Class 11

The Magic of the Muse

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English Literature

THE MAGIC OF THE MUSE

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A TEXTBOOK OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
for
CLASS XI

BOARD OF SECONDARY EDUCATION
RAJASTHAN, AJMER

TEXT BOOK DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Book – THE MAGIC OF THE MUSE
CLASS XI

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Editors

Preface

What is literature? What are the functions of literature? What are the uses of studying literature? Shouldn't students of literature pose these questions to themselves or to their teachers and have the answers? But, surprisingly enough, in most cases, these questions remain unasked and therefore unanswered. As a result, students remain ignorant of the worth of what they are studying or doing. As a result, their interest in the subject (of their choice!) remains rather casual or superficial which in turn affects their performance.

To each of the above questions, however, several answers are possible and, in fact, available. But here the generally accepted ones may be conveniently considered. Literature as the expression of life in forms of truth and beauty is art. And all art, including literature, as Joseph T. Shipley succinctly puts it, "aims at entertainment, enlightenment, and exaltation."

Entertainment, no doubt, is the fundamental function of literature. Literature pleases or delights by employing highly connotative language, by presenting strange combinations of words and grammatical structures capable of arresting our attention, by re-presenting life in a very concentrated manner so as to evoke our attention to it, by appealing to our senses and emotions, and by posing challenge to our intellect.

The enlightening function of literature can be seen in its leading us to insight and an understanding of the diversity and complexity of human life and experience, in its making us aware of the rich traditions of thought and expression, and in its enabling us to understand diverse cultures of diverse classes or groups of diverse times.

Exaltation is the final fruit of all art including literature. It implies improvement of our mind and a qualitative change in our personality and understanding of the world and ourselves. By reading literature we experience, vicariously though, the joys and sorrows, the expectations and disappointments of others. Even such vicariously gained experience is capable of inculcating in us

virtues like tolerance, endurance, and common-sense. We learn to empathise the lives and experiences of others and thus to be concerned about them.

Literature carries out these functions through its various forms: the Poetry, Drama, Novel, Short Story, Essay, Biography, Letter, Speech etc. The present book is divided into four sections, each anthologizing compositions of a particular form or genre of literature. The selection of literary compositions in each of these sections has been made, keeping in view the functions of literature, the diversity and complexity of expression, the variety, depth and intensity of thoughts and feelings they communicate, the different ages or periods of literary history they belong to, and the amount of delight and wisdom they bring us.

The questions for practice, preceded by useful information on the author and the text and a glossary of difficult words or expressions, are intended to test (and thereby to sharpen) the ability of the student to comprehend, analyse, and interpret the text as crucial part of the study of literature. As a study aid, a glossary of most frequently used literary terms and figures of speech has been added at the end of the book. The textbook has not included any language work/activity for the aim is to teach literature, not language through literature.

In the case of literature, as with any art form, reading and study are closely linked. According to John Lyre, "The more one learns how literature works, the more open one is to the effects that it can have—one gains competency as a reader and literature becomes richer and more engaging for one."

Editors

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SECTION-1

POETRY

(Poems)

Poetry as a literary form is usually characterised by highly connotative language, condensed form to communicate emotions or ideas, and alliteration, repetition, rhyme, rhythm, and meter to create musical effect. Poetry also characteristically emphasises the interaction between sound and sense. There are various forms of poetry such as the sonnet, epic, ballad, lyric, mock-epic, elegy, etc each of which has its own additional characteristics.

On His Blindness

John Milton

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide,
"Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience to prevent
That murmur, soon replies: "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts: who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait."

About the Poet

John Milton (9 December, 1608 - 8 November, 1674) was an English poet, polemicist, man of letters, and a civil servant for the Commonwealth of England under Oliver Cromwell. He is best known for his epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667), written in blank verse. He also composed *Paradise Regained*, *L'Allegro*, *Cosmos*, *Lycidas*, etc.

Milton's poetry and prose reflect deep personal convictions and a passion for freedom and self-determination. Writing in English, Latin, Greek, and Italian, he achieved international renown within his lifetime, and his celebrated *Areopagitica* (1644) is one of the most influential and impassioned defenses of freedom of the press.

About the Poem

"On His Blindness" is one of the best known sonnets of John Milton. This is an autobiographical sonnet in which Milton meditates on his own loss of sight. In this sonnet the poet deals with a problem (blindness) with many broader spiritual implications. The poet struggles to understand what God expects of him now that he is losing his sight.

Glossary

ere : before

light : eye-sight; vision; the ability to see

talent : a natural ability to do something well, (here the ability of writing poetry)

maker : God

lodged : stayed, deposited, kept, fixed

chide : to rebuke

denied : (here) refused to allow the poet to have something that he wanted

His : God's

bidding : an act of offering

murmur : to say something in a soft quiet voice that is difficult to hear or understand

yoke : a frame that is attached to the heads or necks of two animals

Choose the correct option:

1. "When I consider how my light is spent. . . ." What does the word "light" mean here?

(a) The sun light

(b) The moon light

(c) The eye-sight

(d) All of these

2. Why does the poet call the world "dark"?

(a) because there is no light.

(b) because there is night all the time.

(c) because there is no sun-light in the world.

(d) because he cannot see.

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. Why is the poet so unhappy with God?

2. Who is the “I” in the first stanza of the poem?

3. What does death want to hide?

4. What does the soul of the poet want to do?

5. How does the poet wish to serve his "Maker"?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. What does the poet mean by "Ere half my days"?

2. Why does the poet call the talent "useless”?

3. Why does the poet wish to give his "true account"?

4. What does the poet mean when he says, "They also serve who only stand and wait"?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. Write a summary of the poem.

2. Write the critical appreciation of the poem "On His Blindness."

Education is the ability to listen to

almost anything without losing your

temper or your self-confidence.

-Robert Frost

The Seven Ages of Man

William Shakespeare

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
Then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly, with a good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

About the Poet

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is England's greatest poet and dramatist. Shakespeare was born and brought up in Stratford-upon-Avon and is often regarded as the 'Bard of Avon.' He is considered as the national poet in England. He belonged to the Renaissance Period also known as Elizabethan Age in the History of English Literature.

He wrote more than thirty plays including romantic comedies, tragic drama, and semi-allegorical pieces. *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Tempest*, etc are some of his greatest plays.

He also composed narrative poems and over a hundred and fifty sonnets. His literary works exhibit an unparalleled power of expression of thoughts, feelings and passions. He had a deep insight into human nature. He was a man of the theatre, an actor, a playwright, a shareholder in the Globe Theatre.

About the Poem

This is Jaques's monologue in Shakespeare's play entitled, *As You Like It* (Act II, scene 7). These beautiful poetic lines vividly describe the seven stages of a man's life from the infancy to the old age. The speaker describes him as an actor on the stage of the world who plays part after part in the drama of life.

Glossary

players	: actors
his acts	: the role he plays
mewling and puking	: crying and vomiting
sighing like furnace	: breathing sighs like a furnace which is an enclosed space or room for heating metal or glass to very high temperatures
made	: composed
pard	: leopard with good capon lined: filled with fat chicken (perhaps a bribe)
wise saws	: wise sayings and commonplace illustrations
modern instances	: commonplace illustrations
pantaloon	: a lean and foolish old man
well–saved	: carefully preserved
his shrunk shrank	: his emaciated (thin and weak) leg
childish treble	: the high pitch of a child's voice
sans	: (a French word) without

Choose the correct option:

1. What does a soldier wish to get?

(a) Honour

(b) Oaths

(c) Fame

(d) Strength

2. In which age does a man become childish again?

(a) The third age

(b) The fourth age

(c) The fifth age

(d) The sixth age

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. What is the similarity between a bubble and a soldier's reputation?

2. How does the justice/judge play his part in his life?

3. How does a man behave in the old age?

4. How are "all the men and women merely players"?

5. Find the figures of speech in the following table containing the lines/phrases from the poem:

(metaphor, simile, alliteration)

S.N.	**Phrase/line of the poem**	**Figure of speech?**
1.	All the world's a stage	
2.	And all men and women are merely players	
3.	seeking the bubble reputation	
4.	Sighing like furnace	
5.	creeping like a snail	
6.	shrunk shank	
7.	plays his part	

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. Why does the poet call "all the world's a stage"?

2. What are the seven ages of a man?

3. Why does the poet compare the lover's sighing to a furnace?

4. Why does the poet call the ballad woeful?

Answer the following questions in 150 words each:

1. Write a summary of the poem.

2. Explain with reference to the context the following extracts of the poem:

(a) All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;

(b) And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow.

The Solitary Reaper

William Wordsworth

Behold her, single in the field,
    Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
    Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! For the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No nightingale did ever chant
    More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
    Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?
    Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
    And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matters of today?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang
    As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
    And o'er the sickle bending;
I listen'd, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

About the Poet

Born on April 7, 1770 at Cockermouth in England, William Wordsworth was one of the greatest English poets of Nature and Man. Much of his work was inspired by the

landscape of the English Lake District. He spent some time in France where he was influenced by the French Revolution. In collaboration with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, he composed *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), a landmark in the history of English Romantic poetry. Among his famous poems are "Ode on Intimations of Immortality" (1807), sonnets such as "Surprised by Joy" and "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (both 1815), and the posthumously published autobiographical *The Prelude* (1850). He was appointed Poet Laureate in 1843. He passed away on April 23, 1850.

About the Poem

The poem "The Solitary Reaper" was composed in 1805 and first published in 1807. Here the poet recalls an experience he had during his tour of the Highlands of Scotland with his sister Dorothy. The poem is an expression of the poet's feelings about a native Highland woman who was singing a melodious song while reaping in the field.

Glossary

behold	: see
solitary	: without companion
melancholy	: sorrowful
strain	: song
vale	: valley
weary	: tired
bands	: groups of travellers
shady haunts	: oasis in deserts
thrilling	: exciting; excited feeling
Hebrides	: a group of islands in the North Atlantic off the west coast of Scotland
plaintive	: sorrowful
numbers	: song
lay	: song
maiden	: an unmarried young girl

Choose the correct option:

1. Which of the following is most nearly similar in meaning to 'Single'?

(a) Unattached

(b) Isolated

(c) Separate

(d) Lonely

2. The solitary reaper was singing a song in. . . . .

(a) Scottish

(b) English

(c) Hebrew

(d) None of the above

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. What is the Highland girl doing in the field?

2. To whose voice is the voice of the solitary reaper compared?

3. Whom does the poet address in the first stanza?

4. Why does the poet refer to 'nightingale'?

5. What is the poet's concluding remark on the solitary reaper's song?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. What are the poet's guesses about the theme of the solitary reaper's song?

2. What is the effect of the solitary reaper's song on the poet?

3. How does the poet describe the solitary reaper's song?

4. Describe the activities of the solitary reaper?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. Discuss the central idea of the poem.

2. Write a note on the use of figures of speech in the poem.

Work without Hope

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

All Nature seems at work. Slugs leave their lair—
The bees are stirring—birds are on the wing—
And Winter, slumbering in the open air,
Wears on his smiling face a dream of Spring!
And I, the while, the sole unbusy thing,
Nor honey make, nor pair, nor build, nor sing.

Yet well I ken the banks where amaranths blow,
Have traced the fount whence streams of nectar flow.
Bloom, O ye amaranths! bloom for whom ye may,
For me ye bloom not! Glide, rich streams, away!
With lips unbrighten'd, wreathless brow, I stroll:
And would you learn the spells that drowse my soul?
Work without Hope draws nectar in a sieve,
And Hope without an object cannot live.

About the Poet

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was an English poet, critic, and philosopher who, with his literary companion, William Wordsworth, initiated the Romantic Movement in England. Born on 21 October, 1792 in the country town of Ottery St. May, Devon, England, Coleridge is considered as one of the most important figures in English poetry. He is best known for his poems "The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner," "Kubla Khan," and "Christabel."

About the Poem

Composed in 1825, the poem is a sonnet relating nature to the mental and emotional state of the speaker. The poem is built on the contrast between dynamic nature and the idle life of the speaker. It concludes that there cannot be success without hope and hope cannot live without an object or purpose.

Glossary

slug : (plural: slugs) a small creature like a snail, without a shell that moves slowly

amaranth : (plural: amaranths) any plant of the genus Amaranthus, some species of which are cultivated as food and some for their showy flower clusters

ye	: (archaic) you
wreathless	: without wreath; a wreath is an arrangement of flowers and leaves twisted or woven into a circle or similar shape. Wreaths are used for decoration or are placed on the dead/grave as a mark of respect
stroll	: to walk slowly and casually
drowse	: to make drowsy/sleepy
nectar	: a sweet liquid produced by flowers and collected by bees for making honey
sieve	: an implement consisting of a wire or plastic net attached to a ring. Sieves are used for separating large pieces of something (which do not pass through) from liquids or very small pieces of something (which can pass through).
slumbering	: sleeping
ken	: to know
fount	: (archaic) a source or origin of something

Choose the correct option

1. Whom does the speaker address in the poem?

(a) Work

(b) Hope

(c) Himself

(d) Winter

2. What do the words “birds are on the wing” mean?

(a) Birds are sitting on the wing

(b) Birds are resting on the other birds’ wing

(c) Birds are flying

(d) Birds are opening their wings

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. Which creatures are representing nature in the poem?

2. What is the rhyme scheme of the first stanza of the poem?

3. How does the speaker describe himself in the first stanza?

4. Why is winter described as “slumbering”?

5. Why is the first letter of ‘hope’ in line 11 capitalized?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. How is winter described in the poem?

2. What does the speaker contrast himself with?

3. Why does the speaker call “streams” “rich”?

4. What does drawing “nectar in a sieve” metaphorically suggest?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. What is the central idea of the poem? How is it developed?

2. Comment on the use of contrast in the poem.

Crossing the Bar

Alfred Tennyson

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

About the Poet

A reputed poet of the Victorian Age, Lord Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892) was appointed Poet Laureate in 1850. He wrote many good lyrics. Among his notable poems are "In Memoriam," "Idylls of the King," "Maud," "The Princess," "Break, Break, Break," "Ulysses," The Lotus Eater," and "Crossing the Bar."

About the Poem

This is a lyrical poem. Tennyson wrote it when he was 81, while crossing the river Solent after a serious illness. He explained to his son that the "Pilot" was the Divine, the Unseen who always guided us. The poem is considered the "Swan Song" of the poet. Here, the speaker (the poet) wishes to set out on a journey to eternity in a calm atmosphere, without any "sadness of farewell."

Glossary

moaning	: low mournful sounds
bar	: harbor or shore; sandy ridge across the mouth of a harbor
twilight	: dusk
farewell	: parting
embark	: to depart; to take on a ship
bourne	: boundary; limit
one clear call	: a call of death
Pilot	: here, the Divine

Choose the correct option:

1. What do "Sunset and evening star" imply in the poem?

(a) The end of the day

(b) The end of evening

(c) The end of life

(d) The beginning of night

2. What is the mood of the speaker?

(a) Sad

(b) Cheerful

(c) Optimistic

(d) Pessimistic

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. What is the wish of the speaker?

2. In what atmosphere does the speaker want to die?

3. "I hope to see my Pilot face to face" Whom does the word "Pilot" refer to here?

4. What does the speaker want to suggest by referring to "twilight and evening bell"?

5. What does “the bar” symbolise in the poem?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. Which words and phrases in the poem suggest the idea of death and dying?

2. Why doesn’t the speaker want to die in a mournful atmosphere?

3. Explain the phrase “our bourne of Time and Place.”

4. Which expressions in the poem reveal the optimistic mood of the speaker?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. Critically appreciate the poem.

2. Discuss the theme of the poem.

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

About the Poet

Born in San Francisco, USA, on March 26, 1874, Robert Lee Frost (Robert Frost) is considered as one of America's greatest poets. He has been the most honoured one. He received the Pulitzer Prize four times, more than twenty honourary degrees, several prizes, distinctions, and fellowships. His volumes of poetry include *A Boy's Will* (1913), *North of Boston* (1914), *Mountain Interval* (1916), *New Hampshire* (1923), *West-Running Brook* (1928), *A Further Range* (1936), *A Witney Tree* (1942), *A Masque of Reason* (1945), *A Masque of Mercy* (1947), and *In the Clearing* (1962). Frost's life ended on January 29, 1963.

About the Poem

The present poem is from Robert Frost's fourth volume of poems entitled *New Hampshire*. It is one of Frost's best-known poems which may be read on many levels. On the surface, it can be seen as an expression of a mood—a desire to enjoy nature's beauty and awareness of obligations. But at the deeper level, the poem has symbolic implications. The speaker's journey through woods becomes a journey of life.

Glossary

woods	: an area of land, smaller than a forest, covered with growing plants
queer	: strange; odd
harness	: a set of leather straps and metal parts that is put around a horse's head and body so that the horse can be controlled and fastened to the cart
sweep	: sudden and forceful movement of something
downy	: fine soft feather like
flake	: a small, very thin layer or piece of something.

Choose the correct option:

1. Where does the speaker of the poem stop?

(a) At a farmhouse near a frozen lake

(b) Somewhere between a village and a farmhouse

(c) At a village

(4) Somewhere near woods and a frozen lake

2. "He" in line 3 refers to. . . . . .

(a) Horse

(b) A villager

(c) The owner of woods

(d) The poet (speaker) himself

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. What does the speaker want to do near the woods?

2. "He gives his harness bells a shake. . . ." Whom does "He" refer to here?

3. Which sound does the speaker refer to in stanza 3?

4. Which word in the poem indicates a change in the mood of the speaker?

5. What contrast do you find in stanza 3?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. What does the speaker want to suggest by referring to the owner of woods?

2. What do the words “My little horse” signify?

3. What does “must” in line 5 suggest?

4. Explain the meaning of the last two lines of the poem.

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. Write a note on the style of the poem.

2. What is the central idea of the poem?

You Cannot Call This True Devotion

Mira Bai

(Translated by A. J. Alston)

You cannot call this true devotion,
To bathe one's forehead and apply the tilak
Without cleansing the impurities of the heart.
That cruel cur desire
Has bound me with the cord of greed.
The butcher of anger remains within me,
How can I hope to meet Gopal?
The greedy senses are like a cat,
And I keep on giving them food.
Weakened by my hunger for sense-objects
I do not take the Name of God.
I worship not God but myself,
And glow with ecstasy.
Now that I have built up
This towering rock of pride,
Where can the water of true wisdom collect?
You cannot deceive Him who knows
The inmost recesses of your soul.
The Name of Hari does not enter my heart,
Though I tell with my lips
The beads of my bejewelled rosary.
Learn to love the compassionate Lord,
Give up faith in the world.
Mira is the slave of the courtly Giridhara,
She has adopted the path of simple detachment.

About the Poet

Born about 1498 A.D. in Merta (Rajasthan), Mira Bai was a princess-turned-poet-saint of medieval India. She chose Lord Krishna as her true lover/husband. In her devotion to the Lord, she sang and danced ecstatically and mingled, irrespective of class and caste, with all those who sang glories of God. Her conduct was taken as a transgression and defiance of the cherished aristocratic values and customs. Some of her royal in-laws conspired to harm her but in vain. Nothing could deviate her from her path of devotion.

About the Poem

In this poem, Mira, while expressing her love for Giridhar (Lord Krishna), explains the meaning of true devotion. The strictures she so straightforwardly talks about suggest by implication how our attachment to the world prevents us from treading the path of true devotion.

Glossary

tilak : a mark worn on the forehead by a Hindu as part of religious devotion

cleansing : making something thoroughly clean

impurity : (plural: impurities) a substance present in another substance that makes it of poor quality

cur : an aggressive dog

cord : a long thin flexible material made of twisted strands, thinner than rope

butcher : a person who kills people in a cruel and violent way

sense-objects : objects that appeal to the senses; that give sensuous pleasure

ecstasy : a feeling or state of great joy or happiness

recess : (plural: recesses) a remote or secret place

rosary : a string of beads used for counting prayers as they are said

give up : to abandon

adopted : took over something and used it as one's own

detachment : the state of being not influenced by people, things, objects etc.

Choose the correct option:

1. "And I keep on giving them food." Whom does "them" refer to here?

(a) Cats

(b) The greedy senses

(c) The sense-objects

(d) The impurities of the heart

2. Whose slave does Mira call herself?

(a) Cruel cur desire

(b) Lord Krishna

(c) The world

(d) The greedy senses

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. What, according to Mira, is not true devotion?

2. How does Mira describe anger?

3. To whom does Mira compare the greedy senses?

4. What, according to Mira, is the obstacle to true devotion?

5. For whom does Mira use the expression "the compassionate Lord"?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. Which impurities of the heart does Mira refer to in this poem?

2. Point out the logical connection between the first three lines and the last line of the poem.

3. Explain whether the strictures Mira presents in the poem apply to herself or to others?

4. What is Mira's attitude to the world?

Answer the following questions in 150 words each:

1. What is Mira's message through the poem?

2. Comment on the use of figures of speech in the poem.

The Song of the Free

Swami Vivekanand

The wounded snake its hood unfurls,
The flame stirred up doth blaze,
The desert air resounds the calls
Of heart-struck lion's rage.

The cloud puts forth it deluge strength
When lightning cleaves its breast,
When the soul is stirred to its inmost depth
Great ones unfold their best.

Let eyes grow dim and heart grow faint,
And friendship fail and love betray,
Let Fate its hundred horrors send,
And clotted darkness block the way.

And nature wear one angry frown,
To crush you out- still know, my soul,
You are Divine. March on and on,
Nor right nor left but to the goal.

Nor angel I, nor man, nor brute,
Nor body, mind, nor he nor she,
The books do stop in wonder mute
To tell my nature; I am He.

Before the sun, the moon, the earth,
Before the stars or comets free,
Before e'en time has had its birth,
I was, I am, I will be.

The beauteous earth and the glorious sun,
The calm sweet moon, the spangled sky,
Causation's law do make them run;
They live in bonds, in bonds they die.

And mind its mental dreamy net
Cast o'er them all and holds them fast.
In warp and woof of thought are set,
Earth, hells, and heavens, or worst or best.

Know these are but the outer crust-
All space and time, all effect, cause.
I am beyond all sense, all thoughts,
The witness of the universe

Not two nor many, 'tis but one,
And thus in me all me's I have;
I cannot hate, I cannot shun
Myself from me, I can but love.

From dreams awake, from bonds be free,
Be not afraid. This mystery,
My shadow, cannot frighten me,
Know once for all that I am He.

About the Poet

Swami Vivekanand was born on January 12, 1863 in Calcutta (now Kolkata). His original name was Narendra Nath Dutta. Vivekanand was spiritually inclined. He was influenced by his guru, Ramakrishna from whom he learnt that service to God could be rendered by service to mankind. It was Vivekanand who introduced Hinduism at the Parliament of World's Religions in Chicago in 1893. He died at the age of 39 on July 4, 1902 in Belur Math in West Bengal.

About the Poem

"The Song of the Free" is a philosophical poem expressing the poet's faith in the divine nature of human soul and belief in Advaitism. The poem is highly inspiring in that it urges us not to be daunted or discouraged by the difficulties of life but to continue to march towards the ultimate goal of life.

Glossary

wounded : injured

hood : head

unfurl : to spread open

stir : excited; moved

doth : (archaic) does

blaze : to burn brightly and fiercely

resound : to echo

rage : violent anger

deluge : a great quantity of something

cleave : to split something

unfold : to reveal something

faint : lacking power or strength

betray : to act in a way that is not worthy of trust

fate : the power believed to control all events in a way that cannot be resisted; destiny

clotted : very thick

frown : a serious, angry or worried look

crush : to defeat or destroy something/someone completely

angel : a messenger of God

brute : an animal, especially large or fierce one

mute : silent

causation : the causing or producing of an effect

spangle : (passive: spangled) to decorate something with spangles (a spangle is a tiny piece of shining metal or plastic)

warp : (the warp) the threads on a loom over and under which other threads are passed

woof : (the woof) the threads woven across the other threads on a loom

crust : a hard outer layer or surface

witness : someone who is present at something and sees it

shun : to avoid something

mystery : a thing of which the cause or origin is not known

frighten : to fill someone with fear

Choose the correct option:

1. What do the words "when eyes grow dim and heart grows faint" suggest in the poem?

(a) The disease of eyes and heart

(b) The weakening of eyes and heart due to illness

(c) Old age

(d) Giddiness

2. Which of the following is an example of personification?

(a) "The flame stirred up doth blaze"

(b) "Great ones unfold their best"

(c) "You are Divine"

(d) "And nature wear an angry frown"

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. What is the rhyme scheme in the first stanza?

2. Whom does the poet address in stanza 4?

3. "When lightening cleaves its breast…" What does "its" refer to here?

4. Point out an example of metaphor in the poem.

5. Which dreams does the poet refer to in the concluding stanza?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. What idea does the poet want to suggest by referring to activities in nature in the first two stanzas?

2. In stanza 5, why does the poet say "I am He"?

3. Explain the words: "I was, I am, I will be."

4. What is the poet's view on human soul?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. Explain the following passage with reference to the context:

And nature wear one angry frown
To crush you out—still know, my soul,
You are Divine. March on and on,
Nor right nor left but to the goal!

2. What inspiring message does the poem convey?

Village Song

Sarojini Naidu

Full are my pitchers and far to carry,
Lone is the way and long,
Why, O why was I tempted to tarry
Lured by the boatmen's song?
Swiftly the shadows of night are falling,
Hear, O hear, is the white crane calling,
Is it the wild owl's cry?
There are no tender moonbeams to light me,
If in the darkness a serpent should bite me,
Or if an evil spirit should smite me,
Ram Re Ram! I shall die.

My brother will murmur, 'Why doth she linger?'
My mother will wait and weep,
Saying, 'O safe may the great gods bring her,
The Jamuna's waters are deep'…
The Jamuna's waters rush by so quickly,
The shadows of evening gather so thickly,
Like black birds in the sky…
O! if the storm breaks, what will betide me?
Safe from the lightning where shall I hide me?
Unless Thou succor my footsteps and guide me,
Ram Re Ram! I shall die.

About the Poetess

Born on February 13, 1879 in Hyderabad, Sarojini Naidu was a gifted Indian poetess. It was only because of her great poetic talent and melodious voice that she was called "The Nightingale of India." She began writing poems at an early age. Her volumes of poetry include *The Bird of Time*, *The Broken Wing*, and *The Golden Threshold*.

About the Poem

The poem draws a vivid picture of a country woman who, while carrying pitchers of water from the banks of the river Yamuna to her house, is delayed because of her temptation to listen to the boatmen's song. She is now filled with fears as the night is approaching and she is alone. Her emotions are expressed beautifully in the poem.

