. Oh! dear me, the mystery of life; the inaccuracy of thought! The ignorance of humanity! To show how very little control of our possessions we have—what an accidental affair this living is after all our civilization—let me just count over a few of the things lost in one lifetime, beginning, for that seems always the most mysterious of losses—what cat would gnaw, what rat would nibble—three pale blue canisters of book-binding tools? Then there were the bird cages, the iron hoops, the steel skates, the Queen Anne coal-scuttle, the bagatelle board, the hand organ—all gone, and jewels, too. Opals and emeralds, they lie about the

roots of turnips. What a scraping paring affair it is to be sure! The wonder is that I've any clothes on my back, that I sit surrounded by solid furniture at this moment. Why, if one wants to compare life to anything, one must liken it to being blown through the Tube at fifty miles an hour—landing at the other end without a single hairpin in one's hair! Shot out at the feet of God entirely naked! Tumbling head over heels in the asphodel meadows like brown paper parcels pitched down a shoot in the post office! With one's hair flying back like the tail of a race-horse. Yes, that seems to express the rapidity of life, the perpetual waste and repair; all so casual, all so haphazard...

But after life. The slow pulling down of thick green stalks so that the cup of the flower, as it turns over, deluges one with purple and red light. Why, after all, should one not be born there as one is born here, helpless, speechless, unable to focus one's eyesight, groping at the roots of the grass, at the toes of the Giants? As for saying which are trees and which are men and women, or whether there are such things, that one won't be in a condition to do for fifty years or so. There will be nothing but spaces of light and dark, intersected by thick stalks, and rather higher up perhaps, rose-shaped blots of an indistinct colour—dim pinks and blues—which will, as time goes on, become more definite, become—I don't know what...

And yet that mark on the wall is not a hole at all. It may even be caused by some round black substance, such as a small rose leaf, left over from the summer, and I, not being a very vigilant housekeeper—look at the dust on the mantelpiece, for example, the dust which, so they say, buried Troy three times over, only fragments of pots utterly refusing annihilation, as one can believe.

The tree outside the window taps very gently on the pane... I want to think quietly, calmly, spaciously, never to be interrupted, never to have to rise from my chair, to slip easily from one thing to another, without any sense of hostility, or obstacle. I want to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts. To steady myself, let me catch hold of the first idea that

passes... Shakespeare... Well, he will do as well as another. A man who sat himself solidly in an armchair, and looked into the fire, so—a shower of ideas fell perpetually from some very high Heaven down through his mind. He leant his forehead on his hand, and people, looking in through the open door—for this scene is supposed to take place on a summer's evening—but how dull this is, this historical fiction! It doesn't interest me at all. I wish I could hit upon a pleasant track of thought, a track indirectly reflecting credit upon myself, for those are the pleasantest thoughts, and very frequent even in the minds of modest mouse-coloured people, who believe genuinely that they dislike to hear their own praises. They are not thoughts directly praising oneself; that is the beauty of them; they are thoughts like this:

'And then I came into the room. They were discussing botany. I said how I'd seen a flower growing on a dust heap on the site of an old house in Kingsway. The seed, I said, must have been sown in the reign of Charles the First. What flowers grew in the reign of Charles the First? I asked—(but I don't remember the answer). Tall flowers with purple tassels to them perhaps. And so it goes on. All the time I'm dressing up the figure of myself in my own mind, lovingly, stealthily, not openly adoring it, for if I did that, I should catch myself out, and stretch my hand at once for a book in self-protection. Indeed, it is curious how instinctively one protects the image of oneself from idolatry or any other handling that could make it ridiculous, or too unlike the original to be believed in any longer. Or is it not so very curious after all? It is a matter of great importance. Suppose the looking glass smashes, the image disappears, and the romantic figure with the green of forest depths all about it is there no longer, but only that shell of a person which is seen by other people—what an airless, shallow, bald, prominent world it becomes! A world not to be lived in. As we face each other in omnibuses and underground railways we are looking into the mirror; that accounts for the vagueness, the gleam of glassiness, in our eyes. And the novelists in future will realise more and more the

importance of these reflections, for of course there is not one reflection but an almost infinite number; those are the depths they will explore, those the phantoms they will pursue, leaving the description of reality more and more out of their stories, taking a knowledge of it for granted, as the Greeks did and Shakespeare perhaps—but these generalisations are very worthless. The military sound of the word is enough. It recalls leading articles, cabinet ministers—a whole class of things indeed which, as a child, one thought the thing itself, the standard thing, from which one could not depart save at the risk of nameless damnation. Generalisations bring back somehow Sunday in London, Sunday afternoon walks, Sunday luncheons, and also ways of speaking of the dead, clothes, and habits—like the habit of sitting all together in one room until a certain hour, although nobody liked it. There was a rule for everything. The rule for tablecloths at that particular period was that they should be made of tapestry with little yellow compartments marked upon them, such as you may see in photographs of the carpets in the corridors of the royal palaces. Tablecloths of a different kind were not real tablecloths. How shocking, and yet how wonderful it was to discover that these real things, Sunday luncheons, Sunday walks, country houses, and tablecloths were not entirely real, were indeed half phantoms, and the damnation which visited the disbeliever in them was only a sense of illegitimate freedom. What now takes the place of those things I wonder, those real standard things? Men perhaps, should you be a woman; the masculine point of view which governs our lives which sets the standard, which established Whitaker's Table of Precedency, which has become, I suppose, since the war, half a phantom to many men and women, which soon, one may hope, will be laughed into the dustbin where the phantoms go, the mahogany sideboards and the Landseer prints, Gods and Devils, Hell and so forth, leaving us all with an intoxicating sense of illegitimate freedom—if freedom exists...

Stop and Think

1. What is the string of varied thoughts that the mark on the wall stimulates in the author's mind?
2. What change in the depiction of reality does the author foresee for future novelists?

In certain lights that mark on the wall seems actually to project from the wall. Nor is it entirely circular. I cannot be sure, but it seems to cast a perceptible shadow, suggesting that if I ran my finger down that strip of the wall it would, at a certain point, mount and descend a small tumulus, a smooth tumulus like those barrows on the South Downs which are, they say, either tombs or camps. Of the two I should prefer them to be tombs, desiring melancholy like most English people, and finding it natural at the end of a walk to think of the bones stretched beneath the turf... There must be some book about it. Some antiquary must have dug up those bones and given them a name... What sort of a man is an antiquary, I wonder? Retired Colonels for the most part, I dare say, leading parties of aged labourers to the top here, examining clods of earth and stone, and getting into correspondence with the neighbouring clergy, which, being opened at breakfast time, gives them a feeling of importance, and the comparison of arrow-heads necessitates cross-country journeys to the county towns, an agreeable necessity both to them and to their elderly wives, who wish to make plum jam or to clean out the study, and have every reason for keeping that great question of the camp or the tomb in perpetual suspension, while the Colonel himself feels agreeably philosophic in accumulating evidence on both sides of the question. It is true that he does finally incline to believe in the camp; and, being opposed, indites a pamphlet which he is about to read at the quarterly meeting of the local society when a stroke lays him low, and his last conscious thoughts are not of wife or child, but of the camp and that arrow-head there, which is now in the case at the local museum, together with the foot of a Chinese murderess, a handful of Elizabethan nails, a great many Tudor clay pipes, a picture

of Roman pottery, and the wineglass that Nelson drank out of—proving I really don't know what.

No, no, nothing is proved, nothing is known. And if I were to get up at this very moment and ascertain that the mark on the wall is really—what shall we say? the head of a gigantic old nail, driven in two hundred years ago, which has now, owing to the patient attrition of many generations of housemaids, revealed its head above the coat of paint, and is taking its first view of modern life in the sight of a white walled fire-lit room, what should I gain?—Knowledge? Matter for further speculation? I can think sitting still as well as standing up. And what is knowledge? What are our learned men save the descendants of witches and hermits who crouched in caves and in woods brewing herbs, interrogating shrew-mice and writing down the language of the stars? And the less we honour them as our superstitions dwindle and our respect for beauty and health of mind increases... Yes, one could imagine a very pleasant world. A quiet, spacious world, with the flowers so red and blue in the open fields. A world without professors or specialists or house-keepers with the profiles of policemen, a world which one could slice with one's thought as a fish slices the water with his fin, grazing the stems of the waterlilies, hanging suspended over nests of white sea eggs... How peaceful it is down here, rooted in the centre of the world and gazing up through the grey waters, with their sudden gleams of light, and their reflections—if it were not for Whitaker's Almanack*—if it were not for the Table of Precedency!

I must jump up and see for myself what that mark on the wall really is—a nail, a rose-leaf, a crack in the wood?

Here is Nature once more at her old game of self-preservation. This train of thought, she perceives, is threatening mere waste of energy, even some collision with reality, for who will ever be able to lift a finger against Whitaker's Table of Precedency? The Archbishop of Canterbury is followed by the Lord High Chancellor; the Lord High Chancellor is followed by the Archbishop of York.

* *Whitaker's Almanack is a reference book, published annually in the United Kingdom. It consists of articles, lists and tables on a wide range of subjects.*

Everybody follows somebody, such is the philosophy of Whitaker; and the great thing is to know who follows whom. Whitaker knows, and let that, so Nature counsels, comfort you, instead of enraging you; and if you can't be comforted, if you must shatter this hour of peace, think of the mark on the wall.

I understand Nature's game—her prompting to take action as a way of ending any thought that threatens to excite or to pain. Hence, I suppose, comes our slight contempt for men of action—men, we assume, who don't think. Still there's no harm in putting a full stop to one's disagreeable thoughts by looking at a mark on the wall.

Indeed, now that I have fixed my eyes upon it, I feel that I have grasped a plank in the sea; I feel a satisfying sense of reality which at once turns the two Archbishops and the Lord High Chancellor to the shadows of shades. Here is something definite, something real. Thus, waking from a midnight dream of horror, one hastily turns on the light and lies quiescent, worshipping the chest of drawers, worshipping solidity, worshipping reality, worshipping the impersonal world which is a proof of some existence other than ours. That is what one wants to be sure of... Wood is a pleasant thing to think about. It comes from a tree; and trees grow, and we don't know how they grow. For years and years they grow, without paying any attention to us, in meadows, in forests, and by the side of rivers—all things one likes to think about. The cows swish their tails beneath them on hot afternoons; they paint rivers so green that when a moorhen dives one expects to see its feathers all green when it comes up again. I like to think of the fish balanced against the stream like flags blown out; and of water beetles slowly raising domes of mud upon the bed of the river. I like to think of the tree itself: first the close dry sensation of being wood; then the grinding of the storm; then the slow, delicious ooze of sap. I like to think of it, too, on winter's nights standing in the empty field with all leaves close-furled, nothing tender exposed to the iron bullets of the moon, a naked mast upon an earth that goes tumbling, tumbling all night long. The song of birds must sound very loud and strange in June; and how cold the

feet of insects must feel upon it, as they make laborious progresses up the creases of the bark, or sun themselves upon the thin green awning of the leaves, and look straight in front of them with diamond-cut red eyes... One by one the fibres snap beneath the immense cold pressure of the earth, then the last storm comes and, falling, the highest branches drive deep into the ground again. Even so, life isn't done with; there are a million patient, watchful lives still for a tree, all over the world, in bedrooms, in ships, on the pavement, living rooms, where men and women sit after tea, smoking cigarettes. It is full of peaceful thoughts, happy thoughts, this tree. I should like to take each one separately—but something is getting in the way... Where was I? What has it all been about? A tree? A river? The Downs? Whitaker's Almanack? The fields of asphodel? I can't remember a thing. Everything's moving, falling, slipping, vanishing... There is a vast upheaval of matter.

Stop and Think

1. What is the author's perception of the limitations of knowledge and learning?
2. Describe the unbroken flow of thoughts and perceptions of the narrator's mind, using the example of the colonel and the clergy.

Someone is standing over me and saying:

'I'm going out to buy a newspaper.'

'Yes?'

'Though it's no good buying newspapers... Nothing ever happens. Curse this war; God damn this war!... All the same, I don't see why we should have a snail on our wall.'

Ah, the mark on the wall! It was a snail...

Understanding the Text

1. An account of reflections is more important than a description of reality according to the author. Why?
2. Looking back at objects and habits of a bygone era can give one a feeling of phantom-like unreality. What examples does the author give to bring out this idea?

3. How does the imagery of (i) the fish (ii) the tree, used almost poetically by the author, emphasise the idea of stillness of living, breathing thought?
4 How does the author pin her reflections on a variety of subjects on the 'mark on the wall'? What does this tell us about the way the human mind functions?
5. Not seeing the obvious could lead a perceptive mind to reflect upon more philosophical issues. Discuss this with reference to the 'snail on the wall'.

Talking about the Text

1. 'In order to fix a date, it is necessary to remember what one saw'. Have you experienced this at any time? Describe one such incident, and the non-chronological details that helped you remember a particular date.
2. 'Tablecloths of a different kind were not real tablecloths'. Does this sentence embody the idea of blind adherence to rules and tradition? Discuss with reference to 'Understanding Freedom and Discipline' by J. Krishnamurti that you've already read.
3. According to the author, nature prompts action as a way of ending thought. Do we tacitly assume that 'men of action are men who don't think'?

Appreciation

1. Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of narration: one, where the reader would remain aware of some outside voice telling him/her what's going on; two, a narration that seeks to reproduce, without the narrator's intervention, the full spectrum and continuous flow of a character's mental process. Which of these is exemplified in this essay? Illustrate.
2. This essay frequently uses the non-periodic or loose sentence structure: the component members are continuous, but so loosely joined, that the sentence could have easily been broken without damage to or break in thought. Locate a few such sentences, and discuss how they contribute to the relaxed and conversational effect of the narration.

Language Work

A. Grammar: Content Words and Function Words

A sentence has words in it. What kind of words? It has nouns:

(1a) I looked up and saw the *mark* on the *wall*.

and verbs

(1b) I *looked* up and *saw* the mark on the wall.

It may have adjectives

(2a) How readily our thoughts swarm upon a *new* object…

and adverbs

(2b) How *readily* our thoughts swarm upon a new object…

Such words have a meaning that can be readily explained; these words can be defined. They also have content. *Nouns*, *verbs, adjectives* and *adverbs* are *content words.* But what about the remaining words in our examples above? Take for example the word *and*. What is its 'meaning'?

(3) I looked up *and* saw the mark on the wall.

Its meaning is in its function in the sentence. It joins together two words, phrases or sentences. It is a conjunction.

A *conjunction* is a *function word*. Function words are the kind of words that we leave out when we send telegrams, when we can guess at the meaning. Look at this example

…saw mark on wall

What words have been left out in this message? Two occurrences of the word *the*. We can call *the* the definite article. What is its function? In example (1), it shows that a unique mark on a unique wall is being spoken about. Virginia Woolf isn't speaking about '*a* mark on *a* wall', that is, *any* mark on *any* wall. She's speaking about a particular, definite mark on a particular, definite wall.

(4) I looked up and saw *the* mark on *the* wall.

Definite and *indefinite articles* are *function words*. What about the words *I* and *our*?

(5a) *I* looked up and saw the mark on the wall.

(5b) How readily *our* thoughts swarm upon a new object…

These are pronouns; they occupy the place of a noun. But are they, therefore, content words, like nouns? We shall argue that they are not. (Notice that they get left out in telegraphic language.) We can make up new nouns in a language, but we

cannot make up new pronouns. *Pronouns* are a *closed set*; *nouns* are an *open set*. So, we shall say, *pronouns* are *function words*.

The words that remain in our examples are *up*, *on*, *upon*, and *how*. The first three are *prepositions*. Are prepositions content words or function words? We can argue that prepositions have meaning, and treat them as content words. (Notice that they occur in telegraphic language.) Or we can argue that prepositions are a closed set of words like pronouns, and treat them as function words. So this question does not have a single answer.

Finally, what is the function of *how* in our example in (2)? *How*, we all know, usually asks a question; it is a *question word*. But our example in (2) is not a question. It is an exclamation. *How* occurs in the exclamation (2) in place of the intensifying word *so* in (6a)

(6a) Our thoughts swarm upon a new object *so* readily!

(6b) *How* readily our thoughts swarm upon a new object!

How occurs instead of *so* in (6b) because the emphasised word *readily* has moved to the front of the sentence.

Summing up: Content words are nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and perhaps prepositions.

Function words include conjunctions, pronouns, determiners and demonstratives, quantifiers and intensifiers, question words, and perhaps prepositions.

TASK

(i) Can you say which words are content words in the examples below, and which are function words? All the examples are from the text in this unit.

(ii) Can you name the kind of word (its category as noun, pronoun, etc.?). A dictionary may help you to do this. You can work in pairs or groups, discussing the reasons for your analysis.

- Ants carry a blade of straw so feverishly, and then leave it.
- They wanted to leave this house because they wanted to change their style of furniture.
- I don't believe it was made by a nail after all; it's too big, too round, for that.
- There was a rule for everything.
- The tree outside the window taps very gently on the pane.

B. Pronunciation

We have seen how the segments of spoken language, i.e. vowels and consonants, combine to produce syllables, words and sentences. When we articulate these segments, we notice that there is some variation. That is, in connected speech, we do not isolate sounds, but several things can happen to the pronunciation of their individual segments. The speed and rhythm can cause some segments to have weak forms, some to drop out, and some put in.

Words, sometimes, have both strong and weak forms, depending on whether they are pronounced with force. The word 'is', for instance, is pronounced /iz/ when said in isolation, or in emphasis as in

He *is* responsible.

[Meaning: He cannot get away from the fact that he is responsible.]

But in the utterance

He *is* a doctor

The word 'is' has no emphasis, and so it is pronounced as /s/ or /z/.

TASK

(i) Look at the following words

a and had is not

Notice the difference in pronunciation when they are said in isolation and in normal conversation.

(ii) Find out five more words which have both strong and weak forms.

Suggested Reading

The Death of the Moth by Virginia Woolf

The Moment by Virginia Woolf.

