Flamingo

Textbook for Class XII
(Core Course)

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1 The Last Lesson

About the author

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

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

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

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

When I passed the town hall there was a crowd in front of the bulletin-board. For the last two years all our bad news had come from there — the lost battles, the draft, the orders of the commanding officer — and I thought to myself, without stopping, “What can be the matter now?”

Then, as I hurried by as fast as I could go, the blacksmith, Wachter, who was there, with his apprentice, reading the bulletin, called after me, "Don't go so fast, bub; you'll get to your school in plenty of time!"

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

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

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

I jumped over the bench and sat down at my desk. Not till then, when I had got a little over my fright, did I see that our teacher had on his beautiful green coat, his frilled

shirt, and the little black silk cap, all embroidered, that he never wore except on inspection and prize days. Besides, the whole school seemed so strange and solemn. But the thing that surprised me most was to see, on the back benches that were always empty, the village people sitting quietly like ourselves; old Hauser, with his three-cornered hat, the former mayor, the former postmaster, and several others besides. Everybody looked sad; and Hauser had brought an old primer, thumbed at the edges, and he held it open on his knees with his great spectacles lying across the pages.

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

What a thunderclap these words were to me!

Oh, the wretches; that was what they had put up at the town-hall!

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

Poor man! It was in honour of this last lesson that he had put on his fine Sunday clothes, and now I understood

why the old men of the village were sitting there in the back of the room. It was because they were sorry, too, that they had not gone to school more. It was their way of thanking our master for his forty years of faithful service and of showing their respect for the country that was theirs no more.

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

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

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

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

France
1870-71

Sketch map not to scale

language in the world — the clearest, the most logical; that we must guard it among us and never forget it, because when a people are enslaved, as long as they hold fast to their language it is as if they had the key to their prison. Then he opened a grammar and read us our lesson. I was amazed to see how well I understood it. All he said seemed so easy, so easy! I think, too, that I had never listened so carefully, and that he had never explained everything with so much patience. It seemed almost as if the poor man wanted to give us all he knew before going away, and to put it all into our heads at one stroke.

Think as you read

1. What was Franz expected to be prepared with for school that day?
2. What did Franz notice that was unusual about the school that day?
3. What had been put up on the bulletin-board?

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

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

just like that. Only the desks and benches had been worn smooth; the walnut-trees in the garden were taller, and the hopvine that he had planted himself twined about the windows to the roof. How it must have broken his heart to leave it all, poor man; to hear his sister moving about in the room above, packing their trunks! For they must leave the country next day.

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

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

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

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

"Vive La France!"

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

"School is dismissed — you may go."

Think as you read

1. What changes did the order from Berlin cause in school that day?
2. How did Franz's feelings about M. Hamel and school change?

Understanding the text

1. The people in this story suddenly realise how precious their language is to them. What shows you this? Why does this happen?
2. Franz thinks, "Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?" What could this mean?

   (There could be more than one answer.)

Talking about the text

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

   Can you think of examples in history where a conquered people had their language taken away from them or had a language imposed on them?
2. What happens to a linguistic minority in a state? How do you think they can keep their language alive? For example:

   Punjabis in Bangalore

   Tamilians in Mumbai

   Kannadigas in Delhi

   Gujaratis in Kolkata
3. Is it possible to carry pride in one's language too far?

   Do you know what 'linguistic chauvinism' means?

Working with words

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

petite	–	French
kindergarten	–	German
capital	–	Latin
democracy	–	Greek
bazaar	–	Hindi

Find out the origins of the following words.

tycoon	barbecue	zero
tulip	veranda	ski
logo	robot	trek
bandicoot		

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

(a) "What a <u>thunderclap</u> these words were to me!"

The words were

(i) loud and clear.

(ii) startling and unexpected.

(iii) pleasant and welcome.

(b) "When a people are enslaved, as long as they <u>hold fast to</u> their language it is as if they had the key to their prison"

It is as if they have the key to the prison as long as they

(i) do not lose their language.

(ii) are attached to their language.

(iii) quickly learn the conqueror's language.

(c) Don't go so fast, you will get to your school <u>in plenty of time.</u>

You will get to your school

(i) very late.

(ii) too early.

(iii) early enough.

(d) I never saw him <u>look so tall.</u>

M. Hamel

(a) had grown physically taller

(b) seemed very confident

(c) stood on the chair

Noticing form

Read this sentence

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

In the sentence above, the verb form "had said" in the first part is used to indicate an "earlier past". The whole story is narrated in the past. M. Hamel's "saying" happened earlier

than the events in this story. This form of the verb is called the **past perfect.**

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

Writing

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

Things to do

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

S.No.	Languages you know	Home language	Neighbourhood language	City/Town language	School language
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

About the Unit

Theme

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

SUB-THEME

Student and teacher attitudes to learning and teaching.

READING COMPREHENSION

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

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

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

TALKING ABOUT THE TEXT

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

WORKING WITH WORDS

To make pupils aware of

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

NOTICING FORM

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

WRITING

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

THINGS TO DO

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

2 Lost Spring

Stories of Stolen Childhood

About the author

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

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

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

'Sometimes I find a Rupee in the garbage'

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

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

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

"There is no school in my neighbourhood. When they build one, I will go."

"If I start a school, will you come?" I ask, half-joking.

"Yes," he says, smiling broadly.

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

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

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

"Why aren't you wearing *chappals*?" I ask one.

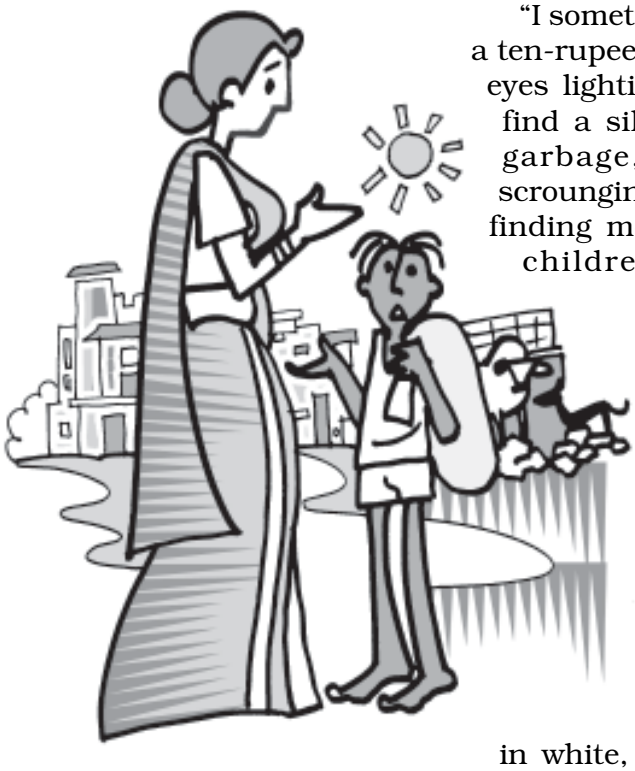
"My mother did not bring them down from the shelf," he answers simply.

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

if this is only an excuse to explain away a perpetual state of poverty.

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

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



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

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

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

This morning, Saheb is on his way to the milk booth. In his hand is a steel canister. "I now work in a tea stall down the road," he says, pointing in the distance. "I am paid 800 rupees and all my meals." Does he like the job? I ask. His face, I see, has lost the carefree look. The steel canister seems heavier than the plastic bag he would carry so lightly

over his shoulder. The bag was his. The canister belongs to the man who owns the tea shop. Saheb is no longer his own master!

Think as you read

1. What is Saheb looking for in the garbage dumps? Where is he and where has he come from?
2. What explanations does the author offer for the children not wearing footwear?
3. Is Saheb happy working at the tea-stall? Explain.

"I want to drive a car"

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

"Do you know anything about cars?" I ask.