Glossary

pitcher : (plural: pitchers) a large container for liquids, especially water

lone : without companion

tempted : attracted

tarry : to delay coming to or going from a place

lured : attracted; tempted

swiftly : quickly

crane : a large bird with long legs and a long neck

evil : wicked; harmful

smite : to hit someone/something hard

linger : to stay for a time especially because one does not want to leave

betide : happen

lightning : a flash of brilliant light in the sky

thou : (archaic) you (second person singular)

succour : help given to someone in need or in danger

Choose the correct option:

1. What time of the day is referred to in the poem?

(a) Morning

(b) Afternoon

(c) Evening

(d) Night

2. Which family members does the speaker (the country woman) mention in the poem?

(a) Brother and father

(b) Brother and sister

(c) Mother and uncle

(d) Mother and brother

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. How does the speaker describe her way to her house?

2. Which animal does she fear that may harm her in darkness?

3. Give one example of simile in the poem.

4. What is the greatest fear of the speaker?

5. Whom does the speaker address in line 6 in the poem?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. How do we know that the speaker in the poem is a country woman?

2. Describe the mood of the speaker in lines 1-4 of the poem.

3. In the poem, whom does the speaker entreat to help her?

4. What dangers does the speaker suspect to face on her way back to her house?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. Describe the atmosphere of the poem.

2. Analyse imagery in the poem.

Education

is the most powerful weapon

which you can use to change the

world.

-Nelson Mandela

Discoveries of Science III

Sri Aurobindo

Our science is an abstract cold and brief
That cuts in formulas the living whole.
It has a brain and head but not a soul:
It sees all things in outward carved relief.

But how without its depths can the world be known?
The visible has its roots in the unseen
And each invisible hides what it can mean
In a yet deeper invisible, unshown.

The objects that you probe are not their form.
Each is a mass of forces thrown in shape.
The forces caught, their inner lines escape
In a fathomless consciousness beyond mind's norm.

Probe it and you shall meet a Being still
Infinite, nameless, mute, unknowable.

About the Poet

Sri Aurobindo (Sri Ôrobindo), (15 August 1872–5 December 1950), was an Indian nationalist, philosopher, yogi, guru, and poet. He became a spiritual reformer by introducing his vision of spiritual evolution.

Aurobindo studied for the Indian Civil Service at King's College, Cambridge, England. After returning to India he took up various civil service works and gradually began to involve himself in politics. He was imprisoned by the British for writing articles against the British rule in India. He was released when no evidence was provided. During his stay in jail he had mystical and spiritual experiences, after which he moved to Pondicherry, leaving politics for spiritual work.

During his stay in Pondicherry, Aurobindo developed a method of spiritual practice which he called Integral Yoga. His main literary works are *The Life Divine*, *Synthesis of Yoga*, and *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*, an epic poem. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1943 and for the Nobel Prize in Peace in 1950.

About the Poem

"Discoveries of Science" is a sonnet composed by Aurobindo who describes the efforts made by humanity to discover the truth behind the physical existence of things. The poet observes that the discoveries of science are only fragments of the truth. Science is not able to discover the complete truth as it works with the material objects. Sri Aurobindo does not undermine the attempts of science to find the truth, but finds that an evolution in the nature of scientific inquiry is required in order to discover the ultimate truth. The poet suggests the union of the two (science and spirituality) as the future of humanity.

Glossary :

carve : to make objects, patterns, etc by cutting away material from wood or stone

consciousness : the state of being aware of something

fathomless : impossible to understand

invisible : that cannot be seen

infinite : without limits

mute : silent

probe : a thorough and careful investigation

Unknowable : that cannot be known

Choose the correct option:

1. What, according to the poet, does Science have?

(a) A head

(b) A brain

(c) A soul

(d) Both a brain and a soul

2. What, according to the poet, does science study?

(a) The known

(b) The unknown

(c) The known and visible

(d) The unknown and invisible

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. What does "the outward carved relief" mean?

2. Where do "the inner lines escape"?

3. Where does the visible have its roots?

4. What do the words "beyond mind's norm" suggest?

5. What are the qualities of the "Being"?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. Explain the lines: "Probe it and you shall meet a Being still/Infinite, nameless, mute, unknowable."

2. Comment on the line: "In a fathomless consciousness beyond mind's norm."

3. What message does the poet wish to give through the poem?

4. Find out the words which bring out the spiritual content of the poem.

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. Discuss the central idea of the poem.

2. Explain the following lines of the poem with reference to the context:

"But how without ……unshown."

The Song of Youth

A P J Abdul Kalam

As a young citizen of India,
Armed with technology, knowledge
And love for my nation,
I realize, small aim is a crime.
I will work and sweat for a great vision,
The vision of transforming India
Into a developed nation,
Powered by economic strength with value system.
I am one of the citizens of a billion,
Only the vision will ignite the billion souls.
It has entered into me,
The ignited soul compared to any resource
Is the most powerful resource
On the earth, above the earth and under the earth.
I will keep the lamp of knowledge burning
To achieve the vision - Developed India.

About the Poet

A. P. J. Abdul Kalam (15 October 1931– 27 July 2015) was the 11th President of India (2002–2007). He was born and raised in Rameshwaram, Tamil Nadu, and studied physics and aero-space engineering. He is popularly known as the Missile Man of India for his work on the development of ballistic missile and the launch vehicle technology.

He is widely referred to as the "People's President." After a single term as the President of India, he returned to his civilian life of education, writing and social service.

He had literary taste and wrote many books, research papers, articles, and some beautiful, inspiring and educative poems. His major published works include *India 2020: A Vision for the New Millennium*, *Wings of Fire: An Autobiography*, *Ignited Minds: Unleashing the Power Within India*, *The Luminous Sparks*, *Mission India*, *Inspiring Thoughts*, *Indomitable Spirit*, *Envisioning an Empowered Nation* , *You Are Born To Blossom: Take My Journey Beyond*, *My Journey: Transforming Dreams into Actions*, *A Manifesto for Change: A Sequel to India 2020*, *Reignited: Scientific Pathways to a Brighter Future*, and *Advantage India: From Challenge to Opportunity*.

He was a recipient of several prestigious awards, including the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour.

About the Poem

"The Song of Youth" is an inspiring poem for the young people. It contains the poet's great vision for India. Here, Kalam argues that if the youth of India work for the vision with ignited minds, India can certainly be transformed into a vibrant developed country. He appeals to the youth to gain more and more useful knowledge and help the country progress in all fields. Thus, the poem unites not only our minds but also our hearts.

Glossary

ignite	: start to burn, (here, inspire and motivate)
sweat	: to work hard
transform	: to change
vision	: an idea or a picture about the future with great imagination and intelligence
vibrant	: full of life and energy

Choose the correct option:

1. "The Song of Youth" has. . . .

(a) an inspirational note

(b) a personal note

(c) a melancholic note

(d) a satirical note

2. What, according to the poet, would motivate the billion souls?

(a) The dream

(b) The song

(c) The vision

(d) The speech

Answer the following question in 15-20 words each:

1. What, according to the poet, should be done for a great vision?

2. What, according to the poet, is a crime?

3. To which vision does the poet refer?

4. What does the poet wish to do in order to realise his vision?

5. What, according to the poet, is the most powerful resource?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. Why is a great vision necessary?

2. What impact does the poem have on the mind of the young people?

3. Why does the poet emphasise the economic strength with a value system?

4. What does the line "On the earth, above the earth and under the earth" suggest?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. Write a summary of the poem?

2. Discuss the poet's vision for the country?

SECTION-2

FICTIONAL PROSE

(SHORT STORIES)

A short story is a brief fictional prose narrative, shorter than a novel, that usually deals with a few characters and is concerned with a single effect achieved through one or a few episodes. The short story as a literary form is characterised by limited setting, concise narrative, and less complex plot.

A fictional prose narrative is a prose writing about imagined events and characters.

A Day's Wait

Ernest Hemingway

He came into the room to shut the windows while we were still in bed and I saw he looked ill. He was shivering, his face was white, and he walked slowly as though it ached to move.

"What's the matter, Schatz?"
"I've got a headache."
"You better go back to bed."
"No. I'm all right."
"You go to bed. I'll see you when I'm dressed."

But when I came downstairs he was dressed, sitting by the fire, looking a very sick and miserable boy of nine years. When I put my hand on his forehead I knew he had a fever.

"You go up to bed," I said, "you're sick."
"I'm all right," he said.
When the doctor came he took the boy's temperature.
"What is it?" I asked him.
"One hundred and two."

Downstairs, the doctor left three different medicines in different colored capsules with instructions for giving them. One was to bring down the fever, another a purgative, the third to overcome an acid condition. The germs of influenza can only exist in an acid condition, he explained. He seemed to know all about influenza and said there was nothing to worry about if the fever did not go above one hundred and four degrees. This was a light epidemic of flu and there was no danger if you avoided pneumonia.

Back in the room I wrote the boy's temperature down and made a note of the time to give the various capsules.

"Do you want me to read to you?"
"All right. If you want to," said the boy. His face was very white and there were dark areas under his eyes. He lay still in the bed and seemed very detached from what was going on. I read aloud from Howard Pyle's *Book of Pirates;* but I could see he was not following what I was reading.

"How do you feel, Schatz?" I asked him.
"Just the same, so far," he said.

I sat at the foot of the bed and read to myself while I waited for it to be time to give another capsule. It would have been natural for him to go to sleep, but when I looked up he was looking at the foot of the bed, looking very strangely.

"Why don't you try to go to sleep? I'll wake you up for the medicine."
"I'd rather stay awake."

After a while he said to me, "You don't have to stay in here with me, Papa, if it bothers you."
"It doesn't bother me."
"No, I mean you don't have to stay if it's going to bother you."

I thought perhaps he was a little lightheaded and after giving him the prescribed capsules at eleven o'clock I went out for a while.

It was a bright, cold day, the ground covered with a sleet that had frozen so that it seemed as if all the bare trees, the bushes, the cut brush, and all the grass and the bare ground had been varnished with ice. I took the young Irish setter for a little walk up the road and along a frozen creek, but it was difficult to stand or walk on the glassy surface and the red dog slipped and slithered and I fell twice, hard, once dropping my gun and having it slide away over the ice.

We flushed a covey of quail under a high clay bank with overhanging brush and I killed two as they went out of sight over the top of the bank. Some of the covey lit in trees, but most of them scattered into brush piles and it was necessary to jump on the ice-coated mounds of brush several times before they would flush. Coming out while you were poised unsteadily on the icy, springy brush, they made difficult shooting and I killed two, missed five, and started back pleased to have found a covey close to the house and happy there were so many left to find on another day. At the house they said the boy had refused to let anyone come into the room.

"You can't come in," he said. "You mustn't get what I have."
I went up to him and found him in exactly the position I had left him, white-faced, but with the tops of his cheeks flushed by the fever, staring still, as he had stared, at the foot of the bed. I took his temperature.
"What is it?"
"Something like a hundred," I said. It was one hundred and two and four tenths.
"It was a hundred and two," he said.
"Who said so?"
"The doctor."
"Your temperature is all right," I said. "It's nothing to worry about."
"I don't worry," he said, "but I can't keep from thinking."
"Don't think," I said. "Just take it easy."

"I'm taking it easy," he said and looked straight ahead. He was evidently holding tight onto himself about something.
"Take this with water."
"Do you think it will do any good?"
"Of course it will."

I sat down and opened the *Pirate* book and commenced to read, but I could see he was not following, so I stopped.
"About what time do you think I'm going to die?" he asked.
"What?"
"About how long will it be before I die?"
"You aren't going to die. What's the matter with you?"
"Oh, yes, I am. I heard him say a hundred and two."
"People don't die with a fever of one hundred and two. That's a silly way to talk."
"I know they do. At school in France the boys told me you can't live with forty-four degrees.
I've got a hundred and two."

He had been waiting to die all day, ever since nine o'clock in the morning.

"You poor Schatz," I said. "Poor old Schatz. It's like miles and kilometers. You aren't going to die. That's a different thermometer. On that thermometer thirty-seven is normal. On this kind it's ninety-eight."

"Are you sure?"
"Absolutely," I said. "It's like miles and kilometers. You know, like how many kilometers we make when we do seventy miles in the car?"
"Oh," he said.

But his gaze at the foot of the bed relaxed slowly. The hold over himself relaxed too, finally, and the next day it was very slack and he cried very easily at little things that were of no importance.

About the Author

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), a renowned American writer whose style of writing novels and short stories has greatly influenced the development of modern prose. His important novels are *The Sun also Rises* (1926), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) and *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952). He received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954 for his greatest achievement, *The Old Man and the Sea.*

His best stories are "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," "Old Man at the Bridge," "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," "Cat in the Rain," and "A Day's Wait."

About the Story

"A Day's Wait" is a very interesting and captivating short story about Schatz, a little boy who falls sick. His father affectionately cares for him and tries his best to keep the miserable son happy and relaxed in the sick condition also, but the boy, having a misunderstanding about the scales of temperature, believes that he is going to die. When the father explains to him the difference in scales, the boy slowly relaxes.

Glossary

shivering : trembling (here, from fear)

Schatz : (German) darling

purgative : medicine that cleanses the bowels

light : (here) mild

detached from : not interested in, or influenced by

Howard Pyle's *Book of Pirates* : *The Book of Pirates* is one of the children's storybooks written by Howard Pyle (1853-1911), an American artist and author

pirate : sea robber

following : (here) understand /comprehend /get the meaning.

bother : cause trouble or worry

light headed : dizzy or delirious

sleet : half frozen rain that falls when it is very cold

setter : a long-haired dog often trained to help hunters find where animals or birds are

creek : a small narrow stream or river

slither : to slide somewhere over a surface, twisting or moving from side to side

covey : a brood or small flock of partridges or similar birds (here a group or company)

quail : a small fat bird with a short tail that is hunted for food or

sport, or the meat from this bird

stare : to look at something or somebody without moving your eyes

flushed : become red

forty-four degrees: (the boy is talking of Centigrade while the doctor was talking of Fahrenheit)

holding tight onto : keeping his grasp on something; trying to hide a secret himself

hold over himself : refers to the way Schatz was controlling his tension .

slack : with less activity than usual (here lazy)

Choose the correct option:

1. ". . . at eleven o'clock I went out for a while." With whom did the narrator go out for a while?

   (a) with the boy

   (b) with the doctor

   (c) with the dog

   (d) with all of these

2. "No. I mean you don't have to stay if it's going to bother you."
What did the boy really want?

   (a) He wanted to be alone.

   (b) He wanted his father to go out.

   (c) He wanted his father not to disturb him.

   (d) He wanted his father to stop worrying about him (the boy).

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words:

1. How did the father come to know that his son had a fever?

2. For which three medical problems were the medicines prescribed?

3. What was the boy waiting for?

4. Who told the boy that he was going to die?

5. Why did the boy cry very easily at little things that were of no importance?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. Why was the boy not interested in listening to the story written by Howard Pyle?

2. "He lay still in the bed and seemed very detached from what was going on." Why did the boy seem detached from what was going on?

3. Why was it very tough to shoot the covey of quail?

4. "Are you sure"? What did the boy feel when he asked this question to his father?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. "About what time do you think I'm going to die?" Why did the boy think that he was going to die?

2. Discuss the father–son relationship in the story.

We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet.

-Swami Vivekanand

Boons of Life

Mark Twain

CHAPTER I

In the morning of life came a good fairy with her basket, and said:

"Here are gifts. Take one, leave the others. And be wary, choose wisely; oh, choose wisely! for only one of them is valuable."

The gifts were five: Fame, Love, Riches, Pleasure, Death. The youth said, eagerly: "There is no need to consider"; and he chose Pleasure.

He went out into the world and sought out the pleasures that youth delights in. But each in its turn was short-lived and disappointing, vain and empty; and each, departing, mocked him. In the end he said: "These years I have wasted. If I could but choose again, I would choose wisely.

CHAPTER II

The fairy appeared, and said:

"Four of the gifts remain. Choose once more; and oh, remember-time is flying, and only one of them is precious."

The man considered long, then chose Love; and did not mark the tears that rose in the fairy's eyes.

After many, many years the man sat by a coffin, in an empty home. And he communed with himself, saying: "One by one they have gone away and left me; and now she lies here, the dearest and the last. Desolation after desolation has swept over me; for each hour of happiness the treacherous trader, Love, as sold me I have paid a thousand hours of grief. Out of my heart of hearts I curse him."

CHAPTER III

"Choose again." It was the fairy speaking.

"The years have taught you wisdom -- surely it must be so. Three gifts remain. Only one of them has any worth -- remember it, and choose warily."

The man reflected long, then chose Fame; and the fairy, sighing, went her way.

Years went by and she came again, and stood behind the man where he sat solitary in the fading day, thinking. And she knew his thought:

"My name filled the world, and its praises were on every tongue, and it seemed well with me for a little while. How little a while it was! Then came envy; then detraction; then calumny; then hate; then persecution. Then derision, which is the beginning of the end. And last of all came pity, which is the funeral of fame. Oh, the bitterness and misery of renown! target for mud in its prime, for contempt and compassion in its decay."

CHAPTER IV

"Choose yet again." It was the fairy's voice.

"Two gifts remain. And do not despair. In the beginning there was but one that was precious, and it is still here."

"Wealth--which is power! How blind I was!" said the man. "Now, at last, life will be worth the living. I will spend, squander, dazzle. These mockers and despisers will crawl in the dirt before me, and I will feed my hungry heart with their envy. I will have all luxuries, all joys, all enchantments of the spirit, all contentments of the body that man holds dear. I will buy, buy, buy! deference, respect, esteem, worship--every pinchbeck grace of life the market of a trivial world can furnish forth. I have lost much time, and chosen badly heretofore, but let that pass; I was ignorant then, and could but take for best what seemed so."

Three short years went by, and a day came when the man sat shivering in a mean garret; and he was gaunt and wan and hollow-eyed, and clothed in rags; and he was gnawing a dry crust and mumbling:

"Curse all the world's gifts, for mockeries and gilded lies! And miscalled, every one. They are not gifts, but merely lendings. Pleasure, Love, Fame, Riches: they are but temporary disguises for lasting realities--Pain, Grief, Shame, Poverty. The fairy said true; in all her store there was but one gift which was precious, only one that was not valueless. How poor and cheap and mean I know those others now to be, compared with that inestimable one, that dear and sweet and kindly one, that steeps in dreamless and enduring sleep the pains that persecute the body, and the shames and griefs that eat the mind and heart. Bring it! I am weary, I would rest."

CHAPTER V

The fairy came, bringing again four of the gifts, but Death was wanting. She said:

"I gave it to a mother's pet, a little child. It was ignorant, but trusted me, asking me to choose for it. You did not ask me to choose."

"Oh, miserable me! What is left for me?"

"What not even you have deserved: the wanton insult of Old Age."

About the Author

Mark Twain was the pen- name of Samuel Langhorne Clemens (November 30, 1835–April 21, 1910). He was an American author and humorist. He wrote many interesting books, short stories, letters and sketches.

Twain began to gain fame when his story, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calvaras County" appeared in the New York Saturday Press in 1865. He wrote *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876)) and its sequel, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), the latter often called "The Great American Novel."

About the Story

This is a short-story about a fairy who offers a man one of five gifts: Fame, Love, Riches, Pleasure, or Death. The man chooses pleasure first, realises it is a bad choice, and then chooses every gift except for death. He ends up seeing that what he thought were great gifts, are actually mere lendings. He concludes that what we see as life's greatest benefits are actually not as precious as they are thought to be; rather, they are very disappointing.

Glossary

boon	: a fortunate and useful thing
wary	: careful
commune	: communicate
calumny	: defamation
derision	: disrespect, contempt
squander	: waste
trivial	: unimportant
garret	: a small uncomfortable upper floor/room, attic
gaunt	: skinny
wan	: pale
gnaw	: worry
weary	: tired
wanton	: deliberately harming someone or damaging something

Choose the correct option:

1. The five gifts were for . . . .

(a) young man

(b) an old man

(c) a fairy

(d) all of these

2. Who got the fifth gift?

(a) A mother

(b) A little child

(c) A young man

(d) An old man

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. What did Fame bring with it?

2. What do the young men generally like?

3. Who is the treacherous trader?

4. What did the person get at the end?

5. What, according to the fairy, does the person not deserve?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. Why did the person choose “pleasure” as a gift in the beginning?

2. Why did the fairy tell the person to “choose wisely”?

3. Why were there tears in the eyes of the fairy?

4. Which gift, according to the person, was “precious” and “not valueless”? Why?

Answer the following questions in 150 words each:

1. "They are not gifts, but merely lendings." Explain the statement in the context of the story.

2. Explain with suitable examples the lesson (moral) the story teaches us.

Let's Go Home

Kewlian Sio

It started when they were going to school in the school-bus. Someone started to talk about marbles, and he was always so interested in marbles that, as he listened, he began to forget. At first only a little, but as the fervour of the discussion increased, he joined in the talk and it was then that he forgot completely. And afterwards, he did not know how he could have forgotten like that. But perhaps it was not so strange after all. Everyone had always said he was 'too sensitive' and 'so absent-minded at this age'. Perhaps it was he who was strange.

The bus rolled in through the gates and crunched on the gravel. It was always the familiar crunch that told him they were in. They broke up and jumped out with their bags and boxes, and outside, as he stood waiting for the rest to come down, the morning hill air felt good and smelt cool, clean and fresh, and the birds were chirping in the row of trees that ran along the gravel way. When the last boy was out, the bus rolled out of the gates again and they crunched along the gravel towards the stone entry porch.

As they went in, someone observed, 'Why, today's Saturday! Always like Saturday because the next day is Sunday. Don't you?' He answered, 'Yes!'. He thought, Saturday; no day like it. Even class on Saturday was not as bad as on other days, and everyone, including the teacher, seemed happier with the prospect of the evening and the morrow.

For him, it was mainly the evening and fun at home with his mother—he had lost his father. On other days there was always homework to do and dinner to prepare. But on Saturday they both were free; he did only a little of the homework; and his mother finished cooking early. Saturday evening meant a lot to him. And then there was, of course, the matinee on Sunday, about the only excitement of a rather quiet day.

They passed the dining room. The boarders were still at breakfast and they could hear the boys talking and the clatter of plates and knives, forks, spoons, cups and saucers. There was such a noise. 'They're having plantains this morning,' Peter said, creeping up to one of the entrances. 'Hey, Whisky! Let's have a plantain,' he called out to the boy sitting at the table nearest to him. 'Whisky' scowled, but on second thoughts threw him a skin. It looked so funny that all laughed.

Class began at half-past eight. And since it was Saturday, it began with Reading, and Miss Moss reminded the boys of three coloured action postcards on her desk that went every Saturday to the first three boys who read best. It was an exciting period, always looked forward to. After Reading, came Arithmetic which did not fare well with him; he was always falling asleep and then having to write fifty lines. Today, Miss Moss did not assign him a task and only asked someone to rouse him; but he wondered why. Then they had English and that wound up Saturday morning.

He had lunch with the boarders and a few other day-scholars, and Mr. White, the master-in-charge, who had his lunch at another table with Mr. Brown and Mr. Black, gave him a helping of the teachers' pudding. He was such a sensitive boy; so that should have made him remember but since the marbles in the bus he had completely forgotten and was so happy.

In the afternoon they had History and Geography and, because it was Saturday, they went upstairs to the library for the last hour. There he read a tale about how a clever young prince foiled an evil ogre and escaped from its clutches. It was exciting and at the same time comical and he enjoyed it. He would tell it to his mother when he got home; she would like it, and he could enjoy it all over again with her. Then the bell rang: time to go home. Books were hurriedly put back and boxes were snatched up from the rear of the room where they had been left, and, except for the boarders waiting rather forlornly at their desks, everyone else dashed out as if home were a train they would miss if they were late.

He did not take a bus with the rest of the day-scholars this time, he walked it with four others: Ned, Ram, Peter and Gopal. As they walked along the road, with the green and daisy-covered hill on one side and the railed off-slope on the other, the sun was bright and warm and the sky was blue. They talked and laughed a lot. Today was Saturday and tomorrow Sunday. He picked up a blade of grass and nibbled at it while Ram slid his ruler along the railing. This evening, Ned was going to the pictures, Ram was going for ice-cream with his visiting uncle. Peter was going horse-riding. Gopal was going to a wedding. As for himself, he was happy, so happy. He would go home, and after a quick wash there would be lemon pie on the table, with a large slice ready on a plate for him. The thought made him want to hurry. His mother always made lemon pie on Saturdays. He would tell his mother the tale he had read at school, when they were at tea. And, after tea, they would go out into the garden. His mother would do some weeding. He would have to water his plants. Had he already watered them? He could not remember. He had better see about it, the first thing when he got home.

They had reached the short-cut to his home.

'Okay, see you Monday!' he said, ducking under the railing off the road, and picking his way down the slope. But just before he started he heard someone say, 'But he doesn't live. . .!' and then someone else saying 'Sh-sh-sh!' and then a lot of giggling. But he did not mind them, because as he picked his way down the short-cut his mind was so full and happy with the anticipation of home and his mother, of the lemon pie and the plants in the garden.

After a little while, he saw the red roof, bright in the sun, grinning wide and happy in the distance. He brightened and began running a little faster. In a little while more he would see the white sides of the house, the curtains flying in the windows and his mother waiting and waving from the kitchen.

But he had not gone very much further when, all of a sudden, clear out of the blue, there was something wrong; he could feel it. At first it was only a feeling, a suspicion; then it grew and thickened in him, it began whispering in his ear, 'Don't go!'. It swelled in him and became heavier and he had to slow down. He slowed down to a snail's pace and then came to a dead stop, thinking. Everything was so quiet and strange, a bird chirped in a tree and after the sound had died away, it seemed quieter and stranger.

He felt himself getting goose-pimples when he started to take a few steps further.

Then he saw that there were no flying curtains beckoning to him and all the windows were closed; the flowers and plants were drooping in a pathetic sort of way. And he had a sudden and full recollection: that he was not living there any more but up the hill at his aunt's, that the house was empty and his mother had died one week ago. At first, he just stood still, looking, not knowing what he should do. There was a big lump in his throat and he felt like crying. Then tears came into his eyes and he wanted to cry a lot. But he could only cry quietly.

About the Author

Born in 1936 in Calcutta (now Kolkata) Kewlian Sio is considered a noted writer among the younger generation of Indo-Anglican writers. He was educated in Darjeeling and he worked for an advertising agency in Mumbai. His collection of short stories *A Small World* (1960) was published by Writers' Workshop, Calcutta.