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3

Film-making

Ingmar Bergman
1918-2007

Ingmar Bergman is a well known Swedish director of films noted for their starkness, their subtle use of black and white and 'shades' of those extremes, the ambiguity of their content, and a certain brooding presence that seems to pervade them all. The list of Bergman films is long; his best known include The Seventh Seal (1957), Wild Strawberries (1958), The Virgin Spring (1960), The Silence (1963), Persona (1967), The Passion of Anna (1970), and Cries and Whispers *(1973)—this last film in colour, though emphasising red in all its shadings. In the following selection, the Introduction to* Four Screen-plays by Ingmar Bergman *(1960), Bergman discusses how he views the art of film-making.*

During the shooting of *The Virgin Spring*, we were up in the northern province of Dalarna in May and it was early in the morning, about half past seven. The landscape there is rugged, and our company was working by a little lake in the forest. It was very cold, about 30 degrees, and from time to time a few snowflakes fell through the grey, rain-dimmed sky. The company was dressed in a strange variety of clothing—raincoats, oil slickers, Icelandic sweater jackets, old blankets, coachmen's coats, medieval robes. Our men had laid some ninety feet of rusty, buckling rail over the difficult terrain, to dolly the camera on. We were all helping with the equipment—actors, electricians, make-up men, script girl, sound crew—mainly to keep warm. Suddenly someone shouted and pointed toward the sky. Then we saw a crane floating high above the fir trees, and then another, and then several cranes floating majestically

in a circle above us. We all dropped what we were doing and ran to the top of a nearby hill to see the cranes better. We stood there for a long time, until they turned westward and disappeared over the forest. And suddenly I thought: this is what it means to make a movie in Sweden. This is what can happen, this is how we work together with our old equipment and little money, and this is how we can suddenly drop everything for the love of four cranes floating above the tree tops.

Childhood Foretells Future

My association with film goes back to the world of childhood. My grandmother had a very large old apartment in Uppsala. I used to sit under the dining-room table there, 'listening' to the sunshine which came in through the gigantic windows. The cathedral bells went ding-dong, and the sunlight moved about and 'sounded' in a special way. One day, when winter was giving way to spring and I was five years old, a piano was being played in the next apartment. It played waltzes, nothing but waltzes. On the wall hung a large picture of Venice. As the sunlight moved across the picture the water in the canal began to flow, the pigeons flew up from the square, people talked and gesticulated. Bells sounded, not those of Uppsala Cathedral but from the picture itself. And the piano music also came from that remarkable picture of Venice.

A child who is born and brought up in a vicarage acquires an early familiarity with life and death behind the scenes. Father performed funerals, marriages, baptisms, gave advice and prepared sermons. The devil was an early acquaintance, and in the child's mind there was a need to personify him. This is where my magic lantern came in. It consisted of a small metal box with a carbide lamp—I can still remember the smell of the hot metal—and coloured glass slides: Red Riding Hood and the Wolf, and all the others. And the wolf was the Devil, without horns but with a tail and a gaping red mouth, strangely real yet incomprehensible, a picture of wickedness and temptation on the flowered wall of the nursery.

When I was ten years old I received my first, rattling film projector, with its chimney and lamp. I found it both mystifying and fascinating. The first film I had was nine feet long and brown in colour. It showed a girl lying asleep in a meadow, who woke up and stretched out her arms, then disappeared to the right. That was all there was to it. The film was a great success and was projected every night until it broke and could not be mended any more.

This little rickety machine was my first conjuring set. And even today I remind myself with childish excitement that I am really a conjurer, since cinematography is based on deception of the human eye. I have worked it out that if I see a film which has a running time of one hour, I sit through twenty-seven minutes of complete darkness—the blankness between frames. When I show a film I am guilty of deceit. I use an apparatus which is constructed to take advantage of a certain human weakness, an apparatus with which I can sway my audience in a highly emotional manner—make them laugh, scream with fright, smile, believe in fairy stories, become indignant, feel shocked, charmed, deeply moved or perhaps yawn with boredom. Thus I am either an impostor or, when the audience is willing to be taken in, a conjurer. I perform conjuring tricks with apparatus so expensive and so wonderful that any entertainer in history would have given anything to have it.

Stop and Think

1. What childhood memories does the author recollect that had a bearing on his later involvement with film-making?
2. What connection does the author draw between film-making and conjuring?

Split Second Impressions

A film for me begins with something very vague—a chance remark or a bit of conversation, a hazy but agreeable event unrelated to any particular situation. It can be a few bars of music, a shaft of light across the street. Sometimes

in my work at the theatre I have envisioned actors made up for yet unplayed roles.

These are split second impressions that disappear as quickly as they come, yet leave behind a mood—like pleasant dreams. It is a mental state, not an actual story, but one abounding in fertile associations and images. Most of all, it is a brightly coloured thread sticking out of the dark sack of the unconscious. If I begin to wind up this thread, and do it carefully, a complete film will emerge.

This primitive nucleus strives to achieve definite form, moving in a way that may be lazy and half asleep at first. Its stirring is accompanied by vibrations and rhythms which are very special and unique to each film. The picture sequences then assume a pattern in accordance with these rhythms, obeying laws born out of and conditioned by my original stimulus.

If that embryonic substance seems to have enough strength to be made into a film, I decide to materialise it. Then comes something very complicated and difficult: the

transformation of rhythms, moods, atmosphere, tensions, sequences, tones and scents into words and sentences, into an understandable screenplay.

This is an almost impossible task. The only thing that can be satisfactorily transferred from that original complex of rhythms and moods is the dialogue, and even dialogue is a sensitive substance which may offer resistance. Written dialogue is like a musical score, almost incomprehensible to the average person. Its interpretation demands a technical knack plus a certain kind of imagination and feeling—qualities which are so often lacking, even among actors. One can write dialogue, but how it should be delivered, its rhythm and tempo, what is to take place between lines—all this must be omitted for practical reasons. Such a detailed script would be unreadable. I try to squeeze instructions as to location, characterisation and atmosphere into my screenplays in understandable terms, but the success of this depends on my writing ability and the perceptiveness of the reader, which are not always predictable.

The Rhythm of a Film

Now we come to essentials, by which I mean montage, rhythm and the relation of one picture to another—the vital third dimension without which the film is merely a dead product from a factory. Here I cannot clearly give a key, as in a musical score, nor a specific idea of the tempo which determines the relationship of the elements involved. It is quite impossible for me to indicate the way in which the film 'breathes' and pulsates.

I have often wished for a kind of notation which would enable me to put on paper all the shades and tones of my vision, to record distinctly the inner structure of a film. For when I stand in the artistically devastating atmosphere of the studio, my hands and head full of all the trivial and irritating details that go with motion-picture production, it often takes a tremendous effort to remember how I originally saw and thought out this or that sequence, or what was the relation between the scene of four weeks ago and that of today. If I could express myself clearly, in

explicit symbols, then this problem would be almost eliminated and I could work with absolute confidence that whenever I liked I could prove the relationship between the part and the whole and put my finger on the rhythm, the continuity of the film.

Thus the script is a very imperfect *technical* basis for a film. And there is another important point in this connection which I should like to mention. Film has nothing to do with literature; the character and substance of the two art forms are usually in conflict. This probably has something to do with the receptive process of the mind. The written word is read and assimilated by a conscious act of the will in alliance with the intellect; little by little it affects the imagination and the emotions. The process is different with a motion picture. When we experience a film, we consciously prime ourselves for illusion. Putting aside will and intellect, we make way for it in our imagination. The sequence of pictures plays directly on our feelings.

Music works in the same fashion; I would say that there is no art form that has so much in common with film as music. Both affect our emotions directly, not via the intellect. And film is mainly rhythm; it is inhalation and exhalation in continuous sequence. Ever since childhood, music has been my great source of recreation and stimulation, and I often experience a film or play musically.

Stop and Think

1. What is the nature of the first impressions that form the basis for a film?
2. Which art form is film-making closest to? What is the reason for the similarity?

Film and Written Literature

It is mainly because of this difference between film and literature that we should avoid making films out of books. The irrational dimension of a literary work, the germ of its existence, is often untranslatable into visual terms—and it, in turn, destroys the special, irrational dimension of the film. If, despite this, we wish to translate something

literary into film terms, we must make an infinite number of complicated adjustments which often bear little or no fruit in proportion to the effort expended.

I myself have never had any ambition to be an author. I do not want to write novels, short stories, essays, biographies, or even plays for the theatre. I only want to make films—films about conditions, tensions, pictures, rhythms and characters which are in one way or another important to me. The motion picture, with its complicated process of birth, is my method of saying what I want to my fellow men. I am a film-maker, not an author.

Thus the writing of the script is a difficult period but a useful one, for it compels me to prove logically the validity of my ideas. In doing this, I am caught in a conflict—a conflict between my need to transmit a complicated situation through visual images, and my desire for absolute clarity. I do not intend my work to be solely for the benefit of myself or the few, but for the entertainment of the general public. The wishes of the public are imperative. But sometimes I risk following my own impulse, and it has been shown that the public can respond with surprising sensitivity to the most unconventional line of development.

When shooting begins, the most important thing is that those who work with me feel a definite contact, that all of us somehow cancel out our conflicts through working together. We must pull in one direction for the sake of the work at hand. Sometimes this leads to dispute. But the more definite and clear the 'marching orders', the easier it is to reach the goal which has been set. This is the basis for my conduct as director, and perhaps the explanation of much of the nonsense that has been written about me.

While I cannot let myself be concerned with what people think and say about me personally, I believe that reviewers and critics have every right to interpret my films as they like. I refuse to interpret my work to others, and I cannot tell the critic what to think; each person has the right to understand a film as he sees it. Either he is attracted or repelled. A film is made to create reaction. If the audience does not react one way or another, it is an indifferent work and worthless.

I do not mean by this that I believe in being 'different' at any price. A lot has been said about the value of originality, and I find this foolish. Either you are original or you are not. It is completely natural for artists to take from and give to each other, to borrow from and experience one another. In my own life, my great literary experience was Strindberg. There are works of his which can still make my hair stand on end—*The People of Hemso,* for example. And it is my dream to produce *Dream Play* some day. Olof Molander's production of it in 1934 was for me a fundamental dramatic experience.

Stop and Think

1. Quite often a film made out of a book is not very successful. Discuss.
2. What, according to Bergman, is the relationship between a film-maker and his audience?

Significant Persons

On a personal level, there are many people who have meant a great deal to me. My father and mother were certainly of vital importance, not only in themselves but because they created a world for me to revolt against. In my family there was an atmosphere of hearty wholesomeness which I, a sensitive young plant, scorned and rebelled against. But that strict middle-class home gave me a wall to pound on, something to sharpen myself against. At the same time they taught me a number of values—efficiency, punctuality, a sense of financial responsibility—which may be 'bourgeois' but are nevertheless important to the artist. They are part of the process of setting oneself severe standards. Today as a film maker I am conscientious, hard-working and extremely careful; my films involve good craftsmanship, and my pride is the pride of a good craftsman.

Among the people who have meant something in my professional development is Torsten Hammaren of Gothenburg. I went there from Hälsingborg, where I had been head of the municipal theatre for two years. I had no

conception of what theatre was; Hammaren taught me during the four years I stayed in Gothenburg. Then, when I made my first attempts at film, Alf Sjöberg—who directed *Torment*—taught me a great deal. And there was Lorens Marmstedt, who really taught me filmmaking from scratch after my first unsuccessful movie. Among other things I learned from Marmstedt is the one unbreakable rule: you must look at your own work very coldly and clearly; you must be a devil to yourself in the screening room when watching the day's rushes. Then there is Herbert Grevenius, one of the few who believed in me as a writer. I had trouble with script-writing, and was reaching out more and more to the drama, to dialogue, as a means of expression. He gave me great encouragement.

Finally, there is Carl Anders Dymling, my producer. He is crazy enough to place more faith in the sense of responsibility of a creative artist than in calculations of profit and loss. I am thus able to work with an integrity that has become the very air I breathe, and one of the main reasons I do not want to work outside of Sweden. The moment I lose this freedom I will cease to be a film-maker, because I have no skill in the art of compromise. My only significance in the world of film lies in the freedom of my creativity.

The Tightrope of Film-making

Today, the ambitious film-maker is obliged to walk a tightrope without a net. He may be a conjurer, but no one conjures the producer, the bank director or the theatre owners when the public refuses to go see a film and lay down the money by which producer, bank director, theatre owner and conjurer can live. The conjurer may then be deprived of his magic wand; I would like to be able to measure the amount of talent, initiative and creative ability which has been destroyed by the film industry in its ruthlessly efficient sausage machine. What was play to me once has now become a struggle. Failure, criticism, public indifference all hurt more today than yesterday. The brutality of the industry is undisguised—yet that can be an advantage.

So much for people and the film business. I have been asked, as a clergyman's son, about the role of religion in my thinking and film-making. To me, religious problems are continuously alive. I never cease to concern myself with them; it goes on every hour of every day. Yet this does not take place on the emotional level, but on an intellectual one. Religious emotion, religious sentimentality, is something I got rid of long ago—I hope. The religious problem is an intellectual one to me: the relationship of my mind to my intuition. The result of this conflict is usually some kind of tower of Babel.

Philosophically, there is a book which was a tremendous experience for me: Eiono Kaila's *Psychology of the Personality.* His thesis that man lives strictly according to his needs—negative and positive—was shattering to me, but terribly true. And I built on this ground.

Cathedral-building

People ask what are my intentions with my films—my aims. It is a difficult and dangerous question, and I usually give an evasive answer: I try to tell the truth about the human condition, the truth as I see it. This answer seems to satisfy everyone, but it is not quite correct. I prefer to describe what I *would like* my aim to be.

There is an old story of how the cathedral of Chartres was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. Then thousands of people came from all points of the compass, like a giant procession of ants, and together they began to rebuild the cathedral on its old site. They worked until the building was completed—master builders, artists, labourers, clowns, noblemen, priests, burghers. But they all remained anonymous and no one knows to this day who built the cathedral of Chartres.

Regardless of my own beliefs and my own doubts, which are unimportant in this connection, it is my opinion that art lost its basic creative drive the moment it was separated from worship. It severed an umbilical cord and now lives its own sterile life, generating and degenerating itself. In former days the artist remained unknown and his work was to the

glory of God. He lived and died without being more or less important than other artisans; 'eternal values', 'immortality' and 'masterpiece' were terms not applicable in his case. The ability to create was a gift. In such a world flourished invulnerable assurance and natural humility.

Today the individual has become the highest form and the greatest bane of artistic creation. The smallest wound or pain of the ego is examined under a microscope as if it were of eternal importance. The artist considers his isolation, his subjectivity, his individualism almost holy. Thus we finally gather in one large pen, where we stand and bleat about our loneliness without listening to each other and without realising that we are smothering each other to death. The individualists stare into each other's eyes and yet deny the existence of each other. We walk in circles, so limited by our anxieties that we can no longer distinguish between true and false, between the gangster's whim and the purest ideal.

Thus if I am asked what I would like the general purpose of my films to be, I would reply that I want to be one of the artists in the cathedral on the great plain. I want to make a dragon's head, an angel, a devil—or perhaps a saint—out of stone. It does not matter which; it is the sense of satisfaction that counts. Regardless of whether I believe or not, whether I am a Christian or not, I would play my part in the collective building of the cathedral.

Stop and Think

1. What is the story of the Cathetdral of Chartres and how does the author relate it to his profession?
2. What are some of the flaws of the world of film-making today?

Interview with Umberto Eco

With over 30 honorary doctorates and a string of literary and academic awards, Umberto Eco has the reputation of being one of the world's foremost intellectuals. A professor at the University of Bologna in Italy, Umberto Eco is known for his ideas on semiotics, literary interpretation and medieval aesthetics. He is a distinguished novelist and writer. His novel, The Name of the

Rose, *published in 1980 sold over ten million copies. Here is an excerpt from an interview with Eco where he expresses his views on the filming of books.*

***The Name of the Rose* is a very serious novel. It's a detective yarn at one level but it also delves into metaphysics, theology, and medieval history. Yet it enjoyed a huge mass audience. Were you puzzled at all by this?**

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

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

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

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

What did you think about the film [directed by Jean Jacques Annaud and starring Sean Connery]? Why weren't you happy with it?

I expected the film to be different. My novel is a kind of club sandwich—lettuce, tomato, cheese...

Different layers of meaning?

Yes. A film cannot select all the layers. It has to make do with jambon or cheese... I didn't react like authors who, immediately after the film is made, say it is not at all like my book. But after that experience, I asked my publisher not to sell the rights of the novel to cinema. I did this because I discovered that 80 per cent of readers read the book after the movie. And that is very painful for a novelist.

But surely this also means greater success, greater remuneration?

Yes. But it is embarrassing to know that somebody else has already told the reader that the novel should be read in a particular way. That he should imagine the face of a character in a particular way. The only enviable position is that of Homer's who had the film made more than 2000 years after the book (*laughs*).

So this is why Stanley Kubrick never got to make *Foucault's Pendulum*?

Since I had laid down a general rule, the publisher said no. Then Stanley Kubrick died. But it may have been a great movie (*laughs*).

Talking about *Foucault's Pendulum*, there is a sense in which you did the Da Vinci Code before Dan Brown did. Of course, you did it as a myth that takes on a strange reality and he did it as it was historical truth.

I told Dan Brown's story. My characters are his. I gave the broad picture of this kind of literature.

Mukund Padmanabhan

Understanding the Text

1. Pick out examples from the text that show Bergman's sensitivity to sensory impressions which have made him a great film-maker.
2. What do you understand of the complexity of the little invisible steps that go into the making of a good film?
3. What are some of the risks that film-making involves?
4. What misgivings does Bergman have about the contemporary film industry?
5. Compare Bergman's views about making films out of books with that of Umberto Eco's.

Talking about the Text

1. According to the author, split-second impressions form a 'mental state, not an actual story, but one abounding in fertile associations and images'.

   Compare this with Virginia Woolf's experiment with the stream of consciousness technique in 'The Mark on the Wall'.

2. Bergman talks about the various influences in his life including his parents and his religious upbringing. To what extent are an individual's achievements dependent on the kind of influences he or she has had in life? Discuss.

Appreciation

1. Autobiographical accounts make interesting reading when the author selects episodes that are connected to the pursuit of excellence. How does this apply to Ingmar Bergman's narration of the details of film-making?
2. Comment on the conversational tone of the narration. Compare this with the very informal style adopted by Umberto Eco in the interview.

Language Work

A. Vocabulary

Find out and write down the definitions of the following terms used in the film industry

script	project	montage	flashback
	stage prop	footlights	

B. Grammar

We saw in the grammar section of the unit on *Freedom* that a sentence can consist of clauses and phrases.