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

Mukesh's family is among them. None of them know that it is illegal for children like him to work in the glass furnaces with high temperatures, in dingy cells without air and light; that the law, if enforced, could get him and all those 20,000 children out of the hot furnaces where they slog their daylight hours, often losing the brightness of their eyes. Mukesh's eyes beam as he volunteers to take me home, which he proudly says is being rebuilt. We walk down stinking lanes choked with garbage, past homes that remain hovels with crumbling walls, wobbly doors, no windows, crowded with families of humans and animals coexisting in a primeval state. He stops at the door of one such house, bangs a wobbly iron door with his foot, and pushes it open. We enter a half-built shack. In one part of it, thatched with dead grass, is a firewood stove over which sits a large vessel of sizzling spinach leaves. On the ground, in large aluminium platters, are more chopped vegetables. A frail young woman is cooking the evening meal for the whole family. Through eyes filled with smoke she smiles. She is the wife of

Mukesh's elder brother. Not much older in years, she has begun to command respect as the *bahu*, the daughter-in-law of the house, already in charge of three men — her husband, Mukesh and their father. When the older man enters, she gently withdraws behind the broken wall and brings her veil closer to her face. As custom demands, daughters-in-law must veil their faces before male elders. In this case the elder is an impoverished bangle maker. Despite long years of hard labour, first as a tailor, then a bangle maker, he has failed to renovate a house, send his two sons to school. All he has managed to do is teach them what he knows — the art of making bangles.

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

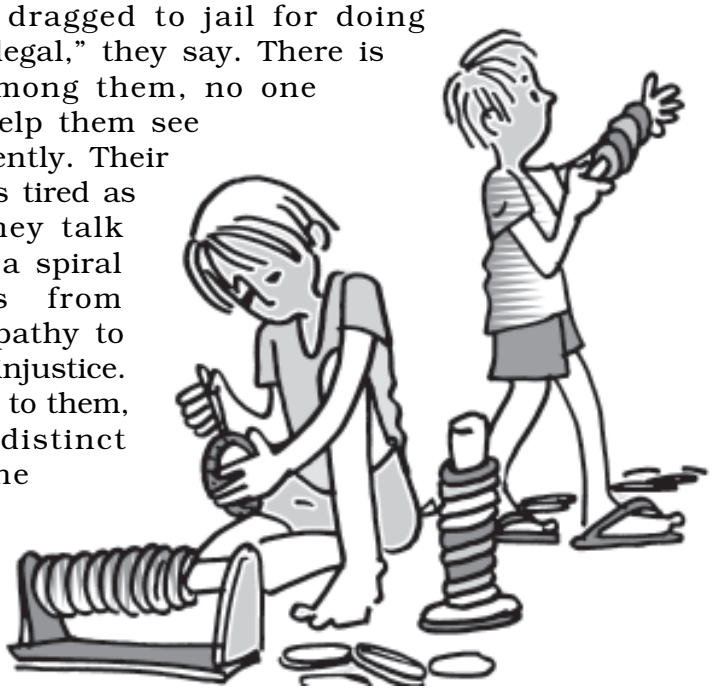
Savita, a young girl in a drab pink dress, sits alongside an elderly woman, soldering pieces of glass. As her hands move mechanically like the tongs of a machine, I wonder if she knows the sanctity of the bangles she helps make. It symbolises an Indian woman's *suhaag*, auspiciousness in marriage. It will dawn on her suddenly one day when her head is draped with a red veil, her hands dyed red with henna, and red bangles rolled onto her wrists. She will then become a bride. Like the old woman beside her who became one many years ago. She still has bangles on her

wrist, but no light in her eyes. *"Ek waqt ser bhar khana bhi nahin khaya,"* she says, in a voice drained of joy. She has not enjoyed even one full meal in her entire lifetime — that's what she has reaped! Her husband, an old man with a flowing beard, says, "I know nothing except bangles. All I have done is make a house for the family to live in."

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

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

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



Listening to them, I see two distinct worlds — one of the family, caught in a web of poverty, burdened

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

Think as you read

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

Understanding the text

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

Talking about the text

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

Thinking about language

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

- *Hyperbole* is a way of speaking or writing that makes something sound better or more exciting than it really is. For example: Garbage to them is gold.
- *A Metaphor*, as you may know, compares two things or ideas that are not very similar. A metaphor describes a thing in terms of a single quality or feature of some other thing; we can say that a metaphor "transfers" a quality of one thing to another. For example: The road was a ribbon of light.
- *Simile* is a word or phrase that compares one thing with another using the words "like" or "as". For example: As white as snow.

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

1. Saheb-e-Alam which means the lord of the universe is directly in contrast to what Saheb is in reality.
2. Drowned in an air of desolation.
3. Seemapuri, a place on the periphery of Delhi yet miles away from it, metaphorically.
4. For the children it is wrapped in wonder; for the elders it is a means of survival.
5. As her hands move mechanically like the tongs of a machine, I wonder if she knows the sanctity of the bangles she helps make.
6. She still has bangles on her wrist, but not light in her eyes.
7. Few airplanes fly over Firozabad.
8. Web of poverty.
9. Scrounging for gold.
10. And survival in Seemapuri means rag-picking. Through the years, it has acquired the proportions of a fine art.
11. The steel canister seems heavier than the plastic bag he would carry so lightly over his shoulders.

Things to do

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

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

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

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

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

About the

Theme

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

Sub-theme

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

Comprehension

Factual understanding and responding with sensitivity.

Thinking on socio-economic issues as a take-off from the text.

Talking about the text

- Fluency development
- Social awareness

Discussion on

- the dreams of the poor and the reality.
- problems of child labour.

Thinking about language

Focus on the use of figures of speech in writing.

Things to do

Observation of the paradoxes in the society we live in.

Writing

Note-making and reporting.

3 Deep Water

About the author

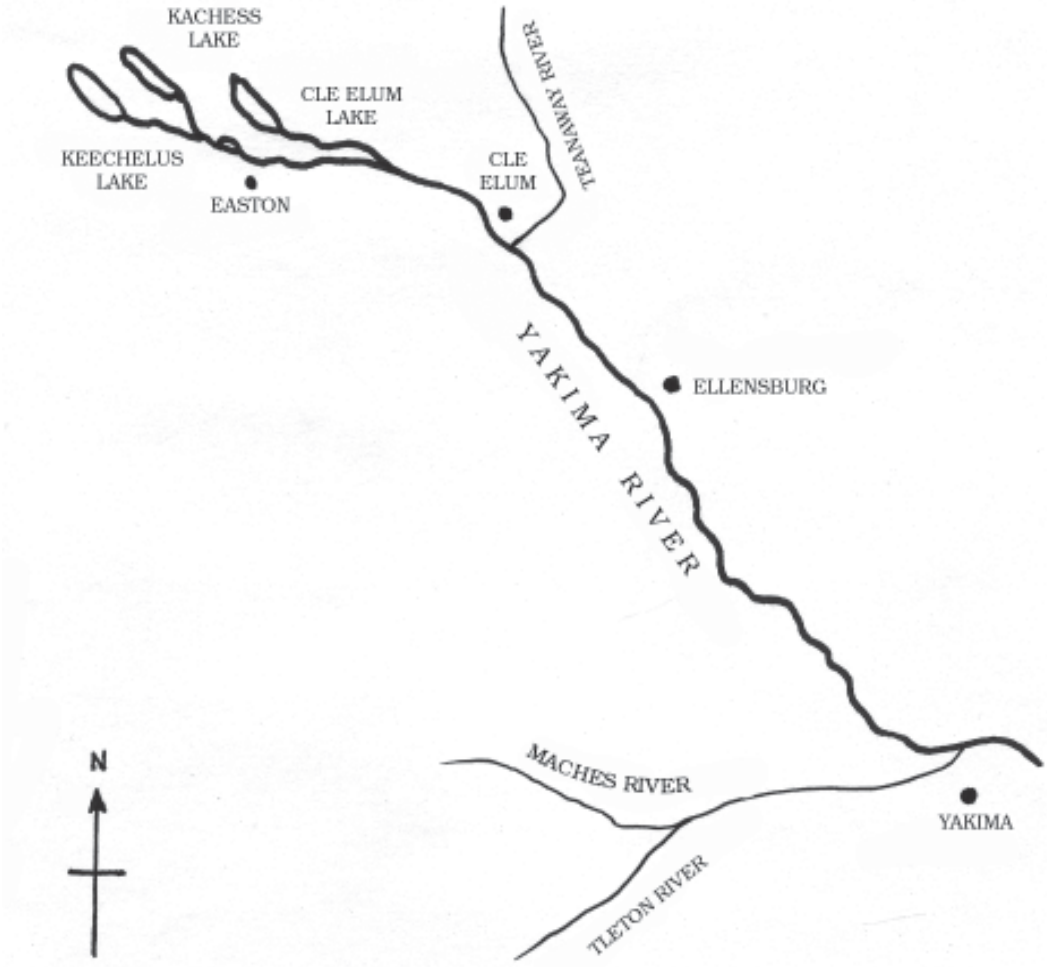
William Douglas (1898-1980) was born in Maine, Minnesota. After graduating with a Bachelors of Arts in English and Economics, he spent two years teaching high school in Yakima. However, he got tired of this and decided to pursue a legal career. He met Franklin D. Roosevelt at Yale and became an adviser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

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

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

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

THE YAKIMA RIVER



The Yakima River is a tributary of the Columbia River in eastern Washington, U.S.A. The state is named after the indigenous Yakama people.