About the Story

The story "Let's Go Home" is about a fatherless child who has lost his mother just a week ago and who is now being looked after by his aunt. The story poignantly shows how the child whose name is not mentioned anywhere realises at the end that he is all alone in the world.

Glossary

fervour : strength or intensity of feeling

absent-minded : tending to forget things

crunched : made a harsh crushing noise

gravel : small stones used to make the surface of roads and paths

prospect : the chance or hope that something will happen

matinee : an afternoon performance at a cinema or theatre

boarder : (plural: boarders) a pupil who lives at a boarding school

plantain	: (plural: plantains) a tropical fruit similar to a banana
scowled	: looked at someone with an angry expression
foiled	: prevented someone from achieving something
ogre	: (in fairy tales) a cruel and frightening giant who eats people
forlornly	: in the manner of an unhappy, lonely or abandoned person
nibbled	: took small bites of something
giggling	: laughing in a childish or silly way
anticipation	: the excited feeling one has when expecting something pleasant to happen
suspicion	: doubt
beckoning	: making a gesture to someone to come nearer or to follow
pathetic	: causing one to feel pity or sadness
recollection	: the action of remembering something from the past; memory

Choose the correct option:

1. On what day of the week did the events of the story take place?

(a) Sunday

(b) Monday

(c) Saturday

(d) None of the above

2. "They had reached the short-cut to his home." Whose home is referred to here?

(a) Ned's

(b) Mr. White's

(c) Gopal's

(d) The boy's

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. Why was Saturday so special for the boy of the story?

2. On what day did the students go to the library for the last hour?

3. Whom did the boy of the story think about while returning from the school to his house?

4. Why didn't the boy mind the giggling of his friends?

5. In what condition were the flowers and plants of the boy's house?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. How did the boy and his mother spend Sundays?

2. What were the plans of the boy's friends for Sunday?

3. How did the boy picture his mother on his way back to his house?

4. What realisation did the boy have at the end of the story?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. In the story, the boy's name is not mentioned. The boy is simply referred to as "he". Why does the writer do this? Discuss.

2. What is the most touching aspect of the story? Why?

One of the very important characteristics of a

student is to question.

Let the students ask questions.

-A. P. J. Abdul Kalam

The Bird with Two Heads

(A Fable from the *Panchatantra*)

Once upon a time, there lived a strange bird, named Bharunda. He lived on a banyan tree near the banks of a river. The strangeness of the bird lay in the fact that he had two necks, but shared a common stomach. One day, the bird was wandering on the banks of the lake and found a red-golden fruit which appeared delicious at the first sight. One of the two heads mumbled, "Oh, What a fruit! I am sure the heavens have sent it for me. I am so lucky." He started eating the fruit with immense pleasure and claimed that it was the most delicious fruit he had ever eaten.

Hearing this, the other head said, "O dear, let me also taste the fruit you are praising so much." The first head laughed and replied, "You know that we've only one stomach, whichever head eats, the fruit will go to the same stomach. So it makes no difference whether I eat or you eat it. Moreover, I'm the one who found this fruit. So I've the first right to eat it." The other head became silent and disappointed after hearing the first head. This kind of selfishness on the part of the first head pinched him very much.

Later, one day, the other head found a tree bearing poisonous fruits. He took the poisonous fruit and told the first head, "You deceitful fellow. I will eat the poisonous fruit and avenge the insult you have done to me."

The first head yelled, "Please don't eat the poisonous fruit. If you eat it, both of us will die because we've a common stomach to digest it." The other head replied, "Shut up! As I have found this fruit, I have every right to eat it." The first head started crying, but the other head didn't bother and ate the poisonous fruit. As a consequence of this action, both of them lost their lives.

About the Author

It is believed that the *Panchatantra* was originally composed in Sanskrit around the 3rd century BC. The prelude to the *Panchantatra* identifies Vishnu Sharma as its author. Born in Kashmir, Vishnu Sharma was an Indian scholar and writer of the Gupta era. He is one of the most widely translated authors in history.

About the Story

The story "The Bird with Two Heads" has been taken from the *Panchatantra*, an ancient Indian collection of interrelated animal fables in verse and prose. For more than two and a half millenia, the *Panchatantra* tales have delighted and instructed children and adults alike with a moral at the end of every tale. The present story tells us how a lack of understanding, cooperation, and cordiality between the two heads of a bird leads to its death.

Glossary

delicious : giving pleasure to the senses of taste and smell

mumbled : spoke something in a low voice that is not clear

disappointed : sad or not pleased because one/someone has failed

pinched : hurt

poisonous : causing death or illness if taken into the body

deceitful : often deceiving people; dishonest

avenge : to take revenge on someone for a wrong

yelled : gave a loud sharp cry as if of pain, excitement, anger etc.

Choose the correct option:

1. Which of the following had the name Bharunda?

(a) A banyan tree

(b) A river

(c) A bird

(d) A peculiar bird

2. What was the bird doing when his first head found a delicious fruit?

(a) Hovering around the banyan tree

(b) Gathering food

(c) Moving near the lake

(d) Looking for fruits near the lake

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. What made Bharunda a strange bird?

2. How did the fruit that the first head found appear?

3. What did the first head say about the fruit it found?

4. What favour did the other head want from the first head?

5. What happened when the other head ate the poisonous fruit?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. What hurt the other head?

2. Why did the other head decide to eat the poisonous fruit?

3. How did the first head react to the other head's decision to eat the poisonous fruit?

4. Do you approve of the action of the other head? Give reasons for your answer.

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. Describe the relationship between the two heads of the bird.

2. Discuss the moral of the story?

The Blind Vulture

(A Fable from the *Hitopadesha*)

Once upon a time, there was a hill that sloped down to the banks of a river. At the bottom of the hill, there was a tree which became a shelter for many birds. One day, a blind old Vulture came to live in the hollow of the tree. The birds welcomed the blind Vulture and decided to give him a share of their food since he was old.

When the blind Vulture saw birds' concern for him, he was overwhelmed with gratitude. He thought, "As these birds are so kind to me, it has become my duty to protect their young ones when they are away gathering food." After this, the Vulture used to get his food from the birds and in return, he took care of their young ones while they were away. So like this, all of them were passing their days happily.

One day, a cat passed by that tree when the birds were away. Hearing the noise of the young ones, she came near the tree with the hope of catching and eating the baby birds. But when the young ones saw her coming, they made a chirrup. The blind Vulture heard them and shouted, "Who is there?" On seeing the Vulture, the Cat got frightened and said to herself, "O God! I am as good as dead. But I need to be brave. I should try to gain his confidence."

At once, the Cat replied, "O wise one! I just came to pay homage to you." The Vulture asked, "Who are you?" The Cat answered, "I am a cat." The Vulture shouted, "Go away otherwise I'll eat you up." The Cat was clever and she made quick responses to the Vulture. She innocently said to the Vulture, "Sir, listen to me first, then you can decide further. It is not good that you are discarding me as I belong to a particular race."

The Vulture decided to listen to her. The Cat said. "I live on the other side of the river. I don't eat meat and I take bath in the river every day. I am doing great penance for my sins. I have heard much about your intelligence from the birds on the banks of the river. They told me that I should learn more about religion from you as you possess all knowledge. So I came here to become your disciple and seek your blessings."

She further said, "But I don't feel what the birds told me is true, when you got ready to kill a poor cat. You should have treated me well. After all, guests are form of God. Even if you don't have any food to offer me, at least you could say something kind to me." The old Vulture replied, "How can I trust you since you are carnivorous and young birds reside here." The clever Cat was well-versed in tantrums.

She touched the ground and her ears as a sign of her honesty and replied, "I've read all scriptures and come to know that killing is immoral. The entire forest is full of herbs and vegetables. So why should I commit sin by killing birds?" The Vulture believed her and allowed to stay with him in the hollow of the tree. With the passing days, the Cat started eating the young birds one by one without the knowledge of the Vulture.

When the birds found that their young ones were missing, they started looking for their kids. As soon as the Cat realised that the situation was not in her favour, she quietly slipped away. Unknown about the happening, the blind Vulture lay down near the hollow of the tree where the Cat had thrown the bones of some of the birds eaten by her. When the birds saw the bones of their young ones, at once they shouted, "The blind Vulture has eaten our innocent kids."

All of them got enraged by the ingratitude of the Vulture and they pecked him to death. The poor Vulture didn't even get the chance to defend himself.

About the Author

It is only the concluding verses of the *Hitopadesha* that provide a clue to the identity of its author. These verses suggest the name Narayana. An Indian Sanskrit scholar and author, Narayan says that the purpose of creating the work is to encourage development of skills in Sanskrit expression and wise conduct.

About the Story

The *Hitopadesha* is a collection of Sanskrit fables in verse and prose meant as lessons in statecraft in form easily comprehensible to young princes of the old. The story "The Blind Vulture" is from this collection. It is about a blind vulture who loses all his good friends because of the bad company he keeps with a cunning cat.

Glossary

shelter : a structure giving protection

vulture : a large bird that eats the flesh of dead animals

overwhelmed : had a very strong emotional effect on someone

gratitude : the feeling of being grateful

gathering : collecting

chirrup : a short sharp sound made by small birds

frightened : filled with fear

homage : things said or done to show great respect

innocently : here, politely

discarding : putting aside

penance : a punishment that one gives oneself to show that one is sorry for one's sins

sin : the action of breaking a religious or moral law

possess : to have or own something

disciple : a follower of a religious, political, or artistic leader or teacher

carnivorous : (of an animal) that eats meat

well-versed : knowing a lot about something; experienced

tantrum : (plural: tantrums) a sudden display of anger

scriptures : the holy writings of a religion

immoral : not following accepted standards of morality; bad or wicked

looking for : searching

enraged : made very angry by someone/something

innocent : not guilty of wrongdoing

peck : to hit someone/something with the beak

defend : to act, speak or write in support of someone/something

Choose the correct option:

1. What frightened the Cat?

(a) The noise of the young birds

(b) The threat of the Vulture

(c) The presence of the Vulture

(d) None of the above

2. Where did the birds find the bones of their young ones?

(a) On the banks of the river

(b) In the hollow of the tree

(c) At the bottom of the hill

(d) Close to the hollow of the tree

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. How was the blind Vulture received by the birds?

2. Why did the Cat go near the tree?

3. Which books does the Cat claim to have read?

4. What did the Cat do when she found the situation unfavorable?

5. Why couldn't the Vulture know that the Cat was eating the baby birds one by one?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. What did the Vulture do in return of the birds' concern for him?

2. What were the Vulture's reasons for not trusting the Cat?

3. Why did the birds kill the Vulture?

4. Draw a brief character sketch of the Cat.

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. Explain how the Cat succeeds in winning the confidence of the Vulture.

2. What do you learn from the story? Discuss.

The fragrance of flowers spreads only in

the direction of the wind.

But the goodness of a person

spreads in all directions.

-Chanakya

The Parrot's Training

Rabindranath Tagore

Once upon a time there was a bird. It was ignorant. It sang all right, but never recited scriptures. It hopped pretty frequently, but lacked manners.

Said the Raja to himself: "Ignorance is costly in the long run. For fools consume as much food as their betters, and yet give nothing in return."

He called his nephews to his presence and told them that the bird must have a sound schooling.

The pundits were summoned, and at once went to the root of the matter. They decided that the ignorance of birds was due to their natural habit of living in poor nests. Therefore, according to the pundits, the first thing necessary for this bird's education was a suitable cage.

The pundits had their rewards and went home happily.

A golden cage was built with gorgeous decorations. Crowds came to see it from all parts of the world.

"Culture, captured and caged!" exclaimed some, in a rapture of ecstasy, and burst into tears.

Others remarked: "Even if culture be missed, the cage will remain, to the end, a substantial fact. How fortunate for the bird!"

The goldsmith filled his bag with money and lost no time in sailing homewards.

The pundit sat down to educate the bird. With proper deliberation he took his pinch of snuff; as he said: "Textbooks can never be too many for our purpose!"

The nephews brought together an enormous crowd of scribes. They copied from books, and copied from copies, till the manuscripts were piled up to an unreachable height.

Men murmured in amazement: "Oh, the tower of culture, egregiously high! The end of it lost in the clouds!"

The scribes, with light hearts, hurried home, their pockets heavily laden.

The nephews were furiously busy keeping the cage in proper trim.

As their constant scrubbing and polishing went on, the people said with satisfaction: "This is progress indeed!"

Men were employed in large numbers, and supervisors were still more numerous. These, with their cousins of all different degrees of distance, built a palace for themselves and lived there happily ever after.

Whatever may be its other deficiencies, the world is never in want of fault-finders; and they went about saying that every creature remotely connected with the cage flourished beyond words, excepting only the bird.

When this remark reached the Raja's ears, he summoned his nephews before him and said: "My dear nephews, what is this that we hear?"

The nephews said in answer: "Sire, let the testimony of the goldsmiths and the pundits, the scribes and the supervisors, be taken, if the truth is to be known. Food is scarce with the fault-finders, and that is why their tongues have gained in sharpness."

The explanation was so luminously satisfactory that the Raja decorated each one of his nephews with his own rare jewels.

The Raja at length, being desirous of seeing with his own eyes how his Education Department busied itself with the little bird, made his appearance one day at the great Hall of Learning.

From the gate rose the sounds of conch-shells and gongs, horns, bugles and trumpets, cymbals, drums and kettle-drums, tomtoms, tambourines, flutes, fifes, barrel-organs and bagpipes. The pundits began chanting *mantras* with their top-most voices, while the goldsmiths, scribes, supervisors, and their numberless cousins of all different degrees of distance, loudly raised a round of cheers.

The nephews smiled and said: "Sire, what do you think of it all?"

The Raja said: “It does seem so fearfully like a sound principle of Education!”

Mightily pleased, the Raja was about to remount his elephant, when the fault--finder, from behind some bush, cried out: “Maharaja, have you seen the bird?”

“Indeed, I have not!” exclaimed the Raja, “I completely forgot about the bird.”

Turning back, he asked the pundits about the method they followed in instructing the bird.

It was shown to him. He was immensely impressed. The method was so stupendous that the bird looked ridiculously unimportant in comparison. The Raja was satisfied that there was no flaw in the arrangements. As for any complaint from the bird itself, that simply could not be expected. Its throat was so completely choked with the leaves from the books that it could neither whistle nor whisper. It sent a thrill through one's body to watch the process.

This time, while remounting his elephant, the Raja ordered his State Ear-puller to give a thorough good pull at both the ears of the fault-finder.

The bird thus crawled on, duly and properly, to the safest verge of inanity. In fact, its progress was satisfactory in the extreme. Nevertheless, nature occasionally triumphed over training, and when the morning light peeped into the bird's cage it sometimes fluttered its wings in a reprehensible manner. And, though it is hard to believe, it pitifully pecked at its bars with its feeble beak.

"What impertinence!" growled the kotwal.

The blacksmith, with his forge and hammer took his place in the Raja's Department of Education. Oh, what, resounding blows! The iron chain was soon completed, and the bird's wings were clipped.

The Raja's brothers-in-law looked black, and shook their heads, saying: "These birds not only lack good sense, but also gratitude!"

With text-book in one hand and baton in the other, the pundits gave the poor bird what may fitly be called lessons!

The kotwal was honoured with a title for his watchfulness, and the blacksmith for his skill in forging chains.

The bird died.

Nobody had the least notion how long ago this had happened. The fault-finder was the first man to spread the rumour.

The Raja called his nephews and asked them: "My dear nephews, what is this that we hear?"

The nephews said: "Sire, the bird's education has been completed."

"Does it hop?" the Raja enquired

"Never!" said the nephews.

"Does it fly?"

"No."

"Bring me the bird," said the Raja.

The bird was brought to him, guarded by the kotwal and the sepoys and the sowars. The Raja poked its body with his finger. Only its inner stuffing of book-leaves rustled.

Outside the window, the murmur of the spring breeze amongst the newly budded *asoka* leaves made the April morning wistful.

About the Author

Born on May 9, 1861 in Bengal, Rabindranath Tagore was a writer, philosopher, educationist, and artist of exceptional talent. He is internationally known for his literary creations as well as his educational ideas. He founded the Santiniketan and, later, Viswabharati University where he practised his educational ideals successfully. Tagore was awarded Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 for his collection of poems, *Gitanjali* which the poet himself translated from Bengali into English around 1911. Known mostly for his poetry, Tagore wrote novels, essays, short stories, travelogues, dramas, and songs. Of his prose, his short stories are widely popular. Tagore breathed his last on August 7, 1941.

About the Story

The story "The Parrot's Training" is a satire on the contemporary education system which tends to promote rote-learning and suppress the student's natural impulses, individuality, and creativity. The story is full of wit, irony, and sarcasm and can be considered a preface to a significant change in the education system.

Glossary

recited : said a piece of literature aloud from memory

scriptures : the holy writings of a religion

hopped : moved by jumping

consume : to eat or drink something

summoned : ordered people to come

cage : a structure made of bars or wires in which birds or animals are kept

gorgeous : very beautiful

ecstasy : a feeling or status of great joy or happiness

burst into tears : began to cry suddenly

substantial : large in amount or value

goldsmith : a person who makes articles of gold

deliberation : careful consideration or discussion

scribes : persons who make copies of writings

manuscripts : documents written by hand, not typed or printed

amazement : feeling of great surprise or wonder

egregiously : exceptionally

furiously : intensely

trim : good order or condition

scrubbing : cleaning something thoroughly by rubbing it hard

deficiency : (plural: deficiencies) a lack of something necessary

fault-finder : (plural: fault-finders) a person who looks for faults in other people work or behaviour

flourished : prospered

testimony : a written or spoken statement of evidence

scarce : not easily obtained and found only in small quantity

gong : (plural: gongs) a metal disc that makes a loud noise when struck with a stick

trumpet : (plural: trumpets) a brass musical instrument played by blowing

cymbal : (plural: cymbals) round brass plate used as musical instrument

tambourine : (plural: tambourines) a round musical instrument like a shallow drum

fife : (plural: fifes)a small high-pitched musical instrument like a flute

barrel-organ : (plural: barrel-organs) a type of musical instrument

bagpipes : a musical instrument played by blowing air into a bag

sire : (archaic) used when addressing a king

mightily : forcefully

immensely : to a very great extent

stupendous : extremely great or large

inanity : foolishness; stupidity

fluttered : (of wings) moved lightly and quickly

reprehensible	: deserving blame or criticism
impertinence	: without respect; rudeness
blacksmith	: a person whose job is to make or repair things made of iron
clipped	: cut something with scissors or shears
forging	: shaping metal by heating it in fire and hammering it
rumour	: a story/information spread by being talked about but may not be true
rustled	: made or caused something to make a dry light sound like paper, leaves
wistful	: full of or expressing sad longing for something that is past or that one cannot have

Choose the correct option:

1. Who built the cage for the bird?

(a) The blacksmith

(b) The Nephews

(c) The goldsmith

(d) The Pundits

2. "Maharaja, have you seen the bird?" Who asks this question to the Raja?

(b) The blacksmith

(d) The fault-finder

(c) One of the nephews

(d) The pundit

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. What kind of cage was built for the bird?

2. What fault did the nephews find with the fault-finders?

3. Why were musical instruments sounded at the gate of the Hall of Learning?

4. Why was the Kotwal honoured?

5. By whom was the news of the bird's death spread?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. How does the author describe the bird?

2. What reason did the pundits suggest for the ignorance of birds?

3. Why did the nephews bring together a crowd of scribes?

4. What is the author's attitude to the method of instructing the bird?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. What message does the author want to convey through the story?

2. Discuss the elements of satire in the story?

A literary genius, it is said, resembles all,

though no one resembles him.

-Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

Mallu and Ballu

Sukhbir Singh

One evening, I visited my friend Balraj at his residence in the old Hyderabad. Ballu and his wife were cordial but a little restive. Knowing them well for over a decade, I couldn't see a possible reason for their unusual unease. Anyway, I soon became oblivious to their discomfort amid the rush of their generous hospitality and serious discussions on a variety of current topics.

Finally I got up to return home before it was too dark as the Osmania University campus where I stayed had little lights and lots of snakes. They were popularly known as 'Professor Snakes' because of their frequent forays into the faculty homes and the staff rooms. But my friend Ballu graciously offered to drive me to my house on his motorbike. At this, his wife became a bit more agitated and finally let the cat out of the bag, saying, 'Come back soon! Don't forget we are going to a movie today.' Ballu boldly promised her, putting his helmet on, 'I'll be back in just five minutes.' I found his false assurance rather strange as it took at least half an hour one way alone to the OU campus from his house. But I kept quiet for my own convenience and wondered how Ballu would explain the delay in his return after an hour.

We both quickly got away towards the campus on Ballu's bike. Just after five minutes of our hasty departure, I remembered to buy a bathing soap and asked Ballu to stop for a minute in front of some wayside store. He soon stopped near a small shop at Chaderghat where it was slightly crowded and somewhat dark. I dashed off to the shop to fetch the soap and returned hurriedly, cutting through the crowd to avoid more delay in Ballu's return to his wife. In the dark, I quietly jumped over the pillion and the bike raced towards the OU campus at an unusual speed.

On reaching Law College, I strangely found the bike speeding past my destination towards Tarnaka. I shouted, 'Stop! Stop! No further. You know it ... I always get down here and walk up to my house.' The bike came to a screeching halt and I promptly jumped off to my feet. As I turned to pay my thanks, the person pushed up his helmet and shouted to me, 'Oh *noooo*! But then where is Mallu?' I was shocked to see he was not Balraj but someone else - a total stranger. I couldn't say anything except to shout back, 'Oh *naaaa*! But then where is Ballu?'

He quickly whirred in reverse and zoomed back towards Chaderghat, leaving a long streak of smoke on the road.

I was amazed by the prophetic assurance of my friend to his anxious wife.

About the Author

Prof. Sukhbir Singh has taught English Literature at Osmania University, Hyderabad for 30 years. He had been a Senior Fulbright Fellow in the U.S. during

1994-95. He holds a doctorate in American literature. His critical and humourous writings have appeared in a number of reputed journals in India and abroad. Presently, he is Professor Emeritus at Osmania University, a Visiting Professor at National law University, Hyderabad, and Chief Vigilance Officer at English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad.

About the Story

The present story has been taken from Prof. Singh's collection of short humourous stories entitled *Humour from Hyderabad*, published in 2014. The story is a beautiful example of the comedy of errors. The narrator by mistake mounts a stranger's motorbike. The stranger, mistaking the narrator for his friend, drives him towards his destination. Eventually, the situation becomes comical and the story ends on a humourous note, when both realise their errors.

Glossary

cordial : pleasant and friendly

restive : unable to be still or quiet

oblivious : not aware of or not noticing something

generous : giving or ready to give freely

hospitality : friendly and generous treatment of guests

forays : sudden attacks

agitated : troubled or excited

put on : to wear/ to dress oneself in something

assurance : a promise

convenience : quality of being suitable

hasty : hurried

dash off : to move suddenly and quickly; to rush

fetch : to go and find out and bring back somebody/something

destination : a place to which somebody/something is going or being sent

screeching : making a harsh, high pitched sound

whirr : to make a continuous low sound as that made by the regular movement of part of a machine

zoom back	: to move back very quickly
streak	: a long thin mark of a line of a different substance or colour from its surroundings
amazed	: filled somebody with great surprise or wonder
prophetic	: describing or showing what will happen in the future
anxious	: feeling worried or nervous

Choose the correct option:

1. Who is Mallu in the story?

(a) Narrator's friend

(b) A stranger

(c) Narrator himself

(d) A professor

2. What does the phrase "let the cat out of the bag" mean?

(a) To allow the cat to go out of the bag

(b) To allow the cat to sit outside the bag

(c) To reveal a secret carelessly or by mistake

(d) To do a mischief secretly

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. Where did the narrator go to meet his friend?

2. What made the narrator unaware of the discomfort of Balraj and his wife?

3. What promise did Ballu make to his wife?

4. Why did the narrator stop at Chaderghat?

5. What was the stranger's response when he realised his mistake?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. Why does the narrator call the snakes of the Osmania University campus "Professor Snakes"?

2. What happened at Chaderghat?

3. What happened at Law College?

4. Why were Balraj and his wife "restive"?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words:

1. What makes the story humourous?

2. Draw the character sketches of the narrator and Balraj.

SECTION-3

FICTIONAL PROSE

DRAMA

(One-Act Plays)

A drama is, in fact, a story intended for performance. A drama is usually a composition in prose, but it may also be in verse. The earliest plays were written in verse form. As a literary form, drama is characterised by imagined characters, dialogues or pantomime, a story involving conflict or contrast of characters. A play is a dramatic composition especially meant for enactment on stage.

Two Blind Men and a Donkey

Mathurin Dondo

CHARACTERS

THE COMEDIAN
THE FIRST BLIND MAN
THE SECOND BLIND MAN
THE DONKEY DRIVER
THE INNKEEPER
THE DONKEY

THE SCENE: *is the public square of a quaint town of medieval France. To the left is shown an inn with the sign of 'The Green Dragon,' and to the right one perceives the shadowy arch of a monumental gate. There is a stone bench by the gate under a little shrine. In the background, we get a glimpse of tortuous streets and protruding gables. As the curtain rises the* TWO BLIND MEN *may be seen standing in their professional attitude, motionless, silent and expectant. Within a short time the* COMEDIAN *enters, and at once the* TWO BLIND MEN *practise their art on him.*

FIRST BLIND MAN [*in a droning whimper*]: Charity, if you please, for the love of God and our Lady, the blessed Virgin Mary.

SECOND BLIND MAN [*in the same tone*]: Charity, if you please, my good people, for sweet mercy's sake in the name of the great Saint Martin, our glorious patron.

FIRST BLIND MAN: Have pity on a poor blind man who lost his sight in battle against the Saracens. Ave Maria .....

[*He mumbles a prayer.*]

SECOND BLIND MAN: Have pity on a poor man born blind who will pray for your soul and for you happiness. Ave Maria ....

[*Same action.*]

COMEDIAN: My good folks, if you ask me for pity, I give it to you from the fullness of my heart. If you ask for money, all I can give, is the blessing of the Lord. I myself am a poor beggar.

FIRST BLIND MAN: You filthy beggar, get away from here.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Away with you. No beggar has a right to stand here.

COMEDIAN: Is it by special privilege of our King that you both claim exclusive right to this place?

FIRST BLIND MAN: I have been doing business on this corner for over thirty years. No one shall dispute me this place.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Since the Pope rode through this gate on his way to Avignon, 1 have not left this spot. Let no beggar interfere with my trade.

COMEDIAN: My friends, I do not pretend to encroach upon your valuable territory. What I told you was all in jest.