Let us now look at the basic form of a sentence and study its parts. A sentence consists of a subject and a predicate. Take the sentence

My grandmother *had a very large old apartment in Uppsala.*

The sentence here talks about 'the grandmother'. 'The grandmother' is the subject of the sentence. What is said about the subject 'grandmother' is the predicate of the sentence. 'had a very large old apartment in Uppsala' is the predicate.

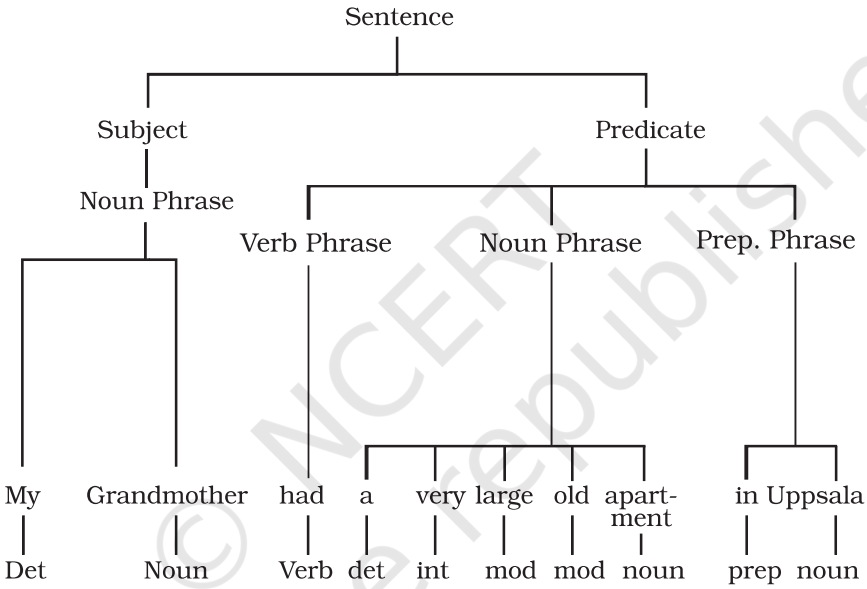
Generally a sentence begins with the subject. The predicate begins with a verb. 'had' is the verb in the example above. The subject answers the question 'who' or 'what' before the verb.

Question: 'Who had?'

Answer: 'the grandmother had'.

The object of a sentence generally comes after the verb. It answers the question 'what' after the verb. 'Had what?' 'had an apartment' is the answer. 'Apartment' is the object of the sentence. The word 'apartment' has an article and two adjectives preceding it.

'a very large old apartment'; the word 'very' is an intensifier for the adjective 'large'. We are also given information about the location of the apartment, 'in Uppsala'. This is a prepositional phrase and consists of a preposition and a noun. 'in Uppsala' is an adjunct. It gives additional information.



det: determiner

int: intensifier

mod: modifier

TASK

Analyse the parts of the following sentences according to the pattern above

- My association with film goes back to the world of childhood.
- This is an almost impossible task.
- Thus the script is a very imperfect technical basis for a film.
- I would play my part in the collective building of the cathedral.
- The ability to create was a gift.

C. Pronunciation

We have seen that it is not necessary, nor desirable, to pronounce every sound perfectly to be understood. Quite a lot of sounds that you might expect to hear are not actually pronounced. In rapid speech, sounds may be left out or elided, especially when they occur as part of a cluster of consonants. For example in the phrase 'next day', the /t/ is lost

nex*t*/ day

TASK

Mark the consonants that are left out or elided in the following utterances

- new textbooks
- written scripts
- he must be ill
- mashed potatoes

Things to do

Think of a particular episode that could be enacted. Now imagine that you are a scriptwriter and write the screenplay for the first ten minutes of the episode, in the following format

Title : Actors : Scene -1	
Description	Dialogue

The column 'Dialogue' would contain the words to be actually spoken by the characters. 'Description' would include instructions regarding stage props, position of lights, movement of actors and so on.

Suggested Reading

Four Screen-plays by Ingmar Bergman.

12076CH17

4

Why the Novel Matters

D.H. Lawrence
1885-1930

D.H. Lawrence was born in a coal-mining town. He was the son of an uneducated miner and an ambitious mother who was a teacher. His wife was German, and the couple lived, at various times, in Italy, Germany, Australia, Tahiti and Mexico.
Lawrence's writings reflect a revolt against puritanism, mediocrity and the dehumanisation of an industrial society.

We have curious ideas of ourselves. We think of ourselves as a body with a spirit in it, or a body with a soul in it, or a body with a mind in it. *Mens sana in corpore sano.* The years drink up the wine, and at last throw the bottle away, the body, of course, being the bottle.

It is a funny sort of superstition. Why should I look at my hand, as it so cleverly writes these words, and decide that it is a mere nothing compared to the mind that directs it? Is there really any huge difference between my hand and my brain? Or my mind? My hand is alive, it flickers with a life of its own. It meets all the strange universe in touch, and learns a vast number of things, and knows a vast number of things. My hand, as it writes these words, slips gaily along, jumps like a grasshopper to dot an *i*, feels the table rather cold, gets a little bored if I write too long, has its own rudiments of thought, and is just as much *me* as is my brain, my mind, or my soul. Why should

I imagine that there is a *me* which is more *me* than my hand is? Since my hand is absolutely alive, me alive.

Whereas, of course, as far as I am concerned, my pen isn't alive at all. My pen *isn't me* alive. Me alive ends at my fingertips.

Whatever is me alive is me. Every tiny bit of my hands is alive, every little freckle and hair and fold of skin. And whatever is me alive is me. Only my finger-nails, those ten little weapons between me and an inanimate universe, they cross the mysterious Rubicon between me alive and things like my pen, which are not alive, in my own sense.

So, seeing my hand is all alive and me alive, wherein is it just a bottle, or a jug, or a tin can, or a vessel of clay, or any of the rest of that nonsense? True, if I cut it will bleed, like a can of cherries. But then the skin that is cut, and the veins that bleed, and the bones that should never be seen, they are all just as alive as the blood that flows. So the tin can business, or vessel of clay, is just bunk.

And that's what you learn, when you're a novelist. And that's what you are very liable *not* to know, if you're a parson, or a philosopher, or a scientist, or a stupid person. If you're a parson, you talk about souls in heaven. If you're a novelist, you know that paradise is in the palm of your hand, and on the end of your nose, because both are alive; and alive, and man alive, which is more than you can say, for certain, of paradise. Paradise is after life, and I for one am not keen on anything that is *after* life. If you are a philosopher, you talk about infinity; and the pure spirit which knows all things. But if you pick up a novel, you realise immediately that infinity is just a handle to this self-same jug of a body of mine; while as for knowing, if I find my finger in the fire, I know that fire burns with a knowledge so emphatic and vital, it leaves Nirvana merely a conjecture. Oh, yes, my body, me alive, *knows*, and knows intensely. And as for the sum of all knowledge, it can't be anything more than an accumulation of all the things I know in the body, and you, dear reader, know in the body.

These damned philosophers, they talk as if they suddenly went off in steam, and were then much more important than they are when they're in their shirts. It is

nonsense. Every man, philosopher included, ends in his own finger-tips. That's the end of his man alive. As for the words and thoughts and sighs and aspirations that fly from him, they are so many tremulations in the ether, and not alive at all. But if the tremulations reach another man alive, he may receive them into his life, and his life may take on a new colour, like a chameleon creeping from a brown rock on to a green leaf. All very well and good. It still doesn't alter the fact that the so-called spirit, the message or teaching of the philosopher or the saint, isn't alive at all, but just a tremulation upon the ether, like a radio message. All this spirit stuff is just tremulations upon the ether. If you, as man alive, quiver from the tremulation of the other into new life, that is because you are man alive, and you take sustenance and stimulation into your alive man in a myriad ways. But to say that the message, or the spirit which is communicated to you, is more important than your living body, is nonsense. You might as well say that the potato at dinner was more important.

Nothing is important but life. And for myself, I can absolutely see life nowhere but in the living. Life with a capital L is only man alive. Even a cabbage in the rain is cabbage alive. All things that are alive are amazing. And all things that are dead are subsidiary to the living. Better a live dog than a dead lion. But better a live lion than a live dog. *C'est la vie!*

It seems impossible to get a saint, or a philosopher, or a scientist, to stick to this simple truth. They are all, in a sense, renegades. The saint wishes to offer himself up as spiritual food for the multitude. Even Frances of Assisi turns himself into a sort of angel-cake, of which anyone may take a slice. But an angel-cake is rather less than man alive. And poor St. Francis might well apologise to his body, when he is dying: 'Oh, pardon me, my body, the wrong I did you through the years!' It was no wafer, for others to eat.

The philosopher, on the other hand, because he can think, decides that nothing but thoughts matter. It is as if a rabbit, because he can make little pills, should decide

that nothing but little pills matter. As for the scientist, he has absolutely no use for me so long as I am man alive. To the scientist, I am dead. He puts under the microscope a bit of dead me, and calls it me. He takes me to pieces, and says first one piece, and then another piece, is me. My heart, my liver, my stomach have all been scientifically me, according to the scientist; and nowadays I am either a brain, or nerves, or glands, or something more up-to-date in the tissue line.

Now I absolutely flatly deny that I am a soul, or a body, or a mind, or an intelligence, or a brain, or a nervous system, or a bunch of glands, or any of the rest of these bits of me. The whole is greater than the part. And therefore, I, who am man alive, am greater than my soul, or spirit, or body, or mind, or consciousness, or anything else that is merely a part of me. I am a man, and alive. I am man alive, and as long as I can, I intend to go on being man alive.

Stop and Think

1. What are the things that mark animate things from the inanimate?
2. What is the simple truth that eludes the philosopher or the scientist?

For this reason I am a novelist. And being a novelist, I consider myself superior to the saint, the scientist, the philosopher, and the poet, who are all great masters of different bits of man alive, but never get the whole hog.

The novel is the one bright book of life. Books are not life. They are only tremulations on the ether. But the novel as a tremulation can make the whole man alive tremble. Which is more than poetry, philosophy, science, or any other book tremulation can do.

The novel is the book of life. In this sense, the Bible is a great novel. You may say, it is about God. But it is really about man alive.

I do hope you begin to get my idea, why the novel is supremely important, as a tremulation on the ether. Plato

makes the perfect ideal being tremble in me. But that's only a bit of me. Perfection is only a bit, in the strange make-up of man alive. The Sermon on the Mount makes the selfless spirit of me quiver. But that, too, is only a bit of me. The Ten Commandments set the old Adam shivering in me, warning me that I am a thief and a murderer, unless I watch it. But even the old Adam is only a bit of me.

I very much like all these bits of me to be set trembling with life and the wisdom of life. But I do ask that the whole of me shall tremble in its wholeness, some time or other.

And this, of course, must happen in me, living.

But as far as it can happen from a communication, it can only happen when a whole novel communicates itself to me. The Bible—but *all* the Bible—and Homer, and Shakespeare: these are the supreme old novels. These are all things to all men. Which means that in their wholeness they affect the whole man alive, which is the man himself, beyond any part of him. They set the whole tree trembling with a new access of life, they do not just stimulate growth in one direction.

I don't want to grow in any one direction any more. And, if I can help it, I don't want to stimulate anybody else into some particular direction. A particular direction ends in a *cul-de-sac.* We're in a *cul-de-sac* at present.

I don't believe in any dazzling revelation, or in any supreme Word. 'The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the Word of the Lord shall stand for ever.' That's the kind of stuff we've drugged ourselves with. As a matter of fact, the grass withereth, but comes up all the greener for that reason, after the rains. The flower fadeth, and therefore the bud opens. But the Word of the Lord, being man-uttered and a mere vibration on the ether, becomes staler and staler, more and more boring, till at last we turn a deaf ear and it ceases to exist, far more finally than any withered grass. It is grass that renews its youth like the eagle, not any Word.

We should ask for no absolutes, or absolute. Once and for all and for ever, let us have done with the ugly

imperialism of any absolute. There is no absolute good, there is nothing absolutely right. All things flow and change, and even change is not absolute. The whole is a strange assembly of apparently incongruous parts, slipping past one another.

Me, man alive, I am a very curious assembly of incongruous parts. My yea! of today is oddly different from my yea! of yesterday. My tears of tomorrow will have nothing to do with my tears of a year ago. If the one I love remains unchanged and unchanging, I shall cease to love her. It is only because she changes and startles me into change and defies my inertia, and is herself staggered in her inertia by my changing, that I can continue to love her. If she stayed put, I might as well love the pepper-pot.

In all this change, I maintain a certain integrity. But woe betide me if I try to put my figure on it. If I say of myself, I am this, I am that—then, if I stick to it, I turn into a stupid fixed thing like a lamp-post. I shall never know wherein lies my integrity, my individuality, my me. I *can* never know it. It is useless to talk about my ego. That only means that I have made up an *idea* of myself, and that I am trying to cut myself out to pattern. Which is no good. You can cut your cloth to fit your coat, but you can't clip bits off your living body, to trim it down to your idea. True, you can put yourself into ideal corsets. But even in ideal corsets, fashions change.

Let us learn from the novel. In the novel, the characters can do nothing but *live.* If they keep on being good, according to pattern, or bad, according to pattern, or even volatile, according to pattern, they cease to live, and the novel falls dead. A character in a novel has got to live, or it is nothing.

We, likewise, in life have got to live, or we are nothing.

What we mean by living is, of course, just as indescribable as what we mean by *being.* Men get ideas into their heads, of what they mean by Life, and they proceed to cut life out to pattern. Sometimes they go into the desert to seek God, sometimes they go into the desert to seek cash, sometimes it is wine, woman, and song, and again it is water, political reform, and votes. You never

know what it will be next: from killing your neighbour with hideous bombs and gas that tears the lungs, to supporting a Foundlings Home and preaching infinite Love, and being co-respondent in a divorce.

In all this wild welter, we need some sort of guide. It's no good inventing Thou Shalt Nots!

What then? Turn truly, honourably to the novel, and see wherein you are man alive, and wherein you are dead man in life. You may eat your dinner as man alive, or as mere masticating corpse. As man alive you may have a shot at your enemy. But as a ghastly simulacrum of life you may be firing bombs into men who are neither your enemies nor your friends, but just things you are dead to. Which is criminal, when the things happen to be alive.

To be alive, to be man alive, to be whole man alive: that is the point. And at its best, the novel, and the novel supremely, can help you. It can help you not to be dead man in life. So much of a man walks about dead and a carcass in the street and house, today: so much of women is merely dead. Like a pianoforte with half the notes mute.

Stop and Think

How does Lawrence reconcile inconsistency of behaviour with integrity?

But in the novel you can see, plainly, when the man goes dead, the woman goes inert. You can develop an instinct for life, if you will, instead of a theory of right and wrong, good and bad.

In life, there is right and wrong, good and bad, all the time. But what is right in one case is wrong in another. And in the novel you see one man becoming a corpse, because of his so-called goodness; another going dead because of his so-called wickedness. Right and wrong is an instinct: but an instinct of the whole consciousness in a man, bodily, mental, spiritual at once. And only in the novel are *all* things given full play, or at least, they may be given full play, when we realise that life itself, and not inert safety, is the reason for living. For out of the full play of all things emerges the

only thing that is anything, the wholeness of a man, the wholeness of a woman, man alive, and live woman.

Understanding the Text

1. How does the novel reflect the wholeness of a human being?
2. Why does the author consider the novel superior to philosophy, science or even poetry?
3. What does the author mean by 'tremulations on ether' and 'the novel as a tremulation'?
4. What are the arguments presented in the essay against the denial of the body by spiritual thinkers?

Talking about the Text

Discuss in pairs

1. The interest in a novel springs from the reactions of characters to circumstances. It is more important for characters to be true to themselves *(integrity)* than to what is expected of them *(consistency). (A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds—Emerson.)*
2. 'The novel is the one bright book of life'. 'Books are not life'. Discuss the distinction between the two statements. Recall Ruskin's definition of 'What is a Good Book?' in *Woven Words* Class XI.

Appreciation

1. Certain catch phrases are recurrently used as pegs to hang the author's thoughts throughout the essay. List these and discuss how they serve to achieve the argumentative force of the essay.
2. The language of argument is intense and succeeds in convincing the reader through rhetorical devices. Identify the devices used by the author to achieve this force.

Language Work

A. Vocabulary

1. There are a few non-English expressions in the essay. Identify them and mention the language they belong to. Can you guess the meaning of the expressions from the context?

2. Given below are a few roots from Latin. Make a list of the words that can be derived from them

mens (mind) *corpus*(body) *sanare* (to heal)

B. Grammar: Some Verb Classes

A sentence consists of a noun phrase and a verb phrase. The verb phrase is built around a verb. There are different kinds of verbs. Some take only a subject. They are *intransitive* verbs.

Look at these examples from the text in this unit

(1a) The grass *withers*.

(1b) The chameleon *creeps* from a brown rock on to a green leaf.

Notice that an intransitive verb can be followed by prepositional phrases that have an adverbial function, as in (1b). Such phrases that follow an intransitive verb are called its complements.

A kind of intransitive verb that links its subject to a complement is called a 'linking verb' or a *copula*. The most common copulas in English are *be*, *become* and *seem*.

The copula *be* occurs very often in the text in this unit. Its complement may be a noun phrase or an adjective phrase. Here are a few examples

- My hand *is alive*. (be+adjective)
- The novel *is supremely important*. (be+adjective phrase)
- You'*re a novelist*. (be+noun phrase)
- The novel *is the book of life*. (be+noun phrase)

Other examples of copulas from the text are given below

- It *seems* important.
- The Word *becomes* more and more boring.

Can you say what the category of the complement is, in the examples above?

TASK

1. Identify the intransitive verbs and the copulas in the examples below, from the text in this unit. Say what the category of the complement is. You can work in pairs or groups and discuss the reasons for your analysis.

- I am a thief and a murderer.
- Right and wrong is an instinct.

- The flower fades.
- I am a very curious assembly of incongruous parts.
- The bud opens.
- The Word shall stand forever.
- It is a funny sort of superstition.
- You're a philosopher.
- Nothing is important.
- The whole is greater than the part.
- I am a man, and alive.
- I am greater than anything that is merely a part of me.
- The novel is the book of life.

2. Identify other sentences from the text with intransitive verbs and copulas.

C. Spelling and Pronunciation

Let us look at the following letter combinations and the sounds they represent

- ch
- gh

ch is used for the sounds /k/ as in 'character', /ʧ/ as in 'chart', or/ʃ/ as in 'champagne'.

