

## **“On the Face of It” by Susan Hill**

### **TEXTUAL QUESTION ANSWERS**

*(From Vistas – Supplementary Reader)*

#### **Reading with Insight**

##### **1. What is it that draws Derry towards Mr. Lamb despite himself?**

**Answer:** Derry, a teenage boy with a burnt face, initially avoids people due to their judgmental attitudes. When he meets Mr. Lamb, an old man with a tin leg, he is drawn by Lamb's openness, honesty, and positive outlook on life. Mr. Lamb treats Derry as an equal, encouraging him to embrace life rather than hide. This genuine connection and inspiring attitude attract Derry despite his own reservations.

##### **2. In which section of the play does Mr. Lamb display signs of loneliness and disappointment? What are the ways in which Mr. Lamb tries to overcome these feelings?**

**Answer:** Mr. Lamb's loneliness becomes apparent when he tells Derry about children calling him names and people avoiding his house. He tries to overcome his isolation by keeping his garden open to all, talking to bees and birds, and being friendly with strangers. He finds solace in nature and in his philosophy of acceptance and optimism.

##### **3. The actual pain or inconvenience caused by a physical impairment is often much less than the sense of alienation felt by the person with disabilities. What is the kind of behaviour that the person expects from others?**

**Answer:** People with disabilities often experience social alienation more deeply than their physical challenges. They expect others to treat them with normalcy, dignity, and respect—not with pity or fear. They want to be accepted for who they are and not defined solely by

their impairments. Understanding, inclusion, and empathy can go a long way in making them feel valued.

#### **4. Will Derry get back to Mr. Lamb in the end?**

**Answer:** Yes, Derry does go back to Mr. Lamb. Initially hesitant, Derry is deeply moved by Mr. Lamb's words. He realizes that hiding from the world won't help and that he needs to live with confidence. He decides to return and embrace life—but tragically, he finds Mr. Lamb dead, having fallen from the ladder. Derry's return signifies the beginning of a change in his outlook, inspired by Mr. Lamb.

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### **ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS (SHORT & LONG ANSWERS)**

#### **◆ Short Answer Questions (30–50 words)**

##### **1. Why does Derry avoid people?**

**Answer:** Derry avoids people because of his burnt and scarred face. He feels judged, pitied, or feared by others, which makes him self-conscious, bitter, and withdrawn from society.

##### **2. What is the significance of the play's title, “On the Face of It”?**

**Answer:** The title reflects the idea that people judge others based on outward appearances. “On the face of it,” Derry and Mr. Lamb seem different and broken, but inwardly they have depth, strength, and emotions like anyone else.

##### **3. What attitude does Mr. Lamb have toward life?**

**Answer:** Mr. Lamb has a positive, accepting attitude. He doesn't let his disability define him and believes in living fully, interacting with others, and seeing beauty in the world.

##### **4. What made Derry return to Mr. Lamb's garden?**

**Answer:** Derry was inspired by Mr. Lamb's philosophy about life and self-worth. Lamb's words stayed with him, prompting him to return and prove he could live confidently and not hide.

**5. How did Mr. Lamb lose his leg?**

**Answer:** Mr. Lamb lost his leg during a war. He now uses a tin leg, which often makes children call him “Lamey-Lamb,” but he accepts it without bitterness.

**6. Why does Mr. Lamb leave his garden gate open?**

**Answer:** Mr. Lamb leaves the gate open to welcome everyone. He believes in openness, friendliness, and does not want to shut anyone out of his life.

**7. How is Derry's mother protective of him?**

**Answer:** Derry’s mother is overly protective and hesitant about him going out. She fears people’s reactions and wants to shield him from hurt, though it results in limiting his independence.

**8. Why does Derry feel inferior?**

**Answer:** Derry feels inferior because of the way people look at his disfigured face. He believes no one can love or accept him, leading to low self-esteem.

**9. What does Mr. Lamb say about things being different and still beautiful?**

**Answer:** Mr. Lamb tells Derry that even things that are different or flawed, like a weed or a tin leg, have beauty and value. It’s all about how one looks at them.

**10. What message does the play convey?**

**Answer:** The play conveys that physical disability does not define a person. One must not let appearance or others’ opinions limit their life. Inner strength, optimism, and acceptance are key to living fully.