Sketch map not to scale

naked into it and show my skinny legs. But I subdued my pride and did it.

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

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

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

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

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

It seemed a long way down. Those nine feet were more like ninety, and before I touched bottom my lungs were ready to burst. But when my feet hit bottom I summoned all my strength and made what I thought was a great spring upwards. I imagined I would bob to the surface like a cork. Instead, I came up slowly. I opened my eyes and saw nothing

but water — water that had a dirty yellow tinge to it. I grew panicky. I reached up as if to grab a rope and my hands clutched only at water. I was suffocating. I tried to yell but no sound came out. Then my eyes and nose came out of the water — but not my mouth.

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

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

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

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

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

But the jump made no difference. The water was still around me. I looked for ropes, ladders, water wings. Nothing but water. A mass of yellow water held me. Stark terror took an even deeper hold on me, like a great charge of electricity. I shook and trembled with fright. My arms wouldn't move. My legs wouldn't move. I tried to call for help, to call for mother. Nothing happened.

And then, strangely, there was light. I was coming out of the awful yellow water. At least my eyes were. My nose was almost out too.

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

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

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

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

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

Think as you read

1. What is the "misadventure" that William Douglas speaks about?
2. What were the series of emotions and fears that Douglas experienced when he was thrown into the pool? What plans did he make to come to the surface?
3. How did this experience affect him?

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

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

This handicap stayed with me as the years rolled by. In canoes on Maine lakes fishing for landlocked salmon,

bass fishing in New Hampshire, trout fishing on the Deschutes and Metolius in Oregon, fishing for salmon on the Columbia, at Bumping Lake in the Cascades — wherever I went, the haunting fear of the water followed me. It ruined my fishing trips; deprived me of the joy of canoeing, boating, and swimming.

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

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

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

I did. The instructor was finished.

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

This went on until July. But I was still not satisfied. I was not sure that all the terror had left. So I went to Lake

Wentworth in New Hampshire, dived off a dock at Triggs Island, and swam two miles across the lake to Stamp Act Island. I swam the crawl, breast stroke, side stroke, and back stroke. Only once did the terror return. When I was in the middle of the lake, I put my face under and saw nothing but bottomless water. The old sensation returned in miniature. I laughed and said, "Well, Mr Terror, what do you think you can do to me?" It fled and I swam on.

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

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

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

Think as you read

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

Understanding the text

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

Talking about the text

1. "All we have to fear is fear itself". Have you ever had a fear that you have now overcome? Share your experience with your partner.
2. Find and narrate other stories about conquest of fear and what people have said about courage. For example, you can recall Nelson Mandela's struggle for freedom, his perseverance to achieve his mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor as depicted in his autobiography. The story *We're Not Afraid To Die*, which you have read in Class XI, is an apt example of how courage and optimism helped a family survive under the direst stress.

Thinking about language

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

Writing

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

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

   You could begin with the last sentence of the essay you have just read — "At last I felt released — free to walk the trails and climb the peaks and to brush aside fear."
2. Write a short letter to someone you know about your having learnt to do something new.

Things to do

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

About the Unit

Theme

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

Sub-theme

Psychological analysis of fear.

Comprehension

- Understanding another person's experience.
- Relating subjectively to the discussion on fear.

Talking about the text

- Sharing personal experiences.
- Sharing accounts of acts of courage.

Thinking about language

Focus on first person narrative style.

Writing

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

Things to do

Gathering information on water sports.

4 The Rattrap

About the author

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

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

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

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

No one can imagine how sad and monotonous life can appear to such a vagabond, who plods along the road, left to his own meditations. But one day this man had fallen into a line of thought, which really seemed to him entertaining. He had naturally been thinking of his rattraps when suddenly he was struck by the idea that the whole

world about him — the whole world with its lands and seas, its cities and villages — was nothing but a big rattrap. It had never existed for any other purpose than to set baits for people. It offered riches and joys, shelter and food, heat and clothing, exactly as the rattrap offered cheese and pork, and as soon as anyone let himself be tempted to touch the bait, it closed in on him, and then everything came to an end.

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

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

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

The stranger must have seemed incredulous, for the old man got up and went to the window, took down a leather pouch which hung on a nail in the very window frame, and picked out three wrinkled ten-kronor bills. These he held up before the eyes of his guest, nodding knowingly, and

then stuffed them back into the pouch.

The next day both men got up in good season. The crofter was in a hurry to milk his cow, and the other man probably thought he should not stay in bed when the head of the house had gotten up. They left the cottage at the same time. The crofter locked the door and put the key in his pocket. The man with the rattraps said good bye and thank you, and thereupon each went his own way.

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

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

Think as you read

1. From where did the peddler get the idea of the world being a rattrap?
2. Why was he amused by this idea?
3. Did the peddler expect the kind of hospitality that he received from the crofter?
4. Why was the crofter so talkative and friendly with the peddler?
5. Why did he show the thirty kroner to the peddler?
6. Did the peddler respect the confidence reposed in him by the crofter?

It was late in December. Darkness was already descending over the forest. This increased the danger, and increased also his gloom and despair. Finally he saw no way out, and he sank down on the ground, tired to death, thinking that his last moment had come. But just as he laid his head on the ground, he heard a sound—a hard regular thumping. There was no doubt as to what that was. He raised himself. "Those are the hammer strokes from an iron mill", he thought. "There must be people near by". He summoned all his strength, got up, and staggered in the direction of the sound.

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

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

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

It was probably on account of all this noise that the blacksmith did not notice that a man had opened the gate and entered the forge, until he stood close up to the furnace.

Surely it was nothing unusual for poor vagabonds without any better shelter for the night to be attracted to the forge by the glow of light which escaped through the sooty panes, and to come in to warm themselves in front of

the fire. The blacksmiths glanced only casually and indifferently at the intruder. He looked the way people of his type usually did, with a long beard, dirty, ragged, and with a bunch of rattraps dangling on his chest.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To go along up to the manor house and be received by the owner like an old regimental comrade — that, however, did not please the tramp.

"No, I couldn't think of it!" he said, looking quite alarmed.

He thought of the thirty kronor. To go up to the manor house would be like throwing himself voluntarily into the lion's den. He only wanted a chance to sleep here in the forge and then sneak away as inconspicuously as possible.

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

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

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

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

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

Think as you read

1. What made the peddler think that he had indeed fallen into a rattrap?
2. Why did the ironmaster speak kindly to the peddler and invite him home?
3. Why did the peddler decline the invitation?

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

She entered, followed by a valet, carrying on his arm a big fur coat. She was not at all pretty, but seemed modest and quite shy. In the forge everything was just as it had been earlier in the evening. The master blacksmith and his apprentice still sat on their bench, and iron and charcoal still glowed in the furnace. The stranger had

stretched himself out on the floor and lay with a piece of pig iron under his head and his hat pulled down over his eyes. As soon as the young girl caught sight of him, she went up and lifted his hat. The man was evidently used to sleeping with one eye open. He jumped up abruptly and seemed to be quite frightened.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"First of all we must see to it that he gets a little flesh on his bones," he said to his daughter, who was busy at the table. "And then we must see that he gets something else to do than to run around the country selling rattraps."

"It is queer that things have gone downhill with him as badly as that," said the daughter. "Last night I did not think there was anything about him to show that he had once been an educated man."

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

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

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

"What does this mean?" he thundered.

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

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

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

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

"Now I am going to tell you, Mr Ironmaster, how things are," he said. "This whole world is nothing but a big rattrap. All the good things that are offered to you are nothing but cheese rinds and bits of pork, set out to drag a poor fellow

into trouble. And if the sheriff comes now and locks me up for this, then you, Mr Ironmaster, must remember that a day may come when you yourself may want to get a big piece of pork, and then you will get caught in the trap."