FIRST BLIND MAN: You should not mock a poor blind man.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Those who mock the blind shall weep bitterly.

COMEDIAN: I am a jester by profession and cannot help my little jest, but God forbid, my words convey no mockery. Pray tell me, good friends, can you recommend a good inn in this town?

FIRST BLIND MAN: There is an inn on the corner good enough for a king.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Noble lords and rich merchants feast daily at the sign of 'The Green Dragon'.

COMEDIAN: 'The Green Dragon' is then not unworthy of serving a comedian of my reputation. But, my dear friends, I confess that my purse is just not as flat as my stomach, and both need refilling. I shall trust to my wits and to your good prayers, and, with the help of God, may 'The Green Dragon' be kind and propitious.

[*The* COMEDIAN *goes* out]

FIRST BLIND MAN: Pierre!

SECOND BLIND MAN: What?

FIRST BLIND MAN: Have you made a few pennies?

SECOND BLIND MAN: Not a farthing. And you?

FIRST BLIND MAN: Nothing. And I have been standing in this place since early Mass.

SECOND BLIND MAN: I am hungry. It must be dinner time.

FIRST BLIND MAN: For me it is rather breakfast time. I haven't tasted a morsel today.

SECOND BLIND MAN: 'Tis dinner time, I say. It begins to smell good at the inn over there.

FIRST BLIND MAN: Yes, it smells like roast goose.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Suppose we draw near, we can better relish its flavour.

FIRST BLIND MAN: Yes, let's go nearer. Go first Pierre. You have a surer nose than I.

[*They draw near the inn.*]

SECOND BLIND MAN [*taking a deep sniff*]: Um... ah!... this is the cabbage soup. How does it suit your taste?

FIRST BLIND MAN [*sniffing*]: Um...ah... 'Tis just the kind I like.

SECOND BLIND MAN [*imitating someone who laps up his soup*]: Ah! it does me good. It goes straight to the heart.

FIRST BLIND MAN [*in the same way*]: Ah! Isn't that fine! It is not every day that one tastes soup like that.

SECOND BLIND MAN: No, verily.

[*They continue their imaginary lapping for a while.*]

SECOND BLIND MAN: Enough of the soup, here comes the goose.

[*He sniffs violently.*]

FIRST BLIND MAN: I have not done yet with my soup.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Now for the goose, do you hear? If you care for any, you had better hurry.

FIRST BLIND MAN: [*sniffs strongly, deep sighs of delight between each draught*].

SECOND BLIND MAN [*does the same*]: Stuffed goose.

FIRST BLIND MAN: Stuffed?

SECOND BLIND MAN: Yes, with chestnuts. Haven't you got a nose?

FIRST BLIND MAN [*sniffing*]: You are right. Chestnuts.

SECOND BLIND MAN [*smacking his tongue*]: Niam, niam… Taste that, I tell you.

FIRST BLIND MAN [*same way*]: Niam, niam.... Zounds! I wager that the Pope never tasted the like.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Here, old man, be not so greedy. You're getting more than your share, it is not right.

[*Sound of footsteps.]*

FIRST BLIND MAN: Someone is coming. Eh, Pierre, a client!

[*The* TWO BLIND MEN *resume their begging attitude.*]

SECOND BLIND MAN: Charity, if you please, for sweet mercy's sake in the name of Saint Martin our most blessed patron.

FIRST BLIND MAN: Charity, if you please, in the name of our Lord and the Holy Virgin.

[*The* DONKEY enters *through the City Gate and steps towards the* BLIND MEN]

SECOND BLIND MAN: Have pity on a poor blind man who will pray for your soul and your good health.

FIRST BLIND MAN: Have pity on a poor blind man who will pray to the Lord to bless your children and grandchildren.

[The DONKEY *approaches the* FIRST BLIND MAN, *stops, and licks his outstretched hand.*]

FIRST BLIND MAN: Thank you, my good lady, may God requite you!

[*The* FIRST BLIND MAN, on *feeling the* DONKEY, *pushes him with his stick. The beast goes to the next man and acts in the same way.*]

SECOND BLIND MAN: Thank you, my child, God's blessing be on you.

[*Same movements. The* DONKEY *walks off and goes out to the right.*]

FIRST BLIND MAN: Pierre!

SECOND BLIND MAN: Well?

FIRST BLIND MAN: You have been caught.

SECOND BLIND MAN: So have you.

FIRST BLIND MAN: You couldn't see through it.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Neither could you.

FIRST BLIND MAN: What was it?

SECOND BLIND MAN: 'Twas a cow.

FIRST BLIND MAN: You idiot, 'twas a dog.

SECOND BLIND MAN: It's a cow, I tell you.

FIRST BLIND MAN: Cow yourself, I tell you it's a dog.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Dog yourself. You are more stupid than you are blind. You couldn't distinguish your nose from your thigh.

FIRST BLIND MAN: You threefold idiot, tell me if you can distinguish my stick from my boot?

[*Both sticks strike the air, right and left, and the following could be heard — each speaking alternately.*]

FIRST AND SECOND BLIND MEN: Take that... take this ... filthy … scabby ... thief... cheat... pagan... devil...

[*The* DONKEY'S *powerful braying is heard. The* TWO BLIND MEN *stop fighting.*]

FIRST BLIND MAN: A donkey!

SECOND BLIND MAN: A donkey!

FIRST BLIND MAN: I knew quite well it was a donkey.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Egad, anybody would know it was a donkey.

FIRST BLIND MAN: I had only been joking.

SECOND BLIND MAN: I pretended that I did not know.

FIRST BLIND MAN: Whoever deceives me must be pretty sharp.

SECOND BLIND MAN: And cleverer still who gulls me.

[*Steps are heard. The* BLIND MEN *resume their begging*.]

FIRST BLIND MAN: Charity, if you please, for the love of God and his blessed mother, the Virgin Mary.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Charity, if you please, for the love of God and our glorious Saint Martin.

FIRST BLIND MAN: Ave Maria . . . *etc.*

SECOND BLIND MAN: Ave Maria . . . *etc.*

[*The* DONKEY DRIVER *enters through the city gate and comes towards the* BLIND MEN]

DONKEY DRIVER: Good day, my friends. Have you perchance seen a donkey pass this way?

FIRST BLIND MAN: My good sir, I am a poor blind man. Charity, if you please, for the love of God.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Have pity on a poor man born blind who will pray for your soul.

DONKEY DRIVER: Oh, I must change my wording. Have you perchance heard a donkey pass by here a little while ago?

FIRST BLIND MAN: There passes many a beast through this place, my good sir.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Beasts of all ranks and sorts pass by here, and we poor blind cannot always distinguish them.

DONKEY DRIVER: If you can tell me in what direction my donkey has gone, I will give you a generous reward.

FIRST BLIND MAN: Sure enough, my master, your donkey passed this way…

SECOND BLIND MAN: I noticed him first.

FIRST BLIND MAN: No, you didn't, it is I.

SECOND BLIND MAN: He lies. I heard him first. He could not distinguish a donkey from an elephant.

DONKEY DRIVER: Do not quarrel, my good people. You shall both have a share in the reward. Tell me, which way did my beast go?

FIRST BLIND MAN [*pointing to the right*]: This way, my lord.

SECOND BLIND MAN [*pointing to the opposite direction]:* This way, my prince.

DONKEY DRIVER: How long since?

FIRST BLIND MAN: Oh, fully a half an hour ago.

SECOND BLIND MAN: A half an hour! He does not know what he is saying. Five minutes, my prince. I would lie if I said one minute more or less. Five minutes, my prince.

[*The* DONKEY *is heard braying*.]

DONKEY DRIVER: Very well, my friends, thank you. I have promised you a reward. Here, take this. It is a fine gold ducat. [*Turns his back to them and gives them nothing.*] Share this between you!

FIRST BLIND MAN: Thank you, my lord, thank you. May God give it back to you a hundredfold.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Thank you, my glorious prince, may God bless you.

[*The* DONKEY DRIVER *goes out*.]

FIRST BLIND MAN: May all the saints of heaven give you protection.
Ave Maria ...

SECOND BLIND MAN: I shall pray to the Lord for the salvation of your soul. Ave Maria ...

[*A pause*]

FIRST BLIND MAN: Pierre!

SECOND BLIND MAN: What?

FIRST BLIND MAN: Suppose we go there?

SECOND BLIND MAN: Where?

FIRST BLIND MAN: To the inn.

SECOND BLIND MAN: To 'The Green Dragon'?

FIRST BLIND MAN: Of course

SECOND BLIND MAN: To eat the goose?

FIRST BLIND MAN: Yes, the stuffed goose.

SECOND BLIND MAN: To eat for fair.

FIRST BLIND MAN: Naturally for fair, to eat your fill, to eat with your mouth and not only with your nose.

SECOND BLIND MAN:And shall we have a drink?

FIRST BLIND MAN: We shall have a drink and a good one, too.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Look here, old man, that will cost us dear.

FIRST BLIND MAN: What of it, we have the money.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Yes, we have a goodly sum, a ducat. For a ducat we can feast. You bet there is enough *to guzzle and guttle.* Once in a lifetime, that is not too often.

FIRST BLIND MAN: We shall eat like princes.

SECOND BLIND MAN: And drink like bishops.

[*The* TWO BLIND MEN *enter the inn and disappear. Enter* the DONKEY DRIVER *with the* DONKEY. *He walks towards the inn, pulling his animal by the halter and bursting into laughter at each step.*]

DONKEY DRIVER: Gittup, you blockhead, gittup. Hi, hi, ha, ha ho, ho. What a fine trick I played on those blind men! Ha, ha, ho, ho. They imagine I gave them a ducat, hi, hi! Gittup you ass, gittup. I gave them nothing, not even a penny. They have gone to the inn, I'll wager, and ordered a good dinner. I'll go in myself and enjoy the fun. Hi, hi! ... It will be interesting to watch them get their bill. Ho, ho! Gittup. I'll tie you up here while I go inside and watch the fun.

[*He ties the* DONKEY to *the hitching post and disappears into the inn. The* COMEDIAN *enters.*]

COMEDIAN: It is a fine joke and cleverly played. From my shaded seat under the gate I have witnessed the little comedy, and I declare that this donkey driver is an artist of great merit. Ladies and gentlemen, I am a comedian, a wandering comedian, and have travelled in all the provinces of France and Navarre. But I must confess that a merrier farce was never played. This donkey driver has won my full admiration, and now, ladies and gentlemen, with your kind permission, I shall make him the hero of a farce of my own. [*He draws near the* DONKEY and *pets the animal while addressing it.*] Nice donkey, pretty donkey! [*The* DONKEY *shows signs of animosity.*] Here, here, be a good boy, little brother. Don't you think we look alike, just a little? [*The* DONKEY nods his *head.*] Yes, you said it. There is a family likeness between us, a little air of shrewdness, I warrant. As I love you, 1 am going to give you an opportunity to change your diet. You're as lean as I am, yes, you are. Working too hard? [*The* DONKEY *nods his head in affirmation.*] And not much to eat? [The DONKEY *shakes his head.*] Just like me. Wait but a moment, my little brother, if I am not mistaken your fate shall be improved. [*The* INNKEEPER *appears on the doorstep and calls out to the* BLIND MEN *inside.*]

INNKEEPER: If you don't pay at once, I'll call the police!

[*Through the open door of the inn, the* TWO BLIND MEN are *heard quarrelling.*]

FIRST BLIND MAN: It is you who got the ducat, you thief.

SECOND BLIND MAN: You're a liar. He gave it to you. I am sure of it. Pay, you rascal, do you want us to go to jail?

FIRST BLIND MAN: You pay yourself, bandit, or I'll thrash you.

SECOND BLIND MAN: I'll knock your head off first, if you don't give that ducat.

[*Blows, cries, general scramble.* INNKEEPER *shuts the door of the inn and runs across the stage in great excitement.*]

INNKEEPER: Police, police! Thief, thief, police!

COMEDIAN: What is the matter?

INNKEEPER: Go and call a policeman, quick, quick. There are two thieves in my inn, two blind men. They ordered a big dinner with wine and now they refuse to pay.

COMEDIAN: Don't get excited, master, you shall be paid for your dinner. How much do they owe you?

INNKEEPER: A ducat, sir, they owe me a ducat. They ate a whole goose and drank two bottles of my best wine.

COMEDIAN: A ducat? Bah, that is a mere trifle. I take it upon myself to reimburse you.

INNKEEPER: Really? You are too kind, sir. They do not deserve it. They're two bandits, thieves they are and they ought to be hanged.

COMEDIAN: Listen, master. You see this fine donkey. How much is it worth to you?

INNKEEPER: I don't care for your donkey. I want to be paid for my dinner.

COMEDIAN: Gently, my friend, gently. By all the saints of the calendar, your dinner shall be paid for. But, I say, here is a fine-looking beast. You could not find its like in the whole kingdom of France.

INNKEEPER: Indeed, a sorrier-looking beast it would be hard to find anywhere,

COMEDIAN: Ah, my dear sir, I pray you, do not judge this animal by its outward appearance. By my faith, it is a most wonderful creature. I know many a man who does not come up to it in intelligence. Would you believe it, sir? That donkey can churn butter.

INNKEEPER [*in a crescendo of admiration*]: Is that so?

COMEDIAN: Yes, sir. And sing the baby to sleep.

INNKEEPER: Is that so?

COMEDIAN: Yes, sir. And draw water from the well.

INNKEEPER: Is that so?

COMEDIAN: Yes, sir. And keep the beggars away.

INNKEEPER: Is that so?

COMEDIAN: Yes, sir. And protect you from the plague.

INNKEEPER: Is that so?

COMEDIAN: Yes, sir. Now watch him. [*The* DONKEY *wags his tail.*] See him wag his tail? That means: 'Look out, master, someone is trying to cheat you.'

INNKEEPER: Those two rogues of blind men!

COMEDIAN: Perhaps so, sir. Watch him again. Do you see his head shaking wisely? [*The* DONKEY *shakes his head.*] That means: 'Beware, some young man is paying attention to your wife.'

INNKEEPER: That young scholar again, I wager. I always distrusted that blond pup. I'll make him pay for it.

COMEDIAN: Yes, sir, this donkey is almost human. I would not sell him for any amount of money, not even for his weight in gold. For that would be a sin. I have made the vow of poverty. I have renounced all worldly possessions as I am on my way to enter the monastery. What shall I do with my beloved donkey? I cannot give him away to the first stranger for fear the precious animal might be ill-treated. But here I find you, you with a noble, gentle and generous soul. You are the man who can understand my donkey, treat him with kindness and value his services. Take him, sir, he is yours. I give him away for charity's sake. He will more than pay for the blind men's dinners.

INNKEEPER: Do you really wish to give the beast away?

COMEDIAN: He is yours for the taking.

INNKEEPER: I'll take him. Rest assured that I'll take good care of him. But look here, won't you come in and have dinner? I have some fine roast goose today, and my wine is not to be despised. I'll give you of my best.

COMEDIAN: You know, kind sir, that I am bound to fasting and abstinence, but just to please you, I accept your invitation.

INNKEEPER: Well, my friend, come in, come in! I want you to taste one of my old bottles.

COMEDIAN: Allow me first to put the donkey in your stable. This beast is so attached to me that, if I venture a step away from him, he starts braying nigh enough to split your head. So it is best, you understand, to put him away at once and then we won't be disturbed. Where is your stable?

INNKEEPER: In the rear to your right. Hurry up, I am going to serve you a good hot dinner at once. [*The* COMEDIAN goes out *with the* DONKEY. *The* INNKEEPER *opens the door of the inn and calls out from the steps to the* BLIND MEN]. Begone from here! [*The* TWO BLIND MEN stumble out.] Give thanks to the Lord for having sent a generous soul to pay for your dinners, but don't ever set foot in my house again. Be off, hurry along.

FIRST BLIND MAN: Thank you, sir, may the Lord requite you.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Thank you, master, thank you, may the Lord reward you.

[*The* INNKEEPER *re-enters the inn.*]

FIRST BLIND MAN: Pierre, tell me the truth, you have the ducat, confess it.

SECOND BLIND MAN: I told you a hundred times, I haven't got it. He gave it to you, thief that you are.

FIRST BLIND MAN: Now, now, haven't we had enough of quarrelling?

SECOND BLIND MAN: Yes, and enough of thrashing.

FIRST BLIND MAN: You nearly split my head.

SECOND BLIND MAN: You nearly broke my back.

FIRST BLIND MAN: Now, then, let's have peace.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Yes, peace.

FIRST BLIND MAN: We have dined well, we need calm to digest well.

SECOND BLIND MAN: You are right, let us keep calm. Anyway, I dislike discussions after a good dinner.

FIRST BLIND MAN: Let's go over there and sit on the bench.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Yes, let us sit down.

[*The* TWO BLIND MEN *withdraw underneath the gate. The* COMEDIAN enters, puts *his head in the halter, ties himself to the* ring *in the post, and stations himself there motionless, his head bowed, facing the wall of the inn.*]

DONKEY DRIVER [*appears at the door, convulsed with laughter*]: Hi, hi, ha, ha, ho, ho.

COMEDIAN [*Imitating the braying of a donkey*]: Hee, haw!

DONKEY DRIVER [turning around at the noise]: My donkey, where is my donkey? Escaped again?

COMEDIAN [*braying once more*]: Hee, haw!

DONKEY DRIVER: Are you making fun of me? Where is my beast?

COMEDIAN [in a *hypocritical tone of voice*]: My good master, do not be angry. God's will be done! I am your donkey.

DONKEY DRIVER: Hey, what? Are you crazy?

COMEDIAN: For mercy's sake, listen to me, my venerable master. I am your donkey, but by the grace of God, I have become a man again.

DONKEY DRIVER: Mercy on me! What do I hear? Am I being punished for having mocked the poor?

COMEDIAN: My excellent master, I shall relate to you my lamentable story. May God pardon me! When I was living with my mother, I was very wicked and disobedient. I would never do what my dear mother wished. My days were spent in gambling and drinking, while my poor mother nigh killed herself with work. At last, my dear mother lost patience with me and put me out of her house and threw this curse upon me. 'Begone,' she said, 'leave my house. You are but an ass. Go and live among the asses. Go and live and work like an ass for five years, five months, five days, five hours.' And the curse fell upon me and I at once changed into an ass. For five years, five months, five days and five hours, I have lived and worked like a donkey. But at this very moment the term of the malediction has expired, and I have changed back into my human form. God be praised!

DONKEY DRIVER: Holy Mary! Is it possible? I had you for six months as a donkey and I never suspected you were a man.

COMEDIAN: Six months in your service, true enough. And I thank you for your kind treatment. I beg your pardon if at times I have been a bit stubborn.

DONKEY DRIVER: It is I who ask your pardon for having beaten you so often. But how was I to know? Why didn't you inform me that you were a man?

COMEDIAN: That could not be. However, you have shown yourself very kind to me, more so than I deserved, and I hope that we may separate as friends.

DONKEY DRIVER: Certainly, certainly, we shall remain good friends. Do come to my house, there will be a good dinner for you.

COMEDIAN: I beg to be excused. I must be off on a pilgrimage to Rome to receive my absolution from our most Holy Father, and I must fast until the end of my journey.

DONKEY DRIVER: Here, take this little change. It may be of use to you on your long journey. Take it.

[*Gives him some money.*]

COMEDIAN: I thank you, my good master. May God requite you! [*Suddenly begins to bray.*] Hee, haw!

DONKEY DRIVER: Heavens, what is happening now?

COMEDIAN: It is nothing. Only a habit of my donkey life. I shall have some difficulty in getting rid of it, but in time, it will pass. Good-bye, my dear master.

DONKEY DRIVER: Good-bye, my friend. May the Lord take care of you!

[*The* DONKEY DRIVER *goes out. The* TWO BLIND MEN *who had been mute witnesses to this scene draw near and join in the braying*.]

FIRST BLIND MAN, **SECOND BLIND MAN**, **COMEDIAN** [*in turn*]: Hee, haw!

COMEDIAN: My friends, I beg your indulgence for having made an ass of myself. I am indebted to you for recommending to my attention the inn of 'The Green Dragon.' The goose was excellent, the wine unequalled. And now I shall leave you to ply your flourishing trade by this gate, for I must wander on, to show my wits and follies throughout the land of *la belle France.*

CURTAIN

About the Playwright

Born of Breton stock on March 8, 1884 at Lorient, France, Mathurin Dondo lived a life of warm relationships, literature, and learning. Dondo had wide interests in the arts and scholarship. He was a talented amateur painter. He published much admired poetry in French and English. During his earlier years, he was a master- puppeteer and wrote several plays of which *Two Blind Men and a Donkey* has been widely applauded. He died on August 30, 1968.

About the Play

The playwright has constructed a comedy artfully around the story of the fooling of the owner of a donkey. It is amusing to see how the donkey driver who has an acrid sense of humour gets his just deserts.

Glossary

quaint	: attractive because being unusual or old-fashioned
Virgin Mary	: mother of Jesus Christ
Saint Martin	: a Christian saint of the fourth century
patron	: a person who gives money or support to a person, organisation, or cause
Saracens	: combat in the seventh crusade by France's King Louis IX to recapture the Holy city of Jerusalem

Ave Maria	: a prayer to the Virgin Mary
jester	: (formerly) a man whose job was to make jokes to amuse a royal court
propitious	: giving or indicating a good chance of success; favourable
pennies	: (plural of penny), a penny (or British pence) was a British coin and unit of money
farthing	: a former British coin worth one quarter of an old penny
morsel	: a small amount or piece of food
roast goose	: the flesh of the goose (a bird like a large duck) cooked in an oven
to have a surer nose	: to be able to smell something quickly and accurately
chestnuts	: any of various types of tree producing smooth brown nuts
wager	: to be so confident that something is true or will happen that one would be willing to bet money on it
filthy	: dirty
scabby	: covered with scabs (a scab is a hard dry covering that forms over a wound as it heals
Pagan	: a person who does not believe in any religion (formerly, a person who did not believe in Christianity
gull	: seagull
ducat	: a gold coin formerly current in most European countries
guzzle and guttle	: to eat and drink something very quickly or in large amounts
gitt up	: get up
ass	: donkey
farce	: a funny play based on ridiculous and unlikely situations & events
bandit	: a member of an armed gang that robs people
wag	: to move or make a part of one's body move quickly
monastery	: a building in which monks live as a community

stable : a building in which horses are kept and fed

malediction : prayer or curse that something bad may happen to somebody

Choose the correct option:

1. Where were the Two Blind Men begging?

(a) At the "The Green Dragon"

(b) Outside the City Gate

(c) Inside a stable

(d) At a public square

2. Whom does the First Blind Man call "filthy beggar"?

(a) The Second Blind Man

(b) The Donkey Driver

(c) The Comedian

(d) The Innkeeper

3. Who promises to pay for the Two Blind Men's dinner?

(a) The Donkey Driver

(b) Pierre

(c) The Innkeeper

(d) The Comedian

4. How many characters are there in the play?

(a) Seven

(b) Five

(c) Three

(d) Six

5. To whom does the Comedian say: "And I thank you for your kind treatment."

(a) The First Blind Man

(b) The Second Blind Man

(c) The Donkey Driver

(d) The Innkeeper

6. The Innkeeper says, "Rest assured that I'll take good care of him." Whom does "him" refer to here?

(a) The Donkey Driver

(b) The First Blind Man

(c) The Donkey

(d) The Comedian

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. Where is 'The Green Dragon' situated?

2. What does the Comedian say to introduce himself to the Two Blind Men?

3. Why does the Innkeeper threaten to call the police?

4. Where does the Comedian put the donkey?

5. How do the Two Blind Men recognise the donkey?

6. Why are the Two Blind Men annoyed with the Comedian?

7. Why do the Two Blind Men go to 'The Green Dragon'?

8. Where do the events of the play take place?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. What trick does the Donkey Driver play upon the Two Blind Men?

2. What trick does the Comedian play upon the Donkey Driver?

3. Why do the Two Blind Men quarrel with each other second time in the play?

4. Point out two instances of dramatic irony in the play.

5. Who speaks the following words, to whom and why?

"It is nothing. Only a habit of my donkey life. I shall have some difficulty in getting rid of it, But in time, it will pass."

6. Comment on the appropriateness of the title of the play.

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. Discuss the central theme of the play.

2. Do you agree that the play would not have been possible without the Comedian? Give reasons for your answer.

3. Do you think the Donkey Driver really deserved his comeuppance? Justify your answer.

4. Explain the following passage with reference to the context:

This donkey driver has won my full admiration, and now, ladies and gentlemen, with your kind permission, I shall make him the hero of a farce of my own.

I learned the value of hard

work by working hard.

-Margaret Mead

The Phoenix

Abhijit Sircar

CHARACTERS

MANAB
COMPUTER
BIDHU
JOY
DADDY

(*The curtain rises in darkness. We see a TV screen with a graphics display which is distorted due to interference. As the light comes up we can see a TV console with a computer terminal at back center stage. A bed is in front of the console, across the stage and has a variety of objects strewn on it. On the left edge of the bed is the Android Bidhu with his head on the bed and body and feet limply on the ground. A carelessly thrown shirt covers his head. Right front is a table with a chair behind it. The table has a variety of odds and ends of an electronic hobbyist. The whole place looks unkempt and dank. Manab is seated in an armchair at left front.*)

MANAB (*In a monotonous voice*): On this day. 20th of August in the year 2004, I, Manab Roy, jack of all trades, declare myself the last man on earth. (*Looks at computer console.*) Any comment?

COMPUTER (*The voice of the computer is dispassionate and mechanical, but the tone and pronunciations are that of a human*): According to my evaluation, there are still five thousand four hundred and twenty nine units of human life surviving.

MANAB: You don't say? Well, where are they? I've been living in this basement for the last ten years. Every week I have to go out to forage for food and fuel. I haven't seen anyone.

COMPUTER: It is correct that you are the last man in Calcutta.

MANAB: There you are.

COMPUTER: But not in the world.

MANAB: Calcutta-world-what does it matter? Nobody can contact anyone. There's no transport. No electricity. No food. No drinkable water. Nothing. How could anyone survive?

COMPUTER: You have survived.

MANAB: Yes I have. Like a rat. Staying underground, living on tinned food. Vandalising petrol pumps to get fuel for the generator.

COMPUTER: But you have survived.

MANAB: Yes, I've been lucky.

COMPUTER: So why not others?

MANAB: Oh, you're saying that to cheer me up. It won't work.

COMPUTER: I am a computer. I cannot lie.

MANAB: (*Shaking his head disbelievingly*): You aren't just any computer. You are THE Computer. How do I know that you haven't learned to lie?