Word initial position

Ch/k/character	Ch/ʧ/church	Ch/ʃ/champagne
chameleon	char	chiffon
chord	chase	chateau
chemical	chin	chef
charisma	chalk	chauffeur
chorus	chore	chandelier

While 'ch' is pronounced /ʧ/ in most words, it is pronounced /k/ in many others. Generally words with Latin or Greek origins are pronounced/k/. Words of French origin are pronounced /ʃ/. Words beginning with 'ch', followed by a consonant, are always pronounced /k/, for example chlorine, chrysanthemum, Christian, etc.

Word medial position

/k/ archive	/ʧ/ mischief	/ʃ/ sachet
ochre	achieve	crochet
mechanic	hatchet	machine
lichen	ketchup	parachute
bronchitis	eschew	Michigan
architecture	penchant	schedule

Word final position

/k/	/ʧ/	/ʃ/
Hi-tech	catch	cache
Bach	spinach	papier mache
loch (lake)	preach	niche
	stitch	pastiche
	march	panache

'Ch' is not pronounced in 'schism' but pronounced as /k/ in 'schizophrenia'. gh is pronounced /g/ as well as /f/ and sometimes not pronounced at all. In the initial position it is always pronounced /g/. In the medial and final positions it may be /f/ or silent.

/g/ ghost	/f/ rough	Silent
ghoul	cough	taught
ghastly	laughter	plough
ghetto	tough	borough
ghat	draught	drought
ghee		slough

Look for other words with 'ch', 'gh' letter combinations and guess how they are pronounced.

Suggested Reading

'Two Blue Birds' by D.H. Lawrence

Rhetoric as Idea by D.H. Lawrence.

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5

The Argumentative Indian

Amartya Sen
Born 1933

Amartya Sen was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1998 for his contribution in the field of welfare economics. He is Lamont Professor at Harvard.
This text forms the opening sections of the first essay in Sen's book of the same title published in 2005. The sub-title of the book is 'Writings on Indian Culture, History and Identity'. Sen argues in this essay that in India there has been a long tradition of questioning the truth of ideas through discussion and dialogue.

Prolixity is not alien to us in India. We are able to talk at some length. Krishna Menon's* record of the longest speech ever delivered at the United Nations (nine hours non-stop), established half a century ago (when Menon was leading the Indian delegation), has not been equalled by anyone from anywhere. Other peaks of loquaciousness have been scaled by other Indians. We do like to speak.

This is not a new habit. The ancient Sanskrit epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata,* which are frequently compared with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* are colossally longer than the works that the modest Homer could manage. Indeed, the *Mahābhārata* alone is about seven times as long as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* put together. The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* are certainly great

* *Krishna Menon was India's Defence Minister from 1957 to 1962. He led the Indian delegation to the United Nations, and on 23 January 1957 delivered an unprecedented 9-hour speech defending India's stand on Kashmir.*

epics: I recall with much joy how my own life was vastly enriched when I encountered them first as a restless youngster looking for intellectual stimulation as well as sheer entertainment. But they proceed from stories to stories woven around their principal tales, and are engagingly full of dialogues, dilemmas and alternative perspectives. And we encounter masses of arguments and counterarguments spread over incessant debates and disputations.

Dialogue and Significance

The arguments are also, often enough, quite substantive. For example, the famous *Bhagavad Gītā,* which is one small section of the *Mahābhārata,* presents a tussle between two contrary moral positions —Krishna's emphasis on doing one's duty, on one side, and Arjuna's focus on avoiding bad consequences (and generating good ones), on the other. The debate occurs on the eve of the great war that is a central event in the *Mahābhārata.* Watching the two armies readying for war, profound doubts about the correctness of what they are doing are raised by Arjuna, the peerless and invincible warrior in the army of the just and honourable royal family (the Paṇḍavas) who are about to fight the unjust usurpers (the Kauravas).

Arjuna questions whether it is right to be concerned only with one's duty to promote a just cause and be indifferent to the misery and the slaughter—even of one's kin—that the war itself would undoubtedly cause. Krishna, a divine incarnation in the form of human being (in fact, he is also Arjuna's charioteer), argues against Arjuna. His response takes the form of articulating principles of action—based on the priority of doing one's duty—which have been repeated again and again in Indian philosophy. Krishna insists on Arjuna's duty to fight, irrespective of his evaluation of the consequences. It is a just cause, and, as a warrior and a general on whom his side must rely, Arjuna cannot waver from his obligations, no matter what the consequences are.

Krishna's hallowing of the demands of duty wins the argument, at least as seen in the religious perspective. Indeed, Krishna's conversations with Arjuna, the *Bhagavad Gītā,* became a treatise of great theological importance in Hindu philosophy, focusing particularly on the 'removal' of Arjuna's doubts. Krishna's moral position has also been eloquently endorsed by many philosophical and literary commentators across the world, such as Christopher Isherwood and T. S. Eliot. Isherwood in fact translated the *Bhagavad Gītā* into English. This admiration for the *Gītā*, and for Krishna's arguments in particular, has been a lasting phenomenon in parts of European culture. It was spectacularly praised in the early nineteenth century by Wilhelm von Humboldt as 'the most beautiful, perhaps the only true philosophical song existing in any known tongue'. In a poem in *Four Quartets,* Eliot summarises Krishna's view in the form of an admonishment: 'And do not think of the fruit of action! Fare forward'. Eliot explains: 'Not fare well/But fare forward, voyagers'.

And yet, as a debate in which there are two reasonable sides, the epic *Mahābhārata* itself presents, sequentially, each of the two contrary arguments with much care and sympathy. Indeed, the tragic desolation that the post-combat and post-carnage land—largely the Indo-Gangetic plain—seems to face towards the end of the *Mahābhārata* can even be seen as something of a vindication of Arjuna's profound doubts. Arjuna's contrary arguments are not really vanquished, no matter what the 'message' of the *Bhagavad Gītā* is meant to be. There remains a powerful case for 'faring well', and not just 'forward'.*

J. Robert Oppenheimer, the leader of the American team that developed the ultimate 'weapon of mass destruction' during the Second World War, was moved to quote Krishna's words ('I am become death, the destroyer of worlds') as he watched, on 16 July 1945, the awesome

* *As a high-school student, when I asked my Sanskrit teacher whether it would be permissible to say that the divine Krishna got away with an incomplete and unconvincing argument, he replied: 'Maybe you could say that, but you must say it with adequate respect.' I have presented elsewhere a critique—I hope with adequate respect—of Krishna's deontology, alongwith a defence of Arjuna's consequential perspective, in 'Consequential Evaluation and Practical Reason', Journal of Philosophy 97 (Sept. 2000).*

force of the first nuclear explosion devised by man. Like the advice that Arjuna had received about his duty as a warrior fighting for a just cause, Oppenheimer, the physicist, could well find justification in his technical commitment to develop a bomb for what was clearly the right side. Scrutinizing—indeed criticising—his own actions, Oppenheimer said later on: 'When you see something that is technically sweet, you go ahead and do it and you argue about what to do about it only after you have had your technical success.' Despite that compulsion to 'fare forward', there was reason also for reflecting on Arjuna's concerns: How can good come from killing so many people? And why should I seek victory, kingdom or happiness for my own side?

These arguments remain thoroughly relevant in the contemporary world. The case for doing what one sees as one's duty must be strong, but how can we be indifferent to the consequences that may follow from our doing what we take to be our just duty? As we reflect on the manifest problems of our global world (from terrorism, wars and violence to epidemics, insecurity and gruelling poverty), or on India's special concerns (such as economic development, nuclear confrontation or regional peace), it is important to take on board Arjuna's consequential analysis, in addition to considering Krishna's arguments for doing one's duty. The univocal 'message of the *Gītā*' requires supplementation by the broader argumentative wisdom of the *Mahābhārata*, of which the *Gītā* is only one small part.

Stop and Think

1. Sen quotes Eliot's lines: 'Not fare well / But fare forward voyagers'. Distinguish between 'faring forward' (Krishna's position in the Gita) and 'faring well' (the position that Sen advocates).
2. Sen draws a parallel between the moral dilemma in the Krishna-Arjuna dialogue and J. R. Oppenheimer's response to the nuclear explosion in 1945. What is the basis for this?

Gender, Caste and Voice

There is, however, a serious question to be asked as to whether the tradition of arguments and disputations has been confined to an exclusive part of the Indian population—perhaps just to the members of the male elite. It would, of course, be hard to expect that argumentational participation would be uniformly distributed over all segments of the population, but India has had deep inequalities along the lines of gender, class, caste and community (on which more presently). The social relevance of the argumentative tradition would be severely limited if disadvantaged sections were effectively barred from participation. The story here is, however, much more complex than a simple generalisation can capture.

I begin with gender. There can be little doubt that men have tended, by and large, to rule the roost in argumentative moves in India. But despite that, the participation of women in both political leadership and intellectual pursuits has not been at all negligible. This is obvious enough today, particularly in politics. Indeed, many of the dominant political parties in India—national as well as regional—are currently led by women and have been so led in the past. But even in the national movement for Indian independence, led by the Congress Party, there were many more women in positions of importance than in the Russian and Chinese revolutionary movements put together. It is also perhaps worth noting that Sarojini Naidu, the first woman President of the Indian National Congress, was elected in 1925, fifty years earlier than the election of the first woman leader of a major British political party (Margaret Thatcher in 1975).* The second woman head of the Indian National Congress, Nellie Sengupta, was elected in 1933.

* *The Presidentship of the Congress Party was not by any means a formal position only. Indeed, the election of Subhas Chandra Bose (the fiery spokesman of the increasing—and increasingly forceful—resistance to the British Raj) as the President of Congress in 1938 and in 1939 led to a great inner-party tussle, with Mohandas Gandhi working tirelessly to oust Bose. This was secured—not entirely with propriety or elegance—shortly after Bose's Presidential Address proposing a strict 'time limit' for the British to quit India or to face a less nonviolent opposition. The role of the Congress President in directing the Party has remained important. In the general elections in 2004, when Sonia Gandhi emerged victorious as the President of Congress, she chose to remain in that position, rather than take up the role of Prime Minister.*

Earlier or later, these developments are products of relatively recent times. But what about the distant past? Women's traditional role in debates and discussions has certainly been much less pronounced than that of men in India (as would also be true of most countries in the world). But it would be a mistake to think that vocal leadership by women is completely out of line with anything that has happened in India's past. Indeed, even if we go back all the way to ancient India, some of the most celebrated dialogues have involved women, with the sharpest questionings often coming from women interlocutors. This can be traced back even to the Upaniṣads—the dialectical treatises that were composed from about the eighth century BCE and which are often taken to be foundations of Hindu philosophy.

For example, in the *Brihadaranyaka Upaniṣad* we are told about the famous 'arguing combat' in which Yājñavalkya, the outstanding scholar and teacher, has to face questions from the assembled gathering of pundits, and here it is a woman scholar, Gargi, who provides the sharpest edge to the intellectual interrogation. She enters the fray without any special modesty: 'Venerable Brahmins, with your permission I shall ask him two questions only. If he is able to answer those questions of mine, then none of you can ever defeat him in expounding the nature of God.'

Even though Gargi, as an intellectual and pedagogue, is no military leader (in the mode, for example, of the Rani of Jhansi—another feminine hero—who fought valiantly along with the 'mutineers' in the middle of the nineteenth century against British rule—one of the great 'warrior-queens' of the world, as Antonia Fraser describes her), her use of imagery is strikingly militant: 'Yājñavalkya, I have two questions for you. Like the ruler of Videha or Kasi [Benares], coming from a heroic line, who strings his unstrung bow, takes in hand two penetrating arrows and approaches the enemy, so do I approach you with two questions, which you have to answer.' Yājñavalkya does, however, manage to satisfy Gargi with his answers (I am not competent to examine the theological merits of this interchange and will refrain from commenting on the

substantive content of their discussion). Gargi acknowledges this handsomely, but again without undue modesty: 'Venerable Brahmins, you should consider it an achievement if you can get away after bowing to him. Certainly, none of you can ever defeat him in expounding the nature of God.'

Interestingly, Yājñavalkya's wife Maitreyī raises a profoundly important motivational question when the two discuss the reach of wealth in the context of the problems and predicaments of human life, in particular what wealth can or cannot do for us. Maitreyī wonders whether it could be the case that if 'the whole earth, full of wealth' were to belong just to her, she could achieve immortality through it. 'No', responds Yājñavalkya, 'like the life of rich people will be your life. But there is no hope of immortality by wealth'. Maitreyī remarks: 'What should I do with that by which I do not become immortal?'

Maitreyī's rhetorical question has been repeatedly cited in Indian religious philosophy to illustrate both the nature of the human predicament and the limitations of the material world. But there is another aspect of this exchange that has, in some ways, more immediate interest. This concerns the relation—and the distance—between income and achievement, between the commodities we can buy and the actual capabilities we can enjoy, between our economic wealth and our ability to live as we would like.* While there is a connection between opulence and our ability to achieve what we value, the linkage may or may not be very close. Maitreyī's worldly worries might well have some transcendental relevance (as Indian religious commentators have discussed over many centuries), but they certainly have worldly interest as well. If we are concerned with the freedom to live long and live well, our focus has to be directly on life and death, and not just on wealth and economic opulence.

The arguments presented by women speakers in epics and classical tales, or in recorded history, do not always

* *Maitreyi's central question ('what should I do with that by which I do not become immortal?') was useful for me to motivate and explain an understanding of development that is not parasitic on judging development by the growth of GNP or GDP; see my* Development as Freedom *(New York: Knopf, and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. I.*

conform to the tender and peace-loving image that is often assigned to women. In the epic story of the *Mahābhārata*, the good King Yudhiṣṭhira, reluctant to engage in a bloody battle, is encouraged to fight the usurpers of his throne with 'appropriate anger', and the most eloquent instigator is his wife, Draupadī.

In the sixth-century version of this dialogue, presented in the *Kirātārjunīya* by Bhāravi, Draupadī speaks thus—

> For a woman to advise men like you
> is almost an insult.
> And yet, my deep troubles compel me
> to overstep the limits of womanly conduct,
> make me speak up.
>
> The kings of your race, brave as Indra,
> have for a long time ruled the earth without a break.
> But now with your own hand
> you have thrown it away,
> like a rutting elephant tearing off
> his garland with his trunk...
>
> If you choose to reject heroic action
> and see forbearance as the road to future happiness,
> then throw away your bow, the symbol of royalty,
> wear your hair matted in knots,
> stay here and make offerings in the sacred fire!

It is not hard to see which side Draupadī was on in the Arjuna-Krishna debate, which deals with a later stage of the same sequence of events, by which time Yudhiṣṭhira had made his choice to fight (rather than embrace the life of a local hermit, mockingly assigned to him by his wife, with unconcealed derision).

If it is important not to see the Indian argumentative tradition as the exclusive preserve of men, it is also necessary to understand that the use of argumentative encounters has frequently crossed the barriers of class and caste. Indeed, the challenge to religious orthodoxy has

often come from spokesmen of socially disadvantaged groups. Disadvantage is, of course, a comparative concept. When Brahminical orthodoxy was disputed in ancient India by members of other groups (including merchants and craftsmen), the fact that the protesters were often quite affluent should not distract attention from the fact that, in the context of Brahmin-dominated orthodoxy, they were indeed distinctly underprivileged. This may be particularly significant in understanding the class basis of the rapid spread of Buddhism, in particular, in India. The undermining of the superiority of the priestly caste played quite a big part in these initially rebellious religious movements, which include Jainism as well as Buddhism. It included a 'levelling' feature that is not only reflected in the message of human equality for which these movements stood, but is also captured in the nature of the arguments used to undermine the claim to superiority of those occupying exalted positions. Substantial parts of early Buddhist and Jain literatures contain expositions of protest and resistance.

Movements against caste divisions that have figured repeatedly in Indian history, with varying degrees of success, have made good use of engaging arguments to question orthodox beliefs. Many of these counterarguments are recorded in the epics, indicating that opposition to hierarchy was not absent even in the early days of caste arrangements. We do not know whether the authors to whom the sceptical arguments are attributed were the real originators of the doubts expressed, or mere vehicles of exposition of already established questioning, but the prominent presence of these anti-inequality arguments in the epics as well as in other classical documents gives us a fuller insight into the reach of the argumentative tradition than a monolithic exposition of the so-called, 'Hindu point of view' can possibly provide.

For example, when, in the *Mahābhārata,* Bhrigu tells Bharadvāja that caste divisions relate to differences in physical attributes of different human beings, reflected in skin colour, Bharadvāja responds not only by pointing to

the considerable variations in skin colour *within* every caste ('if different colours indicate different castes, then all castes are mixed castes'), but also by the more profound question: 'We all seem to be affected by desire, anger, fear, sorrow, worry, hunger, and labour; how do we have caste differences then?' There is also a genealogical scepticism expressed in another ancient document, the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa:* 'Since members of all the four castes are children of God, they all belong to the same caste. All human beings have the same father, and children of the same father cannot have different castes.' These doubts do not win the day, but nor are their expressions obliterated in the classical account of the debates between different points of view.

To look at a much later period, the tradition of 'medieval mystical poets', well established by the fifteenth century, included exponents who were influenced both by the egalitarianism of the Hindu Bhakti movement and by that of the Muslim Sufis, and their far-reaching rejection of social barriers brings out sharply the reach of arguments across the divisions of caste and class. Many of these poets came from economically and socially humble backgrounds, and their questioning of social divisions as well as of the barriers of disparate religions reflected a profound attempt to deny the relevance of these artificial restrictions. It is remarkable how many of the exponents of these heretical points of views came from the working class: Kabir, perhaps the greatest poet of them all, was a weaver, Dadu a cotton-carder, Ravi-das a shoe-maker, Sena a barber, and so on.* Also, many leading figures in these movements were women, including of course the famous Mira Bai (whose songs are still very popular, after four hundred years), but also Andal, Daya-bai, Sahajo-bai and Ksema, among others.

In dealing with issues of contemporary inequality, the relevance and reach of the argumentative tradition must be examined in terms of the contribution it can make today in resisting and undermining these inequities which characterise so much of contemporary Indian society. It

* *On this, see Kshiti Mohan Sen, Medieval Mysticism of India, with a Foreword by Rabindranath Tagore, trans. from Bengali by Manomohan Ghosh (London: Luzac, 1930).*

would be a great mistake in that context to assume that because of the possible effectiveness of well-tutored and disciplined arguments, the argumentative tradition must, in general, favour the privileged and the well educated, rather than the dispossessed and the deprived. Some of the most powerful arguments in Indian intellectual history have, in fact, been about the lives of the least privileged groups, which have drawn on the substantive force of these claims, rather than on the cultivated brilliance of well-trained dialectics.