The ironmaster began to laugh.

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

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

"What in the world are you doing?" said the father.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The man with the rattraps said not a word; he only sat down and helped himself to the food. Time after time

he looked at the young girl who had interceded for him. Why had she done it? What could the crazy idea be?

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

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

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

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

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

When, at about ten o'clock, they drove back from the church, the young girl sat and hung her head even more

Think as you read

1. What made the peddler accept Edla Willmansson's invitation?
2. What doubts did Edla have about the peddler?
3. When did the ironmaster realise his mistake?
4. What did the peddler say in his defence when it was clear that he was not the person the ironmaster had thought he was?
5. Why did Edla still entertain the peddler even after she knew the truth about him?

dejectedly than usual. At church she had learned that one of the old crofters of the ironworks had been robbed by a man who went around selling rattraps.

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

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

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

"Honoured and noble Miss,

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

Think as you read

1. Why was Edla happy to see the gift left by the peddler?
2. Why did the peddler sign himself as Captain von Stahle?

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

"Written with friendship
and high regard,
"Captain von Stahle."

Understanding the text

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

Talking about the text

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

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

Working with words

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

Noticing form

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

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

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

Thinking about language

1. *Notice the words in bold in the following sentence.*

   "The fire boy shovelled charcoal into the **maw of the furnace** with a great deal of clatter". This is a phrase that is used in the specific context of an iron plant.

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

2. *Mjölis* is a card game of Sweden.

   Name a few indoor games played in your region. 'Chopar' could be an example.

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

ABOUT THE 

THEME

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

SUB-THEME

The human tendency to redeem oneself from dishonest ways.

COMPREHENSION

- Factual understanding of events.
- Inferring motives for human actions.

TALKING ABOUT THE TEXT

Small group discussion on

- the portrayal of characters in fiction.
- human emotional needs and human behaviour.
- real-life recounting of similar incidents.
- narrative style.

WORKING WITH WORDS

- Choice of synonyms to reflect personal attitudes 'Noticing form'.
- Focus on the uses of the reflexive pronoun.

THINKING ABOUT LANGUAGE

- Vocabulary specific to a particular field.
- Culture-specific games (especially indoor).
- Region-specific synonyms.

5 Indigo

About the author

Louis Fischer (1896-1970) was born in Philadelphia. He served as a volunteer in the British Army between 1918 and 1920. Fischer made a career as a journalist and wrote for *The New York Times*, *The Saturday Review* and for European and Asian publications. He was also a member of the faculty at Princeton University. The following is an excerpt from his book- *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*. The book has been reviewed as one of the best books ever written on Gandhi by *Times Educational Supplement.*

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

- urge the departure
- conflict of duties
- harbour a man like me
- seek a prop

When I first visited Gandhi in 1942 at his ashram in Sevagram, in central India, he said, "I will tell you how it happened that I decided to urge the departure of the British. It was in 1917."

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

Under an ancient arrangement, the Champaran peasants were sharecroppers. Rajkumar Shukla was one of them. He was illiterate but resolute. He had come to the

Congress session to complain about the injustice of the landlord system in Bihar, and somebody had probably said, "Speak to Gandhi."

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

"Fix a date," he begged.

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

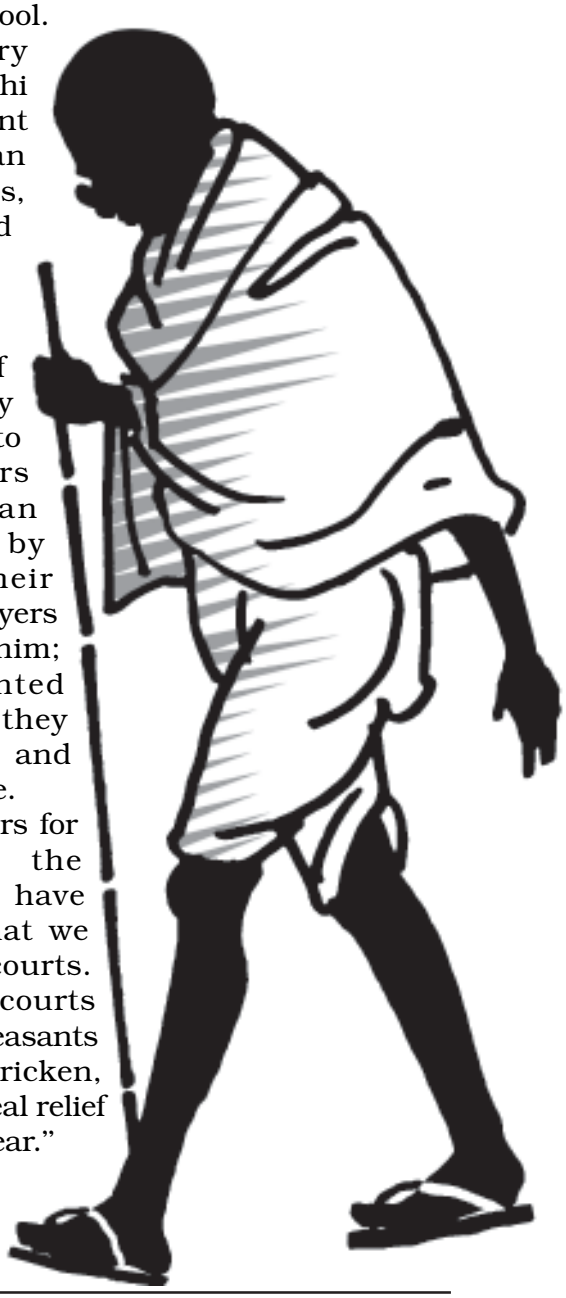
Months passed. Shukla was sitting on his haunches at the appointed spot in Calcutta when Gandhi arrived; he waited till Gandhi was free. Then the two of them boarded a train for the city of Patna in Bihar. There Shukla led him to the house of a lawyer named Rajendra Prasad who later became President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

Think as you read

1. Strike out what is not true in the following.
   a. *Rajkumar Shukla was*
      (i) a sharecropper.
      (ii) a politician.
      (iii) delegate.
      (iv) a landlord.
   b. *Rajkumar Shukla was*
      (i) poor.
      (ii) physically strong.
      (iii) illiterate.
2. Why is Rajkumar Shukla described as being 'resolute'?
3. Why do you think the servants thought Gandhi to be another peasant?

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

arrived at midnight, 15 April 1917. Kripalani was waiting at the station with a large body of students. Gandhi stayed there for two days in the home of Professor Malkani, a teacher in a government school.



''It was an extraordinary thing 'in those days,'' Gandhi commented, "for a government professor to harbour a man like me". In smaller localities, the Indians were afraid to show sympathy for advocates of home-rule.

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

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

Most of the arable land in the Champaran district was divided into large

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

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

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

Think as you read

1. List the places that Gandhi visited between his first meeting with Shukla and his arrival at Champaran.
2. What did the peasants pay the British landlords as rent? What did the British now want instead and why? What would be the impact of synthetic indigo on the prices of natural indigo?

At this point Gandhi arrived in Champaran.

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

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

Gandhi did not leave. Instead he proceeded to Motihari, the capital of Champaran. Several lawyers accompanied him. At the railway station, a vast multitude greeted Gandhi. He went to a house and, using it as headquarters, continued his investigations. A report came in that a peasant had been maltreated in a nearby village. Gandhi decided to go and see; the next morning he started out on the back of an elephant. He had not proceeded far when the police superintendent's messenger overtook him and ordered him to return to town

in his carriage. Gandhi complied. The messenger drove Gandhi home where he served him with an official notice to quit Champaran immediately. Gandhi signed a receipt for the notice and wrote on it that he would disobey the order.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When the court reconvened, the judge said he would not deliver the judgment for several days. Meanwhile he allowed Gandhi to remain at liberty.

Rajendra Prasad, Brij Kishor Babu, Maulana Mazharul Huq and several other prominent lawyers had arrived from Bihar. They conferred with Gandhi. What would they do if he was sentenced to prison, Gandhi asked. Why, the senior lawyer replied, they had come to advise and help him; if he went to jail there would be nobody to advise and they would go home.

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

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

Think as you read

1. The events in this part of the text illustrate Gandhi's method of working. Can you identify some instances of this method and link them to his ideas of *satyagraha* and non-violence?