COMPUTER: You have to take my word for it.

MANAB: There you are, you have no proof. Why should I trust you? I don't know why I set up this communication link just to listen to your drivel!

COMPUTER: You need company.

MANAB: I have Bidhu.

COMPUTER: Bidhu is unintelligent and inoperative.

MANAB: Okay, he's inoperative for the time being, but he won't be once I've finished working on him.

COMPUTER: You have tried hundreds of times. He still remains unintelligent.

MANAB: One of these days, I'll get him right.

COMPUTER: Why do you still refuse to contact the other survivors? You know your skills will be useful to them.

MANAB: I told you I know I'm the last man on earth. I refuse to listen to your nonsense any more. (*He goes and shuts the computer link off. The graphics display disappears. Manab begins to tinker with Bidhu, getting into various odd positions to do so. Finally satisfied, he hauls Bidhu and sits him in the armchair. This is difficult since Bidhu is quite heavy. Bidhu remains limp. Manab presses behind Bidhu's neck. Bidhu sits up straight with a jerk*.) Android x219, start procedure for activation.

BIDHU (*Mechanically*): Activation procedure starting now. *(He makes various jerky movements with his arms, legs and head. His right leg appears to be stiff.)* All system operative, slight malfunction in right extremity, system capable of compensating for defect.

MANAB: Oh no! You mean you're going to limp all over the place again?

BIDHU: Affirmative.

MANAB: Well, it can't be helped. Carry on with the activation procedure.

BIDHU: All systems go. Personality programme running now. Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one, zero. Run complete. (*Bidhu gets up. He is still somewhat mechanical in movement but his voice is human: the voice of a cheerful fool.*) Hello, Boss. What do you want me to do?

MANAB: For a start you can clean up the kitchen.

BIDHU: Okay, Boss. (*Limps towards right, looks confused, gives a silly grin to Manab and finally goes out through left*.)

MANAB (*Looking at the computer*): Inoperative, huh?

(*A loud crash of pots and pans is heard offstage*).

Oh, no! (*Looks furtively at the computer*)
Bidhu, what are you doing?

BIDHU (*off stage*): Cleaning the kitchen Boss! But it's hard to do it blind.

MANAB: Blind?

BIDHU (*Enters with a saucepan over his head covering his eyes*): This fell off the rack, Boss.

MANAB: Then for goodness' sake take it off!

BIDHU (*Removes saucepan from head and gives his silly grin*): Hey, I never thought of that! I can see now, Boss!

MANAB (*disgusted*)*:* Idiot!

BIDHU: Yes, Boss. (*Limps out through left again*.)

MANAB: (*Comes forward*): Ten years! ten years with that stupid tin can. And now that lying computer! I'm going crazy! (*Checks himself. Looks at the computer, hesitates and then finally goes and turns it on. The distorted graphics display is seen again*.)

COMPUTER: Thank you for making contact again, Manab.

MANAB: I don't want to listen to lies again.

COMPUTER: They are not lies.

MANAB: Forget it. What's the temperature like outside?

COMPUTER: In Calcutta it is 13 degrees Celsius, in London it is 30 degrees Celsius, in "New York...

MANAB: Who asked you all that?

COMPUTER: I thought you might be interested.

MANAB: Tell me, can you see the sun?

COMPUTER: I can.

MANAB: Of course, stupid. You are in space. I mean, is it visible from earth?

COMPUTER: No. Not yet.

MANAB: God! Ten years without the sun! (*Turns to the computer*) Look. I'm fine. Perfectly okay. Don't you start gloating.

COMPUTER: A Computer cannot gloat. I have news for you. I detect a life form very near your place. It was not there before.

MANAB: Oh no! There you go again!

COMPUTER: It seems to be small and young. A boy - definitely not dangerous.

MANAB (*In spite of himself*): A boy?

COMPUTER: Yes, he looks about eleven or twelve.

MANAB (*Shaking his head*): Oh no! You won't catch me that way. I'm on to you.

COMPUTER: I have made contact. I am directing him to your place.

MANAB (*Furious*): Damn you! *(viciously turns the computer off)* Bidhu!

BIDHU (*offstage*): Yes Boss?

MANAB: Come here.

BIDHU (*limps in*): You want breakfast, Boss?

MANAB (*looking at his watch*): It's past seven in the evening now!

BIDHU: Sorry Boss.
MANAB: Will you stop saying Boss!
BIDHU: Yes Boss. I mean no Boss. That is O-okay.
MANAB: Okay what?
BIDHU: I won't say Boss, Boss.
MANAB (*Disgusted*): The computer is right. You're stupid, good for nothing hunk of metal.
BIDHU: Yes Bo... (*stops*)
MANAB (*Interested*): Hey! That's not bad, you stopped yourself.
BIDHU: Stopped what, Boss?
MANAB (*Gives up*): Never mind. I was expecting too much.
BIDHU: Shall I make dinner then, Boss?
MANAB: No! I'm not hungry. You'll spoil it anyway. (*A banging is heard from right stage. Manab does not seem to hear it.*)
BIDHU: Somebody knocking, Boss.
MANAB (*Mimicking*): Somebody knocking, Boss! Have you ever heard anybody knocking in this last ten years?
BIDHU (*Thinks. Shakes his head*): No, Boss.
MANAB: Then how do you know it's someone knocking? It could be a building collapsing for all you know.
BIDHU (*Listens*): I still think there's somebody outside.
MANAB (*Sarcastically*): You think! With what?
BIDHU: Shall I open the door?
MANAB: Okay, I'll humour you. Go have your hallucinations. (*Bidhu limps out to right*) Now my menagerie is complete! I've an android gone cuckoo! (*During this dialogue he goes and lies down on the bed with his head facing right. He has his arm across his eyes. Bidhu enters with Joy. He is about eleven or twelve. He carries a duffle coat over one arm and a rucksack on the other. His clothes are shabby and he is shivering with cold.*)
JOY (*Removing rucksack and keeping it near the head of the bed*): You are an android?
BIDHU: Yes, little Boss.
JOY: I've never seen an android before!
MANAB: (*without taking his arm off his eyes*): Talking to yourself. Bidhu?
BIDHU: No Boss, little Boss is here.
MANAB (*Eyes still covered*): Who?
BIDHU: I said little Boss, Boss.
MANAB (*Eyes still covered*): I heard you the first time. Listen, I'll have to deactivate you if you carry on like this.
JOY: Who is he?
BIDHU: He's Boss, little Boss.

JOY: What does Boss mean? (*Joy's attention goes to the computer link. He goes towards it and studies it. Manab takes his arm away from his eyes, sits up and looks at Bidhu. He doesn't notice who is behind him now*.)

BIDHU: Boss means - Boss means - (*Turns to Manab*) What does Boss mean, Boss?

MANAB (*Getting up and moving with deliberation towards Bidhu*)*:* Boss means you've a stuck circuit somewhere. I'll scream if I hear you say Boss once more. (*Reaches behind Bidhu's neck and presses. Bidhu totters and collapses. Due to his position, his head touches the table right front stage with his feet sticking out on the ground to its right. Manab gets down on his knees and tinkers with Bidhu around his chest area. He still has not seen Joy. Manab goes on talking to himself.*) Just my luck - stuck with this stupid android -

JOY (*Interested, moves towards Manab*): What are you doing?

MANAB (*Startled, looks towards Bidhu's* mouth): Are you still activated? (*Checks*) No! Then who is talking? (*Shrugs. Goes back below Bidhu*)

JOY (*coming nearer*): Is he dead?

MANAB (*Looking straight in front and gradually standing up moving towards right front stage*)*:* I'm perfectly fine. I'm not crazy. I just need some rest.

JOY: Why are you talking to yourself?

MANAB (*Very cautiously looks behind to see Joy and immediately looks forward again*)*:* God! It is contagious! Now I'm hallucinating. (*Not looking at Joy*) Go-Go away. You don't exist.

JOY: Do you know where my daddy is?

MANAB: It seems this aberration only asks questions.

JOY: Daddy went out a week ago. He hasn't come back. I finished all the water we had. I'm thirsty.

MANAB: Thank goodness, it's stopped asking questions.

JOY: May I have a drink of water, please?

(*Manab looks at Joy for some time, then he moves towards him and gingerly touches his face but pulls back his hand quickly. Joy flinches at the touch but stands steady.*)

MANAB: I don't know if I'm hallucinating or not but - Dear God! I think it really is another human being. (*Without looking at Bidhu*) Bidhu, go get some water. (*Bidhu of course remains deactivated. Manab looks back*) Oh hell! Wait, I'll get you some. (*Exits left while talking excitedly*) Stay right there. I'll be right back.

(*Joy moves to Bidhu and tries to raise him, but finds him too heavy. Manab enters with a glass of water. Joy moves away from Bidhu with a guilty movement*)

Here you are. (*Joy drinks the offered water thirstily*) You want some more?

JOY (*Shakes his head to indicate no*)*:* Thank you. (*Points to Bidhu*) Will he talk again?

MANAB: Of course. All he needs is a little adjustment. (*Goes towards right and looks at Bidhu, lost in thought*)

(*Joy goes back to the bed, opens his rucksack and begins to empty it, taking out a few tins of canned food and other odds and ends. Lastly he draws out a Swiss pen knife set. Exactly at that movement Manab turns and looks at him*)

MANAB: What's that?

JOY (*Startled*): What? (*Looks down*) Oh this! It's a pen knife.

MANAB: I know that. (*Moves to Joy and squats beside him*) But if I'm seeing right it's a Swiss Army knife.

JOY: It's Daddy's. We open our food cans with it.

MANAB: Does it have a Philips screwdriver?

JOY: What's that?

MANAB: Let's see. (*Takes knife from Joy and finds what he's looking for*) It's here! Dear God! I've needed one for so long. (*Moves towards Bidhu with the knife*)

JOY (*Following him*): Here! Give it back. It's my Daddy's.

MANAB (*Turning around*): I'm not taking it. I only want to use it for some time.

JOY (*Childishly*): No, I want it back.

MANAB: Listen, you want to hear Bidhu talking again, don't you?

JOY (*Pointing at Bidhu*): You mean him? Yes, I do.

MANAB: Then I need this thing (*Holds up the Philips screwdriver*) to tighten up his loose screws.

JOY (*Reluctantly*): All right.

(*Manab takes the knife set and tinkers with Bidhu. Finally he is satisfied. He asks Joy to bring the chair on the left of the table and then moves Bidhu to it*)

MANAB: Android x 219: Start procedure for activation.

BIDHU (*Mechanically*): Activation procedure starting now. (*He makes the same movement as the first time, only now there is no stiffness in the right leg*). All systems operative.

MANAB: Yes, yes, I know all that. Carry on.

BIDHU: All systems go. Personality programme running now. Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one, zero, Run complete (*Suddenly collapses in the chair. Manab leans forward concerned. Bidhu looks up vacantly*) Where am I? (*His voice sounds more intelligent).*

MANAB (*Collapsing on bed*): Oh, no! What have I done?

JOY (*To Bidhu*): You are home.

BIDHU (*Puzzled*): Home?

JOY (*To Manab*): What's happened to him? (*Manab doesn't seem to hear. Joy moves to the bed and faces him*) What's happened to him?

MANAB: I don't know. I'm not an expert, (*Bitterly*) I'm only a jack of all trades. (*Bidhu gets up and walks about vaguely, picking up articles, looking at them in a puzzled way and putting them back. He is no longer limping though. Manab looks at him meditatively.*) Well, at least he is not limping any more. He seems to be harmless enough. (*Loses interest in Bidhu*) He wasn't much

use anyway. I only activated him when I felt lonely. (*Deliberately changes topic*) So how did you get here?

JOY: A light brought me.

MANAB: A light?

JOY: Yes, a light. It went on moving away and coming back to me again. Almost like a dog. (*Wistfully*) I used to have a dog. He died last year.

MANAB: What did you do then?

JOY: I cried.

MANAB: No, I mean what did you do with the light?

JOY: I followed it. It brought me here.

MANAB: That must have been the Computer.

JOY: Your computer here?

MANAB: No. The Master Computer is in space. This is only a terminal linked to it.

JOY: How could it direct me from space?

MANAB: I don't know - with laser beams or something.

(*During this time Bidhu's movements have become more deliberate and assured. He looks at the computer terminal and deliberately moves towards it and starts working on it.*)

JOY: What's your name?

MANAB: Manab, Manab Roy. What's yours?

JOY: I'm a Roy too. Joy Roy. Does that mean we're related?

MANAB: Not necessarily. Where are you from?

JOY: I don't know the name of the place. Daddy says its an old air base.

MANAB: That must be Barrackpore. To think, you were living right next door and I wasn't even aware of it.

JOY: We didn't always live there. We moved a lot. In the beginning there was Mum and my little sister. (*Pauses*) I don't really remember them now. It was so long ago. Now Daddy is not coming back. (*Almost in tears*).

MANAB: Don't worry. Daddy must be somewhere nearby. It's difficult to travel. He can't have gone far. I don't know how you did it.

JOY (*Matter of factly*): I was thirsty.

(*Bidhu finishes whatever he was doing and presses a key. The graphics display undistorted comes on the screen*).

COMPUTER: Thank you for opening the auxiliary communication channel, Manab. Now you can talk with your fellow survivors.

MANAB (*Looks back in amazement*): Huh? Bidhu! What have you done?

BIDHU: Just opened the auxiliary channel.

MANAB: But how did you know how to?

BIDHU: I always knew. A lot of things are coming back to me now.

COMPUTER: There's a message for Joy.

JOY: For me?

DADDY'S VOICE: Joy! Can you hear me?

JOY: Daddy! Yes, I can hear you. Where are you? Why didn't you come back? Wh...

DADDY'S VOICE: I'll answer everything later. Are you okay? The Computer says you are.

JOY: I'm fine, Daddy. I'm with Manab. He gave me water to drink. Oh Daddy! When will I see you again?

DADDY'S VOICE: Soon Joy, very soon I promise you. Let me talk to Manab.

MANAB: Here I am.

DADDY'S VOICE: Thank you for looking after my boy.

MANAB: I didn't get much of a chance to do that. He's just arrived here.

DADDY'S VOICE: Listen. I stumbled on to this computer link by chance. I got so carried away I even forgot Joy for a while. I'm sorry, son.

JOY: That's all right, Daddy, if you're coming back now.

DADDY'S VOICE: Yes, I am. Manab, I've found out about an enclave of people in a place called Phoenix. It's not Phoenix in Arizona. This is somewhere in the Middle East. They have a lot of scientists who've survived. They've been guiding people like us to the enclave with the help of the computer. Let's go! Are you game?

MANAB: Then it's true. I thought the computer was lying.

DADDY'S VOICE: Of course it's true. I've heard their broadcast. I've even talked with them. I can't wait to get started. I'm going over to your place now.

JOY: How long will you take, Daddy?

DADDY'S VOICE: Not long, son. I'm quite near. 1 have a surprise for both of you. See you in a few minutes.

COMPUTER: Manab, you have to believe me now. Are you prepared to go?

MANAB (*After a pause, vehemently*): No! (*Controls himself*) Okay. I concede I'm not the last man on earth; but don't expect me to travel halfway across the world on a wild goose chase. At least I'm alive here.

BIDHU (*Turning to face him*): I think you should go.

MANAB: That's a great joke! Even an android tells me what to do! Can you give me one good reason why?

BIDHU: Teach everything you know to the children.

(*Manab looks at Bidhu with new respect. Sound of a car approaching and stopping is heard*)

JOY: Daddy!

(*Exits through left and after a moment re-enters clinging to Daddy. The newcomer is Manab's age but looks more physically fit.*) Daddy! That's Manab.

DADDY (*Going forward and taking Manab's hand*): Hello, Manab.

MANAB: I couldn't have heard a car.

DADDY: You sure did! A real working car.

JOY: Is that the surprise, Daddy?

DADDY: Yes, son. (*Joy runs out through left to look at the car.*)

MANAB: So you're going?

DADDY: Of course. Aren't you?

MANAB (*Looks at Bidhu meditatively*): I don't know.

DADDY: But what else is there to do? You can't go on living like this.

MANAB (*Defensive*): Why not? I've survived for ten years. I can do it for another twenty.

DADDY: Yes, but why? For whom? What's the use of just existing? (*Pause*) Listen, Manab, if you don't want to go for your own sake, at least think of the children.

MANAB: Everyone keeps telling me about the children and the future. They don't need me.

DADDY: Of course they do. Our children don't know what it is to walk on green grass on a summer's day. They have never seen the splendour of a star-studded sky. I've tried to describe them to Joy but...

MANAB: What's the use? He'll never see them in his lifetime.

DADDY: Maybe he won't. But someday his children may, or his children's children. We don't have any right to keep our future generations in ignorance.

MANAB: But why me?

DADDY: Why do you underestimate yourself? Every individual has something to contribute. Come with us, Manab.

(*During this Joy has come back. Now he runs to Manab and holds his hand.*)

JOY: Yes! Please come. Please come with us.

MANAB (*Looking at Joy after a pause*): I daresay I know a thing or two that you don't.

JOY/DADDY (*Together*): Then you'll come? That's the spirit!

BIDHU: I think my work is over, Manab. Please deactivate me before you go.

JOY: Oh no!

MANAB: Deactivate you? Now that you're fully functional? You must be crazy.

BIDHU: I weigh a lot. It'll mean a lot of fuel if you carry me along.

DADDY: Who cares? We don't have to pay for it.

MANAB: Bidhu, for the last ten long years you have been a friend to me. I've bullied you, kicked you, but Bidhu, you know I can't do without you. Don't desert me now.

BIDHU *(Looks at Manab for some time)*: All right. I'll come. Maybe I can be of some assistance on the way.

DADDY: Right you are. We need everyone in the new world.

MANAB (*Trying to joke*): Yes, who'll change the tyres when we have a flat?

BIDHU: Thank you. (*A bit of old Bidhu*) Boss!

(*Manab is too overcome to speak but holds on to Bidhu's arm*)

COMPUTER: Manab, you will listen to the people of Phoenix now?

MANAB: Yes - Yes I will. Put them on.

(All of them turn around to face the computer link. Manab and Bidhu on the right and Daddy with his hand on Joy's shoulder on the left. The light gradually dims until only the light of the graphics display is seen.)

VOICE OF PHOENIX: *People of the world - survivors - come to Phoenix. It's been a long night. But we know that day will come some day. You are tired, you are burnt out - but the time has come to gather the ashes. It's time to be reborn. The master computer has dedicated itself to our course. It will help you to find transport - it will guide you to food and shelter - it will warn you against danger. Make this final pilgrimage for* Mankind*. Come to Phoenix. Just follow the light.... Follow the light...Follow the light... Follow the light.*

CURTAIN

About the Playwright

A computer teacher by profession, Abhijit Sircar's brilliance as a playwright is evidenced by the awards he won at the British Council Original One Act Play Competitions for plays like *Bull Run* (1992), *Author-Author* (1988), and *Child's Play* (1987).

About the Play

The play *The Phoenix* depicts the dilemma of the protagonist, Manab, who has survived a nuclear holocaust and lived in a basement for ten years with only an android to help him and give him company. Now, he has to make a choice whether he should continue to live his lonely and stale life or join the other survivors to lead a meaningful and fruitful life.

Glossary

Phoenix (pronounced as feenix) : a mythological bird

graphics : related to graphs, charts, and drawings, esp. designed by a computer

display : show

distorted : twisted

console : a panel for the switches, controls etc. of electronic or mechanical equipment

strewn : scattered; spread

Android : a robot that looks like a real person

limply	: bending as if lame
odds and ends	: small articles, items of various sorts
unkempt	: untidy; dirty
dank	: damp and cold
jack of all trades	: a person who can do many different types of works not necessarily very well
surviving	: living; existing
basement	: a room or rooms in a building below ground level
forage	: search for food or supplies
tinned food	: food packed in a sealed tin
vandalizing	: destroying; damaging
drivel	: silly nonsense
tinker	: to try to repair or improve something
stiff	: not easily bent or folded; hard
malfunction	: to fail to work normally or properly
compensating	: providing something good to balance or reduce the bad effect of damage, loss or injury
grin	: a wide smile
furtively	: secretly and quietly
saucepan	: a metal pot, usually round, used for cooking things
disgust	: strong dislike for something/somebody
gloating	: expressing or feeling delight at one's own success or good luck or at somebody else's failure
good-for-nothing	: useless
hunk	: a large piece of something that is cut from a larger piece

banging	: hitting something to make a loud noise
collapsing	: falling
sarcastically	: ironically
hallucinations	: illusions of seeing or hearing something that is not present
menagerie	: a collection of animals in captivity
gone cuckoo	: become a little mad
duffle	: coarse cloth
rucksack	: a bag carried on back
deliberation	: careful consideration
contagious	: spreading by contact
aberration	: deviation from what is accepted as normal or right; here an abnormal creature
gingerly	: over-cautiously
flinches (singular verb)	: to make a sudden movement
screwdriver	: a tool with a handle and a blade to turn screws
auxiliary	: extra; additional
enclave	: group
a wild goose chase	: a foolish or hopeless search
flat	: puncture
pilgrimage	: a journey to a holy place

Choose the correct option:

1. Whom does Manab regard as his companion?

(a) Joy

(b) Computer

(c) Bidhu

(d) None of the above

2. What task does Manab ask Bidhu to do first?

(a) To walk around the basement

(b) To stop repeating the word "Boss"

(c) To clean up the kitchen

(d) To remove the saucepan from its own head

3. What is the Computer's opinion of Bidhu?

(a) Positive

(b) Negative

(c) Neutral

(d) Can't say

4. What does Manab utter to activate the Android (Bidhu)?

(a) Android x 319

(b) Android x 219

(c) 219Android x

(d) 219 x Android

5. Whom does the Computer thank for opening the auxiliary communication channel?

(a) Joy

(b) Daddy

(c) Manab

(d) Bidhu

6. What is the date of the events of the play?

(a) 20th November, 2014

(b) 20th August, 2014

(c) 20th August, 2004

(d) 20th November, 2004

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. Where has Manab been living for the last ten years?

2. Who has been Manab's companion for the last ten years?

3. How does the Computer describe Bidhu?

4. Why does Bidhu say that it is hard to clean up the kitchen?

5. What news does the Computer give to Manab?

6. Why does Manab think that he is hallucinating?

7. Who is Bidhu?

8. What request does Manab make to Bidhu towards the end of the play?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. Describe the relationship between Manab and Bidhu.

2. What makes you think that Bidhu is not a human being but a machine?

3. What is Manab's initial attitude to the Computer?

4. How does Manab realise that he is not the last man on the earth?

5. How does Daddy persuade Manab to go with him to Phoenix?

6. What function, according to Phoenix, will master computer perform for mankind?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. What message does the play convey about the relationship between man and machine?

2. Comment on the title of the play.

3. Draw a character sketch of Manab.

4. Explain the following passage with reference to the context:
Yes, but why? For whom? What's the use of just existing? Listen, Manab, if you don't want to go for your own sake, at least think of the children.

The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.

-Rabindranath Tagore

The Hour of Truth

Percival Wilde

CHARACTERS

ROBERT BALDWIN
MARTHA, HIS WIFE
JOHN, HIS SON
EVIE, HIS DAUGHTER
MR. MARSHALL

It is a rather hot and sultry Sunday afternoon, and the sun overhead and the baked clay under foot are merciless. In the distance, lowering clouds give promise of coming relief. And at the parlour window of a trim little cottage the *BALDWIN FAMILY* is anxiously awaiting the return of its head.

JOHN, *the son, an average young man of twenty-seven, is smoking a pipe as philosophically as if this day were no whit more momentous than any other. But his mother, has made little progress in the last half-hour; and* EVIE, *his sister, takes no pains to conceal her nervousness.*

There is a tense pause. It seems as if none of them likes to break the silence. For the tenth time in ten minutes, EVIE *goes to the window and looks out along the sultry road.*

MARTHA: It's time he was home.

EVIE: Yes, Mother.

MARTHA: I do hope he hasn't forgotten his umbrella: he has such a habit of leaving it behind him...

EVIE: Yes. Mother.

MARTHA: It might rain. Don't you think so, Evie? [*Without waiting for an answer she goes to the window and looks out anxiously.'*] The sky is so dark. [*She starts*.] There was a flash of lightning! [JOHN *rises slowly, moves to a centre table and knocks the ashes out of his pipe. His mother turns to him.*] John, run into your father's room and see that the windows are closed. There's a good boy.

JOHN: Right-O [*He goes*]

EVIE [*after a pause*]: Mother [*There is no answer.*] Mother! [MRS. BALDWIN *turns slowly*] What does Mr. Gresham want with him? Has he done anything wrong?

MARTHA [*proudly*]: Your father? No Evie.

EVIE: Then why did Mr. Gresham send for him?

MARTHA: He wanted to talk to him.

EVIE: What about? Mr. Gresham has been arrested; they're going to try him tomorrow. What can he want with father?

MARTHA: Your father will have to give evidence.

EVIE: But he's going to give evidence *against* Mr. Gresham. Why should Mr. Gresham want to see him?

MARTHA: I don't know, Evie. You know your father doesn't say much about his business affairs, [*She pauses.*] I didn't know there was anything wrong with the bank until I saw it in the papers. Your father wouldn't tell me to draw my money out—he thought it wasn't loyal to Mr. Gresham. [*Evie nods*] I did it of my own accord—against his wishes—when I suspected.

EVIE [*after a pause*]: Do you think that Father had anything to do with—with...?
[*She does not like to say it.*]

MARTHA: With, the wrecking of the bank? You know him better than that, Evie.

EVIE: But did he know what was going on? You know what the papers are saying—

MARTHA: They haven't been fair to him, Evie.

EVIE: Perhaps not. But they said he must have been a fool not to know. They said that only he could have known— he and Mr. Gresham. Why didn't he stop it?

MARTHA: He was acting under Mr. Graham's order.

EVIE [*contemptuously*]:Mr. Graham's order! Did he have to follow them?

MARTHA [*after a pause*] : Evie, I don't believe your father ever did a wrong thing in his life—not if he knew it was wrong. He found out by accident —found out what Mr. Gresham was doing.

EVIE: How do you know that?

MARTHA: I don't know it: I suspect it—something he said [*eagerly*] You see, Evie he *can't* have done anything wrong. They haven't indicted him.

EVIE [*slowly*]: No. They didn't indict him— because they want him to testify against Mr. Gresham. That's little consolation, Mother. [JOHN *renters*]

MARTHA [*seizing the relief*]: Were the windows open, John?

JOHN [*shortly*]: I've closed them. *[He crosses to the table, takes up his pipe, and refills it]* Look here, Mother what does Gresham want with Father?