Stop and Think

1. Maitreyi's remark—'what should I do with that by which I do not become immortal'—is a rhetorical question cited to illustrate both the nature of the human predicament and the limitations of the material world. What is the connection that Sen draws between this and his concept of economic development?
2. It is important to see that the Indian argumentative tradition has frequently crossed the barriers of gender, caste, class and community. List the examples cited by Sen to highlight this.

Democracy as Public Reasoning

Does the richness of the tradition of argument make much difference to subcontinental lives today? I would argue it does, and in a great many different ways. It shapes our social world and the nature of our culture. It has helped to make heterodoxy the natural state of affairs in India; persistent arguments are an important part of our public life. It deeply influences Indian politics, and is particularly relevant, I would argue, to the development of democracy in India and the emergence of its secular priorities.

The historical roots of democracy in India are well worth considering, if only because the connection with public argument is often missed, through the temptation to attribute the Indian commitment to democracy simply to the impact of British influence (despite the fact that such an influence should have worked similarly for a hundred

other countries that emerged from an empire on which the sun used not to set). The point at issue, however, is not specific to India only: in general, the tradition of public reasoning is closely related to the roots of democracy across the globe. But since India has been especially fortunate in having a long tradition of public arguments, with toleration of intellectual heterodoxy, this general connection has been particularly effective in India. When, more than half a century ago, independent India became the first country in the non-Western world to choose a resolutely democratic constitution, it not only used what it had learned from the institutional experiences in Europe and America (particularly Great Britain), it also drew on its own tradition of public reasoning and argumentative heterodoxy.

It is very important to avoid the twin pitfalls of (1) taking democracy to be just a gift of the Western world that India simply accepted when it became independent, and (2) assuming that there is something unique in Indian history that makes the country singularly suited to democracy. The point, rather, is that democracy is intimately connected with public discussion and interactive reasoning. Traditions of public discussion exist across the world, not just in the West. And to the extent that such a tradition can be drawn on, democracy becomes easier to institute and also to preserve.

Understanding the Text

1. What is Sen's interpretation of the positions taken by Krishna and Arjuna in the debate between them?

   [Note Sen's comment: 'Arjuna's contrary arguments are not really vanquished... There remains a powerful case for 'faring well' and not just 'faring forward'.]

2. What are the three major issues Sen discusses here in relation to India's dialogic tradition?

3. Sen has sought here to dispel some misconceptions about democracy in India. What are these misconceptions?

4. How, according to Sen, has the tradition of public discussion and interactive reasoning helped the success of democracy in India?

Talking about the Text

1. Does Amartya Sen see argumentation as a positive or a negative value?
2. How is the message of the Gita generally understood and portrayed? What change in interpretation does Sen suggest?

Appreciation

This essay is an example of argumentative writing. Supporting statements with evidence is a feature of this kind of writing. For each of the statements given below state the supportive evidence provided in the essay

(i) Prolixity is not alien to India.

(ii) The arguments are also, often enough, substantive.

(iii) This admiration for the Gita, and Krishna's arguments in particular, has been a lasting phenomenon in parts of European culture.

(iv) There remains a powerful case for 'faring well', and not just 'forward'.

Language Work

I. (a) The opening two paragraphs have many words related to the basic idea of using words (particularly in speech) like 'prolixity'. List them. You may look for more such words in the rest of the essay.

(b) Most of the statements Sen makes are tempered with due qualification, e.g., 'The arguments are also, *often enough*, quite substantive'. Pick out other instances of qualification from the text.

II. A noun can be the subject or object of a sentence. Notice this sentence

Democracy is a Western *idea.*

In this sentence *democracy* and *idea* are nouns. (they are abstract nouns)

A *noun* is the simplest form of a *noun phrase.* A noun can be preceded by

(i) an article or demonstrative: an idea, the idea, this idea; and/or

(ii) an adjective: *a Western idea*

[There can be more than one adjective, or an adverb and an adjective]: *a quintessentially Western* idea.

(iii) and/or numerals and quantifying phrases: *three very influential Western* ideas; *such a* tradition. (quantifying phrases such as a few/some/one of the many)

A noun can be followed by prepositional phrases and relative or complement clauses. There will be nouns and noun phrases within the prepositional phrase as in 'traditions *of public discussion*'.

III. Noun phrases can also have phrases in apposition following the main noun.

Notice the following sentence

> The ancient Sanskrit epics, *the Ramayana and the Mahabharata*, are colossally longer than the works that the modest Homer could manage.

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata add to the meaning of the main noun (epics)and are placed next to it. They are separated from the main sentence by commas. Notice the expansion here:

> The ancient Sanskrit epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata***,** which are frequently compared with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, are colossally longer than the works that the modest Homer could manage.

The relative clause—which are frequently compared with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey***—** that follows, adds more information to the epics.

IV. Parenthetical phrases or clauses may also follow the noun phrase.

(i) This can be traced back even to the Upaniṣads—*the dialectical treatises that were composed from about the eighth century BCE and which are often taken to be foundations of Hindu philosophy.*

The clause italicised here gives additional information about the noun 'Upaniṣads'.

TASK

Examine the noun phrases in these sentences from the text

- The second woman head of the Indian National Congress, Nellie Sengupta, was elected in 1933.
- This concerns the relation—and the distance—between income and achievement.
- This may be particularly significant in understanding the class basis of the rapid spread of Buddhism, in particular, in India.

Suggested Reading

Development as Freedom by Amartya Sen.

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6

On Science Fiction

Isaac Asimov
1920-1992

Isaac Asimov was a Russian born American author and biochemist. He was a highly successful and exceptionally prolific writer best known for his works on science fiction and for his popular science books.
Most of Asimov's popularised science books explain science concepts in a historical way, going back as far as possible to a time when the science in question was at its simplest stage. He also lent his name to the magazine, Asimov's Science Fiction.

I
The Prescientific Universe

Foreword

To every history there is a prehistoric period. In the case of science fiction, the prehistory lingers on even today in some of the aspects of the field.

But what of that? Just as Ice Age art can hold up its head with any form of art produced by sophisticated modern man, so can the prehistoric aspects of science fiction prove an accomplished literary form.

I have often made the point that true science fiction is a creature of the last two centuries. Science fiction cannot exist as a picture of the future unless, and until, people get the idea that it is science and technology that produce the future; that it is advances in science and technology

(or, at the very least, changes in them) that are bound to make the future different from the present and the past, and that thereby hangs a tale.

Naturally, no one could possibly get that idea until the rate of scientific and technological change became great enough to be noticed by people in the course of their lifetime. That came about with the Industrial Revolution say, by 1800—and it was only thereafter that science fiction could be written.

And yet there must have been something that came before science fiction, something that was not science fiction and yet filled the same emotional needs. There must have been tales of the strange and different, of life not as we know it, and of powers transcending our own.

Let's consider—

The respect that people have for science and for scientists (or the fear that people have or a combination of both) rests on the certain belief that science is the key to the understanding of the Universe and that scientists can use science to manipulate that key. Through science, people can make use of the laws of nature to control the environment and enhance human powers. By the steadily increasing understanding of the details of those laws, human powers will be greater in the future than in the past. If we can imagine the different ways in which they will be greater, we can write our stories.

In previous centuries, however, most men had but a dim understanding, if any at all, of such things as laws of nature. They did not know of rules that were unbreakable; of things-as-they-must-be that could serve neither to help us nor to thwart us but that might allow themselves to be ridden to glory, if we but knew how.

Instead, there was the notion that the Universe was the plaything of life and the will; that if there were events that seemed analogous to human deeds but that were far greater in magnitude, they were carried through by life-form's resembling those we know but greater in size and power.

The beings who controlled natural phenomena were therefore pictured in human form, but of superhuman strength, size, abilities, and length of life. Sometimes they were pictured as superanimal, or as supercombinations of animals. (The constant reference to the ordinary in the invention of the unusual is only to be expected, for imaginations are sharply limited, even among the best of us, and it is hard to think of anything really new or unusual—as Hollywood 'Sci-fi' constantly demonstrates.)

Since the phenomena of the Universe don't often make sense, the gods are usually pictured as whimsical and unpredictable; frequently little better than childish. Since natural events are often disastrous, the gods must be easily offended. Since natural events are often helpful, the gods are basically kindly, provided they are well-treated and that their anger is not roused.

It is only too reasonable to suppose that people would invent formulas for placating the gods and persuading them to do the right thing. Nor can the validity of these formulas be generally disproven by events. If the formulas don't work, then undoubtedly someone has done something to offend the gods. Those who had invented or utilised the formulas had no problems in finding guilty parties on whom to blame the failure of the formula in specific instances, so that faith in the formulas themselves never wavered. (We needn't sneer. By the same principle, we continue to have faith in economists, sociologists, and meteorologists today, even though their statements seem to match reality only erratically at best.)

In prescientific times, then, it was the priest, magician, wizard, shaman (again the name doesn't matter) who filled the function of the scientist today. It was the priest, etc., who was perceived as having the secret of controlling the Universe, and it was advances in the knowledge of magical formulas that could enhance power.

The ancient myths and legends are full of stories of human beings with supernormal powers. There are the legendary heroes, for instance, who learn to control winged horses or flying carpets. Those ancient pieces of magic

still fascinate us today, and I imagine a youngster could thrill to such mystical methods of aeronavigation and long for the chance to partake in it, even if he were reading the tales while on a jet plane.

Think of the crystal ball, into which one can see things that are happening many miles away, and magic shells that can allow us to hear the whisperings of humans many miles away. How much more wonderful than the television sets and the telephones of today!

Consider the doors that open with 'Open sesame' rather than by the click of a remote-control device. Consider the seven-league boots that can transport you across the countryside almost as quickly as an automobile can.

Or, for that matter, think of the monsters of legend, the powerful travesties of life invented by combining animal characteristics: the man-horse Centaur, the man-goat Satyr, the woman-lion Sphinx, the woman-hawk Harpy, the eagle-lion Gryphon, the snake-woman Gorgon, and so on. In science fiction we have extraterrestrials that are often built up on the same principle.

The goals of these ancient stories are the same as those of modern science fiction—the depiction of life as we don't know it.

The emotional needs that are fulfilled are the same—the satisfaction of the longing for wonder.

The difference is that the ancient myths and legends fulfil those needs and meet those goals against the background of a Universe that is controlled by gods and demons who can, in turn, be controlled by magical formulas either in the form of enchantments to coerce, or prayers to cajole. Science fiction, on the other hand, fulfils those needs against the background of a Universe that is controlled by impersonal and unswervable laws of nature, which can, in turn, be controlled by an understanding of their nature.

In a narrow sense, only science fiction is valid for today since, as far as we can tell, the Universe *does* follow the dictates of the laws of nature and is *not* at the mercy of gods and demons.

Nevertheless, there are times when we shouldn't be two narrow or haughty in our definitions. It would be wrong to throw out a style of literature that has tickled the human fancy for thousands of years for the trivial reason that it is not in accord with reality. Reality isn't all there is, after all.

Shall we no longer thrill to the climactic duel of Achilles and Hector because people no longer fight with spears and shields? Shall we no longer feel the excitement of the naval battles of the War of 1812 and of the Napoleonic Wars because our warships are no longer made of wood and are no longer equipped with sails?

Never!

Why, then, shouldn't people who enjoy an exciting science fiction adventure story not enjoy a rousing mythological fiction adventure story? The two are set in different kinds of Universes but follow analogous paths.

So though I am sufficiently stick-in-the-muddish to be narrow in my definition of science fiction and would not be willing to consider sword-and-sorcery examples of science fiction, I am willing to consider it the *equivalent* of science fiction set in another kind of Universe—a prescientific Universe.

I don't even ask that they be wrenched out of context and somehow be made to fit the universe of reality by being given a scientific or pseudoscientific gloss. I ask only that they be self-consistent in their prescientific Universe—and that they be well-written and exciting stories.

Stop and Think

1. What is the parallel drawn between myths and legends of the past and science fiction?
2. What gives science fiction its validity?
3. Which literary works does the author have in mind when he refers to 'Open Sesame' or the concept of winged horses or flying carpets?

II
The Universe of Science Fiction

Foreword

Of late I have taken to the preparation of science fiction anthologies, which is perhaps a sign of literary senescence, though I like to think of it, rather, as putting my mature wisdom and expertise at the service of the science fiction reading public. After all, I am by no means ceasing, or even slowing, my own proper output. Besides, I must admit I generally make use of coeditors, and sweet-talk them into taking care of the more turgid aspects of the job—correspondence, bookkeeping, and so on.

One of these recent anthologies was *The 13 Crimes of Science Fiction* (Doubleday, 1979) in which my coeditors were Martin Harry Greenberg and Charles G. Waugh. For the anthology, I wrote an introduction relating science fiction to other specialised fields of writing, especially mysteries, and here it is.

Science fiction is a literary universe of no mean size because science fiction is what it is, not through its content but through its background. Let me explain the difference that makes.

A 'sports story' must have, as part of its content, some competitive activity, generally of an athletic nature. A 'Western story' must have, as part of its content, the nomadic life of the cowboy of the American West in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The 'jungle story' must have, as part of its content, the dangers implicit in a forested tropical wilderness.

Take the content of any of these and place it against a background that involves a society significantly different from our own and you have not changed the nature of the story—you have merely added to it.

A story may involve, not the clash of baseball and bat, or of hockeystick and puck, but of gas gun and sphere in an atmosphere enclosed on a space station under zero gravity. It is still a sports story by the strictest definition you care to make, but it is science fiction *also*.

In place of the nomadic life of a cowboy and his horse herding cattle, you might have the nomadic life of a fishboy and his dolphin, herding his schools of mackerel and cod. It could still have the soul of a Western story and be science fiction *also*.

In place of the Matto Grosso, you can have the jungle on a distant planet, different in key factors of the environment, with exotic dangers in atmosphere, in vegetation, in planetary characteristics never encountered on Earth. It would still be a jungle story and be science fiction also.

For that matter, you needn't confine yourself to category fiction. Take the deepest novel you can imagine, one that most amply plumbs the secret recesses of the soul and holds up a picture that illuminates nature and the human condition, and place it in a society in which interplanetary travel is common, and give it a plot which involves such travel and it is not only great literature—it is science fiction also.

John W. Campbell, the late great science fiction editor, used to say that science fiction took as its domain, all conceivable societies, past and future, probable or improbable, realistic or fantastic, and dealt with all events and complications that were possible in all those societies. As for 'mainstream fiction' which deals with the here and now and introduces only the small novelty of make believe events and characters, that forms only an inconsiderable fraction of the whole.

And I agree with him.

In only one respect did John retreat from this grand vision of the limitless boundaries of science fiction. In a moment of failure of nerve, he maintained that it was impossible to write a science fiction mystery. The opportunities in science fiction were so broad, he said, that the strict rules that made the classical mystery story fair to the reader could not be upheld.

I imagine that what he expected was the sudden change of rules without warning in the midst of the story. Something like this, I suppose—

'Ah, Watson, what that scoundrel did not count on was that with this pocket-frannistan which I have in my pocket-frannistan Container I can see through the lead lining and tell what is inside the casket.'
'Amazing, Holmes, but how does it work?'
'By the use of Q-rays, a little discovery of my own which I have never revealed to the world.'

Naturally, there is the temptation to do this. Even in the classical mystery story that is not science fiction there is the temptation to give the detective extraordinary abilities in order to advance the plot. Sherlock Holmes's ability to distinguish, at sight, the ashes of hundreds of different kinds of tobacco, while not perhaps in the same class as the invention of a Q-ray at a moment's notice, is certainly a step in the direction of the unfair.

Then, too, there is nothing to prevent even the strictest of strict mystery writers from using actual science, even using the latest available findings of science, which the reader may not have heard of. That is still considered fair.

There are dangers to that, however, since many mystery writers know no science and cannot prevent themselves from making bloopers. John Dickson Carr, in one book, revealed that he didn't know the difference between the element, antimony, and the compound, antimony potassium tartrate. That was only irritating, but in another book, he demonstrated that he couldn't tell the difference between carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide and reduced the plot to a shambles. One of Dorothy Sayers' more grisly short stories involved the effect of thyroid hormones and, though she had the right idea, she made the effects impossibly rapid and extreme.

Writing a scientific mystery, then, has its extraordinary pitfalls and difficulties; how much more so the writing of a science fiction mystery. In science fiction, you not only must know your science, but you must also have a rational notion as to how to modify or extrapolate that science.

That, however, only means that writing a science fiction mystery is difficult; it does *not* mean that it is conceptually impossible as John Campbell thought.

After all, it is as perfectly possible to cling to the rules of the game in science fiction mysteries as in ordinary ones.

The science fiction mystery may be set in the future and in the midst of a society far different from ours; one in which human beings have developed telepathy, for instance, or in which light-speed mass transport is possible, or in which all human knowledge is computerized for instant retrieval—but the rules still hold.

The writer must carefully explain to the reader all their boundary conditions of the imaginary society. It must be perfectly clear what can be done and what can't be done and with those boundaries fixed, the reader must then see and hear everything the investigator sees and hears, and he must be aware of every clue the investigator comes across.

There may be misdirection and red herrings to obscure and confuse, but it must remain possible for the reader to introduce the investigator, however *outré* the society.

Can it be done? You bet! Modestly, I refer you to my own science fiction mysteries, *The Caves of Steel* and *The Naked Sun* which I wrote, back in the 1950s, in order to show John that he was being too modest about science fiction.

Understanding the Text

1. What makes for the distinction between the various genres of fiction—'a sports story', 'a Western story', 'a jungle story' and science fiction?
2. How does Asimov establish that John Campbell was wrong in his opinion that it is not possible for a science fiction mystery to be fair to a reader in the same way as a classical mystery is?
3. What are the pitfalls that the writer of science fiction mystery must guard against?

Talking about the Text

Discuss in small groups

1. Imagination and fantasy help human beings to speculate upon the possible explanations for the complexity and unpredictability of the phenomena in the universe.
2. The difference that science and technology have made to everyday life today was visualised in science fiction fifty years ago.