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

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

In June, Gandhi was summoned to Sir Edward Gait, the Lieutenant-Governor. Before he went he met

leading associates and again laid detailed plans for civil disobedience if he should not return.

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

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

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

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

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

the law. Now the peasant saw that he had rights and defenders. He learned courage.

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

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

Think as you read

1. Why did Gandhi agree to a settlement of 25 per cent refund to the farmers?
2. How did the episode change the plight of the peasants?

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

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

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

The Champaran episode was a turning-point in Gandhi's life. "What I did," he explained, "was a very ordinary thing. I declared that the British could not order me about in my own country."

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

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

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

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

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

Understanding the text

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

Talking about the text

Discuss the following.

1. "Freedom from fear is more important than legal justice for the poor."

   Do you think that the poor of India are free from fear after Independence?
2. The qualities of a good leader.

Working with words

- List the words used in the text that are related to legal procedures.

  For example: deposition
- List other words that you know that fall into this category.

Thinking about language

1. *Notice the sentences in the text which are in 'direct speech'.*

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

Things to do

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

About the Unit

Theme

The leadership shown by Mahatma Gandhi to secure justice for oppressed people through convincing argumentation and negotiation.

SUB-THEME

Contributions made by anonymous Indians to the freedom movement.

READING COMPREHENSION

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

TALKING ABOUT THE TEXT

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

WORKING WITH WORDS

Making pupils notice the specialist vocabulary used in legal parlance.

NOTICING FORM

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

THINGS TO DO

Extension activity to help pupils understand the method of Gandhian activism and relate it to current problems of national importance.

- Investigation of facts
- Presentation of arguments
- Settlement

6 Poets and Pancakes

About the author

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

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

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

Pancake was the brand name of the make-up material that Gemini Studios bought in truck-loads. Greta Garbo[1] must have used it, Miss Gohar must have used it, Vyjayantimala[2] must also have used it but Rati Agnihotri may not have even heard of it. The make-up department of the Gemini Studios was in the upstairs of a building that was believed to have been Robert Clive's stables. A dozen other buildings

1. *A Swedish actress, in 1954 she received an Honorary Oscar for her unforgettable screen performances. The Guinness Book of World Records named her the most beautiful woman who ever lived. She was also voted Best Silent Actress of the country.*
2. *An Indian actress whose performance was widely appreciated in Bimal Roy's* Devdas. *She won three Best Actress awards for her acting. She is now an active politician.*

in the city are said to have been his residence. For his brief life and an even briefer stay in Madras, Robert Clive seems to have done a lot of moving, besides fighting some impossible battles in remote corners of India and marrying a maiden in St. Mary's Church in Fort St. George in Madras.

The make-up room had the look of a hair-cutting salon with lights at all angles around half a dozen large mirrors. They were all incandescent lights, so you can imagine the fiery misery of those subjected to make-up. The make-up department was first headed by a Bengali who became too big for a studio and left. He was succeeded by a Maharashtrian who was assisted by a Dharwar Kannadiga, an Andhra, a Madras Indian Christian, an Anglo-Burmese and the usual local Tamils. All this shows that there was a great deal of national integration long before A.I.R. and Doordarshan began broadcasting programmes on national integration. This gang of nationally integrated make-up men could turn any decent-looking person into a hideous crimson hued monster with the help of truck-loads of pancake and a number of other locally made potions and lotions. Those were the days of mainly indoor shooting, and only five per cent of the film was shot outdoors. I suppose the sets and studio lights needed the girls and boys to be made to look ugly in order to look presentable in the movie. A strict hierarchy was maintained in the make-up department. The chief make-up man made the chief actors and actresses ugly, his senior assistant the 'second' hero and heroine, the junior assistant the main comedian, and so forth. The players who played the crowd were the responsibility of the office boy. (Even the make-up department of the Gemini Studio had an 'office boy'!) On the days when there was a crowd-shooting, you could see him mixing his paint in a giant vessel and

slapping it on the crowd players. The idea was to close every pore on the surface of the face in the process of applying make-up. He wasn't exactly a 'boy'; he was in his early forties, having entered the studios years ago in the hope of becoming a star actor or a top screen writer, director or lyrics writer. He was a bit of a poet.

Think as you read

1. What does the writer mean by 'the fiery misery' of those subjected to make-up'?
2. What is the example of national integration that the author refers to?
3. What work did the 'office boy' do in the Gemini Studios? Why did he join the studios? Why was he disappointed?
4. Why did the author appear to be doing nothing at the studios?

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

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

and people. He had the ability to look cheerful at all times even after having had a hand in a flop film. He always had work for somebody — he could never do things on his own — but his sense of loyalty made him identify himself with his principal completely and turn his entire creativity to his principal's advantage. He was tailor-made for films. Here was a man who could be inspired when commanded. "The rat fights the tigress underwater and kills her but takes pity on the cubs and tends them lovingly — I don't know how to do the scene," the producer would say and Subbu would come out with four ways of the rat pouring affection on its victim's offspring. "Good, but I am not sure it is effective enough," the producer would say and in a minute Subbu would come out with fourteen more alternatives. Film-making must have been and was so easy with a man like Subbu around and if ever there was a man who gave direction and definition to Gemini Studios during its golden years, it was Subbu. Subbu had a separate identity as a poet and though he was certainly capable of more complex and higher forms, he deliberately chose to address his poetry to the masses. His success in films overshadowed and dwarfed his literary achievements — or so his critics felt. He composed several truly original 'story poems' in folk refrain and diction and also wrote a sprawling novel *Thillana Mohanambal* with dozens of very deftly etched characters. He quite successfully recreated the mood and manner of the Devadasis of the early 20th century. He was an amazing actor — he never aspired to the lead roles — but whatever subsidiary role he played in any of the films, he performed better than the supposed main players. He had a genuine love for anyone he came across and his house was a permanent residence for dozens of near and far relations and acquaintances. It seemed against Subbu's nature to be even conscious that he was feeding and supporting so many of them. Such a charitable and improvident man, and yet he had enemies! Was it because he seemed so close and intimate with The Boss? Or was it his general demeanour that resembled a sycophant's? Or his readiness to say nice things about everything? In any

case, there was this man in the make-up department who would wish the direst things for Subbu.

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

Think as you read

1. Why was the office boy frustrated? Who did he show his anger on?
2. Who was Subbu's principal?
3. Subbu is described as a many-sided genius. List four of his special abilities.
4. Why was the legal adviser referred to as the opposite by others?
5. What made the lawyer stand out from the others at Gemini Studios?

lot of raw stock and pancake were used on it, not much came of the film. Then one day The Boss closed down the Story Department and this was perhaps the only instance in all human history where a lawyer lost his job because the poets were asked to go home.

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

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

3. *A freedom fighter and a national poet.*
4. *A poet and a playwright.*

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

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

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

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

At last, around four in the afternoon, the poet (or the editor) arrived. He was a tall man, very English, very serious and of course very unknown to all of us. Battling with half a dozen pedestal fans on the shooting stage, The Boss read

Think as you read

1. Did the people at Gemini Studios have any particular political affiliations?
2. Why was the Moral Rearmament Army welcomed at the Studios?
3. Name one example to show that Gemini studios was influenced by the plays staged by MRA.
4. Who was The Boss of Gemini Studios?
5. What caused the lack of communication between the Englishman and the people at Gemini Studios?
6. Why is the Englishman's visit referred to as unexplained mystery?

out a long speech. It was obvious that he too knew precious little about the poet (or the editor). The speech was all in the most general terms but here and there it was peppered with words like 'freedom' and 'democracy'. Then the poet spoke. He couldn't have addressed a more dazed and silent audience — no one knew what he was talking about and his accent defeated any attempt to understand what he was saying. The whole thing lasted about an hour; then the poet left and we all dispersed in utter bafflement — what are we doing? What is an English poet doing in a film studio which makes Tamil films for the simplest sort of people? People whose lives least afforded them the possibility of cultivating a taste for English poetry? The poet looked pretty baffled too, for he too must have felt the sheer incongruity of his talk about the thrills and travails of an English poet. His visit remained an unexplained mystery.