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◆ **Long Answer Questions (120–150 words)**

**11. Compare and contrast the characters of Mr. Lamb and Derry.**

**Answer:** Mr. Lamb is an old man who has lost one leg in war. Despite this, he is cheerful, kind, and optimistic. He believes in the beauty of

life, in openness, and in embracing all experiences. In contrast, Derry is a young boy with a burnt face. He is bitter, withdrawn, and lacks self-confidence. He fears judgment and avoids people. Mr. Lamb's positive attitude deeply influences Derry, helping him see that life is about more than appearances. While Mr. Lamb is an example of resilience, Derry represents the struggle to accept oneself. Their interaction is transformative for Derry.

### **12. What changes do we see in Derry by the end of the play?**

**Answer:** At the beginning, Derry is shy, angry, and bitter due to his facial disfigurement. He believes people only see his scars, not his personality. However, after meeting Mr. Lamb, his perspective begins to change. Mr. Lamb's words about not letting disability define one's life resonate with him. Derry gains confidence, understands that he can still lead a fulfilling life, and decides to return to Mr. Lamb's garden. Though he finds Mr. Lamb dead, Derry's return marks the start of his emotional transformation from self-pity to self-acceptance.

### **13. How does Mr. Lamb try to change Derry's attitude?**

**Answer:** Mr. Lamb talks to Derry in a calm and open manner. He shares his own experience of being mocked but explains that he never lets such things affect him. He encourages Derry to enjoy life, appreciate nature, and not worry about others' opinions. Mr. Lamb emphasizes that what matters is how one sees oneself, not how others do. Through simple stories and philosophical reflections, he helps Derry realize that life is precious and should not be wasted on fear or bitterness.

### **14. Discuss the symbolic role of Mr. Lamb's garden in the play.**

**Answer:** Mr. Lamb's garden is symbolic of openness, acceptance, and healing. Unlike Derry's closed-off world, the garden is welcoming and peaceful. Mr. Lamb keeps the gate open to everyone, showing that he embraces life and people. It becomes the space where Derry

begins his transformation. The garden represents a safe haven where Derry feels accepted and begins to change his outlook on life.

**15. What does the play teach us about acceptance and prejudice?**

**Answer:** The play teaches that prejudice based on appearance or disability is shallow and harmful. True acceptance comes from within and from treating others with kindness and understanding. Both Mr. Lamb and Derry are physically impaired, but they respond to their challenges differently. Mr. Lamb accepts himself and others, while Derry initially feels rejected. The play urges society to move beyond superficial judgments and encourages individuals to find strength within themselves.

**16. Why is Mr. Lamb an ideal mentor for Derry?**

**Answer:** Mr. Lamb has gone through pain and rejection himself, making him empathetic toward Derry. He doesn't pity Derry; instead, he treats him with respect and challenges his negativity. His life philosophy and calm wisdom provide Derry with the guidance he needs. Mr. Lamb doesn't preach—he shares stories and insights, letting Derry draw his own conclusions. This makes him a perfect mentor and guide.

**17. What is the role of self-perception in the story?**

**Answer:** Self-perception plays a crucial role in shaping Derry's character. His belief that he is ugly and unloved isolates him. Mr. Lamb helps him realize that these are his own beliefs, not necessarily true. The story emphasizes that how we see ourselves is more important than how others see us. Positive self-perception leads to confidence and happiness.

**18. How does the story challenge the idea of physical perfection?**

**Answer:** The story shows that physical appearance doesn't define one's worth or happiness. Both main characters have physical impairments but differ greatly in their approach to life. Mr. Lamb

shows that one can lead a joyful life despite a disability. Derry learns that beauty lies in thoughts and actions, not faces.

**19. Explain the message of hope in the play.**

**Answer:** The play ends on a bittersweet but hopeful note. Even though Mr. Lamb dies, his influence lives on in Derry. Derry's return to the garden shows he is ready to live life more positively. The play tells us that change is possible, and that even the most disheartened person can find hope.

**20. What makes "On the Face of It" a play about transformation?**

**Answer:** The entire play revolves around the emotional transformation of Derry. He goes from being a reclusive, bitter boy to someone willing to face life and accept himself. This change is brought about through his interaction with Mr. Lamb. The transformation is not external but deeply internal—highlighting the power of encouragement, empathy, and self-belief.