Appreciation

1. Discuss the author's attitude towards the pre-scientific imagination and the tone he adopts while talking about it.
2. Observe how the paragraph, as a form, has been used in the essay. Some paragraphs consist of just one sentence. What purpose do you think the author had in putting them in this manner?
3. Mark the linkers used by the author to connect the point he makes in one paragraph with that in the next. For example, *Let me explain the difference that makes* in the last line of para 1 of Section II. These are called discourse markers or discourse signalers.

Language Work

A. Literary Allusions

(i) Look up a literary dictionary or encyclopedia or the internet to understand the references to the following mythical creatures

Centaur	Satyr	Sphinx	Harpy
Gryphon	Gorgon	Pegasus	

Find out parallel creatures in Indian mythology.

(ii) Find out about the story of Achilles and Hector.

B. Pronunciation

Languages vary greatly in the way in which they use rhythm in fluent speech. English rhythm is based not only on word stress (i.e. the stress on a certain syllable or syllables in a word) but also on sentence stress (i.e. the basic emphasis pattern of a sentence). Both of these elements are important for intelligibility.

Look at the following sentences

(i) Delhi is a big city.

(ii) He asked me how I felt in a big city like Delhi.

You will notice that the first sentence can be said in one breath, but you may like to pause while saying the second sentence. Pauses can be indicated by the mark (/). Each pause marks the end of a 'breath' or *tone group*. Because tone groups are said in a single breath, they are limited in length and average about two seconds, or five words.

We break up spoken language into tone groups because we need to breathe, so there is a physical reason for the structure. But there is also the need to think. Thus the pace of the tone groups, and the information they convey, matches the speakers' thoughts. Tone groups can contain only one word or as many as seven or eight, as you can see in the example given below

No,/I really can't put up with it any more/good bye./

TASK

Mark the pauses in the following dialogue.

A: Good morning, this is Ten-2-Ten supermarket. Can I help you?

B: Good morning, I'd like to speak to the person in charge of your After Sales Service, please.

A: That's Mr Patel.

B: Could you put me through to him, please?

A: Who's speaking, please?

B: My name's Karandikar.

A: Just a moment, Mr Karandikar... I am sorry, Mr Patel's line seems to be busy.

B: Well, is there someone else who could help me?

A: There's Mrs Paul. She's the assistant manager, but she's out at the moment.

B: Look, this is quite important!

A: I'll try Mr Patel's line again for you,... trying to connect you.

B: Ah! finally, ... is that Mr Patel? Good morning, this is... Hello?... oh no! I'm cut off.

C. Grammar: Some More Verb Classes

The verb *have* is followed by a noun phrase. Find the noun phrases that follow *have* in the paragraph of the text that begins "A 'sports story must have...some competitive activity..." (In

this example, *have* is followed by the noun phrase *some competitive activity*.)

Sentences with *have* do not usually have a passive form. But in general, verbs which take a noun phrase after them are *transitive*, and they have a passive form. Look at the verbs in the paragraph following the paragraph you have just worked with. Find the noun phrases that follow the verbs *take*, *place*, *involve*, *change* and *add*.

Notice that these verbs can all be passivized, and their objects can become subjects (these have been set in bold below). So that we can say

Let **the contents of any of these** *be taken* and *be placed* against a background where **a society significantly different from our own** *is involved* and **the nature of the story** *has not been changed*—it *has* merely *been added* to.

TASK

1. Here are a few sentences with transitive verbs, adapted from the text. Identify the noun phrases that are the verbs' objects, and underline them. Then turn these sentences into a passive form.

- He expected a sudden change of rules.
- Nothing prevents writers from using actual science.
- He revealed that he didn't know the difference between the element and the compound.
- He demonstrated that he couldn't tell the difference between carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide and reduced the plot to a shambles.
- The writer must carefully explain to the reader all the boundary conditions of the imaginary society.

2. Some verbs take a *that*-clause after them. Find the verb *ask* in the last paragraph of the first part of this text (which begins 'I don't even ask that…') and note how it is followed by *that*-clauses. Look for other verbs, in this text as well as in the earlier ones, that are followed by a *that*-clause (verbs such as *believe*, *know*, *realise*, *promise*…).

Suggested Reading

Foundation by Isaac Asimov

Chronology of Science and Discovery by Isaac Asimov.

Drama

INTRODUCTION

A drama is a composition in prose or verse presenting in dialogue a story of life or character, especially one intended to be acted on the stage. The essence of drama is the make-believe by which an actor impersonates a character of the play. The element of make-believe in drama is much greater than the average play-goer realises. For instance, we must regard it as entirely natural that rooms and houses have one wall 'missing' that enables the audience to witness the action.

Drama is usually divided into tragedy and comedy, but within this general framework a number of types and subtypes have been developed. The tragicomedy, for instance, mixes elements of both tragedy and comedy; the modern 'problem-play' deals with neither of these but with middle class life and problems.

Furthermore, drama is the literary form most viable with the modern mass media; and film, radio and television are producing a vast quantity of it, ranging from 'soap opera' and farce to serious new works and fine productions of old ones.

Two plays find a place in the section: *Chandalika* by Tagore which describes the angst of an untouchable woman; and an excerpt from *Broken Images* by Girish Karnad, which is a monologue by a celebrity writer that plumbs the depths of her psyche and recreates her life for the TV viewer.

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1

Chandalika

Rabindranath Tagore
1861-1941

Rabindranath Tagore was a poet, novelist, short-story writer and dramatist. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. Tagore's interest in drama was fostered while he was a boy, for his family enjoyed writing and staging plays. The music in his plays is instrumental in bringing out the delicate display of emotion around an idea. The central interest in his plays is the unfolding of character; of the opening up of the soul to enlightenment of some sort.

INTRODUCTION

This short drama is based on the following Buddhist legend. Ananda, the famous disciple of the Buddha, was one day returning from a visit when he felt thirsty and, approaching a well on the way, asked for water from a chandalika, a girl belonging to the lowest untouchable caste. The girl gave him water and fell in love with the beautiful monk. Unable to restrain herself, she made her mother, who knew the art of magic, work her spell on him. The spell proved stronger than Ananda's will and the spell-bound monk presented himself at their house at night; but, as he saw the girl spread the couch for him, he was overcome with shame and remorse and prayed inwardly to his master to save him. The Buddha heard the prayer and broke the magic spell and Ananda went away, as pure as he came.

This crude plot of the popular tale, showing how the psychic power of the Buddha saves his devotee from the lust of a chandal girl, has been transformed by the poet

into a psychological drama of intense spiritual conflict. It is not the story of a wicked girl roused to lust by the physical beauty of the monk, but of a very sensitive girl, condemned by her birth to a despised caste, who is suddenly awakened to a consciousness of her full rights as a woman by the humanity of a follower of the Buddha, who accepts water from her hand and teaches her to judge herself not by the artificial values that society attaches to the accidents of birth, but by her capacity for love and service.

This is a great revelation for her, which she calls a new birth; for she is washed clean of her self-degradation and rises up a full human being with her right to love and to give. And since her own self is the most she can give, and since none is more worthy of the gift of her surrender than the *bhikshu* who has redeemed, or, as she puts it, created her, she yearns to offer herself to him. But Ananda, detached from all earthly cares and immersed in his inner self, knows nothing of all this and passes by without recognising her.

She is humiliated, wounded in her newly awakened sensibility, and determines to drag the monk from his pride of renunciation to the abjectness of desire for her. She has lost all religious scruple or fear, for she owed nothing to religion save her humiliation.

'A religion that insults is a false religion. Everyone united to make me conform to a creed that blinds and gags. But since that day something forbids me to conform any longer. I'm afraid of nothing now.'

She forces her mother to exercise her art of magic on Ananda. She refers to it as the primeval spell, the spell of the earth, which is far more potent than the immature *sadhana* of the monks. The 'spell of the earth' proves its force and Ananda is dragged to their door, his face distorted with agony and shame. Seeing her redeemer, so noble and resplendent before, thus cruelly transformed and degraded, she is horrified at the selfish and destructive nature of her desire. The hero to whom she yearned to dedicate herself was not this creature, blinded by lust and darkened with shame, but Ananda of the radiant form, who had

given her the gift of a new birth and had revealed her own true humanity. In remorse she curses herself and falls at his feet, begging for forgiveness. The mother revokes the spell and willingly pays the price of such revocation, which is death. The chandalika is thus redeemed for the second time, purged of the pride and egoism that had made her forget that love does not claim possession, but gives freedom.

Chandalika is a tragedy of self-consciousness over-reaching its limit. Self-consciousness, up to a point, is necessary to self-development; for, without an awareness of the dignity of one's own role or function, one cannot give one's best to the world. Without rights there can be no obligations, and service and virtue when forced become marks of slavery. But self-consciousness, like good wine, easily intoxicates, and it is difficult to control the dose and have just enough of it. Vanity and pride get the upper hand and he who clings to his rights very often trespasses on those of others. This is what happened to the heroine. Prakriti, in her eagerness to give, forgot that Ananda need not take; her devotion grew so passionate that she could not make her surrender without first possessing. Yet it was inevitable that it should be so; for a new consciousness, after ages of suppression, is overpowering and one learns restraint only after suffering. Hence the tragedy. The good mother who, so unwillingly, worked the spell to please her importunate daughter, and who so willingly revoked it to save Ananda, dies in the process. The daughter, though chastened and made wise by suffering, has paid a heavy price; for wisdom is not happiness and renunciation is not fulfilment.

ACT I

Read and find out

How does Prakriti's mother react when she hears of Prakriti's encounter with the monk?

MOTHER. Prakriti! Prakriti! Where *has* she gone? What ails the girl, I wonder? She's never to be found in the house.

PRAKRITI. Here, mother, here I am.
MOTHER. Where?
PRAKRITI. Here, by the well.
MOTHER. Whatever will you do next? Past noon, and a blistering sun, and the earth too hot for the feet! The morning's water was drawn long ago, and the other girls in the village have all taken their pots home. Why, the very crows on the *amloki* branches are gasping for heat. Yet you sit and roast in the *Vaisakh* sun for no reason at all! There's a story in the *Purana* about how Uma left home and did penance in the burning sun—is that what you are about?
PRAKRITI. Yes, mother, that's it—I'm doing penance.
MOTHER. Good heavens! And for whom?
PRAKRITI. For someone whose call has come to me.
MOTHER. What call is that?
PRAKRITI. 'Give me water.' He set the words echoing in my heart.
MOTHER. Heaven defend us! He said to you 'Give me water'? Who was it? Someone of our own caste?
PRAKRITI. That's what he said—that he belonged to our kind.
MOTHER. You didn't hide your caste? Did you tell him that you are a chandalini?
PRAKRITI. I told him, yes. He said it wasn't true. If the black clouds of *Sravana* are dubbed chandal, he said, what of it? It doesn't change their nature, or destroy the virtue of their water. Don't humiliate yourself, he said; self-humiliation is a sin, worse than self-murder.
MOTHER. What words are these from you? Have you remembered some tale of a former birth?
PRAKRITI. No, this is a tale of my new birth.
MOTHER. You make me laugh. New birth, indeed! Since when, pray?
PRAKRITI. It was the other day. The palace gong had just struck noon and it was blazing hot. I was washing that calf at the well—the one whose mother died. Then

In the original, this play, unlike the others, is not divided into acts. There is no lapse of time in the action. The divisions here suggested indicate the intervals which would be found desirable in stage production.

a Buddhist monk came and stood before me, in his yellow robes, and said, 'Give me water'. My heart leaped with wonder. I started up trembling and bowed before his feet, without touching them. His form was radiant as with the light of dawn. I said, 'I am a chandalini, and the well-water is unclean'. He said, 'As I am a human being, so also are you, and all water is clean and holy that cools our heat and satisfies our thirst'. For the first time in my life I heard such words, for the first time I poured water into his cupped hands—the hands of a man the very dust of whose feet I would never have dared to touch.

MOTHER. O, you stupid girl, how could you be so reckless? There will be a price to pay for this madness! Don't you know what caste you were born in?

PRAKRITI. Only once did he cup his hands, to take the water from mine. Such a little water, yet that water grew to a fathomless, boundless sea. In it flowed all the seven seas in one, and my caste was drowned, and my birth washed clean.

MOTHER. Why, even the way you speak is changed. He has laid your tongue under a spell. Do you understand yourself what you are saying?

PRAKRITI. Was there no other water, mother, in all Sravasti city? Why did he come to this well of all wells? I may truly call it my new birth! He came to give me the honour of quenching Man's thirst. That was the mighty act of merit which he sought. Nowhere else could he have found the water which could fulfill his holy vow—no, not in any sacred stream. He said that Janaki bathed in such water as this, at the beginning of her forest exile, and that Guhak, the chandal, drew it for her. My heart has been dancing ever since, and night and day I hear those solemn tones— 'Give me water, give me water'.

MOTHER. I don't know what to make of it, child; I don't like it. I don't understand the magic of their spells. Today I don't recognise your speech; tomorrow, perhaps, I shall not even recognise your face. Their spells can make a changeling of the very soul itself.

PRAKRITI. All these days you have never really known me, mother. He who has recognised me will reveal me. And so I wait and watch. The midday gong booms from the palace, the girls take up their water-pots and go home, the kite soars alone into the far sky, and I bring my pitcher and sit here at the well by the wayside.

MOTHER. For whom do you wait?

PRAKRITI. For the wayfarer.

MOTHER. What wayfarer will come to you, you crazy girl?

PRAKRITI. That one wayfarer, mother, the one and only. In him are all who fare along the ways of all the world. Day after day goes by, yet he does not come. Though he spoke no word, his word was given—why does he not keep his word? For my heart is become like a waterless waste, where the heat-haze quivers all day long. Its water cannot be given, for no one comes to seek it.

MOTHER. I can make nothing of your talk today; it's as though you were intoxicated. Tell me plainly, what do you want?

PRAKRITI. I want *him*. All unlooked for—he came, and taught me this marvellous truth, that even my service will count with the God who guides the world. O words of great wonder! That *I* may serve, *I*, a flower sprung from a poison-plant! Let him raise that truth, that flower from the dust, and take it to his bosom.

MOTHER. Be warned, Prakriti, these men's words are meant only to be heard, not to be practised. The filth into which an evil fate has cast you is a wall of mud that no spade in the world can break through. You are unclean; beware of tainting the outside world with your unclean presence. See that you keep to your own place, narrow as it is. To stray anywhere beyond its limits is to trespass.

PRAKRITI [*sings*].

Blessed am I, says the flower, who belong to the earth.
For I serve you, my God, in this my lowly home.
Make me forget that I am born of dust,
For my spirit is free from it.
When you bend your eyes upon me my petals tremble in joy;
Give me a touch of your feet and make me heavenly,
For the earth must offer its worship through me.

MOTHER. Child, I'm beginning to understand something of what you say. You are a woman; by serving you must worship, and by serving you must rule. Women alone can in a moment overstep the bounds of caste; when once the curtains of destiny are drawn aside, they all stand revealed in their queenliness. You had a good chance, you know, when the king's son was deer-hunting and came to this very well of yours. You remember, don't you?

PRAKRITI. Yes, I remember.

MOTHER. Why didn't you go to the king's house? He had forgotten everything in your beauty.

PRAKRITI. Yes, he *had* forgotten everything—forgotten that I was a human being. He had gone out hunting beasts; he saw nothing but the beast whom he wanted to bind in chains of gold.

MOTHER. At least he noticed your beauty, if only as game to be hunted. As for the *Bhikshu*, does *he* see the woman in you?

PRAKRITI. You *won't* understand, mother, you won't! I feel that in all these days he is the first who ever really recognised me. That is a marvellous thing. I want him, mother, I want him beyond all measure. I want to take this life of mine and lay it like a basket of flowers at his feet. It will not defile them. Let everyone marvel at my daring! I shall glory in my claim. 'I am your handmaid,' I shall declare—for otherwise I must lie bound for ever at the whole world's feet, a slave!

MOTHER. Why do you get so excited, child? You were born a slave. It's the writ of Destiny, who can undo it?

PRAKRITI. Fie, fie, Mother, I tell you again, don't delude yourself with this self-humiliation—it is false, and a sin. Plenty of slaves are born of royal blood, but I am no slave; plenty of chandals are born of Brahmin families, but I am no chandal.

MOTHER. I don't know how to answer you, child. Very good. I'll go to him myself, and cling to his feet. 'You accept food from every home', I'll say. 'Come to our house too, and accept from our hands at least a bowl of water.'

PRAKRITI. No, no, I'll not call him in that way, from outside. I'll send my call into his soul, for him to hear. I am longing to give myself; it is like a pain at my heart. Who is going to accept the gift? Who will join with me in give-and-take? Will he not mingle his longings with mine, as the Ganges mingles with the black waters of the Jumna? For music springs up of itself, and he who came unbidden has left behind him a word of hope. What is the use of one pitcher of water when the earth is cracked with drought? Will not the clouds come of themselves to fill the whole sky, the rain seek the soil by its own weight?

MOTHER. What is the use of such talk? If the clouds come, they come: if they don't, they don't; if the crops wither, it's no concern of theirs! What more can we do than sit and watch the sky?

PRAKRITI. That won't do for me; I won't simply sit and watch. You know how to work spells; let those spells be the clasp of my arms, let them drag him here.

MOTHER. What are you saying, wretched girl? Is there no limit to your recklessness? It would be playing with fire! Are these *bhikshus* like ordinary folk? How am I to work spells on them? I shudder even to think of it.

PRAKRITI. You would have worked them boldly enough on the king's son.

MOTHER. I'm not afraid of the king; he might have had me impaled, perhaps. But these men—they do nothing.

PRAKRITI. I fear nothing any longer, except to sink back again, to forget myself again, to enter again the house of darkness. *That* would be worse than death! Bring him here you must! I speak so boldly, of such great matters—isn't that in itself a wonder? Who worked the wonder but he? Shall there not be further wonders? Shall he not come to my side, and sit with me on the corner of my cloth?

MOTHER. Suppose I can bring him, are you ready to pay the price? Nothing will be left to you.

PRAKRITI. No, nothing will be left. The burden and heritage of birth after birth—nothing will remain. Only let me bring it all to an end, then I shall live indeed. That's why I need him. Nothing will be left me. I have waited for age after age, and now in this birth my life shall be fulfilled. My mind is saying it over and over again—fulfilled! It was for this that I heard those wonderful words, 'Give me water'. Today I know that even I can give. Everyone else had hidden the truth from me. I sit and watch for his coming today to give, to give, to give everything I have.

MOTHER. Have you no respect for religion?