The great prose-writers of the world may not admit it, but my conviction grows stronger day after day that prose-writing is not and cannot be the true pursuit of a genius. It is for the patient, persistent, persevering drudge with a heart so shrunken that nothing can break it; rejection slips don't mean a thing to him; he at once sets about making a fresh copy of the long prose piece and sends it on to another editor enclosing postage for the return of the manuscript. It was for such people that *The Hindu* had published a tiny announcement in an insignificant corner of an unimportant page — a short story contest organised by a British periodical by the name *The Encounter*. Of course, *The Encounter* wasn't a known commodity among the Gemini literati. I wanted to get an idea of the periodical before I spent a considerable sum in postage sending a manuscript

to England. In those days, the British Council Library had an entrance with no long winded signboards and notices to make you feel you were sneaking into a forbidden area. And there were copies of *The Encounter* lying about in various degrees of freshness, almost untouched by readers. When I read the editor's name, I heard a bell ringing in my shrunken heart. It was the poet who had visited the Gemini Studios — I felt like I had found a long lost brother and I sang as I sealed the envelope and wrote out his address. I felt that he too would be singing the same song at the same time — long lost brothers of Indian films discover each other by singing the same song in the first reel and in the final reel of the film. Stephen Spender[5]. Stephen — that was his name.

And years later, when I was out of Gemini Studios and I had much time but not much money, anything at a reduced price attracted my attention. On the footpath in front of the Madras Mount Road Post Office, there was a pile of brand new books for fifty paise each. Actually they were copies of the same book, an elegant paperback of American origin. 'Special low-priced student edition, in connection with the 50th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution', I paid fifty paise and picked up a copy of the book, *The God That Failed*. Six eminent men of letters in six separate essays described 'their journeys into Communism and their disillusioned return'; Andre Gide[6], Richard Wright[7], Ignazio Silone[8], Arthur Koestler[9], Louis Fischer[10] and Stephen Spender. Stephen Spender! Suddenly the book assumed tremendous

Think as you read

1. Who was the English visitor to the studios?
2. How did the author discover who the English visitor to the studios was?
3. What does *The God that Failed* refer to?

5. *An English poet essayist who concentrated on themes of social injustice and class struggle.*
6. *A French writer, humanist, moralist, received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1947.*
7. *An American writer, known for his novel* Native Son *and his autobiography* Black Boy.
8. *An Italian writer, who was the founder member of the Italian communist party in 1921, and is known for the book.* The God That Failed, *authored by him.*
9. *A Hungarian born British novelist, known for his novel* Darkness at Noon.
10. *A well known American journalist and a writer of Mahatma Gandhi's biography entitled* The Life of Mahatma Gandhi. *The Oscar winning film Gandhi is based on this biographical account.*

significance. Stephen Spender, the poet who had visited Gemini Studios! In a moment I felt a dark chamber of my mind lit up by a hazy illumination. The reaction to Stephen Spender at Gemini Studios was no longer a mystery. The Boss of the Gemini Studios may not have much to do with Spender's poetry. But not with his god that failed.

Understanding the text

1. The author has used gentle humour to point out human foibles. Pick out instances of this to show how this serves to make the piece interesting.
2. Why was Kothamangalam Subbu considered No. 2 in Gemini Studios?
3. How does the author describe the incongruity of an English poet addressing the audience at Gemini Studios?
4. What do you understand about the author's literary inclinations from the account?

Talking about the text

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

1. Film-production today has come a long way from the early days of the Gemini Studios.
2. Poetry and films.
3. Humour and criticism.

Noticing transitions

- This piece is an example of a chatty, rambling style. One thought leads to another which is then dwelt upon at length.
- Read the text again and mark the transitions from one idea to another. The first one is indicated below.

  Make-up department Office-boy Subbu

Writing

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

Things to do

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

About the Unit

Theme

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

Sub-theme

Poets and writers in a film company environment.

Comprehension

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

Talking about the text

Discuss

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

Noticing transitions

Focus on devices for achieving thematic coherence.

Writing

Practice writing in the humorous style.

Things to do

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

7 The Interview

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

About the Author

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

Part I

Since its invention a little over 130 years ago, the interview has become a commonplace of journalism. Today, almost everybody who is literate will have read an interview at some point in their lives, while from the other point of view, several thousand celebrities have been interviewed over the years, some of them repeatedly. So it is hardly surprising that opinions of the interview — of its functions, methods and merits — vary considerably. Some might make quite extravagant claims for it as being, in its highest form, a source of truth, and, in its practice, an art. Others, usually celebrities who see themselves as its victims, might despise the interview as an unwarranted intrusion into their lives, or feel that it somehow diminishes them, just as in some primitive cultures it is believed that if one takes a photographic portrait of somebody then one is stealing that person's soul. V. S. Naipaul[1] 'feels that some people are wounded by interviews and lose a part of themselves,' Lewis Carroll, the creator of Alice in Wonderland, was said to have had 'a just horror of the interviewer' and he never consented to be interviewed — It

1. *Known as a cosmopolitan writer. In his travel books and in his documentary works he presents his impressions of the country of his ancestors that is India. He received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2001.*

was his horror of being lionized which made him thus repel would be acquaintances, interviewers, and the persistent petitioners for his autograph and he would afterwards relate the stories of his success in silencing all such people with much satisfaction and amusement. Rudyard Kipling[2] expressed an even more condemnatory attitude towards the interviewer. His wife, Caroline, writes in her diary for 14 October 1892 that their day was 'wrecked by two reporters from Boston'. She reports her husband as saying to the reporters, "Why do I refuse to be interviewed? Because it is immoral! It is a crime, just as much of a crime as an offence against my person, as an assault, and just as much merits punishment. It is cowardly and vile. No respectable man would ask it, much less give it," Yet Kipling had himself perpetrated such an 'assault' on Mark Twain only a few years before. H. G. Wells[3] in an interview in 1894 referred to 'the interviewing ordeal', but was a fairly frequent interviewee and forty years later found himself interviewing Joseph Stalin[4]. Saul Bellow[5], who has consented to be interviewed on several occasions, nevertheless once described interviews as being like thumbprints on his windpipe. Yet despite the drawbacks of the interview, it is a supremely serviceable medium of communication. "These days, more than at any other time, our most vivid impressions of our contemporaries are through

Think as you read

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

2. *A prolific writer who was known as the poet of the common soldier. Kipling's* Jungle Book *which is a story of Kimball O' Hara and his adventures in the Himalayas is considered as a children's classic all over the world.*
3. *An English novelist, journalist, sociologist and historian he is known for his works of science fiction. Wells best known books are* The Time Machine, The Invisible Man and The War of the Worlds.
4. *A great Russian revolutionary and an active political organiser.*
5. *A playwright as well as a novelist, Bellow's works were influenced widely by World War II. Among his most famous characters are Augie March and Moses. He published short stories translated from Yiddish. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1976.*

interviews," Denis Brian has written. "Almost everything of moment reaches us through one man asking questions of another. Because of this, the interviewer holds a position of unprecedented power and influence."

Part II

"I am a professor who writes novels on Sundays" – Umberto Eco

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

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

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

Mukund: Which is?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

day and so I started. Novels probably satisfied my taste for narration.

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

Umberto Eco: Over 40.

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

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

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

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

Umberto Eco: No. Journalists are puzzled. And sometimes publishers. And this is because journalists and publishers believe that people like trash and don't like difficult reading experiences. Consider there are six billion people on this planet. *The Name of the Rose* sold between 10 and 15 million copies. So in a way I reached only a small

percentage of readers. But it is exactly these kinds of readers who don't want easy experiences. Or at least don't always want this. I myself, at 9 pm after dinner, watch television and want to see either 'Miami Vice' or 'Emergency Room'. I enjoy it and I need it. But not all day.

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

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

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

Understanding the text

1. Do you think Umberto Eco likes being interviewed? Give reasons for your opinion.
2. How does Eco find the time to write so much?
3. What was distinctive about Eco's academic writing style?
4. Did Umberto Eco consider himself a novelist first or an academic scholar?
5. What is the reason for the huge success of the novel, *The Name of the Rose*?

Talking about the text

Discuss in pairs or small groups.

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

Noticing discourse linkers and signallers

LINKERS

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

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

I am convinced I am always doing *the same thing.*

Which *is?*

Aah, now *that* is more difficult to explain.

...

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

Not everyone can do* that *of course.

.....

Novels probably satisfied my taste for narration.

***Talking about* novels,**

.....

at least *more than 20* of them...

Over 40.

Over 40.

.....

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

***Which* brings me to my next question.**

.....

