

Half a Day
A Short Story Nabuid Mahfouz

Central character- unnamed narrator

His father

Mother

Teachers

Children

Middle-aged Man

Young Lad

Setting: way to school, school, way back home

Plot : the narrator's father leaves him at school – the first day at school

Boy: why school?

Father: school is not a punishment. It is the factory that makes useful men out of boys.

The narrator is not happy. He feels as if he was torn away from the intimacy of his home.

At the school gate father said: “ Go in by yourself and join them. Put a smile on your face and be a good example to others ... today you truly begin life. You will find me waiting for you when it’s time to leave”.

The boy got mixed up with many other children of his age and teachers.

A woman at school said, “ this is your new home, here too there are mothers and fathers. Here there is everything that is enjoyable and beneficial to knowledge and religion. Dry your tears and face life joyfully.”

- He gained various kinds of knowledge and experience; friendship, love, games, songs, language, earth, continents, countries, numbers, the creator of the universe
- The bell rang announcing the passing of the day and the end of work. The gate was opened, the narrator bade farewell to friends and sweethearts and passed through the gate.
- He found the outside world completely changed; highly mechanical and modernized life. He could not find his home.

- He wanted to cross the road but could not. A young boy said, “Grandpa, let me take you across.”
- “Half a Day” can only be fully understood if interpreted as an allegorical tale, in which each element is symbolic of some greater meaning. The central allegorical motif of “Half a Day” is that a morning spent in school is symbolic of an entire lifetime spent in the school of life.

- Everything that occurs in the story represents common experiences of the human condition: birth, childhood, old age, death, the afterlife, religion, love, friendship, pain, fear, joy, learning, memory, and nostalgia, as well as the cycle of life from generation to generation.