PRAKRITI. How can I say? I respect him who respects me. A religion that insults is a false religion. Everyone united to make me conform to a creed that blinds and gags. But since that day something forbids me to conform any longer. I'm afraid of nothing now. Chant your spells, bring the *Bhikshu* to the side of the chandalini. I myself shall do him honour—no one else can honour him so well.

MOTHER. Aren't you afraid of bringing a curse upon yourself?

PRAKRITI. There has been a curse upon me all my life. Poison kills poison, they say—so one curse another. Not another word, mother, not another word. Begin your spells, I cannot bear any more delay.

MOTHER. Very well, then. What is his name?

PRAKRITI. His name is Ananda.

MOTHER. Ananda? The disciple of the Lord Buddha?

PRAKRITI. Yes, it is he.

MOTHER. O my heart's treasure, you are the apple of my eye—but it's a great wrong I'm putting my hand to at your bidding!

PRAKRITI. What wrong? I will bring to my side the one who brings all near. What crime is there in that?

MOTHER. They draw men by the strength of their virtue. We drag them with spells, as beasts are dragged in a noose. We only churn up the mud.

PRAKRITI. So much the better. Without the churning, how can the well be cleansed?

MOTHER (*apostrophising Ananda*].

O thou exalted one, thy power to forgive is greater far than my power to offend. I am about to do thee dishonour, yet I bow before thee: accept my obeisance, Lord.

PRAKRITI. What are you afraid of, mother? Yours are the lips I use, but it's I who chant the spells. If my longing can draw him here, and if that is a crime, then I will commit the crime. I care nothing for a code which holds only punishment, and no comfort.

MOTHER. You are immensely daring, Prakriti.

PRAKRITI. You call *me* daring? Think of the might of *his* daring! How simply he spoke the words which no one had ever dared to say to me before! 'Give me water.' Such little words, yet as mighty as flame—they filled all my days with light, they rolled away the black stone whose weight so long had stopped the fountains of my heart, and the joy bubbled forth. Your fear is an illusion, for you did not see him. All morning he had begged alms in Sravasti city; when his task was done he came, across the common, past the burning-ground, along the river bank, with the hot sun on his head—and all for what? To say that one word, 'Give me water', even to a girl like me. O, it is too wonderful! Whence did such grace, such love, come down—upon a wretch unworthy beyond all others? What can I fear now? 'Give me water'—yes, the water which has filled all my days to overflowing, which I must needs give or die! 'Give me water.' In a moment I knew that I had

water, inexhaustible water; to whom should I tell my joy? And so I call him night and day. If he does not hear, fear not; chant your spell, he will be able to bear it.

MOTHER. Look, Prakriti, some men in yellow robes are going by the road across the common.

PRAKRITI. So they are; all the monks of the *sangha*, I see. Don't you hear them chanting?

[*The chant is heard in the distance.*]

To the most pure Buddha, mighty ocean of mercy,
Seer of knowledge absolute, pure, supreme,
Of the world's sin and suffering the Destroyer—
Solemnly to the Buddha I bow in homage.

PRAKRITI. O Mother, see, he is going, there ahead of them all. He never turned his head or looked towards this well. He could so easily have said 'Give me water' once more before he went. I thought he would never be able to cast me aside—me, his own handiwork, his new creation. [*She flings herself down and beats her head on the ground.*] This dust, this dust is your place! O wretched woman, who raised you to bloom for a moment in the light? Fallen in the end into this same dust, you must mingle for all time with this same dust, trampled underfoot by all who travel the road.

MOTHER. Child, dear child, forget it, forget it all. They have broken your momentary dream, and they are going away—let them go, let them go. When a thing is not meant to last, the quicker it goes the better.

Read and find out

Will Prakriti resign herself to her lot?

PRAKRITI. Day after day this cry of desire, moment by moment this burden of shame; this prisoned bird in my breast, that beats its wings unto death—do you call it a dream? A dream, is it, that sinks its sharp

teeth into the fibres of my heart, and will not loosen its grip? And they, who have no ties, no joy or sorrow, no earthly burden, who float along like the clouds in autumn—are only they awake, are only they real?

MOTHER. O Prakriti, I cannot bear to see you suffer so. Come, get up, I *will* chant the spells, I *will* bring him. All along the dusty road I will bring him. 'I want nothing,' he says in his pride. I'll break that pride and make him come, running and crying 'I want, I want'.

PRAKRITI. Mother, yours is an ancient spell, as old as life itself. Their mantras are raw things of yesterday. These men can never be a match for you—the knot of their mantras will be loosened under the stress of your spells. He is bound to be defeated.

MOTHER. Where are they going?

PRAKRITI. Going? They are going nowhere! During the rains they remain four months in penance and fasting, and then they are off again, how should I know where? That's what they call being awake!

MOTHER. Then why are you talking of spells, you crazy thing? He is going so far—how am I to bring him back?

PRAKRITI. No matter where he goes, you must bring him back. Distance is nothing for your spells. He showed no pity to me, I shall show none to him. Chant your spell, your cruellest spells; wind them about his mind till every coil bites deep. Wherever he goes, he shall never escape me!

MOTHER. You need not fear, it is not beyond our powers. I will give you this magic mirror; you shall take it in your hand and dance. His shadow will fall on the glass, and in it you will see what happens to him and how near he has come.

PRAKRITI. See there the clouds, the storm clouds, gathered in the west. The spell will work, mother, it will work. His dry meditations will scatter like withered leaves; his lamp will go out, his path will be lost in darkness. As a bird at dead of night falls fluttering into the

dark courtyard, its nest broken in the storm, even so shall he be whirled helpless to our doors. The thunder throbs in my heart, my mind is filled with the lightning flash, the waves foam high in an ocean whose shore I cannot see.

MOTHER. Think well even now, lest sudden terror spring upon you with the work half done. Can you endure to the end? When the spell has reached its height, it would cost me my life to undo it. Remember that this fire will not die down till all that will burn is burnt to ashes.

PRAKRITI. For whom are you afraid? Is he a common man? Nothing will hurt him. Let him come, let him tread the path of fire to the very end. Before me I see in vision the night of doom, the storm of union, the bliss of the breaking of worlds.

ACT II

[*Fifteen days have passed.*]

Read and find out

Will the spell work? What will happen when Ananda is made to come?

PRAKRITI. O, my heart will break. I will not look in the mirror, I cannot bear it. Such agony, so furious a storm. Must the king of the forest crash to the dust at last, his cloud-kissing glory broken?

MOTHER. Even now, child, if you say so, I will try to undo the spell. Let the cords of my life be torn apart and my life-blood spent, if only that great soul can be saved.

PRAKRITI. That is best, mother. Let the spells stop, I'll have no more... no, no, don't! Go on—the end of the path is so near! Make him come to the very end, make him come right to my bosom! After that I will blot out all his suffering, emptying my whole world at his feet. At dead of night the wayfarer will come, and I will kindle the lamps for him in the flames of

my burning heart. Deep within are springs of nectar, where he shall bathe and anoint his weary, hot and wounded limbs. Once again he shall say 'Give me water'—water from the ocean of my heart. Yes, that day will come—go on, go on with the spell.

[*Song*]

In my own sorrow
Will I quit thy sorrow;
Thy hurt will I bathe
In the deep waters of my pain's immensity.
My world will I give to the flames,
And my blackened shame shall be cleansed.
My mortal pain will I offer as gift at thy feet.

MOTHER. I never knew it would take so long. My spells have no more power, child; there is no breath left in my body.

PRAKRITI. Don't be afraid, mother; hold out a little longer, only a little. It will not be long now.

MOTHER. The month of *Ashad* is here, and their four months' fast is at hand.

PRAKRITl. They are gone to Vaisali, to the monastery there.

MOTHER. How pitiless you are! That is so far away.

PRAKRITI. Not very far; seven days' journey. Fifteen days have already passed. His seat of meditation has been shaken at last. He is coming, he is coming! All that once lay so far away, so many million miles away, beyond the very sun and moon, immeasurably beyond the reach of my arms—it is coming, nearer and nearer! He is coming, and my heart is rocked as by an earthquake.

MOTHER. I have worked the spell through all its stages—such force might have brought down Indra of the thunderbolt himself. And yet *he* does not come. It is a fight to the death indeed. What did you see in the mirror?

PRAKRITI. At first I saw a mist covering the whole sky, deathly pale like the weary gods after their struggle with the demons, Through rifts in the mist there

glimmered fire. After that the mist gathered itself up into red and angry clusters, like swollen, festering sores. That day passed. The next day I looked, and all the background was a deep black cloud, with lightning playing across it. Before it he was standing, all his limbs fenced with flame. My blood ran cold, and I rushed to tell you to stop your spells at once—but I found you in deep trace, sitting like a log, breathing hardly, and unconscious. It seemed as though a fierce fire burned in you, and your fire was a flaming serpent that hissed and struck in deadly duel at the fire that wrapped him round. I came back and took up the mirror; the light was gone—only torment, unfathomable torment, was in his face.

MOTHER. Yet that did not kill you? The fire of his suffering burnt into my soul, till I thought I could bear no more.

PRAKRITI. It seemed that the tortured form I saw was not his only, but mine too; it belonged to us both. In those awful fires the gold and the copper had been melted and fused.

MOTHER. And you felt no fear?

PRAKRITI. Something far greater than fear. I beheld the God of Creation, more terrible far than the God of Destruction, lashing the flames to work His purposes, while they writhed and roared in anger. What lay at his feet in the casket of the seven elements—Life or Death? My mind swelled with a joy hard to name—joy in the tremendous detachment of new creation, free of care or fear, of pity or sorrow. Creation breaking, burning and melting among the sparks of the elemental fires. I could not keep still. My whole soul and body danced and danced together, as the pointed flames dance in the fire.

MOTHER. And how did your *Bhikshu* appear?

PRAKRITI. His eyes were fixed motionless upon the distance, like stars in the evening twilight. I longed to escape from myself far into boundless space.

MOTHER. When you danced before the mirror, he saw you?

PRAKRITI. Fie upon it, how I am shamed! Again and again his eyes grew red, as though he were about to curse.

Again and again he trampled down the glowing fires of anger, and at last his anger turned upon himself, quivering, like a spear, and pierced his own breast.

MOTHER. And you bore all this?

PRAKRITI. I was amazed. I, this I, this daughter of yours, this nobody from nowhere—his suffering and mine are one today! What holy fire of creation could have wrought such a union? Who could dream of so great a thing?

MOTHER. When shall his turmoil be stilled?

PRAKRITl. When my suffering is stilled. How can he attain his *mukti* until I attain mine?

MOTHER. When did you last look into your mirror?

PRAKRITl. Yesterday evening. He had passed through the lion-gate of Vaisali some days before, at dead of night—seemingly in secret, unknown to the monks. After that I had sometimes seen him ferried across rivers or on difficult mountain passes. I had seen the evening fall, and him alone on the wide commons, or on the dark forest paths at dead of night. As the days went by, he fell more deeply under the spell and became heedless of everything, all the conflict with his own soul at an end. His face was mazed, his body slack, his eyes fixed in an unseeing stare, as though for him there were neither true nor false, good nor evil—only a blind and thoughtless compulsion, with no meaning in it.

MOTHER. Can you guess how far he has come today?

PRAKRITI. I saw him yesterday at Patal village on the river Upali. The river was turbulent with new rains; there was an old peepul tree by the ghat, fireflies shining in its branches, and under it a lichened altar. As he reached it he gave a sudden start and stood still. It was a place he had known for a long time; I have heard that one day the Lord Buddha preached there to King Suprabhas. He sat down and covered his eyes with his hands—I felt that his dream-spell might break at any moment. I flung away the mirror, for I was afraid of what I might see. The whole day has passed since then, and torn between hope and

fear I have sat on, not daring to know. Now it is dark again; on the road goes the watchman calling the hour, it must be an hour past midnight. O mother, the time is short, so short; don't let this night be wasted; put the whole of your strength into the spell.

MOTHER. Child, I can do no more; the spell is weakening, I am failing body and soul.

PRAKRITI. It mustn't weaken now—don't give up now! Maybe he has turned his face away, maybe the chain we have bound on him is stretched to the uttermost, and will not hold. What if he escapes now, away from this birth of mine, and I can never reach him again? Then it will be my turn to dream, to return to the illusion of a chandal birth. I will never endure that mockery again. I beseech you, mother, put out your whole strength once only; set in motion your spell of the primeval earth, and shake the complacent heaven of the virtuous.

MOTHER. Have you made ready as I told you?

PRAKRITI. Yes. Yesterday was the second night of the waxing moon. I bathed in the river Gambhira, plunging below the water. Here in the courtyard I drew a circle, with rice and pomegranate blossoms, vermilion and the seven jewels. I planted the flags of yellow cloth, I placed sandal-paste and garlands on a brass tray, I lit the lamps. After my bath I put on a cloth, green like the tender rice shoots, and a scarf like the *champak* flower. I sat with my face to the East. All night long I have contemplated his image. On my left arm I have tied the bracelet of thread—sixteen strands of golden yellow bound in sixteen knots.

MOTHER. Then dance round the circle in your dance of invocation, while I work my spells before the altar.

[*Prakriti dances and sings.*]

Now, Prakriti, take your mirror and look. See, a dark shadow has fallen over the altar. My heart is bursting and I can do no more. Look into the mirror—how long will it be now?

PRAKRITIl. No, I will not look again, I will listen—listen in my inmost being. If he reveals himself I shall see him before me. Bear up a little longer, mother, he will surely, surely reveal himself. Hark! Hark to the sudden storm, the storm of his coming! The earth quivers beneath his tread, and my heart throbs.

MOTHER. It brings a curse for you, unhappy girl. As for me, it means surely death—the fibres of my being are shattered.

PRAKRITI. No curse, it brings no curse, it brings the gift of my new birth. The thunderbolt hammers open the Lion-gates of Death; the door breaks, the walls crumble, the falsehood of this birth of mine is shattered. Tremors of fear shake my mind, but rhythms of joy enrapture my soul. My All-destroyer, my All-in-all, you have come! I will enthrone you on the summit of all my dishonour, and build your royal seat of my shame, my fear and my joy.

MOTHER. My time is near, I can do no more. Look in the mirror at once.

PRAKRITI. Mother, I'm afraid. His journey is almost at an end, and what then? What then for him? Only myself, my wretched self? Nothing else? Only this to repay the long and cruel pain? Nothing but me? Only this at the end of the weary, difficult road?—only me?

MOTHER. Have pity, cruel girl, I can bear no more. Look in the mirror, quick!

PRAKRITI (*looks in the mirror and flings it away*). O mother, mother, stop! Undo the spell now—at once—undo it! What have you done? What have you done? O wicked, wicked deed!—better have died. What a sight to see! Where is the light and radiance, the shining purity, the heavenly glow? How worn, how faded, has he come to my door! Bearing his self's defeat as a heavy burden, he comes with drooping head... Away with all this, away with it! [*She kicks the paraphernalia of magic to pieces.*] Prakriti, Prakriti, if in truth you are no chandalini, offer no insult to the heroic. Victory, victory to him!

[*Enter Ananda.*]

O Lord, you have come to give me deliverance, therefore have you known this torment. Forgive me, forgive me. Let your feet spurn afar the endless reproach of my birth. I have dragged you down to earth, how else could you raise me to your heaven? O pure one, the dust has soiled your feet, but they have not been soiled in vain. The veil of my illusion shall fall upon them, and wipe away the dust. Victory, victory to thee, O Lord!

MOTHER. Victory to thee, O Lord. My sins and my life lie together at thy feet, and my days end here, in the haven of thy forgiveness. [*She dies.*]

ANANDA [*chanting*].

Buddho Susuddho karuna mahannvo
Yoccanta suddhabbara-gnana locano
Lokassa papupakilesa ghatako
Vandami Buddham ahamadarena tam.

To the most pure Buddha, mighty ocean of mercy,
Seer of knowledge absolute, pure, supreme,
Of the world's sin and suffering the Destroyer—
Solemnly to the Buddha I bow in homage.

Thinking about the Play

1. Why does something so ordinary and commonplace as giving water to a wayfarer become so significant to Prakriti?
2. Why is the girl named Prakriti in the play? What are the images in the play that relate to this theme?
3. How does the churning of emotions bring about self-realisation in Prakriti even if at the cost of her mother's life?
4. How does the mirror reflect the turmoil experienced by the monk as a result of the working of the spell?
5. What is the role of the mother in Prakriti's self-realisation? What are her hopes and fears for her daughter?

6. 'Acceptance of one's fate is easy. Questioning the imbalance of the human social order is tumultuous.' Discuss with reference to the play.

Appreciation

1. How does the dramatic technique suit the theme of the play?
2. By focusing attention on the consciousness of an outcast girl, the play sensitises the viewer/reader to the injustice of distinctions based on the accidents of human birth. Discuss how individual conflict is highlighted against the backdrop of social reality.
3. 'I will enthrone you on *the summit of all my dishonour,* and build *your royal seat of my shame, my fear and my joy'*. Pick out more such examples of the interplay of opposites from the text. What does this device succeed in conveying?
4. 'Shadow, mist, storm' on the one hand, 'flames, fire,' on the other. Comment on the effect of these and similar images of contrast on the viewer/reader.

Suggested Reading

Gora by Rabindranath Tagore.

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2

Broken Images

Girish Karnad
Born 1938

Girish Karnad is a contemporary writer, playwright, actor and movie director. He is a recipient of the Padma Shri (1974), Padma Bhushan (1992) and the Jnanpith Award (1998). He writes in both Kannada and English. His plays generally use history and mythology to focus on contemporary issues. He is also active in the world of Indian cinema.
This play, too, can be looked at from multiple levels—the focus on values, both personal and academic, and the issue of bilingualism in today's world.

...for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter,...

T. S. Eliot
The Waste Land

The interior of a television studio. A big plasma screen hangs on one side, big enough for a close-up on it to be seen clearly by the audience. On the other side of the stage, a chair and a typically 'telly' table—strong, wide, semi-circular. At the back of the stage are several television sets, with screens of varying sizes.

A small red bulb glows above the table, high enough not to appear on the television screen.

Manjula Nayak walks in. She is in her mid-thirties/forties, and has a confident stride. She is wearing a lapel mike. It is immediately evident that she is at home in broadcasting studios. She looks around.

MANJULA: Nice, very nice. Neat!

(She goes and sits on the chair. Adjusts the earpiece.)

But where is the camera?

(Listens to the reply.)