Were *you puzzled* at all by this?

No. *Journalists are puzzled.*

.....

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

That's possible

.....

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

SIGNALLERS

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

Notice these two examples taken from the interview:

"Which brings me to another question ...."

"But let me tell you another story..."

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

Writing

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

Write this report for him.

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

Things to do

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

About the Unit

Theme

The interview as a communication genre .

Sub-theme

An excerpt from an interview with an author.

Comprehension

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

Talking about the text

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

Noticing discourse linkers and signallers

Focus on cohesion and coherence features of discourse.

Writing

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

Things to do

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

8 Going Places

About the Author

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

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

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

"When I leave," Sophie said, coming home from school, "I'm going to have a boutique."

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

"Takes money, Soaf, something like that."

"I'll find it," Sophie said, staring far down the street.

"Take you a long time to save that much."

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

"They wouldn't make you manager straight off, Soaf."

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

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

When they reached Sophie's street Jansie said, "It's only a few months away now, Soaf, you really should be

sensible. They don't pay well for shop work, you know that, your dad would never allow it."

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

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

"If ever I come into money I'll buy a boutique."

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

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

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

Their mother sighed.

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

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

of the city, or places beyond in the surrounding country — who knew? — they attained a special fascination simply because they were unknown to her and remained out of her reach.

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

Think as you read

1. Where was it most likely that the two girls would find work after school?
2. What were the options that Sophie was dreaming of? Why does Jansie discourage her from having such dreams?

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

"I met Danny Casey," Sophie said.

He looked around abruptly. "Where?"

"In the arcade — funnily enough."

"It's never true."

"I did too."

"You told Dad?"

She shook her head, chastened at his unawareness that he was always the first to share her secrets.

"I don't believe it."

"There I was looking at the clothes in Royce's window when someone came and stood beside me, and I looked around and who should it be but Danny Casey."

"All right, what does he look like?"

"Oh come on, you know what he looks like."

"Close to, I mean."

"Well — he has green eyes. Gentle eyes. And he's not so tall as you'd think..." She wondered if she should say about his teeth, but decided against it.

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

"Sophie met Danny Casey," Geoff said.

Sophie wriggled where she was sitting at the table.

Her father turned his head on his thick neck to look at her. His expression was one of disdain.

"It's true," Geoff said.

"I once knew a man who had known Tom Finney," his father said reverently to the television. "But that was a long time ago."

"You told us," Geoff said.

"Casey might be that good some day."

"Better than that even. He's the best."

"If he keeps his head on his shoulders. If they look after him properly. A lot of distractions for a youngster in the game these days."

"He'll be all right. He's with the best team in the country."

"He's very young yet."

"He's older than I am."

"Too young really for the first team."

"You can't argue with that sort of ability."

"He's going to buy a shop," Sophie said from the table.

Her father grimaced. "Where'd you hear that?"

"He told me so."

He muttered something inaudible and dragged himself round in his chair. "This another of your wild stories?"

"She met him in the arcade," Geoff said, and told him how it had been.

"One of these days you're going to talk yourself into a load of trouble," her father said aggressively.

"Geoff knows it's true, don't you Geoff?"

"He don't believe you-though he'd like to."

* * *

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

"Promise you'll tell no-one?" Sophie said.

"Nothing to tell is there?"

"Promise, Geoff — Dad'd murder me."

"Only if he thought it was true."

"Please, Geoff."

"Christ, Sophie, you're still at school. Casey must have strings of girls."

"No he doesn't."

"How could you know that?" he jeered.

"He told me, that's how."

"As if anyone would tell a girl something like that."

"Yes he did. He isn't like that. He's... quiet."

"Not as quiet as all that — apparently."

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

Think as you read

1. Why did Sophie wriggle when Geoff told her father that she had met Danny Casey?
2. Does Geoff believe what Sophie says about her meeting with Danny Casey?
3. Does her father believe her story?
4. How does Sophie include her brother Geoff in her fantasy of her future?
5. Which country did Danny Casey play for?

next week he would give me an autograph then. Of course, I said I would."

"As if he'd ever show up."

"You do believe me now, don't you?"

He dragged his jacket, which was shiny and shapeless, from the back of the chair and pushed his arms into it. She wished he paid more attention to his appearance. Wished he cared more about clothes. He was tall with a strong dark face. Handsome, she thought.

"It's the unlikeliest thing I ever heard," he said.

* * *

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

"I wish he was an Englishman," someone said on the bus.

"Ireland'll win the World Cup," little Derek told his mother when Sophie brought him home. Her father was gone to the pub to celebrate.

"What's this you've been telling?" Jansie said, next week.

"About what?"

"Your Geoff told our Frank you met Danny Casey."

This wasn't an inquisition, just Jansie being nosey. But Sophie was startled.

"Oh, that."

Jansie frowned, sensing she was covering. "Yes — that."

"Well-yes, I did."

"You never did?" Jansie exclaimed.

Sophie glared at the ground. Damn that Geoff, this was a Geoff thing not a Jansie thing. It was meant to be something special just between them. Something secret. It wasn't a Jansie kind of thing at all. Tell gawky Jansie

something like that and the whole neighbourhood would get to know it. Damn that Geoff, was nothing sacred?

"It's a secret — meant to be."

"I'll keep a secret, Soaf, you know that."

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

Jansie blinked. "A row? I'd have thought he'd be chuffed as anything."

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

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

"Jesus, I wish I'd have been there."

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

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

* * *

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

For some while, waiting, she imagined his coming. She watched along the canal, seeing him come out of the shadows, imagining her own consequent excitement. Not until some time had elapsed did she begin balancing against this the idea of his not coming.

Here I sit, she said to herself, wishing Danny would come, wishing he would come and sensing the time passing. I feel the pangs of doubt stirring inside me. I watch for him but still there is no sign of him. I remember Geoff saying he would never come, and how none of them believed me when I told them. I wonder what will I do, what can I tell them now if he doesn't come? But we know how it was, Danny and me — that's the main thing. How can you help what people choose to believe? But all the same, it makes me despondent, this knowing I'll never be able to show them they're wrong to doubt me.

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

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

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

"Excuse me, but aren't you Danny Casey?"

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

He turns, reddening slightly. "Yes, that's right."

"I watch you every week, with my dad and my brothers. We think you're great."

"Oh, well now — that's very nice."

"I wonder — would you mind signing an autograph?"

His eyes are on the same level as your own. His nose is freckled and turns upwards slightly, and when he smiles he does so shyly, exposing teeth with gaps between. His eyes are green, and when he looks straight at you they

seem to shimmer. They seem gentle, almost afraid. Like a gazelle's. And you look away. You let his eyes run over you a little. And then you come back to find them, slightly breathless.

And he says, "I don't seem to have a pen at all."

You realise you haven't either.

"My brothers will be very sorry," you say.

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

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

Think as you read

1. Why didn't Sophie want Jansie to know about her story with Danny?
2. Did Sophie really meet Danny Casey?
3. Which was the only occasion when she got to see Danny Casey in person?

Understanding the text

1. Sophie and Jansie were class-mates and friends. What were the differences between them that show up in the story?
2. How would you describe the character and temperament of Sophie's father?
3. Why did Sophie like her brother Geoff more than any other person? From her perspective, what did he symbolise?
4. What socio-economic background did Sophie belong to? What are the indicators of her family's financial status?

Talking about the text

Discuss in pairs.

1. Sophie's dreams and disappointments are all in her mind.

2. It is natural for teenagers to have unrealistic dreams. What would you say are the benefits and disadvantages of such fantasising?

Working with words

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

- **Words had to be prized out of him** like stones out of a ground.
- Sophie felt **a tightening in her throat.**

  If he **keeps his head on his shoulders.**
- On Saturday **they made their weekly pilgrimage** to the United.
- She saw... him **ghost past** the lumbering defenders.

Noticing form

Notice the highlighted words in the following sentences.

1. "When I leave,' Sophie said, **coming** home from school, "I'm going to have a boutique."
2. Jansie, **linking** arms with her along the street, looked doubtful.
3. "I'll find it," Sophie said, **staring** far down the street.
4. Jansie, **knowing** they were both earmarked for the biscuit factory, became melancholy.
5. And she turned in through the open street door **leaving** Jansie **standing** in the rain.

   – When we add "ing" to a verb we get the present participle form. The present participle form is generally used along with forms of "be', (is, was, are, were, am) to indicate the present continuous tense as in "Sophie ***was coming*** home from school."