EVIE [*nodding*]: I've been just asking that.

MARTHA: I don't know, John

JOHN: Didn't you ask him? [*As she does not answer*] Well?

MARTHA: Yes, I asked him. He didn't say, John [anxiously] I don't think he knew himself.

JOHN [*after an instant's thought*]: I was talking to the assistant cashier yesterday.

EVIE: Donovan?

JOHN: Yes, Donovan. I saw him up at the Athletic Club. He said that nobody had any idea that there was anything wrong until the crash came. Donovan had been there eight years. He thought he was taken care of for the rest of his life. He had gotten married on the strength of it. And then, one morning, there was a sign up on the door. It was like a bolt out of a clear sky.

EVIE: And father?

JOHN: He says father must have known. He'll swear nobody else did. You see, Father was closer to Gresham than anyone else. That puts him in a nice position, doesn't it?

MARTHA: What do you mean, John?

JOHN: Father the only witness against John Gresham— and me named after him! John Gresham Baldwin, at your service!

MARTHA: Your father will do his duty, John, No matter what comes of it.

JOHN [*shortly*]: I know it. And I'm not sure but what is right.

[*They look at him inquiringly.*] There's John Gresham, grown rich in twenty years, and the governor pegging along as his secretary at five thousand a year!

MARTHA: Your father never complained.

JOHN: No, that's just the pity of it. He didn't complain. Well, he'll have his chance tomorrow. He'll go in the box and when he's through, they'll put John Gresham where he won't be able to hurt anybody for a while. Wasn't satisfied with underpaying his employees: had to rob his depositors! Serves him jolly well right!

MARTHA [*rather timidly*]: I don't think your father would like you to talk that way, John.

JOHN [*shrugs his shoulders contemptuously*]: Humph!

MARTHA: Your father has nothing against Mr. Gresham. He will tell the truth— nothing but the truth.

JOHN: Did you think I expected him to lie? Not Father! He'll tell the truth: just the truth. It'll be plenty!

EVIE [*at, the window*]: There's Father now!

[*There is the click of a latchkey outside.* EVIE *makes for the door*]

MARTHA: Evie! You stay here: let me talk to him first.

[MARTHA *hurries out.* JOHN *and* EVIE *look at each other.*]

JOHN: Wonder what Gresham had to say to him? [EVIE *shrugs her shoulders. He turns away to the window*] It's started to rain.

EVIE: Yes.

[*There is a pause. Suddenly* JOHN *crosses to the door, and flings it open.*]

JOHN: Hullo, Dad!

BALDWIN [*coming in, followed by* MARTHA]: How are you, my boy?

[*He shakes hands with* JOHN] Evie! [*He kisses her.*]

MARTHA: You are sure your shoes aren't wet, Robert?

BALDWIN [*shaking his head*]: I took the car. Not a drop on me. See?

[*He passes his hands over his sleeves. He goes to a chair: sits. There is an awkward pause.*]

JOHN: Well, Dad? Don't you think it's about time you told us something?

BALDWIN: Told you something? I don't understand, John.

JOHN: People have been talking about you—saying things...

BALDWIN: What kind of things, John?

JOHN: You can imagine rotten things. And I couldn't contradict them.

BALDWIN: Why not, John?

JOHN: Because I didn't know.

BALDWIN: Did you *have* to know? Wasn't it enough that you knew your father?

JOHN [*after a pause*}: I beg your pardon, Sir.

BALDWIN: It was two days before the smash-up that I found out what Gresham was doing. [*He pauses. They are listening intently.]* I told him he would have to make good. He said he couldn't.

EVIE [*as he does not continue*]: And what happened?

BALDWIN: I told him he would have to do the best he could—and the first step would be to close the bank. He didn't want to do that.

MARTHA: But he did it.

BALDWIN: I made him do it. He was angry —very angry, but I had the whip hand.

EVIE: The papers didn't mention that.

BALDWIN: I didn't think it was necessary to tell them.

MARTHA: But you let your name rest under a cloud meanwhile.

BALDWIN: It will be cleared tomorrow, won't it? [*He pauses*.] Today Gresham sent for me. The trial begins in twenty-four hours. I'm the only witness against him. He asked—you can guess what...

JOHN [*indignantly*]: He wanted you to lie to save his skin, eh? Wanted you to perjure yourself?

BALDWIN: That wouldn't be necessary, John. He just wanted me to have an attack of poor memory. If I tell all I knew, John Gresham will go to gaol—no power on earth can save him from it. But he wants me to forget a little— just the essential things. When they question me I can answer, 'I don't remember'. They can't prove I *do* remember. And there you are.

JOHN: It would be a lie Dad!

BALDWIN [*smiling*]: Of course. But it's done every day. And they couldn't touch *me*—any more than they could convict him.

MARTHA [*quivering with indignation*]: How dared he—how dared he ask such a thing—

EVIE: What did you say, Father?

BALDWIN [*smiling and raising his eyes to* JOHN'S]: Well, son, what would *you* have said?

JOHN: I'd have told him to go to the devil!

BALDWIN [*nodding*]: I did.

JOHN: Bully for you, Dad!

MARTHA [*half to herself*]: I knew! I knew!

BALDWIN: I didn't use your words, John. He's too old a friend of mine for that. But I didn't mince matter any. He understood what I meant.

EVIE: And what did he say then?

BALDWIN: There wasn't much to say. You see, he wasn't surprised. He's known me for thirty-five years, and, well [*with simple pride*] anybody who's known me for

thirty-five years doesn't expect me to haggle with my conscience. If it had been anybody else than John Gresham I would have struck him across the face. But John Gresham and I were boys together. We worked side by side. And I've been in his employ ever since he started in for himself. He is desperate—he doesn't know what he is doing—or he wouldn't have offered me money.

JOHN [*furious*]: Offered you money, Dad?

BALDWIN: He'd put it aside, ready for the emergency. If they don't convict him, he'll hand it over to me. The law can't stop him. But if I live until tomorrow night, they *will* convict him! [*He sighs.*] God knows I want no share in bringing about his punishment.... [*He breaks off.* EVIE *pats his hand silently.*] Young man and old man, I've worked with him or for him the best part of my life. I'm loyal to him—I've always been loyal to him—but when John Gresham ceases to be an honest man, John Gresham and I part company!

MARTHA [*weeping softly*]: Robert! Robert!

BALDWIN: I've got only a few years to live, but I'll live those as I've lived the rest of my life. I'll go to my grave clean! [*He rises presently, goes to the window, and looks out.*] The rain's stopped, hasn't it?

EVIE [*following him and taking his hand]:* Yes, Father.

BALDWIN: It'll be a fine day tomorrow. [*There is a pause.*]

JOHN: Dad.

BALDWIN: Yes?

JOHN: What did Gresham offer you?

BALDWIN [*simply*]: A hundred thousand dollars.

EVIE: What?

MARTHA: Robert!

BALDWIN: He put it aside for me without anybody knowing it. It's out of his private fortune, he says. It's not the depositors' money— as if that made any difference.

EVIE [*as if hypnotized*]: He offered you a hundred thousand dollars?

BALDWIN [*smiling at her amazement*]: I could have had it for the one word 'Yes'- or even for nodding my head - or a look of the eyes.

JOHN: How–how do you know he meant it?

BALDWIN: His word is good.

JOHN: Even now?

BALDWIN: He never lied to me, John [*He pauses.*] I suppose my eyes must have shown something I didn't feel. He noticed it. He unlocked a drawer and *showed* me the hundred thousand.

JOHN: In cash?

BALDWIN: In thousand-dollar bills. They were genuine: I examined them.

EVIE [*slowly*]: And for that he wants you to say, 'I don't remember'.

BALDWIN [*smiling*]: Just that: three words only.

JOHN: But you won't?

BALDWIN [*shaking his head*]: Those three words would choke me if 1 tried to speak them. For some other man, perhaps, it would be easy. But for me? All of my past would rise up and strike me in the face. It would mean to the world that for years I had been living a lie: that I was not the honourable man. I thought I was. When John Gresham offered me money I was angry. But when I rejected it, and he showed no surprise, then I was pleased. It was a compliment, don't you think so?

JOHN [*slowly*]: Rather an expensive compliment.

BALDWIN: Eh?

JOHN: A compliment which cost you a hundred thousand dollars.

BALDWIN: A compliment which was *worth* a hundred thousand dollars. I've never had that much money to spend in my life, John, but if I had I couldn't imagine a finer way to spend it.

JOHN [*slowly*]: Yes, I suppose so.

MARTHA [*after a pause*]: Will the depositors lose much, Robert?

BALDWIN [*emphatically*]: The depositors will not lose a cent.

EVIE [*surprised*]: But the paper said—

BALDWIN [*interrupting*]: They had to print something: they guessed. *I* know. *I* tell you.

MARTHA: But you never said so before.

BALDWIN: I left that for Gresham. It will come out tomorrow.

JOHN: Why tomorrow? Why didn't you say so before? The papers asked you often enough.

BALDWIN: Nothing forced me to answer, John.

JOHN: That wasn't your real reason, was it, Dad? You knew the papers would keep right on calling you names [BALDWIN *does not answer.* JOHN'S *face lights up with sudden understanding.*] You wanted to let Gresham announce it himself: because it will be something in his favour! Eh?

BALDWIN: Yes.... We were able to save something from the wreck, Gresham and I. It was more than I had expected—almost twice as much—and with what Gresham has, it will be enough.

EVIE: Even without the hundred thousand? [BALDWIN *does not answer*]

JOHN [*insistently*]: Without the money that Gresham had put away for you?

BALDWIN: Yes, I didn't know there *was* the hundred thousand until today. Gresham didn't tell me. We reckoned without it.

EVIE: Oh!

JOHN: And you made both ends meet?

BALDWIN: Quite easily [*He smiles.*] Mr. Marshall is running the reorganization; Mr. Marshall of the Third National. He hasn't the least idea that it's going to turn out so well. [*There is a pause.]*

JOHN: They're going to punish Gresham aren't they?

BALDWIN: I'm afraid so.

JOHN: What for?

BALDWIN: Misappropriating the funds of the—
JOHN [*interrupting*]: Oh, I know that. But what *crime* has he committed?
BALDWIN: That's a crime, John.
EVIE: But if nobody loses anything by it?
BALDWIN: It's a crime nevertheless.
JOHN: And they're going to *punish* him for it!
BALDWIN: They can't let him go, John. He's too conspicuous.
JOHN: Do you think that's right, Dad?
BALDWIN: *My* opinion doesn't matter, John.
JOHN: But what do you think?
BALDWIN: I think—I think that I'm sorry for John Gresham—terribly sorry.
JOHN [*slowly*]: It's nothing but a technicality, Dad. Nobody loses a cent. It's rather hard on Gresham, I say.
BALDWIN [*after a pause*]: Yes, John.
EVIE [*timidly*]: Would it be such an awful thing, Father, if you let him off?
BALDWIN [*smiling*]: I wish I could, Evie. But I'm not the judge.
EVIE: No, but...
BALDWIN: But what?
EVIE: You're the only witness against him.
BALDWIN [*nonplussed*]: Evie!
JOHN: She's right, Dad!
BALDWIN: You too, John?
JOHN: It's going to be a nasty mess if they put John Gresham in gaol—with your own son named after him! It's going to be pleasant for *me!* John Gresham Baldwin!
MARTHA [*after a pause*]: Robert, I'm not sure I understand what you said before. What did Mr. Gresham want you to do for him?
BALDWIN: Get him off tomorrow.
MARTHA: You could do that?
BALDWIN: Yes.
MARTHA: How?
BALDWIN: By answering, 'I don't remember' when they ask me dangerous questions.
MARTHA: Oh! And you *do* remember?
BALDWIN: Yes, Nearly everything.
JOHN: No matter what they ask you?
BALDWIN: I can always refresh my memory. You see, I have notes.
JOHN: But without those notes you wouldn't remember?
BALDWIN: What do you mean, John?
JOHN [*without answering*]: As a matter of fact, you will have to rely on your notes nearly altogether, won't you?
BALDWIN: Everybody else does the same thing.

JOHN: Then it won't be far from the truth if you say, 'I don't remember?'

MARTHA: I don't see that Mr. Gresham is asking so much of you.

BALDWIN: Martha!

MARTHA: Robert, I'm as honourable as you are —

BALDWIN: That goes without saying, Martha.

MARTHA: It doesn't seem right to me to send an old friend to gaol. [*As she speaks she holds up her hand.*] Now don't interrupt me! I've been thinking. The day John was christened when Mr. Gresham stood sponsor for him: how proud we were! And when we came home from the church you said—do you remember what you said, Robert?

BALDWIN: No. What was it?

MARTHA: You said, 'Martha, may our son always live up to the name which we have given him!' Do you remember that?

BALDWIN: Yes—dimly.

JOHN: Ha! Only *dimly*, Dad?

BALDWIN: What do you mean, John?

MARTHA [*giving JOHN no opportunity to answer.*]: It would be sad—very sad—if the name of John Gresham, our son's name, should come to grief through you, Robert.

BALDWIN [*after a pause*]: Martha, are you telling me to accept the bribe money that John Gresham offered me?

EVIE: Why do you call it bribe money, Father?

BALDWIN [*bitterly*]: Why indeed? Gresham had a prettier name for it. He said that he had underpaid me all these years. You know, I was getting only five thousand a year when the crash came—

JOHN [*impatiently*]: Yes, yes?

BALDWIN: He said a hundred thousand represented the difference between what he had paid me and what I had actually been worth to him.

MARTHA: That's no less than true, Robert. You've worked for him very faithfully.

BALDWIN: He said that if he had paid me what he should have, I would have put by more than a hundred thousand by now.

JOHN: That's so, isn't it, Dad?

BALDWIN: Who knows? I never asked him to raise my salary. When he raised it was of his own accord. [*There was a pause. He looks around.*] Well, what do you think of it, Evie?

EVIE [*hesitantly.*]: If you go into the box tomorrow...

BALDWIN: Yes?

EVIE: And they put John Gresham in gaol, what will people say?

BALDWIN: They will say I have done my duty, no more and no less.

EVIE: *Will* they?

BALDWIN: Why, what should they say?

EVIE: I don't think so, of course, but other people might say that you had turned traitor to your best friend.

BALDWIN: You don't mean that, Evie?

EVIE: When they find out that they haven't lost any money—when John Gresham tells them that he will pay back every cent— then they won't *want* him to go to gaol. They'll feel sorry for him.

BALDWIN: Yes, I believe that. I hope so.

JOHN: And they won't feel too kindly disposed toward the man who helps put him in gaol.

MARTHA: They'll say you went back on an old friend, Robert.

JOHN: When you pull out your notes in court, to be *sure* of sending him to gaol!... [*He breaks off with a snort.]*

EVIE: And Mr. Gresham hasn't done anything really wrong.

JOHN: It's a technicality, that's what it is. Nobody loses a cent. Nobody wants to see him punished.

EVIE: Except you, Father.

JOHN: Yes. And you're willing to gaol the man after whom you named your son!

MARTHA [*after a pause*]: I believe in being merciful, Robert.

BALDWIN: Merciful?

MARTHA: Mr. Gresham has always been very good to you. [*There is another pause. Curiously enough, they do not seem to be able to meet each other's eyes.*] Ah, well! What are you going to do now, Robert?

BALDWIN: What do you mean?

MARTHA: You have been out of work since the bank closed.

BALDWIN [*shrugging his shoulders*]: Oh, I'll find a position.

MARTHA [*shaking her head*]: At your age?...

BALDWIN: It's the *man* that counts.

MARTHA: Yes, you said that a month ago.

JOHN: 1 heard from Donovan—

BALDWIN [*quickly*]: What did you hear?

JOHN: He's gone with the Third National, you know.

BALDWIN: Yes; he's helping with the reorganization.

JOHN: They wouldn't take you on there—

BALDWIN: Their staff was full. They couldn't very well offer me a position as a clerk.

JOHN: That was what they told *you.*

BALDWIN: Wasn't it true?

JOHN [*shakes his head.*]: Mr. Marshall said he wouldn't employ a man who was just as guilty as John Gresham.

BALDWIN: But I'm not!

JOHN: Who knows it?

BALDWIN: Everybody will tomorrow!

JOHN: Will they believe you? Or will they think you're trying to save your *own* skin?

BALDWIN: I found out only a day before the smash.

JOHN: Who will believe that?

BALDWIN: They will *have* to!

JOHN: How will you make them? I'm afraid you'll find that against you wherever you go, Dad. Your testifying against John Gresham won't make things any better. If you ever get another job, it will be with *him!* [*This is a startling idea to* BALDWIN, *who shows his surprise*.] If Gresham doesn't go to gaol, he will start in business again, won't he? And he can't offer anything less than a partnership.

BALDWIN: A Partnership?

JOHN [*with meaning*]: With the hundred thousand capital you could put in the business, Dad.

BALDWIN: John!

JOHN: Of course, the capital doesn't matter. He'll owe you quite a debt of gratitude besides. [*There is a pause*.]

MARTHA: A hundred thousand would mean a great deal to us, Robert. If you don't find a position soon, John will have to support us.

JOHN: On sixty dollars a week, Dad.

EVIE: That won't go very far.

MARTHA: It's not fair to John.

JOHN [*angrily*]: Oh. Don't bother about *me*. [EVIE *begins to weep.*]

JOHN: Look here, Dad, you've said nothing to the papers. If you say nothing more tomorrow, what does it amount to but sticking to your friend? It's the square thing to do—he'd do as much for you.

BALDWIN [*looks appealingly from one face to another. They are averted. Then*]: You—You want me to take this money? [*There is no answer*] Say 'Yes' one of you [*Still no answer*.] Or 'NO'. [*A long pause. Finally*] I couldn't go into partnership with Gresham.

MARTHA: [*promptly*] Why not?

BALDWIN: People wouldn't trust him.

JOHN: Then you could go into business with someone else, Dad. A hundred thousand is a lot of money.

BALDWIN [*walks to the window. Looks out*] God knows I never thought this day would come! I know—I know no matter how you try to excuse it—I know that if I take this money, I do a dishonorable thing. And you know it! You, and you, and you! All of you! Come, admit it!

JOHN [*resolutely*]: Nobody'll ever hear of it.

BALDWIN: But among ourselves, John! Whatever we are to the world let us be honest with each other, the four of us! Well? [*His glance travels from* JOHN *to* EVIE, *whose head is bowed; from her to his wife, who is apparently busy with her knitting. He raises* MARTHA'S *head: Looks into the eye. He shudders.*] Shams!

Liars! Hypocrites! Thieves! And I no better than any of you! We have seen our souls naked, and they stink to Almighty Heaven! Well, why don't you answer me?

MARTHA [*feebly*]: It's not wrong, Robert.

BALDWIN: It's not right.

JOHN [*facing him steadily*]: A hundred thousand is a lot of money, Dad.

BALDWIN [*nodding slowly*]: You can look into my eyes *now*. My son, can't you?

JOHN [*without moving*]: Dad: Why did you refuse? Wasn't it because you were afraid of what *we'd* say?

BALDWIN [*after a long pause*]: Yes, John

JOHN: Well, nobody will ever know it.

BALDWIN: Except the four of us.

JOHN: Yes, Father [*Abruptly they separate*. EVIE *weeps in silence.* MARTHA *being less emotional, blows her nose noisily, and fumbles with her knitting.* JOHN, *having nothing better to do scowls out of the window and* BALDWIN, *near the fireplace, clenches and unclenches his hands.]* Someone's coming.

MARTHA [*raising her head*]: Who is it?

JOHN: I can't see [*with sudden apprehension.*] It looks like Mr. Marshall.

BALDWIN: Mr. Marshall? [*The doorbell rings. He goes to a window commanding a view of the doorway.*] It *is* Mr. Marshall!

MARTHA: The President of the Third National?

BALDWIN: Yes, What does he want here?

EVIE: Shall I show him in, Father?

BALDWIN: Yes—yes—by all means. [EVIE *goes out*].

MARTHA [*crossing to him quickly*]: Robert! Be careful of what you say: you're to go into the box tomorrow.

BALDWIN [*nervously*]: Yes, yes I'll look out.

MARTHA: Let him talk. Say nothing at all. [EVIE *re-enters, opening the door for* MR. MARSHALL]

MR. MARSHALL [*coming into the room very buoyantly*]: Well, well, spending the afternoon indoors? How are you, Mrs. Baldwin? [*He shakes hands cordially*.] And you, Baldwin?

MARTHA: We were just going out. Come, Evie.

MR. MARSHALL: Oh, you needn't go on my account. You can hear what I have to say. [*He turns to the head of the family.]* Baldwin, if you feel like coming around to the Third National some time this week, you'll find a position waiting for you.

BALDWIN [*thunderstruck*]: Do you mean that, Mr. Marshall?

MR. MARSHALL [*smiling*]: I wouldn't say it if I didn't. [*He continues more seriously.]* I was in to see Gresham this afternoon. He told me about the offer he had made you. But he knew that no amount of money would make you do something you thought wrong. Baldwin, he paid you the supreme compliment: rather than go to trial with you to testify against him, he confessed.

BALDWIN [*sinking into a chair*]: Confessed!

MARSHALL: Told the whole story [*He turns to* MARTHA.] I can only say to you what every man will be saying tomorrow: how highly I honor and respect your husband! How sincerely…

MARTHA [*seizing his hand piteously*]: Please! Please! Can't you see he's crying?

THE CURTAIN FALLS SLOWLY

About the Playwright

Percival Wilde, an American author and playwright, was born in New York City (March 1, 1887-September 19, 1953). He graduated from Columbia University in 1906 and worked for a time as a banker. He began writing plays in 1912. Wilde composed numerous novels, short stories, and one-act plays. He also authored a textbook on the theater arts. His plays were especially popular in the Little Theatre Movement. His plays are: *Dawn, The Noble Lord*, *The Traitor*, *A House of Cards*, *Playing With Fire*, *The Finger of God*, C*onfession*, *The Beautiful Story*, *The Villain in the Piece*, *A Question of Morality*, *According to Darwin*, *The Unseen Host and Other War Plays* (1917), *The Reckoning* (1930), and *Eight Comedies For Little Theaters*.

About the Play

Percival Wilde's play *The Hour of Truth* is an intense psychological study of the corrupting influence of money on people. Mr. Robert Baldwin, is the secretary of a powerful bank president, Mr. John Gresham. Mr. Gresham, Robert's boss, is accused of misappropriating the bank's money, which in turn, hurts the clients of the bank. Consequently, Mr. Gresham is arrested. However, Mr. Gresham is a good boss to Mr. Baldwin. As a result of the arrest, Gresham begs Mr. Baldwin to simply say three words ("I don't remember") during his examination on trial regarding Mr. Gresham's transactions. As a reward, he offers him one hundred thousand dollars which is an amazing amount of money at the time of the story. Mr. Robert Baldwin's family members suddenly change from being virtuous, respectable, and incapable to allow Robert to tell a lie. Robert is simply not ready to accept a bribe but, most importantly, he cannot bear telling a lie. Therefore, he politely rejects Gresham's offer. This action leaves Mr. Gresham ashamed of himself, which leads him to confess his own crime. Robert Baldwin's honesty and integrity land him a job in another bank. His reputation as a good, honest, upright, and decent man is spread out by Mr. Gresham, who realises what a good man Robert is. Virtue is rewarded. Truth prevails in the end.

The play reveals that money only brings with it isolation, punishment, deception, frustration, conflict, opposition, and the possibility of endless shame.

Glossary

sultry	: very hot and humid
conceal	: to hide something very carefully
indicted	: (pronounced as in-daited) to accuse somebody of something, to charge somebody
contradict	: to refute to say that it is not correct or true
under a cloud	: under suspicion
perjure	: to tell a lie in a court of law, swear falsely
gaol	: (pronounced as jail) a prison, jail
not to mince words	: to speak plainly or bluntly especially when accusing someone
reckoned	: assumed , calculated
misappropriating	: using public funds for a purpose for which they are not meant, to misuse them especially for one's personal use
conspicuous	: noticeable, prominent , attracts attention
technicality	: detail of no real importance
square thing to do	: honest, fair

Choose the correct option:

1. ". . . .the BALDWIN FAMILY is anxiously awaiting the return of its head." Who is the 'head' here?

(a) Maratha

(b) Robert

(c) Evie

(d) John

2. Where was Mr. Gresham that evening?

(a) At home

(b) At bank

(c) In jail

(d) In court

3. What did Mr. Gresham offer Mr. Robert?

(a) Promotion

(b) A new job

(c) Money

(d) A new house

4. How did the family members of Mr. Robert come to know that there was something wrong with the bank?

(a) Through friends

(b) Through neighbours

(c) Through the print media

(d) Through the bank-staff

5. What did Mr. Gresham show in the drawer to Mr. Robert?

(a) Court papers

(b) Newspapers

(c) Bank papers

(d) Notes of the local currency

6. How many witnesses were there against Mr. Gresham in the case?

(a) Two

(b) Three

(c) Four

(d) None of the above

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. What was the charge against Mr. Gresham?

2. What was the "supreme compliment"?

3. What is the Third National?

4. What formal relationship did Mr. Robert and Mr. Gresham have?

5. How old was their friendship?

6. What favour did Mr. Gresham want from Mr. Robert?

7. Why were the family members anxious?

8. How many persons as witnesses were available there against Mr. Gresham?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. What was the “crash”?

2. Why did the family members support Mr. Robert in the beginning?

3. Why did the family members think that Mr. Gresham had not done anything wrong?

4. Why did Mr. Marshall decide to offer "a position" to Mr. Robert?

5. Why did Mr. Gresham confess to Mr. Marshall?

6. Why did Mr. Robert think that he would not be able to help Mr. Gresham?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. "I will go to my grave clean." Elaborate this statement of Mr. Robert.

2. "Shams! Liars! Hypocrite! Thieves!..” Why did Mr. Robert react like this to his wife? Discuss.

3. Draw a character sketch of Mr. Robert.

4. Explain the title of the play *The Hour of Truth*.

SECTION-4

NON-FICTIONAL PROSE

(Essays)

In the broadest sense, an essay is a short piece of non-fictional literary composition on one subject usually conveying the author's own views. Essays are generally analytic, speculative or interpretative. Aldous Huxley described the essay as "a literary device for saying almost everything about almost anything."