Ah! I see. New technology. Isn't it scary? The rate of obsolescence? (*Listens.*) Of course I have. In London. And in Toronto. But when you think of Indian television studios, you always imagine them cluttered. Lots of men and women scurrying about, shouting orders. Elephantine lights. Headphones. Cameras. You know what I mean. But here... I mean, it's all so spartan... I know. But a bit lonely too. Like a sound studio... All right. All right... No camera. I just look ahead and speak to an invisible audience in front of me... Direct. Fine. Fine... I can hear you. Clearly. Voice test?... 'Testing, Testing, One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Hello, Hello!' Shall I tap on the mike?

(*Laughs.*)

My speech will last exactly ten minutes. I have timed it... No, I won't read. 'Look ahead and speak!' Good... But that may take a little longer. A couple of minutes... if I don't fumble too much.

(*Giggles.*)

The yellow light?... Okay, okay, ready, fine!

(*She mouths 'Ten' to 'Zero' silently, emphasising each count with her forefinger. At the stroke of ten, the light turns yellow. The Announcer appears on the big plasma screen. The other screens remain blank till the last few minutes of the play.*)

ANNOUNCER: Good evening. This is a proud evening for the Shree-TV channel. For tonight we bring to you Ms Manjula Nayak. Many of you will know her as a renowned Kannada short-story writer. Until a year ago, she was a lecturer in English in Bangalore. But she had been writing in Kannada. Not unusual, as you know. It's amazing how many of our Kannada writers are lecturers in English: from the earliest days. B. M. Shree, Gokak, Adiga.

Even modern ones. Lankesh, Shantinath, Anantha Murthy. And of course there is A. K. Ramanujan, who was equally at home in both languages. But last year Mrs Nayak stunned the world—yes, I mean, the world—by writing a novel. Her first novel. In English! *The River Has No Memories*. The advance she received from her British publishers made headlines, here and in the West. And then the novel turned out to be a bestseller all over the world. Our heartiest congratulations to Mrs Nayak.

This evening we broadcast a Kannada telefilm based on this remarkable novel. The film will begin in exactly ten minutes. And we have with us in the studio Ms Nayak herself, who has graciously agreed to address our viewers about her work. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome the Literary Phenomenon of the Decade, Mrs Manjula Nayak.

(Applause on the sound track. The light turns green. The Announcer disappears and Manjula's image appears in his place. She speaks.)

MANJULA: *Namaskara*. I am Manjula Nayak. 1 must mention that officially I am Mrs Manjula Murty, but my creative self continues to be Manjula Nayak. There are some areas in which we must not let marriage intrude too much.

(*Laughter.*)

Talking about one's work is a very difficult task. So let me find an easy way out. Let me just take up two questions I constantly come across. They seem to bother everyone—here, abroad. I'll answer them to the best of my ability within the short time at my disposal and shut up. Actually, that's what a writer should do, shouldn't she?—Write and shut up!

(*Laughs.*)

The first question—you have probably guessed it already. After having written in Kannada all your life, why did you choose—suddenly—to write in English? Do you see yourself as a Kannada writer or an English writer? What audience do you write for? And variations on that theme.

Actually, let me confess. If I had foreseen how many people I would upset by writing in English—I really would not have committed that folly.

Intellectuals whom I respected, writers who were gurus to me, friends who I thought would pat me on my back and share my delight—they are all suddenly breathing fire. How dare I write in English and betray Kannada! (*Laughs.*)

Betray! The answer is simple; if there was betrayal, it was not a matter of conscious choice. I wrote the novel in English because it burst out in English. It surprised even me. I couldn't understand why it was all coming out in English. But it did. That's all. There is no other explanation.

What baffles me—actually, let me confess, hurts me—is why our intellectuals can't grasp this simple fact! I have been accused of writing for foreign readers. Accused! As though I had committed a crime. A writer seeks audiences where she or he can find them! My British publishers said to me: 'We like your book because it's so Indian. We receive any number of manuscripts from India but they are all written with the western reader in view. Your novel has the genuine Indian feel!'

(*Laughs.*)

But who listens here? A pundit for instance has stated that no Indian writer can express herself—or himself—honestly in English. 'For Indian writers, English is a medium of dishonesty.' Of course, one could also ask how many Kannada writers are honest in what they write—in Kannada. But if you did that, you would be immediately condemned as a traitor. You can't win!

Recently the President of the Central Sahitya Akademi—the National Academy of the Letters— (who shall remain nameless) declared that Indians who write in English do so in order to make money. That by writing in English they confess their complicity in the global consumer market economy. He of course spoke in English. Speaking in English, as you know, gives

you the authority to make oracular pronouncements on Indian literatures and languages. But my response to the charge that I write in English for money would be: Why not? Isn't that a good enough reason? Would you like to see what royalties I earned when I wrote in Kannada?

(*Pause.*)

Yet the accusation hides—or perhaps reveals—a grim anxiety. As is clear from the dictum of the President of the Akademi, what is at issue is not Creativity but Money. What hits everyone in the eye is the money a writer in English can earn. The advance I received for my novel—the advance only, mind you—helped me resign my job and concentrate on writing. Of course it is a cause for jealousy. Having struggled in Kannada, I can understand that. A Kannada proverb says: 'A response is good. But a meaningful response is better.' Meaningful: *Arthapoorna*. The Kannada word for Meaning is *Artha*—which also means money! And of course, fame, publicity, glamour...power.

(*Laughs.*)

Let me leave it at that.

The second question everyone asks is about the book itself: thank God! How could you—you seem so strong and active—I was a long jump athlete in college, though of course no Anju Bobby George—how could you so vividly recreate the inner life of a person confined to bed all her life? How can a healthy, outdoor woman be so empathetic to the emotional world of a disabled person? Well, it is sad, but I owe that to my younger sister, Malini.

She was physically challenged. Suffered from what is technically called, meningomyelocele—the upper part of her body was perfectly normal; below the waist, the nervous system was damaged. Completely dysfunctional. A series of operations, which started soon after her birth, reduced her existence to misery—she spent her entire life confined to the wheel-chair.

Six years ago my parents died. She came to stay with

us in our house in Jayanagar, and I nursed her. During the last few months it was quite clear she didn't have much time left. I am childless and she became my child! Truly, the book is about her. I have dedicated it to her memory. She died last year—just a few months before the book came out. I have tried to relive what I learnt about her emotional life as I nursed her—tended to her—watched helplessly as she floated into death. I miss her. I miss my beautiful, gentle sister.

(*Her eyes moisten.*)

She is the only character in the novel drawn from life. The other characters and the plot are entirely fictional. Invented.

(*Pause.*)

I must here acknowledge the support I received from one person while I wrote the novel—my husband, Pramod Murty. I was working full time as a lecturer then. College chores. And home was full of her memories. And there was I, suddenly writing in English. Floundering. Sinking. I was utterly clueless. There were moments when I broke down, when I felt I couldn't go on. But he was always there at my side, encouraging me, prodding me on. Without him, I would never have completed the novel. Thank you, Pramod.

(*The overhead light turns yellow.*)

Well, that's it. I have committed the cardinal sin of writing in English.

(*Laughs.*)

There is no *prayashchitta* for it, no absolution. But fortunately the film you are about to see is in Kannada. That makes me very happy. After all, the family I have written about is Kannada. I am a Kannada writer myself, born to the language and civilization, and proud of it. The Kannada reality I conceived in English has been translated back into Kannada—to perfection—by the Director. I couldn't have done it better. My thanks to the cast and the crew and of course, Shree-TV. Well, enjoy the telefilm.

Good Night. *Namaskara.*

(*The light turns red. She leans back in her chair. Pause. Then into the lapel mike.*)

I hope that was okay? I didn't fumble too much, did I? (*Listens.*)

Thank you, Raza. The pleasure's all mine. See you outside? (*The red light switches off. She smiles contentedly.*)

Whew! That'll get them. Good. I have taken enough shit from them.

(*Laughs and gets up. Manjula's image on the screen should have given way to the film, but hasn't. Instead, the Image continues as before, watching her calmly. She is of course unaware of it.*)

(*She makes a move to the door.*)

IMAGE: Where are you going?

(*Startled, Manjula stops and looks around. Touches her earpiece to check if the sound came from there and moves on.*)

You can't go yet. —Manjula!

(*Manjula looks around baffled and sees that her image continues on the screen. She does a double take. From now on, throughout the play, Manjula and her image react to each other exactly as though they were both live characters.*)

MANJULA: Oh God! Am I still on?

(*Confused, she rushes back to the chair and stops.*)

IMAGE: You are not. The camera is off.

MANJULA: Is it?.. Then... how?

IMAGE: You are standing up. If the camera were on, I would be standing up too. I'm not.

MANJULA: Is this some kind of a trick?

(*Into her lapel mike.*)

Hello! Hello! Can you hear me? How come I'm still on the screen? Raza, hello...

(*Taps her mike. No response.*)

Is there a technical hitch?

IMAGE: No hitch.

MANJULA (*to the Image*): But how... Who are you... How... Has the tape got stuck?

Photographs from the play 'Broken Images' staged by National School of Drama in 2005.

(*Calls out into the mike.*)

Raza, Raza. Help! Help!

IMAGE: What are you screaming for? What are you afraid of? It's only me.

MANJULA: Who are you?

IMAGE: Me? You.

MANJULA (*to herself*): This is absurd.

IMAGE: Quite.

(*A long pause while Manjula refuses to acknowledge the presence of the Image. Then she slowly looks up. The Image smiles.*)

IMAGE: A good speech, I must say. My compliments. An excellent performance. The viewers loved it. All two million of them.

MANJULA: But the film? Hasn't it started?

IMAGE: Aw, screw the film... It's awful anyway.

MANJULA: I told them it won't work. A telefilm needs lots of movement. Different locations. Pace. Action. Drama. 'A good novel does not necessarily make a good film,' I argued. But they were persistent. Sponsors were easy to find. (*Pause.*) They paid well.

IMAGE: Your performance now... this introduction... it will be the best thing this evening. You'll be all over the papers. You have managed to upset a lot of people.

MANJULA: Thanks. I meant to.

(*Pause.*)

IMAGE: If one had to comment... in the extreme case that one had to...that bit about your sister Malini...the tears...that could have been played down.

MANJULA: I wasn't pretending. I loved her.

(*Pause.*)

I love her. Still. I don't think I have ever been as close to anyone else.

IMAGE: It was a close bond?

MANJULA: The novel doesn't really do her justice. She was attractive—more attractive than me. Intelligent—more intelligent than me. And vivacious, which I never was. I accepted that. She radiated life from the wheelchair to which she was confined. I have always been reconciled to being the second best.

IMAGE: Her illness was unfortunate. But because of it, she got the best of everything.

MANJULA (*defensive*): She never asked for anything. Soon after her birth, the moment the gravity of her situation was realised, my parents moved to Bangalore. Took a house in the Koramangala Extension. She became the...the (*searches for a phrase and then settles for*)... the apple of their eye. When she was old enough to go to school, a teacher came home to teach her English and Mathematics. Everything else, she read up for herself. History, Philosophy, Anatomy. She was hungry—hungry for life. Gobbled it all up.

IMAGE: And you?

MANJULA: I have often wondered whether I would have been as bright if I'd received all that love and attention.

IMAGE: No, you wouldn't. Let's face it.

MANJULA (*defensively*): I did write a bestseller.

IMAGE: That's true.

MANJULA: But you are right. I wouldn't. They left me with grandparents in Dharwad. An affectionate couple. They fussed over me. But no substitute for parents. When vacations approached I could barely wait to get to Bangalore. And once I finished college, I found a job in Bangalore and came and lived with them. Those were the happiest days of my life! Halcyon! But then I met Pramod. We got married and settled down in Jayanagar. Father helped with the house but he left most of his money in her name—for her care. She was always the focus. Naturally.

IMAGE: But when your parents died, why didn't you move into the Koramangala house? Such a nice, big house. The garden. The sense of space.

MANJULA: The Jayanagar house was my house. I was used to it. My college was in Jayanagar. We had selected a house which was within walking distance. Koramangala would have meant a long haul every morning.

And then such a huge house! Not easy to look after. I would have had to stay home all day like mother. Give up my job probably. No, as I said, she was one of the

most sensitive people I have known. She realised moving to Koramangala would turn my life upside down. She insisted that we sell the Koramangala house. I was reluctant but she wouldn't listen. She wanted no sacrifices on her account, no compromises. And she adjusted beautifully to the smaller house.

(*Pause.*)

Actually I couldn't take Koramangala! Non-Kannadigas, most of them. And of course all those empty houses bought as investments by Non-Resident Indians. I fancied myself a Kannada writer in those days. Wanted to breathe the language. Live in the heart of Kannada culture.

IMAGE: Now that you are a success in English, have you bought a big bungalow in Koramangala?

MANJULA: Aw, shut up!

IMAGE: Was Malini at home with Kannada?

MANJULA: Of course, it is our mother-tongue. But she rarely used it. Her Kannada was limited to the cook and the maid.

IMAGE: So Kannada was the one area that became yours?

MANJULA: You could say that. I tried to occupy it and make it mine.

(*Laughs.*)

Actually, I have never said it publicly, but if you argue that a novel written in English cannot express truth about India because we do not express ourselves in English—

(*Takes a breath. Laughs.*)

God, what a sentence! But if you believe that, then let me say I could not have written about my sister in Kannada. She breathed, laughed, dreamt in English. Her friends spoke only English. Having her in my house for six years helped improve my English.

(*Pause.*)

IMAGE: So when are you going to write your next novel? Will it also be in English?

MANJULA: I think I have already answered that question. Why need I write another novel? Surely one is more than enough?

IMAGE: Critically and financially. But then what are you going to do? You have resigned your job. You are rich—

MANJULA: Well-to-do.

IMAGE: Well-to-do. You have no sister to look after. An empty house. Nothing you can use.

MANJULA: Are you trying to make me feel guilty? Are you implying I 'used' her? It was my life as well you know. I am in the back too, though I would never admit to it publicly. Most readers find the girl's 'first cousin' quite unattractive.

IMAGE: Eek! That odious character! Is that you?

MANJULA: Well! There you are!

IMAGE: A triumph of objective self-analysis, shall we say?

MANJULA: If you must. But I am not that wicked really. It was a narrative necessity to have a negative character. A matter of technique. The sympathetic heroine. A villain as a counterpoint. You see?

IMAGE: But Pramod must be pleased by your treatment of his character. He comes across as not very good-looking or striking...

MANJULA: But not bad-looking, either. Good enough for me.

IMAGE: ...but an intelligent, warm and lovable person. Fun-loving. Fond of practical jokes. Noble and simple. Almost simple-minded.

MANJULA: You can say that again! You know, we met soon after I moved to Bangalore. He felt attracted to me. Didn't know how to convey it. So do you know what he did? I had a friend called Lucy. A close friend. He wrote a letter to her about me. And wrote me a letter about Lucy. Then he mailed her letter in an envelope addressed to me and vice versa. So I received this letter addressed to Lucy—moaning and groaning about how I tortured him. And I didn't even know he was interested in me. And of course Lucy received the other letter. He thought he was being absolutely clever—original. We went and confronted him. Lucy tore her letter to shreds and flung the pieces on him and stormed off. Melodramatically. I felt sorry for him and

said, 'Idiot, every fifteen-year old tries that trick, convinced it's never been done before.' He blushed to the roots of his hair.

IMAGE: But you got married. So the ruse worked.

MANJULA: No ruse. He had made such a fool of himself, he did the only thing he could to save his self-respect. He married me. I didn't mind.

IMAGE: Mind? You would never have got another man of his calibre.

MANJULA: I suppose so.

IMAGE: And what happened to Lucy?

MANJULA: She stopped talking to me.

(*They both laugh.*)

Women found him attractive.

IMAGE: Malini too?

MANJULA: Of course. She was a woman, after all.

IMAGE: They were close to each other?

MANJULA: Very.

IMAGE: And you didn't mind?

MANJULA: Mind? Thank God for it. You see, he is in software development. Works from home. She was confined to her chair. Can you imagine what would have happened if they hadn't got on?

IMAGE: He must be proud of you. That flattering portrayal of him in the novel. The moving acknowledgment in your speech today...

MANJULA: I doubt if he will even hear of my speech. Ever. He is in the US.

IMAGE: Oh! When did he go?

MANJULA: Last year. He lives in Los Angeles now. He is in demand as a software wizard.

IMAGE: Last year! So has he even read the novel?

MANJULA: The launching of the novel was a major media event in the US. After all, you must remember it had already proved a super hit in Britain. They invited me to New York for the release. There was much fanfare. He sent me an email of congratulations. From Los Angeles. Apologised that he couldn't get leave to attend.

IMAGE: And you didn't go to LA?

MANJULA: He didn't even hint at it.

IMAGE: I'm sorry. But the chronology is beginning to confuse me. When did he decide to go to the States? Was it after Malini's death?

MANJULA: Yes.

IMAGE: Immediately after?

MANJULA: No. But soon after.

IMAGE: How long after?

MANJULA (*explodes*): Who are you, for God's sake? What gives you the right to interrogate me like this—about my private life? Either you are me in which case you know everything. Or you are an electronic image, externally prying. In which case, you can just... just... switch off.

(*The Image smiles. Suddenly Manjula becomes calm.*)

Thinking about the Play

1. How genuine is the love that Manjula expresses for her sister?
2. The sister does not appear in the play but is central to it. What picture of her is built in your mind from references in the play?
3. When the image says—'Her illness was unfortunate. But because of it, she got the best of everything'
   (i) What is the nature of Manjula's reply?
   (ii) How can it be related to what follows in the play?
4. What are the issues that the playwright satirises through this TV monologue of a celebrity?

Talking about the Play

1. 'Broken Images' takes up a debate that has grown steadily since 1947—the politics of language in Indian literary culture, specifically in relation to modern Indian languages and English. Discuss.
2. The play deals with a Kannada woman writer who unexpectedly produces an international bestseller in English.
   (i) Can a writer be a truly bilingual practitioner?
   (ii) Does writing in an 'other tongue' amount to betrayal of the mother tongue?

Appreciation

1. Why do you think the playwright has used the technique of the image in the play?
2. The play is called a monologue. Why is it made to turn dialogic?
3. What is the posture the celebrity adopts when the camera is on and when it is off?

Suggested Reading

Two Monologues: Flowers, Broken Images by Girish Karnad

The Dreams of Tipu Sultan by Girish Karnad.