   – We can use the present participle by itself without the helping verb, when we wish to indicate that an action is happening at the same time as another.

   – In example 1, Sophie "said" something. "Said", here, is the main action.

   – What Sophie was doing while she was "saying" is indicated by "**coming** home from school". So we get the information of two actions happening at the same time. We convey the information in one sentence instead of two.

– Analyse the other examples in the same way.
– Pick out five other sentences from the story in which present participles are used in this sense.

Thinking about language

Notice these words in the story.

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

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

Make a list of ten other words of this kind.

Writing

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

Things to do

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

About the Unit

Theme

Adolescent hero-worship and fantasising.

Sub-theme

Relationships-family, friends.

Comprehension

Inferential comprehension.

Talking about the text

Discussion on a subject of immediate relevance to the life of school-leavers.

WORKING WITH WORDS

Metaphorical expressions.

NOTICING FORM

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

THINKING ABOUT LANGUAGE

Colloquial expressions, teenage slang.

THINGS TO DO

Extension activity: Relating to other stories or films (any language).

POETRY

My Mother at Sixty-six
Kamala Das

An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum
Stephen Spender

Keeping Quiet
Pablo Neruda

A Thing of Beauty
John Keats

A Roadside Stand
Robert Frost

Aunt Jennifer's Tigers
Adrienne Rich

1 My Mother at Sixty-six

About the poet

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

Before you read

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

Driving from my parent's
home to Cochin last Friday
morning, I saw my mother,
beside me,
doze, open mouthed, her face
ashen like that
of a corpse and realised with
pain
that she thought away, and
looked but soon
put that thought away, and
looked out at young
trees sprinting, the merry children spilling
out of their homes, but after the airport's
security check, standing a few yards

away, I looked again at her, wan, pale
as a late winter's moon and felt that old
familiar ache, my childhood's fear,
but all I said was, see you soon, Amma,
all I did was smile and smile and smile……

sprinting : short fast race, running
wan : colourless

Think it out

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

Notice that the whole poem is in a single sentence, punctuated by commas.

It indicates a single thread of thought interspersed with observations of the real world around and the way these are connected to the main idea.

2 An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum

About the poet

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

Before you read

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

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

On sour cream walls, donations. Shakespeare's head,
Cloudless at dawn, civilized dome riding all cities.
Belled, flowery, Tyrolese valley. Open-handed map
Awarding the world its world. And yet, for these
Children, these windows, not this map, their world,
Where all their future's painted with a fog,

A narrow street sealed in with a lead sky
Far far from rivers, capes, and stars of words.

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

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

Tyrolese valley : pertaining to the Tyrol, an Austrian Alpine province
catacombs : a long underground gallery with excavations in its sides for tombs. The name catacombs, before the seventeenth century was applied to the subterranean cemeteries, near Rome

Think it out

1. Tick the item which best answers the following.

   (a) *The tall girl with her head weighed down* means

   The girl

   (i) is ill and exhausted

(ii) has her head bent with shame
(iii) has untidy hair

(b) *The paper-seeming boy with rat's eyes* means

The boy is

(i) sly and secretive
(ii) thin, hungry and weak
(iii) unpleasant looking

(c) The stunted, unlucky heir of twisted bones means

The boy

(i) has an inherited disability
(ii) was short and bony

(d) His eyes live in a dream, A squirrel's game, in the tree room other than this means

The boy is

(i) full of hope in the future
(ii) mentally ill
(iii) distracted from the lesson

(e) The children's faces are compared to 'rootless weeds'

This means they

(i) are insecure
(ii) are ill-fed
(iii) are wasters

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

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

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

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

3 Keeping Quiet

About the poet

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

Before you read

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

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

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

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

Fishermen in the cold sea
would not harm whales
and the man gathering salt
would look at his hurt hands.

Those who prepare green wars,
wars with gas, wars with fire,
victory with no survivors,
would put on clean clothes
and walk about with their
brothers
in the shade, doing nothing.

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

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

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

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

Think it out

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

Try this out

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

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

4 A Thing of Beauty

About the poet

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

Before you read

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

A thing of beauty is a joy forever
Its loveliness increases, it will never
Pass into nothingness; but will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old, and young, sprouting a shady boon

For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in; and clear rills
That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season; the mid forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms;
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read;
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

rills : small streams
brake : a thick mass of ferns

Think it out

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

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

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

5 A Roadside Stand

About the poet

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

Before you read

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

The little old house was out with a little new shed
In front at the edge of the road where the traffic sped,
A roadside stand that too pathetically pled,
It would not be fair to say for a dole of bread,
But for some of the money, the cash, whose flow supports
The flower of cities from sinking and withering faint.
The polished traffic passed with a mind ahead,
Or if ever aside a moment, then out of sorts
At having the landscape marred with the artless paint
Of signs that with N turned wrong and S turned wrong
Offered for sale wild berries in wooden quarts,
Or crook-necked golden squash with silver warts,
Or beauty rest in a beautiful mountain scene,
You have the money, but if you want to be mean,
Why keep your money (this crossly) and go along.
The hurt to the scenery wouldn't be my complaint

So much as the trusting sorrow of what is unsaid:
Here far from the city we make our roadside stand
And ask for some city money to feel in hand
To try if it will not make our being expand,
And give us the life of the moving-pictures' promise
That the party in power is said to be keeping from us.

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

Sometimes I feel myself I can hardly bear
The thought of so much childish longing in vain,
The sadness that lurks near the open window there,
That waits all day in almost open prayer
For the squeal of brakes, the sound of a stopping car,
Of all the thousand selfish cars that pass,
Just one to inquire what a farmer's prices are.
And one did stop, but only to plow up grass
In using the yard to back and turn around;
And another to ask the way to where it was bound;

And another to ask could they sell it a gallon of gas
They couldn't (this crossly); they had none, didn't it see?

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

quarts : bottles or containers
squash : a kind of vegetable (gourd)

Think it out

1. The city folk who drove through the countryside hardly paid any heed to the roadside stand or to the people who ran it. If at all they did, it was to complain. Which lines bring this out? What was their complaint about?
2. What was the plea of the folk who had put up the roadside stand?
3. The government and other social service agencies appear to help the poor rural people, but actually do them no good. Pick out the words and phrases that the poet uses to show their double standards.
4. What is the 'childish longing' that the poet refers to? Why is it 'vain'?
5. Which lines tell us about the insufferable pain that the poet feels at the thought of the plight of the rural poor?

Talk about it

Discuss in small groups.

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

Try this out

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

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

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

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

6 Aunt Jennifer's Tigers

About the poet

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

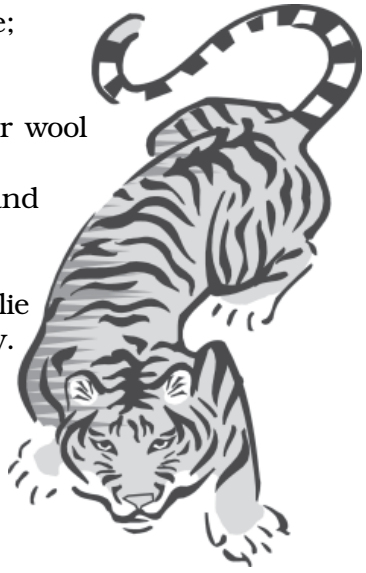
Before you read

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

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

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

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



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

Think it out

1. How do 'denizens' and 'chivalric' add to our understanding of the tiger's attitudes?
2. Why do you think Aunt Jennifer's hands are 'fluttering through her wool' in the second stanza? Why is she finding the needle so hard to pull?
3. What is suggested by the image 'massive weight of Uncle's wedding band'?
4. Of what or of whom is Aunt Jennifer terrified with in the third stanza?
5. What are the 'ordeals' Aunt Jennifer is surrounded by, why is it significant that the poet uses the word 'ringed'? What are the meanings of the word 'ringed' in the poem?
6. Why do you think Aunt Jennifer created animals that are so different from her own character? What might the poet be suggesting, through this difference?
7. Interpret the symbols found in this poem.
8. Do you sympathise with Aunt Jennifer. What is the attitude of the speaker towards Aunt Jennifer?

Notice the colours suggested in the poem.

Notice the repetitive use of certain sounds in the poem.

Notes

Notes