Of Studies

Francis Bacon

STUDIES serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgment and disposition of business; for expert men can execute, and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels, and the plots and marshalling of affairs come best from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules is the humor of a scholar. They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience: for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need pruning, by study; and studies themselves do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience. Crafty men contemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others; but that would be only in the less important arguments and the meaner sort of books; else distilled books are like common distilled waters, flashy things. Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And, therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit: and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not. Histories make men wise; poets, witty; the mathematics, subtle; natural philosophy, deep; moral, grave; logic and rhetoric, able to contend: *Abeunt studia in mores*! Nay, there is no stond or impediment in the wit, but may be wrought out by fit studies; like as diseases of the body, may have appropriate exercises. Bowling is good for the stone and reins; shooting for the lungs and breast; gentle walking for the stomach, riding for the head, and the like. So if a man's wit be wandering, let him study the mathematics; for in demonstrations, if his wit be called away never so little, he must begin again. If his wit be not apt to distinguish or find differences, let him study the schoolmen; for they are *cymini sectores*! If he be not apt to beat over matters, and to call up one thing to prove and illustrate another, let him study the lawyers' cases. So every defect of the mind may have a special receipt.

About the Author

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) was a great essayist. He was a contemporary of William Shakespeare. Bacon was highly educated and was a lawyer who attained prominence in his profession and in 1618 became Lord High Chancellor with the dignity of Baron Verulam and, later, of Viscount St. Albans. He is generally known as Lord Bacon. His merits as philosopher were considerable.

Bacon spent most of his life in literary pursuits. His most popular work is his *Essays*. Other works which attracted attention were The *Advancement of Learning* and *The History of the Reign of Henry VIII*. His essays deal with a wide range of topics and convey profound and condensed thought. His prose is very rich, clear, concise, and epigrammatic.

About the Essay

This is one of the best and most quoted essays of Francis Bacon. This essay enumerates and examines the major uses of studies and maintains that studies are balanced by experience. He warns that spending too much time in studies leads to laziness. The essay, in fact, encourages us to read useful books and advises us to learn to write for becoming exact persons in life. It also suggests to us which subjects/books we should read and why.

Glossary

studies	: the activities of learning or gaining knowledge, either from books or by examining/observing things in the world (also academic subjects)
ability	: development of mental power
disposition	: the natural qualities of a person 's character
sloth	: the bad habit of being lazy and unwilling to work
pruning	: cutting off some of the branches of a tree or bush ,etc so that it will grow better and stronger
confute	: to prove a person or an argument to be wrong
contemn	: condemn /criticise /dislike/discourage (Crafty men do not appreciate studies
diligence	: careful and thorough work or effort
rhetoric	: speech or writing that is intended to influence people, but that is not completely honest and sincere
impediment	: something that delays or stops the progress of something
bowling	: emptying the bowls of the body
apt	: suitable/appropriate in the circumstances

expert men : experienced persons

plots : plans

humour : characteristics

too much at large : very vague

crafty : cunning and ingenious

find talk : acquire subjects for conversation with the idea of showing off'

present wit : ready mind

Abuent studia in mores: (Latin) studies influence character

stond : obstacle, hurdle

reins : kidneys

never so little : no matter how little

schoolmen : the medieval Christian philosophers whose exercises often lapsed into endless analysis of logical futilities

cymini sectores : (Latin) hair-splitters ; given to excessive subtleties in discussions and disputations

receipt : recipe

Choose the correct option:

1. What are studies for?

(a) for getting intellectual and literary pleasure

(b) for making academic discussions more interesting and useful

(c) for developing vocational and professional skills

(d) all of these

2. What can the expert men do with studies?

(a) They can execute

(b) They can judge

(c) They can do both (a) and (b)

(d) They can do none of these

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. What are the three benefits of studies?

2. What are the three evils of excess-studies?

3. What does mathematics do for men?

4. How can a man become “an exact man”?

5. How do studies help a lawyer?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. How, according to the essayist, does reading help a man?

2. How does a man become a “ready man”?

3. When do studies become an undesirable thing?

4. What does the essayist mean by “distilled books"?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. Explain with suitable examples the following extract from the essay:

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested;

2. Explain with suitable examples the following extract from the essay:

Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man.

The decline of literature indicates

the decline of a nation.

-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

My Struggle for an Education

Booker T. Washington

One day, while at work in the coal-mine, I happened to overhear two miners talking about a great school for coloured people somewhere in Virginia. This was the first time that I had ever heard anything about any kind of school or college that was more pretentious than the little coloured school in our town.

In the darkness of the mine I noiselessly crept as close as I could to the two men who were talking. I heard one tell the other that not only was the school established for the members of any race, but the opportunities that it provided by which poor but worthy students could work out all or a part of the cost of a board, and at the same time be taught some trade or industry.

As they went on describing the school, it seemed to me that it must be the greatest place on earth, and not even Heaven presented more attractions for me at that time than did the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia, about which these men were talking. I resolved at once to go to that school, although I had no idea where it was, or how many miles away, or how I was going to reach it; I remembered only that I was on fire constantly with one ambition, and that was to go to Hampton. This thought was with me day and night.

In the fall of 1872 I determined to make an effort to get there, although, as I have stated, I had no definite idea of the direction in which Hampton was, or of what it would cost to go there. I do not think that any one thoroughly sympathized with me in my ambition to go to Hampton unless it was my mother, and she was troubled with a grave fear that I was starting out on a "wild-goose chase." At any rate, I got only a half-hearted consent from her that I might start. The small amount of money that I had earned had been consumed by my stepfather and the remainder of the family, with the exception of a very few dollars, and so I had very little with which to buy clothes and pay my travelling expenses. My brother John helped me all that he could, but of course that was not a great deal, for his work was in the coal-mine, where he did not earn much, and most of what he did earn went in the direction of paying the household expenses.

Finally the great day came, and I started for Hampton. I had only a small, cheap satchel that contained a few articles of clothing I could get. My mother at the time was rather weak and broken in health. I hardly expected to see her again, and thus our parting was all the more sad. She, however, was very brave through it all. At that time there were no through trains connecting that part of West Virginia with eastern Virginia. Trains ran only a portion of the way, and the remainder of the distance was travelled by stage-coaches.

The distance from Malden to Hampton is about five hundred miles. I had not been away from home many hours before it began to grow painfully evident that I did

not have enough money to pay my fare to Hampton. By walking, begging rides both in wagons and in the cars, in some way, after a number of days, I reached the city of Richmond, Virginia, about eighty-two miles from Hampton. When I reached there, tired, hungry, and dirty, it was late in the night. I had never been in a large city, and this rather added to my misery. When I reached Richmond, I was completely out of money. I had not a single acquaintance in the place, and, being unused to city ways, I did not know where to go. I applied at several places for lodging, but they all wanted money, and that was what I did not have. Knowing nothing else better to do, I walked the streets. In doing this I passed by many food-stands where fried chicken and half-moon apple pies were piled high and made to present a most tempting appearance. At that time it seemed to me that I would have promised all that I expected to possess in the future to have gotten hold of one of those chicken legs or one of those pies. But I could not get either of these, nor anything else to eat.

I must have walked the streets till after midnight. At last I became so exhausted that I could walk no longer. I was tired, I was hungry, I was everything but discouraged. Just about the time when I reached extreme physical exhaustion, I came upon a portion of a street where the board sidewalk was considerably elevated. I waited for a few minutes, till I was sure that no passers-by could see me, and then crept under the sidewalk and lay for the night upon the ground, with my satchel of clothing for a pillow. The next morning I found myself somewhat refreshed, but I was extremely hungry, because it had been a long time since I had had sufficient food. As soon as it became light enough for me to see my surroundings I noticed that I was near a large ship, and that this ship seemed to be unloading a cargo of pig iron. I went at once to the vessel and asked the captain to permit me to help unload the vessel in order to get money for food. The captain, a white man, who seemed to be kind-hearted, consented. I worked long enough to earn money for my breakfast, and it seems to me, as I remember it now, to have been about the best breakfast that I have ever eaten.

My work pleased the captain so well that he told me if I desired I could continue working for a small amount per day. This I was very glad to do. I continued working on this vessel for a number of days. After buying food with the small wages I received there was not much left to add on the amount I must get to pay my way to Hampton. In order to economize in every way possible, so as to be sure to reach Hampton in a reasonable time, I continued to sleep under the same sidewalk that gave me shelter the first night I was in Richmond.

When I had saved what I considered enough money with which to reach Hampton, I thanked the captain of the vessel for his kindness, and started again. Without any unusual occurrence I reached Hampton, with a surplus of exactly fifty cents with which to begin my education. To me it had been a long, eventful journey; but the first sight of the large, three-story, brick school building seemed to have rewarded me for all that I had undergone in order to reach the place. If the people who gave the money to provide that building could appreciate the influence the sight of it had upon me, as well as upon thousands of other youths, they would feel all the more

encouraged to make such gifts. It seemed to me to be the largest and most beautiful building I had ever seen. The sight of it seemed to give me new life. I felt that a new kind of existence had now begun—that life would now have a new meaning. I felt that I had reached the promised land, and I resolved to let no obstacle prevent me from putting forth the highest effort to fit myself to accomplish the most good in the world.

As soon as possible after reaching the grounds of the Hampton Institute, I presented myself before the head teacher for an assignment to a class. Having been so long without proper food, a bath, and a change of clothing, I did not, of course, make a very favourable impression upon her, and I could see at once that there were doubts in her mind about the wisdom of admitting me as a student. I felt that I could hardly blame her if she got the idea that I was a worthless loafer or tramp. For some time she did not refuse to admit me, neither did she decide in my favour, and I continued to linger about her, and to impress her in all the ways I could with my worthiness. In the meantime I saw her admitting other students, and that added greatly to my discomfort, for I felt, deep down in my heart, that I could do as well as they, if I could only get a chance to show what was in me.

After some hours had passed, the head teacher said to me: "The adjoining recitation-room needs sweeping. Take the broom and sweep it."

It occurred to me at once that here was my chance. Never did I receive an order with more delight. I knew that I could sweep. I swept the recitation-room three times. Then I got a dusting-cloth and dusted it four times. All the woodwork around the walls, every bench, table, and desk, I went over four times with my dusting-cloth. Besides, every piece of furniture had been moved and every closet and corner in the room had been thoroughly cleaned. I had the feeling that in a large measure my future depended upon the impression I made upon the teacher in the cleaning of that room. When I was through, I reported to the head teacher. She was a "Yankee" woman who knew just where to look for dirt. She went into the room and inspected the floor and closets; then she took her handkerchief and rubbed it on the woodwork about the walls, and over the table and benches. When she was unable to find one bit of dirt on the floor, or a particle of dust on any of the furniture, she quietly remarked, "I guess you will do to enter this institution."

I was one of the happiest souls on Earth. The sweeping of that room was my college examination, and never did any youth pass an examination for entrance into Harvard or Yale that gave him more genuine satisfaction. I have passed several examinations since then, but I have always felt that this was the best one I ever passed.

About the Author

Born to a slave on April 5, 1856 in Hale’s Ford, Virginia, U.S., Booker Teliaferro Washington was one of the foremost African-American educators. He became the dominant leader in the African-American community during 1890-1915. It was of course neither the extreme penury nor the lack of means in his childhood that could

discourage him from getting education. It was because of his sheer love for education and his commitment to the cause of education for African-Americans that in 1881 he was made the leader of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama. He remained the head of the Institute until his death on November 14, 1915.

About the Essay

The present essay is taken from Booker T. Washington's autobiography *Up from Slavery*. Here the author relates his experience of how he left home and travelled 500 miles, mostly on foot and without food, to Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia and how he passed the best exam of his life—of sweeping the recitation room—and got admission there.

Glossary

overhear	: to hear someone talking without the knowledge of those engaged in conversation
coloured people	: (people) of a race that do not have white skin (S. Africans)
pretentious	: claiming importance or value without good cause
resolved	: decided firmly
constantly	: continuously; frequently
wild-goose-chase	: a meaningless and hopeless search for someone/something
half-hearted	: lacking enthusiasm
satchel	: a small leather or canvas bag
misery	: great suffering; discomfort of mind or body
acquaintance	: a person whom one knows but who is not a close friend
exhausted	: very tired
elevated	: raised; higher than the area around
pig-iron	: a form of iron that is not pure
consented	: gave agreement or permission
economize	: to save money, time, resources; to spend less than before
linger	: to stay for a time especially because one does not want to leave
delight	: a feeling of great pleasure

Yankee : an inhabitant of any of the N. American states, esp. New England

Choose the correct option:

1. Where did the author spend his nights in Richmond?

(a) In the house of a relative

(b) On the ship where he worked

(c) Under the sidewalk

(d) In a guest house room provided by the captain of the ship

2. Which school were the two miners talking about?

(a) A school for coloured people in Richmond

(b) A school for coloured people in Malden

(c) Hampton Agricultural Institute for coloured people

(d) Hampton Normal and Agriculture Institute

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. Where did the author overhear the two miners talking about a school for coloured people?

2. What fear did the author's mother have about her son's attempt to go to Hampton?

3. What was the condition of the author when he reached Richmond?

4. Why couldn't the author have a safe place for lodging in Richmond?

5. Who asked the author to sweep the recitation room?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. What did the author feel as the two miners went on describing the school?

2. How did the author reach Richmond?

3. What did the author do to get money for food in Richmond?

4. Why does the author call his sweeping of the recitation room the best examination of his life?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. Describe the difficulties Washington had to face in order to get education at Hampton.

2. What qualities of the author have impressed you most and why?

The Meaning of Literature

William Joseph Long

The Shell and the Book: A child and a man were one day walking on the seashore when the child found a little shell and held it to his ear. Suddenly he heard sounds, strange, low, melodious sounds, as if the shell were remembering and repeating to itself the murmurs of its ocean home. The child's face filled with wonder as he listened. Here in the little shell, apparently, was a voice from another world, and he listened with delight to its mystery and music. Then came the man, explaining that the child heard nothing strange; that the pearly curves of the shell simply caught a multitude of sounds too faint for human ears, and filled the glimmering hollows with the murmur of innumerable echoes. It was not a new world, but only the unnoticed harmony of the old that had aroused the child's wonder.

Some such experience as this awaits us when we begin the study of literature, which has always two aspects, one of simple enjoyment and appreciation, the other of analysis and exact description. Let a little song appeal to the ear, or a noble book to the heart, and for the moment, at least, we discover a new world, a world so different from our own that it seems a place of dreams and magic. To enter and enjoy this new world, to love good books for their own sake, is the chief thing; to analyze and explain them is a less joyous but still an important matter. Behind every book is a man; behind the man is the race; and behind the race are the natural and social environments whose influence is unconsciously reflected. These also we must know, if the book is to speak its whole message. In a word, we have now reached a point where we wish to understand as well as to enjoy literature; and the first step, since exact definition is impossible, is to determine some of its essential qualities.

Qualities of Literature: The first significant thing is the essentially **artistic quality** of all literature. All art is the expression of life in forms of truth and beauty; or rather, it is the reflection of some truth and beauty which are in the world, but which remain unnoticed until brought to our attention by some sensitive human soul, just as the delicate curves of the shell reflect sounds and harmonies too faint to be otherwise noticed.

In the same pleasing, surprising way, all artistic work must be a kind of revelation. Thus architecture is probably the oldest of the arts; yet we still have many builders but few architects, that is, men whose work in wood or stone suggest some hidden truth and beauty in the human senses. So in literature, which is the art that expresses life in words that appeal to our own sense of the beautiful, we have many writers but few artists. In the broadest sense, perhaps, literature means simply the written records of the race, including all its history and sciences, as well as its poems and novels; in the narrower sense, literature is the artistic record of life, and most of our writing is excluded from it, just as the mass of our buildings, mere shelters from storm and from cold, are excluded from architecture. A history or a work of science may be

and sometimes is literature, but only as we forget the subject-matter and the presentation of facts in the simple beauty of its expression.

The second quality of literature is its **suggestiveness**, its appeal to our emotions and imagination rather than to our intellect. It is not so much what it says as what it awakens in us that constitutes its charm. When Milton makes Satan say, “Myself am Hell,” he does not state any fact, but rather opens up in these tremendous words a whole world of speculation and imagination. When Faustus in the presence of Helen asks, "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?" he does not state a fact or expect an answer. He opens a door through which our imagination enters a new world, a world of music, love, beauty, heroism,--the whole splendid world of Greek literature. Such magic is in words. When Shakespeare describes the young Biron as speaking

> In such apt and gracious words
> That aged ears play truant at his tales,

he has unconsciously given not only an excellent description of himself, but the measure of all literature, which makes us play truant with the present world and run away to live awhile in the pleasant realm of fancy. The province of all art is not to instruct but to delight; and only as literature delights us, causing each reader to build in his own soul that "lordly pleasure house" of which Tennyson dreamed in his "Palace of Art," is it worthy of its name.

The third characteristic of literature, arising directly from the other two, is its **permanence**. The world does not live by bread alone. Notwithstanding its hurry and bustle and apparent absorption in material things, it does not willingly let any beautiful thing perish. This is even more true of its songs than of its painting and sculpture; though permanence is a quality we should hardly expect in the present deluge of books and magazines pouring day and night and to know him, the man of any age, we must search deeper than his history. History records his deeds, his outward acts largely, but every great act springs from an ideal, and to understand this we must read his literature, where we find his ideals recorded. All that is interesting; but it does not tell us what most we want to know about these old ancestors of ours,--not only what they did, but what they thought and felt; how they looked on life and death; what they loved, what they feared, and what they reverenced in God and man. Then we turn from history to the literature which they themselves produced, and instantly we become acquainted. It is so with any age or people. To understand them we must read not simply their history, which records their deeds, but their literature, which records the dreams that made their deeds possible. So Aristotle was profoundly right when he said that "poetry is more serious and philosophical than history"; and Goethe, when he explained literature as "the humanization of the whole world."

Importance of Literature: It is curious and prevalent opinion that literature, like all art, is a mere play of imagination, pleasing enough, like a new novel, but without any serious or practical importance. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Literature preserves the ideals of a people; and ideals—love, faith, duty, friendship,

freedom, reverence—are the part of human life most worthy of preservation. In a word, our whole civilization, our freedom, our progress, our homes, our religion, rest solidly upon ideals for their foundation. Nothing but an ideal ever endures upon earth. It is therefore impossible to overestimate the practical importance of literature, which preserves these ideals from fathers to sons, while men, cities, governments, civilizations, vanish from the face of the earth.

Summary of the Subject: Literature is the expression of life in words of truth and beauty; it is the written record of man's spirit, of his thoughts, emotions, aspirations; it is the history, and the only history, of the human soul. It is characterized by its artistic, its suggestive, its permanent qualities. Its two tests are its universal interest and its personal style. Its object, aside from the delight it gives us, is to know man, that is, the soul of man rather than his actions; and since it preserves to the race the ideals upon which all our civilization is founded, it is one of the most important and delightful subjects that can occupy the human mind.

About the Author

William Joseph Long (1866-1952) was an American writer, naturalist, and minister. He lived and worked in Stamford, Connecticut church. He had immense interest in wildlife. Many of his books are based on his experiences of wildlife. His famous writings include *Beasts of the Field*, *Wilder Ways*, *Secrets of Woods*, *America: a Study of the Men and the Books*, and *English Literature: Its History and Its Significance for the Life of the English Speaking World*.

About the Essay

"The Meaning of Literature" is an excerpt from Long's *English Literature: Its History and Its Significance for the Life of the English Speaking World*. Here the author explains the meaning, qualities, objectives, and importance of literature in a simple and interesting style.

Glossary

Shell : the hard outer coverings of eggs, nuts, certain seeds, fruits, and animals

melodious : of or producing pleasant music

delight : a feeling of great pleasure

mystery : a thing of which the origin is not known or impossible to explain

pearly : like a pearl

multitude : an extremely large number of people or things

glimmering : sending out a faint unsteady light

innumerable : too many to be counted

race : a group of people who have the same culture, history, language etc.

determine : to find out or fix something exactly and without doubt

splendid : magnificent; very impressive

humanization : concerned with improving the lives of people and reducing sufferings

ideals : standards of perfection

reverence : a feeling of deep respect or admiration for someone/something

endures : continues in existence

Choose the correct option:

1. "Suddenly he heard sounds…." Where were the sounds coming from?

(a) The seashore

(b) The waters of the sea

(c) The shell

(d) None of the above

2. By whom was a comparison between Poetry and History made?

(a) Shakespeare

(b) Goethe

(c) W.J. Long

(d) Aristotle

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. Why was the child's face filled with wonder?

2. What are the two aspects of the study of literature?

3. Which aspect does the author regard as more joyous?

4. Name any two essential qualities of literature.

5. How does the author define literature?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. How does literature become suggestive?

2. How can we understand any age or people?

3. Why are ideals important?

4. What are the objects of literature?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. Summarise the essay in your own words.

2. On the basis of your reading of the essay, explain the importance of literature for your life.

On the Rule of the Road

A. G. Gardiner

A stout old lady was walking with her basket, down the middle of a street in Petrograd to the great confusion of the traffic and with no small peril to herself. It was pointed out to her that the pavement was the place of foot-passengers, but she replied: 'I'm going to walk where I like. We've got liberty now.' It did not occur to the dear old lady that if liberty entitled the foot-passenger to walk down the middle of the road it also entitled the cabdriver to drive on the pavement, and that the end of such liberty would be universal chaos. Everybody would be getting in everybody else's way and nobody would get anywhere. Individual liberty would have become social anarchy.

There is a danger of the world getting liberty drunk in these days like the old lady with the basket, and it is just as well to remind ourselves of what the rule of the road means. It means that in order that the liberties of all may be preserved the liberties of everybody must be curtailed. When the policeman, say, at Piccadilly Circus steps into the middle of the road and puts out his hand, he is a symbol not of tyranny, but of liberty. You may not think so. You may, being in a hurry and seeing your motor-car pulled up by this insolence of office, feel that your liberty has been outraged. How dare this fellow interfere with your free use of the public highway? Then, if you are a reasonable person, you will reflect that if he did not, incidentally, interfere with you he would interfere with no one, and the result would be that Piccadilly Circus would be a maelstrom that you would never cross at all. You have submitted to a curtailment of private liberty in order that you may enjoy—a social order which makes your liberty a reality.

Liberty is not a personal affair only, but a social contract. It is an accommodation of interest. In matters which do not touch anybody else's liberty, of course, I may be as free as I like. If I choose to go down the Strand in a dressing-gown, with long hair and bare feet, who shall say me nay? You have liberty to laugh at me, but I have liberty to be indifferent to you. And if I have a fancy for dyeing my hair, or waxing my moustache (which heaven forbid), or wearing a tall hat, a frock-coat and sandals, or going to bed late or getting up early, I shall follow my fancy and ask no man's permission. I shall not inquire of you whether I may eat mustard with my mutton. I may like mustard with my mutton. And you will not ask me whether you may be a Protestant or a Catholic, whether you may marry the dark lady or the fair lady, whether you may prefer Ella Wheeler Wilcox to Wordsworth, or champagne to shandy-gaff.

In all these and a thousand other details you and I please ourselves and ask no one's leave. We have a whole kingdom in which we rule alone, can do what we choose, be wise or ridiculous, harsh or easy, conventional or odd. But directly we step out of that kingdom, our personal liberty of action becomes qualified by other people's liberty. I might like to practise on the trombone from midnight till three in the morning. If I went on to the top of Helvellyn to do it I could please myself, but if I do it out in the

streets the neighbours will remind me that my liberty to blow the trombone must not interfere with their liberty to sleep in quiet. There are a lot of people in the world, and I have to accommodate my liberty to their liberties.

We are all liable to forget this and, unfortunately we are much more conscious of the imperfections of others in this respect than of our own.

I got into a railway carriage at a country station the other morning and settled down for what the schoolboys would call an hour's 'swot' at a Blue-book. I was not reading it for pleasure. The truth is that I never do read Blue-books for pleasure. I read them as a barrister reads a brief, for the very humble purpose of turning an honest penny out of them. Now, if you are reading a book for pleasure, it doesn't matter what is going on around you. I think I could enjoy *Tristram Shandy* or *Treasure Island* in the midst of an earthquake.

But when you are reading a thing as a task you need reasonable quiet, and that is what I didn't get, for at the next station in came a couple of men, one of whom talked to his friend for the rest of the journey in a loud and pompous voice. He was one of those people who remind one of that story of Horn Tooke, who, meeting a person of immense swagger in the street, stopped him and said, 'Excuse me, sir, but are you someone in particular?' This gentleman was someone in particular. As I wrestled with clauses and sections, his voice rose like a gale and his family history, the deeds of his sons in the war, and his criticisms of the generals and the politicians submerged my poor attempts to hang on to my job. I shut up the Blue-book, looked out of the window, and listened wearily while the voice thundered on with themes like these: 'Now what the French ought to have done...' 'The mistake the Germans made...' 'If only Asquith had...' You know the sort of stuff. I had heard it all before, oh, so often. It was like a barrel-organ groaning out some banal song of long ago.

If I had asked him to be good enough to talk in a lower tone, I dare say he would have thought I was a very rude fellow. It did not occur to him that anybody could have anything better to do than to listen to him and I have no doubt he left the carriage convinced that everybody in it had, thanks to him, had a very illuminating journey, and would carry away a pleasing impression of his encyclopaedic range. He was obviously a well-intentioned person. The thing that was wrong with him was that he had not the social sense. He was not a 'clubbable man'.

A reasonable consideration for the rights or feelings of others is the foundation of the social conduct.

It is in small matters of conduct, in the observance of the rule of the road, that we pass judgment upon ourselves, and declare that we are civilized or uncivilized. The great moments of heroism and sacrifice are rare. It is the little habits of commonplace intercourse that make up the great sum of life and sweeten or make bitter the journey.

About the Author

Born in 1865, Alfred George Gardiner was an English journalist and writer. Gardiner is known for his excellent essays on simple, day-to-day matters. His essays have been described as "sweet morsels of writing" because of the distinct quality of style. His collections of essays include *Pebbles on the Shore*, *Leaves in the Wind*, *Windfalls*, and *Many Furrows*.

About the Essay

"On the Rule of the Road" was published in Gardiner's collection of essays, *Leaves in the Wind*. Here the author speaks up for a sensible and balanced attitude to life. It is by talking about the rule of the road, an ordinary matter of conduct, that he tries to define true freedom characterised by the balance between individual and social liberty.

Glossary

accommodate : to provide space for someone/something

anarchy : the absence of government or control in society

Champagne : an expensive French white wine with bubbles in it

civilized : having or showing good behavior or manners

conventional : following what is traditional

curtail : to make something shorter or less

heroism : brave and noble conduct

intercourse : dealings with people

liberty : freedom

maelstrom : a state of violent confusion

outrage : a strong feeling of anger and shock

peril : serious danger

ridiculous : deserving to be laughed at; absurd

shandy : a drink made by mixing beer with lemonade or ginger ale

trombone : a large brass musical instrument

tyranny : the unfair, severe or cruel use of power or authority

Choose the correct option:

1. How did the old lady look like?

(a) Thin and tall

(b) Short and fat

(c) Fat

(d) Too fat

2. When does a policeman become a symbol of liberty?

(a) When he arrests those who break traffic rules.

(b) When he arrests and releases people who commit small offenses.

(c) When he controls the traffic on the road.

(d) When he allows all the people to do what they like on the road.

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. Why was the old lady walking down the middle of a street?

2. What example does the author give to explain the meaning of the rule of the road?

3. Give two examples of matters in which we rule alone.

4. "He was obviously a well-intentioned person.' Whom does "He" refer to here?

5. Why did the author shut up the Blue-book?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. When does individual liberty tend to become social anarchy?

2. Was the old lady "liberty-drunk"? How?

3. What is the foundation of social conduct?

4. How do habits of ordinary conduct influence the quality of our life?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. "Liberty is not a personal affair only, but a social contract." Explain this statement with reference to the context.

2. Do you agree with the author's views on liberty? Give reasons for your answer.

On the Conduct of Life

William Hazlitt

MY DEAR LITTLE FELLOW—You are now going to settle at school, and may consider this as your first entrance into the world. As my health is so indifferent, and I may not be with you long, I wish to leave you some advice (the best I can) for your conduct in life, both that it may be of use to you, and as something to remember me by. I may at least be able to caution you against my own errors, if nothing else.

As we went along to your new place of destination, you often repeated that 'you durst say they were a set of stupid, disagreeable people', meaning the people at the school. You were to blame in this. It is a good old rule to hope for the best. Always, my dear, believe things to be right, till you find them to be contrary; and even then, instead of irritating yourself against them, endeavour to put up with them as well as you can, if you cannot alter them. You said you were sure you should not like the school where you were going. This is wrong. What you meant was that you did not like to leave home. But you could not tell whether you should like the school or not, till you had given it a trial. Otherwise, your saying that you should not like it was determining that you would not like it. Never anticipate evils; or, because you cannot have things exactly as you wish, make them out worse than they are, through mere spite and wilfulness.

You seemed at first to take no notice of your school-fellows, or rather to set yourself against them, because they were strangers to you. They knew as little of you as you did of them; so that this would have been a reason for their keeping aloof from you as well, which you would have felt as a hardship. Learn never to conceive a prejudice against others, because you know nothing of them. It is bad reasoning, and makes enemies of half the world. Do not think ill of them, till they behave ill to you; and then strive to avoid the faults which you see in them. This will disarm their hostility sooner than pique or resentment or complaint.

I thought you were disposed to criticise the dress of some of the boys as not so good as your own. Never despise anyone for anything that he cannot help—least of all, for his poverty. I would wish you to keep up appearances yourself as a defence against the idle sneers of the world, but I would not have you value yourself upon them. I hope you will be neither the dupe nor victim of vulgar prejudices. Instead of saying above— "Never despise anyone for anything that he cannot help"—I might have said, "Never despise anyone at all"; for contempt implies a triumph over and pleasure in the ill of another. It means that you are glad and congratulate yourself on their failings or misfortunes. The sense of inferiority in others, without this indirect appeal to our self-love, is a painful feeling, and not an exulting one.

You complain since, that the boys laugh at you and do not care about you, and that you are not treated as you were at home. My dear, that is one of the chief reasons for your being sent to school to inure you betimes to the unavoidable rubs and uncertain reception you may meet with in life. You cannot always be with me, and perhaps it is as well that you cannot. But you must not expect others to show the same concern about you as I should. You have hitherto been a spoiled child, and have been used to have your own way a good deal, both in the house and among your play-fellows, with whom you were too fond of being a leader: but you have good-nature and good-sense, and will get the better of this in time. You have now got among other boys who are your equals, or bigger and stronger than yourself, and who have something else to attend to besides humouring your whims and fancies; and you feel this as a repulse or piece of injustice. But the first lesson to learn is that there are other people in the world besides yourself. There are a number of boys in the school where you are, whose amusements and pursuits (whatever they may be) are and ought to be of as much consequence to them as yours can be to you, and to which therefore you must give way in your turn. The more airs of childish self-importance you give yourself, you will only expose yourself to be the more thwarted and laughed at. True equality is the only true morality or true wisdom. Remember always that you are but one among others, and you can hardly mistake your place in society. In your father's house, you might do as you pleased: in the world, you will find competitors at every turn. You are not born a king's son to destroy or dictate to millions: you can only expect to share their fate, or settle your differences amicably with them. You already find it so at school: and I wish you to be reconciled to your situation as soon and with as little pain as you can.

Your affectionate father,

WILLIAM HAZLITT

About the Author

William Hazlitt (April 10, 1778-September 18, 1830) was an English essayist, literary critic, painter, and philosopher. His notable works include *The Round Table: A Collection of Essays on Literature, Men, and Manners* (1807), *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817), *Table Talk* (1821-22), *The Spirit of the Age* (1825).

About the Essay (Letter)

The essay, "On the Conduct of Life" was originally a letter written by William Hazlitt to his son about 150 years ago. Later, this letter was published as an essay in *Selected Essays* (1930). In the present extract of the letter, Hazlitt gives his son some valuable advice for his conduct as a student. He wanted his son to treat life at school as a preparation for future life. Hazlitt's advice may be useful for our students even today.

Glossary

settle : to make oneself comfortable in a new place

indifferent : of rather low quality

caution : to warn or advise someone against something

destination : a place to which someone is going or being sent

durst : (dated) dared (past tense of dare)

stupid : foolish

disagreeable : unpleasant

contrary : opposite

irritating : making someone angry, annoyed or impatient

endeavour : to try to do something

to put up with : to tolerate or bear someone/something

alter : to make someone/something different; to change

trial : an act of testing something

anticipate : to expect something

spite : an unkind desire to hurt, annoy or offend someone

wilfulness : obstinacy

keeping aloof : not participating in something; showing no alliance towards someone

hardship : suffering caused by a lack of money or basic necessities

conceive : to form an idea, a plan, etc in the mind; to imagine something

prejudice : dislike or distrust of person, group, customs, etc that is based on fear or false information rather than on reason or experience

reasoning : the action or process of using one's ability to think, form opinions

disarm : to make someone less suspicious, angry, hostile

hostility : aggressive feeling or behaviour

pique	: irritation
resentment	: feeling of indignation or annoyance
disposed	: wanting or prepared to do something
despise	: to feel contempt for someone/something
to keep up	: to cause things to appear satisfactory though they are not so
sneer	: a look, smile, word, phrase, etc that shows contempt
dupe	: one who is deceived or cheated
contempt	: the feeling that someone/something is totally worthless and cannot be respected
exulting	: showing or feeling great joy
inure	: to make oneself/someone able to tolerate something unpleasant
betimes	: (dated) early
rubs	: difficulties
hitherto	: until now
humouring your	: satisfying all your trifling desires
repulse	: the act of repulsing (refusing or rejecting with rudeness)
amusements	: (plural: amusements) a thing that makes time pass pleasantly
pursuit	: (plural pursuits) a thing to which one gives one's time and energy
airs	: affected manners intended to make one very important
thwarted	: opposed
amicably	: in a polite or friendly manner
to be reconciled	: to be content with

Choose the correct option:

1. Which of the following was not Hazlitt's reason for giving advice to his son?

(a) Hazlitt felt that he was not going to live long.

(b) He wished to be remembered by his son.

(c) He wanted his son to publish his advice.

(d) He wished to caution his son against his own errors.

2. Where, according to Hazlitt, might one have maximum freedom?

(a) At the school

(b) In the father's house

(c) In the world

(d) None of the above

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. Whom does Hazlitt address as "MY DEAR LITTLE FELLOW"?

2. What did Hazlitt's son think of the people at the school?

3. How does Hazlitt like his son to behave with his school mates?

4. What, according to Hazlitt, is true wisdom?

5. How does Hazlitt wish his son to settle differences with his competitors?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. What advice does Hazlitt give about prejudice against others?

2. Why does Hazlitt prefer to advise his son never to "despise anyone at all?

3. What reason does Hazlitt give for sending his son to school?

4. What first lesson does Hazlitt wish his son to learn?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. Summarise in your own words Hazlitt's advice to his son.

2. If you were the author's son, how would you respond to his letter?

My Wood

E. M. Forster

A few years ago I wrote a book which dealt in part with the difficulties of the English in India. Feeling that they would have had no difficulties in India themselves, the Americans read the book freely. The more they read it the better it made them feel, and a cheque to the author was the result. I bought a wood with the cheque. It is not a large wood – it contains scarcely any trees, and it is intersected, blast it, by a public footpath. Still, it is the first property that I have owned, so it is right that other people should participate in my shame, and should ask themselves, in accents that will vary in horror, this very important question: What is the effect of property upon the character? Don't let's touch economics; the effect of private ownership upon the community as a whole is another question – a more important question, perhaps, but another one. Let's keep to psychology. If you own things, what's their effect on you? What's the effect on me of my wood?

In the first place, it makes me feel heavy. Property does have this effect. Property produces men of weight, and it was a man of weight who failed to get into the Kingdom of Heaven. He was not wicked, that unfortunate millionaire in the parable, he was only stout; he stuck out in front, not to mention behind, and as he wedged himself this way and that in the crystalline entrance and bruised his well-fed flanks, he saw beneath him a comparatively slim camel passing through the eye of a needle and being woven into the robe of God. The Gospels all through couple stoutness and slowness. They point out what is perfectly obvious, yet seldom realized: that if you have a lot of things you cannot move about a lot, that furniture requires dusting, dusters require servants, servants require insurance stamps, and the whole tangle of them makes you think twice before you accept an invitation to dinner or go for a bathe in the Jordan. Sometimes the Gospels proceed further and say with Tolstoy that property is sinful; they approach the difficult ground of asceticism here, where I cannot follow them. But as to the immediate effects of property on people, they just show straightforward logic. It produces men of weight. Men of weight cannot, by definition, move like the lightning from the East unto the West, and the ascent of a fourteen-stone bishop into a pulpit is thus the exact antithesis of the coming of the Son of Man. My wood makes me feel heavy.

In the second place, it makes me feel it ought to be larger.

The other day I heard a twig snap in it. I was annoyed at first, for I thought that someone was black-berrying, and depreciating the value of the undergrowth. On coming nearer, I saw it was not a man who had trodden on the twig and snapped it, but a bird, and I felt pleased. My bird. The bird was not equally pleased. Ignoring the relation between us, it took fright as soon as it saw the shape of my face, and flew straight over the boundary hedge into a field, the property of Mrs. Henessy, where it sat

down with a loud squawk. It had become Mrs. Henessy's bird. Something seemed grossly amiss here, something that would not have occurred had the wood been larger. I could not afford to buy Mrs. Henessy out, I dared not murder her, and limitations of this sort beset me on every side. Ahab did not want that vineyard – he only needed it to round off his property, preparatory to plotting a new curve – and all the land around my wood has become necessary to me in order to round off the wood. A boundary protects. But – poor little thing – the boundary ought in its turn to be protected. Noises on the edge of it. Children throw stones. A little more, and then a little more, until we reach the sea. Happy Canute! Happier Alexander! And after all, why should even the world be the limit of possession? A rocket containing a Union Jack, will, it is hoped, be shortly fired at the moon. Mars. Sirius. Beyond which . . . but these immensities ended by saddening me. I could not suppose that my wood was the destined nucleus of universal dominion – it is so very small and contains no mineral wealth beyond the blackberries. Nor was I comforted when Mrs. Henessy's bird took alarm for the second time and flew clean away from us all, under the belief that it belonged to itself.

In the third place, property makes its owner feel that he ought to do something to it. Yet he isn't sure what. A restlessness comes over him, a vague sense that he has a personality to express – the same sense which, without any vagueness, leads the artist to an act of creation. Sometimes I think I will cut down such trees as remain in the wood, at other times I want to fill up the gaps between them with new trees. Both impulses are pretentious and empty. They are not honest movements towards money-making or beauty. They spring from a foolish desire to express myself and from an inability to enjoy what I have got. Creation, property, enjoyment form a sinister trinity in the human mind. Creation and enjoyment are both very, very good, yet they are often unattainable without a material basis, and at such moments property pushes itself in as a substitute, saying, "Accept me instead – I'm good enough for all three." It is not enough. It is, as Shakespeare said of lust, "The expense of spirit in a waste of shame"; it is "Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream." Yet we don't know how to shun it. It is forced on us by our economic system as the alternative to starvation. It is also forced on us by an internal defect in the soul, by the feeling that in property may lie the germs of self-development and of exquisite or heroic deeds. Our life on earth is, and ought to be, material and carnal. But we have not yet learned to manage our materialism and carnality properly; they are still entangled with the desire for ownership, where (in the words of Dante) "Possession is one with loss."

And this brings us to our fourth and final point: the blackberries.

Blackberries are not plentiful in this meagre grove, but they are easily seen from the public footpath which traverses it, and all too easily gathered. Foxgloves, too – people will pull up the foxgloves, and ladies of an educational tendency even grub for toadstools to show them on the Monday in class. Other ladies, less educated, roll down the bracken in the arms of their gentlemen friends. There is paper, there are tins. Pray, does my wood belong to me or doesn't it? And, if it does, should I not own it best by

allowing no one else to walk there? There is a wood near Lyme Regis, also cursed by a public footpath, where the owner has not hesitated on this point. He has built high stone walls each side of the path, and has spanned it by bridges, so that the public circulate like termites while he gorges on the blackberries unseen. He really does own his wood, this able chap. Dives in Hell did pretty well, but the gulf dividing him from Lazarus could be traversed by vision, and nothing traverses it here. And perhaps I shall come to this in time. I shall wall in and fence out until I really taste the sweets of property. Enormously stout, endlessly avaricious, pseudo -creative, intensely selfish, I shall weave upon my forehead the quadruple crown of possession until those nasty Bolshies come and take it off again and thrust me aside into the outer darkness.

About the Author

English writer E(dward) M(organ) Forster was educated at Cambridge. He established himself as a novelist. He was the author of several novels, two biographies, a book of criticism, and many essays and short stories. He is best known today for the novels *Howards End* and *A Passage to India*.

About the Essay

The essay "My Wood," was first published in 1926. In fact, the essay contains the essayist's personal experiences of possessing a property. He purchases a wood (a piece of land /an estate). But he is not satisfied with it and therefore wishes to have a large piece of land and thus develops greed. The essay encourages us to think about the nature of materialism and the seductive power of our possessions.

Glossary

I wrote…India : Forster wrote a famous novel *A Passage to India* (1924)

a wood : a piece of land (an estate/a property)

scarcely : hardly

intersected : divided

blast it : we use these words when we are very annoyed about something

accent : the way someone pronounces the words of a language

wicked : evil, sinful

parable : a story (esp. in the Bible) which is intended to teach a lesson

wedged : fixed

crystalline : formed into crystals

flanks : the side of something

Gospel : (one of the four descriptions in the Bible) the life and teaching of Christ

Jordon : the holy river of Palestine

Tolstoy : a famous Russian novelist

tangle : a confused state /situation

asceticism : avoiding pleasure and comfort, especially for religious reasons

antithesis : the complete opposite of something

snap : to grasp with teeth

squawk : noise

Sirius : also called a dog-star: its appearance in the sky is the premonition of rain and storm

dominion : rule or power

vagueness : lack of clarity, a state of confusion

impulse : sudden desire

sinister : evil

trinity : union

lust : desire

shun : to avoid

starvation : suffering from hunger

exquisite : skilful

entangled : twisted, involved

Dante : a great Italian poet

meager : small and less in quantity

grove : a piece of land with trees growing on it

toadstool : a wild plant like a mushroom, that can be poisonous

Dives in hell….vision : according to the Biblical story, Dives and Lazarus are the

symbol of the man of wealth and the poor respectively

avaricious : greedy

pseudo : false or not real

quadruple : four times as big or as many

Bolshies : Bolsheviks, the members of the Russian Communist Party, advocates of the radical political and economic philosophy which forbids and rejects all private property

Choose the correct option:

1. What, according to the author, does a property make us?

(a) proud

(b) greedy

(c) happy

(d) sad

2. The essay "My Wood" discusses the author's feelings regarding. . . .

(a) the ownership of the property

(b) the neighbour's property

(c) the adverse effects of the property

(d) all of these

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. How did the author get money to buy a wood?

2. What is the adverse effect of the property on the character of the author?

3. What allusions does the author make to prove that property acquisition creates various problems?

4. What three things does the property make the author feel?

5. What four qualities would the author like to have on his crown of possession?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. What, according to the author, is “the internal defect in the soul”?

2. How, according to the author, does property help in "self-development and exquisite or heroic deeds”?

3. What does the author mean by "a sinister trinity in the human mind"?

4. Of what dangers does the author warn the readers?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. Explain, with reference to the context, the following extracts from the essay:

(a) Property produces men of weight.

(b) Property is sinful.

2. What would you do if you had a wood? Elaborate (with examples) the reasons for it.

Reading makes a full man, meditation

a profound man, discourse a clear man.

-Benjamin Franklin

The Pleasure of Books

William Lyon Phelps

The habit of reading is one of the greatest resources of mankind; and we enjoy reading books that belong to us much more than if they are borrowed. A borrowed book is like a guest in the house; it must be treated with punctiliousness, with a certain considerate formality. You must see that it sustains no damage; it must not suffer while under your roof. You cannot leave it carelessly, you cannot mark it, you cannot turn down the pages, you cannot use it familiarly. And then, some day, although this is seldom done, you really ought to return it.

But your own books belong to you; you treat them with that affectionate intimacy that annihilates formality. Books are for use, not for show; you should own no book that you are afraid to mark up, or afraid to place on the table, wide open and face down. A good reason for marking favorite passages in books is that this practice enables you to remember more easily the significant sayings, to refer to them quickly, and then in later years, it is like visiting a forest where you once blazed a trail. You have the pleasure of going over the old ground, and recalling both the intellectual scenery and your own earlier self.

Everyone should begin collecting a private library in youth; the instinct of private property, which is fundamental in human beings, can here be cultivated with every advantage and no evils. One should have one's own bookshelves, which should not have doors, glass windows, or keys; they should be free and accessible to the hand as well as to the eye. The best of mural decorations is books; they are more varied in color and appearance than any wallpaper, they are more attractive in design, and they have the prime advantage of being separate personalities, so that if you sit alone in the room in the firelight, you are surrounded with intimate friends. The knowledge that they are there in plain view is both stimulating and refreshing. You do not have to read them all. Most of my indoor life is spent in a room containing six thousand books; and I have a stock answer to the invariable question that comes from strangers. "Have you read all of these books?" "Some of them twice." This reply is both true and unexpected.

There are of course no friends like living, breathing, corporeal men and women; my devotion to reading has never made me a recluse. How could it? Books are of the people, by the people, for the people. Literature is the immortal part of history; it is the best and most enduring part of personality. But book-friends have this advantage over living friends; you can enjoy the most truly aristocratic society in the world whenever you want it. The great dead are beyond our physical reach, and the great living are usually almost as inaccessible; as for our personal friends and acquaintances, we cannot always see them. Perchance they are asleep, or away on a journey. But in a private library, you can at any moment converse with Socrates or Shakespeare or Carlyle or Dumas or Dickens or Shaw or Barrie or Galsworthy. And there is no doubt that in these books you see these men at their best. They wrote for *you.* They "laid themselves out,"

they did their ultimate best to entertain you, to make a favorable impression. You are necessary to them as an audience is to an actor; only instead of seeing them masked, you look into their innermost heart of heart.

About the Author

William Lyon Phelps (1865-1943) was an American educator, literary critic, columnist, and speaker. He was a Professor of English at Yale University, U.S.A. from 1901 to 1933. His major works include *Advance of the English Novel* and *Essays on Modern Dramatists*.

About the Speech

The speech which came to be known as "The Pleasure of Books" was delivered by William Lyon Phelps on April 6, 1933 during a radio broadcast.

Glossary

resources	: things that give help, support or comfort
punctiliousness	: showing great attention to details or behaviour
considerate	: careful not to hurt or trouble others
intimacy	: close friendship or relationship
annihilate	: destroy somebody/something completely
blaze a trail	: to be the first to do something that others follow
instinct	: a tendency that one is born with
evil	: morally bad
accessible	: that can be reached, used
mural	: a large painting done on a wall
varied	: of different types
stimulating	: exciting or interesting
stock	: commonly used
corporeal	: having physical existence
recluse	: a person who lives alone and likes to avoid other people
immortal	: living for ever; never dying
enduring	: lasting for a long time

Choose the correct option:

1. Which books do we enjoy more?

(a) Books of guests

(b) Borrowed books

(c) Simple books

(d) Own books

2. What are more attractive in colour and appearance than wall papers?

(a) Mural decorations

(b) Glass windows

(c) Marked books

(d) Bookshelves

Answer the following questions in 15-20 words each:

1. Whom does the author compare a borrowed book to?

2. What, according to the author, are books for?

3. In what way should one have his/her bookshelves in the house?

4. What reply does the author give to strangers' question?

5. When and where can you converse with the great authors of the world?

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. How is the treatment of a borrowed book similar to that accorded to a guest?

2. What reason does the author suggest for "marking favourite passages in books"?

3. Why does the author prefer own book to a borrowed book?

4. Why are readers necessary for writers?

Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:

1. Discuss the use of similes in the speech.

2. In his speech, Phelps mentions several benefits of books. Which of them do you find the most significant? Why?

Literary Terms and Figures of Speech

(The following contribution is largely based on M. H. Abrams's *A Glossary of Literary Terms*)

Elegy

An elegy is a formal and sustained poem of lament for the death of a particular person. For example, Tennyson's *In Memoriam* on the death of Arthur Hallam. Sometimes, the term is used for meditative poems, such as Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard."

Epic

Epic or heroic poem is a long narrative poem on a great and serious subject, composed in an elevated style, and centred on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depend the fate of a tribe, a nation or the human race. Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* are notable examples of epic.

Sonnet

A sonnet is a lyric poem which consists of fourteen iambic pentameter lines linked by an intricate rhyme scheme. The rhyme, in English, usually follows one of two main patterns:

(1) The Italian or Petrarchan sonnet is divided into two parts: an octave (8 lines) rhyming a b b a a b b a and a sestet (6 lines) rhyming c d e c d e or some variant such as c d c c d c. This form was used by Milton, Wordsworth, and D.G. Rossetti.

(2) The English or the Shakespearean sonnet is divided into three quatrains and a concluding couplet: a b a b c d c d e f e f g g.

Ode

An ode is a long lyric poem, serious in subject, elevated in style, and elaborate in its stanzaic structure. For example, Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality."

Lyric

Greek writers identified the lyric as a song rendered to the accompaniment of a lyre, a musical instrument. The term is now used for any short, non-narrative poem presenting a single speaker who expresses a state of mind or a process of thought and feeling.

Ballad

The popular ballad (known also as the folk ballad or traditional ballad) is defined as a song, transmitted orally, which tells a story.

Satire

Satire is the literary art of diminishing a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking attitudes of amusement, contempt, indignation, or scorn towards it.

Fiction

Broadly speaking, fiction is any narrative which is feigned or invented rather than historically or factually true. The term "fiction" is applied primarily to prose narratives (the novel and the short story), and is sometimes used simply as a synonym for the novel.

Melodrama

"Melos" is a Greek term for song, and the term "melodrama" was originally applied to all musical plays, including opera. Now, melodrama can be said a drama which is full of exciting events and exaggerated characters. The adjective melodramatic is applied to any literary work or episode that relies on improbable events and sensational action.

Monologue

The term monologue is derived from Greek term meaning 'one word' or 'one speech', and refers to an extended speech by one person. It is used in the form of a dramatic monologue, where the speaker is imagined to be talking to a silent listener (for example, in Browning's "My Last Duchess") or as a soliloquy, where the speaker speaks his thoughts aloud to himself, presented as an extended part of a text or a play (for example, Hamlet's soliloquy "To be or not to be. . . ." in Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*).

Simile

This is a figure of speech in which an explicit comparison is made between two essentially dissimilar things, actions, or feelings. This is done by the use of words such as "like" or "as." For example, Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud" and Robert Burns' "O, my love is like a red, red rose."

Metaphor

In this figure of speech, a thing, idea, or action is referred to by a word or phrase denoting some other idea or action, but used to highlight a common factor or characteristic between them. Through a metaphor, an analogy is drawn between two dissimilar things, for instance, Martin Luther's phrase: "A mighty fortress is our God/A bulwark never failing."

Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of speech sounds in a sequence of nearby words: the term is usually applied only to consonants, and only when the recurrent sound occurs in a prominent position at the beginning of a word or of a stressed syllable within a word. For example, in one of Shakespeare's sonnets "When to the ***session*** of ***sweet silent*** thought. . . ."

Onomatopoeia

In its narrow sense, onomatopoeia is applied to a word, or a combination of words whose sound seems to resemble the sound it denotes: "hiss," "buzz," "rattle," "crackle," etc. Two lines from Tennyson's poem "Come Down, O Maid" are often cited example of onomatopoeia:

The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

Personification

This is a figure of speech in which either an inanimate object or an abstract concept is spoken of as though it were endowed with life or with human attributes or feelings. For instance, in his poem "To Autumn," Keats personifies the abstraction, autumn, as a woman carrying on the rural chores of that season.

Paradox

A paradox is a statement which appears on its face to be self-contradictory or absurd, yet turns out to have some truth in it. For example, the concluding lines of Donne's sonnet:

One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; *Death, thou shalt die*.

Oxymoron

When two contradictory terms are combined or juxtaposed in a compressed paradox, it is called oxymoron; an example is Tennyson's "O *Death in life*, the

days that are no more." The phrases like "pleasing pains," I burn and freeze," "loving hate" are also examples of the oxymoron.

Euphemism

Euphemism, derived from the Greek "to speak well," is an expression that is gentler or less direct in place of the blunt expression for something disagreeable, unpleasant, terrifying, or offensive. For example, euphemisms like "to pass away," "mortician" are often used in reference to death.

Epithet

The term epithet is derived from the Greek "epitheton" signifying "something added." It denotes an adjective or adjectival phrase used to define the special quality of a person or thing. For example, Keats's phrase "*silver snarling* trumpets and Homer's phrases such as "swift-footed Achilles," "wine-dark sea," and "rosy-fingered dawn."

Antithesis

This is a contrast or opposition in meaning emphasised by a parallel in grammatical structure. An example is Alexander Pope's description of Atticus in his Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, "Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike." Another example is in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*.

Resolved to win, he meditates his way,
By force to ravish, or by fraud betray.
